

Calvin on Man's Natural State

The reader who makes it through this unusual choice for our "meditation" this month will be richly rewarded. As long as "meditation" doesn't imply "light," in your mind, you will see why we made this choice. The reader will recognize Calvin's influence on the Reformed confessions, not only in content and argument (if the sin of Adam was passed on only by imitation, is the righteousness of Christ available in the same way?), but even in wording. As you read this (perhaps) on a Lord's Day afternoon, be reminded of Augustine's ancient battle against Pelagius and the present necessity to be thoroughly Augustinian. Meditate on the believer's confession as Calvin leads you to admit that there is nothing more appealing to sinful nature than flattery. But reflect on the explanation of Scripture as it leads us, in Calvin's estimation, to the exercise of two virtues: dependence on God and humility before others. Then close your eyes ... and meditate.

1 It was not without reason that the ancient proverb so strongly recommended to man the knowledge of himself. For if it is deemed disgraceful to be ignorant of things pertaining to the business of life, much more disgraceful is self-ignorance, in consequence of which we miserably deceive ourselves in matters of the highest moment, and so walk blindfold. But the more useful the precept is, the more careful we must be not to use it preposterously, as we see certain philosophers have done. For they, when exhorting man to know himself, state the motive to be, that he may

not be ignorant of his own excellence and dignity. They wish him to see nothing in himself but what will fill him with vain confidence, and inflate him with pride. But self-knowledge consists in this, *first*, When reflecting on what God gave us at our creation, and still continues graciously to give, we perceive how great the excellence of our nature would have been had its integrity remained, and, at the same time, remember that we have nothing of our own, but depend entirely on God, from whom we hold at pleasure whatever he has seen it meet to bestow; *secondly*, When viewing our miserable condition since Adam's fall, all confidence and boasting are overthrown, we blush for shame, and feel truly humble. For as God at first formed us in his own image, that he might elevate our minds to the pursuit of

virtue, and the contemplation of eternal life, so to prevent us from heartlessly burying those noble qualities which distinguish us from the lower animals, it is of importance to know that we were endued with reason and intelligence, in order that we might cultivate a holy and honorable life, and regard a blessed immortality as our destined aim. At the same time, it is impossible to think of our primeval dignity without being immediately reminded of the sad spectacle of our ignominy and corruption, ever since we fell from our original in the person of our first parent. In this way, we feel dissatisfied with ourselves, and become truly humble, while we are inflamed with new desires to seek after God, in whom each may regain those good qualities of which all are found to be utterly destitute.

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2. In examining ourselves, the search which divine truth enjoins, and the knowledge which it demands, are such as may indispose us to everything like confidence in our own powers, leave us devoid of all means of boasting, and so incline us to submission. This is the course which we must follow, if we would attain to the true goal, both in speculation and practice. I am not unaware how much more plausible the view is, which invites us rather to ponder on our good qualities, than to contemplate what must overwhelm us with shame — our miserable destitution and ignominy. There is nothing more acceptable to the human mind than flattery, and, accordingly, when told that its endowments are of a high order, it is apt to be excessively credulous. Hence it is not strange that the greater part of mankind have erred so egregiously in this matter. Owing to the innate self-love by which all are blinded, we most willingly persuade ourselves that we do not possess a single quality which is deserving of hatred; and hence, independent of any countenance from without, general credit is given to the very foolish idea, that man is perfectly sufficient of himself for all the purposes of a good and happy life. If any are disposed to think more modestly, and concede somewhat to God, that they may not seem to arrogate every thing as their own, still, in making the division, they apportion matters so, that the chief ground of confidence and boasting always remains with themselves. Then, if a discourse is pronounced which flatters the pride spontaneously springing up in man's inmost heart, nothing seems more delightful. Accordingly, in every age, he who is most forward in extolling the excellence of human nature, is

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received with the loudest applause. But be this heralding of human excellence what it may, by teaching man to rest in himself, it does nothing more than fascinate by its sweetness, and, at the same time, so delude as to drown in perdition all who assent to it. For what avails it to proceed in vain confidence, to deliberate, resolve, plan, and attempt what we deem pertinent to the purpose, and, at the very outset, prove deficient and destitute both of sound intelligence and true virtue, though we still confidently persist till we rush headlong on destruction? But this is the best that can happen to those who put confidence in their own powers. Whosoever, therefore, gives heed to those teachers, who merely employ us in contemplating our good qualities, so far from making progress in self knowledge, will be plunged into the most pernicious ignorance.



5. As Adam's spiritual life would have consisted in remaining united and bound to his Maker, so estrangement from him was the death of his soul. Nor is it strange that he who perverted the whole order of nature in heaven and earth deteriorated his race by his revolt. "The whole creation groaneth," saith St. Paul, "being made subject to vanity, not willingly," (Romans 8:20, 22). If the reason is asked, there cannot be a doubt that creation bears part of the punishment deserved by man, for whose use all other creatures were made. Therefore, since through man's fault a curse has extended above and below, over all the regions of the world, there is nothing unreasonable in its extending to all his offspring. After the heavenly image in man was effaced, he not only was himself punished by a with-

drawal of the ornaments in which he had been arrayed, viz., wisdom, virtue, justice, truth, and holiness, and by the substitution in their place of those dire pests, blindness, impotence, vanity, impurity, and unrighteousness, but he involved his posterity also, and plunged them in the same wretchedness. This is the hereditary corruption to which early Christian writers gave the name of Original Sin, meaning by the term the depravation of a nature formerly good and pure. ...The orthodoxy, therefore, and more especially Augustine, labored to show, that we are not corrupted by acquired wickedness, but bring an innate corruption from the very womb. It was the greatest impudence to deny this. But no man will wonder at the presumption of the Pelagians and Celestians, who has learned from the writings of that holy man how extreme the effrontery of these heretics was. Surely there is no ambiguity in David's confession, "I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me," (Psalm 51:5). His object in the passage is not to throw blame on his parents; but the better to commend the goodness of God towards him, he properly reiterates the confession of impurity from his very birth. As it is clear, that there was no peculiarity in David's case, it follows that it is only an instance of the common lot of the whole human race. All of us, therefore, descending from an impure seed, come into the world tainted with the contagion of sin. Nay, before we beheld the light of the sun we are in God's sight defiled and polluted. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one," says the Book of Job, (Job 14:4).

6. We thus see that the impurity of parents is transmitted to their children, so that all, without exception, are originally depraved. The commencement of this depravity will not be found until we ascend to the first parent of all as the fountain head. We must, therefore,

hold it for certain, that, in regard to human nature, Adam was not merely a progenitor, but, as it were, a root, and that, accordingly, by his corruption, the whole human race was deservedly vitiated. This is plain from the contrast which the Apostle draws between Adam and Christ, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned; even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord," (Romans 5:19-21). To what quibble will the Pelagians here recur? That the sin of Adam was propagated by imitation! Is the righteousness of Christ then available to us only in so far as it is an example held forth for our imitation? Can any man tolerate such blasphemy? But if, out of all controversy, the righteousness of Christ, and thereby life, is ours by communication, it follows that both of these were lost in Adam that they might be recovered in Christ, whereas sin and death were brought in by Adam, that they might be abolished in Christ. There is no obscurity in the words, "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Accordingly, the relation subsisting between the two is this, As Adam, by his ruin, involved and ruined us, so Christ, by his grace, restored us to salvation. In this clear light of truth I cannot see any need of a longer or more laborious proof....

7. To the understanding of this subject, there is no necessity for an anxious discussion, (which in no small degree perplexed the ancient doctors,) as to whether the soul of the child comes by transmission from the soul of the parent. It should be enough for us to know that Adam was made the depository of the endowments which God was pleased to bestow on human nature, and that, therefore, when he lost what he had received, he lost not only for himself but for us

all.... Thus, from a corrupt root corrupt branches proceeding, transmit their corruption to the saplings which spring from them. The children being vitiated in their parent, conveyed the taint to the grandchildren; in other words, corruption commencing in Adam, is, by perpetual descent, conveyed from those preceding to those coming after them. The cause of the contagion is neither in the substance of the flesh nor the soul, but God was pleased to ordain that those gifts which he had bestowed on the first man, that man should lose as well for his descendants as for himself. The Pelagian cavil, as to the improbability of children deriving corruption from pious parents, whereas, they ought rather to be sanctified by their purity, is easily refuted. Children come not by spiritual regeneration but carnal descent. Accordingly, as Augustine says, "Both the condemned unbeliever and the acquitted believer beget offspring not acquitted but condemned, because the nature which begets is corrupt." Moreover, though godly parents do in some measure contribute to the holiness of their offspring, this is by the blessing of God; a blessing, however, which does not prevent the primary and universal curse of the whole race from previously taking effect. Guilt is from nature, whereas sanctification is from supernatural grace.

8. ...Original sin, then, may be defined a hereditary corruption and depravity of our nature, extending to all the parts of the soul, which first makes us obnoxious to the wrath of God, and then produces in us works which in Scripture are termed works of the flesh. ...The two things, therefore, are to be distinctly observed, viz., that being thus perverted and corrupted in all the parts of our nature, we are, merely on account of such corruption, deservedly condemned by God, to whom nothing

Guilt is from nature, whereas sanctification is from supernatural grace.

is acceptable but righteousness, innocence, and purity. This is not liability for another's fault. For when it is said, that the sin of Adam has made us obnoxious to the justice of God, the meaning is not, that we, who are in ourselves innocent and blameless, are bearing his guilt, but that since by his transgression we are all placed under the curse, he is said to have brought us under obligation. Through him, however, not only has punishment been derived, but pollution instilled, for which punishment is justly due.... And the Apostle most distinctly testifies, that "death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," (Romans 5:12); that is, are involved in original sin, and polluted by its stain. Hence, even infants bringing their condemnation with them from their mother's womb, suffer not for another's, but for their own defect. For although they have not yet produced the fruits of their own unrighteousness, they have the seed implanted in them. Nay, their whole nature is, as it were, a seed-bed of sin, and therefore cannot but be odious and abominable to God.... Next comes the other point, viz., that this perversity in us never ceases, but constantly produces new fruits, in other words, those works of the flesh which we formerly described; just as a lighted furnace sends forth sparks and flames, or a fountain without ceasing pours out water.... For our nature is not only utterly devoid of goodness, but so prolific in all kinds of evil, that it can

never be idle. Those who term it concupiscence use a word not very inappropriate, provided it were added...that everything which is in man, from the intellect to the will, from the soul even to the flesh, is defiled and pervaded with this concupiscence; or, to express it more briefly, that the whole man is in himself nothing else than concupiscence. □

Calvin's View of Creation: Spectacle of God's Glory

"For our salvation was a matter of concern to God in such a way that, not forgetful of himself, he kept his glory primarily in view, and therefore created the whole world for this end, that it may be a theater of his glory" — *Consensus Genevensis*, as quoted in *The Theater of His Glory: Nature and Natural Order in the Thought of John Calvin*, Susan E. Schreiner, Labyrinth Press, 1991 (cf. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, J.T. McNeill, Ed.; F.L. Battles, Transl., Westminster, 1960, 2 vols., I. v. 8, where Calvin also uses this term).

It is that theme of God's glory that dominates Calvin's thought concerning God's work of creation. Calvin's doctrine of creation is cast in beautifully positive terms and is therefore wonderful to explore. Though Calvin had to be polemical at times in his treatment of this doctrine (as Reformed theologians and believers still do!), the truth of creation was for the most part free of controversy in his time. Though the Protestants of the great Reformation did have controversies with Rome over the creation of man, specifically over the image of God in man, there was no conflict over the creation of the world in general. And so Calvin presented creation as a glorious work of God, revealing His power in making a well-ordered and perfectly good universe that pro-

claimed the glory and goodness of its Maker.

...Wherever you cast your eyes, there is no spot in the universe wherein you cannot discern at least some sparks of his glory. You cannot in one glance survey this most vast and beautiful system of the universe, in its wide expanse, without being completely overwhelmed by the boundless force of its brightness. ...This skillful ordering of the universe is for us a sort of mirror in which we can contemplate God, who is otherwise invisible (*Inst.*, I. v. 1).

Following the classic doctrine of the Christian church, Calvin taught that this world was not the product of blind chance or of any other power outside of God, but was the work of the triune God alone. In this he simply upheld the historic confession of the church, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." It was Calvin's faith, as it is and must be ours, that God the eternal Father, through the Son as His eternal Word, and by the Holy Spirit as His powerful Breath, created all things visible and invisible.

Even though Calvin did not face the error of evolutionism in his day, he did confront other similar unbelieving notions about the origin of the universe. For example, he refuted the pagan Greek idea that matter is eternal — an idea that is at least still implied, if not taught, in modern evolutionism. In his commentary on Genesis he remarks on chapter 1:1,

He moreover teaches by the word 'created,' that what before did not exist was now made; for he has not used the term *yatsar*, which signifies to frame or form, but *bara*, which signifies to create. Therefore his meaning is, that the world was made out of nothing. Hence the folly of those is refuted who imagine that unformed matter existed from eternity.... Let this, then, be maintained in the first place, that the world is not eternal, but was created by God (*Commentary Upon the Book of Genesis*, Transl. by Rev. J. King, Baker, 1979, p. 70).

This key point, that God created the world "out of nothing" (*ex nihilo*), silences the vain shouts of all those who defend evolutionary theories about how the universe came into being. Calvin would not be on the side of such "scientists."

Further, at one point in the *Institutes* Calvin refers to those who "babble" about the universe being given life by some "secret inspiration." He quotes the philosopher Vergil, who promoted this idea in some famous lines. But Calvin responds, "As if the universe, which was founded as a spectacle of God's glory, were its own creator!" (*Inst.* I. v. 5). And at another point, in speaking of the glory of God evidenced in the human body, Calvin writes of those who nonetheless deny this divine handiwork, with words that ring strikingly true of today's evolutionists:

How detestable, I ask you, is this madness: that man, finding God in his body and soul a hundred times,

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on this very pretense of excellence denies that there is a God? ...They set God aside, the while using 'nature,' which for them is the artificer of all things, as a cloak. ...Here also they substitute nature for God (*Inst. I. v. 4*).

It should be clear from this that for Calvin there was no room for any evolutionary theory concerning the origin of the universe.

In this connection, a matter of great importance to every Reformed Christian should be what Calvin taught with regard to the days of Genesis 1. Did he view Genesis 1 as real history, with God's work carried out in a chronological order, such that the six days of creation were ordinary, successive days of 24 hours? Or did he take this opening chapter of God's Word to be poetry or some other type of literary framework to describe the creative work of God? Did he, in other words, allow for today's framework and day-age theories, which would give room for some type of evolutionary development of the universe, even if it be controlled by God (theistic evolution)? And therefore, did Calvin believe that the universe was young or old?

In answering this, it is important to remember again that this was not as such a controversial question in Calvin's time. At least not on this specific question of how the days of Genesis 1 were to be interpreted. It was assumed that they were to be taken literally, i.e., as ordinary days of 24 hours. But Calvin did face this question in connection with another conflicting viewpoint. Augustine and other church fathers before him had taught that God's work of creation was done "in a moment," and that therefore it did not take God six days to create the world. In writing about this miraculous work of God, Moses, they argued, spread the work over six days for our instruction, but not because it actually took God that long to make the world.

Calvin took issue with this when he first came across the word "day" in Genesis 1:5:

Here the error of those is manifestly refuted, who maintain that the world was made in a moment. For it is too violent a cavil to contend that Moses distributes the work which God perfected at once into six days, for the mere purpose of conveying instruction. Let us rather conclude that God himself took the space of six days, for the purpose of accommodating his works to the capacity of men. ...God applied the most suitable remedy (for our dullness, CJT) when he distributed the creation of the world into successive portions... (*Genesis*, p. 78).

As W. Robert Godfrey writes in his recent study on Genesis 1, in which he includes an appendix on "Calvin on Creation,"

He cannot be accused of accommodating to modern science.... Calvin does conclude in his study that Genesis 1 is simple chronology and does see the days of creation as ordinary days (*God's Pattern for Creation: A Covenantal Reading of Genesis 1*, P&R Publishing, 2003).

This is an honest but striking admission in view of the fact that Godfrey himself does not take Genesis 1:5 to refer to a day of 24 hours and leaves this question open to various interpretations (cf. pp. 28, 30), a fatal concession to those who want to defend a framework theory and an old earth in conservative Reformed churches in our day. Calvin firmly believed an early earth, based on his proper understanding of the days of Genesis 1.

But Calvin also believed that this present created order was not an end in itself. Its purpose was not just the glory of God in this material world with all its beauty; it also served the greater and higher purpose of the glory of God in the redemption of His people in Jesus Christ. It was in this created heaven and earth that sin and grace would

be revealed. Calvin throughout his treatment of the doctrine of creation views this present world as the stage for the revelation of God's program of salvation for His elect church. Always he relates the creation to God's plan in Christ in the face of man's fall into sin. That is true of his comments in the early part of Genesis, even before the account of the Fall. But it is also true of those special places in Scripture where God's salvation plan is tied to Christ and creation (cf. his comments on Rom. 8:19ff.; Eph. 1:10ff., and Col. 1:15ff.). That means Calvin also believed the redemption of all creation in Christ. Not of all men, for reprobate men and angels are excluded from this gracious plan of salvation. But all the elect and all the elect angels, as well as the entire created world, will be gathered together in one in Christ. This is God's plan and purpose with His creation. In this, too, He shows Himself to be a faithful Creator. And all of this serves the glory of God. That is the ultimate purpose of all things.

Because of this saving purpose of God in Christ, Calvin also taught that fallen man cannot attain to a true and saving knowledge of God apart from God's gracious revelation of Himself in Christ through the gospel as set forth in Scripture. He makes this abundantly plain in the opening section of the *Institutes*. While Calvin teaches that all men have a natural, innate knowledge of God given them by God through the things He has made (Rom. 1:19-21), this knowledge is not saving, nor does it lead men to reach higher for the knowledge of God as Savior. He writes: "In this ruin of mankind no one now experiences God either as Father or as Author of salvation, or favorable in any way (no common grace here! CJT), until Christ the Mediator comes forward to reconcile him to us" (I. ii. 1).

In fact, Calvin shows that this natural knowledge that man has he totally corrupts, due to the pres-

ence of sin in him, just as Romans 1:21ff. teaches.

But although the Lord represents both himself and his everlasting Kingdom in the mirror of his works with very great clarity, such is our stupidity that we grow increasingly dull toward so manifest testimonies, and they flow without profiting us. ...Sometimes we are driven by the leading and direction of these things to contemplate God.... Yet after we rashly grasp a conception of some sort of divinity, straightway we fall back into the ravings or evil imaginings of

our flesh, and corrupt by our vanity the pure truth of God. ...We forsake the one true God for prodigious trifles (I. v. 11).

This is what makes the revelation of God in Christ through the Holy Scriptures necessary, which Calvin goes on to treat in the *Institutes*.

...It is needful that another and better help be added to direct us aright to the very Creator of the universe. It was not in vain, then, that he added the light of his

Word by which to become known unto salvation; and he regarded as worthy of this privilege those whom he pleased to gather more closely and intimately to himself (I. vi. 1).

This is the amazing grace and abundant mercy of God to us His people in Jesus Christ. For this gracious revelation of God we ought to thank and worship the Lord. For this wonderful mercy of God we will praise and serve Him everlastingly in the new heavens and earth. □

Rev. Kenneth Koole

Reclaiming the Truth of the Image of God

Many were the areas in which the Reformers cleared away the stifling undergrowth of Romish, scholastic error and opened up and clarified the church's understanding of biblical truths. One of these vital areas was the truth of the image of God in man.

What Berkof says in his Reformed Dogmatics is certainly true: "The doctrine of the image of God is of greatest importance in theology, for that image is the expression of that which is most distinctive in man and in his relation to God" (Vol. I, p. 191, Eerdmans, 1932 ed.). If one goes astray here, his view of man, in particular man's condition in his fallen state (what of this 'image' man lost, if anything) and how man stands related to God, is going to be affected. One's view of what remains of the image of God in man's fallen

condition will also have a bearing on one's view of saving grace, that is, the extent to which Christ Himself is needed for its restoration.

The importance of a correct understanding of this doctrine is clear from the fact that it is something the Spirit led Moses to underscore in the very first chapter of God's book to us (Gen. 1:26, 27). "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: ...So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them." By these words the Spirit was certainly distinguishing man from the animals, man made in such a way as to bear (be endowed with) something that no mere animal possibly could. And it was this 'something,' this image and likeness, that enabled man to stand and function as God's friend.

What properly constitutes this image of God has been the subject of all kinds of discussion and disagreement. Adding to the volume of discussion is Genesis 1's use of the term "likeness," following its

declaring that "in the image of God made he man." It has been common to distinguish between the two. Some have been of the opinion that "image" refers to the intellectual abilities given to man, and "likeness" to the spiritual virtues in man; others that "image" refers to man's body, and "likeness" to man's soul. Still others maintain that the image of God refers to everything that makes man unique as a creature, and "likeness" refers to man's dominion over creation. These are but a few of the variations that exist.

More serious was the distinction that developed in Romish theology prior to the Reformation (ultimately in order to justify serious [Pelagian] error). Rome's theologians talked about a "natural" image of God in terms of that which was given at man's creation (having to do with a soul that was spiritual, a will that was free, and a body that was immortal), which gave to man a "natural righteousness"; and then they went on to talk about "the likeness of God" in

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terms of a supernatural endowment (of grace) being added (called the *donum superadditum*). It is this supernatural endowment that provided what became known as man's "original righteousness"; and it is this gracious supernatural endowment of God's image that alone enables man (even Adam himself in the state of perfection) to resist "concupiscence," that is, the natural tendency of the appetites of the human body (be it a sinless body) to yearn for and feed on sin.

This forced and "unnatural" distinction applied to the "image of God" in man has serious implications when it comes to how one views the consequences of Adam's fall and of original sin on the human race. Berkof's description of Rome's view makes this plain.

Man, then, as he was originally constituted (i.e., in paradise — kk) was by nature without positive holiness, but also without sin, though burdened with a tendency which might easily result in sin. But now God added to the natural constitution of man the supernatural gift of original righteousness, by which he was enabled to keep the lower propensities and desires in due subjection and order. When man fell, he lost this original righteousness (i.e., what was given by the "likeness" of God's image — kk), but the original constitution of human nature remained intact. *The natural man is now exactly where Adam was before he was endowed with original righteousness, though with a somewhat stronger bias towards evil.* (emphasis mine - kk) (*op. cit.*, pp. 196-7).

Note the words in italics. The upshot of Rome's faulty distinction is a denial of the truth of fallen man's depravity (its vitiating, ruinous effect upon the whole man) and his spiritual death. It is a denial of the truth and reality of original sin. Man's fall amounts to little more than a relapse back to the state of pure nature. Dr. R. L. Reymond points this out in clear fashion.

Accordingly, in Roman Catholic theology, in and by the fall man lost the "likeness" while still retaining as man the image of God. Thus fallen man is essentially *deprived* of the "superadditional gifts" of holiness and righteousness but not morally depraved throughout the whole man. Indeed, he is not even in a state of sin but only in the state of a *tendency* to sin (*Systematic Theology*, p. 426).

It was against this grievous, and essentially Pelagian error that the Reformers reacted in their formulation of what constituted the image of God in man.

While it is true that the Reformers were not in perfect agreement about what constituted the full scope of the image of God, Luther in particular giving it a narrower scope, about one thing there was no disagreement, Rome's view was to be vigorously rejected, and in this there was basic agreement, a rejection of any real distinction between the two terms, image and likeness.

Calvin, as one might suppose, is representative.

The "image" and "likeness" has given rise to no small discussion: interpreters searching without cause for a difference between the two terms, since "likeness" is merely added by way of exposition. First, we know that repetitions are common in Hebrew, which often gives two words for one thing; and, secondly, there is no ambiguity in the thing itself, man being called the image of God because of his likeness to God. Hence there is an obvious absurdity in those who indulge in philosophical speculation as to these names, placing *Zelem*, that is, the image, in the substance of the soul, and the *Demuth*, that is, the likeness, in its qualities, and so forth. God having determined to create man in his own image, to remove the obscurity which was in this term adds, by way of explanation, in his likeness, as if he had said, that he would make man, in whom he would, as it were, image himself by means of the marks of re-

semblance impressed upon him. Accordingly, Moses, shortly after repeating the account, puts down the image of God twice, and makes no mention of the likeness (*Inst.* I. xv. 3, Beveridge ed.).

The point is, Calvin wanted it to be clear that once man rebelled against God and fell, it was not just some "likeness" to God that was affected, the loss of a special original righteousness, leaving the original image with all its powers (for instance, man's free will) unaffected and intact, but the image in its entirety was affected, vitiated, and left in ruin. Fallen man is not now simply lacking a certain kind of righteousness, but is by very nature filled with unrighteousness, opposed to God.

Luther, taking his lead from the New Testament Scriptures that speak of the image as restored by Christ and the renewing Spirit (Eph. 4:24 and Col. 3:10), restricted the image to spiritual virtues originally bestowed on man, namely, true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. The other gifts of mind and soul that make man superior to the brute beasts are what enable man to bear and exhibit these virtues, but are not part of the image itself.

The implication of this view is that by man's fall God's image and man's likeness to God was brought into complete ruin and lost. Thus the author of *The Bondage of the Will* shut the door on any natural good or spiritual abilities remaining in unredeemed, unregenerate man.

Calvin was willing to maintain a broader definition of what belonged to the image of God, namely, everything that set man apart and lifted him above the animals. The image then includes what belongs to man's intellectual gifts and rationality, as well as his spiritual virtues of righteousness, holiness, and the knowledge of God. In the context of insisting the image of God primarily finds its seat in the soul of man, man's spiri-

tual side, Calvin states, "...though [I still] retain the principle which I lately laid down, that the image of God extends to everything in which the nature of man surpasses that of all other species of animals" (*Inst.* I. xv. 3).

This explanation became the general consensus of perspective in the Reformed tradition. It became the occasion for speaking of the image in both a broader (or 'formal') sense, and in a narrower (or 'material') sense.

What is significant today, in the days of drifting (motoring?) towards Rome, is that the emphasis in Reformed circles is more and more on this broader, formal aspect of the image. The emphasis is on what all human beings, due to these so-called wonderful remnants of the image still found in everyone, still share in common. (And, of course, it is common grace that is given credit for preserving these wonderful remnants of the image in fallen man). Be that as it may, the result of this mis-emphasis is that universalism has been given opportunity to rear its ugly head in Reformed teachings. This is certainly an abuse of the direction Calvin meant to go.

Calvin was willing to grant that not everything of the image was destroyed and lost through man's folly, but not in the interests of finding some 'redeeming' virtue in fallen man. As he states emphatically (I. xv. 4),

Wherefore, though we grant that the image of God was not utterly effaced and destroyed in him, it was, however, so corrupted, that anything which remains is fearful deformity....

And then a little later in the same section, Calvin points out that just as the image of God shone through the excellency of the human nature prior to the fall:

...[it]was afterwards vitiated and almost destroyed, nothing remaining but a ruin, confused, muti-

lated, and tainted with impurity....

Whatever 'breadness' Calvin was willing to grant to the content of the image, it cannot be denied that Calvin placed the primacy (the core) of the image in the spiritual, ethical aspect of man. As he states in his Institutes:

However, it appears that no complete definition is as yet given of that image, unless it be set forth more clearly in which faculties man excels by which he must be considered a mirror of the glory of God. Now this can be known better from no other source than from the restoration of the corrupt nature (I. xv. 4).

The source that records for us what God used Christ Jesus to restore in fallen, corrupted man is, of course, to be found in Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10. Having quoted these two passages, Calvin goes on to say:

Whence it appears what Paul comprehends chiefly (note!— kk) under the image of God. In the first place he mentions knowledge, and further, true righteousness and holiness: whence we gather that in the beginning the image of God was conspicuous by the light of the mind, the rectitude of the heart, the soundness of all the parts (I. xv. 4).

These, Calvin says, are the "leading" features of the image restored by Christ, and because that is true, we can only conclude that these spiritual, ethical virtues "...must also have held the highest place in [the image of God's] creation" (I. xv. 4).

What also bears emphasis is what it was that the churches of the early Reformation (students of both Calvin and the Scriptures, and familiar with Luther as well) emphasized when it came to this matter of the image of God in man. It was the image as the spiritual, ethical reflection of God that received all

the emphasis. This is found consistently in the Reformed confessions.

The Canons of Dort define the image in this 'narrow' sense (III/IV, 1).

Man was originally formed after the image of God. His understanding was adorned with a true and saving knowledge of his Creator and of spiritual things; his heart and will were upright; all his affections pure; and the whole man was holy.

The Westminster Confession does the same.

After God had made all other creatures, he created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness after his own image... (Chpt. 4, sect. 2).

Cf. Heidelberg Catechism Q & A 6 as well.

The Reformed church world does well to note where the Reformers and the creeds put the emphasis in this vital matter. Errors here have invariably given way to greater errors down the road.

In conclusion it must be admitted that Calvin and Luther disagreed about what constituted the full scope of the image of God in man — Calvin unwilling to give it as narrow (and, shall we say, as biblically accurate) a scope as Luther did. But Calvin and Luther did not disagree when it came to rejecting Rome's view. In that they were in full agreement, their views by very intention rejecting Rome's view on this vital matter.

When one reads Calvin in his entirety, it becomes plain that he was much more in agreement with Luther than many a Reformed theologian wants to admit today, certainly much more in agreement with Luther's teaching on this matter than where Protestant theologians are heading today, essentially back to Rome and its Pelagian view of fallen, unbelieving man. □

The Invincible Doctrine of Federal Headship

Adam ... “who is the figure of him that was to come” (Rom. 5:14). “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22).

Federal headship!

It is a glorious reality.

In its light we have true knowledge of ourselves and our fellow men. First, we know ourselves to be dead in Adam, for “the [first, cjc] covenant being made with Adam as a public person, not for himself only, but for his posterity, all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him in that first transgression”; and second, we can know certain hope of heaven, for we learn that “the covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in him with all the elect as his seed.”¹ In Adam we are fallen sinners cast upon the mercy of God, and in Christ we are redeemed sinners raised up to sit in heavenly places.

The Reformation recovered the doctrine of federal headship. The Reformed have developed and placed it in its covenantal setting.

As such it is *the invincible doctrine of federal headship!*

We shall discuss the doctrine, and then note that when the Reformers tied headship into predestination they had loosed a truth that might not rest until it had led

the church of Christ into the knowledge of God’s covenant — federal theology.

Federal headship?² *One* person appointed by God to represent the *many* within His covenant. That one is the *head*. He is like the root from which the whole organism of his body springs forth and grows. He is a public person who represents every member of the whole number that is incorporated into him. God endows the head with authority and the legal right to represent his offspring, to stand in their place, to act on their behalf and in their name. Furthermore, such is the legal relation of the members to their head that each is accounted by God to act in, with, and by the head.

Adam and Christ are both representative heads within God’s covenant.

Adam represented all mankind under the first covenant, variously called the covenant of creation, life, friendship, or works. Within that covenant, man was assured of life in God’s presence and blessing while ever he kept covenant by loving God in perfect, personal, perpetual conformity to God and His command. Man was also warned that if ever he broke covenant by sinning against God: “...thou shalt surely die.” Adam broke that covenant. “In Adam all die.”

Adam’s sin belongs to, and affects, not only himself, but all men descending from him by ordinary generation. Adam’s headship means that we sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgres-

sion. All are involved in that sin through headship. Legally we are guilty of that original sin, for it is ours in Adam. Organically, we partake of the sinful nature of our head; so that from our mother’s womb we are devoid of original righteousness, totally depraved, utterly incapable of and opposed to all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil — continually! Sin and misery have swallowed mankind whole! This truth is invincible — it might be denied but it cannot be escaped!

Should this dreadful reality strike home to our hearts we will never again think in terms of cooperating with God or contributing toward our salvation! We will at last agree with God, “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” The broken covenant will sound in our hearts as it did in Adam’s, “thou shalt surely die.” How could we even begin to understand the universality of sin and death, or indeed our own need of the Savior sent from God without this knowledge. It is a dreadful reality, but it is our reality *in Adam*.

In like manner Christ, the Second Adam, was appointed by God in eternity to be the head of the covenant of grace. “His goings forth are from of old, even from everlasting” (Micah 5:2). At His appointment God gave all the elect unto Christ as His seed, thereby establishing Christ as head over the whole body of His elect (Eph. 1:4-5). On the basis of this eternal pre-

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destination, Christ was authorized and commissioned to act as head of His elect within the covenant of grace. He came forth to fulfill all the demands of the broken covenant in the place of His seed, and thereby to redeem His body, bestow upon them the adoption of children, and lift them into glorious life with their covenant God.³ His obedience *affects* (actually redeems and saves to the uttermost) all in whose name and place He acts. Just as really as the first head's sin destroyed his natural seed, so Christ's obedience saves His elect seed: "even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

This reality — the might, power, and sufficiency of Christ's headship — is the substance of the gospel. It is the good news that God publishes in the world fallen in Adam, because His covenant demands that the body be united to its head through faith. Surely, this reality ought to give pause to those of Reformed persuasion who insist that God must desire that all who hear the gospel should be saved. Men, we ask, what of the headship of Christ? What is the content of your gospel?

Christ's headship also ensures that the covenant is *unconditional*. Christ is the *one* who is appointed to act on behalf of all God's elect. According to the tenor of His own ordinance, God looks to the head, not to the body, for the provision of *everything* necessary. Every conceivable requirement, condition, or prerequisite for salvation must be satisfied by the head. Nothing — *absolutely nothing* — is wanting. Therefore, God is satisfied. Salvation must now be applied to the body as a free gift, by grace alone. Headship demands it.

This truth has tremendous significance to *saving faith*. If a sinner should wish to contribute one particle toward his own salvation, he commits the outrageous crime of despising Christ!⁴ Arminianism is a crime. Laboring to become good enough to be saved is a crime. Self-righteousness is a crime. Federal

headship demands faith in Christ *alone*.

The Reformers' Viewpoint

In Adam all die — in Christ shall all be made alive — as is determined by eternal predestination. Headship is predestined. Federal headship is predestination out-worked. *That* was the distinctive perspective of the Reformers on this subject.

Though not yet singled out for attention, developed, or systematized, this doctrine was integral to the Reformers' thought. Martin Luther saw it as one of his "very strong arguments":

Seeing that through the one transgression of the one man, Adam, we are all under sin and damnation, how can we attempt anything that is not sinful and damnable. ...Original sin itself, therefore, leaves free choice with no capacity to do anything but sin and be damned.⁵

John Calvin laments that "the ancient doctors of the church touched upon this subject so obscurely," and proceeds himself to work with the doctrine of federal headship at considerable length.⁶ He agrees with Augustine on the subject in his defense of predestination: "As he alone was predestinated, as MAN, to be our HEAD, so many of us are also predestinated to be his members."⁷ Of Adam, Calvin writes:

1. The eternal predestination of God, by which he decreed, before the fall of Adam, what should take place in the whole human race and in every individual thereof, was unalterably fixed and determined. 2. That Adam himself, on account of his departure from God, was deservedly appointed to eternal death. 3. And lastly, that in the person of Adam, thus fallen and lost, his whole future offspring were also eternally condemned; but so eternally condemned that God deems worthy the honour of his adoption all

those whom he freely chose out of that future offspring.⁸

John Knox in his defense of predestination was, if anything, even clearer:

In the first man Adam (who fell from his purity) have we neither love, righteousness nor life, but the contraries, to wit, hatred, sin, and death. But God, as he had chosen his Elect before all beginning in Christ Jesus His Son, so has he placed these gifts in the second Adam alone, "that out of

1. Westminster Larger Catechism 22 and 31.

2. We have used the term *federal* because this headship is most emphatically a covenantal ordinance. Headship exists because God establishes His covenant in and through Jesus Christ. Adam was but "the figure of him that was to come" (Rom. 5: 14.) Christ is no "Plan B" demanded by the failure of the first Adam. Christ (the end) is before Adam (the means) in God's eternal counsel. Adam is first in time, because Christ must save His people from their sins. Adam serves Him who "is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence, for it pleased the Father that in Christ should all the fullness dwell" (Col. 1:18-19).

3. It might also be noted that the divine appointment of Christ as head of God's elect provides the legal ground for him to act as a Surety and Substitute, for the imputation of sin to Him, for Him to offer Himself in a vicarious atonement for sin, for the imputation of His righteousness for justification, and the impartation of His righteousness for sanctification. Lose headship and lose all!

4. Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (Philipsburg: P&R, 1997), vol. 2, pp. 247-248.

5. Martin Luther, *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), p. 315.

6. John Calvin, *Institutes*, Book 2, chapter 1, sections 4 – 11.

7. John Calvin, *Calvin's Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: RFP, p. 124.)

8. *Ibid*, p. 124.

his fullness we may all receive even grace for grace.”⁹

The Reformers restored headship to the orbit of eternal predestination. Headship is God’s will. Divine predestination, they insisted, determines the truth with respect to the headship of Adam and of Christ. Headship serves God’s purpose to glorify His justice and make His power known in the punishment of sin, and it serves His ultimate purpose to show His covenant to elect mankind redeemed unto Himself in Jesus Christ! Election is a covenantal act. Election demands a covenant head. And a covenant head demands a covenant theology. Thus, the Reformers’ faithfulness to God’s sovereign predestination became the launching pad for our covenant theology. In fact, it would seem that, for the Reformers, predestination *was* their covenant theology!

How did they dispense with the Pelagian assertion that the same *all men /many/ whole world* is represented by Adam and by Christ? Knox is representative: “You make the love of God common to all men,

and that do we constantly deny, and say, that before all beginning God hath loved his Elect in Christ Jesus his Son, and that from the same eternity he hath reprobated others.” They brought predestination down like an axe on this pernicious root. They taught Adam and Christ as heads of two distinct categories. Under Adam stand *all mankind* fallen into the estate of sin and justly liable to eternal damnation. Out of Adam God chooses *the whole world of elect sinners*, arraying them under Christ as their head and Redeemer, leaving *the world of reprobate sinners* forever in Adam. Christ is not their head. That *many* has no part in Him, for they are children of wrath who shall perish in the way of their own sin. Common grace in Christ? The Reformers constantly denied it! The federal headship of Adam and of Christ according to predestination forbid it.

That was federal headship according to the Reformation.

In our day, many are embarrassed by the Reformers’ unwavering adherence to predestination — but the heirs of the Reformation ought never be. Their faithfulness

gave the Reformed churches the direction and impetus they needed to understand God’s purpose in predestination in terms of the realization of His covenant with man in Christ the head. That development brought forth in the Reformed churches a mature confession of predestinarian federal theology — that confession is the Westminster Confession of Faith.

At its very heart stands the Son of God appointed from all eternity to be the Mediator of the covenant of grace, the second Adam, the federal head of God’s elect.

The invincible head of the invincible covenant of the invincible God!

He is the death knell to all universalism.

He is the nemesis of conditional theology.

He is the heart of Reformed covenant theology!

He is the only hope of heaven for a son of Adam like me! □

9. John Knox, *Works of John Knox* (Edinburgh, James Thin, 1895), vol. 5, pp. 60, 61.

Rev. Angus Stewart

The Covenant with Adam— A Brief Historical Analysis

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Reformed churches teach a covenant relationship between pre-fall Adam and the triune God. In this article, we shall analyze the views of various theologians, especially John Calvin, culminating in the work of Herman Hoeksema, who identified the covenant as fellowship between the

living God and His Son, whom He created in His own image.

1. Is there a covenant with Adam?

The Christian church has spoken of the relationship between God and Adam before the fall in terms of the covenant from at least

as far back as Augustine (354-430).¹ Reformed theology has developed this truth. Scholars have debated, however, if Calvin (1509-1564) held to a pre-fall covenant with Adam.

Luther (1483-1546) and many Reformed theologians rightly see a reference to God's covenant with Adam in Hosea 6:7.² From his commentary on Hosea 6:7, it is clear that Calvin was aware that some in his day understood the verse this way: "Others explain the words thus, 'They have transgressed as Adam the covenant.'" However, Calvin calls this interpretation "frigid," "diluted," and "vapid," and so does "not stop to refute" it.

Calvin scholars have found only one passage in which Calvin speaks explicitly of God's covenant with pre-fall Adam. In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, he writes of the "covenants" (plural) with Adam and with Noah and their respective sacraments or signs:

One is when [God] gave Adam and Eve the tree of life as a guarantee of immortality, that they might assure themselves of it as long as they should eat of its fruit [Gen. 2:9; 3:22]. Another, when he set the rainbow for Noah and his descendants, as a token that he would not destroy the earth with a flood [Gen. 9:13-16]. These, Adam and Noah regarded as sacraments. Not that the tree provided them with an immortality which it could not give to itself; nor that the rainbow (which is but a reflection of the sun's rays opposite) could be effective in holding back the waters; but because they had a mark engraved upon them by God's Word, so that they were proofs and seals of his *covenants* (4.14.18).³

Calvin does not call this pre-fall covenant a "covenant of works" or a "covenant of creation" or a "covenant of nature," terms used by Zacharias Ursinus (1534-1583).⁴ The phrase "covenant with Adam" would fit well with the

above quotation from the Genevan reformer.

2. Could unfallen Adam have attained eternal, heavenly life?

Calvin believed that "the first man would have passed to a better life had he remained upright" (Comm. on Gen. 3:19). By a "better" life, he means, more specifically, "eternal life" (*Institutes* 2.1.4) and heavenly life, for "he would have passed into heaven without death" (Comm. on Gen. 2:16-17).

Calvin opines, "In this integrity man by free will had the power, if he so willed, to attain eternal life." A few lines later he writes, "Adam could have stood if he had wished, seeing that he fell solely by his own will" (*Institutes* 1.15.8). We have no quarrel with the statement that Adam would have "stood" in the way of obedience. But neither Calvin nor anyone since has proved that Scripture teaches that Adam would have received "eternal life."

Commenting on "man became a living soul," Calvin writes,

Paul makes an antithesis between this living soul and the quickening spirit which Christ confers upon the faithful (I Cor. 15:45) for no other purpose than to teach us that the state of man was not perfected in the person of Adam; but it is a peculiar benefit conferred by Christ, that we may be renewed to a life which is *celestial*, whereas before the fall of Adam, man's life was only *earthly*, seeing it had no firm and settled constancy (Comm. on Gen. 2:7).

To say the least, I Corinthians 15:45 (and Calvin's remarks on it above) do not sit easy with the notion that pre-fall Adam could have attained to eternal, heavenly life in the way of obedience, both for himself and, by implication, his descendants.

I Corinthians 15:45-49 draws a contrast between the first Adam and the "last" or "second" Adam, Jesus Christ. First, Christ is "the

Lord from heaven," while Adam is merely "of the earth, earthy" (I Cor. 15:47), a "clayey figure," as Calvin puts it (Comm. on Gen. 2:7). Second, Adam is "natural"; Christ is "spiritual" (I Cor. 15:46). Third, whereas "Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit" (I Cor. 15:45). The latter happened through the incarnation, death, resurrection, and session of Christ. Thus, if it took the incarnation, cross, and ascension of the "spiritual" "Lord from heaven"—"a quickening spirit!"—in order to convey eternal, heavenly life to the elect, how could the "earthly," "natural" Adam, who was merely "a living soul," ever gain eternal, heavenly life and communicate it to his posterity?

Though many Presbyterian and Reformed men reckon that Adam could have gained *eternal* life, the *Westminster Standards* do not actually specify this: "The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein *life* was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of

1. Peter A. Lillback cites Augustine's *City of God* 16.27 and *On Marriage and Concupiscence* 2.11.24 (*The Binding of God: Calvin's role in the Development of Covenant Theology* [Baker: Grand Rapids, 2001], pp. 41-45).

2. Cf. B. B. Warfield, "Hosea VI.7: Adam or Man?" in *Selected Shorter Writings*, vol. 1 (USA: P & R, 1970), pp. 116-129.

3. "The term 'sacrament,'" Calvin explains in this context, "embraces generally all those signs which God has ever enjoined upon men to render them more certain and confident of the truth of his promises." In this broad category, Calvin includes Gideon's fleece and Hezekiah's sundial going back ten degrees. Thus Calvin is not referring to the tree of life as if it were the equivalent of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

4. Westminster Larger Catechism Q & A 20 also speaks of a "covenant of life" with Adam.

perfect and personal obedience” (*Westminster Confession* 7.2).

Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680), English Puritan and prominent Westminster Assembly delegate, in part 2 of his *Of the Creatures, and the Condition of their State by Creation*, makes a sustained attack on the idea of Adam gaining eternal, heavenly life by his perseverance. He appeals to I Corinthians 15:45 and its context many times.⁵ In his work, *Of Christ the Mediator*, Goodwin writes,

Adam could not earn a condition of a higher rank, nor by all his works have brought any greater preferment than what he was created in. To compass it was *ultra suam sphaerum*, above his sphere; he could never have done it. As, for instance, he could not have attained that state in heaven which the angels enjoy. What says Christ? “When you have done all you can say, You are unprofitable servants” (Luke 17:10). This he could no more do than other creatures by keeping those their ordinances can merit to be “translated into the glorious liberty” which they wait for, and shall have at the latter day. The moon, though she keep all her motions set her by God never so regularly, yet she cannot thereby attain to the light of the sun as a new reward thereof. And thus no more can any pure creature of itself, by all its righteousness, obtain in justice a higher condition to itself. And therefore the angels, by all their own grace, have not to this day earned a better condition than they were created in.⁶

Nor is the idea that unfallen Adam could have gained *eternal* life distinctively Reformed, for, as Goodwin points out, the Roman Catholics also hold this.⁷

Though Calvin (wrongly) held that Adam could have attained to heaven, he (rightly) rejects all notion of Adam meriting with God. Peter Lillback writes, “Calvin’s theology permits no merit in the prelapsarian context.”⁸ He explains,

Calvin’s rejection of merit in the pre-fall context is partly motivated by a desire to refute the Roman Catholic theologians’ connection of merit and the justification of the sinner. But his antipathy to merit is deeper than this. For Calvin, no creature of God [including pre-fall Adam and the elect angels], even though perfect, could merit anything from God the Creator.⁹

Lillback cites Calvin’s commentary on Romans 11:35:

Paul not only concludes that God owes us nothing, on account of our corrupt and sinful nature; but he denies, that if man were perfect, he could bring anything before God, by which he could gain his favour; for as soon as he begins to exist, he is already by the right of creation so much indebted to his Maker, that he has nothing of his own.

Luther’s deadly hatred of creaturely merit in all its forms is well known. Other Reformed theologians, such as Thomas Goodwin and the Swiss Daniel Wyttenbach (1706-1779), also rejected the idea of Adam meriting with God, even if it was *ex pacto* (out of the covenant).¹⁰

3. Was the covenant with Adam a contract or a bond?

Peter Mastricht (1630-1706) speaks for most Reformed and Presbyterian theologians: “all the essentials of the covenant of works are contained in the first publication of it [in Genesis 2:17].”¹¹ He is referring to the “condition” (not eating of the tree of the knowledge of God and evil), the “penalty” for eating (death), and the “promise” (eternal and heavenly life). In his commentary on Genesis 2:16-17 and in his *Institutes* (2.1.4), Calvin uses words such as “test,” “threat,” and “promise,” though he does not present the schematized theology of many later theologians.

However, not only is there no promise of eternal life in Genesis 2:17, this system also presents the

pre-fall covenant as merely a means to an end. But the Bible teaches that the covenant is eternal and the end of God’s dealings with His people (Rev. 21:3), not merely a means. Moreover, if “all the essentials of the covenant of works” are contained in Genesis 2:17, then there was a time, after Adam’s creation and before God issued the prohibitory command, in which he was not in covenant with God! A “covenantless” existence for pre-fall Adam, even for a short time, is unthinkable!

The covenant with Adam was a bond of fellowship between the Almighty, triune God and Adam His covenant friend-servant, whom He created in His own image. Thus, as Calvin notes, “In the very order of the creation the eternal solicitude of God for man is conspicuous, because he furnished the world with all things needful” for man (Comm. on Gen. 1:26). God gave Adam a “home” in “Paradise,” which Calvin further describes as “a place which he had especially embellished with every variety of delights, with abounding fruits, and with all other most excellent gifts ... from the enjoyment of which he might infer the paternal benevolence of God” (Comm. on Gen. 2:8). Thus Adam was “in every respect, happy” for he lived as a recipient of the divine “liberality” (Comm. on Gen. 2:16). In His goodness, God gave Adam a wife with whom he lived in “sweetest harmony” and with whom he enjoyed “a holy, as well as friendly and peaceful, intercourse” as “the inseparable associate of his life” (Comm. on Gen. 2:18).

Herman Hoeksema developed the truth of covenant fellowship between the Creator God and His creation, man. He worked with the biblical data of the covenant as walking with God, dwelling with God, and friendship with God and built on ideas found in the Reformed tradition, especially in its treatment of the blissful commun-

ion Adam enjoyed with God in the Garden of Eden. Hoeksema writes,

From the very first moment of his existence ... and by virtue of his being created after the image of God, Adam stood in [a] covenant relation to God and was conscious of that living fellowship and friendship.... He knew God and loved Him and was conscious of God's love to him. He enjoyed the favor of God. He received the Word of God, walked with God and talked with Him; and he

dwelled in the house of God in paradise the first.¹²

Hoeksema's formulation of the covenant (both before and after the fall) as a gracious bond of friendship explains the biblical data, excludes all human merit, and preserves the absolute sovereignty of God. □

5. Thomas Goodwin, *The Works of Thomas Goodwin* (USA: Tanski Publications, 1996), vol. 7, pp. 36, 37, 48, 49-50, 62, 70, 73, 76-91, etc.

6. Goodwin, *Works*, vol. 5, pp. 82-83.

7. Goodwin, *Works*, vol. 7, p. 57.

8. Lillback, *op. cit.*, p. 299.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 298.

10. Quoted in Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), p. 296; Goodwin, *Works*, vol. 7, pp. 23, 29, 49.

11. Quoted in Heppe, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

12. Herman Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: RFP, 1966), p. 222.

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop

The Reformation and the Doctrine of Man: Man's Total Depravity

The King of the church used His church at the time of the Reformation to develop especially the doctrines of man's salvation — soteriology. The Reformers proclaimed a salvation of man that was gracious — arising completely out of the unmerited favor of the merciful God from the beginning to the end. For the Reformers, nothing showed the need for the grace of God more than the depravity of those saved — their total depravity. Therefore, when the Reformers developed the doctrine of salvation, there was also a development in their understanding of the nature and extent of man's depravity.

At the conclusion of the Reformation our spiritual fathers, in the

formulation of the Canons of Dordt, put together their treatment of man's total depravity and God's irresistible grace. Though there was the historical reason found in the way in which the Remonstrants (Arminians) presented their case, there is also the biblical reason that these two truths are very closely related. How one understands man's condition has so much to do with how one understands God's saving work. Consider the different responses to someone who is very sick, in contrast to someone who is dead — both physically and spiritually. To revive someone whose pulse is slow and whose blood pressure is low is a much different work than giving new life to someone who is already dead.

The teaching of Scripture about man's spiritually dead condition is the setting for Scripture's teaching about salvation by God's grace alone. It is only God's powerful and efficacious grace that is the an-

swer to the needs of the totally depraved sinner. Every saved sinner knows that, but for the grace of God toward him or her in Christ, his situation would be completely helpless.



The position taken by the Reformers on the doctrine of sin was first a reverting back to Augustine's understanding of the doctrine of sin, thereby rejecting the perversion of Augustine's position held by the Church of Rome. When God brought the Reformers onto the scene of His history, they were confronted by a Roman Church that had a weak doctrine of sin and that denied total depravity, that is, a moral depravity that completely pervades every part of man.

The prevailing view at the time of the Reformers was that man's fall into sin resulted in his being in a neutral condition, neither sinful nor holy, in which he experienced

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constant conflict between flesh and spirit. Rome maintained that Adam was head of the human race, so that all his descendants sinned in him and were born with original sin; but the predominant position in Rome was that original sin consisted not of something that was positively evil, but in the absence of that which ought to be present. Generally Rome rejected the idea of man's total depravity and complete dependence on God's grace. The prevailing position maintained by Rome was that man was able to cooperate with God in regeneration.

Erasmus, as a good son of Rome, defended, when debating with Martin Luther, the position that the will of unregenerated man was not incapable of spiritual good but was able to want and to choose the good.

The Reformers' development of their doctrine of sin and grace began by reverting back to the stronger position held by Augustine; and then they developed their position further from there.

First, the Reformers (and especially John Calvin) emphasized that original sin, and all sin, is not merely the lack of something good, but also a positive evil and a total corruption of the human nature. The Reformers generally defended the position that original sin is an inherited depravity and a corruption of the whole human nature, so that by nature every human being is guilty and polluted in Adam and justly condemned by God. All men bring with them into the world a thoroughly depraved moral nature, which manifests itself in a pervading proneness to sin. This depraved moral nature leads every human being to many actual violations of God's law. This depraved nature cannot be subdued or taken away by any human or created power. This depraved moral nature, except for the intervention of divine grace, consigns man to the everlasting destruction of hell.

The prevailing view among the Reformers was that the fall of Adam into sin rendered all of his descendants totally depraved, incapable of doing any spiritual good. Thus the Reformers saw natural man as unable to make any step toward a recovery from this spiritual death.

Second, concerning the relationship of Adam to his descendants, the Reformers strengthened the position of the early church. To the organic idea of Adam being the first father of the whole human race, they added the concept of the legal or federal headship of Adam to every member of the human race. Adam was seen then as not only the natural head of the human race, but also as its legal representative. This legal representation by Adam means that his fall into sin results in the imputation of guilt to all of his descendants.

All the Reformers saw the correlation of man's total depravity with man's absolute dependence on the grace of God for deliverance and salvation.

The Reformation's understanding of man's total depravity is evidenced in Martin Luther's *Bondage of the Will*. Luther powerfully and accurately describes the spiritual bondage of unregenerated man's ability to will any spiritual good. Luther declares, presenting a solid basis in Scripture, that the sinner is not free to seek after God, unless God gives this freedom. Man's will is moved by what he finds desirable, and natural man finds God always undesirable. So he does not will to seek after him. Only the regenerated man finds God desirable, and therefore he willingly seeks Him. Luther's point is that the natural man has no will to desire to receive the things of God or to respond to God.

In his book *The Theology of the Reformers*, Timothy George states, "Gradually Luther came to view sin as a seething rebellion, not

merely a passive weakness or a lack of good. The atrocity of sin was not only that it vitiated one's entire being but that it was an uncontrollable energy which could not be conquered by ordinary means." George also points out that during the course of his ministry "Luther abandoned the medical imagery of impartation/infusion in favor of the forensic language of imputation."



John Calvin approaches the subject of the condition of fallen man from the perspective that we cannot know God as Redeemer unless we know ourselves as sinners. The purpose of Calvin's presentation of the doctrine of total depravity is to open up the way for God to be gracious and for man to believe in Christ. It is only by abandoning all hope in ourselves that we will flee to Christ. One who does not know his depravity will not go to Christ. Therefore, one who does not teach total depravity bars the way for one to come to Christ.

Calvin's doctrine of man's original sin is that all men are depraved by nature, sinful and corrupt, lacking all of the original righteousness with which Adam was created. Also, Calvin maintained that Scripture taught that all men are born with an active source of sin. In his *Institutes* Calvin defines original sin as "a hereditary depravity and corruption of our nature, diffused into all parts of the soul, which first makes us liable to God's wrath, then also brings forth in us those works which Scripture calls 'works of the flesh.'"

Calvin emphasized Adam's organic relationship to the human race, and it seems that during the course of his ministry he saw with increasing clarity the necessity of maintaining Adam's legal headship, and therefore man's guilt as well as man's corruption.

Calvin was always clear on this, that the extent of man's de-

pravity is total. The whole nature of man is completely corrupted by sin, so man has no capability of doing any good, and is capable of doing only evil. Thus there is nothing in man's nature that is in need only of a little help from grace. He is totally depraved.



The Reformation doctrine of sin and of total depravity climaxed in the Canons of Dordt after the Arminian controversy. Adam is presented as the legal and organic head of the human race, and the guilt of his first sin is imputed to all of his descendants. Consequently, the corruption of the hu-

man nature is also propagated to them. Every descendant of Adam is totally corrupt — spiritually corrupt in every part of his being, including his will, and so corrupt that he is incapable of doing any spiritual good and incapable of making any effort to restore his broken relationship with God. □

Prof. Barry Gritters

A Christian's Self-Assessment

The beginning of faith is humility...

(Calvin, on Isaiah)

The whole humility of man consists in the knowledge of himself.

(Calvin, on the Psalms)

The grimmest evil in this sad world is the evil of pride. In the maelstrom of that root sin that thrashes families and marriages, divides churches, and separates very friends, God's power is most evident when He graces His people with humility. If you believe that, you have reason to give serious consideration to what the Reformer said, "The beginning of faith is humility," and then, "The whole humility of man consists in the knowledge of himself."

Next to the knowledge of God—chief pursuit of a Christian—is the true knowledge of one's self. When we know God aright, we can truly know ourselves. *Truly*, because our hearts are so cunning at self-deception (Jer. 17:9: *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*), we must ever be on guard against

supposing we are something that we are not.

The Reformation confession of man is the confession of depravity of his old man, his flesh. No theoretical confession about "man" is this confession. The Reformed believer confesses this of himself. I confess this about myself. You must of yourself. Every believer must. Even though he is a *re-formed* believer—he has been regenerated by the Spirit of God—he is able to confess this humbling reality of depravity: "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). Because he is a *Reformed* believer—one who confesses Reformational truth—he testifies with experiential conviction of his spiritual tradition: "I am evil, born in sin; thou desirest truth within" (Psalm 51 in the *Psalter*).

The Reformed Christian's self-assessment of a grievous depravity takes nothing away from his confession of his faith in Christ and his new life through Christ's Spirit. He confesses and is fully conscious of his shameful depravity right at the same time that he confesses and experiences regeneration.

The Reformed Christian's self-assessment of corruption and unworthiness takes nothing away from his conviction that God loves

him eternally, has adopted him in Jesus Christ, redeemed him by the blood of His Son, so that he is precious. It undermines nothing of the foundational truth that he has and experiences full justification and complete sanctification (I Thess. 5:23).

Indeed, not in spite of it, but exactly *because* he experiences the Spirit's renewing work, does the believer also experience the corruption of his nature and flesh, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh" (Gal. 5:16) in a painful and on-going battle. His two natures—his flesh, and the life of Christ in him—engage in an all-out, no-holds-barred fight-to-the-death. No non-Christian has this experience.

Our assessment of ourselves is, and must be: "I am evil, born in sin." Renewing his mind in his Christian transformation (Rom. 12:2), the believer's first duty is "not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think" (v. 3). "With the lowly is wisdom" (Prov. 11:2).



Over against arrogant clerics in the church of their day, Calvin called on believers to confess that

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“oil might be extracted from a stone sooner than we could perform a good work” (*Inst.* III. xiv. 5), and that “sin exists within us as a disease fixed in our nature” (on Psalm 51). At the end of one of his lectures on the Minor Prophets, Calvin’s prayer confessed: “The depravity of our nature” (note: not *their* nature, BLG) is so great, that we cannot bear prosperity without some wantonness of the flesh... and without becoming even arrogant against Thee.” That he did not mean our nature in a theoretical way becomes clear from his confession that “there still remains in a regenerate man a fountain of evil, continually producing irregular desires” (*Inst.* III. iii. 10, 11). So evil is our nature that, “If God should discover our secret faults, there would be found in us an abyss of sins so great as to have neither bottom nor shore” (on Ps. 19:12). The Reformation restored this confession in the church.

Over against modern psychology’s promotion of a perverted “self-esteem,” and the modern reverend who advocates a “new Reformation” based on a high self-esteem, the Reformed believer must remember his precious Reformation inheritance.

Characteristically colorful and blunt, Luther reminds us to confess:

The original sin in a man is like his beard, which, though shaved off today so that a man is very smooth around his mouth, yet grows again by tomorrow morning. As long as a man lives, such growth of the hair and the beard does not stop. But when the shovel beats the ground on his grave, it stops. Just so original sin remains in us and bestirs itself as long as we live, but we must resist it and always cut off its hair.

And who can forget (or deny!) Luther’s description of our nature, as it found its way into the *Formula of Concord*: “The old Adam

(is) an intractable, refractory ass”?

These descriptions of our present, sinful condition were codified in every Reformed creed, not because they were the opinion of influential men, but because Reformed churches (synods) themselves were convinced they were biblical.

In the Reformed Baptism Form, we confess that baptism always teaches us “to loathe and humble ourselves before God,” so that we may always “seek our salvation and purification without (outside of) ourselves.” The Reformed Lord’s Supper Form says that true examination of ourselves (the only proper way to partake of the supper, all our life long!) is that the believer “consider by himself his sins, to the end that he may abhor and humble himself before God.” This is no less blunt than father Luther. The same form has us “acknowledge that we lie in the midst of death ... (and) feel many infirmities and miseries in ourselves, namely....” Then follows quite a list that may never become routine as we approach the holy table. The Belgic Confession teaches that original sin is a corruption of our whole nature, is like a hereditary disease, and is by no means abolished by baptism, for “sin always issues from this woeful source.” And “a sense of this corruption should make believers often to sigh.” Think of it: “*often to sigh.*” Dordt’s Canons (V.2): “Hence spring daily sins of infirmity ... which furnish (believers) with constant matter for humiliation before God...” (you must read the rest of the article: Canons V.2). In the PRC, every 13-year old memorizes the confession “that God ... will no more remember my sins, neither my corrupt nature, against which I have to struggle all my life long” (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 21). And after a devastatingly clear explanation of the total depravity caused by the fall, Westminster’s Confession of Faith says, “*This* corruption of nature, during this life,

doth remain in those that are regenerated...” (vi.5).



But not everyone likes this confession. I don’t. You don’t. Applied to others, I approve it, confess it, even sinfully relish it; applied to myself, I reject it. It is only God’s grace that keeps a church from changing her singing of Psalm 51 to: “I *was* evil, born in sin,” as one church reportedly did. God’s grace alone maintains in a believer a confession of total depravity that does not hedge on the confession of it, as many forms of common-grace teaching hedge. My human nature is so disgusted with the need to admit, “without me (Christ) ye can do nothing,” that apart from God’s grace to give me that admission I will leave the church that preaches so, as one did shortly after I preached that text ... *because of that sermon.*

Grace alone in a denomination will preserve this truth from becoming a dead letter. Grace alone will make those who confess this truth really confess it. Without pride. In a way that breaks them. Brings them to their knees. So that they do not despise others, but beat their breasts and beseech God, “Mercy to *me!*”



The frivolous but foolish attempts to undercut this confession, even attempts that masquerade as a desire to “give the poor man a little self-esteem,” will not help the believer. The fruit these attempts will produce is doubly rotten.

First, the believers will not live in humility as they ought. How ugly is the life, and brutally cruel, that consists of living with “holy blasphemers”—Luther’s description of those who would not remain “pious sinners.” How God-dishonoring are the people who do not strive with all their might to root out pride, *the* original sin. How self-destructive, for “whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased;

and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.” How blind are we who have all our lives read that “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit” (Is. 66:2). “What doth the Lord require of thee ... but to walk humbly with thy God?” (Micah 6:8).

The self-assessment described above humbles, properly. It does not destroy; rather, it furnishes “constant matter for humiliation” (Canons V.2). What a lovely life, full of tearful delight, to live among a people who cannot and will not shrug off the sense of their own unworthiness, so that they may glory with you in the worthiness of Christ. How blessed to experience together that “though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly” (Ps. 138:6) and that “he forgetteth not the cry of the humble” (Ps. 9:12). Charity, the virtue that makes church life among sinners bearable and even joyful, “vaunteth not itself, is not

puffed up” (I Cor. 13:4). Beautiful life! Enough to make one sing!

Second, allowing this painful but necessary confession to slip away will lead me from Christ, and from trust in Him. Denial of the real and full depravity of my nature enables me to bring my own gifts to God, for which He owes me. Denying that there is no good thing in my flesh makes me believe that my flesh can merit, and be the reason (at least part of it) that God approves me. Then, denying my natural inability, I will not trust fully in grace for success against sin’s power. Rather, I will suppose there is still some strength in me—in my will, my mind, my heart. Take heed, if you think you stand (I Cor. 10:12)!

But the confession of my real and full sinfulness does two things. First, as the Canons put it, it “furnishes ... (me) with constant matter for... flying for refuge to Christ crucified....” Then, it furnishes me with constant matter “for mortifying the flesh more and more....”

Understanding my nature, and its potential, I will always live “afar off” with the publican, pleading for mercy—is not that what “flying for refuge to Christ” is? Then I will always be wary of the “enemy within” with regard to temptation. Never letting down my guard, I will always need the prayer, “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

Only such an assessment of myself leads me to esteem highly my Christ, in whom and through whom and for whom I live and die, happily. He loved me and gave Himself for me. He covers me with His own righteousness, so that God judges me according to Him ... and not my sin. Glory! He even gives Himself to me, lives in me, makes me a new man. With Him dwelling in me, I can say, “In Christ I can do all things, who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13).

That’s not the whole story. But it’s a good start.

... to be concluded. □

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

The Woman’s Unique Place in Marriage

Unbelief just cannot understand! It posits its own wisdom, tries to come up with its own assessments, and then in books and treatises presents its own propositions. But one can wade through the myriads of books on the subject and still be left scratching his head. Unbelief just

has no clue! We refer, of course, to the proper relationship that must exist between a husband and his wife. More particularly, we refer to how a husband must view his wife within the bond of marriage. There are those in our present world and society of sin who seem to have mastered at least the *form* of a good marriage. But even these do not fully understand the lofty and important place that God has given the wife in the marriage relationship.

Because of unbelief, many in our world go to one extreme and treat wives as nothing more than a piece of property, something that a man possesses only for his pleasure. As a result, the wife in marriage becomes a mere slave to her husband and children. She has no standing in her home but must hide her face. She must wait on her husband as a house maid. She must share the marriage bed with several other wives. And if she displeases her husband she is beaten

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and even in certain instances put to death. Some cultures even go so far as to rob the woman of her natural right to pleasure by means of female castration.

Neither does the “enlightened” society of the West escape this characterization. Law enforcement officers spend the greater share of their labor on domestic violence. They answer countless calls to rescue battered wives from the fury of their irate husbands. Shelters are set up in every major city for women who are sexually, verbally, and physically abused by their husbands. Neither does such abuse belong only to the lower class. Horrible violence can be found among the wealthy and famous as well.

On the other hand, the feminist movement of today has long carried our nation and others to view the place of the wife in the marriage relationship in another way. The wife is now an equal, so they say. In reality, the wife has now become the head in the marriage relationship. She need not submit her ways to her husband. The vow to cherish and obey is deliberately left out of the vows spoken on the wedding day. Like her husband, she has the right to pursue a career. And so she leaves her children in the hands of a nanny or day-care center. She is free and independent to do her thing with her friends and associates. She has her own bank account and may live independently of her husband. So much has the relationship of husbands and wives changed in modern marriage that the man has in many instances become subject to the wife. And if he complains and insists on the right to headship, the marriage quickly ends in divorce.

So far has this extreme taken our society that the woman no longer even sees the need to marry. It is believed that it is perfectly legitimate for a woman to have children out of wedlock and raise those children herself. Who needs a

man? These single women are lauded by our society as being strong. The complaint has been raised even by worldly commentators that commercials and sitcoms on television depict the father as a stupid, bumbling idiot, while the wife is the sensitive, calm one who always sees things straight.

The audacity of those in politics to condemn other cultures for their view of the place of the wife, as if our culture has found the proper place of the wife in the home and family! Unbelief simply does not have a clue!

Much of this same perversion of the place of a wife in marriage characterized the Dark Ages, that period of time prior to the Reformation. Will Durant describes English society in his book, *The Reformation*, page 112,

Marriage was an incident in the transfer of property. Girls could legally marry at twelve, boys at fourteen, even without their parents' consent; but in the upper classes, to accelerate property transactions, betrothals were arranged by parents soon after the children reached the age of seven. Since love marriages were exceptional, and divorce was forbidden, adultery was popular, especially in the aristocracy.

Though this was Durant's description of English society, it was little different in any of the societies of Europe during that time. The Roman Catholic Church may have held ecclesiastical sway over the countries of Europe, but its stress on outward ritual and ceremony rather than on the work of salvation had little moral impact on society. It was only the gospel of grace as proclaimed by the Reformers that would at last bring about reform not only in society but within the basic unit of society: the home.

The Reformers themselves became shining examples, not only in their role as husbands in the home, but in the way they viewed their

wives as well. On June 13, 1525 Luther forsook his monastic vow of celibacy and married Catharina vonBora. Of his marriage to her he later wrote in a letter, “Next to God's Word there is no more precious treasure than holy matrimony. God's highest gift on earth is a pious, cheerful, God-fearing, home-keeping wife, with whom you may live peacefully, to whom you may intrust your goods and body and life” (Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 7, p. 461). In this same work, Schaff writes of Catharina,

She was a good German *Hausfrau* (housewife — W.B.), caring for the wants of her husband and children; she contributed to his personal comfort in sickness and health, and enabled him to exercise his hospitality. She had a strong will, and knew how to take her own part. He (Luther — W.B.) sometimes speaks of her as his “Lord Katie,” and of himself as her “willing servant.”

John Calvin married Idelette de Bure and lived with her for almost nine years before she died. He had three children with her, all of whom died in their infancy. After she died, Calvin remained a widower. One commentator on the life of Calvin remarked, “The only kind of female beauty which impressed him was, as he said, gentleness, purity, modesty, patience, and devotion to the wants of her husband, and these qualities he esteemed in his wife.”

The observation of Philip Schaff in reflecting on the family life of the Reformers is worthy of note: “The Reformers present to us the first noted examples of clerical family life in the Christian Church. This is a new and important chapter in the history of civilization. They restored a natural right founded in the ordinance of God” (*History of the Christian Church*, vol. 7, p. 473). The example alone, not only of Luther and Calvin but of all the Reform-

ers, was a well-needed incentive for the saints of God who lived under their influence and teaching. That example still shines for us to see today as we live in a world of unbelief that denies the proper place and calling of husbands and wives in marriage.

It was not simply the example left by the Reformers, however, that transformed the idea of the place of the wife in marriage. Luther often preached on the trials and duties of married life. He did this using his own practical experience in marriage and in his usual heartwarming way. In obvious reference to I Corinthians 11:12 he wrote, "All men are conceived, born, and nursed by women. Thence come the darlings, the high prized heirs. This honor ought in fairness to cover up all feminine weakness."

John Calvin, in his writings, emphasized the calling of the wife to submit to her husband. Her role in the marriage was that of subjection. The husband was the head, and she was called humbly and quietly to submit to his will for her and the children. Calvin taught this, of course, because such is the unequivocal instruction of the Scriptures. Certainly, we cannot overlook the plain teaching of Genesis 2, Psalm 128, Ephesians 5, and I Corinthians 11, to list a few chapters of the Bible that speak of the subjection of the woman to her husband and her place in the home and family.

The unbelieving world either misconstrues this instruction of God's Word or loudly and blatantly denies it. On the one hand, it is used as an occasion for abuse of the wife, something that Scripture most definitely does *not* teach. In our society the opposite is true: it is severely criticized. This is demeaning to the woman who is a wife, it is claimed! It robs her of her freedom! Her place in marriage holds her back from using her time and talents for the benefits of others. This view relegates the

place of the woman in society to that of servitude to the man. On the contrary, the woman must be viewed as man's equal and be given the same freedoms that our society offers to men.

Against this criticism stand the Scriptures and the writings of the Reformers themselves. John Calvin, in his commentary on Genesis 2:18, writes,

Now, since God assigns the woman as a help to the man, he not only prescribes to wives the rule of their vocation, to instruct them in their duty, but also pronounces that marriage will really prove to men the best support of life. We may therefore conclude that the order of nature implies that the woman should be the help of the man. The vulgar proverb, indeed, is, that she is a necessary evil; but the voice of God is rather to be heard, which declares that woman is given as a companion and associate to the man, to assist him to live well, I confess, indeed, that in this corrupt state of mankind, the blessing of God, which is here described, is neither perceived nor flourishes; but the cause of the evil must be considered, namely, that the order of nature, which God had appointed, has been inverted by us. For if the integrity of man had remained to this day such as it was from the beginning, that divine institution would be clearly discerned, and the sweetest harmony would reign in marriage; because the husband would look up with reverence to God; the woman in this would be a faithful assistant to him, and both, with one consent, would cultivate a holy, as well as friendly and peaceful intercourse.

Certainly, this is not difficult to understand. Happiness and joy in life and in marriage is found when the creation ordinance of God is maintained. The woman was created out of man in order to be a help to him. She was created for the man. But this does not deny her her dignity and honor in marriage and society. On the contrary, it estab-

lishes it! What more glorious place can a person possess? Calvin in his commentaries stresses this glory of the wife in the home and family. He writes in his commentary on I Corinthians 11:11,

The pious ... acknowledge that the male sex is but the half of the human race. They ponder the meaning of that statement — *God created man: male and female created he them.* (Gen. 1.27, and v. 2) Thus they, of their own accord, acknowledge themselves to be debtors to the weaker sex. Pious women, in like manner, reflect upon their obligation. Thus the man has no standing without the woman, for that would be a head severed from the body; nor has the woman without the man, for that were a body without a head. Let, therefore, the man perform to the woman the office of the head in respect of ruling her, and let the woman perform to the man the office of the body in respect of assisting him....

Calvin then goes on to expound verse 12 of I Corinthians 11, "...the male sex cannot maintain and preserve itself without the aid of the woman." And again, "This decree of God exhorts us (husband and wife — W.B.) to cultivate mutual intercourse."

The Reformers taught the honorable place of the wife in marriage. They exemplified what they taught in the way that they dealt with their own wives. In this way the Reformation changed the "moral ideal" and "elevated domestic and social life" (Schaff, vol. 7, p. 477). We agree with the assessment of Schaff in how the Reformers and the Reformation led God's people then to a right understanding of the relationship of husband and wife in marriage. He writes on p. 477 of volume 7,

The medieval ideal of piety is the flight from the evil world: the modern ideal is the transformation of the world. The model saint of the Roman Church is the monk

separated from the enjoyments and duties of society, and anticipating the angelic life in heaven where men neither marry nor are given in marriage: the model saint of the Evangelical Church is the free Christian and useful citizen, who shows piety in the performance of social and domestic duties, and aims at the sanctification of the ordinances of nature. The former tries to conquer the world by running away from its temptations — though after all he cannot escape the flesh, the world, and the Devil in his own heart: the latter tries to conquer the

world by converting it. The one abstains from the wedding feast: the other attends it, and changes water into wine. The one flees the woman as a tempter: the other takes her to his heart, and reflects in the marriage relation the holy union of Christ and his Church. The one aims to secure chastity by abstinence: the other proves it within the family.... The one looks for happiness in heaven: the other is happy already on earth making others happy. The daily duties and trials of domestic and social life are a better school of moral discipline than monkish celibacy and poverty. Female vir-

tues and graces are necessary to supplement and round out the character of man. Exceptions there are, but they prove the rule.

May the witness of the church today ring loud and clear to when it speaks of the beautiful harmony between a godly husband and wife. May it extol both the honor of a husband and the glory of his wife in their marriage relationship. May the Reformation and its teaching be a constant witness to society today as it was then. God bless our families! □

Martin Luther

On the Doctrine of Man

The Creation of Man

Here Moses returns to the work of the sixth day and shows whence man, the owner and cultivator of the earth, came, namely, that God formed him out of the ground, as the potter with his hand forms the vessel out of clay. Here He did not say, as of the other creatures: "Let Us make man," in order to set forth the excellency of the human race and to make manifest the peculiar counsel of God according to which He created man, although afterwards man grew and multiplied as all the other animals multiply.... But Moses shows that in their first creation there was the greatest difference, since the human nature was created by a peculiar divine counsel and wisdom and formed by the finger of God.



Man: Body and Soul

Ah, good God, what do we poor human beings mean by strutting about while we do not know what our soul or our body is! Holy Scripture impugns the view of Aristotle, who denies an immortal soul and says that soul and body are of the same sub-

stance. Christ clearly states: "Fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul" (Matt. 10:28). The soul is of a substance different from that of the body; and yet there is an intimate union and connection, for the soul loves the body very much. They part from each other reluctantly.



Why Man Was Created

The principal end of man's creation, to which Scripture points, is that, made in the likeness of God, he was to live with God forever. And here on earth he should praise God, thank Him, and obey His Word in patience. This end we do attain to some extent in this life, although in weakness; but in the future life we shall achieve it to perfection. Of these things philosophers know nothing. That is why the world is most foolish at the height of its wisdom, lacking Holy Scripture of theology. For without the Word men know nothing either of their beginning or of their end.



Providence

Hereby John shows not only that Christ is God and was forever and forever, from eternity, before the beginning of the world and all things, but

that God not only created the world and all creatures by the Word, His only-begotten Son and divine Wisdom, but also constantly, to the end of the world, governs and sustains them by Him; that, therefore, the Son of God is Cocreator of heaven and earth with the Father. God, however, is not a Master who acts as a carpenter or builder does, who, when he has prepared, finished, and completed a house, ship, or any structure whatever, lets the house stand for its master to live in or turns the ship over to the boatmen and the crew to sail across the sea in it, while he, the builder, leaves and goes wherever he pleases. This is what all other craftsmen do. When they have finished their work or discharged their business, they leave and pay no further attention to their work and product, letting it stand as long as it can. Not so here, but God the Father has begun and finished the creation of all things through His Word and constantly sustains it by this same Word. He stays with the work He has created until He no longer wants it to exist. This is why Christ says (John 5:17): "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." For just as He has created us without any co-operation and ability on our part, so we cannot preserve ourselves. Therefore as heaven,

Quotations from various writings and sources.

earth, sun, moon, stars, men, and everything living were created by the Word in the beginning, so they are also governed and sustained by it in a marvelous manner.



On Marriage

The world says of marriage: A short joy and a long displeasure. But let it say whatever it please. What-

ever God has created and wants is bound to be a mockery to it. What kind of pleasure and joy the world finds outside marriage, I think it will best become aware of in its conscience. To be married and to understand married life are two very different matters. He who is married but does not understand married life can never live in it without displeasure, trouble, and

misery. He must complain and slander, as the heathen and unreasoning, blind people do. But he who understands it finds in it delight, love, and joy without ceasing, as Solomon says: "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing" (Prov. 18:22). These are the people who understand, who firmly believe that God has instituted marriage and joined man and woman together. □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Mission Activities

In early September, the Council of the Hull, Iowa PRC informed our churches that Rev. Wayne Bekkering, missionary with Rev. Rodney Miersma to Ghana, was requesting early emeritation. It had become evident to Rev. Bekkering, his wife, Phyllis, and his coworkers on the field that he no longer was able to carry out the duties of missionary because of the infirmity God had laid upon him. His dementia, caused by slight strokes that he has suffered, had become a serious and notable concern. Seeking the necessary and appropriate medical attention, Hull's Council arranged for the Bekkerings to come home to the United States already on September 14. Let us remember the Bekkerings and the Ghana mission field as the Lord guides them and our churches' work in Africa according to His counsel.

We have made mention of this news item before, but it bears repeating. The Council of Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI, the calling church for our denomination's mission work in Pittsburgh, PA, is soliciting the assistance of an officebearer or an ex-officebearer from Classis East to serve as a volunteer assistant on the Pittsburgh mission field for a period of at least three weeks.

Following the British Reformed

Fellowship Conference this past August, Prof. Herman Hanko, one of this year's speakers, remained in the British Isles to spend a couple of months, with his wife, in South Wales ministering to interested people there. Part of his itinerary included holding Bible studies every week through October 17 in Porthcawl. Prof. Hanko also planned to give lectures on the Welsh revivals and on Hyper-Calvinism. Pray for this witness.

Denomination Activities

Our Protestant Reformed Seminary in Grandville, MI held its annual Convocation September 14 at Southwest PRC, next door to our seminary building. Prof. Russell Dykstra spoke on the theme, "Pastors After God's Heart." There are six students in our seminary this year; two in their fourth year, two in their third year, one in his second year, and one in his first year. May the Lord continue to bless the seminary faculty and students in its new year of instruction and study.

Men from many of our churches in West Michigan, including our Kalamazoo, MI PRC, continue to make up the membership of the Hope Heralds. This past summer these men were privileged to sing at many area nursing homes. In addition to those concerts, the Hope Heralds presented their annual program for our churches in the Grand Rapids area on September 11 at the Grandville, MI PRC. They followed this pro-

gram one week later, on September 19, with an additional concert at the South Holland, IL PRC.

Evangelism Activities

Christianity on Campus, the Bible study hosted in part by Grace PRC in Standale, MI, meets again this year on Thursdays at 9 P.M. in room 104 of the Kirkhof Center of Grand Valley State University. All students are welcome. In early September, in addition to the regular attendance, no fewer than eight people showed up for the first time. These showed a lively interest in the doctrines of grace and in the doctrine of "How God Speaks," which was being discussed. Let us be glad for the privilege of such a witness on a secular campus.

The Evangelism Committee of Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL recently gave the families of their congregation an Evangelism Training Series CD packet. This set of audio sermons and lectures was specifically geared to help and motivate each member of Bethel in their personal witnessing. The Evangelism Committee hoped that this evangelism tool would get some good use, and they intended to add more CDs to the series when it was appropriate.

The PR churches in Iowa and Minnesota continue to sponsor the Dordt College Bible Study. Meetings began on September 1, with Bible discussion taken from Psalm 104. All Dordt students, as well as any other young adults, were invited.

Mr. Wigger is an elder in the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

P.O. Box 603
Grandville, MI 49468-0603

Congregation Activities

WEALTH (Women Encouraging and Living Through Him), a small group ladies' Bible Study, began its second year of meeting on September 1 at the Hull, Iowa PRC.

A special final meeting of the Summer Bible Study series on the parables was held at Grace PRC in Standale, MI on September 8. Plans called for the showing of slides of a recent trip to the Holy Land/Israel by one of Grace's members. Members were encouraged to come and share a journey to the biblical sites of Jesus' earthly ministry.

The congregation of Grace was also encouraged to consider attending a fall special Reformed "Doc-

trine and Life" class starting in September. All were welcomed, newcomers and those raised in the faith, for this "refresher" and refreshing class on the basics of the Reformed faith, and on living out of that faith.

Young People's Activities

The young people of both Grace and Kalamazoo, MI PRCs met together for a late summer, early fall "Retreat" at Camp Geneva, on the shore of Lake Michigan September 17 & 18. Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma, and Rev. Mitchell Dick led discussions on: The Young Christian, the Old Culture, and the New.

Minister Activities

Our vacant Faith PRC in Jenison, MI will call a pastor

from a trio of the Revs. Ronald Cammenga, Daniel Kleyn, and James Slopsema.

Rev. Daniel Kleyn declined the call he had been considering to serve as the next pastor of First PRC in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Rev. Bruinsma declined the call from the Doon, Iowa PRC. Doon then formed a new trio, the Revs. Allen Brummel, Steven Houck, and James Slopsema, and subsequently called Rev. Slopsema.

The congregation of Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL called Rev. Audred Spriensma, from a trio that included also Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma and Rev. Jaikishin Mahtani.

Rev. S. Key declined the call he had been considering from the Hudsonville, MI PRC. □

Announcements

YEARBOOK CHANGE:

New bulletin clerk for Bethel:

Mrs. Mary VanOverloop

1400 Princeton Lane

Schaumburg, IL 60173

(847) 985-1158

E-mail: jaredvo@access4less.net

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, MI extend their sincere sympathies to Henry C. Lubbers in the death of his beloved wife of 60 years, and to Mr. and Mrs. Case Lubbers and Mr. and Mrs. Eric Gustafson in the death of their aunt and great aunt,

MRS. GLADYS LUBBERS,

whom the Lord took to glory on Sunday, July 18. May the God of all comfort provide daily peace and strength to our brother in his time of loss and grief. □For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal □(II Corinthians 4:17).

Rev. Charles J. Terpstra, Pres.
Don De Jong, Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On October 25, 2004

PAUL and DEBBIE HAAK

will celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary. We, their children, are grateful to God for the years He has given them, and for the love and godly instruction they have given us. Our prayer is that God will continue to sustain them and bless their marriage in the years to come. □But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children □(Psalm 103:17).

- ❖ Nathan and Michelle Haak
- ❖ Jeff and Katie Baatenburg
- ❖ Trisha Haak
- ❖ Alyssa Haak

Crete, Illinois

2004 FALL REFORMATION LECTURE

Rev. Charles Terpstra

will speak on

"Solo Christo"

Principles of the Reformation: #2-

"Salvation by Christ Alone!"

Friday, October 29, 2004

7:30 P.M.

Sponsored by First Holland PRC
Evangelism Committee

3641 104th Ave.

Zeeland, MI 49464

Come, bring a friend;
refreshments will be served.

Are you regularly
checking the
RFPA website:
www.rfpa.org