

Protestant Reformed Theological Journal

VOLUME XXXIV

November, 2000

Number 1

In This Issue:

Editor's Notes	1
Setting in Order the Things That Are Wanting Robert D. Decker	2
Genesis 1-11: Myth or History? David J. Engelsma	13
Thomas Bradwardine: Forgotten Medieval Augustinian Russell J. Dykstra	28
Book Reviews	41



ISSN: 1070-8138

PROTESTANT REFORMED THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

Published twice annually by the faculty of the Protestant Reformed
Theological Seminary:

Robert D. Decker, Editor

Russell J. Dykstra, Book Review Editor

David J. Engelsma



The Protestant Reformed Theological Journal is published by the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary twice each year, in April and November, and mailed to subscribers free of charge. Those who wish to receive the *Journal* should write the editor, at the address below. Books for review should be sent to the book review editor, also at the address of the school.

Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary
4949 Ivanrest Avenue
Grandville, MI 49418
USA

EDITOR'S NOTES

Prof. David J. Engelsma asserts, "... the historicity of the opening chapters of the Bible is of fundamental importance." Prof. Engelsma explains, "In this issue (that of the historicity of Genesis 1 - 11, RDD), the gospel itself is at stake among us. If we agree that Genesis 1 - 11 is myth, the divinity of Scripture — its 'God-breathedness,' as II Timothy 3:16 puts it — is denied, and thus is lost Scripture's authority, reliability, clarity, sufficiency, and unity. If Genesis 1 - 11 is myth, the message of Scripture is abandoned, for Genesis 1 - 11 is the foundation of the doctrine of justification by faith alone and the source of the gospel of grace. Martin Luther is our teacher here. Of the early chapters of Genesis, he said: 'certainly the foundation of the whole of Scripture.'

"The force then of the sorry, embarrassing topic of this piece is, 'What are we to make of the foundation of the whole of Scripture? myth? or history?'" Prof. Engelsma concludes this first installment on the subject. "The child of God must have *history* in Genesis 1 - 11. Christianity must have history there, history that is clearly and reliably set down by divine inspiration." Read this forthright defense of the historicity of Genesis 1 - 11 and be warned and instructed.

Prof. Russell J. Dykstra contributes a fascinating study of Thomas Bradwardine — "... a late medieval theologian of considerable significance who has been all but lost to the twentieth century church." Prof. Dykstra contends that this man deserves serious consideration because, "From a church historical perspective, he represents a resurgence of a relatively pure Augustinianism in the late Middle Ages. From a doctrinal point of view, he was one of a few who maintained the doctrine of sovereign, double predestination as Augustine had, and as many of the sixteenth century reformers would. He is a light for the truth in the relatively dark time of the Middle Ages, and that, coming two centuries before the great sixteenth century reformation." Read and enjoy Prof. Dykstra's account of the life and theology of this little known medieval theologian.

The editor continues his exposition of the Epistle to Titus. This exposition, the reader may recall, was first given in the form of "chapel talks" at the weekly chapel services at the seminary. They are presented in the *Journal* pretty much as they were delivered in chapel.

As is our custom the last section of the *Journal* is devoted to reviews, some very detailed and extensive, of books on a number of theological subjects. It is our hope that these reviews will be of help to busy pastors who are serious about building their libraries with good books that will be of help to them in their ministering to God's people and church.

Our prayer is that this issue of the *Journal* will serve to edify those who read it and in this way to advance the cause of God's truth and church.

Setting in Order the Things That Are Wanting

An Exposition of Paul's Epistle to Titus (2)

Robert D. Decker

In the previous issue we offered an exposition of verses one through four of Chapter One of Titus. In this issue we continue with the exposition of verses five through nine.

In this section the inspired apostle lays down the qualifications or gifts a man needs if he is to serve in the office of elder (ruling or teaching) in God's church. Two comments are in order concerning these qualifications. First, these are absolutely necessary if a man is to serve God's church in the office of elder. A man must possess a measure of each of these qualifications or he may not occupy the office. Second, these necessary qualifications are gifts of God. God graciously bestows these gifts upon men, qualifying them to serve as elders and ministers in Christ's church. The fact that these are gifts from God does not mean they cannot be developed. Indeed, we would maintain that a man who is blessed with these qualifications must strive diligently to develop them in order to be of greater blessing to the church he is called to serve.

CHAPTER ONE

The apostle, after his salutation to Titus, his "own son," instructs the young preacher concerning the office of elder in the church. Writes the apostle,¹ "For this cause² left I thee in Crete, in order that thou shouldest set in order thoroughly (completely) the things remaining and appoint³ elders at every city, as I charged thee. If anyone is blameless,⁴

1. The translation is mine, RDD.

2. "For this cause" is *toutou charin*.

3. The AV translates *dietaxamen*, "ordain."

4. *Anekkleetos* is one who cannot be called to account, unreprouvable, unaccused.

a husband of one wife, having believing children, not in the state of accusation of a dissolute life or unruly. For it is necessary that the bishop be blameless as the steward of God, not self willed (self pleasing, arrogant), not prone to anger, not given to wine, no striker,⁵ not eager for base gain; But given to hospitality, loving goodness, sober, just, holy, temperate; Holding fast the faithful (trustworthy, reliable) word which is according to the doctrine in order that he might be able both to exhort (encourage) by means of his sound teaching and to refute the ones who speak against it" (vv. 5 - 9).

Verse 5

In this verse the inspired apostle informs Titus why he left him in Crete: "For this cause left I thee in Crete, in order that thou shouldest set in order thoroughly the things remaining and appoint elders at every city,⁶ as I charged thee."

Whether the purpose is twofold, i.e., 1) Titus is commanded to set in order the things remaining (whatever those things might have been) and 2) Titus must appoint elders as well in every city, or whether there is one purpose: Titus is told to set in order the things remaining, i.e., ordain elders in every city, makes little difference. Hendriksen takes the latter interpretation and we are inclined to agree with him.⁷

Titus must ordain or appoint elders at every city, "as I charged thee." The idea is that the apostle now puts in writing the charge he had previously given Titus orally. He does this, no doubt, to remind Titus of what he must do among the believers in Crete. These instructions are written too, no doubt, to confirm Titus' authority to ordain elders should that authority be disputed. No less is it God's purpose to give instruction through this charge to Titus to the entire New Testament church.

According to this verse, Titus must appoint elders.⁸ In verse seven

5. *Pleekteen*, a pugnacious, quarrelsome person, one quick to pick a fight, a bruiser, ready with a blow.

6. *hina*, with the two subjunctives *epidiorthoosei* and *katasteeseis*, expresses purpose.

7. William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: I - II Timothy, Titus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), pp. 344 - 345.

8. *presbuteros* is the term in this verse.

he refers to the same men using the word “bishop.”⁹ The term “elder” is used in the New Testament to refer to the aged men and to refer to the office of elder in the church. In the latter sense the term refers to the *dignity* of the *office* of the elder, the title and official, authoritative position of the elder. While these men need not necessarily be older in years, they must be mature in the faith. The word “bishop” used in verse seven refers to the same office but from the point of view of its *function*. A bishop is an overseer. The elder takes oversight of God’s flock and in this way shepherds the flock.¹⁰ Thayer offers this description and translation: a bishop is “One charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly, a bishop is a superintendent.”¹¹ Both of these terms, “elder” and “bishop,” are found in the parallel passage, I Timothy 3:1-7.

The elders, therefore, are men who are qualified by the grace of God in Christ and authorized by Christ, the King of the church, to take spiritual oversight of the congregation. They are the rulers of God’s church who take care that everything in the church is done decently and in good order. They must see to it that sound doctrine and godly living are maintained in the church.

Titus is instructed by the apostle to appoint these elders. The question is, does this mean that Titus himself must appoint the elders? Must Titus personally search out men who possess the gifts and qualifications for the office of elder and then appoint, i.e., ordain them to that office? Or is it the case that Titus must instruct the church in these matters and that the people of God in the office of believers were to call qualified men to the special office of elder?

While the question cannot be answered decisively, we think the latter is correct. The congregation was to be involved in the calling of qualified, gifted men to the office of elder. We believe that Titus was to see to it that the people of God were instructed in their duty to call and ordain the elders. This is the way Christ Himself calls (appoints and qualifies) men to the office of elder, i.e., Christ accomplishes this through the congregation and the office of believer.

9. *episkopos* is the term in verse 7.

10. See I Peter 5:2.

11. James Henry Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973), p. 243.

Our reasons for taking this position are: 1. The entire congregation in Jerusalem was involved in the calling and ordination of the first deacons. It was the multitude of the disciples who chose the seven, "Whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them." The Lord blessed this institution of the office of deacon and the seven who were thus chosen, for "the Word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:1-7). 2. This is the manner in which Timothy himself was called and ordained a preacher, as is evident from the exhortation given him, "neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery" (I Tim. 4:4). 3. Even though the risen Christ personally appeared to and called the apostles (Paul too, Acts 9), the Holy Spirit instructed the congregation at Antioch to "separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." In obedience to this command, the congregation laid hands on them after fasting and praying and sent them on the first missionary journey (Acts 13:1-4). 4. Finally, very early after the apostolic era ended, the church was involved in the calling of her officebearers.

Verse 6

In this verse the inspired apostle begins the list of gifts and qualifications a man must have if he is to be called by Christ through the church to the office of elder in the church. The apostle concludes this list in verse nine.

There are at least two comments needed before we look at each of these gifts/qualifications in a bit of detail. 1. This relatively long list, which indicates not only what must characterize the elder but also what must not characterize him, only serves to emphasize just how high and important this office of Christ is in the church. 2. For this very reason, consistories and congregations must take this very, very seriously when called upon to nominate and call men to the office of elder or minister. A man lacking in any one of these gifts/qualifications may not be called to the office of elder. He may not be called because lacking one or more of these gifts/qualifications for the office renders him unable to function in the office. He is unqualified for the office. God did not place this list in Holy Scripture for the church to ignore! Councils, consistories, sessions ought carefully and with much prayer read this passage and its

parallel, I Timothy 3, every year when it is time to nominate men for the sacred office of elder.

The elder must be blameless. The Greek word here means “one who cannot be called to account, unaccused, unprovable.”¹² This does not mean that an elder must be sinless. That would be quite impossible. In fact the best elders are the ones who have a deep, profound sense of their sins and their sinful natures. The best elders are those who prayerfully fight against their sins and sinful natures and who daily repent of those sins and who are profoundly thankful for the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

The elder must be blameless in the sense that no one can point to any public or gross sin in his life. The elder must have a good reputation; he must be one who cannot be called to account. The elder must be morally upright. This is extremely important! The elder, after all, is called to be an example of the believers (I Tim. 4:12). Our fathers were impressed with this truth and captured it beautifully in the forms for the ordination of ministers, elders, and deacons. These forms stipulate that the names of those about to be ordained must be announced to the congregation to make certain “no one can allege anything lawful against them.”¹³ Only when this is ascertained may the church proceed to ordain the men into the sacred office of Christ.

Having established the fact that the elder must be blameless, the apostle continues by explaining in detail what this means. The elder must be “a husband of one wife” and “having believing children.” This does not mean that an unmarried man may not serve as elder. Nor does this mean that a married man who has no children may not serve in the office of elder. The man whom the Holy Spirit inspired to write this very letter to Titus was not married and, of course, had no children. It may perhaps be argued that ideally the man ought to be married and the father of believing children. But this is not necessary.

What this does mean is that the elder must be devoted to one wife; he must be a one-wife husband. The elder may not have two or more wives. He may not be an adulterer or fornicator. The elder must be

12. The Greek is *anegkleetos*.

13. *The Psalter*, Revised Edition (Grand Rapids: Protestant Reformed Churches, 1998), pp. 100, 104.

totally devoted to his wife; he must nourish and cherish her in the love of God just as Christ loves His one bride, the church.

And the elder must have believing children. This is possible only if the elder is, by God's grace, a faithful father. The elder must be a father who provokes not his children to wrath, but one who brings them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). The faithful father does this in three ways: 1) He carefully supervises his wife's teaching of their children. 2) He himself takes the time to teach his children God's fear by word and by the example of his own life. 3) He takes an active interest in his children's education in both the Christian school and the church. In one word the elder must be an exemplary husband and father. If he is, and if he nevertheless has the tragic experience of raising an Esau, this would not disqualify him from serving as an elder. He must, however, have his marriage and children in good order. Calvin sums the whole matter nicely when he writes, "Seeing that it is required that a pastor shall have prudence and gravity, it is proper that those qualities should be exhibited in his family; for how shall that man who cannot rule his own house – be able to govern the church! Besides, not only must the bishop himself be free from reproach, but his whole family ought to be a sort of mirror of chaste and honourable discipline; and, therefore, in the First Epistle to Timothy, he not less strictly enjoins their wives what they ought to be."¹⁴ A man, therefore, who is not a one-wife husband and who does not have believing children because he is an unfaithful father may not serve the church as an elder. Again, let the congregations and consistories take this matter very seriously. If they do not, the churches will suffer.

Further, the apostle writes, the elder must not be in the state of accusation of a dissolute life or unruly. The Authorized Version translates, "not accused of riot or unruly." The word translated "riot" refers to unrestrained, wanton immorality. The word translated "unruly" means broken down, shameless immorality, all standards even of common decency being broken down.¹⁵ Again, the plain meaning is, there must be nothing in the elder's life that would make it possible for

14. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1959), p. 292.

15. The two words are, respectively, *kateegoria* and *anopotakta*.

someone to accuse him of immorality. The elder must be blameless in this sense.

It is striking indeed that in this list of gifts/qualifications for the office of elder the Holy Spirit begins with the man's calling as a husband and father. This has to mean that first of all, before any other considerations, a man must be a good, faithful family man. There must not be even a hint of moral impropriety or weakness or sin.

Verse 7

The apostle writes in the seventh verse, "For it is necessary that the bishop be blameless, as the steward of God...." Here the apostle states the reason for the requirements given in verse six. A bishop must be blameless, a one-wife husband, having believing children, not accused of riot or of being unruly — because it is necessary that the bishop be such. This is divine necessity. God requires this of a bishop. These gifts/qualifications are not set up as the standard by men, not even by the men of the church. God Himself says this is what the bishop must be!

God says this is what the bishop must be because he is the steward of God.¹⁶ In the ancient world the head of the house often had a steward who would manage the affairs of the household for him. Scripture calls the apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers "stewards of the mysteries of God" (I Cor. 4:1). These stewards were entrusted with the gospel and charged with the task of preaching/teaching that gospel to the church. Moreover, I Corinthians 4 goes on to explain, "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful" (v. 2). The point the apostle is making in I Corinthians 4 is that the steward must be found faithful, not by men, but by God! It does not matter how the Corinthians judge the apostle or what they think of Paul. What matters is that he, the apostle, be found faithful by God!

Thus it is with the bishops of God's church. They are stewards. They have been put in charge of the church. That church has been chosen in Jesus Christ before the foundations of the world. Christ is the Head of that church. The church is Christ's holy bride because He suffered the agonies of hell for her on the cross. Christ atoned for the sins of His bride, and in His resurrection she is raised to newness of life. When Jesus

16. The word is *oikonomon*, which means manager or steward.

returns at the end of the ages. God will raise up His church to everlasting life and glory in the new heaven and earth. God raises up in the church gifted, qualified men to be bishops. God puts them in charge of His church. There could be no higher, no more blessed, no more important task in all the world than to be God's steward in charge of the church, the holy bride of Christ.

God says to those elders whom He calls to the teaching office, "Preach the word: be instant in season, out of season: reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (II Tim. 4:2). Be faithful in that work! Devote all of your time and energy to this great task. By this means, God says to the preachers, my sheep hear the voice of Jesus, are known of Him, and follow Him into life eternal.

God says to the ruling elders, you too are stewards of the church. Rule the church; guide and lead the church in the way of thankful obedience to My will. When they wander into sin, God says, discipline and admonish them in Christ's love. Keep my church holy and pure. When they are sick, bring to them the Word which assures them that all things work together for the good of them that love God. When they are anxious and in despair, bring them the Word which teaches them to cast all their cares upon the Lord who cares for them. When they sorrow, bring them the Word which alone can comfort them.

The elders must remember in all their work in the church that it is required of stewards that a man be found faithful not by men, but by God! There will always be, in fact, ungodly in the church who will wickedly and sharply contradict the Word and oppose you. Do not be afraid of them. Do not seek the praise of men either! Just remember this one thing: you must be found faithful by God Himself. To Him you will give an account (Heb. 13:17).

When the ministers and elders of the church ponder these things and when they consider their own sins, weaknesses, and their sinful natures against which they have to fight all their lives long, when they ponder these things, two things happen: 1) They tremble! If this does not make you students tremble, God is not calling you to the office of the bishop! 2) They are driven often, daily, to the Lord in prayer. They realize that it is possible for them to serve the church and her Lord as bishops only by the grace of God in Jesus!

Is God calling you to serve Him and His church in the office of bishop as His steward? I assume that you are in seminary because you

are convinced God is calling you to this holy office. That being the case, you are determined to be blameless, as God's steward. You are a humble man, a man of unceasing prayer, one who depends upon the Lord's grace. And you are determined to be found faithful by God!

In the rest of verse seven the apostle describes what a bishop must not be. In verses eight and nine he describes what a bishop must be.

The bishop must not be self-willed or arrogant.¹⁷ It is interesting to note in this connection that Scripture in II Peter 2:10 describes the false teachers as self-willed! The arrogant man may not be a bishop; he does not qualify for the office. The reason is simple. The bishop must seek to please God and His Christ by caring for the people of God. He may not seek himself; rather, he denies himself and seeks the welfare of God's people. He must never proudly seek to please himself, but in humility he must unselfishly seek the salvation of God's people. In this way he pleases the Lord and is found faithful. It is the false teacher, the hypocritical, wicked, unfaithful bishop who is self-willed, self-pleasing, and arrogant. There is no place for this kind of member in God's church. Certainly there is no place in the church for this kind of bishop.

Neither must the bishop be prone to anger.¹⁸ The text, we ought to notice, does not say that the bishop may never be angry. There is a righteous anger. God Himself is angry with the wicked every day. But the bishop must not be prone to anger. He must not be soon angry, i.e., inclined quickly to lose his temper. Satan and evil men in the church will quickly take advantage of that weakness in a bishop and soon the bishop will be ineffective. The elder then must be able to control himself so that he does not quickly fly into a towering rage.

Nor must the bishop be given to wine. Literally the word in the Greek refers to one who sits long at his wine, hence, a drunkard.¹⁹ We all know that Scripture does not forbid the proper use of alcoholic beverages. In fact, it is the preacher/bishop Timothy whom the apostle Paul commands to "use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities" (I Tim. 5:23). We all know too that Scripture sharply

17. The word is *mee authadee*, which is derived from *autos heedomai*, which means self-willed or self-pleasing and in that sense arrogant.

18. *Mee orgilon*.

19. *Mee paroinon*.

and clearly forbids the abuse of alcohol. The Bible states categorically, "no drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 6:10). Certainly the bishop may not be given to wine. Drunkenness would render him unfit to care for God's people, and unable as well. Also, and especially, in this respect, let the bishops set a good example for the children of God entrusted to their care.

The bishop must be "no striker," i.e., a pugnacious, quarrelsome person, one who is quick to pick a fight, a bruiser, one ready with a blow.²⁰ Again, the bishop must be prepared to fight the good fight of faith with the whole armor of God (Eph. 6). In fact, he must be in the vanguard of God's army. The bishop has to lead the way in keeping the doctrine of the church pure. The bishop must fight against all heresies and errors and ungodliness. A courageous defender of the faith must he be.

The bishop must not be a striker. He must not be quick to pick a fight over non-essentials. He must not be a quarrelsome, pugnacious person. There are such in the church, as any minister/bishop knows only too well. These people, more often than not, like to pick fights with the elders and especially with the minister. If you wish, you can be fighting all the time, but you do not have to! When you are in the ministry you must admonish these strikers from the Word of God and in the love of God call them to repentance. If need be you must place them under discipline with the fervent prayer that God will use that means to bring them to repentance. But do not be quarrelsome and quick to pick a fight.

Nor may the bishop be given to filthy lucre. He must not be greedy or eager for base, shameful gain.²¹ The bishop must not be a lover of money who uses the office of a bishop to gain wealth. The Bible nowhere condemns wealth. Being rich is not a vice, no more than being poor is a virtue. Whether one be wealthy or poverty stricken, he must not desire riches, nor must he trust in uncertain riches. The love of money (not money, but the love of it) is the root of all evil (I Tim. 6:6-10, 17-19). In this too the bishop must be a good example to the believers. In very practical terms, take to heart this advice when you become ministers in God's church: 1) Let your legitimate needs be known to the elders and

20. *Mee pleekteen.*

21. *Mee aischrokerdee.*

deacons: food, shelter, clothing, Christian education for your children, etc. 2) Be a good steward of what the church gives you. Do not squander it foolishly. 3) Be content with your wages. Do not lust for money. Do not always be complaining that you do not have enough. Godliness with contentment is great gain also for the bishop!

In sum, then, the bishop must be: 1) Blameless, a one-wife husband having believing children, and not accused of riot or of being unruly; 2) a faithful steward of God; 3) not self-willed, soon angry, given to wine, a striker, or given to filthy lucre.

A man who does not have these gifts/qualifications may not serve as a bishop in God's church. ●

... to be continued

Genesis 1-11: Myth or History?

David J. Engelsma

Everything about the topic of this polemical essay is wrong. There is absolutely no reason to set Genesis 1-11 off from the rest of Genesis, the rest of the Old Testament, and the rest of the Bible as a special, indeed dubious, kind of writing. There is no question whether Genesis 1-11 is historical. There may be no question about the historicity of Genesis 1-11. Merely to allow for the possibility that Genesis 1-11 is mythical is unbelief. Seriously to pose the question about Genesis 1-11, "Myth or History?" is to do exactly what Eve did when she entertained the speaking serpent's opening question, "Yea, hath God said?" (Gen. 3:1). Tolerance of doubt concerning the truthfulness of God's Word is revolt against Him and apostasy from Him.

Nevertheless, the topic is forced upon us by the controversy of the present day. And it serves well to sharpen the issue: Genesis 1-11 is either myth or history. That section of Scripture is not, and cannot be, a third thing: mythical history, or historical myth.

The topic is not seriously intended, as though it were an open question to the writer, and may be an open question to the reader, whether Genesis 1-11 is myth or history. Genesis 1-11 is history, not myth. This must be the presupposition, proposition, and conclusion of this article. Genesis 1-11 demands it.

It is shameful that the topic is necessary in the sphere of Reformed churches. Has it really come to this in the Reformed churches, that the historicity of Genesis 1-11 must be defended? One can reply, correctly, that this is also the case in all the other churches, Protestant as well as Roman Catholic. Nevertheless, the Reformed believer so feels the shame of it that also the Reformed churches have proved vulnerable to the assault on Genesis 1-11 that he has no joy in publishing an article that makes this known. His spirit is rather that of David in II Samuel 1:19, 20:

“How are the mighty fallen! Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.” He experiences the sting of the apostolic rebuke in Hebrews 5:12: “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God.”

Humiliating though the topic is, the issue must be confronted: the historicity of Genesis 1-11 is widely and increasingly denied, in evangelical and Reformed circles; and the historicity of the opening chapters of the Bible is of fundamental importance.

In this issue, the gospel itself is at stake among us. If we agree that Genesis 1-11 is myth, the divinity of Scripture—its “God-breathedness,” as II Timothy 3:16 puts it—is denied, and thus is lost Scripture’s authority, reliability, clarity, sufficiency, and unity. If Genesis 1-11 is myth, the message of Scripture is abandoned, for Genesis 1-11 is the foundation of the doctrine of justification by faith alone and the source of the gospel of grace. Martin Luther is our teacher here. Of the early chapters of Genesis, he said: “certainly the foundation of the whole of Scripture.”

The force then of the sorry, embarrassing topic of this piece is, “What are we to make of the foundation of the whole of Scripture? myth? or history?”

Myth?

The foundation of the whole of Scripture and, therefore, also of all that the whole Scripture teaches is a myth, the Christian church is being told today, by her own ministers, theologians, and scholars. A myth is a story that explains an important aspect of human life and experience. Often the story is of a theological, spiritual, and religious nature. But a myth is a story that never happened. The storyteller casts the myth in the form of events, events that occurred on earth among men. Usually these events involved the gods and their relationships with men and women. But these mythical events have no reality in actual fact; they are unhistorical. If read or listened to for entertainment, the myth is fictitious. If taught as the factual explanation of a certain aspect of human life, the myth is a lie.

C.F. Nosgen gives this definition of “myth”: “Any unhistorical tale, however it may have arisen, in which a religious society finds a

constituent part of its sacred foundations, because an absolute expression of its institutions, experiences, and ideas, is a myth."¹

Heathen religions abound in myths. The Greek myth of Pandora's box explains evil in the world as the result of a woman's opening a box contrary to the instruction of the gods. The Babylonian myth *Enuma Elish* explains creation from the killing and dividing of a great monster, Tiamat.

Scripture speaks of myths. In the Greek of the New Testament, Scripture speaks of myths explicitly: the Greek word is *muthos*, "myth." The King James Version uniformly translates this Greek word as "fables." But Scripture denies that the biblical message is based on, or derived from, myths: "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables (Greek: *muthos*), when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty" (II Pet. 1:16). It warns the saints, particularly ministers, against myths: "Neither give heed to fables (Greek: *muthos*)" (I Tim. 1:4). Nevertheless, Scripture prophesies that in the last days, under the influence of unsound teachers—"mythologians," we may call them—professing Christians will turn from the truth to myths: "And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (Greek: *muthos*)" (II Tim. 4:4).

This prophecy is now fulfilled in evangelical and Reformed churches in that men and women hold Genesis 1-11 for myth. They have turned from Genesis 1-11 as truth to Genesis 1-11 as myth. This is widespread. This prevails. Otherwise, we would not be forced to the shameful extremity of defending the historical reality of the events recorded in Genesis 1-11.

Many Reformed people in North America learned that Genesis 1-11 is regarded as a myth, in reputable and influential Reformed circles, with the publication of the book, *The Fourth Day*, in 1986.² Since the author of the book was then a professor at Calvin College, the book and

1. C. F. Vosgen, cited in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, vol. 4, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967, p. 765. For a forthright acknowledgment that "myth" is, in fact, man's own creation of history, see W. Taylor Stevenson, *History as Myth: The Import for Contemporary Theology*, New York: Seabury Press, 1969.

2. Howard J. Van Till, *The Fourth Day: What the Bible and the Heavens are Telling Us about the Creation*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986.

resulting controversy brought to light that the view of Genesis 1-11 as myth is held, taught, and tolerated at Calvin College.

Four years later, in 1990, a similar work came out of Calvin College. This was titled, *Portraits of Creation: Biblical and Scientific Perspectives on the World's Formation*.³ In a chapter entitled, "What Says the Scripture?" John H. Stek, at that time a professor of Old Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary, boldly asserted that Genesis 1 draws on heathen, Egyptian myths; is non-historical; is a "metaphorical narration"; and is, in short, a "storied rather than a historiographical account of creation."

A third installment of Calvin College's ongoing denial of the historicity of Genesis 1-11 followed in 1995. In his book, *The Biblical Flood: A Case Study of the Church's Response to Extrabiblical Evidence*, professor of geology Davis A. Young rejected the historicity of the account of the flood in Genesis 6-9. On the basis mainly of geology, Young declared that "there is no evidence whatsoever to indicate that human or animal populations were ever disrupted by a catastrophic global flood." The account of the flood in Genesis is Scripture's exaggerated—*enormously* exaggerated—description of some local flood or other once upon a time in the region of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers: "The flood account uses hyperbolic language to describe an event that devastated or disrupted Mesopotamian civilization—that is to say, the whole world of the Semites."⁴

But it would be a mistake to suppose that the mythologizing of Genesis 1-11 goes on only at the college of Howard Van Till and Davis Young and at the seminary of John Stek. It goes on almost everywhere in evangelical, Presbyterian, and Reformed churches. Rare is the church, seminary, or college where it is not found and tolerated, if not approved. Among the theologians, scholars, and teachers, it is the prevailing view.

3. *Portraits of Creation: Biblical and Scientific Perspectives on the World's Formation*, ed. Howard J. Van Till, Robert E. Snow, John H. Stek, Davis A. Young, Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.

4. Davis A. Young, *The Biblical Flood: A Case Study of the Church's Response to Extrabiblical Evidence*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995. The book was reviewed in the November, 1995 issue of the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*. The quotations are found on pages 311, 312 of the book.

This means that in a very short time it will be the prevailing view of the people, if it is not already.

One strategic center for teaching the myth is the Christian school, not only the Christian colleges, but also the Christian grade schools and high schools. The Christian schools in North America are full of the teaching that Genesis 1-11 is myth.

Christian schools!

To be sure, the term “myth” is seldom used in Reformed and evangelical circles. Those who are, in fact, teaching that Genesis 1-11 is myth will usually disavow “myth” as the proper description of that part of Holy Scripture. There is good reason for this. “Myth” has unsavory connotations. The Bible expressly denounces myths. Only the most radical (and candid!) of liberal theologians—the Rudolph Bultmanns—boldly call the Bible stories in Genesis 1-11 “myths.” Hence, the evangelical and the Reformed mythologians are careful to use other terms. However, just as a rose by any other name smells sweet, so a myth by any other name still stinks.

We ignore the liberals like Hermann Gunkel, who called Genesis 1-11 “legend,” and the neo-orthodox like Karl Barth, who called the passage “saga.” Our concern is the extent to which Genesis 1-11 is regarded as myth in reputedly conservative circles. In *The Fourth Day*, Howard Van Till described the opening chapters of Genesis as “primal,” or “primeval history.” The committee of the Christian Reformed Church that advised synod on the views of Van Till and his colleagues referred to Genesis 1-11 as “stylized, literary, or symbolic stories.”⁵

The Dutch Reformed scientist and author Jan Lever had earlier written two books that were translated into English in which he attacked the Reformed confession that Genesis 1-11 is historical. In his *Where are We Headed? A Christian Perspective on Evolution*, he vehemently denied that Genesis 1-11 is “an account of historical events.... Anyone who reads the Bible with common sense can reach the conclusion that a

5. “Report 28: Committee on Creation and Science,” in *Christian Reformed Church in North America: Agenda for Synod 1991*, Grand Rapids: Christian Reformed Church, 1991, pp. 367-433.

literal reading of the Genesis account is wrong.” Rather, the opening chapters of the Bible are a “confession about God.”⁶

A recent book by notable evangelical theologians and other scholars, *The Genesis Debate*, has a number of these men insisting that Genesis 1-11 is unhistorical, indeed allegorical. One scholar is bold to state an implication of this view of Genesis 1-11 that fairly bristles with doctrinal implications, namely, that it is absurd to think that the human race descended from two (married) ancestors. Nevertheless, so the editor informs us, this scholar, like all the others, is “committed to the full inspiration and authority of Scripture.”⁷

Another prominent evangelical, Charles E. Hummel, in an InterVarsity publication, *The Galileo Connection*, contends that the first eleven chapters of Genesis must be seen as a “literary genre”; they are a “semipoetic narrative cast in a historico-artistic framework.” Genesis 1-11 is not a “cosmogony,” but a “confession of faith.”⁸

The Fuller Seminary theologian Paul K. Jewett prefers the designations “primal history” and “theologized history.” Authoritative science has enabled us moderns to recognize the “childlike limitations of the understanding” of those who wrote the first eleven chapters of the Bible. Theirs was a “prescientific simplicity” when they told the story of “God’s making the world ‘in the space of six days.’”⁹

Bruce Waltke, who was professor of Old Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary at the time, wrote in *Christianity Today* that we must not read Genesis 1:1-2:3 as historical. Rather, we must take “an artistic-literary approach.” He quoted Henri Blocher approvingly: the

6. Jan Lever, *Where are We Headed? A Christian Perspective on Evolution*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970, pp. 25, 27. See also Jan Lever, *Creation and Evolution*, Grand Rapids: Grand Rapids International Publications, distributed by Kregel’s, 1958.

7. *The Genesis Debate: Persistent Questions about Creation and the Flood*, ed. Ronald Youngblood. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990. H. Wade Seaford, Jr. scoffs at the descent of the race from two parents on p. 163. Youngblood praises Seaford’s commitment to the inspiration of Scripture on p. viii.

8. Charles E. Hummel, *The Galileo Connection: Resolving Conflicts between Science & the Bible*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986. See particularly pp. 214, 217.

9. Paul K. Jewett, *God, Creation, and Revelation: A Neo-Evangelical Theology*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991, pp. 16, 478-484.

passage is "an artistic arrangement ... not to be taken literally." Waltke concluded that Genesis 1:1-2:3 is a "creation story in *torah* ('instruction'), which is a majestic, artistic achievement, employing anthropomorphic language."¹⁰

To refer to no others, in his book, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, John Frame, at the time professor of theology at Westminster Seminary in Escondido, California, wrote that he is open to the possibility of interpreting Genesis 1 and 2 "figuratively" because of the findings of geologists that the earth is very old.¹¹

All of these men studiously avoid the use of the word "myth," although a couple of them give the game away by their description of the kind of stories they think to find in Genesis 1-11. Having denied that Genesis gives us "a picture of reality," Lever goes on to affirm that Genesis "does provide us with the fundamentals for a *life and world view*, a religious perspective on the nature of this reality, its finitude and its dependence upon God in becoming and in being."¹² This is the textbook definition of myth.

Similarly, Bruce Waltke explains his own figurative interpretation of Genesis 1:1-2:3 by quoting H. J. Sorenson in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*:

The basic purpose is to instruct men on the ultimate realities that have an immediate bearing on daily life and on how to engage vitally in these realities to live successfully. It contains "truths to live by" rather than "theology to speculate on."¹³

This is the classic myth.

Avoidance of the term "myth" is of no significance. What is important is that the events recorded in Genesis 1-11 never really happened, *never really happened as Genesis 1-11 records them as happening*. Genesis 1-11 is not history, but myth. This world never did

10. Bruce Waltke, "The First Seven Days: What is the Creation Account Trying to Tell Us?" *Christianity Today*, April 12, 1988, pp. 42-46.

11. John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1987, pp. 314, 315. Frame calls this figurative interpretation a "revised exegesis."

12. Lever, *Where are We Headed?*, p. 23.

13. Waltke, "The First Seven Days," p. 46.

come into existence by the Word of God calling each creature in the space of six days, and then in the *order* set forth in Genesis 1. The human race never did originate from a man, Adam, who was formed by the hand of God from the dust, and from a woman, Eve, built by the hand of God from a rib of the man as we read in Genesis 2. Sin and death never did enter the world by the man's eating a piece of forbidden fruit at the instigation of his wife and by the temptation of a speaking serpent as Genesis 3 tells us. There never was the development of agriculture, herding, music, and metallurgy as Genesis 4 reveals. There never was a universal flood as taught in Genesis 6-8. There never was a Tower of Babel occasioning the dividing of the nations by confounding of the language as set forth in Genesis 11.

Genesis 1-11: Myth!

This is the prevailing opinion in evangelical, Reformed, and Presbyterian seminaries, schools, publishing houses, and churches at the beginning of the 21st century.

Myth is also the implication of the "framework-hypothesis." This is an explanation of the six days of Genesis 1 and of the seventh day of Genesis 2:1-3. The theory is occasioned by doubt concerning the literality of the account in Genesis 1:1-2:3 because of the loud testimony of modern scientists that the universe is billions of years old and that its present form is due to evolution.

The framework hypothesis denies that Genesis 1:1-2:3 makes known what actually took place in the beginning. Rather, the very human, but inspired author told a story whose point is that God created the world in some unknown way and over the span of unknown time. (In fact, the defenders of the framework hypothesis will be found holding that God created the world exactly as evolutionary science decrees: by evolutionary process over billions of years.) The storyteller of Genesis, so runs the hypothesis, hung his story on the framework (utterly fictitious!) of six days of creation and one day of rest. There is nothing factual about the days with their evening and morning, including the seventh day; nothing factual about the order of the days; nothing factual about the individual acts of creation on each day, or about any of the details whatsoever. Presumably, the unreality of the passage would extend also to God's trinitarian conversation within Himself before the creation of man in Genesis 1:26.

This is how one of the leading proponents of the theory, who also

did much to popularize it among conservative Reformed people both in the Netherlands and in North America, described it.

In Genesis 1 the inspired author offers us a story of creation. It is not his intent, however, to present an exact report of what happened at creation. By speaking of the eightfold work of God he impresses the reader with the fact that all that exists has been created by God. This eightfold work he places in a framework: he distributes it over six days, to which he adds a seventh day as the day of rest. In this manner he gives expression to the fact that the work of creation is complete; also that at the conclusion of His work God can rest, take delight in the result; and also ... that in celebrating the Sabbath man must be God's imitator. The manner in which the works of creation have been distributed over six days is not arbitrary.¹⁴

The name by which this understanding of the foundational chapters of the Bible calls itself is itself the refutation of the theory: "framework hypothesis." The faith of the church may not, and does not, rest upon a "hypothesis." The church's faith must be absolutely certain knowledge that has clear, infallible, divine revelation as its object and that receives Genesis 1:1-2:3 for what it itself and all the rest of Scripture claim that it is: history.

The rejection by the framework-hypothesis of the historicity of Genesis 1:1-2:3 implies the mythical character of the more detailed description of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:4ff., the mythical character of the account of the fall in Genesis 3, and the mythical character of the rest of Genesis 1-11, which depends upon Genesis 1-3. For Genesis 1:1-2:3 includes the account of God's creation of a first man and a first woman in His own image. If this account is not historical, neither is the tightly linked account of the fall of these two fabulous persons.

Ridderbos himself acknowledged that the framework-hypothesis implies death in God's world long before, and altogether apart from, any possible "fall" of humans, which according to Genesis 3:17, 18 and Romans 8:19-22 is the cause of death in the creation. Ridderbos also

14. N. H. Ridderbos, *Is There a Conflict between Genesis 1 and Natural Science?*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957, p. 45.

admitted that the framework-hypothesis opens up the church to Jan Lever's teachings of man's biological descent from the beasts.¹⁵

Fundamental to the historicity of Genesis 1-11 is the reality of the days of Genesis 1:1-2:3, each consisting of one evening and one morning: the factuality of their order, as of the acts, or rest, of God on each of them; and the literality of the record of them.

What explains the view of the opening chapters of Scripture as mythical?

This view has not been the tradition of the church for some 1700 years after the apostles. All freely acknowledge that the tradition of the church has been to take Genesis 1-11 as historical. Much less is this view the tradition of the Reformation. Luther is representative of the tradition of the Reformation in his lectures on Genesis. Referring to Eve's temptation by the serpent, Luther wrote:

Through Moses [the Holy Spirit] does not give us foolish allegories; but He teaches us about most important events, which involve God, sinful man, and Satan, the originator of sin. Let us, therefore, establish in the first place that the serpent is a real serpent, but one that has been entered and taken over by Satan, who is speaking through the serpent.¹⁶

A little later in his commentary, reflecting on the first three chapters, Luther wrote: "We have treated all these facts in their historical meaning, which is their real and true one."¹⁷ "Nobody," he added, "can fail to see that Moses does not intend to present allegories, but simply to write the history of the primitive world."¹⁸

Neither is the view of Genesis 1-11 as myth due to exegesis of the chapters themselves, or to exegesis of the New Testament passages that refer to Genesis 1-11. The most liberal of the critics of Genesis 1-11, including Julius Wellhausen and Gerhard von Rad, acknowledged that Genesis 1-11 purports to be history and science. The writer thought that

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 70, 71. To his credit, Ridderbos did not try to hide these implications of the framework-hypothesis. Neither did he minimize the importance of them. He spoke of "two profound problems."

16. Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 1, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, Saint Louis: Concordia, 1958, p. 185.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 231.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 237.

he was giving a cosmogony and intended to give a history. Wellhausen wrote:

Yet for all this the aim of the narrator is not mainly a religious one. Had he only meant to say that God made the world out of nothing, and made it good, he could have said so in simpler words, and at the same time more distinctly. There is no doubt that he means to describe the actual course of the genesis of the world, and to be true to nature in doing so; he means to give a cosmogonic theory. Whoever denies this confounds two different things—the value of history for us, and the aim of the writer. While our religious views are or seem to be in conformity with his, we have other ideas about the beginning of the world, because we have other ideas about the world itself, and see in the heavens no vault, in the stars no lamps, nor in the earth the foundation of the universe. But this must not prevent us from recognizing what the theoretical aim of the writer of Gen. 1 really was. He seeks to deduce things as they are from each other: he asks how they are likely to have issued at first from the primal matter, and the world he has before his eyes in doing this is not a mythical world but the present and ordinary one.¹⁹

Although von Rad excluded Genesis 1:1-2:4a from this analysis, he judged concerning the rest of Genesis 1-11 that

with the Jahwist it would be misdirected theological rigorism not to recognize that what he planned was, as far as might be with the means and possibilities of his time, a real and complete primeval history of mankind. No doubt, he presented this span of history from the point of view of the relationship of man to God; but in the endeavor he also unquestionably wanted to give his contemporaries concrete knowledge of the earliest development of man's civilization, and so this aspect too of J's primeval history has to be taken in earnest.²⁰

Is there anyone who dares to deny that Christ and His apostles regarded the persons and events recorded in Genesis 1-11 as historical, and taught the New Testament church so to regard them, in Matthew

19. Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1973, p. 298.

20. Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 1, New York: Harper & Row, 1962, pp. 158, 159.

19:3-9; John 8:44; Matthew 24:37-41; Romans 5:12-21; I Corinthians 11:7-12; I Timothy 2:12-15; II Peter 3:5, 6; Acts 17:26, and other places? No one derives the conception of Genesis 1-11 as myth from sound exegesis of these New Testament passages. Indeed, the recognition of Genesis 1-11 as historical by Christ and the apostles in New Testament Scripture is an extreme embarrassment for the evangelical and Reformed mythologians.

There is not the slightest opening in the confessions of the Reformation—*binding* documents for all Reformed and Presbyterian theologians—for taking Genesis 1-11 as myth. On the basis of Genesis 1-3, in Articles 12-17, the Belgic Confession teaches creation, the creation of man out of the dust, and the fall of man by means of the devil speaking through the serpent as history. The Heidelberg Catechism does the same in Lord's Days 3 and 4. The Westminster Confession of Faith explicitly requires that the days of Genesis 1 be understood as historical reality: "It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ... in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days, and all very good" (4.1).

Why then have evangelical and Reformed men come to question the historicity of Genesis 1-11?

This has been possible because of the doctrine of Scripture that has gained entrance into the churches. Scripture is regarded as a human book formed by a historical process. In Genesis 1-11 Scripture is a weak, fallible word of man on origins. John Romer is probably a little strong for some evangelical and Reformed defenders of a figurative interpretation of Genesis 1-11, but he does accurately indicate what is going on in these circles as regards their doctrine of Scripture. In a semi-popular work on Scripture titled *Testament*, Romer states that the book of Genesis introduces us to the "world of myth." "Myth," he describes as "a sacred tale. . . carefully designed [to] deal with the deepest issues of the day." How this has come about in the Bible, Romer explains this way:

This whole process began when the sagas of Mesopotamia were carefully re-examined by the authors of Genesis and the thoughts and structures of that most ancient story were turned to the purposes of Israel and their most singular and solitary God.²¹

21. John Romer, *Testament*, New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1988, pp. 33, 39.

Second, and no less significant, is the desire of evangelical and Reformed scholars to accommodate the church's thinking to the thinking of the world, the desire to make Christianity conform to the culture. This runs deep and strong in contemporary Protestant theology. The churches have abandoned the antithesis: the absolute spiritual separation between the world of the ungodly and the holy people of God, between the mind of the enemies of God and the mind of Christ in His friends.

One aspect of this suicidal mania is the conviction that to be respectable, to be attractive even, to educated modern man, the churches must adapt their thinking, their confession, and their Scriptures to the most recent scientific theory. They call the latest scientific theory "general revelation." Since the reigning theory is Darwinian evolution, Genesis 1-11 must dance to the tune played by that infidel scientist and his atheistic theory.

The Roman Catholic writer, Zachary Hayes, is refreshingly honest as to the reason why both the Roman Catholic and the Protestant churches now regard Genesis 1-11 as mythical. "The flat (*sic*), historical interpretation of *Genesis* is gone from virtually all theological presentations outside strictly fundamentalist (*sic*) circles.... The account is largely fictional in character and contains many symbolic and mythical elements...." The cause of the churches' new view of the opening chapters of the Bible is not exegesis of Scripture: "It would be quite incomplete to try to account for these changes solely in terms of the internal development of biblical exegesis." Rather, the cause is modern scientific theory, particularly Darwinian evolution: "The familiar theory, which was laden with inadequacies from the start, has become almost incomprehensible for a Christian who views the origins of the human race in terms of some form of evolution." Hayes gives fair warning: "One cannot open up the possibility of holding some form of evolution without opening a Pandora's box. Those who open that box must be willing to assume responsibility for dealing with the kinds of problems which emerge in many areas of theology."²²

Many evangelical and Reformed scholars and churches are less candid in their explanations, or less developed in their thinking, but they all indicate that their revised view of Genesis is due to the pressure of

22. Zachary Hayes, *What are They Saying about Creation?*, New York: Paulist Press, 1980.

modern science, that is, the theory of evolution. The Christian Reformed "Committee on Creation and Science" consigned all of Genesis 1-11 to the realm of the unhistorical. The passage is a "special kind of historiography"; it gives us "primeval history." The reason for this analysis of the passage was "the impact of general revelation upon our understanding of special revelation." "General revelation" is modern evolutionary scientific theory.²³ N. H. Ridderbos indicated the underlying reason for his framework-hypothesis concerning Genesis 1 and 2 when he argued that "on any other view ... there arise grave difficulties with respect to natural science."²⁴

What the cowardly churches are doing was perfectly symbolized by one of the most ironic incidents in church history. Upon the death of Charles Darwin, the Church of England buried that atheist, who did as much to destroy the church of Jesus Christ as any man in the modern era, with full honors in Westminster Abbey, with old, admitted reprobate Thomas Huxley carrying the casket. This really happened.

None of this implies that the mythologians do not take Genesis 1-11 very seriously and that they do not find much fine, spiritual meaning in this unhistorical section of Scripture.

On the contrary!

The story of creation brings out Israel's dependence on Jahweh, Israel's rejection of the heathen deifying of the creation, and Israel's confession that their God is God alone. The story of the fall is Israel's recognition that man is inherently sinful and needs redemption.

But none of this fine, spiritual and helpful application of Genesis 1-11 carries any weight, for it all rests on ... *myth*. It is all *man's* explanation of *man's* fictitious account of things. It all lacks ... well, *reality*. It is not *sound doctrine*. It is not *truth*.

I need to pay as much attention to Genesis 1-11, if it is myth, as I do to the story of Pandora's box, or to the myth of Marduk slaying and cutting up the monster Tiamat, or to the fairy tale of "Little Red Riding Hood." When the preacher who takes Genesis 3 as myth tells me that I need a redeemer in view of man's fallenness, I have but one response:

23. "Report 28," pp. 379-384.

24. Ridderbos, p. 46.

“*Did* man really fall just as recorded in Genesis 3?” If not, I need no redeemer; rather, I need to evolve higher.

When the theologian who explains Genesis 2 as a myth calls me to live in one-flesh fidelity with my wife (and I notice that as the churches increasingly accept Genesis 1-11 as myth, they decreasingly call me to live in one-flesh fidelity with my wife), I have this question: “Is Genesis 2 a factual account of a historical institution of marriage by the Creator Himself?” If not, I am not bound by any law of faithfulness in marriage. I may live just as I please in marriage, or outside of marriage.

The child of God must have *history* in Genesis 1-11. Christianity must have history there, history that is clearly and reliably set down by divine inspiration. ●

... to be concluded.

Thomas Bradwardine: Forgotten Medieval Augustinian

Russell J. Dykstra

Thomas Bradwardine is a late medieval theologian of considerable significance who has been all but lost to the twentieth century church. In his day, Bradwardine's obvious intellectual ability and theological acumen earned him the designation *Doctor Profundus* and a spot in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.¹ His published works include learned volumes on logic as well as on geometry and physics. The mathematical

1. In "The Nun's Priest's Tale." The section has to do with the relationship between God's foreknowledge of man's actions and man's freedom to act. It reads as follows:

But that which God foreknows, it needs must be,
So says the best opinion of the clerks.
Witness some clerk perfect for his works,
That in the schools there's a great altercation
In this regard, and much disputation
That has involved a hundred thousand men.
But I cannot sift it to the bran with pen,
As can the holy Doctor Augustine,
Or Boethius, or Bishop Bradwardine,
Whether the fact of God's great foreknowing
Makes it right needful that I do a thing
(By needful, I mean, of necessity);
Or else, if a free choice he granted me,
To do that same thing, or to do it not,
Though God foreknew before the thing was wrought;
Or if His knowing constrains never at all,
Save by necessity conditional.

Taken from *Chaucer*, Vol. 22 of *Great Books of the Western World*, Robert Maynard Hutchins (Ed.), (Chicago: William Benton Publisher, 1952) pp. 456-457.

and scientific works were on the cutting edge of those fields and are still referred to today. His theological *magnum opus* is a defense of God's sovereignty, especially over against the Pelagianism of his age – a mammoth work entitled *The Cause of God against the Pelagians*.

Despite his evident ability and significant writing, Bradwardine remains largely unknown to the church world today. This is due partly to the inaccessibility of his works, and partly to the paucity of material written on Bradwardine. In the introduction to his work, *Bradwardine and the Pelagians: A Study of his 'De Causa Dei' and its Opponents*, Gordon Leff laments that "little that is definite or consistent has been said" about Thomas Bradwardine.² That was in 1957, interestingly enough, the year when two major works on Bradwardine appeared – that of Leff and the scholarly work of Heiko Oberman, *Archbishop Thomas Bradwardine: A Fourteenth Century Augustinian*.³ Since that time the dearth of material on Bradwardine has continued, and the English reader is severely limited.⁴

In spite of this dearth of scholarly publications on Bradwardine, he deserves serious consideration. From a church historical perspective, he represents a resurgence of a relatively pure Augustinianism in the late Middle Ages. From a doctrinal point of view, he was one of few who maintained the doctrine of sovereign, double predestination as Augustine had, and as many of the sixteenth century reformers would. He is a light for the truth in the relatively dark time of the Middle Ages, and that, coming two centuries before the great sixteenth century reformation. In addition, sufficient connections exist between Bradwardine and John

2. (Cambridge: University Press, 1957), p. 1.

3. (Utrecht: Drukkerij en Uitgevers-Maatschappij v/h Kemink & Zoon N.V., 1957).

4. In addition to the above two works, there is a translation of a small section of *De Causa Dei*, trans. by Paul L. Nyhus in *Forerunners of the Reformation: The Shape of Late Medieval Thought Illustrated by Key Documents*, Heiko Augustus Oberman (ed.), (New York: Holt Rhinehart and Winston, 1966) pp. 151-164; a brief bibliography by Walter Farquhar Hook, *Lives of the Bishops of Canterbury*, vol. 4, (London: Richard Bentley, 1865) (pp. 80-110), and a short work by Irena Backus, "Thomas Bradwardine and the Church Fathers" in *Studia Patristica*, vol. 28, Elizabeth A. Livingstone, ed., (Leuven: Peeters Press, 1993), pp. 161-168. For the rest, brief references to Bradwardine can be found in connection with other people, particularly John Wyclif.

Wyclif to explore possible influences of the earlier Bradwardine on Wyclif, as well as on other subsequent theologians.

The purpose of this article is to acquaint the reader with Thomas Bradwardine's thought and to set forth his significance. The question that looms large is the mystery of God raising up a Bradwardine at that time in the history of the church, only to have Bradwardine and his work so soon sink into obscurity. God has promised that His church and His truth shall not fail. The medieval age is a time of severe trial for both the church and the truth. The appalling apostasy, corruption, and idolatry makes one wonder how the church could have survived. A cursory glance at this period might well cause one to conclude that God's promises failed. Yet God preserved both His people and His truth. Of that, Bradwardine is proof. His significance is that he stands as a beacon of light for the doctrines of sovereign grace in the dark medieval night of Rome's Pelagian and Semi-Pelagian errors.

Bradwardine's Life

The date of Thomas Bradwardine's birth is disputed. Henry Savile, Bradwardine's earliest biographer, sets it at 1290, but Walter F. Hook doubts that the date can be set with any certainty.⁵ Oberman demonstrates that it was almost certainly five or ten years later and, additionally, calls into question Savile's evidence that Bradwardine was born in Chichester.⁶ It is clear that the Bradwardine family took its name from Bradwardine, a parish near Hereford.⁷

Virtually nothing is known of Bradwardine's early life, not even the date of his entering Oxford University. In Oxford, he studied in Merton College, and he excelled in his studies. He studied philosophy, mathematics, and astronomy before turning his attention to theology. In his day Bradwardine was unsurpassed in the science of mathematics, and, as noted above, he published several works in the area of mathematics and physics.

In 1325 Bradwardine accepted the office of a junior proctor in the University of Oxford. There he was soon involved in a legal dispute that involved the autonomy of the University. The chancellor and proctors

5. Hook, *Bishops of Canterbury*, p. 81.

6. Oberman, *Archbishop Bradwardine*, pp. 11-14. Other than those two facts, Oberman expresses confidence in Savile's biography of Bradwardine.

7. Hook, *Bishops of Canterbury*, p. 81.

insisted that discipline of the University remained with them, not the Church. The king supported this, and a few years afterwards exempted the University from episcopal jurisdiction.⁸

Heiko Oberman, in an introduction to a translation of a section of Bradwardine's *De causa Dei*, points out that Bradwardine had a conversion experience in the late 1320s. Bradwardine describes his attitude prior to his conversion:

Idle and a fool in God's wisdom, I was misled by an unorthodox error at a time when I was still pursuing philosophical studies. Sometimes I went to listen to the theologians discussing this matter [of grace and free will], and the school of Pelagius seemed to me nearest the truth.... In the philosophical faculty I seldom heard a reference to grace, except for some ambiguous remarks. What I heard day in and day out was that we are masters of our own free acts, that ours is the choice to act well or badly, to have virtues or sins and much more along this line.⁹

Bradwardine was so profoundly influenced by this view that – as he relates – “every time I listened to the Epistle read in church and heard how Paul magnified grace and belittled free will—as is the case in Romans 9, ‘It is obviously not a question of human will and effort, but of divine mercy,’ and its many parallels—grace displeased me, ungrateful as I was.”¹⁰

The text (Rom. 9:16) troubled Bradwardine for some time, but he describes his change of heart:

Even before I transferred to the faculty of theology, the text mentioned came to me as a beam of grace and, captured by a vision of the truth, it seemed I saw from afar how the grace of God precedes all good works with a temporal priority [God as Savior through predestination] and natural precedence [God continues to provide for His creation as ‘first mover’].... That is why I express my gratitude to Him who has given me this grace as a free gift.¹¹

8. Hook, *Bishops of Canterbury*, pp. 92-93.

9. Oberman, Heiko Augustus (ed.), *Forerunners of the Reformation: The Shape of Late Medieval Thought Illustrated by Key Documents*, (New York: Holt Rhinehart and Winston, 1966), p. 135. The quotations are from *De causa Dei*.

10. *De causa Dei*, quoted by Oberman in *Key Documents*, p. 135.

11. *De causa Dei*, quoted by Oberman in *Key Documents*, p. 135.

As a result, Romans 9:16 became one of Bradwardine's favorite texts. He quotes it in *De causa Dei* more than any other verse of the Bible.

Eventually this brilliant student became a lecturer in Merton College in Oxford. During that time Bradwardine began writing his chief work, *De causa Dei*, which was probably completed in 1344 in London.

In 1335 he left Oxford to serve in the court of Richard (of) Bury, newly appointed Bishop of Durham. Here Bradwardine found one of the richest libraries of medieval England as well as a very stimulating and learned circle of theologians — including Richard FitzRalph, the future Archbishop of Armagh (1360), and Bradwardine's future theological opponent, Robert Holcot.

Although he had serious reservations about them, Bradwardine accepted the offered prebends (beneficiaries) to support himself, at least one of which (Lincoln Cathedral) was a sinecure (without care of souls).¹²

Bradwardine was appointed (c. 1338) one of the confessors (chaplains) to King Edward III, a king known for his immoral life. He traveled extensively with the king's entourage.¹³

At the request of King Edward, Bradwardine was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury by Pope Clement IV in Avignon. Politics played heavily in the matter. The Pope is reported to have said that if the king of England were to ask him to make a bishop of a jackass, that he could not refuse the request. This so angered some of the Cardinals, that one of them, Hugo, Cardinal of Tudela, took the opportunity at Bradwardine's consecration (July 19, 1349) to rebuke the pope and insult the English. He sent a clown on a jackass into the proceedings and had the clown ask to be made the Archbishop of Canterbury.¹⁴

Following his consecration Bradwardine hurried to England, where the black plague was decimating the population. He contracted the disease shortly after his arrival in August, and died on August 26. "During his episcopate of a few weeks duration, nothing was done or attempted of public importance."¹⁵

12. Hook, *Bishops of Canterbury*, p. 96.

13. Hook, *Bishops of Canterbury*, p. 97.

14. Hook, *Bishops of Canterbury*, pp. 104-105.

15. Hook, *Bishops of Canterbury*, pp. 111-112.

The Age of Bradwardine

It is well known that philosophy in the late Middle Ages was not only influential, it was also intertwined with theology. This is the era of medieval scholasticism, when philosophy was pressed into the service of established and accepted theological doctrines. There were several schools of philosophical thought, each having its distinct position on the question of universals, namely, Are universals real? Or, In what sense are universals real? The answer to that question placed the theologian/philosopher in a specific category, which, in some areas of theology, had no little influence on how one formulated specific doctrines.

In Bradwardine's day, the philosophy of William of Ockham, fresh and exciting, was having significant influence in certain academic circles. Ockham was a nominalist who therefore denied the existence of universals. More significantly, he insisted that all knowledge is intuitive, but that God can place knowledge of a thing into a man's mind, even when the thing does not exist.¹⁶

In addition, Ockham maintained that God cannot be known by man intuitively, but only by revelation, and that is known only by faith. Thus in Ockham's thought is introduced beginnings of the radical separation between faith and reason which would blossom in the Renaissance.

One area of special concern for Bradwardine was Ockham's teaching on the relationship of God to man. Ockham elevated God so high above His creation that God became virtually detached from and uninvolved in it. Hence he allowed that man had great freedom in his activity, even an independent position.¹⁷ Ockham also maintained that the exalted power of God allowed Him to act arbitrarily in His dealing with men. Applied to soteriology, it meant that God could save a man in an extraordinary fashion if He so pleased – say by granting merit for a man's works, which in turn might earn God's saving grace.

Ockham was condemned by Pope John XXII and excommunicated. Yet the pope did not specifically condemn the teachings that Bradwardine considered Pelagian. In addition, Ockham's philosophy was popular in England and on the continent.

16. David Knowles, in his book *The Evolution of Medieval Thought*, (London: Longman Group UK Limited, 1988), has a succinct treatment of Ockham's philosophy and its effect, pp. 290-306.

17. Oberman, *Archbishop Bradwardine*, p. 34.

In such a philosophical climate, therefore, Bradwardine lived and studied. As a result, there are those who insist that Bradwardine was reacting to the philosophy of Ockham with its consequences, particularly that God was not the center of man's life,¹⁸ and that Bradwardine was upholding realism.¹⁹

However, Bradwardine's efforts must not be so construed. Bradwardine was astute enough to distinguish between Ockham's philosophy on universals and Pelagianism. He titled his work *The Cause of God against the Pelagians*, and the work gives every indication that Bradwardine was taking specific aim at Pelagianism. The issue was not epistemology, nor centrality of God in man's knowledge. The issue was rather this: Is God's grace the sole cause of salvation, or is the cause of salvation to be found in any sense in man? In fact, Ockham also taught that man was capable of loving God by nature, *ex puris naturalibus*.²⁰ That puts man first in his works, and able to merit with God. This is the Pelagianism opposed by Bradwardine. Notwithstanding that the errors of Pelagius appeared in a slightly different form than Augustine confronted them in the fifth century, Bradwardine was maintaining salvation by God's grace alone, over against the Pelagianism of his day.

From a philosophical point of view, then, perhaps a plausible argument could be raised that Bradwardine was maintaining the realist position over against the nominalist position. That is really beside the point. This was no philosophical discussion for Bradwardine. His intent was to maintain the biblical doctrines of God and salvation. This for Bradwardine was true Augustinianism.

However, virtually every churchman of the Middle Ages was Augustinian! At least, most claimed that their views were supported by him. It often happened that debating theologians on both sides of a particular issue called on Augustine for support (as would Luther and his opponents). Oft times both were at least formally correct. There were several reasons for this. First, Augustine had written a tremendous

18. Leff, *Pelagians*. This is a major theme of Leff, but is expressly stated on p. 127.

19. Knowles, *Medieval Thought*, pp. 300-301.

20. McGrade, Arthur Stephen. "Enjoyment After Ockham" in *From Ockham to Wyclif*, ed. Anne Hudson and Michael Wilks, (Published for the Ecclesiastical Historical Society by Basil Blackwell, 1987), p. 81.

amount, and that, on a wide variety of topics. Secondly, Augustine had developed over his lifetime and, not infrequently, changed his views along the way. Thus theologians could quote the early Augustine supporting one idea, and quote the mature Augustine to prove an opposing position. Thirdly, medieval scholarship on Augustine and his works was neither thorough nor complete. Many of his works were not available to the theologians. Some of his views were simply reported by others, perhaps not accurately. Other views ascribed to Augustine were actually another writer's interpretation of Augustine. In addition, the chronology of his works was not established, so that one could not always know whether it was an early or later work of Augustine.

Describing this situation, Hook writes, "Augustine was less read than praised; and when he was quoted, the quotations were too frequently taken from abstracts made from his works, apart from the context; consequently, he was frequently misunderstood, and more frequently misinterpreted."²¹ Joseph Kelly, in his study, "The Knowledge and Use of Augustine among the Anglo-Saxons," concludes that "the Anglo-Saxon knowledge and use of Augustine were both broad and deep,"²² but notes that the Anglo-Saxons tended to be utilitarian in their use of Augustine. They quoted Augustine where he addressed the concerns of the day. He notes specifically that the Anglo-Saxons neglected the anti-Pelagian works of Augustine because they did not meet their immediate needs. "Retgression to paganism provided far greater problems than doctrinal deviance among the English Christians, and Augustine's attacks on heretics met few needs in Early Middle Ages."²³

Be that as it may, Bradwardine was far more faithful to Augustine than most of his contemporaries. Hook observes that "Bradwardine was a student of the entire works of the great Latin doctor, whom he regarded as the true apostolic logician and philosopher."²⁴ He stood against what he called the "pestiferous Pelagians" of his day.²⁵

21. Hook, *Bishops of Canterbury*, p. 88.

22. Kelly, Joseph F., "The Knowledge and Use of Augustine among the Anglo-Saxons" in *Studia Patristica*, vol. 28, Elizabeth A. Livingstone, ed., (Leuven: Peeters Press, 1993), p. 216.

23. Kelly, "Use of Augustine," p. 215.

24. Hook, *Bishops of Canterbury*, p. 88.

25. *Cause*, Book III, Chap. 1, p. 637, quoted in *Archbishop Thomas Bradwardine*, H. A. Oberman, p. 29.

Pelagians were followers of a fourth century British monk named Pelagius, with whom Augustine did battle. Pelagius taught that man was neither good nor evil at birth because the fall of Adam did not affect the human race. Sin was in the act, learned by imitation, and not a part of man's nature. Thus man was able to do good or evil, but committing sin did not make man evil, that is, did not make man's nature depraved; he could subsequently choose the good. The Pelagians contended that in every man God formed the ability (*posse*) for keeping God's law (which gift Pelagius called "grace"), and it was up to man to will and accomplish the good. By keeping the law of God, man could make himself worthy of salvation, for by these good works he merited a certain righteousness and the right to saving grace.

Augustine battled this teaching ferociously, and the church of that day condemned the teachings of Pelagius.²⁶

However, a modification of the Pelagian error, later called Semi-Pelagianism, arose in its place. Concerning fallen man, it held that every man was born spiritually sick, nigh unto death, but not dead in sin. Though he would die without the aid of the great Physician, man could yet do good with the assistance of God's grace, although this grace was resistible. The Semi-Pelagians attacked especially the doctrine of sovereign, double predestination that Augustine had affirmed in the Pelagian controversy. They insisted rather that predestination was based on God's foreknowledge, in the sense that God knew who would believe and who not, and chose accordingly.²⁷

26. Synod of Carthage, 411, 416, and 418. In 351, the Third Ecumenical Council held in Ephesus condemned Pelagius, but did not enter into his views specifically.

27. The Semi-Pelagian doctrines were condemned in the main at the Council of Orange in 529. However, the council made a fatal concession when it adopted the following: "According to the Catholic faith, we believe this also, that after grace has been received through baptism, all the baptized with the help and cooperation of Christ can and ought to fulfill what pertains to the salvation of the soul, if they will labor faithfully." Denzinger, Henry, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, translated by Roy J. Deferrari, (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Church order, 1957), p. 81. Thus the counsel failed to maintain that grace is irresistible, and it also left open the way for the doctrine of merit, which errors plagued the soteriology of the church until the sixteenth century reformation of Luther and Calvin. Oberman maintains that "Augustine's teaching of the prevenience and irresistibility of grace and of God's eternal predestination,

Thus the central teaching of both Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism is that salvation is not all of God, but something is left for man to accomplish. Man is able to merit something with God if he properly uses what he has from God. This is the Pelagianism that Bradwardine faced in his day – the teaching that man by his works merited with God, and that his salvation in some way depended on his works. This error finally won the day in the medieval church because the idea of merit was woven into the warp and woof of her theology and sacerdotalism.

Authority

It is worthwhile to consider briefly the issue of authority, that is to say, what is the authority upon which Bradwardine maintains his doctrinal positions. From *De causa Dei* it becomes immediately plain that the main and decisive authority for Bradwardine is Scripture. This stands to reason in that Bradwardine's polemic against the Pelagians is a treatise which is theological, not philosophical. It was noted above that Bradwardine rejected the teaching of the philosophers in Oxford because it was Pelagian. Scripture opened his eyes to the truth of God's sovereignty in salvation, particularly Romans 9. Irena Backus notes, "In the preface of *De causa Dei* Bradwardine says that he sought to elucidate the correct interpretation of the canonical Scriptures (*Scripturae canonice*) and of the Catholic doctors (*Catholici doctores*), seeing that all Pelagians, ancient and modern alike, twist their meaning so as to make it correspond to their heresy."²⁸

In fact, Bradwardine maintains that man can know God, not by reason, but only by revelation. He writes, "O blush with shame, philosophy, and arrogant knowledge, to presume to have the smallest ken of God, so that you, so small, would know Him entirely through your little mind, probe all His secrets, grasp and fully comprehend His whole being."²⁹ In addition, Leff notes, "Accordingly Bradwardine concluded

election, and reprobation evoked very little enthusiasm in later centuries.... [In the late medieval period] [p]ure Augustinians are as hard to find as pure Pelagians." Oberman, Heiko Augustus (ed.), *Key Documents*, p. 127.

28. Backus, Irena, "Church Fathers" p. 162.

29. *De causa Dei*, p. 27, quoted in Leff, Gordan. "Thomas Bradwardine's *De causa Dei*," in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 7, April, 1956, pp. 27-28.

that the highest truth in philosophy was that we cannot by ourselves know God."³⁰

On the relative (un)importance of philosophy, Oberman points out that "[w]e can no doubt speak of the philosophy of Thomas Bradwardine, as has been done till now, but in this way it was not made sufficiently evident that he uses philosophy in the same manner as a scholar in his days had to use Latin in order to make himself understood."³¹

That important observation of Oberman applies also to the meaning of terms. Bradwardine will call on Aristotle, for example, not as an authority to back Bradwardine's main argument. Rather, he uses Aristotle to set forth the various elements in a concept.³²

The church fathers, however, were of great importance to Bradwardine. He stated explicitly in *De causa Dei* that he intended to quote a goodly number of the them in order to demonstrate to the modern day Pelagians that he (Bradwardine) was not alone in his stand.³³ Backus describes Bradwardine's high view of the fathers as follows:

Bradwardine's attitude to Origen, Jerome and Cyprian is equally subtle. Many excellent theologians have erred, he asserts, this is what distinguishes their writings from the Holy Scripture. There are no ecclesiastical writers greater than Origen, Jerome, Cyprian and the most illustrious Augustine. Yet Origen is frequently criticised by the other three. For he erred most gravely, no theologian ignores it, and the blessed Jerome amended some of his works. However, continues Bradwardine, Jerome frequently corrected himself, Augustine and Jerome often disagree; and Augustine sharply criticises Cyprian for his views on heretical baptism....³⁴

Backus noted that "[a]ll in all, the modern reader is struck by Bradwardine's 'linear' and favourable attitude to the Fathers. All ancient Christian writers are fallible, but all constitute *auctoritates* and so should be taken seriously."³⁵

30. Leff, Gordan. "Thomas Bradwardine's *De causa Dei*," p. 28.

31. Oberman, *Archbishop Bradwardine*, p. 9.

32. Bradwardine, *De causa Dei*, in *Key Documents*, p. 140.

33. Backus, Irena, "Church Fathers" p. 162.

34. Backus, Irena, "Church Fathers" p. 165.

35. Backus, Irena, "Church Fathers," p. 165. Oddly, her ultimate conclu-

Yet, for all the importance that the Fathers had for Bradwardine, Scripture remained the ultimate authority. Oberman differentiating between various medieval traditions as to the relation of Scripture and the Fathers, describes the tradition of which Bradwardine was a part.

Tradition I, then, represents the sufficiency of Holy Scripture as understood by the Fathers and doctors of the church. In the case of disagreement between these interpreters, Holy Scripture has the final authority. The horizontal concept of tradition is by no means denied here, but rather understood as the mode of reception of the *fides* or *veritas* contained in the Holy Scripture. Since the appeal to extrascriptural tradition is rejected, the validity of ecclesiastical traditions and *consuetudines* is not regarded as "self supporting" but depends on its relation to the faith handed down by God in Holy Scripture.

Thomas Bradwardine can be pointed out as one of the first outspoken representatives of Tradition I at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Though his references to the problem of Scripture and Tradition are relatively few and scattered, his emphasis on the exclusive and final authority of Holy Scriptures is quite explicit.³⁶

This is the pattern followed in *De causa Dei*. In his presentation of the doctrine Bradwardine is at pains to demonstrate the truth from Scripture. He does call various church fathers into the discussion in his efforts to explain the passages. However, the goal is ever to gain the right interpretation of Scripture.

sion is: "There is no doubt that for Bradwardine the most important authority is that of the Fathers" (p. 168). That is, more important than the Bible, though the evidence she gives is not very substantial. Her main ground for such a conclusion is this: "Although he does admit that all theologians, ancient and modern, unlike the Bible, are fallible, he nonetheless constructs *De causa Dei* with patristic arguments drawn chiefly, albeit not exclusively from *florilegia*" (p. 168). Yet she admits that Bradwardine intentionally cited as many anti-Pelagian Fathers as he could (see quotation from p. 162 above).

36. Oberman, Heiko A. *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1967), pp. 272-3.

This will be continued in the next issue with an examination of Bradwardine's teachings in several related areas, including the sovereignty of God, predestination, and grace. ●

Apology

In the April 2000 issue of this Journal, in a review of Timothy J. Wengert's book, *Law and Gospel: Philip Melancthon's Debate with John Agricola over Poenitentia*, I quoted the following from the "Formula of Concord" as proof that synergism is found in the creeds of Lutheranism: "If the Holy Spirit, by the preaching of the word, shall have made a beginning, and offered his grace in the word to man, that then man, by his own proper and natural powers, can, as it were, give some assistance and co-operation, though it be but slight, infirm, and languid, towards his conversion, and can apply and prepare himself unto grace, apprehend it, embrace it, and believe the gospel" (Article II, *Negativa*, IV). As the reference indicates, this is quoted from one of the *negative* sections of the "Formula of Concord" and is an error which that creed is *rejecting*, not *approving*. Other references could have been given to prove a certain synergism in the Lutheran creeds, but this citation very emphatically does not prove that point, and if anything proves the opposite. I apologize to anyone who may have been offended by such a careless and haphazard citation, especially since it was given in proof of such a serious charge.

Ronald Hanko

Book Reviews

The Happy Mourner: Consolations of God & Sympathy for the Bereaved, by William Jay. Willow Street, PA: Old Paths Publications, 2000. 220 pp. \$25.95 (cloth). [Reviewed by David J. Engelsma.]

This reprint of selected writings of nineteenth century English preacher William Jay is comfort for the children of God in all kinds of sorrows. The chapter titles express the various sorrows addressed: "The Loss of Connexions"; "The Hand of God in Afflictions"; "Friendship in Death"; "Consolation in Death"; "Death of Children"; "The Funeral of a Widow's Son"; "The Design of Affliction"; "How We are to Honor God in Trouble"; "Acquiescence in the Will of God"; and "The Christian in Death" (which could more accurately be rendered as "The Christian in *Dying*"). And who of us is a stranger to these griefs?

Jay is simple, biblical, and moving. Consider this passage exhorting the believer to "honor God in trouble":

The obligations you are under to the blessed God, should in-

duce you to glorify him in the fires [of trouble]. Once you had no being. He called, and you came—not in the contemptible nature of a worm—but "a little lower than the angels." What wonders are there in thy body! Yet this is the baser part. You have conscience, reason, immortality. He has taught you more than the beasts of the earth, and made you wiser than the fowls of the air. There is a spirit in you, and the "inspiration of the Almighty giveth you understanding." And is all this to enable you to labor for shining dust with the covetous? To run after air with the ambitious? To dive into mud and mire with the sensual and vicious? Should you not "worship and fall down, and kneel before the Lord your Maker?" By whom have you been upheld from the womb? At whose table have you been daily fed? From whose wardrobe have you been clothed? There is not a comfort in life but gives God a title to thy praise. But he has greater, dearer claims. Go to the manger, the garden, the cross. See him not sparing his own Son, but delivering him up for us all.... What has he done for thee in the application of this free and full redemption? Has

he opened thine eyes and turned thy feet into the path of peace? What has he done for thee since thou hast known him? Has he ever left thee? Has he ever turned away thy prayer from him, or his mercy from thee? And is it for you to be wrapped up in selfishness? How unworthy a creature; but how much more unworthy a Christian? (pp. 140, 141)

The prospect of heaven in the final chapter is as full as revelation allows, and alluring.

Jay's embrace of the doctrine of the salvation of all who die in infancy is mistaken. Infants are not innocent, nor does God prom-

ise salvation in Christ to the children of the ungodly. Jay's attack on the orthodox teaching is malicious: "The God we worship is not Moloch.... We listen not to unfeeling and system-hardened divines" (p. 100).

The title of the book—not Jay's own—is unhappy. Jay is far too aware of the bitterness of the Christian's distresses, and of the persistence of his struggles, even when he is comforted by the gospel, to suggest the title, "*Happy Mourner*." In reality, the book is about the *comforted* mourner, who thus—wonder of wonders—can even be joyful in this valley of the shadow. ■

Sermons on Melchizedek & Abraham, by John Calvin. Willow Street, PA: Old Paths Publications, 2000. XXIX + 284 pp. \$37.95 (cloth). [Reviewed by David J. Engelsma.]

With this reprint in modern English of Calvin's sermons on Melchizedek and Abraham, Old Paths adds to its growing library of published sermons, long out-of-print, by the Reformer.

The book consists of sermons by Calvin on passages in Genesis 14, 15, 21, and 22. Calvin preached the sermons in French during the

years 1559-1561 as part of his series on Genesis. The particular sermons collected in this book were published in English in 1592. They were never again reprinted and, therefore, have been virtually unavailable for the past 400 years.

Although the title refers to the three sermons on the meeting of Melchizedek and Abraham, the book actually includes much more. There are four sermons on the important passage concerning Abraham's justification in Genesis 15. There are also three sermons on Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac in

Genesis 22, the first of which begins with comment on the last verses of Genesis 21.

In his foreword, Richard A. Muller notes that these excerpts from Calvin's Genesis series were originally chosen for publication in English

because of their theological and religious interest, namely, the doctrines of faith, justification, godly obedience, and predestination. Indeed, these sermons, given that they were written after virtually all of the commentaries that deal with these particular themes and also after the completion of the final edition of the *Institutes*, represent Calvin's final published thoughts on these major doctrinal issues of the Reformation (pp. XIV, XV).

As it did with its previous books of Calvin's sermons, *Old Paths* modernizes the spelling and explains—in brackets—the unfamiliar words. Still, there is the occasional strange word and phrase left unexplained, e.g., “advichilate” (p. 57), “nifles” (p. 147), and “retcheth him up to divers pins” (p. 221). At least one word was misunderstood by the editor. “Weather,” undoubtedly, is an old variant of “wether” (p. 247).

Calvin's language in preach-

ing was vivid. Describing Abraham as he assembled his little band to pursue the four kings that had captured Lot, Calvin spoke of a “silly old man” deciding to lead an army. In another context, Calvin acknowledged that the “jolly rabble of Monks, Friars, and their like ... have a certain glorious glittering show of righteousness.”

The plain, vigorous exposition of the Word of God set forth and defended the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith to the saints. Outstanding is the explanation of justification by faith in connection with Genesis 15:6. In justification, the guilty sinner is *accounted* righteous; he is not *made* righteous. The role of faith is not that it is the “substance” or “matter” of the sinner's righteousness; only Christ's obedience for him is the substance of his righteousness. But faith is the instrument, or means, to receive Christ's righteousness to one's own account.

Of great significance in these sermons also is Calvin's emphasis that confidence of one's own salvation is an integral element of true faith. Assurance for Calvin is of the essence of faith. “Belief” is not only that we assent to the Word as true. It is also that we do not “doubt but that he [God] will be our Father and Savior, and so thereupon may be bold to call upon him,

and hold ourselves for his children, and fly unto him for succor and aid." Whatever lacks this assurance is nothing but a "fantastical opinion ... conceived in [the] brain" (pp. 98, 99). For Calvin, "faith ... importeth a certainty" (p. 145). In this doctrine of faith, Reformed Christianity differs radically from Rome, which denies assurance and settles for "probability" of salvation. This, says Calvin, is "utterly to overthrow the whole foundation of Christianity" (p. 146).

The notion that there is a kind of genuine faith that lacks assurance and that this miserable and God-dishonoring state of spiritual affairs may very well predominate in a true church is utterly foreign to Calvin, as it is to the gospel.

This is the reading—devotional, instructive, edifying—for Reformed Christians.

Muller's recommendation is well put:

The Necessity of Reforming the Church, by John Calvin. [Willow Street, PA]: Old Paths Publications, 1994. xi + 117 pp. \$7.95 (paper). [Reviewed by David J. Engelsma.]

How urgent that in this time of reunion with the Roman Catholic Church by bewitched Protestants many of the bewitchers and

The reissuing of the sermons on the history of Melchizedek and Abraham, particularly when taken together with the sermons on election and reprobation, provides entry into the mind of Calvin at a significant juncture and on a series of highly important topics for Reformed or "Calvinistic" Protestants. This is, as already noted, the preaching of the mature Calvin. It is also his preaching on a set of topics—faith, justification, obedience, Christ, and predestination—that belongs to the very heart of the Reformed faith. These sermons also offer a preeminent example of Calvin's manner of addressing the Old Testament both as history and as the living Word of God to the church in all ages. May Calvin's fundamental intention to edify the people of God in a lively and penetrating discourse continue to have fruit in our times (p. XXV). ■

bewitched read this spirited defense of the Protestant Reformation!

How urgent that in this age of tolerance of false doctrine and impure worship many of the tolerant ones, fancying themselves good, indeed superior, Christians (so full of love, they mistakenly suppose), read this vigorous call to resist impure worship and false doctrine

even unto death! Calvin ends on this very note:

But be the issue what it may, we will never repent of having begun, and of having proceeded thus far. The Holy Spirit is a faithful and unerring witness to our doctrine. We know, I say, that it is the eternal truth of God that we preach. We are, indeed, desirous, as we ought to be, that our ministry may prove salutary to the world; but to give it this effect belongs to God, not to us. If, to punish, partly the ingratitude, and partly the stubbornness of those to whom we desire to do good, success must prove desperate, and all things go to worse, I will say what it befits a Christian man to say, and what all who are true to this holy profession will subscribe.—We will die, but in death even be conquerors, not only because through it we shall have a sure passage to a better life, but because we know that our blood will be as seed to propagate the Divine truth which men now despise (p. 117).

The book is *Old Paths'* reprint of John Calvin's defense of the Reformation to Emperor Charles V in 1544 at the urging of Calvin's fellow Reformer and friend, Martin Bucer. By this defense, Calvin hoped to ward off the emperor's persecution of the Re-

formed churches and even to enlist his support of the Reformation. In this, Calvin was to be disappointed. But the treatise would become a clear explanation to all of the fundamental issues in the sixteenth century Reformation of the church and a ringing call to true Protestants to cherish and maintain the Reformation.

Calvin divided his defense into three sections: the evils that made the Reformation necessary; the remedies applied by the Reformation; and the urgency ("necessity") of the Reformation. Each of the three sections then treats of four matters: the right manner of worship; the source of salvation; the right administration of the sacraments; and the proper exercise of church government, particularly discipline.

Noteworthy is that the impure worship of the Roman Catholic Church—worship that is not regulated by the command of God—was for Calvin the primary evil that made reformation necessary. To be sure, impure worship was accompanied by false doctrine concerning the gospel of salvation by grace alone, but impure worship is mentioned first. Let the advocates and practitioners of "progressive worship" and the opponents of the regulative principle of worship take heed!

One long, glorious paragraph

(thank God for John Calvin!) sums it up:

At the time when divine truth lay buried under this vast and dense cloud of darkness—when religion was sullied by so many impious superstitions—when by horrid blasphemies the worship of God was corrupted, and His glory laid prostrate—when by a multitude of perverse opinions, the benefit of redemption was frustrated, and men, intoxicated with a fatal confidence in works, sought salvation any where rather than in Christ—when the administration of the Sacraments was partly maimed and torn asunder, partly adulterated by the admixture of numerous fictions, and partly profaned by traffickings for gain—when the government of the Church had degenerated into mere confusion and devastation—when those who sat in the seat of pastors first did most vital injury to the Church by the dissoluteness of their lives, and, secondly, exercised a cruel and most noxious tyranny over souls, by every kind of error, leading men like sheep to the slaughter;—then Luther arose, and after him others, who with united counsels sought out means and methods by which religion might be purged from all these defilements, the doctrine of godliness restored to its integrity, and the Church raised

out of its calamitous into somewhat of a tolerable condition. The same course we are still pursuing in the present day (pp. 23, 24).

In this work is found Calvin's well-known appeal to the barking of a dog when its master is threatened. "A dog, seeing any violence offered to his master, will instantly bark; could we, in silence, see the sacred name of God dishonoured so blasphemously" (p. 70; see also p. 76). This was Calvin's response to criticism of his sharp refutation of error and vigorous defense of the truth by members of the church who counseled tolerance. Nothing has changed!

And then, Calvin's exposure of this accursed tolerance:

There is something specious [plausible] in the name of moderation, and tolerance is a quality which has a fair appearance, and seems worthy of praise; but the rule which we must observe at all hazards is, never to endure patiently that the sacred name of God should be assailed with impious blasphemy—that his eternal truth should be suppressed by the devil's lies—that Christ should be insulted, his holy mysteries polluted, unhappy souls cruelly murdered, and the Church left to writhe in extremity under the effect of a

deadly wound. This would be not meekness, but indifference about things to which all others ought to be postponed (p. 80).

This is one of the works that I could wish were in the hands of all our

people, including the youth, as in the hands of every Roman Catholic who has enough interest in church history and concern for fair judgment to read the Protestant defense of the Reformation. ■

Registers of the Consistory of Geneva in the Time of Calvin: Volume 1, 1542-1544. Robert M. Kingdon, general editor. Thomas A. Lambert & Isabella M. Watt, editors. M. Wallace McDonald, translator. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000. IL + 470pp. \$50 (paper). [Reviewed by David J. Engelsma.]

The consistory minutes of any church make interesting reading. When the minutes are the detailed records of the proceedings of the consistory of the church in Geneva during the ministry of John Calvin, they are very interesting indeed, and instructive. The student of the Reformation will find these records fascinating.

A group of scholars headed by Robert M. Kingdon has completed the huge and difficult task of transcribing and then preparing a critical edition of the registers of the Geneva consistory during the time of Calvin. Scholars now have access to all of the minutes in readable French. There are 21 volumes.

This book is the beginning of the ambitious project to publish the 21 volumes in English translation. It covers the years 1542-1544. In 1542, Calvin had just returned to Geneva from his exile in Strasbourg. Immediately upon his return in September, 1541, Calvin insisted upon a consistory, to establish order in the church. He drew up ordinances for this consistory. The article that describes the office of elder explains the registers:

Their office is to watch over the life of everyone, to admonish gently those they see at fault and leading a disorderly life, and where it is proper make a report to the Company who will be assigned to make fraternal corrections, and then make them in common with the others.

The registers, on the other hand, make plain what Calvin intended with the office of elder.

The Geneva consistory met weekly, and more often when necessary. It consisted of elders, "men

of good life and honest, without reproach and above all suspicion, above all fearing God and having good spiritual discretion," according to Calvin's ordinances; the pastors; a leading magistrate (syndic), who presided; an official of the civil government, to compel people to appear when summoned; and a secretary, to whom we are indebted for the minutes of the meetings.

The registers record the consistory's examination of the citizens of Geneva (who were also regarded as members of the church) on various charges or suspicions; the confession or defense of the one on trial; the testimony of witnesses; and the decisions of the consistory.

Men and women were summoned to answer to charges of practicing the Roman Catholic religion; blaspheming the (Reformed) gospel and its ministers; not attending sermons, or not attending them often enough; fornication and adultery; gambling; usury; singing indecent songs; wife-beating; hatred and strife with a neighbor; and otherwise living unholy lives.

Some cases must have struck even the consistory as outlandish. Tyvent Tondou, the local blacksmith, quarreled with his wife (over money!) late in the evening, beat her, and made her "jump out of the window, which she did entirely

nude through the window." The consistory gave both "strong remonstrances."

Claudaz appeared to inform the consistory that her husband "threatened to pull her nose off" because she refused to give the wastrel any more of her money.

Jehan Caliat denied that he drank 18 glasses of wine at breakfast at an inn and "gobbled the old cheese like a wolf." Like many of those brought before the consistory, Jehan lied shamelessly, and obviously. Rare was the sinner who honestly acknowledged his fault. Pierre Truffet was a refreshing exception. Asked about his gambling, he replied that "he has to have fun." But he assured Calvin and the others that he gambled only for drinks and then only on Sundays. He was admonished.

An aggrieved husband brought his wife before the consistory because of her conviction that she might sleep with all the men of the congregation. This was a doctrinal position. She had it by direct revelation from the Holy Spirit that sharing her body with all was the implication of the church's being one body in Christ.

A number of cases concerned the evil of "muttering" during the sermons. Evidently, those who remained Roman Catholics and others who had no delight in Reformed

sermons, but were compelled to attend, expressed their displeasure by audible complaint as the ministers were preaching.

Calvin remains in the background in these minutes, although he is almost always present at the sessions (each meeting is headed by the list of those who are present). Nevertheless, it becomes apparent that he is the leading figure in the "Reform," as at the meetings of the consistory. A decision appointing the pastors to work at the plague hospital, virtually a death-warrant, expressly exempted Calvin. Calvin could not be spared. A woman accused of the Anabaptist heresy angrily charged Calvin with persecution and false prophecy. One enemy of the Reformation, a simple woman, was summoned before the consistory for spreading the rumor that dancing was always going on at the home of Calvin. Another woman, examined concerning her Roman Catholic beliefs, defiantly asked the consistory "whether Monsieur Calvin is God."

Whenever the consistory was confronted with an especially difficult offender, it called on Calvin to instruct or rebuke. Claude Tappugnier frankly confessed that he believed Roman Catholic doctrines concerning salvation by works, praying to Mary, and praying for the dead. The register of

Thursday, April 5, 1543 then notes: "Of which doubts he was relieved by Monsieur Calvin."

The consistory resolved the marital trouble involving the wife who had heard from the Holy Spirit that our spiritual oneness in Christ permits community of husbands and wives. The resolution included that "Monsieur Calvin gave them [husband and wife] beautiful admonitions from Holy Scripture, both together, and remonstrated with the wife, using firm respectable admonitions."

These consistory records highlight the struggles of the Reformed church as it emerged from the superstition and immorality of Roman Catholicism. They demonstrate the determination of the Calvinistic Reformation that the members of the church live holy, orderly lives. They demonstrate as well the conviction of Calvin and the Reformed church that discipline by a body of elders is essential for this holiness. The consistory took hold of the sins, and even the obvious weaknesses, of the members. There was real oversight. The article on elders in the "Ecclesiastical Ordinances of 1541" called for elders "in each quarter of the city in order to have their eyes everywhere, which we want to be done." The eyes of the Geneva elders were wide open, not shut as

much as possible to sin, scandal, and disorder, in order to avoid trouble.

There is admonition here for Reformed elders today. If we were to exercise the oversight of discipline as did the consistory in Calvin's Geneva, we might find that we needed to retain the stipulation in the Dordt Church Order that the consistory meet weekly.

The registers show the falsity of the popular notion that the Geneva consistory in the time of Calvin was tyrannical. Love for the people of God motivated the elders. More than once the minutes record touching instances of hateful neighbors reconciling with handshakes and tears, by the instrumentality of the consistory.

The errors in these ecclesiastical proceedings are glaring. One mistake was the assumption that all the citizens of Geneva were, by virtue of this fact, also members of the Reformed church. How futile, the disciplinary work with obviously indifferent, hardened unbelievers and determined Roman Catholics!

The second error was the involvement of the civil government in church discipline. A syndic presided. A policeman compelled appearance at the meeting of those who were summoned. And punishment for spiritual offenses often consisted of jail terms on bread and water. Regardless that Calvin and the Geneva church technically observed the rule, by sending off the offenders to the civil government for the prescribed sentence, this was grievous violation of the principle that Calvin himself incorporated in the 1541 ordinances:

And let all this be done in such a way that the ministers have no civil jurisdiction and use only the spiritual sword of the Word of God, as Saint Paul orders them, and that this Consistory does not derogate from the authority of the Seigneurie or the ordinary courts, but that the civil power remain in its entirety.

This book is a valuable addition to the literature of the Calvinistic Reformation in English. ■

Martin Luther as Prophet, Teacher, and Hero: Images of the Reformer, 1520-1620, by Robert Kolb. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999. 278pp. \$21.99 (paper). [Reviewed by David J. Engelsma.]

In another study of the apparently inexhaustible Luther, Concordia Seminary professor Robert Kolb proposes three ways in which Luther's disciples saw, and used, the Reformer. Luther was the prophet who proclaimed the Word of God anew, the teacher whose doctrines were a creed-like guide to the knowledge of Scripture, and the hero who courageously freed especially the church in Germany from the tyranny of the papacy.

Purged of the exaggerations of adoring German Lutherans, the three ways are reality, not alone for Lutheranism in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries but also for the entire church of Jesus Christ to the world's end.

Kolb's demonstration of the images of Luther on the part of Lutheranism between 1520 and 1620 includes valuable discussion of the important controversies in the Lutheran church. Both sides appealed to "Dr. Martin" in the controversy over the adiaphora of the Leipzig Interim, in the controversy over the necessity of good

works for salvation, and in the controversy over the "crypto-Calvinistic" doctrine of the Supper held by some Lutherans.

The second part of the book is a thorough, informative account of the publishing of Luther's books both during his life and after his death. Luther was the first author to have his collected works published *at the beginning of his career* (in 1518, by Froben—a volume of some 500 pages). We are delighted to learn that this aroused the jealousy of Erasmus.

Especially interesting and helpful is the full description of the Wittenberg and Jena complete editions of Luther's works.

The number of publications of Luther's numerous works only between the years 1517 and 1620 is astounding. The world was flooded with the man's writings. This is ironic in view of Luther's own disparagement of his books. In a preface to volume 1 of the Wittenberg edition of his collected works, in 1539, Luther wrote:

It was also our intention and hope, when we ourselves began to translate the Bible into German, that there should be less writing, and instead more studying and reading of the Scriptures.... I cannot, however, prevent them from wanting to collect and publish my works

through the press (small honor to me), although it is not my will. I have no choice but to let them risk the labor and the expense of this project. My consolation is that, in time, my books will lie forgotten in the dust anyhow.

In his preface to volume 2, Luther recommended Melancthon's *Loci Communes* and wished that his own books be "buried in perpetual oblivion."

Writings of Thomas E. Peck. Selected and arranged by T. C. Johnson. 3 vols. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1999. \$79.99 (cloth). [Reviewed by David J. Engelsma.]

Thomas E. Peck was a nineteenth century southern Presbyterian in the school of Thornwell and Dabney. Born in 1822, he taught at Union Theological Seminary from 1860 until his death in 1893. He taught church history for the first 23 years and theology for the last 10 years.

The contents of the three volumes are individual articles, sermons, and lectures gathered for publication as a collection of miscellaneous writings after Peck's death. Some had been published in various journals while Peck was

God exalts the humble author.

This volume is part of Baker's important series, *Texts & Studies in Reformation & Post-Reformation Thought*, under the general editorship of Richard A. Muller. Other books in the series include Caspar Olevianus' *A Firm Foundation* and John Calvin's *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, both of which have been reviewed in this journal. ■

living; others had not. The book suffers, therefore, from the lack of any relation of topics and chapters. On the other hand, the subjects of certain chapters are of great importance to Reformed theology and life. Overall, the volumes flesh out the theology of nineteenth century Presbyterianism in the south of the United States.

Volume 1 is mostly devoted to public worship. Peck was an ardent advocate of the regulative principle of worship. The opening chapter excellently argues the necessity of defending the truth against false doctrine. Peck wrote the piece against certain who pleaded that there be only a positive proclamation of the truth. Like the poor, these church members are with us always. Peck charita-

bly called them the "brothers of charity." The first volume ends with a few biographies, including a good sketch of Luther ("terribly in earnest").

Volume 2 is theological. Included are a helpful account of the call to the ministry; Peck's inaugural address on church history at his installation at Union Seminary; a chapter on "The Judicial Law of Moses," in which Peck contends that the judicial, or civil, laws were intended only for Old Testament Israel; and some explanation of the book of Revelation. The second volume concludes with a treatment of issues of church polity, including an interesting chapter on "Church and State." The impending division of the war between the states, affecting both the nation and the Presbyterian Church, looms large in Peck's discussions of church government.

The last volume is exegetical, consisting largely of explanatory notes on various passages of Scripture and of sermons on the book of Acts, although there is also brief sermonic material on other passages.

One of these is a sermon on II Peter 3:8, 9, God's not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. This is the passage that many professing Calvinists, not least the Banner of Truth men, who publish these volumes, are determined to press into the service of the heresy of universal, resistible grace in the preaching of the gospel, the "well-meant offer." Peck would have none of it. His exposition of "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" goes like this:

The time is fixed; but so long as there breathes upon earth one solitary human being for whom Jesus has laid down his life, who has been ordained to faith, repentance, and life eternal, and destined to be an assessor with Jesus upon his throne, so long shall the heavens contain him whom our soul loveth but after the number of the elect shall have been accomplished, not one moment longer. Then shall he be revealed, and the earth with all its works and wickedness be given to the flames (p. 390). ■

Evangelical Eloquence: A Course of Lectures on Preaching, by Robert L. Dabney. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1999. 361pp. \$8.99 (paper). [Reviewed by David J. Engelsma.]

More than 20 years ago, a friend gave me the old book of which this is a reprint. The original title was *Sacred Rhetoric; or a Course of Lectures on Preaching*. I regarded it then as one of the finest, most helpful books on making sermons and preaching that I had ever read. I regard it so still today.

No seminarian should enter the ministry without having read it carefully and having taken its instruction and warnings to heart. He should re-read it periodically thereafter. Ministers who have not read it should make up the lack as quickly as possible, regardless of their age and experience.

The book is the teaching of preaching by a preacher to would-be preachers. Beginning with what preaching is, it takes the student through all the aspects of making and delivering a sermon: choosing and working with the text; arranging the material in the sermon; "style," or delivery, including voice and gesture; and more.

Valuable as the book is as a solid work on the formal aspects of

homiletics, it is invaluable because of its spiritual and practical instruction and warning from beginning to end.

Above all, the preacher must be a godly man. This theme, passionately urged and developed, runs through the work like a refrain: "Only the eminent Christian can be an eminent preacher of the gospel"; "The prime qualification for the pulpit orator is eminent piety"; "What can give this glow [of the zeal of heavenly love] except the indwelling of the Holy Ghost? You are thus led again to that great, ever-recurring deduction, the first qualification of the sacred orator, the grace of Christ"; "You must be men of faith and prayer; you must live near the cross and feel 'the powers of the world to come.' We thus learn again the great truth that it is divine grace which makes the true minister"; "The pastor's character speaks more loudly than his tongue."

Every preacher must work hard at his sermons: "Whatever may be your method, excellence can only be the result of strenuous effort. He who labours most on each sermon is usually the best preacher.... To preach a sermon is a great and awful task. Woe to that man, who slights it with a perfunctory preparation and a careless heart!"

Proper preparation means writing the sermons out and then going over the manuscript with painstaking care. Indeed, Dabney exhorts preachers to be writers:

The first upon which I insist is careful writing. The abundant and painstaking use of the pen is necessary to give you correctness, perspicuity and elegance of language, and to make these easy to you. No man ever learns to compose a sermon at his desk in rhetorical language save by speaking *extempore* under the rhetorical impulse; so no man ever learns to speak well *extempore* save by learning to write well.

But the preacher may not read his sermon. "Reading a manuscript to the people can never, with any justice, be termed preaching.... Mere reading, then, should be sternly banished from the pulpit." Having interpreted the text, having written the sermon out in the right form, which includes a logical flow, and having gone over the sermon in his study so that the Word of God in the text is also in his soul, the minister must, and can, preach it in what Dabney calls "*extempore*" fashion.

Dabney warns against all political preaching (especially powerful, coming as this warning

does from Stonewall Jackson's chaplain during the war between the states); eulogistic funeral addresses (always a temptation, also in the Protestant Reformed Churches); needless criticism of the KJV; failure carefully to prepare the sermon's conclusion; not following one line in the sermon, "lest [the] sermon will be a crude bundle of little sermons"; and announcing the main divisions of the sermon at the outset.

The last chapter is excellent instruction of the minister concerning public prayer.

Robert L. Dabney was one of the outstanding southern Presbyterian theologians of the nineteenth century. The contents of the book are the lectures he gave on preaching at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia. Whatever one may think of the change of the original title, Dabney himself suggested it (see pp. 30ff.).

The one criticism that must be made is that Dabney does not sufficiently make plain that true preaching is the living voice of Christ Himself and that, in the final analysis, this is its power. This is, no doubt, assumed and implied, but without the mention of this, and stress upon it, the reader can go away with the impression that the power of preaching is the preacher's own preparation, piety,

and eloquence.

Dabney closes his treatment of preaching this way:

Let me impress you with the high responsibility of ascending the pulpit, and beseech you to form a lofty ideal. He who proposes to sway the souls of a multitude, to be their teacher, to lay his hands upon their heart-strings, to imbue them with his passion and will, makes an audacious attempt. But nothing less than this is true preaching. It behooves the man who attempts this high emprise to have every power of his soul trained and braced like an athlete, and to perfect his equipment at every point, with the painful care of the commander who is about to join battle with a powerful

enemy. He begins the adventure with a solemn awe, an anxious diffidence, whose palpitations nothing but a heroic will controls. The great Athenian statesman, Pericles, the model upon which Demosthenes formed himself, was wont to say, that so solemn did he deem the act of speaking, he could not ascend the *bema* without an anxious invocation to the immortal gods for their assistance. Surely, the minister of a divine Redeemer should mount his pulpit with a more holy dread, by as much as he discusses a more sacred theme and more everlasting destinies. To preach a sermon is a great and awful task. Woe to that man, who slights it with a perfunctory preparation and a careless heart! ■

E. W. Bullinger: *A Biography*, by Juanita S. Carey. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2000. 281pp. \$13.99 (paper). [Reviewed by David J. Engelsma.]

Ethelbert William Bullinger comes up in theology as the representative of hyper-dispensationalism. This nineteenth century clergyman in the Church of England was part of the bizarre movement begun by Edward Irving, developed by J. N. Darby and others, and continued today in premillennial dispensationalism. Bullin-

ger was extreme even by dispensational standards. Pentecost had nothing to do with the church. The church began with Acts 28:28. Many of Paul's epistles do not concern the church. Neither Baptism nor the Lord's Supper are sacraments for the church.

This biography, the first ever published, touches briefly on these and other teachings of Bullinger. His dispensational views are set forth fully in his book, *The Foundations of Dispensational Truth*.

Bullinger's family life was

strange. For many years, he lived separately from his wife. His housekeeper and companion was a niece. Apparently, he had little or no contact with his two sons from their early years.

His relationship with the Anglican Church was also peculiar. Although he remained a minister in the Church until his death, for many years he criticized its teachings and lived and worked apart from it.

His connections with the Trinitarian Bible Society, however, were close. He was the very active secretary of the Society for 46 years from soon after its forming until his own death in 1913.

Bullinger was also a Worshipful Master of the Orange Order, the Protestant patriotic organi-

zation centered in Northern Ireland.

An indefatigable worker almost to his death at 75, Bullinger wrote much and traveled widely. Among other works, many of which are still in print today, he wrote *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament*; a classic work on the figures used in Scripture, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, which reputable scholars praise as the best in the field; and a huge tome, *The Companion Bible*, a King James Bible with copious notes and commentary.

This edition of the biography is a revised and expanded edition of the original, which was published in 1988. ■

Reformed Confessions Harmonized.
Edited by Joel R. Beeke and Sinclair B. Ferguson. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999. xiii + 271 pages. Price: \$19.99 (paper). [Reviewed by Russell Dykstra.]

Every Reformed church and every Reformed believer understands the importance of the Reformed creeds. A working knowledge of and love for the Reformed confessions is vitally important not only for the welfare of the Re-

formed churches as a whole but also for the individual believer. The creeds are the fruit of the work of the Spirit of Christ as the Spirit of truth, leading the church into the truth, even as Christ promised His disciples. Any book that will better enable believers to know and use the confessions is welcome. A “harmony” of the confessions can be such a tool.

As the title indicates, *Reformed Confessions Harmonized*, this work harmonized confessions

of the Reformed tradition. Specifically, seven confessions are included, namely, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Canons of Dordrecht, the Second Helvetic Confession, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms.

The book includes a succinct historical introduction to each of these seven creeds. It also contains a select annotated bibliography of (English) books on various doctrines in which the books are listed according to the thirty-seven articles of the Belgic Confession. Sinclair B. Ferguson assisted with the writing of the introductions, and the lion's share of the work of harmonizing is apparently that of Joel R. Beeke.

The work has an attractive format well designed for effective use. The pages are large – 11 by 8½ inches. All seven confessions are listed across the top of facing pages of the harmony and the pertinent articles are presented in parallel columns. This format makes for an easy comparison of the teaching of these various creeds on the given subjects.

The subject divisions follow the articles of the Belgic Confession as a pattern. This makes for a rather logical division of the material, since the Belgic Confession

follows one of the traditional Reformed methods of dividing of doctrine – the six loci. The various articles of the seven creeds are grouped under specific headings like “The Being and Attributes of God,” “The Holy Scripture,” “Christ the Mediator,” “The First Commandment,” etc.

In many ways, this is a good and useful tool for any and all Reformed believers.

We do have a few criticisms to offer of the book re the manner in which the various articles are divided. Formulating proper divisions is no easy task, and of necessity requires that many careful judgments be made. In the opinion of this reviewer, some of the divisions could be improved. For one thing, some divisions seem to be too broad and inclusive. For example, one heading is “The Fall of Man, Original Sin, and Punishment.” Another is “Repentance and Conversion.” On the other hand, some headings tend to confuse, because the relationship between topics is not always clear, as in “Common Grace and External Calling” (about which we will have more to say later). Still other divisions are so narrow as to appear forced, as with “God’s Just Mercy in Christ” and “The Promises of the Gospel.”

More significantly, some-

times the placement of the various articles is questionable. For example, the section entitled "Christ as Mediator" contains nothing from the Westminster Larger Catechism. However, under the heading "The States of Christ" is included the Westminster Larger Catechism Q. 55, "How doth Christ make intercession?" It also seems peculiar that the section on the Fourth Commandment contains nothing from the Second Helvetic Confession. However, Chapter 22 of the Helvetic Confession (Of Holy and Ecclesiastical Meetings) and Chapter 23 (Of the Prayers of the Church, of Singing, and of Canonical Hours) which have a great deal to say about worshiping God, are put into the section on "The Government and Office-bearers of the Church," seemingly out of place.

For obvious reasons, the most interesting section to this reviewer is the division entitled "Common Grace and External Calling." First of all, it is surprising to see these two topics incorporated into one heading. Linking these two topics implies that they are related, and that so intimately that they can best be treated together. This was apparently the case with the topics "Effectual Calling and Regeneration," and "Repentance and Conversion." However, the heading "Common Grace and External Call-

ing" raises some questions. Does this mean that common grace and the external call are the same thing? Does it mean that common grace is conferred by the external call, so that all who hear the preaching receive a grace that enables the hearer to make a decision, yes or no, concerning Christ? Or perhaps, that God has a common grace to all men, and the external call is an offer, a general, well-meant offer of the gospel?

All the above would be in harmony with the First Point of the Christian Reformed Church adopted by the synod of 1924. That point affirmed the existence of a non-saving grace to all the creatures of God, and as a proof of that grace, adduced the "general offer of the Gospel." The trouble is that this kind of common grace can only be rooted in the atonement of Christ, for if God offers salvation to all who hear the preaching, then salvation must be available for all. That in turn means that in some sense Christ died for all men. And that is rejected by the Reformed creeds! Hence it cannot be that common grace is the same as the external calling, nor that common grace is given to all who hear the gospel.

On the other hand, if these two items, namely, common grace and the external call, are to be dif-

ferentiated, as they must, then it is worthwhile to notice what kind of support for common grace does exist in the Reformed confessions. Eight different articles from four confessions are included under this heading. Of these, four of the articles (Canons III, IV, Articles 8 and 9; the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 10, Article 4, and the Westminster Larger Catechism, Q. 68: *Are the elect only effectually called?*) all deal with the call of the gospel.

What is left for common grace are three articles. One selection is the first sentence of the Belgic Confession, Article 14: *And being thus become wicked, perverse, and corrupt in all his ways, he hath lost all his excellent gifts which he had received from God, and retained only a few remains thereof, which however, are sufficient to leave man without excuse.* Is that common grace, namely, that God has not removed all His good gifts from fallen man? It is certainly scriptural that God has not taken all His good gifts from man. To the pagans in Lystra, Paul pointed out that God “did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.” However, Paul did not describe this as God’s common grace to the people. He said rather that by these means God “left not

himself without witness” (Acts 14:17). But whether or not this witness is grace depends on God’s intent for leaving the witness. Did he leave it for the salvation of all, or to try to save all? Then it is grace. But if God left this witness for their condemnation, then it is not grace. Romans 1 is the clearest teaching on this question. It teaches that God’s witness to the ungodly is for the purpose of condemnation, to leave them “without excuse.” That is also the conclusion of the Belgic Confession itself – these *excellent gifts ... are sufficient to leave man without excuse.* It must also be noted, therefore, that this article of the Belgic Confession neither defines common grace nor describes the work of common grace. In fact, it does not even mention common grace. If it is asserted that this article teaches common grace, a closer examination reveals that this is erroneous.

Another article selected for its “support” of common grace is the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 16, article 7. This reads: *Works done by unregenerate men, although for the matter of them they may be things which God commands; and of good use both to themselves and to others: yet because they proceed not from a heart purified by faith; nor are done in a right manner according to the*

Word; nor to the right end, the glory of God, they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, or make man meet to receive grace from God: and yet, their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing to God.

This article likewise does not so much as mention common grace. If it teaches common grace, it must be by implication. The implication, apparently, is that God gives His common grace to all men so that they do good.

The Westminster rightly shows that unregenerate men do works that are outwardly in harmony with God's law. Every student of Scripture knows and acknowledges that fact.

The article goes on to teach that these same works of the unregenerate are sinful and cannot please God. This is generally *not* the position of those who support common grace! The third point of common grace as adopted by the Christian Reformed Church in 1924 maintains that the unregenerate do a certain good, not saving good (which was not defined), but good nonetheless, according to God. Those who defended the "Three Points" maintained that this good includes not only the outward conformity to the law, but also "certain desires and impulses which are good and from which his good

deeds spring" (H. J. Kuiper, *The Three Points of Common Grace*, p. 35). Concerning these works, H. J. Kuiper averred, "God says they are good," even though these "works of the unregenerate are fundamentally evil" (p. 37).

This article of the Westminster Confession of Faith does not teach concerning the works of the unregenerate that "God says they are good." It maintains rather that "they...are sinful, and cannot please God." It should be noticed that the teaching of this article has been the position of the Protestant Reformed Churches from the beginning of her history. Never have the Protestant Reformed Churches denied that the unregenerate can perform works that are outwardly in harmony with God's law. But since these same works *proceed not from a heart purified by faith; nor are done in a right manner according to the Word; nor to the right end, the glory of God, they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God!* That is the literal teaching of this very article of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Perhaps this article of the Westminster was placed under the heading of "Common Grace and External Calling" because it rejects common grace?

What, then, is left as "proof" of common grace? The Canons of

Dordt, Head III/IV, Rejection of Errors, Article 5. It reads in part: [Synod rejects the errors of those who teach:] *That the corrupt and natural man can so well use the common grace (by which they understand the light of nature)...* This is the one and only place that any of these seven Reformed creeds use the term common grace. What is the very most that can be drawn from this? That the Reformed fathers referred to common grace, and did not outright reject the possibility of there being a thing called common grace. But notice that in this article, the Reformed church world en masse 1) spoke of common grace only in an article where error was rejected, and 2) placed the term in the mouths of the Re-monstrants.

That, therefore, is the “support” of the Reformed confessions for the doctrine of common grace. The Protestant Reformed Churches are vindicated against the charge that Protestant Reformed doctrine is not in line with the theology of

the Reformation. These creeds testify on her behalf.

Men may make their claims and try to establish the notion of common grace on the basis of Scripture. To these attempts, the Protestant Reformed Churches have responded repeatedly. Believers must compare and evaluate the exegesis promoted by the proponents of common grace with that of the Protestant Reformed Churches, and make a decision. But let no one pretend that the Reformed creeds teach common grace. The doctrine simply finds no support in the Reformed creeds.

In spite of this criticism, the value of the *Reformed Confessions Harmonized* ought not be depreciated. It is highly recommended. The use of this book may well promote the knowledge and faithful use of the Reformed confessions. I offer one suggestion for future editions, and that is that an index be included of all the various articles. ■

A New Testament Greek Primer.
Steven M. Baugh. Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing Company, 1995. viii + 240 pages. (paper).

A First John Reader Intermediate Greek Reading Notes and Grammar.
Steven M. Baugh. Phillipsburg: P & R

Publishing Company, 1999. X + 150 pages. (Paper). [Reviewed by Russell Dykstra.]

These two works are Greek textbooks, intended to be companion volumes – the first a grammar,

and the second a follow-up for reading, review, and additional instruction in Greek syntax.

The author is Associate Professor of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary in California. Dr. Baugh carries considerable experience into the work, having taught Greek since 1983.

For decades, the Greek grammar by J. Gresham Machen (*New Testament Greek for Beginners*) has been the standard for New Testament Greek grammars. Baugh points out that some significant changes have occurred in the language education of students since the days of Machen. Formerly it was the case that most students studied Latin before taking Greek. "Today's student, however, has little experience with reading foreign languages of any sort, much less inflected languages like Latin or Greek." Hence, he concludes, "It is time that Greek textbooks were updated again for today's needs" (*Primer*, p. v). Baugh is on target in the problem that faces students and instructors of Greek – fewer and fewer pre-seminary students have studied Latin prior to learning Greek. In fact, some colleges do not even offer the language!

Baugh's design in the grammar was to "analyze the process of

reading Greek, breaking it down into its constituent 'sub-skills,' and then to teach these skills discretely" (*Primer*, p. v).

The *Primer* definitely leads the student into the Greek language and the various concepts in a "friendlier fashion." Less is assumed of the students' knowledge of language. An excellent feature of the vocabulary lists is that, whenever possible, Baugh provides English derivations of the Greek vocabulary. This not only enhances memorization, it also removes some of the "foreignness" of the Greek language for the English speaking student.

The exercises likewise demonstrate this different approach used. Virtually every lesson in Machen's grammar concludes with two sets of exercises – a set of Greek sentences to be translated into English, and a second set of English sentences to be translated into Greek. In contrast with that, the lessons in Baugh's *Primer* include as many as six different exercises. For example, Lesson 4 on "Present Active and Deponent Verbs" assigns the following:

A. ENDINGS. Four verbs are laid out in the standard conjugation form, with the ending omitted. Students are instructed to "[c]omplete the conjugation from memory...."

B. VARIABLE VOWELS deals with the fact that in the indicative the vowel immediately after the stem can be an epsilon or an omicron, depending on the person. This set gives ten verbs and instructs students to determine whether each form is *Correct* or *Not Correct*.

C. The third exercise, titled LEXICAL FORMS, sets out twenty verbs in various present indicative forms. Students are required to give the lexical form of each.

D. READING is obviously intended to teach the student to focus on the words as such. A *key (Greek) word* is provided, followed by four (Greek) choices, three of which are similar words, and one is exact. Students are to "circle the word that matches the key word." Ten such sets are provided.

E. MEANING AND PARSING. Ten Greek verbs are given. Students are to parse and translate each, and specifically identify the "person" of each verb.

F. The last assignment is TRANSLATION. Ten brief phrases and clauses from the New Testament Scriptures are provided, and students are required to parse the verb and translate the Greek phrase. (Note: All the Greek in this book assigned for translation is from the New Testament itself.)

Obviously this is a radically different approach from that of Machen. In the opinion of the reviewer, while these exercises have many good and commendable elements, they are seriously weakened by the absence of any English to Greek translations. It is by that excruciatingly difficult and painstaking work that the student reveals whether or not he knows the Greek lessons.

The lessons are well organized. The grammar is covered in thirty lessons. Vocabulary is assigned in each lesson and, taken together, includes all the words used in the New Testament 50 times or more. The text is rounded out with sixteen pages of paradigms, the answer key to all the exercises, a Greek-English Vocabulary list, a glossary of terms, and a subject index. The paradigms are particularly well laid out. Due to the large size of the book (8½ by 11 inches), more declensions can be placed on one page, making comparisons between various forms easier to recognize.

The weak element in the textbook is the exercises. For the most part, the exercises tend to be fairly easy and would not require much time to complete. As noted previously, they include no English to Greek translation. And, finally, the answers in the back of the book,

while handy for the student learning on his own, do not promote good learning. From the point of view of the student, it can become habit forming that he looks all too quickly to the answers when he is "stuck." From the point of view of the instructor, he does not get a good feel for the comprehension of the students. All should have the correct answer after checking their answers against the key. The first indication that a student is not grasping the lessons comes with the test, which may come several weeks after the lesson is covered.

The title of the other work by Baugh describes its content – *A First John Reader: Intermediate Greek Reading Notes and Grammar*. In the words of the author, the text/workbook is an "introduction to intermediate Greek designed as part of an integrated curriculum to go along with my beginning grammar book, the *Primer*" (*Reader*, p. v). He goes on to explain that he intends this textbook to be a bridge between the grammar-learning stage of studying Greek forms and the advanced stage of intelligent use of reference grammars.

Baugh further delineates the place of the book when he writes: "In my opinion, the larger process of reading the Greek New Testament involves this sequence of

skills acquisition: mastery of forms and vocabulary, mastery of syntactical categories, and mastery of Greek style. This *Reader* fits squarely in the second stage ('mastery of syntactical categories'), yet it provides a systematic review of the Greek forms and vocabulary and some introduction to Greek style" (*Reader*, p. vii).

This *Reader* has two main sections. In the first 83 pages twelve lessons concentrate on teaching particular points of Greek syntax, e.g., the definite article, the various case uses, pronouns, participles, etc. The rest of the book consists of a "Sketch of Greek Word and Phrase Syntax" where the rules of syntax are discussed and demonstrated with illustrations lifted from the New Testament.

The lessons are nicely laid out. At the beginning of each lesson, three points of information are listed: First, the specific lessons in the companion *Primer*, if the student needs reviews; secondly, the paragraphs of the "syntax sketch" covered by the lesson – in the back of the *Reader*; and, finally, the particular passage from I John that is covered in the lesson. Each of the twelve lessons includes vocabulary which, on the one hand, provides any necessary vocabulary for the passage in I John, and, on the other, supplements the Greek

student's existing vocabulary. Baugh's goal (combining the vocabulary of the *Primer* and the *Reader*) is that the student will know all Greek words used seventeen times or more in the New Testament.

In the twelve lessons, students translate all of I John in order. Students are told to parse certain words, and the parsing is given at the bottom of the page. Baugh gives helps, hints, and various explanations of the Greek in each verse. Sometimes the helps seemed a bit elementary; at other times, very helpful. Worked into Baugh's notes are brief references and quotations from reference grammars.

Reading the Greek is an exercise that is intended to increase the proficiency of the student by reinforcing the grammar and syntax learned. In addition, it is a transition to exegesis of Scripture. Thus it is appropriate that Baugh includes in his notes explanations on how the Greek grammar and syntax can be used to elicit the meaning of the text. However, in my judgment, Baugh gives too much commentary on the verses translated. This detracts from the value of the book. An instructor using a book on syntax ought not to have to contend with interpretations of Scripture with which he disagrees. This

ought to be left for the individual instructor in the classroom, in my judgment.

Most disturbing, however, is the attitude revealed towards the inspired Scriptures. Simply put, the comments on the text reveal higher critical views of Scripture. This shows itself immediately in the first lesson. The author compares the repetition of a particular Greek word in I John 1:1 with "a fairly common rhetorical feature of ancient and some modern literature." Merely rhetorical? In answering the question why an aorist and then a perfect tense is used, he concludes that "it is more likely that the perfect sounded more 'dramatic' or 'formal' than the aorist." Sounded to whom? In the next paragraph we read: "John is making certain...." *John* is making certain? These are warning signs that the author puts too much into *John* as the human *author* of this epistle.

Later in the same lesson, these concerns are confirmed when we read: "Why didn't John write ἡ κοινωνία ἡμῶν instead of using ἡμετέρα?" (p. 7). Anyone who believes in the infallible, verbal inspiration of the Bible should answer that question, "John wrote those very words because those are the words that the Spirit gave him to write."

Admittedly, by the above

question, one could *mean* to ask, "Why did the Holy Spirit use these words instead of those?" Sometimes the comments in the *Reader* could be so understood. However, other comments do not indicate a conviction that the Scriptures are verbally inspired, that is to say, that the words that John wrote on paper are the very words that the Holy Spirit intended – *His* words. This is indicated, for instance, by the comment (on p. 9) that a particular variation between two Greek synonyms (ἀναγγέλλομεν and ἀπαγγέλλομεν) "is simply a matter of style. An author may make slight changes simply to avoid monotony. We grammarians call this by a Latin name, *variatio*. You may too." That indicates the seriousness of this matter. It fails to acknowledge that the Bible is the Spirit's precise revelation using exactly the words, the perfect words, that best reveal God in the face of Jesus Christ.

This has practical implication for exegeting the Bible. With this attitude, the exegete will pass over variations in the text, will not ask the question, "Why did the Spirit use this word here, and that word in the next verse?" The use of synonyms in the Greek is a valuable tool for the exegete, and ought not be passed off as *variatio* – the Spirit making an attempt to avoid

sounding monotonous!

The author uses this kind of language throughout. "Why did John use a singular verb...?" and, "Rather than repeating the noun ἔργα in the second clause, John simply uses the article as a rough and ready pronoun" (p. 55). Repeatedly the verb "to mean" is used with John as the subject – "what John meant," "John's meaning," and "What specifically does John mean?" (See pages 79-81, for several instances.) Our response is: What does it matter what John meant or intended? John might not even have understood exactly why he was to write what he did (as was true of the Old Testament prophets, see I Pet. 1:10-12). The only thing of importance is what the Holy Spirit meant.

Our criticisms of the author's comments arise out of a particular view of the inspiration of Scripture. The most common view today is that the Scripture is a cooperative effort between God and man. The watchwords are "human element" and "divine element." The Spirit of God inspired the men, and the men wrote in their own words. The divine element is from the Spirit; the human element is from the human author. The specific manner in which the Spirit passes the message to the writer is variously explained. But the main

point is that the Spirit gave the message to the man, who then wrote it as he saw fit to convey the message.

Our view is that of II Peter 1: 19-21. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were moved* by the Holy Ghost.

The men were inspired *writers*, a term much to be preferred over *authors*, since authors contribute something of the content of the message that they write. The human writers were moved by the Holy Spirit – carried along as a ship is carried across the sea by a mighty storm wind. (Note how the word is used by the Spirit in Acts 27:15 & 17 to describe the movement of the ship on which Paul was a prisoner – it “was driven.”) The Spirit moved the men to write exactly what they wrote.

This is not the mechanical

inspiration that everyone, including this reviewer, rejects. God did not use men as unthinking type-writers. They were actively involved – thinking, willing, and writing. Yet the message was not their opinion (the meaning of the “private interpretation” of II Peter 1:20). In fact, the message did not originate with them. It was God-breathed (II Tim. 3:16).

This is organic inspiration, namely that God used the men He had sovereignly ordained, created, and prepared, to write His Word. Each writer is unique, and his own style comes through in the writing, to be sure. But the Holy Spirit moved the writer in such a way that *what the Spirit intended to be written was written, even to the very words used*. This realization produces a profound reverence for the Bible and rules out every form of higher criticism.

It is extremely regrettable that these higher critical views are evidenced in the *Reader*. The book itself has many commendable features. However, the higher critical views spoil the book, and make its use as a text impossible for those who hold to verbal inspiration. ■

Contributors for this issue are:

Robert D. Decker, professor of Practical Theology and New Testament Studies in the Protestant Reformed Seminary, Grandville, Michigan.

Russell J. Dykstra, professor of Church History and New Testament Studies in the Protestant Reformed Seminary, Grandville, Michigan.

David J. Engelsma, professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament Studies in the Protestant Reformed Seminary, Grandville, Michigan.