

The Outlook

Devoted to the Exposition and Defense of the Reformed Faith

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"It was late. I had just stopped in at the church to pick something up and there he was..."

Kindness

The fifth in the list of the fruit of the Spirit is “kindness” (NKJV). Whereas the works of the flesh are to be put off, the fruits of the Spirit are to be put on. This is the life of sanctification for every child of God.

What exactly is “kindness?” The Greek word which is here translated as “kindness” is translated elsewhere in the New Testament with the words: “goodness” and “gentleness.” Its first meaning is “to be fit for use,” and it is to be fit for use especially when dealing with people.

Secondly, it has the meaning of being mild and pleasant over against being harsh, hard, sharp, or bitter.

“Kindness” is that fruit of the Spirit which is the virtue of being eminently approachable, of being humble in demeanor and kind in speech so that others will not be afraid to come up to us. It is to be tender and sensitive to others, to be considerate and not offensive. This is a great attribute for men as well as women.

God is kind. This virtue is ascribed to God in Romans 2:4; 11:22; Ephesians 2:7; and Titus 3:4. The tremendous riches of the grace of God toward His people are manifested in His kindness to them through Christ Jesus. It is God’s kindness and gentleness which are evidenced in His gathering His

lambs and gently leading those which are with young (Isaiah 40:11).

Jesus also is kind. It was this virtue which made Him approachable by Nicodemus and Zacchaeus. While He spoke scathingly against the hypocritical Pharisees, He had obvious compassion on other sinners.

God’s children are the recipients of God’s kindness. They are renewed in regeneration by the Spirit so they also are able to be kind and gentle. The apostle Paul says that, as a minister of the gospel, he made every effort to be kind (II Corinthians 6:6). This virtue is urged especially on ministers (II Timothy 2:24). In dealing with people, they are to be “fit for use,” that is, pleasant rather than hard or harsh. But all of God’s people, just because they are God’s, are to put the virtue



Volume 52, No. 2 (ISSN 8750-5754) (USPS 633-980) “And the three companies blew the trumpets...and held THE TORCHES in their left hands, and THE TRUMPETS in their right hands. . .and they cried, ‘The sword of Jehovah and of Gideon’ (Judges 7:20).

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of kindness (Colossians 3:12; Titus 3:2).

How are we to put on kindness? How can we as Christians be kind?

First, it is good to remember that we do not have a choice whether we are going to be kind or not. God commands us to be kind. While the unregenerated cannot obey this command, you, who confess yourselves to be regenerated and converted, not only *must* be kind, but you also *can* be kind. God, in giving you the gift of the Spirit, gives you the ability to be kind. This means that you cannot say, "I cannot be kind" or "I cannot be kind to so and so." You can. For a Christian to deny the presence of the ability to be kind is a lie. In all honesty, when we are unkind, we must say that we did not want to be kind. We have been given the ability to obey this command of God; so we can be kind!

Second, an important part of obeying the command to be kind is to pray for help from THE Kind One. After all God promises to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him (Luke 11:17). To grow in the fruit of the Spirit we must ask for the Spirit.

Third, think about why you want to be kind. Every Christian is moved by the Spirit to be kind whenever they consider how much they are the objects of God's kindness. As we consider God's kindness to us, His kindness becomes greater as our awareness of our unworthiness increases. We are often mean and critical, but God never ceases to be kind to us. God's ever-faithful kindness to us is the stimulation for our being kind. See how our kindness is to be motivated by God's kindness to us, according to Titus 3:2-4 and Ephesians 2:4-7.

There is especially one time when Christians are to be kind. That is

when we face opposition. When others oppose us, then kindness is not only commanded, but it is greatly needed. Kindness is the Christ-like response to our personal enemies and to all ill-treatment. When we are kind to those who take advantage of us or oppose us, then we reflect Christ, Who did not threaten when He suffered at the hands of men (I Peter 2:23). Being kind is not returning evil for evil, but on the contrary, blessing (I Peter 3:9).

In the church, with our fellow-saints, kindness is also required. "And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32).

Rev. Ron Van Overloop is the pastor of the Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

Casey Freswick

The Changing Face of Liberalism

During many discussions in the last twenty years with members of the Christian Reformed Church, I often made the charge that the church had become liberal. The response would almost always be the same. No matter how far they had strayed from the faith of their forefathers they would declare, "I am not liberal." They would say this because the definition of liberalism they there were taught in seminary or read in various books did not seem to describe what they had become. Since they did not look like historic liberalism, they claimed they did not have to worry about Liber-

alism. But Liberalism has changed. It has grabbed many churches that had remained free of its tentacles at the turn of the twentieth century only to be caught in its deadly grip at the turn of the twenty-first century.

In his classic work *Christianity and Liberalism*, J. Gresham Machen encouraged his readers with these words: "There have been previous great crises in the history of the Church, crises almost comparable to this. One appeared in the second century, when the very life of Christendom was threatened by the Gnostics. ...In

such times of crisis, God has always saved the Church. But He has always saved it not by theological pacifists, but by sturdy contenders for the truth."

Dr. Machen declared that the root of liberalism is "the denial of any entrance of the creative power of God (as distinguished from the ordinary course of nature) in connection with the origin of Christianity" (p. 2 *Christianity and Liberalism*). However, the subsequent history of Liberalism has shown that its root is not "naturalism." Natural Liberalism is but one face of Liberalism.

Little did Dr. Machen know that exactly 70 years after he wrote those words his theological son, Dr. Peter Jones, professor at Westminster West Seminary, would write a book entitled, *“The Gnostic Empire Strikes Back.”* Dr. Jones recognized a major shift in the religious setting since Dr. Machen. The liberal crisis of the earthy twentieth century had changed. Just as the ancient eastern religions invaded the Greek materialism of the first century and produced Gnosticism, Eastern religions have invaded the spiritual vacuum caused by Naturalistic Liberalism and reproduced the Gnostic religion of the past: New Age Liberalism.

Although anti-naturalistic, this “new age” religion is readily embraced by the historic liberal mind set. Although it can no longer be called Naturalistic Liberalism, it can certainly be called Liberalism. It is rooted in the same denial of a personal God acting in history, in creation, and in redemption.

Naturalistic Liberalism

Naturalistic Liberalism had its birth in the late nineteenth century. It was conceived in a cultural context of a scientific world view. A mind set that elevated science as the ultimate method of testing all truth. The battles against Naturalistic Liberalism were fought in a different cultural setting than we now face.

Naturalist Liberalism was born in the context of a renewed hope in

the scientific enterprise. We often forget the time frame of this elevation of science. Charles Darwin had already entered the debate with his theories of evolution. You could find soldiers fighting the battles of the civil war discussing Darwin. A religion of science was emerging. The declaration was made that only what is scientifically verifiable is true. The scientific method of proving a thesis by an experiment was declared the root of all truth.

This view of truth led German theologians of the nineteenth century to question the Bible as a miraculous revelation of God to man and the truths it contains. They “demythologized” the Bible. They stripped it of its supernatural character. They claimed it was necessary to remove the “myths” of the Bible to find the truth of the Bible. They declared the Bible was filled with errors and written by many men and competing views of God. Doctrinal truth was irrelevant. *Eerdman’s Handbook to American Christianity* summarizes Naturalistic Liberalism with these words:

The key test of Christianity was life, not doctrine. Christianity could be saved by stressing the ethical. This, said the liberals, was the heart of Jesus’ teaching. They faulted Calvinism and other traditional theologies for stressing the judicial elements of God’s relationship to humanity. They claimed Jesus, by

contrast, had emphasized the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of mankind. Whatever else might fall before the withering blasts of criticism, the ethics of Jesus would survive (p. 322).

The heart of the gospel became the Social gospel. An ethical life was the most important. Most liberals during the 1920’s were prohibitionists and supported the amendment to ban all sale of alcohol. However, their social gospel, their ethic, was dictated by the whims of society not by the authority of God’s word. Just as their theology was controlled by compromises to naturalistic science their ethical standards were controlled by what was socially acceptability. Prohibition was culturally acceptable. Dr. Machen was ostracized by both liberals and many Christians who supported outlawing the sale of alcohol because he did not favor prohibition.

The influence of Naturalistic Liberalism had a direct result in the churches of North America. Most major denominations in the United States split during the early part of the 20th century because of the Biblical issues raised by Naturalistic Liberalism. Naturalistic liberals believed that the only way the church could survive was to shed what they declared to be the non-essentials in order to remain relevant and popular to the changing world.

In response conservative denominations and individuals declared the

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necessity of the “Five Fundamentals.” First, the absolute authority, infallibility and innerrancy of Scripture had to be maintained. Second, the virgin birth of Jesus Christ was necessary to a true understanding of the unique nature of Jesus Christ. Third, the miracles of Christ, although unable to be repeated for scientific verification, must be accepted as historical. Fourth, the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ was necessary to a Biblical understanding of God’s saving work. Fifth, the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ was affirmed in the wake of the denial of a literal bodily resurrection.

These specific issues became the focal point of many conflicts within what is now described as mainline liberal denominations. By 1922 liberalism had sent its claws into the culturally important, large, but theologically weak and ineffective denominations of the day. Methodists, Presbyterians, The Episcopal Church, Baptists, and Lutherans were all influenced by Naturalistic Liberalism. By 1940 most large “mainline” denominations had split and Naturalistic Liberalism dominated historic Christian seminaries.

For example, in 1924 the Assembly of the Presbyterian Church faced these very issues. Thirteen percent of the denomination’s ministers, 1,274 strong, stated that the historic teachings of Scripture were only theories and were not necessary or fundamental to the Christian faith. There was no disciplinary action taken against these ministers by the delegates to the Synod.

The issues came to a head in Princeton Seminary. The result was the establishment of Westminster

Seminary (Philadelphia) in the fall of 1929. The conservatives of the denomination established a separate missions board. In 1936 the men supporting this action were deposed from office. On June 11, 1936, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church was formed. This same scenario was repeated in other denominations and many Protestant denominations split during this time.

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Not everyone remaining in their mother denominations agreed with the liberal teachings of the day. But these fundamentals were no longer a basis of unity in the churches.

The historic battle with Naturalistic Liberalism had been seen by many denominations as the key battle. Because of this, all kinds of denominations, Reformed, Presbyterian and Mennonites, who today are compromising with New Age Liberalism maintain that they have no problem with Liberalism. They think that since they reject Naturalistic Liberalism they are free from the possibility of compromising and becoming Liberal. But they are compromising with New Age Liberalism.

New Age Liberalism

New Age Liberalism is a liberalism that has grasped once more the supernatural. Liberal churches have had a resurgence in the supernatural. There are all kinds of discussions about miracles and the divinity of Christ. Historic liberal denominations have demonstrated a surface return to the supernatural fundamentals that were debated at the turn of the 20th century. The existence of the supernatural is no longer the key point of controversy. The Bible’s explanation of the supernatural is rejected, but the supernatural is once again embraced as acceptable.

New Age Liberalism avoids anti-supernaturalism but they bow down to false gods, the Baals of Gnosticism. This is not a positive move. It is simply one more expression of man’s sinful rebellion to the true and living God. It is not any better than Naturalistic Liberalism. Historic paganism is embraced with a desire to get in tune with the spirit realm.

Former Beatle, John Lennon became a key promoter of Eastern Religions infiltrating Western Naturalistic Liberalism. The impact of Lennon is still seen in our world today. After the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York the entertainment industry proclaimed the gospel of New Age Liberalism. One song they sang was John Lennon’s, “Imagine”:

*Imagine there’s no Heaven
It’s easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people
Living for today*

*Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too
Imagine all the people
Living life in peace*

Just like World War Two dashed the hopes of many adherents of Naturalistic Liberalism, you would think that the destruction of the Twin Towers would shake the foundations of anyone not holding to Biblical Christianity. But the song "Imagine" was presented to untold millions as our ultimate dream. Modern man grasps at the madness of New Age Liberalism. No Savior, no judgment, no God involved in history, only dreams of universal oneness. But we know that there will be wars and rumors of wars until that day that Jesus Christ returns in all His glory.

If you asked Naturalistic Liberals, "Do you believe in the Divinity of Christ?" they would say, "I do not believe in anything supernatural or spiritual. How could I believe in the myth about Jesus being God incarnate." This was historically a good question to ask to try to get at the errors of liberalism. But if you asked a New Age Liberals this same question they would say, "Yes, I believe in the divinity of Christ." They would go on to declare that they, too, are divine and that all people are divine. In fact, all things are divine. Instead of denying divinity outright, they deny it by denying the uniqueness of divinity. Instead of attempting to lower God to man's level they elevate man to divinity.

A basic proponent of Gnosticism and New Age religion is that every-

one and everything is one. This declaration sounds good to modern ears. New Age Liberalism means this in an ultimate sense. Peter Jones notes that New Age liberalism promotes the breakdown of all distinctions between Creator and Creature. Dr. Jones summarizes Gnostic, New Age Liberalism, teaching in the following way: "Gnosticism rejected the Creator God of scripture....For the Gnostic, the true God was an unknowable,

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impersonal force, the unified sum of all the separated parts. In anthropology and sexuality, the divine being is thus best expressed by androgyny, that is, the erasure of the male-female distinction" (*Gnostic Empire Strikes Back*, p. 30).

New Age Liberalism's failure to make a distinction between God and man has implications in what is believed about the essence of being human. "Androgyny" is not unity of the male and female but it is the merging of male-female into a new being without the distinction of male and female. It is the breakdown of a basic distinction put in place by God at the beginning of creation, male and female. This is the root of many

false teachings in New Age Liberalism.

So called theologians have made bizarre attempts at reinterpreting the Bible according to this basic theme. For instance, I have a book in my library entitled, *In Memory of Her*. Some years ago this book was used as a text for the introduction to theology course at Drew Seminary. The author speculates that at creation there was an original being, both male and female. This being was somehow divided into male and female. The ultimate goal of spiritual progression is that this perversion be overcome by a reunification. This new oneness is a progression because it is a process that brings us closer to "god" who is the unity of all things.

Differentiation is the great evil in this system. Thus, there is no Creator-creature distinction, there is no male-female distinction, and there is ultimately no living and non-living distinction.

In contrast to the breakdown of all distinctions is the fundamental truth revealed in Genesis 1. God's word from the very beginning makes clear distinctions. A distinction between God and man, between the living and the non-living, between man and animal, and then in man a distinction between male and female. These distinction are attacked by New Age Liberalism. This attack has direct consequences related to controversies in many denominations that historically stood against Naturalistic Liberalism but have compromised with New Age Liberalism.

If there are no distinctions then you would naturally deny the headship



of males in the home, church or society. New Age Liberalism supports women's ordination because of the core belief in breaking down all distinctions. Apply the breakdown of distinctions to the area of sexuality and you conclude there is no difference between heterosexuality and homosexuality. New Age liberalism promotes homosexuality. Evolution continues to have an appeal not because it focuses on the survival of the fittest, a naturalistic concept; but because here is no distinction between human and animal. We become one with the world. New Age Liberalism supports a circle of life naturalism that emphasizes the oneness of nature. It supports a revised form of evolution. The failures to recognize God's created distinctions are applied by New Age Liberalism to God Himself. And so a book is written, *In Memory of Her*.

The Ashera (a female goddess) pole of the ancient pagan religions of the Old Testament has returned. Thus the God of the Bible revealed as Father is declared to be "mother." We are called on to pray to "Our mother who art in heaven." New Age Liberalism promotes the feminization of God. It promotes the worship of a false goddess.

Cultural Accommodation

These aspects in liberal theology appeal to the general mind set of our culture. New Age Liberals are acceptable in our culture. This harmony between false church and secular culture happened in such a way that it is difficult to discern which influenced which the most. Did the culture influence these churches or did these churches influence the culture? In historic lib-

eral churches it is difficult to say. Culture and false church moved together in continuous harmony. But for many denominations that historically stood against Naturalistic Liberalism their historic truth failed to influence the culture. Worse, they have been tainted by New Age Liberalism. New Age Liberalism and our culture have infiltrated these churches with error. They have become liberal.

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The heart of Naturalistic and New Age liberalism are the same. First, historic liberalism upheld the universal brotherhood of man and Fatherhood of God. Although this expression of oneness can no longer be accepted because of its gender references, the heart of this aspect of liberalism lives. We are all one, every tribe, tongue, and religion are all one.

Second, liberalism harmonizes or moves with the culture of the day instead of bowing to the absolute authority of God's word. Liberalism is opposed to moral absolutes. Twentieth century liberalism accommodated to a godless scientific world view, twenty-first century liberalism accommodates to a new

age pagan spirituality. The process continues and liberal churches continue to accommodate themselves. Liberal churches are once again accommodating themselves to the culture to attract the word to themselves.

Sadly, there are many examples of New Age Liberalism's unbiblical reincarnation. One example was found in the local paper of our city following the terrorist attack in the United States on September 11, 2001. The headline in the religion section read, "We Gather Here as One American Family." The Grand Rapids Area Center for Ecumenism organized two dozen faith leaders. Jewish, Christian and Muslim clergy as well as Hindu and Bahi speakers spoke of their binding faith in the face of unimaginable tragedy. Universal oneness was expressed. Liberalism was alive and well.

This same universalism was witnessed in the National Prayer Service following the terrorist attack. Jew, Muslim and Christian gathered together to pray. It was evident in the prayer meeting our president called preceding his address to the congress. He asked Jew, Muslim, Christian, Hindu and Buddhist to join him. The liberal Christian attending declared, "It was an encounter with god." But it was not an encounter with the true God. Liberalism has taken its toll and has won the mind set of our culture. We need to understand this in order to speak to a culture in rebellion to God.

We also need to understand this in order to speak to the Christian who is in a church that has begun court-

ing and far too often married New Age Liberalism and accepted her views. We need to maintain the truth of 2 Corinthians 6:14-16: “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God.”

We must recognize that only Christians, those bought with the blood of Christ, can call upon God as Father as His sons and daughters. We must encourage those who belong to churches tainted with New Age Liberalism to come out from among them.

Rev. Casey Freswick is the pastor of the Bethany United Reformed Church in Wyoming, Michigan.

The Qur’an (Koran)

The Koran is the foundation upon which Islam rests. No adequate knowledge of Islam is possible without a basic understanding of its contents. It is the textbook for Muslims to learn Arabic. Millions of devout Muslims revere it, even to the point of treating it something almost worthy of worship. One of the best analogies describing the importance of Islam for the Muslim is: The Koran is in Islam what Christ is in Christianity. In the latter the Word became flesh. In Islam the Word became a Book. In Folk Islam the Koran is used as a talisman: miniature copies are often hung on children’s clothes for protection. And daily recitation of verses from the Koran is said to keep Satan away from one’s home.

A Book of Law

The Pakistani Islamic scholar Allahbukhsh.K.Brohi claims that the Koran is the best evidence that there is for all of us to believe that God exists and that Muhammad is His Prophet. Through it Allah makes known his sovereign will, what he has chosen for mankind and what he has forbidden. It foretells the day of judgment, and vividly describes the tortures of the damned and the delights of a very sensual paradise. Brohi states that the Koran is to be construed as a sort of “Instrument of Instructions” which has been issued to man in his capacity as God’s vice-regent on earth to enable him to conduct his life’s operations here below in such a manner that he is able to obtain success in this world and the reward of eternal bliss in the hereafter. And Brohi says that the

distinctive feature of the Koran as a religious scripture lies in the undeniable fact that it “affirms and completes the total process of revelation which has come from the Divine for the guidance of the human race.”

He also states that God says to the Prophet in one of the very last Surahs (v:3) revealed to him: “This day I have perfected your religion for you and completed My favour unto you, and have chosen for you as religion Al-ISLAM.” (“The Surrender” to Allah.) Consequently, his declaration means for the Muslim that since Islam is the last and most complete of the revealed religions, its holy book cannot be abrogated (repealed or abolished). And since Islam means submission to Allah’s will, it follows therefore that his will and instructions already made explicit in the Koran are knowable, and the study of this revelation a primary concern for the Muslims.

A Description of the Koran

For the Muslims the Koran is the infallible Word of Allah. While the controversies have raged among them whether it is the created or uncreated Word, they have never questioned it. The Koran is smaller than the New Testament. It has 114 surahs (chapters) with strange titles. It has no chronological order and it follows no sequence. The surahs are arranged according to length. The Koran features many historical inaccuracies and superstitious ideas.

Since the Koran is the final revelation, it is said to contain the final and most perfect answers to all questions to belief and conduct. It is gen-



erally held to be a transcript of a heavenly tablet, eternally kept by God. The Muslim scholar Badru Kateregga observes that the Koran does not contain information, ideas, or arguments about specific themes that are arranged in a literary or serial order. Subjects are not discussed under specific topics. They are scattered throughout the book.

The Four Holy Books

The Koran speaks about four kinds of Scriptures given by God to humanity. Kateregga asserts that for Muslims it is a central part of their faith to believe in the four sacred Books (Scriptures) which originated from Allah. It is mandatory for Muslims to believe in them. They are inscribed on eternal tablets in heaven.

Exact copies of these Divine, heavenly Scriptures have been sent down from Allah from time to time. These revealed Scriptures have much in common, and all four Books have the same purpose: they are to reform mankind. The four Books are: the Torah. This was a Holy Book revealed to the Prophet Musa (Moses); the Zabur (Psalms). This Holy Book was revealed to Prophet Daud (David); The Injil (Gospels) This is the Holy Book revealed to the Prophet Isa (Jesus). The Qur'an (Koran). This is the Holy Book (final message) to mankind which was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad.

Kateregga states, "The Qur'an is just the final revelation, which confirms earlier Scriptures, clears up all uncertainties, and perfects the truth. The Qur'an testifies that there has been earlier revelation before it."

The Koran considers the teachings of any of these books from the Bible

as equal before God. And Jews and Christians are even called the "People of the Book." The Koran says, "And argue not with the People of the Scriptures unless it be in (a way) that is better, save with such of them as do wrong; and say: We believe in that which hath been revealed unto us and revealed unto you; our God and your God is One, and unto Him we surrender"

Muhammad may have said nice things about previous revelations as he understood them, but he also taught that the Jews and the Christians falsified them. Hence, the Koran alone is trustworthy and true.

(xxlx:46). In other places the Koran says that those who followed the Old Testament or the Gospels did not need anything further for their religious and temporal life. "Let the People of the Gospel judge by that which Allah hath revealed therein. Whoso judgeth not by that which Allah hath revealed; such are evil doers."(v:47) "The messenger believeth in that which hath been revealed unto him from his Lord and (so do) the believers. Each one believeth in Allah and His angels and His scriptures and His messengers - We make no distinction between any of His messengers." (ii:285) Muhammad may have said nice things about previous revelations as

he understood them, but he also taught that the Jews and the Christians falsified them. Hence, the Koran alone is trustworthy and true.

Muhammad and the Koran

Islam claims that Muhammad has no higher prestige than a prophet. Yet obedience to Allah and the prophet are inseparably linked together. "He who obeys the prophet, obeys God." The Koran was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad through the archangel Jibril (Gabriel) from an archetype preserved in the seventh heaven. Every letter, word, content form, and meaning of the Koran is believed to be divinely revealed.

Muhammad claimed not only that he was the last of the prophets, he declared that he had received special revelations from Allah. In 610 A.D., in the month of Ramadan, in the fateful "Night of Power," he said that he saw a vision and heard a voice. Tradition says that the Archangel Gabriel acted as God's agent in the revelations. He commanded Muhammad:

Recite: in the name of the Lord who createth, Createth man from a cloth.

Recite: And thy Lord is the Most Bounteous, Who teacheth by the pen, Teacheth man that which he knew not. Thus was revealed the first fragment of the Koran (the "Reading" or "Recitation.")

And after the initial revelation, Muhammad eagerly awaited further visitations from Gabriel. He despaired. When more than two years had passed without further revelations, A ninth-century biographer wrote that "he seriously

considered...hurling himself down to the abyss from either Mount Hira or Mount Thabir. Just as he was about to jump he heard a heavenly voice and beheld Gabriel, seated upon a throne set between heaven and earth, who said, "Muhammad, Thou art the messenger of God and I am Gabriel." From that moment onward, the Prophet never again faltered. Revelations thereafter steadily increased.

The origin of the teachings of Muhammad has been a subject of much debate. Some scholars argue in favour of a predominantly Jewish background to his teachings. Others emphasize a Christian influence, especially in the doctrine of the last judgment, which they claim is a very prominent doctrine in Muhammad's revelations. But Muhammad seems to have had a very superficial, and erroneous knowledge of Christianity. Most scholars agree that his knowledge of Jewish and Christian teachings came by personal observation. He also derived many stories from Jewish folklore. Furthermore, Rev. Bassam M. Madany, retired pioneer radio missionary with the Arabic Back To God Hour broadcast ministry, points out the failure of the early Church to acquaint the Arabs with the true contents of the Scriptures. And he notes, "The saddest thing about the early church is that it failed to give the Arabs the Bible in their tongue!"

The Bible and the Koran

The whole atmosphere of the Bible is different from the Koran. The Bible calls for obedient living in gratitude to God for what He has done for man. The reader of the Bible must not orient himself

merely to people, rules and regulations, but to the covenant God. As Eli said to Samuel, "If He calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening.'" (1 Sam.3:9) Madany argues that the real difference between Christianity and Islam is in the area of the nature of revelation. "Whereas the Christian conceives of the Word of God as being law and gospel, the Muslim concept is that the Word of God is purely and simply law."

Joseph and Jusuf

The Koran has many stories you can find in the Bible. One story, the story of Jusuf (Joseph), is narrated in one lengthy surah (xii). In the Koranic version Jacob is a prophet who is not deceived by the story of his son's death. A Muslim writer calls the surah of Jusuf "a most meritorious chapter, for whosoever shall read it and teach it to others shall have an easy death." The Islamic Jusuf has many similarities with the Joseph of the Bible - the dreams, the selling into slavery, the ruler of Egypt. But the more the Joseph and the Jusuf stories are compared, the greater the differences. It is a reconstructed story of Joseph. In comparing the Biblical Joseph with the Jusuf of the Koran, we discover the deep cleavage that divides Islam from Christianity. The Jusuf story is rather confusing and unimpressive; yet it has a place of great esteem in the Koran. It doesn't actually take place in time and space. It can happen any time and anywhere, and to any man. It is a beautiful tale from which you can draw profound moralistic examples. It relates universal truth and wisdom. Jusuf is not a man of flesh and blood. He is the

every man of every age.

The story of Joseph is told in thirteen chapters of Genesis. He is described as a man of flesh and blood, sold into slavery by his brothers, lived and worked in Egypt. He was imprisoned, interpreted dreams, and upon his release became second in command to Pharaoh. As we study Joseph's life, we discover that he has a unique place in redemptive history. He points us to Jesus. God used Joseph for the salvation of his father and brothers. Through Joseph God keeps Israel for the sake of the coming of Christ. When we read the Biblical Joseph story, we discover the profile of the Saviour - Jesus Christ. The Joseph story in Genesis unmasks the Jusuf story in the Koran. In the Jusuf story God is an abstract being. In the history of Joseph, God is our covenant keeping God, the One Who hears, speaks, and acts. The conclusion? Islam is the religion of the natural man with his abstract God. The Bible and the Koran are poles apart. In the Jusuf story we read about the "every man." In the history of Joseph we are directed to the true Joseph - the Saviour of the world.

The Author of this article writes under the alias of "Dick Wunnink" due to past threats received from the Islam community when writing about this subject.



Sound Bites

Torch and Trumpet 1959

January 1959

“Outward improvements have their value but inward growth and spiritual deepening are far more important.”

At the Turn of the Year
Henry J. Kuiper

“There is no doctrine so basic and fundamental as that of the infallible Holy Scripture. If this bastion falls all our defenses of the truth of God have crumbled.”

The Infallibility of Scripture Denied
Henry J. Kuiper

“Our days need a positive Christian attitude. Negative attitudes, denials and refusals are not sufficient; moreover, a constant negation of something is not a Christian attitude.”

* * * * *

“It is vain to fight with half-truths against the lie.”

* * * * *

“It is impossible for a Christian world to exist without real Christians.”

The Message of the Unknown Freedom Fighter
Alexander S. Ungvary

“The first point we must take into consideration is the obvious fact that Genesis One is a portion of the Holy Scripture. Therefore, it is God breathed, written by a man who was borne of the Holy Spirit, and ‘cannot be broken.’ In other words it is infallible Scripture. This fact lifts it up out of the category of ordinary human compositions. It is really beside the point to speak of

the literary genre of Genesis One.”

* * * * *

“Genesis One does not give us the thoughts of men with respect to the creation; it gives us rather a revelation from the living and true God.”

The Nature of Genesis One
Edward J. Young

February 1959

“There are Christians who emphasize religious knowledge at the expense of religious service. They occupy themselves almost exclusively with the doctrines of the faith to the neglect of practical activities. Christianity for them is knowing God’s will, studying God’s will, and sometimes arguing God’s will. They seem to ignore or minimize the doing of God’s will.”

* * * * *

“The blunt truth is that without this disposition to serve Christ beyond the comfort of our armchair we have no satisfactory evidence that we really belong to His army.”

Our Shoes and Our Shield
Leonard Greenway

“[M]an, lost in Adam and adding to his sin every day, has no inherent right either to salvation or to hearing the way of salvation.”

Are Those Who Never Heard the Gospel Saved?
William Hendriksen

March 1959

“When a church no longer reaches out it passes out.”

Helmet and Sword
Leonard Greenway

“Hell is hell because God is there in all His wrath. Heaven is heaven because God is there is all His love.”

God in Hell and Hell Fire
William Hendricksen

“We shall know each other there, and we shall live in the sweetest fellowship with one another. Is the statement too strong that those, and those only, who love fellowship here will partake of the fellowship there?”

Are These Truths “Practical”?
William Hendricksen

April 1959

“There are too many Christians who budget their time so poorly that they have only a few minutes a day for prayer. When we are too busy to pray, we are too busy!”

* * * * *

“To test the intensity of our praying let us ask whether we can remember what we prayed for yesterday. Can we remember ten minutes after we prayed what we definitely asked of God? If our requests sit so lightly upon our minds, dare we expect the Holy Spirit to take them seriously?”

Praying Soldiers
Leonard Greenway

May - June 1959

“If each member would speak to only one new person at each service, the results would be overwhelming. Not only would no visitor be ignored, but I dare say many members of the congregation would become acquainted with each other for the first time.”

The Pinanskis Go to Church
“Peter” Palmer

July - August 1959

“The only Scriptural way to

church union is the way of the unity of the faith. External unity which has no basis in unity of doctrine is neither real nor enduring. It has no spiritual value."

Convergence of Two Denominations
Henry J. Kuiper

"The business of being Jesus Christ's men and women is not a hobby or avocation. It is not something we play around with; it is our supreme job in life."

The Christian's Supreme Calling
Katie Gunnink

September 1959

"The men who live apart from God are bound to make gods for themselves that their insecurity and anxiety may be removed."

The Idol of Power
Rein Leetsma

"Biblical truths which are sometimes tagged the distinctive Reformed teachings, such as the sovereign grace of God and unconditional election of the believer in Christ do not hang loosely onto the body of truth, like a satellite circling around a planet. Rather they define the very heart of God's grace in Jesus Christ."

On Being Reformed and Christian
Paul G. Schrottenboer

"Our indifference to the Reformation principle of 'Scripture alone' is the tell-tale token of the cancer of subjectivism among us today."

* * * * *

"[T]rue ecumenicism seeks to have fellowship with and, so far as possible, witness to Christ with those who seek to make their

thought subject to the Christ as He speaks through His infallible Word."

* * * * *

"[F]alse ecumenicism is based on a Christ-ideal projected by men who do not bow to the Christ of Scripture."

Calvin and Modern Subjectivism
Cornelius Van Til

October 1959

"When Bible reading ceases in the homes of which the church is composed the spiritual ignorance of the members becomes so great that they will have no taste for Biblical preaching and no ability to understand solid sermons."

The Future of Our Family Altars
Henry J. Kuiper

"We must expect the will of God to be bound up so immediately with the Word of God written that the inerrancy of the will of God must reflect immediately in the inerrancy of the form to which this will of God is now wholly committed."

* * * * *

"Under no condition can the unbeliever be permitted to influence my definition of Christian doctrine with a reasoning that is basically alien to the thoughts of Scripture."

Infallibility Explored
Marten H. Woudstra

November 1959

"Man can have fellowship with God only by an arrangement made by God Himself."

The Covenant of Grace and Our Christian Schools
Edward Heerema

December 1959

"By the word of the unseen Lord were the heavens made, but to take away our sin the Word becomes flesh and dwells among us."

Christ the Destroyer
Leonard Greenway

"The Reformed faith is the only theology which does full justice to the most basic of all truths: that God is God - the self-contained, self-sufficient, absolutely sovereign God who works all things after the counsel of His will; who is supreme over all, has the right to do in His world and with man as He pleases; whose 'dominion is an everlasting dominion.'"

* * * * *

Reformed theology, like Scripture, takes its starting point not in Christ but in the triune God, from whom, through whom, and unto whom are all things."

The Only Theology the Bible Knows
Henry J. Kuiper

"Supporters of Christian schools are not clear on what we mean by a Christian education. It seems to me that if we want to justify the tremendous expense of maintaining separate schools we ought to strive for a clearer understanding of their function."

Do We Really Need Christian Schools?
Walter A. De Jong



Scripture on the Antithesis

Scripture speaks of several antitheses; for example, that of Christ and Antichrist, that of the good angels and the fallen angels, that of believers and “principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6:12), that of the church and the world, that of believers and unbelievers, that of regenerate men and unregenerate men. These antitheses are interrelated. In fact, they may be said to be so many facets of one grand antithesis. That truth should be borne in mind when an attempt is made to describe any one of them.

This essay will deal primarily with the antithesis of the regenerate and the unregenerate. In the light of Scripture several of its characteristics will be named.

Central, Not Peripheral

The Bible is the Word of God. It goes without saying that all that God says is true. It is no less obvious that all that he says is important. Yet not all things told us in the Bible are of equal importance. Some are stressed more strongly than are others. Some are supremely significant, others relatively less so. The teaching of the antithesis does not lie on the periphery of the Word of God, but is central to it. It is of the very warp and woof of Holy Writ.

At the dawn of human history God put enmity between the serpent and the woman and between their seed, and he foretold that the woman’s seed would bruise the head of the serpent, whereas the serpent would bruise the heel of the woman’s seed

(Gen. 3:15). That passage is correctly denominated the *protevangelium*, the first proclamation of the gospel. It is also the first declaration of the antithesis. At the end of time the Son of God will part men asunder even as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats, and with the sword of his mouth he will divide the human race in two for the endless ages of eternity. Some will enter upon eternal

The teaching of the antithesis does not lie on the periphery of the Word of God, but is central to it. It is of the very warp and woof of Holy Writ.

life; others will depart into eternal punishment (Matt. 25:31-48). Between the aforementioned two events lies an unintermittent conflict of the woman’s seed and that of the serpent. It is, indeed, *the* conflict of the ages. And it reached its climax in that event about which centers the whole of human history — the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

Present-day denials of the antithesis are numerous. Many substitute for it the deceptive dogma of the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man. We are witnessing a mighty resurgence of the ancient heresy of universal salvation. Preachers and professors

of theology tell us that it is inconceivable that a God of love would sentence any human being to eternal hell. Such teaching is the direct result of rejection of the Bible as the infallible Word of God.

Inexpressibly sad to say, even in relatively conservative circles there are those who belittle the antithesis. They are wont to speak of it sneeringly. For that attitude there are but two possible explanations. It is rooted either in ignorance of Holy Scripture or in a tendency to slight Scripture. It could spring from both. He who takes the Bible seriously cannot help taking the antithesis seriously. Scripture teaches it unequivocally, and Scripture’s emphasis on it is truly tremendous.

Fact, Not Duty

The Bible informs us that the antithesis of the regenerate and the unregenerate is a fact. To be sure, a duty is implicit in it; but it is not itself a duty. It is an inescapable fact.

That fact is God-appointed. When our earliest ancestors had yielded to the deceiver’s temptation, God did not command the woman, together with her seed, to be at enmity with Satan; he put enmity between them. Regeneration, by which the antithesis is brought about, is a divine work in which man is utterly passive. Nowhere does Scripture command dead sinners to bring themselves to life.

“Ye must be born again” (John 3:7) is an indicative, not an imperative. The apostolic exhortation, “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from

the dead” (Eph. 5:14) was addressed, not to dead sinners, but to sleeping Christians who once were darkness but now were light in the Lord (v. 8). They were commanded to arouse themselves from spiritual lethargy and to arise from among their spiritually dead pagan neighbors. Nor had they transformed themselves from darkness into light. That change was effected by God.

That the antithesis of the regenerate and the unregenerate is a God-appointed fact is the plain teaching of Scripture. Scripture is no less insistent that this fact entails a duty. The regenerate differ radically from the unregenerate. That being the case, they are in sacred duty bound to show it. The solemn admonition addressed to them, “Walk as children of light” (Eph. 5:8), is predicated on the fact that they are light, not darkness. No demand could be more reasonable. God requires of his children that they manifest what they are, that they be true to their regenerated selves.

Spiritual, Not Spatial

That the contrast of the regenerate and the unregenerate is spiritual is self-evident. On the one hand are those who are spiritually alive, on the other those who are spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1).

Strange, and also exceedingly sad to say, throughout history God’s people have times without number committed the fallacy of externalizing the antithesis. They have regarded it as spatial rather than spiritual.

No doubt, the most heinous sin of ancient Israel was idolatry, worship of the false gods of the neighboring

peoples. It constituted a brazen denial of the antithesis. Another of its sins hardly less heinous, was formalism. God complained: “This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me” (Is. 29:13). And by the mouth of his prophet God uttered the scathing denunciation: “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? I am full

The regenerate differ radically from the unregenerate. That being the case, they are in sacred duty bound to show it.

of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me” (Is. 1:11-13). Formalism externalizes the antithesis. And to externalize the spiritual is to deny it.

The Pharisees of Jesus’ day perverted the antithesis by making it spatial. The hermits and stylites of early Christianity tended to do likewise. So did the monks and nuns of the Middle Ages. So did the extreme Anabaptists of the Reformation age. So do the Amish of today.

And so do all who deem world flight to be the essence of Christian living.

True, the antithesis has spatial implications. Christian parents will instruct their children to shun evil companions. In the line of duty adult Christians are bound to face many temptations, but to expose oneself needlessly to temptation is to tempt God. Matrimony has a spatial as well as a spiritual aspect, and Scripture forbids the marriage of a believer to an unbeliever. No Christian may hold membership in an organization which by its constitution or persistent practices defies the law of God and in which he is forbidden to witness to the lordship of Christ. The Psalmist pronounced blessed “the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful” (Ps. 1:1).

However, the Saviour prayed for his own, not that they would be taken out of the world, but *that* they would be kept from the evil one (John 17: 15); and the apostle Paul advised the saints in Corinth not to break off all association with the fornicators, the covetous, the extortioners, and the idolaters of the wand, for in that case they would have to go out of the world (I Cor. 5: 9, 10).

He who externalizes the antithesis is sure to fall into a heinous sin of omission. Without contact with the world one cannot perform his duty as the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt 5:13, 14). He is also in imminent peril of yielding to a no less heinous sin of commission. Losing sight of the spiritual character of the antithesis can hardly result in anything but unspiritual living.



It is not unusual for a recluse to become a profligate. The externalization of the antithesis is a mark of sanctimony, not of sanctity.

Absolute, Not Relative

The antithesis under discussion has been described accurately as *radical*. The difference between the regenerate and the unregenerate is not something shallow or superficial. Contrariwise, it concerns that which is deepest in man, his inmost being, the basic disposition of his soul - what the Bible calls his *heart*. In regeneration the sinner receives a new heart. The unregenerate have "hearts of stone," the regenerate "hearts of flesh" (Ezek. 36:20).

Prominent theologians have not hesitated to describe the antithesis as *absolute*. That is strong language; in the estimation of some, too strong. It has been argued that the contrast between the regenerate and the unregenerate is less than absolute because they have certain things in common; for instance, the quality of humanness. That they have humanness in common cannot be denied. Man alone of all earthly creatures was made in the image of God. That image constitutes him a human being. Now, in the fall it was not entirely lost. Vestiges of it remain in the most perverse of men. However, the absolute character of the antithesis is not thus ruled out. If the regenerate and the unregenerate had nothing whatever in common, they would

not even be comparable; and it hardly makes sense to speak of the antithesis of incomparables. Even Christ and Antichrist have something in common. Beyond all reasonable doubt, the Antichrist, who is to appear toward the end of time, will be a human person. Scripture speaks of him as "that man of sin" and "the son of perdition" (II Thes. 2:3). Christ, too, even the ascended Christ, has a human nature. Christ and Antichrist, then, have humanness in common. But who will deny that the antithesis of the two is absolute? Nor may it be overlooked that the difference between the image of God as it remains in all men and the image of God as it is restored in the regenerate is not merely quantitative but decidedly qualitative.

After all, the antithesis of the regenerate and the unregenerate is that of life and death. To be sure, it is not the antithesis of physical life and physical death. All men, with such rare exceptions as Enoch and Elijah and the less rare exception of those who remain alive at Christ's second coming, must experience the separation of body and soul. Nor is it for the present the antithesis of eternal life and eternal death. The regenerate do indeed possess eternal life even now, but the unregenerate will not be swallowed up by eternal death until the day of judgment, and in the meantime the living unregenerate may yet by the grace of God be born again. But the antithesis is that of spiritual life and spiritual death. The unregenerate is not as

sound as Pelagianism asserts him to be. He is not somewhat ill, as Semi-Pelagianism teaches. Nor yet is he sick well-nigh unto death, as Arminianism would have us believe. He is "dead" (Eph. 2:1). That is the essence of the Reformed doctrine of total depravity. And the regenerate is "alive" (Eph. 2:1). Certainly, there are degrees of sanctification and no saint is fully sanctified in this life. It may even be granted that the term *regeneration* can be used in the broad sense of sanctification. Then there are degrees of regeneration. But there are no degrees of regeneration in the sense of the instantaneous working of the Holy Spirit by which he makes the heretofore dead sinner alive. One is either dead or alive. There is no intermediate condition, no middle ground. It follows that the antithesis is truly absolute.

Pervasive, Not Partial

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what portion hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord; and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive

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you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (II Cor. 6:14-18).

Obviously, those verses of Scripture have a most direct bearing on the antithesis. But they are often misunderstood. They are said to condemn mixed marriages. Yet there is no such reference in the context. At most the condemnation of mixed marriages is implicit in this passage. It is said to rule out practically all association of believers with unbelievers. But that would amount to a contradiction of I Corinthians 5:9, 10. It is said to forbid believers to hold membership in the same organization with unbelievers. But Abraham, the father of believers, entered into a defensive league with Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre, heathen Palestinian chieftains; and Scripture does not breathe an inkling of disapproval of that alliance. The meaning of II Corinthians 6:14-18 is most specific. There were in the church at Corinth those who had not broken completely with paganism. In uncompromising language Paul enjoined these to practice complete separation from pagan worship.

Christianity is the one and only true religion. All other religions, regardless of elements of truth contained in them, are false. Exclusiveness is of the essence of Christianity. The God of the Bible is God alone (Ps. 86:10). All other gods are idols. And the Christ of Scripture is the only Saviour. No man can come to the Father but by him (John 14:8), and his name is the only one under heaven given among men by which they must be saved (Acts 4:12). Therefore Christians are unquali-

fiedly forbidden to participate in the worship of another religion, whether paganism, Mohammedanism, Judaism, or modernism.

Room is left for numerous contacts of the regenerate with the unregenerate, for various associations, and for much co-operation.

Does it follow that there are areas in the lives of the regenerate and the unregenerate in which the antithesis does not come to expression? That question is as important

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as it is pertinent. And the answer to it is an emphatic *No*. According to Scripture the antithesis is pervasive.

Two men — one regenerate, the other unregenerate — sit at one board. They eat of the same food and drink of the same beverage. Are they doing identical things? God forbid! In principle the former does his eating and drinking, as, indeed, all that he does, to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). The latter does nothing of the kind.

The same two men attend one church. They sit in the same pew. They sing the same songs. They contribute to the same offering.

They listen to the same sermon. Are they doing the same thing? Far from it. The regenerate person is worshipping God, however imperfectly. The other is merely going through the form of worship.

The same two men are members of one political party and on election day they cast their ballots for the same candidates. Is the antithesis out of the picture? Not at all. One is motivated by the fear of God, the other is not.

The same two men perform seemingly identical works of charity. Is the antithesis inoperative? No verily. The unregenerate person may well be doing that which the Word of God calls “good.” It is altogether possible that he is manifesting “love” for his neighbor. Did not Jesus teach that even sinners love those that love them and do good to those that do good to them (Luke 6:32,33)? But he is doing only what has come to be denominated *civic* good. He is incapable of performing *spiritual* good, which the Heidelberg Catechism aptly defines as works “which are done from true faith, according to the law of God and to his glory” (Lord’s Day XXXIII, Answer 91). He is not motivated by love for God. And because his love for his neighbor does not spring from love for God it does not meet the demand of God’s law. The regenerate person, on the other hand, is prompted by faith in God and love for God. In consequence he performs spiritual good. It differs qualitatively from the good done by his unregenerate fellow.

The same two men sin, for “there is no man that sinneth not” (I Kings 8:46) and the best of God’s children



offend in many things (Jas. 3:2). Surely, at this point the antithesis would seem to be inactive. The truth of the matter is that even here it asserts itself vigorously. Whatever sin he may commit, the regenerate person always sins against his will. He, and he alone, can say with Paul: "The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me" (Rom. 7:19, 20). Even the sinning of the regenerate man differs essentially from that of the unregenerate man.

How can the antithesis help being pervasive? As has been said, it is radical. It is a matter of the *heart*. The unregenerate are controlled in all that they do by "hearts of stone." The regenerate are dominated in all that they do by hearts of flesh." And from the heart are "the issues of life" (Prov. 4:2,3). A man's heart is what he is. And as a man is, so he *thinks* and feels and wills. What *he is* affects every function of his soul "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17). Meyer comments: "*The old*, the pre-Christian nature and life, the pre-Christian spiritual constitution of man, *is passed away; behold the whole* — the whole state of man's personal life—has *become new*'.

Active, Not Passive

An antithesis may be passive. The peaceful co-existence of white and black is altogether possible. But such is not the antithesis under consideration. It resembles the antithesis of light and darkness. They are at odds with each other. Darkness

would drive out light; light would dispel darkness. Scripture tells us that the regenerate and the unregenerate are at "enmity" with each other (Gen. 3:15). In short, this antithesis is active.

That the unregenerate are active in their opposition to the regenerate is a frequent and emphatic teaching of Holy Writ. Throughout history the serpent and his seed have been bruising the heel of the woman's seed. Cain killed Abel. The Egyptians cruelly oppressed God's cov-

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enant people. The heathen nations were bent on destroying Israel. That activity reached its climax when the world, a worldly church included, crucified the Christ. But the world's hatred was not burned out on that occasion. Christ's disciples have experienced it throughout the ages. Said Jesus: "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me they will also persecute you" (John 15:19, 20).

The attitude of the regenerate to the unregenerate is quite different from that of the unregenerate to the regenerate. The unregenerate hate the regenerate, the regenerate love the unregenerate. That difference is a striking manifestation of the antithesis. As God loves his enemies, so God's children love their enemies, albeit imperfectly (Matt. 5:43-48). They pray for their persecutors as Jesus prayed for those who were nailing him to the cross (Luke 3:34) and as Stephen prayed for those who were stoning him to death (Acts 7:60). And by proclaiming to them the gospel of the grace of God they seek to persuade them to believe on the Savior. In Christ's stead they pray them to be reconciled to God (II Cor. 5:20).

That is not the entire picture. The regenerate also oppose the unregenerate. They condemn their evil works. They denounce their proud words. They would thwart their wicked designs. And, paradoxical as it may be, when the unregenerate blatantly defy the Most High and brazenly give vent to their hatred of him, the regenerate are constrained by their very love for God to exclaim: "Do not I hate them. O Lord, that hate thee? and am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies" (Ps. 139:21, 22). And that note is heard not merely in a few so-called imprecatory Psalms, but it sounds forth clearly throughout the Book of Psalms, in the woes pronounced by the Son of God, in the anathemas of inspired Paul, and in the loud cry of the souls of them that were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held," issuing from under the altar in

heaven: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth (Rev. 6:9, 10)

Conquest, Not Flight

The antithesis is spiritual, not spatial. For that reason world flight must be condemned. There is another reason. The antithesis must issue, and will, in conquest of the world, and flight can hardly result in conquest.

Two stories from Greek mythology illustrate rather well the difference between world flight and world conquest. A certain island was inhabited by Sirens, creatures that were half woman and half bird. So alluring was their song that any mariners who came within hearing distance were irresistibly drawn to the island. But no sooner did they set foot on shore than the Sirens would tear them in pieces and devour them. Odysseus' ship was about to enter the danger zone. Aware of the peril besetting him and his crew, he stopped their ears with wax and had them bind him firmly to the mast with strict orders to pay no heed to his pleading for release. Those measures resembled world flight. Orpheus and his Argonauts, too, neared the island of the Sirens, and he also was aware of imminent peril. But he took an altogether different measure to insure the safety of his men and himself. Playing on his lyre, he made music

of such superior charm that none gave the slightest heed to the song of the Sirens. That resembled world conquest.

Let not God's people think that they have discharged their duty when they have stopped their ears to the temptations of the world. What they must do is to drown out the voice of the tempter by singing the songs of Zion. In other words, they must crowd out evil from their lives by the doing of good. And, to go far beyond our illustration, they must declare the gospel of the grace of God to the far corners of the earth in order that sinners from every kindred and tongue and people and nation may be won for Christ and brought into the fold of his church. That is a most important aspect of world conquest. Yet it *is* not the whole of it.

The apostle John said: "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (I John 5:4). The eleventh chapter of Hebrews pre-sets a long list of such as overcame the world by faith. Those overcame who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of aliens (vv. 33, 34). But unbelievable though it may seem, they also overcame who were tortured, not accepting deliverance, had trial of

cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, of bonds and imprisonment, were stoned, were sawn asunder, were slain with the sword, and wandered in deserts and in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth (vv. 35-38). For in all these things they were more than conquerors through him that loved them (Rom. 8:37).

An amazing teaching of Scripture is that believers are owners of all things. Paul wrote to the Christians in wealthy Corinth: "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: all are yours" (I Cor. 3:22). In 'all' the products of the common grace of God are included; for example, Greek art, Roman law, the learning of the ancient world, English literature, modern science. To be sure, believers are warned not to use the world to the full because its fashion passes away (I Cor. 7:31 ASV). Yet it belongs to the regenerate in a sense in which it does not belong to the unregenerate. This is their Father's world and therefore theirs. They are to use radio, television, aeronautics, atomic energy, and countless other things to the glory of God and his Christ. That, too, is a phase of world conquest.

God gave Christ to the church that he might be head over the church, to be sure, but also over all things (Eph. 1:22). The kingship of Christ over all things must be proclaimed by the church. It must demand of

The attitude of the regenerate to the unregenerate is quite different from that of the unregenerate to the regenerate.



men everywhere that they acknowledge Christ as king over every domain of life. The regenerate must declare a Christian view of the whole of life and all of the world. They must insist on Christian education, Christian science, Christian art, Christian culture, Christian relations between labor and industry, Christian politics, Christian internationalism, a Christian society as well as a Christian church.

And whether today and tomorrow men hear or forbear, one day all things will be subdued unto the Christ (1 Cor. 15:27); at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Phil. 2:10, 11); great voices in heaven will sing: “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 11:15).

Dr. R. B. Kuiper [1886-1966] served the church as Professor at Westminster Seminary [1929-1930, 1933-1952], President of Calvin College [1930-1933], and President of Calvin Seminary from 1952 until he retired in 1956.

Mid-America: An Academy with a Vocational Aim (3)

(The following is the text of Cornelis P. Venema’s inaugural address as the first president of Mid-America Reformed Seminary, September 27, 2001. This part concludes the address. In the first and second parts of the address, Dr. Venema emphasized that Mid-America as a seminary is an academy that seeks to honor the Scriptures and the confessions.)

Mid-America is more than an academy. It is more than an academy that seeks, by God’s grace, to be biblical, confessional and catholic. It is a school that exists for the specific purpose of training its students for the pastoral ministry. No one familiar with the history of Mid-America should be surprised when I say that it is a school, yes, but one whose training and program have a vocational aim. As an institution, we recognize the legitimacy of the lament of John Leith regarding many seminaries—“The consequence is that theological seminaries are no longer seen as primarily institutions for the training of pastors, but as institutes for the discussion and study of religion.” The singular aim of this Seminary is train its students to be faithful, effective ministers of the Word and sacrament.

But what does that mean as a practical matter?

Focused on Preaching

For Mid-America it means that the focus of seminary education and training is the equipping of our students for the ministry of the Word. Not “ministry” in some vague and ill-defined sense, but the ministry of the Word and sacraments as that has been understood historically in the Reformed tradition. If I may use

a spatial analogy, the preaching of the Word of God is to other aspects of the pastoral calling—pastoral care and counseling, church education, evangelism and missions, etc.—what a point at the center of the circle is to all the points on the circumference.

As a Reformed seminary that wants to live up to its name in practice, we are committed to the conviction that the principal means of grace is the official preaching of the Word of God by ordained ministers. We subscribe to Calvin’s conviction about preaching:

He [Christ] alone should rule and reign in the church as well as have authority or pre-eminence in it, and this authority should be exercised and administered by his Word alone. Nevertheless, because he does not dwell among us in visible presence, we have said that he uses the ministry of men to declare openly his will to us by mouth, as a sort of delegated work, not by transferring to them his right and honor, but only that through their mouths he may do his own work—just as a workmen uses a tool to do his work (IV.iii.1).

The Heidelberg Catechism, Q. & A. 65, expresses succinctly this fundamental conviction of the Reformed churches: "Since, then, we are made partakers of Christ and all His benefits by faith only, whence comes this faith? From the Holy Spirit, who works it in our hearts by the preaching of the holy gospel, and confirms it by the use of the holy sacraments."

One of the primary reasons, ironically, for the loss of a proper appreciation of the seminary as an academy is the loss of a proper respect for the unique calling of the minister of the Word. Where an anti-intellectual and especially anti-clerical spirit takes root, there the emphasis upon seminary training that prepares students to be faithful ministers and preachers tends to be diminished. When every form of Christian ministry is given equal billing with the ministry of the Word, the focus of the seminary is blurred and its academic quality diminished.

D. G. Hart, in an article entitled, "Overcoming the Schizophrenic Character of Theological Tradition," argues that many seminaries, for this reason, though quite "successful" in terms of numbers of students, are at a loss regarding their peculiar identity and purpose. He maintains that "evangelical seminaries may be suffering from a state of schizophrenia where they encourage more and more students to enroll in their institutions and hire better and more widely published faculty, and yet all the while they are less certain about their reason for existence." Though seminary education is a growth industry, at least in terms of numbers of students at evangelical institutions, this

growth is often at the expense of a clear focus. Various degree programs are offered, student body numbers are artificially inflated, but the particular purpose of the seminary is uncertain.

Unified in its Curriculum

This kind of focus upon preaching as the pastor's vocation has profound implications for a seminary's

One of the primary reasons, ironically, for the loss of a proper appreciation of the seminary as an academy is the loss of a proper respect for the unique calling of the minister of the Word.

curriculum or course of study. One of the courses I have taught in seminary through the years, "Theological Foundations," addresses the questions of theological encyclopedia. Theological encyclopedia considers questions like, what is theology? What is its object of study? Is it a science? How are its various disciplines related? As you can tell, a tedious list of formal questions! One of the common complaints today, however, is that the theological curriculum in many seminaries is fragmented. The curriculum lacks unity, either in terms of its distinct subject matter or its aims.

One of the more important measures, however, of any seminary is

its curriculum. A seminary curriculum is always shaped by convictions regarding the nature of the discipline of theology, and the purpose that theological education serves. If, for example, you have a low view of Scriptural authority, why bother to study the original languages of Scripture, the issues of biblical hermeneutics, or the steps required to move from biblical text to sermon? If you do not believe one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, which has been gifted with the Spirit's presence and leading throughout its history now of some 20 centuries, why take the trouble to pore over ancient texts, to read the great books of the tradition of Christian theology? And if you are persuaded that system means artificial unity, why bother to see the unity and coherence of God's revelation?

The benefit of a clear institutional focus is evident in the way it undergirds and unifies the seminary's curriculum. Biblical studies are foundational and indispensable since they provide the "stuff" of biblical preaching. Ecclesiastical or historical studies are necessary since they acquaint the aspiring pastor with the wealth of the church's historic understanding of the Scriptures. Doctrinal studies are essential since they acquaint the would-be minister with the system of biblical teaching in all of its depth and breadth. And ministerial studies are, building upon the other divisions, indispensable to equipping the student with the tools to minister the Word of God in worship and preaching, pastoral care and counseling, evangelism and missions.

Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield



expressed it this way in his article, “Our Seminary Curriculum”:

But, if the minister is the mouth-piece of the Most High, charged with a message to deliver, to expound and enforce; standing in the name of God before men, to make known to them who and what this God is, and what his purposes of grace are, and what his will for his people — then, the whole aspect of things is changed. Then, it is the prime duty of the minister to know his message; to know the instructions which have been committed to him for the people, and to know them thoroughly; to be prepared to declare them with confidence and exactness, to commend them with wisdom, and to urge them with force and defend them with skill, and to build men up by means of them into a true knowledge of God and of his will, which will be unassailable in the face of the fiercest assault. No second-hand knowledge of the revelation of God and the salvation of a ruined world can suffice the needs of a ministry whose function it is to convey this revelation to men, commend it to their acceptance and apply it in detail to their needs Nothing will suffice for it but to know; to know the Book; to know it first hand; and to know it through and through.

Professors as Pastor/ Preachers

One further feature of a seminary course of training which, though academically rigorous, aims to prepare the student for the pastoral ministry, is the kind of instructor needed.

In John Leith’s exposé of what’s wrong with theological education at many seminaries, one of the most serious problems that he identifies

*We need to
make it our
prayer that God
would bless this
school to the
benefit of His
church, for the
glory of His name.*

is the graduate school ethos that prevails. Professors are hired and ranked according to strictly academic criteria—have they gone to the best graduate schools? Are they published in their discipline? What is their reputation academically among their peers and peer institutions. Little or no attention is given to their affiliation with the church the seminaries ostensibly serve.

Since its beginning, Mid-America’s Board has insisted that its full-time professors be, without exception, ordained pastors who have served the church for a period of years. This is not something altogether unique, of course. Many seminaries appoint professors in the area of practical theology, who have a repu-

tation for excellence and effectiveness in their particular fields. What is rather unusual, however, is our insistence that this is as important a qualification for teaching biblical studies in a seminary setting, as it is for teaching historical studies or doctrinal studies. Consistent with the desire to have a unified focus throughout our course of instruction, and to arrange for a seminary curriculum that supports this focus, Mid-America believes that a seminary instructor ought himself to be an ordained minister of the gospel.

It is rather interesting, if you reflect on the question of the seminary’s relationship to the church, that many seminaries, including seminaries that are established, owned and administered by the churches, do not have such a requirement. Or, if they have the requirement, they are rather quick to make exceptions to it. Though such denominational seminaries might appear to be more legitimately seminaries of the church—and judge a school like Mid-America to be an “independent” seminary—they do not insist that those who are directly engaged in the preparation of the students for the ordained ministry be themselves ministers of the gospel. But what better way to insure the seminary’s intimate association with and service to the churches, than to insist that its instructors be ministers of the Word themselves?

Conclusion

Having said what I wished to say about the kind of seminary Mid-America claims and seeks to be, let me close on a little different note—with a simple prayer, really. And that is, “may God bless Mid-America.”

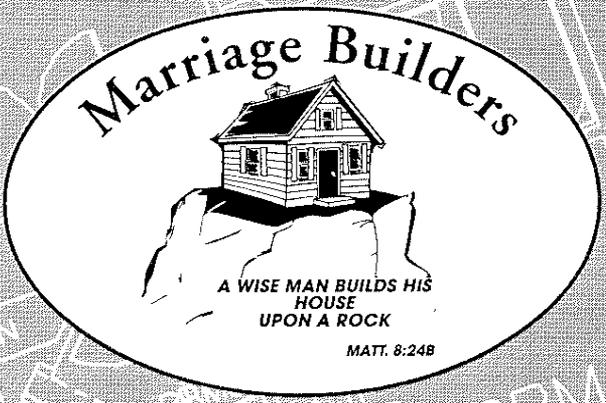
In response to the events of recent days, the horrific attacks by terrorists upon the World Trade Center and Washington, D.C., you have no doubt noticed that the landscape is dotted with signs and posters that say, "God bless America." Now admittedly, those words are often used in a trivial way, tossed off unthinkingly the way people con-

clude a conversation, saying, "I am praying for you." But used properly, they are three of the most profound words. When used properly by individuals, nations or institutions, they are a heartfelt confession of complete dependence upon and need for the Triune God's favor and blessing.

Mid-America is not a seminary that can "rest on its laurels." We have few if any laurels on which to rest. Nor is it a seminary that can boast a long and proud history of extraordinary accomplishment and achievement. Measured by some standards, it is a little and weak thing.

But there is an advantage in that. It reminds us of something we may never forget—that our future is in entirely in God's fatherly hand. That "little is much when God is in it." That our service to the church will be only as He pleases. And surely He doesn't need Mid-America to accomplish his purposes! And so we need to make it our prayer that God would bless this school to the benefit of His church, for the glory of His name. As the Psalmist puts it, "Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us; do confirm for us the work of our hands; yes, confirm the work of our hands" (Ps. 90:17).

Dr. Cornel Venema is the President of Mid-America Reformed Seminary where he also teaches Doctrinal Studies. Dr. Venema is a contributing editor to *The Outlook*.



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God's People, My Parish

I saw him out of the corner of my eye. It was late. I had just stopped in at the church to pick something up and there he was. It wasn't the first time I saw him at the church, I just never expected him to be there that late.

"Just fixing the drinking fountain," he said. "Somebody told me it was leaking a little." The last time I saw him it was early in the morning. Then he was cleaning the carpets.

No, Neil is not our janitor. He is a retired handyman who lives next door to the church. The reason he lives next door to the church is because he donated five acres of his land to our church.

That's just the way Neil is. He's a handy handyman who can fix just about anything. I take that back - he can fix everything. I have never brought anything to Neil that he was not able to fix, usually better than the original parts that I had brought to him. He loves the challenge.

He also loves the church. Neil has served as a deacon and as an elder. He has worked on everything from the Building Committee to the Music Committee. But most of all Neil loves to be in the church doing what he knows how to do - fix things

I thanked Neil for what he was doing and headed home. He was still there when I left.

As I drove home, I couldn't help but think about how much the church

needs people like Neil. People who are willing to use the talents and gifts that God has given them for His kingdom.

People like Neil are often the unsung heroes of the church. Year in and year out they are there contributing to the church not only financially, but they give something

much more important - their time.

Through all the challenges and changes that the church will go through, these people are there giving of their time to the church. The church will go through new ministers, new elders, and new deacons, but people like Neil will always be there to help in any way that they can.

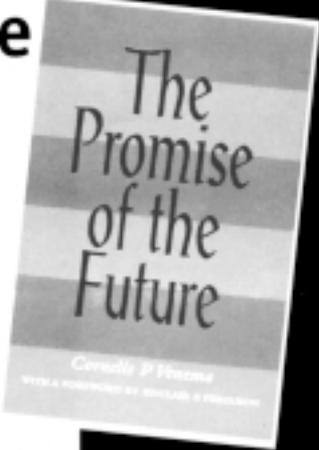
Most of the people in the church have no idea how much Neil does for the church. I'm sure that's the

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(continued from page 23)

way it is with most of these unsung heroes. Those who do know probably take it for granted. "Well, that's what Neil does," would be their attitude. Maybe that's because their presence in the church and their years of service seem to be as much a part of the church as the cornerstone and the steeple.

If you were to thank them, they probably would be embarrassed. They don't want to be recognized anyway. That's because they do not do their jobs to be complimented. The mere doing them is thanks enough. More to the point, if they can be humble servants of Christ, that is all they ask.

The Psalmist wrote, "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of the wicked." People like Neil really understand that verse and live it. And I would rather have one "Neil" in my church than a dozen Pastor's Assistants.

Rev. Wybren Oord is the pastor of the Covenant United Reformed Church in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

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