Protestant Reformed Theological Journal

VOLUME XXXIII April, 2000 Number 2

In This Issue:

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ISSN: 1070-8138

PROTESTANT REFORMED THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

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

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

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EDITOR'S NOTES

In his contribution to this issue David J. Engelsma asserts, "God is three.... Right knowledge of God requires a completely unembarrassed insistence upon God's threeness. There may be no timidity lest the strong emphasis upon threeness compromise the oneness.... So strong ought the confession of God's threeness to be that it inevitably draws the charge of tritheism. Although a good confession of threeness will easily be able to defend itself against the charge of tritheism, it should draw the charge." Engelsma also writes, "Contrary to what may be expected, the Spirit is not the third family member, the third lover and beloved, the third friend." Rather, Engelsma contends, the Holy Spirit is the love itself between the Father and the Son. This leaves two very important questions: how must we understand the procession of the Spirit from the Father to the Son and from the Son to the Father? And, in what sense is the Spirit "Holy?" In answering those questions, and this is true of the entire article, Engelsma works carefully with Scripture, the Reformed confessions, and the theologians of both the past and present.

The undersigned begins his exposition of the Epistle to Titus. He hopes to include at least one article per issue of the Journal to exposition of the sacred Scriptures.

In this issue we offer reviews of books in the fields of Homiletics, Bible exposition, Ethics, Dogmatics or Systematic Theology, and the History of Dogma.

May these articles and reviews be used of our Lord to deepen and enrich the faith of God's people.

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Setting in Order the Things That Are Wanting

An Exposition of Paul's Epistle to Titus

Prof. Robert D. Decker

Introduction

This exposition was first given in the form of "Chapel Talks" by the author at the weekly Wednesday morning chapel services at the seminary. These expositions began in the 1997-'98 school year and will be finished, the Lord willing, by the end of the 1999-2000 school year. They are being published in the *Journal* with the hope that they prove helpful to a wider audience of the people of God in their study of this brief letter in the sacred Scriptures. So that both those able to work with the Greek language and those unable to do so may benefit from this study, all references to the Greek will be placed in footnotes. The translation of the Greek text is the author's. We present this exposition pretty much as it was spoken in the chapel services, application and all. Perhaps this will help the reader gain some insight into what goes on in the seminary.

Most students of the New Testament are of the opinion that the apostle Paul visited Crete with Titus shortly after he had written his first letter to Timothy. In Crete the apostle found pockets of believers, but no instituted congregations. For this reason he left Titus in Crete for the purpose of "setting in order the things which are wanting" (chap. 1:5).

Titus was a Greek (Gal. 2:1-3) who was converted under Paul's preaching (chap. 1:4). He delivered the apostle's first letter to the Corinthians and later met with Paul in Macedonia. There Titus reported to Paul on the effects the first letter had on the Christians in Corinth (II Cor. 7:5-16). Shortly after this meeting the apostle wrote II Corinthians, which Titus and an unnamed "brother" delivered to the

saints in Corinth (II Cor. 8:16-24). In this same passage Paul calls Titus "my partner and fellow helper" (II Cor. 8:23).

This "partner and fellow helper" Paul left in Crete with instructions to "set in order the things which are wanting." A short time later the apostle wrote this brief letter to Titus giving him specific instructions as to his work among the Christians in Crete. These instructions are:

1. Titus must ordain qualified elders in every city, which certainly implies that he must organize congregations in every city (1:5-9). The reason for doing this is the fact that there were many "unruly and vain talkers and deceivers" who needed to be rebuked (1:10-16). In this section, therefore, Paul instructs both Titus and the saints concerning how they are to conduct themselves in the church.

2. Titus must give instruction as to the callings of the aged men and women. He must as well instruct the slaves as to their calling with respect to their masters (2:1-10). This instruction is grounded in the fact that the grace of God which brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching them to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world (2:11-15). Thus in this section the saints are taught how they are to conduct themselves in their covenant homes and family relationships.

3. Titus must remind the saints of their calling to obey the civil magistrates and he must call the saints to be careful to maintain good works and avoid foolish questions (3:1-11). In this section the people of God are instructed on how they are to conduct themselves in public life in the midst of the world.

4. Titus is then given concluding instructions and God's benediction (3:12-15).

CHAPTER ONE

The apostle Paul addresses Titus as follows: "Paul, a slave of God, but an apostle of Jesus Christ with a view to the faith[1] of the elect of God

1. Thayer translates *kata pistin:* "to awaken the faith."

and the knowledge of the truth which tends to godliness; (based) upon the hope of life eternal/everlasting which the never lying God promised before times eternal/everlasting;[2] But he has manifested in his own times his word in (by means of) the preaching with which I was entrusted according to the command of our Savior God. To Titus, my genuine child[3] according to the common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior." (vv. 1-4).

Verse 1

In this verse the apostle Paul both identifies himself and establishes his credentials. He is a servant or slave of God.[4] However we translate the term, it must be understood in a completely good sense. Certainly the apostle was not a slave of God against his will, i.e., he willingly loved and served his Lord as an apostle! Paul was owned by God. God was his Master. God was that graciously, for He was Paul's loving, merciful, heavenly Father for Jesus' sake. He was the God who, having redeemed Paul from sin and death in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, caused all things to work together for Paul's good. He was the God who provided Paul with all his need. God by His wonderful grace enabled Paul to serve Him as an apostle to the Gentiles.

And Paul trusted in God. The apostle was deeply conscious of his utter and complete dependence upon God. Not only did Paul never try to hide this dependence upon God, he gloried in this! In this lay his ability to do the work; herein lay all his confidence. This is what gave him the boldness to make known the mystery of the gospel even when

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2. The King James Version (KJV) translates *pro Xronoon aioonoon:* "before the world began."

3. g*veesioo teknoo* means: "legitimately born son." This must be taken in the spiritual sense. Titus was Paul's legitimate, spiritual son.

4. The Greek here is *doulos Theou.* Commentators do not agree on whether this should be translated "servant" or "slave of God." William Hendricksen prefers the translation "servant" because of the bad connotation of slavery. But Hendriksen is quick to point out, "... the fact that Paul's Master has bought him, hence owns him, and that the apostle *is completely dependent* upon this Master, a relation of which he is fully aware." *New Testament Commentary, I-II Timothy-Titus*, p. 340.

that meant he had to suffer persecution and opposition, imprisonment, and perhaps even death (Eph. 6:18-20).

Already at this point there is a lesson for all of us here at the seminary. Whether we be ministers of the gospel, called by God to teach, or whether we be students who aspire to the high calling of the minister of the Word and Sacraments, we are servants of God. And this means God has called us who teach to the sacred office and has called you who learn to seek the sacred office of the ministry. God, this also means, is all of our strength. He must provide the gifts necessary to do the work. Without God we are nothing. We must believe this. It must be the burning conviction of our hearts. Like the apostle we must glory in this and be profoundly thankful for this utter dependence upon the Lord in all of our work here in the seminary.

If that be not true of us who teach and if it be not true of you who are called to learn, we are no better than the Jewish "unruly and vain talkers and deceivers" who were "subverting whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake" (1:10-11).

This is very serious business, indeed! We are not involved merely in some academic exercises here in the seminary, though scholarship and academics must be of the highest quality to be sure, but we are involved in a sacred work, a spiritual work! We professors occupy a highly specialized aspect of the office of the ministry of the Word. We are charged by God Himself to "commit the truth to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also" (II Tim. 2:1-2). And you students must receive that truth in your minds. You must understand it, grasp it, and you must be able to expound it and defend it. But, more than that, you must *believe* the truth with all your hearts. And you must live it!

We do this only by the grace of God. Apart from God we are nothing. Let us in all of our work, therefore, humble ourselves under God's mighty hand and acknowledge that we are His servants and that in Him alone is all of our strength. In this way, and only in this way, will our work be profitable. Only in this way will we be instruments in God's hands for the gathering, defense, and building of His church.

Paul goes on to remind Titus and us that he is "an apostle of Jesus Christ." By this he wishes to remind us that Christ Himself called him to and qualified him for the office of apostle. This means that Paul is not just another member of the church, merely another brother in the Lord who comes with some wise, fatherly advice for Titus. No, Paul is

an apostle, one sent by the risen Christ for the work of gathering His elect out of the nations. Paul comes to Titus and the church, therefore, with the inspired, authoritative Word of the King of the church, the Word before which we all must bow in humble obedience of faith!

Having identified himself and his office, the apostle continues, "Paul a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, with a view to the faith of the elect of God and the knowledge of the truth which tends to godliness." Our translation differs rather markedly from the KJV which has, "Paul ... an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness." While no doctrine is at stake, and while the sense remains the same no matter which translation we use, we prefer ours over the rendering of the KJV.[5] What the inspired apostle is saying is this: the purpose of Paul's ministry as a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ is to bring the elect of God to faith by way of bringing them to the knowledge of the truth, which truth has as its fruit godliness.

Note well the connection made by the Holy Spirit between the truth (doctrine) and godliness (sanctification, godly living)! Truth or sound doctrine always yields godly living; the lie, false doctrine, always yields ungodly living. Hence the crucial importance of teaching and defending the truth!

"Faith" in the text must be taken in the sense of the bond which unites the elect to Jesus Christ. These were graciously chosen by God in Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). They were scattered among the nations of the Mediterranean world and the apostle was called by the risen Christ to preach the gospel to them for the

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5. The preposition here is *kata*, and it is used with the accusatives: *pistin eklektoon Theou* and *epignoosin aleetheias tees kat' eusebeian*. There are several uses and translations of *kata* with the accusative. The one which indicates "the end aimed at, the goal to which anything tends" is the correct one here. Thayer translates the first *kata* "to awaken, produce faith" and the second, "tending to godliness." A. T. Robertson comments, "Here *kata* expresses the aim of Paul's apostleship, not the standard by which he was chosen as in Phil. 3:14; a classic idiom, repeated here with *epignoosin ... eusebeian...*" *(Word Pictures in the New Testament*, v. 4, p. 597). William Hendriksen agrees with this interpretation. *New Testament Commentary, I-II Timothy-Titus*, p. 340. Meyer agrees in part. *Meyer's Commentary on the New Testament, Timothy, Titus and Hebrews*, pp. 280-281.

purpose of bringing them to conscious faith. By means of faith the elect are brought into a living union with Jesus Christ. By this faith the elect receive and appropriate from Christ all the blessings of salvation which the Savior merited by His atoning death on the cross as sealed and confirmed by His resurrection from the dead. The Heidelberg Catechism speaks of this true faith as the means by which the elect are "ingrafted into Christ and receive all his benefits" (Q & A 20).

That faith consists, the Catechism goes on to explain, of two elements. The first is a certain knowledge whereby the Christian holds for truth all that God has revealed to us in His Word. Note, by faith we hold for truth *all* that God has revealed in His Word. We do not hold for truth some, or much, or even most, but all that God has revealed in His Word. The second element of true faith is "an assured confidence which the Holy Ghost works by the gospel in my heart; that not only to others, but to me also remission of sins, everlasting righteousness and salvation, are freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits" (Q & A 21). While his faith may be stronger at some times than at other times, the child of God is not characterized by doubt. He has an assured confidence that Jesus died for *his* sins and arose for *his* justification.

The relationship between these two elements is that the knowledge of faith is the ground, the basis, for the confidence of faith. Without the certain knowledge there can be no assured confidence.

Now then, the purpose of Paul's preaching was to awaken that faith of God's elect, i.e., to bring them to conscious faith in the Lord Jesus. That purpose would be achieved by bringing the elect of God to a "knowledge of the truth which tends to godliness." Faith, to be sure, is the gift of God. Ephesians 2:8-10 and many other passages make this very clear. But God uses means to bring that faith to conscious expression in the hearts and lives of the elect, and the means is bringing them to the knowledge of the truth.

What is the truth? The truth is reality, reality which always stands opposed to the lie. God is the Truth! "He is the rock, his work is perfect, a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deut. 32:4). Jesus Christ is the truth. God reveals himself in Christ, who is the only begotten of the Father, the Word made flesh, who dwelt among us, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). That truth is revealed in the sacred Scriptures,

given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of truth and, therefore, infallible down to the last detail. Therefore, too, the Scriptures are trustworthy, reliable. In fact, nothing can be properly understood or known except in the light of Scripture.

That truth is "after godliness" (KJV) or "tends to godliness." This means that the truth of God in Jesus Christ revealed in Holy Scripture always comes to expression in godliness. The fruit of the truth is godliness. And godliness is genuine piety, reverence toward God. It is to love God with all that we are and have, and it is to love the neighbor as ourselves.

The purpose of Paul's ministry as an apostle was to bring the elect of God to the knowledge of the truth which tends to godliness.[6] Our knowledge of the truth, according to the literal meaning of the word, must not be imprecise, partial, muddied, or unclear. Certainly it must not be a distorted, erroneous knowledge of the truth. Rather, it must be precise, correct knowledge of the truth, which tends to godliness.

The clear implication is that the apostle would bring the elect to that knowledge of the truth chiefly by means of the preaching of the Word. In summary, the purpose of the apostle's preaching to the Gentile world was to bring the elect to conscious faith by giving them a clear, precise knowledge of the truth which tends to, or has as its fruit, godliness.

All of this has a great deal to say to us about our work in the seminary. All of our teaching, every class, every discipline, not just homiletics and exegesis, aims at preparing you students to preach the Word. The purpose of the preaching remains the same all through the ages. The elect must be brought to the consciousness of faith. They must be given a clear, precise knowledge of the truth so that they come to the certain knowledge and assured confidence of faith in the Lord Jesus. They must grow in the knowledge of the truth in order to grow in faith. The fruit of that is godliness, a life of thankful obedience to the will of God revealed in Scripture and summed in the law of God.

If this is to happen, our preaching must present nothing more or less than the truth of the Word of God. The truth must be its only content. We need to explain in our sermons the meaning of the text of

6. The Greek term here is *epignoosis*, which means pr- -ise, correct knowledge.

God's Word. We may not go to the pulpit with anything less or other than the truth of the Word of God. In our preaching we must always be teaching the knowledge of the truth. We are pastors and teachers through whose ministry God's people learn Christ and are taught by Him in whom alone is the truth (Eph. 4:11-21).

We must do this precisely and correctly. Our sermons must not get in the way of the people of God. They must, those sermons, convey the truth precisely and correctly. God's people must leave the church knowing exactly what the text of the sermon means and what it means for their lives of godliness. We need to remember that we are handling God's holy Word. We must not corrupt that holy Word of God by our own thoughts, ideas, or notions. Let us never forget that we are charged by God to instruct His elect, those for whom Christ experienced the agonies of hell, in the knowledge of the truth which tends to godliness so that they may grow in faith.

This takes hard work! Careful work! Diligent and faithful work! Prayerful work! This sacred task of preaching requires nothing less than our best efforts. We must not be easily and quickly satisfied with our work. Make no mistake about this! But be assured as well, preparing for the pulpit in this way is a blessed work. Indeed it will afford us real joy!

Verse 2

The apostle continues the thought in verse two, instructing us that the faith of the elect and the knowledge of the truth are based upon "the hope of life eternal, which the never lying God promised before times eternal or everlasting." The question is, does the text refer to the hope of life eternal in the subjective sense or in the objective sense? Is it speaking of the action of hope, the hoping, or is it speaking of the object, that for which the Christian hopes? While the two senses can never be entirely separated, i.e., there is always something of both involved, the emphasis is on the latter, the object of the Christian's hope.

This hope is the certain expectation of eternal life. "This hope is an earnest yearning, confident expectation, and patient waiting for life everlasting."[7] Life everlasting is not merely unending existence, it is

7. Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary, I-II Timothy-Titus*, pp. 340-341.

to be raised up in Christ to a life with God that never sins or dies. Life everlasting is salvation fully realized.

This is the basis of the faith of God's elect, which faith is theirs through the knowledge of the truth which tends to godliness. They would never hold for truth all that God has revealed in His Word. They would never have that assured confidence without the certain hope of life everlasting. At the same time this hope of everlasting life is the incentive for the Christian's life of thankful obedience to God's will.

The truth of this the Scriptures make abundantly clear. If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable (I Cor. 15:19). Apart from this hope of life everlasting our faith is vain. Everything is empty, futile, apart from the hope of life everlasting. If there be no hope of life everlasting, then death is the end of everything!

Thank God! We do have the hope of life everlasting. The never lying God promised that hope "before times everlasting." This means that before time began, that is, from all eternity, God promised this hope. "Before times everlasting" must be understood in the same sense as the "before the foundation of the world" of Ephesians 1:4.

Notice how certain is this hope of life everlasting.

1. Hope itself is certain from every point of view. It is real. Jesus has died on account of our sins and He's been raised on account of our justification (Rom. 4:25). Jesus is busy preparing a place for us in His Father's house of many mansions, and He's preparing us for that place.

2. This hope is promised by the *never lying* God. It is impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6:18).

3. This hope is *promised* by God. God's promises are "yea and amen in Christ Jesus" (II Cor. 1:20).

4. God *confirmed* His promise and counsel by an oath which God swore by Himself. The conclusion is this: we have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope that is set before us. This hope of life everlasting is an anchor for our souls, sure and steadfast (Heb. 6:13-20.)

Verse 3

God promised eternal life "before the world began" (v. 2), but "in his own times" God manifested His Word (v. 3). "His Word" is the same

as the promise of verse two. God's Word of promise is meant. This Word of promise was spoken by God in Jesus Christ and its content is Jesus Christ. The Word of God's promise is preserved for us in the inspired, infallible sacred Scriptures.

This Word of promise is manifested "in his own times." This refers to the New Testament era. In the Old Testament times, the Word of promise lay hidden in a sense. It was not fully known and understood. The Word of promise was revealed in types and shadows, in pictures. Israel had salvation in Jesus' precious blood, but she had it by promise. But now "in his own times," the New Testament times, Christ has come and in His cross and resurrection has fulfilled the Word of promise concerning everlasting life. The reality is here. The types have been fulfilled. Now the elect are gathered, not just out of Israel, but out of all nations.

That this is the correct interpretation is confirmed by the fact that the verb translated "manifested" by the KJV can properly be translated "made visible or known," in the sense of realized or brought to completion.[8] This interpretation is also confirmed by the fact that this Word concerning eternal life was manifested by means of the apostle's preaching. By means of the preaching God realizes, makes manifest, His Word of promise concerning everlasting life. This is God's means. God is pleased to use preaching to make known His Word of promise.

This is precisely why preaching must be expository or exegetical. Its content must always be only the Word of God! We who preach do literally herald the official message of God in Jesus Christ. Before that Word of Christ the King, all must bow in the humble submission of faith.

This preaching Paul received as a sacred trust! He was entrusted with this preaching. It was committed to him according to the commandment of God our Savior. This constitutes the authority of preaching. Paul was given the command. He was authorized by God to preach. Paul was called by our Savior God to preach the Word of everlasting life. When He comes with that Word, therefore, his hearers must obey or perish!

So it is with us today. We are called by our Savior God to preach.

8. The verb is *phanerooo*.

We have no choice. God commands us to preach. He entrusts us with the preaching by His commandment.

What a great and wonderful trust this is! Think of it! To be used by the Lord to bring His wonderful Word of everlasting life to His church is a blessed privilege indeed! What calling could be more wonderful than this? Yes, preaching demands careful, prayerful, good, hard work. To exegete and interpret Scripture and to craft that material into a carefully laid out sermon which exposes the meaning of the text is hard work indeed! But it is a blessed work. God takes our feeble efforts and uses them to comfort, encourage, warn, admonish, and instruct His people. This being the case, let us be faithful to the sacred trust given us from our Savior God.

Verse 4

In this verse Paul describes Titus as "my genuine son according to the common faith." Thus Paul not only identifies himself as an apostle who writes as the one authorized by Christ to preach the gospel, the one to whom God had committed the preaching of the Word of promise concerning life everlasting, but he also displys his tender love for Titus. He regarded Titus as his genuine son in the same way that he regarded Timothy (I Tim. 1:2; II Tim. 1:2).

This means Paul had begotten Titus.[9] Hence Titus was Paul's genuine or true son. As such he was very dear to Paul. Loved he was by the apostle. But not in the natural sense. Titus was a Greek, and Paul a Jew. Rather, Titus is Paul's spiritual son. He was converted by God by means of Paul's preaching and in that sense begotten spiritually.

Titus is Paul's spiritual son "according to the common faith." "Common" here does not carry the notion of "unclean," as it does in Acts 10:14 and in several other passages. No, the apostle means the faith shared by both Titus and himself and, therefore, the faith common to all the saints out of every nation, both Jew and Gentile. According to that faith Titus and Paul and all God's people are one. The bond that unites the people of God is the common faith.

This is how we must understand faith. It is the same as "the faith of God's elect" in verse one. It is the bond uniting us to Christ, through which bond we receive from Christ all the blessings of salvation. The

9. The Greek has *gneesioo*, which means "legitimately born."

common faith consists of a certain knowledge, by which we hold for truth all that God has revealed in His Word, and of an assured confidence that we belong to Jesus Christ our faithful Savior.

The apostle then gives to Titus the salutation, "Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior."[10] "Grace" is the unmerited favor of God, by which power God saves His people from their sins. "Mercy" is God's pity, according to which He desires and accomplishes the deliverance of His people out of the misery of their sin and death into the joy of His fellowship. "Peace" is the fruit of God's grace and mercy and is "the consciousness of having been reconciled with God!"[11] We are not at war with God. God is not our enemy. God is our friend. We have peace with God.

Those wonderful blessings are from God the Father. God blesses the elect with His grace, mercy, and peace. This is God's efficacious blessing, not merely a pious wish. When God speaks His Word, "grace, mercy and peace," we receive these gifts. And we receive them through the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior. Jesus, God's only begotten Son in our flesh, is our Savior. He saved us from the greatest evil of our sin and death to the greatest good of life everlasting in the fellowship of God.

John Calvin offers a beautiful summary of this verse when he writes, "Hence it is evident in what sense a minister of the Word is said to beget spiritually those whom he brings to the obedience of Christ, that is, so that he himself is also begotten. Paul declares himself to be the father of Titus, with respect to his faith; but immediately adds, that this faith is common to both, so that both of them alike have the same Father in heaven. Accordingly, God does not diminish his own prerogative, when he pronounces those to be spiritual fathers along with himself, by whose ministry he regenerates whom he chooses; for of themselves they do nothing, but only by the efficacy of the Spirit."[12] ●

10. Some manuscripts omit "mercy" from the salutation. Whether it be retained or omitted does not affect the meaning of the salutation.

11. Hendriksen, p. 343.

12. John Calvin, William Pringle, translator, *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1959), p. 287.

The Holy Family: God As Truly Three *

David J. Engelsma

A Strong Statement of Threeness

God is three. He is not only one. He is three differently than He is one, but He is as truly, necessarily, and significantly three as He is one.

Right knowledge of God requires a completely unembarrassed insistence upon God's threeness. There may be no timidity lest the strong emphasis upon threeness compromise the oneness. What is urgently required is a bold development of this threeness, as well as a bold development of all of Christian doctrine and of all of Christian life in the light of this threeness.

In awareness of the weakness of the trinitarian theology of the Western church, stimulated by the social analogy theory, and guided by Holy Scripture, Reformed theology in particular should press the truth that God is three.

So strong ought the confession of God's threeness to be that it inevitably draws the charge of tritheism. Although a good confession of threeness will easily be able to defend itself against the charge of tritheism, it should draw the charge. Only if a doctrine of the Trinity draws the charge "tritheism" can it be assured that it is doing justice to the threeness of God. In this respect, it is the same with trinitarian orthodoxy as it is with the orthodox confession of salvation by grace alone. Always the gospel of salvation by grace alone provokes the response that this gospel denies the responsibility of man and makes God the author of sin.[1] If the message of the church does not elicit this

* This article is chapter 3 in Prof. Engelsma's unpublished master's thesis, "Trinity and Covenant" (Calvin Theological Seminary, 1994). The thesis is copyrighted. This article may not be copied or reprinted. The article is published here with the permission of the author.

1. See Rom. 3:5-8, 31; 6:1; 9:19; cf. the "Conclusion" of the Canons of the Synod of Dordt, in Schaff, *Creeds*, 3:596, 597. Full bibliographical

response, the church may well ask whether it is preaching the gospel of grace. The same is true as regards trinitarian doctrine. If the charge of tritheism is not raised, a theologian may well wonder whether his doctrine of God does justice to God's threeness.

Every strong expression of God's plurality or threeness in history has met resistance in the form of the charge of ditheism or tritheism. This was the attack by Arius upon Athanasius and Nicene orthodoxy. This was the charge lodged against the Cappadocian fathers. This was Barth's defense of his doctrine of the "modes of being" against the traditional teaching that the three in God are persons or subjects. "Tritheism" is the response to the strong threeness doctrine of the social analogy.[2]

Jesus and Threeness

Whether one begins the treatment of the Trinity with the threeness or the oneness is not decisive as regards doing justice to the threeness. The history of the doctrine indicates that the great defenders of oneness have begun with the oneness of God and have worked toward the

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information for this and the other works cited in this article is given at the end of the article.

2. For Arius' contention that the doctrine of Jesus' being "co-eternal with the Father" meant "two self-existent principles" and, therefore, the "destruction of monotheism," see Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 228. Kelly notes also concerning the Cappadocians that the charge was made that "their doctrine, despite its sincere intention of maintaining the divine unity, was inescapably tritheistic" (267). Barth's sharp attack on the doctrine of three "personalities" in God as "the worst and most extreme expression of tritheism" is found in *CD*, I/1, 351-368. Baillie speaks of the "tendency ... in the direction of what might be accused of verging on tritheism because of its use of the 'social' analogy associated with the Cappadocian Fathers of the fourth century" *(God was in Christ*, 134). Similarly, Bracken asks concerning the contemporary doctrine that "God is a society of persons," "How does one ... avoid the charge of tritheism... ?" *(What are They Saying about the Trinity?* 66) The charge of tritheism against a social doctrine of the Trinity is mistaken insofar as it refers to the strong assertion of three distinct "I's" in the Godhead. When, however, the charge has in view a denial of the oneness of essence, it must be taken seriously.

threeness. The advocates of the social analogy of the Trinity, on the other hand, begin with threeness in order to work toward oneness.[3] In itself, the starting point is not important. One can begin with the oneness of essence and yet develop a sound, rich doctrine of the threeness, just as one can begin with the threeness without compromising the oneness.

The proper starting point of trinitarian theology, however, is neither the oneness nor the threeness but Jesus Christ. He is the revelation of God as triune, as three in one.

The revelation in Jesus Christ of the divine threeness certainly does not suffer by comparison with the revelation of oneness. It can be argued that Jesus did not have to come into the world in order to make known that God is one. This was made sufficiently clear to Israel in the old covenant. With regard to the revelation of the Trinity, the Son of God became flesh in order to establish the plurality of the one God. Jesus makes known that there is someone — Himself — who, although He is one with God the Father, is also other than the Father.

Even as regards God's oneness, Jesus reveals that this oneness is not a solitary, undifferentiated oneness, but a oneness in which are real and important distinctions. Jesus reveals the oneness of God to be a unique oneness. It is a oneness qualified by threeness. The oneness of Jehovah God, the creator of the world and the redeemer of Israel, is distinguished from every other kind of oneness. It is especially distinguished from the oneness of all other gods.

Jesus reveals the unique oneness of God when He says, "I and the Father are one."[4] Jesus confesses the oneness of the being of God. The neuter singular, *hen*, here expresses oneness of being. This is evident,

3. Augustine took his starting point in the oneness of essence. See Augustine, *Trinity*, 1.2.4, 1.4.7, and 8.5.8; cf. Fortman, *The Triune God:* "He [Augustine] started his explanation of the mystery ... from the one, simple divine nature or essence" (140, 141). In contrast, Moltmann chooses to begin with the threeness of persons: "The Western tradition began with God's unity and then went on to ask about the trinity. We are beginning with the trinity of the Persons and shall then go on to ask about the unity" *(Trinity and Kingdom,* 19). Cf. Boff, *Trinity and Society:* "I propose to try a third way, starting decisively from the Trinity, from Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (4).

4. John 10:30 (a literal translation of the Greek).

first, from the response of the unbelieving Jews. They intend to stone Jesus for blasphemy: "because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God."[5] Second, only oneness of being explains the oneness of the work of Jesus and of the Father in preserving Jesus' sheep. Jesus' hand and the Father's hand are one hand.[6] Third, Jesus concludes His defense of His claim to be one with the Father with the significant assertion, "the Father is in me, and I in him."[7] As the church has always understood, the indwelling, or *perichoresis*, of the Father and the Son is due to oneness of being. The unbelieving Jews understood this also. Their response was that "they sought again to take him."[8]

In the doctrine that God is one in being is nothing unusual. What struck Jesus' audience as novel, indeed blasphemous, was His assertion that there are two who share the oneness of the Godhead: the Father and Jesus Himself. The oneness of God revealed in Jesus Christ is a oneness

5. John 10:33.

6. John 10:25-29.

7. John 10:38.

8. John 10:39. To this evidence in the context that the oneness of John 10:30 is oneness of being could be added that in verses 25 and 29 Jesus claims the unique relationship with God that is expressed in the words *"my* Father." In John, this is the sonship of the "only begotten Son" (see 1:18, 3:16, and other places). To be Son by begetting is to share the being. For the explanation of *hen* in John 10:30 defended here, see Augustine, "Sermon LXXXIX. On the Words of the Gospel, John X.30, 'I and the Father are One'": "He is called the Only Son, the Only Begotten, in that He is That which the Father is.... In then that He is That which the Father is; He said, and said truly, 'I and My Father are One.' What is, 'are One'? Are of one Nature. What is, 'are One'? Are of one Substance" ("Sermons on Selected Lessons of the New Testament," tr. R.G. MacMullen, ed. Philip Schaff, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 6, ed. Philip Schaff, 527. See also C. Bouma, *Het Evangelie naar Johannes*, vol. 2, 26, 27 and Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 522, 523. Calvin, on the other hand, is characteristically over-cautious concerning texts that teach the deity of Christ: "The ancients made a wrong use of this passage to prove that Christ is *(homoousios)* of the same essence with the Father" *(John*, 416, 417).

that differs radically from all other oneness. It is a oneness in which is the plurality of at least two different subjects.

"Person": Traditional and Modern

The one God is at least two "persons," whether "person" be understood in the traditional or in the modern sense. By the trinitarian "person," the early church, the medieval church, and the Reformation church had especially in mind an individual subsistence in a rational nature.[9] Contemporary theology prefers to regard the "persons" as distinct centers of consciousness, as conscious and self-conscious subjects.[10]

These two conceptions of the trinitarian persons are not mutually exclusive. The more psychological, contemporary "conscious subject" does not replace the more metaphysical, traditional "subsistence in a rational nature." Nor did the "person" of the early, medieval, and Reformation church completely exclude the element of consciousness. The biblical revelation of the divine plurality embraces both the traditional and the contemporary conceptions. It is not Greek philosophy but Holy Scripture that teaches that God is a rational, spiritual being (substance) in which distinct individuals have their existence.[11]

The notion of consciousness and self-consciousness is fundamental to the biblical revelation of the plurality in God — the "subsistences," or "hypostases," of trinitarian theology. Each of the three is conscious of Himself and of the others as distinct from Himself. Each says "I" in conscious relationship with the other, who is not this "I" but

9. For "person" in Tertullian, who fixed the term in theological usage, and in the early church after him, see Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 115, 246, 247, 263-279. For the view of Thomas Aquinas, see Fortman, *The Triune God*, 208, 209. The *Leiden Synopsis*, representing the Reformed tradition, defined the trinitarian "person" as "a divine subsistence endowed with understanding" (see *Synopsis*, vol. 1, tr. Dirk VanDijk; the translation of the Dutch is mine).

10. On the contemporary view of "person," see Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 59-64, 86-90, 115-118. See also Hodgson, *Trinity*, 79, 128.

11. John 4:24; I Cor. 2:10, 11; Acts 17:27-29; Prov. 8; John 1:1, 2, 18.

another. God is three subjects who live consciously with each other in the being of the Godhead.[12]

Distinction of the Persons

The persons in the being of God differ from each other. They are not the same. The Father is not the Son, nor is the Son the Father. The Son claims to be one and equal with the Father.[13] He does not claim to be the same as the Father. Early in the development of the doctrine of the Trinity by the church, at a time, in fact, when the formula, "three hypostases," or "persons," was suspect because it seemed to indicate three *"ousiai,"* or beings, the church approved the real distinction between the persons

> provided it did not carry the Arian connotation of "utterly distinct, alien hypostases, different in substance from each other," in other words

12. In John 10:30, the person of the Son says "I" over against the "I" of the person of the Father. The one God is at least two "I's." According to John 17:5, Jesus is an "I" who lives with the "self" of the Father eternally. This "I" is a self-conscious subject. For a treatment of the question whether the contemporary view of person is compatible with the traditional view, see Fortman, *The Triune God*, 295-300 and Hugo Meynall, "Bernard Lonergan," in *One God in Trinity*, 95-110. Abraham Kuyper discussed the concept of person at the outset of his treatment of *"Het Dogma de Sancta Trinitate"* ("The Dogma of the Holy Trinity"). Kuyper compared the traditional definition of person ("an individual subsistence of a rational nature") with the modern conception of person in terms of self-consciousness and freedom. Kuyper preferred the old definition because it grounded "person" in "being": *"Maar de oude definitie let ... ook op den wezensgrond."* He warned against the modern conception of person because of its concentration on sensations and actions. In addition, the modern view of person, in Kuyper's judgment, tended toward Pelagianism inasmuch as it attributed an independent freedom to the human person. See Abraham Kuyper, *Dictaten Dogmatiek*, vol. 1, 2.11-31. The volume is not paginated in order from beginning to end. It is necessary, therefore, to refer to the relevant, second section of the volume *("Deel II")*. The translation of the Dutch is mine.

13. John 10:30; 5:18.

"three principles or three Gods," but merely *[sic]* expressed the separate subsistence of the three Persons in the consubstantial Triad.[14]

Although they are not "alien" to each other, much less "different in substance," the divine persons are "utterly distinct." Such is the distinction that each has His own personality, as the Belgic Confession teaches: "The Holy Scriptures teach us that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost have each his personality distinguished by their properties."[15] The personality of each of the persons is the sum of all the qualities that make up and express the distinctive person. The personality of the first person is His fatherliness toward the Son, including source, priority, and paternal love. The personality of the Son is His sonship toward the Father, including derivation, image, posteriority, and filial love. Each projects His personality to the other and is known by the other as this personality. Indeed, in the revelation of God by Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit, the *believer* knows the persons of the Godhead as distinctive personalities.[16]

That wherein the persons differ is their relations with each other. It is not the case, as has sometimes been carelessly asserted, that the

14. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines,* 253, 254. Kelly is referring to, and quoting from, the decision of the council of Alexandria (A.D. 362), presided over by Athanasius.

15. Bel. Conf., Art. 8, in Schaff, *Creeds,* 3:389. The French is "*...sa personne distincte par des proprietes.*"

16. See the remarkable statement in the Belgic Confession concerning the believers' knowledge of the three persons: "All this we know as well from the testimonies of Holy Writ as from their operations, and chiefly by those we feel in ourselves" (Art. 8, in Schaff, *Creeds,* 3:390). Because "person" implies "personality," Karl Barth rejected persons in the Godhead, settling instead for "modes of being." His choice of a term for the plurality in God served his purpose well: a mode of being has no personality (see Barth, *CD,* I/1, 351). With reference to Barth's denial of personality to the three in God and his ascription of personality only to the essence, Donald Baillie judges correctly that for Barth "it is truer to think of God as one Person than as three" *(God was in Christ,* 136). Rather than shrink from "person" because of "personality," the church ought to proceed from the full reality of "person" to a rich, robust "personality."

persons *are* the relations. The Father is not the relation of begetting the Son. Nor is the Son the relation of being begotten of the Father. To identify the persons as the relations is to weaken the reality of their personhood. It is to make the persons impersonal. As little as the person of a human father is identified with his activity of begetting and rearing children is the person of the divine Father identical with His relation with the Son. The divine persons are distinguishable from the relations in which they exist. The persons of the Godhead are thinking, willing, acting individuals in relation with each other.[17]

Nevertheless, the divine persons exist only in relation with each other, are who they are by virtue of these relations, and know themselves and the others only in terms of these relations. Although the persons are not identical with the relations, they are identified by the relations. The persons eternally and naturally determine themselves by the relations in which they exist with the others.

It is not adequate, therefore to describe the persons of the Godhead as individual subsistences in a rational nature or as conscious subjects. For this leaves the persons in isolation, even though later there is recognition of their communion in a discussion of their mutual relations. To the definition itself of the divine persons must be added that they are conscious subsistences *in relation with each other.* The persons are individuals, but they are not from all eternity *individualistic* individuals.

What is true of person in God is, for this reason, also true of person among humanity. To be a human person is to be an individual in relation with others — with God and with other human persons. A solitary human person is an impossibility. To be a *healthy* human person is to live in a close, loving relation with others — with God and with other humans for God's sake. Perversion, destruction, or negation of the relations with others in which one ought to live is ruinous to one's person. The unbeliever and the misanthrope are inhuman humans. The fundamental importance of the family is already indicated.

17. The Belgic Confession does not identify the persons with their properties or relations but rather speaks of "three persons, really, truly, and eternally distinct, *according to their incommunicable properties.*" They "*have* each his personality, *distinguished by* their properties" (Art. 8; see Schaff, *Creeds,* 3:389; emphasis mine).

Father and Son

That the persons of the Godhead are individuals in relation is established by their names, Father and Son. These names also identify the persons and distinguish them from each other.

The Father begets the Son.[18] This begetting is an eternal activity of bringing forth another who is different from the Father as the second person but also like the Father as His "express image."[19]

Contrary to Calvin, the begetting of the Son is the Father's bringing forth of the Son, not only as regards the Son's person but also as regards the Son's being. In the interests of defending the oneness of God and of guarding against any subordination of the Son, Calvin restricted the Father's begetting of the Son to the generation of the Son's person. The Son, Calvin contended, has His being from Himself.[20]

Calvin's doctrine of the generation of the Son, however, does not do justice to the begetting of the Son that is implied by the names Father and Son and that is expressed by John in the word *monogenees*. Calvin's doctrine of *aseity* jeopardizes the essential oneness of the Father and the Son and weakens both the relation and the personal difference between the two.

The idea of begetting, both biblically and in human experience, is that of bringing forth a being from one's own being. Abraham's begetting of Isaac was not only the production of Isaac's person but also the production of Isaac's entire being.[21] There is in John's description of the Son as the "only begotten" no limitation of that which the Father

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18. John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9.

19. Heb. 1:3.

20. This is the doctrine of the *aseity* of the Son. For Calvin's doctrine of the Son's *aseity*, see the *Institutes*, 1.13.25. Warfield enthusiastically endorsed Calvin's teaching on the generation of the Son. This teaching, Warfield thought, put Calvin in the ranks of the greatest trinitarian theologians of the Western church and put an end finally to all subordinationism in the relation of the Son to the Father (see Warfield, *Calvin*, 283, 284).

21. See Heb. 11:17 where Isaac is called Abraham's "only begotten."

has begotten to the person of the Son. The Son is begotten of the Father in His entirety, person and being.[22]

It is exactly the generation of the being of the Son out of the being of the Father that is the reason why the being of Jesus the Son of God is the being itself of God. The generation of the being of Jesus Christ was of critical importance at Nicea. Jesus Christ was confessed to be of "one substance (essence) with the Father" inasmuch as He is "very God of very God," that is, "*out of* very God."[23] But the Son is out of God by virtue of being "begotten of the Father before all worlds." Nicea understood the begetting of the Son to be a begetting of essence, or substance.[24]

In that He begets the Son, it is the personal property of the Father that He is the source of the Son and that He has priority. He is the fatherly source and has fatherly priority.

In that He is begotten of the Father, it is the personal property of the Son that He is derived and secondary. His are a filial derivation and secondariness.

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22. Cf. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, tr. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 4, s.v. "*monogenees*" by Friedrich Büchsel.

23. The Greek preposition is *ek*. The Latin is "*Deum verum de Deo vero*" (see Schaff, *Creeds*, 2:57).

24. Cf. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 243-251, 252-255. The Reformed tradition, feeling the heavy pressure of Calvin's influence, is ambiguous on the question whether the Son is begotten as to person and being or as to person only. Heppe speaks repeatedly of the Father's communicating His essence to the Son and to the Spirit (see *Reformed Dogmatics*, 114, 117, 120). Yet when he comes to consider the matter directly, he denies the begetting of the essence, asserting rather that the "personality of the Father produced the personality of the Son, since the divine essence is common to the Father and to the Son" (121). Personality producing personality is a meager, and strange, begetting! Calvin's influence is evident here. It is significant that Calvin found the Nicene "God of God" a "hard saying" (see Warfield, *Calvin*, 249). The Fourth Lateran Council confessed the generating of the substance of the Son so that "the Son received the undiminished substance of the Father, and thus the Father and Son have the same substance" (cited in Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 74, 75).

By these properties, the Father and the Son are distinct. They are different persons. Although the Father communicates His being to the Son so that the Son shares this being, the Son possesses it as the being of the one who is begotten. The Father possesses it as the being of the one who begets. The Father possesses the being of Himself. The Son possesses it out of the Father. The Father is the first person in eternal order. The Son is the second person in the eternal order. The Father knows Himself and acts as Father, regarding the other as "My Son." The Son knows Himself and acts as Son, eternally responding, "My Father."

The Family God

The one, outstanding relation between the persons, therefore, is the friendship of love. It is the uniquely close friendship and the uniquely warm love of family.

God is the family God.

He is not the family God because He adopts humans as His sons and daughters in the Mediator, Jesus Christ, but because He is Father and Son in Himself. He is not the family God in the sense that this is a legitimate and helpful figure by which believers can know Him, but in the sense that family is the nature of His being and the character of His life. God is the real family, the original family, the family after which "the whole family in heaven and earth is named."[25] He is not the family God in some incidental way, but in a way that discloses the secret of the true, living God. Family is the meaning of the Trinity. This is the profound meaning of the Trinity that has been somewhat overlooked by the church of the West.

That the triune God is fundamentally family is both obvious and incontrovertible. God is Father and Son in the Holy Spirit. What is this but to say that God is family?

The very relations of begetting and being begotten constitute a relationship of friendship. To this relationship of family friendship belong several elements. First, it consists of love. The Father regards His Son as dear, delights in Him, and seeks Him. The Son returns this love. "Only begotten" is virtually synonymous in Scripture with "beloved." "Beloved Son" is the equivalent in Matthew and Mark of

25. Eph. 3:15.

John's "only begotten Son."[26] Jesus spoke of the Father's love for Him "before the foundation of the world."[27]

The love of the Father for His only begotten Son and the reciprocal love of the only begotten Son for His Father are vividly expressed in John 1:18, where it is said of the eternal Son and Word who became flesh in Jesus that He "is in the bosom of the Father." The second person of the Trinity eternally lies in the bosom of the first person. The Father clasps the Son to Himself in intimate embrace. The Son on His part actively presses Himself to the Father.[28]

The relations themselves in which the persons exist in the Godhead, by which they are identified, and according to which they are different individuals are relations of love. The Father does not simply produce another, but He brings forth from Himself His Son *in love*. Begetting a child is the activity of love. Being begotten is for the Son the reality of being loved and of loving the one who begets.[29]

It is as triune that God is love.[30] When the apostle writes in I John

26. Matt. 3:17; 17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:7.

27. John 17:24.

28. The preposition is *eis* with its basic meaning of motion or direction toward someone or something. Luther characteristically caught the meaning: "... the only Son of God, who clings to the Father and rests snugly in His arms.... the Father enfolds Him in His arms and caresses Him" (Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 22, *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John, Chapters 1-4*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, 149, 156). Herman Witsius connected John 1:18 with Prov. 8:30, where Wisdom is said to be "one brought up with him." "The word in the original," wrote Witsius, "properly signifies a *nursling*, a son carried in the bosom" (Herman Witsius, *The Apostles' Creed*, tr. Donald Fraser, vol. 1, 330).

29. To say, then, as does the Reformed tradition, that the generation of the Son took place "*apathoos* (dispassionately)" is puzzling (see Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 121). The Father begets with infinite love. The Son is begotten in infinite love. The begetting of the Son is an eternal, massive, ongoing generation of the being of the Son from the being of the Father as the activity of love. Dispassionately?

30. I John 4:8, 16.

4 that God is love, he does not refer to God's one essence as though one of the perfections of that essence is love. The context is plainly trinitarian. Verse 9 proclaims God's sending "his only begotten Son into the world." Verse 13 reminds the beloved children of God that God "hath given us of his Spirit." God is love in Himself in that He is the Father who loves His Son and the Son who loves His Father. The very being of God is love inasmuch as it is the being of a plurality of loving persons.[31]

A god of one, solitary person could not be love.

In this way also does God love Himself. The love of God for Himself is not simply the delight in His essence as the highest good. But it is the Father's delight in the Son and the Son's delight in the Father. The divine being delights in Himself and seeks Himself as Father and Son in the Holy Spirit. God's love for Himself, therefore, is not a selfish, self-centered love. But it is the love of one for the other. The Father's pleasure rests on the beloved Son.[32] He desires the honor of the Son.[33] The Son on His part is devoted to the Father and glorifies Him.[34] God loves Himself in that the Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father in the Holy Spirit.

A god of one, solitary person could not love itself. It might be enamoured of itself, but it could not love itself.

The family friendship between the Father and the Son includes mutual knowledge. In keeping with the basic meaning of knowledge in Scripture as personal love, this mutual knowledge is virtually identical with their reciprocal love. The Father and the Son love each other with

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31. This was the explanation that Jonathan Edwards gave of the words, "God is love": "That in John God is love shews that there are more persons than one in the deity, for it shews love to be essential and necessary to the deity so that His nature consists in it, and this supposes that there is an eternal and necessary object, because all love respects another that is the beloved" ("An Essay on the Trinity," in *Treatise on Grace,* ed. Paul Helm, 100).

32. Matt. 3:17.

33. John 5:23; 17:1, 5.

34. John 17.

a knowing love and know each other with a loving knowledge. But if love characterizes the knowledge, knowledge is basic to the love. The love of the persons of the Godhead for each other is not blind. It is, rather, a thorough intellectual knowledge of the other. The Father knows the Son, and the Son knows the Father.[35] The intellectual nature of this knowledge is evident from the fact that it is the basis of, and analogous to, the knowledge that the church has of God through the revelation given by Jesus Christ. The Son's declaration of the Father, according to John 1:18, is both due to and of the same kind as the knowledge that the Son has by virtue of His being in the Father's bosom.[36]

This knowledge of each other by the Father and the Son is possible because each is open to the other. Ultimately this finds its explanation in the begetting and being begotten. The Father begets the Son whom, as His own "express image,"[37] He knows perfectly. The Son, being the very image of the one who begets Him, knows Him whose image He is, thoroughly. Nevertheless, in this essential relationship, Father and Son do not hide anything from each other, but disclose themselves fully to each other. In no respect are the members of the Holy Family strangers to each other.

The self-disclosure — the opening up of one to the other — that is basic to love takes place by communication. By intratrinitarian conversation, the Father and the Son know each other and bind themselves to each other. The Son is the Word spoken by the Father, not into the void but to Himself as the returning utterance of the Son.[38] It must not be supposed that the divine conversations are limited to those recorded in Genesis 1:26, 3:22, and 11:6, 7. The triune God is a continuously communicating being.

There is also cooperation of the Holy Family in the divine works of creation and redemption. Theology has expressed this in the

35. Matt. 11:27.

36. John 1:18; cf. Matt. 11:27: "neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."

37. Heb. 1:3.

38. John 1:1-18.

trinitarian law, *"opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa."* Following Augustine, the church has explained this law of the outgoing works of the Trinity almost exclusively in terms of the oneness of the divine being. The explanation has been that each of the three persons is active in all of the outgoing works of God since these works belong to the one essence.[39]

The explanation of the involvement of all of the persons in the outgoing works of God in terms of the oneness of essence hardly does justice, however, to the clear teaching of Scripture that it is the persons who perform the works. It was the plurality of persons who created humanity as male and female. It was the Father who gave His only begotten Son for the world. It was the Son who redeemed us by His blood. It is the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us.[40]

However much the outgoing works belong to the essence, the involvement of all the persons in all the outgoing works of God ought to be explained in terms of the cooperation of friends. Friends work together, especially friends who are family. All the persons cooperate in creating.[41] Although it is the second person who, as incarnate, dies for our sins, the first and third persons are active in redemption.[42] In the indwelling of Jesus' disciples by the Comforter, it is the Son and the Father who come to them and make their abode with them.[43]

The idea of cooperation in the works of God is pronounced when Scripture teaches that the Father and the Son together perform the works of resurrection and judgment;[44] that the Son carries out the will of the

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39. See Fortman, *The Triune God,* 141-143 and Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics,* 116, 117.

40. Gen. 1:26; John 3:16; Col. 1:13, 14; II Thess. 2:13.

41. Gen. 1:2, 3, 26; cf. John 1:3 and Psalm 104:30.

42. Col. 1:20; Heb. 9:14.

43. John 14:23; cf. v. 16.

44. John 5:17ff.

Father;[45] and that the Holy Spirit does not speak of Himself but shows to the church that which He receives from the Son.[46]

Not to be overlooked in the fellowship of the family that God is as Father and Son is the sheer joy that each has in the presence of the other. Implied in their love for each other, this joy finds remarkable expression in Proverbs 8:30: "Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." The Wisdom of Jehovah, plainly a person ("I"), identifies Himself as Jehovah God's child, for the word translated by the King James as "one brought up" is literally "child," emphasizing the tender love of Jehovah for His child.[47] This dearly loved child is close to Jehovah: "by him." He is always in Jehovah's presence. There the child is eternally Jehovah's delight, or pleasure. On His part, the child eternally rejoices in Jehovah and His relationship to Jehovah. His is the joy of laughter and a child's play.[48] Eternally the Father and the Son, who will become flesh in Jesus Christ, God's wisdom,[49] have exuberant joy in each other and in their fellowship.

Perichoresis

The fellowship of the triune God is intensified by the relationship of *perichoresis*. Curiously, this trinitarian relationship has received little attention in the Reformed tradition. Calvin merely mentions that the Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father. Calvin's purpose

45. Luke 2:49; John 6:35-40; Heb. 10:5-10.

46. John 16:13-15.

47. The root is the Hebrew verb *'āman* meaning "support" and then "carry a child" as in Num. 11:12.

48. On the meaning of *śāḥaq*, see *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, tr. Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, 787, 788. In Zech. 8:5, the word refers to the joyous playing of boys and girls in the streets of Jerusalem in the presence of Jehovah who dwells there. In Psalm 104:26, the word describes the playful antics of the great sea-creature ("leviathan") in the sea, but in this case too before the face of Jehovah, who is pleased by the play.

49. I Cor. 1:30.

in noting this indwelling is to prove the oneness of essence.[50] Neither the "Three Forms of Unity" nor the Westminster Standards speak of *perichoresis*. Such Reformed theologians as Herman Bavinck, Louis Berkhof, and Herman Hoeksema do not treat the doctrine of *perichoresis* in their dogmatics.[51] In his exposition of the Reformed tradition, Heinrich Heppe does mention, and briefly describe, the *perichoresis*. But, like Calvin, his sole interest in the doctrine is its implication of the numerical oneness of God's being. There is simply no recognition of the significance of the doctrine for the fellowship of the persons.[52] *Perichoresis* is the forgotten trinitarian relationship in the Reformed tradition.

From an original meaning of "encircling" or "encompassing," the term *perichoresis* has come to refer in theology to the mutual interpenetration and indwelling of the Father and the Son.[53] The doctrine is based on John's teaching that the Father is in the Son and the Son, in the Father.[54]

This indwelling expresses and realizes fellowship between the Father and the Son. It is intimacy. In John 17:20-26, Jesus compares the oneness of this indwelling to the oneness of the fellowship of believers. Indeed, He derives the oneness of the fellowship of His

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50. Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.13.19.

51. See Bavinck, *"De Heilige Drieeenheid,"* in *Geref. Dog.*, 2:260-347; Berkhof, "The Holy Trinity," in *Systematic Theology*, 82-99; Herman Hoeksema, "The Holy Trinity," in *Reformed Dogmatics*, 131-152.

52. Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 113.

53. See Joseph Pohle, *The Divine Trinity: A Dogmatic Treatise*, adapted and ed. Arthur Preuss, 281-290; Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 75, 76, 127, 128; and Brian Hebblethwaite, "Perichoresis — Reflections on the Doctrine of the Trinity," *Theology* 80, no. 676 (July 1977): 255-261. Pohle-Preuss defines *perichoresis* thus: "By the Perichoresis of the Three Divine Persons we mean their mutual Interpenetration and Inexistence by virtue of their Consubstantiality, their immanent Processions, and the divine Relations" *(Divine Trinity*, 281). Boff sees *perichoresis* as being "at the centre of the mystery" *(Trinity and Society*, 128).

54. John 10:38; 14:10, 11; 17:21, 23.

church from this indwelling: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."[55]

The indwelling of the Father and the Son is the intimacy of their mutual love.

> ... as thou hast loved me ... for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world ... that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.[56]

The theological tradition has viewed the indwelling as fellowship. John of Damascus, who was influential in developing the doctrine of the *perichoresis*, described it as a "cleaving together."[57] The Reformed theologian Johannes Marchius wrote that "these *personae* meet mutually ... in ... *mutua inexistentia.*"[58]

Such is the fellowship in the Godhead that the Father and the Son do not only embrace each other, but they also enter into each other, permeate each other, and dwell in each other. One in being, they are also always one in the intimacy of their friendship. This intimacy is unique to family. As the Holy Family, the Father and the Son enter into each other and dwell, not only *with*, but also *in* each other.

And the Holy Spirit

But where is the Holy Spirit in this marvelous fellowship of God?

It is generally acknowledged that understanding of the Holy Spirit is the weakest aspect of the church's knowledge of the Trinity. Arnold A. vanRuler speaks for many when, in the context of his plea for a trinitarian theology, he asserts, "In theology, the area of pneumatology remains impoverished."[59] Indicative of the relative weakness of the

55. John 17:21.

56. John 17:23, 24, 26.

57. See Fortman, *The Triune God*, 92.

58. Cited in Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 112.

59. Arnold A. vanRuler, *Calvinist Trinitarianism and Theocentric Politics: Essays Toward a Public Theology*, tr. John Bolt, 11. Arthur W. Wainwright has similarly stated that "the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has long been a Cinderella of theology. It has suffered from much neglect, and has always been one of the most difficult doctrines to discuss" *(The Trinity in the New Testament*, 199).

church's grasp of the truth of the Spirit are the difficulty intelligibly to represent the procession of the Spirit, the controversy over the *filioque*, and the confusion over the relationship of the Spirit to the Father and the Son generally.

To this weakness concerning the church's doctrine of the third person of the Trinity is to be attributed the openness of many churches to the charismatic movement. The charismatics are intent on giving the Spirit His due in the life of the saints. The churches are doubtful whether the extraordinary gifts and the performance of wonders might not be the manifestation of the neglected Spirit.

There is place, and need, for development of that aspect of the doctrine of the Trinity that specifically concerns the Holy Spirit. A view of the Trinity as the fellowship of distinct persons opens up the way to this development.

Contrary to what might be expected, the Spirit is not the third family member, the third lover and beloved, the third friend. This is, indeed, the theory of virtually all who stress the threeness of persons and regard the Trinity as a society or community. Having convincingly argued that the God who is "charity" must be a God of two persons since "no one is properly said to have charity on the basis of his own private love of himself," Richard of St. Victor added, unconvincingly:

> It is necessary that each of those loved supremely and loving supremely should search with equal desire for someone who would be mutually loved and with equal concord willingly possess him.[60]

This reasoning is unconvincing. Why would two lovers seek a third? Is it not reasonable that two lovers would rather exclude a third, jealously?

For Leonardo Boff, that "God is communion" means that "the Spirit loves the Father and the Son and is loved by them."[61]

The evangelical Royce Gordon Gruenler conceives "the three persons of the Triune Family" as three similarly loving, fellowshiping family members.[62]

60. *Richard of St. Victor*, 377, 385.

61. Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 133.

62. Gruenler, *Trinity*. For the phrase, "three persons of the Triune Family," see xi.

Reformed theologian Herman Hoeksema, who saw the life of the triune God as fellowship, likewise presented the communion of the persons in such a way that the Spirit loves and is loved.

> The Father knows and loves the Son in the Spirit; the Son knows and loves the Father in the Spirit; and the Spirit knows and loves the Father through the Son in Himself.[63]

Even though this conception of the Spirit seems reasonable in light of the reality and equality of the three persons, it has no basis in Scripture. For, as Jonathan Edwards pointed out, Scripture never speaks of the love of the Father or of the Son for the Spirit. Neither does Scripture ever mention the Spirit's love for the Father or the Son.

> God is never said to love the Holy Ghost, nor are any epithets that betoken love any where given to Him.... There is nothing in Scripture that speaks of any acceptance of the Holy Ghost, or any reward or any mutual friendship between the Holy Ghost and either of the other persons, or any command to love the Holy Ghost or to delight in or have any complacence in; tho' such commands are so frequent with respect to the other persons.[64]

To this can be added that the passage in John's gospel that is largely the basis of the *perichoresis* doctrine, John 14-17, speaks only of the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son. The Spirit, although on the foreground in the passage, is not a third who indwells and is indwelt. To introduce the Spirit thus into the trinitarian relationship of *perichoresis*, as did the Council of Florence in 1442, is conjecture.[65]

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63. Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 152.

64. Edwards, *Treatise on Grace*, 129.

65. The decree of this council, called the *decree for the Jacobites*, reads: "... the Father is entirely in the Son and entirely in the Holy Spirit; the Son is entirely in the Father and entirely in the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is entirely in the Father and entirely in the Son" (cited in Fortman, *The Triune God*, 226). For a description of this council, see John L. Murphy, *The General Councils of the Church*, 147-154. Murphy claims that one result of the council was that "the Church received its most clear and explicit statement concerning the doctrine on the Holy Spirit" (153).

Not only does Scripture never speak of the love of the Spirit for the Father or the Son, but also it never speaks of the Spirit's love for the saints. Only once, in Romans 15:30, does the New Testament mention "the love of the Spirit":

> Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.

The meaning is neither our love for the Spirit, nor the Spirit's love for us. Rather, the apostle refers either to the love among the saints mutually that has its source in the Spirit or to the love among the saints that *is* the Spirit. In the latter case, the genitive is a genitive of apposition. The coordinate construction with "for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake" favors the latter explanation. The love in the church among the members is the Spirit. For the sake of Him, as personal love in the church, as well as for the sake of Jesus Christ, the saints strive together in prayer for the apostle.[66]

Viewing the Spirit as a third member of the family in the trinitarian fellowship runs stuck also on the name of the third person. The names Father and Son express friendship. They are family names. Spirit, however, carries no such denotation. How can one conceive a family of three members from Father, Son, and Breath? But this is the name of the third person of the Trinity: Holy Spirit, that is, Holy Breath.[67]

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66. The common interpretation is that "the love of the Spirit" is the love of the saints for each other which is worked by the Spirit. See F. Godet, *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans,* vol. 2, tr. A. Cusin, 383; also, John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians,* tr. Ross Mackenzie, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, 317.

67. On the meaning of *rûaḥ* in the Old Testament see *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros,* ed. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, 877-879. On the meaning of *pneuma* in the New Testament, see *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* ed. Gerhard Friedrich, tr. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 6, s.v. *"pneuma."* The biblical basis for taking the name Spirit as essentially Breath is the following. A comparison of Gen. 1:2 and 2:7 with Psalm 33:6 and 104:29, 30 shows that the Spirit in whom God created is

The Spirit is the Bond of Love

In her understanding of the Holy Spirit in the Godhead, the church must dare, consistently and rigorously, to follow the lead given by Augustine. The Holy Spirit is the bond of love *(vinculum amoris)* itself between the Father and the Son. He is the *personal* bond of love, but He is this bond.

In his *On the Trinity*, Augustine described the Spirit as the "friendship" or "love of the Begetter and the Begotten"; the "unity of both"; the very "harmony *(pax)*" of the triune God; and the "consubstantial communion of Father and Son."[68]

Earlier, Victorinus had taught that the Spirit is the "link, or copula, between the Father and the Son, completing the perfect circle of the divine being."[69]

Jonathan Edwards argued powerfully that the Holy Spirit is the love and fellowship between the Father and the Son.

> Hence, 'tis to be accounted for, that though we often read in Scripture of the Father loving the Son, and the Son loving the Father, yet we never once read either of the Father or the Son loving the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit loving either of them. It is because the Holy Spirit is the Divine love itself, the love of the Father and the Son.[70]

Also Herman Hoeksema, although elsewhere presenting the Trinity as three persons loving each other mutually, regarded the Spirit as

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the Breath of God. In New Testament Scripture, Jesus represented the Spirit of Pentecost as the Breath that Jesus Himself breathed on His disciples (John 20:21-23). The Spirit is not Wind in general, but that specific Wind who is the Breath of God. The Breath of God produced sacred Scripture (II Tim. 3:16). The Breath of God regenerates men and women as He wills (John 3:3-8) and quickens the church (Ezek. 37:1-14). The Breath of God will one day raise the bodies of the children of God (Rom. 8:23), in which redemption creation itself will share (Rom. 8:19-22). The Breath of God who originally created all things (Gen. 1:2) will in the end renew all things.

68. Augustine, *Trinity*, 6.5.7, 6.9.10, 15.27.50.

69. Cited in Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 271.

70. Edwards, *Treatise on Grace*, 63; see 57-66 and 108-118.

the one in whom "the Father and the Son meet one another.... [The Spirit] is the connecting-link in the divine love-life."[71]

Literally and essentially, in the Spirit the Father knows, loves, communicates with, enjoys, and has fellowship with His Son. Literally and essentially, in the Spirit the Son knows, loves, communicates with, enjoys, and has fellowship with His Father.

In the language of Scripture, the Spirit is the personal embrace of the Father and the Son of John 1:18, the personal love between them of Proverbs 8:30, and the personal intimacy of the indwelling of the Father and the Son of John 14-17.

In light of the Spirit's being the "consubstantial communion of Father and Son" is His personal property to be understood. It is the distinguishing property of the Spirit that He proceeds from the Father and the Son.[72] Following in the tradition of the Western church, the Reformed churches have approved and adopted the *filioque*, the doctrine that the Spirit proceeds also from the Son. The Belgic Confession teaches that the Spirit "is the eternal power and might, proceeding from the Father and the Son."[73]

The procession of the Spirit is a single procession from the Father to the Son and from the Son to the Father. Thus, it is the eternal binding of the Father and the Son. Since it is the personal essence of the Spirit that proceeds, the very essence of the Spirit is the bond between the first and second persons.

In fact, the nature of the activity of proceeding is to be understood in terms of the fellowship of the Father and the Son. How to perceive the procession of the Spirit has always baffled the theologians. They have especially found it difficult to distinguish the procession of the Spirit from the begetting of the Son. Reformed theologian Leydecker declared emphatically that "no one will explain how it *(spiratio)* differs

71. Herman Hoeksema, *Believers and Their Seed*, 61.

72. John 15:26; 16:7; 20:21, 22.

73. Art. 8 (see Schaff, *Creeds*, 3:389). For the Reformed understanding of the procession of the Spirit in general and of the *filioque* in particular, see Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 130-132. For the history of the controversy and an analysis of the issues involved in the controversy, see Alasdair Heron, "The *Filioque* Clause," in *One God in Trinity*, 62-77.

from generation."[74] Augustine admitted his inability to distinguish procession from begetting:

> However, in speaking of that transcendantly excellent nature, who is able to set forth what is the difference between "being born" and "proceeding"? ... But I do not know, I cannot give, and I am insufficient for the task of pointing out the distinction between generation on the one hand and procession on the other.[75]

Fortman thinks that the best differentiation is that of Thomas: Generation is a "likeness-producing act," whereas procession is not.[76] But this attempt to distinguish procession from generation obviously gives not so much as a hint as to what procession might be.

On the basis of the name of the third person — Breath — and in harmony with His being the *vinculum amoris* of the Trinity, the procession of the Spirit should be understood as the breathing of ardent love. The Father breathes forth the Spirit as love to the Son, and the Son breathes forth the Spirit as love to the Father. This Breath of paternal and of filial love is essential and personal, but He is the Breath of love.[77]

Surely this is what the Spirit is in the outgoing works of God. The Pentecostal Spirit upon the church is the Breath of the love of God in Christ. Such was the Spirit also in the creation of the world, particularly in the creation of the human race. The Spirit was not merely God's

74. Cited in Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 123.

75. Cited in Herman Bavinck, *The Doctrine of God*, tr. and ed. William Hendriksen, 312.

76. Fortman, *The Triune God*, 206.

77. Reformed theologian Bartholomaeus Keckermann Dantiscanus suggested this conception of the spiration of the Spirit in his exposition of the necessity of God's trinitarian existence. "The most perfect love and the fullest pleasure proceed from Father to Son and from Son to Father ... and that so by the injunction of the knowledge and will of both a third mode of existence or person is posited in the divine essence, called the H. Spirit.... Since then by most perfect will and love the Father so to speak aspires to the Son and the Son for his part to the Father, the Spirit is therefore rightly said to proceed from the mutual longing of both (cited in Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 107).

powerful Breath, or even only the divine Breath of life, but He was the life-giving Breath of love. God breathed after His world in the ardor of His love.[78]

That which clinches the conception of the Spirit as the fellowship in love of the Father and the Son is His name, *Holy* Spirit. This first part of the name of the third person has caused theology a serious problem. Theologians have agreed that the names of the trinitarian persons express their personal properties and relations in the being of God. Unable, however, to explain the name *Holy* Spirit in terms of intratrinitarian relation, theologians have been forced to explain the name in terms of the outgoing work of the Spirit. The explanation is that He has the name *Holy* Spirit by virtue of His work of sanctifying the church.[79]

The divine names reveal the persons themselves and express the relations of the persons to each other in the Godhead, altogether apart from creation and redemption. The first person is Father as the one who begets the Son. The second person is Son as the only begotten of the Father. Likewise, the third person is the Holy Spirit as the one who proceeds from the Father to the Son and from the Son to the Father. If there never were a church that had to be sanctified, the third person of the Trinity would be *Holy* Spirit.

If holiness be taken as moral purity, there is nothing distinctively

78. Gen. 2:7; John 3:16. It is worthy of note that the basic significance of one of the main Hebrew words for love in the Old Testament, *'āhaḇ*, is "to breathe after (someone or something)." See *Gesenius*, 15; cf. also *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, vol. 1, tr. John T. Willis, 102.

79. "Therefore He is called ... *sanctus*, not by reason of an essential attribute (for in this way Father and Son are also holy) but because of His special operation" (Alsted, cited in Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 128). Herman Bavinck is enigmatic. Explaining the name, *Holy* Spirit, Bavinck writes: *"En heilig heet Hij, omdat Hij zelf in een bijzondere relatie tot God staat en alle dingen in eene bijzondere relatie tot God stelt"* ("And He is named Holy because He Himself stands in a special relationship to God and places all things in a special relationship to God"). What the "special relationship to God" in which the Spirit Himself stands might be, Bavinck does not say. See Bavinck, *Geref. Dog.*, 2:280.

holy about the third person. For the being of God, which all three persons share, is free from all impurity. But holiness has another, even more basic significance, that of consecration, or devotion, to God. The Spirit is "Holy" in that in Him the Father is devoted to the Son and the Son is devoted to the Father. The Spirit is the consecration of the Father to the Son and of the Son to the Father. Thus, it is in the Spirit that the Godhead is consecrated to Himself.[80]

This devotion of themselves to each other in the Spirit by the Father and the Son has content. Not only does the procession of the Spirit from the Father to the Son and from the Son to the Father express their mutual love, as they breathe after each other, but also it *gives* each to the other. In the procession of the Spirit from the Father, the Father gives Himself to the Son. In the procession of the Spirit from the Son to the Father, the Son gives Himself to the Father. For the procession of the Spirit, like the begetting of the Son, is the going forth of the *being* of the Father to the Son and the going forth of the *being* of the Son to the Father as Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit, therefore, is gift. He is not only, or even primarily, the gift to the church. But He is gift in the being of God. He is the Father's gift to His Son and the Son's gift to His Father. That which each gives is Himself. This belongs to friendship. This especially belongs to the friendship of family. One gives to the other; one gives *himself,* nothing less.[81]

The objection to this conception of the relation of the Spirit in the Godhead will obviously be that it diminishes the Spirit. To deny Him the relation of a third friend in the Holy Family is to question His equality

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80. Both the Hebrew *qādôš* and the Greek *ägios* have the meaning of being "set apart as devoted to God." See *Gesenius,* 722, 723 and *Thayer,* 6, 7. Louis Berkhof sees the holiness of God to consist in God's self-consecration: "[God] eternally wills and maintains His own moral excellencies..." *(Systematic Theology,* 74). Herman Hoeksema finds in God's consecration to Himself the fundamental idea of God's holiness: "He [God] is eternally consecrated to Himself alone as the only Good" *(Reformed Dogmatics,* 99, 100).

81 For the Spirit as gift, see Acts 2:38; 10:45; John 14:16, 17. Augustine discusses the Spirit as gift in *On the Trinity,* 15.17-19. Augustine stresses that the Spirit is gift in that He is the love of the Father and the Son.

with the Father and the Son. To regard Him as the fellowship *between* the Father and the Son is to call into question His personality.

No doubt, it is the understandable desire to safeguard the personality and equality of the Spirit that underlies the assertion by the advocates of the social analogy of the Trinity that the Holy Spirit is a third lover and friend.

There may be no theory that casts any doubt upon the personality and equality, that is, the Deity, of the Holy Spirit. Scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit is God[82] and a real person.[83] The Spirit Himself, teacher of the church, has guided the church to believe and confess His personality and Godhead.[84] But neither may we impose our own theory upon the relation of the Spirit to the Father and the Son. Scripture is decisive, and Scripture reveals the Spirit, not as a third friend, but as the mutual love, the fellowship, who binds the Father and the Son.

To present the Spirit as the fellowship of the Holy Family is not to suggest the inferiority of the third person. It is simply a matter of the uniqueness of the Spirit according to Scripture and, thus, the uniqueness of the true and living God.

If there is a certain "anonymity" of the Spirit thus conceived, the Christian faith has long recognized this relative "anonymity" in comparison with the sharper features and clearer identity of the Father and the Son. This is the basis in the Godhead of the undeniable reality in the sphere of salvation, that the Spirit does not call attention to Himself. The Spirit of Pentecost — the third person of the Trinity! — gives the church knowledge of, love for, and fellowship with the Son, Jesus Christ, and by Him with the Father.[85]

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82. II Sam. 23:2, 3; Acts 5:3, 4; I Cor. 3:16, 17; Matt. 28:19.

83. John 16:7-15; Rom. 8:26, 27; Eph. 4:30; I Cor. 2:10-16.

84. See the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed: "And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spoke by the Prophets" (Schaff, *Creeds*, 2:59). The Reformed churches confess the Godhead, personality, and equality with the Father and the Son of the Holy Spirit in articles 8, 9, and 11 of the Belgic Confession (Schaff, *Creeds*, 3:389-393, 394, 395).

85. John 16:7-16; Matt. 11:27.

God as Fellowship

The nature of the triune God is that He is the God of fellowship in Himself. He is the family God as Father and Son in the Holy Spirit. God is the Holy Family.

The fellowship of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit, however, does not constitute the oneness of God. This is the position of virtually all advocates of the social analogy of the Trinity. Beginning with the threeness of God, they arrive at oneness by means of the intimate fellowship of the three, especially the *perichoresis*. The oneness that results is not that of a single being (essence) but the oneness of the communion of the three. Some advocates of a social doctrine of the Trinity teach a oneness that consists solely of the fellowship of the three by stressing the fellowship and simply ignoring the oneness of being. Others forthrightly reject the traditional, creedal doctrine of the one being of God.[86]

Rejection of the oneness of being as constituting the oneness of the Godhead is the loss of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, that is, the loss of the knowledge of the true God revealed in Jesus Christ. God is not honored by a theology that tries to do justice to His threeness at the expense of His oneness.

One in Being

The God made known in Holy Scripture is one in being. This is a numerical oneness; there is one, single being that is God. Beside this

86. Royce Gordon Gruenler is an example of those who locate the oneness of God exclusively in the (close) communion of the three by stressing the communion of three while ignoring the oneness of being altogether. "The identity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is seen to lie in the merging of personality in interpersonal communion. There is no claim to independent individuality (which would be tritheism), but an assertion of essential identification in loving communion." His interpretation of John 10:29, 30 is telling: "(a) declaration of the permeability, porosity, mutual accessibility, and unity of the divine Community." There is never the assertion that God is one in being. See Gruenler, *Trinity in the Gospel of John*, 122; 75, 76. For an express rejection of the oneness of being as constituting the oneness of God, see Hodgson, *Trinity*, 85-89, 94, 102, 192; Moltmann, *Trinity and Kingdom*, 148-150, 175-178; and Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 173. Boff freely speaks of "three divine Beings" (63).

being, there is no god. The relation of the three persons to this one being is that each fully shares this one being.[87]

The oneness of being was confessed at Nicea. Jesus is not a being like the being of the Father. He is not another, fully divine being with and alongside the being of the Father. But His being is exactly the same being as the being of the Father: *"homoousios."* Jesus and His Father share one and the same being.

The truth of the numerical oneness of being is established, and safeguarded, by the right understanding of the trinitarian relations. In begetting the Son, the Father communicates to Him His own being. In breathing forth the Spirit, the Father and the Son communicate to Him their own being. Therefore, the being of the Son is, and can only be, the very being of the Father, and the being of the Spirit is, and can only be, the one, same being of the Father and of the Son.[88]

The Reformed tradition is faithful to Nicea in its confession that the oneness of God as three persons is a oneness of the single being.

> The *homoousia* or *consubstantialitas* or *coessentialitas* of the divine persons is that whereby the three persons are of one and the same substance or essence, but singular and sole *(unicae)* numerically; or whereby they are one thing according to essence, the essence of all of them is one, and by no means one for the Father another for the Son and another for the H. Spirit, I John 5:7... John 10:30.[89]

The intimate relationship of *perichoresis* does not establish the

87 Deut. 6:4, 5; Is. 46:9; 1 Cor. 8:4-6; John 10:30; Matt. 28:19. The last passage teaches the oneness of being as clearly and powerfully as it teaches the threeness of persons. The three have *one* name, which is the revelation of *one* being.

88. The significance of the begetting and spiration of the being (essence) of the Son and of the Spirit for the fundamental trinitarian doctrine of the oneness of being is another reason for taking issue with Calvin's teaching that only the persons of the Son and of the Spirit are begotten and breathed forth.

89. Polan, cited in Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics,* 113.

oneness of God. Rather, the indwelling of persons is due to and depends upon the oneness of the being.[90]

God is three persons and one being. This is the mystery of the Trinity. The gospel reveals it, but the gospel reveals it as a truth that, like God, is incomprehensible. There may be no dissolving of the mystery by the mind of man, whether this be done by denying three distinct persons or by affirming three distinct beings.

There is, therefore, no other fellowship that is comparable to the fellowship of the Trinity. Whether it be the fellowship of the saint with God or the fellowship of believing husband and wife, all other fellowship is the fellowship of two different beings. In the mystical union with God, the believer is and remains a human being. Although husband and wife become one flesh, they are yet two beings, so that separation can and will occur. Only God is a *being* of fellows. Only God is a family *being*.

But He is a being *of fellows*, a *family* being. The truth of the one being in no way detracts from, but on the contrary points up, the wonderful fellowship of God. The three are one, *essentially* one.

The essential oneness of the three rules out any subordination of one person to the other in the Godhead. Advocates of a social doctrine of the Trinity cautiously suggest subordination of the Son to the Father and subordination of the Spirit to the Father and the Son. Subordination is intended either to explain the obvious submission of Jesus Christ to the Father or to establish the basis in God Himself for the mutual submission of the saints.

There can be no subordination in the Godhead, whether willing or natural. Each person shares the divine being. God cannot be subordinate to God. The church has confessed that the three persons are coequal.[91]

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90. See Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 113. This was the decision of the Council of Florence in 1442: "... the three persons have one substance, one essence, one nature, one divinity.... Because of this unity the Father is entirely in the Son," etc. The oneness of essence is the cause of the *perichoresis*. See Fortman, *The Triune God*, 226.

91. According to the Athanasian Creed, it is the catholic faith that "in this Trinity none is afore, or after another: none is greater, or less than another. But the whole three Persons are coeternal and coequal" (Schaff, *Creeds*, 2:68).

Church history has proved that subordinationism necessarily implies the denial of the Deity of the person considered subordinate.

The submission of Jesus to the Father must be explained in terms of His human nature. As God, Jesus is one and equal with the Father.[92] As man, He is less than the Father and subject to the Father's will.[93]

Although there can be no subordination among those who are equal by virtue of oneness of being, there can be a seeking of the other. One regards the other as dear, desires His good, and gives Himself to Him. Seeking the other stands opposed to a selfish, self-centered self-seeking that either ignores the other or uses the other for one's own end.

The Father seeks the Son in begetting Him as His image, in breathing out the Spirit to Him, and in indwelling Him. The Son seeks the Father by imaging Him, by breathing forth the Spirit to Him, and by indwelling Him. The Spirit seeks the Father and the Son by being the fellowship between them.

The life of the Holy Family is other-seeking rather than self-seeking.

This seeking of each other in the fellowship of their love is the basis in the triune God of the service of the Father by Jesus Christ and of the service of Jesus Christ by the Spirit of Pentecost.

It is also the basis of the seeking of each other by believers and their children mutually. The seeking of each other by the people of God involves submission and service. This is the expression of their fellowship, the clearest manifestation in creation of the *"vestigium Trinitatis."*[94]

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92. John 10:30; 5:18.

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Book Reviews

The Anatomy of Preaching: Identifying the Issues in Preaching Today, by David L. Larsen. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999. Pp. 203. No price given (paper). [Reviewed by Robert D. Decker.]

In the first chapter of this book Larsen asks, "Does preaching have a future?" His answer is "yes." Preaching has a future because according to Scripture it is given by God for the instruction and inspiration of His people and for the propagation of the gospel to the ends of the earth. Larsen insists, "The real origin of preaching is found in God himself and in his nature" (p. 13). In this same chapter Larsen argues that "... where preaching thrives, the church thrives" (p. 20). This Larsen demonstrates from the history of the church. In this connection Larsen makes the point that the sixteenth century Reformation involved a great revival of preaching. This is true indeed, but to characterize Martin Luther's preaching as "heroic disorder" without any documentation from Luther's extant sermons is grossly unfair (p. 19). Besides, it can be demonstrated to be simply a false characterization of Luther's sermons.

Larsen correctly states that the authority of preaching is rooted in the authority of sacred Scripture, the inspired, infallible Word of God, the absolute rule for the faith and life of God's people. Where Scripture's authority is undermined (as by rationalistic higher criticism) preaching suffers.

Biblical preaching is defined by Larsen as "confident, Spirit-empowered proclamation and application of what the Bible teaches" (p. 30). This is acceptable as far as it goes, but we much prefer H. Hoeksema's definition. Hoeksema, drawing upon the rich Dutch Calvinistic tradition of preaching represented by the likes of S. Volbeda, W. Heyns, T. Hoekstra, H. Bavinck, A. Kuyper, J. J. Van Oosterzee, *et.al.*, defines preaching as "the authoritative proclamation of the gospel by the church in the service of the Word of God through Christ" (*Homiletics*, p. 4, a syllabus available from the seminary).

Of the four kinds of sermons that he distinguishes and defines, the author prefers what he calls

"the expository sermon" (pp. 31-32). Larsen means expository in the sense of *lectio continua*, i.e., "... systematically preaching through books of the Bible or using a lectionary of texts following the church year" (p. 32). The author correctly identifies what he calls the "historic weakness" of this method, *viz.*, "its common lack of unity. It becomes a kind of didactic running commentary on the text, a cluster of sermonettes" (p. 32). Just how Larsen would avoid this weakness is not at all clear. It's gratifying to read Larsen's conclusion to this section: "one of the greatest needs in the church today is for truly biblical preaching" (p. 33).

The author laments the fact that due to the adverse effect of television on our culture, "there is a mounting biblical and theological illiteracy in our more conservative churches" (p. 37). The result is that we are the best entertained people in the world and the least informed! We couldn't agree more!

The fourth chapter is a fine, biblical description of what a preacher must be. He must be a man of God immersed in the Scriptures, a man of the Word. He must be a man of prayer. The preacher needs the Holy Spirit and he needs holiness.

Larsen argues correctly and convincingly that sermons need structure. Preachers, he insists, ought clearly state the two or three (not more than these) points. This the author stresses over against the abandonment of structure and the scorning of what many regard as "Aristotelian linear, syllogistic sermons (three points and a poem)." The sermon must have a destination in view. In this section, Larsen criticizes David Buttrick's "new homiletic," which, he points out, flows quite naturally out of Buttrick's commitment to the "new hermeneutic" and an abandonment of the authority of Scripture. While Buttrick insists that "sermons involve an ordered sequence," he prefers to speak of "moves" and a "plot" rather than points and a proposition.

In this connection Larsen offers nothing new on the question of what makes a sermon flow. By preaching series, either issue-oriented or didactic, on entire books from both Testaments, preachers can avoid predictability. In this discussion the author advocates innovative forms and techniques which have no place at all in the pulpit and worship of the church. These are dialogue, drama (including the wearing of costumes), etc. At this point, Larsen completely loses sight of the uniqueness of preaching as the chief means by which it pleases God to save them

that believe as this truth is revealed in I Corinthians 1:18-24 and 2:1-5.

There are helpful suggestions offered on the subject of application and creativity in preaching. Sermons, the author insists, must reach a clear, prompt, polished goal. Preachers must effect closure, and Larsen presents some good suggestions on how preachers can effectively do that.

Larsen concludes with a good chapter on the necessity of preaching Christ from all of Scripture. This we must do because Christ is typified in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New. In this chapter the author offers a good critique and rejection of the "new hermeneutic."

We conclude the review with two comments in general, the first negative, the second positive. Larsen allows for women in the office of minister of the Word. In referring to preachers he uses "his or her" (cf. p. 47). The book is written in a nice, clear style so that it is not at all difficult to understand.

David Larsen, it should be noted, taught for fifteen years at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (Deerfield, Illinois) after serving as pastor of several churches for thirty-two years. He is not emeritus. ◆

A Critical and Expository Commentary on the Book of Judges, by Andrew R. Fausset. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1999. Pp. viii-340. $19.99 (cloth). [Reviewed by Robert D. Decker.]

Here is a fine commentary of the book and era of the Judges. The work is detailed and complete. The exposition is correct for the most part. Ministers and lay persons alike who are looking for good, solid exposition of this book of the Bible will find it in this commentary.

The Rev. A. R. Fausset correctly views this period as one during which the Lord chastised His people for their repeated apostasy and raised up Judges to deliver them from their enemies. In this way, the author maintains, and rightly so, the Lord prepared Israel for the "king after His own heart," the typical, Davidic Theocracy.

Fausset (1821-1910) was curate of Bishop Middleham, County Durham from 1848 till 1859. He was rector of St. Cuthbert's York from 1859 until his death.

Those interested in other works on the Judges would benefit from the syllabus written by the late Prof. H.C. Hoeksema, *Era of the Judges*, available from the Prot-

estant Reformed Theological Seminary bookstore. ◆

Genetic Engineering: A Christian Response. (Crucial Considerations for Shaping Life), Demy, Timothy J. & Stewart, Gary P., editors. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999. 320 pages. [Reviewed by Herman C. Hanko.]

The mapping of the human genome, which began in 1989, is scheduled for completion in 2005. This is a project which involves defining and understanding the sequences (that is, the relationships between)of the three billion pairs of the DNA molecule. It is this molecule that is necessary for the development of a living creature, including a human being, from a one-celled fertilized molecule to a mature being. It determines everything about that individual: what kind of creature it will be, its weight and size, its appearance, and the detailed characteristics of every cell. In a human it determines the sex, the color of the hair and eyes, the facial features, the size and shape, the health or sickness of an individual, his native characteristics and tendencies; in short, everything about him.

Being on the verge of completing this project of mapping the human genome, scientists are capable of altering that basic molecule of DNA in ways they please. That is, they are capable of taking out of the molecule any of the three billion pairs of genes, altering them, substituting them with other genes, leaving them out altogether, and perhaps adding genes which never were there.

The wicked scientists who are committed to evolutionism and who, on the basis of their theory of evolutionism, think man is nothing more than a material substance, are convinced that they have the key in their hands to direct the evolutionary processes in any way they choose. In the past, so they say, evolutionary changes have taken place by unexpected changes in these genes, and the changes have been carried over to the descendants. These changes were haphazard, many of them were harmful, and all took place over millions of years. But now that man is in a position to make these changes at will, he has his hands on the evolutionary processes so that he can control and direct the development of man, speed up the process, do away with harmful genetic alterations, and produce a superman of hitherto unparalleled abilities. As Julian Huxley, quoted in the book, says: Man can fill the

"position of business manager for the cosmic process of evolution" (p. 149).

The authors of this book are all doctors, scientists, and Christians. They examine the entire problem of genetic engineering from every conceivable viewpoint and weigh it in the balances of the Christian faith. Most of the book is written in terms the ordinary layman, who has no background in science and medicine, can understand and which help him to know what is going on and what the future holds.

What is going on is frightening. And what is now possible for man to do is more frightening yet. We cannot list here all the uses to which genetic engineering is being put, but we can mention a few. Setting aside the work that is being done in the areas of crop development and meat raising (In a recent news item, the European Common Market was pondering whether to ban vegetables, fruits, beef, pork, chickens, etc., which have been altered genetically — which gives some plausibility to the idea that such genetic alternation is not necessarily an improvement in the product), the book concentrates on what can be done with humans.

It is possible, as we all know, to create human embryos in test tubes, to use surrogate mothers in the development of such embryos, to freeze embryos and thaw and use them at a later date, and to make use of these embryos in any way doctors desire. But with the mapping of the human genome, the door is opened to other possibilities. Among these are: preventing genetic diseases (such as cystic fibrosis) and syndromes by changing the defective gene; correcting the defective gene that causes Down's syndrome; controlling and determining the sex of a new baby; testing babies and people (genetic screening)for genetic diseases, to determine the length of their life, the measure of their intelligence, etc.; cloning embryos of animals and people — which includes cloning embryos to produce spare body parts for those whose body parts are injured or imperfect (if this seems far fetched, it is already being done in some laboratories); altering personality; enhancing intelligence; enabling embryos to grow to taller or slimmer or more handsome adults, or with characteristics parents may admire and desire in their children; producing human embryos for experimental purposes (something also being done in some laboratories); and all sorts of other possibilities which the wicked hearts of men are capable of conceiving.

We may wonder whether God

will even permit some of these things to happen. This question becomes all the more pressing when we know from Scripture that man is composed of body and soul, that he is a personal being, which person is the divine "stamp" upon his nature, given directly by God, and that he is not merely the physical blob of material which the evolutionists claim.

It would, I think, be foolish to try to predict what scientists will be able to do and will not be able to do. One might be sorely tempted to say, as many said when cloning was first suggested, It will never happen. God will not permit it to be done. But we must be careful.

One reason is that we understand very little of the mysterious relationship between body and soul, and of the marvelous wonder of the human person. David sings of our being "fearfully and wonderfully made." Among other things, that means that we cannot even understand the marvelous creation we are. But another reason is the wickedness of which man is capable. At the time of Babel, God restrained sin by confusing the speech of men. He did this because if He had not done it, "nothing would be restrained from them" (Gen. 11:6). That is, God confused their speech because it prevented a premature establishment of the kingdom of Antichrist, which would have resulted in the destruction of the church before all the elect were born. But now that the end is near and Antichrist is about to be revealed, it will literally happen that "nothing shall be restrained from them." They will, in their wickedness, reveal completely the full measure of sin, and the almost endless capacity of the depraved human heart to corrupt God's creation.

The book, in a general way, takes a Christian perspective on all that genetic engineering involves. That perspective, in brief, is that genetic engineering is permissible and proper when it is used to alleviate suffering of all kinds. But it is not permissible if it is used in any way for enhancement of life or experimentation which involves the destruction of human embryos or has as its goal the perfection of man. Thus genetic engineering ought to be encouraged.

There are some weaknesses in this position. This becomes evident in the warning of one author who, in one of the best essays in the book, reminds us that God ordained suffering of all kinds in this world for our correction and instruction, and to mold us for our place in the life to come. To seek to eliminate all suffering, therefore, is to go contrary to God's own purpose for His people.

This startling reminder in the book is needed and necessary, for the perspective of most of the writers is that God does not "will" suffering and sickness, and that, therefore, if the means to eradicate them from life is in our hands, we must by all means do what we can to make life free from suffering. They seem to write often from the perspective of a kind of heaven here on earth where all suffering will be removed.

Another weakness is a failure on the part of authors to define what is meant by the image of God in man and free will in man — when these terms are constantly used. One is left with the impression that men still, in spite of the fall, bear God's image and are still endowed with a free will.

This weakness comes out especially in the confidence that many of the authors seem to have in scientists even though these scientists are ungodly men. The authors favor continued genetic engineering (under the restrictions mentioned above) because scientists can usually be trusted to limit their work to what is good for men, and to utilize their forces to prevent scoundrels from doing things that are repugnant to society. Well, I for one do not have that confidence in sinful scientists. We have seen altogether too much of how wicked men use God's gifts (such as radio and TV) to promote their godless and wicked agenda. And truly nothing is restrained from them when God turns them over to do all that is in their wicked hearts.

One wonders whether it is not the calling of Reformed believers to condemn all kinds of genetic engineering in humans, no matter what the purpose. Is it right to tamper with the fundamental processes of life which God has implanted in man? I have grave doubts about it.

It is all well and good to speak, as the authors do, of using genetic engineering for human benefit and the alleviation of suffering. But the line between prevention of suffering on the one hand, and enhancement of life on the other hand, is already blurred, and will, you may be sure, be blurred yet more. After all, does not a boy who never grows beyond four feet tall, suffer at the hands of his classmates when he is mocked for his size, and does not he suffer because his size prevents him from being on the basketball team? Is not a child of only average intelligence suffering because so much study is required to keep up with the class? and because prestigious jobs are not open to her? If these deficiencies can easily be changed, surely the changes can be made in the name of alleviating suffering.

And all of this is not yet to

speak of one major aspect of genetic engineering. It is becoming increasingly common in our day to blame everything on one's genetic deficiencies. A fornicator who holds public office recently pleaded successfully that he ought not to be punished but pitied because his conduct was the result of faulty genes. The authors themselves point out that while a decade or two ago all was blamed on the environment, now everything is blamed on one's genetic makeup. We have moved, the author says, from the era of the environment to the era of the genes. So criminals, homosexuals, drunkards, child abusers, thieves, murderers, and adulterers need only some genetic tinkering and they will be able to live lives acceptable to society. Such is the reasoning. In this way sin is completely denied. But when sin is denied, there is no longer any need for the cross of Christ. Instead of Paul's triumphant shout: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," we can now loudly sing, "God forbid that I should glory, except in the scientists' power to perform astounding feats of genetic engineering." ◆

The Federal Theology of Thomas Boston, A. T. B. McGowan. Carlisle, Paternoster Press, 1998. xix + 228 pp. (paperback). [Reviewed by Ronald Hanko.]

Paternoster is to be commended for filling some very large gaps in the publishing of theological books. Besides the republication of older Puritan works, there is little serious theological material being published. In its "Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought" series, Paternoster is reprinting books that have not been available for hundreds of years, and providing translations of books that have never been available in English. In such series as their "Paternoster Biblical and Theological Monographs" and "Rutherford Studies in Historical Theology," they are providing a great deal of interesting theological analysis and debate. One of their recent efforts in this area is A.T.B. McGowan's *The Federal Theology of Thomas Boston.*

There is nothing else currently available on Thomas Boston and his theology that this reviewer knows of. The book is, therefore, most welcome. It is also welcome, however, for the wealth of information on Boston that it provides and because it is written in an easy and pleasant

style without much technical language. Too many books on such subjects as these are far over the heads of the ordinary reader.

Thomas Boston should be of much interest today in light of his involvement in the Marrow controversy. Many of the issues raised in that debate are still around today. Indeed, this is one of the reasons, McGowan tells us, for his interest in Thomas Boston (pp. xvi, xvii). Though we would disagree with him as well as with Boston on these issues, the book is nevertheless a welcome addition to the debate inasmuch as these issues are brought forward.

The book is divided into sections dealing with various aspects of Boston's theology, the Covenants, the Person of Christ, the Atonement, Predestination, Regeneration, Justification, Sanctification, Repentance, and Assurance. Generally speaking, however, the book falls into two parts as far as its main theme is concerned. In the first part of the book McGowan is primarily concerned to show that Boston was fundamentally orthodox in his theology. In the last half he attempts to show that Boston did not depart from this orthodoxy in connection with the issues raised in the Marrow controversy.

One of the principal issues in the Marrow controversy, though not the only one, is the matter of the preaching of the gospel in relation to the atonement of Christ. Both *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, the book that lay at the heart of the Marrow controversy, and Boston himself, who recommended it and republished it with notes of his own, taught what has come to be known today as the "well-meant offer of the gospel." They grounded that "well-meant offer" in the atonement of Christ, and were, therefore, both then and now accused of denying the doctrine of limited or particular atonement.

In treating Boston's views on this subject, McGowan attempts to clear Boston and the other Marrow men of these charges. He suggests that Boston taught only a certain sufficiency of the atonement for all men (p. 54; the traditional sufficiency/efficiency distinction). But from McGowan's own quotations of Boston it is very clear that Boston and the other Marrow men went beyond this and taught a certain reference of the atonement of Christ to the non-elect. Thus we find such statements in Boston:

> Our Lord Jesus Christ is the official Saviour, not of the elect only, but of the world of mankind indefinitely; so our text calls him "Saviour of the

world." Agreeably to which, God in Christ is called "the Saviour of all men", but with a speciality, "the Saviour of them that believe", I Tim. iv, 10. The matter lies here: like as a prince, out of regard to his subjects' welfare, gives a commission to a qualified person to be the physician to such a society, a regiment, or the like; and the prince's commission constitutes him physician of that society; so that though many of them should never employ him, but call other physicians, yet still there is a relation betwixt him and them; he is their physician by office; any of them all may come to him if they will, and be healed: so God, looking on the ruined world of mankind, has constituted and appointed Jesus Christ his Son Saviour of the world ... so that any of them all may come to him, without money or price, and be saved by him as their own Saviour appointed them by the Father (McGowan, pp. 41, 42).

Yet, as McGowan shows, Boston did teach the doctrine of limited atonement and its attendant doctrine of divine predestination in no uncertain terms. Indeed, though he recommended and republished the *Marrow*, he himself refrained from using the language of the *Marrow* regarding a certain universality in the death of Christ and the atonement as expressed in its notorious statement:

> In his name we can ... say to every man, not: "Christ has died for you," that is to say: the benefits of the gospel are for you; but "Christ is dead for you"—that is, in the fulness of Christ crucified, there is salvation for you through faith in his name (McGowan, p. 44).

This is only to say, however, that Boston's theology runs on two tracks, as does the theology of those today who try to hold both to Calvinism and to the theology of the well-meant offer together. One cannot, in the end, have it both ways. It cannot be true, whatever construction is put on the words, that "Christ is dead" for all men *and* that the atonement is limited. It cannot, without contradicting the simplicity and unchangeableness of God, be true that God both desires and does not desire the salvation of the reprobate. It cannot be the case that He well-meaningly offers in the gospel something He does not have to give, as Boston, and the other Marrow men held then, and their disciples hold today.

McGowan himself as much as admits this inconsistency when he speaks of Boston holding the

gracious invitation and predestination "in tension" (pp. 15, 54). He attempts (pp. 45 ff.), too, in this connection, to defend Boston from the charge of Amyrauldianism (the teaching that there is a double reference to the atonement, i.e., both to the elect and to the reprobate). But it is striking, as McGowan shows, that the secession churches which were born out of the Marrow controversy were plagued by Amyrauldianism and were never free from controversy over the doctrine of the atonement.

The inconsistency in Boston must, therefore, be the explanation of the very differing views of Boston that McGowan himself mentions in his "Introduction" (pp. 15, 16). It must also be the reason why, in spite of McGowan's attempts to prove him orthodox, both in his own time and in the present, there continue to be doubts of his full orthodoxy.

In this connection we found it striking that there is in the discussion of Boston's views on predestination almost no mention of reprobation. Whether this reflects Boston's own theology or not, we do not know, but it certainly is not true of the Westminster Standards. It is, however, true that the doctrine of reprobation almost always receives very short shrift among those who are committed to the well-meant offer. The reason is obvious, for it is the doctrine of reprobation which most emphatically contradicts the theology of the offer. It raises the (unanswerable) question, "How can God sincerely offer what He neither has to give nor *intends* to give?"

That these issues are still alive is also evident in the book. In spite of his repeated assertions of objectivity (pp. xvii, xviii), a definite bias against Boston's opponents in the Marrow controversy comes out. McGowan repeatedly characterizes Boston's main opponent, James Hadow, in a negative fashion. He says, for example, that Hadow "was a legalist whose views on repentance represented a significant move away from the evangelical position of Reformed orthodoxy" (p. 182).

Because of the relevance of these controversies, we would have liked to have seen, especially in light of the book's title, a clearer and more thorough explanation of the connection between Boston's federal (covenant) theology (which was also the theology of his contemporaries) and the issues raised in the Marrow controversy. We ourselves are certain that there was such a connection, but McGowan spends very little time on that, in spite of his emphasis on Boston's federalism.

Though we disagree with

McGowan's analysis of Boston's views, the book is nevertheless a very valuable introduction to the thought of Thomas Boston and to the Marrow controversies in which he was involved. Indeed, the book serves not only as a mine of information on Boston, but on many others as well, for in each of the chapters McGowan compares Boston with others, as for example in the chapter on predestination, where Boston's theology is compared with that of Augustine, Calvin, Knox, and Westminster. Whether one agrees with Mc Gowan's conclusions and bias or not, then, there is much important information in the book. May there be many others like it from Paternoster. ◆

The Extent of the Atonement. A Dilemma for Reformed Theology from Calvin to the Consensus (1536-1675), G. Michael Thomas. Paternoster Publishing, 1997. 277 pages (paper). [Reviewed by Ronald Hanko.]

The consensus referred to in the title of this book is the Second Helvetic Confession, one of the clearest and most consistent expositions of the doctrines of grace ever produced. The book, then, is a historical survey of the doctrine of the atonement from Calvin till the great period of Reformed orthodoxy that produced the Canons of Dordt and the Westminster Confession of Faith. As such it is not without value.

One wearies, however, of the seemingly endless number of books on the doctrine of the atonement, all of which, in one way or another, seem bent on proving that the doctrine of limited or particular atonement is not biblically or traditionally a part of Reformed theology. From that point of view, this book is just another of the same.

In fact, the book is as much a repudiation of the Reformed doctrine of predestination as of the doctrine of limited atonement. This, of course, is not surprising in that the two doctrines are inextricably related so that they stand or fall together.

Indeed, the purpose of the author, which does not come to light until the very last paragraph of the book, involves the doctrine of predestination more than the doctrine of the atonement. He pleads for a reworking of the doctrine of predestination, apparently along Barthian lines: "The present study ... proposes that an attempt such as Barth's to find a new way of understanding predestination deserves careful consideration by all who claim to stand in the Reformed tradition" (p. 253).

Thus he speaks of the atonement as being "shackled" by particular predestinarianism (p. 241) and says that "predestinarian logic could, and perhaps had to, lead away from the initial Reformation proclamation of grace" (p. 228). This, too, is not surprising. It has always been the doctrine of predestination which has born the brunt of the attack against gracious salvation. This is the reason, for example, that the Canons of Dordt, the original "Five Points of Calvinism," treat the doctrine of predestination first. It was that doctrine especially to which the Arminians objected.

The author, attempting to prove "the Reformed inability to come to an agreed position on the extent of the atonement" and "the inconsistency of the doctrine of predestination with its other concerns," sometimes presents a slanted view of things. He suggests, for example, that the conclusions of the Synod of Dordt were ambiguous and plays up the weaknesses of some of the delegates, particularly those from Bremen and England by way of undermining the strong position of Dordt on predestination and the atonement.

Thus, too, he glosses over the fact that the Canons present one of the strongest statements regarding limited atonement to be found in any of the Reformed confessions: "It was the will of God, that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby he confirmed the new covenant, should *effectually* redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, all those, *and those only*, who were from eternity chosen to salvation, and given Him by the Father" (II, 8 — emphases mine). This is not ambiguous.

There is even a definite bias shown in the way that Reformed orthodoxy is described over against Arminianism and Amyrauldianism, though Thomas himself does not adopt any of these positions. Reformed orthodoxy is invariably described as rigid, scholastic, and rationalistic, and the Canons of Dordt as full of cracks (p. 152). In contrast, John Cameron, the Amyrauldians, and the theology of the Saumur school are described as "markedly original"(p. 180), "daring" (p. 197), "brave" (p. 241), and "uncompromising" (p. 189).

Zanchius' doctrine of predestination, he says, "was constructed on the basis of his doctrine of God and of Aristotelian concepts of end, cause and effect," and "the doctrine of God itself was shaped according to the axioms of Aristotelian philosophy, mediated though the theology of Thomas Aquinas" (p. 99). Zanchius, accordingly, has the "dubious dis-

tinction" (p 99) of being the first defender of the doctrine of limited atonement.

John Cameron, on the other hand, makes a "consistent effort to root the universal and conditional elements (of the atonement) in the nature of God, so tending to put the predestinating will of God into the background" (p. 181). And Amyraut himself comes "closer to a Biblical approach than does his opponents" (p. 203), his theology marking "a break with the scholastic logic of the past" (p. 204).

Thomas, along with many others (Clifford, Daniel, Kendall), adamantly refuses to admit the possibility that that there is positive development and progress in the history of doctrines, and that the work of Beza, Zanchius, Dordt, Owen, and Westminster represent such progress. This bias mars the book throughout.

All this is not to say that the book is without value. There is very much interesting and valuable historical material in the book. This reviewer was especially struck by the consistency and biblicity of the views of Beza and Zanchius, as well as by the weakness of Bullinger. The section on Amyrauldianism was also informative and valuable. Nevertheless, the book is part of the continuing attack on the biblical and Reformed doctrines of sovereign, unconditional predestination and a particular, effective atonement.

There is also one minor complaint that must be made concerning the format of the book. It is irritating in the extreme to have the footnotes printed at the end of the chapters, so that one must be constantly paging back and forth to see the references. We wish publishers would abandon this practice. ◆

The Claims of Truth: John Owen's Trinitarian Theology, Carl R. Trueman. Carlisle, Paternoster Press, 1998. xii + 267 pp. (paperback). [Reviewed by Ronald Hanko.]

Carl Trueman has given us in this book a scholarly overview of John Owen's theology, and from that point of view alone the book is all but unique. Very few have had the courage to tackle Owen's writings or write an analysis of his theology. This is due in part, as Trueman himself suggests (p. 2), to a general neglect of Puritan theology, but must also be due to the sheer volume of Owen's works (16 volumes in the Banner of Truth edition), and to the fact that Owen is never easy to read.

Trueman looks at Owen's theology especially from the view-

point of his controversies with the Socinians and the Arminians and with Richard Baxter, and gives many penetrating and valuable insights, not only into Owen's thinking but into the character and development of post-Reformation theology. His analysis, we believe, is accurate and a needed corrective to popular misrepresentations of those who followed Calvin and the other Reformers.

Trueman, therefore, spends a great deal of time answering the "Calvin against the Calvinists" thesis, the notion that the Reformed theologians after Calvin corrupted and perverted the "pure Calvinism" of Calvin himself by their use of scholastic methods, the application of strict logic and rationalism, and a misplaced emphasis on predestination and other such doctrines. He answers especially the work of Alan Clifford (*Atonement and Justification*; *Calvinus*) and Frank Boersma (*A Hot Peppercorn*), though others also are mentioned (Kendall, Rainbow, Torrance, Hall, Rolston).

This defense of Owen is, in fact, one of the major concerns of the book. Trueman, therefore, does not just give an overview of Owen's theology, but defends him and the other post-Reformation Reformed theologians against the charges of contributing to a destructive betrayal of Reformed theology, especially with respect to the doctrine of the atonement.

Believing rather that Owen and others like him stood where Calvin stood and built on his foundations, Trueman ends his book with these words, encapsulating this theme:

> As I was going up the stair,
> I met a man who wasn't there
> He wasn't there again today.
> Oh! How I wish he'd go away.
>
> It is a remarkable fact, but the secondary literature surrounding the Protestantism of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is populated by men who were not actually there — not actually in those centuries, that is. It may well be that scholars were on the whole never foolish enough to subscribe to the popular myths about Calvinism epitomized in Mencken's definition of Puritanism as a 'haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy,' but they have generated enough myths and factoids of their own to fill the void. Whether it is Beza, playing Stalin to Calvin's Lenin and almost single-handedly perverting the Reformed faith, or Zanchi rationalizing Reformed theology into a *centraldogma* based upon a rigid form of Aristotelianism, or Perkins taking English Reformed thought

out into the wasteland of despair created by voluntarist notions of faith — scholars have found no shortage of villains to blame for the directions taken by Reformed thought in the late-sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

It is, however, becoming increasingly clear that these sinister villains who prowl through the pages of the secondary scholarship bear little resemblance to the theologians who led the Reformed churches of their day. Indeed, as far as their 'crimes' are concerned, they have, to use a crude modern colloquialisms, been 'framed' .... Once one has read the primary texts from a historical perspective, reading the analyses of such as Beza, etc. given by the old school is an experience not dissimilar from that described by the author of the above rhyme: it is like meeting a man who wasn't there, and whose continued presence is a source only of irritation and frustration (pp. 227, 228).

Trueman is especially hard on Alan Clifford in the book, and rightly so. He shows clearly that Clifford has, at the very least, seriously misread Owen by coming to Owen with an agenda of his own. Clifford's analysis is characterized by Trueman as "seriously deficient" (p. 186, footnote), "misleading" (p. 187, footnote), "uncritical" (p. 216, footnote), given to "unsound methodology" (p. 225, footnote), and based upon "nonsensical presuppositions" (p. 12, footnote). He goes so far as to accuse Clifford of misrepresenting Owen, when he, Clifford, to prove a point, brings together from Owen's writings in one place and as one quotation two sections of text that are separated by 45 pages in Owen's writings! As Trueman says: "if this approach is legitimate, then one might as well argue that 'Judas went and hanged himself ... Go and do thou likewise' is a command explicitly taught in the Bible" (pp. 235, 236).

Over against Clifford and others Trueman shows (1) that Owen must be read in context, particularly of the times in which he lived; (2) that his use of Aristotelian terms by no means makes him guilty of carrying over Aristotelian philosophy into his theology; (3) that his theology represents not a departure from Reformed theology but a natural development of it, as Owen himself believed; (3) that he was not "guilty" of rationalizing, but only of systematizing and working out the consequences of historic Calvinism, especially with regard to the atonement; and (5) that he is, in fact, in the main line of Reformed theology tracing back to

Calvin himself.

He shows, too, and in some detail that Owen's theology was decidedly Trinitarian throughout (thus the subtitle of the book), and that this, rather than scholasticism or rationalism is the governing and over-arching principle of Owen's theology, as indeed it is. Even a cursory reading of Owen shows this, at least if one does not read Owen only to prove that Owen was guilty of perverting Reformed theology from its original purity and truth.

There is much other interesting material in the book. We found especially valuable the material on Owen's rejection of the traditional view of the necessity of the incarnation (pp. 105-109), his use of the analogy of faith (pp. 94-99), his understanding of the relationship between revelation and the nature of God (pp. 109-110), and his views on the sufficiency and efficiency of the atonement (pp. 199-206).

Two negative criticisms must be made, however. The first is that the book is overly scholarly, with an abundance of theological Latin terminology. This probably puts it beyond the capacity of most laymen and seriously limits its value. Perhaps this should not be said by way of criticizing Trueman's book, but only by way of pleading for a similar book "written down" to a more popular level. There is a great need for this. The battle for the truth is not fought in the cloudy heights of scholarship, but in the trenches and by the ordinary members of the church. They would be well armed with much of the material in this book if it were written less technically.

The second negative criticism is more significant in our opinion. Perhaps in the interest of scholarship, but for whatever reason, Trueman distances himself from the question of whether or not Owen's theology is true. He says:

> I wish at the start to make it clear that I write as a historian of ideas, not as a systematic theologian. My interest is not to discover whether Owen was right or wrong, but to see what he said, why he said it, whether it was coherent by the standards of his day, and how he fits into the theological context of his own times and of the western tradition as a whole. Of course I do have personal intellectual convictions about the theological value of Owen's writings, but I have tried to be aware of my own theological commitments and to keep them as separate as humanly possible from my analysis (p. ix).

We question whether it is really possible to be totally objective concerning the truth of what is, after all, God's Word — the truth about God Himself and His gracious work, even when engaged in historical analysis. Much more we question whether it is right to treat such matters merely as matters for scholarly and historical debate. Certainly it is not a game, as Trueman himself suggests (p. 9). It was never that for Owen. Owen says (p. 92) "that the primary purpose of theology is living to please God," and with that we wholeheartedly concur. Theology and even the history of theology are never and can never be abstract matters. Trueman might learn something from Owen in that respect.

With those caveats, the book is highly recommended to those who are able to make use of it. ◆

Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment, Carl R. Trueman and R. S. Scott, editors. Carlisle, Paternoster Press, 1999. xix + 344 pp. (paperback). [Reviewed by Ronald Hanko.]

Here is another very valuable book from Paternoster with a wealth of information and analysis on the development of Lutheran and Reformed orthodoxy from the time of the Reformation to its decline in the eighteenth century. The book is a collection of 18 essays by a wide variety of writers divided up into five main sections: Luther and Calvin; Early Reformed Orthodoxy; The British Connection; From High Orthodoxy to Enlightenment; and The Rise of Lutheran Orthodoxy.

As is to be expected in a book of this sort, the essays vary considerably in readability, interest, and value, but the book nevertheless deserves a place in the library of every serious student of Reformed theology. We found particularly interesting and valuable the essay by Richard Muller on Beza's *Tabula Praedestinationis*, a translation of which is soon to be published by Paternoster, and the essay by Lyle D. Bierma on Olevianus' covenant theology.

The book is particularly valuable, however, because of the information it provides on many lesser known figures of the Reformation. There are essays on the theology of Peter Martyr Vermigli, Jerome Zanchius, Caspar Olevianus, Andreas Hyperius, William Perkins, Gisbertus Voetius, Francis and Jean Alphonse Turretin, and in the Luther branch of the Reformation, Philip Melanchthon and

Johann Gerhard.

The main thrust of all the essays is, as the title of book indicates, a reevaluation of the charge, often brought against Reformed theology in general, and more recently against all Reformed orthodoxy after Calvin, that it is scholastic. So often has this charge been brought, and so widely is it believed, that it conjures up in the minds of most the spectre of arid, speculative, philosophical, unbiblical debate about trivial questions (cf. p. 17) and keeps many from reading or considering the theological position of post-Reformation Reformed theologians.

The book attempts to show and does show successfully, we believe, that scholasticism is not in itself a bad thing. It also demonstrates, however, that while the Reformers (including Calvin) and their successors used scholastic language and methods of teaching and defending the truth, they were *not* scholastic in their theology, but in fact rejected scholastic theology almost completely.

It was only, according to the authors of this book, when Reformed scholasticism was abandoned that Reformed orthodoxy began to decline and opened itself to the influences of the Enlightenment, rationalism, deism, Socinianism, and even atheism. Thus the chapter on Jean Alphonse Turretin, the son of Francis Turretin by birth but not by belief.

The main thesis of the book is, then, that while Reformation and post-Reformation theology can to some extent be characterized as scholastic in its methods and language, this is not a bad thing and is part of the *positive* development of Reformed orthodoxy to its high water mark in the theology of such men as William Perkins and Francis Turretin. With this thesis we heartily agree and recommend the book to all who wish to see corrected the very biased view of church history that sets Calvin and later Reformed theologians against one another — that views later Reformed orthodoxy as an aberration rather than a positive development in the church's understanding of the truth.

We hope, too, that the expectation of the editors is indeed being realized, "that these two insights, one stressing the necessity of understanding Protestant orthodoxy in its own historical-intellectual context, the other ridding the word scholasticism of its pejorative connotations, have effected a change in the scholarship surrounding this area the long-term impact of which should be nothing short of revolutionary" (p. xv). ◆

Law and Gospel: Philip Melanchthon's Debate with John Agricola of Eisleben over *Poenitentia,* Timothy J. Wengert. Carlisle, Paternoster Press, 1997. 232 pp. (paperback). [Reviewed by Ronald Hanko.]

This volume is the third in Paternoster's "Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought," a very valuable series in which Paternoster is publishing translations of Reformation works that have never been available in English, reprints of works that are no longer readily available, and various modern studies and analyses of Reformed theology. Wengert, a professor at the Lutheran Seminary in Philadelphia and an expert on Melanchthon, has given us one of these studies.

The work is both exceptionally interesting and disappointing. This reviewer found the book so interesting that it was difficult to put down, but having finished the book, was left feeling distinctly unsatisfied. That dissatisfaction arose primarily from a lack of a clear theme, and the impression that the author was doing his best to hide Melanchthon's theological weaknesses, which were not few.

The debate between Melanchthon and Agricola, which is the subject of the book, led directly into the antinomian controversies that plagued the Lutheran churches in the mid-sixteenth century, as Wengert so ably shows. The debate centered in the meaning of "*poenitentia*," roughly translated "penitence," and involved such questions as whether *poenitentia* preceded faith, whether it included "confession" to a priest, and the extent to which the law was involved in producing such *poenitentia*.

The book shows beyond doubt that Agricola's theology was antinomian. Indeed, his views were in many ways similar to those of certain Baptist antinomians today, who believe that the decalogue, the law of the Ten Commandments, has no place in the life of the New Testament Christian. Wengert demonstrates this antinomianism from Agricola's writings and shows its connection with the subsequent antinomian controversies in Lutheranism.

Melanchthon's opposition to Agricola was, therefore, very much justified. Nevertheless, though Wengert never admits this (his purpose, seemingly, is to defend Melanchthon and to present him in the very best light), one is left with the very strong feeling that Agricola's fears in the controversy were also justified, especially if one knows something of Melanchthon's later "develop-

ment" as a theologian.

Agricola was certain, and later history proved him right, we believe, that in the debate Melanchthon was compromising the doctrines of *sola fidei* (faith alone) and *sola gratia* (grace alone). There can be no doubt that Melanchthon was primarily responsible for introducing an element of synergism (that man cooperates with God in his salvation) into Lutheran theology. That synergism is found in Melanchthon's own writings and in the creeds of Lutheranism.

The *Formula of Concord*, for example, teaches that "if the Holy Spirit, by the preaching of the word, shall have made a beginning, and offered his grace in the word to man, that then man, by his own proper and natural powers, can, as it were, give some assistance and co-operation, though it be but slight, infirm, and languid, towards his conversion, and can apply and prepare himself unto grace, apprehend it, embrace it, and believe the gospel" (Art. II, Negative, IV). Wengert's quotations from Melanchthon's writings show that he was moving in this direction already at the time of his debate with Agricola, though, as we have said, Wengert never really admits this.

Thus it was that Wengert's book left us feeling so dissatisfied. He very ably traces the controversy between the two men, though the wealth of historical detail is sometimes a bit difficult to follow, but comes to no other conclusions, it seems, than that Agricola *was* antinomian, and that this controversy did set the stage for other controversies.

Wengert admits that there were changes in Melanchthon's theology, but by showing Luther's support for Melanchthon, and by downplaying these changes, he leaves the reader with the impression that Melanchthon was doctrinally sound, while Agricola was not. What is perhaps even more unsatisfactory is the fact that Wengert offers little in the way of showing the impact of this controversy on later Lutheranism and how these views of Melanchthon became the official teaching of Lutheranism as reflected in its creeds.

Maybe that is the way historical theology is done these days — a plethora of historical detail with little or no analysis or application — but it certainly leaves this reviewer unsatisfied. Of much more value, whatever one thinks of Melanchthon's theology, would have been a clear statement of how Melanchthon's theology did change and how, with Luther's approbation, it became the standard of Lutheran orthodoxy.

We would have appreciated also some brief discussion at least of the relevance of these issues for modern Lutheranism and maybe even for Reformed churches. What is the use of historical theology if it does not offer some lessons for the present? One cannot read Wengert's book and consider the issues involved in the controversy between Melanchthon and Agricola without feeling that there is "nothing new under the sun." The place of the law in the life of the Christian, the relation between penitence and faith, and other such issues are as hotly debated today as they were at the time of the Reformation.

Nevertheless, for all its faults, the book is worth reading for the abundance of historical material contained in it and is recommended to those who are interested in these issues. They will, however, have to draw their own conclusions. Wengert draws none. ◆

Let's Study Mark, by Sinclair B. Ferguson. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1999. Pp. xix—304. $14.99 (paper). [Reviewed by Robert D. Decker.]

This attractive book was written not for the scholar, but for ordinary Christians. Ferguson's purpose is twofold, *viz.*, to lead the reader into an understanding of the Gospel according to Mark and to lead the reader into an understanding of how this Gospel account applies to his life and situation.

While we are certain, and that too beyond any doubt whatsoever, that Dr. Ferguson is committed to the truth of the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures by the Holy Spirit, he misses a nice opportunity to state that truth in the introductory section in which he discusses the "author of the Gospel." The discussion is limited to the identity of John Mark, but nothing is said about the inspiration of this account of the Gospel by the Holy Spirit.

What we have in this volume is a very nice, brief, devotional commentary in paragraph form on the Gospel according to Mark. The book is well-written and easy to read. Ferguson offers pithy summaries of the various sections of which this Gospel account consists.

The book is enhanced by a useful "Group Study Guide," which not only guides the reader into a study of the various passages, but which also includes instructive comments on how one ought to go about leading a group Bible study. Ministers and others

called upon to lead group studies of the Scriptures will benefit from these comments.

Some of the expositions are too brief, thus leaving the reader with unanswered questions. Dr. Ferguson is committed to the error of a well-meant gospel offer. His exposition of Jesus' conversation with the rich young ruler (Mark 10:17-31, pp. 164-170) is incorrect. The fact is, Jesus loved the young man. This means He saved him. The young man came to faith and repentance in the way of a tremendous struggle. All things are possible with God! Even the salvation of a rich young ruler.

Under the title, "For Further Reading" (p. 304), this reviewer was disappointed to find only two commentaries listed, *viz.*, *Mark*, by L. A. Cole, and *The Gospel According to Mark*, by W. L. Lane. There are many more commentaries on Mark, some of which are arguably much better than the two listed, e.g., Wm. Hendriksen, R. C. H. Lenski, and John Calvin's *Harmony of Matthew, Mark, and Luke*.

In spite of the negative comments above, we recommend this study of the Gospel according to Mark. It should prove useful for private or family devotions and for Bible Study groups. ◆

The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church, v. 3: The Medieval Church, by Hughes Oliphant Old. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999. Pp. xviii-646. $45.00 (paper). [Reviewed by Robert D. Decker.]

This series by Old is really a history of preaching. Undersigned has reviewed both volumes one and two, hence this review of volume three will be brief. Volume three is as good as the first two volumes. This is an excellent series, indeed! The books are well researched and written in a lucid and "easy-to-read" style. We certainly hope Old is able to finish this project.

Chapter I covers Byzantine Preaching, beginning in the middle of the sixth century and continuing into the beginning of the eleventh century. In this chapter Old analyzes the preaching of John of Damascus and Andrew of Crete Photius, among others. Chapter II is a fascinating account of the mission preaching to the barbarians. Readers of Dutch (Frisians especially!) will be interested in Old's study of Boniface, the missionary to the Frisians and among the Germans. Old reaches this conclusion as regards the sermons of Boniface: "These sermons may not be re-

ported with the detail we would like or in the most elegant Latin (Old theorizes that not Boniface, but converts won by means of his preaching put the sermons in written form, hence the less than elegant Latin.), but one gets the impression that somewhere behind them was a solid Christian thinker who had some clear ideas about what evangelistic preaching entailed. We may not be completely satisfied with his doctrine of grace or his understanding of soteriology, but the overall impression is most positive. There is much we can learn about the ministry of evangelism from these sermons" (p. 137).

Is the reader interested in learning about the shaping of the Roman Lectionary? Is he/she interested in the preaching of the Benedictines, the Cistercians (among them, Bernard of Clairvaux), the Franciscans, the Dominicans, or the German Mystics (Eckhart, e.g.)? It's all in this volume.

Old provides brief but well documented biographies of each of the preachers covered. There is an extensive bibliography with each chapter. The book is enhanced by a detailed index as well.

Old is a member of the Center of Theological Inquiry, Princeton, New Jersey. In addition to the first two volumes of this set, he is the author of *Leading in Prayer: A Workbook for Worship.*

Get these three volumes. Read them. Learn from them. And enjoy them. ■

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