

ORDAINED SERVANT



The 1993 ICRC in Zwolle, Holland

Published by
The Christian Education Committee
of

THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

October, 1997

ORDAINED SERVANT

Statement Of Purpose

Ordained Servant exists to provide solid materials for the equipping of office-bearers to serve more faithfully. The goal of this journal is to assist the ordained servants of the church to become more fruitful in their particular ministry so that they in turn will be more capable to prepare God's people for works of service. To attain this goal Ordained Servant will include articles (both old and new) of a theoretical and practical nature with the emphasis tending toward practical articles wrestling with perennial and thorny problems encountered by office-bearers.

Editorial Policy

1. Ordained Servant publishes articles inculcating biblical presbyterianism in accord with the constitution of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and helpful articles from collateral Reformed traditions; however, views expressed by the writers do not necessarily represent the position of Ordained Servant or of the Church.

2. Ordained Servant occasionally publishes articles on issues on which differing positions are taken by officers in good standing in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Ordained Servant does not intend to take a partisan stand, but welcomes articles from various viewpoints in harmony with the constitution of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

**Published for the Christian Education Committee of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church
under direction of**

**Dr. James Gidley, Mr. David Winslow, Rev. Larry Wilson and Rev. William Shishko
by PLEROMA PRESS, Box 242, Carson N.D. 58529**

Subscription price is \$12 per year. Ordained Servant will be published from 2 to 4 times per year in the present format. Do not send subscriptions to the editor but to PLEROMA PRESS. No part of this Journal is to be reproduced without permission from the Committee.

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Please send all materials intended for possible publication in Ordained Servant to the Editor, G. I. Williamson, 406 Normal College Ave., Sheldon, IA 51201. (Or send it in a text file, by Email to: williamson.1@opc.org). Please send all requests for additional copies, or back issues, to the Publisher, Stephen Sturlaugson, PLEROMA PRESS, Box 242, Carson N.D. 58529. Telephone: 701-622-3862 (Email: SSturlaug@aol.com), or download them from The Orthodox Presbyterian Church's Web site on the Internet at: <http://www.opc.org>.

Editorial Notes

This issue of *Ordained Servant* marks a special occasion, namely, the recent appearance of two things that ought to be of great interest to all who read these pages—especially our pastors. The first is the CD-Rom containing the complete works of Cornelius Van Til. The second is the recently published English translation of the final volume of Herman Bavinck's *magnum opus*, his four volume *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*. The one volume summary of this work called *Magnalia Dei* (God's Wonderful Works) was translated more than 40 years ago, and has been treasured by not a few as the finest one volume work of systematic theology. But it has also generated a longing in many—and I include myself—for the larger work to find its way into English. And, with the publication of this volume, what was so long desired is beginning to be realized. The volume reviewed here will be followed, in due course, by companion volumes until the entire work is available in English. Because of the importance of these two events we are pleased to feature (1) a brief introduction to the Van Til CD-Rom by the editor, followed by a segment of one of the things which has not been published before, which is included on this CD, and (2) an introductory review of Dr. Bavinck's section on Eschatology. I hope that my enthusiasm will be widely shared.

The cover of this issue is a picture of the 1993 International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) which met in Zwolle, in the Netherlands. At approximately the time that you will receive this issue of *Ordained Servant* a fourth ICRC will be meeting in Seoul, Korea. A number of churches formerly members of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, but now separated from it because of its tolerance of unfaithfulness to the Bible, have applied for membership in the ICRC. These

include the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, and the recently organized United Reformed Churches of North America. May it please the Lord to bless this growing fellowship of Reformed Churches from the four corners of the earth, with unity and faithfulness in doctrine and practice.

God may be using your labors in His great Kingdom when you are unaware of it. This is the encouraging word that comes to us by way of *A Personal Testimony* submitted by one of our OPC pastors. Many of us could say much the same thing. This article by Rev. Osborne made me think, again, of Margaret Duff—sister of our pioneer missionary to Eritrea—who influenced my life decisively when she gave me a few books by J. Gresham Machen.

A few requests—by mail or by email—to send more copies of *Ordained Servant* are still coming directly to the editor, even though we have tried to make it very clear—and even to call attention to the fact—that this is not his responsibility. So, once again we repeat: **all requests for additional copies of *Ordained Servant* should be sent to the PUBLISHER, not the Editor and not the offices of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Horsham, Pa.**

The publisher is Mr. Stephen Sturlaugson, a ruling elder of Bethel OPC in Carson, N.D. His telephone number is: 701-622-3862, and his Email address is: **SSturlaug@aol.com**. A brief note to him is all that is needed to add to, or subtract from, the number of copies that your church is receiving. Thank you.

The Van Til CD-Rom

by

G. I. Williamson

When I was a student at Pittsburgh-Xenia Theological Seminary the great John Gerstner warned us against the apologetic views of Cornelius Van Til. It was therefore quite natural for me to want to read what he had to say. So I secured a copy of *The New Modernism* and began reading.

My first reaction, quite frankly, was a prolonged headache. I just couldn't understand what he was on about. At the time I credited this to the fact that he was a Dutchman, and that his English was therefore not very clear. Yet, somehow, I did persevere. And—after some time—I suddenly saw the light. I got what he was driving at, and it opened up a life-changing understanding to me. For the first time I could see that much of what I had been taught up to that point did not really do justice to the seriousness of the fall of man into sin, and the resultant depravity of man's nature. I could also see, with the help of Van Til, that it is not right to leave out of sight the awful antithesis between the mind-set of the living and the mind-set of the dead. And the more of Van Til I read, the more convinced I became—and remain to this today.

But I never did have *all* of the things he wrote. Now I do. I have it because it was recently released on one CD-Rom entitled *The Works of Cornelius Van Til – 1895-1987*. The CD contains 41 Books and Pamphlets, 22 Manuscripts, 111 Articles in English, 25 in Dutch, 75 Reviews, 32 Sermons and Addresses, and you can actually hear Van Til himself in 52 hours of audio recordings. And, as if that were not enough, there is also a searchable KJV Bible, the Westminster Standards and a number of fine photographs.

Unlike my recently acquired CD-Rom entitled *The Sage Digital Library*, the Van Til CD

cannot be used with a MacIntosh computer such as mine—not without additional software.¹ This does present a rather formidable problem for MacIntosh users, but even with that added expense I want to urge you to get this CD.

In the short time that I have had this CD I have particularly enjoyed two things. The first is a revisit to some of the earlier things I read (yes: I gladly admit that they are very clear indeed. The problem then was in *me*, not in Van Til's writings). The second is the fascinating privilege of reading some things never before published—such as the very moving letter that he wrote to Francis Schaeffer soon after the publication of some of his earliest writings. Has anyone ever blended a firm adherence to principle with a genuine loving spirit better than Van Til did? And does not the excerpt that we include in this issue—from his discussion of the Reorganization of Princeton—also demonstrate this abundantly?

This CD-Rom is available from the Westminster Seminary Book Store for a special price of \$175 (the full retail price is \$250) and while that is certainly not easy for some of us to come up with, I believe that this is one of those things that every Orthodox Presbyterian pastor—and, if possible, every ruling elder—ought to possess. I simply cannot recommend this too highly.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to the editor, Mr. Eric Sigward, of our Franklin Square Church, who put this all together.

¹ Such as Insignia's *SoftWindows* (3 or 95) or the recently released *Virtual PC* from Connectix.

Van Til on the Reorganization of Princeton

An Excerpt from an Unpublished Lecture entitled: Why Westminster Today?

In the spring of 1929, Dr. Stevenson and his party succeeded in having the Seminary reorganized in accordance with the new inclusive policy. At the 1929 General Assembly the church did away with the old two board system of control and established one new board to run the affairs of the seminary both academic and educational. Two of the members of this new board were signers of the Auburn Affirmation. It was as if two communist sympathizers had been elected to the supreme court of the United States. The new board soon made a public pronouncement to the effect that under the new board the seminary would now be better able than it had ever been to carry out the provisions of its charter. The new board revealed the way in which it would perform its new task. It asked all the members of the old faculty, even those who had opposed the reorganization of the Seminary, to remain on the new faculty. They were not seeking to exclude the old point of view; they were simply going to give both points of views a place on the faculty. This was clever strategy. If men like Robert Dick Wilson, Oswald T. Allis, Geerhardus Vos, Wm. Park Armstrong and J. Gresham Machen could be persuaded to remain on the faculty, or rather join the new faculty, it would appear to all the world that they did not consider the change very basic or very evil. But as you all know Dr. Wilson, Dr. Machen, and Dr. Allis refused to serve under the new board. Dr. Vos, Dr. Armstrong, and Dr. Hodge did agree to teach under the new board but this was due to circumstances. All three of them had vigorously opposed the reorganization.

In the summer of 1929 these three men together with others organized Westminster Theological Seminary. Dr. Machen was the natural leader of the new movement. In giving a public account of the reason for the organization of the new seminary, Dr. Machen made it clear beyond the peradventure of a doubt that the old Princeton was dead. The gospel of salvation by grace from dead works would no longer be taught there without compromise. This gospel would be diluted with the supposed wis-

dom of man. The new seminary was small in number and had no money. There would be no final dependence upon numbers and upon organization. Those who undertook to organize the new seminary were not pretending to be greater scholars than were other men. Those who organized the seminary, both the board and the faculty would seek learning indeed, they would seek learning with all their strength, but they would seek this learning on their knees, in humility seeking their help from their Savior.

But one thing must be clear, the banner of the gospel of the grace of God in Christ must be raised to the top of the highest mountain that can be found. For that reason Dr. Machen soon organized the Independent Board of Foreign Missions as well as the seminary. To be sure, Dr. Machen believed the work of the Missions is the work of the church. But through its Board of Foreign Missions, the Presbyterian Church was sending out missionaries such as Pearl S. Buck who nowise believed the gospel at all. Graduates of the seminary applying under this Board to go out to the foreign field were required to promise that they would cooperate with such missionaries as did not believe the gospel at all. What else could be done, at least as a temporary measure, but to organize an independent mission board?

The response of the leaders of the church was not slow in coming. They soon called Machen to give an account before a commission of five appointed by the General Assembly. One of the commissioners was a signer of the Auburn Affirmation. The whole Commission was loyal to the church, but they were not loyal to Christ the head of the church. They condemned Machen who was loyal to Christ as the head of the church. If Machen had succumbed to their requirement he would, like they, have crucified the Christ of the Scriptures afresh. He, like they, would have prevented— as far as he could—the gospel of grace from going out to the ends of the world. By the grace of God Machen said in effect that he must obey God rather than man.

The Reorganization of Princeton

Bismarck, North Dakota

It was in this spirit of obeying God rather than man that Machen spent himself to exhaustion till he died in Bismarck, North Dakota. It was on New Year's Day, 1937. Before leaving for the West, he called me up and told me that on his way to Dakota to speak for a little group of people who sought to be faithful to Christ he would stop in Chicago and write an article on Christian Schools. He would send this article to me. Would I go over it and send it on to the office of the National Union of Christian Schools. In Chicago the pains of pleurisy overtook him but they did not prevent him from going on to the Dakotas in order to encourage a small group of Christian people to stand fast for their Lord. A former student of his drove him forty miles through midwinter weather while he was in pain. But he carried on to the finish. On his death bed he sent a telegram to Professor John Murray about the comfort of the active obedience of Christ for a dying man. As he lived so he died. In humble deep obedience of love he gave his life, his money, his all.

How good it was for those of us whom he had chosen to labor with on the faculty, R. B. Kuiper, Ned B. Stonehouse, Paul Woolley and me to be with him daily and often to go out to lunch with him after the Saturday morning faculty meeting. He did not preach at us telling us to do this or to do that. He left us free in the true sense of the word, freedom to develop our work for ourselves. But we could not help but imbibe something of his spirit of unre-served devotion to the one goal of lifting up the banner of Christ on top of the highest mountain.

When Socrates was about to drink the hemlock cup he had sent his wife away. One cannot die philosophically with women around. Socrates had Simmias and Cebes and others with him. With them he calmly discussed the question whether, when the hemlock would reach his heart, and he would pass to the other world, he should then still know who he was. Socrates was certain that he would live because he would partake of the Idea of Life. Well, Machen did not send his wife away. It was indeed said of him that he had inherited his money from his wife and she had made it from breweries. But the missing link in this chain of forgeries was his non-existent wife. As for his money, he had some money but he used it freely to pay for

the deficits that appeared on the books of the seminary from year to year. One day I saw him place a check of \$24,000.00 on the desk of the treasurer to make up for the deficit of a certain year. We his followers could not be present at his deathbed physically in the way that Simmias and Cebes were present at the deathbed of Socrates. But one thing we knew without a doubt. Machen did not speculate on the problem whether or not he might participate on some unknown Idea of Life. He knew Christ and the power of his resurrection. He knew that he would presently see his Savior face to face.

On the way back from the burial service at Baltimore I was depressed. Would everything that Machen had done go, as it were, with him into death? Then Mrs. Frank Stevenson, wife of the Seminary Board's first president and a friend of Machen's, spoke to me and told me not to be disheartened. The greatness of Machen lay precisely in that he had not centered the work of the seminary around himself. His death was a great loss indeed but the work must go on. God would raise up new men to do his work. They might not be of the caliber of Machen, but as long as they were of the spirit of Machen the work would go on for generations to come and even to the final day of Jesus Christ. Then, soon after that, I visited my father who had all his life been a simple farmer. He listened to me as I told him how dismayed I had been not only at the personal loss sustained in the death of Machen but of my fear that the work could not go on effectively without such a world renowned leader as Machen had been. My father, old and well stricken in years, simply quoted the passage of Hebrews "*He that cometh to God must believeth that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*" That was all he said! He said no more. I was rebuked and chastened. Did I still finally trust in Machen's greatness as a scholar and as a man or did I trust in the Christ to whom Machen had constantly pointed us?

From the new CD-Rom containing the Works of Cornelius Van Til, Published by Labels Army Co. 1997. Price \$250. However, the CD is available through the Westminster Seminary Bookstore for \$175 (with postage charges no greater than \$6).

A Letter from Cornelius Van Til to Francis Schaeffer

March 11, 1969
Dr. Francis A. Schaeffer
Chalet les Melezes
Huemoz sur Ollon
1861 Switzerland

Dear Francis:

You remember that some time ago I sent you a copy of a memorandum that I wrote on your Wheaton Lectures. Now that your book *The God Who Is There* appeared I should like to make some further remarks.

Let me preface what I say, by repeating what I said in the memorandum, that I have the greatest admiration for you personally and for your work at L'Abri. Those who have been with you there speak in the most glowing terms about what you accomplish with modern intellectuals.

Let me, to begin with, stress the fact that I think we both have essentially the same goal before us in our work. We are seeking to have modern man, in particular modern educated young men and women, accept Jesus Christ as he speaks to us with absolute and infallible authority in the original languages of the Old and New Testament as the Savior and Lord.

Moreover, I think we agree that the biblical gospel of sovereign, saving grace, which modern man needs, is best reproduced in the Reformed Confessions. When the Westminster Confession speaks of God as "alone and unto himself all-sufficient" and as "the alone fountain of being" it is speaking of the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost (Clyst 2) of which the Scripture speaks. It is this triune God of Scripture who is there. It is this God who has created the world

and who is, accordingly, manifest in the world. The works of creation and of providence are the works of this God. He who does not recognize the presence and all-controlling activity of this God in nature and in history therefore, in a basic sense, misinterprets all the facts with which he deals in any way.

I think you will agree, then, that no form of natural theology has ever spoken properly of the God who is there. None of the great Greek philosophers, like Plato and Aristotle, and none the great modern philosophers, like Descartes, Kant, Hegel or Kierkegaard and others, have ever spoken of the God who is there. The systems of thought of these men represent a repression of the revelation of the God who is there.

Again, we know that man has been created in the image of this triune God. Every man is therefore confronted with the revelation of the triune God within his own constitution as well as by the facts of his environment. Man cannot turn on any button on the dial of his self-consciousness but he will see the face of this God who is there. The triune God of Scripture who is there is everywhere there and is everywhere unescapably there.

We know this fact that the God who is there is everywhere and unescapably there because he has told us this in the Scripture. He has spoken to us in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the second person of the trinity. Jesus tells us that he is one with the Father. By directing the Apostles of Christ the Holy Spirit, the third person of the trinity, has given us the Scriptures. From the Scriptures, as the word of the triune God, we learn what he has done in relation to man. At the beginning of history he established a covenant with man. By obeying the command of God man would attain eternal life.

By disobeying he would reap eternal death.

Man disobeyed. As a consequence he, and the whole created universe with him, rests under the curse of God. The wrath of God is since the fall of man revealed from heaven. The God who is there is everywhere and unescapably there to covenant-breaking, sinful man as the God who punishes all iniquity upon all men. To be sure, God restrains his wrath. He gives men rain and sunshine and fruitful seasons. He calls all men to repentance through the good gifts that he gives them. But so long as they do not repent they remain under his wrath. This fact, as Calvin puts it, all men ought to see because it is there clearly to be seen. Every form of evil, physical as well as moral, is, in the final analysis, a consequence of human sin. However, no man has, from a study of himself and of the facts of nature by means of observation and ratiocination, ever come to the conclusion that he is a creature of God and that he is a sinner in the sight of God, who, unless he repents, abides under the wrath of God. The "natural man" assumes that he can and must interpret himself and the facts of the universe without any reference to the God who is actually there. The "natural man" assumes that the facts of the space-time world are not what Christ, speaking for the triune God, says they are. For the natural man the facts are just there. They are contingent, i.e. not preinterpreted by God.

The "natural man" assumes that there is a "principle of rationality," including the laws of logic, i.e. the law of identity, the law of excluded middle and the law of contradiction which is, like the "facts," just there. The facts he speaks of he assumes to be non-created facts. There is no "curse" that rests upon nature because of man's sin. The "natural man" assumes that he himself, being 'just there,' can relate the space-time facts which are 'just there' by means of a "principle of rationality" that is 'just there' to one another or that if he cannot do this, no one can. It does not occur to him to think of God as the one whose thoughts are higher than his thoughts. How do I, as a Christian, know all this information about the "natural man." Christ tells me this in Scripture. Moreover, the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit gives me life from the dead so that I understand this not merely in intellectual fashion but

existentially, I have been born again unto knowledge. Once I am born again I know that I am a creature made in the image of God. I now know that together with all men I became a sinner, a covenant-breaker, subject to the wrath of God. I now know that Christ died to redeem me from the curse that rested upon me for my disobedience of the law of God and that in him I am now justified. I now that I am, together with the body of the redeemed, on the way to my Savior's presence. In the words of the Heidelberg Catechism I am now persuaded that "I belong, not to myself, but to my faithful Savior and that without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair shall fall from my head." Everything in the I-It dimension as well as everything in the I-thou dimension is unified by means of the all-directing control of Jesus Christ, the Savior of his people. The city of God will be victorious over the city of men. The powers of hell cannot prevent the victory of the work of the triune God for the salvation of the world.

It is now my task, assigned to me by my Savior, to beseech all men everywhere to be reconciled to God. It is now my task as a simple believer to witness as a simple believer by word of mouth and by my life to simple unbelievers. I must tell men plainly and simply that things are much worse with them than they themselves assume them to be. To my simple unbelieving neighbor I must be like the doctor. When the doctor comes, I tell my neighbor, he does not ask you, as the patient, to diagnose the nature of your disease. The doctor may ask you, I say to my neighbor, where it hurts. But for all that, the doctor himself makes the diagnosis of your distress.

The diagnosis is that you have a disease that will lead to death. You are on the staircase that leads downward to eternal separation from the love of God. You are on this staircase, not because the world, reality, just happened to be built that way but because you, with all other men, hate the triune God, the creator-redeemer of men. God calls you to repentance. Rom 2 You have spurned and continue to spurn his call. You deserve to go to hell.

Am I better than you? Not in the least! I too was in the way of death, til God reached down to

change my inmost disposition. The triune God reached down in grace to me. He gave me life! I was dead in trespasses and sins. I hated God. I was helpless in my hatred of God. I could not because I would not and I would not because I could not love God and my neighbor.

Now that I know God or rather am known of God, now that I have been, as Paul says, born again unto knowledge, now I can look back and see the nature of sin from which I have been saved. Only now that I live do I understand something of the nature of the death from which I have been rescued.

I now know that I ought to have seen that the triune God of Scripture is everywhere operative in the world. The triune God is plainly present everywhere. But I, together with all other men, had taken out my eyes. After that I needed not only new light, the light of the grace of God's redeeming work in history, but also a new power of light. "But natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor 2:14).

It is thus, when I speak as a simple believer to my neighbor, a simple unbeliever, that I plead with him to give up his futile, hopeless opposition to the pleading, threatening voice of God. My Lord and my Savior commands me, and in that command gives me the great privilege, of thus speaking to my neighbor. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28). Following the example as well as the command of my Savior, I present the universal offer of salvation to all men everywhere, so far as my voice and life can reach. I know that Jesus also said: "No one comes to me except the Father draw him." I know that my argument, however forceful and valid it may be, cannot, as such, bring men to know the truth. I know that at the beginning man was created as the image-bearer of God and as such as possessing true freedom. But I know also that this freedom of man did not consist in an ability to beyond or independently of the all controlling purposes of the triune God. Man as a creature is free within the plan of God; man become a sinful creature is

still "free" within the plan of God. He is free to sin, and therefore free to be a "slave to sin." Without the presupposition of the sovereign disposition of all things, whether in the I-it or in the I-thou dimension, there would be no freedom for man and no meaning for history.

Having said this much about my simple, unbelieving neighbor I turn to my sophisticated friends. Here you have the advantage over me. You converse constantly with modern artists, modern existentialists etc., etc., as they eat at your table, study their literature. Whereas I am only a book-worm. Even so both of us have, finally, to make our diagnosis of the sophisticated as well as of the simple unbeliever by means of our "medicine book," the Bible.

When I talk of my sophisticated unbelieving friend I do not merely "soon discover" but rather "know in advance" that his "disease" is the same as that of my simple unbelieving friend. It is the disease of the "natural man." The symptoms are different but basically the disease is the same. The medication for both is the same. Both need to be told that they are in the way of death, that the wrath of God rests upon them and will abide upon them forever unless they repent and believe the gospel. Both of them must be told that they cannot do what yet they needs must do except the Holy Spirit enables them to do it. They do not understand themselves and their world for what they are because they do not see themselves and the world in the light of the triune God who everywhere confronts them with his claims. They are like men who might wander about on the campus of Westminster Seminary, appropriating to themselves what they pleased. When approached by Mr. Gregg and asked why they were taking things that did not belong to them they would look at him "innocently," as though surprised that this campus did belong to somebody. In reality they are trying to face the reality of the God who is.

How then shall we proclaim the gospel of the God who is there to twentieth century sophisticated man? Surely you say we must do so by setting forth before him the meaning of the gospel as we find it in the Scriptures. We must

make unmistakably clear in what we say that the God who is there wants his love and service with the whole of his heart, as he engages himself in his calling whether as an artist, as a scientist, as a philosopher or as a theologian. He now follows his calling with himself as its center. He must therefore repudiate the goal of life, the standard of life and the motivation of life that have marked him up to this point. He must become a "new man" in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit in order to respond properly, even if it be only in principle, to the God who is there.

But now the argument begins. Says Mr. Jones: "Are you asking me to believe that whole "system of doctrine" that your Westminster Confession of faith finds in the Bible on your say so or on the authority of the Bible itself? Well, there are many other interpretations of the Bible besides yours. Moreover, there are a number of Bibles. Or do you appeal to the authority of Jesus speaking in and through the words of the Bible? If you do then you should know that if Jesus was really a man then he was, like all men, finite and as such immersed in the contingency of all space-time reality. If you claim that Jesus was "God" as well as man for instance, in the Westminster Catechism, then you should know that no man knows because no man can know anything about such a God. You remember what Socrates said. He wanted to know the essence of holiness regardless of what gods or men had said or did say about it. In modern times Immanuel Kant worked out the implications of this Socratic principle of human inwardness more fully than Socrates did. He points out to us that what man knows he knows because his own mind has impressed its categories of thought upon the raw stuff of experience. There can therefore be no knowledge of a God such as the Westminster Confession sets forth. There can be no such a god. How could there then be anything like what you call a revelation of such a God? Propositional revelations given by such a god to man is meaningless. All the schools of modern science and philosophy agree that to say God is there, in the sense of the traditional Confessions of the Church is to speak nonsense. Many of the typical modern scientists and philosophers may believe in a god. They even defend their belief in their god against naturalists, mechanists, and sceptics and

materialists. They may believe in a personal god. They may want to give a spiritual, teleological interpretation to the course of history. For all that their gods are nothing more than projections of would-be autonomous moral consciousness of man. They agree with Kant that man himself is autonomous in the final point of reference in predication. In the eyes of all the major schools of modern thought the god who is there is dead. "When it comes to metaphysics," says Neuath, a member of the Vienna Circle, "one must indeed be silent, but not about anything." Or, as the Cambridge philosopher, F. P. Ramsey, an enthusiastic follower of Wittgenstein puts it: "What we can't say we can't say, and we can't whistle it either."

When we turn to modern theology we soon discover that its major schools agree with the starting point, the method and the conclusions of modern science and philosophy. With one accord modern theologians contend that, even though, as over against naturalism, we must speak of God we must not speak of a God who is self-sufficient and whose revelation of himself is directly and clearly given in history, more particularly in Jesus. Suppose that Jesus did think he was the Son of God. Suppose that in his own words we could hear him say that he is one with the eternal Father. Our principle of inwardness could not but rebel at this. Man is not truly a personal being if he must listen to extraneous voices. Robert Collingwood expresses the view of modern theology on the question of revelation well when he says that the modern historian must take such claims as Jesus makes when he says he has absolute authority as so much evidence into his own philosophy of history.

Such is, I believe, the attitude of modern sophisticated man in relation to the God who is there.

Excerpts from the new CD-Rom entitled: *The Works of Cornelius Van Til*, (New York: Labels Army Co.) 1997, \$250. It is currently available from the Westminster Seminary Bookstore for \$175. Shipping and Handling will not exceed \$6.00. System requirements: 486 IBM compatible computer, 15mb hard drive space, 4mb ram, Windows 3.1 or higher.

The Last Things, by Herman Bavinck

reviewed by

Harry Zekveld

Bavinck, Herman, *The Last Things: Hope for This World and the Next*. John Bolt, ed., John Vriend, trans. Grand Rapids, U.S.A., and Carlisle, U.K.: Baker Books and Paternoster Press, 1996, 205 pp.

[Note: Since the editor approached me too late in the day to provide an extensive review of this book, I simply agreed to introduce it as the first fruit of the project to translate *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* (*Reformed Dogmatics*).]

The Last Things is the first installment of the Dutch Reformed Translation Society's initial project—the complete, definitive translation of Bavinck's four-volume magnum opus *Reformed Dogmatics* (*Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*). It is Volume Four of that work. "The DRTS was formed in 1994 by a group of business-people and professionals, pastors, and seminary professors, representing five different Reformed denominations, to sponsor the translation and facilitate the publication in English of classic Reformed theological and religious literature published in the Dutch language" (Preface, p. 7). We might add that the DRTS have favored us with a recent graphite sketch of Herman Bavinck on the opening page.

The name Herman Bavinck brings back childhood memories of looking up at Bavinck's work *De Algemeene Genade* high on my father's bookshelf. The neo-Calvinist thinking of this Dutch Reformed Theologian was introduced to me by my college professors. But only as I read through his translated works *Our Reasonable Faith* [*Magnalia Dei*, 1909; trans. by Henry Zylstra] and *The Doctrine of God* [Vol. II of *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, 3rd ed., 1918; trans.

by William Hendriksen] in seminary did I become an admirer of this great Reformed thinker.

Born in 1854, and raised in the experimental Calvinism of the Dutch Second Reformation (the Nadere Reformatie), Bavinck went on to face full-blown modernism in his studies at the University of Leiden; then to teach theology at the Theological School of the Christian Reformed Churches (Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken) at Kampen in 1882; and finally, in 1902—as Abraham Kuyper left the Free University for a time to take on the Prime Ministership of the Netherlands—to join the faculty as Professor of Systematic Theology at the Free University of Amsterdam where he served until his death in 1921.

That Bavinck is a highly valuable teacher for every student of Reformed theology is clear from the things that are said of him. Editor John Bolt, who has enhanced this book with a brief introduction to Herman Bavinck, regards him as one who "represents the concluding high point of some four centuries of remarkably productive Dutch Reformed theological reflection" (Editor's Introduction, p. 9). The article on Herman Bavinck in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Walter Elwell, ed.) praises his "broad grasp of the history of theology and his notable philosophical capacity." Most notable is the fact that Amsterdam's prince of theologians is praised by Princeton's own great theologian, B. B. Warfield. In a somewhat critical review of Bavinck's *The Certainty of Faith* (*De Zekerheid des Geloofs*, 1901), Warfield named him "a brilliant [representative]" and "a shining ornament" of his school of thought. "We must not close [this review]" wrote Warfield,

“without emphasizing the delight we take in Dr. Bavinck’s writings. In them extensive learning, sound thinking, and profound religious feeling are smelted intimately together into a product of singular charm” (*Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield*, Vol. II, edited by John. E Meeter, p. 123).

The reasons for the high praises that others have sung about Herman Bavinck are all clearly displayed in *The Last Things*.

The Last Things is divided into three sections: 1) The Intermediate State, 2) The Return of Christ, and 3) The Consummation. In each area of eschatology Bavinck fixes our focus upon the reign of Christ as Creator and Mediator whose redemption will advance until all creation has been restored to its full splendor in His Parousia. “Just as the caterpillar becomes a butterfly, as carbon is converted into diamond, as the grain of wheat upon the dying ground, produces other grains of wheat, as all of nature revives in the spring and dresses up in celebrative clothing, as the believing community is formed out of Adam’s fallen race, as the resurrection body is raised from the body that is dead and buried in the earth, so, too, by the re-creating power of Christ, the new heaven and the new earth will one day emerge from the fire-purged elements of this world, radiant in enduring glory and forever set free from the bondage of decay” (p. 160).

That the reign of Christ is for Bavinck the real subject of eschatology, rather than sanctification, glorification, and tribulation is seen in his statement: “Eschatology...is rooted in Christology and is itself Christology, the teaching of the final, complete triumph of Christ and his kingdom over all his enemies” (122). How necessary is this perspective for an evangelical world caught up in the last-days madness!

Bavinck interacts ably with philosophy, church history, Roman Catholic theology, chiliasm and modernism, and consistently rests squarely upon the testimony of Scripture. “[I]f

it is not in Scripture, theology is not free to advocate it” (p. 62). Another closely related defining mark of this book is the call to exercise “scriptural reserve.” For example, Bavinck carefully steers us through the subject of the intermediate state with constant fidelity to his own opening warning: “The history of the doctrine of the intermediate state shows that it is hard for theologians and people in general to stay within the limits of Scripture and not to be wiser than they ought to be” (p. 44). We are also blessed in this work by brief but careful exegesis of passages such as sections of Matthew 24, Romans 9-11, and Revelation 20.

There is one caution to be made, however. We wish that Bavinck would have been more definite in his opposition to universalism when he comes to the matter of the salvation of pagans and of infants outside of the covenant who die in infancy. What about Romans 1:18ff, 3:10-21, and 1 Cor. 7:14? Without facing these and other passages crucial to this discussion, he neither affirms nor denies their salvation. We would add, however, that his opposition to universalism is definitely strong in Chapter 6, “The Day of the Lord.”

We are grateful to the Dutch Reformed Translation Society for making this volume available to the English-speaking Church, and hope that it will serve to bring us closer to Scripture and also to one another as members of the long-standing British and Continental, Princeton and Amsterdam Reformed traditions.

Born of Dutch immigrant parents in Canada, Harry Zekveld studied at Redeemer College in Ontario, and then at the Mid-America Reformed Seminary which was then located in Iowa. He is now serving as pastor of the Cornerstone Orthodox Reformed Church in Sanborn, Iowa, a member church of the United Reformed Churches of North America.

THE EVENING WORSHIP SERVICE

by

Lawrence Eyres

“[God] hath particularly appointed one day in seven for a Sabbath, to be kept holy unto Him: which, ... from the resurrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week, which, in Scripture, is called the Lord’s Day, and is to be continued to the end of the world, as a Christian Sabbath” (Westminster Confession of Faith XXI, vii).

“The sabbath is to be sanctified by a holy resting all that day, even from such worldly employments as are lawful on other days; and **spending the whole time in the public and private exercises of God’s worship**, except so much as is to be taken up in works of necessity and mercy” (Shorter Catechism 60, emphasis added).

“The charge of keeping the sabbath is more specially directed to governors of families and their superiors, **because they are bound not only to keep it themselves, but see to it that it is to be observed by all under their charge; and because they are prone oftentimes to hinder them by employments of their own**” (Larger Catechism 118, emphasis added).

These quotations are an integral part of the Secondary Standards of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church; and as such, all her ministers, elders and deacons have solemnly affirmed on oath that they “sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in Holy Scripture” (Form of Government XXI, 13-c (2)). Admittedly, there is and has been, since the founding of the OPC, wide variation in the degree of rigor with which the ordained servants of our church have lived up to the strictures of these quotations from our Secondary Standards. For example, J. Gresham Machen and John Murray differed in their conscience-directed practices in this regard. But lately I’ve become concerned because many churches under identical confessional standards have abandoned the evening worship service altogether. (I am not aware of any OPC churches having done so.) Some have substituted small group meetings for corporate evening worship. I personally have some problems with this, but if all members of the congregation are free to be involved,

this substitution may fulfil the requirement of our standards. But in any case, it is my conviction that the abandonment of regular, corporate congregational worship on the evening of the Lord’s Day is a recipe for disaster.

One family, which had belonged to the church I served, was transferred to a city where there was no Orthodox Presbyterian Church. So they joined a church of a sister presbyterian denomination. The husband and father even served as an elder for some years in that congregation. But then the session decided to abandon the evening worship service because it was so poorly attended that they judged it impractical to continue. This family greatly missed the evening service. And, after a time, they sought out other churches with evening services to visit. But their children resisted—they had already become used to the new “freedom.” Presumably this family attended evening services anyway, but the effect of their own church’s decision had already made these children feel that it was a wearisome duty instead of a

The Evening Worship Service

blessed privilege to attend God's house at the end of a Lord's Day.

True, it is still possible to worship as families in our homes on Sunday evening, and we should if an assembly of the larger Christian family is unavailable. But this is far from the biblical ideal (Hebrews 10:25). An obvious advantage of evening congregational worship is found in the fact that it is much easier to keep the whole day sacred if it is begun and ended with corporate worship. I've often used this (now old fashioned) illustration: A clothesline must have two posts. Otherwise, the clean clothes will fall to the ground and be soiled. Even when there are two posts, if one of them is weak it is apt to give way under pressure of the weight and fall with disastrous results. Not being dispensationalists, we Reformed Christians must take seriously the teaching which is found in Isaiah 58:13 and 14. We are not to "do [our] own ways, nor find [our] own pleasure, nor speak [our] own words" on the Lord's day. Rather we are to "call the Sabbath a delight, [and call] the holy day of the Lord honorable." True, this goes against our modern "need" to fill empty time with easy entertainment and fun things—all available at the push of the "power" button on the remote. But God's Word is not idle advice, and obedience to it carries the sure promise of blessing: "Then you shall delight yourself in the Lord; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth [i.e. to rise above the nagging troubles of our workaday world], and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father [enjoy the blessings of the covenant]. The mouth of the Lord has spoken!"

But, for those ordained office bearers in churches under the Westminster Standards, the importance of retaining the evening worship service—even though it is an uphill battle in this pleasure-mad age—is that we have "adopted" the Puritan doctrine of the Christian Sabbath. And it is not an incidental figment of the culture out of which it emerged. "There is a sabbatismos [keeping of the sabbath rest] for the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9). It is a creation ordinance (Genesis 2:2, 3 and Exodus 20:11). It is also an integral part of our redemption (Deuteronomy 5:15. See also the typology of the sabbatical system—of the sabbatical year, and the fiftieth year of "Jubilee" in Leviticus

25). And Hebrews 4 shows us how this comes to its glorious climax in the work of Christ: "For if Joshua had given them rest, then he would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God" (vss, 8 and 9). Quite obviously, that which remains is our Eternal Sabbath. But that is not only "then," when the church enters her consummate state, but it is NOW as well, for verse 11 adds, "Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience"! Certainly, none of the perfected saints will be able to fall into disobedience when the day of final consummation arrives! So it is clear that the sabbath principle is in effect all the way from the first creation until the completion of the new creation!

Finally, the abandonment of Sunday Evening Worship sends the wrong message both to the world and to the people of God: "From dawn till noon on the Lord's day, attend to the things of God. Thereafter, do as you would do on any other day of the week." There are those who sincerely agree with that advice, though I am persuaded it is sadly mistaken and misguided. But we are committed to keeping the whole day as "set apart" even from things that are legitimate on the other six days. Sure, it's an uphill battle in these permissive times. Yes, many of our people are careless—almost to the point of causing despair on the part of their ordained rulers. But I believe that if—to begin with—there are only a few of the faithful who seem to want that blessing, we must be there to join with them in seeking the face of our God so that He may revive us in the midst of these years of spiritual drought, and "in wrath, remember mercy."

Rev. Lawrence Eyres, who is now retired for the third or fourth time, has spent his entire ministerial career in the service of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. We are thankful to the Lord that he is still active in his Master's work.

PASTOR TO PASTOR: THE MINISTER'S TREASURE

Part 4 — ABOUT PASTORAL THEOLOGY

by

William Shishko

Then He said to them, *“Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old”* (Matthew 13:52).

Among the finest “treasures” a minister has in his books are volumes described as “pastoral theology.” Since our day is a day in which pastoral work is often replaced by administration, and theology is often replaced by sociology, business principles, marketing concepts, and assorted pragmatics we have few contemporary “pastoral theologies” that are worth very much. Lyle Schaller is simply not in the same league as Richard Baxter! This is all the more reason for ministers to enrich themselves with true “pastoral theology” that comes from men who were “in the trenches”, doing the kind of pastoral work that is envisioned in biblical texts like 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12, 1 Peter 5:1-4, and—more extensively—in the Pastoral Epistles. I have found that the times of regular reflective reading of works by seasoned faithful ministers has been among the most richly rewarding of all of my reading in connection with my pastoral work. These volumes give a sense of perspective and a dose of holy reality in the face of so many unrealistic expectations of both ministers and congregations.

The classic volumes, of course, are Richard Baxter's *The Reformed Pastor* and Charles Bridges' *The Christian Ministry*, both published by the Banner of Truth Trust. Baxter (1615-1691) has been described by Dr. J. I. Packer as “the most outstanding pastor, evangelist, and writer on practical and devotional themes that Puritanism produced.” His preaching and pastoral ministry in Kidderminster, England were used of God to transform the entire community. Obviously much must be done to “contextualize” Baxter for our own day, but this

volume of probing, penetrating exhortation ought to be read by our ministers more than once in a ministerial lifetime. Fiery arrows such as this: “Believe it, sirs, God is no respecter of persons: he saveth not men for their coats or callings; a holy calling will not save an unholy man” should be often pricking our ministerial souls. Baxter aims and shoots like no one else does.

Bridges' volume is marked by far more of an evangelical spirit than is Baxter. Baxter is a stormy low pressure system. Bridges brings in the fresh air of a sparkling high pressure system. Both are necessary for the growth of ministerial fruit. The footnotes on every page of Bridges' *The Christian Ministry* are worth the price of this priceless volume. They give you a taste of the finest pastoral wisdom that preceded Bridges (1794-1869). Read Bridges through at least once, and then consult it regularly for encouragement and challenge. His 40+ pages on “The Spirit of Scriptural Preaching” are an especially fine digest. Read a section or two as part of your Saturday evening or Sunday morning preparation for your Lord's Day ministry. My note under Section VII, “Love, in the Preaching of the Gospel” reminds me to “Read, re-read, and re-read again.” Read it for yourself and you will find out why.

Closer to our own Presbyterian tradition are four fine volumes, two of which have been recently reprinted by Old Paths publications. These two are *Pastoral Theology: A Treatise on the Office and Duties of the Christian Pastor*, by Patrick Fairbairn (1805-1874) and *Pastoral Theology: The Pastor in the Various Duties of His Office*, by Thomas Murphy (1823-1900) Fairbairn's volume is a companion to his excellent commentary on the Pastoral Epistles. There is nothing particularly new here (and a fuller use of Scriptural references would have improved the production), but it is chock full of sage advice and counsel

from one of Scotland's great 19th century Free Church pastors and theologians. I found his section on the advantages of expository preaching (pp. 242-250) to be especially helpful. The distinct advantage of the Murphy volume is that Thomas Murphy served for over 45 years as pastor of a single congregation, i.e. the Presbyterian Church of Frankford, PA (northeast Philadelphia). Murphy represents one of the best of Old School Presbyterian pastors. While I found his style to be somewhat plodding, his material offers superb contact with historic American Presbyterianism. His statement on the importance of the pastoral office (pps. 25-29) is an outstanding reminder of the solemn nature of the Gospel ministry, and his section on "deep earnestness" in preaching (pp. 188-194) demonstrates quite clearly that our Baptist friends do not have a corner on this element of public proclamation of the Word of God!

The other two volumes are harder to acquire, but both are important contributions from Presbyterian pastors of note. William G.T. Shedd's *Homiletics and Pastoral Theology* was a standard textbook in late 19th century Presbyterian seminaries. It majors on preaching (as do most of the other volumes of pastoral theology) including some especially helpful material on "Reciprocal Relations of Preacher and Hearer" and "Liturgical Cultivation of the Preacher". The actual "Pastoral Theology" section comprises slightly over 100 pages of this 429 page volume, but it includes a valuable chapter on catechising. Try to get it through a used book dealer. The other volume (my personal favorite) is William Blaikie's *The Public Ministry*. How I wish this outstanding manual of homiletics and pastoral theology would be reprinted! Blaikie (1820-1899), who ministered in the Free Church of Scotland for 25 years before accepting the position of Professor of Apologetics and Pastoral Theology at the New College in Edinburgh, offers a brilliant overview of everything from the nature of and call to the ministry to "Supplementary Hints" on subjects like visitation of the sick, home mission work, and "evangelistic movements." His advice on everything from pastoral care of the young to fulfilling pastoral engagements and meetings is full of mature wisdom which is as applicable today as it was over a century ago. I have profited immeasurably from everything Blaikie wrote, e.g. *The Inner Life of Christ*,

and *The Public Ministry of Christ* (which was recently reprinted by Westminster Discount Book Service), but this volume is the richest of all. Again, try to get it from a used book dealer.

All of this is not to slight some more recent contributions in the field of pastoral theology. Jay Adams' three volumes entitled *Shepherding God's Flock* are available in a single edition now published by Zondervan. This is an eminently practical and comparatively recent overview of pastoral life, pastoral leadership, and pastoral counseling. My wistfulness for pastoral work in an earlier, less complicated day makes me prefer Blaikie, et. al. to Adams, but Adams shakes me and makes me realize that I am ministering in the late 20th century! Just be careful to keep Jay Adams' dogmatism separate from biblical ones, e.g. his views on Junior Church! I would also give a hearty recommendation to *The Elder's Handbook* by Gerard Berghoef and Lester DeKoster (Christian's Library Press). Don't make the mistake of thinking this volume is only for Ruling Elders! Its overview on leadership, ministry in special cases, eg. the single parent, the unwed mother, the critically ill, the mentally handicapped, etc., and the meaning of "watching out for the flock" are invaluable. Pastors: Use it for yourselves and for elder training classes. Another very recent contribution is *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry* by John MacArthur, Jr. and members of the faculty of Master's Seminary (Word Publishing). I have not read this thick volume, but its sections on topics such as "The Pastor's Home", "The Pastor's Study", and "The Pastor's Prayer Life - the Personal Side and the Ministry Side" will all arouse interest.

Remember that there is no higher calling than that of being a Minister of the Word and a Shepherd of the Flock. May these fine expositions of the practical aspects of that work—written from both pastoral experience and good theology—be used of God to make us all more skillful Reformed pastors in our own day.

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A Personal Testimony

by

Daniel G. Osborne

I have not always been an Orthodox Presbyterian. In the late 1970s, I was pastor of a church that held to Arminian doctrine and congregational government. But now, in 1997, I am a pastor of an Orthodox Presbyterian congregation, Reformed in doctrine and Presbyterian in government. I made the transition from Southern Baptist to RPCES (which became PCA) to OPC. God used various instruments in His providence to bring about the changes in my life. I am grateful to Him for each individual person and each thing He used to guide me.

The church I served in the late '70s had a Wednesday evening service, composed of Bible study and prayer. In the course of our studies, we came to study the books of First and Second Timothy and Titus. A young man in the church, providentially, spoke to me one day and said, "Here is a catalog of some good Christian books you might be interested in." As a pastor, of course I was interested. It just so happened that the catalog was from a source then known as "Puritan Reformed Discount Book House" (now "Great Christian Books").

I looked in the catalog to see what was offered on the Pastoral Epistles. I ordered a commentary, rather blindly. The volume I ordered came to me, and I began to study it in preparation for our Wednesday Bible Studies. It was a commentary

by Dr. William Hendricksen. As I studied that book, and the text of the Pastoral Epistles, I came little by little in contact with Reformed doctrine, as opposed to Arminianism. The book even referred to a "Westminster Confession of Faith." I became more and more interested in this line of thinking, without knowing what it was. It seemed to make sense to me. I sought to obtain a copy of the Westminster Confession, and eventually did.

It was in this period of time that I met the first living Orthodox Presbyterian I had ever encountered, Everett C. DeVelde, then pastor of First Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Baltimore. He was a great encouragement and help to me (as his son has been in more recent years).

I continued to explore these new ideas. I wanted to read as much as I could. I eventually obtained a copy of G. I. Williamson's study guide on the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. And, after that, I obtained a copy of A. W. Pink's *The Sovereignty of God*. This book, more than any other single volume, took me through the obstacles of believing in election and reprobation. By this time, I knew there was no turning back into Arminianism.

But there remained the obstruction of infant baptism. After reading several volumes on this subject, in God's leading, it was *William the*

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I have been brought
into this body (the
Orthodox Presbyterian
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page.

Baptist, by James M. Chaney, that convinced me of the truth of this doctrine. That book is not necessarily the best on the subject, and I had read several others. But this was the right one at the right time for the questions I had in my mind, as one who doubted the validity of infant baptism.

Along the way there were other helpful articles and books, without which, I just would not be where I am today. Concerning the doctrine of Holy Scripture, there was no book used more effectively in my life than E. J. Young's *Thy Word Is Truth*. For doctrine in general, in addition to the Confession itself (and commentaries on it), John Murray's *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* was manna from heaven.

As the Lord has taken me through the '80s and into the '90s, a refreshing study of some of the works of John Calvin, and the works of J. Gresham Machen, Geerhardus Vos, Herman Ridderbos, and others, have been extremely helpful to me. And now, here I am, a former Arminian, in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church! By God's providence, I have been brought into this body. To a large degree, the Lord used the printed page. I am so thankful to God for the various men and other tools that He has used and continues to use to change me.

When I came into the Presbyterian and Reformed tradition in 1980, I noticed that there was a little difference in vocabulary. One of the things that was strange to me was that men would address the Presbytery with the words "Fathers and Brethren." Now I am much more at home with this usage. Now I say, "Fathers and Brethren, I thank God for you"—for all of you, especially, whom God has used to help me understand His Holy Word.

Sometimes our ministers, elders, deacons, and other members labor exhaustively for years and wonder if their toil has accomplished anything. We Christians know in our heads that our labor is not in vain. But sometimes in our hearts, the feeling of accomplishment is not there. I for one am thankful to God for the "Fathers and Brethren," and to all fellow believers who have taught me a comprehensive system of truth, a worldview, a faith in which all glory is due to God alone.

Daniel Osborne is presently serving as pastor of the Westchester Orthodox Presbyterian Church in New Rochelle, New York.

"I received your letter of the 19th yesterday. It is not possible for me to give adequate expression to my appreciation. Furthermore, I have been filled with surprise. For I could not have thought that my writings could have been to you what you so kindly stated. And that you should have taken the time to write at such length adds to my sense of indebtedness to you. So, my friend, thank you. In all of this we have to realize more and more that God has put the treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. It is cause for amazement that I should be in any degree used to contribute to the advance of the gospel. It is all of grace..."

- John Murray

The Case for More Presbytery Consultation

by

Peter J. Wallace

Brethren,

A recent incident in the Presbytery of the Midwest has awakened a dormant idea from its slumbers. I am increasingly convinced that presbyteries are not living up to what a presbytery should be. We do business and formal discipline, but where is the bond that holds us together? Someone can easily fall between the cracks because the pastoral side of presbytery is wholly optional. If someone takes the initiative, he can develop a whole network of friendships and mentors, but without such initiative, he could spend his entire ministry in virtual isolation. Hence, when one member of our presbytery sought spiritual counsel and wisdom, the presbytery offered him a committee which met a couple times, proclaimed him orthodox, and dissolved. A couple of its members tried sporadically to continue talking with him, but the presbytery forgot that he needed help. So he turned to someone who had a more organic understanding of the pastoral relationship—and he now is seeking to leave the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and to join the Antiochene Orthodox Church.

I don't know how to create a more pastoral understanding of the presbytery. It would certainly involve changing the way we think about presbyteries. It might even involve some structural changes. We currently have a belief, as a relic of the past, that ministers are members of presbytery rather than members of a congregation. I call it a relic of the past because it appears to have virtually no substance as a belief, and no obvious effects in our corporate life. Beyond our yearly visitation (which is not given to all members of presbytery—only to each congregation), where

is the presbytery's pastoral oversight being exercised? In the local congregation, we not only worship together, but we have regular opportunities for fellowship, study, prayer, and spiritual development—not to mention systematic visitation and pastoral counseling. But where is that available (except upon special request) for pastors? We are beginning to develop better means for dealing with crises AFTER they arise, but how might we be able to take our understanding of the organic nature of the body of Christ and make use of it to PREVENT at least some such crises.

So now my historian's motor starts humming, and I recall how the "presbytery" of Geneva met regularly for joint study and discussion of various problems in the churches—not merely for conducting business, but for pastoral oversight, for mutual correction, and counsel in how to handle difficult situations. I could multiply examples beyond number.

Obviously many presbyteries are geographically too large for the whole body to get together. But then again, most presbyteries are numerically too large for a meeting of the whole to provide the sort of pastoral oversight that I envision and desire. I would suggest that each region have regular monthly (at least) meetings for the discussion of issues, pastoral counsel, and godly fellowship. Each region should consist of roughly five to ten ministers, plus ruling elders. For example, in my presbytery, according to my count, there are thirteen ministers in Illinois, five in Iowa (though I think two are in Dakotas presbytery), twenty-two in Michigan, one in Ontario, and twelve in

Wisconsin. Perhaps the regions could be Wisconsin, Illinois/Iowa, Western Michigan, and Eastern Michigan.

Required meetings could be held every month except those months with business meetings. Perhaps at least half the meetings (if not more often), could be devoted to a specific topic. One member of the group would make a brief presentation, with discussion to follow. The topics would vary with the interests and needs of the group (ranging from “how do I handle this one” sorts of things, to relevant theological questions). Presentations could be exegetical and/or historical perspectives on issues to provoke discussion. Obviously each member of the group would not be expected to prepare one of these talks more than once a year. Other meetings could be devoted to simply talking through issues that have come up in the various congregations, encouraging and admonishing each other. Regions could combine and hold joint sessions involving special speakers, topics of joint interest, etc.

In doing this, we would be taking some concrete steps to assert that ministers are *truly* members of presbytery, and can find counsel, wisdom, and fellowship from one another. The Reformation did not reject the authority which bishops exercised, rather they affirmed that the presbytery should exercise that authority over one another. Have we become virtual congregationalists by diminishing the authority of presbytery to occasional visits and discipline? A good old Scottish presbytery acted like Paul in sending ministers to churches, rather than waiting for a congregation to request someone. Congregations could approve or veto the presbytery's choice (as could the minister), but all involved recognized that the call of the presbytery was to be treated as the call of Christ unless good reasons could be produced. Charles Hodge recommended that the newfangled intrusion of allowing congregations to pay their own minister be abolished. He argued that this was a reason why Presbyterians rarely planted churches in poor neighborhoods, and claimed that it would inevitably lead to the

reduction of both ministerial and presbyterial authority. He advocated the old Reformed and catholic practice of having the presbytery pay all pastors, both as a symbol of their membership in the presbytery, but also as a reminder to the congregation that once the money hit the offering plate, it was no longer theirs—it was God's. Pastors would be paid according to their need, rather than according to the wealth and whim of their congregation.

I would love to see all three of these suggestions come to pass in the OPC, but for now I'll settle for the first! These meetings should not be regarded as merely optional. We should not say that pastoral oversight is less important than business and discipline. We all need the lamp of the Word to shine on our ministry—and not merely in our own study, but in the fellowship of the presbytery to which we are subject. If we say that members of the congregation must not forsake the assembling of themselves together, by what logic can we say that ministers are excused from such requirements?

I grant that some presbyteries are probably too spread out for this, so I suppose that an electronic gathering would be acceptable if no other one is possible.

Would an amendment to the FOG, chapter XIV, be appropriate? Right now, while VI.4 implies that the presbytery is to exercise pastoral care and oversight, I can find no clear direction as to how this oversight is to be exercised. Most of the comments have to do with the exercise of formal discipline. Is it too much to ask that we commit ourselves—even in some general sense—to the pastoral care of one another in the presbytery?

Any comments or suggestions would be appreciated.

Blessings,

Peter J. Wallace

Grace Reformed Christian Fellowship

CHARISMATIC PRESBYTERIANS?

*An Examination of Misunderstanding Among Orthodox Presbyterians
As to the term Charismatic & their use of this term in their self image.*

by James A. Zozzaro

Within the Orthodox Presbyterian Church a problem has arisen in regard to the relationship between the Holy Spirit, the gift/gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the believer. This has arisen in reaction to the neo-pentecostal movement and its stress upon certain gifts of the Spirit. Since the neo-pentecostals have stressed sign gifts, such as tongues and prophecy, to an unbiblical extreme and have virtually equated these with the “charismata” (i.e., gifts) of the Spirit it has become common to refer to neo-pentecostals as “Charismatics.” Since members of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church do not agree with the neo-pentecostals regarding the presence of authentic sign gifts today, many among them have chosen to describe themselves as anti-charismatic or non-charismatic. Herein lies the problem. For a Christian to think of himself as either an anti-charismatic or a non-charismatic would, in fact, be contrary to what the Bible says about the gift/gifts of the Holy Spirit. To my knowledge Orthodox Presbyterians who use these titles to describe themselves do it in an attempt to disassociate himself from the neo-pentecostal movement. But using the title of non- or anti-charismatic in this way could also indicate a misunderstanding as to what the gift/gifts of the Holy Spirit is. In order to solve the problem we must examine what the gift of the Spirit is and come to understand the concept “charismatic” as we find it in the Bible. We will do this by examining the two types of uses of the word group which we usually refer to as “charismata” (i.e., “doron” and “charismata”) found in the Scriptures in regard to the Holy Spirit. The first group sees the Holy Spirit as the gift, the second group sees the Holy Spirit as the giver of the gifts. After examining these two groups it will also be seen that only when we use the “charismata” terminology in a Biblically correct manner will we truly understand the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church today.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AS THE GIFT

The first and most important thing that we must realize is that the Holy Spirit is *the* gift. This is borne out by the following statement by the Apostle Peter, “*Repent and be baptized, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*” (Acts 2:38) The word here is “dorea” which like “charismata” means gift. One would be hard pressed to find a substantial difference between the two words which in the English are both translated “gift” and thus when we speak of “charismatics” in English we are really referring to both “doron” and “charismata” in Greek. In Peter’s statement “the Holy Spirit” is in the genitive case and is being used as an objective genitive. This means that Peter here sees the Holy Spirit Himself as the gift that is received by in repentance and baptism. Thus when we refer to spiritual gifts in Church we must start our discussion by referring to the gift of the Spirit from whom flows the gifts of the Spirit.

That the Holy Spirit Himself is the gift is obvious from Peter’s statement recorded above, but *who* receives this gift of the Spirit and *when* this gift of the Spirit is received are debated in Christian circles. Neo-pentecostals believe that the gift of the Spirit is received by only some Christians and that this gift is received at a time subsequent to conversion. If this is true then only some Christians (those who have received the gift) could be referred to as “Charismatics.” This position is not biblically tenable, however. First of all, the Acts passage above links reception of the Holy Spirit directly with repentance and baptism. The point here would seem to be that all those who repent and are baptized immediately receive the Spirit. This would mean that every Christian *has* received the gift or *is* “Charismatic” in the biblical sense of this term. This conclusion is strengthened

when we look at Romans 8:9 which says: “*You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in You. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ he does not belong to Christ.*” The point here is that those who do not have the gift of the Spirit do not have Christ! Thus every Christian—who by definition must possess Christ—therefore also possesses the Spirit. These two passages along with a multitude of others (Rom.8:11, 1 Cor.3:16; and 2 Cor.13:14 for example) prove that in order to be a Christian one must have received the Spirit as a gift.

Since the Holy Spirit is Himself the gift and every Christian has received this gift, it must be concluded that every Christian is charismatic (i.e., gifted by God). Thus for persons to think of themselves as anti-charismatic or non-charismatic would be, in effect, to deny that they are Christians. No Orthodox Presbyterian Church, therefore, should have this mind-set but should understand the Biblical concept of “charismatic” as “having received the gift of the Holy Spirit.” By admitting to being “charismatic”, understood as explained above, members of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church should begin to see more clearly the centrality of soteriology (i.e., the application of salvation) in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The unordained members will also start to see the possession of the Holy Spirit as being a present reality for the Christian and not just a future hope and thus will see the power of the Spirit as more readily accessible to them.

THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

When we speak of the gifts of the Holy Spirit we come to the area where the term “charismatic” really comes to the forefront in present-day American ecclesiastical circles. In the Orthodox Presbyterian Church two major misconceptions could easily arise as to what the gifts of the Spirit are and how they function in the body of Christ. In this section we will examine the two misconceptions and then seek to demonstrate from Scripture that every Christian is charismatic in the

sense that each has been given a gift by the Holy Spirit.

The first misconception that some Orthodox Presbyterians may have is to equate the gifts of the Spirit exclusively with sign gifts such as tongues, prophecy, and healing. When the gifts of the Spirit are seen in this way, the term “charismatic” will continue to be monopolized by the neo-pentecostal churches. But, as we will see in part three of this section, it is Biblically incorrect to limit the gifts of the Holy Spirit only to the sign gifts which are so closely identified in our country today with the neo-pentecostal movement.

The second misconception that some Orthodox Presbyterians may have is to equate the gifts of the Spirit exclusively with those gifts listed in the New Testament “gift lists” (Rom.12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-31; Eph.4:1-16). When the gifts of the Spirit are understood exclusively in this way then only those identified as possessing one of the gifts on these lists are considered to be “charismatic.” This results in seeing some Christians as being charismatic while others are not. The non-charismatic Christians are then urged to pray that the Spirit would give them one of the gifts also, a prayer that is seen as being answered only if in doing a “gift inventory” of himself the believer discovers that he does indeed have a gift that is found on one of the gift lists. This understanding of the gifts of the Spirit, though perhaps less serious than the first misconception, is still erroneous because it too ends up distinguishing between “charismatic” and “non-charismatic” Christians—a distinction that is not supported by the Biblical text.

Instead of limiting the gifts of the Holy Spirit to either sign gifts—or only those gifts specifically mentioned in the “gift lists”—a closer reading of Scripture will reveal that anything that serves to build up the body of Christ is a gift of the Spirit. This is especially apparent in two passages which we will now look at in a little more detail.

The first passage we must take note of is 1 Cor.12:4-7. The NIV translates this as follows:

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men: Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

The first thing to notice is that the terms “gifts”, “service”, and “working” are being used here as parallel terms and thus are basically synonymous in this context. Thus Spiritual gifts include works and services among the members of the body of Christ. The second thing to notice is that God works all the gifts in “all men” and that to “each” a manifestation of the Spirit is given. The terms “all men” and “each” are in this context references to those in the body—in other words, all Christians have been gifted by the Spirit. The third thing to notice is that these gifts which are services, and workings are given for the common good of Christ’s body. Thus this passage teaches that every Christian has been given a gift which is to be used for the common good of the body of Christ.

The second passage we must look at is 1 Peter 4:10. The NIV translates this passage as follows:

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.

Again we must note three things here. First, “gift” and “God’s grace” are here parallels. The gifts then come in “various forms” and therefore cannot be limited to certain sign gifts or gift lists. Second, “each one” has received a gift. In the context “each one” refers to each believer. Third, the various forms of gifts are given so that the recipient might use them to “serve others.” Thus this passage also teaches that every Christian has been given a gift to be used in serving the people of God.

These two passages demonstrate that *all* Christians have been gifted by the Spirit for service in the kingdom of God. In other words each

Christian has received a “charismata” from the Spirit and therefore should rightfully be seen as being “charismatic” (when we use this term in a Biblical way). The Bible therefore does not support any view that distinguishes between “charismatic” and “non-charismatic” Christians. Thus Orthodox Presbyterians need to see themselves as gifted by the Spirit, “charismatic” (in the Scriptural sense), and recognize that whenever they do any type of work or service which is for the common good of the Church they are exercising their spiritual gift.

CONCLUSION

Every Christian is “charismatic” in the sense that they have received both the gift of the Holy Spirit and have been gifted by the Holy Spirit for service in the church. It follows, therefore, that as Orthodox Presbyterians we should be careful in our use of this term. To distinguish ourselves from neo-pentecostal groups is, of course, proper and necessary. But there is no need to use Biblical terminology incorrectly in order to do so. We are not anti-charismatic *if, by charismatic, we mean what the Bible means*. But we are anti-charismatic *when we are confronted with those who use that term in an unbiblical way*. We should insist that the term “charismatic” be used in a way that is in accord with biblical teaching in order to foster a correct understanding of the gift of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. Thus we as Orthodox Presbyterians need to understand the terms “charismatic” and “Christian” as functional equivalents and therefore to think of ourselves as “Biblical charismatics.”

Our thanks to Rev. James A. Zozarro for this fine contribution to the pages of *Ordained Servant*. Mr. Zozarro is currently in his third year as a pastor of the OPC and is serving Calvary Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Wildwood, New Jersey.

Some Thoughts on The Preparation of Men for Ministry

by John Kramer

Preparation of men for ministry within our denomination is an issue of great concern at the present time. I am aware that much thought, discussion and prayer has already been devoted to this topic. This brief outline of my thoughts about the subject has been prepared with the idea that it may in some way contribute to the ongoing discussion of this important issue. My comments and suggestions are the result of reflection upon my own experience within the existing ministerial training environment of the OPC.

From August 1988 to May 1992, I attended Westminster Theological Seminary at Philadelphia. When I arrived at Westminster I was not a Presbyterian. However, during my years at seminary I was 'converted' to Calvinism. I have grown to love and respect the Reformed system of doctrine as contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. Through my involvement in the church, I have continued to learn about the Reformed faith and the OPC in particular. My love for our rich heritage continues to grow.

At the outset, I feel it is important to state that the guidance and oversight of my home presbytery and the denomination as a whole has not been a significant factor in my preparation for ministry. Overall, the encouragement, support and training received from the denomination has been meager, at best. I suspect that my experience in this regard is not unique. I hasten to add that this is not intended to be either an accusation or a complaint. It is simply a conclusion based on my personal experience.

There are several indications that ministerial training within the OPC is not as effective as it might be. One indication is the consistently high level of vacant pulpits. Another is the lengthy period of time many of those pulpits remain vacant. Another is the filling of pulpits with men from outside the denomination while men already in the OPC are bypassed. Yet another is

what I feel to be a high incidence of 'pastoral failure' resulting in sometimes wrenching disruptions within congregations throughout our denomination.

I believe that if there were OPC men trained and prepared properly to fill OPC pulpits the number of vacant pulpits might be less, the length of time pulpits remain empty might be shortened, men committed to the OPC over a long period of time might be able to fill those pulpits instead of being bypassed and disruptions within our churches would be far more rare than is currently the case.

A relevant illustration of some of the concerns mentioned above is the recent experience of Calvary OPC, Glenside, PA. While many OPC men expressed interest in the recently-filled pulpit there, the committee erected by the congregation to evaluate potential candidates felt constrained to report "...there are few men ideally qualified to be the pastor of Calvary Orthodox Presbyterian Church." The failure of the OPC to effectively train its own pastors was underscored by the fact that a licentiate from the PCA with no prior experience in the OPC was assessed by the committee and then the congregation to be the most qualified candidate to be pastor of Calvary Orthodox Presbyterian Church. He was subsequently called to the position. The OPC men who applied were bypassed even though some had been in the denomination for a long time.

Clearly, something needs to be done. Thankfully, something is being done. While I do not know the details of the work already underway, I am encouraged by the fact that there is not only recognition of the problem but a serious effort to rectify it.

To my knowledge, most of the work thus far has involved documentation of the requirements of a more formal training program. This is a good start. I feel that a more formal denominational

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training regimen clearly documented and rigorously applied would be very beneficial. But I feel that other measures can and should be taken to strengthen the overall training environment.

To that end, I have listed below five concepts that I feel may be developed profitably to enhance pastoral training in the OPC. I do not presume to have thought through all of their details and ramifications. They are presented merely as ideas that may deserve some further thought and refinement. I ask and encourage you to read and consider them in that light.

1. An OPC Training Center:

Westminster Theological Seminary was established by the same men who established the OPC. As originally constituted, the seminary clearly reflected the theology and positions on apologetics and church polity that characterized the denomination. However, Westminster is not an “OPC” seminary. Over the years the seminary has changed. While it is still the seminary of choice for OPC men preparing for ministry, many within our denomination express concern about both the content of the training currently offered and the environment within which that training is presented. In some ways the seminary does not adequately address the concerns and interests of the OPC with respect to pastoral training. A related concern is that OPC students are a distinct minority within the seminary community. They are easily engulfed by those around them.

While Westminster does in some measure respond to the concerns of the OPC there is no real focal point for OPC concerns and interests within the seminary. To address this deficiency, I suggest that the denomination establish a focal point for OPC concerns outside the seminary. This proposal is not a call to establish a new denominational seminary, which I believe to be impractical at this time. Rather, it is a more modest and feasible alternative of establishing an OPC training site in a denominationally owned facility in the vicinity of the seminary. I leave the identification of such a place to your imagination. Suffice it to say that there are viable possibilities near the seminary.

Training accomplished at such a place would be oriented to specific areas of concern and spe-

cific interest to the OPC. Possible areas of study are OPC church history and polity, hermeneutics, preaching, and the Westminster standards. I am sure that as you consider this idea other subjects may come to mind as well. Additionally, the OPC should explore the possibility of negotiating an agreement with Westminster Seminary to allow substitution of such structured and properly documented training for both currently required Practical Theology courses and electives.

2. Mentors:

I have observed that men who have had the experience of being associated with a mentor have developed their abilities more effectively, attained positions in ministry more readily and have served with observable confidence once in responsible positions. Actually, the concept of such preparation for ministry is not new. It has been an effective form of training for many years. However, it is not employed in the OPC to the extent that it can and should be.

One important form of this type of training that is offered in the OPC is pastoral internship in local congregations. Many have profited from a formal internship, whether for the summer or, better yet, for an entire year. There is little doubt that an internship can be a very fruitful experience. But reliance on internships alone is not the most effective way to prepare men for the ministry. A pastoral internship for a limited period of time is not an adequate substitute for an ongoing relationship between a mentor and a man aspiring to the ministry. I have learned that the cultivation of a pastor involves a great deal more than just completing all the courses and passing through all the administrative gateways. It involves the growing of a pastoral heart and mind—a pastoral character. This growth requires consistent attention and nurture over a long period of time. The process ought not to be confined to formal internships of limited duration. Rather, strong pastoral character is best developed over time through the means of ongoing relationships between those who are capable and experienced pastors within the denomination and those who are interested in serving the church as competent and equipped pastors.

The OPC is blessed with many experienced men who could provide extremely valuable guid-

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ance in this way. I suspect that there are many who would be happy to serve in such a capacity. What remains to be done is for someone to take the initiative and make it happen.

3. Seminary advisors:

One of the first things I learned after my arrival at Westminster was that the seminary does not assign students to faculty advisors. I was surprised about this, because I had never been in an educational environment in which no one was identified as a point of contact for advice and counsel for the individual student. I would have benefited significantly from the advice and counsel of an advisor not only at the beginning but throughout my seminary experience. I feel that others would express the same sentiment.

In view of this, it seems to me that there is an opportunity for the OPC to step forward and provide this needed service to both those seminary students who are already in the OPC and others who express an interest in our denomination. It may be impractical for a number of reasons to expect the few OPC members currently serving at Westminster to take on this responsibility by themselves. It may be necessary that OPC men not directly affiliated with the seminary also become involved. This need not frighten anyone, however. There are a number of men who are currently sufficiently acquainted with the seminary to be able to do this effectively and others could learn. Indeed, taking on this responsibility might encourage OPC men in general to become more familiar with Westminster. This increased interest might, in turn, actually strengthen the voice of the OPC within the seminary community. There is an opportunity here both to help those who need advice and counsel and also demonstrate OPC interest in what is going on at Westminster Seminary.

4. Meaningful “Under Care” Status:

I was brought “under care” of the Presbytery of Philadelphia at a point in my pastoral training. However, in my experience, this amounted to merely an administrative designation with no real significance. Very little, if anything, changed when I came “under care.”

Being “under care” should mean that a man preparing for ministry receive some objectively discernable and measurable “care.” But what is “care”? This is a question that should be addressed. To me, being placed “under care” ought to mean that an individual receive assistance, encouragement and active oversight from the presbytery on a regular basis. “Care” may include elements of some of what has been mentioned in the preceding paragraphs. It may involve other forms of support and nurturing that have not been discussed. But whatever it involves ought to be real and tangible. It should not be merely an administrative designation.

5. OPC Housing Assistance:

When a man is called to be pastor of a church, provision is made to ensure that he is free from worldly cares and concerns. This is done to enable him to concentrate on his responsibilities as undershepherd of the flock God has entrusted to him. It seems to me that a man who is preparing for service in the church ought to have the same sort of relief. By this, I do not necessarily mean that he be relieved from his duty to support himself and his family, if he has one. What I do mean is that he ought to have the benefit of being able to prepare for God's work free from concerns about housing conditions that may be unduly uncomfortable or even dangerous for him and his family.

One of the greatest challenges a seminary student may face when he comes to Philadelphia is locating affordable, decent housing. This is especially true of students with families. The OPC could provide a real service in this regard by either assisting in locating housing for seminary students or, more ambitiously, by establishing and supporting a low cost denominational housing facility in the vicinity of Westminster Seminary. For instance, a large house could be purchased and used as an “OPC House.” This would provide denominational students a place to live and study in the company of others with a like mind. The importance of this particular issue must not be overlooked or understated. It is important.

John Kramer,

THE LORD'S SUPPER: HOW OFTEN?

Lessons from the Past, No. 4

by D.G. Hart & John R. Muether

The Directory for Worship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church seems to give two very different instructions about the Lord's Supper. On the one hand, it describes the Lord's Supper, along with Baptism, as an "occasional" element of the public worship of God. On the other hand, it directs congregations to celebrate the Lord's Supper "frequently." So which is it, a literalist might ask: occasional or frequent? In good Presbyterian fashion, the Directory leaves that for sessions to determine: "the frequency may be determined by each session as it may judge most conducive to edification" (IV:A:2).

When the OPC was founded in 1936, it inherited a pattern of quarterly observance of the Lord's Supper that was well-established in American Presbyterianism. Many OP churches have increased observance to bimonthly or monthly rates, but even that leaves some ministers and elders dissatisfied. Should churches celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly? As sessions wrestle with the issue of frequency, a look at how Presbyterians have practiced communion in the past might be instructive.

Most students of Calvin are aware that it was his desire that churches practice weekly communion. Calvin believed that this frequency could be found in both apostolic teaching and example, and that weekly observance was also the practice of the church fathers. Moreover, Calvin saw weekly observance as necessary for uniting the ministry of Word and sacrament. By sealing the promises proclaimed in the preaching of the Word, weekly communion enabled Christians frequently to return in memory to Christ's work, and "by such remembrance to sustain and strengthen their faith."

Infrequent communion, Calvin claimed, was a superstitious horror, "a most evident contrivance of the devil," and he considered it among the

worst of the many abuses of worship in medieval Catholicism. For Calvin, weekly communion was no less important than other reforms he sought, such as the use of the cup by the laity and worship in the language of the vernacular. So Calvin came to the conclusion that "the Lord's Table should have been spread at least once a week for the assembly of Christians, and the promises declared in it should feed us spiritually."

Students of Calvin also know that he did not have his way on the matter of communion frequency. The Geneva Town Council never approved this element of Calvin's reform program. Nor have his Presbyterian descendants adopted Calvin's desire. The blame for this is usually placed upon another Reformer, Ulrich Zwingli, and his memorial view of the Supper. If the sacrament is not a means of grace, and if the bread and wine merely symbolize and do not embrace the body and blood of Christ, there is little urgency for frequent celebration. Zwingli himself suggested quarterly observance: once in the autumn and on Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. While the OPC in her confessional standards officially rejects a Zwinglian view of the sacraments, we would do well to ask if we have become Zwinglians in practice, when the supper becomes an infrequent addition to the ministry of the Word. As Donald MacLeod has suggested, "there are more Zwinglians among Presbyterians today than one would hazard to guess."

But contemporary Presbyterian practice may owe less to the legacy of Zwingli than to generally overlooked developments in Scottish Presbyterianism. Although John Knox's *Order of Geneva* (1556) advocated monthly communion, the *First Book of Discipline* adopted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (1562) advised quarterly observance in the towns, and twice a year in rural parishes.

By the eighteenth century, Scottish practice gradually became even less frequent, to the point where communion was generally celebrated annually. The reasons for this decline included hostility toward episcopacy, poverty (that made bread scarce), and a lack of qualified ministers. As historian Leigh Eric Schmidt tells the story in his *Holy Fairs: Scottish Communion and American Revivals in the Early Modern Period* (1989), the result was a triumph of festivity over frequency. These annual rites developed into elaborate week-long festivals, called “Communion Seasons,” that typically included a Thursday fast day, a Saturday preparatory service (where communion tokens were distributed), and a Thanksgiving service on the Monday following Sunday observance.

The effect of these seasons was a subtle redefinition of Presbyterian spirituality. Popular piety began to revolve around these massive outdoor gatherings. As these occasions frequently resulted in religious revival, they became the forerunner of the camp meeting and the sawdust trail of American revivalism. And ironically, their spectacular services would exceed in pageantry the medieval Catholicism that Presbyterians had sought to reform.

The Scottish communion season was transplanted into the new world with the 1787 Directory of Worship for American Presbyterianism. But the practice came under attack from the pen of a Scottish-trained New York pastor, John Mitchell Mason. In his 1798 book, *Letters on Frequent Communion* Mason hoped that the reinstatement of frequency would restore simplicity and reorient the rhythm of Presbyterian piety. Because the Bible sanctioned no holy days and no festivities beyond the weekly Sabbath, churches should cultivate piety not through big shows with itinerant evangelists but through the steady and unpretentious observance of all of the outward and ordinary means of grace. This continual and sustained devotion, Mason argued, could be nurtured only through weekly communion, Sabbath after Sabbath.

Mason’s critique of Scottish festivity found favor with J. W. Alexander. Writing in the *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* in 1840, Alexander saw the Scottish innovation of a Com-

munion season as “pernicious” and without Scriptural warrant. By adding to the length and number of services connected with the sacrament, the church was taxing the strength of the “feebler members of the flock.” While the practice did heighten the “gravity” of the celebration, it also added “an unscriptural mystery or awfulness...Instead of being an attractive and delightful ordinance, it thus becomes fearful and repulsive.” Alexander concluded with Calvin and Mason that “ecclesiastical history affords the strongest presumption that the Lord’s Supper was celebrated every Lord’s day.”

To be sure, mere frequency will not rid our churches of Zwinglianism or other false beliefs and practices of the Lord’s Supper. And we should be wary of how weekly communion might tempt partakers toward a deadening familiarity with the sacrament (a warning, of course, that applies to other means of grace that churches rightly observe weekly).

Still, Orthodox Presbyterian pastors and elders who are striving for greater faithfulness in the observance of both the Lord’s Day and the Lord’s Supper ought to consider Mason and Alexander’s suggestion that the two must work together, and not at cross-purposes. When sessions offer two different rhythms for devotional life, the outward and ordinary cadence of Sabbath observance and the infrequent and extraordinary habit of occasional communion practice, it is any wonder that corporate devotional life seems off-key? The efficacious power of the sacrament is compromised if it falls to the margins of the public worship of God. Weekly observance, Mason maintained, restores the Lord’s Supper to the heart, and away from the circumference, of Christian worship.

D. G. Hart and John Muether are coauthors of *Fighting the Good Fight, A Brief History of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*. Both are ruling elders in the OPC — Mr. Hart at Calvary OPC, Glenside, PA and Mr. Muether in Lake Sherwood OPC in Orlando, FL.

Should We Still Use the KJV Today?

(a review article)

by

G. I. Williamson

A New Hearing for The Authorized Version, (second edition, 1997) by Theodore P. Letis, Ph. D., 34 pages. Published by The Institute for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 6417 N. Fairhill, Philadelphia, PA 19126. Price not stated.

The argument presented in this small book is to the effect that we should return to the use of the Authorized Version of the Bible (commonly referred to as the King James Version or KJV) in our churches. And in support of this advocacy two major reasons are given. The first is the author's contention that, unlike almost all of the legion of modern versions, the KJV is based on the text found in the majority of ancient Greek manuscripts. The second is his contention that it is still the most faithful translation of the original Hebrew and Greek. He even defends the retention of such antiquated elements as the pronoun 'ye' because it provides a way for the average reader to clearly distinguish between the singular and plural—something that is not possible with the modern English versions.

It is the conviction of this reviewer that the author's argument for much greater respect for the majority text (on which most of the KJV was based), than has been the rule in recent years, is right. Discussions with Dr. Edward F. Hills, many years ago, brought me to this conviction. His arguments—and those of John William Burgon on whose work he built—have never really been refuted in my judgment. It is also my conviction that the author is right in his contention that the so-called "dynamic-equivalence" method of translation employed by the authors of most modern versions has been a catastrophic mistake. As Dr. Jacob Van Bruggen rightly says: "When the translator starts reducing the author's form...the possibility of letting his own theological prejudices influence the determination of what is essential

and what is not essential is far greater than when he sticks as closely as possible to the textual form handed down." It is the author's view that in the past it was faithfulness in strict rendering of the Hebrew and Greek idioms that made the great translations (such as the LXX, Luther's German Bible, and the KJV) transformers of both language and culture. This is what is needed today—not another modern version that will dumb itself down to the level of the prevailing culture, but rather one that will impact it the way these translations did.

All in all, then, this small booklet puts forward a powerful case—powerful, that is, to a point. But when it also argues for the retention of thee/thou, ye/you language I find it disappointing. I say this because I remain convinced of the correctness of the Westminster Confession of Faith (I,8) when it says:

"...because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have right unto, and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded, in the fear of God, to read and search them, therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, that, the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship him in an acceptable manner; and, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, may have hope."

The author himself seems to realize this when he says: "I am not, of course, arguing from these facts that the A.V. could never be improved" (p.18). Well, it *has* been improved precisely where it was needed—in the *New King James Version* (NKJV). For this reason, as well as for other reasons cogently argued in this little book, I find the NKJV to be my version of choice for use in the pulpit and in teaching.

ORDAINED SERVANT

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