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Jessica Hanko reports on the
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Editorial Policy

(Abstract)

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COVER: Happy gathering of young folk from Britain, Malaysia, the USA and Canada at this year's BRF Conference in Mid-Wales.

Inset: Jessica Hanko who gives a Conference Report on pages 23-27.

All Conference photos herein courtesy Messrs. Phil Harbach & Ed Bos.

WHO are the Wicked & the Righteous in Scripture?

A Study by
PAUL FAHY

Part One: Some Scripture Facts

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It appears that there are a variety of opinions on this subject, which is important because it frames our views on God's purposes in election and providence, as well as man's appropriation of God's promises. Strangely, it seems that some (many?) Calvinists are at the forefront of opposing *particularity* at this point, believing that scripture points to a universal application of grace, favour and loving kindness (though not in an everlasting sense) to all people. To resolve this, we must investigate what the Bible says the wicked and righteous really are.

Options

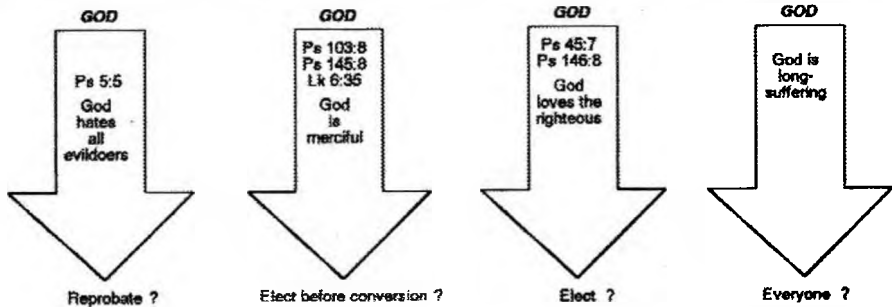
- The righteous are the elect *in Christ* & the wicked are the reprobate.
- Those who are actually morally good or bad at that specific time, elect or reprobate.
 - * The righteous are the effectually called and justified.
 - * The wicked are the reprobate and the elect.

In the case of the elect, the title 'wicked' means either:

- a) the elect before conversion or
- b) the elect viewed as committing sin in their old nature.

It is appropriate to view the ramifications of these options in diagrammatic form before we examine the actual Scripture texts.

Diagrams overleaf.



Why is this important?

It has very great import regarding:

- **the ability of man.** If God is addressing the reprobate doing 'good' works whenever he approves of good actions (e.g. the man not: *sitting in the seat of scoffers* - Ps 1:1), then the reprobate can be blessed and receive grace from God. If God is gracious to the reprobate, then we have salvation by works. A wicked man can receive some kind of grace from God because he did something worthy. This is not Biblical. The promises of God would thus become founded upon works, fleshly effort, even in believers, instead of grace and the power of the Spirit working in us.
- **The love of God for all/only some people.** If the wicked and the righteous are not generic terms for the elect and the reprobate, then we have texts supporting a love of God for all. A reprobate man doing a 'righteous' deed could be approved by God and yet still be sent to hell later.
- **A conditional covenant.** If God addresses all men indiscriminately with promises of blessing, then the covenant becomes conditional, not by faith in a federal substitute. Personal obedience secures blessing.
- **Limited atonement,** is turned upon its head and becomes unlimited, except by the faith and works of a man.
- **Common or particular grace.** If the wicked are not the just reprobate, then there is a grace of God applicable to everyone indiscriminately. In order for this presumed grace to be distinguished from saving grace, it has to be called 'common grace', yet there is no such Biblical distinction.
- **A subjective viewpoint.** Who decides what is righteous? Appealing to the law is not enough. If a reprobate person does not steal or covet, is

he righteous? Of course not. Why, because the doctrine of Total Depravity reveals that his 'good' deeds are intrinsically evil.

Scriptural Facts

1. Some people are clearly elect who are nevertheless frequently pictured in the Old Testament as being actually sinful. Despite their sin, God dealt bountifully with them, e.g.: Jacob, Rahab, David. Their inheritance in the covenant did not rest upon their moral condition. In fact some, like Jacob, are declared to be chosen before they were able to do anything at all, good or bad. The blessing rested on relationship initiated by God, not their moral condition. They inherited the portion of *the righteous man* even though they were not actually righteous.

• **Point:** *A person can look wicked and yet be classed with the righteous.*

2. The outward appearance of covenant blessings is not necessarily an indication of real covenant relationship. Psalm 73 shows that although the wicked prospered, their end was destruction.

• **Point:** *A person can appear to be blessed, with the prosperous, material blessing of the righteous, and still be foreign to the covenant.*

3. This means that covenant relationship cannot rest upon outward actions. In addition we see that scripture clearly teaches this principle both in the Old and New Testaments.¹ 'The just shall live by faith.'

4. The New Testament must be allowed to explain the Old. The righteous man described in the Old Testament promises is Christ. He inherits all the covenant blessings. No one else is sufficiently righteous in God's eyes. Galatians 3 makes this clear. The Abrahamic covenant (which rested upon grace) passed to Christ as the true offspring of Abraham (3:16). The inheritance is not by law (i.e. works, 3:18). We are all (all the elect) sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus (3:26), heirs according to promise (3:29).

5. This means that **the statements regarding the righteous man are speaking of Christ, and all who are in him - the elect.** It cannot mean anything else. The promises are made to those who are righteous, but no one is righteous enough except Christ. The Old Testament promises are for the elect. This is why sinners like Jacob could receive God's blessing; they were seen as in Christ.

6. If this is true, and if there is a clear distinction drawn between the righteous and the wicked in the Old Testament promises, then the wicked must be the non-elect, the reprobate. It cannot refer to the elect before their conversion, because many people inherited covenant blessings before there was any appearance of faith (e.g. Jacob). They were treated as elect before their effectual calling.

¹ **Negatively:** Rm 3:9, 20, 23, 5:12; Ps 143:2. **Positively:** Rm 1:17, 3:21-22, 26, 28.

Disputed Texts: Does God show grace and love to the wicked?

There are very few texts appealed to in order to support an idea of God's gracious dealings with the reprobate, while there are very many which show that God's only dealing with them is condemnation. It has been said that this is because God did not want to encourage complacency in the reprobate, but that, nevertheless, God's intention to bless them is sincere. In my view this is a very weak argument. There is not even one clear, undisputed text to set against the many declaring God's hatred for the wicked.² A careful consideration of these texts is called for.

Ps 103:8

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

This verse does not say that God loves, or is gracious to the wicked. There is no question that this verse is referring to elect, covenant people (v18). The Psalm makes a distinction between his sons who fear him (v13) and the natural man whose days are like grass (v15); between those who know his ways and those who only see his acts (v7). The steadfast love of the Lord is upon those who fear him (v17). God's love is not said to be upon anyone else. The Psalm is a response of a righteous, redeemed man (v3-4) to this loving God who forgives iniquity (v3) and is merciful to his children (v13).

Ps 145:8-9

The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made.

There are insufficient exegetical grounds to explain away the 'all' here as only referring to God's *works* based on a parallelism with verse 10. The whole context as well as the simple sense of the verses include people. Verses 10, 15-16 insist that we must see all human beings here. We cannot avoid the fact that this Psalm says that God is good to all; but what does this mean?

Firstly, the Psalm itself distinguishes between a providential goodness which supplies food (v15-16), through the giving of sunshine and rain, and a covenantal graciousness and mercy. It is this providential goodness which is referred to in v9.

Secondly, the Psalm distinguishes between the wicked (v20) and those that fear God, the elect (v19), those who call upon him (v18). The Lord is good in providen-

² For example: Ps 5:4-5, 11:5-6, 34:21, 37:20, 37:38, 45:7; Prov 3:33; Mal 1:2-3; Rm 9:11-13.

tial supply to *all* people, everyone. (In Hebrew this is further emphasised as a distinct group by using the definite article *the all*.) But God is gracious and merciful only to some. This distinction is repeatedly seen in the Psalm. God is only near to those who cry to him and love him, but the wicked he destroys (v19-20). All men proclaim God's mighty acts, seen objectively as terrible (v 6): but those in relationship to the Lord (e.g. : David, the writer of this Psalm) declare God's greatness (v 6). A generation declares God's acts and mighty works (v 4) but David meditates on these acts and sees the glorious splendour of God's majesty (v 5). It is the saints who bless God (v 10)- not said of ordinary men. In fact these saints make known to men God's deeds and the glory of his kingdom (v 12).

Thirdly, the psalm does not say that God loves the wicked, that God is merciful to the wicked, that God loves everyone. Phrases like these do not exist.

Fourthly, God is good. A perfect God, who is love, maintains the world he has created until the day of his wrath and judgment. As a God of purpose, he will not cease to supply food in general terms until the times comes in his plan for a reckoning with mankind. Food supply is, therefore, a fruit of God's loving kindness. This providence is not an indication of a desire to save.

The terms used in verse 8 are covenantal, (in the Hebrew: *chesed* = steadfast love), but the terms used in v. 9 are not, (Heb. '*rachamim* = kindness, compassion, pity). Verse 8 is applicable to the elect alone and verse 9 to all people generally.³

³ The following technical data undergirding these assertions has been collated from the KJV/Strong's Code/ Notes from Strong's Abridged edition of the Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon and Whitaker's Revision of the same Lexicon. The data pertains to Psalm 145:8-9 since this Psalm is regularly used as the strongest proof of God's love and grace to all men indiscriminately. A careful analysis reveals that there are two distinct people in view here: the elect and the reprobate.

H2617 Hebrew חֶסֶד *chesed* = common noun masc. singular: goodness, kindness, faithfulness.

I. Of man: *kindness* (especially as extended to the lowly, needy and miserable), *mercy*; (rarely) *affection of Israel to God, love to God, piety, lovely appearance*.

II. Of God: *kindness, lovingkindness* in condescending to the needs of His creatures. **1.** Specifically lovingkindness: **a.** *in redemption from enemies and troubles*. **b.** *in preservation of life from death*. **c.** *in quickening of spiritual life*. **d.** *in redemption from sin*. **e.** *in keeping the covenants*, with Abraham; with Moses and Israel; with David and his dynasty; with the wife Zion. **2.** '*Chesed*' is found grouped with other divine attributes: e.g.: *loving kindness and fidelity*. **3.** the kindness of God is **a.** *abundant*. **b.** *great in extent*.

God's attitude to this group of people is further described as being merciful and full of loving-kindness. It involves redemption from enemies, preservation from death, atonement for sin, and covenant faithfulness. None of these things are ascribed to the wicked in other Psalms, but they are applied to the elect many times. The wicked cannot be recipients of this '*chesed*' or they would be saved, and by definition- not reprobated.

H7356 Hebrew: רַחֲמִים *rachamim* = *compassion* cognate noun is *rechem* = womb.

The word speaks of natural care and compassion, not of grace and covenantal loving-kindness in any way. This caring attitude results in the provision of a sustainable environment for mankind.

Lk 6:35

But love your enemies, do good and lend hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For he is kind to the unthankful and evil.

There really is no problem here at all. The point that Jesus is making is that there is no credit to love or do good to those who love you or do good to you (v32-33). Our motive to do good to all people, including evil people, is that God has acted likewise. If we do good to bad people, we will be acting like him and be seen to be of him.

Some argue, therefore, that God must love everyone, including the reprobate. But why does this follow? [Note that Luke is careful to say that God is *kind* to the unthankful, not that he loves them.]

Firstly, scripture is full of references to God hating sinners, therefore this argument would strip them of any sensible meaning. If these texts mean what they say, then God cannot love the reprobate; hence this argument cannot be right. In what way did God love Esau? This verse cannot be set in contradiction to many other passages.

Secondly, all that God does is perfect and complete, without complication. If God loves someone, he loves them to the end. God's love, therefore, saves. If the reprobate are not saved, then God cannot love them, or else he would have failed to love properly. Those upon whom God sets his love, he protects and redeems. (see footnote 3 prev. page re: *chesed*.) This sense of protection is contained within the meaning of the word love.

God has loved those that, at one time, were bad and against him - the elect. God's reaction to a world of men in rebellion to him was not to destroy that world, a just and righteous act by the way, but he expressed love to that world by redeeming a portion of the human race, by his own power and at great cost, in order to populate a new world with people that love and obey him. If we love others, then we are following our Father who expressed love to a fallen world.

Regarding the last part of the verse and verse 36: '*He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be compassionate (merciful), just as you Father also is compassionate.*' We should note the following: Jesus is moving on to explaining that God even continues to be kind to fallen men now, he is so patient with this fallen world. 'Kind' is *chrestos*, meaning good, kind easy and its base meaning is *something appropriate or superior for a particular use*. For example, Jesus' yoke is *chrestos* (easy). This cannot be stretched to mean loving or gracious. Again it refers to God's

provision for those who hate him.⁴

Matt 5:43-48

The argument is suggested that: if we are patterned to be like God, and if we are to love our enemies, then God must love everybody. *How can God command us to love those that he hates? Is the scope of our love greater than God's?*

We must take great care in trying to read back the character of God from his commands to us. It is much wiser to learn about God's attributes from clear statements about them elsewhere. For instance, who will be bold enough to say that God longs for Satan's rehabilitation or that Jesus intercedes for him on the basis that we must pray for those who persecute us? *In fact we know* that Jesus does not pray for reprobates (Jn 17:9).

Such an interpretation from Matt. 5 would be false and in conflict with other scriptures. The rule for the creature does not equally apply to the creator. He is wholly above our order. The parallel passage in Luke 6 27-36 adds the action of lending money, a notion totally unsuited of application to God.

Again, the argument is that God preserves his creation, even though it is spoiled by sin. God is good to all. Man's hate to God and nature's bondage does not stop a good God from providing for creation's welfare. Since we have a God like this, we also must be good to others to the extent of our capabilities. Our capabilities are limited to good reactions to evil actions upon us. The reaction of a godly person to evil is to repay it with good (Rm 12:17-21). This is how we show love to enemies. Those we thus love are not loved by God, he will repay vengeance upon those who mistreat us (Rm 12:19-20).

1 Pt 3:20

God's patience waited in the days of Noah.

We need spend little time with this. The obvious interpretation of this verse is that the patience of God was exercised towards the benefit of only eight people, Noah

⁴**Lexical Details** pertaining to Luke 6:35 (Strong / Friberg)

Compassionate 3629 Greek: οἰκτιρμων *oiktirmon* {oyk-tir'-mone} • from 3627; TDNT - 5:159,680; adj • *merciful, of tender mercy 1.*

οἰκτιρμονες adj nom masc pl , from οἰκτιρμων-ον *compassionate, merciful.*

Kind

5543 Greek: χρηστός *chrestos* {khrase-tos'} • from 5530; TDNT - 9:483,1320; adj • AV - *kind 2, easy 1, better 1, goodness 1, good 1, gracious 1; 7 • 1) fit, fit for use, useful 1a) virtuous, good 2) manageable 2a) mild, pleasant* (as opp. to harsh, hard sharp, bitter) 2b) of things: *more pleasant, of people, kind, benevolent*

χρηστός adj nom masc sing , from χρηστός, ή, όν w. a basic mng. of being well adapted to fulfil a purpose *useful, suitable, excellent; (1) of things good, easy, pleasant; of requirements easy* (Matt 11:30); *superior, better* (Luke 5:39)

and his family. He waited patiently for them to build the ark according to his instructions. There is also a sense in which God's patience, as tolerance of sin, was towards the wicked remainder of the world's population; but this lends no support to a supposed goodness in God toward them. God's patience in goodness was extended to Noah's family. God's tolerance to sinners was a temporary respite before he poured out his wrath upon them.

We should note that the New Testament frequently alludes to the days of Noah being a type for the end of this present world. God's dealings with the wicked are exactly the same now; there is no grace or mercy being extended to the reprobate.

Luke 19:41/Matt 23:37

Again, this need not trouble us long. Defenders of a love of God to the wicked make much of these passages which contain no clear statement on the matter, such is the desperation to find any thread of support.

Luke 19:41 mentions Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. In what way does this help the case - none at all. Jesus also prophesies about its future, lamenting its failure to identify the Messiah. Jerusalem contained two sorts of people, those who trusted in the Messiah (elect) and those who did not. Some of those who failed to recognise Jesus as the Christ, later did so as we learn in Acts. If this text shows a disposition of goodness in God to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, it is equally applicable solely to the elect, as much as solely or jointly to the wicked or all people.

Israel was appointed originally to be a light to the Gentiles with the word of God and failed utterly in the task. Instead she prided herself on her privileged status as God's own, Rabbis called the Gentiles 'dogs'. All this was in God's plan which included a rejection of Israel as the means of testifying to the whole world, the church being appointed to this task. This is declared in both the Old and New Testaments.⁵ Though decreed by God, Jesus laments this failure in the same way that God mourns Israel's behaviour in the Psalms and prophetic books.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. Matt 23:37-8

⁵ As God's people, Israel was to be God's priesthood, as part of a missionary work to the rest of the nations (Isa 42:6,45:4-6; Zech 8:23; Ex 19:5). Israel failed, not only in this venture but also in her own faithfulness to the covenant (Rm 11:21). Jesus came as the obedient servant who fulfilled the will of God and attributed the work of missionary to the world to himself and his people. He even lifts passages in Isaiah relating to the future glory of Zion (like 61:1-4, 42:1-6) and consciously fulfils them in himself (Mt 12:17-21; Lk 4:16-21).

Matt 23:37 is the parallel passage to Lk 19:41. Jesus' lament is slightly amplified here. Again a strong case can be made that he is referring to the elect that he wished to gather. It is a reference to Israel's failure which is too vague to draw out notions about God's attributes. If we insist that Jesus is here referring to reprobates, then we have a God who is sad, and longing for fellowship with a wayward creation, desperately holding out his arms in loving welcome and being completely frustrated by sinners who reject his offer. Neither does this make sense in a chapter about condemnation of religious leaders. Can Jesus really be holding out loving arms to those whom he condemned to hell a few verses earlier (v33)?

'Your children' refers to the elect of Jerusalem who were spurned by unbelieving Jews and even murdered. This is the clear implication from the immediate context (v30,31, 34, 35). The elect community could not be gathered as a testimony to the wider community because they were persecuted. Jesus grieves over this and declares that judgment is upon Jerusalem as a result (v38). Just as the historical testimony of prophets (God's children) was rejected violently, the culmination of the sin of Jerusalem's religious leaders was to be the rejection and crucifixion of the last in the line of God's testimony - Jesus, God's own son.

The Optative⁶ Passages

One matter to be borne in mind in considering these verses is the unusual character of Israel. The Jews had been chosen, elected, as the people of God from amongst many nations, as such, they were an example and type of the election of God's people from the world. Israel, in general, demonstrates God's selection of some not others. In terms of the world's ancient nations, Israel is favoured with an especial relationship to God (Rm 11:1,2,5).

Within Israel, however, there is a further selection. Not all within Israel are truly Israelites (elect; Rm 9:6-7), there is a further process of discrimination in order to be an object lesson for the church (Rm 11:5,7). Within God's decree, there is a call to Israel as a nation, and there is an effectual call to a remnant; but God called the whole nation "his son" because of this special relationship amongst the nations (Hos 11:1).

In order for God to justly remonstrate with his people as a nation, there are many passages where God speaks to Israel in very paternal terms and often with great longing. If God had not warned, in this and many other ways, he would have been

⁶ **Optative.** For those readers not conversant with the niceties of Greek grammar, the word "optative" means "something that is expressive of a wish or desire". Hence these following texts are those in which it appears as if God is expressing a desire or wish for the salvation of more than the elect.

unjust; and so we have passages like the following where God is said to long for an obedient people who, themselves, tend to be wayward. In some passages it is difficult to assess whether God is addressing Israel in general terms as an elect nation, Israel as elect but wayward needing to repent, or elect/reprobates from within Israel. It is not good enough for expositors to happily draw promises from Israel's experience as a rule, but suddenly declare that certain passages are actually addressing the reprobate or all men. Each passage has to be examined within context. We will look at three.

Deut 5:29

O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!

It is the covenant people who are addressed here (5:1). Moses is reminding them of their commitment to God upon hearing the 10 Commandments. In this verse God simply states that this attitude of humble commitment would bear good fruit for them if they continued.

God is speaking of a covenant people who had submitted to his law and committed themselves to his ways, stating that such an obedient heart would bode well with them. Is this not true? An obedient, covenant people will do well. How can this be applied to the lost?

Isa 48:18

O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea:

This is addressed to the house of Jacob, the elect line. God says that he will defer his anger to those addressed (v9) and that these people may not be 'cut off', but rather, refined (v10). The Lord speaks of these people, who swear by his name (v1), in terms of love (v14), calling (v15), redemption (v17, 20), leading and teaching them (v17), and then a longing for their obedience (v18). Though rebuked for failing, these people are elect, not reprobate.

Ps 81:13

Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!

The context of the whole Psalm shows that this text is very similar, being a warning to the wayward but elect. In fact, they are contrasted with those who hate the Lord.

To be continued (DV).....

The Baptist System UnScriptural and UnReformed

Part Three

THE HISTORICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL TESTIMONY

We have seen in two former articles in this series³⁶ how the implimentation of Immersionism took place in the early Papal church consequent upon the assimilation of pagan mystery rites and dogmas into the stream of Christianity during the second to fifth centuries. During this period the Lord's Supper became corrupted into the form of the Roman Mass, and a plethora of innovations distorted the fundamental simplicity of Christian baptism. Immersionism became a central dogma with the neophyte required to present in the nude for the sacrament, as was required in the Roman Mystery Religions.

And we discovered that it was not until the 4th century, that the first exegetical connections were made between Romans 6:4/Col. 2:12 and the practice of immersion.³⁷ Such sacramentarianism was centred around Easter-time, which was of course, not only the calendar date of the Lord's death and resurrection, but also of yet another pagan festival which celebrated the resurrection of natural life after the winter. The pagan notion of "dying and rising again" was thus easily blended into the main-stream of Christian liturgy, and at this time of Spring festivals the practice of immersionistic baptism connected with "dying and rising" was of course conveniently apposite.³⁸ Adult baptism in the churches became a sacrament performed-

³⁶ **British Reformed Journal** No. 29 pages 1 -9, and No. 30 pages 28 to 37.

³⁷ Cf. **Hughes Oliphant Old**: *"The Shaping of the Reformed Baptismal Rite in the 16th Cent."* (Grand Rapids USA: Wm B. Eerdmans 1992) page 272-3.

³⁸ Of course, the noun "Easter" is derived from a pagan religious source. The details of how "Eostre" or "easter" became grafted on to the early commemorations of Christ's death and resurrection can be found in **Alexander Hislop's work**: *"The Two Babylons"* (4th edit. publ. Partridge & Co. London 1975) and pages 103 to 113.

primarily and almost exclusively at "Easter".³⁹ And immersion in a "plunge bath" naturally encapsulated the whole meaning and philosophy of this festival, originally pagan, but now itself absorbed into Christianity via the papistic policy of conquering pagan faiths by means of assimilation.

In tracking the history of this development, three salient features stand out .

First, there is the fact that in Classical, Judaic, Johannine, Christic and Patristic usage, "baptism" did not mean "immersion", but signified the application of water in order to effect (Classical) or symbolize (Johannine, Christic and Patristic) inner purification.. Thus, in Christian baptism the application of the water of baptism symbolized the inner Baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire, and via this inward spiritual baptism, *incorporation into Christ*.⁴⁰ As such the application of water was not expressive of mode, hence the Scriptures can speak of "sprinklings" as baptisms, and of the "outpouring" of the Holy Spirit as a baptism. Whilst plunge immersionism is not ruled out as a valid means of applying water sacramentally to the individual, it is certainly not mandated by the meaning of the Biblical terms used to delineate "baptism", nor is it mandated by the Scriptural descriptions of such activities.....witness the "diverse washings" (actually it says "baptisms" in the Greek) of Hebrews 9: 10 which refer to the Mosaic "sprinklings" of Leviticus 14:6-7; Num. 8:7; 19:11-13, Psalm 51:7; Ezek. 36:25-27, and to the "baptism with the Holy Spirit" of Acts ch. 2. If mode is at all expressed, it is "sprinkling" or "affusion", and actually no case can be made out from Scripture anywhere that would mandate "immersion".⁴¹

³⁹ Cf. **Charles Thomas**: *"Christianity in Roman Britain to AD 500"* (London: Batsford Academic 1981) pages 212-213. Thomas notes that: "the use of seasons other than Easter or Pentecost for Baptism were progressively condemned by Church Councils in the 5th and 6th centuries as inappropriate and out of step." This salient feature indicates the impact of the pagan mystery religions affecting baptism in an ever-increasing manner as the centuries roll by.

⁴⁰ Cf. the monumental tomes of **James Wilkinson Dale**, 4 volumes numbering some 1852 pages containing the most exhaustive analysis of the usage of the greek verbs "bapto" and "baptizo" ever undertaken. It was produced in response to the Baptist work "Baptizein" by Thomas Conant, and one can only say that Dale's work wipes the floor with Conant. First published in about 1867-1874 these four tomes have been reprinted in the last 10 or 12 years of the 20th Cent. by a Publishing combine including the American Presbyterian and Reformed company. The titles of the 4 volumes are respectively: *"Classical Baptism"*, in which Dale examines the usage of the baptismal verbs in the Greek of the Classical period, then *"Judaic Baptism"* in which he examines their usage in Jewish circles, *"Johannine Baptism"* concerning the baptism of John the Baptist, and finally, *"Christic Baptism and Patristic Baptism"* in which he analyses the usage of the baptismal verbs as found in the New Testament and in the early church "fathers".

⁴¹ A most useful and easily readable little book that examines all the New Testament evidence is : *"Baptism, its Meaning and Subjects"* by **Michael Kimmitt**. (K&M Books 1997 ISBN 0 9523041 1 2). In this work the author judiciously examines all NT baptism references as to mode, and finds himself (very rationally, we are convinced) drawn to the conclusion that no-where in the NT can one make out a *certain* case for immersionism, but all instances indicate *most probably* affusion or sprinkling.

Further ramifying this linguistic evidence is the fact, missed completely by Immersionists, that other words existed in the vocabulary of the Koine Greek which could have been used by the inspired writers of the Scriptures if they had wanted to specify "immersion" most definitely. The puritan John Owen had isolated this feature over 300 years ago.⁴² He noted that two Greek verbs were used in the New Testament to signify "baptism". They are βαπτω ("bapto") and βαπτίζω ("baptizo"). Manifestly the linguistic evidence shouts they cannot be used to unambiguously mandate "immersion", so as Owen says, if the apostles had definitely wished to mandate immersionism, why did they not use the two compound modified forms of those verbs, that are to be found in the Greek language? Owen is referring here to the verbs ἐμβαπτω ("embapto") and ἐμβαπτίζω ("embaptizo"). The reader will note that a prefix ἐμ ("em") is found in front of these latter two verbs. This "em" is in fact the greek preposition ἐν ("en"), which can mean "in" as well as "with". The "en" is mutated to "em" because when a nasal sound 'n' falls before a labial sound (like 'b') it changes to another labial, in this case "m". (The reader should try pronouncing "eNbapto" and then try pronouncing ""eMbapto". He will find the latter easier, his lip-formation flowing from the 'm' into the 'b' more smoothly than from an 'n'. to a 'b'.) Now, these two verbs are the modified or compounded form of the original "bapto" etc, and signify without doubt...immersion by an act of dipping. It is that proposition "en" or "in" that enforces this conclusion, and indeed the actual usage of these modified forms in Classical and Koine greek bears that out. Indeed, only "embapto" of the two is found at all in the Greek New Testament, used on 3 occasions, once in each of three parallel passages in the Synoptic gospels to indicate Judas "dipping" his hand in the bowl, or to the Lord "dipping" the morsel of bread in the bowl before handing it to Judas. (John 13:26). In Classical greek the same usage pertained, as is recorded in Liddell-Scott's lexicon. **YET THE SACRED PENMEN OF SCRIPTURE AVOIDED USING THESE COMPOUNDED FORMS OF THE VERBS IN ALL REFERENCES TO BAPTISM.**

The conclusion is inescapable. If the apostles had absolutely definitely wanted to mandate "immersion", leaving no doubts at all, then they used the wrong verbs!

Even further evidence gives further ramification of this feature. Two more verbs exist in Koine greek that unambiguously yield a meaning and usage specifying "immersion". First there is βυθίζω ("buthizo"). It is used just twice in the greek New Testament. In Luke 5:7 it means "to sink", referring to boats overloaded with people. In 1 Tim. 6:9 it is used in the sense "to drown". This verb is related to the greek noun βυθός ("buthos") meaning "the deep" (ref. to the sea.) Secondly, and most interestingly, is the compound verb καταποντίζω ("katapontizo"). This verb is used only twice in the greek New Testament. In Matt. 14:30 it is used to describe

⁴² **Owen** : WORKS (BOT edit. Edinburgh 1968) Vol. 16 pp. 266-268.

Peter suddenly beginning to sink down in the waters after walking upon the sea, and in Matt. 18:6 it is used when the Lord describes how it is better for those who offend His little ones to have a millstone hung around their necks, and for them to be cast into the sea. Now this usage of “katapontizo” is interesting because it indicates a complete immersion, such as the modern Baptist is wont to predicate of “bapto” and “baptizo”. Significantly, another salient usage of “katapontizo” is to be found in the Greek Septuagint (LXX) translation of Exodus 15:4 where it is used to describe what happened to Pharaoh and his armies in the Red Sea! NOW SIGNIFICANTLY AGAIN, the Apostle Paul in the New Testament takes up this whole business of the deliverance of the Israelites at the Red Sea, and calls it a “baptism”. He writes :

“all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” (1 Cor. 10: vv. 1-2).

The verb used here for “baptized” is “baptizo”. It is thus brought into close juxtaposition with the usage of the verb “katapontizo” in that the two verbs are apparently referring to the same event. If “immersion” is what the apostle wanted to specify he had a golden opportunity here to use a verb (“katapontizo”) which was indubitably, and unambiguously, connected in the LXX account of the Red Sea crossing with the immersion of Pharaoh and his host. YET THE APOSTLE CAREFULLY AVOIDED USING “katapontizo” at this juncture. Why? For the following reasons:

(i) The “katapontizo” of LXX Exod. 15:4 refers to Pharaoh and his host, not to the Israelites.

(ii) The “baptizo” of 1 Cor. 10: vv. 1-2 refers to Israel or God’s elect people.

(iii) From (i) and (ii) above one is forced to conclude that the “baptizo” of the Israelites did not involve their immersion, but that the “katapontizo” of the Egyptians most certainly did involve them in immersion. Hence there is a clear Scriptural difference between “baptizo” and “immersion”.

The Scottish ‘Relief’ theologian, Neil Macmichael of about 200 years ago had an acidulous way of summing up this one. He put it like this:

1. The Israelites were baptised, both adults and infants; for the Apostle declares it.
2. They were not immersed, a fact which Moses and other inspired writers testify.
3. The Egyptians who pursued them were immersed.
4. The Israelites had baptism without immersion, and the Egyptians had immersion without baptism.
5. The baptism of the Israelites was salvation, and the immersion of the Egyptians drowning.⁴³

Linguistically, therefore, one is forced to conclude that “immersion” is a concept

43. Cited by John MacLeod in: “*Scottish Theology*” (Edinburgh: BOT 1974) pages 253-254.

saliently, indeed, one might say, *carefully*, bypassed in the Scriptural delineations of "baptism". The sacred penmen, inspired immediately by the guiding impulses of the Heavenly Paraclete, carefully avoided using words that indubitably would have signified "dipping" or "immersion", and used instead words that were universally used to delineate "sprinklings" and "pourings". Such connection the verbs "bapto" and "baptizo" might have originally had with "dipping" and "immersing" they had manifestly lost diachronically via the natural linguistic processes of metonymy and specialised usage. They had come to signify "ceremonial purification" or "ceremonial washing" as a mode of initiation "into" something or somebody, and as such, if mode was expressed at all, in the Scriptural context of Christian baptisms and Old Testament baptisms, that mode was clearly "sprinkling" or "pouring".⁴⁴

Secondly, there is archaeological evidence that indicates that in the early centuries of the church, immersion was not initially the practice. It is apposite for us to investigate this evidence, as archaeology can track out for us the gradual introduction of immersion-capable baptisteries in the later centuries, **plus thirdly**, certain other powerful evidence in the form of Christian art-work, both monumental and as paintings.

Since the rise of the modern immersionistic movements, from the early 17th cent. onwards, archaeology has emerged and evolved into a sophisticated science. This is not to say that it is an infallible science. Nevertheless it is a highly useful tool. At the time of the early baptists, like Haweis, Knollys, Keach, and on into the times of Gill and Robinson in the 18th cent., our knowledge of the archaeology of ancient Christianity was next to nothing. Archaeology was barely emerging in the 18th century, and on through the 19th cent. such great baptists as Spurgeon predated the full expansion and development of the science.

Not to digress too far, it should yet be noted here that all these Baptist scholars predated, too, the rise of Linguistics as a scientific discipline. The development of this science has, in fact, vitiated much of the dictionary and lexicographical work that went in to producing the scholarly study aids for Scripture that were produced particularly in the 19th century and the early 20th cent. Such volumes include even prestigious lexicons like Winer, Cremer, Bengel, Grimm-Thayer, and even the grand phalanx of "Kittel". Much of such lexicographical work tended to support the "immersionist" view of baptism, but the application of proper linguistic principles of interpretation has in recent decades turned things upside down in important respects. The modern scientific view in fact supports the grammatico-historical-spiritual position of the Reformers and their usage of the "analogia fidei" as being

⁴⁴ Cf. the vast evidence accumulated in the 2000 plus pages of J.W. Dale Op. cit. The booklet by Michael Kimmitt is also a useful *vade mecum* in respect of these facts.

master keys of interpretation. The older lexicographical work is vitiated by its insistence on "etymology" as being the principal determinator of the meaning of any word.⁴⁵ It was on "etymology" that the early baptist scholars staked their all with respect to the meaning of those verbs "bapto" and "baptizo", and as modern linguistic science points out, those early baptists missed other equally important factors in the development of word-meanings such as "metonymy", "colloquial usage", "specialized usage", and the interactions of such factors with words, culture, and religion as those words tumble through the centuries of time.

In other words, the "immersionists" base their position, philologically, on outmoded, nay, erroneous concepts. The Reformers, and their subsequent heirs, though having to work with idiosyncratic study aids for some centuries,⁴⁶ were by contrast, more cautious, and their mode of interpreting words used in Scripture was, as it happens, more in line with the discoveries of modern linguistics than their immersionist protagonists.

But we come to the archaeology. Over the 20th century extensive exploration of ancient remains over Europe and the British Isles proceeded apace. Builders, developers, farmers, prospectors, engineers, anyone inadvertently unearthing ancient remains have now to report such to the authorities, and development work is halted until full archaeological investigations are undertaken. New techniques of discovering buried ancient remains via aerial, radar, and geo-magnetic surveys have all added to the encyclopaedic build-up of knowledge. Saliently, the remains of ancient Christian churches, some from nearly 1,900 years ago, have been brought to light. And in many of these church remains, the experts have isolated the remnants of baptisteries. And these remains are telling in their import against the immersionists.

It would take a volume of encyclopaedic dimensions to fully catalogue such discoveries. We content ourselves here, therefore, with a summary giving full references to the relevant scholarly works, noting as we go the conclusions of the historical and archaeological experts who have minutely examined the evidence.

By the later decades of the 20th cent. extensive cataloging and examination of ancient Church sites in Britain, across Europe, and the Near East, had been drafted by a plethora of experts. It was in 1981 that Batsford Academic published, in their series "Studies in Archaeology" the sterling work of Charles Thomas, Professor of

⁴⁵ Cf. James Barr: *"The Semantics of Biblical Language"* (Oxford Univ. Press 1961). One does not have to agree with Barr's virulent anti-Fundamentalist attitudes to appreciate his work as a linguistic expert, though it has to be said that perhaps he pushes things too far. There is still a lot of good mileage in those older lexicons, but it is necessary to bear in mind Barr's warnings when using them.

⁴⁶ Hughes Oliphant Old, (Op. Cit.) for instance, notes in footnote 70 on page 273 that the 10th cent. Byzantine lexicon used by the Reformers was seriously affected by the immersionistic predilections of the Greek churches from the 4th cent. on.

Archaeology at the University of Leicester 1967-1972, under the title : "Christianity in Roman Britain to AD. 500." In this scholarly tome the author is principally concerned with the archaeology of Christian sites in Roman Britain, but he necessarily views the subject by setting it in the context of the whole vista of discoveries dating from this time as extant from Europe and the Near East. Thomas sets aside a whole chapter of his work under the title: "Baptism and Baptisteries", and therein provides a succinct and useful summary of the evidence.

Thomas says: "In the mundane world of archaeological interpretation, we are obliged at any given site to try to decide which particular form of baptism may have been used: and, if possible, eventually to argue for the predominance of particular forms within given regions and provinces."⁴⁷

In undertaking this task, he notes that "submersion" can only be performed-apart from natural settings as in a river- in a receptacle of adequate dimensions. Analysing and summarising the vast catalogues of evidence, Thomas notes the numerous clues that point to "affusion" as being the standard mode, not "immersion", and this, despite the fact that literary evidence from ancient documents alludes to the sacrament as an act of "submersion". Thomas notes that as far back as 1903 the scholar C.F.Rogers had noted this peculiar phenomena, that whilst documentary evidence continuously alluded to immersionism, yet the extant archeological evidence forced him to conclude that immersion "had in fact been rare, and hardly ever followed."⁴⁸

Thomas also cites the French scholar, Khatchatryan, who in his scholarly tome of 1962 produced a fulsome catalogue of the archaeological remains apposite to baptism.⁴⁹ He notes that another scholar, J. G. Davies, on examining Khatchatryan's evidence,⁵⁰ draws the conclusion that in "early churches in Greece, to name only one area, " there "does not exist a single baptistery of which the font was deep enough to allow the submersion of the candidate". Moreover, this feature proves to be true, says Thomas, of sites excavated in "Syria, Palestine, Egypt and North Africa, and of the very few sites in France now supportable as being really early."⁵¹

Thomas concludes: ".....total submersion was **not** the common practice. Affusion

⁴⁷ Thomas: Op. cit. page 205.

⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 206 citing C.F. Rogers: "Baptism and Christian Archaeology" in STUDIA BIBLICA ET PATRISTICA 5 (Oxford) pp. 239-362.

⁴⁹ Ibid. page 206 citing A. Khatchatryan: "Les baptistères paléochrétiens: plans, notices et bibliographie" (Paris 1962).

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 206 citing J.G. Davies: "The Archeologocal Setting of Baptism" (London 1962) pp 23-26.

⁵¹ Ibid p. 206 ref. to work of Davies, Mâle: "La Fin du Paganisme en Gaule" (Paris 1950), chap. 8; and Porcher and Volbach: "Europe in the Dark Ages" pp.294-307 (Engl. transl.of French 1967 orig.).

seems to have been by far the most likely mode of Baptism, in Britain, as in Gaul".⁵² (*Emph. Ed.*)

Arising from this, we note the following salient features:

1) Archaeological evidence from the first 5 centuries of Christianity from all across Europe, the Near East, and North Africa universally points away from immersionism to affusion, this latter of which can also be interpreted as "sprinkling".⁵³

2) The fact that ancient British church evidence points again to "affusion" is specially significant. The ancient Celtic churches of Britain came into being very early on, perhaps as early as mid to late 2nd cent. and remained free and aloof from the later development of the Papacy.⁵⁴ It was not in fact, until as late as 597 AD that the Papal church first set its foot in Britain, and assimilating the invading Saxons in the east, aided and abetted war and genocide against the competing Celtic churches in the west and far north. Wholesale terror was let loose on the Celtic Christians, as their churches were, of course, connected in a kind of "Apostolic succession" right back to the Apostles without any Papal intermediary connection. At those times then Rome would have had to assimilate the Celtic churches, or surrender the right to "sole Apostolic succession". The result of their pogroms was the gradual wearing down of the Celts, until the ancient Celtic churches were assimilated into Romanism at the Synod of Whitby in 664 AD.

Thus Romanist-style practices were at minimal levels in the British churches prior to 664 AD. We should expect to find amongst them, therefore, a purer doctrine of baptism, and a more pristine mode of its application. This the archaeological evidence supplies. Now this is important, because it runs counter to what the Immersionist lobby would lead us to expect. If immersionism is the most ancient practice, then we should expect to find evidence of it amongst the ancient Celtic churches, whereas the non-immersion-capable fonts would be wholly found in those areas first affected by the Papacy in Europe. What is extant however is that the evidence from early fonts indicates that immersionism was *not* extant as the common mode of baptism not only in Celtic Britain, but also right across the rest of the

⁵² Ibid. p. 213.

⁵³ From the archaeological evidence in terms of ancient baptisteries, one cannot tell whether sprinkling or affusion was the mode. What one can tell is that it was not immersion. Also, in Biblical terms ceremonial baptisms or washings were often "sprinklings", as per Heb. 9:10 and following. Hence affusion and sprinkling as ecclesiastical modes of baptism are fundamentally at one, the only difference being possibly the quantity of water applied.

⁵⁴ On these ancient Celtic churches and their origins note Arthur Wade-Evans: *Welsh Christian Origins* (Alden Press, Oxford 1934).

Christian world.⁵⁵ But this leaves us with the enigma that documentary evidence from these ancient times speaks of "immersionism" as the mode of baptism. Why does the literary evidence contradict the archaeological? It is necessary now to examine this carefully, and what we find is surprising.

Thirdly: Linguistic evidence versus Archaeology.

In a learned essay first published in 1896, the Presbyterian scholar B.B. Warfield⁵⁶ expatiated somewhat on the contradiction evident betwixt the ancient documentary references to baptism as being immersion, and the actual archaeological data that was already by then beginning to have a notable impact. Warfield noted that whilst the archaeological remains shouted that affusion was the universal mode of practice in the early church and in most areas for most of the first millennium, yet in the theological and literary references extant from many of the early Church Fathers and the later medieval theologians baptism is repeatedly described as a "trine (three-fold) immersion". Warfield enquires thence at length as to (i) whether these references to trine immersion reflect apostolic practice, or an ecclesiastical development, and (ii) whether immersion was insisted on as the only valid mode of baptism.

Begining with (ii) above, Warfield adumbrates a concatenation of evidences that illustrate how at no time from the Apostolic period to the medieval period, was there ever a time when aspersion or sprinkling was considered to be invalid as to mode. He cites evidences from the "didache" of the late 1st/early 2nd cent. through Cyprian (3rd Cent.), Augustine, on through the witnesses of the Egyptian Coptic churches, the Syrian churches, including the 7th Cent. James of Edessa and Mar Basilus, the Council of Toledo in 633, the Council of Worms in 868, on through to the medieval giants like St. Thomas and Bonaventura. Universally, aspersion was regarded as an acceptable mode of baptism, and this feature is trackable right back to the "didache".

With respect to (i) above, Warfield discovered that "with whatever stringency trine immersion may have been held the right and only regular mode of baptism, it is perfectly obvious that other modes were not considered invalid and no baptism." ⁵⁷

⁵⁵ **Thomas:** op. cit. pages 213 - 227 gives the examples of ancient Celtic baptism fonts found in Britain. They are exclusively non-immersionistic.

⁵⁶ **Warfield:** "*The Archaeology of the Mode of Baptism*" published in the BIBLIOTHECA SACRA Vol. liii for 1896 and pages 601-644. This essay can also be accessed in the collection of Warfield's lesser known works printed under the title: "*Studies in Theology*" (Edinburgh BOT 1988) and pages 345 to 386. All references to this work of Warfield hereinafter follow the BOT pagination.

⁵⁷ **Warfield** Op. cit . p. 358

We see two traditions therefore running parallel in the ancient churches, trine immersion, and aspersion or sprinkling. In theological circles, the trine immersion was held as the normal mode, this we adduce as being under the effect of the incoming paganism of the Roman mystery religions. But now Warfield can refer us to a strange phenomena. Why, he asks, if theologically so much emphasis began to be put on trine immersion, increasingly as one tracks onward through the Middle Ages, why do all monumental and artistic representations of baptism in the early centuries universally illustrate "affusion" ? We can add, today, the question: Why are all extant fonts or baptisteries from those ancient times not deep enough to effect immersion?

"It is most noteworthy" says Warfield, "that from the second to the ninth century there is found scarcely one pictorial representation of baptism by immersion; but the suggestion is almost uniformly either sprinkling or pouring." ⁵⁸ Indeed, it seems that one has to come as late as the 9th cent. before one finds pictorial representations that suggest immersion, and even there such evidence is sparse.⁵⁹ From the Christian art of the catacombs of ancient Rome through to the medieval period, archaeology has revealed that pictorial representations of baptism as aspersion/sprinkling are universal in the earlier centuries, and only in the later (mainly 9th cent.) are immersionistic pictorial evidences emergent.

So how, asks Warfield do we explain the theological and literary emphasis on "trine immersion"?

In answering this, Warfield draws attention to the Patristic usage of "immersion", and to the representations of Christian baptism in the artwork recovered from ancient Christian archaeological sites.⁶⁰

With respect to the Christian art, Hughes Oliphant Old notes that in Classical Art, any human ritual or act was always portrayed by means of "freezing" in the picture what one might call the "definitive point of the action". Such stylistic "freezing" proved to be enduringly conservative, and not given to changes even if in society and culture changes did evolve with respect to what the art-form was depicting.⁶¹ Warfield notes this feature, though not so explicitly as Old, and does not really see its full significance. In order to appreciate this feature of "definitive-moment-

⁵⁸ *ibid.* p. 361. In Footnote 43 Warfield cites Bennett's *"Christian Archaeology"* of 1890 noting that the Christian art data from the early Roman catacombs is exclusively in favour of affusion.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p. 361 and footnote 44 where Warfield cites an example of immersion found in a "Pontifical" of the 9th cent. recorded in Smith and Cheetham's *"A Dictionary of Christian Antiquities."*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 361-370.

⁶¹ Old, *op. cit.* p.271, where he says: "Once a tradition (had) been established as to how a particular subject should be represented, it never changed." Cf. also Warfield *op. cit.* p. 368.

freezing" we might allude, even today, to a modern artist or photographer. Such a professional will, in seeking to portray definitively in one picture the very essence of his subject seek to "freeze" the definitive moment of say, the crown being placed on the young Elizabeth's head in 1953 as depicting the Coronation. Likewise, ancient artists depicting baptism, picked out the "definitive moment". Universally they depicted a presbyter pouring or sprinkling water over a neophyte, the latter standing in a shallow baptistery, or font.

Everywhere, baptism was represented as aspersion/sprinkling. "When," says Warfield, "when Jerome and Leo and Pelagius and Gregory were speaking of trine immersion as of order in Rome, the artists were still laying stress on affusion."(or sprinkling).⁶²

Indeed, so entrenched was the artistic fixation with affusion/sprinkling, that one classical archaeological example from AD 450 provides a startling view of what was actually going on. By AD 450 the immersionism imported from the mystery cults was of course gaining ground steadily, and in the Baptistery of the Orthodox at Ravenna there is a ceiling mosaic of a picture of John the Baptist baptising Jesus. Underneath this picture, is the baptistery. Saliently, it is a baptistery that deep that it shouts at us that it was used for immersion, and is one of the earliest of such on record., a rare example indeed from that era. But amazingly, the picture above it shows John baptising Jesus by affusion/sprinkling.⁶³ Thus as each neophyte was laid back into the water of the baptistery below, each would have looked straight up at a picture of Christ being baptized by affusion/sprinkling !

In trying to make sense of such conflicting evidence, Warfield suggests that the Patristic usage of the term "immersion" was such that they interpreted baptism as "immersion" even when undertaken by "pouring" or aspersion. Pouring does mean, indeed that an "immersion" of a kind does take place.⁶⁴ However, Warfield's solution here does not do justice to the fact that some of the fathers speak of "plunging" in baptism, and we have seen that from the late 4th cent on for the first time baptism was associated as to mode with Rom. 6:4/Col.2:12.

The answer lies in the fact that the impact of assimilated paganism from the mystery religions was having a greater and greater bearing on Christian theology. The very design of many of the earliest fonts betrays the impact of pagan mystery religion, with the *octagonal* shape reflecting the octagonal plunge baths through which pagan initiates were baptised in the heathen cults.⁶⁵ Only of course, the Christian

⁶² Warfield: op.cit. p.369.

⁶³ Old: op. cit.. pp. 271-272.

⁶⁴ Warfield op. cit. pp. 369 ff.

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 374 Warfield notes that various scholars of his time detected this copying of pagan baptisteries, and says: "Having obtained their models of the baptistery from the surrounding heathendom, it may possibly be that the early Christians the more readily leaned toward completing their symbolical bath by pouring....."

font was not so deep, initially, that is. As time went on the influence of the pagan input began to evolve the simple font into a full-blown immersionist's baptistery, and the example from Ravenna is one of the earliest. This incoming pagan "immersionism" had to meet, however, the conservative traditions of the Churches extant from the Apostolic times. The history of the rise of the Papacy shows indubitably that the paganisation process was a gradual evolution that did not reach its zenith until the time of the Reformation, when God broke down the bastions of Antichrist. We should expect to find, therefore, that the archaeological evidence in terms of baptisteries and monumental art would reflect this process, as such evidences do in all cultural environments. And this is indubitably what we find. All early literary references to baptism describe affusion/sprinkling as a valid mode, and even those later references which specify "plunge" baptisms still allow that "affusion/sprinkling" is yet a valid mode, and the archaeological data from baptisteries and from ancient Christian art indicates for us that affusion/sprinkling was the entrenched orthodoxy right from the early times. The influx of immersionism was later, and initially struggled against the entrenched old orthodox mode of administering the sacrament. Immersion-capable baptisteries are Johnny-come-latelies on the scene.

If the Baptist immersionistic cause was the correct one, we should see, archaeologically and historically, the exact opposite to the evidence presented above, with deep baptisteries in the early period, with universal artwork depicting neophytes being "plunged" under the water as the "definitive moment" of baptism, then as the centuries pass, we should expect to see the gradual introduction of shallow baptisteries or fonts being introduced as a "Romanist" aberration, and a gradual evolution of the artistic representations of baptism moving away from plunge-baths and very slowly and reluctantly turning over to illustrate affusion/sprinkling. Indeed, if the Baptist argument was right, the baptistery at Ravenna ought to have been one of the first baptisteries to be too shallow for immersion, and the mosaic on the ceiling ought to have depicted John plunging the Lord Christ under the Jordan waters. And this because if immersionism was Apostolic, then immersionism would have affected the design of the earliest baptisteries, and immersion would have been the "definitive moment" frozen into the tradition of the early Christian art.

If all this says anything, it shouts this: That early baptism was universally affusion/sprinkling, and immersionism was a later and pagan interloper infused into Christianity from perhaps the late 2nd cent. onwards. This was truly the Romanist aberration gathering apace to become established as the prime (but not exclusive) mode of baptism by the early medieval period. The exegetical connection first made between baptism and Rom. 6:4/Col. 2:12 in the late fourth century provided an extra impetus to this evolution from thereon, subsequent to the "establishment" of Christianity (?) as the state religion of the pagan (!) Roman empire. Indeed, it was a deeply paganised travesty of the Biblical faith once delivered unto the Saints.

Scripture, Linguistics, and Archaeological/Historical studies. A three-fold cord is not quickly broken.....(Eccles. 4:12). *To be continued (DV).....*

Cefn Lea, Wales 2000

"THE KINGDOM OF GOD"

BRF CONFERENCE REPORT

by

Miss Jessica Hanco
of Kells, Ballymena, Northern Ireland

Jessica is a member of the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church of Northern Ireland located at Ballymena in County Antrim. She is currently studying Physiotherapy at the University of Ulster. With a number of other young people she attended the BRF Conference at Cefn Lea in Mid-Wales this year, and we are specially grateful to her for providing us with this report giving us a youthful viewpoint on the proceedings. (*Ed.*)

This conference would not have been possible without the efforts of the BRF Committee. We need to say a special thanks to Messrs. Brian Harris, Lindsay Williams, Paul Hayden, John Clarke, Philip Rainey, Jonathan McAuley, Rev. Ron Hanco, Allen Baird, Michael Kimmitt and Rev. Allen Spencer. Also, we express our appreciation to those who were re-elected to the committee as well as to all new members. Our prayers are with you all in this difficult work.

Prof. Engelsma and Prof. Hanco deserve a special thanks. It takes much time and hard work to prepare and present three speeches and a sermon, all within one week. I marvel at their courage to stand up in front of the audience and answer the questions posed to them. Also, it was a pleasure to fellowship with the Professors and their wives. The work of the Professors would not be possible without their wives. We thank God for such staunch defenders of the truth. We give special thanks too, to Prof. Euros Jones of the University of Wales, whose lecture about Griffith Jones was really fascinating.

There are numerous others that deserve our thanks, but there is no space in this article. We appreciated how Messrs. Ivan Reid and Ryan Hanco ably presented the Psalms for our meetings. Also, we were much blessed by the devotions, led by our young men. What a privilege to come before God each morning and evening in the communion of the saints.

The conference began on Saturday, July 22. Throughout the afternoon and evening people arrived at Cefn Lea Park, Newtown, North Wales. People arrived there from all over the world - as far afield as Canada, America, New Zealand, the Netherlands and the British Isles. It was great to renew old acquaintances and meet

so many new people.

On Saturday evening, Mr. Brian Harris commenced the conference by a welcome address. The evening was concluded by devotions. A majority went to their chalets early on Saturday night to prepare for the Sabbath, and recover from travelling.

It was an early start for some on Sunday. Prayer meeting and devotions commenced at 7:45 am. The morning worship service was conducted by Prof. Hanko. He preached on Psalm 73: "Guided by God's Counsel". It was a joy to hear so many singing the Psalms!

In the afternoon, Sunday school and catechism classes were conducted (prepared on very short notice). The classes were divided according to age (although some were slightly confused about which class they belonged to). I attended Angus Stewart's class on Psalm 145 - an excellent discussion of the meaning of the Psalm. Mr. Lammert Lubbers' class (age 17+) was on Acts 1. Ryan Hanko's class (age 12-17) reviewed the morning sermon. Mrs. L. Lubbers lead the youngest group.

The afternoon also provided time to fellowship, discuss and sing. Prof. Engelsma led the evening worship on Romans 8:35-39: "More Than Conquerors". After the evening meal we listened to Mr. Jonathan Moore speak on his thesis concerning the origins and development of the so-called "well-meant" offer of the Gospel. This was a pleasant surprise! We learned that this idea came from Bishops Davenant and Ussher. The day concluded with devotions.

For a few of us, Monday morning was also an early start. At 6:00 am ten of us gathered to climb the 'mountain' just outside the conference centre. Then, after devotion and breakfast, Prof. Engelsma introduced us to the theme of this, the sixth BRF conference; namely, the Kingdom of God. He explained the nature of the kingdom, with Colossians 1:13 as his text, showing how entrance into the Kingdom was by the spiritual regeneration of a person by God's power. All true Christians, therefore, and them alone, are "in" the "Kingdom of God". This, like all other following conference speeches, was followed by a question time.

A trip to Powys Castle was organised for the afternoon, but was subsequently cancelled as the castle was not open on Mondays. Thus the afternoon was free to do as one wished. The Brits challenged the Americans to a soccer match, but the Americans were unable to produce a full team. The challenge still stands for 2002.

Angus Stewart, the seminary student of Covenant PRC of Ballymena, also challenged Prof. Engelsma to a tennis match. Angus's advantage of age did little to help him. The Prof. beat him in three sets, although Angus reckoned he improved with

each set.

We listened to our second speech on Monday night. Prof. Hanko spoke on **"The Coming of the Kingdom in History"**. His text was Matthew 11:1-19. He looked at the Kingdom of God from three perspectives, it was in being in Heaven from before the Creation of man, and was "breaking through" from Heaven to earth at various times during the Old Testament times, then it came in a fuller manifestation in the ministry of the Lord, continuing in the Church. Finally, it will come in all its glory at the return of the Lord.

The last scheduled events of that evening were question time and devotions. Needless to say, the activities of the young (and not so young) extended well into the night. These included walks, volleyball, discussions and Psalm singing.

All day Tuesday was set aside for a day trip to Bala and Llangollen, OR a walk up Cader Idris (2928 feet high.) . A few opted for the walk. Many of us went on the bus tour. We stopped in the town of Bala, to where, about 200 years ago, the young Mary Jones walked to get her copy of the Bible. She walked alone, and bare-foot for most of the way, up over Cader Idris and on for about 20 miles, to get the Bible she had been working and saving up for since she was a little girl. May we be so eager for the Word!

In the evening, Prof. Engelsma spoke on **"The Kingdom and the Church"**, with John 18:1-14, 33-38 as his scripture passage. He explained from these scriptures how God's Kingdom is "not of this world", and that the Kingdom is in this present age to be found in the Church, indeed, it is the Church. This he proved from Scripture, and also showed how the Reformed Confessions have the same interpretation. He said we must guard against those errors that make the Kingdom of God some kind of political set-up in this present world.

Prof. Hanko gave the fourth conference address on Wednesday morning. He spoke on **"The Kingdom, Gospel and Law"**, using Psalm 19 as his text. For homework, he asked all the audience to read either I Peter or the Sermon on the Mount. He showed how God's law is one, and that the basis of it is in the command to love God with all our hearts, soul, strength, and minds, and our neighbour as our selves. No earthly government could ever enforce such a law, for only Christ ever kept it perfectly, and He kept it as His work of obedience that we might be saved.

The scheduled annual BRF meeting took place in the afternoon, and extended well past the scheduled time. I think they finally sorted out the business!

In the evening, our guest speaker, Prof. Euros Jones, of the University of Wales,

introduced us to Griffith Jones and the Welsh Christian schools. It was an interesting lecture on a subject many of us knew little about. We learned how Griffith Jones emphasised catechising, and how successful it was. Griffith Jones said “without catechising, so much preaching is wasted.” What an amazing effect this man’s work had all through Wales! Nearly half of the population learned to read and write using the Bible and the Catechism as their text-books!

After the meeting, Prof. Engelsma presented certificates to ten children and young people from Covenant Protestant Reformed Church, N. Ireland. Their photograph is included in the Conference photo pages in this journal. These certificates are given to those who memorise the Westminster shorter catechism. This is a tradition at the conferences. It was started in 1994 by Timothy Cross. We thank Mr. McAuley for examining them all.

The evening ended with the usual activities - devotions followed by discussions, walks and singing. Discussions touched on almost all subjects - the kingdom, head covering, fasting, the new creation, angels, ...

Thursday was set aside for activities. Some went to Aberystwyth by car or in the two minibuses we had hired. At Aberystwyth, a narrow-gauge steam train took a lot of us up the Rheidol Valley to a place called “Devil’s Bridge”. I went with some of the Americans to Aberystwyth to shop, see the castle and walk along the shore. We drove to Devil’s Bridge and then walked to the waterfalls. We experienced our first rain of the week; we were soaked!

Others went southwards, to shop at Hay-on-Wye, a little town crammed with second-hand bookshops, where of course, they have the inevitable theological sections!

In the evening Prof. Engelsma gave the fifth speech of the week: **“The Kingdom and Civil Government”**. He spoke on Romans 13, explaining especially the role of the Civil Magistrate. He pointed out that such rulers do not have unlimited authority, particularly with regard to religion. They are not capable of enforcing the Ten Commandments, but are only capable of keeping the peace, so that the Church can survive and prosper. An interesting question time followed.

Directly after this meeting Wayne Courtney had to go into casualty for an injured hand. There were a few other minor injuries at the conference - three sprained ankles!

The last day of the conference was Friday. A few left to begin their long travelling on this day. The rest enjoyed Prof. Hanko’s last speech. He spoke from Colossians 3 on **“The Life of the Kingdom”**. He showed how on this earth Christians must be “in the world” but “not of the world”, and that our goal is to set our hearts on heavenly things, not earthly things. We must live out the “antithesis”

and not be corrupted by worldly things. In setting our affections on the “things that are above” (Col. 3:2) we must be prepared to suffer if necessary, and we must not set our hearts on things of this world.

In the afternoon the trip to Powys Castle was rescheduled. Report came back from those who went that the castle and gardens were gorgeous.

There was an extra question time on Friday evening. The Professors answered eight questions that had been written out during the week by various people and handed in for this final session. One questioner wanted to know if the Church could take up arms to protect itself, or should it just surrender? Prof. Engelsma answered that when a church is persecuted and does not retaliate, this is not surrender. It is the same kind of victory that Christ won on the cross. We are encouraged to suffer for Christ he said, by the Scriptures. (Phil. 1:29 for instance.) Someone else asked what law the Civil magistrate should enforce if he couldn't enforce the Ten Commandments? Again, Prof. Engelsma answered that he should enforce the natural law mentioned in Romans 2:14-15. This was to do with keeping order in society. If the civil ruler tried to enforce the Law of God, he would have to put everyone to death, because that was the penalty for all breaking of God's law. For who never breaks God's law?

The conference ended on Saturday morning. After devotions and breakfast, everyone parted their separate ways. Some stayed in the British Isles to travel, while others started on their long flight home. Overall, the conference was enjoyable, the speeches excellent and the fellowship a blessing.

Join us in Northern Ireland, at Castlewellan in 2002, as planned, D.V.

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75 years:
The Fight for the Reformed Faith
Being a review and appreciation of the book:
FOR THY TRUTH'S SAKE

by
Prof. Herman Hanko
Emeritus Prof. of New Testament & Church History
Protestant Reformed Theol. Seminary, Grand Rapids USA
Publ. Reformed Free Publishing Assoc. Grand Rapids USA
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In this Year of Grace 2000, America's Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) celebrated 75 years of their existence as a denomination. It was at once a joyful, vibrant event, with several thousands attending over a glorious week of celebratory meetings on the campus of Calvin College, Grand Rapids. It was no celebration of any men and their achievements. It was a celebration of God's Covenant faithfulness, and a heartfelt thanksgiving to Him by whose Grace alone the PRC stand. And it was a prayerful plea that by Him, the PRC might continue into the future to stand in faithful witness to the Reformed, and Biblical Truth. *God's* Truth, indeed.

As a commemorative volume to mark this happy occasion, Prof. Herman Hanko has via the RFPA provided for us a handsome production that is the fruitage of some 35 years of teaching in the PRC Seminary. For some two years he laboured on this tome, distilling into it the accumulated theological wisdom of his long career. Bearing the title: "For Thy Truth's Sake", the book is therefore extremely important. Important not just because it is a chronicling of the history of the PRC, which has been done by others on other occasions, but important because it primarily focuses on the Theological development of the PRC against the background of gathering apostasy not only in Christianity in general, but specifically within the precincts of the Reformed Faith. It is therefore appropriately sub-titled "A *Doctrinal* History of the Protestant Reformed Churches."

If the 20th century can be characterised by one salient proposition, it is this:....it was a century in which a conscious and virulent rejection of the Son of God overtook the very foundations of a hitherto "christianized" western society. Ablaze with military wars greater than the sum of all previous human wars, the century saw also hot battle on those profound spiritual frontiers that divide Light from darkness.....Truth from error.....True Christianity and the false..... It was a "Fight for

the Reformed Faith". And these battle lines were drawn, not somewhere "out there" amongst the infidels. They were drawn inside Churches. Inside Reformed Churches, at that. For it was inside Reformed Churches, that the full and glorious Revelation of Scriptural Truth, God's Truth, was alone to be found. Into their precincts came the stealthy merchants of darkness, and in *Reformed* Churches, the Glorious Truth of our Sovereign Redeemer was questioned, then villified, and then dismissed.....

For the faithful, these were times of sufferings. They suffered not at the hands of infidels, but at the hands of their own colleagues and brethren in the Reformed traditions. As indeed, the Lord Christ himself was persecuted by the very "church" of His day. Crucified at the instigations of "orthodox" pharisees allied with "modernist-politico-materialist" Sadducees and "materialist-reconstructionist" Herodians and Zealots. Within the churches then, we see the awful spectacle of Christ being crucified again. Within *Reformed* Churches. Great theological minds see Him, revealed in all His glory in the Word, and some of them turn away, appalled, their proud human egos insulted by the Sovereign Resplendence. Others, embarrassed, mitigate their theology, diluting the strong draughts of Heavenly Truth, thinking they can accommodate God to human nature. Still more straddle the divides, and mix their theologies with compromise, believing that the Truth is to be found in some happy medium. A remnant, just a remnant, stay firm with Scripture, their hearts bonded in covenant love with the unadulterated Glory of the Sovereign Christ. For this they pay the price..... "Away with *them*.....Crucify *them*....!"

With such a remnant Prof. Hanko is concerned. In tracking their theological history and development, his book presents a dynamic record of not just the PRC in its struggles through the last 75 years, but it is also, and most importantly, a dynamic record of God's Truth unfolding from His Word against the background of a worldwide apostasy in *Reformed* Churches and in *Reformed* Theology. Herein lies one of the book's most important features, making it relevant not only within the PRC itself, but throughout the whole world of Christianity. It shows us how the Reformed Churches *should* have developed, in contrast to the apostasy that we can see all around. It is indeed like a "meteorological record", so to speak, of the last 75 years of "Theological Weather" through which the PRC has passed, and indeed, through which all other churches have passed too. As such the book touches the very pulse of Christianity. It describes how the PRC coped with the "theological weather", and from this one can gauge how other groups and denominations have fared in passing through the same "weather". Ignore this book, ignore its analysis, its conclusions, at your peril. For its implications concern the whole Church of God militant.

One quickly discovers that this volume is not in the popular stream of "easy" theology. In the Editor's Foreword the reader is told explicitly that he will "have to put his thinking cap on".(p.xiv), but also that such application "in humble faith" means one will "be richly rewarded". To be sure, we have here a profound theological

tome, but it must be said that Prof. Hanko has made the theological profundities unfold most lucidly. It is, I feel, within the bounds of ability of the average layman to understand this book, though here and there he might find a theological dictionary to be of use, when he encounters terms like "ontological" and the term "economical" as applied to the Trinity. (p.407 note). But overall the work really is eminently readable, much more easily read than a volume of "Systematic Theology", though in many ways, equally as profound. Above all, it is most instructive.

In concerning himself with that remnant who struggle to hold fast to God's Truth, the Professor begins in **Part 1** with a theological review of the "roots" of the PRC, tracing them back to two major streams of Dutch Reformed piety, the "Afscheiding" (the "separation") that seceded from the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk in 1834, and the "Doleante" ("aggrieved ones") who, under the leadership of Abraham Kuypers, seceded from the same state Kerk in 1886. In 1892 they united to form the Gereformeerde Kerken van Nederland (GKN), and amongst Dutch immigrants to the USA we see the two streams uniting under the banner of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). However, it was an unhappy union, harbouring a great variation of doctrinal variations on important topics. Afscheiding and Doleante each emphasised their own particular tenets, and in 1905 the Synod of Utrecht was called to arrange a compromise to keep the peace. This peace was uneasy, and contained the roots of the controversy whereby Herman Hoeksema was unjustly deposed from the PRC in the year 1924.

Tracking the development of the PRC Prof. Hanko has done an excellent job in guiding the reader through these rough and complicated seas, providing just enough detail to maintain a connected narrative of events, without losing the reader amongst a forest of facts. In the second chapter of Part 1 we find the developments in the CRC from its origins in amongst the Afscheiding immigrants seceding from the Reformed Church of America, then later taking in the influence of the Kuypersian stream, up to the time when Professor Jansen began to insinuate modernist criticism of the Old Testament into his classes at Calvin Seminary in the teens of the 20th century. At this point we are introduced to the work of Herman Hoeksema and others in exposing what Jansen was doing, and the fateful, and dual outcome. Jansen deposed, but Jansen's supporters still active as ministers in the CRC and pursuing a vendetta with Hoeksema as their target.

In **Part 2** Prof. Hanko outlines the events concerning the beginnings of the PRC. In three chapters he not only adumbrates the series of events that culminated in the deposition of Hoeksema, Danhoff, and Ophoff, but he also takes care to go in to the theological principles at stake underlying this whole controversy. Cleverly, the Jansenites had noted Hoeksema's opposition to the Kuypersian "common grace" dogma that had been sweeping in to the CRC since the early 1900's. Hoeksema had perceptively isolated this dogma as the root evil underlying the influx of such men as Jansen and the evil principles they brought into the churches. But unfortunately, "common grace" as taught by Kuypers was a dogma that evidently partook of the

same "sacro-sanctity" as Kuyper did himself, in those days. A large plethora of the orthodox "Calvinists" in the CRC, and at Calvin College, espoused the doctrine, and soon were to be found in alliance with the Jansenists in opposing Hoeksema, Danhoff, and Ophoff.

A plethora of theological considerations were at issue here. It was the very Biblical theology of Grace that was at issue. It was the work of Christ that was at issue. And there were knock-on effects into practically every area of Christian life. The actual preaching of the Gospel was affected by it....was Grace for all, or only for the elect? The doctrine of God's Providence was affected by these issues, as also were the doctrines of the Covenant, of Election, of Reprobation.

And as a by-product, the Doctrine of Ecclesiology, or the doctrine of the Church was affected by way of how the CRC synodical bodies eventually dealt with Hoeksema and his colleagues. Can a synod, or a Classis, constitute some towering pyramid of perpetual authority directly over the internal affairs of each congregation in the denomination and by-pass, or over-ride, and even pre-empt the authority of each congregation's office-bearers? Prof. Hanko guides us through these "mine-fields" of administration, noting how the Reformed principles of Church government "include the principle of the autonomy of the local Church".(p.104). Thus the Reformed synod or classis is a "federation" which is a "union of autonomous congregations."(p.106). A delicate balance must be maintained between the overall authority of the "synod" and the authority of the local office-bearers. In practice, churches tend to veer too much one way or the other, and maintaining the balance is a "precarious" business, that "needs constant attention."(p.111). Prof. Hanko illustrates the dilemma via commenting on a few historical examples of how the PRC have dealt with such an issue. Fundamentally he sees the local office-bearers as directly responsible to Christ the Lord of the Church, and that synods may only impose their authority into a local congregation *via* such office-bearers.

These are all vital theological questions. In tracing the history of these developments Prof. Hanko has unfolded the theological dimensions intrinsic to each historical issue. We find not only a narrative of events leading up to and including the crisis of 1924-5, but a cogent analysis of the theological issues impelling the whole affair. Common Grace is clearly expounded in Ch. 4, with its ramifications for Gospel preaching, one's view of God's Providence, the restraint of sin, and the good gifts God bestows on humanity in general. Using Psalm 73 as his Scriptural base the Professor elucidates the PRC teaching concerning the good gifts God gives to the non-elect. Such gifts do not imply grace and favour. For "grace is not in things, but purely in the good favour of God" (p.80). Good gifts to the non-elect but confirm God's hatred towards them, as such gifts compound their ingratitude and culpability. For such gifts but enable the wicked to advance in wickedness.

In analysing this problem, Prof. Hanko looks too at the variant shades of the "common grace" dogma, and takes special note of its Kuyperian manifestation, which he subjects to cogent, and convincing criticism. He notes that it "was disas-

trous for the doctrine of the antithesis" (p.96), in that it opened up a bridge between the Church and the world. Across this bridge the likes of Prof. Jansen had come, loaded with their critical modernist ideas about Scripture.

Pursuing the course of events centred around the 1924 crisis, Prof. Hanko gives an analysis of the Three Points of Common Grace adopted by the CRC as a form of supplement to the Three Forms of Unity. That such supplementation was required was ample evidence that the Common Grace dogma was a post-Confessional development, and that by the Confessional Standards alone, the CRC could only judge Hoeksema (as they did at the 1924 synod) as being "orthodox".

Having pursued the theological developments as far as the formation of the PRC in 1925, **Part Three** of the book then through 8 chapters looks at "**The Positive Development of the Truth.**" The title should not be interpreted as if to mean some kind of evolution of truth itself, but rather it signifies how the fledgling PRC dug down deeper into the Scriptural revelations and sought to fully elucidate the truths contained therein. Perhaps, outside an American theological context, the word "development" is, for British readers, unfortunate here, in that it gives the impression of a progressive re-modelling, or innovating concerning the truth of the Scripture. The word "elucidate" I think, will convey more accurately to British readers what the Prof. has in mind. The PRC theologians were not innovating. They were elucidating, clarifying, researching and discovering, drawing out the full Scriptural truth on given topics and applying it appropriately in theological reasoning and Christian practice.

This section covers **first the Sovereign Grace of Miracles**, (p.128) in which the Jansenist-modernist view is rightly dismissed as heretical, and miracles are defined as super-natural manifestations of God's power in this material realm for the purpose of saving His church. The theological exposition undergirding this assertion is fascinating, and has damning ramifications against the common grace dogma. **Secondly, the Sovereign Grace & Revelation** (p.141) is analysed, in which it is shown how the idea of "General Revelation" is linked with "common grace". Again the erroneous knock-on effects of "common grace" come to light here, as even leading Reformed theologians took "General revelation" in nature as being preparatory for the "Special revelation" of Scripture. Basic to this error is the notion that God bestows "common grace" on even the heathen, and utilizes "general" revelation as a means of blessing them, enabling them to do a great deal of good. It is interesting to read from here on the Professor's account of how Hoeksema brought out the correct and Scriptural position, showing how the wicked do indeed "hold down the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18). Whilst fallen men may possess varying degrees of "natural light", this, being a vestige left over from pre-fall Adam, it is but like the "tattered remains of a fur coat badly eaten by moths in the course of a summer." (p.152) Even such "remnants" of light man uses to facilitate sin, and so they make him all the more culpable. True Grace is sovereign grace, and is that grace which saves, enlightening the sinner and enabling him to receive God's spe-

cial, or rather, full revelation, the Scriptures. And thus Creation still reveals God, but only to the Elect. (p.155). To the non-elect, the witness of God in creation is effectively part of God's wrath, for they squirm away from the implications of nature, and suppress the truth of its witness.

Thirdly, the Doctrine of Scripture (p.158) is analysed. Evident in the Bible is the fact that the different writers, being different characters, leave the distinctive imprints of their personalities on the Scriptures they themselves wrote. This "human" element in Scripture has been played up not only by critical modernism, but even in Reformed circles, and damage has been done to the concept of the Bible as inspired and infallible. Despite early on combating Prof. Jansen, Hoeksema and other PRC leaders did not initially go on to fully develop, or elucidate, an adequate Scripture doctrine of inspiration and infallibility, though all their labours evidently presupposed they believed in such truth, as is evinced in the records of their preaching and teaching (p.161). It is from the early sixties on that the PRC began to consciously examine the doctrine of Inspiration. They found that the old creeds (the Belgic and the Westminster) laid down the correct scriptural groundwork, what was now needed in the 20th Cent was to meet the incoming flood of Biblical Criticism with the full "development", that is, full "elucidation" of this fundamental doctrine. Homer Hoeksema, son of the illustrious Herman, undertook this work, the results of which are found in his useful little book, *"The Doctrine of Scripture"* (RFP 1990). Fundamentally the PRC theologians elucidated the fact that Scripture in its own self-testimony is a miracle in itself, and is intrinsically the work of God. As to the human element, rejecting the Warfieldian suggestion that this is analagous to the Divine/human incarnation as in Christ, they showed that Scripture has its analogy, if at all, with the connection between God's work of Salvation and inspiration. In salvation, all is of God, yet the saved individual acts, moved both to will and to do of God's good pleasure (Phil 2:12-13). This willing, and this doing, originates not in the natural self, but in the Divine Spirit now inhabiting the individual. Likewise, in inspiration, the sacred penman is so moved by the inspiring Spirit, that his thoughts and words are the product of the Spirit, and the product of his pen is indeed the Words of the Spirit of God. As such, the written words will bear the imprint of the writer's human character, but even this has been fore-ordained by God for that particular place, time, and occasion. The end-product, Scripture, is exactly what God determined it should be, and hence it is true to say that it is wholly from God, and none at all from man. This is important. One immediate implication from this is that Scripture is an "organic" unity, not a conglomeration of multi-various authors. The one Divine Spirit speaks through the Scriptures, not Paul, or Peter, etc., but God Himself. Thus 20th Century trends in Reformed Theology to examine and produce learned theses on *"The Theology of St. Paul"* (So: Ridderbos) are fundamentally mistaken, we would say, as also is Geerhardus Vos' work, *"The Pauline Eschatology"*. The root principle of such studies is in error, as it supposes that all of St. Paul's theology, or all of his eschatology, can be culled just from the apostle's

letters in the New Testament. Truth is, Paul would also have held to truths taught by Peter, and John, and James, etc. The fact that he doesn't happen to mention those particular things in his own epistles cannot, under the proper Scriptural doctrine of inspiration, be used to delimit the parameters of what Paul believed. In short, contra Vos, there is no such thing as "Pauline" eschatology. Espouse that kind of principle, you can also speak of "Petrine" eschatology, which would be evidently different to the "Pauline" breed, seeing that the two apostles focus on different aspects of eschatology. In such an approach the foundation is laid for claiming humanistically, as critical modernist theologians do, that Paul's eschatology contradicts that of Peter. Given the PRC's "organic" approach however, the two apostles are seen as inspired by the same one Spirit to reveal different parts of the one picture, so to speak. What is important here is to see how even within the precincts of the "solid" 20th cent. Reformed traditions of Princeton and Amsterdam, men like Vos and Ridderbos had taken on board humanistic principles. Such institutions had, of course, trimmed their sails to suit the way the wind was blowing.

Steering a faithful Scriptural course through the teeth of all these contrary gales, Prof. Hanko can sum up the PRC's "organic" Scripture-based principles thus:

"The believer is fundamentally not interested in what Paul, or Peter, or Isaiah believed, and Scripture will not help him in that regard, for Scripture is not of any private interpretation (2 Peter 1:20). The believer is interested in what "the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev. 3:22). (p.174).

Fourthly, in Chapt. 10, we are introduced to the PRC "development" or "elucidation" of the Scripture doctrine of the "**Antithesis**". We are given a succinct and useful explanation of this doctrine, stressing its importance, its role, its nature, and how it is revealed in Election and Reprobation, and executed in time. The practical aspects of the doctrine are also considered vis a vis certain concrete examples, viz. "The Christian and Trade Union membership", and "The Antithesis and Worldly Amusements." Through all this, the writer's concern is to maintain the strict dividing line between the Christian and the world, between the seed of the Woman, and the seed of the Serpent. Interesting is the description of Hoeksema finding that "games of chance" are a use of God's providence for trivial reasons. (p.196).

A well-worn tag that modern "calvinists" stick on the PRC to this day is that they are "Rationalistic" and thereby not Biblical or Confessional. Thus **fifthly**, in **Ch. 11**, under the heading "**Biblical, Confessional, or Rationalistic?**" Prof Hanko looks at this serious charge. This is one of the most profound areas of reasoning in the book. Beginning with Van Baalen's attack against Hoeksema as early as 1922, the Prof. gives us an historical overview of 75 years of running false accusations. In 1922, Van Baalen was already espousing "two-track theology", the idea that the truth is equally present in both of two simultaneously contradictory propositions. This was evidently his way of harmonizing his "common grace" and "free offer" beliefs with Election and Reprobation. In this "paradox" system of theology, one had to believe the contradiction simply because the Bible (allegedly) taught it, and

any attempt to resolve the paradox therein was sinful, in that it was a "rationalistic" attempt to penetrate what only the mind of God could comprehend. 20th century Calvinism, going with the wind, almost to a man, has espoused this theological schizophrenia, and has indicted Hoeksema and the PRC as "rationalists", a charge that is repeated, almost mindlessly by modern Calvinists even today.

Prof. Hanko examines the position of Cornelius Van Til in all this, in that Van Til is the epitome of this whole "paradox" position. We remember how Van Til insisted that "all the truths of the Christian religion have of necessity the appearance of being contradictory...." (*Common Grace and the Gospel* p.165). And "faith adores the apparently contradictory: To adore the apparently contradictory is to adore God....." (*Ibid* p. 67), indeed, "we embrace with passion" these contradictions. (*Ibid*. p.9). And thus, to Van Til, "apparently contradictory" was nevertheless absolutely an unresolvable contradiction to the *human* mind.

To Hoeksema and the PRC, such "contradictions" were the products of faulty exegesis, and they set out to make the necessary corrections in this field. Against this, the "Paradox" men hurled the accusation "rationalist". Thus these latter made "contradiction" a sacrosanct and essential component of Scripture. True Christian belief was effectively delineated as a belief in unresolvable contradictions! And this, amongst Calvinists!!!! Here again we see how 20th Cent. Calvinism let the winds of modern culture drive their ships off course. Van Til's own doctrine of Scripture here is loaded with Neo-Kantian concepts, for, like Kant talking of reality, Van Til even talks of Scripture truths as being not truths but "limiting concepts." Rationalism, he said, belongs to the realm of the unbeliever, and the believer's "logic" is different. This allows Van Til to find room for "believing contradictions" as a component of faith. Prof. Hanko lucidly exposes this nonsense, saying "the premises which believers use in their logical reasoning are not fundamentally different from those of unbelievers, for the latter begin with a denial of God as their most fundamental premise, while the believer begins with God. Thus the conclusions a believer comes to are different to the conclusions to which an unbeliever comes. But the difference does not lie in the logic used. That is the same." (p. 212).

This profound area of discussion is an immensely fruitful area of study in this book. One could have wished perhaps, for some comparative study here with the work of Karl Barth, the modernist, for whilst opposing Barth, Van Til's work essentially espouses the same "paradoxical" principle, albeit with the fulcrum of its "logic" (sic) shifted in an evangelical direction. And in espousing the "paradox" principle, modern "Calvinism" has a "soft under-belly" exposed to the vicious jabs of experts in Dialecticism. Not for nothing did droves of erstwhile "Calvinists" slither into a Barthian or quasi-Barthian position during the 20th cent. The whole "Umkehr" at Amsterdam from the 1960's on reflects the breadth of this enormous slide into apostacy. The same can be said of the absolute demise of Calvinism in the French Reformed Church over the last 50 years, where incoming "paradox" principles opened the door wide for Barthianism.

But then, one has limits to work to in producing a book, even one as good as this!

Over against "paradoxism", Hoeksema asserted that the idea of "apparent contradiction is contrary to the nature of Scripture itself. If we are to know what Scripture teaches and are to understand God's revelation, Scripture can have no contradictions in it."(p.214-215). In elucidating the PRC's whole position on this, Prof. Hanko is able to show that the charge of "rationalism" is unjust, for not only are the PRC's following Scripture faithfully, they are likewise in harmony with the Reformed Confessions on this very matter.

Sixthly, in **Ch. 12**, we have an elucidation of PRC teaching concerning the **notion of "organic"**. This very important concept we have already met in Ch.9 with respect to the "organic" unity of the Scriptures. And just as this organic unity is rooted in the one Sacred living author of all Scripture, so this same concept is applicable to the whole of creation. "Organic" refers to a living unity, like a human body, which develops according to the creation principles embedded in it, and in which each individual organ serves its own God-ordained function as part of the whole "organism". Hence the Creation is one massive "organism", as also is "mankind" in Adam, hence the "federal" headship of the first man. Likewise the Church is an "organism" in Christ as her federal head. (Cf. 1 Cor. 12:12-31; 15:45-50). Fascinating is Prof. Hanko's expatiation here on how the "organism" of the redeemed is culled out of the "organism" of the reprobate by the work of Christ. Notable too is the point made concerning how the spiritual world functions organically on similar principles to the material world, a fact borne out in the structure of parables such that things in this natural physical realm can be isolated and used as illustrations of Spiritual verities.

Ch. 13 continues with the **"Organic Development of Sin"**. Danhoff and Hoeksema had applied the term "organic" to sin in order to elucidate the organic growth and development of sin in the unfolding history of the human race. In its root in Adam's sin, one finds what I would call, the "DNA" of sin that has unfolded over human history to the present state of humanity. This is akin to the natural growth of a plant, with small beginnings, and, through the ages, whilst undergoing various prunings ordained by the "gardener", finally bursts forth in all its full strength to blossom and fruit in a way that the original sinful Adam could not have done himself. Today we see this organic development reaching its ultimate conclusions, the great tree of sin with its boughs weighed down with poisonous fruitage, ready for the ultimate harvest of God's Judgement.

In considering this topic, Prof. Hanko has also given us an outline as to the position of the "antithesis" vis a vis the organic development of the sinful human race. Two "organisms" are evident amongst humanity, each with its own "DNA", so to speak. The seed of the Woman, and the seed of the serpent. The history of the world from Genesis to the present is a history of the organic developments of these two seeds as being entirely separate species from one another, though perhaps in human society enmeshed to varying degrees in various social relationships. Nevertheless,

the line of distinction betwixt the two is ever maintained. Two different, nay, two *opposite* life-forms, the woman is the antithesis of the serpent. And in the unfolding history of humanity, the reprobate life-form under God's sovereign government actually functions as the servant of the elect, much in the way that the roots, stalk, and chaff serve the kernel of wheat. And thus, maintaining the "antithesis" must be high in the calling of the Christian, and difficult, for he will not find that the line of demarcation lies at the Church door, but rather, it will zig-zag hither and thither through the pews, so to speak. Every church is really an "ecclesiola in ecclesia", for "not all they that are in Israel are of Israel".

Seven further chapters, comprising chapters 14-20, comprise **PART 4** under the general heading "**The Doctrine of the Covenant**", filling some 140 pages, an indication of the importance this area of doctrine carries for PRC theologians and churches. The PRC take serious issue with the usual "Westminster" stream of covenant theologians, and deny the notion of a "Covenant of Works" as being a "contract" between Adam and God in Eden. Prof. Hanko enters this deep and important subject by means of recounting the events of the traumatic schism that decimated the PRC in 1953, since that schism was fundamentally entwined with the doctrine of the Covenant. We are given a succinct portrayal of the relationships between the PRC and Klaas Schilder and the Liberated Churches (LC) of Holland, which relationship ran sour when the Dutch LC theologians exported their views of the Covenant over into the PRC via the waves of Dutch immigrants pouring in to the USA and Canada in the immediate post-war years. Effectively a "common-grace" and "free-will" theology was imported into the sphere of the covenant as it bore on the children of believers. What Hoeksema et al. had opposed in 1924 with regard to gospel preaching in general was being applied in the close internal relationships of covenant families. Conditional salvation was clearly implied in the preaching which characterised more and more of the PRC's own ministers. Effectively, they adopted a "Heynsian" view of the covenant, in which God promises salvation to every individual child of every Christian family, *on condition that* they believe. In this controversy the PRC and the LC position differed thus:

To an LC man, it is Scriptural to say: "God promises every one of you that if you believe, you will be saved." So said De Wolf, one of Hoeksema's co-pastors.

To a PRC man, it is Scriptural to say: "God promises every believing soul that He will save them."

The difference between these two statements is fundamentally the difference between Arminianism and Calvinism. And the pro-LC men had imported Arminianism into the arena of the Covenant family.

The controversy split the denomination, and we are given the statistics for the traumatic year, 1953-54. From 6,063 souls in 1953, the PRC was blitzed down to 2,353 souls by 1954, losing 8 churches, and 14 out of 28 ministers. The little denomination was gutted, and it has taken some 47 years to recover the ground and heal the wounds. In that 47 years they really set about elucidating the theology of

the Covenant, and in this they have progressed enormously, throwing down a vital challenge to all the prevalent views found in Presbyterian and Reformed circles. It was found that Hoeksema and his contemporaries had been laying the foundations of a true Scriptural dogma of the Covenant, which could be traced right back through Prof. TenHoor of Calvin Seminary, who had taught Hoeksema back in the teens of the 20th century. TenHoor had developed what he had learned from Bavinck in Holland, and one can see connections that go beyond this to Olevianus and Cocceius at the times of the Reformation.

Fundamental to the PRC's Covenant doctrine is the realization that most Reformed theologians, even such illustrious ones as Witsius and Hodge, had not defined the doctrine Scripturally. For these latter, the Covenant was a "mutual contract" between God and man as equals. But as Hoeksema et al were want to insist, the Scriptures definitely hold out the Covenant as being:

a) **A sovereign imposition** by the Most High, not a "mutual agreement" or "contract". PRC doctrine here is also found in such theologians as Geerhardus Vos, and his son J.G. Vos, both of whom elucidated the Biblical words for "Covenant" as requiring a "sovereign" and actually, "one-sided" work, imposed on man by God in Sovereign election.

b) A "covenant", following from the above, is not a "set of rules of contract", but **a bond of fellowship in friendship**. Such a bond may indeed have rules, or laws, but these laws trace the parameters of the relationship, and are not the "covenant" relationship itself.

c) Arising from a) and b) above, the "covenant" is not a means to an end, but is **the end in itself**.

d) This "covenant" is **essentially integral with Divine Election and Predestination**. This feature Dr. Klaas Schilder and the LC denied (p.352), as it left them no room for their "free promise to all" dogma, which premise required "covenant" to be interpreted as a "contract".

In defining Biblically the true doctrine of the Covenant, Prof. Hanko begins with the Inter-Trinitarian life in the God-head. (pp.317 ff.) God is a "family of persons", bonded in perfect love. In this we have the "prototype" of the covenant God makes with man.(p.321). Henceforth we are shown how it all affects human family life, the status of covenant children, Infant baptism, and how it establishes the unbreakable sanctity of the human marriage bond on earth. Marriage may never be sundered except by death. Divorce and remarriage are proscribed, in that they destroy the earthly type and reflection of Christ's covenant with His church. In Christ, all God's Elect are taken up into a fellowship of love with Him.

Part 5 is entitled "**Concluding Considerations**". Hitherto Prof. Hanko has concentrated on those doctrines that are distinctly entwined with PRC history and the distinctive development of the denomination.(p.401). But PRC theologians have also been intensely involved in the general theological debate across the whole field of Dogmatics, and hence in this concluding section we have a useful, if unfortu-

nately brief, distillation of PRC thought arranged under the Six Loci of Dogmatics. The subject matter here is, we feel, worthy of far more than the 19 pages allocated to it, but then, it would have needed another whole book probably to do it full justice. Under a brief section entitled "Theology" we are introduced to Herman Hoeksema's view, which, following Bavinck, placed emphasis on "the unity of all God's attributes" (p.403) rather than seeing them as divided into "Communicable" and "Incommunicable" categories. Hoeksema's methodology was to elucidate the Scriptural details concerning God under the significance of His many Scriptural names, rather than under any abstractions. This method facilitated the deduction that all God's attributes formed a unity in His own being. Following from this came ramifications for the Doctrines of Grace, since "if God's attribute of Grace is common to all men, the same must be said of all God's attributes, including His love, mercy....etc..." (p.403). Likewise the unchangeability of God must be unified with His Counsel. If God is unchangeable, and eternal, so also must be His Counsel, and this factor will have ramifications for considering the Decrees of God.

Under "**Anthropology**" we find the PRC holding to the veracity of the Genesis account, a feature from which Presbyterian and Reformed thinking fell away, even in such bastions of the truth as Princeton and Amsterdam. A six-day creation is espoused, and the pressures of scientific theories have not been allowed to mollify PRC theology.

Christology is the doctrine of the Person of Christ. We find that the PRC insist on the Eternal Sonship of Christ, and a useful exposition is made here on the relationship between the Eternal Son as one person of the Trinity, and the Incarnate Son as Christ. (p.407). In Christ the Divine and the human natures are found together, as in Him all things are to be gathered into one in the coming Eschatological fulfillment of the Ages, when the spiritual world and the material world are all gathered up into one.

We are given more detail on the matters of **Soteriology**. Here the distinction between Kuyper and Hoeksema is elucidated. Whilst both men insisted on the doctrine of "immediate regeneration" over against those who insisted that such regeneration can only be "mediate" consequent to the preaching of the Gospel, Hoeksema demurred from the particular turn Kuyper gave to this dogma. Kuyper went so far as to separate regeneration from the gospel preaching virtually altogether, whereas Hoeksema was discerning enough to see that the very first work in the heart of an elect sinner was that in which God gave the sinner "the spiritual power to hear the Word of God preached." (p.409). The similarities with Creation, (by the Word of God) are noted, and the fact that regeneration is a "new creation". In this "new creation" faith is part of that which God imparts to the Elect, thus initiating the Covenant bond between God and the believer.

Under "**Ecclesiology**" the Professor is intent on focussing on Preaching, hermeneutics, and missions, and omits any study of Reformed Church Government here having examined this in Chap. 5. In all PRC services, the sermon is the cen-

tral aspect of the congregation's worship, for therein they behold the Risen Christ revealed in some way from His Word. For PRC ministers, this means that they spend "most of their time during the week to the preparation of sermons" (p.415), for they are called to "feed my lambs" (John 21:15).

"**Eschatology**" is the final locus, indeed a hot topic in Reformed circles today, as with the demise of Dispensational Pre-millennialism one finds the incoming tide of "extended politico-material Post-millennialism". What this means of course is that modern Calvinist evangelicals are throwing out one Jesuit heresy (that of Ribera) in order to take on board another Jesuit heresy, (that of Alcazar). In order to meet both of these errors, the PRC propound what theologians call the "a-millennialist" dogma. How this interaction takes place is not detailed in this volume, and we could have wished for more information on the matter.

But all books must necessarily have their limits, and it must be said that some abbreviation notwithstanding, this volume is more than useful, rather, it is *essential* reading. It is a *vade-mecum* of PRC theology, and where it can only present limited amounts of detail, it does most appropriately carry reference Bibliographies, one in general, and one specifically for the works of Herman Hoeksema, that open the way for one to do any "in-depth" further reading one desires, on any of the topics developed in the book. A useful Index of Scriptures is followed by an index of authors and subjects. There are nine appendices, each carrying most useful reference material, e.g., "The Conclusions of the Synod of Utrecht" in 1905 concerning *inter alia*, Eternal Justification. Then one finds the "Three Points of Common Grace" of 1924, and various documents concerning the background to the schism of 1953. Carrying all this data means that the work is not only worth reading, but one will find it a necessary reference source. Material is drawn together here which hitherto has only existed in a multiplicity of disparate sources. Now, for the first time, it is all drawn together into one repository....."how did one ever manage without it....." is an exclamation it will surely provoke in the future amongst many.

We would conclude with one minor caveat. The text is not justified in the right hand margins. Though the overall page design is cleverly drafted so as to maintain a certain attractiveness to the eye, and whilst overall the publishers are to be commended for the excellent quality of the book, we would, respectfully, urge full text justification for future productions. It gives a book a more "weighty" appearance, which we believe, PRC books are most certainly worthy of.

For Thy Truth's Sake

A Doctrinal History of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

by Prof. Herman Hanko. Obtainable from:

Mr. Sean Courtney, Covenant Reformed Bookstore, 78 Millfield, Grove Road, BALLYMENA BT43 6PD NORTHERN IRELAND.

Tel. 028 256 41 200

75 years.....

Our Goodly Heritage Preserved

A Pictorial Survey of the Protestant Reformed Churches 1925-2000
ISBN 0-916206-62-9 Publ. Protestant Reformed Churches in America 2000
Large paperback A4 size 135 pages.

This large size volume ranks as complimentary in a way to the volume produced by Prof. Hanko "For Thy Truth's Sake". It is complimentary in that it too, is a commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC), but more especially because it takes a less technical, and more social viewpoint, punctuating its readable text with a goodly array of pertinent photographs. The net result is that it gives the reader a very good insight into the actual ethos, life, and work of the whole denomination in all its aspects. In this volume, one might say, the PRC "comes alive", and those who have never encountered them personally can browse through this book and feel that they are actually meeting the PRC people in their churches, homes, schools, and daily walk. Having spent a few weeks in the USA amongst them myself, I think that the book gives quite a true-to-life impression. As such it is worthy of study by not only BRJ readers, but by any who are concerned with the Reformed Faith.

At the outset, let it be said that the book gives the lie to the slander "hyper-Calvinist" which even today, many who imagine themselves to be "leading" Reformed theologians level against the PRC. Chapter 3 is an eminently significant account of the Missionary activity of the PRC, introduced by Prof. Robert Decker. Herein we are introduced to the hard-working members of (i) The Domestic Mission Committee, which at the moment has two home missionaries active in the USA, with nascent congregations and preaching stations in Carolina, Washington, Pittsburgh, and the New York area, then (ii) the Foreign Mission Committee and their activities in Jamaica, Northern Ireland, Singapore, the Philippines, India, Myanmar (Burma), and now in Ghana. Ghana is the latest missionary placement, where it pleases the Lord to be gathering a new congregation under the labours of the Rev. Richard Moore. Far from any "hyper-calvinism", the whole effort rings with enthusiasm to bring the Gospel to the lost, and to reap where the fields are white unto harvest. We read herein too, about the Bible College in which Rev. Jason Kortering is active in Singapore, assisted betimes by Prof. Hanko. We learn

too of their dangerous forays into the interior of Burma, and of the positive reception amongst the Burmese. Included with all this is an account of the ecumenical relations of the PRC with other denominations concerned for the Reformed Faith, such as the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore, and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia. And it is to be noted that PRC people are to be found as willing co-workers on the mission field alongside their missionaries, having sacrificed, for a time at least, the comfortable life of modern America to work assisting their ministers under arduous conditions in foreign lands.

Also in this chapter is an account of the PRC Radio outreach. The USA has much more freedom to broadcast Christianity than have most nations, including Britain. Accordingly the PRC have a "Radio Committee", responsible for broadcasting currently on nine different radio stations across the USA. This committee broadcasts sermons by Rev. Carl Haak regularly, together with Psalm-singing devotions, on the "Reformed Witness Hour". For nearly sixty years this effort has been maintained, and we could only wish that this Committee would find it possible to broadcast on the Short-wave as well, beamed to Europe, and beamed in to other needy places as well.

All these matters are but a part, and a most worthy part, of the great and general efforts made by this small denomination. The missionary endeavours outlined above can not be paralleled amongst many a larger denomination, particularly in the British Isles. The denomination's statistics are given on page 15, as of the 1999 yearbook. One is staggered to see that such a small denomination is delivering such a big "clout". Whilst they have more than repaired the losses following upon the 1953 schism, they still only number 27 established congregations with some 6,551 souls in all. Seen in perspective, however, this represents a growth of 278 per cent from the 2,353 souls of 1954, or an overall average annual growth rate of 6 per cent. By comparison, its nearby large "rival", the Christian Reformed Church, with its emphasis on the "Free Offer" and "Common Grace" is presently declining not only with a steady haemorrhaging of numbers, but rampant apostasy of doctrine. One might compare too, the statistics of most UK Calvinist denominations as found in Scotland. Decline is writ large over them, even the best. Listed with 70,000 souls in 1904, the present Free Kirk of Scotland is now down to about 16,000, and the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, listed with some 14,000 souls in the 1890's, is now down to about 4,000. (Cf. Dictionary of Scottish Church Hist. & Theology.)

(It will not do to plead against this that both Free Kirk and Free Presbyterians have had their schisms, because none of them have been hit as hard with schism as was the PRC in the 1953-4 "blitz."

Again, we feel justified in pointing out the incongruity of the charges of "Hyper-Calvinism" brought against the PRC.

Prof. David Engelsma begins the book with an Introduction to the PRC, followed respectively by Rev. Douglas Kuyper's overview of PRC doctrinal principles and Rev. Kenneth Koole's outline on PRC Church Government. The two largest sec-

tions of the book then follow, the first dealing with every congregation in Classis East, the second with Classis West. Photographs and brief histories of each church illustrate the text such that one feels one is looking right in on the whole denomination. Following on this, we are given a look inside the PRC Seminary in Grandville, near Grand Rapids, which, from a first hand visit, I can say is a delightful place of learning replete with a fascinatingly well-stocked library. (I could have spent months, nay years in there!) The text and photographs again convey something of the atmosphere of the place, profound, purposive, intensely hard-working, yet happy.

Chap. 5 I found, as a former school-teacher, immensely interesting. The PRC now have 13 day schools up and running, one of which in Grand Rapids is a High School for grades 9 to 12. (Grade 12 = UK Upper Sixth.). In addition, plans are under way to begin a second High School in the Chicago area. I have visited and toured through 3 of these schools, namely Hope, (Grand Rapids); South Holland, (Chicago area); and Loveland (Colorado). I have also looked around Covenant High School in Grand Rapids, Heritage, and Adams schools, and what struck me immediately was the high quality of the buildings, appurtenances, grounds, equipment, and the excellent maintainance of the same. I saw no evidences of vandalism. Compared with this, the bulk of UK state schools by and large are at a lower standard of provision, and at a somewhat lower standard of maintenance.

The PRC schools are presented ably, I think, in this volume, and I felt that it conveyed to me a lot of what I had felt on my actual visits in 1999. A lot of PRC people must be sacrificing a lot of dollars to make all these provisions for their covenant children, believing seriously as they do that the children of believers should be brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). We in the UK have a lot to catch up in this respect.

A noteworthy adjunct to the PRC educational enterprise is the work of a Centre for Special Education, where a small team of dedicated staff patiently cope with the difficulties involved with children that are handicapped in various different ways. This is a noble calling to deal with such children, one that demands special skills and patience, one that regards all children of covenant believers to be special, whatever their individual talents or handicaps.

Professors Herman Hanko and David Engelsma look respectively at the two main publications of the PRC, the twice yearly Theological Journal, and the semi-monthly Standard Bearer. The circulation figures look surprisingly healthy for such a small denomination, some 1,200 for the Theological Journal, and over 3,000 for the Standard Bearer. With 76 years in publication, the Standard Bearer is one of the oldest still-running Christian papers in the USA.

A lively, interesting volume, it gives an excellent impression of the PRC.

OUR GOODLY HERITAGE PRESERVED obtainable from: Mr. Sean Courtney,
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Renée (born again)

Duchess of Ferrara Courageous Protestant Princess

of the

REFORMATION IN ITALY AND FRANCE

Excerpts from the book: *Sketches of Protestantism in Italy*
by Robert Baird, D.D. (Publ. 1847).

And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens (Hebr. *princesses*) thy nursing mothers.....(Isaiah 49:23).

In many respects, the history of the spread of the evangelical opinions at Ferrara is the most interesting portion of any work which treats of the Reformation in Italy. Under the government of its dukes, of the illustrious house of Este, this city had long vied with Florence in the encouragement which it gave to learning and the fine arts. Situated in a plain, monotonous, and insalubrious country, in the valley of the Po, its natural advantages never could compare with those of Florence, or even Bologna. But what was wanting in this respect, was compensated by the superior wisdom and paternal spirit of several of the dukes of that house, who took delight in having learned men at their court. In the year 1527, Ercole, (or Hercules, as he is more commonly called by English writers), Duke of Ferrara, married the celebrated Renée, or Renata, of France. This excellent princess had become instructed in the evangelical doctrine before she left her native land, and gave decided evidence that her heart was deeply interested in it. It was under her auspices, that, for several years, Ferrara was a *City of Refuge*, if we may so speak, to unfortunate scholars, and to persecuted Protestants, not only of France but also of Italy. John Calvin spent some time at the court of Ferrara, in his younger years, under the assumed name of Charles d'Espeville, and was the instrument of confirming the Duchess in the doctrines of the Reformation. And almost all the distinguished Protestants of Italy visited Ferrara, at one period or other, and passed more or less time there. Among those whom we may mention here, were Fulvio Peregrino Morata, from Mantua, the father of the celebrated Olympia Morata, and Celia Secundo Curio, of Turin.¹

¹ Calvin was actually at the court of Ferrara in 1536. Henceforth developed a life-long ministry of correspondence from him to the Duchess, the result of which she became more and more emboldened to make a public stand for the Reformation. Also, sheltered in Ferrara 1535-36 under her care was that bright poet of the French Reformation, Clement Marot, who translated the Psalms into French verse. She appointed Marot as her secretary. So impressed was he with the Duchess that he wrote a poem in the form of a letter to his friends, which was a play on her name "Renée", meaning "born again".

Most of the distinguished Protestants who spent a considerable length of time at Ferrara, were either connected with the University, which was then in the zenith of its fame, or employed as tutors in the family of the Duke.

It is not possible to ascertain the number of those in Ferrara who embraced the New opinions, or whether they worshipped in public, in churches or chapels, or held their assemblies in private houses. The latter is most likely to have been the case. It would seem that there were sometimes several Protestant preachers among those who, in this city, received the true gospel, and professed it more or less openly. Whatever was the extent to which the Reformed opinions gained ground at Ferrara, it is certain that it was owing to the decided patronage and encouragement of the Duchess Renée.

This distinguished woman was the second daughter of Louis XII, who may be pronounced, on many accounts, one of the best monarchs France has ever had; who, when urged to renew the crusades against the poor Waldenses, in Dauphiny, refused to do it, saying: "*They are better Christians than we are.*"

Renée was born at Blois, in the year 1510. Her mother was Anne, of Brittany, widow of Charles VIII. Scarcely had she reached the age of three years when she lost her mother, and at five she lost her father. She then had to depend upon the care of her cousin and brother-in-law, Francis I, who ascended the throne in 1515. At an early age she was affianced to one prince and then another, as policy dictated; first to Ferdinand of Austria; then to Charles (afterwards Charles V Emperor of Germany); then to the king of England; then to Joachim Marquis of Brandenburg; and lastly to Ercole I, Duke of Ferrara, whom, as we have stated, she married in 1527.

History informs us that this lady had few claims on the score of personal beauty.² But she possessed what was far more valuable—a strong intellect, a sound judgment, and great nobleness of soul, united with much tenderness of heart, and a remarkable amiable spirit. At an early age, she displayed a striking fondness for those studies which are of an ennobling character. She became quite proficient in the exact as well as in the moral sciences. She was well acquainted with the Latin and Greek languages. And she spoke Italian with the same purity and elegance that she did the French.

Such a woman was Renée of France, whom God raised up to protect, for a season, the persecuted Protestants in Italy; and then, when her enemies had rendered it impossible for her to give further aid to the bleeding and prostrate cause of Truth in that country, she was permitted to return to her native land, and there offer an asy-

² Two portraits of this lady available indicate a basically plain visage, but depending on the accuracy of the artists, the one portrait, representing a woman in about early thirties seems to indicate a certain radiant but peaceful beauty of spirit which gives her quite a striking appearance. (So. see 1 Peter 3:3-5 concerning inward and outward adornment.) According to the author Christopher Hare: "*Men and Women of the Italian Reformation*" (London 1914) Renée suffered from a certain "slight deformity", of what nature, we are not told. (Ed.).

lum to such of the poor persecuted Protestants of France as gathered around the walls of the Castle in which she spent her declining years.

It was the misfortune of this excellent woman to be married³ to a man every way unworthy of her. Ercole I was a bigoted Roman Catholic; a man of little spirit, who, notwithstanding the injuries and indignities which Rome had heaped upon his father, was ever ready to cringe at the feet of the reigning pontiff. Indeed, he had neither the desire nor the ability to extricate his neck from the yoke which his house had so long worn. During the first years of his marriage, he seemed to have some affection for his excellent wife. But after the death of his father, and his own accession to the ducal throne, it began to be manifest that he cared little for her. He complied with the first solicitation to enter into a league with the emperor and the pope, by which he bound himself to remove from his court all the French who were suspected of heresy. Soon afterwards he went further, and used all the influence he had with his wife to persuade her to renounce the Protestant religion, and return to the bosom of the Roman Catholic Church.

Nor was the storm slow in reaching Ferrara. In 1545, the pope exhorted the ecclesiastical authorities of that city to great diligence in investigating the sentiments of those who were suspected with heresy, and, having brought their inquiries to a definite judgment, to transmit the same to Rome. Spies were, about this time, sent forth into all parts of Italy, who insinuated themselves into the acquaintance and company of all classes, and transferred to the Vatican the information which they collected. By this means many excellent persons were entrapped in Ferrara. Upon the death of Paul III, Cardinal De Monte ascended the papal throne, under the name of Julius III. He was a man of a persecuting as well as voluptuous spirit. In 1550, the Reformed church, which had existed for a number of years at Ferrara, was dispersed; many of its members were thrown into prison, and one of their preachers, a man of great piety, was put to death.

The Duchess Renée did all she could to shield the little flock of the faithful against these cruel proceedings. But her influence at Ferrara was fast departing. Her husband, who was incapable of appreciating either her noble character, or the elevated motives from which she acted in adhering to the Protestant faith, did all that he could to induce her to return to the Roman Catholic Church—instigated and urged on by the pope. Failing to accomplish this by persuasion, he resorted to harsh measures. He had long ceased to manifest any regard for the person, and had given himself up to a life of criminal and most shameful neglect of his duties as a husband.

The influence of her family was brought to bear upon her, to turn her away from the Truth. Her nephew, Henry II King of France, sent the Inquisitor Ortiz, who had

³ “misfortune”..... “to be married...” refers here to the fact that Renée’s marriage was an “arranged” marriage, done for reasons thought to be politically/materially advantageous and “fixed” by parents or guardians over the heads of the couple concerned. Such was commonplace amongst the nobility of those days throughout Europe.

been with him some time as his confessor, to Ferrara, with instructions to labour for the recovery of his 'only aunt' to the Roman Catholic Church, and, if arguments failed, to cause all necessary severity to be employed to effect the object. But all his efforts were to no purpose. The daughter of Louis XII was neither to be persuaded nor frightened into an abandonment of what she conscientiously believed to be the true gospel. One indignity after another was heaped upon her by her husband. Those of her attendants who were suspected of participating in the new opinions were sent away. Even her children were at length forbidden to approach her. Her intimate friend, the instructress and companion of her daughter Anne, the devoted Olympia Morata had, some time previous to this, been compelled to leave the palace, upon the death of her father, to take care of her mother and the younger branches of her family, and had become exposed to much harsh treatment from the court. From this she was relieved by her marriage with Dr. Gunthler, a German medical student, who took her into Germany upon his return to that country.

But neither the bad treatment of her husband, nor the sophistry and persuasion of the Inquisitor Ortiz, availed to cause the Duchess to return to the fold of Rome; though it would seem that, for the sake of her children, she at last made some unimportant concessions.

In the year 1558 died Ercole, Duke of Ferrara. His character has been sufficiently exhibited in the few sentences in which we have spoken of him. Notwithstanding his immoralities, he was honoured by Paul IV with the title of *Defender of the Church*. His zeal for Rome was still further rewarded by the dethronement of his grandson, and the annexation of the dukedom of Ferrara to the States of the Church.

Upon the death of her husband Ercole, the Duchess Renée left Ferrara and returned to France, where her nephew, Henry II, was still on the throne, and took up her abode at the Castle of Montargis, a small and ancient city, some sixty miles south-east of Paris. There she spent the remainder of her life. There she made an open profession of the Protestant religion; and during the sixteen years which she lived after her return from Italy, she devoted all her energies and her resources to the succour of the poor persecuted Protestants of her native land. In doing this she had, of course, to encounter all the hatred of the fanatical priest-party of the kingdom, headed by the Guises, one of whom, was the husband of her daughter Anne. In the year 1560, Francis II, a mere youth, without experience, and wholly under the domination of a faction of bigots, who had succeeded his father, Henry II, commenced the persecution of the Protestants on an extensive scale. The houses of those whose names were on the lists of the proscribed were pillaged and torn down, and many persons were put to death. The Prince of Condé, a distinguished Protestant, was cast into prison at Orleans, and his sister-in-law, the Countess of Roze, was thrown into that of St. Germain-en-Laye. Renée hastened to Orleans to save Condé. Meeting the Duke of Guise, her son-in-law, she upbraided him with his perfidy, and boldly said, that, "if she had been there, she would have prevented what had been done; whoever gave the king such advice has deceived him; this would

will bleed a long time hereafter, and so much the more as no one has ever become fond of shedding the blood of France, without finding evil in so doing."

Not long afterwards, the Duke of Guise sent an armed force, under the conduct of Jean de Souches-Malicorne to Montargis, to cause the Duchess Renée to deliver up the unfortunate Protestants who had taken refuge in that place. In the onset, a number of these people were killed, their houses were burned and then razed to the ground. The Duchess retired to the Castle, into which all fled that could. De Souches threatened to advance his cannon, and batter the fortress to the ground. But he received this bold answer from the courageous Renée:

"Consider well what you do; know that no one has the right to command me but the king himself; and that, if you come hither, I will be the first to mount the breach, where I shall see if you have the audacity to kill the daughter of a king, who desires only to protect her subjects, and whose death heaven and earth will be bound to avenge upon you and all your line, even to your children that are in their cradles."

This noble answer, when reported to the Duke of Guise, had the effect to arrest his threats. A short time after, he fell by the hand of a fanatical Protestant of the name of Poltrot. This event plunged the Duchess into the deepest grief. She deplored the civil war which had been kindled by the determination of the Roman Catholics, headed by the government, to destroy by force the new sect, whose only crime was, that they held to a religion founded on the gospel, which inculcated the practice of good works instead of vain superstitions, and taught men to rely for salvation upon the merits and intercession of a glorious and only Saviour. This religion she desired to see propagated by reason and persuasion, and not by force. But, alas, those were not the times in which the voice of humanity was likely to be heard. And all that this excellent woman could do was to exert herself in favour of the Protestants and their pastors as far as her influence could shield them. She maintained a constant correspondence with the chief men among them, until her death, which occurred at Montargis on the 12th of June, 1575. To the last she was a consistent and devoted Protestant; and ever gave proof, in her abhorrence of Rome, that she was a worthy daughter of him who caused to be inscribed on the medal which was struck on the occasion of the Council of Lyons—the Council which proclaimed the liberties of the Gallican Church -*Perdam Babylonis nomen*.⁴

The memory of this excellent princess is revered by the Protestants of France, to this day, and with good reason; for she was an ornament to the religion which they profess.

⁴ Meaning: "I will destroy the name of Babylon" - i.e. Rome. The die in which this medal was struck was still to be seen at the Royal Museum in Paris in 1847 or thereabouts when Robert Baird wrote this book.

BRF CONFERENCE: CEFN LEA, MID-WALES, JULY 2000

THE KINGDOM OF GOD



Prof. Herman Hanko
PRC Seminary USA



Prof. Euros Jones
University of Wales



Prof. D.J. Engelsma
PRC Seminary USA





YOUNG CATECHUMENS RECEIVE CERTIFICATES

Ten of them, from Ballymena Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland, they are, from left to right: Neil Hanko; Cherith Crossett; David Crossett; Rosanna Hanko; Joel Clarke; Jessica Hanko; Aaron McAuley; Rebecca Clarke; Mark McAuley; Ruth McAuley.



THE NURSERY

A necessary, and welcome side to BRF Conferences.

Mrs Siân Harris and Mrs Marlene Clarke keep an eye on the little ones, with the help of Edward Hanko.

Seen also in the picture are young Joshua Harris, (on his mother's lap), Heather and Sharon Clarke, (John and Marlene Clarke's identical twins), and, in the foreground is Rebecca Moore, but a few weeks old.

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS in this supplement by courtesy of:

Philip Harbach

Ed Bos

The Editor gratefully acknowledges their excellent work.



YOUNG FOLK AT THE BRF CONFERENCE: CEFN LEA MID-WALES 2000

We are not able to print all the names of those pictured here, so we leave it to the reader to pick out those who they know. They're on here from California, Colorado, Michigan, Illinois, Canada, Malaysia, Northern Ireland and other places in Britain.

Photo: Phil Harbach and Ed. Bos.

British Reformed Fellowship

Founded in 1990 by a group of Reformed Christians concerned for the defence of the Historic Reformed Faith in the British Isles

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To which all subscriptions should be sent for membership in the British Reformed Fellowship and for the British Reformed Journal, and any other correspondence not concerned with matters for printing in the Journal.

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- 1) The Divine inspired, infallible, and inerrant Holy Scriptures
- 2) The Doctrines set forth in :
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The Belgic Confession,
The Heidelberg Catechism
 - b) The Westminster Standards

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- (a) To promote a knowledge of the Reformed Faith in the British Isles, as defined in the Doctrinal Basis.**
- (b) To organise meetings, conferences, preaching services and other activities in order to further the Reformed Faith and to give practical expression to the unity enjoyed by Christians of Reformed persuasion.**
- (c) To encourage the formation of groups in different areas of the country who will seek to promote the Reformed Faith on a local level.**