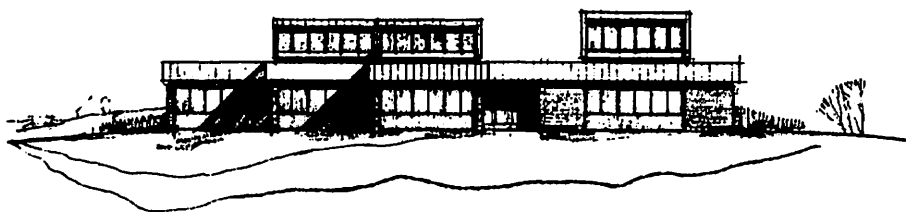


# **PROTESTANT REFORMED THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL**



NOVEMBER, 1987

Volume XXI, No. 1

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

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Theological School  
of the  
Protestant Reformed Churches  
Grandville, Michigan

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## EDITORIAL NOTES

We have added an important and interesting section to the *Journal*: a book review section. We hope, by means of this section, to review not only new books which are being published, but also significant books of an older sort which our readers may like to know about. We have enlisted the help of a number of ministers to prepare reviews for the *Journal*; this has the added advantage of broadening the number of writers. If any of our readers have come across a significant book which, in their opinion, is not very well known, but ought to be more widely known, our book review editor would appreciate hearing about it. Every child of God ought to be interested in building up a good library of Christian literature. We hope this section will aid him in doing this.



Prof. Hoeksema continues his translation of the book *Een Kracht Gods Tot Zaligheid* in this issue. We consider this pamphlet to be a significant contribution to Reformed thought. We suggest that our readers save these translations so that they can eventually be put together in some bound form. They will then have a complete translation of an important work.



Prof. R. Decker starts a two-part series of articles on "Preaching: The Chief Task of the Church." This constitutes a paper originally prepared as an independent study for a Th.M program in which Prof. Decker is engaged in Calvin Theological Seminary. Prof. Decker has written a considerable amount of material on this subject, and this paper is the fruit of a great deal of study and reflection — reflection also on the current American pulpit.



Last Spring's issue of the *Journal* mentioned the fact that the material included under the subject "The History of the Free Offer of the Gospel" was the last in the series. Something happened somewhere and a large amount of copy was lost so that not all of it appeared in that *Journal*. Computers can be wonderful things, even though when they do not operate well, they are an enormous frustration and a vexation of spirit. The only place the "lost" material could be located was on my computer. So the rest of the material is found in this issue, and this is indeed the last of the series.



# The History of the Free Offer of the Gospel (11)

Prof. H. Hanko

*(In our last article we had begun an analysis of the doctrinal aspects of the free offer of the gospel and a positive statement of the truth concerning the preaching. We ended the last article with arguments which demonstrate that the free offer is opposed to all the five points of Calvinism. The last point we discussed was the doctrine of sovereign predestination. The present article, while continuing this analysis and positive statement of the truth, picks up with the whole matter of the relation between the free offer and sovereign predestination.)*

A discussion of the relation between the idea of the free offer of the gospel and the counsel and will of God leads us to a point which needs to be made. Those who hold to a free offer and still want to retain some semblance of being Calvinistic and Reformed make a distinction at this point between the will of God's decree and the will of His command; or, as is sometimes said, between God's decretive will and His preceptive will. According to this strange notion, God's decretive will purposes the salvation only of the elect, while God's preceptive will purposes the salvation of all who hear the gospel. Thus God has two wills which are in direct conflict.

The conflict is so obvious that even the supporters of this view (and their number is legion) find it a bit difficult to swallow. So in justification of this, they fall back on a sort of last line of defense and plead "apparent contradiction." They piously assure us (and it sounds truly pious) that God's ways are so much higher than our ways that we cannot fathom them. What to us seems to be contradictory, to God is a perfect harmony. All we can do is hold the two apparently contradictory propositions in proper tension.

We cannot go into this matter of apparent contradiction in this article; but it ought to be apparent to all that this sort of argumentation ultimate-

ly leads to theological scepticism. If there is contradiction possible at such a critical juncture of the truth, then there is contradiction possible at any juncture of the truth. Then man can be both totally depraved and relatively good. Then grace is both resistible and irresistible. Then God is both triune and not triune. Then justification is both by faith alone and also by faith and works. Then the atonement of Christ is both efficacious and ineffectual. And so one can go on. But this makes any knowledge of the truth impossible and mires one in the slime of subjectivism and scepticism.

Nevertheless, this doctrine of two wills in God is an invention. It has never been held by any Reformed, including Calvin, who reprobated the idea in the strongest possible terms. It is sheer human invention which masks an attempt to be both Arminian and Reformed at the same time.

This does not mean that the distinction itself is not valid. It is certainly true that Scripture indicates to us that, within the one will of God, we may distinguish between God's will of decree and God's will of precept. The danger of evil enters when we set these two over against each other in such a way that these two not only indicate two separate wills of God, but two wills which are in conflict with each other. But the distinction must be maintained because it has importance for our present subject.

We indicated above that those who deny the free offer of the gospel nevertheless maintain that the gospel is preached and must be preached to all creatures to whom God in His good pleasure is pleased to send it. That is, the gospel is and must be preached to many more than those whom it is God's purpose to save. We must now face the question of why this is important.

In the first place, we must be clear about the fact that throughout the history of the world the gospel has by no means been brought to every person. This too, in a certain sense, is a problem which can hardly be satisfactorily answered by the advocates of a well-meant offer. If God expresses His desire to save all who hear the gospel, and this desire is serious, well-meant, truly an expression of God's love and grace, it would seem only appropriate to the nature of God to express this desire to all men and not only those to whom the gospel comes. Yet the fact is that the gospel by no means comes to everyone. This was already true in the Old Testament during which only a relatively few heard the gospel. Far and away the majority of people who lived never received the gospel at all, for the gospel was bound up in the types and shadows of Israel's ceremonial life and was, therefore, limited to the nation of Israel which dwelt in Palestine. Only to them did the gospel of Christ come. But the same is true of the new dispensation. Although the church, from the very beginning of her history, was busy in obeying the command of Christ to go into all the

world and preach the gospel, nevertheless, in the nature of the case this could not be done immediately. And, in fact, even today we are told that there are remote tribes here and there who still have never heard the gospel preached. This is because, in the final analysis, God sends the gospel where He pleases. Our Canons are right when in II, 5 they say that this promise, together with the command to repent and believe, must be preached and proclaimed to all those *to whom God in His good pleasure is pleased to send it*. God determines where His gospel is to be preached. And He does that today just as certainly as He did this when the Holy Spirit forbade the gospel to be preached in Asia on Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 16:6).

But while this is true, we have not yet answered the question why it is important for the gospel to be preached to more people than the elect. Some have answered that it is only a kind of inevitable "fall-out" from the preaching. They point to the fact that it is simply impossible for the gospel to be preached to the elect only. The gospel, after all, is preached by human men. They must preach to audiences of mixed people. They do not know who in these audiences are elect and who are reprobate. They must of necessity preach to all. Therefore, while it is really not important or necessary that the gospel come to more than the elect, there is little or nothing any one can do about it, and it is fundamentally unimportant, for the reprobate cannot believe the gospel anyway.

This is a terribly wrong and evil caricature of the idea of preaching. Never must we take this position, for it implies that God really cannot do anything about the fact that the gospel is preached to all, although it would be preferable that things be different. It is also a denial of the Canons which tell us that the promise of the gospel "*ought to be* declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously" (II, 5). That is, the gospel *must* be so preached. It is a divine must. It is God's will.

But we must be careful that we do not go to the opposite extreme and say that this is true because all men must have a chance to be saved. This is the kind of language which fits in perfectly with the idea of the free offer; yet it is so commonly heard today that it seems almost ingrained in the thinking of people. The idea is that God cannot justly send anyone to hell unless he at least has the opportunity to hear the gospel and reject it — or accept it. But this simply is not true. The Scriptures plainly teach on the one hand that all men are guilty in Adam apart from any guilt which they may accumulate because of their own sins, and this guilt in Adam is itself sufficient to send every man to hell. This is taught clearly, e.g., in Romans 5:12-14: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world,

and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (for until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come."

But on the other hand, apart from that guilt, the wicked who never hear the gospel are confronted daily with the obligation to love God and serve Him alone by the things in the creation, which clearly testify of God's eternal power and Godhead (Rom. 1:18ff.). It is true that no man can be saved apart from the gospel, but this does not alter the fact that all men know, through the creation, that God alone is God and that He alone must be served. That they cannot serve God is not due to anything but their own total depravity for which they are themselves responsible in Adam.

It is God's will that many more than the elect hear the gospel proclaimed. Why is this?

The answer to this question is that God is pleased to have all who hear the gospel confronted with Christ and with the specific command to repent from their sins and believe in Christ. Not only the elect but the reprobate who hear the gospel must be specifically and concretely commanded to turn from their evil way and to believe in Christ. They, of course, cannot do this apart from God's work of regeneration and conversion; but they must nevertheless. This is why, throughout this series of articles, we have always insisted that the original meaning of the word "offer" is entirely Biblical. Christ is presented in the gospel. He is presented to all who hear. He is presented and proclaimed not only to the elect, but also to the reprobate. It is God's will that this be so. And God so wills this because it is through the presentation of Christ as the only One in Whom is salvation that all men who hear the gospel are placed before the solemn obligation to repent and believe. This is why Peter, in his great Pentecostal sermon, exactly preached repentance and faith to all who heard him on that day (Acts 2:38).

But, in the second place, we must carry this point a bit further. The question is still: why is it God's purpose to confront all those who hear the gospel with the command to repent and believe? Why must those whom God has purposed not to save be commanded to repent and believe as well as those whom God does save?

Again, the answer is not that these select people are given an opportunity to be saved, that for some unspecified purpose, God gives them a chance which is not given to those who never hear the gospel. This is again to introduce into the preaching of the gospel an Arminian element which



is completely antipathetic to the teaching of God's holy Word. God does not give people a "chance" to be saved of whom He knows that they cannot and will not believe.

The answer to this question is first of all to be found in the fact that God always maintains the demands of His law. God originally created man upright and capable of doing all things which God required of him. Although man fell and by his fall brought upon himself total depravity so that he can no longer keep the law in any respect, God does not and cannot change His demands. This would be out of keeping with the holiness of God.

To make this clear we can use a figure. Suppose that I contract with a carpenter to build a house for me at a cost of \$50,000. Suppose also that he informs me that he cannot proceed with building until I advance him the total cost of the building. I may do this in order that he can proceed with building. But it is also possible that he, rather than use that money for building, leave on a round-the-world trip in which he spends every dime I gave him. Upon his return, I have the right to insist from him that he build my house. He may object to my insistence and plead that he is unable because he no longer possesses the necessary money. But this does not alter my demand in the least. I will tell him: "I gave you all that was necessary to build my house. You squandered the money in your own pleasures. That is not my fault; it is yours. Now build my house." I would have every right to insist on this. This is not less true of God. God gave us, in Adam, all that we needed to serve Him. The fact that we are incapable of doing this is not God's fault, but ours. He must, according to His own holiness and justice, insist that I do this. And because of sin, this demand of God to serve Him now involves the command to repent of my sin and believe on Jesus Christ. For God to do anything less than this would be a denial of His own justice and holiness.

It is characteristic of the Arminians that they always identify obligation with ability. God may obligate man to do that only which he is able to do. But this is very far from the truth. Our Heidelberg Catechism states the matter succinctly: "Q. Does not God then do injustice to man, by requiring from him in his law, that which he cannot perform? A. Not at all; for God made man capable of performing it; but man, by the instigation of the devil, and his own wilful disobedience, deprived himself and all his posterity of those divine gifts" (IV, 8). So in the first place, the command to repent from sin and believe in Christ is only rooted in God's original command to Adam and to all men to obey Him. This command God continues to maintain.

But there is more. In the second place, it is through the command of

the gospel which comes to all who hear that God accomplishes His purpose. We must look at this matter from two different sides. On the side of man, his refusal to obey the command of the gospel places him unmistakably in a position where he is justly sentenced to everlasting condemnation in hell. Not as if he does not deserve hell already because of his sin in Adam and because of his refusal to obey the testimony of God in the things that belong to the creation. But the command becomes ever so much clearer through the gospel. And it becomes clearer through the gospel because in the gospel God presents Christ as crucified to accomplish salvation. To repent of sin and believe in Christ is the way of salvation. When man refuses to do this, he shows how deep is his sin and how bitter his enmity. He demonstrates unmistakably that he hates God and His Christ, that he will have no part of God's salvation, that he despises all that is of God and His truth, that he prefers an eternity in hell to repenting of his evil way which he loves. When, therefore, he is cast into hell for his terrible sin, no one can say that this is not just. He receives what he wants and what he has justly coming to him.

And if it be objected once again that he is incapable of believing in Christ and turning from his evil way, then the answer is once again: but who is to blame for that? Is not the sinner himself to blame? His sin and depravity are not God's fault, but his own.

Or, if the question be asked: what difference does it make that the gospel come to such a man when he already shows his hatred by refusing to worship God after knowing him through the things which God created? Why does God want him also to hear the gospel? The answer is: sin must appear completely as sin. It must be evident that sin is really the terrible power which it is. Perhaps it might be objected that, after all, the command to repent and serve God is not clear enough in creation. God shows completely that it makes no difference whatsoever. Sin is so terrible that when Christ, God's own Son, is sent for salvation, wicked man will take Him in his filthy hands and nail Him to a cross. And when that cross is preached as God's way of salvation, man will trample underfoot the blood of the covenant and crucify the Son of God afresh (see Heb. 6:4-6). God does all that is necessary, apart from man's sin, to make salvation clear and unmistakable. When Isaiah writes in chapter 5 of his prophecy what God has done with His vineyard, he concludes with the words of God: "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge

thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it" (vss. 3-6).

But we must look at this matter also from God's point of view. This is necessary because, after all, God always accomplishes His own sovereign purpose. Nothing is outside His will and nothing takes place without His sovereign determination. That is, with respect to our subject, the decree of reprobation must be accomplished. By means of the command of the gospel which comes to all who hear, God accomplishes His purpose in reprobation. God has determined from all eternity to save a people. But God has also determined from all eternity to damn the wicked to eternal hell in the way of their sins.

This requires just a bit of explanation. Reprobation cannot be separated from the sins of the wicked. Yet, while we say this, we must be careful that we understand it. The sins of the wicked are not the *cause* or *condition* of reprobation, so that God reprobates *on account of* sin and unbelief. This is the position of the Arminians which is emphatically refuted by the fathers of Dort in the Canons. It is a conditional reprobation which the Scriptures abhor because it detracts from the absolute sovereignty of God. Nor must it be asserted that the decree of reprobation is the *cause* of the sin of the wicked. This makes God the Author of sin, something which the Canons brand as blasphemy. Rather we must insist that reprobation is decreed and accomplished *in the way* of man's sin so that, while God is sovereign in His decree, man goes to hell because he and he alone has sinned and must bear the responsibility for sin.

We are fully aware of the fact that this difficult question involves the whole relation between God's sovereign counsel and man's sin for which he alone is responsible. And we are not at all ashamed to admit that a mystery is present here which our feeble minds can never begin to fathom. But Scripture is clear enough on the point that also sin lies within the scope of God's decree and purpose. Yet God so decrees and works that man remains forever responsible.<sup>1</sup>

However all this may be, what needs emphasis now is the fact that through the preaching of the gospel, with the command to repent and

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1 The Scripture passages here are too numerous to cite and one can, for proof, consult any good book on Calvinism. We refer here only briefly to such passages as Ex. 7:3; II Sam. 16:10; 24:1; Prov. 21:1; Amos 3:6; John 10:26; 12:37-41; Rom. 9:13-21; I Pet. 2:8.

believe, God accomplishes His sovereign purpose. The gospel is intended by God, not only to save His elect, but also to harden the reprobate. And it is exactly this command of the gospel which comes to all which serves as God's means to harden in sin. Because the gospel presents Christ as the way of salvation, and because all men everywhere are commanded to believe in Christ, the gospel exactly works as God's power to damn the wicked in the way of their sin and impenitence. Scripture clearly teaches this twofold power of the gospel. Paul speaks of this in II Corinthians 2:14-17: "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ." This is why Peter writes, in I Peter 2:8, that Christ preached is "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: *whereunto also they were appointed.*" And this is why John writes in 12:37-41: "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they *could not believe*, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him."

When, therefore, the gospel is preached generally and all who hear are placed before the command to repent and believe, God accomplishes His sovereign purpose in their refusal to believe and their terrible disobedience. It is important therefore that the gospel be preached to all.

We must at this point remind ourselves of the truth that this command of God which comes to all who hear the gospel is serious. God is not playing games with men when He commands them to repent and believe. God is not merely toying with their emotions and eternal estate. God means exactly what He says. He is so serious about it that refusal ends in eternal death. Our Canons also emphasize this in III & IV, 8. Unfortunately, the translation of our English version is not correct on this score. This reads:

As many as are called by the gospel, are unfeignedly called. For God hath most earnestly and truly declared in his Word, what will be acceptable to him; namely, that all who are called, should comply with the invitation. He, more-

over, seriously promises eternal life, and rest, to as many as shall come to him, and believe on him.

The problem centers in the second sentence of this article, which, at least on the surface, seems to suggest some kind of well-meant offer. However, the correct translation of this sentence is: "For God has most earnestly and truly declared in His Word what is acceptable to Him, namely, that those who are called should come unto Him." You will immediately notice the important difference.<sup>2</sup> The point which the Canons are making is that God calls to repentance and faith seriously and unfeignedly. He means exactly what He says.

But this brings up another question which has sometimes troubled some. If when God seriously and unfeignedly calls the reprobate to repent of sin and turn to Christ, is this not after all an expression of God's will and desire to save all men? What is so different in this from the well-meant offer?

The difference is great and crucial. A bit earlier in this article we mentioned the fact that it is not necessarily wrong in itself to make a distinction between God's decretive will and God's preceptive will, God's will of decree and God's will of command – as long as these two aspects of God's will are not so placed in contradiction with each other that they really become two separate wills. Bearing this in mind, it is certainly correct and according to Scripture to say that God's will of command is that all men obey Him, keep His commandments, walk in His way, love Him with all their hearts and minds and souls and strength. And if they sin, as they always do, this will of God's command surely means that men turn from their evil ways, repent of their sins and seek their salvation only in Christ. But this command of God is His morally perfect will for men. Surely, because God is supremely holy and without sin, because He loves only that which is right and good and according to His own law, He delights only in the good and hates all that is of evil. When, therefore, He insists that all men serve Him alone as God, repent of their sins and seek their salvation only in Jesus Christ, this is His good and morally holy will. He can do nothing else, for He is the Holy One of Israel. It would sully and stain His holiness for God to say, It is quite all right with Me if you

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2 The official Latin version reads here: *Serio enim et verissime ostendit Deus verbo suo, quid sibi gratum sit, nimirum, ut vocati ad se veniant.* And the official Dutch translation reads: "*Want God betoont ernstiglijk en waarachgiglijk in zijn woord, wat Hem aangenaam is; namelijk, dat de geroepen tot Hem komen.*"

continue in your sins. In fact, it is quite My will for you to walk in sin, live lives of rebellion against Me, and trample under foot My righteous ways. No man would ever say that this is God's will. His will is as He is: holy, just, good, righteous, and perfectly right.

This command, therefore, which comes to all men to repent of sin and turn to Christ is the expression of God's holy and just will for the sinner. There is fundamentally (and I speak in all reverence) nothing else that God can do but to demand holiness of men. It is His morally holy will that men do what is right. And this is in perfect harmony with the will of His decree because it is exactly through this morally holy will of His command that God sovereignly executes His eternal will of reprobation. If His will were anything less than morally holy, the decree of reprobation could never be executed through it.

But this is a far cry from the well-meant offer, for the well-meant offer teaches us that God desires and intends the salvation of all who hear. It is His love and grace shown to them which offers them Christ as their salvation. And it is His purpose and will to save such. This is Arminian in every respect and a resurrection of the ancient heresy of Amyrauldianism which destroys all the truth of the gospel.

There is one more point to which we must still address ourselves. It is true that this point is not directly related to the well-meant offer, but nevertheless stands closely connected to it. I refer to the fact that the whole concept of the well-meant offer gives a decidedly wrong idea of Scripture. Scripture is sometimes presented as if the whole of it is nothing but such a well-meant offer. In proof of this a number of texts are quoted which are supposed to prove that God sincerely desires the salvation of all, texts which prove nothing of the kind. I refer to such texts as Isaiah 55:1-3; Matthew 11:28; Revelation 22:17, etc. Perhaps it would be well to have at least these texts before us before we comment on them.

Isaiah 55:1-3: Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

Matthew 11:28: Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Revelation 22:17: And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

As we said, Scripture as a whole, and these texts in particular, are often presented as one large offer of the gospel. Because the Scriptures are pre-eminently the revelation of Christ, Christ in the whole of the Scriptures is said to be offered to all. And these texts are often quoted as proof.

Yet nothing could be more wrong.

The address of these texts, even on their very surface, is very particular, limited to a select group of people. Isaiah 55:1-3 is specifically addressed to those who are thirsty and who have no money. Matthew 11:28 is specifically addressed to those who labor and are heavy laden. Revelation 22:17 is specifically addressed to him that heareth, to him that is athirst, to whosoever will.

Now it is possible, of course, so to interpret these texts that they refer to every one in the world, or at least to every one who hears the gospel. But this interpretation can only be made from a totally Arminian viewpoint. That is, if every one thirsts, is without money, is laboring and heavy laden, wills to come to Christ, then everyone is capable of seeking salvation by himself. He has the power within himself to seek Christ, thirst for Him, will to come to Him. Then the totally depraved sinner, apart from Christ's work of salvation, is capable of doing good, exercising his own free will and coming to Christ by his own power. But this Arminian conception puts all the responsibility of salvation upon man, ascribes to him powers which he does not have, and makes God dependent upon the sinner's choice and power.

When the texts are specific in their address, they are such because they mean to be Christ's Word only to specific people. But because no man can of himself thirst for Christ, come to the water, be burdened by his sin and guilt, will to come, these spiritual virtues are dependent upon the work of the Holy Spirit. Only the Spirit can work these powers within a man. But the Holy Spirit works these powers only in those who are God's elect, for whom Christ died, and who are efficaciously called by the Spirit in their hearts. By virtue of the Spirit's work, these people thirst for Christ, are heavy laden under the load of their sins, will to come, etc.

We may well ask the question why Christ works this way, i.e., first working in His people a longing for salvation, and then calling them to Him.

The answer to this question is first of all that God always deals with His people as rational and moral creatures, and not as stocks and blocks. God does not take His people along the pathway of this life to glory in the same way as a child pulls a mechanical toy or a quacking mechanical duck along the floor. Or as one minister once expressed it, God's people do not ride to heaven in the lower berth of a Pullman sleeper. God wants His

people to know and experience their salvation. He wants them to be conscious partakers of His grace so that they may praise and bless His name for the salvation which He gives to them.

In the second place, God's people, while in this world, are not yet perfect. They are indeed regenerated and converted, but this work of salvation is only in principle. They are still in the flesh, and in their flesh dwells no good thing. There is much sin in them which strives for mastery in their life, pulls them in the direction of the things of this world, and often causes them to fall deeply into sin. With this evil in their flesh, they must constantly struggle; and when they fall into sin, they must repent of their sin and turn again to Christ.

In the third place, it is only through repentance and sorrow for sin that they can come to know their salvation in Christ. Without a deep consciousness of their sin and an overwhelming awareness of their own unworthiness, they have no need of Christ, no consciousness of their utter dependence upon Him, no sense of the truth that salvation is to be found only in Him.

It is in this way that God deals with them through the gospel. He addresses them in this life, in their struggles and sins, in their need and trouble, in the consciousness of their sin and helplessness. He addresses them in such a way that, through His call to them, He brings them back to Himself, restores them to grace and favor, shows them His great love and mercy, and gives them His full and free salvation so that they are conscious of it.

Thus the elect in whom the Spirit works are the ones who thirst, for they, wallowing in their sins, thirst again for God as a hart pants for water brooks. They are without money because they know their own hopeless state, their utter inability to save themselves, their total dependence upon God. They are laboring and heavy laden because the burden of sin has become intolerable, too heavy to bear, too great to carry as they walk the pathway of this life. They will to come because they have seen the total futility of life apart from God and the hopelessness of the wicked world which so often attracts them to its pleasures and lusts. But all these things are true of them because the Spirit of Christ has put these characteristics into their hearts and lives.

Thus we must remember that the Scriptures are, after all, a book addressed to God's people, not to all men. The Scriptures are the infallibly inspired record of the revelation of Jehovah God in the face of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the God Who saves His people from their sins. And because Scripture is this, it is God's Word of hope and promise to them. It is the light — the only light — that shines in this dark world of hopeless



despair. It is God's great grace and mercy revealed in Christ to those whom He has chosen to be His own inheritance. It is, if you will, Christ the Bridegroom's love letter to His elect and chosen bride for whom He died and to whom He comes tenderly and compassionately to save them.

But Christ addresses His bride in her sins, her struggles, her troubles and afflictions. Sometimes He encourages her; sometimes He sharply reprimands her; sometimes He comforts tenderly and compassionately; sometimes He calls to her with all the sweetness of His loving voice. But always His purpose is to lead her to Him and to bring her to the joy of the salvation He has prepared for her.

Thus He calls His people by their spiritual names. In John 10 Jesus speaks of this under the figure of a shepherd and his sheep. In that connection, Jesus speaks of the fact that "the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name (literally, name by name)" (vs. 3); that He is the Good Shepherd Who gives His life for the sheep, Who knows His sheep, and is known of those who are His sheep (vss. 11, 14). These are the spiritual names, therefore, of the people of God who belong to Christ. They are called by Scripture the ones who thirst, who are laboring and heavy laden, who mourn, who hunger and thirst after righteousness, etc.

And Christ uses these spiritual names to address them in Scripture and in the preaching of the Word because, when the preaching is, through the minister, addressed to Christ's people under these names, the Spirit of Christ so works in the hearts of God's people that they recognize themselves as hungering and thirsting, as laboring and heavy laden; and recognizing themselves as such, they know that Christ is calling them, and they hear His Word. Rejoicing, they come to Him Who is the fountain of all their life and the source of all their strength. They hear the Word of the gospel: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest." As Christ works in their hearts in such a way that they see the heavy burden of sin which weighs upon them and crushes them; and seeing this and knowing it, they hear Christ call to *them* and recognize it as the call of their Lord: Come to me; I will give you rest. Joyfully and full of hope they flee to Christ and receive the rest promised them.

We stress again that this is the character of Scripture. It is not a book addressed, in its fundamental nature, to all men, or even to all who hear the gospel. It is a love letter addressed by Christ to His elect bride.

This does not mean that when that Scripture is preached, and preached, as it must be, promiscuously, that by it all men are not confronted with the obligation to repent of sin and come to Christ. They surely are, for many are called, though few are chosen. And all men stand solemnly before the command to obey God, walk in His ways, and keep His command-

ments. We have noticed earlier how important this also is. But it must never be forgotten that that very command to repent and believe is the command which Christ uses, through His Spirit, to bring His own people to repentance and faith in Him. The power of that Word of the gospel, the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16) is, even when it comes in the form of a command, the very power by which repentance and faith are worked in the elect. In other words, when the command of the gospel goes forth to come to Christ, that command is heard by all who come under the preaching. This not only lies in the nature of the preaching, but it is also God's purpose. But that one command, heard by all, has a two-fold effect. As it places the reprobate before the obligations of God's holy Word, it serves as the means to harden them in their unbelief. But that same command is heard by the elect in whom Christ has begun His work of salvation and grace. And they, hearing it, obey with willing hearts, made willing by God's gracious operations within them. Both the willing and the doing are worked in them by God (Phil. 2:13).

To reduce the preaching, therefore, to a well-meant offer is to rob the preaching (and the Scriptures) of their beauty and power, of their comfort and hope as these Scriptures are the only light we have in the midst of the world. How wonderful it is to have the very voice of Christ our Savior speak to us. How wonderful it is to hear His voice addressed to us, calling us name by name. How wonderful it is to hear His great mercy and love, His grace and compassion addressed to us personally. He is full of pity towards us in our sins, tender and compassionate even when we stray from Him, moved to tears at our waywardness and foolishness. His love shines through when he rebukes, for it is for our good. His patience with us knows no end, for we are all like sheep who have gone astray. He lifts us up and carries us back to the fold though we deserve nothing of such great grace. His encouragement to us in all the difficulties of life comes as cooling streams in the parched wasteland of this world. His promise that He will be with us always and take us finally into His Father's house of many mansions lightens our darkest moments. His assurance that no man can pluck us out of His hand gives us courage and puts steel in our spines when we face the hordes of our enemies who are so much stronger than we. Who, understanding this, would want to reduce Scripture to a mere offer? It is incredible that anyone, having tasted the good things of the gospel, can deal so disparagingly with that most blessed of all books.

Finally, there are a few classic texts which are quoted in support of the free offer; and we ought to take a look at them. After all, in the final analysis, the whole question of the free offer turns on the point of whether or not it is taught in Scripture. If it is, all else falls by the way-

side: we must bow before Scripture and receive it, whether we like it or not.

As we have mentioned earlier there is a kind of *prima facie* case which can be made against this. Scripture is so full of passages which flatly and explicitly contradict and reprobate any idea of the free offer that it would be extremely strange, to say the least, if there were other passages which taught it. God's Scriptures are a unity, a harmonious whole, a single revelation of God in Christ. If these Scriptures indeed contradict themselves, teach exactly opposing ideas, we could not have any confidence in them at all and we would be reduced to theological agnosticism.

Nevertheless, our study can hardly be complete without taking a look at the most important texts which have been quoted in support of the free offer.

The first such passage is Ezekiel 33:11 (with a similar passage in 18:23). This passage reads: "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

Now it ought to be clear that no matter how this passage is really taken, there is no offer of salvation in it. God, in fact, swears an oath as the living God that He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. His pleasure is to be found in the fact that the wicked turn from his evil way. Even if God's reference to "the wicked" is interpreted to mean all men, there is still no offer. There is indeed the command to turn from evil. And as we have noticed before, God, in all sincerity, places before all men the command to repent from sin and turn from their evil way. God's moral will is of such a kind that He has no pleasure in sin, but rather demands holiness from men.

But the fact is that this text is not addressed to all men without distinction. The text itself as well as the context make this very clear. The text itself is addressed to "the house of Israel." And the words of the text are an answer to what the children of Israel were deeply worried about: "If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?" (vs. 10). In other words, the children of Israel had departed from the ways of God's covenant and had made themselves worthy of God's wrath and displeasure. In the agony of their sin, they wondered whether they would ever be received back into favor. They knew they rightly deserved to die, and they were deeply troubled by how they would again be restored to life. In fact, they wondered whether indeed they ever would be restored to life. They know how undeserving of this they were. What child of God, after falling deeply into sin and coming

again to the consciousness of how terrible his sin was before God has not asked the same question? He wonders in the agony of his soul whether there is any way out of his sin to life; whether God could ever receive him again. And if there is some way, what can this way be?

To this God says: I have no pleasure in your death, but that you turn from your evil ways and live. And God's gracious promise to such as turn from their ways and repent of their sin is precisely that they will be restored to life once again.

Another such text is Matthew 23:37 (see also Luke 13:34): "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

Here too it is immediately evident that there is nothing even faintly resembling a well-meant offer of the gospel. It is not even so very easy to understand exactly why the proponents of the well-meant offer quote this text. Presumably, their argument goes something like this. Jesus wanted to gather to Himself all the people of Jerusalem, but was prevented from doing this by their stubborn rebellion. Hence, Jesus expresses here His divine desire and intention to save all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but was foiled in this attempt by the terrible unbelief of these stubborn Jews. If, therefore, Jesus wanted to save all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, He surely offered them salvation.

If this is the argument, it is immediately apparent that the offer *as such* is assumed. The text itself says nothing about it. But apart from this, is it really true that Jesus expresses here His divine intention and purpose to save all the inhabitants of Jerusalem? The answer must be an emphatic No. The very language of the text refutes that notion. Jesus does not say, "How often would I have gathered *thee* together. . . ;" He says, "How often would I have gathered *thy children* together. . . ." This is quite different. This means, in the first place, that by "Jerusalem" Jesus does not mean the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but the city as the center of all Israel's political and ecclesiastical life. In more than one place in Scripture this city is pictured as a mother who brings forth children (cf., e.g., Gal. 4:24-27). In the old dispensation Jerusalem was the church of God. In Jesus' time it was the church which had become apostate and corrupt. It was the church from the viewpoint of her temple and sacrifices, her priesthood and ceremonies, her feast days and cleansings, but as all these were polluted by the wicked Scribes and Pharisees. Jesus expresses in this text the desire to save Jerusalem's children. But the Scribes and Pharisees fought bitterly against this at every step of Jesus' way. They resisted His efforts to do this so fiercely that they finally nailed Him to the cross. But does all this mean

that Jerusalem's children were never gathered by Jesus? Far from it. Jesus accomplished His purpose in spite of the wickedness of Jerusalem's leaders. We have only to read of the thousands of Jerusalem's children who were saved after Pentecost to understand that Jesus did what He purposed to do. Here Jesus is emphasizing the terrible sin of Jerusalem, which is almost ripe for destruction and which will presently be razed to the ground for all her sins. They not only themselves rejected Christ, but they did all in their power to prevent their children from coming to Christ. Therefore, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23:38).

Finally we call attention to II Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Again, it is not so easy to see exactly how this text is supposed to teach the well-meant offer. One would suppose that the argument goes along these lines. Since God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, God wants all men to be saved, and therefore, God also offers His salvation to all men.

But again, it ought to be noticed that the text itself says nothing about an offer. Even if one interprets the words "any" and "all" as referring to all men, there is, every one will be forced to admit, no mention whatsoever of an offer.

But again, is it true that the words "any" and "all" refer to all men in this passage? They most emphatically do not, and no amount of twisting or semantic gymnastics can make them refer to all men.

Consider first of all the context. Peter is speaking of the fact that scoffers shall come in the last day denying the second coming of Christ (vs. 4). The basis for their argument is what modern evolutionism calls the "Uniformitarian Theory:" "All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." Peter first proceeds to show that their basis is wrong: all things do not continue as they were from the beginning of the creation, for the ante-deluvian world was "standing out of the water and in the water" and was destroyed by water (vss. 5, 6). But "the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment. . ." (vs. 7).

Apparently, however, the church of Peter's day, hard-pressed as it was by persecution, was somewhat inclined to be persuaded by these scoffers. And their tendency to allow the scoffers to influence their thinking was born out of their idea that the Lord did not come back immediately, when they expected any day His return. And so they thought that the Lord was "slack concerning his promise." Peter assures them that this is not the

case. The people of God must remember that time as we know it does not govern the purpose and counsel of almighty God. One day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. Even if the Lord should delay the coming of Christ for one thousand years, this would be but as a day with Him. But emphatically the Lord is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness. There is a good reason why Christ does not come back immediately. And that reason is simply this: there are many elect who must still be saved. If the Lord would come back too early (so to speak) there would be elect who would never be born and saved, for the return of Christ means the end of history, and thus also the end of marriage and the bringing forth of children. But God does not want any of His elect to perish, but wants them all to come to repentance. And so Christ will not come back until that has happened.

It is clear, therefore, that the "any" and "all" of the text must refer to the elect and not to all men. But this is also clearly indicated in the text itself. The "any" and the "all" must be interpreted in the light of the "us-ward." God is longsuffering to us, not willing that any of us should perish, but that all of us should come to repentance. This is so clearly the meaning of the text that it is difficult to see how any one could interpret it in any other way. Consider that the manifestation of God's longsuffering is exactly this that God wants all to come to repentance. Yet the text is emphatic about it that God's longsuffering is only towards us, not towards all men.

All this is further strengthened by the fact that in verse 15 of the same chapter the apostle writes: "And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation." God's longsuffering is salvation. The apostle does not say that God's longsuffering desires salvation, or wants salvation, or even intends to give salvation. This wonderful attribute of God is itself salvation. Now if the well-meant offer people want to make God's longsuffering an attribute of God shown to all men, then they will have to admit also that, because longsuffering is salvation, all those towards whom God is longsuffering are also saved. Not even the most ardent defenders of the well-meant offer would want to go that far. There is no other conclusion: God's longsuffering which is salvation is shown only to usward. The result is that Christ does not return until all those for whom He died, given to Him of the Father from all eternity, are born and brought to repentance. Then Christ will surely come again to destroy this old world, create a new heavens and a new earth, and give to His saints the everlasting inheritance of that glorious creation.

And so we come to the end of our study. There can be no doubt about it but that both history and Scripture stand opposed to the whole concept

of the free offer. That it is so generally received in our day can only be indicative of the sad state of affairs in today's churches. Arminianism and Pelagianism have made devastating inroads. How sad it is that the truths of sovereign grace are no longer maintained and taught. How sad it is that God is robbed of His power and man is exalted to God's throne. There is a terrible price to pay for this, for all Arminianism is incipient Modernism. And those churches which have chosen the Arminian way have clearly shown the truth of this. For already Modernism has made its inroads. And Modernism denies the Christ, tramples under foot the blood of the covenant and makes all that is holy an unholy thing. Upon such a church rests terrible judgments.

It is our hope and prayer that all who love the truth of Scripture and the precious doctrines of sovereign grace may see the error of the free offer and reject it.

May God bless these efforts to His glory and the cause of His precious gospel in the midst of the world. ■ ■

# Preaching: The Chief Task of the Church (1)

Prof. R. Decker

## INTRODUCTION

It is well known and almost universally admitted that preaching has fallen upon rather bad times. Jay Adams, professor of preaching at Westminster Theological Seminary, Escondido, California speaks of: "the present crisis in preaching."<sup>1</sup> James I Packer, a well known evangelical scholar, asks: "Why do so few seem to believe in preaching?"<sup>2</sup> Charles H. Kraft, professor at the Fuller School of World Mission, claims there are "ten myths concerning communication." "Myth 5," according to Kraft is: "Preaching is God's ordained means of communicating the gospel."<sup>3</sup>

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1 Jay E. Adams, *Preaching With Purpose*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), p. xi.

2 Samuel T. Logan, Jr., ed., *The Preacher and Preaching*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1986), p. 3.

3 Charles H. Kraft, *Communication Theory For Christian Witness*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), pp. 41-44.

Well may we ask what is the cause of the present reaction against preaching? After all, everyone knows that preaching has always occupied the central place in the worship and life of the church. If the gospel narratives teach us anything at all about the ministry of our Lord they teach us that Jesus considered preaching to be His chief task. He came "preaching the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 4:23). Even His miracles were subordinate to the Lord's preaching. Twice He sent out His disciples to preach to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. After His resurrection Christ commissioned His disciples (and in doing so, the church) to go into all the world baptizing and teaching (Matt. 28:19, 20). What is the book of Acts if it be not the record of the apostles and evangelists going into all the world preaching the gospel in obedience to the command of Christ. The epistles as well teach in unmistakable terms the primacy of preaching in the worship, life, and mission of the church. Subsequent to the apostolic era the history of God's church teaches the same lesson. Always the church regarded preaching as the chief means of grace. When the church was at its lowest point spiritually it is striking to note that preaching was at a low ebb.<sup>4</sup> It is also a fact that times of reformation and/or revival were accompanied by a return to preaching. This was true of the sixteenth century Reformation. Men such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, *et. al.* were great preachers and held preaching services several times per week.<sup>5</sup> It was the power of preaching that brought and spread the Reformation and it was the power of preaching that sustained the churches of the Reformation. Surely no one can deny that preaching has always occupied the central place (or should have) in the life of God's church. Why then do we witness the decline in the place and power of preaching? Why is there today this questioning of the necessity of preaching at all?

Several answers have been offered to this question. There are those who find the reason for the decline in preaching in a new attitude toward worship itself. These argue that the people should have a greater part in the worship and so responsive readings have been introduced along with time for individual testimonies. This has taken away from the time formerly allotted to the sermon. At the same time there has been a shift

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4 Edwin Charles Dargan, *A History of Preaching*, v. 1, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), pp. 105ff., 129ff., 262ff.

5 A. Shevington Wood, *Captive to the Word*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), pp. 86, 87.



in some Reformed circles to a much more elaborate and formal liturgy. The minister often enters the sanctuary with the choir as a procession. There is a choral "call to worship" and choral responses to prayers, offerings, and Scripture readings. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, the former pastor of Westminster Chapel in London, claims:

It has been illuminating to observe these things; as preaching has declined, these other things have been emphasized; and it has all been done quite deliberately. It is part of this reaction against preaching; and people have felt that it is more dignified to pay this greater attention to ceremonial, and form, and ritual.<sup>6</sup>

Another view has it that the contemporary emphasis on counselling has, if not caused the decline in preaching, at least contributed significantly toward it. It is urged that due to the stress and strain of modern life people do not need preaching but individual attention. There are a host of problems which cannot be dealt with, we are told, from the pulpit but which must be dealt with privately. This, they say, is the only effective way to cope with these problems. Hence, preaching is de-emphasized and gives way to a "counselling oriented" ministry. Still others, notably Jay Adams, find the cause for the decline of preaching in the great dearth of good, proper preaching in our time. In support of his position Adams points to some examples of excellent preachers and preaching which is gladly heard. Adams also sees the obvious fact of the decline in membership of the larger liberal churches and in the increase in membership of the more conservative, preaching churches as proof of his contention.<sup>7</sup>

What must we say to these things? Are these reasons correct? Do they really explain the decline of preaching? Certainly we must admit that there is something to be said for each of the above reasons. The new attitude toward worship with its emphasis on congregational participation and elaborate, formal liturgy has certainly contributed to the decline of preaching. The emphasis on counselling is likewise a contributing factor. And, who would care to deny that there is a dearth of good, proper preaching today? But we are convinced that these "reasons" are in reality more *symptoms* of the problem than causes of it. While each may indeed play a role none is really *the* reason for the decline of preaching. It is our

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6 D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preacher*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972), p. 16.

7 Jay E. Adams, *Pulpit Speech*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971), pp. 1-3.

conviction that the cause for the decline of preaching must be sought in the sphere of the general apostasy and denial of the truth which we have with sincere regret witnessed in recent years. The truths of creation, Adam as a real man, the fall into sin, the miracles of the Bible, the virgin birth of Jesus, limited or definite atonement, the expiatory sacrifice of Jesus on the cross; all these truths and more are questioned and in many instances denied. Along with the denial of these goes the denial of the truth of preaching as the chief means of grace and indispensable to salvation.

But we may be more specific. Among the main denials of various doctrines of Holy Scripture is the denial of the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible. We believe that when that fundamental truth is denied the truth of preaching must inevitably be denied as well. These two are inseparable. Preaching after all by definition is the authoritative proclamation of the Word of God. It is the exposition of the Scriptures and the application of them to the lives of God's people. This means that the *content* of preaching must be the Scriptures. Thus when one denies that the Holy Spirit inspired or moved "holy men of God" (II Peter 1:20, 21) to speak or write the Word of God and when one, therefore, denies the truth that the Scriptures are without error and do "fully contain the will of God" (The Belgic Confession, Art. VII), one has stripped preaching of its content. There is nothing left to preach so why preach at all? Not only that, but when one denies the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture he of necessity denies its authority and that of preaching. Apart from Holy Scripture preaching has no authority, no right to instruct or comfort or admonish God's people. Lloyd-Jones puts the matter a bit mildly but rather well nonetheless when he writes:

... we are more concerned about certain attitudes in the Church herself which account for the decline in the place of preaching. I suggest that here are some of the main and the leading factors under this heading. I would not hesitate to put in the first position: the loss of belief in the authority of the Scriptures, and a diminution in belief of the Truth. I put this first because I am sure it is the main factor. If you have no authority, you cannot speak well, you cannot preach. Great preaching always depends upon great themes. Great themes always produce great speaking in any realm, and this is particularly true, of course, in the realm of the Church. While men believed in the Scriptures as the authoritative Word of God and spoke on the basis of that authority you had great preaching. But once that went, and men began to speculate, and to theorize, and to put up hypotheses and so on, the eloquence and the greatness of the spoken word inevitably declined and began to wane. You cannot really deal with speculations and conjectures in the same way as preaching had formerly dealt with the great themes of the Scriptures. But as belief in the great doctrines of the Bible began to go out, and sermons were

replaced by ethical addresses and homilies, and moral uplift and sociopolitical talk, it is not surprising that preaching declined. I suggest that that is the first and the greatest cause of this decline.<sup>8</sup>

We believe, therefore, that the denial of the inspiration and infallibility of the Scriptures is *the* cause for the decline of preaching. When that truth was denied the truth of preaching was also rejected for it no longer had either content or authority. Though writing in a different context Samuel Volbeda makes the same point when he says:

Ministers in particular, who must preach and teach others to observe the precepts of the Gospel, must never forget that God's Word is their official manual. In Holy Scripture, God's own authentic Word, addressed to us and absolutely authorized, we possess the full warrant which we need to shepherd the flock of God unto the nurture of its spiritual life by means of feeding, guiding, protecting, and healing the sheep.<sup>9</sup>

#### A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF FOUR VERBS

There are several terms used in the New Testament for preaching. One of these we find in Luke 9:59, 60, a passage in which Jesus teaches that preaching takes precedence over absolutely everything, even over burying one's father. The text reads:

And he (Jesus) said unto another, Follow me, But he said, Lord suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

The verb "preach" is *diangelloo* and it means to carry a message through, announce everywhere, through places, through assemblies of men, etc.<sup>10</sup>

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8 Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, p. 13.

9 Samuel Volbeda, *The Pastoral Genius of Preaching*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960), p. 85.

10 William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 181. A. and G. translate: "proclaim far and wide."

Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1889), p. 135.

Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, v. 1, 1965), pp. 68, 60. Kittel says: "The meaning is not simply that the disciples announce the imminent *basileia ton Theou*, but that the eschatological lordship of God is proclaimed, beginning in the word of proclamation."

This same verb is used in Romans 9:17: "... that my name might be declared through all the earth." This term would indicate that preaching is bearing a message first of all. This implies a sender of that message. And, in the second place, that message must be announced everywhere, universally.

The second term, *euangelizomai*, means to bring good news, announce glad tidings, proclaim glad tidings, or to instruct men concerning the things which pertain to salvation.<sup>11</sup> This verb is used by the Savior in Luke 4:43 where He speaks of the necessity of His preaching in other cities (than the desert places near Capernaum) also. There are numerous references in the Book of Acts. It is the term used by the apostle Paul in his beautiful confession: "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel" (I Corinthians 9:16). We find it also in I Corinthians 15:1, 2 where the apostle speaks of his official labor among the Corinthians:

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

Really the emphasis of this verb falls upon the fact that preaching is the announcement or proclamation of glad news, good tidings. Again note the plain implication of authority. Preaching is an official announcement.

A third verb, *katangelloo*, means to announce, declare, promulgate, make known, proclaim publicly.<sup>12</sup> It is translated (Authorized Version, A.V., RD) "declaring," in I Corinthians 2:1, 2 where the apostle describes his work among the Corinthians as follows:

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.

The emphasis here would seem to be on public proclamation. The gospel, the Word of God, must be declared publicly.

A fourth term is the verb *keerusoo*. This is the most common of the words used in the New Testament and for this reason alone the most important. Fundamentally it means to be a herald, to officiate as a herald, to proclaim after the manner of a herald.<sup>13</sup> The herald bore a message. He

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11 Arndt and Gingrich, pp. 317, 318; Kittle, v. II, pp. 717, 721; Thayer, pp. 256, 257.

12 Arndt and Gingrich, p. 410; Kittel, v. I, pp. 71, 72; Thayer, p. 330.

13 Arndt and Gingrich, p. 432; Kittle, v. III, pp. 703-714; Thayer, p. 346.

was sent out to proclaim the official word of the king. Hence with this verb is always a suggestion of formality, gravity, and an authority which must be listened to and obeyed! Thus with the reference to the gospel this verb means to publish, proclaim openly, and it refers to the public, authoritative proclamation of the Word of God and matters pertaining to it. It is used in connection with the preaching of John the Baptist: "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:1, 2). This verb is used with reference to Jesus' proclaiming the kingdom of heaven:

From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. . . And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people (Matthew 4:17, 23).

Jesus, after His resurrection and just before His ascension, uses this word when He commissions the disciples: "... Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15, 16). We find it also in Romans 10:15: "And how shall they preach except they be sent?" The apostle Paul uses the term when he writes:

But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God (I Corinthians 1:23, 24).

The same apostle uses the word again in his charge to his spiritual son, Timothy:

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine (II Timothy 4:1, 2).

Clearly the force of this verb is that of an authoritative proclamation. The preacher is the herald, sent out into the world by Christ with the Word of God or the Gospel.

From these four key verbs used in the New Testament Scriptures with reference to preaching we gain a general idea of what preaching is. It may be said that preaching is *proclamation*. It is not dialogue or private conversation among a group of believers. Rather, preaching is public proclamation. Preaching declares publicly or *heralds* the Word of God. In the second place, preaching heralds *the gospel or the Word of God*. It proclaims a message and that message is not the word of man's wisdom but it is the Word of God. And, that Word of God is glad tidings, good news. In the third place, preaching is *authoritative*. The one who preaches is

sent by Christ, charged by Him to proclaim the message. Preaching, therefore, bears the authority of Jesus Christ. For that reason the true preaching of the Word must be obeyed. Finally, preaching always, and let that be emphasized, always evokes a response. True preaching is never without fruit. Precisely because of this truth the apostle Paul could write:

Now thanks be to God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ (II Corinthians 2:15-17).

When, therefore, we speak in Christ (preach) in sincerity, as of God and in the sight of God, we always triumph! We are pleasing to God both in them that perish and in them that are saved.

That we may determine precisely what preaching is as the chief task of the church we purpose to examine several passages of the New Testament in a bit of detail.

#### I CORINTHIANS 1:17-25

This passage reads:

For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

The apostle writes: "For Christ sent me not to be a baptizer but to preach the gospel. . ." (translation mine, R.D.D.). The verb "sent" (*apostelloo*) means: to send away, to send off, to order one to go to a place appointed, to commission one.<sup>14</sup> Hence the term refers to an *official* sending. This

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14 Arndt and Gingrich, p. 98; Kittel, v. 1, pp. 403-406; Thayer, pp. 62, 68.

is what Scripture means by the "calling" of one to an office in the church. This "sending" or calling includes two main elements. That one is sent by Christ means that he is appointed to that office by Christ. But that sending also includes qualification for that office. In other words, Christ always gives His Spirit to the one whom He appoints to office enabling that person to fulfill the duties of that office. In this sense Christ often spoke of Himself as being "sent of the Father." Christ was appointed by the Father and qualified by the Father to be our Mediator. That, therefore, to which the apostle refers is his official sending, i.e., his being sent by Jesus Christ (cf. vs. 1) as an apostle. His commission is not to be a baptizer but to preach the gospel. And note well, Christ is the Sender. Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the gospel, Paul writes.

This, therefore, is how the apostle conceived of his commission from Christ, the Sender. His chief task was to preach the gospel. Literally he was called to bring or announce the glad news, to proclaim the glad tidings, to instruct men concerning the things which pertain to salvation. This does not preclude his baptizing. Indeed not for according to this very chapter he baptized a few of the Corinthian Christians. But chiefly his mission was to proclaim the glad news. And, the point is that everything else, even baptizing as important and significant as that sacrament may be, must be subservient to the task of preaching. So overcome with this consciousness of his call to preach was the apostle that he went so far as to say: "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel" (I Corinthians 9:16). Primarily, therefore, the apostle Paul was sent to Corinth to preach! Whatever he did there in that congregation he had to preach. All of his activities had to be subservient to the chief task of preaching.

This certainly indicates the supreme importance of preaching, one could even say, the critical or crucial importance of preaching. If one understands that the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20), he can readily understand as well that what Christ charged the apostles to do he also charges His church. If one understands that along with the apostles, evangelists, and prophets the ascended Christ also gave pastors and teachers to the church for the work of the ministry and the edifying of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:4-16) then one can also understand that the chief task of the church through its ordained ministers is the preaching of the gospel. THAT is THE work of the minister in God's church. Preaching is his business. For this and for this *chiefly* Christ sent him, i.e., appointed him to the office of the ministry and qualified him for that office. This means that the minister must be wholly devoted to the work of preaching the gospel. In his capacity as a husband, as a father in

his home, in his work, in his recreation, and in all the many details of his life he must be devoted to his task as a preacher of the gospel. Jesus said that not even burying one's father or bidding farewell to one's relatives could come before preaching the kingdom of God (Luke 9:59-62). The chief task of the minister is to preach. He may have many duties which pertain to his office as minister of the Word in a congregation but the one duty which takes precedence is preaching. All of his duties: visiting the sick, comforting the sorrowing, caring for those who have problems and troubles of one sort or another; as important as these duties may be, they must be subservient to his task of preaching. Preaching is THE work of the church and its ministers. Why this is the case we shall point out presently. At this point we must understand that the calling, official sending or commissioning of the apostles (and, therefore, of the pastor-teacher today) is to proclaim the glad tidings of the gospel.

There are two implications of this truth which ought to be noted. The first is, and this is by far the most significant also for our study, preaching belongs to the *official* work of the minister. Not everyone, therefore, may preach. Only one who is *sent*, which is to say, called by Christ through His church may preach. But this also implies that one who is sent in this way by Christ stands before God's people as the official representative of Christ. He comes in the name of and by the authority of Jesus Christ. He comes with the Word of Christ and that Word must be honored and obeyed. In the second place, preaching is *proclamation*. It is the official announcement and public declaration of the testimony of God. This implies that informal discussion of a portion of God's Word by a group of believers or a panel discussion or a dialogue may not be substituted for the preaching of the gospel. Nor may preaching be replaced by dramatic productions or by singing or by anything else. Preaching is absolutely necessary simply because it belongs to the official task of the church and its ministers. Christ sends the minister to preach the Word. To fail is to be disobedient to Christ Himself.

The apostle continues in verse seventeen by describing how he preached or rather how Christ sent him to preach. Christ sent him to preach, "... not with (in) wisdom of words. . . ." The negative purpose is "... lest the cross would be made of none effect." Notice, in general, that this is part of the apostle's commission. He is sent to preach the gospel in a specific way and that way is "not with (in) wisdom of words." This is highly necessary for that wisdom of word (or, "words" as some manuscripts have it) would make the cross of Christ of none effect. What this means is that the preacher must preach but he is called to preach not in wisdom of word. If he does in fact preach in wisdom of word he makes the cross of



Christ of no effect.

Precisely what is meant by this "wisdom of word" is explained in chapter two of this letter, the first five verses, where the apostle describes how he did his preaching among the Corinthians. There we read:

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

Paul did not come to them with distinguished "eloquence" by the world's standards. Gerhard Delling states it nicely when he writes: "Paul did not proclaim God's act in Christ. . . after the manner of outstanding eloquence and wisdom,"<sup>15</sup> Thus the apostle in his preaching stood in stark contrast to the teachers of wisdom in Corinth! The apostle further explains in verses four and five: "And my preaching was not with persuasive words of wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power in order that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." The wisdom, therefore, of which Paul is speaking is the wisdom of men or of the world according to chapter one. With that wisdom Paul did not preach. Not with the enticing words or persuasive speech of that wisdom of man did he preach. That would cause their faith to be grounded in the wisdom of men and not in God. Rather he was with them in weakness, fear, and much trembling. In this way the power of the Spirit was manifest in the apostle and thus he was determined to know nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

This is what the apostle means with the "not with wisdom of word" of chapter one verse seventeen. It is the worldly wisdom of man's word. It is the "wisdom of the wise" and the "understanding of the prudent" (vs. 19) and "the wisdom of this world" (vs. 20). The apostle did not preach *in the sphere of* ("en" plus the dative in the original) the wisdom of word. His preaching remained outside of that sphere. In other words, in his preaching the apostle did not accommodate himself to the wisdom of men. Paul did not employ their persuasive eloquence. He could not for the gospel which Paul preached stands diametrically opposed to the

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15 G. Friedrich, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, v. VIII, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), p. 524.

wisdom of this world. Thus one can readily see that if the apostle had spoken in the sphere of the wisdom of words he would have made the cross of no effect. That word "of no effect," literally means to make empty or to empty, to make void, i.e., deprive of force, render vain, useless, or of no effect.<sup>16</sup> That is strong language indeed! To preach in the sphere of the wisdom of word is to make the cross of Christ empty or void, useless and in this sense of no effect. That kind of preaching strikes at the very heart of the gospel, the cross of Christ. If preaching is to do anything it must present the cross of Christ in all of its saving, dynamic, divine power. Preaching in the wisdom of word does not do this. It makes the cross void. No wonder, then, that Christ commissioned Paul to preach the gospel not in wisdom of word.

The apostle continues: "For the word (not 'preaching' as the A.V. has it) of the cross is to them who are perishing, foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (vs. 18, translation mine, R.D.D.). With these words Scripture gives the reason for the preaching. Christ sent the apostle to preach the gospel not in wisdom of word lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect because the word of the cross is to those who are perishing, foolishness, but to those who are being saved it is the power of God. That "word of the cross" is a descriptive genitive or genitive of content. The idea is that this is the word which speaks of the cross. The cross is the content of that word. This "word of the cross" stands in direct contrast to the "wisdom of word" of the preceding verse. That is the wisdom of this world and over against that wisdom is the word of the cross. We must also understand that this "word of the cross" which has as its sole content the cross, is to be distinguished from the preaching of the word. The apostle does not say as the A.V. puts it: "the preaching of the cross." Preaching is the means by which the word of the cross is conveyed. Thus the word of the cross is really the content of preaching. It is that which is proclaimed. The cross, of course, stands for Christ and His expiatory sacrifice, the atonement which He made for the sake of the elect, His people; or in this context, "them who are being saved." This is the word which the apostle was sent by Christ to preach. The Word of the cross. Nothing less and nothing more must be preached. The apostle and every "sent preacher" for that matter, must preach the cross. This is the very heart of the Scriptures. Everything in Scripture implies, therefore, that one preaches sin, guilt as the consequence of the fall of mankind in Adam, and total depravity. It implies that one preaches the only way out

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16 Arndt and Gingrich, p. 429; Kittel, v. III, pp. 661, 662; Thayer, p. 344.

of this, the sovereign grace of God revealed in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

That word of the cross which is conveyed by means of the preaching has a twofold effect. "To them who are perishing," i.e., consigned to eternal misery and, therefore, on the path to destruction, to these whom Scripture calls unbelievers, the ungodly, or the reprobate, the word of the cross is foolishness. The term used in the Greek is *mooria*, which means utter folly or even silliness.<sup>17</sup> Thus they react to the word of the cross when it is preached to them. They consider that word to be nonsense and an insult to their intelligence. And, we must understand that this is not because the word of the cross is actually foolishness. This is the effect which that word of the cross produces in "those who are perishing." Thus they react in unbelief and rebellion against the word of the cross and they want nothing to do with that "foolishness." But, "to those who are being saved," or "us," Paul, the Corinthian Christians, and the children of God of every age, it is the power of God, the dynamic power of God. This word of the cross is power indeed! It is the power to forgive guilt-ridden sinners, to call them from darkness into God's fellowship, to give faith, to sanctify, to preserve and glorify the saints. This is all the power of God which is the word of the cross. It is the word of the cross which the apostle was sent by Christ to preach. And, Christ commissions His church today to preach that word and that word of the cross has the same twofold effect, in them that are perishing and in them that are being saved. It is God's almighty, sovereign power.

The apostle continues in verse 19: "For it has been written, I shall destroy the wisdom of the wise and I shall bring to nothing (make void, of no effect, frustrate) the understanding of the learned ones" (translation mine, R.D.D.). The apostle having made the point that the word of the cross to them that perish is foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God, now substantiates that truth by quoting from the Old Testament Scriptures, Isaiah 29:14. In this passage God Himself says that He will destroy the wisdom of the wise and make of no effect the understanding of the learned. Thus it must be that the word of the cross which Christ sent the apostle (and which He sends the church today) to preach is foolishness to them that perish. These latter are the wise, the learned whose wisdom God destroys and whose understanding God makes of no effect. Next with a series of rhetorical questions the apostle reinforces his

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17 Arndt and Gingrich, p. 533; Kittel, v. IV, pp. 832-847, note pp. 845-857; Thayer, p. 420.

argument: "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Did not God make foolish the wisdom of the world?" The answer to these questions is obvious. Where is the wise? The answer is that he is not. Where is the scribe? Again, he is not. Where is the disputer of this world? He is not. There is a definite note of triumph here! Paul means to say, the wise, the scribe, the disputer of this world have absolutely no effect. The conclusion is perfectly evident: "Did not God make foolish the wisdom of the world?" He surely did. The wisdom of this world has been made void and utterly useless by God.

In the succeeding verses (21-25) Paul explains precisely how this came about, this total destruction of the wisdom of this world. Verse 21 reads: "For seeing that in the wisdom of God, the world through (its) wisdom did not know God, it has pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (translation mine, R.D.D.). The "*epeidee gar*" with which this verse begins is causal. What we have here, therefore, is proof of the fact that God made foolish the wisdom of this world, destroyed the wisdom of the wise, frustrated the understanding of the learned. The text speaks of both the wisdom of God and His good pleasure. These two may be distinguished but they are nonetheless very closely related. In His unsearchable wisdom God has adapted all things in His counsel to the attainment of the highest purpose which is the glory of His name. Thus all things in heaven and on earth, good and bad, great and small, individually and collectively, work together to attain God's purpose. And God's purpose is the manifestation of His glory in the saving of His church in Jesus Christ.

In that wisdom of God the world by its wisdom knew not God. For all of its learning and knowledge the world by its wisdom cannot know God. How could it? Scripture describes the wisdom of this world in these terms: "This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish" (James 3:15). The wisdom of the world does not come from above, i.e., it does not have its source in God. It comes from beneath, from the devil and sin. Thus it is characterized as earthly, sensual, and devilish. It is not difficult to understand that this wisdom cannot know God, and that, the fact that the world by its wisdom cannot know God, is the wisdom of God. Jesus spoke of this very truth when He thanked the Father for hiding the things of the kingdom from the wise and prudent and revealing them to babes. In this connection Christ said, "... Even so, Father for thus it seemed good in thy sight" (Matt. 11:25, 26). In other words it is God's good pleasure! God sovereignly hides these from the wise and prudent of this world and reveals them to the humble babes of His kingdom. The fact that the world does not know God by its wisdom

serves in the wisdom of God the attainment of His eternal purpose in Christ.

On the other hand, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save those that believe. It simply pleased God. This is His sovereign and free good pleasure. God determined to save those who believe. And those who believe are not saved because they believe. This is not the point of the text at all. God means to emphasize that the saved are believers. Those who believe in this context are the "saved" of verse 18 or the "called" of verse 24; in other words, they are the people of God. God saves them by means of the foolishness of preaching. By that means God saves believers. God doesn't save by disputation or all kinds of worldly wisdom or learning. He saves by the foolishness of preaching. To the world that is sheer foolishness (cf. vs. 18). But by that foolishness God saves His people.

This is precisely why preaching is both mandatory and indispensable for the church. If the church ceases to preach it loses everything! The church must preach! It must simply because God is pleased to save believers by means of the preaching. The life of the church as the organism of the body of Christ is sustained by means of the preaching of the Word. By means of the preaching God's people are called to consciousness of faith, turned from sin to the living God, brought to the consciousness of their justification, sanctified, preserved in the world unto everlasting life and glory. If there be no preaching none of these blessings of salvation is possible. Therefore, too, there may be no substitution for preaching, no elaborate liturgy with all kinds of choral responses and responsive readings may take its place. No dramatic productions, no Bible discussion may replace either in part or in whole the preaching of the Word. Again the church must preach simply because it pleases God to save His people by that "foolishness." We must not pretend to be wiser than God by substituting something else for preaching!

Two factors must be noted in this connection. By proclamation God saves "those who believe" or "the ones believing." The ones saved, therefore, are characterized by believing. The word of the cross (verse 18, the content of the preaching) conveyed by preaching appeals not to reason or the intellect or the emotions but to faith. This is not to say that faith is not reasonable. It is. But the point is that the word of the cross cannot be logically demonstrated. It is either believed or rejected. Note too, that we have a second term for preaching, *keerugma*, in this verse. This word means that which is promulgated by a herald, the message or proclamation by heralds of God or Christ.<sup>18</sup> Preaching, therefore, is heralding the word

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18 Arndt and Gingrich, p. 432; Kittel, v. III, pp. 714, 717; Thayer, p. 346.

of the cross. This certainly emphasizes the fact that it is official. The herald is commissioned to proclaim the official announcement. Thus the preacher is ordained by Christ ("sent," vs. 17) and charged by Christ to proclaim the message which in this context is the "word of the cross" (vs. 18) or "Christ crucified" (vs. 23).

Continuing in verse twenty-two the apostle explains what the world by its wisdom wants: "For the Jews asked for signs, and the Greeks seek wisdom." Hence, neither wanted the word of the cross or Christ crucified. The Jews often asked Jesus for signs. In Matthew 12:38ff. the Scribes and Pharisees asked the Lord for a sign. Jesus' response was that "an evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; but there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas" (vss. 39ff.). Their asking for a sign was plain rejection of Jesus' preaching for in verse forty-one the Lord says that the men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold a greater than Jonas is here! That they were not all sincere in asking for signs is also evident from Matthew 16:1 where Scripture says that they *tempted* Jesus in desiring a sign from heaven. Jesus repeats His answer, "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign and there shall be no sign given it but the sign of the prophet Jonas." (In this connection cf. also John 6.) The Greeks on the other hand seek after wisdom. They wanted rational proof for everything and they "loved to hear some new thing" (Acts 17). But in all their seeking of wisdom they mocked at and rejected the gospel of Jesus and the resurrection!

But, writes Paul in verse 23, in sharp contrast to the Jews who asked for signs and the Greeks who seek after wisdom, we preach Christ crucified. We *preach*, we do not show signs and we do not dispute or discuss with persuasive words of man's wisdom, we preach, i.e., we herald (*keerusoo*, cf. comments on this verb above in the introduction and in connection with verse 21).

And we preach "Christ crucified!" Here is the content of the preaching, the essence of the gospel message and it is really the same as the "word of the cross" of verse eighteen. This is the gospel, Christ crucified. All preaching must be Christ crucified or it is not preaching at all. The name, Christ, is the official name of the Savior and signifies the fact that He is the anointed of God. He is the eternal, only begotten Son of God Who is anointed to be our prophet and Who perfectly reveals the will of God to us. He is our priest Who brought the perfect sacrifice of Himself for the sin of the elect and Who appears in the presence of God for us. And, Christ is our king Who rules His people graciously by His word and spirit and Who rules over all things by His sovereign power. And, He is

Christ *crucified*. That "crucified" is the perfect passive participle in the Greek and is literally translated, "having been crucified." The force of the perfect tense is that Christ once having been crucified stands before us always as the crucified one. This and only this, nothing more and nothing less, Christ having been crucified is the message heralded by the foolishness of preaching!

Christ having been crucified means that the eternal Son of God in our flesh suffered and died under the curse of God's wrath and thus brought atonement for God's people. This implies the fall of the race of human kind into sin and the guilt, and depravity of that race. It implies the justice of God which must be satisfied. Nothing less than the sacrifice of the Son of God would suffice. Christ having been crucified implies sovereign grace and unconditional predestination. God blesses us and predestinated us in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world and that is realized in the crucifixion of Christ. Christ crucified implies the end to all work righteousness. Salvation cannot be earned; its only possibility lies in Christ having been crucified. This is the heart of the word of God and the content of preaching.

To the Jews who ask for signs Christ having been crucified is a stumbling block (vs. 23). This stumbling block is an impediment in one's way causing him to fall. Scripture speaks of the same in I Peter 2:8. In this passage Christ is called the chief cornerstone which God lays in Zion. But to the disobedient He is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. The same word is used in both passages, *skandalon*.<sup>19</sup> Only, Peter adds, "Whereunto also they were appointed." God appointed them to stumble over Christ in unbelief and disobedience. Thus they stand in stark contrast with those who believe and to whom Christ is precious and are the chosen generation, the royal priesthood, and the holy nation that they should show forth the praises of him who called them out of darkness into his marvellous light (vs. 9). Thus also we must understand this text. To the Jews, i.e., the unbelieving Jews who ask for signs, Christ having been crucified is a stumbling block. And this is precisely God's intention that they should stumble over Christ crucified into destruction. This is one effect of Christ having been crucified. He causes unbelief to stumble. They are offended by Christ; He does not fit into their messianic expectations. They want a Christ not *the* Christ having been crucified. Unto this they were appointed. Preaching Christ having been crucified produces

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19 Arndt and Gingrich, p. 760; Friedrich, v. VII, pp. 344-347; Thayer, p. 577.

this effect! The apostle continues: "And to the Greeks foolishness." To the unbelieving Greeks who seek after wisdom Christ having been crucified is foolishness, sheer folly, silliness. They in all their wisdom are offended at Christ crucified and reject Him as foolishness.

In verse 24 we have the contrast, the positive effect of the preaching of Christ having been crucified. But, in distinction from the Jews who ask for signs and the Greeks who seek after wisdom and to whom Christ is the stumbling block and foolishness, to the called both Jews and Greeks He is Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God! "The ones called" are the same as "those who believe" of verse 21 and the "saved" of verse 18. These are the ones predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3ff.), the chosen generation of God's people (1 Pet. 2:9). These are "His people" whom Jesus saves from their sins (Matt. 1:21). They are the "sheep" for whom the Good Shepherd laid down His life (John 10). They are the regenerated ones by the Holy Spirit, called out of darkness into the light of God's fellowship. To them God gives faith uniting them to Christ in whom are all the blessings of salvation. They are justified, forgiven, adopted, and given the right to everlasting life and glory. They are the sanctified, preserved, presently to be glorified saints. The called they are, both Jews and Greeks, the called out of every nation.

To them Christ, having been crucified, is Christ the power and the wisdom of God. Christ crucified is the power of God, the power that forgives sin, transforms from darkness into light, saves from death and hell, and translates into glory. That is power! Dynamic, saving power of grace! Christ having been crucified, that is not earthly power, but heavenly, divine, wonder-working power! And Christ having been crucified is the highest manifestation of the wisdom of God. God's purpose is the glory of His name through the saving of His people in Christ. And God in His wisdom determined the way of the cross, "Christ having been crucified," as the highest and best way to reach that purpose. Thus Christ having been crucified is the power and the wisdom of God!

Now then Paul was sent to preach "the word of the cross" or "Christ having been crucified." The preaching of Christ having been crucified has a double effect: it is a stumbling block to the unbelieving Jews who ask for signs and foolishness to the Greeks who seek after wisdom, but to the called, both Jew and Greek, it is Christ the power and the wisdom of God! Thus by preaching God destroys the wisdom of this world and makes it of no effect and by preaching God saves His people. Can there be any doubt but that preaching, therefore, must be the chief task of the church? How can there be salvation without it? Why is this true? Simply because it pleases God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe! This is God's wisdom and this is His power. ■ ■



# A Power of God Unto Salvation

or GRACE NOT AN OFFER

Herman Hoeksema

[Translator's Note: The Dutch title of this chapter is "*Zo Vast Als Een Muur*." This is an idiomatic figure of which there is no exact English idiomatic equivalent; that is, a literal translation would make no sense here. I have taken the liberty of substituting an English idiomatic figure which is roughly equivalent and conveys the sense. Secondly, the reader should bear in mind that the Dutch verb *aanbieden* is somewhat ambiguous. It can be translated by "offer," but it can also be translated by "present." I have consistently rendered it by "offer" in this chapter, although the flavor of the term as used by the Rev. Keegstra in this chapter is somewhat lost — especially in connection with what the Rev. Hoeksema calls the "second stage" of Keegstra's reasoning process. — Homer C. Hoeksema]

## Chapter 2 Up Against a Stone Wall

It is not an easy task to follow the reasoning of the Rev. Keegstra, to find a clear line in his reasoning and to give a correct presentation of the actual view which the esteemed writer holds with respect to the so-called general, well-meant offer of grace and salvation on God's part in the preaching.

I have seriously attempted to find such a line.

For when one wants to subject someone's view to criticism, then the very first requisite is surely that he understands clearly the view to be criticized. Therefore I have read Keegstra's articles very carefully, and even reread them several times. But I have not succeeded in becoming sure what Keegstra really means. Neither have I been able to discover any unity or any single line in what he has written about this subject. When he writes about other subjects, the Editor of *De Wachter* is usually clear and easy to follow. But in these articles the usual clarity is completely lacking. Time after time I had to ask: what does Keegstra mean now? Only this one thing finally became very clear: the esteemed writer wants to cling to a general, well-meant offer of grace on God's part to all men.

When I faced the question: why is it so difficult to follow Keegstra's reasoning when otherwise he can usually express his thoughts very clearly? I soon found an answer. The esteemed Editor of *De Wachter* has attempted to rework two mutually exclusive propositions into one whole, or at least to join them in such a way that his readers would not stumble too much over the flagrant contradiction. His intention was to show that a well-meant and general offer of grace and salvation properly is at home in pure Reformed preaching. And that is in the nature of the case impossible.

With such a position one runs against a stone wall.

One feels this at once upon reading it.

One cannot even escape the impression (I do not believe that this is my imagination) that the author himself felt this.

Black is not white. Square is not round. General is not particular. Reformed is not Arminian. All of this was evidently clear to the author all along. But when one is committed to the position that black is white, square is round, general is particular, and Reformed is Arminian, and wants to defend it and make it clear, then he certainly has to argue very carefully.

This is what Keegstra does.

I finally discovered the following in his reasoning process:

1. First the esteemed writer is Reformed. Of general atonement he wants nothing. Christ did not die for all men. Election must be maintained and taught also in the preaching.

2. Then Keegstra becomes ambiguous. He begins to write in such a way that one repeatedly rubs his eyes and asks: where are we going now? Where does the editor want to lead us? It is not completely clear that he does not mean the same thing with a general offer of grace as a general demand of conversion and faith. If one is not on guard, he is swept along; but he who is on guard begins to hesitate at this point to travel farther with Keegstra.

3. Finally Keegstra again expresses himself clearly, and now he speaks frankly of a general, well-meant offer of grace on the part of God to all men.

Reformed.

Reformed-Arminian.

Arminian.

Thus the line runs in the reasoning of the Rev. Keegstra. It is well that we pay close attention to this. For indeed, the argumentation and presentation of the Rev. Keegstra are very dangerous for those who value keeping their feet on Reformed shores and not sailing away with the travel

companions of Arminius. We shall therefore demonstrate that the method described above is actually that employed by the Rev. Keegstra. Notice that first he writes:

"What is preaching?

"Wherein does the Gospel consist, the message of salvation which we have to bring to men in general?

"In the answers given to these questions differences come to the fore.

"The Remonstrant preaches to all men without distinction: 'Jesus has satisfied for you all with His suffering and death, your debt is paid, your sins are atoned; now accept that Jesus by faith, and you are saved in beginning, and if you persevere in the faith, then you will be completely saved.'

"Of course, the Remonstrant has much more to say than that; but if you want to reduce his preaching to a few words in which he brings his message to all men, then it comes down to that."

Now one would expect that the Rev. Keegstra would subscribe to this presentation of the Arminians wholeheartedly in order to be able to hold fast to and have a valid basis for his general, well-meant offer of grace and salvation on God's part. We would think that one cannot do with less if he wants such a general offer. If grace is to be offered by God to all men, then that grace must actually be there. That is an indispensable requisite. Then Christ must die for all, for otherwise that salvation is not there and cannot be offered. And this is precisely what the Remonstrants say. That a general offer of grace is in any event thoroughly at home in the preaching of the Remonstrants and fits very well — this Keegstra makes very clear.

But he who would think that Keegstra is committed to this Arminianism is evidently mistaken. He wants to be Reformed. Therefore he writes further:

"Such a message we do not have for our hearers. To say in the name of God to all who hear, without distinction, that Christ has died for them — that we cannot do. Scripture does not give us the right to do this."

This becomes even stronger when Keegstra writes:

"Certainly, we must say and do much more in our preaching. For we must proclaim the full counsel of God. In that full counsel there appears as a very definite and necessary element this, that we set forth the plan of salvation as it is revealed to us in Scripture; and therefore it belongs to the preacher's mandate to declare clearly and unambiguously that according to God's eternal purpose only the elect, for whom Christ died and who were given Him of the Father, shall be saved."

This is the first stage in the reasoning of the esteemed Editor of *De Watcher*.

And it is clear that here he is soundly Reformed. He rejects the presentation of the Remonstrants. He cannot say to *all* his hearers that Christ dies for them. He even emphasizes that the opposite must be preached and that the preacher must say unambiguously that salvation in Christ is not for all.

However, we would surely want to conclude that by this he cuts off absolutely all possibility of presenting the Gospel as a general offer of grace and salvation, coming to all men as well-meant on God's part. Notice, the issue is not whether the Gospel must be proclaimed by the preacher to all men without distinction who sit in his audience. Every Reformed man believes this. No, the issue is whether the preacher may say to his audience: God well-meaningly offers salvation to you all, head for head and soul for soul. That is the question. Neither can Keegstra very well explain *well-meaningly* as meaning anything but: *with the intention to save you*. Gladly would I accept from him another explanation if he knows of one. Thus, the general offer comes down to this, that the preacher says to his audience: God offers grace to you all, head for head and soul for soul, with the intention of saving every one of you. Now this, we would say, Keegstra can no more teach after the first stage of his reasoning. For I must declare unambiguously: God does not will to save all; only the elect. How then could I add to this in one breath: He indeed wills to save all of you: therefore He now offers you salvation?

No, in the first stage of his argument the esteemed writer is Reformed.

Here he says: White is white and black is black. Reformed is Reformed, and Arminian is Arminian.

But now comes the second stage.

Does the Rev. Keegstra simply follow up, without beating about the bush, by saying: But the offer of grace and salvation is on God's part general and well-meaning?

Does he suddenly say: White is black? Reformed is Arminian?

No; apparently he could not get that out of his pen. Here his struggle begins. One can feel that the esteemed writer begins at this point to feel the difficulty of his problem. Therefore he tries to find a gradual transition to his general offer. And in that gradual transition the Rev. Keegstra is ambiguous. It is not entirely clear what he means. One can explain him in a favorable way. He could also have intended it wrongly. Things become blurred. The presentation is no more clear. White begins to become gray. The reasoning becomes cloudy.

Thus he writes:

"We may and must indeed bring the message in Christ's stead to all the hearers: 'Repent and believe the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be

saved.' We do not have to add to this the reservation, either in words or in our thoughts: 'This pertains only to those for whom Christ has made satisfaction; for those others cannot repent, they cannot believe, for them Christ has not died.' Nowhere does God's Word point us in that direction for our preaching."

At this point you rub your eyes and then read it once again.

And here you must pay careful attention. Here you have the beginning of the transition to a general offer.

You simply do not understand this at once. It leaves the impression on you that it is still correct, but also that there is nevertheless something wrong. And if you once again read the words of the esteemed writer carefully, with the question in mind how you get such a double impression, then you come to the discovery that they are capable of a double interpretation.

For when Keegstra writes that the message must go forth to all the hearers, "Repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," then he writes nothing new. No one would get it in his head to contradict him here, to say that he here departs from the Reformed line. For, in the first place, he here quotes Scripture almost literally; and that is sufficient for us. And besides, this is almost literally the presentation of our Reformed confession. We read in Canons II, 5: "Moreover, the promise of the gospel is, that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified, shall not perish, but have everlasting life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of his good pleasure sends the gospel." About this, therefore, there is no dispute. To this article of the confession we also subscribe.

But, in the first place, it appears that the Rev. Keegstra wants to leave the impression here that this is now the general offer of grace and salvation. He gives that impression through the context in which these words occur. But also by the fact that he writes this under the title: *Offer of the Gospel General*.

And yet this is not the case.

The words, "Repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved" contain no general offer. In fact, they contain no offer whatsoever. What they indeed contain is:

1. A general *demand* of faith and conversion. And to this we also have no objection. About this there is no dispute. And about this the Rev. Keegstra did not write. That the demand of repentance and faith concerns all, even though all cannot satisfy that demand, even though

only almighty grace can put one in a position to satisfy it, we readily grant.

2. A limited promise: he who believes shall be saved. This promise, therefore, is not general, but particular. And since the Lord God alone bestows faith, and since He bestows this faith only upon His elect, such preaching is absolutely not in conflict with the doctrine of particular grace.

If therefore it was the intention of the esteemed editor to leave the impression here that he is writing about a general offer, then it will not be plain that that impression is deceitful.

And, in the second place, the Rev. Keegstra becomes even more ambiguous when he adds to this: "To this we do not have to add the reservation, neither in our words nor in our thoughts: 'This pertains only to those for whom Christ has made satisfaction; for those others cannot repent, they cannot believe, for those Christ has not died.' Nowhere does God's Word point us in that direction for our preaching."

Also these words are capable of a double interpretation.

If Keegstra means by this that the *demand* of faith and repentance must be proclaimed without reservation in word or thought, then there is no wrong lurking in those words. But then he also says nothing. Then he is also saying not a single word about his subject: *Offer of the Gospel General*.

If, however, he wants to leave the impression that he is indeed referring to the offer of grace, and if these latter words mean: to everyone salvation must be offered, and in this the preacher must not think: only on the elect will it be bestowed, then he is slipping from firm Reformed ground into Arminian waters. A Reformed man can indeed proclaim without reservation *the demand* of faith and repentance. But no Reformed man can speak of grace in Christ without reservation in word or thought.

What the Rev. Keegstra means here cannot be stated with certainty. It would have been better that he explained himself more precisely.

As I said: the presentation is no longer clear here. No longer are you dealing with pure white or black. It becomes gray.

I fear, however, that he indeed intended already here to leave the impression that he was writing about a general and well-meant offer of grace and salvation. For in this way this offer is almost incidentally inserted here when the esteemed writer further expresses himself as follows:

"That proposed salvation the preacher must recommend to all his hearers, must invite them to it, and *in the name of the Lord must offer it to them* with the equally necessary exhortation, as a command of the Most High, to repent and believe."

The reader should note that here matters become worse. We are gradually being prepared by the writer for the general, well-meant offer of salvation on God's part. He has not yet reached that point completely. These words are indeed very disguised. The white of the Reformed confession here becomes very gray. If one wants to, he can read in these words that God offers grace in Christ, but that it depends on man whether now he will further repent and believe in the Lord Jesus.

Also the little word "offer" is peeking around the corner here.

But the writer has nevertheless not yet arrived where he wants to be and where he wants to lead his readers.

He can still rescue himself by saying that he is not writing here about what God does, but about the work of the preacher. The preacher must recommend to all his hearers grace in Christ (although it is the question whether Keegstra intends this by the expression "offer in the name of the Lord"). He could also say that he emphatically added: "with the equally necessary exhortation, as a command of the Most High, to repent and believe."

But here, too, we must let the writer himself explain what he meant. The words are not clear. They are capable of more than one explanation. It is becoming grayer.

As I wrote, however, this belongs to the second stage of the Rev. Keegstra's presentation. It is a medium of transition. (See: *De Wachter*, April 9.)

He says here approximately: White is black-white-black.

But he does not stop here.

For, after the esteemed writer has so very carefully prepared you, and has carefully guarded against telling you plainly what he understands by a general offer of grace, he at last plops into Remonstrant waters and is picked up in the boat of Arminius, when he boldly writes: "Even if it were true that the preacher cannot very well harmonize this *offer of salvation* with the truth of particular atonement, that does not excuse him from the obligation to preach both." Here the writer suddenly refers to an offer of salvation which cannot be harmonized with the doctrine of particular atonement. As it were, he plucks this thought out of thin air, for he has not previously discussed this.

And then he writes further:

"And now the second question: *the well-meaningness of God in the offering of salvation even to those of whom God knows that Christ has not atoned for them and whom He did not choose unto salvation. Is God sincere and well-meaning in this?*"

Yes, now it is clear!

Keegstra hesitated long to express himself clearly. He even had difficulty with it apparently. As long as he still spoke of a general *demand* of faith and repentance, we could go along with him, even though it was necessary that we pointed out the dangerous and ambiguous way in which he expressed himself.

But now it is completely clear where Keegstra wants to go. He began with white, and now it has become completely black.

And we do him no injustice when we interpret his view briefly as follows: the Rev. Keegstra believes that the preaching of the Gospel is an offer of grace, well-meaning on God's part, to all who hear the Gospel, head for head and soul for soul. (See: *De Wachter*, April 16.)

But now he runs up against a stone wall. For if we omit Keegstra's transitions for the moment, then the presentation of the editor comes down to this: The Lord God well-meaningly offers (that is: with the purpose to save) salvation in Christ also to those whom He does not will to save.

Is it a wonder that the writer already beforehand feared that some would raise the objection against him that this after all runs stuck, runs up against a stone wall? For he writes:

"But, thus the question is raised sometimes, and thus the question was put to us at the occasion of our articles in *De Wachter* about general atonement, with such a view does not one run against a stone wall in the preaching?

"How can you, preacher, who firmly believes the truth of election and of particular atonement, how can you now simply offer to your hearers in general, without distinction, the salvation of the Gospel and invite them to it? What becomes of your honor? Do you not transgress your power as ambassador of the Lord? God can after all not well-meaningly and sincerely offer salvation in Christ to those for whom Christ has not atoned, can He? And how can you as His messenger presume to do this? Do you simply do that on your own authority?

"There you have the question plain and simple.

"We want to furnish a simple and honorable answer to that question."

I have sought in vain for this simple and honorable answer. The Rev. Keegstra does not so much as touch the answer to these questions.

Nor is he able to do so. The doctrine of particular atonement and that of a general, well-meant offer on God's part simply exclude one another. The one swears at the other. For white never becomes black, no matter how long you talk.

But in our subsequent discussion we shall set all philosophizing aside and proceed from the thought that the Rev. Keegstra believes that the



preaching of the Gospel really is an offer of God, well-meant, to all.

If this means anything, then it includes the following, as we wrote already in our first chapter: (1) That God wills that all the hearers shall receive salvation in Christ (general grace). (2) That the offered salvation actually exists for all men (general atonement). (3) That Scripture presents salvation as intended for everyone, head for head (general offer). (4) That man can accept the offered salvation (free will).

If the Rev. Keegstra thinks that we present him incorrectly when we say that these four elements are included in his doctrine, then I challenge him to demonstrate that *one* of these elements can be omitted, and that we nevertheless retain the possibility of a general offer on God's part.

Let him not jump to another line that he might also want to draw. Let him not answer us that he has written clearly enough that he nevertheless also believes in election and in particular atonement. Nor let him accuse us that we want to understand mysteries.

But let him explain the general offer of salvation in such a way that he does justice to that term and nevertheless remains Reformed.

As matters stand now, Keegstra ran up against a stone wall. ■ ■

## Book Reviews

*Momentous Decisions in Missions Today*, by Donald A. McGavran. Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1984. (Reviewed by Rev. Arie den Hartog.)

Donald McGavran is a missionologist of considerable repute. According to the back cover of this book he is the author or editor of more than twenty books. He is dean emeritus and senior professor of church growth and South Asian studies at the School of World Missions at Fuller Theological Seminary. McGavran obviously has a great wealth of knowledge and experience in the science of missions. Throughout

his book he is able to site examples and illustrations from mission fields in many parts of the world. This makes the book interesting.

There are however, we believe, two factors that greatly diminish the value of this book for the serious Reformed reader who has a special interest in the work of missions. The first of these is McGavran's commitment to the whole new philosophy of church growth. He is in fact at least in part the father of much of this philosophy. We cannot possibly go along with much of what this philosophy teaches. It espouses the ambitious goal of the evan-

gelization of all the nations and peoples of the world. This is a goal that must be fully accomplished in our age. The book repeatedly states that there are still three billion people in the world that must be brought to faith in the Lord. These are referred to in the book as "those who have yet to believe." Great human strategy is set forth to accomplish the goal of the evangelization of all the nations and peoples of the world. Characteristically, bold and confident proclamations are made about how many people are to be converted and how many churches are to be established in each country and geographic area. Maps of the world are drawn and quotas of converts are predetermined. All efforts of missions are judged chiefly on the basis of how many "converts" it produces. All churches are exhorted to co-operate in the great effort following the principles of this philosophy. There is no great need for ecclesiastical unity among the churches as was once so strongly emphasized by ecumenical philosophy. The multitude of denominations must be allowed to continue to exist. All of them are more or less true, all have a creed and doctrine that speaks of Christ and salvation. But all must co-operate in the great task of world evangelization. The liberal and apostate churches that are members of the WCC must also learn to tolerate and co-operate with the

more conservative and separatist churches. None must judge or condemn the other. Members of various churches must be allowed to flow freely from one denomination and church to the other. Repeatedly it is stated that following the principles of the modern day church growth philosophy alone is obedience to the great commission of our Lord. The mere emphatic and repeated saying of this does not however necessarily make it so. In all of the great strategy and plans of the new church growth movement the truth of the sovereignty of God is lost sight of. The sovereign work of the Holy Spirit is replaced by the great strategy and efforts of men. Doctrine and truth is minimized. It matters little which church is established as long as many "converts" are won and vast numbers are brought in. The chief criteria to judge every effort of missions is growth no matter growth of what. It would be easy to write a lengthy paper exposing some of the fundamental errors of this whole philosophy but that is not our purpose.

The second factor which in our opinion greatly diminishes the value of this book (and this is related to the above) is its fundamentally Arminian perspective. Throughout one finds classic Arminian doctrine that God loves all men and desires to save all men. All men are to be counted as brethren and God is the Father of all men. Christ died for

all men and the purpose of evangelism is to attempt to save all men. Bringing the vast millions of the world's people to faith and obedience unto the Lord is dependent upon the great efforts and strategy of men. If on the other hand the church fails to perform her mission then millions of the world will perish though God sincerely desires to save them all. Such a philosophy of missions dethrones the almighty and sovereign Lord of heaven and earth and robs Him of all His glory. The truly Reformed church cannot and may not go along with such a philosophy of missions.

The only value of this book is that it brings up some of the great contemporary issues faced in missionology. That is of course as the title also suggests the purpose of the book. Probably the best chapter of the whole book is the second entitled "The Theological Heart of Today's Crisis." In this chapter McGavran stresses the great need for getting back to a proper biblical limitation of the task of missions. Modern and liberal churches have over the last decades changed the definition of the task of missions. Missions according to these churches is not so much preaching the gospel unto the conversion and salvation of men through Jesus Christ. It is rather the task of relieving the poverty of the world and seeking to bring about social reform in nations

where peoples are being oppressed and establishing peace and brotherhood and equality and justice among men. Much of the vast sums of money and great armies of missionaries sent out are seeking to accomplish these goals. Much of the church of today has lost sight of what the real calling of the church in missions is. Comparatively little of the resources and manpower of the church is actually being used to fulfill the real calling of missions which is to preach the gospel of Christ Jesus. In this we would of course agree with McGavran and also with the fact that this is the greatest single issue facing the church today in her calling to obey the great commission of the Lord. We would however point out that it is exactly because so much of the modern day mission efforts are nothing more than the preaching of the social gospel and heresies such as liberation theology that there can be no true co-operation in the work of evangelism between the modern day apostate liberal churches and the true church of Jesus Christ.

We also agree with what McGavran has to say about the need of "momentous decisions" on the part of the church in regards to where she spends most of her resources in missions. There is always a great need of redirecting the resources of the church away from unfruitful fields of labor to fields where there is more evidence that the

gospel is having a positive purpose. We would not however allow numbers alone to be the criterion for such redirection as those who follow the church growth movement do. The preaching of the gospel has both a negative and positive purpose. However the church is not warranted to remain for many years in an unfruitful field of labor. The Lord clearly teaches us that there will be places and peoples that completely reject the preaching of the gospel and where the church must "shake the dust off her feet" and move on to other more fruitful fields of labor. It is often easy to become so entrenched in a field that it is difficult to leave even after a field has proven to be unfruitful.

McGavran emphasizes that always in the work of missions the church must be aware of the fact that the people of the earth are a great "mosaic" of many different races, cultures, tribes, and peoples. Even in one country there are many different peoples. The gospel must be preached in such a way that it is relevant to each culture and ethnic group. There are thousands of different groups of people in the world. A church must be set up within each of these groups that is relevant and indigenous to each of these groups. The purpose of the preaching of the gospel is not to bring people out of their culture and tribe but rather to make them Christian within their own setting.

There are many implications of this. For many years the great emphasis in mission work has been to establish multiracial and cross-cultural churches. This has not necessarily always been the best approach in missions. Unnecessary barriers have been set up which hinder people from coming to the faith. It is, according to the author of this book, better to evangelize each people within their culture and racial and ethnic groups. A man will be most comfortable among people of his own kind and race. He will be most attracted to a church that preaches in his own language and dialect in terms relevant to his own culture. He will listen with greatest interest when the gospel is being preached by men of his own kind, and each people will be able to evangelize most effectively among their own people. This is not in any sense a denial of the reality of the unity of the church and of the truth that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek. The unity of the races and cultures that is found among the people of the earth will not however begin to become a reality until after the gospel has by the Spirit of God transformed the thinking and lives of men and not before.

Another one of the most interesting and beneficial discussions of this book is the one regarding the need of the proper co-operation between the churches that send missionaries to establish churches

and the national churches that are established through these labors. It is rather common philosophy of missions for a sending church to view its task to be as soon as possible to establish an indigenous church in a given country and after this has been accomplished to withdraw from that country and allow the national church to carry on the work of missions on its own in its own country. It often even happens that national churches become very possessive of their "own territories" and are unhappy if the sending churches begin new works of missions in these territories. The result is often that vast areas which have not yet been evangelized are left to the relatively small national churches to evangelize. At the same time these newly established national churches are often busy seeking to establish themselves in the faith and as an institute church. Because of this they have limited resources to extend further the work of missions in the territories surrounding them. Better therefore is it when new ways of co-operation are fostered between the sending and national churches so that the relatively larger sending churches with usually larger resources and manpower can further advance the work of missions in the areas and countries of the national churches. "Momentous decisions" on the part of the sending churches and the national churches are required to

bring about this co-operation.

McGavran also has some good things to say about the need for mission work in the western and nominally Christian nations of the world. We would of course have quite a different perspective than McGavran on that. Nevertheless that "momentous decisions" are in order in considering such fields of missionary endeavor we would agree with.

We also appreciate the author's call for momentous decisions needed on the part of the church to evangelize the urban masses of our modern day cities including our large American cities. In order to do mission work in our modern cities we need to be aware of the complex situations that exist there, of the great gulfs and separations that in fact do exist among the various peoples of our modern cities. We need also to consider how distant many affluent modern day churches really are from many groups in the cities and how very difficult it often is for an "outsider" to enter into one of our churches. McGavran suggests that in order to missionize our modern cities we need to establish many small churches within the cities each of which are relevant to the various groups that exist in these cities. We cannot of course agree with all that he has to say about this. On the other hand the call to the church to make more real and relevant efforts to do the work of

missions in our large urban centers is certainly needed.

There is much more that could be commented on in this book. We must strongly disagree with the view of the church that is set forth in it. We must also disagree with its obvious minimization of the doctrinal differences that exist between various churches, and the importance of truth and doctrine at all in the work of missions. In our own limited experience on the mission field we have been deeply impressed with the urgent need in the vast fields of missionary labors for churches faithful to the doctrines of the word of God. Though the modern day church growth movement seeks rapidly to multiply converts and establish as many churches as possible in every land of the earth in the midst of it all, something has to be said about truth and doctrine. It has to be said that the mission labors of many churches of the world must be judged and some of them even condemned. There is an urgent need for missions on the part of the truly Reformed Church.

Anyone who today criticizes the philosophy of the church growth school is commonly judged as being less than truly interested in fulfilling the great commission of the Lord to preach the gospel unto all the nations of the world. The vastness of this movement and the many thousands of converts they claim to be gaining can often be

somewhat intimidating for smaller conservative churches. There can be a great temptation to compromise doctrine and join together with the large movements of our day. The true church must not however give way to this pressure. Numbers alone can never be the criterion of judgment for any method of evangelism, not even very large numbers. In all our principles of missions we must be guided by the absolute standard of the word of God. The whole of our perspective in mission work must be controlled by the great truth that it is God who in sovereignty gathers His church in every nation by the power of His Word and Spirit and according to His purpose of election.

This does not mean however that we as churches must be complacent, sitting back and letting God do it all so to speak. God in His sovereignty is pleased to use His church and to preach His word through her though He is never dependent on her. God Himself fills His church with missionary zeal and commands her to go forth unto the ends of the world. The great commission of our Lord has not been revoked. There are still many areas in the world where the gospel has not been preached. There are still those of God's elect among the nations of the world who must be brought to conversion and salvation. This should fill us with holy zeal and urgency to

be faithful unto our Lord to preach His gospel. This is no time to withdraw missionaries and close fields. As God's people we must continue by the grace of God to make large sacrifices to support the cause of missions. We must continue to pray earnestly to the Lord that He will raise up men from our midst specially called and qualified for the work of missions. We must work very hard to seek out new mission fields. We must constantly evaluate and judge the work being done on present fields. One of the greatest things that overwhelmed us while we were on the mission field was the great urgency of missions by the truly Reformed Church. Though today there are churches in many lands of the world, many of these churches have become so apostate that they are hardly worthy of the name church at all. The "converts" these are winning often are taught very little of the truth of the Christian faith. There is a great urgency for the preaching of the truth and the establishing of churches that are faithful to the word of God. The glorious work of the preaching of the gospel unto the ends of the earth will not be finished until the return of our Lord. ■■

*Born Again: A Biblical and Theological Study of Regeneration*, by Peter Toon. Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1987. 206 pp. \$8.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Rev. C.

Hanko.)

Peter Toon is a minister of the Church of England. He has published other books, such as *The Puritans and Calvinists, Life and Work of John Owen, Heaven and Hell: A Biblical and Theological Overview*.

The author informs us in the introduction of this book, "I see the book as primarily for those who preach and teach in colleges and seminaries. Moreover, I hope that it is written in such a way that the person who is not schooled in theology will be able, with a little extra effort, to understand it." The average reader should have no difficulty understanding and enjoying this study of personal regeneration.

There is, first of all, a paraphrasing of John 3:1-15, which consists of an imaginary conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus. The author concludes this part by saying, that the purpose of Christ's exaltation is to give people the opportunity to believe in Him, and, being born from above, to receive eternal life. From this conclusion it already becomes evident that Peter Toon places faith in some sense before regeneration, and that this faith is the result of our being given "the opportunity" to believe in Jesus.

A number of chapters are devoted to the biblical idea of regeneration, both in the Old and the

New Testament, particularly from the point of view of the work of the Spirit of Christ in the church. In regard to the question whether the faithful believers of Israel were regenerate, he answers, "both 'yes' and 'no'." If by "regenerate" is meant that they had the right relationship with God and enjoyed communion with Him, then certainly they were regenerate. They were assisted by the Holy Spirit in their relationship with the covenant God. However, if by "regenerate" is meant that the Holy Spirit was permanently present in their souls, then the answer is that they were not regenerate, for they could not have enjoyed the benefits of the new covenant before it had been inaugurated (page 61). We would certainly not distinguish the work of the Spirit of Christ in the believers of the old dispensation and that work in the believers of the new dispensation in that manner.

The author expresses his idea of regeneration in the following quotation, "Now in addition to creating fellowship between the Creator-Savior and humans, the Holy Spirit in his work of regeneration under the new covenant also begins to renew humans so that they come to reflect the divine image and likeness, which were perfectly reflected in the person of Jesus. So regeneration leads to a new creation, which, because it is rooted in Christ, is permanent. The new covenant produces a dynamic per-

manence of fellowship, communion, and service" (page 61).

There is also in this book a rather extensive reference to the idea of regeneration as held by the various church fathers. The author points out that the early church fathers associated regeneration with baptism, speaking of a baptism by water and Spirit. He quotes specifically from Augustine and the Council of Orange. After making reference to Thomas Aquinas, he also refers to the Reformers, and quotes from the Westminster Confession and from the Canons (III, IV, 11, 12). Quotations are taken from the Puritans and Pietists, whom he particularly refers to as often placing faith before regeneration. The later evangelists, such as Billy Graham, are also mentioned.

The author refers to William Perkins, who distinguishes between "preparation for and the actual beginnings of regeneration by God, and also between restraining grace and renewing grace." Concerning preparation for regeneration, he writes that this "consists of the ministry of the law of God acting upon the conscience and causing us to know not only our guilt before God, but also the wrath of God against our sin." In regard to restraining grace, the author says that "Perkins meant much the same as what later theologians have called common grace — the help given by God to all people so that they can act in a sober, just and



merciful way ensuring a peaceful society." Renewing grace, however, "is not for all: it is 'not common to all men, but proper to the elect and is a gift of God's Spirit whereby the corruption of sin is not only restrained, but also mortified, and the decaying image of God restored in righteousness and true holiness.' "

There is one other reference to common grace, which is taken from a quote of Jonathan Edwards, "Common grace is used to signify that kind of action or influence of the Spirit of God, to which are owing those religious or moral attainments that are common to both saints and sinners, and so signifies as much as common assistance; and sometimes these moral or religious attainments themselves that are the fruits of this assistance, are intended."

I thought these references to "common grace" might be of interest to our readers.

Peter Toon sums up his idea of regeneration in the last chapter as follows:

"1. Regeneration occurs or will occur because Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, is exalted at the right hand of the Father in heaven as the Lord and as Head of the church.

"2. Regeneration of an individual person occurs when the Holy Spirit enters the soul.

"3. Inward regeneration may be said to be paradoxical in that it

can be regarded as both (a) the internal cause of true faith and genuine repentance and (b) God's gift to those who repent and believe the gospel.

"4. Conversion may be understood either as a synonym of internal regeneration or as the immediate result of regeneration.

"5. Regeneration is certainly a personal experience, but it is not meant to be an individualistic experience.

"6. The rite of baptism is not only God's appointed way of his either bestowing or confirming the gift of the Holy Spirit (i.e., the grace of regeneration) and of our entering into the church of Christ, but it is also the means by which a new Christian testifies to having been born from above and converted to the Lord Jesus Christ."

Although we differ in regard to many of the views of the author, the book does make for interesting reading especially from the point of view of the historical references to regeneration. As is true of all books of this nature, it should be read with discretion. ■■

*Jonathan Edwards, A New Biography*, by Iain H. Murray. The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987. 503 pages, \$22.95. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.)

The Banner of Truth Trust has been instrumental in bringing about a renewed interest in and study of

Puritan divines by a republication of many of the works which issued from their prolific pens. This biography of Iain Murray is an extremely valuable addition to these publications and ought to be purchased by those who find in Puritan thinkers much room for thought. I predict that this biography will become the standard work on Edwards.

Jonathan Edwards was a Puritan thinker who performed his labors in New England during the first half of the eighteenth century, prior to the Revolutionary War. He was, without doubt, one of New England's most influential thinkers, and his influence extended even to Scotland and England — as the biography also makes clear. He was deeply Calvinistic in his thought, his writings and his preaching, although he lived in a time of transition, when Calvinism was on the wane in New England; and one of the great tragedies of his time was that New England Calvinism soon became Universalism and Unitarianism under the influence of Arminian thought.

It is very difficult to pick out the outstanding features of the book because it is packed full of factual data, summaries of Edwards' major writings, and analyses of his thought and the trends of the times. But a few general remarks will give the reader some idea of the value of the book. (This is hardly to be considered a

substitute, however, for a reading of the book itself.)

Delightful glimpses are given by the author into Edwards' home life, his family, and, in connection with all this, home life on the frontier during the years following the establishment of the colony of pilgrims at Plymouth Rock.

Edwards' work habits and preaching style are discussed at some length. He spent thirteen hours a day in his study, six days a week. For twenty years he wrote out his sermons word for word. Though he was perhaps the most effective preacher in all New England, he used no gestures and looked only at the bell rope in the back of the church building.

Much time is given in the book to The Great Awakening and Murray includes an interesting critique of the excesses of this movement and the divisions which they caused. In connection with this, Murray discusses the whole idea of revivals and the theology behind them. This in itself makes the book worthwhile, for, while we do not agree with this theology, it explains the Puritan emphasis on revivals.

Murray spends a great deal of time on the communion controversy which finally forced Edwards' departure from his congregation in Northampton, which he had served for so long. This controversy was brought about by Edwards' change of mind concerning those who

should be admitted to the table of the Lord. Earlier in his ministry he had taken the position of his predecessor that also unconverted people could be admitted on the grounds that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was instituted for the purpose of bringing to faith. But later he came to the conclusion that this was incorrect and that, in fact, it was an occasion for much sinfulness in the congregation. He pushed hard for a change which would allow only converted to come to the Lord's table, and this resulted in his ouster from his beloved flock. From a church political point of view, this controversy shows also the weaknesses of congregationalism.

From Northampton, Edwards went to Stockbridge where he labored as a missionary to the Indians, but this work was beset by innumerable troubles which arose out of the French-Indian wars which preceded the Revolutionary War. After a stay of some years there, Edwards accepted, though reluctantly, the post of president to Princeton; but his labors there were brief, terminated by his death. He died before he could even move his family to his new place of work.

The last chapter in the book elaborates on his theology and speaks of his erroneous views and his influence of subsequent times.

I found of particular interest the helpful material on Puritan

preaching which the book contains. This preaching, which has moved some to say that the Puritans were the world's greatest psychologists, was profoundly subjective and experiential. But in connection with this type of preaching were also certain doctrinal views: the idea of conviction of sin which the preaching brings about but which is prior to regeneration and conversion, the relation between conviction of sin and common grace, the place of the preaching of the law in relation to conviction of sin and conversion, the relation between conviction of sin and common grace, the place of the preaching of the law in relation to conviction of sin and conversion, the relation between conversion and attendance at the Lord's table, etc. These subjects have long held a fascination for me, and this book was helpful in understanding the Puritan conception of these ideas.

My conviction was strengthened, in reading this book, that in Puritan thought are two errors which led to their views on these matters. The one has to do with the idea of conversion. One gets the impression that conversion was considered by Puritan divines primarily as a once-for-all experience which brought about the assurance of salvation, and was not considered from the viewpoint of the Heidelberg Catechism as a daily killing of the old man (sorrow for sin) and a daily quickening of the

new man (a desire to walk in the ways of God's commandments). The emphasis here ought to fall on the word, "daily." Conversion is something always present in the life of the child of God.

The second error has to do with a wrong conception of God's covenant of grace and the place of children in it. This is an extremely important subject and one could wish that a detailed study would be made of this subject — although I am aware of the valuable book written by Dr. P.Y. DeJong entitled *The Covenant Idea in New England Theology*. (This latter book can well serve as collateral reading to this biography of Edwards.) It is my judgment that not only did wrong notions of conversion bring about the "communion controversy," which was such a dark spot in Edwards' life, but that misconceptions concerning the covenant also made this controversy somewhat inevitable. De Jong's book also makes this clear.

Biographies are difficult to write. Good biographies are more difficult, and successful ones are few and far between. I consider this most successful. Iain Murray, deeply steeped in Puritan thought and sympathetic to Edwards, has given us a most worthwhile book.

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*The Life and Letters of James Henley Thornwell*, by Dr. B.M. Palmer. Banner of Truth Trust,

1986. 614pp, \$23.95. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.)

For those of our readers who do not know very much about J.H. Thornwell, we quote a few statements from the flyleaf:

J.H. Thornwell, ordained in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America in 1835, revealed from the outset of his ministry that combination of powerful thought and spiritual unction which destined him for early leadership. After three years in pastoral charges he was called to a professorship at the South Carolina College before he was twenty-five and, thereafter, the principal turning points in his life concerned the contesting claims of the College and of congregations for his services. Twice he returned to the pastorate, in Columbia in 1840 and in Charleston in 1851, and twice he was called back. . . .

. . . His influence went far beyond his native state. In the General Assembly (where at 34 he was the youngest man ever to be elected Moderator) he took decisive part in debates on church issues; twice he visited the British Isles; and at the outbreak of the Civil War he became a guiding spirit in the

Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States.

The biography was written and first published in 1875; it is not surprising, therefore, that the style is somewhat florid, much after the manner of 19th century prose. J.H. Thornwell is probably the most influential theologian in the Presbyterian Churches of the South, and this biography is worth reading if for no other reason than to come to some understanding of the life of Southern Presbyterianism's greatest theologian, the times in which he lived, and the influence he had upon his church. Many of his letters have been preserved and are woven into the narrative. The book can serve as an introduction to *The Collected Writings of James Henley Thornwell*, also published by the Banner of Truth and available in four volumes.



*The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture*, by Rene Pache. Moody Press, 1987. 349 pages, paper. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.)

Since this book first appeared in the English in 1969, it has gone through twelve different printings, abundant proof of its popularity and worth.

The book was translated from the French. The author taught

in Lausanne University and was active for many years in the evangelical movement in France.

The book deals with all aspects of the inspiration and authority of Scripture: revelation, inspiration, plenary and verbal inspiration, inerrancy and infallibility, apparent contradictions in Scripture, the canon of Scripture, transmission of the text of Scripture — these are only some of the subjects with which the author deals. These questions are all dealt with from the viewpoint of faith, faith in the testimony of Scripture itself. The result is an excellent book which is a strong defense of Scripture and a powerful weapon in the arsenal of believers against the attacks of those who, more or less, want to make the Bible a human book. It is easy to read, not technical nor given to the difficult terminology of higher criticism, faithful to God's own Word.

One aspect of the book is, however, exceedingly troublesome. This has to do with a question which arises in the current debate over the question of Scripture's infallibility. The question is this: Why is it that the church has repeatedly to fight the battle in defense of the Scripture? Why does the question of Scripture's absolute trustworthiness have to be re-

peatedly faced? One could conceivably answer this question by pointing out that the doctrine of Scripture is fundamental to the faith of the church and is, therefore, a doctrine which the devil is unusually intent on destroying. And such an answer would certainly be correct. But the same thing could be said of the truth concerning the trinity and the divinity of our Lord. Yet the battle for these truths was fought over a millennium ago, and, apart from the extremes of modernism, the church has not been unduly troubled by these heresies.

There is, I suggest, another factor that plays a role in this question. This has to do with the question of the so-called human factor in Scripture. While oftentimes the idea of a "human factor" was intended merely to emphasize that God used men to write His Word, nevertheless, this idea of a human factor has often been exalted to the point where the divine factor and God's authorship is minimized and even ignored. I suggest further that the reason for this is a basic commitment to an Arminian theology which is found so commonly in fundamentalistic circles, an Arminian theology which also emphasizes a significant and finally determinative "human element" in the work of salvation.

What needs to be said to understand this properly is the fact that the preparation of Scripture as the

infallibly inspired record of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ *belongs to the work of salvation*. It is an integral and inseparable part of that work. This is true not only because the Scriptures record for us the work of God in Christ as accomplishing salvation — although this is certainly part of it. Nor is this true only because the whole of Scripture finds its principle of unity in the fact that it reveals to us Christ in all its parts — although this also is true. But God prepared the Scriptures *for the church*, gave the Scriptures *to the church*, and entrusted the church with the Scriptures *because the Scriptures are an integral part of that work of salvation which God performs through Christ to bring His church to glory*.

All this means, therefore, that one's view of Scripture must be the same as one's view of salvation if either doctrine is to be preserved in all its purity. Characteristic of today's church world is a blatant and God-dishonoring Arminianism which exalts the "human factor" in the work of salvation, ascribes to man powers which he does not possess, and makes salvation dependent in some measure upon man's will. If this is one's theology of salvation, it stands to reason that this erroneous view will soon carry over into one's doctrine of Scripture. The human factor will also be exalted in the doctrine of inspiration, and the result will be

that this human factor will be so emphasized that the divine factor takes second place. This is why in fundamentalist and evangelical circles the "battle for the Bible" has to be fought repeatedly. To put it positively, the truth concerning the Scriptures can only be maintained on the basis of the truth of sovereign grace, i.e., that salvation is the work of God alone without any contributing element from man.

Then, of course, it will also be maintained that Scripture is the work of God alone, that there is no more a human element in the preparation of Scripture than there is in the salvation of lost souls. Does this mean that Scripture was written by dictation? that the mechanical theory of Scripture's inspiration is the correct one? that the Bible miraculously "dropped out of the sky?" Of course not; and only a fool would charge the church with believing such nonsense. Inspiration surely means that God made use of men in preparing the Bible — just as He saves men and fits them for His service. Inspiration means that God makes use of men with all their own unique characteristics, abilities, and gifts; that God made use of them in the time in which they lived, in the relationships of life in which they were brought up, educated and did their work; that God made use of them through the calling entrusted to them in God's church.

But, as Gordon Clark points out in his book, *God's Hammer*, this was all according to sovereign predestination, a predestination which determined everything concerning an individual man sovereignly. The result was that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." And the Scriptures are God's work and His alone.

This book does not do justice to all this. And this strikes us as a fatal flaw. The book is thoroughly Arminian in its approach to revelation and salvation. We quote only the following paragraph to demonstrate this:

Can a heathen who has received only the revelations of nature and of conscience come to salvation? Paul expressly declares that everyone will be judged according to the light which he has received: "As many as have sinned without the law shall also perish without the law: and as many as have sinned under the law shall be judged by the law" (Rom. 2:12). We have seen that the revelations of nature and of conscience are sufficient to produce, on the part of the heathen, both worship and repentance and the full responsibility for both. However, God, who is just and omniscient, knows perfectly whether a sincere yet ignorant man, given a chance to accept salvation,

would take it or not. Christ died for the sins of the whole world, those committed before His coming as well as those in times and places not yet reached by the gospel (cf. Rom. 3:25). The Lord, then, will know how to treat every sinner according to His love and His righteousness (p. 18).

It is that kind of Arminianism which will eventually also affect one's doctrine of Scripture. Allow for this human factor in the work of salvation and soon the human factor also in Scripture will open the door to every form of higher criticism. Let the church learn once and for all that the only way to defend Scripture's absolute trustworthiness and integrity is on the basis of sovereign and particular grace in salvation. ■■

*God's Hammer, The Bible and Its Critics*, by Gordon H. Clark. The Trinity Foundation, 1987. 225pp., \$6.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.)

This book is without doubt the best book I have read on the question of the doctrine of Scripture's inspiration and infallibility. There are several reasons why, without hesitation, I say this.

1) The book takes an unqualified and unambiguous stand for the absolute infallibility of Scripture and for its complete integrity and

reliability. Clark has no time for those who, in one way or another, want to compromise this great truth, so important for the faith of the child of God.

2) The book is written in the straight-forward language of one who knows and sees that this truth is not complicated or difficult to understand, but that it is a truth which every child of God can know and comprehend. Clark wants none of the jargon of modern day defenders of redaction criticism and their interminable arguments which no one can follow unless he has some degree in modern Hermeneutics. The writing is clear, to the point, and straight from the shoulder. This immediately gives it the ring of truth. When discussions of Scripture's inerrancy and authority are so complicated that only advanced students with degrees can understand them, one cannot help but suspect that they carry less than the truth. The truth is always simple and clear. Things get complicated and sticky when heresy is brought in.

3) Clark makes the emphatic point in chapter 1 that this truth concerning Scripture cannot be believed apart from grace because of sin which is present in every man. I appreciated this emphasis immensely, for it is so seldom heard in our day, and it puts the battle between those who hold to and those who deny infallibility where the battle belongs: in the arena of faith vs.



unbelief.

4) But most of all, I appreciated this book because it is the only book I have ever read on the question of the doctrine of Scripture which has a correct view of organic inspiration. In at least two places Clark deals with this question. It is so important because critics of Scripture have often set organic inspiration over against the idea of dictation and, therefore, interpreted organic inspiration as referring to a certain liberty which the "secondary authors" possessed as they wrote the Scriptures — a liberty to write things in their own way, which resulted in a great deal of personal views and cultural conditioning creeping into the Bible. Clark speaks correctly of organic inspiration. He points out that, while from a certain viewpoint, Scripture was dictated because it was verbally inspired, nevertheless, inspiration is more than dictation because of the truth of predestination and providence. That is, all those whom God used to write the Scriptures were determined by God from eternity to fill that role and were prepared by God's sovereign providence for that work. Thus all the circumstances of their lives were determined and sovereignly controlled. How good it was to hear this emphasis which is so sorely needed.

We have often discussed in Seminary (among the faculty and with the students) that an over-

emphasis on the human factor in Scripture is really an Arminianism which also introduces a human factor in the work of salvation. The analogy between Scripture and salvation is correct because Scripture belongs to the work of salvation in Jesus Christ. Clark, by insisting on predestination and providence, makes such an Arminian conception of Scripture impossible.

The book is a collection of essays on this subject which Clark wrote over the years. For this reason there is some duplication in the book, and some of the essays are rather philosophical, especially when Clark is analyzing and criticizing the views of the critics. But Clark holds that the truth of revelation is rational and that the whole body of the truth is an organic whole every part of which stands in logical connection with every other part. Clark's powers of logical analysis are formidable and he subjects the critics' attacks against the Bible to searching analysis and scathing criticism.

We urge our readers to get this book. And while you are ordering it, it would be worth your while to obtain a booklist of the publications of Trinity Foundation and to ask for their *Trinity Review*. The latter is a brief paper which usually carries an article or two of exceptional worth. An issue from last summer carried an excellent analysis of the free offer of the gospel. The address is:

The Trinity Foundation  
P.O. Box 169  
Jefferson, Maryland 21755

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*The Atonement*, by Gordon H. Clark. Trinity Foundation, 1987. 181 pp., \$8.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.)

The truth of the atonement of Christ is, with the possible exception of sovereign and double predestination, the doctrine of Scripture most often attacked. Many profess to be Calvinists, yet they reject the truth of particular redemption or limited atonement; they are "four-point Calvinists." Many in our day even question whether Calvin taught limited atonement and books have been written which attempt to demonstrate that he did not — an effort which always ends in failure, for the fact is that he did, as even his enemies which were his contemporaries recognized. Even in Reformed circles this truth, which John W. Robbins in his forward to this book calls, "the heart of the gospel," is under attack and few there are who still hold consistently to it.

Clark in his usual incisive way comes to the defense of this truth both by attacking those who deny it and by defending it with the force of Scriptural proof and carefully reasoned argumentation. He treats the atonement, however, by dealing with related subjects.

Sections are devoted to the covenant of redemption and the covenant of grace; to the incarnation and the virgin birth of Christ; to the human nature of Christ and the purpose of the incarnation; to the covenant of works, the ideas of expiation, propitiation, satisfaction, federal headship, the necessity of the atonement, traducianism (as opposed to creationism: traducianism holds that the soul of a new baby comes from its parents along with his body; creationism holds that at the moment of conception God creates a new soul. The question has been considered important in connection to the doctrine of original sin and the transmission from parents to children of a corrupt nature), and the sovereignty of God.

In the course of dealing with all these subjects, Clark discusses various philosophical questions, especially as they arise out of modern liberal theology. This sometimes makes the book hard going as one tries to follow the line of argument. Clark also analyzes some aspects of the doctrine of the atonement as it was held by other theologians, especially in the Presbyterian tradition. For example, on the question of the necessity of the atonement, Clark examines carefully the views of the two Hodges and Smeaton.

While Clark argues logically, his assumption always is that the truth of Scripture is logically consistent with itself.

We recommend this book to our readers in full awareness of the fact that it is not always easy reading.

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*Sources of Secession, The Netherlands Hervormde Kerk on the Eve of the Dutch Immigration to the Midwest*, by Gerrit J. tenZythoff. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987. 189 pp., \$12.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.)

This book is No. 17 in "The Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America," in which series have already appeared many interesting and worthwhile books. If anyone is interested in our Dutch Reformed heritage, these books are must reading. This present volume is no exception.

The author, Professor of Religious Studies at Southwest Missouri State University, originally wrote this book as a doctoral thesis. It was only minimally changed for purposes of being published by the Historical Commission of the Reformed Church in America.

Martin E. Marty, who wrote the Foreword, says:

Gerrit tenZythoff's book, *Sources of Secession*, is a very valuable contribution to our understanding of one set of people who witnessed in Europe and then came to America and played their part

in church life here. He captures well both the spirit of old controversy and the passions that survive. I remember my astonishment when I first read in his introduction that he experienced some frustration over sources. The reason was not linguistic: he has mastery of the languages in question. Nor historical: Professor ten Zythoff knew where to go for sources, and how to handle them. His problem was that he could not gain access to them all. No secretive Vatican stood in the way. Instead, "some institutions and certain persons are averse and even unwilling to make their extant holdings available for historical research. Persons thus reluctant to divulge historical information are still embarrassed by the actions of their forefathers in the ecclesiastical controversies and quarrels of the time."

I found of particular interest in the book the author's rather elaborate treatment of the *Reveil*, its leaders (Bilderdijk, Da Costa, Capadose), and its influence on the ministers of the Secession of 1834. His remarks concerning how the *Reveil* thinkers were deeply conscious of history and considered the Netherlands and its people to occupy a special place as God's chosen in the history of the world

were helpful in understanding Dutch history as a whole. Also of interest was his discussion of the Secession ministers and the reasons for their departure from the State Church. This includes some material on DeCock's conversion to the Reformed faith (DeCock did not, prior to his conversion, possess even a copy of the Canons of Dort or Calvin's *Institutes*). Also, the book contains some valuable information on the Groningen School and its liberal teachings.

The weakness of the book is that it is not written from a Reformed viewpoint. The evidences of this can be found throughout the book. His prejudice is found, e.g., in the terms he uses to describe the parties present at the Synod of Dort.

There (at Dort) the orthodox scholastic party led by Gomarus was victorious over the biblical-humanistic wing of Arminius' followers (p. 10).

On page 103 the author remarks that the Arminians at Dort were too Biblical to be suppressed in the long run. A highly prejudicial and incorrect statement is found on page 127: "DeCock and his followers thus adopted the Three Forms of Unity and the Church Order of Dordrecht as infallible guides."

I found somewhat unsatisfactory the author's lack of material on the question of the

relation between the *Reveil*, *oefeningen*, *gezelschappen*, etc. and the Secession. This would not be so bad, except that, when I first picked up the book, the title suggested to me that these were the things the author intended to treat.

While the "Editor's Preface" speaks of the "lucid flow of the present text," we found rather that in some places the text was heavy, clumsily written, and even difficult to understand. We cite but one example. On page 87, the following sentence appears: "He (Bilderdijk) then went on to blast his opponent's mild reply and incorporating morality, religion, and national safety into his argument."

The book is a valuable contribution, however, to the studies of the heritage of the Dutch Reformed faith. And those who live in this heritage and wish to understand it more fully can profit greatly from a study of this book. ■■

*The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*, by Rene Pache. Moody Press, 1987. 223 pp. (Reviewed by Rev. Kenneth Koole.)

According to the cover blurb Dr. Pache was president of Emmaus Bible School in Switzerland and was active in organizing the Inter-Varsity Christian

Fellowship in Switzerland and France. While the cover format and subject matter leaves the impression that the book is a recent addition to an issue of great contemporary interest, namely, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, in actual fact the book is a reprint, first published in 1954. Also, evidently, the author is deceased. Evidently, for purposes of sale, Moody Press makes no direct reference to these matters. In these days of shallow thinking books by the deceased do not sell well.

The book is divided into five main sections, which are further divided into chapters, and touches on nearly every aspect of the Spirit's person and work imaginable, from who He is, to His work before Pentecost, since Pentecost, in the future, and His involvement in various spiritual activities. It is well set up for ready reference.

This is, sad to say, not a good book. That is not to say that there are not some worthwhile features in the book (the first section provides some excellent Biblical lists which irrefutably prove the Spirit's personhood and divinity, and are most useful); but it is by no means a sound and trustworthy exposition of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps we can expect no more from an author who is thoroughly Arminian, as well as a committed pre-millenarian (cf. chapter on "The Holy Spirit and Israel").

Dr. Pache's blatant Arminianism

is not difficult to document.

Such (scripture) passages, we believe, have been written to remind us that man is always free to choose, even after his conversion. . . . Even as God compels no unbeliever to become converted, even so does He not constrain those who call themselves believers to submit themselves to sanctification (page 65).

The Spirit in us will carry away all obstacles and overcome all resistance, but never will He so act unless He has the support of our own will which He respects (pp. 118-9).

Such passages could be multiplied. Despite his claims to believe in a Spirit of sovereign power, Dr. Pache's "Spirit" is no more powerful than we permit Him to be.

Along the way Dr. Pache makes some statements that can only be described as astounding. For instance he states "The Spirit had to find hearts purified from sin before making them His temple" (Pg. 31). This supposedly explains why the Holy Spirit was so severely limited in His work in the Old Testament saints before Christ came. He could not find (or make) such hearts.

As stated, this book was originally published in 1954. This reviewer finds that significant. That means that this book does not really belong to the recent glut of books that deal in some shape or

form with the topic of the Holy Spirit, but is to be numbered with their predecessors. It was written when the contemporary Pentecostal movement was just beginning to gain strength in main-line churches. Evidently the book was written to counter-act and warn against some of the excesses of the Charismatic movement, with its reliance upon miraculous gifts, tongue speaking, and emotional seizures. Dr. Pache states for instance,

...there is no passage in Scripture which inevitably links the gift of tongues with baptism of the Spirit. On the contrary, Paul, when he asserts that *all* are baptized with the Spirit, distinctly states that all do not speak with tongues (1 Cor. 14:33, 40).

Further, he states,

... when speech with tongues is accompanied by an excited state of mind, by cries, contortions, and among some by a thoroughly unbalanced nervous state. . . (which occur only too frequently), we are deeply troubled, for we cannot perceive in these the Spirit's gift, and we are again compelled to think of those subtle or debased counterfeits that the enemy is so clever at producing especially in the field of our emotions (pg. 195).

Quite likely it is because of these

warnings against the extremes and emotional abuses of contemporary pentecostalism that Moody Press decided to republish this book at this time. We point out that such warnings will not suffice, no more so than they did in the day this book was first published. For all his reservations about the Charismatic excesses Dr. Pache made some fatal concessions. While it is true that Dr. Pache sought to avoid the excesses and abuses that were gaining a foothold in his day he was not in fundamental disagreement with the basic tenants of Pentecostalism. He allows the ongoing presence of the special signs of the apostolic age.

If such (apostolic) signs are today reproduced largely in mission fields, it is because the situation there closely resembles that prevalent in the Roman world, nineteen centuries ago (pg. 185).

This is fatal. It opens the door to charismatic excesses. Who is to say what is authentic and what is not?

Far more serious in this reviewer's judgment is Dr. Pache's position that there is reserved for the really sincere believer a second blessing experience. However loudly he protests against the Charismatic insistence upon the second baptism of the Spirit notion, the inescapable fact is that Dr. Pache maintains the same thing

under a different label. He calls it "the fullness of the Spirit." He speaks of three stages through which our faith must travel.

a. Jesus Christ asks us first to believe in Him and to look to Him for everything. . . .

b. Once our gaze is concentrated on His person, Jesus Christ asks us to believe that He is in us through the Spirit. . . .

c. We must believe that Christ fills us with His Spirit. Because many Christians fail to complete this third stage for our faith they have never received fullness. This stage consists of opening wide our hearts to Jesus Christ, *meanwhile believing that He has filled us with His Spirit* (emphasis his) (pp. 122-3).

We mention this because it strikes this reviewer that this is virtually the same mistake that the late Dr. M. Lloyd-Jones made in his latest books, and which Dr. J.I. Packer, in following his lead, is making also. They want nothing to do with the excesses and extremes of the Charismatics, but they want to allow for the presence of the apostolic signs, and promote some kind of second blessing, which they label "the sealing of the Spirit." This simply plays into the hands of the Charismatic movement. This reviewer, for instance, first ran into the name of Martyn Lloyd-Jones in the trailer of an old

saint whose family had gone pentecostal. They were trying to persuade her to do likewise by use of tapes. The tapes were sermons of Dr. Lloyd-Jones, which I believe are now published in the book *Joy Unspeakable*. The concessions are fatal. In the end they feed the charismatic "spirit"; they do not withstand it. We do not believe Dr. Pache's book quenched the spirit of excess in the late 50's; we have no expectation it will do so in the late 80's.

This is not the first book on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit this reviewer would buy; nor is it the second. Nor is it to be recommended to those new in the Christian faith. The abundance of texts is misleading. They are for the most part superficially and mistakenly interpreted.

We recommend the book, then, with reservations. We state again the usefulness of the Biblical lists proving the Spirit's person and divinity. And it is useful in the work of polemics. One can be sure that the error being inveighed against from the pulpit is not one's own poorly constructed straw-man, but is really being taught in the market-place and to be discerned.

■ ■

*The Doctrine of Salvation*, by Charles M. Horne. Chicago: Moody Press, Publishers, 1984. 112 pages (paper). (Reviewed by Rev. T. Miersma.)

This book is a slightly revised edition of a work by Charles Horne first issued under the title *Salvation* in 1971. The revisions and updating of reading lists are by Paul Nevin, a faculty member of the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. Horne himself taught systematic theology at Wheaton Graduate School, Moody Bible Institute, Southeastern Bible College, and Cornus-Hill Bible College. The purpose of the book is explained by its title. It intends to trace the doctrine of salvation and attempts to do so over all the loci of dogmatics, tracing sin and the need for salvation, its basis in election, the nature of it in the atonement, the application of salvation or *ordo salutis*, the results, assurance, and climax of salvation. The book is filled with quotations and lists for further reading which are in many instances as instructive as to the author's or revisor's views, as is the actual material. The author, for example, takes a basically Calvinistic stance on predestination and election setting forth the views of the Arminians and others with reading lists in their material. But under further reading on the Calvinistic view of election, the books presented are a confused mixture of reformed and heretical. They include Calvin, L. Boettner, and W.G.T. Shedd, but also G.C. Berkouwer, and James Daane.

To present the different doctrinal issues involved with quotations,

reading lists, and added charts in 112 pages presents a rather difficult problem for anyone. The author in some instances attempts a few word studies and concept studies, but for the most part he simply states the different views of a doctrinal question, states his views and adds a minimal amount of argumentation, refutation, and development. This material includes also an attempt to treat briefly some of the views of the Neo-Orthodox theologians such as Barth and Bultman as well as the classic differences between Reformed, Lutheran, and Arminian positions. The result is that while the book has a line to it in the development of its subject, it is at the same time more of an anthology of views and opinions, with suggestions for further reading. It is this feature which makes the book valuable as a resource tool and source book for further reading.

The author himself follows a loosely Calvinistic line in his own doctrinal views, along the lines of the five points of Calvinism, but combines them in a somewhat eclectic manner with other diverse opinions. The result is not a clear consistent development of the truth. The book is in many respects a good example of the kind of confused semi-Calvinism or pseudo-Calvinism which is found within the Reformed and evangelical community today. Most notably lacking in the book is any



conception of the doctrine of the covenant of grace.

For example, the author evidently intends to treat the doctrine of total depravity in the Reformed sense as opposed to the Arminian, but his definition is really that of a partially depraved totality which passes under the guise of total depravity in many Reformed circles. He writes,

Man is by nature totally depraved. This does not mean that every man is as bad as he can possibly be. Rather, it means that the principle of sin has pervaded every aspect of his nature and he is totally incapable of achieving his own salvation (page 3).

This opens the door in his thinking, to common grace, both in man's life in the world and in the *ordo salutis*, and to a distinction between a general call (*offer* — TCM) to all in the preaching, (a call "which urges sinners to accept salvation" [p. 42]; "... it is an offer of salvation to whosoever will. . ." [p. 42]), and an effectual call to the elect. The author's view of the *ordo salutis* is that of calling (mediate regeneration), regeneration, faith, and conversion, etc. The author's conception of conversion includes also a preparation for conversion through the grace of repentance. While he would teach that God is the moving cause of conversion and is first, he also speaks in connection with a discussion of the conversion of

the Philippian jailer of a sinner being under conviction and quotes with approval F.F. Bruce who writes concerning the jailer that "He was only at the stage of conviction which precedes conversion, but which is not always followed by it, thus opening the door implicitly to a preparatory work of grace (common and ineffectual grace), a preparatory work preceding the effectual work of God in conversion. The author clearly reflects in this the historical spirit of the Moody Bible Institute and its revivalist origins.

The book follows this line consistently, teaching on the one hand a form of limited atonement but placing the emphasis as much on its sufficiency for all. The book stands as a good representative theological example of the modern neo-Calvinism of our day with its combination of truth and error intermixed. In many respects the book suffers not only from theological confusion but also from its brevity. In attempting to cover so much material briefly with so many references and sources, reading lists and suggestions, no one subject is fully treated in depth and many points of doctrine which are touched upon or implied are left undeveloped as to their meaning or consequences. This leaves one feeling the treatment is vague, incomplete, confused, and sometimes superficial, which best summarizes the book as a whole.

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# Book Notice

*Christ in the Passover*, by Ceil and Moishe Rosen. Chicago: Moody Press, Publishers, 1978. 112 pages. (paper) (Reviewed by Rev. T. Miersma.)

The authors of this book are part of the "Jews for Jesus" movement, and while wife and husband are listed as authors on the cover it soon becomes plain in reading it that the wife, Ceil, is the principal authoress. The book proceeds from the strange mixture of Judaism and Christianity which characterizes premillennial dispensationalism, and this, together with its Arminianism and "altar call" at the end mar the whole book. The book traces the Passover in its meaning, development, and celebration from its origin to its modern form as kept by the Jews. The book is intended to be a simple

and popular treatment of its subject with a view to explaining the Passover, past and present, to the Gentile reader and with a view to leading the Jewish reader to the gospel of Christ. The treatment of the Passover in Egypt, its place in the Old Testament economy, and form of commemoration at the time of Christ is brief, as are all the chapters of the book. Its value lies in its explanation of mechanical details, drawn from other sources, rather than in its theological content. The heart of the book concerns the modern Jewish lambless Passover after the destruction of the temple, Jewish interpretation of it, and possible early Christian influences on its form and symbolism. These latter influences, which are in part a matter of speculation, are used as an occasion to teach the gospel. ■■■

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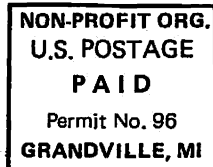
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