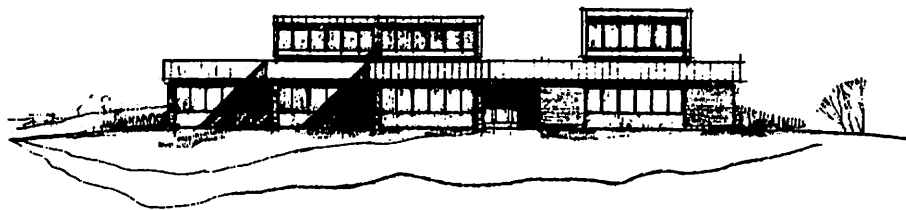


Bruce Watthe p. 45

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EDITORIAL NOTES

Our readers will note that this issue of *The Journal* includes no article by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema. We will not receive articles from him again, for on July 17 the Lord took him to glory after a short illness from cancer.

Our readers will recall that Prof. Hoeksema had spent the past year, beginning in August of 1988, laboring in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Burnie, Australia. It was, in many respects, a happy way for Prof. Hoeksema to end his busy life as a minister of the gospel, for he was once again laboring in his first love — the pastoral ministry, and his labors were deeply appreciated by the saints there.

It was while in Burnie that he learned that he was stricken with inoperable and untreatable cancer. That same week he learned the news, he returned to his home in Grandville, Michigan. There he spent the last three months of his life, most of the time confined to his bed.

We wish to express our gratitude to God for him in this issue of our *Journal*. He labored faithfully in the pastoral ministry, first in Doon, Iowa (1949-1955), then in South Holland, Illinois (1955-1959). In 1959 he was called to be professor of Theology and Old Testament studies, and he spent the remainder of his ministerial career in the Seminary. Thirty years in the Seminary is a long time; most of the ministers active in our churches received part of their theological instruction from him. He was a part of the work of this *Journal* since its inception 23 years ago.

We shall miss him: his family, his fellow saints, his former and present students, his colleagues — we shall all miss him. The loss for me is personal and deep for we labored together in Seminary for 24 years and enjoyed the closest possible fellowship. But we are thankful to God for him: for his ministry in our churches; for fighting the good fight of faith through the years; for his preaching and teaching; for the example of great Godliness and patience in the Lord's way when he walked the last mile through the valley of the shadow of death.

We commend his widow and family to the gracious and comforting care of our heavenly Father.

* * * * *

Prof. Hoeksema did not finish his translation of "The Power of God Unto Salvation." Many of our readers have expressed delight that this book, written in Dutch, was made available to a generation which speaks only English. While we shall not make any promises, we hope that this translation can be completed in future issues.

Prof. Hanko concludes his series of Calvin, Beza and the Doctrine of Predestination in this issue. Prof. Engelsma has submitted a paper on Calvin's doctrine of the trinity. Our readers will find this enlightening and stimulating, and of considerable importance today because the truth of the trinity is being re-examined by many theologians, and because, as Prof. Engelsma points out, the covenantal aspects of the truth of the trinity remain to be explored.

The Doctrine of Predestination in Calvin and Beza

Prof. H. Hanko

(In earlier articles in the Journal 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 students of Calvin. We examined first of all 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 argue 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 that these arguments are without foundation. In a later article we began a discussion of the question: Did Theodore Beza modify or change Calvin's views on predestination? We described the arguments which are raised in support of this position and we offered an analysis of the issues. In this article we compare the views of Calvin and Beza on the question of predestination and related matters. A conclusion brings this series to a close. We are persuaded that neither has Calvin himself altered his views on this subject, nor has Beza made subsequent and substantive changes. It is clear from the evidence that those who argue for such changes are really enemies of predestination and are attempting to bolster their attack against this doctrine by appealing [though without foundation] to important differences between Calvin and his successor. Those who today hold to the truth of sovereign predestination, election and reprobation, are those who are faithful to the heritage of the Reformation.)

Chapter V

THE TEACHINGS OF CALVIN AND BEZA ON PREDESTINATION

After having examined in some detail various questions that arise in

connection with our comparison of Calvin and Beza on the subject of predestination, we are now ready to compare their writings on this question and see whether a comparison of these writings actually shows that the two diverged significantly from each other.

A couple of preliminary remarks must be made before we enter into the details of this question.

In the first place, our examination will, in the nature of the case, concentrate on what Calvin wrote. Almost no disagreement arises concerning the teachings of Beza. He admittedly taught a view of predestination which includes: 1) both election and reprobation; 2) a supralapsarian view of both; 3) a view of both election and reprobation which makes God's eternal and sovereign decree the ultimate explanation for the faith of the elect and the unbelief of the reprobate; 4) an explanation of God's relation to sin in terms of cause. The question is whether Calvin also taught these doctrines or whether Beza's view was a distortion of Calvin's teachings. It is to Calvin's writings that we must turn primarily.

In the second place, various related doctrines are involved in this question. We have had occasion to call attention to the fact that this question cannot be wholly answered unless one also considers what Calvin taught concerning justification, the extent of the atonement of Christ, the nature of the preaching of the gospel (i.e., whether it is an offer which expresses God's intent and desire to save all), and Christ's mediatorial work in heaven. But, although these questions are related to our general subject, we cannot enter into all these questions, as important as they are.

But some additional questions remain which are so intimately related to the question of predestination that they must be considered. We refer to such questions as: 1) the relation between God's decree and sin; 2) the relation between God's decree and the first sin of Adam and Eve in Paradise; 3) the relation between this first sin and subsequent sin which is everywhere present in the human race; 4) the relation between election and faith on the one hand, and the relation between reprobation and unbelief on the other hand; 5) the relation between election and reprobation as decrees in the counsel of God.

All the Reformers were agreed that the sin which is present in the human race was the result of the first transgression of Adam and Eve in Paradise. Their disobedience had consequences, not only for themselves, but also for all their descendants. The sin which merits the just wrath and punishment of God must be traced to its source: the first act of sin by the parents of the human race.

What is not always clear from the Reformers is the question of whether this original sin can be distinguished into original guilt and original pollu-

tion. That is, there was no doubt in the minds of the theologians of the sixteenth century that the pollution and corruption of Adam's sin was transmitted to all his descendants; but did these same men also speak of a *guilt* of Adam's sin which was imputed to all so that all his descendants also stand guilty for the sin which Adam committed. It seems that, while some references in the Reformers, and also in Calvin, can be construed as teaching such an original guilt, they never clearly set forth this aspect of the question and concentrated mostly on original pollution.¹

Of greater importance to our subject is the question of God's relation to sin, also the sin of our first parents. This stands directly connected to our subject because it is involved in the question of the nature and character of reprobation. The sovereignty of God in the decree of reprobation involves the question of the sovereignty of God in connection with the sin of the reprobate. Or, to put the question as succinctly as possible: Is God the *cause* of the sin of the reprobate?

The best way to get at these questions is to discuss them together. And so we turn first of all to the views which Beza held; and then turn to Calvin and discuss what he has to say on these matters to ascertain whether any significant difference appears in the writings of these two men.

That Beza was very strong on this question cannot be doubted; and in fact, just because he was so strong, the charge has been laid at his feet that he taught something different from Calvin. We need not be extensive in our treatment of Beza, therefore.²

Although Beza offers a definition of predestination in various places, they are all in agreement. We use the one found in his *Theological Theses, set forth in the Genevan Academy by some students of sacred theology, under the professors of sacred theology, doctors Theodore Beza and Anton Faye*.³

In the first place, we call predestination in general that eternal and unmovable decree of God by which, as it pleased the highest and the

1 Even our creeds do not speak clearly of anything but original pollution, and it remains a question whether the Westminster Confession specifically mentions original guilt.

2 All the references in what follows are to Holtrop's translation. We have made references here only to the pages, because the titles of Beza's works are very lengthy and are included in the Bibliography. The precise work referred to can be discovered by consulting the translations.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 413.

greatest One himself, he has decreed all things both universally and particularly, and executes them by causes created and directed by him, as it likewise has pleased him for revealing his own glory.

Secondly, when we apply this doctrine especially to mankind, we call predestination that eternal decree (of the sort we have already discussed) by which he decided immutably and from eternity to save some by his highest mercy and to damn others by his most just severity. Thus, from the effects, he demonstrated himself to be as he in fact is: the Supremely Merciful and the Supremely Just.

Because God is sovereign also in reprobation, God can be said to be the cause of sin and unbelief in the wicked and impenitent.⁴ Yet Beza is careful here to distinguish in his idea of causes. Although he uses different terminology, generally speaking he makes use of primary and secondary causes. While God is the primary cause of sin and unbelief, God executes His divine decree through secondary causes, the chief of which is sin, and more particularly, the fall of Adam.⁵ However, these secondary causes are not *compelled* by God's decree.⁶ They are not compelled by God's decree because man acts in them as a morally accountable and willing creature.⁷ Because God works through these secondary causes, God is not the Author of sin, nor can He be charged with unrighteousness.⁸ Man remains accountable for his own sin and is morally culpable.

Moreover, the condemnation of the reprobate is just because their perdition depends on God's predestination in such a way that the cause of their destruction and its whole substance is nonetheless found in themselves.⁹

In connection with the will of God, Beza holds to the simplicity of God's will¹⁰ to ward against the error of setting the will of God's decree over against the will of His command. Nor is Beza satisfied with the idea of a permissive will of God to explain its relation to sin. The idea, says Beza, must be repudiated if it omits an active willing on God's part.¹¹

4 *Ibid.*, p. 101.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 101.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 111.

7 Beza often discusses the relation between God's will and man's will and gives clearly his ideas on this score. See, e.g., pp. 125, 130.

8 *Ibid.*, pp. 101-108.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 115.

10 *Ibid.*, pp. 285-289.

11 *Ibid.*, pp. 220, 221, 341.

There are, Beza says in another place,¹² only four views of predestination: 1) the Pelagian view which teaches that the cause of predestination lies in man and that God offers salvation to all; 2) sovereign election and conditional reprobation which teaches a reprobation on the basis of God's foreknowledge of unbelief; 3) the Semi-Pelagian view which teaches that salvation is partly of mercy and partly of man's will; 4) the Biblical position which teaches that election is by way of mercy and reprobation by way of man's sin. The Biblical teaching is that God's will lies behind the fall, that God's grace is not offered to all, that God's will is neither frustrated nor dependent upon man's will.

Muller¹³ therefore correctly states that Beza did not teach a coordinate double decree. He writes:

Nevertheless, subsequent to such rigidly causal argumentation Beza can, much like Calvin, argue that reprobation can never be completely coordinate with election. The decree to save the elect and the decree to damn the reprobate are manifestly distinct in their execution: the former rests upon the faithful apprehension of Christ while the latter rests upon the sin of the reprobate and its fruits. Thus, the one decree of God is known in the elect as most merciful and in the reprobate as most just.

Muller even goes so far as to say that while Beza is supralapsarian in his explanation of the *massa* of Romans 9:21:¹⁴

Beza's analysis of the problem of sin accords more with an infralapsarian than with a supralapsarian conception of the decree.

While we cannot agree with all of Muller's conclusions, they do set the matter in its proper perspective when he writes:¹⁵

In conclusion, . . . fully developed Reformed orthodoxy does not appear in Beza's theology nor does a thoroughly rationalistic and necessitarian perspective on theology. . . . Beza was a transition figure. He moved beyond Calvin in his use of scholastic terminology and in the precision of his doctrinal statements. But his "scholasticism" was moderate even by sixteenth century standards as set by Vermigli, Zanchi, Ursinus, and Polanus, to name only a few. The analytic-Empirical method adopted by Beza in his last discussions of predestina-

12 *Ibid.*, pp. 456, 457.

13 Richard A. Muller, *Christ and the Decree* (Durham: Labyrinth Press, 1986), p. 88.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 89.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 96.

tion represents his most serious departure from the spirit of early Reformed theology, but like the *sylogismus practicus* it produced, it did not become normative for later Reformed statements of the doctrine of predestination. This analytic-empirical tendency is, moreover, balanced out by Beza's christological emphasis, particularly the development of the concept of Christ's mediation, and by a consistent stress on the economy of salvation. This stress upon temporal economy is manifest in the ever-present distinction between the decree and its execution, in the strong covenant-motif of the *Confessio*, and in the use of the doctrine of predestination primarily as a ground for the *ordo salutis* in his major systematic structures. It would be a mistake to say that there were no deterministic tendencies in Beza's thought, but these tendencies existed in tension with a christocentric piety and a very real sense of the danger of determinism. Beza did not produce a predestinarian or necessitarian system nor did he ineluctably draw Reformed theology toward formulation of a causal metaphysic. Nor did he develop one *locus* to the neglect, exclusion, or deemphasis of others. Beza's role in the development of a Reformed system may better be described as a generally successful attempt to clarify and to render more precise the doctrinal definitions he had inherited from Calvin and the other Reformers of the first era of theological codification.

From this brief statement concerning Beza's views, we turn now to the views of Calvin.

Concerning the relation between Adam's sin and the sin which is present in all men, Calvin taught that Adam's sin had such consequences for the human race that all men are involved in a complete corruption of their nature so that they cannot, apart from grace, do any good in the sight of God nor contribute in any way to their salvation.¹⁶ This corruption of the nature is so complete that it involves the will in such a way that no good can proceed from it; i.e., that the corrupt sinner cannot even *will* to do the good. Every inclination of the will is only towards evil.¹⁷

This corruption of the nature is sometimes explained in terms which seem to suggest that Calvin spoke of original guilt as well as original pollution. In the above references mention is sometimes made to the fact that man's nature is corrupted because of his responsibility for Adam's

16 While the references are many, we can specifically refer here to *Institutes*, II, 1-5, particularly v, vi, ix; *Calvin's Calvinism*, pp. 90ff. Throughout we make use of John Allen's translation of the *Institutes* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949) and *Calvin's Calvinism*, tr. by Henry Cole (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956). This book contains both "A Treatise on the Eternal Predestination of God," the so-called *Consensus Genevensis*, and "A Defense of the Secret Providence of God."

17 *Institutes*, II, 2, xii; II, 3, v, viii, ix.

sin of disobedience. Yet the distinction which later Reformed theologians have made is certainly not clear in the writings of either Calvin or Beza.

Concerning the relation between God's sovereign activity and man's sin, the Reformer of Geneva was also strong. He discussed the question frequently and did not shrink from using language of the strongest kind. The relation between God's will and man's will is the same whether one is speaking of Adam's original sin or of man's actual sin, although, of course, Calvin recognized the fact that man's sin is rooted in his own depraved nature. Nevertheless, he insisted that even after the fall, God's control of sin is a reality which Scripture emphatically teaches.

Several points must be mentioned in this connection. 1) Calvin maintained that this truth was implied in God's sovereignty as that truth is set forth in Scripture; and it is an integral part of the doctrines of providence and predestination.¹⁸ 2) He did not hesitate to use such words as "cause" to define this relationship, although his use of this term was circumscribed.¹⁹ 3) He firmly believed that the word "permission" did not adequately express this relationship.²⁰ Atkinson can therefore write (though not in a totally correct way)²¹

Yet Calvin sees Providence in operation not only within the activity of believers and of the elect, but in the area of the reprobate. The devil and the wicked operate only by divine permission: every creature is an instrument in the hands of God. Their wickedness lies in their being turned away from the will of God: their wickedness God uses for His providential purpose.

Bangs also emphatically states that Calvin taught a view which rooted Adam's fall in the divine decree.²² And the Roman Catholic, Philip Hughes,²³ says that Calvin taught a predestination to hell.

This truth was the undergirding of Calvin's doctrine of predestination.

18 See, e.g., *Calvin's Calvinism*, pp. 240, 241.

19 *Institutes*, I, 18, 11; II, 4, vi; *Calvin's Calvinism*, pp. 81, 83.

20 *Institutes*, I, 18, ii; II, 4, iii. In this later reference Calvin refers to Augustine who also believed that permission did not adequately express this important relation. It is interesting to note, however, that Calvin did sometimes use the word in describing God's sovereign control of sin.

21 James Atkinson, *The Great Light* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), p. 176.

22 Carl Bangs, *Arminius* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 69.

23 Philip Hughes, *A Popular History of the Reformation* (New York: Image Books, 1960), p. 229.

Calvin's view differs in no particulars from that of Beza. We need not quote extensively from Calvin, for this truth is writ large in many places. We consider only the following.

Now, with respect to the reprobate, whom the apostle introduces in the same place; as Jacob, without any merit yet acquired by good works, is made the object of grace, so Esau, while yet unpolluted by any crime, is accounted an object of hatred. If we turn our attention to works, we insult the apostle, as though he saw not that which is clear to us. Now, that he saw none, is evident, because he expressly asserts the one to have been elected and the other rejected while they had not done any good or evil; in order to prove the foundation of Divine predestination not to be in works. Secondly, when he raises the objection whether God is unjust, he never urges, what would have been the most absolute and obvious defence of his justice, that God rewarded Esau according to his wickedness; but contents himself with a different solution, that the reprobate are raised up for this purpose, that the glory of God may be displayed by their means. Lastly, he subjoins a concluding observation, that "God hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." You see how he attributes both to the mere will of God. If, therefore, we can assign no reason why he grants mercy to his people but because such is his pleasure, neither shall we find any other cause but his will for the reprobation of others. For when God is said to harden or show mercy to whom he pleases, men are taught by this declaration to seek no cause beside his will.²⁴

I confess, indeed, that all the descendants of Adam fell by the Divine will into that miserable condition in which they are now involved; and this is what I asserted from the beginning, that we must always return at last to the sovereign determination of God's will, the cause of which is hidden in himself.²⁵

Those, therefore, whom he has created to a life of shame and a death of destruction, that they might be instruments of his wrath, and examples of his severity, he causes to reach their appointed end, sometimes depriving them of the opportunity of hearing the word, sometimes, by the preaching of it, increasing their blindness and stupidity.²⁶

All these quotations are taken from Calvin's *Institutes*. In his *A Treatise on the Eternal Predestination of God* he ascribes the difference between Esau and Jacob to the hidden counsel of God.²⁷ He emphatically repudiates the idea that reprobation is caused by works of men in

²⁴ *Institutes*, III, 22, xi.

²⁵ *Institutes*, III, 23, iv.

²⁶ *Institutes*, III, 24, xii. See also III, 21, v, vii; III, 22, vii; III, 23, ii. and many other places.

²⁷ John Calvin, *A Treatise on the Eternal Predestination of God*, p. 58.

any sense.²⁸ He writes: "God, leaving Pharaoh to his own will and inclination, destined him to destruction."²⁹ He adds: "This fact, nevertheless, remains fixed and unaltered, that the reprobate are set apart, in the purpose of God, for the very end, that in them God might show forth his power."³⁰ God hardens whom He will according to His own pleasure and purpose.³¹ Calvin even says that to say "that they were 'fitted to destruction' by *their own wickedness* is an idea so silly that it needs no notice."³² In his treatment of John 12:37-41 he writes:

Now most certainly John does not here give us to understand that the Jews were prevented from believing by their sinfulness. For though this be quite true in one sense, yet *the cause* of their not believing must be traced to a far higher source. The secret and eternal purpose and counsel of God must be viewed as the original cause of their blindness and unbelief. . . . He says, "*Therefore, they could not believe.*" Wherefore, let men torture themselves as long as they will with reasoning, the cause of the difference made – why God does not reveal His arm equally to *all* – lies hidden in His own eternal decree.³³

These references are sufficient to prove conclusively that 1) Calvin roots reprobation in the decree of God; 2) that thus the decree of reprobation is, along with election, eternal and immutable; 3) that Calvin does not shrink from speaking of God's decree as the cause of sin; 4) that therefore, emphatically, Calvin teaches reprobation in the same way as Beza later did.

With this view, the question arises: How did Calvin still maintain man's accountability?³⁴

Confusion on this issue seems to be fairly general among those who take the time to evaluate Calvin and Beza's thought. Bangs,³⁵ e.g., speaks of the fact that Calvin speaks with two voices concerning the fall. He says

28 *Ibid.*, p. 63.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 67.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 67.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 68.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 76.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 81. See also pp. 82, 83, 91-93 for similar ideas.

34 Although theologians usually speak of the responsibility of man, we consider the term accountability the preferable one. Responsibility means only that man is able to respond, a patent fact which needs no argumentation. Accountability, on the other hand, means that man is accountable before God for what he does.

35 Bangs, *op. cit.*, pp. 68, 69.

that Calvin taught that Adam fell by free will and divine decree, while Beza denies the former. This is, obviously, false. He then proceeds to quote Beza as insisting that the fall came about by the decree of God, while he fails to note that Beza also insisted on the activity of Adam's will in connection with the fall. Alfred Plummer³⁶ suggests that Calvin denied the human activity of the will and writes in a footnote (p. 150):

It is remarkable that the denial of man's freedom to will and to act should have been held so firmly by leaders whose wills were so masterful, and whose actions were so vigorous, as in the case of all three, and especially of Luther and Calvin.

These and others seem to take the position that if God is the sovereign "cause" of sin, man cannot any longer function as a willing and moral agent. If this were true, man's accountability would certainly be denied.

Cunningham³⁷ points out that from a certain point of view this is not a very important question. The fact of the matter is that Scripture teaches throughout that man is accountable before God (even while it teaches God's sovereign control over sin), and that this is the testimony of every man's conscience. No one ever disputes his accountability, except in philosophical discussions. Every man knows he must give account before God of what he has done.

Nevertheless, several considerations enter in. 1) One difference, though not decisive, exists between Adam's first sin and the actual sins of the descendants of Adam. Adam sinned with a free will, able to choose between good and evil. His descendants sin because of a corrupt nature which makes even the will totally in the control of sin. While, therefore, Adam's accountability rests in his ability to choose either the evil or the good, our accountability rests in the fact that we are responsible in Adam for the corrupt nature which we possess.³⁸ Hence, out of our accountability for our corrupt nature, arises our accountability for our actual sins. 2) Calvin especially often called attention to the difference between primary and secondary causes in his attempt to explain this; and he has been followed by many. God is the primary cause, but He makes use of secondary causes. Because these secondary causes are present, man remains accountable and God cannot be charged with sin. 3) But the chief

36 Alfred Plummer, *The Continental Reformation* (London: Robert Scott, Roxburghe House, 1912).

37 William Cunningham, *Historical Theology*, (Banner of Truth Trust, 1969), pp. 596ff.

38 Calvin's *Calvinism*, p. 90.

point which Calvin made was his insistence that no man sins by compulsion. Sometimes the point itself was emphasized in such a way that man was shown to sin willingly; sometimes man was said to have, even in a fallen state, a free will not in the sense of being able to choose between the good and evil, but in the sense of always willing in harmony with his nature and sinning always without any compulsion and coercion of any kind.³⁹ Nor did Calvin see conflict here of the nature of a contradiction or even an apparent contradiction; although he would be the first to admit that God's ways are inscrutable. And here Calvin was content to rest.

Thus we may conclude that in the doctrine itself, no discrepancy or alteration can be found in the teachings of Beza and Calvin.

Chapter VI

CONCLUSION

We have come now to the conclusion of the matter, and there is little need to be lengthy. Our examination of the whole question of Beza's significant departure from the teachings of Calvin on predestination have been looked at from many different points of view, and our conclusion is that the charge lodged against Beza is false.

This is not to say that no differences can be found between the two; we have noticed some of them. And Muller⁴⁰ is correct when he says that there is no significant difference in Beza's theology from that of Calvin. Yet, noting what differences do exist, he says:

Beza's predestinarianism, therefore, balances the two foundational issues, the divine will and the problem of original sin, found in the medieval scholastic paradigm but moves toward integration or resolution of these themes more on the side of the divine will and the problem of necessity than did Calvin, which is to say, with a strong reliance on the scholastic paradigm than on its original Augustinian model. . . .

Nevertheless, subsequent to such rigidly causal argumentation Beza can, much like Calvin, argue that reprobation can never be completely coordinate with election. The decree to save the elect and the decree to damn the reprobate are manifestly distinct in their execution: the former rests upon the faithful apprehension of Christ while the latter

39 The references are many but see especially, *Institutes*, I, 17, v; II, 2, vi; II, 3, v; II, 4, i; Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 574.

40 Muller, *op. cit.*, pp. 86, 88.

rests upon the sin of the reprobate and its fruits. Thus, the one decree of God is known in the elect as most merciful and in the reprobate as most just.

The point Muller makes in the last paragraph quoted is important. The key words for our purposes are: "much like Calvin." Both taught principally the same view. Both taught that election and reprobation are sovereign and rooted in "one decree."⁴¹ Both also taught that the two decrees are not "equally ultimate."⁴² But both understood that although the two are not coordinate, they are both sovereign. And, finally, both taught that election and reprobation were manifestations of God's virtues; thus both held to what is sometimes rather scornfully called, "attribute theology."

A *prima facie* case against the position that Beza altered substantially Calvin's view can be made. It would seem that such a position rests upon the assumption that either Calvin did not know what Beza's view on predestination actually was, or that, knowing, Calvin did not care. The latter is refuted by the fact that Calvin considered the truth of predestination so important to the truth of God's Word that he would, as in the Bolsec case, suffer banishment from Geneva in its defense. If it is true that Calvin attached so much importance to it, the idea that he knew of Beza's differences, differences so great that they altered all subsequent thought on the matter, but did not care about it is false.

The former assumption, while it is sometimes argued that Beza did not really show his hand until after Calvin's death, is refuted by a letter sent to Calvin by Beza on July 25, 1555 in which he acquaints Calvin with his views on this subject and states them in the same manner in which he stated them after Calvin's death.⁴³

The point surely is that Calvin would never have appointed Beza as his successor in the Academy at Geneva if what is charged against Beza is true. But the fact is that all the evidence points in a different direction.

41 Cf. also Canons I, 6 which speaks of election and reprobation as being one decree.

42 It has often been charged that the view of sovereign election and reprobation make the two decrees ultimate. See Berkouwer, Daane, *et. al.* The Canons are said by Daane to reject equal ultimacy by the *eodem modo* clause found in the Conclusion. While this is true, Daane goes on to argue that this rejection of equal ultimacy also means that the Canons reject sovereign reprobation. See my paper prepared for Dr. Plantinga, *Predestination and Equal Ultimacy*. Boer, while being equally opposed to reprobation, interprets the Canons correctly, but wants the entire doctrine excised from the Canons as being contrary to Scripture.

43 See material translated by Philip Holtrop, pp. 11, 12.

Nor did either Calvin or Beza deny the judicial aspect of reprobation. Just as man remains accountable for his own sin and just as God can in no way be made morally culpable for man's sin, so man goes to hell because of that sin and his unbelief. His judgment is just. His eternal condemnation is right and in keeping with God's holiness. But no emphasis on this judicial aspect of reprobation must take away from the fact that God is also sovereign.⁴⁴

Thus we may conclude that Calvin, Beza, and the whole Reformed and Presbyterian tradition, in so far as it has held to this doctrine, are one. We agree with John Murray⁴⁵ who writes in a chapter entitled, "Calvin, Dort, and Westminster on Predestination. A Comparative Study":

On the distinction between the sovereign and judicial elements in foreordination to death Calvin is likewise cognizant. He draws the distinction in terms of the difference between "the highest cause" (*suprema causa*) and "the proximate cause" (*propinqua causa*). The highest cause is "the secret predestination of God" and the proximate cause is that "we are all cursed in Adam." "But as the secret predestination of God is above every cause, so the corruption and wickedness of the ungodly affords a ground and provides the occasion for the judgments of God." Thus for Calvin, as for Dort and Westminster, the *reason* for discriminating is the "bare and simple good pleasure of God" (ad Rom. 9:11) and the *ground* of damnation is the sin of the reprobate, a damnation to which they have been destined by the will of God (cf. ad Rom. 9:20).

It will be admitted that in "the decree of reprobation" the doctrine of God's absolute predestination comes to sharpest focus and expression. On this crucial issue, therefore, Calvin, Dort, and Westminster are at one. The terms of expression differ, as we might expect. . . . But the doctrine is the same and this fact demonstrates the undissenting unity of thought on a tenet of faith that is a distinguishing mark of our Reformed heritage and without which the witness to the sovereignty of God and to His revealed counsel suffers eclipse at the point where it must jealously be maintained. For the glory of God is the issue at stake.

Those who are faithful to Dort and Westminster — and the whole line

44 Students of Calvin may find it difficult to harmonize these two and understand how these two stand related to each other, but not only did Calvin and Beza teach this, it stands in the whole tradition of Reformed thought. I have addressed myself to this question, though briefly, in the paper referred to above and in another paper, "Is Article XIV of the Belgic Confession Deterministic?"

45 P.V. DeJong, ed., *Crisis in the Reformed Churches* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Fellowship, 1968), pp. 156, 157.

of Reformed and Presbyterian theology — may be assured that they stand also in the tradition of Calvin.

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□

Calvin's Doctrine of the Trinity

by David J. Engelsma

INTRODUCTION

In this article, I set forth John Calvin's doctrine of the Trinity chiefly, although not exclusively, as this doctrine is presented in Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. I use, and compare, the 1536 and the 1559 editions of this work. In the 1536 edition, Calvin treats the Trinity in Chapter II in connection with his discussion of the Apostles Creed. In the edition of 1559, Calvin deals with the Trinity in Book I, "The Knowledge of God the Creator," Chapter xiii. The doctrine of the Trinity also

comes up in the 1559 edition in Book II, Chapter xiv, where Calvin treats of Christology — the person and natures of the Mediator.

The importance of the doctrine of the Trinity for Calvin is apparent in his structuring of the 1559 edition of the *Institutes* after the trinitarian pattern. Book I concerns "The Knowledge of God the Creator"; Book II, "The Knowledge of God the Redeemer in Christ. . ."; and Book III, "The Way in Which We Receive the Grace of Christ. . .," which "Way" is "the Spirit, by which we come to enjoy Christ and all his benefits" (III, i, 1). For Calvin, the Trinity is fundamental to the whole of Christianity. It is not simply one doctrine among others, but the ground and framework of all the doctrines. It is this because it is the truth of the nature of the one, true God; and all truth is theology — the doctrine of God. In this estimation of the Trinity, of course, Calvin was not only a good "Calvinist," but also a good Christian. It has always been the tradition of the church to conceive of the doctrine of the Trinity in this way, as the trinitarian structure of the Apostles Creed clearly shows.

In keeping with Calvin's high estimation of the doctrine is his way of leading into the treatment of it. In the edition of 1536, Calvin proceeds to the doctrine from the reality of true faith, which not only believes that God exists, but also believes in God as the true God: "The other is the faith whereby we not only believe that God and Christ are, but also believe in God and Christ, truly acknowledging Him as our God and Christ as our Savior" (1536: II, A, 2). The Heidelberg Catechism follows this approach of Calvin. Having asked in Lord's Day 7, "What is true faith?," the Catechism proceeds to speak of the triune God as the object of this faith in Lord's Day 8. In the 1559 edition, the approach is somewhat different. Calvin opposes the triune God to images and idols, i.e., he lays down the doctrine of the Trinity as the knowledge of the one, true God in contrast to all false gods. There is evident the characteristic method of Calvin of contrasting truth and error, the true and the false religions. Calvin calls attention to this contrast as regards the Trinity at the very outset of his treatment of the doctrine: "But God also designates himself by another special mark to distinguish himself more precisely from idols" (I, xiii, 2). This "mark" is the Trinity.

Calvin's doctrine of the Trinity can be thoroughly and effectively presented and analyzed according to the threefold purpose that Calvin had with the writing of the *Institutes*: positive instruction; a defense of sound doctrine by means of controversy with error; and the goal of a practical godliness of experience and life.

The edition of the 1536 *Institutes* used in this article is that translated and annotated by Ford Lewis Battles and published by The H.H. Meeter

Center for Calvin Studies and William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company in Grand Rapids in 1975. Quotations from this edition will be noted as "1536." The 1559 edition is that edited by John T. McNeill and translated by Ford Lewis Battles and published in Philadelphia by The Westminster Press in 1960. All references to the *Institutes* are to this edition, unless otherwise noted.

CALVIN'S POSITIVE TEACHING

Calvin accepts the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity of the early church as formulated in the Nicene Creed and as taught especially by Augustine. Calvin quotes Augustine repeatedly as authoritative, if not definitive, especially in his *De Trinitate*. What Calvin writes in I, xiii, 19, concerning the relation of the Father and the Son, is typical:

The whole fifth book of Augustine *On the Trinity* is concerned with explaining this matter. Indeed, it is far safer to stop with that relation which Augustine sets forth than by too subtly penetrating into the sublime mystery to wander through many evanescent speculations.

Although recognizing that they are not Biblical words, Calvin readily receives the church's trinitarian terminology — "Trinity"; "person"; "hypo-stasis"; "homooousios"; and the like.

Now, although the heretics rail at the word "person," or certain squeamish men cry out against admitting a term fashioned by the human mind, they cannot shake our conviction that three are spoken of, each of which is entirely God, yet that there is not more than one God. What wickedness, then, it is to disapprove of words that explain nothing else than what is attested and sealed by Scripture! . . . what prevents us from explaining in clearer words those matters in Scripture which perplex and hinder our understanding, yet which conscientiously and faithfully serve the truth of Scripture itself, and are made use of sparingly and modestly and on due occasion? There are quite enough examples of this sort of thing. What is to be said, moreover, when it has been proved that the church is utterly compelled to make use of the words "Trinity" and "Persons"; (I, xiii, 3)

These terms are necessary in order to catch and crush the "slippery snakes" of heresy (I, xiii, 4).

With the church's terms, Calvin receives the church's doctrine. His own exposition of the doctrine of the Trinity is an explanation and defense of the doctrine of the early church. This is not to deny that Calvin's treatment is fresh and lively, or that Calvin feels himself free to criticize what he thinks to be certain weaknesses in the early church's formulation of the doctrine, or that he develops the doctrine, or even that he puts his own

distinctive stamp on the doctrine. But it is to say that Calvin stands squarely in the tradition of the church in his doctrine of the Trinity. In his lengthy, and weighty, analysis of Calvin's doctrine of the Trinity, B.B. Warfield judges

that in his doctrine of the Trinity Calvin departed in nothing from the doctrine which had been handed down from the orthodox Fathers. If distinctions must be drawn, he is unmistakably Western rather than Eastern in his conception of the doctrine, an Augustinian rather than an Athanasian.¹

The importance of this for the Reformed churches, whose doctrine of the Trinity is heavily influenced by Calvin, is that they are one with the early church in this basic doctrine. They give expression to this in Article 9 of the Belgic Confession: "in this point, we do willingly receive the three creeds, namely, that of the Apostles, of Nice, and of Athanasius: likewise that, which, conformable thereunto, is agreed upon by the ancient fathers."

It is characteristic of Calvin that he states the profound doctrine of the Trinity in a simple and clear manner. This not only says something about Calvin's mind, but it also indicates Calvin's purpose, namely, that unlearned believers grasp this truth for their edification.

... if only... this faith were agreed on: that Father and Son and Spirit are one God, yet the Son is not the Father, nor the Spirit the Son, but that they are differentiated by a peculiar quality (I, xiii, 5).

Again:

Therefore, let those who dearly love soberness, and who will be content with the measure of faith, receive in brief form what is useful to know: namely, that, when we profess to believe in one God, under the name of God is understood a single, simple essence, in which we comprehend three persons, or hypostases (I, xiii, 20).

The Heidelberg Catechism shows its dependency on Calvin in the striking simplicity, brevity, and clarity of its treatment of the Trinity in Q. 25: "Since there is but one only divine essence, why do you speak of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? A. Because God has so revealed himself in his word, that these three distinct persons are the one only true and eternal God."

Basic to this doctrine is God's oneness. This is the numerical oneness of God's essence, or being, or substance. Calvin, like Augustine (and like

1 B.B. Warfield, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Trinity," *Calvin and Calvinism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1931), 229.

the Bible) is jealous for the oneness of God. He begins his treatment of the nature of the true God by asserting the one, spiritual essence of God according to which God is "the sole God" (I, xiii, 1, 2). To safeguard this oneness, Calvin, again following the lead of Augustine in the *De Trinitate*, stresses the simplicity of God's being. The being of God cannot be "torn" into parts (I, xiii, 2). Calvin demonstrates the oneness of the divine being from the oneness of faith and baptism in Ephesians 4:5 and from the oneness of the name into which the people of God are baptized according to Matthew 28:19 (I, xiii, 16). He sharply warns against construing the truth of three persons in such a way that one imagines God to be "threefold" or supposes God's simple essence to be "torn into three persons" (I, xiii, 2). Ingeniously, Calvin argues that the oneness of God's essence proves the essential Deity of the Word and of the Spirit against the Arians, who acknowledged the Word and the Spirit to be divine, but denied that they are "the very essence of God." This, says Calvin, is the positing of three gods. But Scripture teaches that there is one divine being. Therefore, the Word and the Spirit, Who are revealed as divine in the Bible, must be the very essence of God (I, xiii, 16).

Yet, the oneness of God is the oneness of an essence shared by three distinct Persons, Who are distinguished, although not divided, by their "properties," or "qualities," or "distinct characters," or "relations" (I, xiii, 17-20).

... when we hear "three" we are to distinguish in this one essence, nevertheless, three properties (1536: II, A, 9).

The Son has a character distinct from the Father (I, xiii, 17).

What Calvin refers to is the Father's being "the fountain and wellspring of all things"; the Son's being "the wisdom, counsel, and the ordered disposition of all things"; and the Spirit's being "the power and efficacy of that activity." Also, by their "relations" he has reference to the Father's begetting of the Son and spirating of the Spirit; the Son's being begotten of the Father and spirating of the Spirit; and the Spirit's proceeding from the Father and from the Son (I, xiii, 18). Calvin adopts the "*filioque*" of the Western church. With appeal to Scripture's calling the Spirit "the Spirit of Christ," in Romans 8:9, Calvin teaches that the Spirit comes forth "from the Father and the Son at the same time" (I, xiii, 18). The names, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, give expression to these "qualities" and reveal the real distinction within the Godhead. What is crucially important is that the three names signify "their mutual relationships and not the very substance by which they are one" (I, xiii, 19), i.e., the threeness does not destroy the oneness.

Because the church's doctrine of the Trinity stands or falls with its

Christology ("Who is Jesus?"; "Is Jesus very God?"), Calvin's doctrine of Christ — the Person and natures of the Mediator — is fundamental to his doctrine of the Trinity, as he understands well. "And the man Christ. . . is believed to be the Son of God because the Word begotten of the Father before all ages took human nature in a hypostatic union" (II, xiv, 5). "I contend that he is called Son of God by virtue of his deity and eternal essence" (II, xiv, 6).

Although Calvin is thoroughly conversant with the fathers, freely acknowledging his debt especially to Augustine, and although he expresses his agreement, explicitly or implicitly, with the creeds of Nicea and of Chalcedon, he derives his doctrine of the Trinity from Scripture.

... we conceive him to be as he reveals himself to us, without inquiring about him elsewhere than from his Word (I, xiii, 21).

Calvin urges "great caution" in the matter of forming and expressing the doctrine of the Trinity:

Here, indeed, if anywhere in the secret mysteries of Scripture, we ought to play the philosopher soberly and with great moderation; let us use great caution that neither our thoughts nor our speech go beyond the limits to which the Word of God itself extends (I, xiii, 21).

There may be no going beyond the limits of Scripture.

In obedience to this, his own rule, Calvin declines to find analogies of the Trinity in creation or even to illustrate the Trinity from the realm of creatures. Here he differs from Augustine.

I really do not know whether it is expedient to borrow comparisons from human affairs to express the force of this distinction (among the Persons in the Godhead — DJE). Men of old were indeed accustomed sometimes to do so, but at the same time they confessed that the analogies they advanced were quite inadequate. Thus it is that I shrink from all rashness here: lest if anything should be inopportunistly expressed, it may give occasion either of calumny to the malicious, or of delusion to the ignorant (I, xiii, 18).

That the "men of old" include Augustine, Calvin indicates in his commentary on Genesis 1:26, where he remarks that "Augustine, beyond all others, speculates with excessive refinement, for the purpose of fabricating a Trinity in man."² Calvin wants the Trinity explained strictly from the Word of God. God Himself must reveal Himself to us in Scripture.

Calvin develops the doctrine, therefore, through apt quotation, showing

2 John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, Vol. I, tr. John King (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1948), 93.

thorough knowledge of Scripture, and through careful, compelling exegesis of the texts. The Trinity is faintly, but definitely, revealed in the Old Testament. That God is one God is everywhere affirmed. But already in Genesis 1:26, a plurality of Persons in the Godhead is made known. Calvin is aware that "many censorious persons laugh at us for deriving the distinction of the persons" from these words of Moses, yet no other explanation can account for God the Creator's speaking "thus within himself" (I, xiii, 24). From Isaiah 9:6 and the passages on the Angel of Jehovah is learned that the coming Messiah will be both God Himself and a personal distinction within the Godhead.

But the Trinity is far more clearly revealed with the incarnation of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. The oneness of the being of God is taught as firmly as in the Old Testament, not only in those passages that concentrate on the unity of God, e.g., Ephesians 4:5, but also in the passages that teach the threeness of Persons. Matthew 28:19 speaks of one name into which the child of God is baptized: "The name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." But now the plurality of Persons is more fully made known. Matthew 28:19 and II Corinthians 13:14 show that they are three and that they are Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The New Testament clearly teaches the Deity of Jesus and of the Holy Spirit. John 1:1-18 identifies Jesus as the eternal Word Who is personally distinct from God and Who is God. Acts 5:3, 4 call the Holy Spirit, God. Also, the distinctions, the eternal, personal relations, are now revealed. Like Augustine and like the early church generally, Calvin finds the gospel of John to be especially helpful here. Jesus is the only begotten of the Father; and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.

Scripture speaks plainly to those who "lend ready and open ears" to it. We are not to suppose, however, that we can know this mystery exhaustively. Rather, humble believers are to "yield themselves to be ruled by the heavenly oracles, even though they may fail to capture the height of the mystery" (I, xiii, 21).

If Calvin is faithful to the tradition of the church, he is also very much his own theologian in developing the doctrine of the Trinity. According to some, the result is that he deviates from trinitarian orthodoxy. Others hail him for a significant contribution to the doctrine.

Calvin's independent treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity got him into serious trouble early in his ministry in Geneva. In 1537 and for some time after this, Pierre Caroli, then pastor of the Protestant church in Lausanne, charged Calvin with heterodoxy regarding the Trinity.³ Specifically, he accused Calvin of Arianism. The ground for the charge was the failure of Calvin (and Farel) to use the ecclesiastical terms,

"Trinity," "Persons," and the like, in the Confession of Faith that they had published in 1537. Indeed, this Confession did not contain a section on the doctrine of the Trinity. Fueling the fire, at a synod in Lausanne in May, 1537 where Calvin was to defend himself and the Genevans against Caroli's charge, Calvin refused to subscribe to the Athanasian Creed as Caroli demanded. In fact, Calvin spoke somewhat disparagingly of the Nicene Creed, criticizing its repetition and suggesting that it served better as a song than as a confession of faith.

And as for the Nicene Creed — is it so very certain it was composed by that Council? One would surely suppose those holy Fathers would study conciseness in so serious a matter as a creed. But see the battology here: "God of God, Light, very God of very God." Why this repetition — which adds neither to the emphasis nor to the expressiveness of the document? Don't you see that this is a song, more suitable for singing than to serve as a formula of confession?⁴

E. Doumergue notes that, despite the personal unworthiness of Caroli, the case was "grievous and disturbing." Calvin's reputation was at stake. There was widespread suspicion concerning his trinitarian orthodoxy which Calvin overcame only by strenuous effort. In 1537, Myconius wrote Bullinger, about Farel and Calvin, "If they want to introduce Arianism, or better, the terrible error of the Spaniard, Servetus, the learned men will have to take action to treat the matter." Rumor had also flown to Wittenberg. In the same year, Melanchthon wrote a friend, "Hear what Bucer writes me about the... (Genevans): a disciple of Servetus has spread the poison of Samosatenus among them..."⁵ E. Bahler states that "Caroli, through almost ten years, had brought to the Reformer of Geneva incessant annoyances and the most bitter mortification, and by his

3 E. Doumergue, *Calvijn in het Strijdsperk*, vertaald door W.F.A. Winckel (Amsterdam: W. Kirchner, 1904), 210ff. All quotations from this work are my translations of the Dutch. Cf. also K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/1, tr. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), 417, 418. Caroli was a scoundrel. Barth calls him "the theological and ecclesiastical adventurer." Calvin was less flattering. With reference to Caroli's vacillation between Rome and Protestantism (he switched his allegiance several times), Calvin wrote, "The kitchen of the abbey was the Holy Ghost that moved him" (quoted in Doumergue, 222).

4 Quoted in Warfield, 210. Cf. also Doumergue, 218. The original Latin of the reference to the Creed as a song is found in P. Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, Vol. I (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877), 27: "*carmen cantillando magis aptum, quam confessionis formula.*"

5 Doumergue, 223, 224.

accusations had imperilled his life-work as perhaps no other antagonist had been able to do.”⁶

To this charge of antitrinitarianism, Calvin refers in his “1538 Catechism”:

... how unjust that one would be toward us, who attempted to belabor us before good men with suspicion no less obscure than devious: as if our opinion concerning the distinction of persons in the one God disagreed somewhat with the orthodox consensus of the church. . . . Surely we, by the Lord's grace, are not so badly trained nor so miserably versed in the Scriptures that we go about blindly in such bright light. For however involved and yet not obscure this proof may seem to others, we nevertheless know that there in the one essence of God the Trinity of persons is more clearly indicated.⁷

That the charge was false, Calvin had proved already before it was made, for the *Institutes* of 1536 had taught the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity and had used the church's terms in doing so. The absence of a section on the Trinity in the Confession of Faith of 1537 can be explained in terms of the Reformers concentrating on those articles of the faith that were in dispute between themselves and the Roman Catholic Church. Calvin's refusal to subscribe to the Athanasian Creed at Caroli's demand must be attributed to Calvin's aversion to having his ministry judged by such an arrogant, self-appointed judge as Caroli and to having another dictate the words by which Calvin must confess the truth. Much later, in the *Institutes* of 1559, Calvin explains his strange behavior at the Lausanne synod, when under attack by Caroli. Although Calvin uses the church's trinitarian words, and thinks them necessary, “really, I am not, indeed, such a stickler as to battle doggedly over mere words.” He warns “against forthwith so severely taking to task, like censors, those who do not wish to swear to the words conceived by us, provided they are not doing it out of either arrogance or frowardness or malicious craft” (I, xiii, 5).

One of Calvin's teachings on the Trinity, however, was distinctive and controversial. It is implied in the *Institutes* of 1536. Calvin expressed it in his defense at Lausanne against the charge of Caroli. Caroli at once seized on it, making it, as Calvin complained, “the most atrocious calumny of all.”⁸ Subsequent editions of the *Institutes* contained clear

6 Quoted in Warfield, 239.

7 John Calvin, “1538 Catechism” (Grand Rapids: The H.H. Meeter Center, Calvin College and Seminary, n.d.), 2.

8 Quoted in Warfield, 235.

declarations of this teaching. This is the teaching that the Son has His existence of Himself, and not of the Father – the “*aseity*” of the Second Person of the Trinity. Calvin’s reasoning is this: since the Son’s essence is the underived, unbegotten essence of the Deity, He, like the Father and and Spirit, has His essence of Himself. That as the Son He is begotten of the Father refers, not to the essence, but to His Person. The Person of the Father eternally begets the Person of the Son. The word that has come to represent this teaching is *autotheotes* (or *autotheos*), “possessing the Godhead of Himself.”

Therefore we say that deity in an absolute sense exists of itself; whence likewise we confess that the Son since he is God, exists of himself, but not in respect of his Person; indeed, since he is the Son, we say that he exists from the Father. Thus his essence is without beginning; while the beginning of his person is God himself (I, xiii, 25).

It was because he denied that the Son has His essence of the Father that Calvin found the phrase in the Nicene Creed, “God of God” (“*Deus de Deo*”), a “hard saying.”⁹

B.B. Warfield thinks that this teaching puts Calvin in the ranks of the greatest trinitarian theologians of the Western church and distinguishes him as the one who finally put an end to all subordinationism in conceiving the relation between Father and Son:

... he (Calvin) marks an epoch in the history of the doctrine of the Trinity. Not that men had not before believed in the self-existence of the Son as He is God: but that the current modes of stating the doctrine of the Trinity left a door open for the entrance of defective modes of conceiving the deity of the Son, to close which there was needed some such sharp assertion of His absolute deity as was supplied by the assertion of His *autotheotes*. If we will glance over the history of the efforts of the Church to work out for itself an acceptable statement of the great mystery of the Trinity, we shall perceive that it is dominated from the beginning to the end by a single motive – to do full justice to the absolute deity of Christ. And we shall perceive that among the multitudes of great thinkers who under the pressure of this motive have labored upon the problem and to whom the Church looks back with gratitude for great services, in the better formulation of the doctrine or the better commendation of it to the people, three names stand out in high relief, as marking epochs in the advance towards the end in view. These three names are those of Tertullian, Augustine, and Calvin. It is into this narrow circle of elect spirits that Calvin enters by the contribution he made to the right understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. That contribution is summed up in his clear, firm, and unwavering assertion of the *autotheotes* of the Son. By this assertion the *homoousiotes* of the Nicene Fathers at last came to its full right,

9 Quoted in Warfield, 249.

and became in its fullest sense the hinge of the doctrine.¹⁰

In this teaching, Calvin was concerned to establish the full equality of the Son (and of the Spirit) with the Father. The controversy with Valentinus Gentilis in the late 1550s sharpened Calvin's conviction that the oneness of God is at stake in this issue, for Gentilis, by making the Father "the essentiator" of the Son (and of the Spirit), taught three, unequal divine essences. What his main concern was in this teaching, as in all his trinitarian doctrine, Calvin himself tells us, when he describes himself as a "detester as sacrilegious of all who have sought to overturn or to minimize or to obscure the truth of the divine majesty which is in Christ."¹¹

Nevertheless, it may be questioned, whether this teaching does justice to the Biblical truth of the Son's being begotten of the Father and, therefore, to the threeness of God. Calvin does affirm the eternal generation of the Son, although he denies that it is continuous generation:

For what is the point in disputing whether the Father always begets? Indeed, it is foolish to imagine a continuous act of begetting, since it is clear that three persons have subsisted in God from eternity (I, xiii, 29).

Nor does Calvin think that most of the texts appealed to by the fathers in support of eternal generation, including Psalm 2:7 and Micah 5:2, actually support the doctrine. The only proof of eternal generation is the names of the first two Persons, Father and Son, and the texts in the gospel and first epistle of John that call Jesus the "only begotten." But Calvin does very little with this description of Jesus in his commentaries on the passages. If he says anything at all about it, he merely states that Jesus is "the only Son of God by nature," invariably contrasting Jesus' Sonship with our sonship "by grace and adoption."¹² Warfield, ardent supporter that he is

¹⁰ Warfield, 283, 284.

¹¹ Quoted in Warfield, 242.

¹² John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, Vol. 1, tr. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), 47; John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles*, tr. and ed. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1948), 239. The Heidelberg Catechism follows Calvin, both in the brevity of the explanation of "only begotten" and in the contrast between Christ's Sonship and ours: "Because Christ alone is the eternal and natural Son of God; but we are children adopted of God, by grace, for his sake" (Lord's Day 13). Neither the Heidelberg Catechism nor the Belgic Confession enters into the question, whether the eternal generation of the Son involves His essence, His Person, or both. The Belgic Confession, however, states that Christ is the only begotten Son "according to his divine nature" (Article 10).

of Calvin's teaching that the Son is begotten only as regards His Person, admits that the position which "rejects or at least neglects, the conception of 'communication' altogether, whether of essence or of mode of existence, although it cannot find an example in Calvin, may yet be said to have had its way prepared for it by him."¹³

The issue is not a matter of heresy. Illustrious Reformed theologians have differed with Calvin, holding that the generation of the Son in the Godhead is a communication of essence, not only a communication of Person. Indeed, Calvin's successor and spiritual son, Beza, differed thus with his mentor.¹⁴ Whether, with Calvin, one holds a communication of Person alone or whether one holds a communication of Person and essence, Jesus is confessed to be fully and equally God with the Father. The weight of proof seems to me to go against Calvin. First, his view is not that of Nicea, which made much of the fact that Jesus is "begotten not made," and understood the begetting of the essence. Second, Calvin's teaching does not do justice to John's doctrine that Jesus is the Son by begetting. The idea of begetting is that of bringing forth Another out of One's own nature, so that the Other shares the Begetter's very nature, or being. It is not with the Son a second nature, like that of the Father, but the very nature of the Father, now stamped with the personal quality of the Son. Calvin has conclusively proved that the essence of the Son is the very essence of the Father. He has not proved that the Son cannot eternally receive this essence of the Father, or that He is inferior if He does so receive it. Neither has Calvin proved that he may abstract "Person" out of that which the Father begets, according to John 1:14; 1:18; 3:16; 3:18; and 1 John 4:9. John says that the Father begets the Son, the *entirety* of the Son. Calvin's begetting is meager — merely the generation of a Person within the unmoved essence. The Bible's begetting is massive — the throes

13 Warfield, 276, 277.

14 H. Heppé, *Reformed Dogmatics* (London: George Allen & Unwin LTD, 1950), 105ff. Heppé is confusing, if not contradictory. Summing up the Reformed position, he says: "... it is more correct to say that the personality of the Father produced the personality of the Son, since the divine essence is common to the Father and to the Son, and the only thing conditioned by the eternal generation is the presence of the personal relation of the Father and Son in the essence of God" (121). But a few pages later, explaining the *processio* of the Spirit, Heppé writes: "The procession or *emanatio* of the H. Spirit is the mode of imparting the divine essence, by which the third person of the Deity as the Spirit receives from Him whose Spirit He is the same unimpaired essence as Father and Son have and hold" (130). Cf. also Warfield, 274, 275.

of the whole divine essence to bring forth itself as the Son. This, and nothing else, satisfies the astounding word in John, *monogenees*, i.e., the astounding reality of God as Father and Son.

POLEMICS

Throughout his solidly Biblical and pervasively exegetical treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity, Calvin carries on sharp, vigorous controversy with heretics. The original, 1536 edition of the *Institutes* makes the polemical purpose explicit at the outset:

But when certain impious fellows, to tear our faith up by the roots, raise an outcry over basic principles, and mock us for confessing one God in three persons, this passage required their blasphemies to be curbed (II, A, 5).

The final, 1559 *Institutes*, some five times longer in the section on the Trinity than the 1536 edition, owes much of this greater size to Calvin's expansion of his controversy with antitrinitarian heresies. Having set forth the positive truths of the doctrine, Calvin gives fair warning that he is now about to pull down the strongholds and cast down the high things that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God: "But now the truth which has been peaceably shown must be maintained against all the calumnies of the wicked" (I, xiii, 21). No doubt, at this point the "wicked" who were reading the *Institutes* began to tremble.

Calvin contends with two kinds of trinitarian heretics: those who deny God's oneness and those who deny His threeness. Of these, one set of heretics was ancient; another set, contemporary. The ancient heretics, named by Calvin in both the 1536 and the 1559 *Institutes*, are Arius and Sabellius. Arius denied that God is one:

Arius confessed that Christ was God. . . . Yet in the meantime he did not cease to prate that Christ was created and had a beginning, as other creatures (1536: II, a, 9; cf. I, xiii, 4).

Against Arius' error, the fathers rightly taught that Christ is "consubstantial with the Father," i.e., the "unity of substance" (1536: II, A, 9).

Sabellius on the other hand denied that God is three: . . . Sabellius, . . . argued that the names of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were empty, not put forward because of any distinction, but that they were diverse attributes of God, of which sort there are very many (1536: II, A, 9).

Against Sabellius, writes Calvin, "we are to distinguish in this one essence, nevertheless, three properties," just as the fathers "truly affirmed that a trinity of persons subsists in the one God, or, what was the same thing, subsists in the unity of God" (1536: II, A, 9).

Wrestling with these false doctrines was not an academic exercise for

Calvin by the time he completed the 1559 revision of the *Institutes*, if indeed it had been before. Both of the fundamental trinitarian heresies had appeared in Geneva and had caused him both anguish and labor. The modalist heresy of Sabellius had taken form in the confused teaching of Servetus. Servetus denied that Christ is the eternal Son of God, existing eternally in the Godhead as the only begotten of the Father. He exists eternally only as an idea in God and is begotten only in the conception of Jesus in the womb of Mary. God, for Servetus, is but one Person. In his books, Servetus charged that all who maintain that there is a Trinity in the essence of God are tritheists, and really atheists. Calvin sums up Servetus' error thus:

The Son of God was from the beginning an idea, and even then was pre-ordained to be the man who would become the essential image of God. He recognizes no other Word of God than one of outward splendor. . . he reduces to nothing the eternal hypostasis of the Word. . . (II, xiv, 8).

In his examination by the company of pastors of Geneva, Servetus admitted that he "remove(d) a real. . . distinction" in the Godhead.¹⁵ The pastors charged Sabellianism: he "fills his cheeks with the breath of Sabellius."¹⁶

In his "*Adversus P. Caroli Calumnias*," Calvin insists upon the real distinctions in the Godhead:

Yet in that one essence of God we acknowledge the Father, with His eternal Word and Spirit. . . nor yet do we understand them to be mere epithets (*nuda epitheta*) by which God is variously designated, according to His operations; but, in common with the ecclesiastical writers, we perceive in the simple unity of God these three hypostases, that is, subsistences, which, although they coexist in one essence, are not to be confused with one another. Accordingly, though the Father is one God with His Word and Spirit, the Father is not the Word, nor the Word the Spirit.¹⁷

15 *The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the Time of Calvin*, ed. and tr. Philip E. Hughes (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1966), 254.

16 *The Register*, 258. The French Confession of Faith of 1559 names Servetus and describes his doctrine: "In this we detest all the heresies that have of old troubled the Church, and especially the diabolical conceits of Servetus, which attribute a fantastical divinity to the Lord Jesus, calling him the idea and pattern of all things, and the personal or figurative Son of God, and, finally, attribute to him a body of three uncreated elements, thus confusing and destroying the two natures" (Article 14).

17 Quoted in Warfield, 190, 191.

If Servetus advocated the ancient error of Sabellius, Valentinus Gentilis was Arius redivivus. Although Calvin does not name him, it is Gentilis to whom Calvin refers, in I, xiii, 23: "From this morass another similar monster has come forth." Gentilis taught that the Father so infuses His essence into the Son and the Spirit that They possess their own, separate, divine essences. Calvin describes Gentilis' doctrine thus:

. . . (he) indeed confessed that there are three persons; but. . . added the provision that the Father, who is truly and properly the sole God, in forming the Son and the Spirit, infused into them his own deity. Indeed. . . (he does) not refrain from this dreadful manner of speaking: the Father is distinguished from the Son and the Spirit by this mark, that he is the only "essence giver". . . . Thus the divinity of the Son will be something abstracted from God's essence, or a part derived from the whole. . . in this way. . . (he) basely tears apart the essence of God (I, xiii, 23).

Gentilis was a tritheist. He taught a trinity of gods. "Out of the three *personae*," Valentinus "fashions three eternal and unequal spirits, mutually distinct in essence."¹⁸

Against Gentilis, Calvin demonstrates the unity of the essence of God. It is in this controversy that Calvin stresses that the essence of the Son is "of Him Himself," not of the Father. Calvin's trump card is Scripture's calling the Son "Jehovah":

it follows that with respect to his deity his being is from himself. For if he is Jehovah, it cannot be denied that he is that same God who elsewhere proclaims through Isaiah, "I, I am, and apart from me there is no God" (Isa. 44:6) (I, xiii, 23).

Calvin crushes the slippery snakes, shuts the mouths of the barking dogs, and destroys the monster out of the morass. But as he wields the sword of the Spirit against these foes of the fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith, ancient and modern, Calvin has his eye on the real enemy, who is not flesh and blood:

These words refute all the chicaneries by which Satan has heretofore tried to pervert or darken the pure faith of doctrine (I, xiii, 29).

Calvin preached this to his congregation. In a sermon on I Timothy 3:16, "God was manifest in the flesh," Calvin proclaimed:

I said, that God suffers the old heresies, which in times past troubled the Church to make a stir now again in our days, to sharpen us so much the more. But let us mark also on the other side, that the devil goes

¹⁸ Heppe, 114.

about as much as he can to destroy this article of belief, because he knows perfectly, that it is the underprop and stay of our salvation.¹⁹

The reason for the refutation of errors, as well as for the faithful explanation of the doctrine, Calvin adds, is that "I am zealous for the edification of the church" (I, xiii, 29).

THE PURPOSE OF PRACTICAL GODLINESS

The *Institutes*, it should be remembered, has as its original, full title, *Institutes of the Christian Religion Embracing almost the whole sum of piety, & whatever is necessary to know of the doctrine of salvation: A work most worthy to be read by all persons zealous for piety, and recently published*. Piety! Not only did Calvin aim at piety in writing the *Institutes*, but he also conceived of the body of truth set forth in it as characterized by piety, or godliness, described in the "Introduction" of the Battles edition of the 1559 *Institutes* as "praiseworthy dutifulness or faithful devotion to . . . God" (p. lii). Calvin does not conceive, nor does he treat, the doctrine of the Trinity as purely theoretical, intellectual truth. His purpose with our knowing the doctrine rightly is not only that we have terms and propositions straight in our heads. For Calvin, the doctrine of the Trinity is "practical knowledge." Warfield is right in explaining the warning of the Reformers against "philosophical disquisitions" on the Trinity and the brevity of their early treatment of the Trinity as "the demand of the Reformers. . . not that men should turn away from these doctrines, but that they should accord their deepest interest to those elements and aspects of them which minister to edification rather than to curious questions that furnish exercise only to intellectual subtlety."²⁰

Referring to the Godhead of the Son with the Father, Calvin writes, "This practical knowledge is doubtless more certain and firmer than any idle speculation." He continues: "There, indeed, does the pious mind perceive the very presence of God, and almost touches him. . ." (I, xiii, 13). In the doctrine of the Trinity, rightly taught, the living God is present. So real is the presence and so close does the believer come to the presence, in the doctrine, that he almost touches God! Heeding Calvin, we avoid two equally serious dangers: supposing that right doctrine can be divorced from piety and supposing that piety ought to be sought apart

19 John Calvin, *Sermons on the Epistles to Timothy & Titus* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1983), 325. I have modernized the English.

20 Warfield, 196, 197.

from right doctrine.

What does Calvin have in mind with the practical godliness of the doctrine of the Trinity?

First, the nature of this doctrine is such that, so far from being abstract and speculative (as is the common perception of the doctrine, even among orthodox Reformed folk), the believer *experiences* the Trinity. In his "1538 Catechism," Calvin writes:

When we name Father, Son and Spirit, we are not fashioning three gods, but in the simplest unity of God, and Scripture, and the very experience of Godliness we are showing ourselves God the Father, His Son and Spirit.²¹

Similarly, at the synod of Lausanne in 1537, in his defense against the charge of Caroli, Calvin had spoken of "the Godhead of Christ, which we through a certain experience of piety (Latin: *certa pietatis experientia*) have learned."²² Calvin means this: the believer experiences the one God as his Creator; as his Redeemer; and as his indwelling Sanctifier – he experiences God as one in three. Denial of the Trinity runs afoul of the Christian experience. A modalist or a tritheist god is simply not the God Whom the believer knows by experience. One might as well try to deceive a child by dressing up some stranger and arguing strongly that that stranger is the child's father.

The Belgic Confession includes this experience of the Trinity in the believers' knowledge of the Trinity: "All this we know, as well from the testimonies of holy writ, as from their operations, and chiefly by those we feel (*sentons*) in ourselves" (Article 9).

Second, the doctrine of the Trinity causes adoration of this incomprehensibly great and glorious God in the believer. In the *Institutes* of 1536, as he is treating of the Holy Spirit, Calvin writes:

For there are three distinct persons, but one essence. . . . As these are deep and hidden mysteries, they ought rather to be adored than investigated inasmuch as neither our intelligence nor our tongue. . . ought, or is able, to encompass these mysteries (II, B, 20).

Exactly the mysteries of the triune nature of God evoke wonder. A god of one person, be he never so huge, as well as three gods, be they never so clever, I can comprehend. The Trinity, I adore.

It belongs to this adoration that, knowing the Trinity, the church offers pure worship to God. She must worship the true God, according to His

²¹ "1538 Catechism," 18, 19.

²² Doumergue, 217.

revelation of Himself in His Word. As Calvin declares at the beginning of his treatment of the Trinity in the *Institutes*, "the sole God, . . . offers himself to be contemplated clearly in three persons. Unless we grasp these, only the bare and empty name of God flits about in our brains, to the exclusion of the true God" (I, xiii, 2).

Third, it is only in the triune God that the sinner can trust confidently for salvation. As the Father, He is the source of my salvation; as the Son, He is my wisdom and redemption; as the Spirit, He is the power and efficacy of salvation. The significance of the Trinity for the sinner, alienated from God by his sin, Calvin expresses already in the *Institutes* of 1536, with specific reference to that truth which is the very heart of the doctrine, the Deity of Jesus Christ:

(We humans had need of a) Head, in whom they might cleave to their God. . . . The matter was hopeless if the very majesty of God would not descend to us, since it was not in us to ascend to Him. And so God's son became for us Immanuel. . . (II, B, 12).

The "very majesty of God" must descend to us in the incarnation of the eternal Son of God in order to make atonement for sin:

In short, since neither as God alone could he feel death, nor as man alone could he overcome it, he coupled human nature with divine that to atone for sin he might submit the weakness of the one to death; and that, wrestling with death by the power of the other nature, he might win victory for us. . . . He offered as a sacrifice the flesh he received from us, that he might wipe out our guilt by his act of expiation and appease the Father's righteous wrath (II, xii, 3).

The doctrine of the Trinity, centering as it does on the question, "Who is Jesus?," which question raises the further question, "Why has God become man?," ends necessarily in the comfort of every repentant and believing sinner that atonement was made for him by God manifested in the flesh.

Such knowledge of God cannot but express itself in a life of prayer and of good works — the vital piety of the man and woman who live before the face of the triune God.

One significant aspect of the practical godliness of the doctrine of the Trinity, Calvin makes very little of, if he does not overlook it altogether. This is the life of fellowship among the Persons of the Trinity, which trinitarian life becomes the source and standard of the believer's life of fellowship with God and of the believer's life with other persons in marriage, in the family, and in the congregation. This is a weakness in Calvin's trinitarian doctrine. It is due in part, not to his stress upon the oneness of God, but to his so stressing the oneness that the threeness is somewhat minimized; not to his emphasizing the equality of the Son with

the Father, but to his so emphasizing the equality that the distinction between them is not done justice; not to his insisting that the essence of the Son is the same essence as that of the Father, but to his so insisting on the sameness that the personal difference fades into the background. Very definitely involved is Calvin's doctrine of the *aseity* of the Son with the related perfunctory and inadequate treatment of the truth of eternal generation.

One comes away from Calvin's doctrine of the Trinity with the impression that the life of God is the life of the one essence. There is little of the notion of a rich, happy communion and interplay among the Persons. Where is there recognition that the Son is eternally in the Father's bosom (John 1:18)? Where is some attention paid to Wisdom's being daily Jehovah's delight and to Wisdom's rejoicing always before Him (Proverbs 8:30)? And where is the doctrine of the Trinity applied in such a way that the Family-life of the Godhead is the source and pattern of family-life in the home and in the church? This too is part of the doctrine of the Trinity! This too is a vitally important part of the doctrine of the Trinity! This aspect of the Trinity awaits development after Calvin in the distinctively Reformed doctrine of the covenant. □

Book Reviews

Studies in Theology, by Benjamin B. Warfield. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1988. pp. iii-671. Cloth. \$24.95. (Reviewed by David J. Engelsma)

Especially Reformed and Presbyterian officebearers ought to read B.B. Warfield. There is no better place to start than this collection of twenty-one articles by the Presbyterian theologian of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Subjects range from "The Idea of Systematic Theology" to "Mysticism and Christianity" and include "Apologetics," "Atone-ment," "The Polemics of Infant

Baptism," and "Annihilationism," among others.

Warfield is at his best (and has few peers) when he is explaining and defending the truth of the sovereignty of God in the salvation of elect sinners by free grace alone. His defense of the doctrine of sovereign grace, solidly grounded in eternal predestination, as the very heart of the gospel of the Reformation, is thrilling. Outstanding among the treatises in this volume, and worth the price of the book by themselves, are "The Theology of the Reformation"; "The Ninety-Five Theses in Their Theological Significance"; and "Predestination

in the Reformed Confessions."

In "The Theology of the Reformation," Warfield demonstrates that the Reformation was essentially the substitution of the doctrine "that salvation is by the pure grace of God alone" for the heretical doctrine, "Do the best you can, and God will see you through." The enemy was the notion that the grace of God is suspended upon the natural power of human will. Basic to the truth, therefore, was the teaching that man's will is enslaved. Warfield observes that the theology of the Reformation held predestination to be the foundation of gracious salvation, "for how can salvation be of pure grace alone apart from all merit, save by the sovereign and effective gift of God?" (p. 476).

This theme is picked up in the article, "Predestination in the Reformed Confessions." "The doctrine of Predestination was... the central doctrine of the Reformation" (p. 117). The reason is that the men and women of the Reformation lived in the "consciousness of dependence as sinners on the free mercy of a saving God" (p. 118). "All the Reformers were at one in this doctrine, and on it as a hinge their whole religious consciousness as well as doctrinal teaching turned" (p. 118). The Reformers taught *double* predestination, reprobation as well as election; and this doctrine of double predestination became the

official teaching of the Reformed and Presbyterian churches in the Reformed creeds. "For the preservation of the Reformed doctrine its affirmation (the affirmation of reprobation — DJE) was clearly exhibited to be essential" (p. 227).

Warfield proves, not only from the Reformed tradition, but also from the Reformed creeds that the doctrine of double predestination is essential to the Reformed Faith. No person is Reformed who denies double predestination. No church may claim the name "Presbyterian," or "Reformed," that hedges on the doctrine, much less repudiates it. To do so is historical, ecclesiastical, and creedal dishonesty.

The article is invaluable on account of its containing the complete quotation from all of the Reformed creeds, and quasi-creeds, of the sections on predestination.

What a sorry age is the present! There is not one Presbyterian or Reformed preacher or theologian in a hundred who believes double predestination. There is not one in a thousand who feels himself constrained to defend the doctrine against its foes. The only noise that Presbyterians make concerning predestination is to yelp, "hyper-Calvinism," when a church or theologian dares to confess election and reprobation and dares to proclaim a gospel that is both rooted in double predestination and consistent with it. But all are Presbyterians!

Warfield is not above criticism in these selected studies. He advocates the salvation of all infants who die in infancy, including the children of pagans, although "on Reformed postulates." He so honors God's revelation of Himself in creation as to hold that special revelation builds on the knowledge of God through creation. For this reason, he has high regard for the "theistic proofs" of the existence of God. Also, in the essay, "On the Antiquity and Unity of the Human Race," Warfield is far too optimistic about, and concessive toward, evolutionary science. □

J. Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir, by Ned B. Stonehouse. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987. pp. 1-520. \$12.95 (cloth). (Reviewed by Prof. Robert Decker)

The Banner of Truth is to be commended for reprinting this fine biography of Machen written by his colleague and successor in the New Testament department at Westminster Seminary. While there are other biographies (e.g., a briefer, perhaps more popular one by Henry Coray) this is the standard.

Machen certainly ranks as one of the greatest evangelical, Reformed theologians of the twentieth century. Born in 1881, he was delivered up to glory at the relatively young age of 55 in January of 1937. Machen, a professor at

Princeton Theological Seminary, was the leading figure in the battle against liberalism and higher criticism of the Bible at that school and in the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. He was one of the founding professors of Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and also a leading figure in the formation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Much can be learned from a reading of this book which is much more than a recounting of the life of this servant of God. Insights abound into the struggles for the truth of the gospel within Presbyterianism in the early twentieth century. These struggles were not at all unlike the battle being fought for the truth within the Reformed churches of our own day.

The account of the last weeks of his life give us insights into the kind of man J. Gresham Machen was by God's grace. After a very busy first semester at Westminster during the 1936-'37 school year, Machen, though weary, insisted on keeping a promise to speak and preach in several churches in North Dakota during the Christmas recess. While there he developed pneumonia and at 7:30 PM, January 1, 1937, the Lord took His servant to glory. When, the night before, The Rev. Samuel Allen, pastor of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Bismarck, N.D., visited Machen in the hospital, he said to him: "Sam, isn't the Reformed Faith grand?" During one of his

conscious periods the next day he dictated this telegram to Prof. John Murray: "I'm so thankful for active obedience of Christ. No hope without it." These were Machen's last words.

May God raise up more men of his calibre and conviction to follow his worthy example in "earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints." □

Medical Ethics: Principles, Persons and Problems, by John M. Frame; Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1988; pp. xx-132. \$6.95. (Paper) (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

Dr. Frame is not a stranger to the field of ethics and has written on various aspects of this branch of theology. This book, while dealing specifically with "medical ethics," is not a discussion of specific ethical problems which arise with the growing body of technology in medicine. It is intended, rather, to lay a general foundation on the basis of which the child of God must make concrete decisions when confronted with various ethical problems.

The book is a good one and ought to be read by all those who are interested in these questions or are confronted with specific ethical and moral decisions in the area of medicine. It is interestingly written and easy to read and understand. Frame bases his ethical system

squarely on the Scriptures, while dealing at the same time with the complexities of modern life and the circumstances in which an individual believer finds himself as he is led through life by the providence of God. Frame takes the opportunity to develop some points that are not only interesting and very helpful, but also are not often considered.

To give our readers a taste of some of the subjects which he deals with, we quote the following from an "analytical outline" found in the front of the book: "The question of conflict: is there a 'conflict of duties?'" "Conscience"; "Motive"; "Personhood"; "The principle of 'autonomy'"; "Informed consent and disclosure"; "Confidentiality"; "Criteria of death"; "Killing and letting die"; "Living wills." These and many more are discussed.

Frame leads the reader through the tangled underbrush of the many complexities of life which the believer faces, but leaves the very strong impression (emphatically true) that the child of God, who uses his sanctified common sense and who lives out of the desire to be obedient to the will of God, is usually right in the decisions he makes; he may not always be able to explain his position in terms of modern ethical problems, but his sanctified judgment, enlightened by the principles of God's Word, will be enough. This is of great en-

couragement to the embattled saint who cannot weigh the technical implications of every medical decision.

Some other valuable parts of the book include a discussion of the problems with transplants and an appendix which contains the report of the committee to study the matter of abortion, a report submitted to the General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, of which report John Frame was chief author. □

The Providence of God, by Benjamin Wirt Farley. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988. 257pp. \$16.95. Cloth. (Reviewed by David J. Engelsma)

Noting that no one has "ever traced the history of the idea of the providence of God, as we have come to inherit it in the West, and that it would be challenging to do so, keeping in view Calvin's own approach as a sort of guiding norm," Benjamin Wirt Farley seeks in this book to do three things: "1) to reflect on and explore the boundaries of a Reformed understanding of the providence of God... 2) to review the positions of major philosophers and theologians who have contributed to our understanding of God's interaction with the world; and 3) to offer occasional commentary and criticism of the same from a Reformed perspective" (p. 11).

By far the bigger part of the book is a summary and analysis of the views of divine providence in the history of the West, from Plato and Aristotle to modern process theologians. Included are an interesting, though far too brief, chapter on the perspective of the Reformers, Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin, and a helpful chapter on the difficult, but influential, thought of process theology.

The review of the theology of the early and medieval theologians painfully reminds a Reformed reader of the fathers' accommodation of Christianity to Greek philosophy. One manifestation of this accommodation, destructive of the Christian gospel, was the acceptance by many of the fathers of free will. Anselm was typical: "grace and free choice are not incompatible but cooperate in order to justify and to save man." Farley correctly analyzes this view as meaning that "in the final analysis, the principle of free choice prevails, assisted by divine grace" (p. 124). One appreciates anew Tertullian's impassioned polemic against yoking Jerusalem and Athens and Luther's violent repudiation of that "damned rascally heathen," Aristotle.

It is a weakness of *The Providence of God* that it is long on the history and analysis of the views on providence, but short on criticism of errant views and short on a positive setting forth of the biblical

and Reformed doctrine.

A more serious weakness is Farley's conception itself of the "Reformed understanding of the providence of God." It is neo-orthodoxy spiced with a dash of process theology. In the statement of "the Reformed position" in the second chapter, Brunner and Barth dominate. One glaring expression of this is Farley's universalism. He accepts Barth's subsuming of providence under a predestination that is wholly and exclusively gracious, i.e., a predestination that is devoid of reprobation. The result is a providence in which "God has acted redemptively for all" (p. 36); "God's providential activity (is grounded) in his mysterious but always merciful and just will, by virtue of which he acts redemptively toward all humankind" (p. 163). How this description of God's providence accords with the express testimony of the apostle in Romans 9:18 that God acts through the gospel to harden some men is a mystery. How this description of providence is to be squared with Farley's later, confident declaration that "all God's purposes will be achieved" (p. 237) is likewise a mystery, unless all humankind is to be saved in the end.

The dash of process theology is mixed in when Farley questions Reformed theology's confession of "God's perfection, omnipotence, omniscience, and immutability" (p. 226). (Process theology, it

should be noted, holds that an imperfect God is constantly changing and developing in interaction with the creation, upon which He is dependent in part.) One suspects that concession to process theology accounts for Farley's peculiar definition of providence as God's "accompanying" the creation (pp. 16, 229). No doubt, the word is intended to convey a third element of providence besides preservation and government sometimes introduced by Reformed theologians, namely, cooperation (Latin: *concursus*). But cooperation did not mean that God accompanies His world on its way in history. Rather, it expressed that God governs His creatures in their history in such a way that they themselves also act without constraint and, in the case of the rational creature, are themselves fully responsible for their actions.

Although the concluding chapter on the essential aspects of a Reformed doctrine of providence is very brief — a mere eight pages, it is long enough to show that the author has moved significantly from the doctrine of Calvin. God's providential government now is only His "guiding and steering mankind and history toward a *telos* (goal — DJE) God himself both wills and controls" (p. 230). Providence is not His almighty rule of every creature in its every movement, so that, as Question 28 of the Heidelberg Catechism puts it,

"without his will they cannot so much as move." God is not in control of His creatures: "...God chooses... to limit himself in the exercise of his power toward his creatures... (with the result that) every entity enjoys... 'partial self-determination'" (p. 235). This is "freedom" for the creature!

But it is not the biblical and Reformed doctrine of providence. Of the most heinous sin ever committed, the killing of the Son of God, Acts 4:27, 28 (not referred to by Farley), says that the wicked did "whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." With reference to the fall of the angels and the fall of Adam, John Calvin writes, in his great treatise on "The Eternal Predestination of God" (not considered by Farley, as he also fails to consider Calvin's definitive work on providence, "A Defense of the Secret Providence of God"): "I solemnly hold that man and apostate angels did, by their sin, that which was contrary to the will of God, to the end that God, by means of their evil will, might effect that which was according to His decreeing will" (*Calvin's Calvinism*, ed. by Henry Cole, p. 127).

The issue is, as it has always been, "Does God govern evil, especially the wicked deeds of men and devils?" This is an important question, for it is really the question whether God is sovereign, i.e., God. Calvin says yes. The

Reformed confessions say yes. The Bible says yes. Farley says, "all God's purposes will be achieved." This is something. It is not enough. □

The Westminster Theological Journal (WTJ), Spring 1989, 198pp. Edited for the faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary by Moises Silva, Editor. Published by Westminster Theological Seminary, Tremper Longman III, Managing Editor, Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, PA 19118. Annual subscription rates are \$20 for institutions, \$15 for individuals, and \$10 for students. Single issues may be purchased at \$10 per copy. (Reviewed by David J. Engelsma)

The latest (Spring 1989) issue of *The Westminster Theological Journal* repays the reading of the serious student of Reformed theology. *WTJ* is the journal of Westminster Theological Seminary, associated with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Several articles treat issues of great importance for Reformed and Presbyterian churches today.

Richard A. Muller of Fuller Theological Seminary writes on "Karl Barth and the Path of Theology into the Twentieth Century: Historical Observations." This is an erudite survey of the development of Protestantism in the 19th and 20th centuries and an analysis of the place of Karl Barth

in this development. Muller challenges the assumption that Barth's theology is a full-scale rebellion against the liberalism of the 19th century and the beginning of a new epoch in theology. Rather, as Wilhelm Pauck has noted, "neo-orthodoxy... is a moment — to be sure, a critical one — in the larger liberal theological tradition" (p. 46). Muller also observes that "we are now in an age of incredible theological pluralism" (p. 46). This sad state of theological affairs need not be the case, indeed *may* not be the case, within confessional Reformed churches.

The opening article is calculated to make the lover of the Synod of Dordt, and its Canons, bristle. Stephen Streyle of Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA writes on "The Extent of the Atonement and the Synod of Dort." Streyle is antagonistic toward the Synod. It was convened by means of "intrigues." The majority of delegates were "intolerant." President Bogerman possessed an "execrable character." The Synod was unjust in refusing to receive the Arminians as participants in a theological discussion, insisting instead that they appear as defendants whose doctrine must be judged. Indeed, Streyle alleges that the Synod even refused the Remonstrants "permission to defend" their views. This is not history, but a hatchet-job.

Although the article purports to be a historical study, the author's

distaste for limited atonement is everywhere evident. The Canons represent "scholastic Calvinism" (p. 2); the doctrine of the extent of atonement is "always... entangled with speculations... and typically jaded with hackneyed phrases..." (pp. 1, 2); it is generally "unintelligible" as was especially the case among the delegates at Dordt (p. 2). Streyle would have us believe that the second head of doctrine of the Canons is contradictory on the extent of the atonement. In one statement, it favors limited atonement; but in another, it "favor(s) unlimited over limited atonement" (p. 19). So patently absurd is the discovery of universal atonement in the second chapter of the Canons that Streyle finds it necessary to cast dust in the eyes of the readers at this point. A footnote informs us that "this attestation of unlimited atonement (in the Canons — DJE) is... abstract..." (p. 20).

Why does the faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary publish an attack on Dordt, and specifically on Dordt's clear, forceful doctrine of limited atonement, in their theological journal by a member of the violently anti-Calvinistic Jerry Falwell's Liberty University?

We watch for the promised second article on the subject in the next issue of *WTJ*. And we bristle.

Women's ordination in Presby-

terian churches is the subject of Frank J. Smith's article, cleverly titled, "Petticoat Presbyterianism: A Century of Debate in American Presbyterianism on the Issue of the Ordination of Women." Smith's survey of the history of the struggle over women's ordination in Presbyterian churches in the United States is enlightening. His conclusions are solid. Women's ordination, particularly to the offices of minister and elder, can take place only where the authority of Scripture has been denied, and on this basis. The issue for Presbyterian and Reformed churches is simply this: "whether or not they will be able to resist the pressure of the surrounding world to conform to egalitarian principles" (p. 75). "On the historical question, there should be no doubt that, within Presbyterianism, the ordination of women, at least to ruling and teaching office, has never been demonstrated by a serious appeal to the Bible" (p. 76). Smith raises the question, whether there is a relationship between political rule by females and their ruling in the church and home.

Following a brief, informative article on "Glossolalia at Azusa Street: A Hidden Presupposition?," a study of the origins of the modern Pentecostal movement, Bruce K. Waltke writes on "Aims of Textual Criticism." With reference to the Hebrew Scriptures, Waltke contends for "the need and

validity of judicious conjectural emendations" (p. 97), subjective though this may be. He thinks that the Old Testament Bible underwent development in which it was "adapted to the needs of the community" (p. 98). "The text was fluid and flexible, capable of being moderately adjusted and made relevant to the times" (p. 99). The scribes who handed down the Old Testament Bible did not merely transmit the writings, but edited them, according to the needs of the communities of which they were part (p. 100).

Waltke, professor at Westminster, does not answer two questions that are raised by his theories of textual criticism. First, how do these theories square with the Westminster Confession of Faith, 1.8: "The Old Testament in Hebrew. . . being immediately inspired by God, and by His singular care and providence kept pure in all ages (is) therefore authentic. . . ." Second, why might not contemporary scribes, say, a committee of scholars appointed by a Presbyterian general assembly or a seminary faculty, adapt Scripture to the ecclesiastical communities of our own time, e.g., on the matter of women's ordination and female equality in marriage and family, without any injury to the doctrine of the inspiration and authority of Scripture? Or is this perhaps what is actually taking place under the name of "hermeneutics"?

Yet another Liberty University scholar (what has Lynchburg, VA to do with Chestnut Hill, PA?) attends to the composition of the book of Jeremiah. By means of literary criticism, Richard D. Patterson analyzes the arrangement of the prophecies of Jeremiah. It is a comfort to be assured that Jeremiah is not "a hopeless maze" (p. 113). For the construction of the book, on Patterson's view, is bewildering. If the understanding of Jeremiah does, in fact, depend upon such literary criticism, according to "Semitic techniques of literary arrangement" (p. 124), not only is the explanation of the book forever beyond the capacity of nearly all pastors (to say nothing of the untrained believer), but also the book of Jeremiah is the exception to the Reformation rule that Scripture is clear.

In an incisive "short study," John Byl of the department of mathematical sciences at Trinity Western University takes sharp issue with Davis A. Young's assertion that "Genesis 1 and the flood story" may not be treated as scientific and historical reports because of the evidence of geology. Byl points out that secular geological theory is not the same as geology; that Young's position denies miracles; that denial of the historicity of certain parts of Genesis 1-11 undermines the historicity of all of this section of Scripture; and that, at bottom,

accommodation of Genesis 1-11 to secular science compromises the infallibility of Scripture. Put this article in the hands of your college students. □

The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature, by Sidney Greidanus. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988. pp. xvi-374. \$19.95. (paper) (Reviewed by Prof. Robert Decker)

If Greidanus "practices what he preaches" in this book, a preaching tradition advocated by Prof. William Heyns and perpetuated by Dr. Samuel Volbeda and his successors Dr. Carl G. Kromminga and Prof. Wilbert VanDyk will continue at Calvin Theological Seminary. Dr. Greidanus, a professor of theology at the King's College in Edmonton, Alberta, was appointed by the 1989 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church to succeed Prof. Carl Kromminga as professor of Homiletics. The "preaching tradition" to which we refer is that of thematic preaching. Thematic preaching is a method of expounding a text which expresses the main thought of the text in a theme or topic and divides the theme logically along the lines of the text itself. Other theologians who advocate this approach to preaching (though using different terminology) are: Kromminga

whom we already mentioned ("reconstructive method"); James Daane in his book, *Preaching With Confidence*; P.Y. DeJong ("reconstructive method" in his *Homiletics* a syllabus available from Mid-America Reformed Seminary); Jay E. Adams, in his book, *Preaching With Purpose*, speaks of determining the Spirit's *telos* in a text; Nelson Kloosterman ("reconstructive method," class notes, Mid-America Reformed Seminary); Samuel Volbeda used the term, "analytical-synthetic," (*Homiletical Technique, Of the Art of Sermon Making*, syllabus); T. Hockstra in his book, *Gereformeerde Homiletiek*, also used the term, "analytical-synthetic"; W. Heyns and Herman Hocksema in their syllabi, *Homiletiek* and *Homiletics* respectively, both used the term "art homily"; Simon Blocker spoke of "thematic" preaching in his book, *The Secret of Pulpit Power Through Thematic Christian Preaching*; D.M. Lloyd-Jones defined preaching as: "exposition moulded into a message" in his book, *Preaching and Preachers*; Lloyd-Jones' predecessor at Westminster Chapel in London, G. Campbell Morgan, stressed "the message of the text in its context" in his little book, *Preaching*; and J.J. VanOosterzee spoke of "synthetic homily" in his *Practical Theology*.

From this point of view Greidanus stands in pretty good

company when he stresses a thematic approach to preaching in chapters 1 (introductory), 6 "Textual-thematic Preaching"; 7 "The Form of the Sermon"; and 8 "The Relevance of the Sermon." What he says on this subject, though not new, is well said. We appreciate the emphasis in the book on the absolute authority of the Bible and on the fact that preaching must of necessity (if it is to be effective biblical preaching) expound or explain the message of the Bible to the contemporary church.

In chapters 9 through 12 the author offers suggestions on the interpretation and preaching of the various genres (kinds) of writings in Scripture; e.g., Hebrew Narrative, Prophetic Literature, the Gospel accounts, and the Epistles.

It is in chapters 2 through 5 that the book manifests what we believe to be serious weaknesses. Greidanus offers an excellent summary in this section of the various forms of Higher Criticism (Source Criticism, Form Criticism, Redaction Criticism, *et. al.*). In this section in which Greidanus is entirely too conciliatory toward these schools of thought, there is only one very brief (three short paragraphs), inadequate statement on the doctrine of organic inspiration which Greidanus concludes with these words: "If the term *organic inspiration* means anything at all, it is that God used the

authors of Scripture in the framework of their own times" (p. 88). Thus, in our opinion, Greidanus missed a splendid opportunity to set forth with precision and detail the Reformational doctrine of verbal, plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture, a truth eloquently expressed in Articles 2-7 of the Belgic Confession.

In the field of homiletics Greidanus has obviously read both widely and in considerable depth. Accordingly, he provides a very useful Bibliography, as well as helpful Subject and Scripture indices.

Future editions would be improved by eliminating those few nasty "typos" that somehow even after careful proofing creep in. Greidanus refers to Dr. T. Hoekstra both in the body of the text (p. 135) and in the Bibliography as "H" Hoekstra.

Taking into account the reservations expressed above, the book is worth its price and ought to be read by students, ministers, and professors of Homiletics. □

Building a Christian World View (Volume 2), W. Andrew Hoffecker, Editor, Gary Scott Smith, Associate Editor. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1988. Pp. iii-478. \$17.95. Cloth. (Reviewed by David J. Engelsma)

The second volume on building

a Christian world view by Grove City College professors deals with the universe, society, and ethics. (Volume 1, on God, man, and knowledge, was reviewed in the November, 1988 issue of the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*.) Pursuing their stated purpose, "to develop a consistent, coherent, and biblical understanding of the universe and our life in it" (p. 447), the authors set forth the Christian's Scripturally based view of the universe as created by God and, therefore, dependent upon Him, as well as his distinctive views on life in society (state, church, marriage, labor, culture, etc.) and on moral (and immoral) behavior. Throughout, the Christian view of the world is contrasted with the views of unbelievers. The authors demonstrate that the word that expresses the modern, non-Christian, and dominant world view in the West is "autonomy." In every area of thought and conduct, modern man repudiates all authority of a transcendent God and regards himself as the measure of all things.

The book informs, or reminds, the Christian reader that his or her world view (including life in society and personal behavior) is a unity. Presuppositions — faith's knowing and receiving of Holy Scripture — determine life. It explores vital, contemporary issues such as the calling of the Christian toward the state. The section on ethics

examines abortion, euthanasia, and homosexuality, showing why Biblically based Christianity condemns all three. The chapters on "Marxism: A Communist Society" and on "Dystopianism: Society Destroyed" are clear, helpful, interesting analyses of Marxism and of the societies envisioned by behavioral psychologists, particularly J.B. Watson (as satirically presented in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*).

The two volumes are a valuable set for Christian college students and seminarians. The set would make a worthwhile gift by a parishioner to his or her pastor, and by a parent to the teacher of his children at school. Christian high schools and colleges should have the set in their libraries.

There are weaknesses in the world view of the authors, however, serious weaknesses. Alan W. Rice is open to theistic evolution as a Christian option in accounting for the origin of the universe (pp. 104ff.). Despite their stress on the diametrically opposite and hostile presuppositions and ways of life of believers and unbelievers, the authors do not present the Christian's position in the world as that of the antithesis. They are ambiguous at best (as is much of evangelical Christianity today) on basic questions concerning the Christian's relationship to society: Does the Christian or the church have a cultural calling? Is the

calling of the Christian to reform and Christianize society, or to live in ungodly society in obedience to his Lord? Does a Christian live in society by virtue of a common grace that he shares with the unregenerate (in which case he co-operates with the unbelievers) or by the power of the sanctifying grace of the Spirit of Christ (in which case he is spiritually separate from the wicked)? What is it to build God's Kingdom — is this to establish a Christian society on the earth in the present age? Somewhat tentatively, Gary Scott Smith at any rate comes down on the side of influencing this world so as to make it Christian: "... Christians are to be light and salt in all the world's nations. . . Christians are to be agents of God's advancing kingdom, which is penetrating the nations of the world. But in seeking first the kingdom and its righteousness, Christians are bound to affect the world in which they live. They are commanded to apply kingdom principles to all activities and to bring the world into subjection to God (Gen. 1:26-28; Matt. 25:14ff.)" (p. 288).

Why will these men, who see so clearly and deeply the development of a heaven-storming autonomy both in the West and in communist countries, not loudly sound the alarm that now at the end of the ages the great war of the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of the World climaxes? And why will

they not call Christians to come out from among the worldlings and be separate, in order to fight a society that attributes the universe to chance; that orders (disorders, really) itself as the kingdom of the beast; and that approves, and practices, abortion, euthanasia, and homosexuality — and all this, because it ungods God?

Nor should the associate editor's criticism of Martin Luther, that he was inconsistent in forbidding the emperor to convert the Turks by the sword, while calling upon the civil authorities to put down the revolt of the peasants, be allowed to stand (cf. p. 226). Luther was perfectly consistent, and thoroughly Biblical, in these actions. The state has no authority to promote the Gospel by the sword (as though this were even possible). But it has the responsibility from God to prevent revolution and to punish rebels. □

Redemptive History and the New Testament Scriptures; by Herman N. Ridderbos. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1988. Pp. x-91. \$6.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Rev. Ronald Hanko)

This small book is a new, revised edition of a work previously published by Presbyterian and Reformed in 1963 under the title, *The Authority of the New Testament Scriptures*. The title of the

Dutch work from which it is translated is, *Heilsgeschiedenis en Heilige Schrift van het Nieuwe Testament. Het Gezag van het Nieuwe Testament* (Kampen: J.H. Kok N.V., 1955). The translation was done by H. DeJongste and the revision by Richard B. Gaffin, Jr.

The book is divided into two parts, "The Canon of the New Testament," and "The Authority of the New Testament." My own first impression of the book was that it might have been written by two different authors. The first part of the book is an excellent defense of the canon of Scripture, particularly of the New Testament, and the second part is, sadly, a discussion of the inspiration and authority of the New Testament which seriously compromises the traditional, reformed view of Scripture.

After reading the book, my own reaction, when finished with the second part was that I must have missed something in the first part of the book, since I had been so pleased with it and so disappointed in the second part. Yet after re-reading the first part of the book, my first impression of it stands. In fact, in my opinion, the first part of the book alone makes it worth the purchase price, since there is very little available on the subject of the canon, as Ridderbos himself points out. The "current Protestant literature on this topic," he says, "Is scanty and unclear."

Ridderbos' own view of the canon seems to be very sound. In his own words, he believes that: "God's authority as canon is not limited to His great deeds in Jesus Christ but extends to their communication in the words and writings of those He specially chose and equipped to be the bearers and instruments of divine revelation, and the written tradition they established, in analogy with the writings of the Old Testament, thereby became the foundation and standard of the coming church" (p. 24).

Reading this in light of the second half of the book, one might quibble about some of Ridderbos' language. But as the statement stands one can find no fault with it and one would be hard-pressed to find anything at all in the first part of the book that suggests that his view of Scripture's authority is faulty.

Even when he speaks of tradition it is difficult to find fault for he defines tradition as "the word of the living Lord" (pp. 20, 21) and says that "it is the authoritative word from Christ about Christ" (p. 21), or in other words, that which is "delivered to" and "received by" the apostles from Christ Himself. In connection with 1 Corinthians 7:10, 12, 25, 40, he says that: "Paul saw no essential difference between what he received from others as tradition from the Lord and what in general

he proclaimed to the church to be the word and will of the Lord" (p. 21).

Ridderbos begins his discussion of the canon with some very good criticism of the modern (post-enlightenment), rationalistic approach to Scripture. He insists that the Canon of Scripture must be received by faith and says of modern biblical criticism: "Certainty cannot result from uncertainty, nor can biblical criticism pronounce Scripture to be authoritative" (p. vii).

But the most significant and interesting part of the first half of the book is the discussion of the basis on which we receive the twenty-seven books of the New Testament as canonical and authoritative. He insists, and correctly so, that the receiving of some books and not others cannot rest simply on their "impact" on believers. "Apart from the issue of the limits of the canon, the *nature* of canonical authority cannot be decided by a simple appeal to the authoritative impact Scripture makes or to the witness of the Holy Spirit. The witness of the Spirit teaches us that such authority exists and that it is divine authority. But the way in which the New Testament canon embodies this authority and the qualitative and quantitative extent of such authority in the New Testament are questions which cannot be decided in terms of the impact that

Scripture makes on the church and the individual believer" (p. 10).

There is no doubt about it, of course, that in many ways the books which belong both to the New Testament and to the Old do testify of their authority and canonicity by the fact that they "ring true" in the experience and hearts of the people of God. Nor is there any doubt that this is part of the witness of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers. The Belgic Confession itself speaks of this in Article V: "We receive all these books, and these only, as holy and canonical, for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith; believing without any doubt, all things contained in them, not so much because the Church receives and approves them as such, but more especially because the Holy Ghost witnesseth in our hearts, that they are from God, whereof they carry the evidence in themselves. For the very blind are able to perceive that the things foretold in them are fulfilling."

Nevertheless, if the extent or authority of the canon depended on its impact or on the witness of the Holy Spirit in hearts of believers, the establishment of the canon would be a purely subjective matter. Even the Belgic Confession, we might note, insists that the testimony which appeals to the experience and hope of believers is not a purely personal and subjective testimony but one which

comes from the Scriptures themselves: "whereof they carry the evidence in themselves." In other words, it is finally neither the approval of the church, nor the reception of the books of the Bible by believers that establishes the extent and authority of the Canon, but the objective testimony of the Scriptures themselves.

Now, Ridderbos takes the position that even this witness does not as such fully establish either the extent or authority of the canon. He quotes, for example, the following statement of Greijdanus: "The question as to which book is part of Scripture and which is not is to be asked of Scripture itself. In principle the Holy Scripture itself constitutes the basis for the acceptance of any part of Scripture as being the Word of God and for 'the rejection of other text as Scripture. In this connection, too, Scripture shines by its own light; it is itself the source of our knowing its extent as well as its authority'" ("Erkenningsgrond van den Kanon," in *GThT* 14 [1913]: 287. Quoted on page 11). Ridderbos says of this statement: "We can agree with Greijdanus if he means that Scripture not only validates itself as canon but also, on careful investigation, sheds light on the nature and the extent of that canonicity. But that is not what he means. Repeatedly he appeals to the authority that the various books claim for

themselves in the material and formal sense. And he contends that a person has no alternative other than to accept or reject this authority. He argues that the New Testament is such a unity that not to accept unconditionally even one book is necessarily to reject the whole of Scripture" (p. 11).

Ridderbos disagrees with this. What he means is that while it is true that Scripture testifies in a more general sense of its canonicity, this, as such, does not answer questions about individual books, especially those that do not have an Apostle as their author or which do not speak directly of their own authority in the canon, that is, exactly those books about which there has been some question in the past history of the church, particularly the books of Hebrews, James, II Peter, and Jude. In fact, the questions about these books have been so persistent that even at the time of the Reformation both Calvin and Luther found it necessary to address the question of their canonicity.

Ridderbos, therefore, appeals to what he calls "the history of redemption" in defense of the Canon: "Thus to form a correct concept of the canon of the New Testament, we must look *behind* the Scripture. Naturally, that does not mean we should go *outside* of Scripture to form a concept of the canon. It simply means that we cannot understand the significance

of Scripture, or its canonicity and authority, apart from the context in which it arose, the history of redemption. In other words, it is necessary to examine more closely *the connection between the history of redemption and the canon*" (p. 12). But all Ridderbos really means by this appeal to the so-called history of redemption, is that not only does Scripture establish the canon by direct testimony concerning its authority and divine authorship, as in the passage where Peter calls the epistles of Paul "Scripture" (II Pet. 2:15, 16), or where Paul himself speaks of his own writings as the very Word of God (e.g., I Cor. 11:23), but also by what it tells of the history of the early church and particularly of the apostolate in the early church.

This, obviously, is only to say that the final foundation for the canon is nothing else than Scripture itself and its own testimony concerning itself. However, Ridderbos' discussion is valuable in that it reminds us that this testimony of Scripture involves not just those passages of Scripture which speak about Scripture directly, and not even the doctrinal passages and their obvious truth and unity with the truth of the rest of the New Testament and also of the Old, but also on the so-called historical parts of the New Testament, what Ridderbos calls "material" in contrast to "formal" factors.

In fact, this discussion and an understanding of what Ridderbos is saying is necessary in that a large number of the New Testament books are neither authored by the Apostles, nor speak directly of their own canonicity. This is true not only of Hebrews, James, II Peter, and Jude, but also of Mark, and to some extent also of Luke and Acts, II and III John.

Ridderbos, therefore, discusses at length the whole idea of the apostolate and its authority and concludes correctly that the authority of the apostolate is indeed the authority of Christ Himself, so much so that there is no real difference for example between the things that Paul speaks "by commandment" and "by permission," or "without commandment" and by his own judgment. He also accepts the traditional view that the authority of the apostolate was something limited to the time of the apostles themselves and has ceased in the church; that it was unique, and that it was the authority of direct inspiration and infallibility: "The apostles were not simply witnesses or preachers in a general, ecclesiastical sense. Their word is the revelatory word; it is the unique, once-for-all witness to Christ to which the church and the world are accountable and by which they will be judged" (p. 15).

What is perhaps unique to this book is Ridderbos' discussion of

the nature and character of the apostolate. He points out, for example, that there is a broader sense in which one can speak of the apostolate, than just of the apostles themselves. He reminds the readers that there is some question about both the number and the identity of the apostles themselves, and points them to other passages which include other persons besides the twelve or thirteen apostles in the number. He shows that to some degree the apostolate is defined not so much in terms of the number of persons, but by the nature of its work, and by its authority, so that it is very possible, for example, that a man such as Luke, who was not himself an apostle in the narrow sense of that word, but was nonetheless involved in the work of the apostles, could therefore speak with apostolic authority.

It is in this connection that he deals with the concept of "apostolic tradition," not as something apart from Scripture, or as something "subject to the vicissitudes of ordinary human and ecclesiastical tradition" (p. 16), but as "the authoritative proclamation that was entrusted to the apostles as Christ's witnesses and as the foundation of His church" (p. 18). This idea is important, Ridderbos says, because it lies at the very heart of the whole idea of the apostolate. The apostolate was what it was because it was the

bearer of that "tradition" and not merely because it could give an "eye-witness" account, or even just because it had been specially called by the Lord. This means once again, according to Ridderbos, that others besides the twelve or thirteen apostles themselves, could become by special commission or authorization the bearers of that same tradition and be in a broader sense, part of that apostolate and speak with apostolic authority.

He sums this all up thus: "It must be added that apostolic authority and apostolic tradition in the New Testament sense were not bound to the person of the apostle but gradually acquired an existence of their own. What is apostolic was not limited to the *viva vox* ('living voice') of the apostles or to their own writings but is also what is apostolic in subject matter and content, as the letters of Timothy and Titus demonstrate throughout. The apostolic witness authorized by Christ and inspired by the Holy Spirit became the *depositum custodi*, the pledge entrusted to the church (I Tim. 3:15; 4:6, 12; 6:20; II Tim. 1:14; 2:2). Therefore Paul addresses the churches with others and through others (e.g., I Cor. 1:1; II Cor. 1:1; I Tim. 3:15). Thus even if the Synoptic Gospels were not written by the apostles, their content is to be received as the apostolic tradition and gospel (Luke 1:1ff.; Mark 1:1). That, however, does

not deprive the apostolate of its unique, once-for-all character. Rather it reveals how the apostles transmitted the foundation to the church. Therefore the question is whether a particular book has that apostolic and canonical significance for the church, whether its content embodies the foundational apostolic tradition, *not* whether it was written by the hand of an apostle" (p. 32).

This certainly seems to be correct and also a necessary point in defending the canon. Yet it still comes down to this, that the basis of Scripture's authority and canonicity is Scripture itself, for that tradition is finally Scripture, and the tests of its purity and truthfulness, the Scriptures themselves. And it is difficult, then, to understand why Ridderbos criticizes Greijdanus.

In any case, whether or not his criticism of others is justified, Ridderbos does develop the whole idea of the canon and the self-justifying character of the canon in a very nice way, and also in a way which few others have done, pointing out some of the implications and conclusions that must be drawn from the traditional position regarding the canon. This alone, as I have said, makes the book worthwhile.

One valuable part of the section on the canon is the historical material that is included. Ridderbos shows, for example, that

Luther's view of the canon was not as defective or subjective as many make it out to be. He makes the point, too, that the questions which arose about the canonicity of some of the New Testament books, did not arise from within the church, but from outside and as the result of false teaching and heresy. This, too, he demonstrates from the history of the church.

This historical material is important, however, not just as a matter of curiosity, but because it demonstrates, as Ridderbos also points out, that the acceptance of the canon by the church was not the result of a mechanical process, or of the formulation of certain rules of canonicity, or of investigation by the church. It was not a reaction to those who denied the canonicity of some or most of the New Testament (as did Marcion). Rather, it was simply a matter of the church's receiving that which obviously bore the stamp of apostolic authority and therefore the stamp of Christ's own authority.

In fact, as Ridderbos very nicely demonstrates, it was not only that the church did not "decide" or "create" the canon, but that the canon really decided and determined the church, for it is the foundation on which the church was built.

He says, for example, "By falling back on the written tradition, the church did not make a Holy Scrip-

ture; it did not proclaim something to be a canon. Rather it established itself on its foundation, insofar as that foundation was available in a fixed form. The existence of the Old Testament Scripture and the way it was read in worship services and cited in general and theological usage undoubtedly exerted a gradual but noticeable influence on the formal structure of the authority of the New Testament Scriptures. Nevertheless, it was not the transfer of the authority or the Old Testament to the New but the original and inherent authority of Christ and His apostles that gave rise to the New Testament canon" (p. 39). And again: "The church never made a decision between four Gospels and one gospel; it never decided to accept an apostolic canon in addition to the canon of the Gospels. The four Gospels and the majority of the Epistles simply formed the *a priori* of all its decisions, and for that reason all heretical, sectarian, or literary attempts to reduce the four Gospels to one already, *a priori*, had no chance of success. . . . The church never knew anything else than that *these* Gospels and *these* letters of Paul, among others, were what it could trust and what had been delivered to it as its foundation. The church was ignorant of any other foundation because (insofar as we understand something of the church's origin) it never had any foundation other than this tradition

concerning Jesus and this teaching of the apostles" (p. 41).

This, of course, is another way of saying that the canonicity of the books of the New Testament is in the final analysis a matter of faith, and that is not something that Ridderbos is saying for the first time in the history of this discussion of the canon. His contribution is that he clarifies some of these matters and discusses in detail both the history of the canon and the "problems" that have been discovered in speaking of the canon.

All of this makes the second half of the book even more regrettable, since it stands in sharpest possible contrast to the first part in that it seriously compromises the doctrine of the infallible inspiration of the Word. In fact, in light of the second part of the book, it must even be concluded that Ridderbos' conception of the authority of the canon as set out in the first part of the book is also defective, though this is not apparent there.

Once again Ridderbos' expressed purpose is to look at the matter of Scripture's inspiration also in the light of the history of redemption. This, in itself, is not wrong and can even be valuable as the first half of the book shows. Nor can there be any question about it that the Bible itself is the "history of redemption." Nevertheless, Ridderbos misapplies this idea in the second half of the book and to some extent

compromises the complete, absolute, and abiding authority of the whole of the New Testament Scriptures.

This is not to say that Ridderbos comes anywhere near teaching the modern theories of inspiration. He rejects entirely the idea that the authority of Scripture consists entirely in its *kerygma* (proclamation) as that is heard or experienced by the people of God. In other words, its authority does not rest on how and when it is received but it carries its authority in itself. He also criticizes at length the historical-critical method of interpretation which results as far as the Gospels are concerned; "in an ever more tenuous and less coherent picture of the historical Jesus, a picture that has to be held together by all sorts of psychologizing and historicizing hypotheses and that is only a weak shadow of the Gospel portrayal of Jesus" (p. 53).

Nevertheless, Ridderbos says such things as the following: "The New Testament is not a book of revelation in the sense that all of its pronouncements intend, directly or indirectly, to give answers to the questions with which life confronts us. It does not anticipate the natural development of the human race or the exploration of nature. It does not provide critiques of every time-bound conception of the structure of the universe and what takes place in it. It does not correct quotations from the Sep-

tuagint by making them agree with the Hebrew text, nor does it authorize every idea that Paul derived from his rabbinical training" (p. 58). "Here we undoubtedly stand before the fact that this teaching about the universal significance of Christ is sometimes given in conceptions that were clearer and easier for the initial hearers and readers of the gospel to understand than they are for us. Naturally this raises the question as what is and what is not "taught" with the authority of the apostolic word. That there are reasons for such a distinction stems from the fact that the apostles' teaching comes to us in a language that is not our own and that must be translated for us to understand it. The problem, however, is more than a question of translation in the usual sense. Every language is an expression of a particular culture — the distinctive, time-bound ideas and conceptions — of which it is a part, and thus is subject to change and disappearance because the ideas and conceptions it expresses change or disappear entirely. That is also true of the language and conceptions of the New Testament. For example, the manner in which the New Testament speaks about man in the various modes of his existence as soul, spirit, body, flesh, inward parts, and so forth is, on closer examination untransferrable into our own language, because the ideas that underlie these concep-

tions are no longer our own. Thus the translation difficulty does not lie in the word so much as in the subject matter itself. That the communication of salvation as teaching means a 'new doctrine' about man is undeniable, but clearly that teaching does not intend that the concepts it uses should serve to construct a 'biblical psychology.' The same may be said of the concepts and notions that the New Testament uses when it speaks of the cosmos. In its description of the cosmos, the New Testament uses the language and conceptions of its day. At times it expresses itself poetically; on other occasions it uses the current language of naive sense perception. Sometimes, however, it clearly alludes to or uses certain contemporary notions about the structure of the cosmos that are strange and difficult for us to assimilate, because they originate in a picture of the world that is different from our own (Phil. 2:10). The same is true, for example, when the New Testament speaks about demons in terms of conceptions derived from popular beliefs (Matt. 12:43; Rev. 8:12; cf. Isa. 34:13, 14), and we encounter a similar problem in passages like Galatians 4:3 and Colossians 2:8, 19, which many understand in connection with pagan terminology" (pp. 73, 74).

Not everything, of course, in these statements is objectionable. In fact, the extent to which Ridder-

bos compromises the inspiration of Scripture might be difficult to detect if the passages were not read carefully, and this is true of the whole second part of the book. On the whole, it is difficult to pick any one statement which is objectionable and yet the end result is that Ridderbos does compromise the doctrine of the infallibility of Scripture in at least two points, (1) by making Scripture in some sense both the witness of man and the witness of the Holy Spirit in the sense that man is in some respect the author of Scripture as well as the Holy Spirit (cf. pp. 62, 63), and (2) by making the Scriptures to some extent time-bound. And anyone who has any knowledge of the current debate on the nature of Scripture's authority certainly will recognize that Ridderbos' view of the Scripture's authority leaves something to be desired.

As an example, look again at the quotation above from pages 73 and 74 of the book. One certainly cannot object to the fact that the Scriptures come to us in a language that is not our own and that this necessitates translation and all the problems attendant thereto, that it is difficult to translate certain words into another language and convey all the meaning of the original word. Yet at the same time Ridderbos makes this more than a matter of translation and its difficulties and says as much: "Thus

the translation difficulty does not lie in the word so much as in the subject matter itself." And he means that the ideas expressed in certain New Testament words are ideas which belonged to a different time and culture than ours and therefore express things that may not even be true for our culture and time. Thus his discussion of the Biblical terms concerning man leads to the conclusion that it is impossible on the basis of these words to construct a "Biblical Psychology," something which I believe is patently false and rests on the premise that these words express a "primitive" and less than correct view of man and of his nature. The same holds in his discussion of the cosmos and of demons. It should be clear in both these cases that what Ridderbos means is that the conception of the cosmos that is used in the New Testament is not the conception we have today and is in fact erroneous, or at least lacking in some respects. This is nothing less than a compromise of the truth that Scripture is the abiding and unchangeable Word of God concerning not only the nature of man and the cosmos, but concerning all things that pertain to this life and to the life to come.

Even with this in mind, there is a certain value to the second half of the book. It shows at least how easily the truth can be compromised and how that may very

well take place long before the battle for the truth actually develops. It is most striking that these views were first published in 1955. Already then a more liberal view of Scripture had gained a foothold in the Reformed Churches. The current attack,

therefore, on the inspiration and authority of Scripture is not something new, and the second part of the book provides a warning to us of how careful we must be not to let slip the things which have been committed to our charge. □

Book Notices

The NIV Story: The Inside Story of the New International Version, by Burton L. Goddard; Vantage Press, Inc., 1989; 125pp., \$10.00. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

The work which produced the NIV, from the first grain of an idea to its completion, is described in this short book. It includes inside looks at some of the vast amount of work which went into this new translation. It considers the labor from the viewpoint of its being a mighty work of God which involved almost miraculous divine interventions to bring it to fruition. From this point of view, the book is interesting.

What is somewhat disappointing in the work is the strange omission of what I consider two crucial aspects of the work: How did those responsible for doing the translation agree on a Greek and Hebrew text? And: what was the reasoning behind the translators' use of the principle of dynamic equivalence?

The first question has to do with

the fact that the translators adopted, for the most part, the text of Wescott and Hort rather than the Majority Text followed by the translators of the King James Version. The second question has to do with the fact that the translation is not literal, nor is it intended to be literal: it is a translation which is concerned about thought—the thought of the Hebrew and Greek which is then put into English words which convey an identical thought.

Without entering into the textual question, a book of this sort would have been an ideal forum to discuss the committee's thinking on this matter. And it is the firm conviction of this reviewer that the principle of dynamic equivalence is a wrong principle to be applied to Bible translation. It is wrong: 1) because it does not do justice to the truth of verbal inspiration; 2) it is interpretive, in addition to being a translation. While, of course, no translation can be wholly free from interpretation, one must avoid this as much as

possible and leave the work of interpretation to Bible commentaries. A translation ought not to enter this aspect of Biblical studies.

In the most crucial areas of the preparation of the NIV this book leaves one in ignorance. □

All the Saints Adore Thee, Insights from Christian Classics; by Bruce Shelley; Zondervan Publishing House, 1988; 224pp. (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. Hanko)

The author of this volume is concerned about the fact that people not only do not live very devotional lives in our present world, but that they do not even know *how* to live such lives if they should desire it. Defining a devotional life as a life of conscious fellowship with God, the author claims that the saints in years gone by can teach us a great deal in this aspect of the Christian's life. He has, therefore, given brief excerpts from the writings of some of the people who have, through the centuries, gained a reputation of genuine devotion and Christian piety.

The book is divided into six parts: Saints in the early church, in the Middle Ages, in the Reformation Era, in the Puritan period, in the age of revivals, and in modern times. Some of the better known authors who are quoted are: Augustine, Francis of Assisi,

Thomas a Kempis, Martin Luther, John Calvin, George Herbert, Blaise Pascal, John Bunyan, John Flavel, Philip Spener, Jonathan Edwards, David Brainerd, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Andrew Murray, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Watchman Nee, and C.S. Lewis.

Each excerpt is introduced by a brief essay which gives some of the history and background of the author and introduces him to the reader with a short biography. I found these introductory essays as valuable as the devotional excerpts.

Usually, in my judgment, the shortness of the excerpts detracted from their quality and usefulness. I know it is difficult to find a happy medium and the author feared undue length; but he probably erred in the other direction.

The book is recommended to our readers as a fine source of devotional literature. □

The Doctrine of Endless Punishment, by W.G.T. Shedd. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, publisher, 1986. Pp. x-201. \$9.95 U.S. (cloth). (Reviewed by T. Miersma)

W.G.T. Shedd was a notable Presbyterian minister and professor and defender of the Reformed faith of the preceding century. This little work was first published in 1885 and has been included in Shedd's *Dogmatic Theology* Vol-

ume Two, Eschatology, chapter 6 under the title "Hell." As its title indicates, it is a defense of the Reformed doctrine of everlasting punishment as the just reward of the wicked in hell. This re-publication by the Banner of Truth Trust is based upon the second edition of 1887 which is somewhat expanded and enlarged with an addition of a thirty-page appendix of additional notes. The book has three chapters which treat first of all, briefly, the history of the doctrine and then secondly and in detail, the biblical argument for it and thirdly, refute the rational or philosophical argument against it. The focus of the book is directed against those who advocate some form of universal salvation or second chance after death or annihilation of the wicked. These views were making inroads in Presbyterian and Modernist Protestant circles of Shedd's day and are still present today as enemies of the truth. The book includes, in the biblical argument, a thorough word study of the terms used in Scripture for sheol, hell or hades, and Gehenna and a systematic development of the concepts involved. Recommended for one who does not have Shedd's *Dogmatic Theology*. □

Systematic Theology (abridged edition), Charles Hodge. Editor, Edward N. Gross. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988. 565pp., cloth, \$24.95. (Reviewed by Rev.

Charles Terpstra)

This single volume is a condensation of Hodge's original three-volume work by the same title. Charles Hodge (1797-1878) taught at Princeton Theological Seminary for over fifty years in the context of theological liberalism and biblical higher criticism. His *Theology*, a staunch setting forth and defense of Reformed, Presbyterian doctrine, was first published in 1872-73. But the fact that after 110 years it is still in print and remains a standard textbook of theology in many conservative seminaries testifies to the respect that it has had.

The editor is a teacher of theology and missions at Faith Theological Seminary. He gained his interest in the Princeton theologians, particularly Hodge, through the influence of his parents who worked as dental missionaries under the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions. Convinced of Hodge's continued importance and relevance, Gross has attempted to present in this abridgment the heart of his theology. He has deleted much of the historical theology and apologetical sections which he claims are dated and irrelevant to our modern era. He has also left out many quotes in both English and foreign languages. What is left is, in the words of Gross, "Hodge's Biblical theology."

There is much to be said for

good concerning this abridgment. It appears that the editor has given us a fair and balanced presentation of the essence of Hodge's theology. Clearly, however, when one reduces a work to one-third of its original content, he also leaves out much that is good. As is always true, nothing beats the original. But if this abridged volume serves to make Hodge more interesting and accessible to both lay persons and theological students, then it will have accomplished its purpose. □

Commentary on Romans, by Robert Haldane. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1988. Pp. 1-668. \$21.95 (paper) (Reviewed by Prof. Robert D. Decker)

Robert Haldane (1764-1842) spent the first half of his ministry in Scotland where several congregational churches were established as a fruit of his preaching. In 1816, at the age of fifty, Haldane moved to Geneva. Under his ministry and teaching several great nineteenth century theologians were trained. Among these were: the church historian, Merle D'Aubigne, and Louis Gaussen, the author of *Theopneustia*, a book on the divine inspiration of Holy Scripture.

This is a fine commentary, a classic on the Epistle to the Romans. Haldane was a careful expositor. He was a Calvinist who never hesitated to expose the errors of Pelagianism and Armini-

anism. In addition one finds in this commentary a warm, pastoral emphasis. His exposition of chapter 1:16, 17 is worth the price of the book. Haldane correctly interprets Romans 7 as referring to Paul after his conversion. One will find nowhere a better exposition of Romans 13:1-7 than in this book.

Not only will preachers find here solid exegesis for sermon preparation, but lay persons as well can benefit from this commentary. Highly recommended. □

The Johannine Logos, by Gordon H. Clark. Jefferson, Maryland: The Trinity Foundation, 1989. 138 pages, plus appendixes. Paper. \$6.95. (Reviewed by David J. Engelsma)

This is Gordon H. Clark at his best. His best is very good Presbyterian theology indeed. The Logos of John 1 (KJV: "Word") is God's "Wisdom" or "Logic." There is, therefore, no playing off of the Person, Jesus, against the propositional truth (doctrine, theology) that reveals Him. Faith in Jesus is belief of the true propositions that are the content of Scripture: "truth therefore is propositional, and these propositions we are called upon to believe" (p. 73). The "Johannine Logos" examined in the book is not only the second Person of the Trinity, but also the concept of truth, or doctrine, in the Gospel of John.

Clark is a merciless foe of every Christian teacher and teaching that disparages "the grasp of intellectual, intelligible truth" (p. 58), from the well-meaning fundamentalist who decries "barren doctrine" to dialectical theology to mysticism. His exposure of this swarm of enemies of Biblical Christianity is of critical importance in our anti-intellectual, anti-doctrinal age.

But the Presbyterian thinker overdoes his emphasis on the intellectual. Is "the antithesis... entirely intellectual" (p. 67)? It is intellectual. It is fundamentally intellectual. But is it "entirely" intellectual? Is the "heart" in Scripture "the intellect" (p. 113)—strictly identical with the intellect? And is saving faith assent to known propositions, exclusive of trust (Chapter 5)? What about Q. 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism: "True faith is not only a certain knowledge... but also an assured confidence..." Similarly, Q. 72 of the Westminster Larger Catechism: "Justifying faith is a saving grace... whereby (the sinner)... not only assenteth to the truth of the promise of the gospel, but receiveth and resteth upon Christ..." □

The Actuality of Atonement, by Colin E. Gunton. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989. Pp. vii-222. \$24.95. Cloth. (Reviewed by David J. Engelsma)

From this slender, but expensive book, theologians will learn something of the contemporary development of the doctrine of the atonement in circles by no means notoriously liberal. Colin Gunton, a British theologian, is widely regarded as Reformed.

Contending that the Bible describes the atonement of Christ by metaphors, Gunton examines the three most prominent metaphors: victory over the demons; satisfaction of the justice of God; and the offering of the sacrifice. Since, according to Gunton, the cross was Christ's victory over demons who do not exist; Christ's satisfaction without penal substitution; and Christ's sacrifice having nothing to do with the revolting notion that God demands the blood of an innocent victim, the result is a death of Jesus that is no actual atonement at all. Metaphor is employed effectively to destroy the actuality of atonement. □

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