

PROTESTANT REFORMED THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

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THE PASTOR

Professor Robert D. Decker

In the previous issue we discussed the subject of the pastor from the point of view of the office of Christ which he holds. Christ calls and ordains the pastor into the office through the instituted church (Ephesians 4:11ff.). This means that Christ authorizes the pastor to shepherd the flock. The pastor comes with the authority of the Great Shepherd of the sheep. This calling by Christ also means that the pastor is qualified by Christ to shepherd the flock. The fact that he is appointed and qualified by Christ affords the pastor the confidence he needs to care for the members of the church. He shepherds out of the conviction that Christ cares for the flock through him. This ought as well move the pastor to a deep sense of his utter dependence on Him Who said: "Without me, ye can do nothing." In this humility the pastor serves His Lord through serving God's people.

As we continue our study of Pastoral Care in general and in particular our study of the pastor we wish to concentrate on the spiritual gifts required of a pastor. Various classifications are used in this connection, such as: conferred gifts and acquired abilities; spiritual and natural characteristics. This latter classification was used by George M. Ophoff, professor in the Protestant Reformed Seminary from 1924 to 1964. Neither of these, however, is satisfactory. Conferred gifts imply that a pastor is born, not made. While this is certainly true in a very real sense, it is not altogether correct. These gifts may be developed in a man in another sense. For example, one may be gifted with compassion for God's people, but that gift may also, even must, be developed. On the other hand, acquired abilities cannot be acquired unless the gift is there in the beginning. The distinction, spiritual and natural gifts, is unsatisfactory because it is too mechanical. There are no purely natural characteristics which will enable one to be a pastor. For example, much common sense, as necessary and desirable as that may be, is not *ipso facto* going to make a man a pastor. It must have a spiritual core and be "sanctified common sense." Hence, we prefer to speak of the spiritual gifts required of a pastor.

Note well, these gifts are required of the pastor. By this we mean emphatically that without these gifts and the cultivation of them by means of training, and above all by prayerful feeding on the Word of God one *cannot* be

a pastor of God's people. These gifts may vary just as individuals vary, but they must be characteristic of a true shepherd of the sheep. He who lacks them or a significant number of them may safely assume that the Lord does not call him to the ministry of the Word.

Among the spiritual gifts required of a pastor, consider the following:

1) Spirituality or Genuine Piety:

Certainly, the foremost requirement for a pastor is that he must be a *spiritual man*. He must be regenerated. In one word he must be a child of God. The question may be raised, can an unspiritual man be a pastor of Christ's flock? Scripture teaches: "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some of good will. . . notwithstanding every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached; and therein do I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice" (Philippians 1:15ff). Some preached Christ in pretense, i.e., out of an evil motive. The answer to this question from an objective point of view is "yes." The objective possibility does exist that an unspiritual man functions as a pastor. It happened in the early church and the Apostle Paul rejoiced nonetheless in the fact that Christ was being preached. It should be understood, however, that if this unspirituality be a principle, one's pastoring cannot endure — that man will be exposed sooner or later. Our own experience ought to teach us that we often preach out of self-seeking and without much love for Christ. Often there is "strange fire on the altar." The wonder of this is that the Lord uses us for the edification of His church in spite of our sinful weaknesses. And, God can even use an unbeliever to bless His church. He used a wicked liar like Balaam. Balaam, one of the most despicable characters to appear on the pages of Scripture, certainly preached Christ. (Cf. Numbers 22, 23, 24; especially 24:17ff.) Even Judas Iscariot functioned for a time in office. The motives of a pastor, if hidden or suppressed do not affect the people of God simply because God blesses not through a person but through His Word.

Ours, however, is not the objective view but the subjective. And then the answer to the question is "no." The personal state of the pastor's heart is the important element in pastoral care. It is a great evil to be a hypocrite. Even though a reprobate (hypocrite) may labor in the office of pastor, and really so, he does not have the office subjectively; and, both he and God, and eventually the church, know him to be a usurper making merchandise of the church (II Peter 2:3).

But a child of God especially in the office of pastor must be a deeply spiritual man. This is not saying that there cannot be periods of spiritual drought; for there can be and often are. There are times when a pastor has his doubts or when his faith is at a low ebb. But these times cannot objectively

affect his work. The spiritual nature of the preaching and pastoral work must fluctuate with the subjective character of the pastor-teacher. This means the pastor must be vibrantly alive in the spiritual sense! He must, therefore, exercise himself spiritually so as to be that. The very real danger exists in this connection that a minister because he works with the Word of God every day becomes a sort of mechanic. Then he busies himself with the Scriptures in such a way that he treats them like a mechanic does the engine of an automobile: impersonally, analytically. Or the pastor may take on a professional air in his work. This must be studiously avoided and can be by daily personal devotions, especially prayer. The pastor ought never begin his day without meditating on the Word of God and praying. He must continue through the day in prayer and meditation. And he must end the day on his knees. If anyone ought to pray without ceasing it is the pastor (I Thessalonians 5:17).

Positively, the pastor must be strong in personal faith and devotion. In this connection he must be accurately aware of the fact that the first object of his preaching must be himself. Wurth remarks in this connection that if positive fruit seems to be lacking, a pastor should ask if something is wrong with himself. (Cf. G. Brillenburg Wurth, *Christian Counselling in the Light of Modern Psychology*, pp. 96ff.) The inclination of a young minister is to blame the congregation if little fruit appears as a result of his work. Then he becomes lackadaisical and loses courage. The pastor must introspect himself first and work and pray all the harder. For the pastor's sake his strength lies in his strong faith and genuine piety.

2) Knowledge of the Word of God:

This is the second requirement of a pastor-teacher in the church. This means, intellectual knowledge. Certainly it is true that the better versed a pastor is in the knowledge of the Bible the better pastor he will be, all other factors being equal. But this knowledge must also be a living, spiritual knowledge. Intellectual knowledge is vain except it be spiritually the knowledge of God in Christ by faith. This spiritual knowledge is an objective and absolutely necessary requirement for the pastor. It implies learning for as far as its *content* is concerned it is an *acquired* characteristic. The pastor must never be satisfied with a backlog of knowledge attained over the course of a few years, but he must always increase his knowledge of the Word of God. The pastor certainly must not be satisfied with a mere seminary training. The most a training in seminary can accomplish is to provide the minister with the necessary tools for a *lifetime* of growing in his knowledge of the Word of God. This means constant, prayerful study of the Holy Scriptures. In addition the pastor must continue his study of theology both of the past and of the present and he ought to keep

abreast of contemporary trends in theology as much as that is possible. The pastor can do this by reading both books and periodicals. The point is, the pastor must know "what is going on" and what is being said if his ministry is going to be relevant to the needs of the church in general and the people of God in particular. For this kind of study a significant portion of his daily routine ought to be reserved. Effort and a goodly measure of self-discipline are required for the attainment of this characteristic, but the rewards of these for both pastor and congregation are immeasurable. This is plain, Biblical truth! Timothy, the young preacher in Ephesus, is exhorted precisely along these lines: "neglect not the gift that is in thee, . . . meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (I Timothy 4:14-16). This same idea is found in the second epistle to Timothy, chapter 2:15: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

From a practical point of view the attaining of this ever expanding knowledge of the Word of God is extremely important. The answer to all the problems which may arise in pastoral work is found in Scripture. The solution to every problem without exception concerning faith and life is in the Word. Quite in general this is true for the Scriptures reveal the wisdom of God together with a host of practical, "down to earth" instructions covering a wide range of human experience. But this is also true in particular. Most emphatically do we insist that there is no situation for which the answer cannot be found either explicitly or implicitly in the Word of God. And the pastor must be able to point God's people to the Scriptures in specifics. Often he will be required to do that "on the spur of the moment" and under strange and stressful circumstances such as in hospital emergency rooms in the wee hours of the morning or even in a jail somewhere. The pastor had better be prepared to give the Word in season and out of season and he can be prepared by diligent study of the Scriptures.

3) Understanding:

This third highly necessary requirement is in the sense of the Dutch: *verstand* or *verstandigheid* (good sense, wisdom). Obviously this must not be "understanding" in the natural sense, but a highly spiritual understanding. By this is meant an understanding which is rooted in a Christ-like compassion for the people of God (Matthew 9:36) and which flows out of the love of the Good Shepherd for His sheep (John 10:12, 13). The pastor is, we have emphasized, a servant of Jesus Christ and undershepherd of *The Shepherd*. He represents Christ as He cares for the church. This means the pastor must be Christ-like.

And Christ "feels with" His sheep. In that powerfully beautiful and utterly profound passage, Hebrews 4:14-16 we read: "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." In this passage the Scriptures teach that Jesus, our high priest is touched with the feeling of the infirmities of God's people and tempted in all points as they, yet without sin. This is what we are saying when we say the pastor must have understanding. He must feel with God's people. Thus He represents the sympathetic high priest. The pastor may never be cold, impersonal, detached, or unaffected with respect to the people of God and their needs. In a very real sense the cares of God's people must become the pastor's.

This understanding involves not only an understanding of human nature in general, but more especially an understanding of the human nature of the children of God. The pastor must be able to analyze the personalities of his congregation. He must know them indeed as the flock of God, but as very imperfect sheep. After the pattern of the Lord Jesus Who sympathizes with the feeling of the infirmities of God's people the pastor must understand his congregation. He must rejoice with them that rejoice, weep with them that weep. He must "bear with" the weak. And, all this must be applied individually. Each individual has his own nature: physically, psychologically, and spiritually. And the pastor must "know the face of his sheep." While in a sense this understanding is a gift, it may also be acquired by diligent study of the congregation. But again, let that be done, not coldly but sympathetically. This the pastor does in order to discern the various characteristics, weaknesses, and needs of the members of his church. In this way he becomes aware of the struggles, the temptations, the doubts, and fears experienced by his members. And then too, the pastor becomes aware of the general patterns apparent in his congregation and he is able to adapt his preaching accordingly. This, by the way, is one serious disadvantage of a brief pastorate — after two or three years one is *just beginning* to become acquainted with the congregation.

In this connection let the fact that this understanding is not something intellectual or coldly rational be underscored. It must flow out of the love, the compassionate love of Christ for the sheep. And those sheep want to be understood, they want the pastor to meet their need. That may not always be so obvious; it is true nonetheless. Sometimes the people of God do not dare come to the pastor for one reason or another. The pastor may appear too aloof or

“too busy.” But they do want their needs met. Often they are ignorant of their own need and it must be pointed out to them. The pastor in the love of Jesus will give himself wholly to this task. He will be willing to lay down his life for the congregation. Their burdens will become his burdens. In this way the pastor will be an example to the people of God to whom comes the admonition: “bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2). That is the love of Christ. Fundamental to that love is that it is always love toward God. It seeks the honor of God. To seek the honor of God is to seek the welfare of the church of God. Genuine love of the people of God out of which flows the understanding necessary for being a pastor is primarily characterized by the honor of the Name of God.

One more point needs to be made concerning this gift of understanding. The key to solving the difficulties experienced by God’s people is the proper diagnosis of the problem. Without understanding as described above there can be no diagnosis and without diagnosis there can be no cure. This is simple fact and almost goes without saying. But, what must be remembered is that the proper diagnosis of the difficulties of God’s people *must always involve sin!* The people of God are regenerated; they are saints in Christ Jesus; but, always with only a “small beginning of the new obedience.” God’s people are *sinners*. And, the root of every (there are no exceptions!) specific problem involving God’s people is sin. It may very well not be any gross sin such as unfaithfulness to one’s spouse, but it is sin. It may be that one is attempting to face life’s difficulties on his own apart from faith and prayer, for example. But the root of every specific problem is a specific sin or sins. And, it is sin which causes alienation from God and puts one in a wrong relationship with his God, and therefore, which causes alienation among fellow believers. A wife is estranged from her husband or vice versa, a child from his parents or peers, a parent from his child. The understanding pastor knows this and looks for this in order to apply the cure of the Word. His goal will be to lead the parishioner to an acknowledgment of his sin so that in the way of the confession of his sin he may enjoy the peace of forgiveness and in the way of sanctification experience the joy of God’s gracious care. In that sense the pastor must be gifted with understanding and prayerfully he must cultivate that gift.

4) Patience:

Also here the question is: “Is this patience an acquired ability or a bestowed gift?” The answer is, it is both. Patience is certainly a gift, but it must also be developed and in this sense it is acquired. The young pastor, especially, often inclines towards impatience with the inevitable result in disappointment and frustration. No doubt this is precisely why the Holy Spirit through the

Apostle Paul urges Timothy to be patient in that beautiful passage in II Timothy 2:22-26: "Flee also youthful lust: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." The young pastor must pray earnestly for this virtue to be increased in him.

This patience will be evident in a twofold way: in longsuffering and in forbearance. Longsuffering is the positive and forbearance the negative aspect of patience. This latter is necessary on account of the sins of God's people which often (unfortunately) come to expression in the form of critical opposition to the pastor. One must forbear in such instances. He must "not strive; but be gentle" (II Corinthians 2:24). The supreme example of this necessary virtue, patience, is to be found in the Lord Jesus. How often do we not see this in His dealings with the disciples (especially impetuous Simon Peter!)? The apostles, too, demonstrate patience. Think of Paul in Corinth or in Ephesus: two congregations where the fruit of the gospel came to manifestation in the lives of the people of God so very slowly. In this connection it is wise for a pastor especially when he is young to follow the older men in the consistory and congregation who out of long experience often move very deliberately.

A note of warning is in order. The pastor must never allow evil to fester in the church. Patience may never be a countenancing of sin. That is not patience but laxity.

5) Veracity, Faithfulness, and Courage:

There must be *veracity* in the approach and speech of the pastor to the people of God. Essentially this means that the pastor must "speak the truth in love" even when it hurts and even when he knows it will incur the wrath of that member. The pastor must always exhibit honesty in both his attitude and speech. *Faithfulness* means constancy. The pastor must not waver in his love for the sheep of Christ. And, *courage* is to take a resolute stand on the truth with respect to the sheep and their sin and with regard to those who are numbered with the sheep but are in fact wolves. The pastor must not be afraid to take an honest and courageous stand on the basis of the truth without wavering. If he does not take this firm stand he will quickly be regarded as untrustworthy and the effectiveness of his pastoral work will be immeasurably diminished.

6) Temperance, or self-control:

A pastor must be able to control his passions or emotions: his anger, for example. But in the heat of anger the pastor must learn to keep silent. In that state he cannot reason correctly and he loses all his effectiveness with God's people. In that case too the people of God easily lose respect for the pastor. Besides, evil men will "needle" this weakness, provoking the pastor again and again to ineffectual anger. The pastor must not give vent to excessive displays of emotion; he must not be "flighty." Rather let him learn by prayer to emulate the quiet example of the Great Shepherd of the sheep.

7) Prudence (practical wisdom):

A pastor needs presence of mind in order to see through a situation promptly so that he can analyze it and present the proper solution. To do this the pastor must be able to put himself in the state and situation of the members of his congregation. He cannot be an "egghead." He must be a *volksman*. He must know men, human life, and human nature and relationships. And he must be aware of the spiritual nature of the times. This, too, as with all these spiritual gifts, must be cultivated. These things depend too, in large measure, upon the location of the congregation. Rural and urban congregations differ widely in many respects and display an almost entirely different life-style. Or, a congregation relatively young and formed as a fruit of home mission labor will be quite different from an older, more established congregation.

THE PERSONAL LIFE OF THE PASTOR

J.J. VanOostersee writes convincingly to this point as follows:

There can be no pastoral discipline over the congregation without spiritual discipline over oneself, manifesting itself in a truly Pastoral Life, which in all its relations may be termed a daily commendation of the Gospel and its holy ministry. (*Practical Theology*, p. 540)

VanOostersee continues in this connection:

A Dutch preacher, Egeling, compared the teacher whose word is contradicted by his walk to a clock which points to eleven, but strikes twelve, so that the people know not whether they are to go by the hand or the hammer of the clock. . . special talent can be the portion only of a few, but personal consecration and hallowing by true regeneration may be demanded of everyone who will be called no hireling, but shepherd. (*Practical Theology*, pp. 540, 541)

The wisest of men said under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches" (Proverbs 22:1). A pastor

more than anyone else needs a "good name." This is absolutely essential. To establish this good name in a congregation takes some time but "goes a long way." This is closely allied with the trustworthiness of a pastor and demands that he lead an upright, devoted, sanctified life. The Word of God which he preaches and teaches must be evidenced in the pastor's everyday life. In one word he must be an example to his congregation.

Neither is this merely a bit of good, practical advice. This is demanded by God Himself of those whom He calls to the office of pastor-teacher in His church. The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Philippi: "Brethren, be followers (imitators, R.D.D.) together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample (*Tupos*, a pattern to be followed, R.D.D.). For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Philippians 3:17-19).

The same apostle teaches that a bishop "must have a good report of them that are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (I Timothy 3:7). Timothy himself is admonished: "These things command and teach. Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believer, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. . . Mediate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting *may appear* (emphasis mine, R.D.D.) to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (I Timothy 4:11-16).

And, to cite no more, elders are exhorted to feed the flock of God as "being ensamples to the flock" (I Peter 5:1-4).

These passages make abundantly clear the fact that the pastor must lead an exemplary Christian life; this belongs to the faithful exercise of his holy office. It will never do for the pastor to say: "Do as I say, but don't do as I do!" He must rather live in such a manner that he is able to say to the congregation, "Look at my life, this is the pattern for you to follow!" There is no way this can be emphasized sufficiently. By failing to exemplify in his life the gospel he preaches, the pastor becomes totally ineffective. His congregation loses all respect for him and some who "hear him" may very well be caused to stumble. And that is utterly serious in the sight of God. The pastor must realize too, in this connection that he lives a "fish-bowl" existence! His people are watching, not always maliciously, but watching him nonetheless. When the full impact of the seriousness of this whole matter hits a genuine servant of God it makes him sincerely humble and it keeps him "on his knees."

This raises the whole question of the pastor's "Christian liberty" (cf. Romans 14, I Corinthians 10). Briefly, the Apostle Paul's position consists in condemning whatever is not motivated by the love of God for one's brother. This after all is the fulfilling of the law of God! This means that one must never engage in anything against his own conscience. The sin is not in the particular action as such. All these matters of Romans 14 and I Corinthians 10 belong to the adiaphora. Hence, offending the brother does not merely mean that he says he is offended; but it is to cause him to stumble into sin. I offend when by my action I give occasion to the brother to do the same thing against his own conscience. The pastor obviously must take great care not to offend the brothers and sisters under his spiritual care! However the minister cannot listen to and please everyone in the church. This would make his life and that of his wife and children quite impossible. He must be sensitive and charitable towards the church in order not to offend. At the same time it ought to be kept in mind that there are not two standards: one for the congregation generally and another for the pastor.

SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

1) As to clerical garb: special clerical garb is not considered necessary in the Reformed churches. It is the author's personal opinion that a pulpit robe is perfectly proper and befits the office of the preacher, but it is not a requirement. For the pulpit the minister ought to wear a dark, conservative suit. In general the minister should be careful about his everyday appearance. He ought not be "sloppy," but neat and clean-shaven; lest he leave a bad impression of himself and the church which he represents.

2) As to "extra-curricular" activity such as, recreation, exercise, social functions, sporting events, etc., it is impossible to lay down rule upon rule and precept upon precept to govern these matters. What VanOostersee has to say is apropos:

Many a one has undone more in a single convivial afternoon or evening, than he has been able to build up in a number of weeks of preaching. . . . The adoption of a wise reserve in this respect cannot be too earnestly enjoined. The man, moreover, who lives above everything for his work, can say in all truth that he has no time for many things which may be judged in themselves harmless enough, but must give way to more important claims; and he who is supremely penetrated with the seriousness of his task will hardly be able to find enjoyment in very much with which smaller minds and hearts are easily occupied. . . . Do not deny your position and your Christian

principle for any single outward enjoyment of life, and at all time seek your highest joy in the work of the Lord. . . . Permit yourself in this domain (the social, etc. R.D.D.) also rather too little than too much, especially in consideration of the great crisis which is approaching. (*Practical Theology*, pp. 544, 545)

The essential element is to keep things in balance or proper perspective. The pastor does not have time to become a "sports fiend" either as a participant or spectator. If his congregation is of any size at all and he is diligent in his work the pastor cannot afford several hours per week for golfing, tennis, or bowling. Relaxation and recreation are certainly necessary for the pastor and he ought to keep fit physically for the Lord's sake; but these are threatening in their inclination to dominate. The pastor must not be too easy on himself and he ought to resist yielding easily to the belief that he needs relaxation.

There are places a pastor ought never to be seen: the theater, nightclubs, or bars. A minister ought not join social, political, or service clubs or organizations (the Rotary Club, the Lions' Club, e.g.). The pastor's calling is to shed the light of the Word of God on matters political and social, etc. and this very fact precludes his being a "party-chooser." The pastor must always reckon with the fact that wherever he is and whatever he does he is always the *minister of the Word of God*. He must do nothing to denigrate the holy office in which he has been ordained. In this respect the pastor must learn to deal with his own individuality and control his own character weaknesses.

3) As to the pastor's family life: Scripture demands that the bishop rule well his own house, be the husband of one wife, have his children under control, etc. (cf. I Timothy 3:1-7). Bearing in mind what has been said under point 2) above, the pastor must not allow his wife and children to suffer. He must allow himself time to be with them and he must not allow the congregation to interfere in this respect.

On the other hand, the pastor's wife and children cannot escape the special effects of being in a preacher's family. It is bad, for example, when the preacher's children are the least prepared and the worst behaved in the catechism class. And, his wife often, especially in the smaller congregations, occupies a rather large place in the church. She must be circumspect and with her husband live an exemplary Christian life.

4) As to the pastor's social life: it ought to be understood that the social life of the believer is essentially and principally different from that of the world. Believers have a brotherhood among themselves and the pastor shares in this. But, within the congregation the pastor faces the question, must he socialize with all equally or may he socialize with some especially. As such, of

course, this has nothing to do with the official function of the pastor. Some suggestions are in order: a) The pastor has no duty to be a "society man." He ought not overdo, but he ought to be moderate in his visiting. Neither should the pastor isolate himself socially. Social contacts are beneficial for learning to know the congregation. The pastor ought to be loved by the people of God and so he ought to fellowship with them. b) He must not be cliquey. This is being at best indiscrete. c) It is neither desirable nor expected that the pastor visit all the members of his church equally. In larger congregations this is quite impossible. Besides, the pastor is bound to become more intimate with some than with others. This is a purely natural occurrence of "like finding like." There are some in whom he will confide and there are many in whom he cannot confide. Sanctified discretion is the key here. Prof. VanOostersee put it best when he wrote:

If we sum up all that has been said, the pastoral life displays itself before our eyes as one harmonious *Whole*, of which Christ is the center, the Holy Spirit the guide, and the glorifying of God the great final aim. (*Practical Theology*, p. 546)

THE ARIAN CONTROVERSY (2)

Rev. Ronald Hanko

THE HISTORY

The history of the Arian controversy is exceedingly complicated. There were some twenty or twenty-five councils held and nine or ten Creeds drawn up all in the space of less than fifty years. We will therefore, attempt to be brief and clear.

BEFORE NICEA, 318-325

This history begins about A.D. 318 or 319 when Arius, the presbyter of Baucalis first began to preach and teach his heretical views concerning the divinity of Christ. After several private remonstrances by Alexander his Bishop showed that he was unwilling to retract, severer measures were taken. In 321 Alexander called together a Synod of the Egyptian Bishops. About 100 attended and proceeded to depose Arius. When he continued to agitate and teach his views, he was forced to leave Alexandria.

Arius went to Palestine and from there entered into correspondence with Eusebius of Nicomedia and Eusebius of Caesarea. The former immediately gave his full support. He flooded the East with letters, trying to drum up support for Arius, and wrote to Alexander urging him to receive Arius back into communion. Two Synods were held: one in Bithynia which agreed with Arius and advised Alexander to withdraw his verdict, and another in Palestine which confirmed Arius and his adherents in their clerical status and offices.³⁰

The result was that the whole Eastern Church was in an uproar and it was at this point that Constantine took a hand. In September, 324, he had defeated his opponent, Licinius, at the battle of Chrysopolis and had become the sole ruler of the Empire. Desiring unity in the Church as he had gained it in the Empire, he immediately took upon himself the role of peacemaker in the controversy. He sent his trusted aide and advisor, Hosius, to Alexandria with a letter intreating both parties to make peace. A council was then held at Alexandria which accomplished nothing.

³⁰ Hans Lietzmann, *A History of the Early Church*, trans. Bertram L. Woolf, (London, Lutterworth, 1950), vol. III, p. 111.

Apparently Hosius returned with a report which favored Alexander, for Constantine wrote a vehement letter to Arius demanding his submission. This, too, accomplished little. Constantine, probably at the suggestion of Hosius, therefore resolved to call a Council of Bishops from the whole Empire to rule on the matter in question. It was decided to hold the Council at Nicea which was at the center of the Empire and accessible from land and sea.

THE COUNCIL OF NICEA, JULY 19, 325

To Nicea, then, came more than 300 bishops from all parts of the Empire, with their retinues. They traveled and were hosted at the public expense. They came to take care of three problems: the Meletian schism, the settling of the date of Easter, and the case of Arius. The last was the most important. Of the Bishops present there were only seven from the West, the principals being Hosius, two presbyters who represented Pope Silvester, and the Bishop of Carthage.

Although Arius had claimed the support of all the East save two or three "heretical and untutored persons," at the Council his party was a very small minority — about 18 bishops. The Arians led by Eusebius of Nicomedia, first proposed a Creed, a concise statement of their views. It was received with "tumultuous disapproval"³¹ and torn to pieces in the sight of all. At this point the whole Arian party (including Eusebius of Nicomedia) with the exception of two Egyptian Bishops, Theonas and Secundus, abandoned the cause of Arius.

Eusebius of Caesarea then stood up and presented the Creed of his church.³² Although the Emperor approved of it, it was found to be insufficient: "this formula had the curious advantage of leaving out every reference to the point at issue."³³ The intent of the Fathers in dealing with these statements seems to have been to use only the language of Scripture, but this proved impossible. Whatever language was proposed, whatever phrase was used, the Arians twisted it to suit their own ends:

...but withal they (Eusebius and his fellows) were caught whispering to each other and winking with their eyes, that "like," and "always," and "power," and "in Him," were, as before, common to us and the Son, and that it was no difficulty to agree to these.³⁴

31 Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1950), v. III, p. 628.

32 Cf. Appendix II; "Creed of Eusebius."

33 William Du Bose, *The Ecumenical Councils* (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1897), p. 10.

34 Athanasius, *De Decretis*, v. 19.

The Arians were very ready to accept the Caesarean Creed.

It was evident that something was needed to guard against all Arian evasions. The Emperor himself, again at the prompting of Hosius, formally proposed the word *homoousios*. After a long debate the word was finally adopted and the Creed of Eusebius was thereupon thoroughly revised under the direction of Hosius and several others. It was presented to and approved by the Council at the urging of the Emperor.

All were required to sign it, and all did except for Arius, Theonas, and Secundus. After a day's deliberation Eusebius of Caesarea also signed, though he disliked the word *homoousios*. Arius' books were burned and he was sent into exile to Illyria. The Emperor had made up his mind to admit no compromise and so also Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicea were banished for their evident hostility to the Creed, even though they had signed it. After being entertained by the Emperor at a great Banquet, the Bishops left for their respective Sees and the first Ecumenical Council was over.

THE ARIAN AND SEMI-ARIAN REACTION, 325-361

For a few years after Nicea, that is, as long as Arius and Eusebius were in exile things were relatively quiet. In the meantime Alexander died (April 17, 328) and Athanasius was made Bishop of Alexandria by common consent of populace and clergy. But the quiet was only the lull before the storm. Arius drew up a personal creed³⁵ which he presented to the Emperor as proof of his good faith. And although the Creed carefully avoids all the terminology of Nicea, the Emperor received Arius back into communion. So also, by exercising his political influence, Eusebius also returned. Both were back by 328.

Eusebius especially was ready to move heaven and earth to efface the results of Nicea. His first target was Athanasius. The ensuing history is as violent as it is complicated:

The controversy now for the first time fairly broke loose and Arianism entered the stage of its political development and power. An intermediate period of great excitement ensued, during which council was held over against council, creed was set forth against creed and anathema against anathema was hurled. The pagan Ammianus Marcellinus says of the councils under Constantius: "The highways were covered with galloping bishops;" and even Athanasius rebuked the restless flutter of the clergy, who journeyed the empire over to find the true faith, and

35 Cf. Appendix I.

provoked the ridicule and contempt of the unbelieving world. In intolerance and violence the Arians exceeded the Orthodox, and contested elections of bishops not rarely came to bloody encounters. The interference of imperial politics only poured oil on the flame, and embarrassed the natural course of theological development.³⁶

In 330 a synod of Arian reactionary bishops assembled at Antioch. They secured the deposition of Eustathius of Antioch, one of the supporters of Athanasius, on false charges of immorality and Sabellianism backed by the complaint that he had indiscreetly repeated a current story concerning the Emperor's Mother. Meanwhile, by alliance with the Meletians, the Arians were doing everything they could to foment disturbances in Egypt.

The purpose of this all was to discredit Athanasius in the eyes of Constantine. Eusebius was also busy at the Capitol using various channels to prefer all sorts of false charges against Athanasius, especially that he had been supporting treasonable persons. He also wrote to Athanasius, exhorting him to receive Arius, and when Athanasius refused, complained to Constantine. Athanasius finally cleared himself of all charges by appearing before the Emperor in person.

Eusebius continued to bring accusations and prevailed finally upon Constantine to call a Council in Caesarea (where Athanasius had many enemies) to deal with these new charges. Athanasius refused to appear and the council fizzled. In 335-337 another council was held at Tyre in connection with the Thirtieth anniversary of Constantine's reign.

All the enemies of Athanasius in the whole empire arranged to be present, hoping to obtain at Tyre their revenge for the abortive council at Caesarea, and to find means of getting rid of the troublesome Bishop of Alexandria.³⁷

No questions of doctrine were raised. The council was very disorderly and many trumped-up charges were brought against Athanasius: that he had disrupted a worship service and broken a chalice; that he had put to death a Meletian Bishop; that he had committed adultery. Athanasius cleared himself of all charges but in the subsequent disorder was obliged to flee the council. In his absence the council proceeded to depose him.

Athanasius appealed to Constantine who wrote a letter to the Council defending him. The Eusebians responded by sending five representatives to the Emperor with a new charge: that Athanasius was threatening to stop grain ship-

36 Schaff, p. 632.

37 Louis Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church* (N.Y. Longmans, Green, 1922), vol. II, p. 139.

ments from Alexandria to Constantinople. This was a sore spot for Constantine, and without even a hearing, he immediately ordered Athanasius into exile at Treves.

This exile lasted less than a year, for Constantine died soon after (337). "After much intrigue, sedition, and massacre, the three sons of Constantine assumed the title of Augustus."³⁸ Athanasius was recalled from his exile and immediately returned to Alexandria. Arius also died meanwhile in the midst of preparations for his formal reception into Church communion (February, 336).

Athanasius was in Alexandria only two years before he was again forced to go into exile. Constantius, the new ruler of the Eastern part of the Empire patronized the Arians and with his approval the Arians and Semi-Arians held a Synod at Antioch where they again deposed Athanasius, and appointed a successor, Gregory of Cappadocia. The arrest of Athanasius was ordered but he escaped first into the desert, and then to Rome. This time he was in exile for six years.

While Athanasius was in Rome the Arians corresponded with Pope Julius, attempting to gain his support. But at a Synod in Rome (341) Athanasius was completely vindicated and Julius wrote a letter to that effect to the Arians. Julius' letter was considered at the Council of Dedication (of Constantius' "Golden Church") held in Antioch in the summer of 341. They again confirmed the deposition of Athanasius and drew up four anti-Nicene creeds which were mainly Semi-Arian in construction.³⁹

At the same time the Western Bishops had appealed Athanasius' case to Constans, their Emperor, who decided that a general council was necessary. Together, he and Constantius arranged for a council to be held at Sardica in 343. The council failed completely. About 100 Western Bishops, as well as Athanasius and several others who had been deposed, attended. The Eastern Bishops refused even to come when they found that they were in a minority and that the defendants were to be seated at the Council. They held their own Synod at Philipopolis, drew up a long and angry statement of principles, and deposed everyone from Pope Julius to Hosius. The Western Bishops again confirmed the orthodoxy of Athanasius and refuted the charges of the Eusebians. And at another Council at Milan (346) the position of Sardica was reaffirmed.

Constans, the Western Emperor, defended Athanasius and urged his brother to restore him to his See. Gregory, Athanasius' "successor" had died, and the people of Alexandria were also clamoring for the return of their rightful

38 Duchesne, p. 153.

39 Cf. Appendices III - V.

Bishop. Constantius did an abrupt about-face and invited Athanasius to return, giving him strong assurances of good-will and protection. Athanasius met with Constantius at Antioch and then returned to Alexandria where he was received with rejoicing. This restoration marks the beginning of his longest stay in Alexandria (10 years). Burn calls it "an armed truce" which was maintained by the formidable power of Constans.⁴⁰

In 350 Constans was assassinated. For three years Constantius was busy consolidating his powers and defeating his rivals. But in 353 he became sole ruler of the Empire and the axe fell on Athanasius once again. Constantius was false to his pledges and immediately began working to establish Arianism as the religion of the Empire. In 353 at the Synod of Arles, a formal Imperial condemnation of Athanasius was made. In 355 at Milan, the Western Bishops were forced to ascribe to and sign the deposition of Athanasius. Those who refused to sign (Hosius, Pope Liberius, and Hilary of Poitiers were the only ones) were sent into exile.

Athanasius himself remained in Alexandria until early 356, when, in spite of the support of the populace and magistrates of Alexandria, he was deposed by force of arms, and very nearly lost his life before escaping into the desert once again. A certain George was made Bishop in his place and a period of terrible persecution and violence began in Alexandria. Many were killed or banished. Athanasius himself remained in exile until the death of Constantius, nearly six more years.

During this six-year period a large number of councils were held, in the course of which the Arian cause finally triumphed. The synod of Sirmium, held in 357, condemned the word *ousios* as being unscriptural and proscribed both the words *homo-* and *homoiousios*. But the triumph of Arianism also marked its downfall, for the decisions of Sirmium, and Constantinople a little later, drove the Semi-Arians into the party of the Orthodox.⁴¹ The coalition between Arians and Semi-Arians had always been an uneasy one; now the two part ways. The Council of Constantinople in 360 is the high point of ultra-Arianism, but it also marks the end of the Arian and Semi-Arian league. At that council both the Orthodox and the Semi-Arian positions were condemned and many of the Semi-Arian leaders were deposed or excommunicated.

The Arians retained power for a brief time, but their days were numbered. In 361 Constantius died. This was the beginning of the end for Arianism, and in the next period we see the final victory of the Orthodox party.

40 A.E. Burn, *An Introduction to the Creeds and to the Te Deum* (London, Methuen, 1899), p. 91.

41 Cf. Appendix VI: "The dated Creed of Sirmium."

THE FINAL TRIUMPH OF ORTHODOXY, 361-381

This final period of the Arian controversy is marked by the union of the Semi-Arians with the Orthodox and the downfall of the Arian party:

...The Arian victory had prepared the way for the ruin of Arianism, though that result was not immediately apparent. The opposition to the Nicene form had always been composed of two elements: a small Arian section, and a much larger conservative body which stood mainly on positions reached by Origen, to which Arianism was obnoxious, but which looked upon homoousios, the Nicene phrase as an unwarranted expression, already condemned in Antioch, and of Sabellian ill-repute. Both elements had worked together to resist the Nicene form, but their agreement went no further. . . . They really stood near to Athanasius. He recognized this approach, and Hilary furthered union by urging that the conservatives meant by *homo*i what the Nicene party understood by *homo*. The ultimate Nicene victory was to come about through the fusion of the Nicene and the Semi-Arian or Conservative parties.⁴²

Constantius was succeeded by Julian the Apostate who supported the old pagan religion at the expense of both orthodoxy and Arianism. It was during his rule that the fourth exile of Athanasius took place. Julian was angry with Athanasius for making too many converts from paganism. Athanasius' exile lasted only two years, and then he was allowed to return by Julian's successor, Jovian.

Jovian ruled only a few months and was succeeded in the East by Valens. Under Valens there was a last revival of Arianism. His fanatical Arianism caused the Semi-Arians to move even closer to the orthodox. Athanasius was for the last time forced to go into exile, but this time for only four months. All Egypt supported Athanasius and Valens had no power to enforce his decrees, in part because his co-ruler in the West, Valentinian, supported the Athanasians.

In 373 Athanasius died. There was another brief revival of Arianism in Alexandria and again the Orthodox suffered many indignities. Valens died soon after (378) and the Empire passed into the hands of Gratian who appointed Theodosius to rule in the East. Both supported the Athanasians and the cause of the Nicene Faith was finally made secure. In 380 Theodosius issued an edict that all should "hold the faith which the holy Apostle Peter gave to the Romans," which he defined more precisely as that taught by the Bishops, Peter of Alexandria and Damasus of Rome.⁴³

42 Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* (N.Y., Scribners, 1918), pp. 113, 114.

43 Walker, pp. 117, 118.

In 381 he called a great council at Constantinople to deal with the new heresies of Apollinarianism and Macedonianism and to confirm the faith of Nicea. This council restated the decisions of Nicea and approved its Creed with a few improvements and additions. Arianism revived briefly in Italy under Gratian's successor, Valentinian II, and lingered for a while in Gaul where it had been taught by Ulfilas, but in both East and West Orthodoxy prevailed.

THE NICENE CREED

In the history of the Church up to 381, the Nicene Creed was unique:

It was the first symbol of faith framed by a council, enforced by a secular power, purely controversial in origin, theological as distinct from Scriptural in its peculiar terms, and furnished with a concluding anathema, a lash on the whip of discipline.⁴⁴

Its importance cannot, however, be underestimated. In the long history of the Arian controversy it stood as the bulwark against Arianism. Many times the Arians drew up creeds which were intended to replace the Creed of Nicea, but it was the latter which was finally adopted officially by the Church. In a few short phrases it repudiated all the heresies of Arius and his followers. In fact it said clearly and concisely, all that could be said against Arianism.

It teaches in the first place, that the Son is "from the substance of the Father." This is the "counter-blast" to the principal tenet of Arianism, that the Son had been created out of nothing and had no community of being with the Father. Its Second anti-Arian statement is: "True God from True God": this in opposition to the Arian doctrine of the uniqueness of the Father. Thirdly, it said against Arius, that the Son was "begotten not made," making more specific the doctrine of eternal generation. Finally, and the whole weight of the Orthodox reply to Arianism is concentrated here, the creed speaks of the fact that the Son was "of One Substance with the Father" (homoousion). It concluded with a series of anathemas specifically directed against the teachings of Arius.

It is interesting to note in this connection that the orthodox party, throughout the controversy, never saw any need to draw up another creed. All the other creeds of this period were the work of the Arians or Semi-Arians. Those of the Semi-Arians all proved insufficient to protect the Christian faith against Arianism, and none were ever officially adopted by the whole Church.

44 William A. Curtis, *A History of the Creeds and Confessions of Faith in Christendom and Beyond* (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1911), p. 68.

Throughout the controversy, the Nicene Creed was attacked for its use of unScriptural language. But history proves that although the language is not, as such, Scriptural, it nevertheless expresses the teaching of Scripture. This fact was proved, first of all, in that it held its own throughout the controversy:

During thirty years it had held its own and the tenacity and loyalty of its defenders through this long period of doubtful conflict won for it a sanction which no council of Bishops, however learned, or spiritually minded, or unanimous, could bestow on a new confession.⁴⁵

But the orthodoxy of the Nicene Creed was vindicated, especially by the Council of Constantinople (381). That Second Ecumenical Council ended the Arian controversy by approving, with only a few, non-essential changes, the Nicene Creed.

THE CREED OF CONSTANTINOPLE

As we have noted, the Creed of Constantinople is in essence the older Nicene Creed. In fact, it is usually called the "Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed." But it is of value to note some of the changes which Constantinople made. For as Curtis says (p. 72): "The controversial character and the literary form of the Nicene Statement were obviously improved upon, and a fuller statement of apostolic faith was secured by it."

There are really two major differences. First of all, the Creed of Constantinople omits the terminal anathema in the Nicene Creed. It also adds all that follows the words "And in the Holy Spirit," "without which the Nicene Creed is ill-proportioned, defective and ill-suited for the liturgical use which was made of it."⁴⁶ This latter was added especially, "to repel the Macedonian heresy of the impersonality of the Holy Spirit."⁴⁷ Besides these things, there is the omission of several words and phrases in the Nicene Creed which were redundant, as well as the addition of words here and there to strengthen and clarify several points: e.g., "to strengthen the affirmation of the atonement"⁴⁸ the words "crucified for us" were added to Article 4.

Later several other additions were made. In the West and in later Reformed tradition, the creed was expressed in the singular; "I believe." But the most important addition of all, was the addition of the words "and the Son"

45 Burn, pp. 98, 99.

46 Curtis, p. 73.

47 Daniel Lamont, *The Church and the Creeds*. (London, James Clark, 1923), p. 47.

48 Lamont, p. 47.

(*filioque*) by the Council of Toledo in 589 to express the double procession of the Holy Spirit. This phrase contributed much to the Great Schism of the Eastern and Western Churches.

THE WORD *HOMOOUSION*

Much of the Arian controversy as we have seen, revolved around the word *homoousion* in the Nicene Creed. Walker, (p. 118) even says that it is "a misfortune that a less disputed phrase was not adopted at Nicea." The objections to it were really two: that it was unscriptural, and that it implied Sabellianism. Athanasius pointed out, in reference to the first objection, that the Arians also used non-Scriptural terminology: e.g., "created out of nothing," "begotten out of the will of the Father," etc. The second objection was done away with when the distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis* (essence and person) was made clear. It was pointed out that several of the ancient Fathers had used the word in the Nicene sense: Irenaeus, Origen, Theognostus, and Dionysius of Alexandria.

Today there are still some who think that it has no place in the Christian faith:

It has been frequently alleged that by introducing this term *ousia*, substance or essence, into the creed, the bishops entirely altered the character of Christian doctrine. They attached to it, so it is alleged, metaphysical conceptions which had no place in the original teaching of Christianity and ought to have no place in it still.⁴⁸

This is not true, however. As the Orthodox pointed out time and time again, the word *does* express the thought of Scripture. And what is more, it guards the truth of the absolute divinity of Jesus Christ against all error. The Great Reformation Creeds use the same language to guard against Socinianism (modern Arianism). One must remember that the Scriptures do not give us a ready-made doctrinal system and that, therefore, the Church has the obligation to express the truth of Scripture logically and systematically, especially over against heresy. This, of necessity, requires non-Scriptural technical terminology. The Church must, of course, be careful in the choice and use of terminology, but it must also be noted again that in this controversy the word *homoousia* was not pulled out of the air on the spur of the moment at Nicea. There had at least been some precedent for its technical use in the Nicene sense.

48 J.W.C. Wand, *The Four Councils* (London, Faith Press, 1951), p. 12.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ARIAN CONTROVERSY

The Arian Controversy and the decisions of the Councils of Nicea and Constantinople have an important place in the history of the Church and in the history of the development of Christian doctrine.

Importance for Church History

In the history of the church Arianism represents:

... a religious-political war against the Christian revelation, by the Anti-Christian spirit of the world. This world after having persecuted the Church 300 years from without, now sought under its Christian name to reduce her to a worldly, profane institution and Christianity to the level of a worldly humanistic religion. It attempted to do this by substituting for Christ the divine redeemer, a created demi-God.⁴⁹

"It was not heresy alone, but heresy arrayed in all the pomp of place and power"⁵⁰ which the Church now had to combat. Having failed to destroy the Church by means of persecution, Satan attempted to use heresy as a means to destroy her. But by the grace of God, the Church was preserved.

Importance for the History of Dogma

God used this attack upon the faith of the Church to lead her into a clearer understanding of the truth of Scripture. It is no wonder that Satan attacked this doctrine first. The doctrine of the Trinity and of the Nature of God is basic to the whole Christian faith. Before anything else, the church confesses its faith in God, and everything else follows and is based on that confession.

The whole substance of Christianity was at stake, especially the truth of our redemption. If Jesus Christ is not very God, then we have no salvation. Then our faith is meaningless. Athanasius saw this very clearly. He says:

Wherefore there was need of God; and the Word is God; that those who had become under a curse, He Himself might set free. If then He was of nothing, He would not have been the Christ or Anointed, being one among others and having fellowship as the rest. But whereas He is God, as being Son of God, and is everlasting King, and exists as Radiance and Expression of the Father, therefore fitly is He the expected Christ, whom the Father announces to mankind, by revelation to His holy Prophets; that as through Him we have come to be, so also in Him all men might be redeemed from their sins, and by Him all things might be ruled.⁵¹

49 George Ophoff, *Church History: Ancient Period* (Grand Rapids, Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches), pp. 160, 161.

50 Burn, p. 73.

51 Athanasius, *Orations* I, xii, 49.

and again:

And these are they who, having received the Word, gained power from Him to become Sons of God; for they could not become sons, being by nature creatures, otherwise than by receiving the Spirit of the natural and true Son.⁵²

This is the heart of Athanasius' contribution to the development of the Christian Faith. It was his insistence on this point which finally won over the majority of the Semi-Arians and secured the triumph of Nicene Orthodoxy.

It is interesting in this connection to note that the doctrine of the complete divinity of the Holy Spirit, as well as the doctrine of double procession, were also developed in connection with the doctrine of Christ's divinity, while the Arian error led directly into the errors of Macedonianism and Apollinarianism (both are really inherent in Arianism).

Here in the Arian heresy we see clearly the work of the Spirit of Truth as He leads the Church into the truth of the Scriptures. Without that Spirit, whom the risen and exalted Son of God gave to the Church, the Church has nothing, but through the Spirit she has everything. It was necessary, therefore, that this doctrine basic to the whole Christian Faith should, through the leading of the Spirit of Truth, be established early in the history of the Church.

CONCLUSION

It is important, therefore, that the Church study and know the error of Arius:

The Arian heresy represents a mode of thought which will always prove attractive to some minds. Its appeal is to the present, to pressing intellectual difficulties in justification of a compromise, an illogical compromise between faith and reason. It permits a worship of Christ which on its own showing is little better than idolatry.⁵³

Arianism is no longer really a threat in the Church. Modernism (which teaches the doctrines of Arius) is too far removed from the mainstream of Christianity to be of any real threat to the truth. But of such an attitude toward the truth, the Church must always beware.

The doctrine of the Trinity, as it was developed especially by Athanasius, we have today in basically the same form. All that can be said concerning the Being of God has been said. We must maintain this truth. With Athanasius we say, then, "Let what was confessed by the Fathers at Nicea prevail."⁵⁴

52 Athanasius, *Orationes* II, xxi, 59.

53 Burn, p. 96.

54 Athanasius, *Epistola ad Maximum*, 5.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

- 256 Birth of Arius.
- 274 Birth of Constantine the Great.
- 295 Birth of Athanasius.
- 306 Death of Constantine Chlorus, father of Constantine the Great.
- 312 Battle of the Milvian Bridge.
Alexander becomes Bishop of Alexandria.
- 313 Edict of Milan (Third Edict of Toleration).
- 318 First outbreak of Arianism.
- 323 Battle of Chrysopolis; Constantine becomes sole Emperor.
Council at Alexandria deposes Arius.
A council in Bithynia vindicates Arius.
June 19, 325 – The COUNCIL OF NICEA.
- 328 Death of Alexander.
Consecration of Athanasius.
- 329 Synod at Antioch, Eustathius deposed.
- 335 The Council of Tyre.
First exile of Athanasius.
- 336 Death of Arius.
- 337 Death of Constantine the Great, accession of his three sons.
Restoration of Athanasius.
- 339 Council at Alexandria vindicates Nicene doctrine.
Second exile of Athanasius.
- 340 Murder of Constantine II.
- 341 Death of Eusebius of Nicomedia.
A council at Rome vindicates Athanasius.
The Dedication Council at Antioch (four creeds).
- 343 Councils at Sardica and Philipopolis.
- 346 Council of Milan.
- 347 Restoration of Athanasius.
- 350 Death of Constans.
- 351 First Council of Sirmium.
- 353 Constantius becomes sole Emperor.
Second Council of Arles.
- 355 Second Council of Milan, Athanasius deposed.
- 356 George of Cappadocia made Bishop of Alexandria.
Beginning of Athanasius' third exile.
- 357 Second Council of Sirmium, (the second creed of Sirmium).

- 358 Third Council of Sirmium (the Dated Creed).
Expulsion of George from Alexandria.
 - 359 Double Council at Ariminum and Selucia.
Council at Nice.
Beginning of Macedonianism.
 - 360 Dedication Council at Constantinople.
 - 361 Death of Constantius, accession of Julian the Apostate.
 - 362 Restoration of Athanasius.
Council at Alexandria.
Fourth exile of Athanasius.
Outbreak of Apollinarianism.
 - 363 Death of Julian, accession of Jovian.
 - 364 Restoration of Athanasius.
Death of Jovian, accession of Valentinian (West) and Valens (East).
 - 365 Fifth exile and restoration of Athanasius.
 - 373 Death of Athanasius.
 - 375 Death of Valentinian, accession of Gratian.
 - 378 Death of Valens, accession of Theodosius.
 - 381 Second Ecumenical Council (Constantinople).
 - 383 Death of Gratian, accession of Valentinian II.
- * Many of the dates given here are only approximate.

APPENDIX I

THE CREED OF ARIUS (A.D. 328)

We believe in one God the Father Almighty:

And in the Lord Jesus Christ, His Son, who was begotten of Him before all ages, the Divine Logos, through whom all things were made, both those in the heavens and those on the earth; who came down and was made flesh, and suffered, and rose again, and ascended to the heavens, and shall come again to judge the living and the dead:

And in the Holy Spirit; and in the resurrection of the flesh; and in the life of the world to come; and in a kingdom of heaven; and in one Catholic Church of God from the ends to the ends of the earth.

APPENDIX II

THE CREED OF EUSEBIUS, CAESAREA (A.D. 325)

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible

and invisible:

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, God of God, Light of Light, Life of Life, the only-begotten Son, first-born of all creation, begotten of God the Father before all worlds, through whom also all things were made; who for our salvation was made flesh, and lived his life among men; and suffered, and rose on the third day; and ascended to the Father; and will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead:

And in one Holy Spirit.

We believe that each of these is and exists, the Father truly father, and the Son truly son, and the Holy Spirit truly holy spirit; even as our Lord, when sending forth His disciples to preach, said: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

And concerning these things we affirm that we so hold and so think, and have of old so held, and will so hold till death, and stand steadfast in this faith, anathematizing all ungodly heresy. We testify before Almighty God and our Lord Jesus Christ that we have thought all this in heart and soul ever since we knew ourselves, and we now so think and speak in truth, being able to show by evidence and to convince you that we in past times so believed and preached accordingly.

APPENDIX III

THE FIRST CREED OF ANTIOCH (A.D. 325)

The faith is as follows: to believe in one God, the Father Almighty, incomprehensible, immutable and unchangeable, protector and ruler of the universe, just, good, maker of heaven and earth and of all the things in them, Lord of the law and of the prophets and of the new covenant;

and in one Lord Jesus Christ, only begotten Son, begotten not from that which is not but from the Father, not as made but as properly an offspring, but begotten in an ineffable, indescribable manner, because only the Father Who begot and the Son Who was begotten know (for 'no one knows the Father but the Son, nor the Son but the Father'), Who exists everlastingly and did not at one time not exist. For we have learned from the Holy Scriptures that He alone is the express image, not (plainly) as if He might have remained unbegotten from the Father, nor by adoption (for it is impious and blasphemous to say this); but the Scriptures describe Him as validly and truly begotten as Son, so that we believe Him to be immutable and unchangeable, and that He was not begotten and did not come to be by volition or by adoption, so as to appear to be from

that which is not, but as it befits Him to be begotten; not (a thing which it is not lawful to think) according to likeness or nature or commixture with any of the things which came to be through Him, but in a way which passes all understanding or conception or reasoning we confess Him to have been begotten of the unbegotten Father, the divine Logos, true light, righteousness, Jesus Christ, Lord and Saviour of all. For He is the express image, not of the will or of anything else, but of His Father's very substance.

This Son, the divine Logos, having been born in flesh from Mary the Mother of God and made incarnate, having suffered and died, rose again from the dead and was taken up into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Majesty most high, and will come to judge the living and the dead.

Furthermore, as in our Saviour, the holy Scriptures teach us to believe also in one Spirit, one Catholic Church, the resurrection of the dead and a judgment of requital according to whether a man has done well or badly in the flesh.

And we anathematize those who say or think or preach that the Son of God is a creature or has come into being or has been made and is not truly begotten, or that there was when He was not. For we believe that He was and is and that He is light. Furthermore, we anathematize those who suppose that He is immutable by His own act of will, just as those who derive His birth from that which is not, and deny that He is immutable in the way the Father is. For just as our Saviour is the image of the Father in all things, so in this respect particularly He has been proclaimed the Father's image.

APPENDIX IV

THE SECOND CREED OF ANTIOCH (A.D. 341)

We believe, conformably to the evangelical and apostolical tradition, in one God, the Father Almighty, the Framer, and Maker, and Provider of the universe, from whom are all things.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, His Son, Only-begotten God (John 1:18), by whom are all things, who was begotten before all ages from the Father, God from God, whole from whole, sole from sole, perfect from perfect, King from King, Lord from Lord, Living Word, Living Wisdom, true Light, Way, Truth, Resurrection, Shepherd, Door, both unalterable and unchangeable; exact image of the Godhead, Essence, Will, Power, and Glory of the Father; the first-born of every creature, who was in the beginning with God, God the Word, as it is written in the Gospel, "and the Word was God" (John 1:1); by whom all things were made, and in whom all things consist (Col. 1:17); who in the last days

descended from above, and was born of a virgin according to the Scriptures, and was made man, Mediator between God and man, and Apostle of our faith, and Prince of life, as He says, "I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (John 6:38); who suffered for us and rose again on the third day, and ascended into heaven, and sat down on the right hand of the Father, and is coming again with glory and power, to judge quick and dead.

And in the Holy Ghost, who is given to those who believe for comfort, and sanctification, and initiation, as also our Lord Jesus Christ enjoined His disciples, saying, "Go ye, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19); namely, of a Father who is truly Father, and a Son who is truly Son, and of the Holy Ghost who is truly Holy Ghost, the names not being given without meaning or effect, but denoting accurately the peculiar subsistence, rank, and glory of each that is named, so that they are three in subsistence, and in agreement one.

Holding then this faith, and holding it in the presence of God and Christ, from beginning to end, we anathematise every heretical heterodoxy. And if any teaches beside the sound and right faith of the Scriptures, that time, or season, or age, either is or has been before the generation of the Son, be he anathema. Or if anyone says that the Son is a creature as one of the creatures, or an offspring as one of the offsprings, or a work as one of the works, and not the aforesaid articles one after another, as the Divine Scriptures have delivered, or if he teaches or preaches beside what we have received, be he anathema. For all that has been delivered in the Divine Scriptures, whether by prophets or apostles, do we truly and reverently both believe and follow.

APPENDIX V

THE FOURTH CREED OF ANTIOCH (A.D. 341)

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Creator and Maker of all things; from whom all fatherhood in heaven and earth is named (Eph. 3:15).

And in His Only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who before all ages was begotten from the Father, God from God, Light from Light, by whom all things were made in the heavens and on the earth, visible and invisible, being Word, and Wisdom, and Power, and Life, and True Light; who in the last days was made man for us, and was born of the Holy Virgin; who was crucified, and dead, and buried, and rose again from the dead the third day, and was taken up into heaven, and sat down on the right hand of the Father; and is coming at the consummation of the age, to judge quick and dead, and to render to everyone

according to his works; whose kingdom endures indissolubly into the infinite ages; for He shall be seated on the right hand of the Father, not only in this age but in that which is to come.

And in the Holy Ghost; that is the Paraclete; which having promised to the apostles, He sent forth after His ascension into heaven, to teach them and to remind of all things; through whom also shall be sanctified the souls of those who sincerely believe in Him.

But those who say that the Son was from nothing, or from some other substance and not from God, and there was time when He was not, the Catholic Church regards as aliens.

APPENDIX VI

THE DATED CREED OF SIRMIMUM (A.D. 358)

We believe in one Only and True God, the Father Almighty, Creator and Framer of all things. And in one Only-begotten Son of God, who, before all ages, and before all origin, and before all conceivable time, and before all comprehensible essence, was begotten impassibly from God: through whom the ages were disposed and all things were made; and Him begotten as the Only-begotten, Only from the Only Father, God from God, like to the Father who begat Him, according to the Scriptures; whose origin no one knoweth save the Father alone who begat Him. We know that He, the Only-begotten Son of God, at the Father's bidding came from the heavens for the abolishment of sin, and was born of the Virgin Mary, and conversed with the disciples, and fulfilled all the Economy according to the Father's will, was crucified and died and descended into the parts beneath the earth, and regulated the things there, whom the gate-keepers of hell saw (Job 38:17) and shuddered; and He rose from the dead the third day, and conversed with the disciples, and fulfilled all the Economy, and when the forty days were full, ascended into the heavens, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father, and is coming in the last day of the resurrection in the glory of the Father, to everyone according to his works. And in the Holy Ghost, whom the Only-begotten of God Himself, Jesus Christ, had promised to send to the race of men, the Paraclete, as it is written: "I go to My Father, and I will ask the Father, and He shall send you another Paraclete, even the Spirit of Truth, He shall take of Mine and shall teach and bring to your remembrance all things" (John 14:16, 17, 26; 16:14). But whereas the term "essence" has been adopted by the Fathers in simplicity, and gives offence as being misconceived by the people, because it is not contained in the Scriptures, it has seemed good to remove it, that no mention of "essence" with regard to

God should be made at all in the future, because the Divine Scriptures nowhere mention "essence" of the Father and Son. But we say the Son is like the Father in all things, as also the Holy Scriptures say and teach.

APPENDIX VII

THE CREED OF CONSTANTINOPLE (A.D. 381)

We believe in one God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible:

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten of His Father before all worlds, (God of God), Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, through whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was made flesh of the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary, and entered humanity; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, and rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father, and shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end:

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father (and the Son), who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spake through the Prophets; in the catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism unto remission of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead; and the life of the world to come.

APPENDIX VIII

Extracts from THE THALIA OF ARIUS

According to faith of God's elect, God's prudent ones,
Holy children, rightly dividing, God's Holy Spirit receiving,
Have I learned this from the partakers of wisdom,
Accomplished, divinely taught, and wise in all things.
Along their track, have I been walking, with like opinions,
I the very famous, the much suffering for God's glory;
And taught of God, I have acquired wisdom and knowledge.

Quoted in Athanasius, *Orationes Contra Arianos*, I, ii, 5.

THE SIMPLICITY OF GOD'S WILL AND THE "FREE OFFER" (7)

Professor H.C. Hoeksema

In the early part of this series of articles I quoted extensively from the Rev. Herman Hoeksema's polemic against Prof. W. Heyns entitled, *THE GOSPEL, The Most Recent Attack On The Truth Of Sovereign Grace*. I did so because the controversy between Heyns, who wrote at that time in *De Wachter* in defense of the First Point of 1924 and its general, well-meant offer of salvation, and Hoeksema, who replied first in the *Standard Bearer* and later in this book (which is a compilation of the *Standard Bearer* articles), concentrated almost entirely on the subject of the will of God as it related to the issue of the "free offer." Since the translation of those earlier chapters appeared in this *Journal*, it has been suggested to me more than once that it would be both interesting and helpful if the remainder of that little booklet were translated, especially because there is such a sharp joining of the issue in the Heyns-Hoeksema controversy and because the focus is on the matter of the will of God. Hence, while this takes me astray from my original plan for this series, I will heed the suggestion, seeing that all this material is closely related to our general subject.

Here follows a translation of the next chapter:

Chapter IV

GOD DOES NOT WILL

The reader should keep in mind that at present the discussion is not yet about the question of a general, well-meant offer of grace and salvation on God's part in the preaching of the Gospel, but about the more fundamental question whether there is in God also a will to save all men. Heyns himself has reduced the dispute to this question. He has discerned correctly that a well-meant offer of grace and salvation to all men, as it has recently been emphasized in the Christian Reformed Churches, presupposes a will in God to save all men. And at present we are treating the question of the two-wills-doctrine as Heyns has always proposed and proclaimed it. In this connection we have pointed out, first of all, that Scripture everywhere teaches that God is one, not two; that He is also God absolutely alone, and that there is none beside Him; that He is the independent and unchangeable God, and that He is neither limited nor influenced by anything outside His own being. In the second place, we have clearly demonstrated that the two passages to which Heyns appeals in his defense of the

two-wills-doctrine have no validity whatsoever, and that *all* in Holy Scripture never means all individuals of the human race, unless the context expressly demands that we understand the term in that sense. There is, therefore, no proof on Heyns' part for his assertion that there is in God a will to save all men.

But we shall now furnish abundant proof that Scripture very expressly teaches that there is in God *not* such a will to save all men, that He indeed very expressly wills that some men shall go lost, and that He Himself also executes this will. We may understand it or not understand it, we may desire it or not desire it; but the fact is that Scripture also very expressly teaches that God leads some men to destruction, and that, too, in harmony with His sovereign good pleasure. God is God. He alone is God, and He is God in relation to all things. He is and remains God with relation to the salvation of the elect; but He is and remains God alone also with relation to the damnation of the reprobate. He leads the elect to heaven; He also casts the reprobate into hell. And no one ever resists His will in this. And He does all this for His own name's sake, and that, too, in complete harmony with His being God. He maintains Himself and wills Himself.

And then we wish to point out, first of all, that the history of salvation should make it sufficiently clear, also for Heyns, that there is in God no will to save *all men*. All men simply includes all human individuals who have ever lived on earth, who live now, and who shall live to the last day. Heyns, too, cannot escape this. If Heyns says that Scripture teaches that God wills that *all men* shall be saved, then he has no right arbitrarily to limit this. Indeed, Heyns does not do this either. He teaches simply that God wills that all men, without distinction, shall be saved. And this simply includes all human individuals from all ages and all lands. But turn with this view to the history of salvation and try to apply it. And then you soon discover that you nowhere find a trace of that will of God to save all men. On the contrary, everywhere the history most explicitly contradicts such a presentation. Immediately at the beginning the key to the explanation of history is offered us in Genesis 3:15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." On our part it may be granted that this prophetic word centrally refers to the promised Seed in Christ; but Heyns shall have to concede on his part also that the entire course of history is here pictured in broad lines, history as it shall be characterized by a fearful, life-and-death battle between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, the children of the light and the children of darkness. Besides, this struggle is here pictured as the realization of God's will and counsel. And He also executes that counsel. He Himself shall make enmity. With this announce-

ment of the course of history to the end of the ages the presentation of Heyns, that God wills that all men shall be saved, certainly does not fit. On the contrary, here already it is absolutely shut out. There shall be a seed of the serpent and a seed of the woman. And God shall put enmity between them.

And the course of history is actually realized in harmony with this word. Thus it is already before the flood, as is plain from the fearful struggle between the descendants of Seth and those of Cain. If God wills that all men be saved, and if He does everything that He pleases, what a sad and inexplicable end of the first world we then behold when presently the whole world of men perishes in the flood, and few, that is, eight souls, are saved by the water! And after the flood the history is no different. From Noah's generation Shem is immediately chosen; out of Shem's generation Abraham is presently separated, in order, with Isaac and Jacob, to become a stranger in the earth; and out of Abraham arises before long Israel, as the bearer of the promise and of the holy seed. If God wills that all men shall be saved, how do you explain then, Professor Heyns, that in the old dispensation He had dealings only with Israel for a period of hundreds of years? Did He will then, too, that the heathen should be saved? Does not Holy Scripture teach us, not only by the history itself but also in so many words, that He let the heathen walk in their own ways until the new dispensation? In other words, does not God's Word teach us that then, at least, God did not will that all men should be saved? The testimony of history is plain and incontrovertible. There was in the old dispensation no will in God to save all men. If Heyns nevertheless wants to maintain his assertion with a view to the peoples outside of Israel before the coming of Christ, then he shall certainly have to teach that presently they shall still receive a chance to be saved.

But is it any different in the new dispensation? Does the history of salvation teach us that in the days of the New Testament God wills that every living soul shall be saved? How strange, then, is the method which God follows in the proclamation of the Gospel! The Savior still sends His disciples only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and even forbids them to go to the heathen or to the Samaritans. Later He chooses twelve apostles, who then must bring the Gospel to all peoples. A small number of missionaries, few means for the speedy spread of the Gospel, who sometimes also had to pine away in prison for a long time for Christ's sake, who could not possibly bring the Gospel, not even with the greatest conceivable exertion, nor even with all possible help from the converts who believed their word, to even a twentieth of the people living at that time — what a strange history all this is in the light of the view of Heyns, that God wills that all men shall be saved! And later it is no different. Heyns will certainly believe with me, will he not, that in the actual fruit of mission labor we

may see a revelation of the will of God? Will he not confess with me, and with the Canons of Dordt, that also the proclamation of the Gospel follows the course of God's good pleasure? Christ is after all the Missionary, is He not? Does He not call His servants? He prepares for them a place, equips them, and sends them wherever He wills, does He not? I know that Heyns will surely believe this with me. But what then is the result? This, that even after nineteen centuries Christ has allowed the Gospel to be preached to only a very small portion of all men! It may safely be said that also in the new dispensation far and away the greater portion of all men have died without ever hearing the Gospel! How do you explain all this, Professor Heyns? I once heard a lecturer on missions, who also laid claim to the name Reformed, who pictured to us in glaring colors how many heathen sank away in hell every minute, and who then drew the conclusion that this was our responsibility because we did not make sufficient haste with the King's business! That responsibility I will not accept. Neither will Heyns, I expect. And I even suspect that it did not weigh heavily upon the conscience of the lecturer. No, we shall continue to maintain that the Gospel is proclaimed in every place to which God in His good pleasure sends it. But is it then not passing strange to you, Heyns, that alongside all this you nevertheless also want to maintain that God wills that all men shall be saved?

But Heyns will undoubtedly say that he does not mean it thus, that he never intended to teach that there is in God a will to save all men who ever lived, who live now, or who shall live in the future. But what then? Heyns himself does not tell us what he really means. But we suspect that he would answer that God wills that all men who hear the Gospel shall be saved. For Heyns must have a basis for his assertion that the Gospel is a general, well-meant offer of grace and salvation to all who hear it. And for this the proposition can serve: God wills that all who hear the Gospel shall be saved. Now such a view — that speaks for itself — is totally arbitrary and without any ground in Holy Scripture. For the proposition that God wills that *all men* shall be saved Heyns could at least still find a few texts which, quoted superficially, could serve as proof, although in reality they mean something entirely different, as we have seen. But for the proposition: God wills that those who hear the Gospel shall be saved — all of them, no one else — there is in Holy Scripture absolutely no basis. Such a view Heyns gets entirely out of his own reason. Besides, with this limitation Heyns also sacrifices his own position. For then God after all does not will that *all men* shall be saved. Then we really obtain three circles. In the first place there is the circle of those who never hear the Gospel and of whom God does not will that they be saved, and who also are not saved. In the second place, there is the circle of men who indeed hear the Gospel, whom God indeed wants

to save, but who are not saved. In the third place, there is the circle of those whom God wills to be saved, who hear the Gospel, and who also are actually saved. Of the first group Heyns would then say that God does not will that they be saved. Of the second group, that God wills that they be saved and also does not will it. Of the third group, that He wills that they be saved. That indeed becomes a strange conception. But we wish nevertheless to place ourselves before the question, with the Scriptures in hand, whether there is any truth to it, that God wills that all who hear the Gospel shall be saved.

And then we would ask Heyns in all seriousness: How do you conceive of that will of God, professor? Has God ever in any way revealed that will to save all who come under the Gospel? If God wills that all men (taken now in the sense of all who live under the Gospel) shall be saved, has God also done anything to carry out that will? Or does the Lord do something now to realize that will whereby He wills the salvation of all? Also Professor Heyns will surely hold fast to the particular character of the atonement of Christ. What does this mean? That Christ according to the intention of God and according to His own intention has not died for all men, but absolutely only for the elect alone. God therefore has not willed that Christ should make satisfaction for sin to His justice for all men. He has given Christ for His own, for the elect. That means that they through divine grace are in Christ, also were in Christ, according to the purpose of God the Father, when Christ made satisfaction on the cross. They died and were buried with Christ, they are raised with Christ, they are justified in Christ and set with Christ in heaven. Heyns also believes that. He would not want to deny that. But for those others, of whom Heyns says that God also wills to save them, Christ according to the intention of God and according to His own intention did not die. God did not will, therefore, to reconcile them unto Himself. They have not died with Christ, are not raised up with Him, and are not set in heavenly places with Him, are not justified in Him. Well then, professor, if you now do not want to deny all this, if you do not now want to say, "Yes, I believe that; but I also do not believe it," then I ask you in all seriousness: how then has God in Christ revealed that will to save all? And, what is more, how *can* God will to save also those for whom Christ has not died? Are they conceived of and willed as justified by God in another way than in Christ? If not, how then? Can God will them as saved outside of Christ? Impossible, you say. Good, but how then can God will this? That He did not will it when Christ died for His own is plain, also for Heyns: for He did not die for all. That God then actually *cannot* will it (stated reverently: God cannot in anything will contrary to His own will) is also plain, for there is no other atonement for sins, and the atonement which is in Christ Jesus is not for all. Hence, it is

very plain that there cannot possibly be in God a will to save all.

[It is significant to note that in the 1960s this inconsistency of Prof. Heyns and others of that earlier period drove Prof. Harold Dekker, and many who agreed with him, to become consistent and to opt for the Arminian error of general atonement. And the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church could not muster a majority vote to condemn Prof. Dekker's position as heretical. Neither was a majority vote mustered, however, to approve Prof. Dekker's position. The ecclesiastical way out was finally found in the very unecclesiastical declaration that Prof. Dekker's doctrine was "ambiguous and abstract." In the 1920s and 1930s Prof. Heyns and others were still too Reformed to accept the consequence of the general atonement. It is also significant to note that Herman Hoeksema and George Ophoff predicted that some day the specter of general atonement would raise its ugly head in the Christian Reformed Church, and that in the 1960s this actually happened. HCH]

And now do not say that I am judging again according to my reason. For, in the first place, Professor Heyns, who consistently proceeds from his reason, who does not even make a single attempt to expound a text, has certainly lost the right to say this. But in the second place, this is also not true. I reason from the Scriptures. Scripture teaches me everywhere that Christ died for the elect, for them all, for them alone. Our Confession teaches us the same. And that indeed lies in the nature of Christ's satisfaction. If I were not so convinced that Heyns dares not and will not contradict this, I would adduce abundant proof. But at present this is not necessary. We are agreed on this. The elect *are* reconciled with God according to His will; the reprobate *are not* reconciled with God according to His will. Those for whom Christ died are justified forever; their righteousness is realized at the cross forever. Those for whom Christ did not die are to eternity in their sins. Now does God nevertheless will their salvation? That would then come down to this, that next to the will of God's eternal good pleasure there is also a certain powerless will or wish in God which He does not carry out. That will, according to which God then would will to save all men, He Himself does not will to carry out. In other words, it comes down to the same thing again: that God of Heyns, who wills that all men shall be saved, is not God. He is an idol. And whereas an idol is nothing in the world, that god is also nothing. And therefore, let it be stated with all possible emphasis: *that Christ died only for the elect teaches most decidedly that there is in God no will that all men shall be saved.*

But we have not finished yet. There is much more proof. I am glad that Heyns believes with me that the subjective application of salvation is from God alone. Scripture teaches that; the Confession teaches that; and the Confession

also declares most positively that he who teaches otherwise, while he feigns that he presents his contrary view in a good sense, seeks to instill into the people the destructive poison of the Pelagian errors (Canons of Dordt, II, B, 6). If also in this regard I could not be certain that Heyns also believes and confesses this, I could adduce abundant proof. At present this is also superfluous. God accomplishes salvation with irresistible grace. He regenerates, He calls, He bestows faith and ingrafts into Christ, He justifies, and He sanctifies. And He saves whom He will. He also does not save whom He wills not to save (Scripture expresses this much more strongly, but about this later). Well, then, if, say, five hundred people come under the proclamation of the Gospel, and two hundred are through that Gospel called and saved, who does this then? God alone. Heyns also says this. And why then in the last instance are those other three hundred not saved? Because they were not willing? Surely not, for no one is willing. And although it is true a thousand times over that God also with respect to them works and treats them as rational, moral creatures, although it remains true a thousand times over that by their rejection of the Gospel their sin is brought to light and they are therefore guilty, nevertheless it is also true that they are not saved *because God does not will to save them*. Hence, also from this point of view it is raised beyond all doubt that there is in God no will to save all men who live under the Gospel.

But there is still more. Heyns could finally still say that we proceed from our reason and do not speak from Scripture, even though our entire reasoning-process is ever so firmly grounded in Scripture. Therefore we shall also still let Scripture speak abundantly, in order to make plain that there is not such a second will in God. The texts for this are ready at hand. I will quote only a few examples. If Heyns would require it, I could easily quadruple them. This is not a matter of a few isolated passages, but the current teaching of Scripture. Let me point first of all to Matthew 11:25-27: "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." This text occurs in the immediate context of the text which is a favorite with the proponents of general grace, "Come unto me, all ye that labor. . . ." Those who cite it would do well carefully to investigate the context before they misuse this favorite text as they do. In any event the passage cited teaches the following:

- 1) That the Father hides the things of the Kingdom of God from the wise and

prudent, and reveals them to the babes. This does not mean that He allows the Gospel to be preached to the babes, but not to the wise and prudent. For the context shows very plainly that the Gospel is proclaimed to both. No, but under and through the preaching of the Gospel there is a spiritually-revealing operation of God in the hearts of the babes, whereby they spiritually see and spiritually discern the things of the Kingdom of God; the Spirit of God illumines them, gives them eyes to see and causes them to see, gives them ears to hear and causes them to hear. And so through the Gospel they are saved. But is this all? Is this the only operation of God under the preaching of the Gospel? Is there no operation of God in those who nevertheless go lost under the preaching of the Gospel? Most certainly there is. God also hides the things of the Kingdom of heaven and gives eyes not to see and ears not to hear. And this He does in the case of the wise and prudent.

2) That Christ thanks the Father for this divine arrangement, not only for this, that He has revealed these things to the babes, but also for the fact that He has kept and still keeps them hid for the wise and prudent. For in this way the Father is glorified, and that is the concern of the Servant of the Lord.

3) That this is entirely in agreement with the good pleasure of the Father – not only the revealing but also the hiding of the things of the Kingdom of God from the wise and prudent; in agreement, that is, with the will of God as God for His name's sake takes pleasure in His own will.

4) That no one among the children of men can know the Father except they to whom the Son will reveal Him. Now I would ask Heyns in all conscience: would he still want to maintain that God wills to save these wise and prudent, from whom He hides the things of the Kingdom of God? Surely, Heyns himself now concedes: that cannot be; there is in God no will which would save these men, for otherwise God would be operating against His own will, something which He never does; and besides, it states here in plain words that thus was the good pleasure of the Father! But then there is in God no will to save all who live under the Gospel. It is indeed difficult to retreat from a once adopted view; but Heyns himself must surely agree now.

Another example.

Has Heyns, when he was still a minister, or later when as professor he went out preaching, never had the congregation sing, and then also preached in such a way that the congregation could sincerely sing: "Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap. Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake. Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them. Let their habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in

their tents. For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded. Add iniquity unto their iniquity: and let them not come into thy righteousness. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous. But I am poor and sorrowful: let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high. I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving" (Psalm 69:22-30).

[Note: Actually the author at this point quotes not directly from Psalm 69, but cites three stanzas of the Dutch versification of Psalm 69 based on the passage cited above. These would have been not unfamiliar stanzas to the Dutch churchgoers of that day, when there were still many well-attended Dutch services in Reformed churches. While this passage of Psalm 69 is not so detailedly versified in our *Psalter*, fundamentally the same note is found in *Psalter* number 185, stanzas 8 and 9:

 Their peace and plenty be their snare,
 In blindness let them grope;
 Thy indignation on them pour,
 And desolate their hope.

 Because they proudly persecute
 Those whom Thou, Lord, dost smite,
 Let them be blotted from Thy book
 And banished from Thy sight.

Similar and more detailed versifications can still be found in the *Scottish Psalter*, still used in some Presbyterian communions. HCH]

A heavy song, is it not? Difficult to sing. It may justifiably be questioned whether the church of our day, also the Reformed church, can sing these things with and from a thankful heart! Today men rather compose hymns, which are sometimes beautiful, sometimes indeed also less than beautiful, but in which the note which you can hear in the stanzas quoted above is surely missing. With few exceptions the church no longer sings the psalms. And I add to this: they are no longer able to sing the psalms. Do not think that the stanzas quoted above are exceptions. The psalms are full of similar prayers of the church. But it speaks for itself that on the basis of the thoroughly unscriptural philosophy that God wills that all men be saved, you can never sing these psalms. Common grace is especially to the psalms completely foreign!

But you say, perhaps, this is Old Testament language? By no means. If you would really introduce New Testament hymns, you would get precisely the same note. You may safely rhyme the New Testament, and then let the church sing hymns. You would obtain precisely the same thing, as far as the essential

content is concerned, as you find in the psalms. Just listen to Romans 11:5-10: "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block, and a recompence unto them: Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway."

Now here it is taught:

- 1) That even though it may appear thus to us, God never casts away nor has cast away His people. The elect alone are, of course, His people. These have obtained it.
- 2) That the rest are hardened, and that, too, through an operation of God: for He hath given them a spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear unto this day.
- 3) That David sang of this Messianically, and singing about it prayed that this song should be laid on the lips of the New Testament church, to be sung by them from a thankful heart and to the praise of our great God and King. Now the question is: did God will also that these men, to whom He gave a spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, ears that they should not hear, should be saved? Heyns again agrees that this could not be maintained. Also these passages of Scripture prove abundantly that there is in God no will to save all men, also not those who live under the Gospel. For the latter was also the case with these Israelites who did not obtain salvation.

Now Heyns may find this hard and terrible. He may not desire it. This is very well possible. From of old already the sinful nature has rebelled against God, Who is really GOD. There is nothing strange in this. Already against the presentation of God which the Holy Spirit gives through Paul sinful flesh murmured, "Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?" But this does not change matters. Such an attitude is still worse than that of rationalism. The only concern now is: what does Scripture teach? And only Scripture can teach us who and what God is. Also Heyns shall have to bow to this, and ultimately will bow. Because I am confident and also deeply convinced that Heyns knows of nothing which he can adduce against these passages of Scripture, I also still have hope that Heyns will retreat from his position and will agree that there are in God no two wills, that there is in God no will according

to which He wills that all men shall be saved.

It is really a sad and strange situation that one can be called to contest an emeritus professor, who for years has taught at the Theological School of the Reformed Churches here and also has given instruction in Reformed Doctrine, because of his position that God wills that all men be saved. It is not that I lose from view the fact that Heyns also teaches that God does not will this. But with the latter Heyns I have no quarrel. I am only opposing the Heyns who teaches that God wills that all be saved; the other Heyns, who teaches precisely the opposite, I leave in peace. And then I say again that it is a strange, but also a sad phenomenon, that it appears to be necessary to attack a Reformed professor for such a position and to write this brochure with the purpose of making it plain that this is not according to Scripture and not according to the Reformed confession. Indeed, that God does not will that all men be saved, that there is not such a will in God, may be considered to belong to those things which have complete certainty among us. The Reformed have, after all, always taught this. But that it is necessary, appears plainly from the fact that Heyns can write these things in *De Wachter* without as much as a word of criticism being voiced. And what is more, Zwier, who has at present taken up his pen again, already informs us that he has found the articles of Prof. Heyns very instructive. Men are therefore far gone in the Christian Reformed Churches, so far, that they can teach and write without fear of contradiction that God wills that all men, head for head and soul for soul shall be saved! And this fact spurs me on to continue adducing my proof, however unnecessary it should be and however much it goes against the grain to have to do this over against men who bear the name of Reformed.

BOOK REVIEW

Professor H. Hanko

INFANT BAPTISM AND REGENERATION, by Dr. J. Douma; Copieerinrichting Van den Berg, Broederweg 6, Kampen, The Netherlands; 36pp. (paper).

As our readers will recall, we have just completed a series of articles in the *Journal* on the Reformed doctrine of infant baptism; and, in connection with that series, we criticized rather extensively David Kingdon's book: "Children of Abraham." It was with more than passing interest, therefore, that we received a copy of "Infant Baptism and Regeneration" in which Dr. J. Douma, professor of ethics at the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Churches (Liberated) in Kampen, also reviews the book of Kingdon which we found so interesting.

Dr. Douma had evidently spent some time in Cuckfield, England where another Reformed Baptist, Erroll Hulse, is minister. He had found the fellowship in this congregation delightful and found many things with which he agreed. Nevertheless, there is this issue of infant baptism, and Dr. Douma directs his attention to it in this pamphlet. He does this by way of a critique of Kingdon because he finds in Kingdon's book, "a clear presentation of the Reformed Baptist stand-point" (p. 7).

Usually we are not greatly interested in what others have to say about a book on which we also commented; but this is an exception. Although the book was sent to us for purposes of being reviewed, we are interested in this book for other reasons. Dr. Douma has many of the same criticisms of Kingdon's position which we have, and this stands to reason. But when his own views are expressed in the book, then we are more than interested because Dr. Douma's views differ widely from ours and, it seems to us that Dr. Douma's views leave him open to many criticisms of the Baptist position which make his apology very weak at certain key points.

Dr. Douma is a member of the Liberated Churches, and those who are familiar with the history of the Protestant Reformed Churches will know our Churches had contact with the Liberated Churches in the late Forties and early Fifties. This contact led to a discussion of the differing covenant views and the relation between baptism and the covenant as held by the Liberated Churches and by our denomination.

Now it is not my purpose to resurrect old discussions and renew old controversies, but the views which are held by the Liberated Churches in general, and by Dr. Douma in particular, are views which come to the heart of the whole question of infant baptism. The question which interests us as we take a look at this pamphlet of Dr. Douma is: Can the Liberated maintain their position on the covenant and baptism and still provide a Scriptural rebuttal of the Baptist position? Our answer to this is, No, they cannot.

We do not intend to discuss at length in this review those areas of criticism in which Douma correctly castigates the Baptists for failing to be Scriptural; this would be a mere repetition of what we have already said in our series of this subject. For example, Douma correctly attacks the basic question of the relation between circumcision and baptism and rightly criticizes the view of Kingdon that circumcision is only a national and external sign though it has also spiritual implications. Douma here is right on target and demonstrates the unScriptural character of the Baptist view.

But in other places in his pamphlet, Douma leaves himself wide open to serious criticisms of the Baptists and does this in the interests of maintaining a view of the covenant and of baptism which is not Scriptural. In fact, in the development of his view, he comes so close to the Baptist position that it is difficult at best to distinguish between the two.

The very heart of the question lies in Douma's view that all the people within the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, and all the people within the Church in the New Testament are called saints by virtue of the promise. Douma claims that God's address to Israel and to the church as people of God is because all were in the covenant and all possessed the promise of the covenant. Referring to Calvin on Matthew 8:12, he writes:

God's promise was also given to them (i.e., unbelieving children, H.H.) and it cannot be denied that eternal salvation was offered to all. . . . The name of church can be applied to all who receive the promise, though in the innermost sanctuary of God no others are considered to be sons of God but those in whom the promise has been confirmed by faith.

Now, while it is true that Douma does not *quote* Calvin in the above reference, the fact nevertheless remains that Calvin says nothing of what Douma puts in his mouth. Calvin does not say that all unbelieving children received the promise. We quote Calvin's entire discussion here on Matthew 8:12, for this is a crucial issue.

Who does he call those persons *children of the kingdom*, who were nothing less than children of Abraham? for those who are aliens from the faith have no right to be considered a part of

God's flock. I answer: Though they did not actually belong to the Church of God (something Douma insists is true – they do belong to the Church of God, Douma says, H.H.), yet, as they occupied a place in the Church, he allows them this designation. Besides, it ought to be observed that, so long as the covenant of God remained in the family of Abraham, there was such force in it, that the inheritance of the heavenly kingdom belonged peculiarly to them. With respect to God himself, at least, they were *holy branches from a holy root*, (Rom. xi.16:) and the rejection of them, which afterwards followed, shows plainly enough, that they belonged, at that time, to the family of God. Secondly, it ought to be observed, that Christ does not now speak of individuals, but of the whole nation. This was still harder to endure than the calling of the Gentiles. That the Gentiles should be admitted, by a free adoption, into the same body with the posterity of Abraham, could scarcely be endured: but that the Jews themselves should be driven out, to make way for their being succeeded by the Gentiles, appeared to them altogether monstrous. Yet Christ declares that both will happen: that God will admit strangers into the bosom of Abraham, and that he will exclude *the children*. There is an implied contrast in the phrase, *the darkness that is without*. It means that out of the kingdom of God, which is the kingdom of light, nothing but darkness reigns. By *darkness* Scripture points out that dreadful anguish, which can neither be expressed nor conceived in this life.

It is clear from this quote that Calvin, in no way, speaks of the unbelieving children of Israel or of the Church as possessing the promise. What he does state is that these children belonged *outwardly* to the nation and to the Church. No one denies this, of course. But Dr. Douma ought to be a bit careful with his references to Calvin.

But this is by way of parentheses.

Douma returns again and again to this point throughout his brochure.

Once again referring to Calvin (this time his commentary on Genesis 17:7), Douma writes:

There are two kinds of children, but they are endowed with the same promise of the gospel and placed in the same covenant. . . . God meant it when He established His covenant with all of them and had it sealed to all with circumcision and baptism.

On page 22, he writes:

We should not start from the mysteries of election and reprobation of man, and real or unreal conversion of man. We

should start from God's call, His covenant and His steadfast promises. *By virtue of these promises we address all the people of the church as called saints.* (All the underscoring is ours except for the word "called," H.H.) You are Christ's, so do not be of the flesh, says Paul, 1 Cor. 3:3, 23. One who does not start from the steadfastness of God's words, but wants to build on the firmness of man's conversion, builds upon sandy soil.

He says the same thing again on page 24:

We do *not* agree with Kingdon when he wants to speak of two kinds of offspring of Abraham in the old covenant, but does not want to extend that line to the new covenant. What applies to true circumcision and being a true Jew in the old dispensation applies equally to true baptism and being a true Christian in the new dispensation. Not only in former times, but also today there are members of the covenant who do not behave as children, but as illegitimate sons. *They have received the same promises as the others* (underscoring ours, H.H.), but they have despised God's grace. Hence we also objected when Kingdon wanted to apply the promises to the elect only.

It is this fact, namely that the promises of the covenant belong to all the children whether elect or reprobate, believing or unbelieving, those who will be saved and those who will not be saved, that becomes, in Douma's thinking, the grounds for the baptism of infants. He writes:

Therefore, we baptize our children; not because something is present *in* them (regeneration, faith, conversion), but because something was expressed *about* them: the promise of the remission of sins and eternal life (page 34).

It is clear, therefore, that Douma wants to make the grounds for infant baptism the fact that all the children born in the lines of the covenant (that is, from believing parents) have the promises of God. They are, in fact, included in the covenant. They receive all the promises of the covenant. They receive the sign of the covenant, whether circumcision or baptism. And they are throughout considered to be as much in the covenant as those who are saved.

This view leads to several other views of Douma.

In the first place, it is obvious that Douma must explain why all the children who are born of believing parents are not saved. He does this in several ways.

He does this first of all by insisting that it is possible to break the covenant. He writes on page 31:

... there are therefore people in the new dispensation as well as in the old who desecrate and break the covenant with God. ...

No less than in the old covenant there are breakers and violators of the new covenant.

The idea is clear. All are included in the covenant and all receive the promises, but some break this covenant and desecrate it. Although God establishes His covenant, it is possible for man to break it — to undo what God has done.

Secondly, Douma must explain how all these children can indeed be in the covenant, receive the promises and be called, “holy” and “members of the church.” To accomplish this, he makes a distinction between the *inward* covenant and the *outward* covenant. While he does not go into this idea in detail in his brochure, there are several passages where this idea comes to the fore. On pages 17 and 18 he writes, paraphrasing Scripture:

Could it not conceivably be said of baptism in the new dispensation exactly what Paul said of the circumcision of many Jews — like this, for instance: “For he is not a real Christian who is called a Christian, and baptized with the baptism of water; but he is a Christian who is one inwardly, and true baptism is that with a good conscience before God, in the Spirit, not in the form. Then his praise is not of men, but of God.”

This is a very common view in Reformed circles, and Douma also adopts it. All the children who are baptized are brought into the covenant. God establishes His covenant with them. They receive the promises objectively, i.e., not in their hearts. But they are part of the Church and are holy.

Whether or not they are actually brought *inwardly* into the covenant depends upon what *they* do with these promises and with the covenant which God establishes with them. If they break the covenant, desecrate it and reject the promises, then they are indeed moved, by their own act, outside the covenant. Only if they accept the covenant and its promises is the inward and subjective realization of the covenant their possession.

This explains also Douma’s misinterpretation of Calvin, referred to above. He writes on page 21, claiming Calvin as his support:

God’s promise was also given to them and it cannot be denied that eternal salvation was offered to all. . . .

So this view then, is something like the general and well-meant offer of the gospel. Only now it is applied specifically to the covenant. Just as, in the preaching, God offers salvation to all and expresses in this offer His willingness to save all who hear, so within the covenant, God offers His promises to all and expresses His desire that all receive eternal salvation.

There is something ironic about this. Douma warns Kingdon and all Reformed Baptists that they stand perilously close to Arminianism, even though they disavow it. But Douma falls into the same trap. He writes, by way of conclusion, on page 36:

What we appreciated so much with the Reformed Baptists during our holidays in England and also in their writings, is their outspoken confession of God's sovereignty and His free grace. Not man, but God decides. Hence the aversion these Reformed Baptists have to all *Arminianism*.

A last word in this connection: Do not our friends, in England lay the stress on the decision of man after all, and on his conversion, when they keep rejecting infant baptism? The conversion theology which dominates Baptist doctrines of baptism and the church looks, as far as the children are concerned, *forward* to the time of their response to Christ, p. 21 (of Kingdon's book, H.H.). But unfortunately it does not look *back* to what God did first, i.e., take up the believers with their children in His covenant.

This is surely the pot calling the kettle black. If Baptists "lay the stress on the decision of man after all," does not Douma do the same thing? How can he successfully refute the Baptist view with a conception which includes all who are born of believing parents in the covenant and which leaves the final decision of whether they shall remain in the covenant up to man himself? In both instances, the stress lies indeed on the decision of man.

But there is another striking similarity between the position of Baptists and that of Douma.

Douma compares, on pages 32 and 33, the positions of Abraham Kuyper and David Kingdon. He points out, correctly, that Kuyper presupposed as regenerate all the children born of believing parents, although many are in fact (as Kuyper also admits) unconverted. Kingdon, on the other hand, claims that all are unconverted although he insists that children who die in infancy are saved. But Douma denies that salvation is possible apart from the preaching, although he too maintains that children who die in infancy are saved. He makes no effort to explain this dilemma.

But then he goes on. He writes that he does not consider his children as children under God's wrath as Kingdon does. They have, after all, the promise and are in the covenant. Nevertheless, they are unconverted for all that.

We do not consider our children – baptized on the ground of God's commandment and promise – as children under God's wrath. Kingdon wants us to do so. But if our children are children of God who are given the promise of remission of sins and eternal life, they are not under God's wrath. When God in Christ blesses the children, nobody should make the opposite of that blessing. Without realizing it, our children are partakers of the condemnation in Adam. Without their knowledge they are received unto grace in Christ, as God's children.

We do not consider our children as regenerated children either. We consider them as covenant children whom we must instruct so that they understand their baptism. The promise is to them as well as to the adults. But the requirement of faith and conversion applies to them as well. They have to say Amen to their baptism by believing and being converted. Leading out from their wealth, we address them and point out their responsibility. They are children of God, but they must also *live* as children of God.

We also calmly dare to say, as opposed to Kingdon, that our children are Christian children. By the call of God (and not by their own "Christianity") they are separated from the children of this world. But they must accordingly behave as children of God. That does not come of itself; and *with* Kingdon we are against all false security. We heartily agree with him that one should not presume that our children are regenerate, for such a presumption cultivates that false security, p. 64 (of Kingdon's book, H.H.). But it does not cultivate false security when we say, as opposed to Kingdon, "Repent and believe the gospel." For conversion and faith are daily matters, a calling for our adults as well as our children.

So, our children are not regenerated children either. But then they are also not converted. What then, is the difference between the position of the Baptists and that of the Liberated? It is true that the Liberated hold to the view that these children are the recipients of grace — a kind of common grace which is introduced into the covenant. Douma says that Kingdon will not accept this. I do not know whether this is true. But the fact remains that common grace is not saving grace. And unregenerated children are unconverted children. And so the Liberated and the Baptists alike must treat their children as unconverted.

The Baptists say that only those who are converted must be baptized. The Liberated demur and insist that children (of believing parents) must be baptized. But they treat the children the same. All are unconverted. And they remain such until they repent and believe the gospel.

It is difficult to see how, with such a view, the position of the Baptists can be successfully refuted. The Liberated have really given up their most precious doctrine and opened themselves wide to the criticisms which Baptists make. If I were a Baptist, I would, quite frankly, prefer the Baptist position. At least, the position of the Baptists does not leave as much to, what Douma calls, "the decision of man." There is more emphasis on God's sovereignty in the Baptist position than in that of the Liberated.

It might not be amiss, while discussing these views of Douma, to expand a bit on what the view of the Liberated is. It will help to sharpen the Scriptural

view and to explain the true Scriptural grounds for the baptism of infants.

The Liberated take the position they do because of a basic idea of the covenant which they hold. They maintain that the covenant is, in its essential character, an *agreement* between God and man. This agreement has mutual stipulations, obligations, responsibilities, conditions and promises. God, on His part, promises that He will be a God to His people and that He will bless them with the blessings of salvation. But He will do this only if man, on his part, agrees to the stipulations of the covenant which are that man accept the provisions of the covenant by faith, walk in the ways of the covenant and live in obedience to God. Only when God and man agree, therefore, to these mutual stipulations is the covenant actually in force.

Now, at the time of baptism, God gives to every baptized child these promises and brings that child into the covenant. God has done His part. The example of a blank check has been used. God, as it were, gives to every baptized child a check. On this check is written: "Pay to the order of (the child being baptized), the sum of salvation in Christ." This check is signed by God and God stands behind what he has promised. He has promised the baptized child to give to him salvation, and He has, as it were, guaranteed the good faith of the check by actually making the child partaker of the check.

But there are a number of things which this child can do with that check. He can, e.g., frame it and hang it on the wall. He can call the attention of visitors to it and boast about what a wonderful check it is. But the check will do him no good. Such a man as this is one who is an outward member of the church, who boasts of his place in the church and lives in the carnal security that he is guaranteed a place in heaven because he has a check. But a man who receives this check can also, in anger, tear it to pieces and throw the pieces to the winds. This man is comparable to the member of the church who breaks and desecrates God's covenant. On the other hand, the man can take the check and cash it in the bank of heaven. Only then will the check be of value to him. This is analogous to the act of faith whereby one receives the promise of the covenant as his own and becomes, subjectively, a member of the covenant.

Nevertheless, at such a time as he is unable to understand what the check means, i.e., while he is still a child, he has that check in his possession. That is, he is a member of the church, numbered among the people of God, blessed with all the blessings which everyone else receives, and is called, as Douma says, holy along with the rest of the Church.

This is the Liberated view of the covenant.

But this view is very wrong.

Its wrong lies first of all in the fact that the covenant cannot be construed

on the basis of Scripture as an agreement between two parties: God and man.

There are a number of objections to this view.

In the first place, and most importantly, nowhere in Scripture is such a view of the covenant found. You may turn where you will, but nowhere does Scripture define the covenant in these terms. It may be that this is the nature of a pact or covenant among men; but we are talking about the covenant which God establishes with His people in Christ.

In the second place, this makes of the covenant a mere mechanical, cold and formal work of God which He performs. What can be more cold than to reduce the work of salvation to a formal and mechanical pact or agreement? Salvation is more than that.

In the third place, it speaks in a very derogatory fashion of the relation between God and man. God is the great and glorious God. He is infinitely exalted above heaven and earth. He makes the heavens His throne and the earth His footstool. All the nations of the earth are less than the dust of the balance before Him and of no more value than a drop of the bucket. To define the covenant, therefore, in terms of an agreement between God Who is so great and man who is so small is to do something evil to the majesty and glory of the Lord of the universe. Does the infinite God stoop down to man's level to enter into an agreement with a speck of dust? How can that be?

In the fourth place, one can not escape the implicit Arminianism in such a view. The full and subjective realization of the covenant depends upon man's response, man's acceptance of the provisions of the covenant and man's willingness to enter into an agreement with God. It is objected by the Liberated that God fulfills all the provisions of the covenant so that the work is actually God's. But there are problems with this that cannot be escaped. If faith is a condition to the full realization of the covenant, how can faith be a blessing of the covenant? It has got to be one or the other. Faith cannot be a condition to faith. This is nonsense. And if faith is one of the blessings of the covenant, therefore, it can no longer be a condition to the covenant.

This Arminianism is also implicit in the general grace which all who are in the covenant receive. For, when this general grace is taken in connection with the "offer of salvation," then the idea is certainly that the grace all receive enables man to accept or reject the offer. But this is Arminian reasoning, and it is contrary to the Scriptures.

The Scriptures present quite a different view of God's covenant.

They present the covenant, not as an agreement between two parties, but rather as a living bond of friendship and fellowship between God and His people in Christ.

We cannot go into this in detail, but only mention a few aspects of it.

God is a covenant God. He is a covenant God in Himself, i.e., in His own triune covenant life. One in essence and three in person, He lives in perfect communion and fellowship with Himself within His own life.

In His sovereign and unmerited grace, God determines to take His elect people, through the work of Christ, into that covenant fellowship Which He enjoys. He takes them into *His own* covenant fellowship. They come to know God triune as their God and themselves as God's people. They live with Him and dwell with Him in everlasting friendship.

It is analogous to a husband and wife who perfectly enjoy each other's fellowship, but who take into their own fellowship and communion a poor, undeserving waif who has never known love. The analogy is far from perfect, for God takes into His fellowship those who are His enemies and who hate Him.

That this is the idea of the covenant is evident from many passages of Scripture. We quote but a few. In Genesis 17:7 God says to Abraham: "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." The clause, "to be a God unto thee," clearly indicates that this is the essence of the covenant which God establishes with Abraham. The Old Testament often uses expressions such as this; but they are equally common in the New Testament. For example, after admonishing the people of Corinth not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers, God says: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (II Corinthians 6:17, 18). Revelation 21:3 speaks of the final perfection of that covenant with these words: "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." In a beautiful Hebrew parallelism, the Psalmist says in Psalm 25:14: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant." Here the essence of the covenant is described as being the presence of the secret of the Lord with them that fear Him.

This is also clearly demonstrated when we consider the fact, that the covenant is established with Christ. Christ is both God and man perfectly united in the person of the Son. But the Church is the body of Christ, bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. In Christ, as His body, the Church dwells in covenant fellowship with God.

All this means that there is no inward and outward covenant. This dis-

inction is invented for purposes of explaining what is really a completely untenable view. It is true that we may speak of the broader sphere of the covenant and the covenant proper. All the children of believers are born within the *sphere* of the covenant. And, within the sphere of the covenant, they receive, in a certain sense, the privileges of the covenant. They are baptized, brought up within a Christian home where there is prayer and Scripture reading and a godly life of the members. They receive the preaching of the Word, Catechetical instruction, and instruction in a Christian day school. They are surrounded by all the tokens of God's care for His people. If they are elect children, all these good influences work towards their salvation. But if they are reprobate children, then all these things work to their condemnation. Just as it will be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for Chorazin and Bethsaida where Christ performed His mighty works, so it will be more tolerable for the heathen that never hear the gospel than for the children born and raised within the sphere of the covenant.

If this is what Douma means by an external and internal covenant, we would have no significant quarrel. But it is obvious from his pamphlet that he means more. He speaks of actually being in the covenant, of these children who are reprobate seed also receiving grace, being holy, actually receiving the promises, etc. With this we cannot agree. Only the elect seed are actually *in* the covenant. Only with them does God actually establish the covenant of fellowship and friendship within which He gives such great and wonderful promises.

There are two remarks here which ought to be made.

In the first place, we are somewhat surprised that Douma speaks of a certain grace within the covenant which all receive. We remember that Dr. K. Schilder, the leader of the Liberated movement, once spoke of a certain grace which is given to all in the covenant. And it is not, in a way, surprising that he took this position, because Dr. W. Heyns, for many years professor of Reformed Doctrine in Calvin College, took the same view. And Dr. Heyns is really the father of this view of the covenant as held by the Liberated. But in his later years, Dr. Schilder repudiated a general covenantal grace. We are surprised, therefore, that Dr. Douma holds to this position.

In the second place, Dr. Douma makes a mistake in failing to deal with the *organic* view of the covenant. We have discussed this at length in past *Journal* articles, and will not speak of it again. But it is this failure which leads Douma to misunderstand the place of the reprobate seed within the covenant. After all, a wheat field is a wheat field even though it has in it many weeds and even though much of the plant itself is nothing but straw. The farmer plants, cultivates, waters, and cares for that field for the purpose of the wheat even though

he knows that the weeds will grow more rapidly and that the straw, which he cannot use, is necessary for the purpose of the wheat. So also within the sphere of the covenant. God sends the rain and sunshine of His Word and truth into the Church. This is for the purpose of the elect seed of the covenant. Under it, the reprobate seed also grow and flourish, but only that they may manifest themselves as weeds so as to be burned (Hebrews 6:4-8). But the whole Church is called Church because even though there are wicked within the Church, the Church goes under the name of the elect as a field is called a wheat field even when weeds are present in it.

But it must be insisted that only the elect are taken within the covenant. They are the heirs of the promise. They and they alone receive the blessings of salvation. How impossible a position it is to maintain that all the children receive exactly the same blessings — until such a time when the children accept the provisions of the covenant so that what is objectively theirs is now made subjectively their possession. This is a crass Arminianism which would make a good Baptist blush.

Therefore, although all the children of believing parents are born and raised within the sphere of the covenant, nevertheless, those with whom God establishes His covenant, gives His promises, and blesses are only the true children of God.

Douma says that we must not proceed from the truth of election and reprobation. But this is exactly what the apostle Paul does in Romans 9. In the early part of the chapter, Paul faces the question of why most of the nation of Israel (all born within the sphere of the covenant and all receiving the sign of circumcision) were not saved. He wonders aloud whether the promise of God had taken none effect. But he emphatically answers that this is not the case. God's Word always has the effect which God intended it to have. But the difference is that "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted for the seed."

This is very clear. Not all the children of Abraham are the children of the promise and are saved. But the children of the promise are a few only of the people of God. These are called the children of the promise because to them the promise is given and in them the promise is realized. It is difficult to understand how Douma, in the face of this passage, can nevertheless, insist that all the circumcized or baptized children receive the promise.

But what is the explanation for all this? Paul immediately traces all this back to God's sovereign purpose in election and reprobation. He proceeds from

God's eternal decree of predestination, although Douma refuses to do this. "And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (vss. 11-13). And as if it is not clear that reprobation is referred to here, the apostle immediately goes to the illustration of Pharaoh and proceeds to show that God "has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth" (vs. 18).

So then the only conclusion of the matter can be that only the elect children of the covenant are the children of the promise. With them God establishes His covenant; to them He gives His promises; only they are holy; only they constitute the Church of Christ.

That God therefore, is the One Who sovereignly establishes His covenant is the teaching of all Scripture. He takes His elect people in Christ into His own covenant fellowship and makes them, by an act of sovereign grace, His own covenant people with whom He dwells in friendship and fellowship. This is especially evident from Genesis 15 where we read of the establishment of the covenant with Abraham. Abraham was instructed to take an heifer, a she-goat, a ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon. The animals he was instructed to cut in halves and lay the halves overagainst each other. The two birds he also had to lay overagainst each other. In ancient times a pact or treaty was sealed by such a ritual as this. When the animals had been laid overagainst each other, the two parties passed together between the pieces. By this act, the two agreed that they would rather themselves be cut in pieces than violate the provisions of the treaty.

But what happened in this case? Did God and Abraham both pass between the pieces? Quite the contrary is true. God alone passed between the pieces. Abraham was sound asleep. How could he do anything? When God alone passed between the pieces, God assumed all the responsibilities for the establishment of the covenant with Abraham. "In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram. . . ." (vs. 18).

By passing alone through the pieces God made the promise of His covenant to Abraham as a solemn and unconditional promise. This is emphasized by Hebrews 6:17, 18: "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

Notice that these verses emphatically speak of the promise to Abraham. The author writes in verses 13-16: "For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife."

The idea is therefore, that men, when they swear, swear by God because they swear by someone higher than themselves. They call upon God to be their witness so that they confirm the truth of what they say. They solemnly adjure that God will strike them dead if they lie. But God cannot swear by anyone higher for He is God alone. And so He swears by Himself and the immutability of His own divine being that He will surely save His people. By passing *alone* between the pieces, He states that, if His promise should fail, then He is no longer God. The promise is as surely true as God is God. By these two things – the immutability of His being and the promise which God swore – we have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.

But that same covenant God not only establishes, but also maintains. Even as the establishment of it is solely God's work, so also is the maintenance of it God's work alone. This is strikingly emphasized in Psalm 89, the record of the covenant which God established with David when He promised David a son to sit upon his throne. I can quote only part of this beautiful Psalm, but notice these words in verses 19ff.: "Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people. I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him. . . . My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and My covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven." Then notice what follows: "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandment; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. *My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.* Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven."

What could possibly be clearer than that? All these great and glorious promises were fulfilled in the everlasting kingdom and throne of Jesus Christ. That is why the angel said to Mary: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his

father David" (Luke 1:32).

So God is sovereign, also in the establishment, the realization and the maintenance of His covenant. All is of His unmerited grace. He works His salvation in Christ.

This does not mean, as is clear from Scripture, that those who are born within the sphere of the covenant do not have obligations. They surely do. The obligations and demands of the covenant come to all. Even the wicked seed of the covenant stand before the obligation to walk in the ways of the covenant. And their refusal to do so brings upon them the wrath of God. But also the true seed of the promise, the elect, stand before these divine obligations. The difference is this. God, in His mercy and grace, gives them the ability and power to walk in His ways. He enables them to walk as covenant children in the midst of the world. When they sin, He brings them to repentance and confession so that they may be forgiven in the blood of the cross. He calls them to fight a good fight of faith, to love the Lord their God with all their heart and mind, and to represent the cause of God's covenant in the world. All is of grace and of grace alone. To put it a little differently, our part of the covenant is the fruit of God's part for God works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Never is the establishment of the covenant dependent upon us. Nor is its continuous maintenance up to us. If we walk in sin, God will surely chastize us. But His covenant will He not break nor alter the promise which has gone out of His mouth. God remains faithful even when we are unfaithful. And that faithfulness of God is shown to us and to our children.

In humble acknowledgement of this great mercy and grace we baptize our children because it pleases the Lord to take us and our children into His everlasting covenant.

It is on the basis of this great work of God that we confess and believe that God's covenant is established with us and our children. And it is on this firm Scriptural basis that we have the answer of God to those who refuse, in disobedience to God's command, to baptize their children.

Would that the Liberated too, who stand for the Reformed faith by their very name, could see that they render the Reformed answer to Baptists ineffectual by their compromise of these precious truths of Scripture.