

PROTESTANT REFORMED THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

**NOVEMBER 1979
VOLUME XIII NO. 1**



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

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EDITORIAL NOTES

While Prof. Hanko continues his discussion on the Biblical basis for infant baptism and Prof. Decker continues his discussion on preaching, we have included in this issue a paper written by Rev. R. Cammenga in his last year in Seminary. This paper is a study of the work of a lesser known but important Reformer who labored in Switzerland at the time of Calvin. We hope that our readers will enjoy some of the work which our students produce and profit from this work. Because these papers are written as assignments, they receive little notice and are seldom circulated beyond the confines of the classroom. Through publishing some of these papers from time to time, they are given a much wider reading audience and will acquaint our readers also with the work which our students are doing. Rev. Cammenga is now pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa.

Heinrich Bullinger and the Preservation of the Swiss Reformation

— Rev. R. Cammenga —

The battle between the two armies had been begun at one o'clock, and the firing had been going on for two hours when the Zurichers bearing the "great banner" joined their comrades in the fight. It seemed at first as if their junction with the van would turn the day in their favour. The artillery of Zurich, admirably served and advantageously posted, played with marked effect upon the army of the five Cantons spread out on a morass beneath. But unhappily a wood on the left flank of the Zurich army had been left unoccupied, and the mountaineers coming to the knowledge of this oversight climbed the hill, and under cover of the trees opened a murderous fire upon the ranks of their opponents. Having discharged their fire, they rushed out of the wood, lance in hand, and furiously charged the Zurichers. The resistance they encountered was equally resolute and brave. The men of Zurich fought like lions; they drove back the enemy. The battle swept with a roar like that of thunder through the wood. The fury and heroism on both sides, the flight and the pursuit of armed men, the clash of halberds and the thunder of artillery, the shouts of combatants, and the groans of the dying, mingling in one dreadful roar, were echoed and re-echoed by the Alps till they seemed to rock the mountains and shake the earth. In their advance the Zurichers became entangled in a bog. Alas! they were fatally snared. The foe returned and surrounded them. At this moment the troop under Goeldi, a traitor at heart, fled. Those who remained fought desperately, but, being as one to eight to the men of the Five Cantons, their valour could avail nothing against odds so overwhelming. "Soon they fell thick," says Christoffel, "like the precious grain in autumn, beneath the strokes of their embittered foes, and at length were obliged to abandon the battle-field, leaving upon it more than five hundred who slept the sleep of death, or were writhing in the agony of death-wounds." On this fatal field fell the flower of Zurich — the wisest of its councillors, the

most Christian of its citizens, and the ablest of its pastors.¹

Such is one church historian's description of that fatal Battle of Cappel. The date was Oct. 11, 1531. The allied Roman Catholic forces had defeated the Protestant. The cause of the Reformation in Switzerland appeared to be lost. Its mightiest champion, Ulrich Zwingli, had been slain in the battle. Great grief swept over the Swiss Reformed. But God is faithful. Also at this time He was faithful to the Reformed in Switzerland. To be sure, it did not appear this way. But the church then, as well as today, had to learn that God's ways are not our ways, His thoughts are not our thoughts. The cause of the Reformation seemed doomed. But God was about to raise up a mighty champion for the truth. Zwingli had fallen. But God's cause does not depend on mere man. In Zwingli's place God was going to raise up one as mighty as he. That man was Heinrich Bullinger.

Bullinger's Early Life and Education

Heinrich Bullinger was born on July 18, 1504 in the small town of Bremgarten which lay a few miles west of Zurich. He was the youngest of five boys. His father was a priest who lived in ecclesiastically unlawful but tolerated wedlock. Bullinger spent the first twelve years of his life at Bremgarten, receiving his first formal education at the small school attached to the village. Evidently Bullinger's father perceived his son's keen intellectual abilities and resolved to obtain the best available education for the boy. Because of the low state of education both in his native Switzerland and in neighboring Germany, the elder Bullinger decided to send his young son to a reputable school of the Brethren of the Common Life in the Netherlands. On July 11, 1516, at the age of 12, Bullinger set out on a journey up the Rhine River to Emmerich where the school was located.² The discipline of the school was rigorous. Just as Luther, Bullinger was forced to sing for his daily bread. Yet these difficult circumstances did not repel the young Bullinger. On the contrary he, as Luther, believed that through such strict self-sacrifice he would please God. Therefore after completing the course of study at the school in Emmerich, he determined to enter the monastic life, choosing the strictest order of all, the Carthusians. But Bul-

1. Wylie, J.A. *The History of Protestantism* (New York: Cassell Petter and Galpin, no publication date), II, p. 94.

2. Pestalozzi, Carl, "Henry Gullinger's Life and Select Writings," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 16 (Oct. 1959), p. 864.

linger was dissuaded from this course by his friends and relatives. Instead he enrolled in the University of Cologne.³

Bullinger's Reception of the Reformed Faith

It is remarkable that while at Cologne, which was a bastion of Roman Catholicism, Bullinger was won over to the cause of the Reformation. This did not happen overnight. Nor was it the climax of a long and intense spiritual struggle as it had been for Luther. But gradually, and after much study, Bullinger became convinced of the Reformed faith. Pestalozzi writes:

After studying logic and the Roman classics, learning by heart the whole of the Aeneid, he devoted himself to the Sentences of Lambardus for his theology, and to the Decretals of Gratian for ecclesiastical law. Observing that these authors referred continually to earlier writers, to the Church Fathers, he read Chrysostom, Ambrose, Origen, and Augustine, and found they taught a different kind of Christianity from that represented in the Sentences and Decretals. Some of the writings of Luther afterwards fell into his hands, in which, as in the Fathers, he found constant reference made to the scriptures. He therefore procured a copy of the New Testament, and studied it with the aid of Jerome's Commentaries; and, at last, read Melanchthon's *Loci*. Thus, by degrees, and by a natural course, was Bullinger led, from the study of the scholastic theology to the study of primitive Christianity, and his religious opinions formed upon his own personal investigations and reflections.⁴

Events in Bullinger's native home at this time must also have contributed to his espousal of the Reformation. For, in 1519, the same year in which he entered the University of Cologne, his father openly opposed the sale of indulgences by a monk named Samson. Hagenbach relates the incident as follows:

Bullinger, the grey-headed dean of Bremgarten and father of the chronicler, had therefore stedfastly opposed him (Samson, R.C.). He was to be intimidated neither by the threats and vulgar abuse of the monk, nor by the excommunication which he hurled against him; but,

3. Hagenbach, K.R., *History of the Reformation in Germany and Switzerland Chiefly*, trans. Evelina Moore (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1879), p. 177.

4. Pestalozzi, p. 865.

proceeding to Zurich before Samson reached that place, he laid his complaints before the Diet there assembled. This body resolved to refuse the indulgence seller an entrance into the city.⁵

Thus it was that through the combination of all these events Bullinger came to see the serious errors in the Roman Catholic Church and became an active proponent of the Reformation. Through his own study of the fathers and the Scriptures, through the influence of Luther's writings, and through his father's influence, Bullinger became aware of the serious departures of the Romish Church.

Bullinger Returns to Switzerland

After studying for three years in Cologne and having received the Bachelor of Arts degree in 1520 and Master of Arts in 1522, Bullinger returned to his home-town of Bremgarten. There, from the spring of 1522 to the year's end, he pursued private studies. But a man of Bullinger's learning and ability could not go very long unnoticed. In the beginning of 1523 he was invited to lecture to the monks and other students in the nearby Cistercian monastery of Cappel. This invitation he accepted. Bromiley writes:

The abbot there, Wolfgang Joner, was a man who saw clearly the need for spiritual and doctrinal reform, and he made the way easy for Bullinger both by supporting him against opponents and also by accepting his services without laying any constraint upon him to take the monastic vows.⁶

The next six years Bullinger spent in regular studying and lecturing, as well as some early writing. Concerning his lectures Pestalozzi writes:

He taught the Latin classics four hours each day, and delivered theological lectures one hour every forenoon. He not only lectured on all the books of the New Testament, with the aid of the commentaries of the best of

5. Hagenbach, p. 253.

6. Bromiley, G.W., Intro. in Ulrich Zwingli and Heinrich Bullinger, *Zwingli and Bullinger*, ed. John Baillie and others, trans. and intro. G.W. Bromiley (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1953), p. 41.

the Fathers, but on Erasmus's Introduction to the Study of Theology, and even on Melancthon's Loci.⁷

These lectures were well received and became widely publicized. Not only did the monks and the abbot himself attend them, but even many of the people from the neighboring villages came to hear Bullinger. Bullinger's reformatory views soon became obvious, and while alienating some of the people were nevertheless received by the majority. Bullinger never lost favor with Abbot Joner. Through their combined efforts the cloister of Cappel was reformed.

It was during Bullinger's residence in Cappel that he first made the personal acquaintance of Zwingli. Pestalozzi writes:

He was greatly delighted both with the preaching and the amiable and frank character of the Zurich reformer. "I felt," said he, "the more drawn to him, because I had already, for four years, been a zealous adherent to the same doctrines. I was greatly confirmed by his powerful, just, and scriptural teachings." These words define accurately the relation of Bullinger to Zwingli: not that of a dependent pupil, leaning upon his teacher; but that of a younger friend, already prepared to become an able and vigorous coadjutor.⁸

In 1527 Bullinger was granted a temporary leave of absence to go to Zurich and study under Zwingli. Concerning this Bromiley writes:

The visit was an important one, for it brought Bullinger into closer and more intimate contact with Zwingli and Leo Jud, and it gave to him a better understanding and appreciation of Zwingli's eucharistic teaching. But Bullinger's obvious learning and ability must also have made their mark, for later in the year 1527 he was appointed to accompany Zwingli to the disputation which opened at Berne on January 7, 1528.⁹

After his visit to Zurich and at the prompting of Zwingli, Bullinger was per-

7. Pestalozzi, p. 865.

8. Pestalozzi, p. 865.

9. Bromiley, p. 41.

suaded to accept the office of preacher. He preached his first sermon at Hausen, near Cappel, on June 21, 1528.¹⁰ It was also at this time that another important event occurred in Bullinger's life. In 1529 he married Anna Adlischweiler, a former nun from Zurich. Pestalozzi writes concerning her:

Her dignified carriage in future life, her frugal housewifery, her hospitality, her entire sympathy with her husband in promoting all the interests of religion, and especially in aiding and even supporting the distressed and persecuted, rendered her, in every respect, a suitable consort for such a man.¹¹

All these events did not leave Bullinger's father unaffected. In the beginning of 1529 he openly declared himself in favor of the Reformation. But the anti-reformatory party in Bremgarten was strong and succeeded in obtaining the deposition of the elder Bullinger. The reformatory party retaliated by calling the younger Bullinger to be their new preacher. This call Bullinger accepted. For more than two years and against considerable opposition Bullinger faithfully expounded the Scriptures at Bremgarten. His labors were not without fruit. A flourishing reformed congregation was established.

It was at this time that the cause of the Reformation in Switzerland reached a great crisis. The opposition of the Roman Catholic cantons had mounted. In retaliation for the Protestant blockade the Roman Catholic forces organized for war. Besides taking the Protestants somewhat by surprise, the Catholic army far outnumbered that of the Protestants. The result of the clash at Cappel was the defeat of the Protestants and the temporary setback of the Reformation. Above all the valiant leaders of the Swiss Reformation, especially Zwingli, lay dead on the battle field. Against the advice of Bullinger he had taken up the sword against the Roman Catholics. D'Aubigne writes:

Zwingli was dead. A great light had been extinguished in the church of God. Mighty by the word as were the other reformers, he had been more so than they in action; but this very power had been his weakness, and he had fallen under the weight of his own strength. Zwingli was not forty-eight years old when he died. If the might of God always accompanied the might of man,

10. Bromiley, p. 41.

11. Pestalozzi, p. 869.

what would he not have done for the Reformation in Switzerland, and even in the empire? But he had wielded an arm that God had forbidden; the helmet had covered his head, and he had grasped the halberd.¹²

Summarizing the significance of the Battle of Cappel, D'Aubigne also writes:

Thus the Reformation, that had deviated from the right path, was driven back by the very violence of the assault into its primitive course, having no other power than the word of God. An inconceivable infatuation had taken possession of the friends of the Bible. They had forgotten that our warfare is not carnal, and had appealed to arms and to battle. But God reigns; he punishes the churches and the people who turn aside from his ways. We have taken a few stones, and piled them as a monument on the battlefield of Cappel, in order to remind the church of the great lesson which this terrible catastrophe teaches. As we bid farewell to this sad scene, we inscribe on these monumental stones, on the one side, these words from God's book: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God. They are brought down and fallen; but we are risen, and stand upright." And on the other this declaration of the Head of the church: "My kingdom is not of this world."¹³

The treaty which concluded the Battle of Cappel established a policy of mutual toleration between the Roman Catholic cantons and the Protestant cantons. However, because the Catholics refused to ratify any peace treaty with Bremgarten as long as Bullinger remained in the city, the reformer was forced to take refuge in Zurich. He took with him his aged father and a short time later received his entire family.

Bullinger Takes up His Labors in Zurich

As a result of the outcome of the Battle of Cappel the anti-reformatory party in Zurich gained in power. Bullinger and his associates were regarded with

12. D'Aubigne, J.H. Merle, *History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, trans. H. White (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., no date of publication), IV, p. 490.

13. D'Aubigne, p. 507.

suspicion. Many of the people blamed the ministers for the recent turn of events. Yet, in spite of this opposition, Bullinger took a firm stand for the Reformation. Openly he continued to preach and to write. It was really no surprise then, that on December 9, 1531 the Great Council of the city appointed him to be Zwingli's successor as the chief pastor (*antistes*), of the city cathedral. At his election, however, the Great Council attempted to restrict the preaching of the ministers. They enjoined not only Bullinger but all the ministers that they must confine themselves to the Scriptures and leave all secular matters alone. Pestalozzi writes concerning this:

Bullinger saw the importance of the moment and the evil consequences that might arise from one false step taken at such a time. He had the firmness to say that he could not accept the appointment without a clearer understanding of what was meant by this restriction. He requested time to confer with his brethren.¹⁴

Bullinger drew up a candid reply to the restriction imposed by the Great Council. In it he affirmed that the Word of God must not be bound. As far as the Scriptures addressed themselves to a given situation, so far would he speak. He could not accept this new appointment if the Council was going to stifle the voice of the preaching. After some debate the Council at length conceded Bullinger's contention. Pestalozzi records the statement of the Council to the preachers: "... that they should be left free to preach the Bible without restraint and without conditions."¹⁵ And so it was that Bullinger entered upon the new and most important phase of his career.

The amount of work that confronted Bullinger was enormous. Above all he had to preserve the reforms begun by Zwingli and reorganize the Reformed who had been cast into a state of confusion. And he had to do this in the face of the growing power of the anti-reformatory party. Hagenbach writes:

Bullinger's position was by no means an easy one. The anti-reformatory party, which now numbered among its adherents many who had formerly professed attachment to the new doctrine, had taken advantage of the dejection of the civil authorities to involve them in reactionary measures. All manner of movements were

14. Pestalozzi, p. 866.

15. Pestalozzi, p. 867.

under way on the borders of the Lake of Zurich. Immediately after the battle of Cappel, in November, 1531, a public meeting had been held at Meilen, on the eastern shore of the lake. A complaint was presented to the Government, requesting the abolition of innovations. It was demanded that the "interloping parsons who had flocked" to the canton should be cast adrift, and that peace-loving pastors should be installed in their places. Some few in the city of Zurich returned to the old faith. Peter Fussli, a member of the council, visited Einsiedeln at Easter, 1532, for the purpose of confessing. Mass was secretly celebrated in a cellar. Rome seized the favourable opportunity now offered to her, and, through her legate Ennius, invited the Government to return to the bosom of the ancient Catholic Church.¹⁶

But Bullinger refused to surrender the faith. Through his continual preaching and writing he succeeded in re-establishing the Reformation in Zurich. God had given Bullinger great gifts. Besides this He had framed Bullinger's personality. In many ways he presented a striking contrast to Zwingli. Zwingli was a man of passion and unbridled zeal, not given to deep thought or reflection. Bullinger was more subdued and gentle, patient and reserved. He was also more scholarly and given to deeper insights than Zwingli. Under his firm but patient leadership the Reformation in Zurich survived the tragedy of Cappel and steadily regained its impetus. Pestalozzi remarks concerning Bullinger: "Instead of being a servile imitator of Zwingli, as Luther's followers were of him, he avoided the faults of his predecessor, and established and maintained a better order of things than Zwingli himself would have done."¹⁷

Bullinger as Preacher and Pastor

It has been said that the power of the Reformation was the power of the preaching. In the case of Bullinger this was indeed the case. Egli writes:

In the earlier years of his pastoral activity Bullinger was an indefatigable preacher, delivering between six and eight sermons each week, nor was it until 1542 that his labors were lessened to two addresses, on Sunday and Friday. Like Zwingli, he was accustomed to interpret

16. Hagenbach, p. 182.

17. Pestalozzi, p. 868.

entire books of the Bible in order, and his sermons were esteemed far and wide, especially in England.¹⁸

Many of Bullinger's sermons were not only published and distributed throughout Switzerland and Europe, but found a large audience as far away as England. His *Decades*, a series of fifty sermons setting forth the sum of the Christian faith, were early translated and sold throughout Europe. These sermons had such a great influence on the English clergy that they became one of the prescribed training books for the Anglican ministry. Though many of Bullinger's sermons are strictly speaking topical, yet their contents are buttressed with much sound exegesis and Scriptural reasoning. In his preaching Bullinger was instructive and aimed at establishing the people in a thorough knowledge of the truth. He stressed the importance of sound doctrine and faithfully warned against the prevalent heresies.

Not only was Bullinger a preacher, he was also a devoted pastor. He personally visited the sick, provided means for the relief of the poor and widows, and even took countless refugees under his roof. On several occasions when the plague visited Zurich he refused to leave his post, even at the advice of his friends, and in great peril to his own life ministered to the sick and dying.

Like Luther, Bullinger enjoyed a blessed home-life. Besides rearing his own children, eleven in number though two died very young, Bullinger opened his home to numerous others. At Zwingli's death he immediately took Zwingli's widow and her two children into his household. Zwingli's son, also named Ulrich Zwingli, married Bullinger's oldest daughter, Anna, and also entered the ministry. Bullinger also took care of his aged parents who had lost nearly all their possessions in the Battle of Cappel. Bullinger's oldest son, also named Heinrich, and his second son both followed their father in the work of the ministry. His third son became a knight in the service of Philip of Hesse. Bullinger's second daughter married Ludwig Lavater who himself eventually became the chief pastor of Zurich. Another daughter married Josias Simler who also became a notable preacher.¹⁹

Besides the immediate members of his household, Bullinger received refugees from all over Europe. Especially during the Marian persecution he

18. Egli, Emil, "Heinrich Bullinger," *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, ed. Samuel Macauley Jackson (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1909), II, p. 300.

19. Pestalozzi, p. 869.

sheltered many English exiles. Among them were Parkhurst, Jewel, Horn, Pilkington, Lever, Humphrey, and Cole. Through these refugees Bullinger exercised a profound influence on the course of the Reformation on the Continent. Especially was this true of the English who later returned to their homeland more thoroughly imbued with the doctrines of the Reformation than when they had left.²⁰

The extent of Bullinger's correspondence and writing is staggering. Much of it, though untranslated, has been collected in the Municipal Library of Zurich. Schaff states:

The extent of Bullinger's correspondence is astonishing. It embraces letters to and from all the distinguished Protestant divines of his age, as Calvin, Melancthon, Bucer, Beza, Laski, Cranmer, Hooper, Jewel, and crowned heads who consulted him, as Henry VIII, Edward VI, of England, Queen Elizabeth, Henry II of France, King Christian of Denmark, Philip of Hesse, and the Elector Frederick of the Palatinate.²¹

Besides his letters and his published sermons, Bullinger wrote expositions of all the books of the New Testament except Revelation. Besides the *Decades*, he composed and published 100 sermons of Revelation, 66 on Daniel, 170 on Jeremiah, and 190 on Isaiah. In addition he wrote theological treatises on providence, justification, the authority of Scripture, the sacraments, the doctrine of the covenant, the atonement, and the office of the ministry. He also wrote a lengthy history of the Swiss Reformation which is still today the primary source for any research in this area.²²

Bullinger also carried on an extensive polemic. On the one hand he defended the Reformed faith against the attacks of the Roman Catholics, especially a certain bishop Faber. On the other hand he defended the Swiss Reformation against the attacks of the radical successors of Luther, notably Westphal and Brentius. He also repudiated the Anabaptist movement and vigorously wrote and preached against the errors of the Anabaptists.

During his lifetime Bullinger exerted himself greatly in the endeavor to .

20. Pestalozzi, p. 869.

21. Schaff, Philip, *History of the Christian Church: The Swiss Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), VIII, p. 208.

22. Egli, p. 302.

unite the various branches of the Reformation. This was a cause very dear to his heart. He revealed himself as willing to overlook non-essential differences and as open to the views of others. And yet he stood firm for what he believed was the truth. He wanted union, but not at the expense of the truth. Pestalozzi writes:

In the various conferences and colloquies held with the leading theologians of Switzerland and Germany, he showed the same traits of character, the same wisdom and balance of mind, which appeared in all his public acts, and which distinguished him so much from the violence of Luther, the timidity of Melancthon, the heat of Calvin, and the chameleon character of Bucer and the Strasburg theologians. In temper and manner, he was a model of a Christian controversialist: less able, and yet more convincing, than Zwingli or Calvin.²³

Especially by his active support of education, Bullinger sealed the success of the Reformation in Zurich. Schaff writes:

He paid great attention to education, as superintendent of the schools in Zurich. He filled the professorships in the Carolinum with able theologians, as Pellican, Bibliander, Peter Martyr. He secured a well-educated ministry.²⁴

Speaking on the importance of education, Bullinger wrote: "Unto the ecclesiastical ministry are joined these that follow. Christian schools have the first place, which bring forth a plentiful increase of prophets or ministers of the church."²⁵ Bullinger also addressed himself to the question of what should be the contents of a good Christian education.

Wherefore let pure godliness be taught in ecclesiastical schools, yea, let godliness be the end of all our studies. At the first let the studious be diligently taught the catechism, and let them never rest until such time as they have learned it perfectly, and made it familiar unto

23. Pestalozzi, p. 868.

24. Schaff, p. 207.

25. Bullinger, Heinrich, *The Decades*, ed. for the Parker Society by Thomas Harding. (Cambridge: The University Press, 1852; rpt. 1968), X, p. 479.

themselves: then let this young-begun godliness be daily increased with lectures and holy sermons: let the writings of the holy evangelists and apostles be always read unto them, that they may become perfect in them in due season: let them also commodiously learn the tongues and good arts, and let them be exercized in writing and reasoning.²⁶

Largely through Bullinger's efforts the young people of Zurich were not only given a liberal arts education, but a thorough grounding in the Reformed faith. Through his labors a well-trained clergy was prepared to carry on the cause of the Reformation.

Bullinger's Last Years

For more than forty years Bullinger ministered as the chief pastor in the church in Zurich. During those forty years of diligent labor the work begun by Zwingli was carried on and greatly advanced. But finally Bullinger's work drew to a close. Gradually the next generation was assuming the roles of leadership in the church. The years 1564 and 1565 were especially trying years for Bullinger. Within the brief span of these two years Bullinger's greatest co-laborers in the Reformation died: Calvin, Bibliander, Hyperius of Marburg, Blaares, and Farel. He was left the oldest of the Swiss Reformers. Besides this, once again the plague visited Zurich and devastated the population. His own wife and three daughters were counted among its victims. He himself was brought to the brink of death, but recovered. The loss of so many dear friends and loved ones, as well as his own illness, nearly overwhelmed Bullinger. For some time he ceased his writing and correspondence. But God gave him strength to continue for ten more years. Those last years were undoubtedly the loneliest and most trying years of his life. During that time he developed a painful kidney stone which frequently laid him low. Finally, on September 17, 1575, after personally bidding farewell to his colleagues, Bullinger died. His body was placed in the cathedral of Zurich amid the great mourning of the town's people. In the history of His church God has been pleased to use few men as He used Heinrich Bullinger.²⁷

Bullinger's Views

Having considered Bullinger's life we should now take a closer look at

26. Bullinger, *Decades*, X, p. 485.

27. Pestalozzi, p. 870.

some of his views. What especially were his views? And what specific contributions did Bullinger make to the cause of the Reformation?

Bullinger steadfastly maintained all the main doctrines of the Reformation. This was especially true of the two doctrines which characterized the Reformation: *sola Scriptura* and *sola fides*. Bullinger strongly maintained the absolute authority of Holy Scripture. He wrote in the preface to his *Decades*: "And yet I speak not of every constitution and canon, but namely of those ancient confessions alone, to which we do attribute so much as is permitted by the canonical scripture, which we confess to be the only rule how to judge, to speak, and do."²⁸ Bullinger in another place spoke of God's providential preservation of the Holy Scriptures.

Also the books of Moses and the prophets through so many ages, perils, and captivities, came sound and uncorrupted even until the time of Christ and his apostles. For the Lord Jesus and the apostles used those books as true copies and authentic; which undoubtedly they neither would, nor could, have done, if so be that either they had been corrupted, or altogether perished. The books also, which the apostles of Christ have added, were throughout all persecutions kept in the church safe and uncorrupted, and are come sound and uncorrupted into our hands, upon whom the ends of the world are fallen. For by the vigilant care and unspeakable goodness of God, our Father, it is brought to pass, that no age at any time either hath or shall want so great a treasure.²⁹

These Holy Scriptures, according to Bullinger, are all-sufficient for our eternal salvation.

Now, because I have said that the word of God is revealed, to the intent that it may fully instruct us in the ways of God and our salvation; I will in few words declare unto you, dearly beloved, that in the word of God, delivered to us by the prophets and apostles, is abundantly contained the whole effect of godliness, and what things soever are available to the leading of our lives rightly, well, and holily. For, verily, it must needs be, that that doctrine is full, and in all points perfect, to

28. *Decades*, VI, p. 13.

29. *Decades*, VII, p. 55.

which nothing ought either to be added, or else to be taken away.³⁰

Following directly from his view of Scripture, Bullinger never ceased to stress the importance of the preaching of the Word. His scores of published sermons and more than forty years of unceasing preaching sufficiently testify of this. Bullinger knew well that if the Reformation were to survive it had to be preached.

Bullinger also embraced what has been called the subjective principle of the Reformation, *sola fides*. In one of his printed sermons he wrote;

This will I make evident yet, by declaring how that faith alone, that is, that faith for itself, and not for any works of ours, doth justify the faithful. For itself I say, not in respect that it is in us a quality of the mind, or our own work in ourselves; but in respect that faith is the gift of God's grace, having in it a promise of righteousness and life; and in respect that, naturally, of itself, it is a certain and undoubted persuasion resting upon God, and believing that God, being pacified by Christ, hath through Christ bestowed life and all good things on us. Therefore faith for Christ, and by the grace and promise of God, doth justify: and so faith, that is, that which we believe, and wherein our confidence is settled, God, I say, himself by the grace of God doth justify us through our redemption in Christ: so that now our own works or merits have no place left to them at all, I mean, in justification: for otherwise good works have their place in the faithful, as we in place convenient do mean to shew.³¹

In keeping with the Scriptural doctrine of salvation by faith through grace, Bullinger very strongly maintained the doctrine of total depravity. In this he was probably stronger than his predecessor, Zwingli. He wrote:

Paul in the very beginning of his epistle to the Romans doth prove that all men are sinners; that there remaineth no strength for them to be saved by; and that the law of God itself doth dig up the knowledge of offences, that is, doth apply them, bring them to light, and make them manifest, but doth not take them away, blot them

30. *Decades*, VII, p. 61.

31. *Decades*, VII, p. 112.

out, or utterly extinguish them; and that therefore God, for his own goodness' sake, to the end that the work that he hath made should not altogether perish, doth justify the faithful freely by faith in Jesus Christ.³²

Bullinger even went so far as to speak of the corruption of the nature and approached the conception of the imputation of Adam's guilt.

Let us now see what and how great the hereditary naughtiness or corruption of our nature is, and what power it hath to work in man. Our nature verily, as I shewed you above, was before the fall most excellent and pure in our father Adam: but after the fall it did by God's just judgment become corrupt and utterly naught, which is in that naughtiness by propagation, or *extra-duce*, derived into all us which are the posterity and offspring of Adam; as both experience and the thing itself do evidently declare, as well in sucklings or infants as those of riper years.³³

Exactly because Bullinger rightly understood the Scriptural doctrines of salvation by grace alone and total depravity, he repudiated the error of free-will. He wrote:

This liberty of the sons of God we do willingly acknowledge and freely confess: but the arrogant disputations of some blasphemous praters concerning free-will, as though it were in our power of ourselves to do any heavenly thing, we do utterly reject and flatly deny.³⁴

Because he was convinced of the Scriptural soundness of the doctrines of the Reformation, Bullinger never ceased to attack the errors of the Romish Church. He repudiated the whole Romish doctrine of the church. He repudiated the notion that the pope was the head of the church.

But this privilege, as I think, thou canst give to no creature without blasphemy and sacrilege: only therefore Christ, perfect God and man, is and remaineth the

32. *Decades*, VII, p. 114.

33. *Decades*, VIII, p. 393.

34. *Decades*, IX, p. 102.

only head of the church. Those that acknowledge the pope of Rome to be the head of the church militant either know not what they do and say, or willingly and wittingly do blaspheme the Son of God, whom they will not have to reign over his church alone.³⁵

Along with the other reformers Bullinger distinguished between the visible and invisible, the outward and inward church.³⁶ He also maintained that the holy catholic church is an object of faith, not the physical reality of the Roman Catholic Church.³⁷ Bullinger also preached against the great abuses in the Romish Church: indulgences, intercession of saints, prayers for the dead, monasticism, and the whole Romish sacramental system.³⁸ In all the main points of the Reformation, Bullinger stood in firm agreement with all the other reformers. There could be no question about it, Bullinger was Reformed according to the Scriptures.

Bullinger's Views on the Sacraments

Bullinger, as did all the reformers, repudiated the Romish *ex opere operato* conception of the sacraments. He also rejected the notion of seven sacraments and maintained that the Lord's Supper and baptism alone were the sacraments of the New Testament church.

But however the case standeth, the holy scripture, the only and infallible rule of life and of all things which are to be done in the church, commendeth baptism and the Lord's supper unto us, as solemn institutions and sacraments of Christ. Those two are therefore sufficient for us; so that we need not be moved, whatsoever at any time the subtle invention of man's busy brain bring against or beside these twain. For why? God never gave power to any to institute sacraments.³⁹

Bullinger stedfastly denied the doctrine of transubstantiation.

It is manifest therefore, that the substance of bread and

35. *Decades*, X, p. 86.

36. *Decades*, X, p. 17.

37. *Decades*, VII, p. 161.

38. *Decades*, IX, pp. 93ff., 222, 230, 395.

39. *Decades*, X, p. 248.

wine in the sacrament of the Lord's supper do remain in their own nature, and that transubstantiation is a sophistical imagination.⁴⁰

There is some question concerning Bullinger's doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Especially in opposition to Luther, Zwingli had taught that the words of institution ought to be interpreted figuratively. Zwingli also insisted on the absolute necessity of faith in the recipient for the efficacy of the sacrament. This tended to deny that the sacrament itself was a means of grace. Besides this, Zwingli never clearly defined the idea of Christ's spiritual presence in the sacrament. All this has led to the charge that Zwingli considered the Lord's Supper to be nothing more than a mere memorial feast. The question is: did Bullinger follow Zwingli in his doctrine of the Lord's Supper? Can Bullinger also be charged with reducing the Lord's Supper to a mere memorial feast?

There are those who level this charge against Bullinger. Hastings Eells is one of these. He writes:

What might have happened had he (Zwingli, R.C.) lived is subject for speculation. What actually did happen when he died was that the clergy of Zurich henceforth revered him as a sainted martyr. Their aim now became not so much to preserve the truth of the doctrines he had taught, as to guard the integrity of his expression of them. Of no doctrine was this more true than of that of the Lord's Supper. Zwingli himself might have modified his views; his followers never could. Led by Henry Bullinger and Leo Jud they inherited his hostility to all things Lutheran and carried it to the extreme.⁴¹

But is this an entirely fair and accurate presentation? It is our contention that it is not. We believe that Bullinger's doctrine of the Lord's Supper was an advance over that of Zwingli and historically stands closer to that of Calvin. It is true that often Bullinger speaks of the sacrament as a memorial, a commemoration. He wrote:

Wherefore those solemn words, "This is my body, which

40. *Decades*, X, p. 276.

41. Eells, Hastings, *Martin Bucer*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1931), p. 139.

is broken for you;" and likewise, "This is my blood, which is shed for you;" can have none other sense than this: This is a commemoration, memorial, or remembrance, sign or sacrament, of my body which is given for you; This cup, or rather the wine in the cup, signifieth or representeth unto you my blood which was once shed for you. For there followeth in the Lord's solemn words that which notably confirmeth this meaning: "Do this in the remembrance of me." As if he should say: Now am I present with you, before your eyes; I shall die and ascend up into heaven, and then shall this holy bread and wine be a memorial or token of my body and blood given and shed for you. Then break the bread and eat it, distribute the cup and drink it; and do this in the remembrance of me, praising my benefits bestowed on you in redeeming you and giving you life.⁴²

Again he wrote:

With these outward sacraments also hath it pleased him to open, declare, and shew unto us his grace and loving-kindness; namely, how that he giveth unto us himself and all his riches; cleanseth us, feedeth, and moisteneth our souls with his flesh and blood; that he is at one with us, and we with him, so that we use and practice the sacraments with a true faith. For the outward enjoying of the sacraments of itself alone doth not reconcile us with God; but if they be used with faith, then, as St. Peter saith, Acts XX, through faith doth God purify the hearts. With the sacraments pleased it him to leave behind him a remembrance of his gifts and benefits, to the intent that we should never forget them, but praise and thank him therefore.⁴³

Yet, we must remember that these statements must be interpreted in the light of the times in which Bullinger wrote. His chief purpose was to repudiate the Romish view that the sacraments themselves confer grace. Besides, Bullinger was quick to warn against any notion that the sacraments were after all superfluous. He wrote:

42. *Decades*, X, p. 439.

43. Bullinger, Heinrich, *The Old Faith*, in *Writings and Translations of Miles Coverdale, Bishop of Exeter*, ed. George Pearson (Cambridge: The University Press, 1844), p. 79.

As they decline too much to the left hand, which are persuaded that sacraments, yea, without faith, do profit the receivers; so they go too far wide on the right hand, who think that the sacraments are superfluous to them that have faith. Faith, say they, doth fully acquit us; so that after we have faith sacraments can increase nothing in us: therefore it must needs be that they are unprofitable.⁴⁴

The historical proof that Bullinger stood very close to Calvin on the question of the Lord's Supper is the *Consensus Tigurinus*, drawn up through their mutual labors in 1549. It was the first confession which united the Reformation in German Switzerland and French Switzerland. The *Consensus* affirms that God through the Holy Spirit uses the sacraments as means of grace. It states:

God uses them as instruments, but in such a way that all the power is His: accordingly, as Paul instructs us that both he who plants and he who waters is nothing, but God alone who gives the increase (I Cor. 3:7), so also it must be said of the sacraments that they are nothing, since they will be without profit unless God effects all things in their entirety. They are indeed instruments by which God acts efficaciously when He so pleases, but in such a way that the whole work of our salvation must be attributed to Him alone. We conclude, therefore, that it is Christ alone who truly baptizes inwardly and who makes us partakers of Himself in the supper, in other words, who fulfills that of which the sacraments are figures, and that He makes use of these aids in such a way that the whole effect resides in His Spirit.⁴⁵

And again:

Concerning the eating of Christ's body: When we say that by the eating of His flesh and the drinking of his blood, which are here figured, Christ feeds our souls

44. *Decades*, X, p. 345.

45. *Consensus Tigurinus* in *The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the Time of Calvin*, ed. and trans. Philip Edgecumbe Hughes (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1966), p. 120.

through faith by the power of His Spirit, it must not be taken to mean that there is any commixture or transfusion of substance, but that we draw life from the flesh once offered in sacrifice and from the blood poured out in expiation.⁴⁶

We agree, therefore, with the judgment of Schaaf:

His theory of the sacrament was higher than that of Zwingli. He laid more stress on the objective value of the institution. We recognize, he wrote to Faber, a mystery in the Lord's Supper; the bread is not common bread, but venerable, sacred, sacramental bread, the pledge of the spiritual real presence of Christ to those who believe. As the sun is in heaven, and yet virtually present on earth with his light and heat, so Christ sits in heaven, and yet efficaciously works in the hearts of all believers.⁴⁷

Bullinger, like Calvin, also emphasized that the sacraments have no meaning apart from the preaching of the Word. They are in fact extensions of the preaching. He wrote:

The chief end of sacraments is this; that they are testimonies to confirm the truth, by which the Lord in his church even visibly doth testify, that the things now uttered by preaching of the gospel, and by the promises assured to the faithful from the beginning of the world, are in every point so brought to pass, and are so certainly true, as they are declared and promised in the word of truth.⁴⁸

Bullinger's Development of the Doctrine of the Covenant

Perhaps Bullinger's greatest contribution to the Reformed faith was his development of the doctrine of the covenant of grace. He developed his views of the covenant especially in his polemic against the Anabaptists. He was a staunch defender of the truth of infant baptism. But not only did Bullinger reject the teachings of the Anabaptists, he developed the positive idea of the one and eternal covenant of God.

46. *Consensus Tigurinus*, p. 123.

47. Schaaf, p. 209.

48. *Decades*, X, p. 316.

Cottrell writes that "... already in 1525 Bullinger was making baptism and circumcision parallel and was postulating the unity of the Old Testament people of God with the New Testament church."⁴⁹ This idea of the unity of the covenant Bullinger stressed, as the title of his treatise on the covenant reveals: *De Testamento Seu Foedere Dei Unico et Aeterno*. According to Cottrell there is some question whether Bullinger was dependent on Zwingli for his views of the covenant. Cottrell comes to the conclusion that he did inherit some of Zwingli's ideas on the covenant, but that he greatly enlarged upon these.⁵⁰

As we said, Bullinger emphasized the unity of the covenant. He wrote (I translate):

From all this it now follows as third in the order of the contemplated points, that this covenant is one and eternal. For, among other statements concerning the covenant, the Lord spoke very clearly: "I shall establish My covenant between me and between thee, and between thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, in order to be to thee and to thy seed after thee for a God," Gen. 17.⁵¹

In another place he wrote:

Verily, there is no difference of the people, of the testament, of the church, or of the manner of salvation betwixt them, among whom there is found to be one and the same doctrine, the same faith, the same Spirit, the same hope, the same inheritance, the same expectation, the same invocation, and the same sacraments. If therefore I shall be able to prove that all these things were indifferently common to them of the old church as well as to us, then have I obtained that which I shot at; to wit, that in respect of the substance there neither was, nor is, any more than one testament; that the old fathers are one and the same people that we are, living in the

49. Cottrell, Jack Warren, "Is Bullinger the source for Zwingli's doctrine of the covenant?" in *Heinrich Bullinger*, ed. Ulrich Gabler and Erland Herkenrath (Zurich: Juris Druck, 1975), p. 75.

50. Cottrell, p. 76ff.

51. Bullinger, Heinrich, *Het Eenige en Eeuwige Testament of Verbond Gods en Het Oude Geloof*, trans. H.A.J. Lutge and G. Oorthuys (Groningen: J.B. Wolters, 1923), p. 44. Hereafter *EET*.

same church and communion, and saved not in any other but in Christ alone, the Son of God, in whom also we look for salvation.⁵²

Based on the fundamental unity of God's covenant, Bullinger taught that the true seed of Abraham is the totality of believers, both of the Old and New Testament. (I translate):

We . . . come to the conclusion that believers out of the Jews and out of the heathen are the seed of Abraham, with whom God has concluded the covenant, and that their seed, that is their children, is not absolutely excluded from the covenant.⁵³

Again he wrote (I translate):

From this is similar testimony born out everywhere by the prophets and apostles concerning the seed of Abraham and that not everyone who is born of Abraham is also included in the seed of Abraham, but only he who is a son of the promise, that is, a believer whether he be Jew or heathen.⁵⁴

Bullinger taught that this covenant is an everlasting covenant.

The time, how long this league should endure, is eternal, and without end or term of time. For although, in the renewings or declarations of the league, many things were added which afterward did vanish away, especially when Christ was come in the flesh; yet notwithstanding, in the substantial and chiefest points, ye can find nothing altered or changed.⁵⁵

He also taught that the essence of the covenant is spiritual.

Now also there was set before the eyes of Israel a carnal and temporal felicity, which yet was not all that

52. *Decades*, VIII, p. 283.

53. *EET*, p. 28.

54. *EET*, p. 29.

55. *Decades*, VIII, p. 170.

they hoped upon; for in that external and transitory felicity was shadowed the heavenly and eternal happiness. For the apostle, in the fourth and eleventh chapter to the Hebrews, saith that the fathers out of that visible, and temporal inheritance did hope for another invisible and everlasting heritage. Neither was Christ to any other end so expressly promised them, nor the blessing and life in Christ for any other purpose so plainly laid before them, not Christ himself almost in all their ceremonies so often prefigured, for any other intent, but that they thereby might be put in hope of the very same life into which we are received through Christ our Redeemer. For the Lord in the gospel saith, that we shall be gathered into the kingdom of heaven, into the same glory with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.⁵⁶

It is very striking that, though he never developed this point, Bullinger even spoke of the essence of the covenant as fellowship.

It is very usual that the signs do take the names of the things which they do signify; so that it is no marvel though circumcision be called the league, when as in deed the league is not the cutting of the skin, but the communion of fellowship which we have with God.⁵⁷

Just as with Bullinger's other writings so with his writings on the covenant, one must be careful not to interpret them apart from their historical setting. This is especially important when one interprets Bullinger's statements concerning the "conditions" of the covenant. There are some who conclude that Bullinger taught a conditional theology and a bilateral, contractual view of the covenant. One of these is J. Wayne Baker in an article entitled: "Heinrich Bullinger and the Idea of Usury." While discussing Bullinger's views on the covenant Baker makes the following statement.

In *De Testamento*, Bullinger built the concept of a bilateral, contractual covenant between God and man. The covenant was first explicitly formulated between God and Abraham (Gen. 17:1 - 4), at which time the conditions of the covenant were clearly stated: God

56. *Decades*, VIII, p. 288.

57. *Decades*, VIII, p. 172.

would be all-sufficient, and man in return would walk before God in purity and perfection of life.⁵⁸

But to make Bullinger teach such a condition theology is both historically inaccurate and a perversion of the entire tenor of Bullinger's theology. It is true that Bullinger spoke of conditions in the covenant. He wrote:

For there are two points, or especial conditions, contained in this league: the first whereof declareth what God doth promise, and what he will do for his confederates; I mean, what we may look for at his hands: the second comprehendeth the duty of man, which he doth owe to God, his confederate and sovereign prince.⁵⁹

Therefore, too, Baker is justified in summing Bullinger's view:

The conditions of the covenant had never been altered; they were simply clarified by Christ in the Love Commandment. The covenant in all ages had taught faith in God and love of the neighbor, as evidenced in the Scriptures, the record of the covenant.⁶⁰

But from this we may not conclude to conditional theology. The whole question of conditions was not even an issue in Bullinger's day. In no respect could he be advocating conditional theology. We have already seen his strong insistence on total depravity and his utter repudiation of the notion of free-will. By the "conditions" of the covenant Bullinger was only referring to the parts or terms of the covenant. This is plain from the fact that Bullinger also spoke of God's condition in the covenant. God's condition is that He is the Redeemer and Savior of His covenant people. Man's condition, therefore, is his obligation to walk in thankfulness to His covenant God. Bullinger wrote:

The second condition of the league betwixt God and man prescribeth to man what he must do, and how he must behave himself toward God, his confederate and

58. Baker, J. Wayne, "Heinrich Bullinger," *Sixteenth Century Journal*, V (April, 1974), p. 67.

59. *Decades*, VIII, p. 170.

60. Baker, p. 68.

sovereign prince. "Walk before me," saith God to man, "and be upright." Now they walk before God, which do direct all their life, words, and works, according to the will of God. His will is that we should be upright. That uprightness is gotten by faith, hope, and charity; in which three are contained all the offices of saints, which are the friends and confederates of the Lord. Therefore this latter condition of the league doth teach the confederates what to do, and how to behave themselves before the Lord"⁶¹

Truly, Bullinger made a great contribution to the Reformation by his development of the doctrine of the covenant. It is a contribution which we as Protestant Reformed Churches should especially appreciate. For it is this same doctrine of the covenant which, by God's grace, we have inherited and been privileged to develop.

Bullinger's View of Predestination

Following Zwingli and Calvin, Bullinger also maintained the truth of God's sovereign predestination. He wrote:

And the predestination of God is the eternal decree of God, whereby he hath ordained either to save or destroy men; a most certain end of life and death being appointed unto them. Whereupon also it is elsewhere called a fore-appointment.⁶²

And again he wrote:

Furthermore, God by his eternal and unchangeable counsel hath fore-appointed who are to be saved, and who are to be condemned.⁶³

He also affirmed God's sovereign freedom and our unworthiness in predestination.

God's predestination is not stayed or stirred with any

61. *Decades*, VIII, p. 171.

62. *Decades*, IX, p. 185.

63. *Decades*, IX, p. 186.

worthiness or unworthiness of ours; but of the mere grace and mercy of God the Father, it respecteth Christ alone. And because our salvation doth stay only upon him, it cannot but be most certain. For they are wrong, that think those that are to be saved to life are predestinate of God for the merits' sake, or good works, which God did foresee in them.⁶⁴

Yet, Bullinger did not stress the doctrine of predestination as Zwingli and Calvin did. Bullinger was very hesitant about the negative side of predestination – reprobation. He was especially afraid of making God the author of sin. Schaff comments:

On the doctrine of Predestination, Bullinger did not go quite as far as Zwingli and Calvin, and kept within the infra-lapsarian scheme. He avoided to speak of the predestination of Adam's fall, because it seemed irreconcilable with the justice of the punishment of sin.⁶⁵

Schaff also makes reference to the following event.

Bullinger, in a private letter to Calvin, impressed upon him the necessity of moderation and mildness. "Believe me," he said, "many are displeased with what you say in your *Institutes* about predestination, and draw the same conclusion from it as Bolsec has drawn from Zwingli's book on Providence." This affair caused a temporary alienation between Calvin and Bullinger.⁶⁶

An English minister with whom Bullinger had considerable correspondence, Bartholomew Traheron, wrote the following in a personal letter to Bullinger in 1553.

I acknowledge, my excellent Bullinger, your especial kindness, who for the sake of satisfying my earnest request have thought it no trouble to write to me so fully and accurately respecting the providence and predestination of God. But though I admire both your

64. *Decades*, VIII, p. 188.

65. Schaff, p. 210.

66. Schaff, p. 617.

exceeding learning and moderation in this writing of yours, nevertheless, to say the truth, I cannot altogether think as you do. For you so state that God permits certain things, that you seem to take away from him the power of acting. We say that God permits many things, when he does not renew men by his Spirit, but gives them up to the dominion of their own lusts. And though God does not himself create in us evil desires, which are born with us; we maintain nevertheless, that he determines the place, the time, and mode (of bringing them into action), so that nothing can happen otherwise than as he has before determined that it should happen.⁶⁷

I think it is true that Bullinger was not as strong as he should have been on the doctrine of predestination. This does not mean that he denied or contradicted it. He certainly did not. But he did not *consistently* maintain it.

Bullinger's Views on Church Government

Not only did Bullinger have some disagreement with Calvin concerning the doctrine of predestination, but he also differed with him in his views on church government. Baker writes:

Church discipline was a hotly debated issue among Protestants from the beginning of the Reformation. There was not only the continuing debate between the major reformers and the Anabaptists, but also, by the middle of the century, a significant difference of opinion among the reformers themselves. Even among the Swiss Bullinger and Zurich were in basic disagreement with Calvin and Geneva on whether or not excommunication should be used and on who should control discipline. In Geneva, discipline was controlled by the semi-independent consistory, and excommunication from the Lord's Supper could be imposed by the consistory. In Zurich, discipline was directed by the Ehegericht, under the magistracy, and excommunication was not used.⁶⁸

67. Traheron, Bartholomew, in *Original Letters Relative to the English Reformation Written during the Reigns of King Henry VIII, King Edward VI, and Queen Mary*, ed. Hastings Robinson (Cambridge: The University Press, 1846), p. 326.

68. Baker, J. Wayne, "In Defense of Magisterial Discipline: Bullinger's 'Tractatus de Excommunicatione' of 1568," in *Heinrich Bullinger*, ed. Lurich Gabler and Erland Herkenrath (Zurich: Juris Druck, 1975), p. 141.

Thus Bullinger and Calvin disagreed on the proper relation between the church and the state. Calvin fundamentally maintained that church and state must be kept separate and constitute two distinct spheres of authority. Bullinger, on the contrary, maintained that it was the duty of the civil magistrate to effect church discipline. The actual government of the church should not be in the hands of a consistory of ruling elders from the church, but in the hands of a sort of committee from the civil government. It is striking that Erastus, the proponent of what has come to be known as the Erastian theory of church government, was a pupil of Bullinger. Despite this basic weakness in his views on church government, Bullinger succeeded in organizing the churches of Zurich. He drafted a church order which was used in the churches for a long time. He also organized a synod which was made up of members of the Great Council and which met twice each year. The chief duty of this synod was the oversight of the ministers. It regularly presented a report to the Great Council evaluating the conduct and qualifications of each of the ministers.⁶⁹

Summary and Conclusion

In conclusion, it is very evident that God greatly blessed His church through the labors of Heinrich Bullinger. Bullinger had a lasting impact both on his own beloved Zurich and on the broader expanse of the Reformation. His significance for Zurich was that through him the Reformation, begun by Zwingli, was preserved and advanced. After Zwingli's death God did not leave His sheep without a shepherd. Bromiley writes:

The comparative stability of Bullinger's long ministry is perhaps the best testimony to its success. In marked contrast to that of Zwingli, the ecclesiastical leadership of Bullinger was a period of steady and peaceful development. Certainly, the decisive changes prior to 1531 could never have been attained without the dynamic inspiration of Zwingli. Yet the Zurich of those years was being launched upon a career of evangelical conquest for which the city had not the resources nor Zwingli himself perhaps the necessary qualities of statesmanship. When the crash came with the Second War of Cappel, Bullinger brought to the situation the less brilliant but steady qualities of moderation and conciliatoriness not unmixed with unwavering conviction and a quiet

69. Egli, p. 301.

and effective persistence. The result was that church life in Zurich settled down again to a steady routine, and the changes effected so rapidly in the previous decade were able to establish themselves as the norm of Christian faith and piety.⁷⁰

But Bullinger's influence was not confined only to Zurich. Especially did he influence the course of the English Reformation and that of the Calvin Reformation. The correspondence he maintained with the English ministers is astonishing. He was consulted on every conceivable point. His counsel was highly regarded. Through his labors, too, the German and French branches of the Swiss Reformation were drawn together. Under his guidance Calvin's leadership was acknowledged. Hagenbach writes:

The Zwinglian and Calvinistic Reformations at first stood in the relation of aliens to each other,— a relation fostered, doubtless, by the difference in their respective tongues,— and no small exertion was requisite to effect an approximation between the heterogenous elements, and to induce them to unite. Such was the task of Bullinger.⁷¹

Bromiley writes in a similar vein.

But to say that is again to emphasize the value of the peculiar contribution which Bullinger made. For it was Bullinger who by his charitable and conciliatory spirit enabled the transition to be made without controversy or bitterness. Not only did he prepare the way by the creation of a common confessional bond between the earlier communions, but when the time came he did not hesitate to take that decisive step which meant a recognition of basic kinship with Geneva, and the emergence of Calvin as a virtual leader of the whole evangelical cause. We must not exaggerate, of course, for at the time it could hardly be recognized how decisive was the change in initiative which was taking place, or how far-reaching its consequences. Yet had Zwingli himself lived, it is difficult to believe that unity between Zurich

70. Bromiley, p. 44.

71. Hagenbach, p. 351.

and Geneva would have been achieved or maintained so peacefully or the advantages of it exploited so swiftly and profitably. From the wider standpoint of ecclesiastical history in general, Bullinger's acceptance of that agreement may not inaccurately be described as the most momentous and indeed the culminating act of his career.⁷²

Thus, it was especially through Bullinger's labors that the Swiss Reformation was united and the way prepared for Calvin's leadership.

Finally, by way of conclusion, we acknowledge the work which Bullinger did in the development of the doctrine of the covenant. It was especially through Bullinger and the Swiss reformers that this central truth of the Scriptures was set forth. Much work would yet be done in this area. But through the work of Bullinger much of the foundation-work was accomplished. His emphasis on the unity and everlasting character of the covenant were a great contribution. And so it was that God not only preserved the cause of the Reformation through Bullinger, but greatly advanced it. The life and ministry of Bullinger testify to the truth that God builds His church ". . . and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," (Matt. 16:18).

72. Bromiley, p. 44.

THE REFORMED DOCTRINE OF INFANT BAPTISM (5)

— Prof. H. Hanko —

In our continuing discussion of David Kingdon's book, "Children of Abraham," we have discussed, by way of positive development, the Scriptural truth concerning the baptism of infants. In the article which appeared in the last issue of the *Journal* we discussed the Scriptural proof for this doctrine and pointed out that Scripture teaches emphatically that children of believers as well as believers themselves are incorporated into God's everlasting covenant of grace. Our Heidelberg Catechism is completely correct when it states in Question and Answer 74:

Are infants also to be baptized?

Yes: for since they, as well as the adult, are included in the covenant and church of God; and since redemption from sin by the blood of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to them no less than to the adult; they must therefore by baptism, as a sign of the covenant, be also admitted into the christian church; and be distinguished from the children of unbelievers as was done in the old covenant or testament by circumcision, instead of which baptism is instituted in the new covenant.

In our present article we turn to another question. This question has to do with an objection which is repeatedly brought up by Baptists against the position of the Reformed. It is the question of the presence of reprobate seed among believers and the question of their baptism, although it is acknowledged by all that they do not belong to God's covenant.

I have purposely phrased the question in this fashion. Sometimes the question is phrased: What is the ground for the baptism of infants when we know that not all the children of believers are elect children of God? I prefer not to phrase the question in this fashion because the answer to the question phrased in this way is simply: Scripture. Scripture and Scripture's command is the basis for the baptism of infants of believers — even though we all know that many of these children of believers are not true children of the covenant.

It is better to look at the question from the viewpoint of the objection of Baptists. Baptists chide the Reformed with this objection. They point to what

to them is an inconsistency. They point out, and rightly so, that the Reformed, with a few exceptions, frankly admit that when all the children of believers are baptized, reprobate and carnal seed are baptized as well as elect children. And they add the accusation: "What right do the Reformed have to baptize carnal seed when baptism is a sign and seal of the righteousness which is by faith? What right do Reformed have, knowingly, to baptize those whom they know are not righteous in Christ and are not regenerated?"

Baptists, you see, claim to have solved this problem when they insist on believers' baptism. They baptize only such as give evidence of regeneration and the new life of Christ.

This objection takes on various forms in Baptist writings. Sometimes this is pointed to as an unanswerable inconsistency in the Reformed position which really makes the position untenable. Sometimes the Reformed are charged with error in their position by claiming that baptism of infants is based upon the faith of *the parents* or upon the supposition that all children are, in fact, regenerated. Kingdon accuses the Reformed of these errors, and it must be admitted that there have been those within the Reformed community who have taught these things, as wrong as they may be. Fred A. Malone also raises some of these same objections in an article in which he explains why he has moved from the paedobaptism position to the position of believers' baptism.¹

There have been those who have answered these objections of the Baptists by pointing out that Baptists themselves have no guarantee that they baptize only true believers.² It is possible for a man to make an outward profession of faith in Baptist circles, and, on this ground, be baptized; but the fact may very well be that his outward profession is exactly contrary to the inner state of his heart. This question involves the deeper question of the purity of the church, a question into which Kingdon enters at some length in his book. But the objection is a forceful one, and it has not been answered satisfactorily by Baptists, even though Kingdon may write:

Because we insist that as far as is humanly possible, the membership of the visible church should be composed of only those who give credible evidence of faith in Christ, we are frequently charged with being perfectionists who hold the impossible ideal of an absolutely pure church.³

1. *Baptist Reformation Review*, Vol. VI, No. 3.

2. Cf. H. Hoeksema's "Believers and Their Seed"; Kingdon refers also to such objections.

3. *Op. cit.*, p. 57.

Along with these objections, arises also the objection that the position of the Reformed leads to carnal security. The argument is that children of believers who are baptized on the grounds that they are members of God's covenant as well as adults will grow up to live careless and profane lives. And they will justify their carelessness and profanity on the grounds that they are baptized and therefore are members of God's church in spite of the sins which they commit.

Although we will discuss this objection in greater detail a bit later, it ought to be clear immediately that this objection is identical to the objection which Arminians and Pelagians have always made against the doctrines of sovereign grace, and are, indeed, objections which already the apostle Paul faced in his day when he wrote in Romans 6:1: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid." This ought, at the very least, to give pause to those who raise this objection against the view of the Reformed on the question of infant baptism.

Nevertheless, this whole question of the baptism of carnal children of believers has been a vexing question — also in the history of the Reformed Churches. Even in Reformed circles various attempts have been made to answer this difficult problem — attempts which have not always been successful.

On the whole, especially two views have been maintained in Reformed circles concerning this question. The one view is the view of Dr. Abraham Kuyper who taught presupposed regeneration.⁴ This view teaches that all the children of believers must be baptized because we must presuppose of them that they are all regenerated until such a time as they prove otherwise by their walk and life. On the basis of this presupposed regeneration we are called to baptize *all* the children of believers. It is exactly this view with which the Reformed are so often charged.

We need not enter a lengthy discussion of this view here. It is sufficient for our purposes to say that we reject this view completely on the grounds that there is absolutely no Scriptural support for it and, in fact, on the grounds that Scripture teaches exactly the opposite. Nevertheless, this must be emphasized, for repeatedly this same objection is brought up. It seems sometimes as if we can repudiate this position a thousand times, but again and again we are required to give answer to those who hurl this charge at us. How emphatically we do repudiate this position will, we hope, become clear in our present discussion.

4. For a rather lengthy discussion of this position and an excellent critique, cf. H. Hoeksema's "Believers and Their Seed," pp. 34 - 47.

There have been others in the circle of the Reformed who have taken quite a different position. These have taken the position that all children of believers are included in the covenant in an outward sense. These, quite obviously, make a distinction between the covenant in an outward sense and the covenant in an inward sense. To belong to the covenant in an outward sense includes to be born of believing parents, to receive the sign of baptism, to receive, *objectively*, the promise of God that God will be the God of the one baptized, to be outwardly separated from the world, to be brought up in the sphere of the covenant with all the privileges of that covenant (Christian instruction in the home, school, and church, etc.), but to lack the inward grace of the Holy Spirit and the work of regeneration and salvation. As I said, all children born of believing parents and baptized in the Church are included in the covenant in this outward sense. One enters into the covenant in the inward sense only when one comes to years of discretion and accepts the provisions of the covenant, professes faith in Christ, agrees to the obligations and stipulations of the covenant and shows by his walk that he is a true member of that covenant. Some⁵ have even gone so far as to say that membership in the outward covenant includes a certain "common grace" of the covenant which must be distinguished from saving grace, but which enables all who are baptized to exercise a choice either for or against God. Pierre Ch. Marcel seems also to suggest something similar to this when he writes:

The promise that the covenant will be given its full accomplishment in the children of believers does not indicate that God wishes, strictly speaking, to endow *all* the children of believers with saving faith. A certain number of them will voluntarily choose unbelief or rebellion despite the *work of God in their hearts by the Holy Spirit* (emphasis ours), despite the gospel offer of grace and pardon in Jesus Christ, despite the liberty — *a fruit of grace* (emphasis ours) which is theirs to believe and confirm the covenant.⁶

To make this view clear, some have used the following illustration. When a child of believing parents is baptized he receives, as it were, a check from God on which is written: "Pay to the order of (the person baptized) the sum of salva-

5. E.G., Prof. W. Heyns who taught for many years in Calvin College and Seminary and who succeeded in getting his views adopted, for the most part, in the Christian Reformed Church.

6. *Baptism: Sacrament of the Covenant of Grace*, Mack Publishing Co., p. 112.

tion." This check is signed by God Himself. There are various things which a child can do with that check when he arrives to years of discretion. He can take that check and frame it and hang it on the wall of his home, e.g. It is obvious that, in that case, the promise of the covenant will do him no good whatsoever. He is like the person in the Church who is intellectually enamoured with the truth of Scripture, but who never gets that truth in his heart. He is the man who is guilty of dead orthodoxy. He trusts in the objective promise of God alone and never appropriates Christ by faith. It is also possible to take that check, tear it up, and throw it in the waste basket. The man who does this shows that he despises God's covenant and will have nothing to do with it. He is a covenant breaker. He departs from the covenant and leaves the Church. He shows that he is an Esau who despised his birthright. But it is also possible to take that check and cash it in the bank of heaven by endorsing it in the proper place on the back. He is the man who, when arriving at years of discretion, accepts Christ and assumes obligations in the covenant. He then, by this endorsement of the check, by his acceptance of the promise, enters into the covenant inwardly.

It is striking that there are many similarities between this position and the position of the Baptists. Both maintain that the children of believers, while they are young, are essentially unbelievers and must be treated as such. Both maintain that one does not enter the covenant truly until such a time as one evidences faith and conversion. In fact, even the language of those who hold to the above position is oftentimes similar to the language which Reformed Baptists use. It is really no wonder that, on such a position, it is almost impossible to hold the doctrine of infant baptism against the sharp arguments of the Baptists. And it is then no wonder that many "Reformed" drift off to Baptist churches.

Our purpose would not be achieved by entering into a lengthy refutation of this view. Because we have as our goal to demonstrate the Scriptural teaching concerning the baptism of infants, it would lead us from this purpose to examine this very common view in detail. There are only a few remarks which we wish to make. One we have already made, namely that this position is very similar to the Baptist position, although, of course, those who hold to it do baptize infants. Further, this position is based upon a wrong conception of the covenant. It assumes that the covenant is an *agreement* between God and man in which both God and man have mutual responsibilities and obligations and both make mutual promises. The covenant is ratified and remains in force only when both parties in the covenant remain faithful. Scripture rather teaches that the covenant is a bond of friendship and fellowship between God and His people in which God is the Friend-sovereign and His people are friend-servants. Finally,

this idea of the covenant is really an introduction into the covenant of Arminianism. The full realization of the covenant in the *inward* sense is dependent upon the will of man and upon man's choice for Christ. Its doctrine of a general promise of God to all that are baptized resembles the doctrine of the general offer of salvation to all who hear the preaching. And, with respect to those who teach a general and common covenantal grace, it denies the particular and sovereign character of grace in the work of salvation. We cannot explain the baptism of all children in the covenant on this ground.

But what then is the justification for baptizing all children who are born from believing parents?

It ought first of all to be emphasized that we surely maintain that not all the children of believers are elect. This is the clear teaching of Scripture on every page. We repudiate as contrary to Scripture and as blatant universalism the view of Joseph C. Holbrook Jr. when he writes:

We used our imaginations when we thought of our own personal standing before the final judgment seat. Let's do it again, this time as parents. As we stand there and point to him who in life and in death was our faithful Saviour, who fully paid for all our sins with his precious blood and set us free from the tyranny of the devil, who watched over us in such a way that not a hair fell from our heads without the Father's will, who assured us of eternal life and made us wholeheartedly willing and ready to live for him and then — we look around us for our children and the Judge of all the earth says, "You honored my Son, even as you honored me, but I'm sorry. I've decided to change the rules. I decided to work my work of regeneration in two of your children, but the third one I let go to make his own decision to reject my Son. Sorry about that. Farewell!!" Incredible! Impossible! Just as incredible and impossible as God not making good on his covenant promise not to desert the parents to their foes. "God is not so unjust." If he really is the one who saves, and if he does it in fulfillment of his freely given covenant promise, then such an imaginary scene is impossible. "It is impossible that God should prove false" so that "we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us" (Hebrews 6:18).⁷

7. *Reformed Review*, Vol. XXXI, No. 1.

The history of the whole nation of Israel is proof to the contrary. Already this distinction between elect and reprobate, between believing and carnal seed appeared in the family of Adam and Eve. Abel made a sacrifice acceptable to God. Cain killed his brother and was banished from his home. Abel was of the true seed of the covenant; Cain was of the seed of the serpent. The whole history after the fall is identical to this. There were "the sons of God" and "the daughters of men"; and, by the time the flood came, all that was left of the church was believing Noah and his family. Although Noah had three sons, the line of the covenant was continued only in Shem until the New Dispensation when "Japheth came to dwell in the tents of Shem." Abraham had many children from Hagar and Keturah. But only "in Isaac shall thy seed be called." And so it was in the history of the nation of Israel. A whole generation perished in the wilderness and entered not into the promised land, the land of rest, because of unbelief (Hebrews 4:6). Many there were who, throughout Israel's history, not only turned to idols and worshipped all the gods of the heathen, but led the whole nation astray until God, in His anger, brought them all into captivity.

And the New Dispensation is no different. In Jesus' day the nation of Israel was rejected and the gospel brought to the Gentiles. And so it is throughout all time. This is exactly the teaching of Paul in Romans 9:6: "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel." Every church knows and experiences that there are many who are baptized but who are not the true children of Abraham. Every believing parent knows that he has no right to expect that all his children will grow up as true members of the covenant. And indeed, in deep covenant consciousness, and in his own concern for the seed of the covenant, he prays: "Cut us not off in our generations." And if the Lord is merciful to him and his children grow up to confess the truth, he can only give humble thanks to God Who was pleased in infinite mercy to grant this to him.

Nor may he even presuppose that all his children are actually regenerated and saved. He may not presuppose that which God has said is not true. And surely, he may not presuppose that this regeneration, being there, constitutes a ground to baptize them all. Doing so he flies in the face of the words of God.

Does this mean, as has been sometimes said, that parents must judge between their children already when they are children to determine from their number who are elect and who are reprobate? who are true seed of the covenant and who are carnal seed? Apart from the fact that this is impossible, no parent would ever be able, psychologically, to do this. He must treat all his children alike. And he must do this on the basis of the command of God. He must give them all covenant instruction and he must pray, in the case of every one of them, that that instruction will be fruitful as the Holy Spirit applies that in-

struction to their hearts. In this sense it is certainly true that he treats them all in the years of their minority as elect. He can and will do nothing else. But is this not always the case in the Church of Christ? We know that in the church as she comes to visible manifestation in the world there are also carnal members who have not the work of regeneration in their hearts. Nevertheless, as long as they manifest themselves as professing members of the church, we treat them all as God's people. Only when in doctrine and/or life they show they are not of the church does the church exercise the keys of the kingdom and put them out of her fellowship. Baptists surely do the same. Admittedly, they too cannot judge the heart. When one manifests himself as a true believer, Baptists as well as Reformed take such a one into their fellowship and receive them as the true elect of God. And when they manifest themselves as wicked people, Baptists as well as Reformed put them out of their fellowship. Only God can judge the heart, and we have no right to make this our business. We have the right to judge only by walk and life. In such a way we also treat our children.

Pierre Ch. Marcel makes this same point when he writes:

Christ forbids us to make such judgments regarding men's hearts. Whenever the official religious authorities of the church of His time passed judgment on the sin of some person or other in order to exclude them from the visible church, Christ always made them feel that they were wrong. Where others were concerned, He taught His disciples constantly to entertain a favourable estimate, namely, one of love, in the hope of the internal and secret working of the Holy Spirit.⁸

But why then do we baptize all our children when we know that they are not all children of God?

The answer to this question is that we must conceive of the covenant as *organic*.

Marcel touches briefly on this idea:

Scripture teaches us that the covenant of grace has an organic character. In the two Testaments it is realized by means of an historic process; it perpetuates itself in the midst of successive generations and brings together believers in a new *organism*, which is the Church, with Christ as Head.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

In the covenant Christ appears as having taken the place of Adam, as the second Head of the human race. Adam has been replaced by Christ. It is not simply individuals, separate from each other, who are saved, but rather, through Christ, the *organism* of humanity and of the universe itself which is saved in the person of the elect. The structure of the new organism is assumed from the original creation in Adam, regenerated and restored. The covenant of grace is the organization of the new humanity, with Christ as Head, attaching itself to it, and thereby making the whole of this creation qualitatively and intensively secure.⁹

It is this idea, so common in Scripture, which forms the Scriptural basis for our answer to the question of why we baptize all the children of the covenant.

It is important, first of all, to ask the question: what precisely is meant by an organism?

By way of definition, we offer the following: an organism is an organized and unified system, composed of many diverse parts, but united by a common principle of life.

There are various elements to this definition which we ought to notice.

First of all, negatively, an organism is not a machine. A machine is also an organized system, a unity with many diverse parts, but it is not living. One would never call an automobile an organism.

Secondly, an organism would not be such without both unity and diversity. An organism is a single system or creature, but this one creature is composed of many varied parts. Only the diversity of the members insures that it is really an organism.

Thirdly, it has one principle of life which holds the whole together, unites the parts, gives purpose and identity to the whole. A tree is such an organism. So is a human body. Each is composed of many different parts, but these parts are united by one principle of life: a tree is planted in the soil and gets its nourishment from the ground. A man has the one principle of life which unifies him in the fact that he was created by God as a rational and moral creature. This unity of life gives to the organism its essential structure, its unity of purpose, its identity. The principle of its life is its controlling feature.

The Church of Jesus Christ is considered such an organism. For that reason

9. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

it is, as, e.g., in I Corinthians 12, compared to a body. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ But now are they many members, yet but one body Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

The human race as a whole was also created as such an organism. That is why Adam was created as the father and organic head of the whole human race, and that is why the whole human race fell in Adam. God saves the organism of His church from the organism of the human race.

For this reason, God always deals organically with men. This is perhaps one of the great differences between the Reformed faith and all Arminianism. Arminianism has no room for and no concept of this important truth. Arminianism is individualistic. It teaches that God deals only with men as individuals. Each man stands alone as an individual before God, and the fate of each man is decided by the decisions which that individual man makes with respect to Christ. But Scripture teaches something far different. After all, God visits the iniquity of the *fathers* upon the *children* upon the third and fourth generation of them that hate him. And, while it is certainly true that each individual man is responsible before God for what he does, nevertheless, the fact remains that God considers each man as a part of a larger organism. God deals with a man in the light of the whole organism to which he belongs. God deals with him as a member of the human race who is guilty in Adam. God deals with him as a part of the *race* to which he belongs. God deals with him in connection with the *nation* of which he is a citizen. God judges with perfect judgment. He judges a man's individual deeds surely, but He does so in connection with all that man's life. He judges in connection with the place in life which a man occupies, in connection with that man's grandparents and parents, in connection with the circle of that man's friends, etc. After all, it will be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah and for Tyre and Sidon than for Bethsaida and Capernaum, Matthew 11:20 - 24, because God judges them all in the light of all their historical significance. Tyre and Sidon never saw the wonderful works of Christ which Bethsaida and Chorazin saw.

All God's works among men are works which He performs in the light of this organic relationship in which men live. It is for this reason that the nation of Israel in the Old Dispensation was also considered such an organism. This is sometimes done under various figures of speech. E.g., in Psalm 80 Israel as a nation is considered under the figure of a vine:

Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river. Why hast thou then broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it. Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine vss. 8 - 14.

It is impossible to interpret this passage and to explain the meaning here unless one understands that the whole nation of Israel, from the beginning of her history to her captivity, is understood. For what the passage speaks about concerns the nation as a whole.

The same thing is true of Isaiah 5 where the figure is that of a vineyard:

Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it: wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry. vss. 1 - 7.

The text itself speaks here of the fact that the whole house of Israel and the men of Judah are comprehended under the one figure of a vineyard. There is

no possibility of explaining this passage apart from this organic conception.

The Church of Christ in the New Dispensation, of which the nation of Israel was a type, is pictured in this same organic relationship under various figures. We have already noticed that Paul compares the church with a human body in I Corinthians 12. Jesus uses an Old Testament figure in John 15 when He speaks of the church as a vine:

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.
Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh
away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth
it, that it may bring forth more fruit. vss. 1, 2.

In Romans 11 the apostle uses a figure of an olive tree:

For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and
if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of
the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive
tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them par-
takest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not
against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest
not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The
branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.
Well; Because of unbelief they were broken off, and
thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:
for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed
lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the good-
ness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity;
but toward thee goodness, if thou continue in his good-
ness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they
also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted
in: for God is able to graff them in again. For if thou
wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature,
and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive
tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural
branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? vss. 16 -
24.

Here Paul is speaking of the nation of Israel as an olive tree and of the Gentiles as a wild olive tree. His whole point here is that, as the nation of Israel was rejected when they rejected Christ, so the branches were cut off from the olive tree. This was done in order to make room for the Gentiles so that new branches from the wild olive tree could be brought into the olive tree of the nation of Israel. In fact, it is one of the prerogatives of the nation of Israel

throughout the New Dispensation that, though they were cut out, they can be grafted once again into the olive tree which is naturally their own.

Under a slightly different figure Jesus speaks of the Church in her relationship with the wicked in the parable of the tares of the field (Matthew 13:24 - 30, 36 - 43). We will not quote the entire passage here for it is rather lengthy. But Kingdon in his book misses the point of the parable entirely. He writes:

The difference of approach which we have noticed can be illustrated by comparing the Westminster Confession of Faith (Chap XXV, section v) with the Particular Baptist Confession of 1677 (sometimes called the 1689 Confession because of its wide publication in 1689) which is largely based upon the former. Both agree that "the purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error and some have so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan," but what is significant is that the Scripture proofs offered are different. In proof that even the purest churches are subject to both mixture and error, the Westminster Confession points us to I Cor. 13:12 and Matt. 13:24 - 30. A reference to Rev. 2 and 3 is put in square brackets, presumably because this reference is regarded as being of secondary importance, or because it was added later. The 1677 Particular Baptist Confession appeals, interestingly enough, to I Cor. 15 (it has in mind presumably the heretical view of the resurrection of the body) and Rev. 2 and 3. What is so interesting is the absence from the Baptist Confession of any reference to the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:24 - 39). This omission is of the greatest significance. Although the authors of the 1677 Confession were prepared to concur with the authors of the Westminster Confession that "the purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error," they were not prepared to apply the parable of the wheat and tares to the visible church, precisely because it appeared to them to sanction *a definition of the church as she had become, rather than of the church as she should be*. It is a remarkable fact that Baptists have consistently refused to apply this parable to the visible church, whereas Reformed Christians of other ecclesiastical communions have had no hesitation whatsoever in so doing. I want to emphasize this point as strongly as possible, because it seems to me that we have two different conceptions of the visible church here, even when

there is agreement on the fact that all visible churches are imperfect. The conception found in the Westminster Confession would appear to come to terms with the visible church as it is, whereas the 1677 Confession refuses to do this. Why is this? Is it because the Reformed theologians have to recognize the presence of considerable numbers of unconverted members in their churches who have not improved, as they say, upon their baptism? Is it that, recognizing this fact, they have been forced to shape their definition of the visible church accordingly? It will not do to make the counter charge which is often made, that Baptists are perfectionists, for the 1677 Confession expressly denies this. Clearly this divergence is of the utmost practical importance. Imagine a visible church in which, among the office bearers (say, the elders) these two different conceptions of the nature of the church are to be found. The one party would be prepared to be accommodating in regard to membership requirements, the other would not. Is not the melancholy story of Jonathan Edwards' rupture with the church of Northampton, Massachusetts, a warning to us of what happens when these two concepts come into conflict? If I may say so in all clarity, Reformed Baptists find it very hard to understand the willingness of some of their non-Baptist Reformed brethren to accept, as apparently normal, the state of the visible church as it is found today. They do not pretend that all is well with them, but they do believe that the situation must not be accepted as normal but reformed by the Word of God. So much then, for the implications of the New Testament interpretation of the covenant.¹⁰

We have purposely quoted Kingdon at some length here because this paragraph brings us to the heart of our present discussion.

The Baptist position on this question is not very clear though. Kingdon says that Baptist and Reformed agree that the visible church in the world is not pure. In other words, Kingdon agrees that Baptists also recognize the presence of unbelievers in the visible church. The difference, so he says, is that Reformed people tolerate this and recognize it as a fact while Baptists do all in their power to prevent this. And, so he says, the Reformed bolster their position

10. *Op. cit.*, pp. 59, 60.

by an appeal to the parable of the wheat and the tares of the field.

Now this is simply not true. It may be, and, no doubt, is true that there have been times when Reformed Churches have simply tolerated the presence of unbelievers in their fellowship. But this was done in times when the Church was on the road to apostasy. Does not Kingdon know that the Reformed hold that one of the marks of the true church is the exercise of Christian discipline? The Church of Christ here on earth is called to exercise these keys in obedience to the Lord. And her obedience to this command of the Lord is exactly a mark of whether she has remained the true church. The church has always cut off from her fellowship unbelievers when they manifest themselves as such in their doctrine and walk. It appears here that Kingdon is still under the impression that all who hold to infant baptism adopt the idea of presupposed regeneration — a position which we repudiate with all the power of our convictions.

But all of this has nothing to do with the parable of the wheat and the tares. It has nothing to do with the question of Christian discipline and the toleration of unbelievers in the fellowship of the church. Jesus is saying in this parable that while the visible church exists in the world (the field, after all, is the world) and organically develops, there are in that church children of the kingdom and children of the wicked one. There is nothing which is going to change that. In fact, for a time, the two look exactly alike, just as the darnel (the tares in the parable) looks like wheat until it comes to head. Certainly, Jesus is not saying here that when the wicked in the church manifest themselves as unbelievers, they are to be tolerated. This would contradict His own words when He gives to the Church the keys of the kingdom, and it would fly in the face of the instruction which Paul gave to the Corinthians and to Titus (see I Corinthians 5:5; Titus 3:10, 11). However, Jesus does not only recognize the fact that there always are children of the wicked one within the visible church; He also, by telling of the farmer who instructed his disciples not to pluck up the tares, showed clearly that it is the purpose of God that this happens in the way that it does. The tares, according to God's purpose, serve a purpose in the field. If they are rooted up, the wheat will be pulled up with the tares. If the situation is any different from what it is in this world, the children of the kingdom will not develop as now they do because of the presence of the tares. But once again the whole matter must be considered organically.

The point, therefore, is this. As the covenant develops in all time, the covenant develops in such a way that, born into the covenant lines, there are both elect and reprobate. Or, to put the matter slightly differently, the purpose of God in sovereign predestination is realized in such a way that election and reprobation cut through the lines of the covenant. There are the true seed of

the covenant, centrally Christ according to Galatians 3:15, and, in Christ, all the elect; but there are also those who are born within covenant lines but who are not the true children of the covenant. But, because they are born in covenant lines, they belong to the historical manifestation of the covenant for a time. This is why the nation of Israel can be considered, organically, as God's covenant people. It is His vine which He brought out of Egypt. It is His vineyard which He planted and which He tended. But it is a vineyard which is broken down because of the fruitlessness of the vineyard, because of the unfaithfulness of the nation. There were times when the elect were in control in the nation, as in the days of David and Solomon. Then the nation, considered as a nation in its entirety, served the Lord, and the blessings of the Lord were upon her. Then there were other times when evil kings ruled on David's throne, when wicked priests led the nation into idolatry and when false prophets prophesied. Then the nation as a whole turned from the Lord. This does not mean that, even then, God did not preserve unto Himself a remnant. Isaiah's plaintive cry held true throughout Israel's history: "Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah" (Isaiah 1:7 - 9).

The same was true throughout the New Dispensation. When Jesus described Himself and His church as a vine, there were, after all, *in* that vine branches which never bore fruit and had to be cut out. When Paul describes Israel as an olive tree, many branches were cut out because of unbelief to make room for the branches of the Gentiles which would be grafted in after being taken from the wild olive tree.

It ought to be clear that these branches represent, however, not individuals, but generations. God visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate Him. Just as branches grafted in represent generations, so also do branches cut out represent the same generations. Also in election and reprobation God works organically, i.e., through the lines of generations.

But it must be remembered that God always looks at the whole organism from the viewpoint of His own purpose in Christ, i.e., the salvation of the elect. Just as the purpose of an apple tree is to bear apples — and the whole organism is suited, in all its parts to attain that purpose, just as a vine has as its purpose the production of grapes — and its whole organism is adapted to serve that purpose, even though it has branches in it that bear no fruit and must be pruned

away — so also does God look at all His work as that work is accomplished in His own purpose: the salvation of His Church in Christ. The organism of the whole world was created in Adam so that God could save the organism of His Church — the true world of sovereign election — in the second Adam. After all, God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. Israel is a nation — an organism; and God looks at the nation as a whole from the viewpoint of His own elect whom He saves through Jesus Christ. They are, therefore, called, Israel, the people of God, God's beloved. So, in the New Dispensation, the Churches to which Paul writes are called, the church, the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus, etc. This is true even though there are wicked within these congregations. God looks at the whole organism from the viewpoint of His own sovereign and eternal purpose.

We do the same — if we may use a few illustrations. The Mississippi River, e.g., is one river. It begins somewhere in northern Minnesota and ends at its mouth in the Gulf of Mexico. At any point along the way, we call that river the Mississippi. When we do that we do not mean to say that every drop of the water in that river begins in Minnesota and ends at the Gulf. We know this is not true. For one thing, there are many rivers, streams, and brooks which empty into it along its course. The Missouri River, e.g., is the Missouri — emphatically — until it empties into the Mississippi. Then, suddenly it loses its own identity and becomes the Mississippi. Furthermore, not all the water which is in that river gets to the mouth. Some is absorbed into the soil along the way. Some is taken up into the atmosphere. Some is caught in whirlpools and eddies. Some is taken out for irrigation. Nevertheless, always that river is the Mississippi.

So it is with God's covenant. That stream of God's covenant began already at its source in Paradise with Adam. As it runs throughout history, many new streams of new generations come into that covenant from the outside where they lose their original identity and become the people of God. This constantly happens when believers and their seed are brought into the Church. But many also fall away. They are not the true children of the covenant. They are born within it, are, for a time, outwardly of it, but never arrive safely at the end — the tabernacle of God in the new heavens and the new earth. Yet, for a time they are in it. And they are, along with the whole of God's people, called covenant people. It would be absurd to take a drop of water out of the Mississippi and throw it to the ground and say, "This drop of water is not the Mississippi River because I have taken it out." Everyone knows that. But while it was still in the river, it too went under the name, Mississippi River. Likewise, it is absurd to point to one individual who has fallen away and say, This man is not a member of God's covenant. Everyone knows that. But while he was in the covenant he went under that name for all that.

The same is true of a stalk of wheat. That one stalk of wheat is an organism. It is planted in the ground. Under the blessing of rain and sunshine it grows and matures. Presently the farmer comes with his combine and mows that stalk of wheat down. The straw is thrown back on the field and the wheat is gathered into the tank above the combine where presently it can be moved to the granary. If you would take the straw after combining is over, and say, Look at this fine wheat, everyone would think you knew nothing about farming. It is not wheat; it is straw. Nevertheless, for a while it was combined with the wheat into one plant. And that one plant was called a wheat plant, for the purpose of the whole plant was the kernels of wheat which are, at the harvest, gathered. Yet, that straw serves its own purpose. It is necessary. Without it the wheat cannot grow. But when it has served its purpose, it is disposed of as quickly as possible, for it has no more use — except, if it be put into piles, as a sort of shelter for cows.

So is God's covenant. The whole is one organism. There is, within that organism, straw and wheat. It is called God's covenant, for the purpose is the realization of God's covenant; but the wicked are there for the purpose of the elect. And when they have served their purpose, they are burned with fire.

Or to use yet another illustration. A farmer has a nice field of wheat. That field must be considered as a whole. If a visitor came to the farmer's house, it might be that the farmer would want to show him the nice stand of wheat which is almost ready to be harvested. Supposing that while the two were standing on the edge of the field looking over the waving golden-brown wheat, the farmer said: Is that not a beautiful stand of wheat? It might be, if the visitor be ignorant of farming, that he would pull a thistle from among the wheat stalks and say to the farmer: But this is not a wheat field. Look at the weed. And there are many more such which I can see. You ought to call this a weed field. The farmer would justly reply: I know that there are weeds in this field. It may even be that there are more weeds than wheat. But that does not alter the fact that this is a wheat field. I sowed wheat here. I irrigated the field for the purpose of the wheat. I will presently harvest the whole field to gather the wheat. And then the weeds shall be destroyed along with the straw.

So it is in God's covenant. There are "weeds" in the field. Of that there is no question. There may even be more weeds than wheat. But it is still God's covenant because God's purpose is to establish His covenant with the elect believers and their seed. No amount of weeds can ever change that. No one may say, Because there is reprobate seed in that covenant as it is historically manifested, it is not really God's covenant at all. No one may call that church the world — any more than a visitor may call a field of wheat a weed field.

But the question still remains: why does God will that all the children of

believers be baptized? We have already answered that question in part. We have answered that children as well as adults are comprehended in the covenant of grace. Believers and their seed are saved. And the seed of believers are saved as children. God has promised that He will gather His elect from us and from our children — and from new believers *and their children* when new branches are grafted into the olive tree. But we know that all children of believers are baptized. And we know that all these children are not elect.

Do we baptize all simply because we cannot distinguish? That, of course, is in itself true. But there is more. God has His purpose also in this. That purpose is expressed specifically and concretely in Hebrews 6:4 - 8. In vss. 4 - 6 the apostle describes reprobate seed who have been born within the covenant, "who have once been enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come." Of them he says that "it is impossible, if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." In vss. 7 and 8 he explains this. And he explains it by means of a figure. He speaks of a field upon which rain falls. When the rain falls upon that field, the result is, on the one hand, that the earth brings forth herbs fit for them by whom it was cultivated and kept. These receive the blessing of God. But that same earth, due to the same rain, also brings forth thorns and briars which are eventually burned — also according to the purpose of God.

So it is within the covenant. Within that covenant are both elect and reprobate seed. Upon both alike, for they are, outwardly, both in the covenant, comes the rain of the benefits of the covenant. All receive baptism; all receive christian education in the home and school; all receive the preaching of the Word and catechetical instruction; all receive the benefits of belonging to the communion of the saints. God wills that this be so. But His purpose is this: that the elect may manifest themselves as elect even as herbs become manifest as herbs, and that the reprobate manifest themselves as reprobate even as the thistles manifest themselves as thistles. Both happen under the outward "rain" of the benefits of the covenant. And through it all the purpose of God is accomplished. The elect are prepared for glory while the reprobate are shown for what they truly are — despisers of God and of His Word, worthy of everlasting hell under the judgment of God. Sin, as it manifests itself, also organically, manifests itself for what it truly is within the sphere of the covenant. After all, not Rome killed Christ first of all but the nation of Israel "to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom

as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever” Romans 9:4, 5.

Israel had assumed a mask of piety and godliness when Jesus came. But Jesus, by manifesting himself to that nation as the Son of God, exposed the sin and depravity of their hearts. And the result was that the nation showed their horrible evil by nailing Him to Calvary’s tree. But, through that very cross, the remnant according to the election of grace was saved. So it is through all time.

And so we baptize infants. It is the command of God through all ages. Those who fail to do this must recognize that they live in disobedience to the Lord. They have no true conception of the covenant. They cannot avoid dispensationalism. They remain individualistic in their thinking. And they do injustice to the children God has given to them.

To the people of God of every age it is a great comfort that God indeed saves them and their children. It is God’s unfailing mercy and grace. To Him be the glory forever.

PREACHING, THE CHURCH'S CHIEF TASK (IV)

— Prof. Robert D. Decker —

In our study of this subject thus far we have learned that Scripture teaches that preaching involves four elements. Preaching is *proclamation*. It is not mutual discussion of a passage of the Word of God nor does it consist of private conversation among a group of believers. Preaching is not dialogue or panel discussion or the testimonies of believers. Rather, preaching is public, official proclamation. Preaching declares publicly or *heralds* the Word or Gospel of God in Jesus Christ. In the second place, preaching heralds the Gospel or Word of God. It proclaims a message, and that message is not the word of man's wisdom but it is the Word of God. And that Word of God is glad tidings, good news of salvation by grace through faith in Christ, the gift of God. For this very reason preaching is *authoritative*. The one who preaches heralds the authoritative Word of God in Christ. Moreover, the preacher is sent by Christ, charged by Him to proclaim the message. Preaching, therefore, bears the authority of God and of His Christ. Precisely and only for this reason all true preaching must be obeyed. Finally preaching always, and let this be emphasized, *always* evokes a response. True preaching is never without fruit. Precisely because of this truth the Apostle Paul could write: "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many who corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ" (II Corinthians 2:15 - 17). When, therefore, we speak in Christ (preach) in sincerity, as of God and in the sight of God, we always triumph! We are pleasing to God both in them that perish and in them that are saved.

These principles stand in bold relief in the passage under consideration in this issue. In his second letter to Timothy, in the context of a description of the perilous times about to come, the Apostle Paul admonishes the youthful preacher to continue in the things he has learned. What he has learned is the holy Scriptures which are able to make him wise unto salvation. Then the Apostle describes those holy Scriptures and charges Timothy to preach them:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for

instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

II Timothy 3:16 - 4:5

There is some disagreement concerning the proper translation of "all scripture." It may be "all" in the sense of the whole of Scripture or it may be "all" in the sense of every Scripture. Whichever way one translates it makes absolutely no difference as far as the meaning and force of the passage is concerned. The whole of Scripture with all of its constituent parts as the written record of the revelation of God in Christ is inspired of God.

The whole of Scripture, or every Scripture, means everything which through the witness of the Holy Spirit in the Church is recognized by the Church as canonical. In other words, the entire Bible with its sixty-six books is meant. When the Apostle wrote this the direct reference was to the Old Testament and whatever had been completed of the New Testament up to that point. Nevertheless the Church has recognized the entire Bible as the God-breathed Word ever since the Council of Hippo, A.D. 393, and the Council of Carthage, A.D. 397. The Church does this not because the church of the past upon a certain date made an official decision to this effect. The Church accepts these writings as inspired of God because the contents of these books testify to their divine origin and because of the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers. The Church *believes* these books to be the very Word of God Himself.

The phrase, "given by inspiration of God," is better translated, "God-breathed." That all Scripture is God-breathed means that the entire Scripture, together with all of its parts, is the breath or Spirit of God. This is true both as far as origin and as far as content are concerned. Scripture is God's Word from beginning to end. This is the plain and simple meaning of the text. One either accepts this by faith or he rejects this in unbelief. There is no room for debate at this point. And there can be no doubt as to what the text itself says concerning the whole of Scripture. All Scripture comes from God. This must be understood in the absolute sense.

This means that holy Scripture is not, most emphatically not the word of man. It is God's Word. Scripture is not, as the modern critics and theologians tell us, a collection of the writings of religious men who testify in these writings of their encounters with God or of their religious experiences. Scripture is not the Word of Moses or David or Paul. It did not have its origins in the minds of these men and of the other human writers of Holy Writ. Yes, it is true, and that is so obvious, holy men from God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. (Cf. II Peter 1:20, 21.) But that is precisely the point! Those men were "holy men from God." They were men set apart by God from all eternity to be used by Him in the speaking and writing of His Word. They spoke, moreover, only as "moved by the Holy Spirit." The fruit of that moving by the Holy Spirit is: "no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation." The word of Scripture is not the private word of Moses or James or of any of the other writers. The whole of Scripture in all of its parts is God-breathed. It is God's Word.

This means too that Scripture is not partly God's Word and partly man's. We must not in this connection do as so many do and speak of a divine and human factor in the production of Scripture. There are no two factors in the production of Scripture. There is only one factor, a divine factor. The human writers were but servants ("slaves" as the apostles so often referred to themselves) or instruments through whom the Holy Spirit of God gave us the Scriptures. This process must not be conceived of in some kind of mechanical fashion as if those writers were little or no more than typewriters. God never works with men that way. God never treats man as a mere puppet. God's servants were ordained by God to the task of writing the Scriptures. God ordained David, for example, with all his character traits, gifts, personality, and life's circumstances so that he might be a fit instrument in penning many of the profoundly beautiful Psalms. Those servants of God were prepared by God and gifted by God to be used by Him in the writing of His inspired Word. Finally the Holy Spirit moved these men in such a way that what they spoke and wrote is the very Word of God Himself. This latter accounts for the differences in style, language, and historical circumstances among the various books of Scripture.

The fact that Scripture is God-breathed means it is infallible. This we mean unqualifiedly. The Bible is not merely inerrant in "what it intends to teach" as we are told by the liberals. That Scripture is infallible means there are no errors of any sort to be found in the Bible. There are no errors of fact; there are no errors of chronology; no historical errors are to be found in Scripture. Scripture speaks with divine accuracy from the beginning to the end. Because

this is true the Scriptures are completely trustworthy. The child of God may safely put all of his trust and confidence in the Word of God. Whatever that Word says will surely come to pass. This is Scripture's own testimony concerning itself. And this is the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the heart of every believer. John Calvin spoke eloquently to this point when he wrote:

*All Scripture; or, the whole of Scripture; though it makes little difference as to the meaning. He follows out that commendation which he had glanced at briefly. First, he commends the Scripture on account of its authority; and secondly, on account of the utility which springs from it. In order to uphold the authority of the Scripture, he declares that it is *divinely inspired*; for, if it be so, it is beyond all controversy that men ought to receive it with reverence. This is a principle which distinguishes our religion from all others, that we know that God hath spoken to us, and are fully convinced that the prophets did not speak at their own suggestion, but that being organs of the Holy Spirit, they only uttered what they had been commissioned from heaven to declare. Whoever then wishes to profit in the Scriptures, let him, first of all, lay down this as a settled point, that the Law and the Prophets are not a doctrine delivered according to the will and pleasure of men, but dictated by the Holy Spirit.*

If it be objected, "How can this be known?" I answer, both to disciples and to teachers, God is made known to be the author of it by the revelation of the same Spirit. Moses and the prophets did not utter at random what we have received from their hand, but, speaking at the suggestion of God, they boldly and fearlessly testified what was actually true, that it was the mouth of the Lord that spake. The same Spirit, therefore, Who made Moses and the prophets certain of their calling, now also testifies to our hearts, that he has employed them as his servants to instruct us. Accordingly, we need not wonder if there are many who doubt as to the Author of the Scripture; for although the majesty of God is displayed in it, yet none but those who have been enlightened by the Holy Spirit have eyes to perceive what ought, indeed, to have been visible to all, and yet is visible to the elect alone. This is the first clause, that we owe to the Scripture the same reverence which we owe to God; because it has proceeded from him alone, and has nothing belonging to man mixed with it. (*Commentary on II Timothy 3:16*)

Because Scripture in all of its parts is God-breathed and infallible it is the only and absolute authority. Our doctrine must be gleaned from it. Our lives in every detail must be ordered by Scripture. Scripture speaks with absolute authority to every circumstance of life. Whatever is in harmony with the Word of God must be received obediently, and whatever is in conflict with the Word of God must be rejected.

By virtue of the fact that the entire Scripture in all of its parts is God-breathed it is useful or profitable for teaching, correction, reproof, and instruction in righteousness. Indeed! Of what use are the words of mere men? If Scripture were not the infallible Word of God and contained only the words of the human writers, it would be of no profit whatsoever. But God's Word is different. The Scripture is a mighty power which instructs, corrects, reproves, and admonishes.

Specifically, the text informs us that the God-breathed Scripture is useful with a view to (literally, "facing toward") doctrine (literally, "teaching"). It is noteworthy that what is last in the estimation of many is first according to Scripture. Doctrine! This Biblical emphasis is not the emphasis of the contemporary church. The task of the church today is conceived of in terms of the social, political, and even economic spheres. The church, it is said, must work to eradicate poverty and hunger in the world. The church must influence the world for good by striving to rid the world of injustice. The church must strive for world peace, etc. Scripture, however, says in this passage that the Word of God is useful first of all and primarily for doctrine. Timothy and every pastor-teacher who would be faithful to his calling must use the Scriptures for teaching. The God-breathed Scripture is profitable for that.

Let it be understood, this is primary. Without sound doctrine the people of God are carried away by the winds of many false doctrines which blow. Without being taught the sound doctrine of Scripture, the church is unable to discern the truth from the lie, the right from wrong. Apart from sound doctrine there can be no life of godliness. The point is, sound doctrine is the foundation of the Christian life of obedience to the will of God. One cannot be a godly husband or wife or parent without knowing the teaching of the Word of God concerning marriage as the picture of Christ and the Church and concerning the covenant child and home. One cannot be a godly farmer or business man or mechanic or whatever without knowing what the Word of God teaches concerning His creation, ethics, stewardship, etc. For this reason alone no preacher ought to yield to today's clamor for less doctrinal and more practical preaching. Apart from anything else the teachings or doctrine of Scripture are eminently practical. The doctrines of the Word of God radically (at the roots) affect the life of the church and the child of God at every turn.

The whole of Scripture in all of its parts is God-breathed and, for that reason, useful for doctrine. The whole of Scripture reveals God in the face of Jesus Christ as the Creator and Sustainer and Ruler of the whole universe. Scripture reveals God in Christ as the God who condemns the reprobate in the way of their own sin and rebellion and saves the elect through the cross of Jesus Christ and causes all things to work together for their good. In one word, Scripture reveals the Sovereign God in Christ.

The God-breathed Scripture is useful as well for reproof or correction or censure. This term is used in the New Testament in the sense of showing the sinner his sin and summoning him to repentance. This has reference both to errors in doctrine (faith) and in life. There are always those in the church who are led away by false teachings and there are always those who fall into sin in their daily life and walk. These sinners must be censured. They must be warned from the Scriptures and they must be called to forsake their sinful ways and walk in sanctification before God. This is the negative aspect.

How necessary! The children of God are weak because of the old nature — that which the Scripture calls “the flesh,” or, “the old man of sin.” They have what the Heidelberg Catechism calls, “a small beginning of the new obedience.” The result is that there is a constant tension within the children of God, that never-ending battle, that fierce struggle between the flesh and the spirit. (Cf. the Apostle Paul’s description of that battle within his own life in Romans 7.) God’s children sin daily and are always prone to wander. Indeed, if left to themselves, they would surely perish. But God Who is rich in mercy gives them His inspired Word, and that Word is useful for reproof. It exposes the children of God in their sins and weaknesses and it causes them to see those sins. The God-breathed Scripture calls them again and again to repentance.

The God-breathed Scripture is also useful for correction. This term means: “restoration to an upright or right state; correction, improvement.” If reproof be the negative aspect, correction is the positive. Not only must the sinner be warned to leave the path of sin, he must be directed positively to the right path. This too the Word of God does; for this correction Scripture is useful. It not only warns and reproves the sinner, but it also restores him and guides him along the right way, the way of obedience to God’s will.

Finally the Scriptures are said to be profitable, “with a view to instruction in righteousness.” The word “instruction” has the basic meaning of “training,” and is used in the New Testament with reference to the training or education of children. The term includes the connotations of both commands and admonitions. According to R.C. Trench this word includes the notion of discipline. (Cf. *Synonyms of the New Testament*.) Applied to believers it means the curbing

of sinful passions and, therefore, it is instruction which aims at the increase of godly virtue. Again, that instruction includes chastisement.

Righteousness refers to the state of being in harmony with the standard of the will of God as expressed in His Word and summed in His law. God declares His people righteous in Christ — that is, on the basis of the atonement Christ brought on the cross. That righteousness is sealed unto the people of God by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. (Cf. Romans 4:23 - 25.) That righteousness the child of God appropriates by the gift of faith and thereby has peace with God. (Cf. Romans 5:1.) Righteousness is worked in the hearts of God's children by the Holy Spirit by means of the Word of God. The God-breathed and therefore infallible Scriptures are useful for training in the sphere of that righteousness, that is, in the sphere of the will of God. For that, one needs guidance, instruction, admonition, chastisement (for on account of our sinful natures we are always inclined to wander and transgress). That training or instruction in righteousness is to be found only in the God-breathed holy Scripture.

In verse seventeen the inspired Apostle continues by speaking of the purpose of this: "That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The connection here is obvious. Scripture in its entirety is God-breathed and it is, therefore, useful for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness in order that (for the purpose that) the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

The name "man of God" is used only twice in the New Testament. It is used here and by the same Apostle in I Timothy 6:11: "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." In this verse the use is obviously personal. The Apostle is addressing Timothy, his spiritual son, as "man of God." In the Old Testament this was a designation of a person who had been entrusted by God with special office. Thus we find the following saints called "man of God": Moses, Deuteronomy 33:1, Psalm 90:1; David, II Chronicles 8:14; Elijah, II Kings 1:9; and "the prophets," I Samuel 2:27. In the new dispensation every believer is a partaker of the anointing of the Holy Spirit (I Peter 2:9) and is therefore prophet, priest, and king in Christ. Hence every believer may be designated a man of God. In this sense we must understand the name in this verse. The believer as the man of God belongs to God. God has chosen Him in Christ before the foundations of the world (Ephesians 1:3ff.). God has set him apart for Himself. God has sent His only begotten Son into the world to redeem him from sin and death. God has filled him with His Spirit so that he shares in every spiritual blessing in Christ. The believer is God's precious possession. As such he stands in direct

antithesis to the man of the world. That man of God must be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work.

The term "perfect" comes from a verb which means "to fit." Hence the noun means, "fitted, complete, perfect." R.C. Trench has the following comments concerning this word:

If we ask ourselves under what special aspects completeness is contemplated in *artios*, it would be safe to answer that it is not as the presence only of all the parts which are necessary for that completeness, but involves further the adaptation and aptitude of these parts for the ends which they were designed to serve. The man of God St. Paul would say (II Tim. 3:17), should be furnished and accomplished with all which is necessary for the carrying out of the work to which he is appointed.

(Synonyms of the New Testament, p. 77)

William Hendricksen translates the word, "equipped." (Cf. New Testament Commentary, II Timothy, p. 303.) The idea is that the man of God must be equipped or fitted for his office as prophet, priest, and king. He must have all that is necessary for the accomplishing of the task to which he is appointed as a man of God.

The idea is strengthened by the next phrase: "thoroughly furnished unto every good work." "Thoroughly furnished" simply means, "furnished completely." The man of God must be equipped and furnished completely for or, more correctly, with a view to every good work. Good works are those works which flow out of a true and living faith. They are the fruit of faith. (Cf. James 2.) Those works are in harmony with the law of God and they are performed to the glory of God. The man of God is: "God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that he should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). In order that he may be fitted or equipped for those good works and completely furnished for them the Scriptures are God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and instruction or training in righteousness.

This brings us to chapter four, verses one through five, which read:

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come

when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

The Authorized Version has "I charge thee *therefore* . . ." The word "therefore" is omitted by most major manuscripts, and in all likelihood does not belong in the text. The relationship between chapter four and the previous, however, is quite evident. First, the underlying thought of verses one through five of chapter four is the "perilous times" of departure from the faith so graphically described in chapter three. These "perilous times" are viewed as future. They *shall come* "in the last days" (3:1). "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine . . ." (4:3). Nevertheless, in the light of the fact that the inspired Apostle exhorts Timothy to continue in the doctrine of the holy and inspired Scriptures (3:14 - 17) and to herald the word with reproof and rebuke (4:1, 2), it is clear that those grievous departures from the faith had already made their appearance. Hence, the background and context of the two chapters are the same. Second, Timothy is exhorted to continue in the doctrine of the Scriptures. Those Scriptures are God-breathed and profitable (useful) for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction (training) in righteousness. Those Scriptures are given for the purpose that the man of God may be fitted, that is, completely equipped unto every good work. Thus those Scriptures are the man of God's only sure defense and refuge against the "perilous times" of departure from the truth.

Precisely because the Scriptures are that (God-breathed and profitable) the inspired Apostle proceeds to exhort Timothy and every preacher of the Word to herald the Word. Those God-breathed Scriptures must be preached! Hence, while the background and context of the two chapters are the same, there is a discernable shift of emphasis from chapter three to chapter four. In chapter three Timothy is exhorted to continue in the doctrine of the Word of God. He must do this in the face of mounting opposition to the Scriptures. In chapter four Timothy's duty to herald (preach) the God-breathed Word is emphasized.

Thus the Apostle charges Timothy before God and the Lord Jesus Christ. The term "charge" means to testify earnestly, to charge religiously or to witness. This is a very serious and solemn charge which the Apostle witnesses to Timothy. It is made before God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Literally it is made "before the eyes of God and the Lord Jesus Christ." Timothy must know that this charge or testimony is made before the face of God and of His Christ. God Himself is witness to the charge. This means the apostle comes with divine

authority. This is tantamount to saying that God Himself and the Lord Jesus Christ charge Timothy: "Preach the Word." Jesus Christ is described as: "the one about to judge those living and those dead even (upon) his appearance and his kingdom." This charge, therefore, is issued by the inspired Apostle and received by Timothy in the presence of both God and the Lord Jesus Christ. In effect Timothy is placed under oath to preach the God-breathed, profitable Word. It is to God that Timothy and every preacher of the Word must give an account. Timothy and all preachers are under solemn and divine obligation to preach the Word. It is an obligation laid upon them in the very presence of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the crucified, risen, exalted Lord Christ Who is about to judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom. The reference here is to the final appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ at the end of the ages, the appearance which will mark the destruction of the present heavens and earth with fire and the establishing of God's Kingdom of glory. (Cf. II Peter 3:12, 13.) Then the Lord Jesus Christ will judge the living (that is, those living at the time of His final appearance) and the dead (that is, those who have died prior to His appearance). All must appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive according to the deeds done in the body. (Cf. Matthew 25: 31 - 46; John 5:27 - 29; I Thessalonians 4:13 - 18; Revelation 20:11 - 15; *et.al.*) That judgment, the text emphasizes, is imminent. The Lord Jesus Christ is about to judge (*tou mellontos krinai*). There is, therefore, a definite urgency about this charge! Timothy is charged to preach the Word, for Christ is about to come!

There is, as well, divine necessity to this charge. Timothy and all preachers (the church in every age and place, today's church!) must preach the Word. They are charged to do so in the presence of God and the Lord Jesus Christ Who is the One about to judge the living and the dead at His appearance and kingdom. This solemn charge is evidence sufficient to establish the fact that preaching is the church's chief task. Preaching lies at the heart of the church's task. Whatever the church does or is called to do it must herald the God-breathed Word. Of course, the task of the church is varied and immense. It is true the church does more than preach from its pulpits or send preachers to its mission fields. The church has the solemn obligation and privilege to administer and celebrate the holy sacraments. But those sacraments, visible signs and seals of the grace of God, have no meaning and no significance and no efficacy apart from the preaching of the Word. The church must care for the widows and orphans, visit the sick, comfort the sorrowing, care for the troubled and distressed, the anxious and the fearful. And if anyone wishes to speak of the

church's social responsibility or of the social implications of the gospel (and many do in our day, also in evangelical and Reformed circles), he must do so in these terms! But again, all these tasks and responsibilities have no significance apart from the preaching of the Word. All flow from the preaching and all receive their impetus from the preaching. Scripture does not say here: "Timothy, things are pretty bad in the world; these are perilous times; there's greed, poverty, injustice, etc. I charge thee in the presence of God and the Lord Jesus Christ to get out of the sanctuary and abandon your formal, preaching-oriented liturgy and work for social justice, the eradication of racism, the alleviation of poverty and hunger, etc." Scripture simply says: "PREACH the Word!"

In verse two Scripture, by means of five brisk imperatives (all of them aorist, the first being primary and governing the last four), gives the content of this divine charge to Timothy. Timothy must "preach the Word." The term "preach" means to be a herald, to officiate as a herald; to proclaim after the manner of a herald. The herald is authorized by the king to speak the king's word. He heralds the official message of the king. There is with this term always the suggestion of formality, gravity, and an authority which must be obeyed. Applied to preaching this means that the preacher is charged before the face of God to herald or proclaim *God's Word* in Jesus Christ. He comes with divine authority. The word which he brings must therefore be obeyed. Simply because he is the official herald of the Word of God he must be received.

The preacher must herald the Word. The Word can only be the God-breathed Word of the holy Scriptures. The preacher is charged to bring that Word only. He may not herald his own word but may herald only the Word of his divine Sender. That Word and only that Word is useful for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. The Scriptures alone contain the official message of God which the herald must bring.

The fact that Timothy and every preacher of the church must herald the Word says something very crucial about the character and style of preaching. There is only one kind of preaching which is acceptable to God, and that is this: exegetical or expository preaching. The God-breathed Word must be exegeted from the original languages of the Scriptures, and on that exegetical basis the sermon must be constructed. Only that kind of preaching explains the Word of God and brings it to bear upon the needs and calling of the people of God. Only that kind of preaching truly heralds the Word which is powerful to call sinners out of darkness into the light of God's fellowship. To that Word everyone everywhere is obligated to listen, and that Word everyone everywhere must obey. The disobedient perish. This is, indeed, the chief task of the church, to herald the God-breathed Word from its pulpits and on its mission fields

promiscuously, wherever God out of His good pleasure sends the gospel.

Now the apostle circumscribes this task of preaching with four more imperatives. The preacher must "be instant in season and out of season." He must be on hand always. Whether he is welcome or not, whether there be opposition or the Word be gladly received, it makes no difference, the preacher must ever be present, heralding the God-breathed Word. The preacher must also reprove or convict, call to account, or show the hearers their faults. This verb does not mean to convict in the sense of finding one guilty of a crime. Rather the idea is that the preacher must call the hearers to account for their sins. The preacher shows them their sins and calls them to the confession of those sins in order that they may repent and find assurance of forgiveness in the blood of Jesus Christ. The preacher must rebuke too. This term means to censure severely. It is closely related to the previous verb but a bit stronger. In no uncertain terms, in straight forward, frank language must the sinner be told of his sins and the need for repentance. At this point there may be no compromise. Sin is sin and as such it is terribly offensive to God Whose Word is being preached. Always the sinner must be sharply reprimanded.

Finally, true preaching involves exhortation. This term is a little broader in scope than the two previous. It takes on a variety of meanings in the New Testament. It sometimes means to admonish or exhort. Thus the elders are admonished to feed the flock of God (I Peter 5:1ff.). Sometimes it means beseech or entreat. Thus the centurion came to Jesus beseeching Him concerning his servant who lay sick of the palsy (Matthew 8:5ff.). It may also mean to console, encourage, and strengthen by consolation, to comfort. (Cf. in this connection, II Corinthians 1:6; 2:7.) It may also mean to instruct, exhort (Titus 1:9). Finally, the term combines the ideas of encouraging, comforting, and exhorting (I Thessalonians 3:2). There is nothing in the verse or context which would indicate any one of the specific meanings. Hence, the term must be taken in its broad sense. Admonition of the wayward, beseeching sinners to be reconciled to God, encouraging the troubled, strengthening the weak, comforting the sorrowing, exhorting and instructing one and all: all this is included in the term "exhort." In all his preaching this is what the preacher must do.

These imperatives, especially the last three, tell us something very significant concerning the content of all proper preaching. The preacher who faithfully heralds the Word, who is at hand in season and out of season, who reproves, rebukes, and exhorts will preach one fundamental motif of the Scriptures, viz., sin and grace. Sin and grace belong to the content of all true preaching. Sin must be preached with all that that implies: the fall of mankind into sin, the resultant depravity of man so that he is incapable of doing any good

and inclined to all evil, man's evil nature according to which he is prone to hate God and his neighbor. And grace must be preached, the sovereign grace of God with all that that tremendous concept implies. By grace God has chosen a people in Jesus Christ before the foundations of the world, by grace He has redeemed that people through the cross of Christ, by grace God regenerates, calls, converts, gives faith, justifies, sanctifies, preserves, and glorifies that people. All this must be and is preached by the one who faithfully heralds the Word. This is the church's task, to herald the God-breathed Word, the gospel which always speaks of sin and grace.

This must be done with "all longsuffering and doctrine." That longsuffering includes: patience, endurance, constancy, steadfastness, perseverance, slowness in avenging wrongs. It is especially manifest in bearing troubles and ills. The preacher must, as we have seen, sharply reprove, rebuke, and exhort. He must point out the sins of God's people in the clearest of terms. He must call them to repentance and daily conversion. But he must do all of that with all longsuffering, with a great deal of longsuffering. He must patiently bear with their weaknesses. The preacher must suffer long with them in their troubles and trials. He always seeks the welfare, the eternal salvation of the people of God. The faithful preacher never seeks to offend or hurt the people of God.

Moreover the preacher must herald the God-breathed Word with doctrine. That accompanies the longsuffering. The preacher must have patience to teach the wayward the right way, the way of obedience to God. And that teaching or doctrine is so very necessary. Doctrine is thought of today in terms of dry, sterile dogmas articulated by the church of the past. It has little if any significance at all for the life of the church today, or so we are told. Scripture makes abundantly clear in this passage that preaching involves doctrine. And with good reason! Without doctrine there can be no godly life. Unless one is grounded in the teaching of the Word of God he cannot walk in obedience to that Word. One must know the will of God, after all, if he is going to obey it in all of his life. The teachings of the Scriptures, the doctrine of the God-breathed Word is fundamentally the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ. All the various teachings of the Scriptures comprise the knowledge of God, the living knowledge of God. That must be preached for one good reason: "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

Verses three through five underscore the urgency of the task of the preacher. The time is coming when they will not endure sound (pure, unadulterated) doctrine. According to their own lusts they will heap to themselves teachers having itching (desiring to hear something pleasant) ears. Turning away

from the truth they shall be turned to fables. It is time for every faithful preacher to be watchful in all circumstances, to suffer afflictions, to do the work of an evangelist, and to fulfill his ministry.

Indeed! This time above described is upon us. Who cares to deny it? Let the church go forward heralding the Word, the God-breathed Word, in order that the elect may be gathered out of the nations, the work and power of darkness made of no effect, and the Kingdom of our God and His Christ may come.