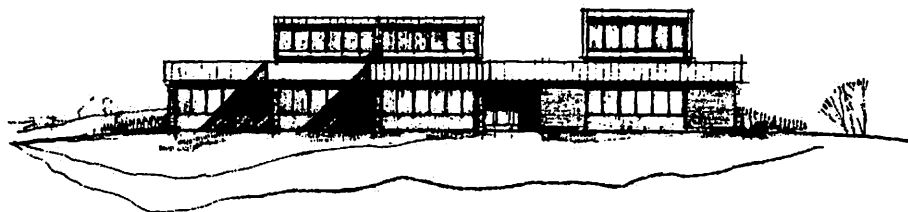


*Has the Council Missed the Mark? M. Silva
p. 62*

Hanson reviews M. Silva on "Redeption Criticism"

PROTESTANT REFORMED THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL



NOVEMBER, 1988

Volume XXII, No. 1

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

PROTESTANT REFORMED THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

**Edited for the faculty of
The Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches**

**Robert D. Decker
David J. Engelsma
Herman C. Hanko
Homer C. Hoeksema**

**by
Prof. Herman Hanko (editor-in-chief)
Prof. Robert Decker (editor, book reviews)**

The Protestant Reformed Theological Journal is published semiannually, in April and November, and distributed in limited quantities, at no charge, by the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Interested persons desiring to have their names on the mailing list should write the Editor, at the address below. Books for review should be sent to the book review editor, also at the address of the school.

**Protestant Reformed Seminary
4949 Ivanrest Avenue
Grandville, MI 49418**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editorial Notes	2
Martin Bucer's "Calvinistic" Doctrine of the Lord's Supper Prof. David J. Engelsma	3
The Doctrine of Predestination in Calvin and Beza Prof. Herman C. Hanko	29
A Power of God Unto Salvation Rev. Herman Hoeksema, translated by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema	39
Book Reviews.	49
Book Notice.	76

EDITORIAL NOTES

We are pleased with this issue to print the second lecture of Rev. D. Engelsma on Martin Bucer. Prof. H. Hanko continues his study on Calvin, Beza, and the Doctrine of Predestination. This is the second installment and others will follow. Prof. Hoeksema has prepared additional material on his translation of Rev. Herman Hoeksema's pamphlet, "The Power of God Unto Salvation or Grace Not an Offer." We also continue our recently begun practice of including book reviews and notices.



Rev. David Engelsma has recently accepted the call to become professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in our Protestant Reformed Theological School. Prof. H.C. Hoeksema is not retiring as yet, but will be gradually reducing his course load while Rev. Engelsma will be gradually assuming the work. For the first year, Rev. Engelsma will be studying in the subjects he will be teaching. We welcome Rev. Engelsma to the faculty with joy and thanksgiving to God who has provided the Seminary with another professor. Our readers can now look forward to more regular contributions from Rev. Engelsma in our paper. May God through Jesus Christ bless our new professor as he prepares for his new responsibilities and as he begins his teaching in our school.



Prof. H.C. Hoeksema will be absent from the Seminary this school year. He has recently accepted a one-year appointment to labor in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Australia, particularly in the Burnie, Tasmania congregation. He and his wife left for Tasmania on August 16 and are now deep in the work half way around the world. May Prof. and Mrs. Hoeksema experience day by day God's richest blessings on their labors and may his ministry be fruitful for the saints in that distant land.



Profs. Decker and Hanko recently earned their Master of Theology degrees from Calvin Theological Seminary. One of the requirements for the Th.M. is the writing of a thesis. Prof. Decker wrote his on "The Preaching Style of David Martyn Lloyd-Jones" and Prof. Hanko on "A Study of the Relation Between the Views of Prof. R. Janssen and Common Grace." Both theses are available from the seminary bookstore, in plastic-ring binding. Cost for the former, a 101-page document, is \$4.50; for the latter, 206pp., \$8.75. □

Martin Bucer's "Calvinistic" Doctrine of the Lord's Supper

by David J. Engelsma

The importance of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper in the Reformation of the Church in the 16th century cannot be overemphasized. With *sola scriptura* and justification by faith alone, it was one of the doctrines that divided Rome and Protestantism. It was the one doctrine that divided Protestantism into Lutheran and Reformed Churches. More ink was spilled over the Lord's Supper, and more horses were ridden to exhaustion attending conferences about it, than over any other doctrine. The attention paid to the Lord's Supper is reflected in the Heidelberg Catechism, which devotes inordinate space to the Sacraments generally and to the Lord's Supper in particular. In its treatment of the Sacraments, as well as in its treatment of the Ascension of Christ, which became part of the debate over the Supper, the Catechism carries on all of the controversies of the 16th century.

The Supper-strife generated not only light, but also heat. The theologians from all quarters conducted the debate with passion — there was hot anger and name-calling. The doctrine of the Supper came near to dividing Lutheranism. Towards the end of Luther's life, Melanchthon feared that he would be driven from Wittenberg, because of Luther's assault upon him as one who was leaning towards a symbolic view of Christ's presence in the Supper. Melanchthon's dying prayer to be delivered from the *rabies theologorum* was a prayer, in large part, for peace from the conflict over the Lord's Supper. Archbishop Cranmer lamented this state of theological affairs in a letter to Melanchthon on March 27, 1552: "It is truly grievous that the sacrament of unity is become, through the devil's malice, food for disagreement and, as it were, the apple of contention."

Although one should never discount "the devil's malice" in the Church's struggles, it is also true that basic doctrinal issues were involved in the controversy over the presence of Christ in the Supper. There was,

first, the doctrine of Holy Scripture. Certain of Rome's teachings about the Supper, especially the sacrifice of the Mass, rested on tradition and the authority of the Church, in keeping with Rome's doctrine that tradition, as declared by the Church, is an authority alongside Scripture. For Luther, the refusal of his Protestant adversaries to agree with him on the Supper was due, at bottom, to their poor view of Scripture, which enabled them to evade the plain force of Christ's words, "This is my body."

There were also the Christological doctrines concerning the natures of Christ and their relationship, especially after the Ascension. The doctrine of Christ was the crucial issue in the mind of Luther. This aspect of the controversy is highlighted in Lord's Day 18 of the Heidelberg Catechism — the Reformed confession concerning Jesus' ascension into heaven.

Ecclesiology was involved. On the one hand, Rome's teaching that the priests make God and sacrifice Christ for sin in the Supper bristled with her view of the power of the Church. On the other hand, the teaching of the anabaptists that the bread and wine are empty symbols was part of the anabaptists' attack upon Protestantism's view of the instituted church, the official character of preaching, the vital importance of the Sacraments, and the offices in the church. No one will ever understand Luther's vehemence in defending a real presence of Christ in the Supper, and his fury in raging against every symbolic view of that presence, who fails to keep in mind that Luther had his eye on the spiritualistic, separatistic anabaptists, with their unbiblical doctrine of the Church.

Not least, the Supper-strife concerned soteriology. At issue was the nature of the working of Divine grace. A fundamental question was, "How does the sinner receive the grace of God?" Another, inseparably connected, was, "*Who* receives grace in the Supper?"

The outcome of the controversy would have serious practical implications, as all the parties knew well. The unity of the Church in its visible expression was at stake, particularly the unity of the Church of the Reformation. None of the Protestant spokesmen was unmoved by the division of Protestantism so soon after the Reformation, especially in the face of the Roman Catholic charge that exactly this was the inevitable harvest of the bad seed of revolution against "holy mother Church." What sincere Protestant does not still today feel grief over the Marburg Colloquy where the contending Protestant parties, agreed in all else, could not find oneness in the doctrine of the Supper and where, at the end, Luther refused Zwingli the right hand of fellowship?

But it was not only the unity of the visible Church that was threatened. The divisions among the theologians threatened also the political union of that day — the oneness of Germany and the unity of the Empire. This is

difficult for us to appreciate, living as we do in a society whose political leaders regard theological differences much as did Gallio of Corinth, who drove the arguing theologians from his judgment seat with the words, "if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters" (Acts 18:15). It was different then; and, therefore, politicians, including the most powerful among them, indeed the Emperor himself, played at the game of ecclesiastical conferences, whose purpose was doctrinal agreement. High on the agendas was the issue of the Lord's Supper.

For the Protestant Christians in Europe, not only was their spiritual welfare at stake, but also their earthly peace and prosperity. The failure of the efforts to reach agreement on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper always threatened war.

In this doctrinal, ecclesiastical, and political uproar over the Lord's Supper, Martin Bucer, Reformed Pastor at Strasbourg, took his place. His was a central place. The three main figures within the Protestant camp were Luther, with Melancthon as ally (often, a somewhat unreliable ally); Zwingli; and Bucer. Bucer was a veritable dynamo of activity. He wrote; exposition, confessions, polemics, and correspondence poured from his pen. He was indefatigable in calling and attending conferences. He preached. The result was that Bucer made a most significant contribution to theology, specifically to the Reformed Faith; for to him, more than to any other man, we are indebted for the "Calvinistic" doctrine of the Lord's Supper.

History of the Development of This Doctrine

Dogma has a history; invariably that history is a history of controversy. The Holy Spirit of Him who is the Truth is promised to the Church as the Spirit of Truth who will guide the Church into all the Truth (John 16:13). The Church, therefore, moves along a way in finding and knowing the Truth; nor are there lacking false guides who point her this way and that. Pernicious as heresies are, in the end the Spirit makes them serve a good purpose: "there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you" (1 Corinthians 11:19). Heresies are made to show the approved doctrine.

So it was with the strife over the Supper. The doctrine of the Supper that we now know as the Reformed doctrine of the Supper, and that Reformed Christians confess in Lord's Days 25 and 28-30 of the Heidelberg Catechism and in Articles 33 and 35 of the Belgic Confession, did not spring full-blown from the heads of Bucer and Calvin. Rather, the doc-

trine developed. It was laboriously hammered out by certain of the Reformers in a history of controversy, which controversy drove these men to the Holy Scriptures in order, on the one hand, to test the spirits in the contending theories, and, on the other hand, to get from the Bible the Word of God concerning the Sacraments in general and concerning the Supper in particular.

Both Luther and Zwingli had early come to see the monstrous error of the Roman doctrine of the Supper, specifically transubstantiation and the repetition of the sacrifice of Jesus for sins, as well as such related teachings as the withholding of the cup from the laity. That left the Reformation, however, with the more difficult question, "What is the truth of the Supper?," particularly, "What is the truth about the presence of Christ in the Supper and about the reception of Him by those who partake?" This question demanded to be answered in light of the words of Jesus at the institution of the Supper, "This is my body." We do well to appreciate the challenge faced by the Reformation at this point. It had no tradition to guide it; the tradition in the Church was that of transubstantiation, which the Reformers repudiated. It had no creedal statements. The Fathers were unclear. All parties, Rome included, appealed to statements by the Fathers and could find in them support for their position. Bucer noted that appeal to the Fathers in the matter of the Supper was unhelpful and even dangerous, in his last work on the Eucharist, shortly before his death, *The Eucharist: 1550 Confession in Aphorisms*:

In such lofty mysteries it is against my principles to use expressions not contained in the Scriptures, even on the authority of the holy Fathers. For we all lament the depths to which Satan and antichrist have brought us by such usages.¹

Besides, the people were trained to see and practise the celebration of the Supper according to the Roman Catholic explanation. The Reformers, therefore, were simply thrown back upon the Scriptures and upon the analogy of faith in the great Reformation doctrines of grace, recently recovered.

The Controversy

The controversy over the Lord's Supper within Protestantism was

¹ Martin Bucer, *The Eucharist: 1550 Confession in Aphorisms*, in: *Common Places of Martin Bucer*, D.F. Wright, tr. and ed. (Appleford, Abingdon, Berkshire, England: The Sutton Courtenay Press, 1972) 392. Hereafter: Wright, *Martin Bucer*.

opened up by Carlstadt, at first a colleague of Luther in Wittenberg, but soon a defector to the anabaptists and the "radical reformation." Certain men have the position, the abilities, and the disposition to do great damage to the cause of Christ in the world. Such a man was Andreas Bodenstein of Carlstadt. He wreaked havoc upon a unified Protestant confession of the Supper and upon Protestant unity. During Luther's enforced absence from Wittenberg, at the Wartburg, immediately after the Diet of Worms, Carlstadt felt himself constrained to press the Reformation more radically in Wittenberg and, in typical radical fashion, to do so at once. Among the radical measures taken were such actions as the giving of the cup to the laity and Carlstadt's preaching that the bread and wine were merely symbols that remind believers of Christ's death. Carlstadt held that the Lord's Supper was nothing more than a recollection, passionate to be sure, of the death of Jesus in the past, similar to a momento by which one remembers a dear human friend:

If you had had to die on the gallows or wheel or in the fire and the sentence had already been spoken against you and you had to go to death and one came who would die for you and free you through his death, would you not, . . . be happy when his name was well spoken of? . . . And if at the end he left something for you that you were to use in remembrance of him, would you not use the same with fresh, passionate remembrance? . . . In the same way, we should also retain the remembrance of the Lord (in the Supper - DJE).²

He denied that the Sacrament is a means of grace:

Concerning the sacrament which forgives sins, no one has written. Concerning the body which would be hanged on the cross, Christ has also said to us that he was to pay for our sins. But no prophet, nor Christ, nor even any Christian brother has written that Christ forgives sins in the sacrament. . . . Let anyone show me one little letter of Scripture which indicates that the sacramental essence of the body and blood is useful to us in the sacrament for the forgiveness of sins.³

He condemned those who "teach thus: You shall believe that Christ is in the sacrament."⁴ Neither, according to Carlstadt, is "the sacrament. . .

2 Andreas Carlstadt, *Concerning the Anti-Christian Misuse of the Lord's Bread and Cup*, in: *Carlstadt's Battle with Luther: Documents in a Liberal-Radical Debate*, Ronald J. Sider, ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978) 80-81.

3 Andreas Carlstadt, *Concerning the Anti-Christian Misuse of the Lord's Bread and Cup*, 82.

4 Andreas Carlstadt, *Concerning the Anti-Christian Misuse of the Lord's Bread and Cup*, 83.

(a) pledge. . . of God.”⁵ It does not give the believer who partakes worthily assurance of his redemption. Carlstadt thought that Paul

demolishes another commonly expressed statement, namely, that the bread and the cup of Christ are an assurance and certain voucher by which one can be certain and sure in himself that Christ's death has brought redemption for him.⁶

A sharp conflict ensued between Luther, who quickly returned to Wittenberg to save the Reformation from its “friends,” and Carlstadt, resulting in Carlstadt's leaving Wittenberg for Orlamunde to become a leader of the anabaptist movement.

However serious the effect of this conflict on Carlstadt, the effect on Luther was equally serious. First, it drove Luther, whose position on the presence of Christ in the Supper was by no means settled at this time,⁷ to the hard stand that there is a physical presence and a physical eating of Christ in the Sacrament. Luther convinced himself that this was the only alternative to, and safeguard against, Carlstadt's doctrine of the Supper as an empty memorial. Angering Luther, and making him forever suspicious of any attempt to “tamper” with the words, “this is my body,” was Carlstadt's foolish defense of his doctrine by the arbitrary exegesis that, when Jesus said, “*this* is my body,” He was pointing to His *body*, rather than referring to the bread:

Therefore, Christ said clearly: Eat the bread, for this body is the body which is given to you. . . . My body, or this my body, is the very one which they all prophesied must be given for the world.⁸

5 Andreas Carlstadt, *Concerning the Anti-Christian Misuse of the Lord's Bread and Cup*, 87.

6 Andreas Carlstadt, *Concerning the Anti-Christian Misuse of the Lord's Bread and Cup*, 87.

7 In his *Letter to the Christians at Strassburg in Opposition to the Fanatic Spirit*, in 1524, Luther wrote: “I confess that if Dr. Karlstadt, or anyone else, could have convinced me five years ago that only bread and wine were in the sacrament he would have done me a great service. At that time I suffered such severe conflicts and inner strife and torment that I would gladly have been delivered from them. I realized that at this point I could best resist the papacy. There were two who then wrote me, with much more skill than Dr. Karlstadt has, and who did not torture the Word with their own preconceived notions. . . .” *Luther's Works*, Volume 40 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958) 68.

8 Andreas Carlstadt, *Concerning the Anti-Christian Misuse of the Lord's Bread and Cup*, 78.

From now on, the die was cast for Luther; he would never move from this stand. All of Bucer's subsequent efforts to persuade Luther were exercises in futility.

Second, the conflict with Carlstadt soured Luther on any view of the Supper that in any way was symbolic – all was tainted with Carlstadt's heresy. For Luther, there were three, and only three, doctrines of the Supper possible: Rome's; Luther's; and Carlstadt's.

Now Zwingli steps forward into the fray, a more redoubtable figure than Carlstadt, but advocating a doctrine of the Supper not essentially different from Carlstadt's. Opposed to the Roman Catholic doctrine of the real presence and thoroughly convinced both of the centrality of this error in Roman Catholic worship and of its corruption of all true worship, Zwingli taught, as the Protestant doctrine of the Supper, what may rightly be called the doctrine of the "*vera absentia*" of Christ, as opposed to the Lutheran and Roman Catholic teaching of the "real presence." The elements of the Lord's Supper are merely symbols of the body and blood of Christ. "Is" in the words of institution means "signifies" or "is a sign of." These signs do not give what they represent – they are empty signs. All that happens in the Supper is that the minds of believers recall, vividly, Jesus' death. Christ's body cannot be present in the Supper, because that body is in heaven, localized there at the right hand of God. Any doctrine of a real presence of Christ in the Supper (along the lines of one Martin Luther) is grave error. At best, it is a miserable failure to root out the last vestiges of the doctrine of Rome; at worst, it is a subtle re-introduction of Romanism into the fledgling Reformation. In his *Fidei Ratio* of 1530, Zwingli spoke of "certain who look back to the fleshpots of Egypt." Luther's doctrine of a real presence is serious Christological heresy, confusing the two natures of Christ against the warning of Chalcedon. Zwingli charged Luther with teaching cannibalism – the carnal eating of Christ's flesh along the lines of the Jewish error expressed in John 6:52: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?":

I have now refuted, I hope, this senseless notion about bodily flesh. In doing that my only object was to prove that to teach that the bodily and sensible flesh of Christ is eaten when we give thanks to God is not only impious but also foolish and monstrous, unless perhaps one is living among the Anthrophagi.⁹

9 Ulrich Zwingli, *Commentary on True and False Religion*, Samuel Macauley Jackson and Clarence Nevin Heller, editors (Durham, North Carolina: The Labyrinth Press, 1981) 216.

But Zwingli also rejected a spiritual eating and drinking of Christ in the Supper:

Nor do I think we have to listen to those who, seeing that the view mentioned is not only crude but even frivolous and impious, make this pronouncement: "We eat, to be sure, the true and bodily flesh of Christ, but spiritually"; for they do not yet see that the two statements cannot stand, "It is body" and "It is eaten spiritually." For body and spirit are such essentially different things that whichever one you take it cannot be the other.¹⁰

The Supper is not a means by which the believer partakes of Christ's body and blood. That the bread is "the communion of the body of Christ," as the apostle writes in I Corinthians 10:16, means only that the saints have fellowship with each other:

That is, when we break the bread with each other, do we not all, as many as are the body of Christ, mutually disclose and show to one another that we are of the number of those who trust in Christ?¹¹

The Sacrament is a memorial, nothing more:

The Lord's Supper, then, . . . is a commemoration of Christ's death, not a remitting of sins. . . .¹²

For this reason, Zwingli preferred to refer to the Supper as the Eucharist — the ceremony of the Church's thanksgiving.

Against Zwingli's memorial view, Luther hardened himself in the doctrine of a real, physical presence of Christ in the bread and wine of the Supper. Without going into Luther's doctrine in detail (for our interest here is not Luther, but Bucer), the main features of Luther's doctrine were the following:

1. There is a real, essential, and substantial bodily presence of Christ in the bread and wine, amounting to a physical presence, so that the body is eaten with the teeth and received into the stomach.

2. This presence is due, not to Rome's wonder of transubstantiation, but to the Word of promise, "This is my body."

3. Because of this presence, Christ's body and blood are eaten and drunk by unbelievers at the Table, albeit to their condemnation.

Luther grounded his doctrine, first, in what to him were the plain words of Scripture: "This is my body." Second, he argued the necessity of Christ's being present objectively in the Supper, i.e., by virtue of His own word of promise, and not merely because faith finds Him there;

10 Ulrich Zwingli, *Commentary on True and False Religion*, 214.

11 Ulrich Zwingli, *Commentary on True and False Religion*, 231.

12 Ulrich Zwingli, *Commentary on True and False Religion*, 228.

regardless of the faith or unbelief of the participants, Christ is present in the Supper. Third, Luther thought this presence of Christ possible because of the ubiquity of the human nature of Jesus after the Ascension. At this point, the Christological aspects of the controversy came to the fore. Luther accused Zwingli of separating the two natures that had become inseparably joined in the Incarnation. For Zwingli, Christ is present in the Divine nature where He is not present in the human nature. Luther wanted the one, entire Christ present in the Supper, human nature as well as Divine. He supposed that he obtained this by his doctrine of the omnipresence of the human nature.

That Luther's view was that of a physical presence, he himself made clear in two critically important places. In his definitive statement on the Supper, the *Confession Concerning the Supper*, of 1528, Luther wrote:

There is a sacramental union of Christ's body and the bread in the Supper so that he who eats this bread, eats Christ's body; and he who crushes this bread with teeth or tongue, crushes with teeth or tongue the body of Christ.¹³

In 1536, before the beginning of the conference on the Lord's Supper at Wittenberg (at which Bucer would valiantly but vainly attempt to reconcile Luther and the Zwinglians), as pre-conditions to the conference, Luther insisted that all must teach

that in the holy Supper the true body and true blood of Christ is truly had and received even by the mouth, and that no less by the wicked than the good.¹⁴

Forthright to a fault, Luther himself freely acknowledged these to be "hard terms."

Between Luther and Zwingli, the war raged. Marburg, in 1529, was the climax, and crisis, so far as Protestantism was concerned. Thereafter, there are two separate and hostile branches of the Church of the Reformation.

The Involvement of Dr. Bucer

In the middle was Martin Bucer. No mere spectator, Bucer actively involved himself in the controversy between Wittenberg and Zurich: he wrote; he travelled; he arranged and attended conferences. It was at the urging of Bucer that Philip of Hesse called the Marburg Colloquy, to reconcile Luther and Zwingli. Bucer attended the Colloquy as delegate

13 Martin Luther, *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper*, in: *Luther's Works*, Volume 37 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961) 300.

14 Hastings Eells, *Martin Bucer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1931) 198, 199.

from Strasbourg. Rather than dampening Bucer's spirit, the failure at Marburg only stirred him up to greater effort on behalf of a Protestant doctrine of the Lord's Supper. At the end of his life, Bucer could say, regarding the doctrine of the Supper, what Paul said concerning the work of an apostle, "I labored more than they all" (I Corinthians 15:10).

His involvement was not that he sided first with the one and then with the other of the two opposing parties. This is how some have viewed Bucer. From holding Luther's doctrine in the early 1520s, he went over to Zwingli's position in the middle 1520s, only to revert back to the doctrine of Luther after 1528. This is indeed how Wittenberg and Zurich looked at Bucer, convinced as they were that their views exhausted all possibilities and blind to a third alternative. Luther, therefore, regarded Bucer with suspicion: at best, he was weak; at worst, he was a traitor.¹⁵ After the Wittenberg Conference of 1536, Zurich wrote him off as a Lutheran, referring to him as "Luther's Cardinal legate."¹⁶

Nor was Bucer's involvement that he was crushed between the upper millstone of a physical presence and the nether millstone of an empty symbol. Rather, in the good providence of God, the pressure of the upper millstone of Wittenberg and of the nether millstone of Zurich produced in Martin Bucer the solid meal and the exhilarating wine of a unique, Biblical doctrine of the Lord's Supper. This was a doctrine that reckoned with all the concerns and emphases that were present in the ongoing Supper-strife. This doctrine did several things. First, it broke thoroughly with the Roman doctrine and practice. Second, it did justice to the good concern of Luther that Christ be truly present in the Supper, as well as to the good concern of Zwingli that there be no physical reception of Christ. Third, it went beyond the conceptions of both Luther and Zwingli in a doctrine of the Supper that is thoroughly Biblical – the doctrine that the Reformed

15 Luther's genial greeting of Bucer at the Marburg Colloquy was, "you rogue!" Bucer had sorely provoked Luther by taking the liberty of inserting into Bugenhagen's *Psalms Commentary* and into Luther's *Church Postil*, books which Bucer had translated, the views of Bucer himself and of Zwingli regarding the Lord's Supper, by way of annotations and prefaces. Luther had vented his righteous indignation against Bucer at the end of his *This is My Body*, in: *Luther's Works*, Volume 37 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961) 147ff.

16 Bucer had given the Zwinglians good reason for this at the Wittenberg Conference. In his desperate effort to reconcile the divided Protestants and to satisfy the adamant Luther, Bucer had conceded every point of Lutheran doctrine concerning the Supper. This was inexcusable. The concessions did not represent Bucer's beliefs concerning the Sacrament.

Churches have embraced (and that the Lutherans ought to have embraced) as the "Calvinistic" doctrine of the Supper.

Leaving out of sight Bucer's inexcusable deviations from his own doctrine in the interests of achieving union within Protestantism, we now consider Bucer's doctrine of the Supper.

What Bucer's Doctrine Was

Bucer's doctrine of the Lord's Supper was rich. By no means did he limit himself to the terms of the present controversy. On the contrary, he developed the covenantal nature of the Supper. He did this especially in a "confession" that he drew up before the conference at Schweinfurt, in 1532, the *Confessio Martini Bucerii in conventu Schweinfurdico*. A Sacrament is a sign of the covenant. A Sacrament acts through faith for fellowship and union with God. The purpose of God with the Sacraments is at all times the salvation and blessedness of His elect. In a Sacrament, the covenant and the promise are the primary things:

The action of the Sacrament. . . is as a visible reminder and assurance of these promises and covenants; these external actions of the Sacraments are a sort of representation or an enactment of that which God promises and offers.¹⁷

Sacraments, therefore, are an "appendix" to the promises. In the Sacrament, we, on our part, promise to live to God. Only after setting forth the full, covenantal significance of the Sacraments did Bucer address, head-on, the issue that divided:

With the bread and wine, the Lord gives us His true body and true blood, which is not, however, received by man's mouth or stomach, but by his faithful soul.

There is for Bucer a real presence of Christ in the Supper, although Bucer himself prefers to speak of Christ's "true presence." Although Christ's body is not in the bread, it is present with the bread, so that a worthy partaker truly eats and drinks the true body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament. In 1526, in his *The Apology of Martin Bucer*, he wrote:

Whenever we discussed or celebrated Christ's Supper, we invariably and above all else taught and commended to Christ's flock. . . the spiritual presence and eating of Christ, which consists in faith in His death endured for our sake. . .¹⁸

17 Quoted by Frank H. Meadows, *The Early Eucharistic Theology of Martin Bucer* (unpublished thesis, Montreal: McGill University, 1965).

18 Martin Bucer, in: Wright, *Martin Bucer*, 336.

Also:

In fact we too assert that to the faithful the bread of the Supper is the bodily body of Christ, but spiritually and in a manner that conveys blessing.¹⁹

In *The Eucharist: 1550 Confession in Aphorisms*, Bucer wrote:

And so I consider it settled that in the eucharist three things are given and received by those who rightly partake of the Lord's Table: the bread and the wine, which in themselves are completely unchanged but merely become symbols through the words and ordinance of the Lord; the very body and blood of the Lord, so that by their means we may increasingly and more perfectly share in the imparting of regeneration. . . ; and hence the confirmation of the new covenant. . . .²⁰

Concerning Christ's presence, it is important to note that His body is not present *in* the bread, or His blood, *in* the wine, but that they are present *with* the bread and wine. Believers do not eat His body *in* the bread, but *with* the bread. "I acknowledge," wrote Bucer in his *Apology* of 1526, "that the faithful truly receive the body of Christ with the bread, (but I do not) confess that they receive it in the bread."²¹ This was a necessary distinction against the doctrine of a physical presence of Christ as taught by Luther, who, in his powerful work of 1525, *Against the Heavenly Prophets*, insisted upon the preposition, "in": Christ's body is *in* the bread, and must be eaten *in* the bread.

So it must follow that the body and blood of Christ are there in the bread and cup. . . . For had St. Paul not wanted to say that the body of Christ was in the bread — he would not have attributed to the body of Christ the breaking. . . . Now, however, no one can disregard the fact that he joins the two together, and thus refers to the bread and calls it the broken body of Christ, so that in one breaking both bread and the body are broken, and we must confess that the body of Christ is there in the bread.²²

In confessing Christ's true presence in the Supper, Bucer rejected the memorial view of Zwingli (and, of course, of Carlstadt). Once, he described Zwingli's view this way: ". . . in the Supper only a memorial of the absent Christ is celebrated."²³ In his definitive work of 1550, Bucer wrote:

19 Martin Bucer, in: Wright, *Martin Bucer*, 338.

20 Martin Bucer, in: Wright, *Martin Bucer*, 397.

21 Martin Bucer, in: Wright, *Martin Bucer*, 330.

22 Martin Luther, in: *Luther's Works*, Volume 40 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958) 187, 210.

23 Quoted by Eells, *Martin Bucer*, 354.

And because we are here not merely reminded of our Christ or of communion in Him, but also receive Him, I prefer to say, in accordance with the Lord's words, "Take and eat. . .," that by the bread and wine the Lord's body and blood are given rather than just signified, and that the bread is here a presenting sign (*signa exhibitiva*) of His body and not simply a sign.²⁴

The presence of Christ is a spiritual presence, not a physical presence. Christ is present in the Supper by the Holy Spirit. Although with respect to His human nature, Christ is in heaven, not on the earth, nevertheless, by the mysterious operation of the Holy Spirit, the one and entire Christ, who is both God and man, is present in the Lord's Supper, with all His benefits.

For the presence of Christ in this world, whether offered or attested by the word alone or by the sacraments as well, is not one of place, or sense, or reason, or earth, but of spirit, of faith, and of heaven, in so far as we are conveyed thither by faith and placed together with Christ, and apprehend and embrace Him in His heavenly majesty. . . . The antichrists, however, persuade the simpler folk from these words that we receive and possess Christ made present in some manner conformed to this world, either contained in or conjoined with the bread and the wine. . . . Therefore, let the teachable be taught that no presence of Christ is enjoyed in the eucharist unless it is rightly observed, and then only a presence both apprehended and retained by faith alone. . . .²⁵

"By faith alone!" In strict and necessary harmony with the spiritual presence, the manner of eating and drinking Christ in the Supper is by faith alone. The eating is a spiritual eating; there is no reception of Christ by the mouth of the body. This, as it is crucial to the truth of the Supper, was a basic theme of Bucer; over and over, in every discussion of the Supper, Bucer stressed that Christ is, and only can be, received in the Supper by faith. Accordingly, no unbeliever eats Christ's body at the Table. The unbeliever receives only the signs. Since the believer eats Christ by faith, there is, and must be, the lifting up of the believing heart into heaven, where Christ is: we are "conveyed thither (to heaven – DJE) by faith and placed together with Christ, and apprehend and embrace him in his heavenly majesty."²⁶ This is the Reformed "*sursum corda*."

24 Martin Bucer, *The Eucharist: 1550 Confession in Aphorisms*, in: Wright, *Martin Bucer*, 398.

25 Martin Bucer, *The Eucharist: 1550 Confession in Aphorisms*, in: Wright, *Martin Bucer*, 391.

26 Martin Bucer, *The Eucharist: 1550 Confession in Aphorisms*, in: Wright, *Martin Bucer*, 391.

Thus, for Bucer, the Sacrament of the Supper is a means of grace. . . with the bread and the wine given for eating and drinking by the mouth of the body, the very body and blood of the Lord are to be received through faith by the faithful alone, which means for the confirmation of the new covenant and the nourishing of eternal life.²⁷

In his *Confession* of 1550, Bucer wrote:

Accordingly, the Lord was pleased to use here these symbols of food and drink and to give his flesh to be eaten spiritually by means of the symbol of bread to be eaten physically. . . .²⁸

Explaining the words of the institution of the Supper, "this is my body," he wrote:

So this is the meaning: "this that I give you by this sign is my body which is delivered up for you. . . ."²⁹

The key phrases, expressing the unique understanding of the Reformed Faith of the Sacrament, are "by means of the symbol" and "by this sign." In the Supper, there is a partaking of the reality represented by the signs. The partaking of the reality is not *along with* the signs, but a partaking *by means of* the signs. In 1536, Bucer wrote that both the Word and the symbols of the Sacraments are "the dispensation of salvation, *canales, vehicula, & instrumenta Spiritus & gratiae*."³⁰

The Grounds for His Doctrine

In coming to this doctrine of the real, but spiritual presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, Bucer was influenced, of course, by Luther. Not only was Luther instrumental in causing Bucer to reject the Roman Catholic doctrines of transubstantiation and of the repetition of the sacrifice of Christ for sins, but he also convinced Bucer that "this is my body" reveals a Supper that is far more than a memorial of an absent Christ. These words of the Lord demand a doctrine of the Supper in which the very presence of Christ is freely and joyfully acknowledged.

In his difference with Luther, namely, his teaching that this presence

27 Martin Bucer, *The Eucharist: The 1526 Apology*, in Wright, *Martin Bucer*, 326.

28 Martin Bucer, *The Eucharist: 1550 Confession in Aphorisms*, in Wright, *Martin Bucer*, 396.

29 Martin Bucer, *The Eucharist: 1550 Confession in Aphorisms*, in Wright, *Martin Bucer*, 397.

30 Martin Bucer, "Preface" to the 1536 edition of the *Commentary of the Four Holy Gospels*, in: Wright, *Martin Bucer*, 347.

is spiritual, not physical, Bucer was influenced by the Frisian, Hinne Rode. Wherever there is theology, there is a Dutchman! Rode, a member of the Brethren of the Common Life, visited Bucer in 1524. Bucer himself spoke of Rode's influence upon him in the matter of the presence of Christ in the Supper in a letter to a third party:

This Rodius was my guest (in the autumn of 1524); and, Bible in hand, he conversed at much length with me on the question of the Lord's Supper, wherein I defended Luther's opinion against him with all my might. But I then discerned that I was no peer to this man's mind, nor equal to all his arguments; and that one can not consistently maintain, by the Scripture, what I desired to affirm. I had to waive the corporeal presence of Christ in the bread; albeit I still hesitated concerning the certain explanation of the words.³¹

In the all-important "explanation of the words," Bucer broke new ground. He was guided simply by Scripture and by the analogy of faith in Scripture. He taught the spiritual presence of Christ in the Supper, rejecting Luther's physical presence, first, because this doctrine is Biblical. It is Biblical in that it does not violate the "self-consistency," the logical character, of the Bible. If Jesus' human nature is revealed to be in heaven, as the account of the Ascension in Acts 1:9ff. makes plain is the case, His body cannot be present on earth in a physical manner. Wrote Bucer in a delightful passage, which expresses a cardinal principle of Reformed hermeneutics:

Nothing, however, can be more self-consistent than the spoken word of God. Therefore, whatever Scripture declares about our receiving and eating Christ, His being with us, abiding, and dwelling in us, is bound to be in complete agreement and harmony with those assertions wherein He is stated to have left the world and to be in heaven, having a real body, and accordingly a body bounded and circumscribed.³²

Lutheran doctrine is erroneous because it is illogical and contradictory. To overcome this glaring contradiction (for also the mind of Luther, despite all his fulminations here against "reason," could not find peace with a construction that has the body of Jesus both in heaven and on earth in the same manner), Luther was forced to the perilous extremity of deifying the human nature of Christ: the ubiquity of the human nature!

31 Quoted in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Volume X, Samuel Macauley Jackson, ed. (New York and London: Funk and Wagnalls, 1911) 64.

32 Martin Bucer, *The Eucharist: 1550 Confession in Aphorisms*, in: Wright, *Martin Bucer*, 390.

Bucer's doctrine of the spiritual presence is also Biblical in that it permits Scripture to interpret Scripture. Specifically, it allows John 6:63, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing," in the context of eating Jesus' flesh and drinking Jesus' blood, to interpret Matthew 26:26, "This is my body." "Is," then, is "is," not merely "signifies"; but it is "is" as a spiritual presence, not as a physical presence. Luther always felt the force of the argument from John 6 and would, therefore, never admit that John 6 had any bearing on the issue of the Lord's Supper.³³ In addition, the spiritual explanation of Matthew's "is" (in "this is my body") is supported by the formula in Luke, "this cup is the new covenant" (22:20), where no physical identification is even thinkable.

Besides, Bucer saw this doctrine to be Biblical in that its teaching of Christ's presence in the Supper harmonized perfectly with the truth of Christ's presence in the preaching of the Gospel. The Supper gives nothing that the faithful do not have also, and first, in the Gospel. Christ is truly present to be eaten and drunk in the Word. But the presence and reception of the Lord in the Word is spiritual; nor is it even conceivable that He is physically present in the Word, to be received in a physical manner.

As the doctrine is Biblical, so is it in accordance with the analogy of faith. Bucer argued for the spiritual presence from the spiritual nature of salvation; and he argued for a spiritual eating of Christ from the fundamental truth of the Reformation, acknowledged by all Protestants, Luther above all, that the way of receiving God's salvation in Christ is the spiritual way of faith, and of faith alone. This is the clear testimony of John 6 on eating and drinking Christ: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not" (vss. 63, 64a). The ungodly are able to receive nothing of Christ in the Supper, or anywhere else. Nor ought the Church to teach a doctrine that tends to cause men to look for salvation in some external activity, rather than in faith only. Even if the godly could eat Christ's body and drink His blood in a

33 For Luther's rejection of the appeal to John 6:62 by those who denied his doctrine of Christ's physical presence in the Supper, cf. his *This Is My Body*, in: *Luther's Works*, Volume 37 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961) 78ff., and his *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper*, in: *Luther's Works*, Volume 37 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961) 235ff. To this text Zwingli referred at Marburg when he said to Luther, "This breaks your neck." At this Luther affected to take umbrage, as though Zwingli had threatened physical violence, and growled that they were not now in Zwingli's Switzerland where such goings-on were permitted, but in Germany, where theologians were protected.

physical manner, such an eating and drinking would be profitless to them.

For though you drank even the very blood which dropped from the cross, you would nevertheless not be drinking the blood of the new covenant unless you believed that by that blood the new covenant was ratified.³⁴

Justification by faith alone gives the death-blow to the Lutheran doctrine of the Supper, as it does to the Roman Catholic teaching. The Roman Catholic bishop in England with whom Bucer carried on a controversy over justification by faith during Bucer's English period, Stephen Gardiner, saw this and stated it forcefully:

The force of that sophism (namely, justification by faith alone – DJE) drove Luther, for the sake of defending his consistency, to pervert the mysteries of the sacraments and fall away to the insane assertion of necessity. When he halted at the Sacrament of the Eucharist, there rose up not a few who assailed the timidity of the man because he did not dare to follow out the full force of that proposition to the end; viz., that he utterly abolish the Eucharist also, which cannot stand with that doctrine. . . .³⁵

Even more decisively than the doctrine of justification by faith alone, predestination rules out the Lutheran doctrine of the Supper, as it does the Roman Catholic doctrine. For Bucer, the doctrinal issue at stake in the Supper-strife was not so much Christological as theological, not so much a matter of the natures of Christ as a matter of God's eternal decree of election. The point at issue here is the recipient of Christ in the Supper. If Christ is physically present in the bread and if He is physically eaten with the mouth, Christ is for all – for the reprobate ungodly, as well as for the godly. As a Reformed theologian, Bucer held that Christ is for the elect alone. In the Supper, therefore, Christ is for the nourishing, strengthening, and saving of the elect alone. W.P. Stephens points out the importance of predestination for Bucer's doctrine of the Supper in his work on Bucer's theology, *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Martin Bucer*:

The doctrine of election gives rise to two emphases in the understanding of salvation. The one is restrictive – it is only the elect who will believe. The other is forward looking – the elect will be called, justified, sanctified, and glorified. Self-evident as these two consequences of a doctrine of election may appear, they need to be stressed, precisely because they affect Bucer's total theology. The restrictiveness of the doctrine of election affects, for instance,

34 Martin Bucer, *The Eucharist: The 1526 Apology*, in: Wright, *Martin Bucer*, 324.

35 Quoted by Constantin Hopf, *Martin Bucer and the English Reformation* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1946) 177.

Bucer's understanding of word and sacraments, and excludes the possibility that they can be automatic bearers of the Spirit and grace of God to all who receive them.³⁶

Significance of Bucer's Contribution

The doctrine of the spiritual presence of Christ was essentially Bucer's doctrine of the Supper from the very beginning, as early as 1524, when he began to differ with Luther. There were times when, inexcusably, he deviated; but these were concessions offered from a blind zeal for unity, which zeal also blinded him to the fact that Luther would never settle for anything but a physical presence of Christ. There can be no question that Calvin derived his doctrine of the Lord's Supper from Bucer, who had laid out, in writing, the doctrine of the spiritual presence in all its main elements, as the *tertium quid* between the view of Wittenberg and the view of Zurich, as early as 1526, when John Calvin was a lad of 17 years. So strongly was Calvin influenced by Bucer's doctrine of the Supper that Calvin even adopted Bucer's dubious distinction between two kinds of unworthy partakers of the Supper, those who are merely weak, and therefore do receive Christ, and those who are ungodly, and therefore do not receive Christ. Bucer invented this distinction in order to accommodate his doctrine to Luther's insistence that the unworthy also receive Christ in the Supper. In his commentary on I Corinthians 11:27 ("Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord"), Calvin accepts this distinction:

Now this passage gave rise to a question, which some afterwards agitated with too much keenness — whether the *unworthy* really partake of the Lord's body. . . I acknowledge that there are some who receive Christ truly in the Supper, and yet at the same time *unworthily*, as is the case with many weak persons, yet I do not admit, that those who bring with them a mere historical faith, without a lively feeling of repentance and faith, receive anything but the sign.³⁷

If it is certain that the "Calvinistic" doctrine of the Supper originated with the Pastor at Strasbourg, it is also certain that Calvin brought the

36 W.P. Stephens, *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Martin Bucer* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1970) 38.

37 John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, Volume I, John Pringle, tr. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948) 386.

doctrine to its fullest development and gave it its clearest expression. In fact, in 1549, Calvin achieved, in part, what Bucer sought so often, and so fervently, but in vain: agreement of Protestants in the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. In the Consensus Tigurinus (also known as the Zurich Consensus), the non-Lutheran Protestants, particularly Zurich and Geneva, united in their confession of the Bucerian-Calvinistic doctrine of the Supper.³⁸ Calvin sent a copy of the Consensus to Bucer, now an exile in England, for his criticism. Bucer responded that he approved the document and that he was pleased that agreement had finally been reached with the Zwinglians.³⁹

The Reformed doctrine of the Lord's Supper as expressed in Lord's Days 28-30 of the Heidelberg Catechism and in Article 35 of the Belgic Confession is Martin Bucer's doctrine.

This was the doctrine that could have united, and ought to have united, Luther and Zwingli, the Lutherans and the Reformed, in the 16th century. They came close to each other at Marburg, closer than is usually realized. It was Martin Luther who, feeling keenly the wound of the division of the Reformation Church, reached out there, on one occasion, to propose a union-formula that would have had the warring parties agree on the Supper by means only of the statement that Christ's body is "substantially present" in the Supper, no questions being asked concerning the manner

38 The Consensus Tigurinus rejects Luther's local presence of Christ's body in or under the bread (Art. 24); affirms a spiritual reception of Christ in the Supper (Art. 9); declares that "God does not exert His power promiscuously in all who receive the Sacraments, but only in the elect. . . (so that) He causes only the elect to receive what the Sacraments offer" (Art. 16); denies that the "reprobate" receive the "verity" of the Sacraments (Art. 17); insists that "nothing is received in the Sacraments except by faith" (Art. 17); and states that, "among other ends (of the Sacraments - DJE) this one is chief, that by these Sacraments God attests, presents anew, and seals to us His grace," i.e., that the Sacraments are means of grace (Art. 7). This significant confession is not found in most popular collections of creeds in English. It appears, as an "Appendix" in A.A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1879) 651ff.

39 Ruefully, Bucer noted the hostility of the Zwinglians to himself, which had made it impossible for Bucer to accomplish the concord just achieved by Calvin: "For I know the zeal of the Zurichers, though I admire them sincerely in the Lord, they would not allow themselves to be persuaded by me of anything, however right and plain" (Eells, *Martin Bucer*, 405). *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* is in error in placing Bucer in Zurich in May of 1549, co-operating with Calvin and Farel in hammering out the Consensus Tigurinus (Volume XII, p. 536, under "Zurich Consensus"). Bucer had arrived in England in April, 1549, having been forced out of Strasbourg by the Augsburg Interim.

of this presence. And it was Ulrich Zwingli who rejected the proposal, suspecting, no doubt correctly, that for Luther "substantially" meant "physically."

A real presence of the entire Christ, according to the Word of promise in the institution-formula; a spiritual food and drink, received by faith, for the support of the eternal life of the elect; the use of the elements, properly administered by the Church, as a means of grace of the Holy Spirit! This doctrine avoided everything that Luther and Zwingli feared; provided all that their theology called for; and corrected what was deficient in their thinking, although neither of them saw it. They did not listen to Bucer!

This doctrine of the Lord's Supper would have to be the basis of union between Lutherans and Reformed, should Marburg ever be revisited. The first item of business, then, for the Reformed would be to convince the Lutherans that a "spiritual presence" is a "real presence." Hermann Sasse is mistaken when he writes, "we may look to Bucer for the origin of the custom of theologians to speak of a Real Presence when a Real Presence is not actually meant."⁴⁰ His error is not that he supposes the Reformed Churches to hold a real presence of Christ in the Supper, for these Churches have made this doctrine their official confession in the plainest and strongest language possible:

Now, as it is certain and beyond all doubt, that Jesus Christ hath not enjoined to us the use of his sacraments in vain, so he works in us all that he represents to us by these holy signs. . . we err not, when we say, that what is eaten and drunk by us is the proper and natural body, and the proper blood of Christ. . . This feast is a spiritual table, at which Christ communicates himself with all his benefits to us, and gives us there to enjoy both himself, and the merits of his sufferings and death. . . .⁴¹

Nor is Sasse mistaken in finding the origin of the Reformed doctrine of the real presence of Christ in Bucer. But he errs in assuming that a "real" presence must be a "physical" presence and in denying that a "spiritual" presence can be a "real" presence. Did not Christ Himself teach us that it is in the Spirit of truth who dwells with us and is in us that "I will come to you"? (John 14:16ff.)

Another Marburg is a dream. The reality is that the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's Supper is a unique and vital aspect of Reformed theology;

40 Quoted in Bernard M.G. Reardon, *Religious Thought in the Reformation* (London and New York: Longman, 1981) 174.

41 Belgic Confession, Article 35.

of Reformed worship; and of Reformed communion with God in the covenant-meal. For this doctrine, we Reformed are indebted to Bucer of Strasbourg.

APPENDIX

The Consensus Tigurinus

Written by Calvin, 1549, for the purpose of uniting all branches of the Reformed Church in a common doctrine as to the Lord's Supper.

Heads of Consent.

The whole Spiritual regimen of the Church leads us to Christ.

I. Since Christ is the end of the Law, and the knowledge of Him comprehends in itself the entire sum of the Gospel, there is no doubt but that the whole spiritual regimen of the Church is designed to lead us to Christ; as through Him alone we reach God, who is the ultimate end of a blessed (holy) life; and so whoever departs in the least from this truth will never speak rightly or fitly respecting any of the ordinances of God.

A true knowledge of the Sacraments from a knowledge of Christ.

II. Moreover since the Sacraments are auxiliaries (appendices) of the Gospel, he certainly will discuss both aptly and usefully their nature, their power, their office and their fruit, who weaves his discourse from Christ; not merely touching the name of Christ incidentally, but truthfully holding forth the purpose for which He was given to us by the Father, and the benefits which He has conferred upon us.

Knowledge of Christ, what it involves.

III. Accordingly it must be held, that Christ, being the eternal Son of God, of the same essence and glory with the Father, put on our flesh in order that, by right of adoption, He might communicate to us what by nature was solely His own, to wit, that we should be sons of God. This takes place when we, ingrafted through faith into the body of Christ, and this by the power of the Holy Spirit, are first justified by the gratuitous imputation of righteousness, and then regenerated into a new life, that, new-created in the image of the Heavenly Father, we may put off the old man.

Christ, Priest and King.

IV. We must therefore regard Christ in His flesh as a *Priest*, who has

expiated our sins by His death, the only Sacrifice, blotted out all our iniquities by His obedience, procured for us a perfect righteousness, and now intercedes for us that we may have access to God; as an expiatory *Sacrifice* whereby God was reconciled to the world; as a *Brother*, who from wretched sons of Adam has made us blessed sons of God; as a *Restorer* (Reparator), who by the power of His Spirit transforms all that is corrupt (*vitiosum*) in us, that we may no longer live unto the world and the flesh, and God himself may live in us; as a *King*, who enriches us with every kind of good, governs and preserves us by His power, establishes us with spiritual arms, delivers us from every evil, and restrains and directs us by the sceptre of His mouth; and He is to be so regarded, that He may lift us up to Himself, very God, and to the Father, until that shall be fulfilled which is to be at last, that God be all in all.

How Christ communicates Himself to us.

V. Moreover in order that Christ may manifest Himself such a one to us and produce such effects in us, it behooves us to be made one with Him and grow together in His body. For He diffuses His life in us in no other way than by being our Head; "from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body" (Eph. iv. 16).

Communion spiritual. Sacraments instituted.

VI. This communion which we have with the Son of God, is spiritual; so that He, dwelling in us by His Spirit, makes all of us who believe partakers of all the good that resides in Him. To bear witness of this, both the preaching of the Gospel and the use of the Sacraments, Holy Baptism and the Holy Supper, were instituted.

The Ends of the Sacraments.

VII. The Sacraments, however, have also these ends: — to be marks and tokens of Christian profession and (Christian) association, or brotherhood; to incite gratitude (thanksgiving), and to be exercises of faith and a pious life, in short, bonds (sealed contracts) making these things obligatory. But among other ends this one is chief, that by these Sacraments God attests, presents anew, and seals to us His grace. For while they indeed signify nothing more than is declared in the word itself, yet it is no small matter that they are presented to our eyes as lively symbols which better affect our feeling, leading us to the reality (*in rem*), while they recall to memory Christ's death and all the benefits thereof, in order that faith may have

more vigorous exercise; and finally, it is of no little moment that what was proclaimed to us by the mouth of God, is confirmed and sanctioned by seals.

Thanksgiving.

VIII. Moreover, since the testimonials and seals of His grace, which the Lord has given us, are verities, surely He himself will beyond all doubt make good to us inwardly, by His Spirit, what the Sacraments symbolize to our eyes and other senses, viz., possession of Christ as the fountain of all blessings, then reconciliation to God by virtue of His death, restoration by the Spirit unto holiness of life, and finally attainment of righteousness and salvation; accompanied with thanksgiving for these mercies, which were formerly displayed on the cross, and through faith are daily received by us.

The signs and the things signified are not separated, but distinct.

IX. Wherefore, though we rightly make a distinction between the signs and the things signified, yet we do not separate the verity from the signs; but we believe, that all who by faith embrace the promises therein offered, do spiritually receive Christ and His spiritual gifts, and so also they who have before been made partakers of Christ, do continue and renew their communion.

In the Sacraments the promise is chiefly to be kept in view.

X. For not to the bare signs, but rather to the promise which is annexed to them, it becomes us to look. As far then as our faith advances in the promise offered in the Sacraments, so far will this power and efficacy of which we speak exert itself. Accordingly the matter (*materia*) of the water, bread or wine, by no means present Christ to us, nor makes us partakers of His spiritual gifts; but we must look rather to the promise, whose office it is to lead us to Christ by the right way of faith, and this faith makes us partakers of Christ.

The Elements are not to be superstitiously worshipped.

XI. Hence the error of those who superstitiously worship (*obstupescunt*) the elements, and rest therein the assurance of their salvation, falls to the ground. For the Sacraments apart from Christ are nothing but empty masks; and they themselves clearly declare to all this truth, that we must cling to nothing else but Christ alone, and in nothing else must the free gift of salvation be sought.

The Sacraments (per se) have no efficacy.

XII. Furthermore, if any benefit is conferred upon us by the Sacraments, this does not proceed from any virtue of their own, even though the promise whereby they are distinguished be included. For it is God alone who works by His Spirit. And in using the instrumentality of the Sacraments, He thereby neither infuses into them His own power, nor abates in the least the efficiency of His Spirit; but in accordance with the capacity of our ignorance (*ruditas*) He uses them as instruments in such a way that the whole efficiency (*facultas agendi*) remains solely with Himself.

God uses the instrument but in such a way that all the power (virtus) is His.

XIII. Therefore, as Paul advises us that "neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase" (1 Cor. iii. 7); so also it may be said of the Sacraments, that they are nothing, for they will be of no avail except God work the whole to completion (*in solidum omnia efficiat*). They are indeed instruments with which God works efficiently, when it pleases Him, but in such a manner that the whole work of our salvation must be credited solely to Him.

XIV. We have therefore decided that it is solely Christ who verily baptizes us within, who makes us partakers of Him in the Supper, who, in fine, fulfils what the Sacraments symbolize, and so uses indeed, these instruments, that the whole efficiency resides in His Spirit.

How the Sacraments confirm.

XV. So the Sacraments are sometimes called seals, are said to nourish, confirm, and promote faith; and yet the Spirit alone is properly the seal, and the same Spirit is the originator and perfecter of our faith. For all these attributes of the Sacraments occupy a subordinate place, so that not even the least portion of the work of our salvation is transferred from its sole author to either the creature or the elements.

Not all who participate in the Sacraments partake also of the verity.

XVI. Moreover, we sedulously teach that God does not exert His power promiscuously in all who receive the Sacraments, but only in the elect. For just as he enlightens unto faith none but those whom He has fore-ordained unto life, so by the hidden power of His Spirit He causes only the elect to receive what the Sacraments offer.

The Sacraments do not confer grace.

XVII. This doctrine refutes that invention of sophists which teaches that the Sacraments of the New Covenant confer grace on all who do not inter-

pose the impediment of a mortal sin. For besides the truth that nothing is received in the Sacraments except by faith, it is also to be held that God's grace is not in the least so linked to the Sacraments themselves that whoever has the sign possesses also the reality (*res*); for the signs are administered to the reprobate as well as to the elect, but the verity of the signs comes only to the latter.

God's gifts are offered to all; believers alone receive them.

XVIII. It is indeed certain that Christ and His gifts (*dona*) are offered to all alike, and that the verity of God is not so impaired by the unbelief of men that the Sacraments do not always retain their proper virtue (*vim*); but all persons are not capable of receiving Christ and His gifts (*dona*). Therefore on God's part there is no variableness, but on the part of men each one receives according to the measure of his faith.

*Believers have communion with Christ,
before and without the use of the Sacraments*

XIX. Moreover, as the use of the Sacraments confers on unbelievers nothing more than if they had abstained therefrom, indeed, is only pernicious to them; so without their use the verity which they symbolize endures to those who believe. Thus in Baptism were washed away Paul's sins, which had already been washed away before. Thus also Baptism was to Cornelius the washing of regeneration, and yet he had already received the gift of the Holy Spirit. So in the Supper Christ communicates himself to us, and yet He imparted himself to us before and abides continually in us forever. For since each one is commanded to examine himself, it hence follows that faith is required of each before he comes to the Sacraments. And yet there is no faith without Christ; but in so far as in the Sacraments faith is confirmed and grows, God's gifts are confirmed in us, and so in a measure Christ grows in us and we in Him.

*Grace is not joined to the act of the Sacraments,
that their fruit is received immediately after the act.*

XX. The benefit also which we derive from the Sacraments should by no means be restricted to the time in which they are administered to us; just as if the visible sign when brought forward into view, did at the same moment with itself bring God's grace. For those who are baptized in early infancy, God regenerates in boyhood, in budding youth, and sometimes even in old age. So the benefit of Baptism lies open to the whole course of life; for the promise which it contains is perpetually valid. It may, also, sometimes happen, that a partaking of the Supper, which in

the act itself brought us little good because of our inconsiderateness or dullness, afterward brings forth its fruit.

Local imagination should be suppressed.

XXI. Especially should every conception of local (bodily) presence be suppressed. For while the signs are here in the world seen by the eyes, and felt by the hands, Christ, in so far as He is man, we must contemplate as in no other place but heaven, and seek Him in no other way than with the mind and faith's understanding. Wherefore it is a preposterous and impious superstition to enclose Him under elements of this world.

Exposition of the words of the Lord's Supper, "This is my body."

XXII. We therefore repudiate as absurd interpreters, those who urge the precise literal sense, as they say, of the customary words in the Supper, "This is my body," "This is my blood." For we place it beyond all controversy that these words are to be understood figuratively, so that the bread and the wine are said to be that which they signify. And verily it ought not to seem novel or unusual that the name of the thing signified be transferred by metonymy to the sign, for expressions of this kind are scattered throughout the Scriptures; and saying this we assert nothing that does not plainly appear in all the oldest and most approved writers of the Church.

Concerning the eating of the body of Christ.

XXIII. Moreover, that Christ, through faith by the power of His Holy Spirit, feeds our souls with the eating of His flesh and the drinking of His blood, is not to be understood as if any commingling or transfusion of substance occurred, but as meaning that from flesh once offered in sacrifice and blood once poured out in expiation we derive life.

Against Transubstantiation and other silly conceits.

XXIV. In this way not only is the invention of Papists about transubstantiation refuted, but also all the gross fictions and futile subtleties which are either derogatory to His divine glory or inconsistent with the verity of His human nature. For we consider it no less absurd to locate Christ under the bread, or conjoin Him with the bread, than to transubstantiate the bread into His body.

Christ's body is in heaven as in a place.

XXV. But in order that no ambiguity may remain, when we say that Christ should be contemplated as in heaven, the phrase implies and ex-

presses a difference of place (a distance between places). For though, philosophically speaking, "above the heavens" is not a locality, yet because the body of Christ — as the nature and the limitation of the human body show — is finite, and is contained in heaven as in a place, it is therefore necessarily separated from us by as great an interval as lies between heaven and earth.

Christ is not to be worshipped in the bread.

XXVI. But if it is not right for us in imagination to affix Christ to the bread and wine, much less is it lawful to worship Him in the bread. For though the bread is presented to us as a symbol and pledge of our communion with Christ, yet because it is the sign, not the reality, neither has the reality enclosed in it or affixed to it, they therefore who bend their minds upon it to worship Christ, make it an idol.

The Doctrine of Predestination in Calvin and Beza

by Prof. H. Hanko

In our last article, we described the problem which this series addresses: Were Calvin's views of predestination significantly altered by Beza and subsequent Reformed and Presbyterian theologians? This point is often argued by many students of Calvin. We examined the question from the point of view of some who argue that not Beza, but Calvin himself altered his views on predestination in the course of his life. Some argued this from an analysis of the different places Calvin treats the doctrine of predestination in various editions of his Institutes. Others argue this position from a comparison of Calvin's Institutes and his polemical writings, particularly the writings which emerged from his controversy with Bolsec, a bitter opponent of predestination. We showed in our last article that these arguments are without foundation. Now, in this present article, we turn to the real question at stage: Did Beza modify or change Calvin's views on predestination? In this article we simply give the

arguments which have been raised. In a subsequent article, we will examine this question in detail.

We are convinced that Calvin himself did not alter his views; but we are equally convinced that Beza made no substantive changes in Calvin's position. It is clear from the evidence that those who argue for such changes are really enemies of Calvin's views on predestination and are attempting to bolster their attack against the doctrine by appealing (though without justification) to Calvin himself.

Chapter III

THE PROBLEM IN A COMPARISON OF CALVIN AND BEZA

Whatever for the moment may be the changes in the doctrine of predestination which are found in Calvin's own writings, the main issue of the controversy revolves around the question of whether Beza significantly altered Calvin's views. That both taught the doctrine of predestination is agreed upon by all. That both incorporated into their writings a double predestination, election and reprobation, can hardly be denied. But at issue is another question: Did Beza make such alterations in Calvin's views that the doctrine which Calvin taught is really lost? To this many would answer with an emphatic affirmative. And it is to a statement of this question that we turn in this chapter.

Again, agreement among those who take this position is impossible to find. Among those who agree that Beza made important changes in Calvin's doctrine some say these changes are to be found in one area of Calvin's thought; others look to another area; and still others to a third.¹

Here too many do not find any significant differences between what Calvin taught and what Beza said concerning predestination. Moore,² e.g., goes so far as to state that no one after Calvin went as far as Calvin

1 These differences of opinion, mentioned also in our discussion in the last chapter, provide some kind of *prima facie* proof that the contentions are at least suspect. If students of Calvin and Beza cannot even agree on how the two differ in their treatment of this doctrine, one has reason to suspect that the differences are questionable, to say the least. But we shall discuss this more in detail in a later chapter.

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

himself. An Anglican, he says, in a chapter entitled, "The Influence of Calvinism on Modern Unbelief":

We often hear it said the Calvinists went far beyond Calvin. My own study of the question leads to a diametrically opposite conclusion. I doubt whether any of Calvin's followers went as far as Calvin himself. The most profoundly immoral and revolting tenets of Calvinism are to be found in the "Institutes," and Calvin himself never receded from, but advanced upon the position he originally took up.

Nevertheless, a bit further (p. 512) he admits that perhaps Beza went a bit further.

Among those who find significant changes between the views of Calvin and Beza, three areas especially are pinpointed as areas in which Beza altered the system of the Reformer of Geneva.

Some are content merely to argue that Beza altered the *emphasis* of Calvin's thought. Carl Bangs³ enters into this matter rather thoroughly. Calling Beza an "epigone" of Calvin, he says:

(Beza) tries to be faithful to his teacher by imposing a strict internal coherence on what had been a free and creative theology. . . . Perhaps everything that Beza says can be found in Calvin, but the emphasis is different. . . . Beza lifts the doctrine of predestination to a prominence which it did not have for Calvin.⁴

Bangs claims that Beza made predestination an end in itself.

Gonzales⁵ says of Beza:

Claiming to be no more than an exponent and continuation of Calvin's views, he distorted those views in subtle yet decisive ways. For instance, he too (with Zanchi, H.II.) placed the doctrine of predestination under the heading of the divine knowledge, will, and power, and thus tended to confuse it with predeterminism.

Steinmetz,⁶ commenting on the treatment of predestination in the locus of soteriology in the *Institutes*, claims that election and reprobation are not of the same weight in Calvin, while in Beza they were. He goes on to say that Beza is the father of hyper-Calvinism!

3 Carl Bangs, *Arminius* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971).

4 *Ibid.*, p. 66.

5 Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought*, Vol. III (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980) p. 246.

6 David C. Steinmetz, *Reformers in the Wings* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971), pp. 167-170.

Seeburg,⁷ also speaking of the place which predestination occupies in Calvin's thought and comparing that with the views of Beza, writes:

In harmony with his fundamental religious temper, and in opposition to foolish opposers, Calvin developed the doctrine of predestination with constantly increasing clearness and distinctness.

He goes on to say that the next generation of reformers (Beza, Zanchi, Musculus) gave to the doctrine a position of greater prominence and developed an extreme form in their supralapsarian views. This extreme form was adopted by the Synod of Dort.⁸

It is in this question of supra- vs. infralapsarianism that some find the difference between Calvin and Beza. Hunter⁹ says that

Calvin himself, ever imbued with practical religious aims and dogmatic only when authorized by Scripture, seems to have given the question little definite thought. His position is certainly sufficiently undefined to allow of both parties claiming him as sponsor for their view. He professed to have a hearty dislike for subtleties, as he once told Beza, and this was essentially the kind of matter over which he would be indisposed to waste time. Logical he was, but logic became an irrelevancy and irreverence when it attempted to penetrate audaciously into the realm of ultimate divine mysteries. So little importance did he appear to attach to the question that he subscribed to and indeed inspired two Confessions whose terms might bear a contrary significance in regard to this point. The Consensus Genevensis (1552) assumes the supralapsarian view, while the French Confession, of which Calvin was practically the author, is infralapsarian in affirming that God chose out of the universal corruption and damnation in which all men were submerged some to eternal life.

Cunningham,¹⁰ while finding no essential and important differences between the theologies of Calvin and Beza, nevertheless considers this matter of supra- vs. infralapsarianism a possibility. He writes:

The chief points, as we have mentioned, on which it has been alleged, that Calvin and Beza differed in their theological sentiments, and that Beza was

7 Reinhold Seeburg, *The History of Doctrines* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), pp. 420-422.

8 It is not clear from what Seeburg writes whether he is of the opinion that Dort adopted a supralapsarian view of predestination. We can hardly imagine that he takes such a patently false position.

9 A. Mitchell Hunter, *The Teaching of Calvin, a Modern Interpretation* (Glasgow: Macklehoose, Jackson & Co., 1920), p. 122.

10 William Cunningham, *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1979), pp. 358ff.

more Calvinistic than Calvin, are the order of the divine decrees in their bearing upon the fall as controverted between the Sublapsarians and the Supralapsarians. . . .

We do not intend to dwell at length upon the topics usually introduced into this controversy, because they scarcely lie within the line of legitimate discussion, and because, to give them much prominence, is really to countenance the unfair use which the Arminians have commonly made of this subject. . . .¹¹

After a rather lengthy discussion of the issues involved, Cunningham goes on to say:¹²

On this unnecessary, and now obsolete subject of controversy, it has been alleged that Calvin and Beza took opposite sides, that the former was a Sublapsarian, and the latter a Supralapsarian. There is no doubt that Beza, in defending the doctrine of predestination, was led to assert Supralapsarian views; though he was not, as has been sometimes alleged, the first who broached them, for they had been held by some of the more orthodox schoolmen, as has been shown by Twisse and Davenant. But, while Beza's opinion is clear enough, it is not by any means certain on which side Calvin is to be ranked, and this question — viz., Whether Calvin is to be regarded as a Sublapsarian or a Supralapsarian? has been made the subject of formal and elaborate controversy. The sublapsarians have endeavoured to show that they are entitled to claim Calvin's authority in support of their views, while Supra-lapsarians and Arminians have generally denied this, — the former of these two classes, that they might claim his testimony in their own favour, — and the latter, that they might excite odium against him, by giving prominence to all the strongest and harshest statements that ever dropped from him on the subject of predestination. . . .

All this, of course, implies that there is real ground for doubt and for difference of opinion, as to what Calvin's sentiments upon this subject were; and the cause of this is, that the question was not discussed in his time, — that it does not seem to have been ever distinctly present to his thoughts as a point to be investigated, — and that, in consequence, he has not been led to give a formal and explicit deliverance regarding it.

After a discussion of the pertinent material in Calvin, Cunningham concludes:

Beza, then, in his explicit advocacy of Supralapsarianism, went beyond his

11 It is interesting to note here that Cunningham is of the opinion that emphasis on differences between Calvin and Beza, especially on this point, are due to Arminian influence. With this we are inclined to agree.

12 Cunningham, *op. cit.*, pp. 363, 364.

master. We do not regard this among the services which he rendered to scriptural truth; especially as we are bound in candour to admit that there is some ground to believe that his high views upon this subject exerted a repelling influence upon the mind of Arminius, who studied under him for a time in Geneva.

However these alleged differences between Calvin and Beza are analyzed, one greater difference between the two reformers is seen by several scholars to be of crucial importance. This difference has to do with what is said to be a scholasticizing of Calvin's thought in the hands of his friend and successor. It is alleged that Beza altered Calvin's views on predestination (and really the whole of Calvin's theology) most significantly when he applied scholastic categories to it. It was this alteration more than any other which spoiled the genius of what Calvin taught, unmistakably altered its whole structure, and gave to subsequent continental and Presbyterian thought an emphasis and direction which was at odds with Calvin. It is in this area more than anywhere else that we must look for the shift which for subsequent times made the true Calvin almost unknown within Protestant circles.

Basil Hall,¹³ in an essay entitled, "The Calvin Legend," writes:

A change of emphasis came with Beza, his successor there, who altered the balance of Calvin's theology, saw, and in part approved, that successful re-pristination of Aristotle among Protestants which led to the Reformed scholasticism that distorted the Calvinist synthesis and used his contacts with Protestant leaders elsewhere in Europe and in Britain for ends more politically sophisticated than Calvin would have conceived or desired.

In another essay, entitled, "Calvin Against the Calvinists,"¹⁴ Hall writes:

Calvin's successors nevertheless distorted the balance of doctrines which he had tried to maintain. His successor at Geneva, Beza, together with the Heidelberg theologian Zanchius, the English Puritan Perkins, and their associates and followers, bear much of the blame for this, even if we allow that theological change had to come in order to meet changing situations, yet it is not necessary to assume that only those changes that these men made were necessarily the right ones. . . .¹⁵

13 G.E. Duffield, ed., *John Calvin, A Collection of Essays* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1966), p. 2.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 26-28.

15 Although this is the way the sentence reads in the book cited, apparently the author intended a full punctuation stop after the word "this." Then the words, "Even if we allow that. . ." would begin a new sentence.

The way in which the balance of Calvin's work was altered can be seen in the writings of Beza, and in those of the English Puritan William Perkins. . . . Without intending it Beza shifted the balance in Calvin's work. . . . He hardened the earlier method of scriptural exegesis, and made scripture itself into a corpus of revelation in almost propositional form with every part equal to the other parts in inspiration, thereby developing or encouraging a literalism, in the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture, which encouraged Reformed theologians to go beyond the more guarded statements of Calvin. Something of scholastic formalism can be seen in Beza's work when it is compared with the more dynamic method and vivid style of Calvin. It was Beza who reverted to the medieval scholastic device of placing predestination under the doctrines of God and providence – the position in which St. Thomas Aquinas discussed it – whereas Calvin had placed it eventually and deliberately under the doctrine of salvation. By doing so, although he was not alone in this, Beza re-opened the road to speculative determinism which Calvin had attempted to close. Beza's writings were largely polemic in origin and contained much less creative theology than Calvin's; it may have been the continuous polemic effort against Catholics and Lutherans that led Beza into exaggeration and distortion in doctrine. Beza taught Supralapsarianism (that is, the view that God decreed from before creation everything relating to man's future, including his fall and total depravity, which comes near to being thoroughgoing determinism) whereas Calvin is not explicit on this point – he would have regarded discussion of it as being impertinently precise in setting out God's purposes. . . .

After a discussion of other differences (including the question of the extent of the atonement) and the affect these differences had on subsequent theology, Hall says,

In fairness to Beza it should be added that his treatment of these matters, while it does not show Calvin's careful avoiding of extreme statements, is not so pronounced as that of those seventeenth century writers who supported wholeheartedly the decrees of the Synod of Dort, for example, the Dutchman Bogerman or the Englishman William Twisse.

In an article entitled, "Election, the Humanity of Jesus, and Possible Worlds," Robert R. Hann¹⁶ writes:

Especially as the doctrine (of election) came to be elaborated by successive generations of theologians, election came increasingly to be discussed in terms of God's decrees before creation, and the fates of both the saved and the lost were thought to be equally the direct outcome of the will of God. As a result, the doctrine that Charles Williams called "comprehensible in Calvin" became, in his words, "tiresome in English Puritans, and quite horrible" in later Presbyterians. It is little wonder that for many even of the Reformed and Presbyterian churches the doctrine of election seemed more and more to be an

¹⁶ *Journal of the Evangelical Society*, Vol. 29, No. 3, Sept., 1986, pp. 295-305.

exercise in theological abstraction and less and less an expression of grace.

While Hann does not specifically mention Beza as the culprit in this connection, he clearly states that Calvin's views were subjected to important modification by subsequent theologians with the result that the true meaning of Calvin was lost. He argues that "later scholasticism" so modified the doctrine of election that no longer was election considered to be "in Christ."

Proceeding from this assumption he, by means of specious argumentation and doubtful interpretation of the history of doctrine, argues: 1) That we are elect in Christ. 2) That this refers to Christ in His humanity. 3) That because this election stands connected with Christ's humanity, it stands connected with Christ's temptations in which it was possible for Christ, by virtue of His humanity, to sin. Hence election is based on foreknowledge. 4) By an appeal to A. Plantinga's conception of all possible worlds¹⁷ he proceeds to argue that man possesses freedom of action, freedom being interpreted as freedom of choice; i.e., no providential determination of man's deeds. 5) And from this he argues that this conception allows for both predestination and freedom of choice (although here the concept "freedom of choice" is used in the sense of moral choice). His contention is, finally, that this view does not conflict with the declarations of the Synod of Dort.¹⁸

In an article entitled, "Was Calvin a Calvinist or was/is Calvinism Calvinistic?" Prof. B.J. van der Walt¹⁹ writes: "Calvinism after Calvin's time was either Scholastic Calvinism or Reformed Scholasticism — a clear deviation from the thought of the Reformer of Geneva."²⁰ In quoting from Brian Armstrong's book, "Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy," he lists six characteristics of "Protestant/Reformed/Calvinistic" Scholasticism. 1) It stresses the necessity of a logical or doctrinal system. Predestination is then regarded as the point of departure. 2) It has a strong dependence on the philosophy of Aristotle. 3) It lays great stress on reason and reason is given almost the same status as revelation. 4) The

¹⁷ A. Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974), esp. chaps. 4-8.

¹⁸ But rather obvious sophistry is used to maintain this contention. We mention this position in some detail because it is evidence of how the argument that Calvin's views underwent change becomes the occasion for an attack against sovereign predestination itself.

¹⁹ *Our Reformation Tradition* (Potchefstroom: Institute for Reformation Studies, 1984), pp. 369-377.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 369.

Bible is considered to be a set of propositions so that a theology may be constructed on its basis. 5) Faith is not as important and is "misshapen to the status of intellectual submission to the truth of Scripture."²¹ 6) It "does not only imply a different method of thinking or a different mentality. It also leads to the achievement of different *results* of thought from those of the Reformation."²²

Muller²³ is much more careful in his analysis of the problem. He first of all gives a thorough definition of what he means by scholasticism and orthodoxy because,

Two terms that appear most frequently in the evaluation of theology after Calvin are "scholasticism" and "orthodoxy." From the first we need to be clear that these terms are neither laudatory nor pejorative; they are only descriptive of the method and the intention of theologians in the century and a half following the demise of Calvin, Vermigli, and Musculus. In other words, characterization of post-Reformation Protestantism as "scholastic orthodoxy" denotes the historical form of that theology and in no way implies that the theology of the seventeenth century can provide either the right method or the right teaching for the present.

After discussing Brian Armstrong's definition of scholasticism²⁴ and dissenting in some particulars from it, as least as far as its relevance to the question at hand is concerned, he defines scholasticism as

a methodological approach to theological system which achieves precision of definition through the analysis of doctrinal *loci* in terms of scripture, previous definition (the tradition), and contemporary debate.²⁵

"Orthodoxy" means, according to Muller, the following:

As applied to the theologians of the Reformed (and Lutheran) branches of the Protestant Reformation, specifically in the late sixteenth and the seventeenth century, it indicates several things: first, and perhaps foremost, it indicates the desire to set forth the true faith as over against the teaching of the several adversaries confronted in polemic. Right teaching is for the edification of the church on both the positive and the polemical levels. Second, "orthodoxy" indicates also a sense of catholicity, of continuity both with the revelation contained in the scriptural deposit and with the valid teaching of the

21 *Ibid.*, p. 370.

22 *Ibid.*

23 Richard A. Muller, *Christ and the Decree* (Durham: Labyrinth Press, 1986), p. 6.

24 See earlier for a reference to his book, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy*.

25 Muller, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

church in past centuries. Orthodox theologians of the seventeenth century felt quite at ease in their use not only of the fathers but also of medieval thinkers. Third, the term implies a strong relationship between systematic theology and church confessions, the confessions acting as a subsidiary norm in the development and exposition of doctrinal systems: even at its most rigid and extreme form, orthodoxy is theology in and for the church. Fourth, and finally, the production of an orthodoxy, so-called, relates to the conviction that true doctrine can be stated fully and finally in a series of strict doctrinal determinations. In this sense, orthodoxy involves an approach to scripture as the deposit of truth out of which correct definitions may be drawn. This assumption in itself entailed the development of a theological method more logical, more rigorous, and more rationalistic than that of the Reformation, though no less committed to the principle of *sola scriptura*.²⁶

From this analysis he concludes

that the question of continuity or discontinuity of Protestant scholastic theology with the western theological tradition is highly complex and not at all to be reduced to the relationship of the doctrine of predestination developed by Beza or Zanchi to that of Calvin.²⁷

Before we proceed to an analysis and evaluation of these various issues in the next chapter, we ought briefly to sum up what we have discovered to this point.

The basic question before us is whether the doctrine of predestination as developed subsequent to Calvin is faithful to the teachings of Calvin, or whether his views have been modified by late sixteenth and seventeenth century theologians under the influence of Beza, Calvin's successor in Geneva.

We face a number of questions in that connection. The first group of questions concentrates on the problem of whether Calvin himself later in life and especially in his polemical writings altered his conception of predestination as found in his *Institutes*. And, in connection with that, can any changes in Calvin's view be deduced from the change in the place in his *Institutes* where he treated this doctrine.

The second group of questions has to do with the problem of whether Beza significantly altered Calvin's view. And this question, if answered in the affirmative, must include a discussion of the problem of the precise nature of that alteration. Was it a mere difference in emphasis? Was it a difference over the question of infra- and supra-lapsarianism? If this

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

latter, is this difference significant? Or was the difference one of a "scholasticizing" of the doctrine? And if so, was such a scholasticizing of the doctrine a fundamental change in Calvin's perspective and teaching?

These are the questions which require answers. □

A Power of God Unto Salvation

or GRACE NOT AN OFFER

Chapter 5

Not According to Scripture

When the Rev. Keegstra wants to prove further from Scripture that there is in the Gospel a general and well-meant offer of grace and salvation on God's part to all men, he confuses and obscures the issue at stake in a couple of introductory remarks. He writes as follows (cf. *De Wachter*, April 23, 1930):

A couple of introductory remarks.

One should not look for texts in God's Word in which it is said to the reprobate expressly and in so many words in the external calling: "this means you too." God does not incriminate Himself and therefore does not repeatedly defend His sincerity by assuring us: "Now I mean what I say." He indeed comes to man in his unbelief to help him, and out of pure goodness gives us the assurance of His veracity and unchangeable faithfulness. But that is something different.

God does not contradict Himself when He sincerely and well-meaningly offers salvation in Christ to all who hear, although He has not elected them all to salvation, nor accomplished atonement for them all through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. For in the presentation of the Gospel He does not say what He Himself will do. He reveals therein only what He wills that we shall do: that is, humble ourselves before His face, confess our sins, and seek our salvation in Christ.

To these observations of the Rev. Keegstra we wish to add a few of our own.

In the first place, why should we not look for texts in God's Word in which God also says to the reprobate in so many words that God also means them, loves them, seeks their good, wills their salvation and well-meaningly offers that salvation? The answer to this question must certainly not be sought in what the Rev. Keegstra says: "God does not repeated-

ly defend His sincerity by assuring us: now I mean what I say." For God the Lord does precisely that in various ways for His elect. He assures them of His unchangeable faithfulness and eternal love, of His Covenant which knows no wavering. He even swears by Himself. Why, if He indeed well-meaningly offers salvation to all men, also to the reprobate, should He not also be willing to give them the assurance of His faithful love? The answer is simple enough: that faithful love toward the reprobate simply does not exist. And as little as that faithful love of God toward the reprobate exists, so little does God set it forth in the presentation of the Gospel as though it does indeed exist. And therefore you must not search Scripture for such passages which indeed proclaim such a faithful love of God toward the reprobate. I do not hesitate to write here that also the Rev. Keegstra cannot get it over his lips that God loves and desires to save all men in a given audience. He dares not accept the consequence of his own general offer of salvation.

In the second place: why does the Rev. Keegstra write, now that he is going to prove that Scripture teaches a general, well-meant offer of grace and salvation on God's part to all men, that in that offer of the Gospel the question is not what God the Lord Himself will do? Pray, was it not precisely the question what God wills and does in the preaching of the Gospel? If I say to someone — say, my servant — what I want him to do, do I then offer him something? And if in Holy Scripture God comes to all who are under the preaching with the demand that they shall humble themselves, repent, confess their sins, seek their salvation in Christ, does He then offer them something or does He demand something of them? You say, of course: that is no offer, but a demand. Good. But perhaps you go on to say: yes, but God then also promises to all who humble themselves and seek their salvation in Christ the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life. And then we agree heartily, but we add to this: then again the Gospel is not general, but particular, for only those to whom God imparts grace to do this humble themselves, and God gives that grace only to His elect. But it is very plain that the Rev. Keegstra now wants to go toward the presentation of a general demand of faith and conversion. And that he may not do. He must not prove that God the Lord comes to all without distinction *with a demand*, but *with an offer*. And in an offer the question is not what we must do, what God demands of us, but very really what God wills and promises to do. In judging the passages which the Rev. Keegstra quotes, we shall proceed then from the question whether the esteemed writer actually proves from Scripture that God well-meaningly offers salvation to all men without distinction. Let us keep this point clearly in view. Neither is the question whether God wills that the

Gospel be preached to all to whom He sends it according to His good pleasure without distinction. No, the question is purely: is that Gospel according to its content a well-meant and general offer on God's part?

But in the third place: if the Gospel according to its content is actually as the Rev. Keegstra here presents it, what an impoverished Gospel that would be! It would only proclaim what *we* must do, not what God Himself will do. How poor! No, we proclaim to all the hearers a far richer Gospel! Surely, we also proclaim to *all* what God wills that we shall do. But along with that we also proclaim to *all* what God the Lord says that He does. We want to have *the complete Gospel* proclaimed to *all*. But that general proclamation is precisely not a general offer of salvation, for God exactly does not will that all men head for head shall be saved, and a preacher may never present it thus. I would almost say that also the Rev. Keegstra will have to let go of a general offer of salvation as soon as he seriously places himself before the task of proclaiming the *entire* Gospel (also including what God says that He will do) to all men.

And now we will discuss the passages which the Rev. Keegstra quotes.

First, however, I must make one more observation from the heart.

It is this. The Rev. Keegstra merely quotes texts which according to his presentation must prove a general and well-meant offer of salvation on God's part. He gives no explanation. He furnishes not a single word of explanation. That is not Reformed. The Synod of 1924 did this too. For this reason it went in the wrong direction with its texts. It is very easy to quote a few texts at random, but this method is not Reformed, or else the texts must be incontestable and incapable of a twofold explanation. And this is not the case with the texts which the Rev. Keegstra cites. In itself it does not prove much for a Reformed man that someone can cite seven passages for a certain view. The question always remains: do those texts actually prove that which they are supposed to prove? Therefore we would also rather see that the Rev. Keegstra would expound the texts which he quoted and would make it clear that they teach a general, well-meant offer of grace on God's part.

But the Rev. Keegstra quotes texts, and we shall make it clear that they do not prove what he thinks that they prove: a general offer of salvation.

At the head of the list stands a text which was also cited by the Synod of 1924, Psalm 81:11-13: "But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels. Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!"

Now in connection with this text we may take note of the fact, first of all, that surely no one can find in it what the Rev. Keegstra claims to find,

namely, a general and well-meant offer of grace and salvation. In the first place, the text is after all not general; and, secondly, it contains no offer. The text is not general: for it speaks of "My people" and of "Israel." And now you may turn and twist as you will, but in that expression "My people" there is always the idea of election. The term always indicates that God's people are His peculiar possession, chosen by Him as His inheritance and by Him delivered and formed, in order that they should show forth His praises and tell His wonders. The subject here therefore is not all men, but God's people. And in that there is precisely nothing general. And of an offer there is no mention. Not at all. Indeed there follow upon this text various promises of God, altogether conditional and dependent upon these verses. The Lord would have subdued their enemies, would have made them rule over those who hated them, would have fed them with honey out of the rock and with the finest of the wheat. But of an offer you do not read so much as a word. How the esteemed editor of *De Wachter* can read a general and well-meant offer of grace into this passage is simply a riddle to me. Read the text in connection with the verses which follow it, and then the following is simply stated here:

1. That God's people would not obey the voice of the Lord and would none of Him.

2. That He therefore gave them over unto their own hearts' lust and let them walk in their own counsels.

3. That this would have been altogether different if God's people had walked in His ways and had hearkened to His voice. Then God would have subdued their enemies before them and fed them with the finest of the wheat and with honey from the rock.

This last you can also state as follows: God promises His salvation to those who walk in His ways and obey His voice. And the latter are never any others than the elect. What you have, therefore, in these verses is nothing else than a pronouncement of curse upon those who do not walk in His ways and a particular promise for those who do walk in His ways. I kindly ask the Rev. Keegstra to draw from these verses anything else than a sure promise of God for God's obedient people.

Now we could rest our case with this, for we actually need do no more than demonstrate that the texts do not teach what the Rev. Keegstra claims that they teach. And that we have done for everyone who is able to judge and is willing to judge without prejudice. The esteemed editor of *De Wachter* does not furnish an explanation, and therefore we would not have to do so either. Nevertheless, we wish to do so in this instance. There are in the text two difficulties which exist not only for me but also for the

Rev. Keegstra. The first problem is expressed in the question: but how can *God's people* be apostate, so that the Lord gives them up unto their own hearts' lust? That is what the text states. And the second problem lies in that complaint of God about their apostasy. The Lord appears to bemoan the fact that His people would none of Him. But how can that be, seeing that He alone is the one who inclines the hearts and is able to draw to Himself with cords of irresistible grace and love that people whom He has given over to their own counsels? Once more I stress that these difficulties exist for Keegstra as well as for me, and that they neither add to nor detract from the fact that a general offer of grace and salvation can never be discovered in this passage. Nevertheless we wish to furnish a solution to these difficulties if such a solution is possible.

Now in order to find such a solution, we must, in the first place, maintain what we have already said: that "My people" always points to God's gracious election and redemption of His own, whereby they are His peculiar possession. In the second place, we must understand that this elect people is in the old dispensation, from the viewpoint of the psalm, Israel as a nation. God had chosen Israel. The holy line ran through Israel. Israel was His people in the unique sense of the word. He loved Israel with an eternal love. He had delivered Israel out of the bondage of Egypt with a mighty arm. Such is the viewpoint of the psalm. It points to that history of a wonderful deliverance of Israel out of Egypt. In the third place, we must keep in view the fact that you will never reach a solution and will never be able to understand the words of this psalm, unless you also keep in mind that the term "My people," also with respect to Israel, did not apply to every Israelite head for head and soul for soul. Not all were Israel who were of Israel. No, the children of the promise were counted for the seed. There was a reprobate shell in Israel as well as an elect kernel. And that reprobate shell was sometimes very great. Not seldom that wicked, carnal Israel held the upper hand and dominated. Nevertheless Israel remains *God's people*. The Lord calls the people as a whole, in the organic sense of the word, His people, according to the remnant of the election of grace. And this remnant was always present and also always constituted the essential element in Israel. Through this it comes about that at some points in Israel's history, it departs from the Lord, does not will Him, wickedly rises up against Him. Here, therefore, you have the answer to the question how the psalm can say that "My people" would none of me. But also then the Lord still loves that people for the elects' sake. When, however, the reprobate dominated, then the entire nation was chastised and punished. When disobedient Israel rises up in rebellion against the Lord in the wilderness, then not only are many

thousands cut down in the wilderness, but then also the elect element suffers, then the whole nation wanders in the wilderness for forty years, then the enemies rule over them, then they suffer hunger and thirst and presently go into captivity. Also the elect suffer. Therefore the Lord can call out complainingly in this psalm: "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries," etc. It is the love to His own that speaks here, nothing else.

If the Rev. Keegstra has objections to this explanation, or if he knows of a better one, let him write. We will gladly take note of it and will also gladly exchange our interpretation for a better one. But let him not say again that here proof is found for a general and well-meant offer of salvation. For that is not mentioned with so much as a word in this passage.

It is no different with the following two passages which are quoted by the Rev. Keegstra and which we can conveniently take together, seeing that they mean the same thing. Isaiah 65:2: "I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts." Jeremiah 7:25, 26: "Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them: Yet they hearkened not-unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers." Also here we observe that these verses are neither general in content nor speak of an offer of grace. We must keep in mind the following:

1. That the Lord also here speaks of Israel, of *His people*, which is elect according to its kernel, but reprobate according to its shell. Only if you keep this in mind can you understand these passages. This is also the basic thought of Romans 9-11. Therefore the apostle can maintain that God has not cast away His people when Israel as a nation is rejected, but that the elect have obtained it, while the rest were hardened. That this organic presentation of Israel, as the people of God with its elect kernel and reprobate shell, is correct as the point of departure in the explanation of Isaiah 65:2 is clear also from the subsequent context. Read verses 8 and 9: "Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it; so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all. And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there."

2. That the Lord spread out His hands to that people, something which, of course, means the same as the sending of the prophets of which the prophet Jeremiah speaks in the passage which was also quoted by the

Rev. Keegstra. In that word of the prophets, sent by the Lord, He spread forth His hands to them, with the divine purpose, of course, of saving the elect. It was never God's purpose to change the reprobate shell into the elect kernel. The elect have obtained it, and the rest were hardened.

3. That the content of the message of the prophets, figuratively presented as the spreading forth of hands, never was a general, well-meant offer of grace to all without distinction, but a calling to walk in the ways of the Lord and, paired with that, a sure promise of salvation and eternal life. Never did the Lord thus spread forth His hands to Israel that He offered grace to all without distinction. On the contrary, He called them to the fear of the Lord, to the keeping of His covenant, to walking in His ways, to conversion, all through their history. And under this spreading forth of His hands to Israel as nation, there was a twofold effect, as always under the preaching of the Word: the elect received of the Lord grace to do what He demanded; He did not offer them grace, but bestowed it upon them; the rest received no grace, were hardened through the operation of God's wrath, and showed more and more that they were wicked and rebellious. Through this the elect finally entered the kingdom of heaven, received the sure promises of God, came to the wedding-feast, while the rest were cast out. This explanation is supported by the entire prophecy of Isaiah, which has as its main content this: that it is God's purpose to save the remnant according to the election of grace, but to harden the rest, also through the means of the prophetic word.

Thus we have in this spreading forth of the hands a calling to conversion which comes to the entire people of God, with a particular bestowal of grace (no offer) to the elect, to heed that call, paired with a manifestation of wickedness and rebellion on the part of the reprobate shell, which brings them to destruction. And let the Rev. Keegstra say what he has against this explanation, and let him give one that is more Scriptural and Reformed.

In this same connection it is probably best that we discuss the parable of the wedding-feast, to which the Rev. Keegstra also calls attention. The esteemed editor of *De Wachter* finds here, too, a general, well-meant offer of grace on God's part. He quotes the following words from this passage: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways. . . . Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they

which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. . . . For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:1-14). About this we remark:

1. That already this last word, "For many are called, but few are chosen," should have been enough for the Rev. Keegstra, to make him see clearly that in this parable there is no reference to a general and well-meant offer of grace and salvation on God's part. There can be no doubt but that the Savior wants us to understand the entire parable precisely in the light of these words. They are an explanation of the parable. If now the main thought of the parable had been that the Lord offers His grace to all without distinction, with the sincere purpose to save them all, then there should have been stated at the end: for grace is offered to many, but few accept it. But precisely that is not stated. What is stated — even somewhat unexpectedly, upon a superficial reading of the parable — is that many are called, but few chosen. This immediately lets us know that God the Lord does not purpose to save all who live under the preaching of the Gospel, but that He gives grace only to the elect to follow up and obey the call to the wedding. You have therefore also in this parable a call to come to the wedding-feast which goes forth to all who are bidden, but a particular bestowal of grace (no offer) upon the elect alone.

2. That the wedding here is the kingdom of heaven, as that is prepared for the Son by the Father, was foreshadowed in the old dispensation in Israel, was realized with the coming, the suffering, and the exaltation of the Savior, and presently shall attain its full realization in the day of Christ.

3. That those who are bidden and who will not come are the Jews. The call of the servants of the King is the call of the prophets, which was discussed already in our treatment of Isaiah 65:2 and Jeremiah 7:25, 26. However, they paid no heed to that call of the prophets, but resisted their word, mistreated them and killed them, and thereby showed that they were not worthy to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Therefore the King in righteous wrath burned their city. Israel as a nation was rejected. Jerusalem was destroyed.

4. That this call of the prophets was never a general offer of grace. The invitation to come to the wedding was no offer of grace, but a call to repentance, to keep God's Covenant, and to walk in His ways. However, seeing that, according to the explanation of the parable by the Savior Himself, not all who were called were elect, they did not all receive grace to heed the call. Israel as a nation manifested itself as completely unworthy to enter into the kingdom of heaven when that kingdom was revealed in Christ Jesus. Therefore Israel was rejected.

5. That the servants then, upon the commandment of the king, turned away from Israel in order to go out into the highways and byways, to call Jew and Gentile, good and evil, to the kingdom of heaven. But also in the new dispensation this calling goes forth always according to the rule that many are called, but few are chosen, and that therefore we must not expect that all who are outwardly called shall also come. The entire parable teaches precisely the opposite of what the Rev. Keegstra wants to draw from it, namely, that grace is precisely not an offer, but a power of God unto salvation, and that where that power of God to salvation does not operate in the calling, hardening sets in, and rejection follows. But the elect receive that power of God unto salvation, and they enter into the wedding of the Kingdom of heaven.

The Rev. Keegstra has two more texts, so that he knows only of six isolated passages to quote in favor of his assertion that the Gospel is a well-meant offer of grace on God's part to all men. For Romans 10:21 is a quotation of Isaiah 65:2, which we already discussed above, and into which we need not enter again. And about the two remaining passages we can be brief.

The first is Ezekiel 18:23: "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways and live?"

About this we wrote already in our previous chapter in connection with a quotation of Calvin. The great reformer pointed out that both parts of this text must be read and understood in connection with one another. And nothing general remains in it. Of an offer of grace there is no mention whatsoever. But besides, if we read the text in its entirety, then it simply teaches that the Lord has pleasure in the life of the sinner who repents. He has pleasure in the life of the sinner even as He has pleasure in his conversion. And since only he who is equipped unto this by almighty grace repents and turns to the Lord, and only the elect receive that grace, also this Scripture passage does not speak of any general grace, nor of any general offer of grace. And it means absolutely nothing for the Rev. Keegstra's assertion.

And the second passage is Acts 13:46: "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

Now it is difficult to see how even the Rev. Keegstra can read in these words a general and well-meant offer of grace and salvation. Certain it is that it is mentioned with not so much as a letter, and that there is nothing in the text that points to it. Paul and Barnabas had preached God's Word,

and that, too, first of all to the Jews. Now it appeared that some of the Jews contradicted and despised that Word of God. And to them Paul and Barnabas are speaking here. They say to them that it has appeared that they judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life. Where is the general offer of grace here? Only in this, that the Word of God was proclaimed also to those who went lost. But the question is not whether the Gospel must also be preached to all who come under it; but the question is whether that Gospel is a well-meant and general offer of salvation. The question is therefore: did Paul and Barnabas preach the Word of God in such a way that it could be called an offer, a general offer of salvation? And to this we can find the answer in the same chapter. What they had preached the previous sabbath is described in verses 16-41. And in brief the content of this preaching is Christ who died and was raised again, and forgiveness of sins through Him. And then you read in verse 39: "And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." There is no offer here, therefore, but a *proclamation* of the forgiveness of sins. And there is nothing general here, but a limitation of justification to everyone who believes. And since only the elect ever believe, therefore you have also here the sure promise of God only for the elect, and not a general and well-meant offer of grace. And the outcome was also entirely in accord with this preaching. For some of the Jews and proselytes believed and followed Paul; but others were filled with envy and contradicted those things which were spoken by Paul and blasphemed, verses 43, 45.

Hence, there is nothing left of the Scriptural proofs of the Rev. Keegstra.

He has not proved that the Gospel is ever a general and well-meant offer of grace and salvation on God's part to all men.

And he is not able to prove it.

He seems to have felt this himself. This appears not only from his introductory remarks, to which we have already called attention, but also from his concluding comment, in which we read the following:

The rationalism of the Arminian may judge that both are impossible; the Reformed man is no rationalist, but as an obedient servant he subjects his thinking and speech to the revealed will of God, and therefore preaches the glad tidings of salvation in Christ to all his hearers. . . ."

As if that were the issue!

As if Keegstra had proposed to prove that the glad tidings of salvation must be proclaimed to all the hearers without distinction!

The reader should not be misled by such remarks.

Repeatedly the Rev. Keegstra departs from his subject. He leaves the

impression that there are also men who believe that the Gospel must not be preached to all the hearers, but only to the elect. And as often as he does this, he is shooting at a straw man.

But let him prove from Scripture that the Gospel which must be preached to all the hearers is according to its content a general and well-meant offer of grace and salvation. That he has not done.

And once more: that he cannot do! □

Book Reviews

Angels, Elect & Evil, by C. Fred Dickason, Chicago, Moody Press Publishers, 1975, 238 pages (paper). [Reviewed by Rev. B. Woudenberg.]

There is something most fascinating about angels. We know that they exist; the Bible makes that clear. They are there, both good angels and bad, somehow affecting our lives; but just exactly what they are like and how they interact with our lives, we never really understand.

And that is what this book is about; it treats nearly every aspect of the angelic hosts. Clearly the author considers the Bible to be authoritative and inerrant, as to this subject as well; and there are few, if any, texts about angels or demons which are not woven into the fabric of this work. Its organization is good; in fact, the whole book constitutes, in effect, an extended outline of Bible teaching regarding both holy and fallen angels. Working methodically through every facet of the subject,

the first half of the book deals with the holy angels — their existence, origin, nature, position, etc. — and the second half does much the same with Satan and his demons, until the field is fully covered in an orderly and systematic way.

And, as this is done, there come up some striking insights, like that dealing with the images of cherubim which stood above the ark of the covenant in the tabernacle: "Thus the cherubim, proclaimers of God's holiness, would symbolically look down and see the sprinkled blood on the mercy seat covering the sins of the people as symbolized by the three items under the lid of the ark. All this God-designed imagery pointed forward to Christ, who would shed His blood not just to cover sins but to put them away by the sacrifice of Himself. . . (p. 62)." With a few quick strokes the centrality of Christ is brought out in the Old Testament symbolism of type and shadow; and attention is focused on the salvation of God's people in a most fitting way.

This is, perhaps, more surprising since Dr. Dickason received his degree from Dallas Theological Seminary — a center of Dispensational thinking where Old Testament Gospel is not always so properly presented — and he teaches, or taught, at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago — a center of modern, evangelical thought. It is the kind of background from which one might expect primarily Arminian-Dispensational views; and yet this is not entirely true.

Now there is no question that Dr. Dickason is a Pre-millennialist. He lays out in brief outline the whole plan of chiliastic anticipation in his chapter on *Development and Destiny of Angels* (pp. 104-106); and there are repeated references to "the Tribulation" and the like all through the book. Accordingly, his whole concept of such things as the binding of Satan in Revelation 20, and thus, the nature of Satan's present function in the world, is far from what we believe; and the implications of this carry on through the structure of the whole.

Nevertheless, as far as the crass side of Dispensationalism is concerned, the outright Scofield Bible kind typical of Dallas Seminary, it is not openly there. In fact, some of the more bizarre of its views — such as, an earth populated with angelic beings prior to the creation of Genesis 1:3ff., and the suggestion that Genesis 6:2 refers to a co-habitation of angelic spirits

with human women — are dismissed rather curtly (pp. 156-158) — at least at first thought.

More surprising, however, is the lack of openly Arminian thoughts. We are, of course, particularly sensitive here and tend to look for them, especially in a book coming from Moody Press; but they are not as such there, even at those points where they are most likely to appear. For example, one would expect to find when coming to the election of angels some suggestion of an election based on foreseen obedience; but instead he defers to a quotation from Louis Berkhof: "The good angels... evidently received, in addition to the grace with which all angels were endowed, and which was sufficient to enable them to retain their position, a special grace of perseverance, by which they were confirmed in their position. . ." (p. 40 taken from *Berkhof's Systematic Theology*, p. 145). We might not appreciate the allusion to Common Grace; but what we have here is not an Arminian view of election based on foresight nonetheless.

Even more impressive than this, however, is Dickason's treatment of the origin of sin as it took place in the original fall of Satan. Not only does he deal with the subject, in a section entitled *The Moral Problem in the Fall of Angels*, but he does so in light of the holiness and sovereignty of God. So he writes: "1. *The Character of God.* We

must remember that the same Bible that records the inception and continued existence of Evil, also presents God as One who is holy. . . . He could not and did not promote or perpetrate the sin [Ps. 5:4; Jas. 1:13, 15]" (p. 136). The warning here is appropriate, one which every responsible theologian must make. Any suggestion that God might be the Author of sin must be avoided, as even the Canons take care to note, lest the holiness of God should be compromised.

But Dickason doesn't stop there; he goes on to deal with the hard problem, the sovereignty of God regarding sin. And so he continues: "2/ *The control of God*. At the same time, the Bible presents God as both omnipotent and sovereign. He is in control of all things, and He has no potential successful rival [Is. 41:4; 43:13; 45:5; 46:6-11; Eph. 1:11; Rev. 4:11]. Evil did not rise up apart from His control, otherwise He would no longer be God" (p. 136). The argument laid out here is well put. His very choice of texts is worthy of note; and one has to appreciate it when he goes on to observe, "Evil did not rise up apart from His control." The thought is clearly Biblical; but when many with credentials far more Reformed than Dickason's avoid making it, one can admire the fact that he does. And he does not stop with that either; he goes on: "3. *The choice of*

God. It seems best to say that God, for good reasons, allowed evil to come into being. Not all these reasons are evident, but a few are genuinely probable. In any case, we must confess that God is the Author of a plan, a perfect plan, that included allowing His creatures to sin [Is. 45:7; Acts 15:16]" (p. 136). What we have here is a forthright recognition of the precedent purpose of God behind all things, and thus also behind the very first and original fall into sin. It is not exactly a Supralapsarian statement as such, for it does not at this point bring election in; but it allows for it, and comes very close just the same. We might flinch a bit at his use of the words "allowed" and "allowing"; but then we should also remember that even such bulwarks of Supralapsarianism as Calvin and Beza, while warning against the idea of bare permission, were careful to recognize that the language of permission cannot always be avoided if the holiness of God is to be properly protected. But the important thing is that Dr. Dickason acknowledges that in the final instance Satan's fall was God's choice even before it was Satan's; and that is worthy of recognition. In fact, it stands out in contrast to a quote he made earlier from Louis Berkhof (in a footnote relating to that matter of the election of angels) in which Berkhof cagily sidesteps this very issue: "There has been a great deal of useless

speculation about the time and character of the fall of angels. Protestant theology, however, was generally satisfied with the knowledge that the good angels retained their original state, were confirmed in their position, and are now incapable of sinning. . . ." (p. 40; & Berkhof, p. 145). It is the same basic question we have just seen Dickason consider; but Berkhof passes it by with nothing but a put-down for those who give it thought, as many of the great Reformed theologians often have, and as most thinking Christians in one way or other do. In fact, even when Berkhof in his *Systematic Theology* comes to the subject of *The Origin of Sin* [pp. 219-222], he is by no means as forthright as is Dr. Dickason here. He may not treat the matter completely, but what he does say is well put.

And yet, when everything is said and done, this book as a whole falls short. It deals with much which the Scriptures teach; but it lacks the theological continuity and depth needed to mold it into a meaningful whole.

An interesting example of this comes when Dickason deals with angels and the image of God. His argument is simple: the image of God consists of personality and holiness; angels have personality and holiness; and, therefore, angels were created in the image of God [p. 32]. The logic is simple and direct, and the point itself is in-

terestingly fresh, but something doesn't quite click. Angels in Scripture are servants and never more [Heb. 1:14] (perhaps the very problem over which Satan was offended and rebelled); but man was chosen — being inferior in nature [Ps. 8:4-6], unto a unique covenant relationship for which he was made in the image of God. In this the angels do not share.

And that is, perhaps, the weak point of this book. Dickason, living and working in a Dispensational environment as he does, lacks the covenantal viewpoint needed to unify any true theological work. This comes out especially in the last half of the book as it deals with Satan and his hosts. It wavers, becomes confused — not in structure, but in thought — and finally falls apart. It doesn't see the covenant; and so it can not grasp the Antithesis either, without which the place of devils cannot be understood.

The author's approach continues much as he did in his treatment of the angels. Methodically he gathers the various elements of Scripture which speak of demons and places them each in their place. With his high regard for the literal meaning of the Biblical text, many things are set forth which are true and worthwhile, regarding Satan, his person, his rank, position and influence; and then the other demons, their natures, presence, place and works. But, when it

comes to putting them into the framework of real life, things begin to reel. Ambivalence and uncertainty set in. Having first rejected, as we have noticed, the possibility of angels cohabitating with humans [pp. 156-158], he goes on to give this a second thought and wonders if it might have been after all [p. 164]; and finally, in an appendix at the end, gives a list of arguments as to why it maybe was [pp. 222-225]. In fact, he begins to ascribe to demons a whole roster of supernatural powers [pp. 164-167]. So also, at one point, he can bring out the deceptiveness of the witch of Endor and the real limits of her power [p. 199], but then he goes on to give credence to such bizarre views as Klas Koch's theory that people have mental problems because their parents or ancestors dabbled in the occult [p. 190]; and Merrill Unger's, that magical powers and curses cling to objects and books which have been used in occult rites, and for that reason must be destroyed [p. 207]. Dickason evidently doesn't understand the working of Satan, and does not know when to say yes or no to the strange claims of those who like to dabble around the mystical fringes of the occult.

* * * * *

Many years ago in the Netherlands, during the late 17th century, there was a certain Ds. Bakker from Groningen who, after filling a

charge in Friesland for a time, moved on to Amsterdam. Everywhere he went, it seemed, he came across certain unhealthy preoccupations with witchcraft, magic, and varieties of superstitious activity. He spent considerable time investigating them and discovered that for the most part they were based on imagination, illusion, and sham; but, at the same time, they spoke to the gullibility of people who were fascinated with a supposed world of spirits and supernatural powers. The fact was that those who did not believe in such things were not troubled by them, while those who did were driven spiritually by them. Thus he finally wrote a book on witchcraft in which he laid down the following principle: "Mind cannot act upon matter unless these substances are suited as soul and body are in man; therefore no separate spirit, either good or evil, can act upon mankind. Such acting is miraculous, and miracles can be performed by God alone.* For many it seemed well put; but for others it was not. There were many within the Christian community who were infatuated with the esoteric and vehemently opposed any effort to expose it as a fraud. In fact, there were elements of Bakker's argument

* Rev. Maurice G. Hansen, *The Reformed Church in the Netherlands*, New York, p. 235.

which were not sound; but his point was well taken nonetheless.

Satan and his demons are creatures and not gods; and, being spiritual beings, their natural powers are not in the material world. This world belongs to God who made it, and to man who was given that unique interface of body and soul which alone can interact upon it. But Satan wants to be "as god"; and, having failed his direct attack in heaven, he now tries to work his plan through the only approach he has, deceiving the souls of men. Lies and deceit are his proper realm (John 8:44; Rev. 12:9). If he can convince man to leave God's word and listen to him, man becomes his servant; and, if he can convince men that he has supernatural powers, they will worship him as well. It doesn't matter if the power is real, whether sleight of hand or elaborate sham; as long as man believes it, Satan holds him in his hand. And so all through the ages there have been countless throngs of people who have given themselves to him, willing to develop and use those ruses which convince the world that Satan's powers are real.

And we are now in a day when interest in the occult is rising again. Through the years Satan has learned a lot in a great many areas; but he does not confine himself to just one. There are times when he uses the esoteric; but there are times when he simply uses man's

desire for excitement and carnal satisfaction, as in the days of Noah (Matt. 24:38); there are times when he uses the cruelty of military power, times when he uses philosophy, human learning, science, and psychology. Each he masters and uses, passing from one to the other, and back again. And now, as the world hastens on toward its end, Satan and his hosts have pulled out all the stops; and we meet the lies of Satan wherever we turn. And so it is important that we learn to recognize and understand his marks.

In the first place, we should note that all through Scripture Satan's claimed powers were not real, they were built upon deceit. Although there were times when God has allowed him to have his way with natural phenomena so that what he wanted came to pass, as with Job (Job 1 & 2), when it came to pass it was acknowledged as God's power and not his, as Job said, Job 1:21, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. . . ." And, as also Dickason points out [p. 199], when the witch of Endor, who had spent her life in supposed communication with the grave, finally saw a true spirit rising from the earth, she was terrified. Regardless of what her claims had been, this was something she had never seen before. And so when Deuteronomy 18:9-22 warns against enchantments, the mark by which they are to be known is in

the fact that their claims never come to pass (vs. 22). Satan is always only the deceiver, and nothing else.

Secondly, we should note from the Bible, that wherever the battle with Satan is spoken of, it is a battle of words for truth and not a battle of mystical powers. This was true already in the garden (Gen. 3:1-5). This is the real message of the book of Job; although at the beginning God allowed Satan to set the scene, the real battle was an attack of words on the faith of Job by his three "friends." And so it was with the struggle over Joshua in Zechariah 3, and over the body of Moses in Jude:9. Jesus' confrontation with Satan was over the meaning of Scripture (Matthew 3); and the great war in heaven recorded in Revelation 12 was won, not with physical weapons to be sure, or with magical rites, but with the power of the Gospel, as Satan and his host were overcome by the truth of the atoning blood. The battle with Satan is a battle for the Gospel and nothing else.

What it finally comes down to is a matter of faith and belief. Those who believe in Satan's power are subject to its fears; and many times their own natures will produce actions and illusions which seem to prove the demonic claims. It may be those of the occult; but it may be as well the claims of carnal pleasure, of the lust for

power, of "science" or of false doctrine. The mere fact that people believe Satan's lies means that they become subject to his power. And the only answer to all of these is simply the word of God. Those who believe in the sovereignty of God are free from Satanic powers.

* * * * *

But that is where this book falls short. It does not understand the real binding of Satan as it exists in this present age (Rev. 20 and Acts 26:15-18); and, accordingly, it does not understand the nature of what Satan does do, and what he can not. And so it does not understand the proper work of the elect angels either. Theirs is not to enact magical counter-rites against Satan (Jude:9), nor is it to perform certain supernatural feats which belong only to God. They are messengers, bringing prayers to God's throne; and returning with His word (Rev. 2 & 3), to bring the church into covenant union with her God (Gen. 28:12; John 1:51). Then Satan flees (Jas. 4:7) and the angels keep their special charges (Matt. 18:10) safe within this world (Ps. 91:11, 12), as Jesus said, John 8:32, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." ■■

Building a Christian World View, Volume 1 (*God, Man, and Knowledge*), W. Andrew Hoffecker, editor; Gary Scott Smith, associate

editor. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1986. pp. iii-340. (cloth). [Reviewed by Prof. David J. Engelsma.]

An ambitious, intriguing, and eminently worthwhile endeavor is begun with this book. In the words of the "Epilogue," the book is a "historical survey and biblical evaluation of Western world views" (p. 319). It gives a "review of the intellectual legacy of Western civilization" (p. 321). In the "Preface," the editor states the purpose of the book to be the enabling of the reader both to examine his own and others' "basic assumptions that form what we call a 'world view'" (p. ix) and "to help students formulate their own presuppositions about life" (p. x).

Treating man's views of God, of man, and of knowledge (theology, anthropology, and epistemology), the authors set forth, in a thorough and lucid manner, the world views of Scripture, of the Greeks, of the medieval Church, of the Reformation, of the Renaissance, and of contemporary humanism, having adopted the historical approach to the subject. The eight contributors, most of whom are professors at Grove City College, Grove City, Pennsylvania, make no (foolish) claim to neutrality in analyzing the various world views. All are "committed to the biblical world view. . . . More specifically, we

describe a Reformed and evangelical exposition of the biblical world view. . ." (pp. xi, xii). Throughout, they press the claims of this world view, and critique the others in light of it.

The Reformed presuppositions, beliefs, and commitment of the authors are sound, indeed surprisingly and refreshingly so. This is true of the doctrine of Scripture espoused and defended in the book. W. Andrew Hoffecker and G.K. Beale contend for verbal inspiration: ". . . the Holy Spirit worked in the hearts and minds of the authors, using their natural talents, styles, vocabularies, cultural milieu, and thought patterns to guide them even to the choice of words that express inerrantly His revelations of truth, history, holiness, and love. Therefore, biblical inspiration should be understood in two ways. First, because the Bible is *verbally* inspired, what God wanted to say is found in its pages exactly in the words He chose to say it. Second, because *all its parts* without exception are inspired, the Bible in its entirety is God's Word" (p. 209). In this connection, they criticize the influential view of Karl Barth that inspiration applies, not to the very words of the Bible themselves, but to the encounter that men can have with God through the (fallible) words of Scripture. They also reject the view that makes headway in Reformed circles that limits inspiration to the

message of salvation found in Scripture, in distinction from those passages of the Bible that are said not to bear on salvation and that are supposed to be unimportant – the “husk-kernel” notion: “Inspiration is not considered to extend to the Scripture’s apparently nondoctrinal or historical sections. Since the divine purpose of each biblical book is to communicate truths about salvation, only the materials having that purpose were inerrantly or infallibly inspired. Other materials, which are not inspired and may contain errors, are merely the ‘husk’ within which is found the ‘kernel’ of saving truth” (p. 210). This is the doctrine of Scripture underlying Howard VanTill’s recent denial of the account of creation in Genesis 1 and 2 in his *The Fourth Day*, although he uses the terms, “packaging-content.” Hoffecker and Beale expose this view as erroneous simply by noting that Scripture itself “never limit(s) inspiration only to certain parts of the Bible,” but explicitly extends inspiration to “every part of Scripture.” They appeal to II Timothy 3:16 in proof of this contention. They conclude: “. . . if we assume that God speaks only truth and that Scripture declares itself to be the written Word of God, then what the whole of Scripture says must be true because it is equivalent to God’s speaking. Thus, the writing of the Bible was an act of both

inspiration and revelation so that mankind throughout history would have a reliable, authoritative, infallible record of God’s self-revelation” (p. 210). As the authors themselves are at pains to point out, this doctrine of Scripture is fundamental to the right world view. Only one who receives Scripture as the inspired Word of God will, and can, know God, man, and his own knowing, as Scripture reveals them; and only he is able to judge the other world views that clamor for acceptance, or subtly insinuate themselves into men’s lives, as the case may be.

Equally heartening is the writers’ presentation of the content of Scripture. For them, the covenant of God with His people is central: “. . . the covenant spoken of in the Bible provides the structural unity that integrates all of God’s dealings with man. Indeed, the Bible repeatedly testifies to the centrality of the covenant” (p. 22). Later, we are told that “the whole Bible is about a covenant that will redeem man from sin, and the New Testament describes how the coming of Christ fulfills this promised covenantal redemption” (p. 49). This covenant is described as “a binding relationship between God and man that has been sovereignly initiated and administered by God” (p. 22). Such a presentation of the covenant contrasts noticeably with the view that prevails among evangelicals, and even among the

Reformed and Presbyterians, that the covenant is a dead contract, mutually hammered out by God and men and dependent upon conditions that both of them fulfill. Since this view of the covenant of grace invariably stems from the conception of God's covenant with Adam in Paradise as a covenant of works, one cannot but wonder whether the authors of *Building a Christian World View* have deliberately avoided calling God's covenant with Adam "the covenant of works" in favor of "the covenant of creation," as, in fact, they do. If so, they ought to have made this explicit, and argued their reasons for doing so, so that they might help to drive the unhappy, if not impious, description of the covenant with Adam as a "covenant of works" from the evangelical field. "Covenant of creation" is superb!

There is, as well, a sound explanation and firm defense of the truth of God's sovereignty, with the concomitant dependency of man — the doctrine known as "Calvinism." This comes out especially in the treatment of Calvin's theology (pp. 127ff.). Indeed, the chapter by W. Andrew Hofferker, "Biblical Roots Rediscovered: The Reformation," is one of the outstanding sections of the book. The fundamental principle of Calvin's theology is the sovereignty and majesty of God. This principle shapes every doc-

trine. Especially the providence of God expresses Divine sovereignty. But the sovereignty of God is revealed also in the salvation of sinners. Fallen man is guilty and depraved in Adam, the "federal representative for all mankind." His depravity is total. Specifically, his will is enslaved. The sinner must be renewed by the Holy Spirit. The basis for this in every case is Christ's death for that sinner, which death, according to Hofferker, was "the penalty for sin on Calvary in order to rescue those whom God freely chooses to be saved" (p. 131). The fountain of all this salvation is God's election of some men in eternity. This election is accompanied by God's rejection of others. In this connection, Hofferker refers to Arminianism. He points out that Arminius "proposed an alternative to the view of predestination shared by Augustine, Luther, and Calvin." He charges that Arminianism teaches that salvation is "a cooperative effort between man and God. . . ." He notes the strong influence of Arminianism on Protestantism, particularly evangelicalism, both in Europe and in North America (p. 134).

This, according to *Building a Christian World View*, is the theology of the Reformation. This is the message of Scripture. This is essential to the Biblical world view. It is cause for rejoicing that such a book is published.

But it is by no means the case that the only merit of the book is its exposition and defense of the faith of Scripture and the Reformation. For me, the chief benefit is its clear presentation and analysis of the world views of the ancient Greeks and of contemporary Western society, beginning with the Renaissance, continuing with the Enlightenment, and culminating in present-day naturalistic humanism, as well as its comparison of these world views with that of the Bible. Basic to all the non-biblical world views is their insistence upon the autonomy of man — man is the measure of all things. Because man is sovereign, he gains knowledge by and for himself, without any dependency upon a sovereign God or Divine revelation. For some, this is done by reason alone (rationalism); for others, this is done by the senses (empiricism). The German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, attempting to reconcile rationalism and empiricism, made man's own mind "the center and source of all valid knowledge" (p. 281). Knowledge of God and of heavenly things is an utter impossibility. What god does exist is merely the creation of man's own moral sense. Legend has it, although the book does not mention this, that, when Kant's old servant wept because Kant had "taken away my God" (in Kant's book, *Critique of Pure Reason*), the philosopher consoled him by assuring him that he would again

create god in a following book (*Critique of Practical Reason*). The philosophy of Kant spawned three, significant, contemporary world views: positivism; existentialism; and pragmatism. All agree that man is autonomous, self-sufficient, and self-perfectible.

The contributors to *Building a Christian World View* are sharply critical of all attempts to unite the Biblical world view with the non-biblical world views (synthesis), as this was done, e.g., by the Roman Catholic theologian, Thomas Aquinas: "...synthetic thinking alters the distinctive biblical perspectives on God and man" (p. 110). They contend for the antithesis between radically different viewpoints (p. 5; cf. also pp. 73ff.). Because, in the words of Charles S. MacKenzie, they are convinced that "the crisis of our times is in large measure an epistemological one" (p. 315), they call confessing Christians to humble dependency upon God's revelation, in the activity of knowing. This consists of receiving Holy Scripture in a true faith and of viewing creation in the light of the revelation of Scripture. Augustine's famed dictum is underscored, "I believe, so that I may understand." Only in this way is certainty possible for men. All other epistemologies end in skepticism.

Not only ministers, school-teachers, and especially college students, but also all thinking

church members will profit from careful reading of this book. A Christian world view is the concern of us all; none, in fact, is without a world view. All should know the thought that governs our present, man-centered world, and the development of that thought in history. Nor should the church member shy from the book because of its use of big, strange words — “epistemology”; “pragmatism”; “existentialism.” It is good to learn new words. Besides, the strange words are always explained, usually very simply. Every chapter concludes with a “Summary” that briefly goes over the main thoughts of the chapter. Those interested in pursuing the subjects treated in a chapter are helped by a list of works at the end of each chapter, “for further reading.”

Criticism, however, should be raised against Hoffecker’s allegation that the Nicene Creed betrays the influence of Greek philosophy in its (crucially important) teaching that Jesus is of one substance with the Father (pp. 78ff.). Hoffecker writes that, “by employing the language of the ‘substance’ (*ousios*) of God,” the Creed “ventured beyond Scripture” (p. 78). Such is the seriousness of this that “the Nicene teaching prepared the way for the subsequent synthesis of Greek and Christian thought in the Middle Ages” (p. 79). “The Nicene formulation may be seen as the infant stage of a growing synthesis

of Greek and Christian ideas” (p. 97). Although Hoffecker himself holds the doctrine of the Trinity as confessed by Nicea, his criticism of the Nicene Creed plays into the hands of the theologians who are attacking the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity by charging that the Trinitarian and Christological creeds reflect Greek philosophy rather than the faith of Scripture — exactly the charge made against the Nicene Creed by Hoffecker (cf. Klaas Runia’s *The Present-Day Christological Debate*). Although the term, “substance,” is not a Biblical word, it conveys a Biblical reality, that expressed by Jesus Himself in John 10:30: “I and my Father are one.” The Church is not bound to the language of Scripture in confessing her faith concerning the doctrine of Scripture; nor is her use of language other than that of Scripture evidence that the Church is venturing beyond Scripture. Although the Church confesses her faith by the word, “Trinity,” a word not found in Scripture, she yet is thoroughly Biblical, inasmuch as the truth of the Trinity is Scripture’s teaching. Specifically, the category of “substance,” or “being,” is a Biblical category, and one of great importance for asserting the oneness of Jesus and God. Contrary to Hoffecker’s assertion, the New Testament writers are not content only to affirm Jesus’ Deity “in terms of all

that He, like His Father, could *do*" (p. 78). They also affirm Jesus' Deity in terms of who He is: "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). The Bible teaches *homoousious*; and the fathers at Nicæa learned *homoousios* from the Bible.

Another flaw in the book is Charles S. MacKenzie's waffling on the Augustinian doctrine of the sovereignty of God in predestination. On the one hand, MacKenzie acknowledges that Augustine taught that fallen men are completely dependent upon "the free gift of the sovereign grace of God" and that this sovereign grace "is given to those chosen (predestined) by God. God predestinates whom He wills 'to punishment and to salvation'" (p. 91). In this connection, MacKenzie criticizes both Pelagianism ("Pelagius taught... that individuals can freely choose to accept or reject God's gracious offer of salvation," p. 93) and semi-Pelagianism ("... natural man... remains able to cooperate with God in redemption," pp. 93, 94). On the other hand, he responds to the critics of Augustine's teaching of Divine sovereignty by basing predestination upon foreknowledge: predestination "is based on His foreknowledge (knowledge in advance) of man's rebellion. God... knows all things and plans and acts accordingly" (pp. 94, 95). "God knows in advance who will freely accept His grace. Those

people receive special influences to bring them to salvation" (p. 89). Foreknowledge for Augustine, as for Calvin, was not knowledge in advance what men would do, but "*love* in advance," eternal, personal love for certain, specific, unlovely, and totally unworthy men and women, which love then chose them (as love does), so that they would be holy. To base predestination upon "knowledge in advance" is quite un-Augustinian, is, in fact, the Arminian variant of semi-Pelagianism.

Also to be faulted is the associate editor's appeal to "common grace" to ground a very significant oneness of Christians and humanists and to justify their cooperation in building "a better tomorrow." Gary Scott Smith writes that "because Christians and humanists share some common concerns and values, they can work together on many good causes" (p. 177). The reason for this unity, and the basis of this cooperation, is common grace: "Humanists agree with so many biblical values because of common grace. Since the fall, God has used His common grace to restrain sin and to promote civilization..." (p. 178). Coming as it does towards the end of a chapter that exposes the virulent anti-christianity of humanism, Smith's cheery call for cooperation with the humanists, and gratuitous assumption of a grace of God working in them, strikes one as

absurd. How was the Reformed Christian in England to cooperate with the humanist, Bertrand Russell, for a "better tomorrow"? By advocating free love? By marching in the streets under Russell's banner, "Better Red than dead"? Surely, this assertion of real oneness with naturalistic humanists contradicts the fundamental theme of the book that the Christian world view is in conflict with that of the humanists, radically in conflict with the humanist world view. Surely, the notion that the humanists' mouthing of love for the neighbor, of respect for property, of concern for truth, and of interest in peace and justice indicates a real oneness with Christians, who also speak of love for the neighbor and all the rest, forgets the book's basic insistence upon the necessity of relating every fact to God. Does a humanist love his neighbor, if he does not love him for the sake of the God and Father of Jesus Christ? Does a humanist respect the neighbor's property, if he does not regard that property as given to the neighbor by the Creator of all things? Does a humanist care about justice, if he repudiates the righteousness of God revealed in Holy Scripture? The value of *Building a Christian World View* is preserved by the fact that "common grace" is not given any significant place in the Christian world view by the book as a whole.

The challenge to the Christian reader is both to know clearly his Biblical world view and consistently to live that world view. Since "world views are not merely a private matter; they are expressed by social groups in political and economic programs, artistic and literary works, and institutions such as the family and education. People pattern their governments, print and distribute money, regulate marriage and divorce, and send their children to college on the basis of their world views," the authors promise a second volume: "We will examine social structures in greater detail in the second volume of our study, which focuses on cosmology, society, and ethics" (p. 321). We look forward to Volume 2. ■■

Has the Church Misread the Bible?

The history of interpretation in the light of current issues, Moises Silva; Zondervan Publishing House, 1987. 136pp., no price listed (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.]

This book is the first in a series under the general title: "Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation." The series is edited by the author of this volume and "seeks to identify and work toward a clarification of the basic problems of interpretation that affect our reading of the Bible today. This unique series covers the field of

general hermeneutics in a comprehensive and systematic fashion."

As the sub-title indicates, this introductory volume is intended to introduce the series by a review of the history of Biblical interpretation; yet it is not really a history in the sense in which one usually thinks of history, but is more a review of certain key views in interpretation that have appeared throughout history. The purpose is to introduce the main problems of hermeneutics with which the whole series will deal.

The author claims that he (and authors of the volumes that are to follow) are all committed to the divine inspiration of Scripture in the sense of its complete inerrancy in the original manuscripts. He stresses this in more than one place and seems intent on persuading his readers that this is indeed true.

The book is, however, troubling in more than one respect. It is, I am convinced, must reading for all those who are interested in the current debate concerning the inspiration and authority of Scripture. And this issue is the real issue underlying many other controversies in the modern church world: it is the real issue beneath the debate over evolutionism vs. the doctrine of creation; it is the basic issue in the whole struggle over the right of women to hold ecclesiastical office; it is the fundamental question in the church's stand on such questions as homosexuality,

divorce and remarriage, etc.

The difficulty is that there is an increasingly large number of Bible scholars, many of whom are within conservative Reformed and Presbyterian Churches, who teach in some of the conservative colleges and Seminaries in this land and abroad, who vehemently claim to hold to the absolute inerrancy of Scripture, and who yet embrace redaction criticism, literary and historical criticism, or whatever the latest theory of interpretation may be. And there are many (including myself) who reject redaction criticism as well as literary-historical criticism and who insist that these methods of interpretation deny the divine and inerrant inspiration of Scripture.

So what is the problem? Are these men laboring under a false conception of what divine inspiration is? Are they deceiving themselves and others, claiming to believe in a doctrine while in fact denying it? Or are they perhaps correct, so that the answer to the title of Dr. Silva's book has to be answered in the affirmative: "Yes, the church has misread the Bible all these years?"

It is becoming increasingly clear to me that if we are to defend the truth of Scripture's inspiration and inerrancy, we are going to have to come to grips with these problems and answer them. And this book (and the series as a whole) is an excellent place to begin. The book

is extremely clear and well-written, without all the jargon that most books of this type use. It can be understood by almost anyone who takes the time to study it a bit — it is not written exclusively for ministers and seminary students. It defines the issues sharply and clearly and without equivocation. The issues are all there: what is one going to say about them?

It is, of course, impossible in the course of this review to deal in detail with the whole problem. In fact, that would not even be wise since it is not always apparent in what direction either Dr. Silva or following writers intend to go on crucial questions. Dr. Silva repeatedly introduces questions and leaves them hanging, all the while assuring his readers that they will be treated in detail in future books of the series.

But there are some preliminary observations which, I think, ought to be made — observations which are of no little importance in connection with this whole question.

Before we get into this matter, however, it might be well to spell out the problems as Dr. Silva sees them. He has a summary of them on page 37 of the book, which we quote:

"The Bible is divine, yet it has come to us in human form.

"The commands of God are absolute, yet the historical context of the writings appears to relativize certain elements.

"The divine message must be clear, yet many passages seem ambiguous.

"We are dependent only on the Spirit for instruction, yet scholarship is surely necessary.

"The Scriptures seem to presuppose a literal and historical reading, yet we are also confronted by the figurative and nonhistorical (e.g., the parables).

"Proper interpretation requires the interpreter's personal freedom, yet some degree of external, corporate authority appears imperative.

"The objectivity of the biblical message is essential, yet our presuppositions seem to inject a degree of subjectivity into the interpretive process."

In the course of the book these questions are dealt with in detail and some related questions are introduced. For example, in Chapter 3, where the author deals with the problem of the literal vs. the figurative interpretation of Scripture, he points out many difficulties which arise in connection with this problem, also as far as the debate over millennial views is concerned. In connection with the doctrine of Scripture's clarity, he talks of whether or not Scripture has just one, simple, natural, meaning or whether it has deeper meanings as well in some places. In Chapter V he discusses the question of "cultural contextualization" and says that the only

question with which we deal is how far to carry it, for even a translation is a cultural contextualization. How can a passage understood in its own cultural context and applicable to situations within that context, be understood in our context and culture and be applicable to our times? Is there not, Silva asks, evidence that the New Testament writers contextualized the Old Testament in their use of it?

The key point in all the debate is the question of whether Scripture has a human as well as a divine factor. This is assumed by the author, as it is assumed by almost all those who deal with questions of Biblical interpretation. Silva makes much of this, and even makes a point or two worth repeating. He argues that there is an analogy between the incarnation of Christ and the inScripturation of God's Word. Just as Christ has a divine and a human nature, so Scripture has a divine and a human element. Just as the human nature of Christ is sinless, so is Scripture, though a human book, without error. And further parts of the analogy can be drawn out. Silva is not the first to use this; it appears in Bavinck's *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, and is criticized by G.K. Berkouwer in his book on Scripture. Nevertheless, it has become a rather popular analogy, although I personally have some reservations about it. However that may be,

Silva points out rather pointedly that those who hold to a "low" view of Scripture criticize those who hold to a high view as being "Docetic," i.e., denying the human element just as the "Docetists" denied Christ's human nature. Silva shoots back at them that certainly the charge of Arianism can be levelled against them because they deny the divine element just as Arius denied the divinity of Christ. It is a point well taken.

Nevertheless, one keeps getting the feeling that Silva looks at the whole problem of the difference between the "lows" and the "highs" as being one of degree. Everyone, Silva seems to maintain, agrees with redaction criticism, literal criticism, historical criticism, or whatever. The question is: how far are you going to carry it? The "lows" carry it way too far and lose the divine; the "highs" make use of it only in a very limited way.

I am extremely uncomfortable with that kind of analysis. I for one do not believe for a moment that the difference between those who receive the Bible as the Word of God in all its parts, and those who challenge it in many respects is only a difference of degree. I insist that it is a difference of fundamental viewpoint. The critics are wrong, dead wrong — whether they be redaction critics, historical critics, or any other kind of critic.

The whole problem lies in that question of the human and the

divine factor in Scripture. There is, of course, no question about it that God used men as instruments to write His Scriptures. Nor is there any question about it that the individual characteristics and personality traits, as well as the individual cultural milieus of these men were preserved in the writings of Scripture. No one, so far as I know, has ever denied these truths.

But Scripture is part of God's work of salvation in Jesus Christ. It belongs to the history of salvation and thus belongs to the miraculous work of God which He performs sovereignly through grace. It would be better, I think, to compare the writing of Scripture with the work of the salvation of the Church. Just as salvation is the work of grace alone without human works, so is also the writing of Scripture the work of grace alone without human works. Just as the individual sinner is saved without his character and personality being destroyed or submerged, so also God used men to write the Scriptures without destroying their individuality. Just as the sinner is saved in the whole context of the time and place in which God has placed him, so is Scripture written through men in their own time and place which God has determined for them. Arminianism wishes to preserve a human element in the work of salvation; so a human element is introduced into the writing of Scripture. But Scrip-

ture says that salvation is all of grace. So also is Scripture all of grace. And so God is the sole Author of salvation and of Scripture. That needs to be emphasized first of all.

Of course God used men to write Scripture; but this must never be interpreted apart from God's sovereign predestination and providence. God so controlled the whole process of writing Scripture that what emerged was God's Word exclusively.

The method of Biblical interpretation which the Church of Christ has almost throughout her entire history adopted is the so-called grammatico-historical method. While during the Middle Ages this method came into disrepute, nevertheless, in times of spiritual strength in the Church, this method was followed. This method says two things about Biblical interpretation: 1) That Scripture must be interpreted according to the ordinary rules of grammar and syntax of the language in which Scripture was originally written (Hebrew and Greek). 2) That Scripture must be interpreted in its historical context. For example, the epistle to the Galatians must be interpreted in the context of the fact that Paul wrote this letter to the churches of Eastern Asia Minor to combat the heresy of Judaism which had so quickly entered the Churches there.

This method of Biblical interpretation is said to justify literary

and historical criticism. Literary criticism simply takes into account what kind of material one is dealing with in Scripture (whether poetry as in the Psalms or narrative as in the gospels, etc.); but it also attempts to demonstrate how a given book of the Bible came into existence; i.e., whether Matthew or Luke, in writing their gospel narratives, used outside sources, depended upon the eye-witness testimony of others, etc. In this area redaction criticism enters the picture, for redaction criticism deals with the question of how the men whom God used to write the Scriptures put their writings in final form. And historical criticism deals with the question of the historical occasion, the human author, the cultural influences, etc. in a given book of the Bible.

I have no doubt that some of this is indeed legitimate work and that surely some of these things are implied in the tried and true grammatico-historical method of Biblical interpretation. This is not where I have my quarrel with current "conservative" hermeneutics.

The problem lies in the whole relation between the divine and the "human" elements in Scripture.

A few things ought to be said about this so that the point can be made as clear as possible.

If we believe that Scripture is infallibly inspired, that it is the Word of God, that it is inerrant in

all its parts, that it is divinely-breathed, that holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, then the all-important question which every exegete confronts is this: What is the meaning of the Holy Spirit in this particular text? That is the only question of any importance whatsoever. That is the question which has to be answered. That is the question which confronts the preacher when he prepares his sermons because he must come to God's people with the words: "Thus saith the Lord." That is the question which the child of God confronts when he takes that Word of God as a lamp unto his feet and a light upon his pathway. He is not interested in what any men say, no matter how holy they may be. He is interested in what God says. That is the only thing which counts.

The dangers of redaction criticism or historical-literary criticism are, therefore, these.

1) This type of critical approach to Scripture places all the emphasis on the human element in Scripture and puts the human element as an element along side that of the divine. It fails to reckon with the relation between the men whom God used to write the Scriptures and the work of God Himself. It introduces into the Scriptures a sort of dualism in which both God and man have a role. It does not see that the human writers were completely controlled by God so that



the product is God's work exclusively. It is therefore an introduction into the doctrine of Scripture of Arminianism.

2) It concentrates so completely on the human element that, in practice, the divine element is ignored. This is a practical consequence, but very real for all that. And, in fact, this is exactly what happens in all Arminianism. The human element is so emphasized that it becomes the only important element. And so, from a practical point of view, this type of criticism so concentrates upon the human that the exegete never gets around to asking concerning the meaning of the Holy Spirit. One is so interested in what Paul had to say, or what Isaiah had to say, or what David had to say, that it never occurs to him to ask what the Holy Spirit has to say. He becomes so wrapped up in the cultural context in which the book was written, the cultural influences which determined the nature of the writings of a given man, that the revelation of God in Scripture is forgotten.

3) It runs the grave risk (extremely common even among conservative scholars) of dealing with what is called so often Johannean theology, or Pauline eschatology, or the *corpus* of Petrine literature, to the exclusion of the truth of God in Christ. Paul has his theology, and John his. And perhaps the two do not even always agree with each other. But, after all, the influences

which shaped Paul are different from those which shaped John. And the unity of Scripture in the one great revelation of the truth of God in Christ is ignored and denied.

4) From a practical point of view, and most serious of all, it puts the Scriptures outside the reach of the child of God who has no formal training in archeology, rabbinic literature, Mid-eastern culture, etc., etc. Really to understand Scripture one must be an expert in all kinds of esoteric subjects. And if one does not have the scholarly credentials that the learned professors in Seminary have, too bad about him; he cannot really know what Scripture teaches. Effectively the Scriptures are taken from God's people and are made the exclusive property of learned men.

To avoid this, some have suggested that, after all, Scripture has more than one level of meaning. There is the simple, easy, literal level which any person can understand, but there is the deep, underlying meaning which is the real truth and which is available only to those who have Ph.D's behind their names. But this is simply a return to the old Medieval and Romish doctrine which ultimately fills the child of God with despair, for he cannot really understand what the Bible says, after all. As C.S. Lewis writes:

"An experienced clergyman told me that most liberal priests, faced

with this problem have recalled from its grave the late medieval conception of two truths: a picture-truth which can be preached to the people, and an esoteric truth for use among the clergy. I shouldn't think you will enjoy this conception much when you have to put it into practice. I'm sure if I had to produce picture-truths to a parishioner in great anguish or under fierce temptation, and produce them with that seriousness and fervour which his condition demanded, while knowing all the time that I didn't exactly — only in some Pickwickian sense — believe them myself, I'd find my forehead getting red and damp and my collar getting tight."

It will be argued by the defenders of redaction and historical-literary criticism that nevertheless, the tried and true grammatico-historical method of interpretation which all the church has used implies such emphasis on the human element. The argument here is, of course, that the meaning of God's Word, i.e., the meaning of the Holy Spirit, can really be discovered only by careful attention to all the historical conditions under which a given book was written.

While we do not deny that there is an element of truth to all this, there are, nevertheless, certain points that have to be remembered.

1) In many, many instances in

Scripture we simply do not know the historical circumstances of a given book. We do not know, e.g., who wrote I & II Kings or I & II Chronicles. We do not know in every instance who wrote a given Psalm, or under what circumstances it was written. We do not know the author of the epistle to the Hebrews. We do not know with certainty the circumstances under which the gospel narratives were written and what purposes they were intended to serve. We can make guesses about all these things, but the fact remains that the most learned of scholars disagree violently among themselves on many of these questions.

The point is that God did not, in every instance, choose to reveal these things to us. What does that mean? Well, it obviously means that God is saying that a knowledge of these things is not absolutely essential to an understanding of the text because the important question of the text is: What is the Holy Spirit saying? And we need not know all this historical and cultural background to know what the Spirit is saying to the Church. It makes not one particle of difference in these cases what the historical circumstances were.

If we had to wait for scholars to decide in every case what the historical circumstances were before we could understand a part of Scripture, we would have to wait until the Lord comes again; and

then it will be too late.

2) This does not mean that where the Holy Spirit Himself is pleased to reveal these historical circumstances to us, that such information is not helpful in understanding a book or a given passage of Scripture. But let it be remembered then that the Holy Spirit Himself has made the decision on what to reveal to us. And we ought, I think, on the whole, let the Holy Spirit make these decisions in every case.

But even then, if the Holy Spirit is pleased to reveal to us these historical circumstances, His purpose is not to inspire us to write volumes of learned balderdash about these historical circumstances, but His purpose is to help us in our stupidity from above so that we may learn the easier what God Himself has to say to us. We are concerned only about God's Word. And if God, through the Spirit of Christ, in some instances chooses to help us by revealing certain historical circumstances, we can only bow in humility before the wisdom of God. But if God tells us that this information is not really necessary, we are guilty of consummate folly when we spend time, energy, and money writing hundreds of books which are adept at constructing magnificent castles of human speculation but which help us not at all in learning what the Spirit says to the Church.

I am aware of the fact that what I have written does not deal with all the problems that arise in connection with the whole question of Biblical interpretation. But these things are surely the limits within which all interpretation must be done and all problems must be solved.

I will, I know, be charged with being unscholarly. So be it. If scholarly work requires one to deny in any way or manner what God has done in that remarkable miracle of giving us Scripture, we can only be thankful that God saves us by His grace from scholarliness. And our earnest prayer ought to be: Deliver us, O God, from the hands of scholarship.

A simple, child-like, humble faith in Scripture as the Word of God, understandable to my child sitting on my knee, is more to be preferred than the intricacies and labyrinthian mazes of redaction criticism. ■■

Education, Christianity, and the State, Essays by J. Gresham Machen; edited by John W. Robbins; The Trinity Foundation, Jefferson, Maryland; 179pp., \$7.95, (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.]

John Robbins has put together in this book a number of essays written by the well-known Presbyterian J. Gresham Machen on the general subject of the relationship between the State and Christian

education. The book was not originally written in its present form by Machen, and the result is that the essays are not always integrated into a unified whole; and some duplication (sometimes verbatim) is present in the book.

Machen has many interesting and important things to say in this collection of essays. Although he wrote about sixty years ago, some of these things need very much to be said in our own time. In the first two essays, the two which I enjoyed the most, Machen stresses strongly the element of *knowledge* in faith and the importance of genuine Christian scholarship. He has many worthwhile things to say and it would do today's doctrinally illiterate church a great deal of good to take to heart Machen's insistence on the importance of the *knowledge* of the truth and the importance of controversy to defend it. (The reader will recall that Machen was deeply involved in the doctrinal apostasy of the Northern Presbyterian Church, that he was cast out of her fellowship, and that he played a major role in the establishment of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and Westminster Theological Seminary.) A brief quote will illustrate this:

"Again, we are told that our theological differences will disappear if we will just get down on our knees together in prayer. Well, I can only say about that kind of prayer, which is indifferent to the

question whether the gospel is true or false, that it is not Christian prayer; it is bowing down in the house of Rimmon. God save us from it! Instead, may God lead us to the kind of prayer in which, recognizing the dreadful condition of the visible Church, recognizing the unbelief and the sin which dominate it today, we who are opposed to the current of the age both in the world and in the Church, facing the facts as they are, lay those facts before God, as Hezekiah laid before Him the threatening letter of the Assyrian enemy, and humbly ask Him to give the answer.

"Again, men say that instead of engaging in controversy in the Church, we ought to pray to God for revival; instead of polemics, we ought to have evangelism. Well, what kind of revival do you think that will be? What sort of evangelism is it that is indifferent to the question what evangel is it that is to be preached? Not a revival in the New Testament sense, not the evangelism that Paul meant when he said, 'Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel.' No, my friends, there can be no true evangelism which makes common cause with the enemies of the Cross of Christ. Souls will hardly be saved unless the evangelists can say with Paul: 'If we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel than that which we preached unto you, let him be accursed!' Every true

revival is born in controversy, and leads to more controversy."

The larger part of the book deals, however, with the relation between the State and public education. Machen was deeply involved in this question to the point that he testified before the Senate Committee on Education and Labor and the House Committee on Education concerning the question of a proposed Department of Education — a department which he vigorously opposed.

There is, however, it seems to me, inconsistency in Machen's position over against education in this country. On the one hand, he was involved in public education and feared greatly federal control of it. One would get the impression that he considered public education necessary in our society, and in fact, he writes about the apparent necessity of public schools. On the other hand, however, he has sharp things to say about public education and about the role of the government in it. He writes concerning the legal impossibility of teaching morality in any Biblical sense in the public school system. He deals with the weakness of an inevitable uniformity in the public schools which comes from government control of education. And he sees the solution to the whole problem as finally being the establishment of Christian schools. So there is the conundrum of support of public schools and support for

Christian schools — both at the same time.

It seems to me that the book indicates how Machen resolved this problem in his own mind. The book has much to do with questions of political liberty, patriotism and Christian principles in government. Apparently (although admittedly I speculate), Machen, with a deep love for his country, and a firm conviction that this country is a truly Christian country as far as its founding principles are concerned, saw that public education was a necessity, and that the Christian ought to exert all the Christian influence in government and in the educational policy of the government which he could. On the other hand, for the people of God themselves, Christian education was the only real alternative.

The book is valuable reading even though some of the emphases in the book are, in my judgment, less than satisfactory. ■■

Pat Robertson: A Warning to America, by John W. Robbins, The Trinity Foundation, P.O. Box 169, Jefferson, Maryland 21755, publisher, 1988, 151 pages, (paper), with notes and indices, \$5.95. [Reviewed by Rev. Robert C. Harbach.]

Read this book. Why? Surely because this is one of the timeliest books on the market informing the world of a controversial,

contemporaneous figure standing to the forefront of the public eye. As the introduction states, Pat Robertson is "very religious." Just what is his religion? The answer the book gives is as amazing as the man himself. But are there any particular advantages to be gained in the reading of this book? There are.

First, here is a book full of theological delights and refreshing perspectives in Reformed thinking. A Reformed apologetic runs throughout in defense of the Christian faith which is devastating without being offensive. Competent insights are given into the American political scene. Content is of the quality of Machen and Clark. A Reformed world and life view colors the work. Cults and false churches are put into clear focus as outside the pale of Christianity. Educative the book is, yet it sparkles with the entertaining, as it relates many of the claims and actions of the tel-evangelists which are screamingly ridiculous. A central stance taken is that the Bible is *the only* infallible rule of faith and practice. Thus the reader is warned against the claims to new revelations, dreams, visions, voices, speakings in gibberish, miraculous words of knowledge, and the *ouija board* method of finding "divine guidance" from the pages of the Bible. Provided is an armory of spiritual artillery and ammunition which may be employed to

deflate the arrogance of the false prophets who put down and shut up their constituencies with, "God has directed *me* in this matter! Have *you* anything further to say?" Is this a *spiritual* book? Not reeking with a cheap spiritual perfume *a la Tartufe*, it has a genuine spiritual ring, honoring the true Christ and the true Gospel.

The Christian public long has been awaiting the appearance of just such an expose. It is about "a man and a movement outside the pale of Christianity." That statement is not a mere "blurb liner," but is a proposition which the author, a Reformed apologete, proves in and throughout the book. Dr. Robbins further sets out to prove that "Robertson has the Bible, (but) he rejects it" (p. 67). He begins by defining Christianity according to the sound basis of *The Westminster Confession of Faith*. The author sees Christianity as "a critique of all religions" (95). Next, he defines what the Gospel is and what a true Evangelical is, showing that not all *called* "Evangelicals" do really believe the Gospel. Proper definition of the Gospel requires showing first what it is *not*, then to state clearly what it *is*. Having done this, the author confidently avers that "One looks in vain through Pat Robertson's books and newsletters for a presentation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (15). Pat Robertson's so-called gospel contrasts markedly

to the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it stands in the light of the whole counsel of God.

What the book is all about is one who claims to be a divinely anointed prophet, who receives direct extra-biblical revelations from God in "voices" and "signs." Some of the prophecies Robertson has made are mentioned. Then it is shown how to test the prophets according to Scripture, and how biblically to evaluate their claims to having wrought miracles. Does Robertson pass these tests and evaluations? It is one of the strong points of the book that the reader will not be disappointed in the answer given to this and the like questions. Another remarkable feature of the book is that it has timely warnings against Counterfeit Gospels, Counterfeit Miracles, against Positive Confession, Dominion Theology, "speaking in tongues," and the New Age groups.

What enhances the value of the book are: 1) its sections on "The Bible and the Draft," 2) on the author's Reformed view of politics, 3) on Christ's use of logic, 4) on what is dangerous about Robertson, deceiving and being deceived, 5) on "The Origin and Destiny of the Charismatic Movement," in an appendix. Here Charismaticism is viewed as a water-slide into Rome. 6) Then there are the Notes, the bibliography, the subject index, and the informative table of contents. Before beginning to read the book,

glance over the table of contents, briefly scan the index, then read and enjoy it you must. In the reading of some books it will be all one can do to keep a firm grip on his attention to keep from falling into a stupor. One will not have that problem with this book.

There is only one statement in this book to which the reviewer would take exception and that is where Dr. Robbins states that Dr. William A. Nolen, M.D., author of the book, "Healing: A Doctor in Search of a Miracle," is "a Christian physician" (p. 40). There is no indication of this in the book under review. For Dr. Nolen states that he was born and raised a Roman Catholic, and is a graduate of Holy Cross (Jesuit) College. Still, he admitted, "I can't claim to be a good Catholic." He goes on, "Am I religious? Not very, I'm afraid. . . . I believe in God, and I also believe that after physical death, we continue in existence in some other form. If someone should ask me if I believe that 'when we die we go (not 'may go' - RCH) to heaven,' I guess, all things considered, and realizing 'heaven' is a nebulous term, I'd answer, 'Yes.'" Further, he wrote, "I'm afraid I don't know the Bible as well as I should." Then he added this about God: "those who wish to substitute 'nature,' 'first cause,' 'Jehovah,' or anything else, may feel free to do so. . . . God. . . gave us brains" (*Healing*, . . pp. 41, 70,

275). To the physician we would reply, "Yes, but He gave us, Christians, more. But see I John 5:20 for what we mean by that."

But as we advised, read this book! ■■

A Christian Philosophy of Education, by Gordon H. Clark; Trinity Foundation, 1987; 280 pp., (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.]

The advertisement which came with the book is interesting enough to quote:

"First published in 1946, *A Christian Philosophy of Education* was a pioneering attempt to articulate a distinctively Christian view of education from kindergarten to university. It was well-received at the time of its first publication and recognized for what it was: a comprehensive defense of Christian education.

"Now the book has been extensively revised and updated; it contains about fifty percent more material than the original edition. The arguments, however, remain the same: There can be no neutrality education, for belief in God — or lack of belief in God — is so fundamental that it colors every other thought and action a person might entertain or take. Secular, that is, non-Christian attempts to articulate a coherent philosophy of education fail because they cannot determine whether man or the

universe has a purpose. Only Christianity can provide a comprehensive purpose for man according to which all the activities, including especially education, can be arranged: 'The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.'

"Given Clark's Christianity, it may surprise some readers to discover that he supported the Supreme Court's decisions removing prayer from the public schools. But those cases, Clark points out, involved a government-written and mandated prayer that was designed to be 'non-sectarian,' that is, non-Christian. The removal of such prayers from public schools should alarm no Christians, for the government has no business prescribing prayers, let alone non-Christian prayers.

"As for public education in general, Clark argues that education is a function of the family, not the state, and that the intervention of the government in education has led to the total secularization of education. This can only be reversed by removing children from public schools and educating them as Christians. Quoting the nineteenth century theologian A.A. Hodge, Clark concludes that the government schools have become the most efficient engine for the propagation of atheism that the world has ever seen."

The book is must reading for all

our teachers who engage in the work of the education of covenant children. It is a sharp critic of so-called religiously-neutral education. In fact, the greatest strength of the book is its sharp emphasis on the antithesis and its arguments which spell out the absolute difference between Christian and unbelieving thought as applied to the area of education.

While the book is on the whole theoretical, it also deals with more practical matters such as curriculum and teacher education in Chapter 7.

There are especially two areas in which the book is somewhat of a disappointment. In Chapter VI Clark deals with the philosophy of education and identifies the image of God in man with reason. This is a mistake, although not at all uncharacteristic of the general trend of Clark's writings.

The book is too philosophical and not sufficiently Biblical. This too is characteristic of many of Clark's writings and probably stands connected with this view of the image of God in man. This philosophical emphasis in the book, while helpful in distinguishing the faith of Christians from unbelief, nevertheless leads to a book which is not grounded as it ought to be in Scripture. There are not a lot of Scripture passages cited, and the citations which do occur (listed in a separate index) are not developed and used to formulate the Biblical basis for Christian education in all instances.

The book is, however, strongly recommended to our readers. ■■■

BOOK NOTICE

Calvin's Calvinism: Treatises on the Eternal Predestination of God & the Secret Providence of God, by John Calvin, translated by Henry Cole, Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, Publishers, 354pp., (paper). [Reviewed by Rev. J. Slopeema.]

As the title indicates this book contains two treatises by the great Reformer, John Calvin, on predestination and providence. Writes the translator, Henry Cole, these: "Treatises derive a considerable ascension of value and interest from the fact that they are the only productions of Calvin which he devoted expressly, exclusively, and purposely, to the exposition and defense of the sublime doctrines of electing, predestinating, and preserving grace."

In explanation of the title, *Calvin's Calvinism*, the translator, Henry Cole, writes in his preface:

"There are, in the religious world, almost as many different shades, phrases, kinds, and degrees of Calvinism as there are Calvinists (or professors of these doctrines of Calvin), and almost as many diverse opinions on the faith and character of the Reformer himself. But (as the present Translator has already remarked) he now presents the Church of Christ... with... "CALVIN'S own CALVINISM."

We commend the Reformed Free Publishing Association for reprinting these valuable works of Calvin and reiterate the hope of the publishers that this book will reach a broad readership. ■■■

Contributors
for this issue
include:

Prof. David J. Engelsma is professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament Studies in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

Prof. Herman C. Hanko is professor of Church History and New Testament Studies in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

Rev. Robert C. Harbach is a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Prof. Homer C. Hoeksema is professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament Studies in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

Rev. James Slopsema is pastor of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan.

Rev. Bernard Woudenberg is pastor of the Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church in Kalamazoo, Michigan.