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PROTESTANT REFORMED THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL



APRIL, 1988
Volume XXI, No. 2

**THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL
OF THE
PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCHES
GRANDVILLE, MICHIGAN**

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THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL**

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This *Journal* is published and distributed in limited quantities, at no charge, by the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Interested persons desiring to have their names on the mailing list should address the Editor, Prof. H. Hanko, at the address of the school:

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Theological School
of the
Protestant Reformed Churches
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EDITORIAL NOTES

We are pleased in this issue to begin a series of articles by Rev. David Engelsma on Martin Bucer. These articles were first delivered in lecture form in Mid-America Seminary in Orange City, Iowa. Rev. Engelsma has graciously consented to submit them for publication in our *Journal*.

We consider these articles to be of great interest and importance for the church of our day. In a cover letter with the first manuscript Rev. Engelsma wrote: "I am stirred, as I invariably am, by the history of that age (the age of the great Protestant Reformation, H.H.) and renewed in my heartfelt conviction that we as Churches carry on the work God did then, and that our carrying on is noble duty and high privilege. What a glorious faith is the Reformed faith! What a grand heritage and tradition is 'Calvinism!' " It is our prayer that the reaction of our readers will be the same.

These articles were also published, with some editorial changes, in the *Journal* of Mid-America Seminary and are printed in our *Journal* by permission.



The undersigned begins a series of articles on the subject: "The Doctrine of Predestination in Calvin and Beza." The articles were prepared as an independent study in partial fulfillment of the requirements of a Th.M. program in Calvin Theological Seminary. The topic proved both interesting and current, and we believe our readers will enjoy the material.



Prof. R. Decker continues in this issue his analysis of the Biblical doctrine of preaching. In this concluding article he deals with two key passages of Scripture: Ephesians 4:1-16 and Romans 10:1-17. Because Biblical preaching is on the decline in the church and has in fact in many instances disappeared, it is our prayer that these articles may serve to bring about a revival of preaching among those who are still concerned to feed the flock of Christ.



Great treasures of theology are often hidden from the general reader in books originally written in other languages. This is also true of Dutch Reformed theology in general, and of important works in our own Protestant Reformed tradition. It is for this reason that we have set aside a part of each issue of the *Journal* for translations of some of the latter works. Prof. Hoeksema continues in this issue his translation of "The Power of God Unto Salvation," a book written by the late Rev. H. Hoeksema. While it contains some historically dated material (because it was written as a polemical work against wrong views of the preaching of the gospel), the positive teaching of the book is of such importance that we believe it will have abiding value within our own tradition and for those who are concerned about a sound and Biblical doctrine of preaching. □

Martin Bucer:

Reformed Pastor of Strasbourg

by David J. Engelsma

The early German Reformer, Martin Bucer, was of great significance for the Protestant Faith and Church. His abilities and leadership in Protestantism were recognized by his notable contemporaries – Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, Bullinger, Calvin, Vermigli, and Cranmer. With all of these, Bucer corresponded, fellowshiped, discussed theology, disputed, and co-operated in the Gospel, as an equal, if not a superior. No theological conference in those days was complete without Bucer; and at many of them, he did most of the talking, which did not endear him always to the others.

The princes of the earth paid Bucer deference. He became a chief advisor and close confidant of Philip of Hesse, the main political defender of the forces of Protestantism in those tense times. Emperor Charles V must needs invite Bucer to the conferences that sought to restore unity to the Empire, and listen to Bucer explaining and defending sound Protestant doctrine. At the end of his life, Bucer was invited to England with the approval of King Edward VI, who welcomed Bucer personally and who later received from the theologian the gift of one of Bucer's greatest works, *De Regno Christi (On the Kingdom of Christ)*, in which Bucer instructed the Protestant king how to make England truly a Christian Commonwealth. In her own way, even Mary Tudor, the infamous "Bloody Mary," acknowledged the greatness of Bucer when, upon her accession to the throne of England, not only did she burn Lattimer, Ridley, and Cranmer alive, but also Bucer dead. She had his body dug up from the grave, and the remains chained to a post and burned.

John Calvin expressed his high estimation of Bucer's gifts, acknowledging his own indebtedness to Bucer. In the "Dedication" of his *Commentary on Romans*, Calvin wrote:

Finally there comes Bucer, who spoke the last word on the subject (of writing commentaries – D.J.E.) with the publication of his writings. In addition to his profound learning, abundant knowledge, keenness of intellect, wide reading, and many other varied excellences in which he is surpassed by hardly

anyone at the present day, this scholar, as we know, is equalled by few and is superior to very many. It is to his especial credit that no one in our time has been more precise or diligent in interpreting scripture than he.¹

In the "Argument" of his *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists*, Calvin stated his dependence, as a commentator, on Bucer:

Bucer, a man of revered memory, and an eminent teacher of the Church of God, who above all others appears to me to have labored successfully in this field, has been especially my model.²

This is no small praise, coming, as it does, from the prince of commentators.

Of late, accompanying a resurgence of interest in Bucer and a development of Bucer studies, there is an increasing awareness of Bucer's importance for Protestantism. H. Strohle regards Bucer's commentary on Romans (1536) as "the inauguration of modern exegesis."³ August Lang, of Halle University, asserted that Bucer is of more importance for the understanding of Reformed Protestantism than is Calvin. Along the same line, Reinhold Seeberg called Bucer the forerunner and pathfinder for Calvin.⁴ Wilhelm Pauck agrees: "The type of church which we call Calvinistic or Reformed is really a gift of Martin Butzer to the world, through the work of his strong and brilliant executive, Calvin."⁵

Although interest in Bucer is growing, Bucer research is difficult, at the present time. The reason is not that Bucer wrote little. On the contrary, he wrote some one hundred and fifty books, many of them large. Bucer wrote like he spoke — at great length. Even his friends complained of his verbosity. Luther (by no means always a friend) once called him a "*Klapperpermaul*" (a chatterbox). Calvin, having praised Bucer for his commentaries, in the "Dedication" of his own *Commentary on Romans*, went on to say, "Bucer is too verbose to be read quickly by those who have other matters to deal with. . . he does not know how to stop writing." Less kind was the criticism by the secretary of Emperor Charles V: "*Windbeutel*" (a windbag).

Besides his books, Bucer carried on a voluminous correspondence, much of it with the leading political and religious lights of that day; and much of this correspondence is extant.

But until recently, Bucer's works have remained buried in libraries in Germany and in England, much of it in Bucer's own handwriting; and Bucer's script was atrocious — the English bishop, Edmund Grindal, said of it that a conjurer was needed to decipher it.

Even now, when his works are being published, little is available in English. Among the works of Bucer that are available in English should be mentioned the book published in 1972 by The Sutton Courtenay Press,

in England, *Common Places of Martin Bucer* (D.F. Wright, translator and editor), a volume of translations of strategically selected parts of several of Bucer's writings, and Wilhelm Pauck's translation of Bucer's *De Regno Christi*, as *On the Kingdom of Christ*, in Volume XIX of the Library of Christian Classics, *Melanchthon and Bucer*.⁶

In addition, there are important biographical works on Bucer, especially Hastings Eells' *Martin Bucer*⁷ and Constantin Hopf's *Martin Bucer and the English Reformation*.⁸

There is a very valuable analysis of Bucer's theology in English, W.P. Stephens' *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Martin Bucer*.⁹

Besides, there is a growing body of theses and dissertations, of varying worth, on specific aspects of Bucer's theology, particularly his doctrine of the Lord's Supper.

We begin with an overview of Bucer's life, theology, and ecclesiastical labors.

A Sketch of Bucer's Life

Martin Bucer, or Butzer, as his name is also spelled, was eight years younger than Luther and eighteen years older than Calvin. He was born in 1491 and died in 1551, barely reaching the allotted threescore years. He was a German, born in the little city of Selestat, in the south of Germany, and serving most of his mature life as Pastor in nearby Strasbourg.

At fifteen, he entered the Dominican order of the Church, not because of any interest in holy orders, but in order to pursue his academic studies. The Dominicans sent him to Heidelberg; and it was there, in 1518, when Bucer was twenty-seven, that he was converted to Christ and to the Protestant Reformation, through Martin Luther himself. Bucer heard Luther speak on the issue of the freedom of the will and was at once drawn to this "real, authentic theologian." The next day he met with Luther alone, over supper. Two years later, in a letter to Luther, Bucer described his meeting with the Reformer:

Smitten by great love for you as though wounded by the sharp arrows of your words, or rather the words of God the mighty, I dared to have a conference with you. . . . The result was assuredly happy. For received at dinner by you. . . I was wonderfully and bountifully refreshed, not only by the excellent delicacies at the table, but by the exquisite and sweet meat of Scripture. . . .¹⁰

From then on, Bucer was both a Protestant and a disciple of Martin Luther.

A curious incident, soon thereafter, was Bucer's attempt, in 1521, to dissuade Luther, at the time on the way to the Diet of Worms, from going

to Worms. Bucer had been induced to undertake this task by a clever spokesman of the Emperor. When Luther refused to be turned aside from his God-given calling, Bucer accompanied him to Worms, so that Bucer was present at the historic Diet and witnessed Luther's good confession and stand.

In 1522 and 1523, Bucer preached the Reformation doctrines of Luther in Wissembourg, struggling to make the city Protestant, against Rome. Here, he developed as a preacher. Here also, he was excommunicated by the Roman Catholic Church, both for preaching the heresies of Luther and for marrying. Bucer had married in 1522 — one of the very first of the Reformers to do so. But from this city he was banished in 1523, Rome being victorious in the struggle for the soul of the city.

Thence, Bucer fled to the notable city of Strasbourg, where his parents were citizens. Here, he would remain for twenty-five years as the leading Protestant Pastor of the city. From Strasbourg would go out Bucer's teachings, and often Bucer himself, who was constantly on the road in Germany and Switzerland, to influence many others throughout Europe. Within a year, the penniless, excommunicated refugee had been installed as the first evangelical Pastor in Strasbourg, where Reformation teaching had just begun to be heard. By 1529, Strasbourg had become a fully Protestant city, for in that year the mass was abolished in Strasbourg. Over the years, by preaching and teaching, Bucer built up a strong, exemplary, and influential evangelical, Reformed Church in Strasbourg. In this work, he did not labor alone. The age was an age of great men of God; and Strasbourg had more than its share of them — Capito, Hedio, and Zell were Bucer's colleagues.

During the twenty-five years that Bucer was Pastor in Strasbourg, this gifted, active, diligent servant of God preached and taught the Word to the flock; developed theology; established Christian schools, including a seminary; carried on vigorous controversy with Rome, Anabaptists, Lutherans, and Zwinglians; attended conferences; advised princes; labored mightily for the unity of the churches; wrote books; lodged refugees; and carried on correspondence with everyone who was someone in Europe. He also found time to be the father of a large family of as many as thirteen children. His household was known to be an orderly, model home (although for this we will give much of the credit to Elizabeth Silbereisen — Mrs. Bucer). Like David's men, Christ's men in those days were "mighty men."

In April, 1549, there was enforced upon Bucer the notorious Interim of the Diet of Augsburg — virtually the imposing upon all Protestants of Roman Catholic worship, while throwing to them a few sophs to make the

Romanism palatable. To his undying credit, Bucer refused to submit to the Interim, although the cost was banishment. He accepted the invitation of Archbishop Cranmer, to find refuge and work in England, declining a similar invitation from his close friend, Calvin, to come to Geneva. The last three years of his life, Bucer spent in England, as "Regius Professor of Divinity" at Cambridge, where he received the first honorary doctorate in theology that Cambridge gave (although Bucer honored Cambridge more than Cambridge honored Bucer).

The years in England were not retirement for Bucer. Eells remarks that "Bucer was not the man to sit in quiet seclusion and croak."¹¹ Instead, Bucer significantly affected the English Reformation, as previously he had had a powerful hand in the German and Swiss. According to Hopf, "Bucer's work . . . in England formed a vital and inseparable part of the story of the English Reformation."¹² Bucer influenced the English Reformation and the Church of England in several ways. He contributed to the Book of Common Prayer, by his criticism and suggestions concerning the First Edwardian Prayer Book. In England, he wrote, and gave to the Protestant king, the important book, *On the Kingdom of Christ*. He spoke out concerning the Vestment Controversy, a controversy about clerical garb that was a portent of fierce struggles to come between the Puritans and the Anglican Church. Bucer engaged in theological dispute with Stephen Gardiner, Roman Catholic bishop, and Lord High Chancellor of England under "Bloody Mary," over the doctrine of justification by faith. There is even some influence of Bucer on the English Bible, through his commentary on the Psalter, which was translated into English as early as 1530.

Bucer died on March 1, 1551 and was buried with great honors. Four years later, the Roman Catholics exhumed and burned Bucer's body. In 1560, with the accession to the throne of Protestant Elizabeth, Bucer's memory was reconsecrated at a solemn assembly; and whatever was left of his remains was buried once again.

Then Bucer suffered the fate that is far more painful to a theologian than any futile persecution of his corpse — he was forgotten.

Before going on to consider Bucer's doctrine and pastoral labor, we may briefly take note of certain significant theological and ecclesiastical turning points and periods in Bucer's life. Not only will this bring out the many-sided nature of the man and his work, but it will also give us some idea of the circumstances in which Bucer developed as a Reformed theologian.

Bucer was converted to the Reformation truths by Luther himself personally in 1518. To the end of his life, Bucer, like all the Reformers,

was greatly influenced by Luther. He read whatever Luther published and was loath to differ from him.

In 1524, with the publication of Erasmus' *Diatrobe on Free Will*, Bucer broke with Erasmus and the humanists. Until then, Bucer had cordial relationships with the humanists, for whom he had high hopes – Hutton, vonSickingen, and especially Erasmus. With all of them, Bucer had personal contact. In fact, he had found refuge with vonSickingen after leaving the monastery.

But when Erasmus published his *Diatrobe*, Bucer urged Luther to reply to the “pestiferous pamphlet” of that “unhappy slave of glory, who pushes forward to prefer the spit of his own opinion to Scripture.”¹³ The controversy between Erasmus and Luther over free will opened Bucer's eyes to see several things clearly. First, the true Reformation of the Church was doctrinal, and not merely a reformation of morals, as the humanists supposed. Second, not only was Erasmus a broken reed for those who depended upon him for the Reformation of the Church, but he was also an enemy of the Reformation. Third, the fundamental doctrine of the Gospel that was now restored to the Church, and by which the thorough Reformation of the Church would be effected, was the truth of salvation by free, sovereign grace; and integral elements of this truth were the doctrine of the spiritual bondage of the will of the natural man and the doctrine of eternal, double predestination.

Yet another important factor in Bucer's development, in the early years of his pastorate in Strasbourg, was his struggle with the Anabaptists. Many of the leaders of the “radical reformation” came to Strasbourg, some, to stay for a time – Carlstadt, Hubmaier, Hans Denck, Pilgram Marbeck, Sebastian Franck, and others. Their teachings were attractive to many, insomuch that Bucer's colleague, Wolfgang Capito, was swept away for a time by the “heavenly prophets.” Against them, Bucer maintained and developed the doctrine of the covenant and infant baptism; the doctrine of divine particularism (the Anabaptists were universalists in their soteriology); the doctrine of the church, particularly the church as local institute, the importance of the means of grace, and the necessity of the eldership, with authority to exercise discipline; and the doctrine of the divine institution of the magistracy.

From 1524 on, in part because of his close association with Zwingli in nearby Zurich, Bucer found himself in disagreement with Luther's doctrine of a physical presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. After 1528, upon reading Luther's weightiest work on the Lord's Supper, *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper*, Bucer did not so much return towards Luther's doctrine as come to see more clearly that Zwingli's doctrine of

the Supper as a mere memorial was unacceptable. The conflict over the Supper between Luther and Zwingli, in which Bucer was deeply involved, indeed, in which he was a participant, resulted in Bucer's development of his own doctrine of the Supper.

In 1538, the young, but already doctrinally developed Calvin (he had written the first edition of the *Institutes* in 1536), expelled from Geneva, found refuge with Bucer in Strasbourg, remaining there, as Pastor, until 1541. Between Bucer and Calvin, there was close contact and fellowship. An interesting, though puzzling, question is, "Who influenced whom?" There can be no doubt that Bucer influenced Calvin in many ways, so that Bucer has significantly formed the Reformed Faith and Church, through Calvin. It is equally certain that the relationship was reciprocal. Someone has wisely observed that the contact between these men helped both to be more strongly what they already were; and what they were was Reformed theologians.

We should not overlook the effect upon Bucer of his life-long struggle against Rome, in every facet of its teaching and practice. Already in Wissembourg, in the very beginning of his ministry, he contended with Rome for the reformation of the city. The conflict continued throughout his Strasbourg years. In England too, in the last years of his life, the struggle with Rome was forced upon him.

In these circumstances, formed in part by these influences, but formed above all by the Scriptures, Bucer labored as the Reformed Pastor at Strasbourg.

The Reformed Theologian

To call him "the Reformed Pastor of Strasbourg" is not to restrict his influence, for, in fact, Bucer was "the Reformer of Central Europe," but rather to indicate his main mission, the heart of all his labor and influence, and the very essence of the man and his place in the Kingdom of God in history. It is something of an anachronism to call him "Reformed," for this ecclesiastical label was not used in Bucer's day to designate a particular denomination. Indeed, Bucer himself did not think in terms of a distinctive Protestant Church over against the Lutheran Church that would be called the "Reformed Church." Bucer strove, almost to the end of his life, to unite what he saw as unnecessarily divided segments of the one evangelical, Protestant Church. In fact there lingered in his soul the notion that there yet would be but one, instituted Church in Europe, a Church that allowed herself to be purified by the doctrines of the Reformation. For this, he hoped; and for this, he labored mightily. Nevertheless, it is

correct, and necessary, to see Bucer as a Reformed Pastor, theologian, and church ruler.

He was ecclesiastically Reformed. He was a Protestant, who was anti-Roman Catholic and anti-Anabaptist, but who was also anti-Lutheran, especially on the fundamental, divisive issue of the presence of Christ in the Supper. Bucer's affiliation was with the Swiss Reformed, and not with the German Lutherans. It is no surprise, therefore, that after Bucer's death and after the lifting of the Augsburg Interim, Strasbourg went Calvinist, or Reformed.

Bucer was theologically Reformed. We say this about him, however, as we say it of Calvin: these were the men who were developing Reformed truth and defining what Reformed has come to mean. (To say that Bucer was theologically Reformed is like saying that Augustine was theologically Augustinian.)

We note several characteristically Reformed doctrines taught by Bucer.

Bucer held the Divine inspiration, sole authority, and absolute inerrancy of Scripture. With appeal especially to II Timothy 3:16, a text of central importance for Bucer, he taught that the Author of Scripture is God, by inspiration of the Spirit, so that the authority of the Bible is the authority of God Himself. Inspiration implies and demands inerrancy:

The Holy Spirit . . . has reserved for His own canonical writings alone this prerogative — that without any sprinkling of error or any illusion they discourse on the divine works, from which may be learnt both the power and the goodness of God. . . .¹⁴

Against the claims of Rome that the Church has authority over Scripture, both to validate Scripture as the Word of God and to interpret Scripture, Bucer insisted that the Bible is the sole authority in and over the Church (he contended here with the notorious Albert Pighius who, in addition to assailing Calvin's doctrine of predestination, argued for an infallible Pope) and that it is the Holy Spirit Who enables believers to receive Scripture as God's Word and to understand Scripture. Implied is the clarity of the Bible. Bucer's Roman Catholic adversary, Latomus, charged that Bucer's chief error was "to maintain that all things necessary to salvation are clear in Sacred Scripture."¹⁵ Some error! Against the disparagement, and even the dismissal, of Scripture in favor of the immediate workings of the Holy Spirit (the Anabaptist, Sebastian Franck, anticipating Karl Barth by four centuries, called the Bible, as confessed by the Reformers, "a paper Pope"), Bucer held the necessity and sufficiency of the written Word. Interestingly, Bucer urged the sole authority of Scripture against some slavish followers of Luther, whose defense of their belief concerning the Lord's Supper was, "Luther has spoken":

They say, indeed, that they follow God's Word, but if you ask how they know it to be God's Word, if they reply truly, they say, "because he, even he has taught in this way." "We know," they say, "that he teaches nothing except the truth of the scripture. . . ." What are they doing now but making God out of a man and relying on the authority of a man in place of the testimony of the Holy Spirit in their hearts?¹⁶

Second, Bucer taught eternal, sovereign predestination, election and reprobation; and he made this doctrine central to all his theology. In his *Commentary on Romans* (1536), Bucer wrote concerning predestination, as follows:

"Predestination" is that act of designation on the part of God whereby in His secret counsel He designates and actually selects and separates from the rest of mankind those whom He will draw to His Son. . . . This. . . is the predestination of the saints. . . . There is (also) a predestination of the wicked, for just as God forms them also out of nothing, so He forms them for a definite end. . . . The godless are the. . . tools and instruments of God, and "God has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked man for the day of evil." . . . He gave Pharaoh up to a depraved mind and raised him up for the purpose of showing His power in punishing him; Esau too He hated before he had done any evil.¹⁷

This predestination is not conditioned by foreseen faith:

Misunderstanding of the holy Fathers has sometimes given rise to the erroneous idea that our good works are in some sense the cause of our predestination, on the grounds that God foresees that His own people will embrace the offer of His grace. . . and for this reason predestines and predetermines them to salvation. But this is an error. . . . There can be absolutely nothing in us, therefore, which God might take into account in predetermining us to future salvation; His own good pleasure decides all that He does and gives to us.¹⁸

If Bucer shared this belief concerning predestination with all the Reformers, including Luther, Bucer is characteristically Reformed in making the doctrine central to all his theology and all his teaching. Predestination is the foundation of the Church; and the Church is the assembly of the elect. In his *Lectures on Ephesians* (1550, 1551), Bucer disputes with Rome over "the definition of the Church and its members." Rome claims that "the Church is the congregation of all baptised persons who make themselves subject to the authority and discipline of the Roman Church and its hierarchy." Not so, says Bucer; rather "the elect of Christ are alone members of the Church, and only they who entrust themselves to Christ's discipline and word and appointed ministry, who abide in Him and live out His Word. . . ."¹⁹

Predestination means, for Bucer, that the death of Christ was only for

the elect – “limited atonement.” Therefore, as Bucer is writing on the Lord’s Supper, specifically the issue forced by Luther, concerning the reception of the body of Christ by the unbelieving, he can defend the position that the ungodly do not receive Christ, against the argument that Judas Iscariot partook of the Supper, by an appeal to predestination:

The belief of some that Judas partook of the bread and the cup offered by Christ is no objection at this point. Whether he partook or not, these words of Christ, “which is delivered up for you, . . . which is shed for the remission of sins,” etc. could not have applied to him and hence were not addressed to him.²⁰

Bucer’s argument is simple. Even if Judas partook of the Lord’s Supper, he did not receive Christ’s body and blood, for Jesus Himself described His body as crucified for those to whom it is given in the Supper. But Jesus’ body was not crucified (“delivered up”) for Judas. Bucer knows that Jesus’ body was not crucified for Judas, because Judas was not one of God’s elect. Predestination, therefore, is decisive for the right doctrine of the Sacrament.

As it determines reception of the grace of God in the Sacrament, predestination also governs the Divine calling through the Gospel. First, all those who are elect will be called with the effectual call that brings them to faith. In proof, Bucer appeals to Acts 13:48: “as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” Second, there is a sharp distinction between the particular call that comes only to the elect and the general call that comes also to many others. Here, Bucer adduces Matthew 22:14: “many are called, but few chosen.” These calls are not the same. They differ, not only in the result – some believe, while others reject the Gospel, but also in the purpose and power of the calling God. God’s purpose with the call of the elect is their salvation; and, therefore, He makes this call effectual by the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, to draw them to Christ. The call of the reprobate has no such purpose or power. In his important book, *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Martin Bucer*, W.P. Stephens writes:

To the problem that this raises (why God should command us to call to Him those He does not wish to come) Bucer simply replies that it is for God to command and for us to obey. In any case, God wishes the reprobate to be without excuse. . . .²¹

Third, Predestination controls the calling, for Bucer, in this way, that there must be a work of the Spirit in the elect *before* they hear and believe the Gospel, to enable and empower them to believe. Here, Bucer appeals to the infant John leaping for joy in his mother’s womb at the presence of Christ. Writes Bucer: “if the Spirit is not present, the word

which is preached is never understood. . . .”²² Stephens remarks that “the idea that there is some (at least preparatory) work of the Spirit, which makes the elect responsive to the gospel, is an abiding feature of Bucer’s theology.”²³ This is the high Reformed doctrine of immediate regeneration.

Those passages of Scripture that teach God’s will for the salvation of “all,” or the “world,” Bucer interprets in harmony with the truth of predestination. F.L. Battles has translated Bucer’s exposition of the Lord’s Prayer in his publication of the 1536 edition of Calvin’s *Institutes*. In his commentary on the petition, “Lead us not into temptation,” Bucer considers those texts that are so often used to overthrow the doctrine of predestination:

Finally, these words: “I do not desire the death of the ungodly, or that one may die, but rather that he may repent and live” (Ezek. 18:23). God desires that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of truth (cf. 1 Tim., 1:15), and similar passages; they can by no means contend with these passages which we recall concerning hardening. Nonetheless it is an undoubted truth that God has rejected some, and hardened them and blinded them, as vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, something abundantly attested daily; therefore the fact that he says he does not will the death of an impious and dying man, but prefers that he repent and live, is to be understood concerning those whom he has chosen to the end that they repent and live, to whom the prophet chiefly spoke. “For he said to Pharaoh: I have raised you up, for the very purpose of showing my power in you, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth” (Ex. 9:16; Rom. 9:17). He had hardened him just as he is wont to harden any rejected ones that they may not at all repent and live, but rather persist in their obstinacy, in their impiety, and perish, that in this he may magnify his power in the whole earth. To all he says: let it be just as if he had said, from all a few, or there is no race of men in which he does not also have his own. For frequently “all” in scripture is understood for “very many” or “anyone.”²⁴

The centrality of the doctrine of predestination in Bucer has not escaped attention. Stephens, admitting that he, as a “son of the Wesleys,” has difficulties with Bucer’s doctrine of predestination, writes: “Much of the power of Bucer’s theology derives from his doctrine of predestination.”²⁵ Constantin Hopf asserts that Bucer’s “conception of predestination was ranked next to – or above – that of Calvin.”²⁶ And Francois Wendel “attributes to Bucer the doctrine of double predestination ‘dans toute sa rigueur,’ saying that it was common to all the reformers, but more so to Bucer who built his whole theology upon the principle of the omnipotence of God.”²⁷

Another mark of a Reformed theologian was Bucer’s heavy emphasis on sanctification. Holding justification by faith alone in common with the

other Reformers, Bucer, like Calvin, stressed that justification must be accompanied by holiness of life and walk, which holiness necessarily flows out of justification. For Bucer, the heart of this holiness is love. A favorite text of his was Galatians 5:6: "faith which worketh by love." His very first published work, in 1523, was *That none must live for himself but for others: and how a man may achieve this*, called by one scholar "one of the loveliest of all reformation tracts."²⁸ One aspect of the life of holiness that Bucer made much of was Sabbath observance. His view was that of the Puritans and of the Westminster Confession, as well as of at least one branch of Dutch Reformed Christianity, later on. In his account of his teachings at the end of his ministry in Strasbourgh, in 1548, Bucer wrote:

Since it has been the practice of the Churches of Christ from the times of the apostles to observe on the first day of the week, on which our dear Lord Christ rose from the dead, the general festival of the Lord which he commanded his ancient people to celebrate on the seventh day of the week, we believe and teach that we should consecrate this day to God and celebrate it with spontaneous piety and no less zeal than was demanded on the ancients in their sanctification of the sabbath. . . . The people must abstain from all temporal occupations and business which can possibly be deferred, along with their families and all who live with them; and they are to be diligent in attendance at divine assemblies, there to hear the word of God read and preached, to join with the congregation in prayer and thanksgiving, to bring charitable gifts for the poor, and to receive the holy sacraments. . . . On this day these godly exercises should be performed and engaged in with more solemnity than at other times, and the whole day is to be spent in the pursuit of piety, as the Lord has commanded in his holy prophets. . . .²⁹

Because of this stress on godly living (to Bucer, theology was not an abstract, but a practical science), he has been regarded as a father of Puritanism and of Pietism. Stress on sanctification, however, is, and ought to be, simply an integral part of genuine Reformed Christianity.

So urgent was the desire in Bucer for godliness that, when he failed to get the rule and discipline of the Strasbourgh Church by the eldership (which he correctly saw to be necessary for the holy life of the membership of the Church), he opted for small, select "fellowships" of the sanctified within the Church, the "*Gemeinschaften*," similar to the *collegia pietatis* of later Pietism. In this, Bucer was impaled on the horns of his dilemma: either he must give up his view of the local church as the total membership of the city or he must sacrifice the holiness of church.

Bucer showed himself a Reformed man also in his conception of the Church. On the one hand, he viewed the catholic Church as the Body of Christ made up of all the elect (his Roman Catholic adversaries scoffed at

Bucer's Church as a spiritual Church that existed nowhere). On the other hand, he taught that the true Church was the local congregation, instituted in four offices, and displaying the marks of the pure Word of God, the proper administration of the Sacraments, and the exercise of Christian discipline. In passing, we remark the striking similarity between the thought of Bucer and the thought of Calvin. This instituted Church must be self-governing.³⁰ Bucer called for a body of elders in each local Church, to govern the Church and especially to exercise discipline. Already in 1534, when Calvin was but twenty-five and had neither written the *Institutes* nor come to Geneva, Bucer, pleading for the office of elder, had written, "We shall never come nearer to true Christian conversation without the discipline that Christ may give us."³¹ Even stronger was his statement, "There cannot be a Church without Church discipline."³² Bucer's insistence on the necessity of elders who will discipline the Church grew stronger over the years. Eells writes that "the word 'discipline' was constantly upon his lips until it became an obsession."³³ In 1545, he "complained publicly of the lack of discipline in Strasbourg, which allowed 'great sinners' to go to the Lord's Supper, permitted others to neglect it, and contemned other errors."³⁴

The stringency of the discipline that Bucer had in mind comes out in the procedure that he proposed for the restoration of an excommunicated member. Restoration would begin with a statement of penitence, "*Es ist mir leydt, ich wils nit mehr thun*" ("I repent, I will not do it any more"). Then would follow a public confession of sin in Church before the Congregation; a demonstration of sorrow in an elder's meeting: "tears and cries, entreating and imploring with all sincerity"; fasting and vigils, shunning of physical delights, with generous alms-giving and proper Christian conduct; and proof of sorrow and repentance in manner of dress, eating, and drinking, showing clear effort to improve his conduct. Finally, the elders would accept the excommunicant again at the Table.³⁵ To many a Reformed Church today, in which excommunication itself is unknown, such a discipline must seem strange, if not a horror. But the reason is that Reformed Churches no longer share Bucer's zeal for the holiness of God in His Church, or his abhorrence of unholiness. Bucer's concern for discipline was closely connected with his doctrine of sanctification and, ultimately, with his doctrine of predestination. The elect are chosen unto holiness; those members who do not repent when admonished by the elders must be excommunicated as rotten members.

Because of this conviction concerning the necessity of discipline by an eldership, Bucer fought long and hard in Strasbourg, as Calvin did in Geneva, to free the Church from the rule of the magistrates, although, like

Calvin, he held that the magistrates ought to promote the Church with the sword.³⁶ Bucer found, as others have found, before and after, that this is difficult to accomplish. Magistrates who promote, insist also on ruling.

At the same time that Bucer was seeking the rule of the Church by elders, he was also doing justice to the office of believer. Bucer required congregational participation in the election of ministers and in the exercise of discipline. This arose, as far as Bucer was concerned, from the Reformation doctrine of the priesthood of believers, a principle that Bucer took with utmost seriousness. The Roman Catholic scholar, William Barron, has written:

... while this doctrine (of the priesthood of all believers -- D.J.E.) was enunciated by Luther in 1520, only Bucer and the Swiss took it seriously in the sense of attempting to implement it in practice.³⁷

Although he was an outstanding theologian, Bucer was fundamentally a Pastor, a Reformed Pastor: he devoted his theology, as well as his gifts and labor, to the people of God, especially the flock at Strasbourg, by teaching and ruling the Congregation. For twenty-five years, Bucer served as Pastor in Strasbourg, preaching, teaching, and taking heed to the flock. Much of the work that gained wider renown for Bucer, and that was helpful to the Church in other places, was simply an outgrowth of his care of the Strasbourg Church, e.g., his refutation of Rome and of anabaptism; his teaching on church government and discipline; his liturgy; and even his doctrine concerning the Sacrament of the Supper.

Whatever counsel he gave others concerning the reform of the Church -- and he gave much to many! -- was first of all put into practice in Strasbourg.

This labor was a labor of love -- Bucer loved the Strasbourg flock, as the chosen and redeemed of the Lord. It is touching to read of the sorrow of Bucer in England, now old, sick, and exiled, because of the lack of care for him by the people of Strasbourg, insomuch that no one even wrote him. Still, he cared for the Strasbourg Congregation and exerted himself to help her from afar. Like Paul, although the more he loved the Church, the less he was loved, he loved the Church all the same.

The pastoral heartbeat of Bucer is heard in several aspects of his labor. It is heard in his emphasis on preaching. Preaching is necessary; preaching is the primary need of the Church. The reason, according to Bucer, is that "it is impossible to come to faith and eternal life unless you hear the gospel and that administered by a man."³⁸ For this, Bucer appealed to Romans 10:14: "... how shall they hear without a preacher?" He had little use, therefore, for radical actions of reform -- destroying icons,

discarding clerical vestments, and the like. All of this is useless, unless good preachers have *preached* the truth into men's hearts. Writing Calvin from Cambridge, Bucer observed:

... you may find parishes in which there has not been a sermon for some years... and you are well aware how little can be effected for the restoration of the kingdom of Christ by mere ordinances, and the removal of instruments of superstition.³⁹

Bucer's attitude came out in his involvement in the Vestments' Controversy in England. Although he personally favored discarding the clerical vestments created in Rome and although, shortly before his banishment from Strasbourg, he refused to wear the white surplice, because this was required as a sign of his submission to the Interim of the Diet of Augsburg, nevertheless, he would not condemn the wearing of the vestments, because, he said, the important thing is that the preachers preach the truth. What they wear while doing it is of no fundamental importance.

One who takes preaching seriously — with the seriousness of Romans 10:14 — must be concerned about the training of preachers. Bucer was. Very early in the Strasbourg years, he and his colleagues began a seminary in the city. Much later, in 1549, Bucer drew up a document for the examination and ordination of candidates for the ministry. It required and outlined a careful, thorough examination of every candidate. A major part of the examination consisted of asking the candidate "what he has been taught and believes on the fundamental principles of our religion, especially those that have been made the subject of controversy." The extensive, doctrinal examination begins by asking the candidate concerning his belief regarding the inspired Scripture and his subscription to the creeds.⁴⁰ No unqualified, unsound preacher may be let loose upon the flock of God.

Bucer's efforts on behalf of the government of the Church by elders, and on behalf of good discipline, were motivated by pastoral concerns. The book in which Bucer called for such government and discipline was significantly titled, *Von der Waren Seelsorge unnd dem rechten Hirten-dienst* (*Concerning the True Care of Souls and the Proper Role of the Pastor*) [1538]; and this book is generally regarded as one of the finest pastoral treatises to come out of the Reformation. Discipline saves the sinner, by bringing him to repentance when all else fails; and discipline saves the Congregation from the leaven of sin. In his *Lectures on Ephesians* (1550, 1551), Bucer wrote:

So too has discipline been commanded by Christ, and its collapse has dire consequences. The corruption of discipline ruins the entire ministry of teaching and sacraments, and the devil fills their place with fearful superstition.

Where discipline is dormant, men are asleep and the devil sows tares.⁴¹

As a true Pastor of Christ's Church, Bucer was concerned to feed Christ's lambs. He called for the catechizing of the children of the Church:

... that they diligently make the Church's catechism known to them when they are old enough to understand it. For unless the foundation of the Church is firmly laid in early childhood through the catechism of Christ, its upbuilding will proceed very poorly from then on. . . .⁴²

He is the father of the practice of confirmation and, thus, of the Reformed practice of "public confession of faith," prior to covenant children's celebration of the Lord's Supper. His concern for the rearing of the children of the Church manifested itself also in his efforts, with the famed educator, Johannes Sturm, "the greatest of the great school rectors of the sixteenth century," to establish in Strasbourg a system of education that was characterized both by solid learning in the various branches of knowledge of the day and by instruction in the principles of Reformed Christianity.

Bucer gave a great deal of attention in his teaching and writing to marriage. One fourth or more of *De Regno Christi* is devoted to marriage. He was convinced of the dignity of marriage:

... let us notice here also the commendation of the wonderful dignity of marriage: God is its author, and he it is who unites those who come together in marriage. What way of life, when regimen of the holiest of monks and nuns enjoys such an encomium?⁴³

He knew the importance of marriage for the State, as well as for the Church:

How important it is for the decency and well-being of the commonwealth that matrimony be contracted and revered according to the will of Christ and not dissolved without a just cause! Who would not understand this? For unless that first and most sacred union of man and woman is established in a holy way, so that household discipline flourishes among the spouses according to God's precept, how can we expect a race of good men?⁴⁴

Bucer was a strong advocate of the marriage of the clergy, an issue of great importance at that time both for the conflict with Rome and for the practical welfare of the Church and her ministers. Practising what he preached, Bucer married, and was one of the first Reformers to do so. It was he who urged John Calvin to marry, and who picked Idelette de Bure for the hesitant Calvin. In his controversial writing against the Roman Catholic, Bartholomew Latomus, Bucer destroyed the Roman law on the celibacy of the clergy, basing his argument on I Corinthians 7, Rome's favorite passage in support of their law:

1. Most men are made to serve God in matrimony and very few in

celibacy.

2. For all those called to matrimony, the choice of a celibate life is a snare; for them fornication is inevitable despite prayer.

3. Authorities have no right to keep those called to matrimony in celibacy, but should encourage them to serve the Lord in matrimony.

4. Among those called to marriage many are worthy of the priesthood and the ministry. A law which keeps fit men away from the priesthood is repugnant to the Word of God. This law drives men away from the priesthood and imposes celibacy upon the unfit. Therefore this law is openly repugnant to the Word of God.⁴⁵

Strangely, Bucer took a very lax stand regarding divorce and remarriage: he permitted divorce for many reasons and the remarriage of guilty and innocent parties alike.

Wherefore, anyone who lacks the gift to live chastely outside marriage must be able to embrace marriage, regardless of whose fault it was, his own or another's, that his previous marriage collapsed.⁴⁶

He expended a great deal of energy, and much ink, in the effort to make Christ and the apostles support this stand.⁴⁷ His contemporaries were struck, unfavorably, by Bucer's laxity of teaching concerning divorce. In a letter to Bullinger, in 1550, one John Burcher wrote:

... Bucer is more than licentious on the subject of marriage. I heard him once disputing at table upon this question, when he asserted that a divorce should be allowed for any reason, however trifling. . . .⁴⁸

At the root of Bucer's permissiveness concerning the remarriage of divorced persons was his erroneous explanation of Genesis 2:18, "It is not good that the man should be alone," as meaning that whenever a man or woman finds himself or herself alone, regardless of any and all circumstances, God approves, if He does not will, his or her remarrying. He certainly would have justified his stand as the expression of a Pastor's love towards those who find themselves in the distressing circumstances of loneliness.

As a Pastor, Bucer developed a distinctive Reformed liturgy, for the Biblical worship of the saints (borrowed by Calvin); urged the care of the poor, suggesting measures to reduce begging and to provide for the truly needy; and called for foreign missions, one of the few Reformers to do so.

Not the least of his pastoral concerns was the peace of his own Congregation. Bucer kept his Church from the divisions threatened by the anabaptists and was very careful not to introduce the Supper-strife into the Congregation.

The Significance of Bucer

Martin Bucer was a powerful, influential instrument of God for the effecting of the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, by his preaching; by his writings, especially his commentaries, which were also his "dogmatics," and his controversial writings; and by his participation in the conferences of his day, many of which he called.

Although there never resulted a "Bucer Church," his influence was wide and deep. He had widespread influence in his own day throughout Germany, Switzerland, and England. Through the years, he has significantly influenced Lutheranism, Anglicanism, Puritanism, and Pietism, as well as the Reformed Church.

Especially we Reformed are Bucer's debtors. The channel of his influence was Calvin, and the work of Calvin in Geneva. There can be no doubt that Calvin drew from, and depended upon, Bucer in many important areas. Even before Calvin found refuge in Strasbourg in 1538, Bucer and Calvin corresponded. Then, Calvin spent three years in Strasbourg, where he could see, firsthand, what Bucer had been teaching and doing in the Church since 1524. It is only natural that Calvin, eighteen years younger than Bucer, would look to the older, more experienced Bucer for guidance, as Calvin himself acknowledged.

Without detracting in the least from Calvin's own contribution, in each of these areas, it may safely be asserted that the Reformed Church is the beneficiary of Martin Bucer as regards doctrine, e.g., predestination and sanctification; as regards church government, e.g., the autonomy of the local church, the eldership, and discipline; as regards liturgy; as regards the writing of commentaries on Scripture; and, most emphatically, as regards the Reformed Church's unique doctrine of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.⁴⁹

As Bucer's works become available, Reformed theologians will learn much from the Strasbourg Reformer concerning the Reformed Faith, and the life of the Church that holds this Faith.

We ought to learn too from the indefatigable angel of Strasbourg, how important and powerful is a diligent, faithful, Reformed pastorate. Ours is a time when never were Reformed Pastors needed more and never were they esteemed less. Many hanker for non-pastoral "ministries." These free-lancers in their "ministries" are the new monks let loose on Christendom; and like their predecessors they are a plague. Few who do accept a pastorate engage in the Reformed fundamentals: preaching; catechizing; administering the Sacraments; disciplining; and bringing the Word from house to house.

Bucer, like Calvin, can be an example that men called to the ministry keep before them, and that their professors hold before them.

And even though the hour is late, who is to say that God will not bless such diligent pastorates with the fruit of a powerful testimony to the Reformed Faith that goes out into all the world?

NOTES

1. John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, Ross Mackenzie, tr., David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, editors (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 2.

2. John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, Vol. 1, William Pringle, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), xl.

3. Quoted in *Common Places of Martin Bucer*, D.F. Wright, tr. and ed. (Appleford, Abingdon, Berkshire, England: The Sutton Courtenay Press, 1972), 13. Hereafter, Wright, *Martin Bucer*.

4. Cf. Reinhold Seeberg, *Textbook of the History of Doctrine*, Charles E. Hay, tr. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 390-393.

5. Wilhelm Pauck, *The Heritage of the Reformation* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1968), 91.

6. *Melanchthon and Bucer*, Wilhelm Pauck, ed., The Library of Christian Classics, Vol. XIX (London: SCM PRESS LTD, MCMLXIX).

7. Hastings Eells, *Martin Bucer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1931).

8. Constantin Hopf, *Martin Bucer and the English Reformation* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, MCMXI.VI).

9. W.P. Stephens, *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Martin Bucer* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1970).

10. Quoted by Wright, *Martin Bucer*, 20.

11. Eells, *Martin Bucer*, 41.

12. Hopf, *Martin Bucer*, IX.

13. Quoted by Eells, *Martin Bucer*, 41.

14. Stephens, *Theology of Martin Bucer*, 130, 131.

15. Quoted by William S. Barron, Jr., *The Controversy between Martin Bucer and Bartholomew Latomus (1543-1546)* (unpublished thesis, Washington: Catholic University of America, 1966), 210.

16. Stephens, *Theology of Martin Bucer*, 136.

17. Wright, *Martin Bucer*, 96, 97.

18. Martin Bucer, *Commentary on Romans*, in Wright, *Martin Bucer*, 102.

- 19 Wright, *Martin Bucer*, 212.
- 20 Martin Bucer, *The Eucharist: the 1526 Apology*, in Wright, *Martin Bucer*, 331.
- 21 Stephens, *Theology of Martin Bucer*, 43.
- 22 Stephens, *Theology of Martin Bucer*, 203.
- 23 Stephens, *Theology of Martin Bucer*, 205.
- 24 Calvin: *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1536 edition, Ford Lewis Battles, tr., "Appendix II: Bucer on the Lord's Prayer" (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1975), 457.
- 25 Stephens, *Theology of Martin Bucer*, 260.
- 26 Hopf, *Martin Bucer*, 260.
- 27 Quoted by W.J. Nottingham, *The Social Ethics of Martin Bucer* (unpublished thesis, New York: Columbia University, 1962), 141.
- 28 The German title is *Das ym selbs niemant, sonder anderen leben soll, und wie der mensch da byn kummen mog*. ET by Paul Traugott Fuhrmann, *Instruction in Christian Love, by Martin Bucer, the Reformer* (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1951).
- 29 Martin Bucer, *A Brief Summary of the Christian Doctrine and Religion Taught at Strasbourg for the Past Twenty-eight Years. . .*, in Wright, *Martin Bucer*, 90. Cf. also Bucer's distinction between a temporary, ceremonial aspect and a lasting, spiritual aspect of the Fourth Commandment in his *Lectures on Ephesians*: "On the one hand, the. . . outward observance of a fixed day, by means of cessation from work. . . has been abolished. On the other hand, there is the inward and spiritual purpose of the commandment itself, for the preservation and renewal of worship. . . since this aim is highly expedient and eternally valid so long as the Church continues on earth, the Church has therefore never changed the commandment itself, nor will it ever change it" (Wright, *Martin Bucer*, 217). Bucer's examination of candidates for the ministry questioned the candidate closely "whether he believes that we incur God's stern displeasure when we fail to devote the Lord's Day. . . to godly exercises. . ." (Wright, *Martin Bucer*, 264, 265).
- 30 Concerning Bucer's view of church government, cf. W. Van't Spijker, *Godelijk recht en kerkelijke orde bij Martin Bucer* (Kampen: J.H. Kok N.V., 1972). For Bucer's doctrine of the offices in the Church, cf. W. Van't Spijker, *De Ambten bij Martin Bucer* (Kampen: J.H. Kok N.V., 1970). Calvin's dependence upon Bucer in the matter of the offices in the church is marked. Bernard M.G. Reardon writes: "The forms of the ministry are explained at length in the 1543 edition of the *Institutes*, and influence of Bucer being everywhere evident, even to the letter" (*Religious Thought in the Reformation*, London and New York: Long-

man, 1981, p. 100).

31 Quoted by G.J. Van de Poll, *Martin Bucer's Liturgical Ideas: The Strasbourg Reformer and His Connection with the Liturgies of the Sixteenth Century* (Assen, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum's Theologische Bibliotheek, XXVII, 1954), 63.

32 Quoted by Wright, *Martin Bucer*, 31.

33 Eells, *Martin Bucer*, 386.

34 Eells, *Martin Bucer*, 508.

35 Nottingham, *The Social Ethics of Martin Bucer*, 135, 136, from Bucer's *Von der Wahren Seelsorge*.

36 "... because pious princes must plant and propagate the Kingdom of Christ also by the power of the sword, as by all the powers which they have received from the Lord, it is also their duty not to tolerate anyone who openly opposes and undermines the sound doctrine of the gospel. . . those who refuse to be taught the things that are of Christ's Kingdom should not be tolerated in a Christian commonwealth, much less those who dare to rebel against and vitiate these things" (Martin Bucer, *De Regno Christi*, in *Melanchthon and Bucer*, W. Pauck, ed., 272).

37 Barron, *Controversy*, 263.

38 Stephens, *Theology of Martin Bucer*, 181.

39 Hopf, *Martin Bucer*, 85.

40 Martin Bucer, *The Restoration of Lawful Ordination for Ministers of the Church*, in Wright, *Martin Bucer*, 253-278.

41 Wright, *Martin Bucer*, 205.

42 Martin Bucer, *De Regno Christi*, in *Melanchthon and Bucer*, W. Pauck, ed., 280.

43 Martin Bucer, *Commentary on the Four Holy Gospels* (1527, 1530), in Wright, *Martin Bucer*, 419, 420.

44 Martin Bucer, *De Regno Christi*, in *Melanchthon and Bucer*, W. Pauck, ed., 316.

45 Barron, *Controversy*, 120, 121, from Bucer's *Responsio altera et solida M. Bucerii*.

46 Martin Bucer, *Commentary on the Four Holy Gospels*, in Wright, *Martin Bucer*, 418. Bucer is commenting here on Matthew 19:3-12.

47 Wilhelm Pauck omits twenty-five chapters of Bucer's defense of divorce and remarriage in his translation of *De Regno Christi* in *Melanchthon and Bucer*. Pauck notes that John Milton translated this section into English in his *Judgment of Martin Bucer concerning Divorce*, and that this work is readily available in editions of Milton's works. Pauck summarizes Bucer's labored and lengthy attempt to defend his lax stand on divorce and remarriage as follows:

Bucer's verbose and repetitious defense of divorce and the right of remarriage is noteworthy for the following reasons: 1) He insists that the control of marriage is properly the function of the political power and not of the church; 2) he argues that there are many reasons besides adultery why divorce should be granted to married persons, e.g., incurable disease (leprosy) or impotence, etc.; 3) he defends the right of legitimately divorced persons to remarry; 4) he employs very strained reasoning in order to demonstrate that in all these opinions he has the support not only of Scripture but also of many of the fathers of the Church. In particular, he tries to show that the sayings of Jesus as recorded in Matt. 5:31-32 and 19:3-11 must not be understood as forbidding divorce, except in the case of adultery (*Melanchthon and Bucer*, 328).

48 Hopf, *Martin Bucer*, 115.

49 Bucer's influence on Calvin was far more extensive and pervasive than the areas listed here. Ford Lewis Battles mentions, e.g., that the chapter on prayer in Calvin's *Institutes* "owes a great deal to Martin Bucer's *Commentary on the Gospels* (1530)" (cf. Battles' "Introduction" to his translation of the 1536 edition of the *Institutes*, p. xlv.).

The Doctrine of Predestination in Calvin and Beza

by Prof. H. Hanko

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

For many years after the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century scholars generally assumed that theology as it developed on the continent of Europe and in England was wholly in the tradition of the great reformer of Geneva, John Calvin. The church was confident that one straight line could be drawn from the theology of Calvin through Beza, Zanchius, Maccovius, the theologians of Dort, Turretin, Witsius, and subsequent continental theologians to the church today which remained faithful to the heritage of Calvin. The same could be said of Puritan theology. Perkins, the Westminster Assembly, other notable Puritan divines, and Presbyterianism in general could trace their

heritage back, without deviation, to the genius of Geneva.

This is not to say, of course, that variations did not exist. It is not a difficult task to point out differences between continental theology and Puritan thought. Nor would anyone with even a passing acquaintance with theology in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries ever be so bold and foolish as to deny differences between the theologians who engaged in a theological enterprise. But the differences were minor and relatively insignificant, due to development within differing ecclesiastical and cultural situations, mainly variations of emphasis, and could be expected to appear as the rich heritage of Calvin was explored and the truth developed further. All could claim, without fear of contradiction, the name "Calvinist"; and all could insist that their theological position differed in no significant respect from the lines drawn with such brilliance in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* and the other voluminous writings of their spiritual and theological mentor.

Within the last forty or fifty years all this has changed. While distant echoes of opposing voices could be heard faintly from earlier years, only recently has Calvin scholarship undergone considerable change. Now, increasingly, voices are heard that one can find very few men who were truly faithful to Calvin. Already during Calvin's own lifetime, under the influence of Calvin's personal friend and successor in Geneva, Theodore Beza, significant and important changes were made in Calvin's theology. Not Calvin himself was the guiding light in subsequent development of doctrine, but Beza, Calvin's heir; and the changes made were significant and important. In a recently published book, Paul Helm,¹ e.g., writing particularly of English Puritanism, says:

However, in recent years several attempts have been made to discredit this doctrinal and spiritual continuity reaching from John Calvin and other early Reformers to the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. Various arguments have been used by different writers, but what they all come down to is something like the following. Whereas Calvin's presentation of the Christian gospel was warm, exuberant and thoroughly evangelical, his so-called Calvinistic followers presented what was in effect another gospel, a gospel that was formal, introspective and legalistic. Sometimes it is held that the later Calvinists distorted the teaching of Calvin by, for example, giving a greater prominence to predestination than he did. At other times the much stronger and more serious claim is made, that the Puritans, supposedly followers of Calvin were actually *opposed* to the teaching of Calvin in its central emphases. On this view, after

1 Paul Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), pp. 5, 6.

Calvin's death the tradition is broken, and is replaced by another, nominally Calvinistic, but which was in fact a repudiation of much that Calvin stood for.

R.T. Kendall's monograph, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*, defends the more extreme view. He claims that the central figures of Puritanism such as William Perkins and William Ames derived their theology not from Calvin but from Theodore Beza, Calvin's successor in Geneva. He holds that there is a fundamental shift in outlook between Calvin and Beza, and consequently that the whole of the Puritan tradition, from Perkins to the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, was set on the wrong, anti-Calvinistic track. According to Kendall, the Westminster divines, without realizing it, became virtually Arminian in many respects. "The architectural mind of Westminster theology, is Beza" (Kendall, p. 210). Ames' theology is Arminian "in every way but in the theoretical explanation that lies behind the actual practice of the believer (or unbeliever)" (Kendall, p. 157). A "crypto-Arminian doctrine of faith, . . . pervades Westminster theology" (Kendall, p. 209). "Calvin's thought, save for the decrees of predestination, is hardly to be found in Westminster Theology" (Kendall, p. 208). "For Calvin faith as an instrument is God's act, opening blind eyes; for the Westminster divines, even though in the context of God's prevenient grace, faith is man's act" (Kendall, p. 201).

Not everyone who believes that Beza altered significantly Calvin's views would, of course, agree with Kendall's position on the nature of these changes. But many are convinced that what Kendall maintains is indeed true, not only in Puritan theology, but also in continental thought. And in almost every case, Beza is the culprit.

The changes which Beza was supposed to have brought about are of different sorts. Helm, writing further concerning Kendall's view, says:²

What, in more detail, is Kendall's case? Although in the monograph he develops his views historically, by considering the sequence of theological development from Calvin to the Westminster Assembly, and not systematically, the following over-all picture emerges. A vital place is occupied by two supposed doctrinal changes. From these changes many other important consequences are alleged to follow.

In the *first* place, Kendall holds, the "followers of Calvin from Beza onwards developed the doctrine of limited atonement, the idea that Christ did not die for all, but only for the elect. Kendall claims that Calvin did not teach limited atonement. He taught what is clearly incompatible with it, namely, general or universal atonement.

In the *second* place Kendall believes that Calvin's doctrine of faith came to be modified beyond recognition. His view that faith is a passive persuasion of the mind is replaced, gradually but unmistakably, by the view that faith is an act of the will. On Kendall's view, whereas for Calvin faith is something that is given, for his "Calvinistic" followers, from Perkins onwards, faith is something that is solely a matter of the will.

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 7.

While other differences have been suggested by other scholars of Calvin, most who want to set Beza over against Calvin do not so much speak of what Kendall concentrates on, but point the finger at the doctrine of predestination. It is here, in the opinion of many, that Beza did the most harm to Calvin's view. And because this is a doctrine of utmost importance, because it formed a significant (if not central) position in the theology of Calvin and Beza, and because it continued to be a fundamental truth of the theology of subsequent theologians both on the continent and in England, it is on this doctrine that we intend to concentrate our attention in this paper. It is, in fact, our conviction that if it can be shown, as we believe it can, that charges of fundamental alteration in the doctrine of predestination are false and unjust, other charges concerning other doctrines will, of themselves, fall by the way.

As we hope to show in the paper, by no means all students of Calvin agree with these charges, not even students of more recent times. And, among those who do aim such charges against Beza, no agreement can be found concerning the precise way in which Beza made these alterations. Some say the changes were minor and insignificant; others insist they were fundamental and basic. Some say changes of significance were made in one area; others point to different areas. A consensus is impossible to find. And this in itself ought to be a caution sign that these theories are by no means to be accepted at face value.

Further, it becomes increasingly clear that among some who insist on the position that Beza really did untold harm to Calvin's views, the reason for such a position is a dislike for the truth of sovereign reprobation. In an effort to maintain what is essentially an Arminian conception of reprobation while at the same time seeking the support of Calvin, Beza is made an antagonist of Calvin on this doctrine. And, because Beza had more influence on subsequent theology than Calvin himself, Reformed and Puritan theologians who made sovereign and double predestination an integral part of their theology are charged with being unfaithful to Calvin, while, either consciously or unconsciously, adopting the position of Calvin's successor. This too will have to be examined.

We propose, therefore, in Chapter II to examine this position and these charges as they concentrate on Calvin's own views, learn what they entail, and come to some clarification on their meaning. In Chapter III we shall examine the alleged differences between Calvin and Beza. In Chapter IV we shall attempt to define the issues involved and evaluate these issues. In Chapter V we shall examine the views of Calvin and Beza and come to some judgments whether these views are in any significant respect different. And in Chapter VI we shall formulate conclusions which can properly be drawn from our study.

Chapter II

THE PROBLEM AS IT ARISES FROM CALVIN'S WRITINGS

While, as we stated in the Introduction, many are convinced that Theodore Beza significantly altered Calvin's views on Predestination, and by doing so steered subsequent Calvinism along different roads than Calvin himself would have wanted, there is no agreement at all as to the nature of these alterations. Many different ideas have been proposed and many different approaches have been taken to this problem.

Just as, until fifty or so years ago, most students of church history agreed that Beza (and subsequent Calvinistic theologians) stood squarely in the line of Calvin and were faithful to Calvin's thought, so in more recent times this is also true. Not all agree with the assessments of modern scholarship that important changes were made in Calvin's thought by those who followed him.

Moore,³ no friend of Calvin, writes:

But though we have no right to assume it *a priori*, I believe there is but little difficulty in proving it as a fact. We often hear it said the Calvinists went far beyond Calvin. My own study of the question leads to a diametrically opposite conclusion. I doubt whether any of Calvin's followers went as far as Calvin himself. The most profoundly immoral and revolting tenets of Calvinism are to be found in the "Institutes," and Calvin himself never receded from, but advanced upon the position he originally took up.

Cunningham⁴ writes approximately the same:

The fuller discussion which this important subject (predestination) underwent after Calvin's death, led, as controversy usually does when conducted by men of ability, to a more minute and precise exposition of some of the topics involved in it. And it has been often alleged that Beza, in his very able discussions of this subject, carried his views upon some points farther than Calvin himself did, so that he has been described as being Calvinio Calvinior. We are not prepared to deny altogether the truth of this allegation; but we are persuaded that there is less ground for it than is sometimes supposed, and that the points of alleged difference between them in matters of doctrine, respect

3 Aubrey Lackington Moore, *Lectures and Papers on the History of the Reformation in England and on the Continent* (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1890), p. 506.

4 William Cunningham, *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1979), pp. 349, 350.

chiefly topics on which Calvin was not led to give any very formal or explicit deliverance, because they were not at the time subjects of discussion, or indeed ever present to his thoughts.

... We think it will appear... that there is really no very material difference between the theology of Calvin and of Beza, any apparent discrepancy arising chiefly from the usual tendency of enlarged controversial discussion to produce a greater amount of exactness and precision in details. . . .

With these assessments many agree.

However, among those who dissent from this position unanimity of opinion by no means exists. What precisely was the difference between Calvin and Beza? How did Beza modify, alter, redirect, restate, amend (or whatever) Calvin's views? In what areas and in what way did Beza move Calvinistic thought from Calvin's original intention to new paths with which Calvin himself might or might not have agreed? The answers to these questions are by no means the same.

The question is, however, a complicated one. And in an effort to sort out the tangled threads of the matter it is important to point out first of all that a prior disagreement among students of Calvin exists, which disagreement forms the background for the further question of the alleged differences between Calvin and Beza. This question has to do with Calvin's own theological position in general, and Calvin's own views on predestination in particular.⁵ Many argue that it can be shown from Calvin's own writings that he changed his own views on this subject. While the changes may not have been fundamental, they nevertheless must be taken into account if one is to assess properly the further question of the relation between Calvin's and Beza's theological position.

The argument, generally speaking, follows two different lines. One line of argumentation rests its case on different editions of the *Institutes* and the different place which predestination occupied in different editions. The other line of thought appeals to the fact that Calvin modified his views in connection with controversies which arose towards the end of his life over this doctrine, controversies with Pighius, Castellio, Bolsec, and Georgias. In other words, in his polemical writings, a different Calvin surfaces than in his *Institutes*; a Calvin who either was much stronger in his statements on predestination, or a Calvin who gave to pre-

5 We do not intend at this point to enter into an analysis of Calvin's doctrine of predestination, something reserved for Chapter V. The question is of importance here only insofar as it directly relates to the matter before us: Did Calvin himself alter his position on this subject?

destination a much more prominent place in the organic unity of his theological system.

We turn first of all to the question of the various places which the truth of predestination occupied in his *Institutes*.

The facts are these.

Two Catechisms came from Calvin's pen. One was drawn up in 1537 and contains a paragraph in which mention is made of predestination. The other, composed in 1541, makes no explicit mention at all of the truth. Four Confessions are attributed to Calvin, of which three make mention of this doctrine, but then only of the truth of election: The Confession for the French King of 1557, the Confession for Scholars in Geneva of 1559, and the Confession for the Emperor and the States of 1562.⁶

Calvin's first edition of the *Institutes* appeared in 1536, of which Hunter⁷ says: "even there it gets no special prominence." It was treated in connection either with the doctrine of the church, under the doctrine of providence,⁸ or under the work of the Holy Spirit.⁹ In an essay by Basil Hall entitled, "Calvin Against the Calvinists," he writes: "It is important to note that in this final edition (of the *Institutes*, H.H.) Calvin places the doctrine of predestination at this stage (under the work of the Holy Spirit, H.H.) and not under the doctrine of God's sovereignty and providence where it had been for twenty years in the previous editions of the *Institutio*." In an interesting observation in this connection, Parker¹⁰ says that in this edition, the truth of predestination was "pre-

6 For details see A. Mitchell Hunter, *The Teaching of Calvin, a Modern Interpretation* (Glasgow: Macklehorse, Jackson & Co., 1920), pp. 89-91.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 90.

8 G.E. Duffield, ed., *John Calvin, A Collection of Essays* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1966.) In an essay entitled: "The History and Development of the *Institutes*: How Calvin Worked," Jean-Daniel Benoit says that before 1559 providence and predestination were treated together. In the 1559 edition providence was treated under God and predestination under salvation. The difference of opinion is probably because Calvin treated the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in different connections.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

10 T.H.L. Parker, *John Calvin: A Biography* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), p. 112.

supposed.”¹¹ McKim¹² considers it doubtful that in this edition Calvin taught reprobation as a result of God’s decree.

In subsequent editions, while the doctrine was considerably expanded (as the *Institutes* itself grew), the doctrine was treated in a soteriological context.¹³

The discussion on this matter has swirled around the question: Why did Calvin place his treatment of predestination under the doctrine of God and discuss it either in connection with providence or God’s decrees in earlier editions of the *Institutes*? What is the reason why it is given, especially in later editions of the *Institutes*, a soteriological emphasis? And is this not indicative of an alteration in Calvin’s own thought?

Those who deal with this problem are not completely agreed among themselves on the exact reason why Calvin placed his treatment of the doctrine where he did in different editions of his major work, although most agree that Calvin was fearful of the consequences of connecting it to closely with the truth of God’s decrees, and wanted the doctrine to have an evangelical context in which it would serve a more practical purpose. Parker,¹⁴ in an essay entitled, “Calvin the Theologian” writes:

Why in the *Institutio* did Calvin treat of predestination and election, not in Book I, where he handled divine sovereignty in creation and providence, but later on in Book III, after dealing with the Gospel and the Christian life? The reason seems to be that he wanted the theme to appear in the same evangelical context in which it appears in Romans. There it first enters in 8:29ff., not for any controversial purpose, but to encourage the people of God by assuring them that as their justification and calling sprang from free grace, so God’s gracious purpose will stand, and they will be preserved to the end. If God resolved to save them, and gave His Son to that end, before ever they turned to Him, He will certainly not abandon them now that they have turned to Him. This is the “unspeakable comfort” which the doctrine of election brings in Romans 8:29-38; and it was in order that it might bring the same

11 We find this significant because, if true, this means that already at this point Calvin considered the doctrine to be of great importance for his entire system of theology.

12 Donald K. McKim, ed., *Readings in Calvin’s Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1948), p. 162.

13 “Calvin, however, had stated the doctrine of predestination in the context of faith and justification.” Richard A. Muller, *Christ and the Decree* (Durham: Labyrinth Press, 1986), p. 6.

14 Duffield, *op. cit.*, pp. 161, 162.

comfort to his readers that Calvin held it back till he could set it in an equivalent context in the *Institutio*.

McKim¹⁵ says that he developed the doctrine and gave a greater importance to it under the influence of Augustine and Bucer and "under the sway of ecclesiological and pastoral preoccupations rather than in order to make it a main foundation to his theology." A bit later¹⁶ he says that the reason is twofold: 1) To stress that election is in Christ; and 2) It thus leads to assurance and piety for we know our election by knowing Christ.

Steinmetz¹⁷ writes:

In 1559, in his last and definitive edition of the *Institutes*, Calvin takes the doctrine of predestination out of the context of providence, where it has traditionally been discussed, and moves it to a new location. In this edition of the *Institutes*, predestination follows justification and precedes the doctrine of the church. This is evidence that Calvin does not view the doctrine speculatively, but confessionally. It springs out of the surprise of the elect that they believe when many fine people do not. The context of the church, furthermore, establishes the priority of election over reprobation. Calvin is interested in explaining the mystery of faith, not of unbelief. He has no intention of speculating about the fate of the reprobate.

While these differences in viewpoint are not fundamental they do illustrate the divergence in thought among those who make a point of this issue.

Of more importance is the question of whether Calvin's controversies with those who denied the doctrine of predestination forced him to alter his views. It is not surprising that within his own lifetime this doctrine came under fierce attack. Especially towards the end of his life he had to do battle with opponents who wanted no part of it.

Especially four men engaged Calvin's attention on this point. Castellio, for a while a teacher in the Academy in Geneva; Pighius, a monk who died before Calvin finished his answer to Pighius' charges; Georgias, against whom, at least in part, was written the *Consensus Genevensis*; and Bolsec. While all of these opponents figure in the question, the issues come most sharply to the fore in the controversy with Bolsec — and it is with this controversy that we deal in more detail.

15 *Op. cit.*, p. 161.

16 Pp. 164, 170.

17 David C. Steinmetz, *Reformers in the Wings* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971), pp. 168, 169.

The controversy started during a sermon of Calvin on Philippians 2:12, 13. Bolsec, a converted Carmelite monk, interrupted the sermon and insisted that man possessed a free will. While Calvin took the time to explain the teaching of Scripture on this point, Bolsec continued to maintain his view for eight months. In October of 1552 Bolsec again interrupted a sermon, this one by Jean de Saint Andre, a minister in the Genevan Church who was preaching on John 8:47. He claimed that God was not the cause of disobedience and warned the people not to listen to ministers who were preaching false doctrine. While he was speaking, Calvin entered and listened unobserved. At the conclusion of Bolsec's tirade, Calvin mounted the pulpit and spoke for two hours on the question.

Bolsec was subsequently arrested to be tried before the Council of Geneva. The Council decided to seek the opinions of the other Protestant cantons in Switzerland on this matter, but the replies which they received were not altogether to Calvin's liking. Berne considered the whole question to be a mystery and urged Geneva to leave the question there and not condemn Bolsec on grounds which were beyond the understanding of man. Basel and Zurich gave qualified support to Calvin's position, but were hesitant to support Calvin's position entirely. Especially Zurich was critical of the way the case was handled. Only Neuchatel (and Farel) were wholly in support of Calvin's position. In general, as Walker¹⁸ notes, the other Swiss theologians did not consider the question as weighty as Calvin did. Schaff¹⁹ writes that this controversy, especially when Bullinger warned Calvin about going too far with the doctrine of reprobation, resulted in alienation between Calvin and Bullinger, an alienation which was later healed when Bullinger adopted Calvin's views.²⁰

It might be well to enter into a bit more detail on this question of the views of the other theologians because it figures rather strongly in the

18 Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), p. 398.

19 Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. VIII (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1953), p. 618.

20 It is not clear whether Berkouwer takes this alleged alienation into account when he claims that very little difference existed between Calvin and Bullinger on the question of predestination. G. Berkouwer, *Divine Election*, tr. by Hugo Bekker (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960), p. 193.

larger problem of the significance of Calvin's views.²¹ Basel wrote as their opinion that God wishes all to be saved. While they were strong on the doctrine of election, they seemed to favor some kind of conditional reprobation. Zurich too was strong on election, but preferred that rather than defend a sovereign reprobation it would be better to ascribe sin to man's fault, simply to acknowledge God's sovereignty over sin, and thus to deal carefully with Bolsec.

Ultimately the Council judged Bolsec wrong and Calvin correct and Bolsec was banished from the city for "false opinions, contrary to the Holy Scriptures, and pure evangelical religion."²² He later re-joined the Romish Church and wrote a bitter and slanderous biography of Calvin in which he charged Calvin with many sins which he could not prove.

Although it is evident from this that the problems which arose in connection with the Bolsec controversy centered generally in the doctrine of predestination, and more particularly in the doctrine of reprobation, nevertheless other issues were involved.²³ Although the controversy centered in the doctrine of reprobation, it is very likely that Bolsec taught a conditional election as well because he based God's determination in both election and reprobation on foresight. Both Beza²⁴ and the record of the Company of Pastors indicate this. Bolsec denied that election and reprobation "were *ab aeterno* and said with emphatic protestations and exhortations that no other election or reprobation should be recognized than that which is seen in the believer or unbeliever."²⁵ Chadwick, a

21 For copies of the letters see Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the Time of Calvin* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1966), pp. 172-186. One may consult this same book for a detailed description of Bolsec's views as recorded in the minutes, pp. 142-149, 150-167. Included also is the letter which the Council of Geneva sent to the Swiss churches concerning the matter.

22 Georgia Harkness, *John Calvin, The Man and his Ethics* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1931), pp. 38, 39.

23 Beza himself tells us that Bolsec taught many false and related views in secret before his case ever became public. Theodore Beza, *The Life of John Calvin* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1932), p. 36.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 37.

25 Hughes, *op. cit.*, pp. 137, 138.

man with a strong dislike for Calvin's views,²⁶ agrees with this. In addition to this, Bolsec insisted on the free will of man and really charged Calvin with denying any activity on the part of man's will. He held to a universal atonement and rejected Calvin's view that the atonement was particular.²⁷ He wanted a gospel which freely offered salvation and election to all and again was at variance with the views propounded and defended by Calvin. So much is all this true that Parker,²⁸ though he disagrees with Calvin's views, nevertheless accuses Bolsec of attempting to Pelagianize the Church.

The final answer of Calvin to the Bolsec controversy was his *Treatise Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, sometimes known as the *Consensus Genevensis*.²⁹

Although not of a great deal of importance in itself, we may mention briefly the so-called Trollet affair. It is often cited to demonstrate that the views of Calvin were by no means generally accepted — either by the other theologians of Switzerland, by the Council in Geneva, or by the citizens of that city. Jean Trollet wanted to be a minister, but his request was opposed by Calvin who claimed that he was unfit for this calling. He took it upon himself to attack the doctrine of predestination, claiming that it made God the author of sin. The Council was called upon to judge in the matter, but found itself in a dilemma: on the one hand, it tended

26 Owen Chadwick, *The Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), pp. 95, 96.

27 This is particularly interesting in the light of the fact that once again controversy rages over whether Calvin actually taught a particular redemption. Bolsec believed that he did.

28 T.H.L. Parker, *op. cit.*, p. 112ff.

29 Some disagreement is apparent concerning the precise reason why Calvin wrote this treatise. McKim, *op. cit.*, p. 161, speaks of the fact that the *Congregation sur l'élection éternelle* of 1551 (published in 1562) was written against Bolsec, while *The Treatise on the Eternal Predestination of God* was written in 1552 against Pighius. Schaff, *op. cit.*, writes that the latter was written against both Bolsec and Pighius and does not mention the treatise of which McKim speaks. The answer to the attack of Pighius which Calvin was preparing was abandoned when Pighius died. We may probably conclude that the *Treatise on the Eternal Predestination of God* was written on the occasion of Bolsec's attacks, but was intended to be an answer to all who attacked this doctrine, including Georgias.

to side with Trollet and feared his many friends, for he was a respected citizen in Geneva; but on the other hand, Calvin threatened to resign if Trollet's views were upheld. The result was that the Council condemned Trollet's views, but declared him to be a good citizen.

On the basis of this history, two related conclusions are drawn. The first is that Calvin had ulterior motives in his defense of the doctrine of predestination. Harkness, e.g.,³⁰ claims that to attack Calvin's doctrine of predestination was "to attack Calvin's own standing as a religious teacher." The obvious point of this remark is that Harkness is of the opinion that Calvin considered any attack against this doctrine to be an attack against him personally and the position he occupied as theological leader in the churches of the Reformation. Hunt³¹ says that the Bolsec controversy made predestination a burning issue in Geneva and in the Council with many opposed. He adds that the result was that Calvin's position was in jeopardy and that Calvin defended his views to maintain his position in the city. With this assessment, many agree.

The second conclusion is that Calvin's views, in connection with these controversies, underwent subtle alterations. Either because his own position and standing were threatened, or because in polemical writings he was more severe, his emphasis on predestination now became much sharper than in his *Institutes*. While in his *Institutes* he was careful to express himself and was moderate in his presentation of this doctrine, in his polemical writings he set forth the doctrine of predestination in sharp, often unBiblical, and immoderate statements.³² In defense of himself and his personal position of leadership in the churches, he raised predestination to a position of primacy in his theological system and made it the "Shibboleth" of orthodoxy. While it had always occupied a subordinate place in his thinking previous to this time, it now became the central doctrine of his system. H. Daniel-Rops³³ writes, in connection with the Bolsec affair: "Any toleration of anti-Predestination on his part would surely result in

30 *Op. cit.*, p. 38.

31 R.N. Carew Hunt, *Calvin* (London: The Centenary Press, 1933), p. 194, 195.

32 On comments on a paper prepared for Dr. Plantinga, Dr. Plantinga observes that Calvin's doctrine of cause is much more strongly presented in his polemical writings than in his *Institutes*.

33 H. Daniel-Rops, *The Protestant Reformation* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1961), p. 419.

the demolition of the whole basis of his theological structure." And because it became the central doctrine of his system, it was sharply re-defined, especially in its relationships to other doctrines.³⁴

To conclude, the argument that is raised is this. In the course of Calvin's own lifetime noticeable and important differences were made in his writings. While some maintain that this took place already in successive editions of the *Institutes*, others maintain that the change is most apparent when Calvin was called to defend the doctrine of predestination against those who attacked it.

(Note: An examination of the legitimacy of these claims will be presented in a later chapter. H.H.)

34 We shall examine this question more closely in a later chapter. □

Preaching: The Chief Task of the Church (2)

by Prof. R. Decker

Ephesians 4:1-16 reads:

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation (calling, R.D.) wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity (oneness, R.D.) of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the

head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

While we are interested in verses eleven through sixteen we ought to pay attention to the entire context. The inspired Apostle begins with "therefore" which means this entire passage is the conclusion to what he has written in the preceding. In this Epistle in general the Apostle develops the great theme of the glory of the elect church in Jesus Christ. That church, the Bride of Christ (cf. chapter 5:27ff.), is saved by grace through faith, the gift of God (cf. chapter 2:8-10). In chapter one the Apostle speaks of the great doctrine of divine and sovereign predestination, the eternal election of grace in Christ. This is cast in the form not of some logical, objective, premise by premise presentation, but in the form of a beautiful doxology of praise to:

... the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved (chapter 1:3-6).

The Apostle continues by speaking of God's great love and rich mercy according to which He made us alive in Christ who were dead in trespasses and sins (chapters 2 and 3).

What these great truths mean for our daily living is explained in the rest of the Epistle beginning with chapter four. "I, therefore," means: because you are chosen in Christ and made alive in Him walk worthy of the calling with which you are called. There is a strong sense of urgency here. "I beseech you" means "I admonish or exhort you." Our election unto Christ and our salvation by grace implies a most urgent calling. We cannot help but remark that this passage all by itself ought to lay to rest forever the old charge that the doctrine of election and reprobation makes men careless and profane. That we are chosen in Christ means we must walk worthy of our calling! That calling must be taken in a rather broad sense inclusive of the whole of the work of our salvation. It includes our election into Christ and our being made alive through the cross and resurrection of Christ. Our calling includes our having been regenerated and called out of darkness into the marvelous light of God's fellowship. Faith, conversion, justification, sanctification, preservation are all part of that calling with which we have been called. In sum that calling means we have

been separated from the world of sin and death unto God. Now, we are exhorted with all urgency to walk worthy of that calling. Scripture often employs the figure of walking or of our walk to refer to our life. Our walk is our life from day to day in all its details: our thinking, willing, and doing, our work, recreation, our relationships with family and friends, our life in the church, etc. When the Apostle exhorts us to walk worthy of our calling he is telling us, therefore, that our lives in every detail must be worthy of our position as saints, the redeemed in Christ. Our lives must reflect the fact that we have been called out of darkness into God's marvelous light. Our walk or daily life must harmonize with our calling. To put it another way, we are elect and we are made alive in Christ by grace and we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ and this means we must walk as such.

Verse two tells us how we walk worthy of our calling. This must be with all lowliness and meekness first of all. Lowliness refers to having a humble opinion of one's self, a deep sense of one's own littleness. Meekness refers to gentleness or mildness. Humility, therefore, must characterize our walking worthy of our calling. We must be humble both before God and before our fellow saints. Before God we acknowledge our dependence upon Him, our inability to do the good apart from his grace. In lowliness and meekness we always seek the welfare and salvation of our fellow saints. Further that walk must be with longsuffering or patience. The meaning of the word here is especially slowness in avenging wrongs. Obviously this has to do with our relationships with our fellow believers. In our walking worthy of our calling we must remember that God said: "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." Rather than seeking to avenge we must seek the brother's repentance in order to forgive him. Finally we must walk thus: "forbearing one another in love." Literally the text reads: "bearing with, sustaining, or enduring one another in love." The love of God is meant. The love of God always seeks the salvation of one's fellow believers. This is terribly necessary in the walk of believers. They have but a small beginning of the new life of Christ in them and that means that they are going to sin against one another. There are bound to be difficulties. For this reason our walking worthy of our calling involves bearing with one another in the love of God. The motive of this walk is given in verse three: "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The bond of peace must be the covenant bond of friendship and fellowship which we have with God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. This bond is characterized by peace, the peace of forgiveness, the peace of the favor of God. In this bond we have peace with God and peace with one another. Within the sphere of that bond is

the unity or oneness which the Holy Spirit effects. Walking worthy of our calling we must endeavor, i.e., exert ourselves with all diligence, to keep, i.e., to hold firmly to, that oneness of the Spirit. This is the motive of our walking worthy of our calling in humility.

Verses four through six provide the basis of the admonition of the preceding. We must walk worthy of our calling with all lowliness and meekness, etc. Endeavoring to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the bond of peace because there is one body, etc. In verse four the Apostle states there is one body. This means there is one body of Christ, i.e., the church. There are not many bodies of Christ or many churches but only one in all the world. Precisely for this reason the church confesses in its creed: "one, holy, catholic church." In spite of appearances this is the truth of Scripture concerning the church. There is one body. That there is but one body ought to be evident from the fact that there is but one Spirit. There is one Spirit Who fills, makes alive, and preserves the one body. The Apostle continues: "... just as ye have been called in one hope of your calling." There is only one hope of our calling and that one object for which we hope is everlasting life and glory in the fellowship of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the goal of all of our living. It is our hope which will never make us ashamed (Rom. 5:5). Just as there is that one hope so there is just one body and one Spirit. And, there is one Lord. There are not many lords of the church, just one Lord Jesus Christ. And again this must mean that there is but one body. There is one faith. Faith here must be taken in the objective sense as that which we believe, viz., the true doctrine of salvation as that is taught in the Word of God. There are not many faiths or doctrines or even many variations of the one faith. There is just one faith. There is one baptism. Not many but one. Just one sign and seal of the covenant is there. Finally, to clinch the argument, there is one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. How perfectly obvious this is! There are not many gods, but just one. This one God and Father is over the whole church, the Father of all the church. Because this is true we are urged to walk worthy of our calling exerting ourselves to the utmost to hold firmly to the oneness of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

"But," the Apostle goes on to say in verse seven: "to every one of us (the members of the one body) is given grace according to the measure (part, or portion) of the gift of Christ." Having stressed the oneness of the church the Apostle now speaks of the diversity of gifts within that one body. Each member is given grace according to the portion of the gift of Christ. This means that each member receives an allotted portion of grace enabling him to fulfill his calling and place within the unity of the body.

Thus each has his place and within that place contributes toward the unity of the body. Thus there is one body and one Spirit, etc., with many members and a diversity of gifts all contributing to the unity of that body.

In accordance with this fact: the oneness of the church with its diversity of gifts from Christ, the Apostle speaks of the ascension of Christ by a reference to Psalm sixty-eight: "Having ascended up on high he (Christ) led captivity captive (or led a host of captives) and gave gifts unto men" (verse 8). Christ's ascension marked His complete victory over sin and death, "He led a host of captives." And having ascended Christ was given of the Father the right to bless His church and He "gave gifts unto men." Those gifts are all the riches of the blessings of salvation, that diversity of the gifts of grace given to each one of the members of the one body. But the ascension of Christ implies the descension, i.e., the incarnation or even better the humiliation of our Lord Jesus Christ. "But that He ascended what is it if not that He also descended into the lower part of the earth? Himself who descended is also He who ascended up far above all heavens in order that He might fill all things" (verses 9, 10). That Christ ascended as the Victor means that He first descended. In other words Christ ascended through the deep, dark way of the descension: the cross and its hellish agonies (cf. also Philippians 2:7-11). In His ascension Christ is highly exalted, "... far above all heavens." He is Lord of lords and King of kings. The purpose of His ascension is: "that he might fill all things." Many interpretations of this are offered and we need not consider them now. In the light of both the preceding and succeeding context the correct interpretation is that Christ having ascended from the depths of His descension through His resurrection and exaltation fills all things with blessings, a multitude of gifts.

The Apostle proceeds to specify just exactly what those gifts are: "And himself gave some, apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers" (verse 11). The ascended, exalted Lord Christ, the Lord of the church gave gifts to the church and those gifts are essentially or primarily apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. The wide diversity of gifts, the multitude of gifts from Christ all flow essentially out of these fundamental gifts. Apart from these gifts there would be no other gifts to the church.

The first of these gifts is said to be the apostles. An apostle was literally a messenger, one sent forth with special orders. This is the highest office in the New Testament Church for, according to Ephesians 2:20, the apostles and prophets with Christ as the chief cornerstone form the foundation of the church. The special orders given to the apostles personally by the Lord were: "preach the gospel to all nations, baptizing and

teaching them to observe my commandments." The apostles include the eleven disciples of our Lord and the apostle Paul. All of these had the distinction of being personally called and commissioned by Christ. They all, Paul too, as "one born out of due time," were blessed with a personal appearance of Christ after His resurrection (cf. Acts 9, I Corinthians 15:8). Their preaching and teaching were often accompanied by mighty signs and wonders authenticating their office and message as ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ. Several were used by the Holy Spirit as instruments of revelation for the writing of the Scripture. This office no longer exists in Christ's church. With the death of the apostle John (ca. A.D. 100) the office ceased, the age of inspiration ended and the canon of the Scripture was completed. The blessings, however, of this gift of the ascended Christ continue in the church.

The prophets are the second gift mentioned. There is some difference of opinion as to the identity of these. Some are of the opinion that the Old Testament prophets are meant. Others think the meaning is New Testament prophets such as Agabus. John Calvin, it would seem, takes a slightly different view although he limits this to a New Testament office and does not see here a reference to Old Testament prophets:

To these two classes the apostle adds *Prophets*. By this name some understand those persons who possessed the gift of predicting future events, among whom was Agabus (Acts 11:28; 21:10). But, for my own part, as doctrine is the present subject, I would rather define the word *prophets*, as on a former occasion, to mean distinguished interpreters of prophecies, who, by a remarkable gift of revelation, applied them to the subjects to which they have occasioned to handle; not excluding, however, the gift of prophecy by which their doctrinal instruction was usually accompanied.¹

This latter view is no doubt correct in the light of the fact that the Apostle is speaking of the New Testament Church and its gifts from the ascended Christ. About all we know concerning these prophets is that they were used as occasional instruments of revelation. This office too, no longer exists in the church and is fulfilled in the pastoral office and the office of the believer.

Christ also gave evangelists to His church. These were according to the literal meaning of the term, "heralds of glad tidings." The New Testament speaks of them as preachers who assisted the apostles in their missionary

1 John Calvin (Pringle translation), *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957), p. 279.

work in the early church. Among them we find Stephen and Philip, mentioned in the New Testament. Scripture also speaks of them as pastors of established churches. Timothy is exhorted to do the full work of an evangelist as the pastor of the church at Ephesus. Because the office of apostle is no longer necessary, this office too ceases to exist in the church. This function is included in the office and task of pastor and teacher.

Finally the text speaks of the office of pastors and teachers. It ought to be understood that this is one office, not two. The text reads: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." The text does not read: "and some pastors; and some, teachers;" but: "and some pastors and teachers." Hence the two: pastors and teachers belong together and constitute one office. Calvin disagrees with this interpretation, but in our opinion his exegesis is incorrect on this point.² This means, however, that the pastoral office involves essentially teaching. Pastors are primarily teachers. We ought to note too, that this office continues in the church until the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. For this reason it has everything to do with our subject, preaching; and we shall focus our attention on it. Still more, we must not fail to understand that the text does not mean to give us an exhaustive and detailed list of the gifts of Christ to the church. These are mentioned in passages like 1 Corinthians 12 or Romans 12. What we have here is a description of the *essential* or *basic* gifts.

What then is a pastor-teacher? The term pastor means shepherd and that essentially is what a pastor-teacher is, a shepherd of the sheep of Christ.³ And let it be emphasized that the New Testament everywhere emphasizes that Jesus Christ is *the* Shepherd of God's flock. Our Lord speaks of that beautifully in John 10:11-18: "I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. . . ." As the Good Shepherd Jesus is committed to the care of the sheep of God, the sheep whom God gave to Him. They are known by Him, called by Him, they hear His voice, and they follow Him. For their sakes Jesus lays down His life in order to take it again and give to them eternal life. Hebrews 13:20 speaks of Christ as the "great shepherd of the sheep." Christ shed the blood of the everlasting covenant and was brought again from the dead. And through Him, the Great Shepherd, God makes the sheep perfect in every good work, working in them that which is well pleasing in His sight. In

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 279, 280.

3 Arndt and Gingrich, pp. 690, 691. Friedrich, v. VI., pp. 485-498; cf. esp. pp. 490ff.

I Peter 5:4 Christ is revealed as the "chief Shepherd." The elders, both ruling and teaching, are admonished to feed (shepherd) the flock of God.

This is a beautiful concept. The shepherd is responsible for the care and well-being of the sheep. The sheep on the other hand, are totally dependent upon the shepherd. He must feed them and give them drink, protect them from every danger, lead and guide them, provide rest for them. When they are sick the shepherd must bear them up in his arms and heal them. All this Christ does for His sheep. But lying at the heart of it all is something no human shepherd can ever do. The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep! He delivers them from the death of sin by dying under the wrath of God and taking His life again in the resurrection. By that wonder of the cross and resurrection Christ grants forgiveness, deliverance from the power of sin, and eternal life to His sheep.

But even then there is more. Christ gave His life for the sheep, but He also gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. In a very real sense Christ gives of Himself. He never ceases to be *the* pastor, the Shepherd of the sheep! What a tremendous thought. Those gifts to the church, pastors, are but under-shepherds of the great, the good, the chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ. This gift to us is from Christ, crucified and raised, but that gift of pastors *is* Christ. Christ feeds us, Christ cares for us, Christ comforts and instructs and protects us. Jesus Christ does all of this through the pastors. "I know my sheep, my sheep hear my voice and they know me." That is true just as really today as when Jesus said it. Christ is with us always, now too, and even unto the end of the world.

This implies an awesome responsibility for the pastors of God's sheep. They are answerable to the Chief Shepherd in all their care of the sheep. They must be very, very careful as to how they handle the sheep of Christ for those sheep are terribly precious to Christ. Christ gave His life for them, bled and died for them. The pastor in God's church must be willing to do the same. He must devote himself entirely to the care of the sheep and be willing to die for them if need be. But for the sheep what a blessing! The pastor is a gift from Christ and in and through him Christ cares for His flock.

These pastors are teachers according to the text. We ought to understand that this is not a separate office. Teaching is not even a separate function of the pastoral office as if the pastor teaches on the one hand and shepherds the flock on the other. Rather the text emphasizes *how* the pastor cares for the flock. He does that by teaching. Jesus, the Chief Shepherd, taught us the same. He promised the Holy Spirit Who would teach the church to observe all His commandments. He charged the apostles to preach, baptize, and teach in all the world. Thus they were to

make disciples of all nations; and disciples are learners. This teaching must be clearly understood. This is not mere academic learning. The pastor is not simply to lecture on the Bible, or speak about Christ, or present merely some dogmas in logical fashion. In fact he may never do this! This is not teaching and that is not preaching. It is true, of course, we must know the facts of the Bible and of the truth, but there is so much more. According to verse thirteen (Ephesians 4) Christ gave pastors and teachers in order that the church might learn the faith and knowledge of the Son of God. This is the spiritual knowledge of faith. It is knowing God and Jesus Christ, it is eternal life. In that the church must be taught. Hence the Word, the living Word of God, the contents of the Holy Scripture which are infallibly inspired must be taught and applied to the lives of God's people. They must know the truth which makes them free, free from the slavery of sin and guilt, free to love and serve God with their whole being and life. This is precisely why Jesus said: "My sheep hear my voice." The Scriptures make abundantly clear that this teaching is done by means of the preaching of the Word. And according to Romans ten Christ is heard when the Word is preached by a preacher who is sent. I Corinthians 1 defines preaching as: "Christ, the power and wisdom of God" by which the church is saved and the wisdom of this world is made of no effect.

All this has tremendous implications. Pastors must always teach the Word. They must always expound and apply the Holy Scriptures, never may they go beyond what the Scriptures say. But neither may they fail to declare the whole counsel of God. They may not add to the things written in the Book, but neither may they take away from those things. The sheep must hear the voice of the Good Shepherd and not a mere preacher. If this is to happen then the Word and only the Word must be expounded. And pastors must *always* teach the Word. They must always be busy instructing, admonishing, comforting with the Word as it confronts every problem in life and fits every circumstance. Only then will the precious flock of God be fed, protected, and preserved unto eternal life. And the sheep must hear and do that Word and never despise it lest they despise Christ Himself.

The purpose of those gifts is stated in verses twelve and following. They are for "the perfecting of the saints." Literally the text reads for the purpose of equipping or strengthening the saints. The saints must be equipped in the Word, they must know the Scriptures. And by the power of the Word they are strengthened: "into the ministry." This is the point of the text. The gifts are bestowed so that the saints may be equipped to minister to one another. That is the context too. To each is given grace

so that each may strive for the unity of the Spirit. Out of the power of grace which they receive through the preaching of the Word on the part of the pastors the saints are strengthened to minister to one another. How often the Scriptures emphasize precisely this point. The saints are to admonish, encourage, comfort, and love one another as Christ loved them. They must do this even to the point of laying down their lives for each other. Thus the ultimate purpose is reached: "unto the edification of the body of Christ." On this clause Calvin has a comment which is as pertinent today as it was when he wrote it:

What is more excellent than to produce the true and complete perfection of the church? And yet this work, so admirable and divine, is here declared by the apostle to be accomplished by the external ministry of the Word. That those who neglect this instrument should hope to become perfect in Christ is utter madness. Yet such are the fanatics, on the one hand, who pretend to be favored with secret revelations of the Spirit, – and proud men, on the other, who imagine that to them the private reading of the Scriptures is enough, and that they have no need of the ordinary ministry of the church.

If the edification of the church proceeds from Christ alone, he surely has a right to prescribe in what manner it shall be edified. But Paul expressly states, that, according to the command of Christ, no real union of perfection is attained, but by the outward preaching. We must allow ourselves to be ruled and taught by men. This is the universal rule, which extends equally to the highest and to the lowest. The church is the common mother of all the godly, which bears, nourishes, and brings up children to God, kings and peasants alike; and this is done by the ministry. Those who neglect or despise this order choose to be wiser than Christ. Woe to the pride of such men! It is, no doubt, a thing in itself possible that divine influence alone should make us perfect without human assistance. But the present inquiry is not what the power of God can accomplish, but what is the will of God and the appointment of Christ. In employing human instruments for accomplishing their salvation, God has conferred on men no ordinary favour. Nor can any exercise be found better adapted to promote unity than to gather around the common doctrine – the standard of our General.⁴

Thus the church is edified, built up until it reaches the perfection of the fulness of Christ. But that will never happen apart from those gifts of the ascended Christ, i.e., the preaching of the Word. Apart from preaching the saints will be children tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. By means of preaching the saints will know the truth and love it and walk in it to the glory of God. They will be one in the Spirit. They will increase in the virtues of godliness and obedience and they will be perfected with the whole church in glory when Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd, appears with the crown of glory.

4 Calvin, *op. cit.*, pp. 281, 282.

If Christ Himself gave pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edification of the body, then who can doubt that preaching is the chief task of Christ's church?

Romans 10:1-17

An understanding of this passage, especially 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.⁵ According to this interpretation righteousness

5 P. Godet, *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1881), pp. 195, 196. H.A.W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Funk & Wagnall's Company, n.d.), pp. 404, 405. John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, v. II (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973), pp. 49-51. A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, v. IV (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931), pp. 387, 388.

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. Dr. J.A.C. VanLeeuwen translates *telos* correctly with the word *doel-einde*, "goal or purpose-end."⁶ 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 the view that Christ terminated the law is really based on the assumption that under the Old Testament economy 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 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,

6 J.A.C. VanLeeuwen and D. Jacobs, *Korte Verklaring Der Heilige Schrift: De Brief Aan De Romeinen* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1939), p. 196.

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 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. This 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 (except as the source of the knowledge of our misery) 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. This 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 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 reference to Christ; and hence no one can rightly understand it, who does not continually level at this mark.⁷

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

7 John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959), pp. 384, 385.

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 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 that 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 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 tutor 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 the 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." 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 name of 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 supplica-

tion. . . ."⁸ 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 in 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 (Heidelberg Catechism, q. 20, 21). 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

⁸ Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, v. II, p. 57.

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! 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.⁹ 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 have seen, 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 comes with the very authority of Christ and with the very word of Christ. So deeply conscious of this were the apostles that the apostle

9 Arndt and Gingrich, p. 98. Kittel, v. I, pp. 403-406. Thayer, pp. 66, 67.

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" (II Corinthians 5:20). 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. □

A Power of God Unto Salvation

or GRACE NOT AN OFFER

Chapter 3 Keegstra's Citation of Calvin

Although the Rev. Keegstra makes no attempt in his articles about the well-meant offer of grace in the preaching to answer the questions which he himself has posed, and especially does not enter into the question how a messenger can presume to make general what God made particular, he nevertheless does make an attempt to make plain that his view is in harmony with Scripture and the Confession.

He appeals first of all, as was almost to be expected, to the well-known and so frequently quoted words of the Savior in Matthew 23:37 and Luke 13:34: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

Instead, however, of giving an explanation of these words himself, the editor appeals to the explanation of Calvin.

Now we also value it when we can appeal to a man like Calvin. Although no one would get it in his head to quote a passage from Calvin's *Commentaries* with the purpose of considering this the last word, we nevertheless value it highly that we can appeal to Calvin in support of our

view. It was partly because of this that we recently published a brochure in which we tried to draw a comparison between the views of Calvin, Berkhof, and Kuiper on the issue of a well-meant, general offer of grace.

Partly because of this we are immediately on our guard when we see Calvin being quoted by others. His name is frequently misused. If we review what in our day passes for Calvinism, especially with so-called Neo-Calvinism in the Netherlands, then it would be no wonder if the Reformer of Geneva would turn over in his grave.

Nor are we the only ones, not even the first ones, to call attention to this evil.

Twenty years ago (we were still in school when the book was published) Dr. C.B. Hylkema already wrote in *Oud en Nieuw Calvinisme* (Old and New Calvinism):

Indeed it cannot be denied that the expression "common grace," with which present day Reformed men designate one of the most central doctrines of their position, appears in Calvin. But that with this he at all thought of a common grace in the broad sense which today is ascribed to the word, that "Calvinism," as Kuyper says, should have stood for "the doctrine of common grace," can, with an appeal to history, be safely denied. (p. 207)

And later he writes:

The more closely one looks, the clearer it becomes that to speak of "Calvinism" and "common grace" can actually produce nothing but confusion. That with that "common grace" as the neo-Calvinist understands it even an entirely new doctrine is introduced is now indeed clear.

Now Dr. Hylkema is not a Reformed man, and I would not readily want to subscribe to all that he writes. But that does not take away the fact that time after time he clearly demonstrates that in our day an appeal to Calvin is not seldom made for a position which the reformer would despise and reject with all that was in him.

Partly also for that reason we have taught that not everything that men offer us in the name of Calvin is simply to be swallowed, but that first we should investigate whether they really quote the great reformer correctly, both as to form and as to sense.

One can twist someone's words in various ways. One can quote incorrectly. Or he can quote in a wrong context. Or one can quote only partially, in the sense that one omits essential parts.

The Rev. Keegstra quotes in the last mentioned way.

He quotes a very long passage from Calvin's *Commentary* on the text referred to. But although he makes such a long quotation, he nevertheless does not cite all that Calvin has to say about this text. At the beginning and at the end he omits some sentences.

This would not be so striking if the esteemed writer had only taken over a few short sentences. Sometimes this is sufficient. One does not expect, of course, that someone always quotes an author fully. But now the case is different. The Rev. Keegstra quotes *almost all* that Calvin has to say about this passage of Scripture. He leaves out only a few brief sentences.

This is even more striking for anyone who consults Calvin on this passage and notices that the Rev. Keegstra begins to quote *in the middle of a paragraph* and also stops quoting *in the middle of a paragraph*. If he had begun quoting at the beginning of a paragraph and had also stopped quoting at the end of a paragraph, there could be an explanation for this partial quotation. But now it is different.

And in the third place, this becomes still more striking because the parts that are omitted are necessary in order to learn Calvin's thinking about the text in question.

We shall therefore take the trouble to quote the omitted portions for our readers. At the beginning Keegstra omitted the following sentences:

"How often would I have gathered together thy children." *This is expressive of indignation rather than of compassion* (italics added). The city itself, indeed, over which he had lately wept (Luke 19:41), is still an object of his compassion; but towards the scribes, who were the authors of its destruction, he uses harshness and severity, as they deserved. And yet he does not spare the rest, who were all guilty of approving and partaking of the same crime, but, including all in the same condemnation, he *inveighs chiefly against* the leaders themselves, who were the cause of all the evils. We must now observe the *vehemence* of the discourse. . . (emphasis added).

And at the end the Rev. Keegstra omitted the following:

... And I am astonished at the obstinacy of some people, who, when in many passages of Scripture they meet with that figure of speech (anthropopathy) which attributes to God human feelings, take no offence, but in this case alone refuse to admit it. But as I have elsewhere treated this subject fully, that I may not be unnecessarily tedious, I only state briefly that, whenever the doctrine, which is the standard of union, is brought forward, God *wills to gather* all, that all who do not come may be inexcusable.

This is said in connection with a possible objection that there would be two wills in God. We have, says Calvin, a figure in the text. He calls it *anthropopathy*. And what he means by this becomes plain when we read in a note: "*Anthropopathy*; that is, when God ascribes to himself feelings similar to those of men, as when he says (Gen. 6:6) that *he repented of having made man*; and similar passages."

And then Calvin writes in addition the following about the words, "And you would not":

This may be supposed to refer to the whole nation, as well as to the *scribes*; but I rather interpret it in reference to the latter, by whom the *gathering together* was chiefly prevented. For it was against them that Christ inveighed throughout the whole of the passage; and now, after having addressed *Jerusalem* in the singular number, it appears not without reason that he immediately used the plural number. There is an emphatic contrast between God's *willing* and their *not willing*; for it expresses the diabolical rage of men, who do not hesitate to contradict God. (Quotations are from Calvin's *Harmony of Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, Vol. III, *in loco*.)

The reader will surely agree that what I here quoted is not something incidental, but indeed basically necessary to understand what is Calvin's interpretation of the text. And we also obtain another view of the explanation furnished us by the Rev. Keegstra in his partial quotation.

According to Keegstra, Calvin's explanation must serve to show that the reformer believed in a general and well-meant offer of grace. But from the passages cited by us the following is evident:

1) That Calvin does not want these words viewed as an expression of sympathy and mercy, but of indignation and heavy accusation against ungodly Jerusalem, namely, against its leaders.

2) That in so far as the text would leave the impression that the Lord God would want to gather everyone, head for head, and that this was made impossible by the scribes, we have to do here with an example of anthropopathy. When we read that it repented God that He had made man, we know very well that we are dealing with figurative language. Human feelings are then ascribed to God, which are nevertheless not found in Him, since He is unchangeable. Thus it is also here, according to Calvin. God is here pictured in human fashion. By this there is ascribed to Him a will which He nevertheless does not have.

3) That for the rest this will of God must be understood in connection with its execution. For thus Calvin wrote literally in the quotation made by Keegstra. According to that execution not all the children of Jerusalem, head for head and soul for soul, are gathered. Only the elect children. This was therefore God's will, according to Calvin. Often God wanted to gather the children of Jerusalem together, that is, the elect children, as appears from the outcome.

4) Finally, that, according to Calvin, the words, "and ye would not," must not be understood as addressed to Jerusalem, but as referring to the leaders of Jerusalem. Thus there is no contrast between the will of God to gather all and the unwillingness of many, through which they are not

gathered. But the contrast is, always according to Calvin: *I* wanted to gather together Jerusalem's children, but *ye*, wicked scribes, did not will to gather them together.

In any event, this is something altogether different from what Keegstra writes as the interpretation of Calvin's meaning:

It is true that there are those who do not agree entirely with Calvin and who want to say that Jesus spoke these words only according to his human nature. But even though that interpretation were correct, and even though Calvin might be mistaken in that respect, that would make no difference with respect to what we have in view here. One may judge for himself whether Jesus, be it then according to His human nature, would so many times have tried, against the will of God, to gather those people together and to draw them to Himself. That is inconceivable! The Savior's efforts were nevertheless undoubtedly serious and well-meant, and the words issuing from the mouth of that prophet were nevertheless certainly the expression of God's outward calling.

When we read this, we shudder!

For here Keegstra speaks of an *attempt* of the Savior which is the equivalent, according to him, of an attempt of God to *draw men to Himself*! And that attempt of the Savior failed! Indeed, here it is Keegstra's view that the ungodly men of Jerusalem were mightier than the Lord Himself! He wanted to draw them, but they would not! And they were victorious!

Thus it goes from bad to worse.

First the editor began by assuring us that he wanted to preach particular atonement and election.

Then he began to write ambiguously about the general demand of conversion and faith, as though this was a general offer of grace.

And now he has come so far that he speaks of an *attempt* of the Savior and an *attempt* of God to draw men to Himself, an attempt which fails because men are unwilling! God must give up over against the wicked will of man!

In a word, I find this to be dreadful. For to me it is nothing less than a direct denial of the almighty grace of the Savior, of the sovereign grace of God; the will of man is put on the throne.

And this is now an explanation of the text in Matthew 23 and Luke 13?

Would the Lord, would Jesus actually have attempted to gather together *all* children of Jerusalem in this way? Would the Savior speak of such a failed attempt toward the end of His sojourn in Palestine — He Who had once so triumphantly declared, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"? He, Who had so emphatically proclaimed, "No man can come to me, except

the Father which hath sent me draw him"? He would now speak of failed attempts?

But how could this be harmonized with reality? Was it actually a fact that the Lord had attempted to draw to Himself *all* the children of Jerusalem? How would this be in harmony with the calling of Isaiah as it is described for us in the sixth chapter of his prophecy, where we are clearly taught that Isaiah's labors must serve precisely to blind their eyes and harden their hearts, so that they would not be converted, while the remnant would be saved through those same labors? Or how would this fit with the words of the Savior Himself when He declares to His disciples that He speaks in parables in order that seeing they should see and not perceive, and hearing they should hear and not understand?

And that would be Reformed?

If that were the case, a Synod of Dordrecht would never have been necessary. There is no Remonstrant who would stumble over such language.

And Calvin taught that?

With not so much as a word does Calvin speak of a general, well-meant offer of grace in this connection. One may agree with his explanation or not, but here he teaches something entirely different. The Lord speaks here, according to him, in indignation and He inveighs against the leaders of Jerusalem, who were not willing to gather Jerusalem's children. And as far as the form of the text is concerned, we have to do here, according to his interpretation, with an anthropopathy, a human presentation of God. But it is far from Calvin's thoughts to speak of an attempt of God or of the Savior to gather together all Jerusalem's children; an attempt which miscarried because insignificant man did not will it!

I do not know, of course, whether the Rev. Keegstra did not understand Calvin's interpretation, or whether he did not read it entirely.

Nor do I know what moved him in such a lengthy quotation to begin in the middle of one paragraph and to end in the middle of another paragraph.

It certainly does not strengthen a man's argument to quote in this fashion. For his neighbor comes and examines him, and then the truth comes to light.

The Synod of 1924 did the same thing upon the advice of its learned committee. They quoted the Canons of Dordrecht, III, IV, 4 in order to prove that the Confession teaches that the natural man can do good in things civil. They quoted half of the article. They stopped quoting in the middle. The striking thing of that instance is that the part which they did not quote teaches precisely the opposite of what they wanted the

article to teach. For there it is stated in so many words that the natural man renders that light of nature wholly polluted even in things natural and civil, and holds it in unrighteousness.

One weakens his own case by such a manner of quotation.

One leaves the impression that he is concerned about something altogether different from the truth.

It simply will not do to presuppose of such quoters, who are after all learned men, that they did this in their ignorance, that they only read half of the article in question and then went no farther. No, they read it all right, but the rest of the article did not suit their purpose. Their position would exactly be given the lie by further quotation. And at all costs, that might not be.

Did it go that way with Keegstra too? Is his long but partial quotation from Calvin's *Commentary* to be explained from this? Did he know no way out with Calvin's explanation of the text as an example of anthropopathy? Did he not want to accept the explanation of "and ye would not" as referring only to the leaders of the people? And did he prefer not to quote Calvin, that God's will to save was proclaimed to all, in order that those who did not believe would be left without excuse?

Who shall say?

Let him answer for himself.

But this is not the main thing – if only the error is now corrected, and we have gotten a fuller and better insight into Calvin's explanation of the text.

But if you want to know that Calvin must have nothing of such mis-carried attempts of God and of the Savior of which the Rev. Keegstra writes, then read what he writes about the same text in *Calvin's Calvinism*:

... What Augustine advanced in reply to them in many parts of his works I think it unnecessary to bring forward on the present occasion. I will only adduce one passage, which clearly and briefly proves how unconcernedly he despised their objection now in question. "When our Lord complains (says he) that though He wished to gather the children of Jerusalem as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but she would not, are we to consider that the will of God was overpowered by a number of weak men, so that He Who was Almighty God could not do what He wished or willed to do? If so, what is to become of that omnipotence by which He did 'whatsoever pleased Him in heaven and in earth'? Moreover, who will be found so profanely mad as to say that God cannot convert the evil wills of men, *which* He pleases, *when* He pleases, and *as* He pleases, to good? Now, when He does this, He does it *in mercy*; and when He doeth it not, *in judgment* He doeth it not." (pp. 104, 105)

This is clear language.

It leaves no doubt about the question whether Calvin would concur with the position of Keegstra that the Savior would have made all kinds of efforts to draw to Himself all the children of Jerusalem, but ended up disappointed. He would cast such a view far from him and never assume responsibility for it.

Nevertheless the Rev. Keegstra meant to ascribe that view to Calvin.

Thus it goes when one does not fully quote what ought to be quoted.

We shall allow Calvin to speak more. We are happy that the Rev. Keegstra has furnished us occasion to do so. For Calvin actually has much to say about this.

If only it has become plain now that the reformer of Geneva, in his explanation of Matthew 23:37, teaches no general, well-meant offer of grace and salvation on God's part.

It was necessary that we correct the Rev. Keegstra on this point.

And we would in all seriousness say to him: do not speak any more of a powerless Jesus, who *attempts* to draw men to Himself, but who ends up disappointed because of the evil will of men!

Chapter 4 More From Calvin

We already remarked that we were happy when we noticed that in his articles the Rev. Keegstra appealed to Calvin in support of his proposition that the preaching of the Gospel is a general, well-meant offer of grace on God's part which comes to all men who come under the Gospel and under the sound of the preaching. For not only did we then have the opportunity to correct the quotation from Calvin by the Rev. Keegstra and to complete it, but we were also unexpectedly furnished an opportunity to demonstrate still further that such a presentation indeed does not come from the great reformer of Geneva. In this chapter, therefore, we furnish the reader with more of Calvin's thoughts on this subject.

We quote from *Calvin's Calvinism*, a work of Calvin which we value highly, because Calvin wrote it during a later period of his life than his *Institutes*. It is to be expected that then he had more light concerning various questions than when he wrote his *Institutes*. We understand very well that this is not always true. It can very well be that a writer or leader is more orthodox in an earlier period of his life than in a later period. But in such a case there is change and departure in such a writer. And this there never was in Calvin. Principally he had no change of convictions after he, already at a very youthful age, had embraced and learned to love the cause of the reformation. Indeed, he received more light concerning

various difficult questions according as he searched the Scriptures and studied things. When he wrote his *Institutes*, he was still very young. When he wrote what now have been published in *Calvin's Calvinism*, he was much older. Besides, the latter work was written by him precisely as a defense of the doctrine of the sovereign grace of God over against the opponents of that fundamental truth. Therefore we attach much value to this work.

We have quoted from this work on an earlier occasion, when we drew a comparison between the doctrine of Calvin, on the one hand, and that of Berkhof and H.J. Kuiper on this other hand. (A little brochure entitled, *Calvin, Berkhof, and H.J. Kuiper, A Comparison*. In earlier years Prof. L. Berkhof and the Rev. H.J. Kuiper were two of the chief defenders of the Three Points of Common Grace adopted by the Christian Reformed Church in 1924. HCH) But this little work was written in the English language. And many of our people who like to investigate the truth of God and learn to understand it do not read English. (How times change! Now we translate a Dutch work because many cannot understand the Dutch language in which the present work was written. HCH) We were all the more happy, therefore, that the Rev. Keegstra unexpectedly furnished us the opportunity to point also in Dutch to what Calvin has to say on this subject.

Calvin writes, p. 98ff.:

All this Pighius (one of the deniers of predestination and a proponent of the doctrine of free will who was fought by Calvin, HH) loudly denies, adducing that passage of the apostle (1 Tim. 2:4): "Who will have all men to be saved;" and, referring also to Ezek. 18:23, 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 willeth 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 denunciation 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 variability 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*.

Now the reader must understand that the importance of this quotation consists precisely in this, that it contains an explanation of a text which is usually quoted as a proof for the proposition of a general and well-meant offer of grace and salvation to all men on God's part. The Synod of 1924 did this, as is well-known, in support of the first of the famed Three Points. Keegstra also does this in *De Wachter*.

Oh, thus men reason then, it is so plainly stated that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, is it not? Who can do violence to this? It does not say that God has no pleasure in the death of the elect sinner, but it speaks altogether in general of the sinner. How can one drag election in here? No, here you have a clear proof of the calling of the minister to proceed from the position of a general and well-meant offer of grace and salvation. No one can contradict that. He who nevertheless does contradict it does not want to accept Scripture, but wants to drag into the Scriptures his own presentation. And men do not at all understand that if this is the meaning of the text in Ezekiel, we must not only draw the conclusion that there is a general, well-meant offer of grace and salvation, but we must concede the good right of the entire doctrine of Arminius.

This ought to be plain in any event.

Ezekiel 18:23 does not speak of a general offer; the text simply speaks of what God wills. The text does not say that God offers something to the sinner. It merely says what God wants. It indicates simply wherein God delights. He has no pleasure in the death of the sinner. Now do not read this in its context. Do not read it in the context of the whole of Scripture. Do not limit it in a single respect. Read here that God has no delight in the death of any sinner, that He wills to save all without distinction. And what do you have then? A general offer of salvation? Not at all! Then you simply have the doctrine of Arminius, that God wills that all men shall be saved. For God does not say here that He offers something; He says simply what He wills.

But does Calvin also explain this text as they who want a general offer of grace and salvation explain it?

Absolutely not.

No, thus he says, there is no conflict here with God's eternal and unchangeable counsel of election.

You must also pay attention to the last clause of the text. And then you must take both clauses together and understand them in connection with one another.

And if you do that, so writes Calvin, then you have no general and well-meant offer of grace and salvation on God's part; then God does not say here to all men that He wants to save them. But then you have here the general proclamation of a particular Gospel. The second clause in the text, thus Calvin says, limits the promise of life to those who turn from their wicked way. God does not simply say in general that He has delight in the life of all the wicked, but in the *conversion* and life of the sinner. Life and conversion belong together, can never be separated. But that conversion is not the work of man. On the contrary, it is the work of God alone; and He works it only in His elect. Hence, the entire text is also particular in its entire content. God has pleasure in the life of those wicked who turn. But He does not bestow that conversion on all, but only on His elect children. The conclusion is plain: He lays upon the prophet the obligation to proclaim to all a particular, a conditional Gospel.

Such is the explanation of Calvin.

If he had anywhere spoken of a general, well-meant offer of grace, he would have done it in connection with this text.

He could have answered Pighius, as in our day it has become a common occurrence: this is a mystery, Pighius, these are the two tracks. You must not try to comprehend things. You must simply accept the fact that there is, on the one hand, a well-meant offer of salvation which or. God's part

comes to all men, and, on the other hand, that God nevertheless does not will that all shall be saved. This is what men do today. But Calvin did not do this. He must have nothing of such a double will in God. Therefore he furnishes an altogether different interpretation of Ezekiel 18:23 from that which is given today.

What Calvin's interpretation of this aspect of the truth becomes still clearer from the following, pp. 100ff.:

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. 31:33). *Now, a man must be utterly beside himself to assert that this promise is made all men generally and indiscriminately.* (Italics added.)

This is surely something other than a general offer of grace and salvation to all men. This promise of the Gospel, that God will write His law in our hearts, says Calvin, is not for all men. No, anyone must be beside himself to assert this.

It is important that we pause to point this out.

What do they mean who so readily speak of a general offer of salvation to all men, well-meant on God's part? What do they really mean with the Gospel? What do they proclaim?

In general they mean by this that the Lord Jesus came, died for sinners, shed His blood for a ransom of sinners, is risen, and that now there is forgiveness and salvation in His blood. And now He is offered by God, in the preaching of the Gospel, to all who hear. Come to Jesus, such is the call.

Thus, then, the Gospel is proclaimed.

But is that really the Gospel? Is that really the full proclamation of the salvation which is in Jesus Christ?

No! The bare proclamation of that which the Savior has done *for us*, when He suffered and died and arose from the dead, is only half of the truth. Even conceived of apart from the fact that someone always proclaims only a half-truth if he preaches that Jesus has died for sinners, without adding that He has merited reconciliation only for the elect, such a proclamation of the Gospel is also very defective because to the full proclamation of the Gospel belongs not only what Jesus has done *for us*, but no less what He does *in us*. I have in view regeneration, the effectual calling, the change from darkness to His marvelous light, the gift of faith, of justification, of sanctification, of preservation, and of final glorification. God also promises to His people that through His Spirit He will bestow on

them regeneration, will call, will bestow faith, justify and sanctify, and preserve to the end. And the proclamation of this also belongs to the Gospel, no less than the preaching of the salvation which the Savior has accomplished for His people in the objective sense of the word.

But how will men proclaim all this under the motto: a general offer of grace and salvation to all men, well-meant on God's part?

Would anyone have the courage to say: God now offers all of you regeneration?

Would a preacher presume to preach to all his hearers this gospel: God is willing to bestow on all of you faith?

However, if everyone feels that this would be not only thoroughly unscriptural and unreformed, but also nonsensical, how then can he nevertheless make of the preaching of the Gospel a general and well-meant offer of grace and salvation?

Calvin refers to this in the quotation which we made above from *Calvin's Calvinism*. The entire subjective, internal work of salvation is in fact indicated by that *writing of God's law in the hearts*. God promises that He will do this. He does not offer it. This is no offer. Not only is it not a general offer. But it is not an offer whatsoever. It is the work of the Holy Spirit, the irresistible work of God Himself. However, this almighty work of God's grace indeed occurs in Holy Scripture as a promise which God gives to His people. No offer, but indeed a promise. And the difference between an offer and a promise is clear. An offer presupposes that the person to whom something is offered can accept it; a promise is fulfilled by him who makes the promise. Grace is indeed a promise. God promises salvation. He also promises that He will actually bestow all the blessings in Christ Jesus upon His people. And it is to one of these promises that Calvin points. God promises that He will write His law in our hearts. But, thus says Calvin, anyone must be beside himself to assert that this promise pertains to all men without distinction. The reason for this declaration of Calvin is plain. That which God promises He also surely fulfills, for He is the faithful and true God. If He promises His salvation to all men without distinction, then He will also certainly bestow it upon all without distinction. The promise is, therefore, truly particular. And of a particular promise of God no one can and may make a general offer.

We will cite one more passage from the same work of Calvin, pp. 81ff.:

Now let us listen to the Evangelist John. He will be no ambiguous interpreter of this same passage of the prophet Isaiah. "But though (says John) Jesus had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him, that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been

revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart," etc. Now, most certainly John does not here give us to understand that the Jews were prevented from believing by their sinfulness. For though this be quite true in one sense, yet *the cause* of their not believing must be traced to a far higher source. The secret and eternal purpose and counsel of God must be viewed as the original cause of their blindness and unbelief. It perplexed, in no small degree, the ignorant and the weak, when they heard that there was no place for Christ among the people of God (for the Jews were such). John explains the reason by showing that none believe save those to whom it is given, and that there are few to whom God reveals His arm. This other prophecy concerning "the arm of the Lord," the Evangelist weaves into his argument to prove the same great truth. And his words have a momentous weight. He says, "*Therefore, they could not believe.*" Wherefore, let men torture themselves as long as they will with reasoning, the cause of the difference made – why God does not reveal His arm equally to *all* – lies hidden in His own eternal decree. The whole of the Evangelist's argument amounts evidently to this: that faith is a special gift, and that the wisdom of Christ is too high and too deep to come within the compass of man's understanding. The unbelief of the world, therefore, ought not to astonish us, if even the wisest and most acute of men fail to believe. Hence, unless we would elude the plain and confessed meaning of the Evangelist, that few receive the Gospel, we must fully conclude that *the cause is the will of God*; and that the outward sound of that Gospel strikes the ear in vain until God is pleased to touch by it the heart within.

It is clear that also in this quotation the subject is the preaching of the Gospel. Isaiah had proclaimed the Word of the Lord, but only a few had believed, so that Isaiah even complains: who hath believed our report? The Savior preached to the multitudes, did signs and wonders, and yet they believed not in Him. Such was the situation. And thus it is still to-day. The preacher can engage in all kinds of contortions, such as, for example, Billy Sunday and those who ape him do. He may glory in thousands of converts. It is and remains a fact that only a few believe his preaching.

But the question which Calvin confronts is: where is the deep cause of the fact that so many do not believe?

Whence comes the difference among men as far as their attitude toward the Gospel of Christ is concerned?

Does Calvin say that the Gospel is a general and well-meant offer of grace, and that it is simply up to man?

On the contrary, he teaches here that the cause also of the unbelief of the Jews must be sought in the *will* of the Lord. This could not very well be otherwise, because Holy Scripture itself does this. They could not believe, for the Lord revealed His arm, the Gospel, not to all; He blinded and hardened many.

But what is left then of a general, well-meant offer of grace and salvation in Calvin?

If it does not please the Lord to reveal His arm to all, also not when the Gospel is brought to them; if under and through that preaching He hardens many and wills to reveal His arm only to the elect; where then is the general offer?

It simply is not there.

Calvin never taught that the preaching of the Gospel is an offer of grace to all men, well-meant on God's part. Surely, he taught that through the ministry of the Gospel by men many are called in the outward sense; called to faith and repentance; called to the salvation in Christ; that many come under the promise: he who believeth hath everlasting life. But this is something altogether different from asserting that God well-meaningly offers His salvation in Christ to all who hear the Word. To assert this, says Calvin, one must be utterly beside himself.

And in place of teaching this, he declared unambiguously, as Scripture also does, that the Lord Himself causes the Gospel and its proclamation to be twofold: a savour of life unto life, and a savour of death unto death.

If only few believe, while nevertheless the same Gospel is proclaimed to all without distinction, then this is because God works in a twofold manner. He touches the heart unto salvation in the few; He blinds and hardens in the many. Thus Calvin teaches. Thus Scripture teaches.

The preacher, therefore, must be well aware of this. He may not be wiser than God. Neither may he present himself as being more merciful than God. Surely, he must preach, preach to all. But he must be prepared in that preaching to be a savour of life unto life, but also a savour of death unto death.

And he must be willing to be that.

□

Book Reviews

Calvinism: Pure and Mixed. A Defence of the Westminster Standards; by W.G.T. Shedd. Banner of Truth Trust, 1986. 161pp., \$10.95. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.)

Dr. Shedd's life spanned the nineteenth century (1820-1894). He was a pastor in the Northern

Presbyterian Church USA, and was a contemporary of the great struggle which went on in that church in the latter part of the nineteenth century to revise the Westminster Standards. This bitter debate over the revision of the Westminster Standards occasioned the writings in this book. It is

intended to be a defence of the Westminster Confessions and a critique of the position of the revisionists. Shedd takes the time and trouble to point out that the claim of the revisionists to make the Confessions more relevant to the times is a false claim; the revisionists, in fact, reject Biblical teaching and want a different confession in which Biblical teaching is excised. (This was actually accomplished in 1967 with the adoption of the "New Confession" in the Northern Presbyterian Church.)

Because the issues revolved primarily around the doctrines most odious to the revisionists — the doctrines of sovereign predestination (especially reprobation) and particular salvation, Shedd devotes most of his time to these matters. Only one short chapter, e.g., is devoted to "Calvinism and the Bible." And in his defence of these subjects, Shedd is fairly sound. In Chapter III, e.g., Shedd has a good defence of reprobation from the viewpoint of infralapsarianism (which is the viewpoint of the Westminster Confessions) and makes proper distinction between preterition and judicial punishment for sin. And to a defence of sovereign reprobation Shedd returns again and again in the book. (See also Chapter IX.)

Nevertheless, Shedd is much too intent on making the Westminster Creeds palatable to his critics; and in the interests of doing this, he

makes the Confessions teach many things which, as a matter of fact, they do not teach. The interesting aspect of this is, however, that Shedd not only reveals his own thinking on these crucial matters, but also gives insight into current Presbyterian thought in the Northern Church at this time.

I refer to the subjects of common grace and the free offer of the gospel.

It is Shedd's conviction that the Westminster Confessions teach both a common grace and a general and well-meant offer of salvation to all. It is not my purpose in this review to go into the question whether this is true or not. I have done so in other articles which have appeared in the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*. It is my conviction that they do not, and I am personally convinced that this can be proved both from the Confessions themselves, the Minutes of the Westminster Assembly, and from the historical situation out of which these Confessions arose. The latter two are not so much as mentioned by Shedd. And his proof for the former is very sparse. This is no wonder because no mention at all is made in the Confessions of common grace, and the word "offer" is used only three times, and then in a way different from its current usage by those who hold to a well-meant offer.

However all that may be, Shedd spends nearly half of the book

discussing these questions and develops his ideas, only to pass them on as the teachings of Westminster. The whole of Chapter IV is devoted to a discussion of God's universal love and a universal gospel offer, as Shedd claims the Confessions teach it. He argues from God's universal command to all to repent and believe to God's universal desire to save all, God's universal love for all, and God's universal offer of pardon to all. He forgets that, while the church has never denied that God commands all to repent and believe, the church has historically maintained that this in no way is to be construed as a universal love or offer of pardon. (See also pp. 94, 95.)

When discussing the difference between common grace and special grace, Shedd writes:

"The following then, are some of the marks of distinction between common and special grace: (a) In common grace God demands faith in Christ, but does not give it; in special grace God both demands and gives faith. . . . (b) In common grace man must of himself fulfill the condition of salvation, namely, believe and repent; in special grace God persuades and enables him to fulfill it. (c) In common grace the call to believe and repent is invariably ineffectual, because man is averse to faith and repentance and in bondage to sin; in special grace the call is invariably effectual, because his aversion and

bondage are changed into willingness and true freedom by the operation of the Holy Spirit. (d) Common grace is universal and indiscriminate, having no relation to election and preterition. . . . Respecting special grace, (this is connected with predestination.)"

Shedd then attempts to distinguish between a Calvinistic and an Arminian conception of common grace. He writes:

"... Calvinism asserts that common grace cannot be made successful by the *co-operation* of the unregenerate sinner with the Holy Spirit, and thereby be converted into special or saving grace: Arminianism asserts that it can be. The Arminian contends that the ordinary operations of the Divine Spirit which are experienced by all men indiscriminately will succeed, if the unrenewed man will cease to resist them and will yield to them. . . ."

Proceeding from this view of common grace, Shedd has some remarkable things to say about it in relation to other doctrines.

Already in the early part of the book (pp. 7, 8), Shedd takes the position that the Confessions leave room for a universal atonement (see also p. 14 for a suggestion of this). While he distinguishes between a Calvinistic conception of common grace and an Arminian conception of the doctrine, he nevertheless becomes very Arminian in his whole viewpoint,

especially in its relation to the free offer. On page 54 Shedd seems to consider common grace a sort of preparatory work for the gospel which can be resisted and which resistance leads to punishment. On page 105 he makes man's response to common grace the condition for preterition or saving grace. This is just as Arminian as it is possible to get. One wonders whether it is also possible to accept common grace. Apparently Shedd thinks this is possible.

But as the undergirding of his views of common grace become more and more a general atonement, Shedd makes some surprising, though logically consistent, conclusions. God's love becomes universal in Shedd's thinking. (Interestingly, he interprets I Timothy 2:4 as universal, while he makes II Peter 3:9 particular. This latter will come as some surprise to the defenders of the free offer, for it seems sometimes as if, in the thinking of free-offer defenders, II Peter 3:9 is the cornerstone of the free offer.) But this universal love of God is a failure (p. 103). Shedd literally says this; one stands aghast at a love of the God of heaven and earth which fails. Yet this is, nevertheless, a logical conclusion from Shedd's position.

Pursuing this idea further, Shedd wants to hold that far and away the majority of the human race is finally saved. In support of this notion he takes the position that

the Westminster Confession (he refers to X, 4; Larger Catechism, 60.) teaches that heathen can be saved apart from the preaching of the gospel (p. 59). Further, he holds that the Westminster Confession teaches that all children dying in infancy are saved. He contrasts, in support of this contention, the statements of Westminster in III, 3, 6, 7 and L.C., 13, 68 with X, 3. His argument is very feeble at this point, but he develops it rather extensively. Returning to the salvation of many heathen, he writes in chapter XII that many are saved without hearing the gospel, the Holy Spirit working in them only a conviction of sin.

It is sad that Shedd took so much time in the book to defend doctrines which are not even found in the Westminster Creeds. And, even if it can be argued that they are found there, everyone must admit that the references are few and far between. Yet almost half of Shedd's book is spent on these views. One can only conclude that the weak stand that Shedd (and others) took in defence of the Westminster Creeds must have been a significant factor in the final victory of the revisionists. ■■

The Pastor-Evangelist: Preacher, Model, and Mobilizer for Church Growth, edited by Roger S. Greenway. Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1987. 200 pp. (paper)

(Reviewed by K. Hanko.)

This book is a collection of essays on evangelism written chiefly by men of a Reformed or Presbyterian background, and having some experience in the work of evangelism.

According to the foreword (p. v) "The book is aimed at the revitalization of churches through pastoral leaders who effectively fulfill their responsibilities to both the faithful sheep in the congregation and the lost and straying outside." But there is very little in the book about the work of a pastor with "the faithful sheep in the congregation." It is really a book about evangelism.

Why it is about evangelism becomes clear in the foreword and the editor's first essay. The editor discerns "a missing link in pastoral ministry — the evangelistic dimension" (p. 2). The problem, he claims, is that pastors are not thoroughly trained in evangelism while they are in seminary.

The material of the book falls into two categories. Some of the essays are theological, and others suggest methods of doing evangelism.

Let us begin with the second category. These essays (in chapters 5-13) have titles which indicate their emphasis: "Evangelism through Small Groups," "Learning How to Witness," "An Integrated Plan for Evangelism and Church

Growth," etc. Several of these essays are of the "how to" variety: that is, they explain in detail various methods of doing evangelism. There is a great deal of this on the market already, not only about evangelism, but also about almost every other aspect of life. It seems to me that there are two dangers inherent in such an approach to the subject of methodology. The first is that it leaves the impression that life (and in this case that part of life which we call evangelism) can be reduced to a set of rules. Accounting and mathematics can; evangelism cannot. The second danger is that such a view of life and evangelism suggests that careful adherence to the rules will (almost automatically) produce the desired results.

"For a number of years I led an evangelistic Bible study in a conference room at the Medical Center in Birmingham every Tuesday at noon. Normally we would "brown bag" it, but once a month we had a covered dish luncheon. What a crowd would turn out!" (p. 66)

"Often I have seen people who had been nominal Christians for a number of years catch fire spiritually when they began attending a small group Bible study." (p. 66)

"I can cite many examples to illustrate the effectiveness of evangelism through small group Bible studies." (p. 67)

On pages 84-85 we are told first that Ward church receives an

average of 400 new members each year. Then we are given a list of things which the pastor of the church thinks important to such growth: location of the church, programs, public relations, etc. The preaching of the gospel is not mentioned, though a later list of methods begins with it. On page 99, D. James Kennedy writes:

"After about a half hour of my stumbling attempts at evangelism, the pastor took over the conversation and in about fifteen or twenty minutes led the man to Christ. . . . For ten days I watched this pastor lead one person after another to Christ for a total of fifty-four individuals during those ten days."

If Jeremiah had organized cell groups, if he had been taught how to witness, or even if he had been more hospitable, perhaps there would have been a great revival. If Paul had mobilized the few converts he had in Athens and given them some more "on-the-job training" (p. 99) his ministry in Athens might have been much more successful.

I do not say, though, that all these men have fallen into the error of thinking that the right method will produce the desired result. I say only that we must not expect that the application of their methods will always produce the results which they claim, and that the methods suggested cannot be considered a complete handbook

on methodology or a set of rules which every pastor ought to follow. We must remember a few things.

1) God is not always pleased to use the presentation of the gospel for salvation. Therefore success may not be defined by the number of converts gained. 2) It is not strict adherence to a rigidly defined set of rules nor the discovery and use of the proper method that saves people. We must be wise to apply Scriptural principles for evangelism (from which we derive rules for any given situation) to the diverse circumstances of life, but God saves, and He saves by the preaching of the Word. The question is not, "What shall I do?" The answer to that is plain: "Preach the Word." But the question is, "When, where, and how must I preach?" 3) Nor ought we to judge our methods by the results achieved. If Jeremiah had done that he would surely have concluded that he was using the wrong approach. We must judge our methods (and results) by the same Word that we preach.

In chapters 5-13 then there are, in my opinion, some statements which may mislead. But other essays in the same group address these things. It is also good that in some of these chapters the authors prick the conscience and urge us to be more faithful and diligent in every aspect of our work.

The remaining chapters (2-4) are theological, but, though they discuss important issues, they cannot

be called a complete theology of evangelism. That need remains unsatisfied.

In chapter 4 there is a failure to distinguish properly between the preaching of the Word and the witnessing of God's people. And that is important, for it is the preaching of the word (the proclamation of the gospel by ordained preachers) that is the center and life of all evangelism.

As in all collections of essays, therefore, the quality of the material varies from chapter to chapter. ■■

The New Birth, by Stephen Charnock, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1986. 534pp., \$19.95 (cloth). (Reviewed by Rev. Charles Terpstra.)

Stephen Charnock (1628-1680), a Puritan divine, received his education at Emmanuel College, Cambridge and New College, Oxford. During his lifetime he served as an assistant to John Owen, as chaplain to Henry Cromwell in Ireland, and as pastor of a London Presbyterian congregation. He is perhaps best known as the author of *The Existence and Attributes of God*.

The New Birth is the second volume of Charnock's *Works* to be reprinted by The Banner of Truth Trust. This is Volume 3 of the 1865 Nichol's edition. (They have also published Volume 4, *The Knowledge of God*.) The volume

under review was also reprinted in a paperback edition by Baker Book House in 1980 with the title, *The Doctrine of Regeneration*. From the back cover of the Baker edition we learn that Charnock did not write a comprehensive study of the doctrine of regeneration, but that editors gleaned from his sermons and discourses his teaching on the subject and published it as a unit.

The New Birth, in addition to Charnock's treatment of the doctrine of regeneration covering some 300 pages, contains discourses on "God's Being the Author of Reconciliation" and "The Cleansing Virtue of Christ's Blood," covering another 200 plus pages. The section dealing with regeneration is divided into four parts: The Necessity; the Nature; the Efficient; and the Instrument.

Charnock's style is typically Puritan. As was true of all the Puritan divines, so also is Charnock "always didactic, always thorough, always practical," to quote from the overleaf. In each chapter or discourse the doctrine is first expounded and then application is made (the "uses" as the Puritans referred to it). This style of the Puritans makes for rather lengthy treatment of a topic. But as one who appreciates the Puritan's doctrinal depth and practical warmth, this reviewer believes that all may profit richly from their writings, including this work. If one is

willing to spend some time reading and reflecting upon the detailed exposition found in this volume, he will find many "fine jewels" of insight, illustration, and application.

As far as the specific content of this work is concerned, on the whole Charnock presents a very biblical and Reformed treatment of the doctrine of regeneration. His emphasis throughout is on the sovereignty of God's grace over against man's impotency. Taking his starting point in John 3:3, 5, he deals with the *necessity* of regeneration. After briefly expounding this passage he summarizes the doctrine he will set forth: "Regeneration of the soul is of absolute necessity to a gospel and glorious state" p. 15. He grounds this need in man's total depravity and spiritual unfitness for the kingdom of heaven. On account of the fall of man and its consequences the natural man is born "of the flesh." He is unfit, unwilling, and unable to enter the kingdom of heaven. If he is to enter the kingdom, he must be changed, not relatively but radically. He then goes on to show that regeneration is necessary both for a gospel state in this life, in order to perform gospel duties and enjoy gospel privileges, and for a state of glory in eternity.

In his second discourse Charnock treats the *nature* of regeneration from the viewpoint of II Corinthians 5:17. After making

introductory remarks on this text, he states the doctrine: "Every man in Christ hath a real and mighty change wrought in him, and becomes a new creature" p. 86. He points out at the outset that due to the nature of this wonder-work of God, regeneration is difficult to describe. Yet he gives what he believes to be a Scriptural definition of the new birth: "Regeneration is a mighty and powerful change, wrought in the soul by the efficacious working of the Holy Spirit, wherein a vital principle, a new habit, the law of God, and a divine nature, are put into, and framed in the heart, enabling it to act holily and pleasingly to God, and to grow up therein to eternal glory" pp. 87, 88.

The rest of this second chapter is an explication of this definition. In doing so, Charnock first of all carefully distinguishes regeneration from the other states of the Christian — from conversion, justification, adoption, and sanctification. This is an excellent and worthwhile section. Secondly, he demonstrates what regeneration is *not*. It is not the removal of the old substance or faculties of the soul. The new creation does not give a new faculty but a new *quality*. Nor is the new birth a change of the essential acts of the soul as acts. The acts remain, but their object, principle, and ends are altered. Further, neither is regeneration an awakening of some gracious principle

lying hid in man's nature, for there is none present. Rather is the new birth the creation of something which was not present before. Moreover, regeneration is not an addition to nature. The old is crucified and taken away, and the new is set in its place. And finally Charnock says that the new birth is not external baptism. Contrary to the position of some of the early church fathers and to Roman Catholic doctrine, water cannot and does not effect regeneration.

Positively, Charnock describes the nature of regeneration in terms of a radical, internal, spiritual change in man. Having its seat in the soul, the new birth is an internal and universal change of the whole man in all his faculties and actions. His entire being is set in a new direction. In regeneration man is given a vital principle, as he is translated from death into life. He is given a new habit; he receives an inward frame, enabling him to act readily and easily. Furthermore, according to Charnock, the new birth is a law put into the heart, the law of the covenant of grace, including a knowledge of this law, conformity to it, love for it, and the desire and ability to obey it. And finally, regeneration is in the nature of a likeness to God. The new man is created in the image of God and made a partaker of the divine nature, so that he is like God in affections and actions, particularly, holiness.

The third chapter of *The New Birth* treats the *efficient* or the *author* of regeneration. Charnock deals with this subject from the perspective of John 1:13. After a brief exposition of this passage, he outlines the two doctrines he will expound in this chapter: first, "Man, in all his capacities, is too weak to produce the work of regeneration in himself"; and second, "God alone is the prime efficient cause of regeneration" p. 169. Concerning the first of these, Charnock makes five points and discusses them. He sets forth that man cannot prepare himself for regeneration; he cannot produce it; he cannot cooperate to initiate regeneration; he cannot actuate the new birth after grace has been received; and he cannot preserve this grace in himself. Thus does he demonstrate man's impotency to be the cause of the new birth.

From that truth Charnock moves on to show that God alone is the efficient cause of the new birth. What man cannot do that God does. He proves both from Scripture and from the nature of regeneration that God *must* be the author of this work. Its marvelous character demands that God alone be the One Who effects it. He then shows from what principles in God regeneration flows, i.e., what perfections are manifest in it, namely, His mercy and goodness, His sovereignty, His truth and wisdom, His holiness and power. And

finally Charnock describes *how* God effects this work in man. He contends that this is a double work of God — upon man's understanding (opening, enlightening, leading him to conviction) and upon his will (bending, drawing, and inclining the sinner to embrace the gospel).

In his final discourse on the subject of the new birth Charnock discusses the *instrument* of regeneration. He takes his starting point in James 1:18 and sets forth the doctrine "That the gospel is the instrument whereby God brings the soul forth in a new birth" p. 309. It is clear that at this point in his treatment Charnock deals with regeneration in its broadest sense, as including faith, conversion, and sanctification. By the gospel he means the voice of the Son of God in the Word preached. He explains that God has connected faith with hearing (Rom. 10). Yet he also points out that the Word is only an instrument, for it must be accompanied by the operation of the Holy Spirit for it to be efficacious. He then explains how the gospel is an instrument. It presents the will of God to the understanding, showing one his sin and revealing Christ as Saviour. And it has an active force upon the will, which leads the sinner to active sanctification. Finally, Charnock brings this chapter to a close with a detailed applicatory section in which he discusses the gospel itself — its

power, its value, how it should be used by sinners, and how it must be preached by ministers.

It ought to be evident from this brief summary of the contents of Charnock's work that this material is on the whole quite solid and sound. Its strength lies in its faithful exposition of Scripture truths and its adherence to Reformed, Calvinistic thought. There is a wealth of material here which is worthy of serious consideration and contemplation. One cannot fault the Puritans for their lack of depth; there are hardly any theological and practical stones which the Puritans do not leave unturned. This is a work therefore from which any serious student of Scripture and the Reformed faith can profit.

This is not to say, however, that this work has no weaknesses. It does. Some of these weaknesses are not so serious. For example, Charnock is not always clear on whether he is treating regeneration in the narrow sense or in the broader sense. This makes for some confusion, also as regards the question of immediate versus mediate regeneration. At times he seems to be referring to the new birth in the narrow sense, and then he makes it an immediate work of God (as e.g., in the second chapter). At other times he includes faith, conversion, and sanctification with the new birth, and then he makes it a mediate work of God (as e.g., in the last chapter).

Further, the Puritan flair for the psychological reveals itself at several points. The Puritans were masters at delving into and analyzing the soul and its activities. And while this in itself is not a weakness, nevertheless, it does often complicate the material and cause one to become bogged down in minute details. This is the case in certain parts of Charnock's volume too.

Another not so serious weakness that appears in this work is the covenant of works idea. I say not so serious because Charnock was a man of his time, and this idea was prevalent in Reformed theology in his day (cf. the Westminster Confession, Chap. 7, II). But it is this idea which causes Charnock to write on page 19, "The new birth is but the beginning of our restoration to that state we had before the fall." This view among other things fails to take into account the vast differences between unending, earthly life in paradise with the first Adam as head, and heavenly, immortal life in the new paradise with Jesus Christ, the second Adam, as Head.

While these are rather minor weaknesses, there is especially one weakness and error that is more serious. This is the idea of common grace. It first appears on page 71, where Charnock is exhorting his readers to seek regeneration as something they must have to be saved. In giving reasons why one

should seek it, he remarks: "Not to seek it is to despise the general mercy of God, and the general kindness of the Mediator to human nature." He explains what he means by this when he says that by His mercy in Christ God has left in man "desires and inclinations to happiness, and some knowledge that this happiness lies in God." These "restored principles" in man "are left as a foundation upon which God grafts this grace of regeneration" p. 71.

This, according to Charnock, is God's "general mercy" and Christ's "general kindness." Notice that he makes this natural desire for and knowledge of happiness in God a matter of God's *saving* grace, since it is left by "the mediation of Christ" and becomes the basis for God's saving work of the new birth. But this is wrong. The Scriptures plainly teach that there is no grace, no mercy, no kindness shown to all men, but only to those who are actually saved, i.e., the elect. To speak of this desire and knowledge in the natural man as grace to him is to weaken and belittle the saving grace of God in Christ, since in many cases this general mercy and kindness bring about no salvation. To the contrary the Scriptures teach that God's grace always effects salvation.

Charnock falls into more serious errors with his idea of "common grace" later on in this work. In chapter 3, after he has set forth

his five propositions concerning man's inability to be the cause and continuance of regeneration, he raises a question by way of objection: "But, do you divest man of all power, all freedom of will? Is he able to do nothing in order to regeneration?" p. 209. He then launches into a discussion of God's common grace shown to and worked in the natural man. Here he is more specific. He grounds this "grace" in the death of Christ, and speaks of a common grace that comes to all men in the preaching of the gospel, pp. 210-11.

Moreover, he describes the extent of the natural man's power by means of this "common grace," pp. 215-223. He claims that by this "common grace" man has the power "to avoid many sins," "to do many more good works than he doth," "to attend upon the outward means God hath appointed for regeneration," and "to exercise consideration" (i.e., the power of discernment and judgment concerning himself and what God demands of him in the Word of God). And what profit does the natural man gain from this power? According to Charnock he can and does in some sense prepare himself for the divine work of regeneration. And this in turn leads Charnock to exhort the unconverted to use their "common grace" powers to come under the conviction of sin, to seek regeneration, and even to pray for it, as he does in his appli-

catory sections.

With this particularly we cannot agree. Charnock attributes too much "power" to the natural man, and erroneously ascribes this to God's "common grace," which is a saving grace yet does not always save. There is no doubt that the natural man is and remains a rational, moral creature. He "retains some knowledge of God, of natural things, and of the differences between good and evil, and discovers some regard for virtue, good order in society, and for maintaining an orderly external deportment" (Canons of Dordt, III, IV, Art. 4). Further, it is true that there is an outward restraint of sin on the natural man, and an internal work of the Spirit upon his conscience. But not only are none of these things "common grace" to man; they also do not prevent him from being as wicked as he could be, and do not enable him to do good works, so that he can "prepare" himself for the work of God in the new birth.

Charnock involves himself in blatant contradictions because of his view of the abilities of the natural man under the influence of so-called common grace. He cannot really maintain a strong Reformed position on the twin truths of man's total depravity and God's absolute sovereignty in the work of salvation. And therefore with this idea we cannot agree. We rather concur with the judgment

of our Reformed fathers in the same article of the Canons referred to above, where it is taught: "But so far is this light of nature from being sufficient to bring him to a saving knowledge of God, and to true conversion, that he is incapable

of using it aright even in things natural and civil. Nay further, this light, such as it is, man in various ways renders wholly polluted, and holds it in unrighteousness, by doing which he becomes inexcusable before God." ■■

Book Notice

A New Testament Blueprint For the Church, by John Moore and Ken Neff. Chicago: Moody Press, 1985. 168pp., \$7.95. (paper)
Reviewed by Ronald VanOverloop.

The two authors are graduates of Dallas Theological Seminary. The book is the presentation of what they believe to be the weaknesses of the church, particularly in its organization and function, to which they propose alternatives.

There is no doubt that there is a crying need for a much clearer understanding of the concept and practice of the local church today. There is also a lack of definitive works on this subject (other than James Bannerman's *The Church of Christ* and D. Douglas Bannerman's *The Scripture Doctrine of the Church*). It is regrettable in the opinion of this reviewer that this book does not fill this need and

lack.

This book is an attempt to re-establish the emphases the Bible gives to the structure and activity of the church. This desire is commendable. Some good things are said over against the generally accepted concept of the church in American culture.

However, for the most part, this book fails. First, it suffers from the lack of a development of the concept of the essence of the church, which concept is the foundation of the form and function of the church. The lack of this development gives rise to many of the weaknesses of the book. Also, there is no evidence of appreciation for what the church in the past has said about herself as she appears visibly on earth. Just as serious is the lack of development of the role of the preaching of the Word, the chief means of grace. ■■■

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