

Editor's Notes

I write on a beautiful October day. The trees are a glorious spectacle of color, and the sun makes the colors vibrant. The leaves are beginning to fall. The glory of God, our Creator, is on display for all to see! And who can but worship and praise?

By time you receive this issue of the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*, fall will have changed to winter, and perhaps snow will have fallen. Again, the sun will dazzle on the snow: how pure the righteousness God has given us in Christ Jesus!

This issue will provide you with lovely reading material for a cold winter evening. The issue opens with an installment by our newest faculty member. Prof. Cory Griess notes that John Calvin, although zealous in encouraging the church to practice church discipline, did not consider church discipline to be a distinct mark of the true church. Making this more striking is the fact that other reformers of his day *did* consider it a third mark.

Undersigned submits the second installment of the history of the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary, covering the years 1940-1959. During these years World War II was raging, and the PRCA had to battle internal controversy regarding the conditions in God's covenant. Both of these events, directed by the hand of God, had direct effects on the seminary.

While researching in the denominational archives this summer, I found the written version of a speech that Herman Hoeksema, one of the PRCA's founding pastors, gave for the Christian Psychopathic Hospital Association (now Pine Rest) in Cutlerville, MI. The archives are a treasure trove of historical artifacts that remain hidden unless brought to light. While some archived material should remain hidden (details of past discipline cases, for instance), many unpublished or long-forgotten speeches and articles are worthy of being brought to light. This speech is one of those. What was a find for me was not new to Prof. Barry Gritters, our practical theology professor. Not only was he aware of this article, but he also references it in his pastoral care class. Graciously, he agreed to write an introduction to Hoeksema's article, in which he points out the article's main value: it argues "that

the Reformed faith alone is able properly to minister to the mentally distressed church member and their families” (page 61 below).

Prof. Gritters also presents an article-length critical review of the popular book *The Body Keeps the Score* by Bessel van der Kolk. This issue concludes with reviews of seven other books of doctrinal or historical value.

I thank every contributor for the time devoted to publishing this issue.

I thank every reader for your interest in both this publication and the seminary.

And I thank our covenant God for His abiding faithfulness, constant love, and wonderful grace to us sinners.

- DJK

John Calvin and the Third Mark of the True Church

Cory J. Griess

The Belgic Confession in Article 29 teaches that church discipline is a mark of the true church: “The marks, by which the true Church is known, are these: if the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein; if she maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ; if church discipline is exercised in punishing of sin.”¹ A “mark” of the true church is a perceivable element that lets one know that the *true, visible* church of Christ is present. The invisible body becomes visible in true, visible church communions that share specific, biblical marks. The Belgic Confession teaches that these marks are three in number.

John Calvin, however, taught that there are only *two* marks of a true church: the pure preaching of the gospel and the proper administration of the sacraments. Church discipline, for Calvin, was not one of the marks of a true church. Calvin taught this in spite of the fact that he expended much of his life’s energy establishing church discipline in Geneva. Furthermore, Calvin taught this in spite of the fact that other reformers around him taught church discipline as the third mark of a true church.

The burden of this article is to investigate the questions that arise from these facts. Why did Calvin not teach church discipline as a third mark of the true church? What *was* Calvin’s view of the importance of church discipline, if he was not willing to describe it as a mark of the true church; that is, what role does church discipline play in his broader theology? Why was Calvin willing to give so much of his life’s effort to secure the church’s rights to discipline if he did not believe discipline was a mark of the true church? Finally, is the Belgic Confession out of accord with Calvin’s view of the importance of church discipline?

1 The Belgic Confession 29 in Philip Schaff, ed., *The Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes*, Volume 3: *The Evangelical Protestant Creeds* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), 419.

This article opens by noting how significant the issue is, given Calvin's life work and the views of those closest to Calvin on the marks. Second, the article will demonstrate that Calvin's failure to make church discipline a third mark of the true church was not due to a low doctrine of church discipline. On the contrary, church discipline was a key component in Calvin's ecclesiology. Third, the article will show that Calvin failed to teach church discipline as a mark of the true church because of his reaction to the Anabaptists, and because to him whether a church was true or false was not *immediately* determined by church discipline. Finally, it will be noted that Calvin's high view of church discipline in theology and practice led others, including the author and adopters of the Belgic Confession, to recognize church discipline as a third mark of the true church, a recognition that was implicit in Calvin himself.

Understanding the Problem

Battle for the Right of Church Discipline in Geneva

Much of Calvin's labor for reform in Geneva was a battle for the right to practice church discipline. Church discipline is the spiritual censure of God's people for their sins, with the intent to correct them and lead them back to faithfulness. François Wendel says that Calvin's life-long "personal work" was to establish the church in Geneva the way that he finally was able to leave it at his death. The "fundamental principles" Calvin left behind in the church order there and in the practice of discipline, sent his influence throughout the world.²

Following Matthew 18, Calvin conceived of church discipline as involving first admonition, then (if the admonition goes unheeded) minor excommunication (holding back from the Lord's Supper), then major excommunication (removal from the church and city altogether). In his second stint in Geneva, Calvin was able to establish the Consistory, a body of elders and pastors who met every Thursday to hear cases of unbiblical behavior and apply church discipline to people they judged worthy of it.

² François Wendel, *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought* (Durham, NC: Labyrinth Press, 1987), 69.

Already in his 1536 *Institutes*, Calvin viewed this discipline as the exclusive right of the church.³ Though the more egregious cases would include civil punishments from Geneva's Small Council, Calvin believed that the church herself had the sole right to apply spiritual correctives.⁴ Thus in 1537, when Calvin and Farel submitted the "Articles Concerning the Organization of the Church and of Worship at Geneva"⁵ to the civil magistrates of Geneva for their adoption, the articles called for, among many other things, the church's sole right to exercise spiritual discipline, including excommunication. The civil authorities approved many of the articles, but "they effectively ignored the ministers' call for church-controlled moral discipline in the city."⁶

What followed was a battle over the rights of the church to exercise her own affairs. Calvin lamented in a letter to Bullinger,

It does appear to me, that we shall have no lasting Church unless that ancient apostolic discipline be completely restored, which in many respects is much needed among us. We have not yet been able to obtain that the faithful and holy exercise of ecclesiastical excommunication be rescued from the oblivion into which it has fallen.⁷

3 John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion - 1536 Edition*, ed. Ford Lewis Battles (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 145. This in distinction from some other reformers at the time like Zwingli, who believed excommunication was the responsibility of the Christian magistrates apart from the church. Calvin perceived this to be an overreaction to papal abuses of power. Zwingli said that in Romans 12:8 "he that ruleth" referred to the Christian magistrates. Calvin rightly contradicted this, explaining its reference to the Consistory; see John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion - 1559 edition*, ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1211 (4.11.1).

4 On the difference between civil and ecclesiastical power for Calvin see, Calvin, *Institutes-1559 edition*, 1215 (4.11.3).

5 John Calvin, "Articles Concerning the Organization of the Church and of Worship at Geneva (1537)," in J. K. S. Reid, ed., *Calvin: Theological Treatises* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), 48-55.

6 Scott M. Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church, 1536-1609* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 19.

7 "John Calvin to Henry Bullinger, Letter XVIII, 21st February 1538," in Jules Bonnet, *Letters of John Calvin* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1972), 66.

The attempt came to naught when the Genevan magistrates, bowing to pressure from Bern, required Calvin and Farel to adopt various liturgical practices whether they wanted to or not. The two reformers protested vociferously, and the Council barred Calvin and Farel from their pulpits. The reformers nonetheless mounted their pulpits the following Lord's Day and announced that they could not in good conscience serve the sacrament to the city.⁸ The Council responded by banishing Calvin and Farel from the city. While Calvin and Farel stood for more than the right of discipline, that right was front and center. They were fighting against what "they saw as blatant interference by the magistrates—to say nothing of Bern—in the affairs of the Genevan church." Indeed, the right to discipline was "one of the reasons [Calvin] was kicked out of Geneva."⁹

During his three-year interim in Strasburg, Calvin saw his conception of church discipline in action in many ways. Martin Bucer, the Strasburg reformer who became Calvin's mentor, was as committed as Calvin to the right and necessity of the church to exercise her own discipline.¹⁰ It was in Strasburg that Calvin observed the practice of examining families before the Lord's Supper. In addition, the Marburg debates occurred during Calvin's time in Strasburg. These were debates between Bucer and the Anabaptists that "centered on the issue of church discipline."¹¹ The Anabaptists had a high, albeit extreme, view of church discipline. In some ways Bucer was influenced positively by the debates. They marked "the most decisive maturing of Bucer's teaching on discipline."¹² Calvin's attention was further fixed on church discipline by these circumstances and Bucer's mentoring.

8 The civil magistrates had adopted what would later be called the "Genevan Confession" and required that all subscribe to it. There was resistance to this among the people. This played a part in Calvin's refusal to serve the sacrament.

9 Timothy E. Fulop, "The Third Mark of the Church? Church Discipline in the Reformed and Anabaptist Reformations," *Journal of Religious History* 19, no. 1 (June 1995): 31.

10 Fulop, "Third Mark?," 29.

11 Fulop, "Third Mark?," 29.

12 Kenneth R. Davis, "No Discipline, No Church: An Anabaptist Contribution to the Reformed Tradition," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 13, no. 4 (1982): 54.

And though both Bucer and Calvin were critical of the radical nature of the Anabaptist discipline, “Calvin learned from the Strassburgers something of the church discipline and missionary intensity which marked the Anabaptists.”¹³

In September 1541 Calvin returned to Geneva at the request of the Genevan magistrates. He did so upon two conditions: “The city’s children must be catechized, and church discipline must be exercised in Geneva’s churches.”¹⁴ The “Ecclesiastical Ordinances,”¹⁵ adopted by the magistrates in 1541, made provision for a Consistory of elders and pastors to engage in church discipline. Once in place, the Consistory did not hesitate to do its work, hearing 320 cases already in 1542.¹⁶ Calvin himself was a faithful presence at the weekly consistory meetings and often took the lead in giving the admonitions from Scripture. The “Ordinances” remained a bit vague, however, regarding who had the final say in excommunication—the Consistory or the Small Council. The vague language, uncharacteristic of Calvin, was intended to ensure the passing of the “Ordinances.”¹⁷ The result, however, was that the battle for exclusive rights of the church to excommunicate continued until 1555, when Calvin achieved his full vision for the biblical rights of the church in discipline.¹⁸

The history leading up to 1555 is well known. In 1553 the libertine Berthelier wanted to come to the table as an open and unrepentant adulterer who had been excommunicated by the Consistory. Having appealed to the Small Council, Berthelier convinced the magistrates to allow him to partake of the holy meal. However, on the day of the next celebration, Calvin dramatically threw his arms around the sacramental bread and wine and thus around the church’s right to discipline, crying, “These hands you may crush, these arms you may lop off, my life you may take, my blood is yours, you may shed it; but you shall

13 Fulop, “Third Mark?,” 31.

14 Manetsch, *Calvin’s Company of Pastors*, 26.

15 John Calvin, “Ecclesiastical Ordinances,” in Reid, *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, 58-72.

16 Philip Benedict, *Christ’s Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (Yale: Yale University Press: 2002), 97.

17 Wendel, *Calvin: Origins*, 74.

18 For the history leading up to and including this achievement, see Philip Benedict, *Purely Reformed*, 99-103.

never force me to give holy things to the profane.”¹⁹ Berthelier and the Libertines backed away. By 1555 they were finally removed from power and in most cases from the city. Wendel summarizes this history:

Now in Calvin’s eyes the right to excommunicate was the corner-stone of his whole system of ecclesiastical discipline. It had been so already in 1537; and his experience at Strasbourg and his contacts with Bucer—who as we know was a determined believer in excommunication—can only have confirmed Calvin in his opinion. So on that point he refused all concession. His firmness carried the day and he won his case.²⁰

No Third Mark

Given Calvin’s lifelong efforts to establish the church’s discipline, it is striking to learn that Calvin did not believe church discipline was a mark of the true church. But there can be no doubt about the matter. Already in the 1536 *Institutes* Calvin gave only two marks: “where we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, where we see the sacraments administered according to Christ’s institution, there, it is not to be doubted, the church of God exists.”²¹ It is generally recognized that Calvin originally borrowed his doctrine of two marks of the true church from Article 7 of the Augsburg Confession (1530): “But the Church is the congregation of saints [the assembly of all believers], in which the Gospel is rightly taught [purely preached] and the Sacraments are rightly administered [according to the gospel].”²² Calvin signed the Augsburg Confession in 1539 when he came to Strasburg. He famously stated later, “Nor do I repudiate the Augsburg Confession, which in time past I have willingly and cheerfully subscribed according as the author himself has interpreted it.”²³

19 James A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism* (London: Cassel, Petter & Galpin: 1874), 2:327.

20 Wendel, *Calvin: Origins*, 73.

21 John Calvin, *Institutes - 1536*, 62-63.

22 Augsburg Confession in Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 3:11-12. The brackets are original to the source.

23 Augustus Graebner, “Calvin and the Augsburg Confession,” *Theological Quarterly* 1, no. 1. (1897): 22. The author of the confession was Melancthon.

Calvin may have borrowed the two marks from the Augsburg, but he maintained the view by conviction. Observe Calvin's Genevan Confession of 1536, Article 18 on "The Church." Though the Confession speaks highly of discipline and the church's right to excommunicate in Article 19, Article 18 speaks of only two marks of a true church:

We believe that the proper mark by which we rightly discern the Church of Jesus Christ is that his holy gospel be purely and faithfully preached, proclaimed, heard, and kept, that his sacrament be properly administered, even if there be some imperfections and faults, as there always will be among men. On the other hand, where the Gospel is not declared, heard, and received, there we do not acknowledge the form of the Church.²⁴

In the face of controversy with the Anabaptists, Calvin maintained his teaching of two marks: "For we ought to bear this honour unto the holy word of God and his Sacraments: that wheresoever we see this word preached, and that, according unto the rule which is given unto us, God is there purely honoured without superstition, and the sacraments there ministered, we ought to conclude without any doubt that there is the church."²⁵ Calvin went on to speak of the importance

24 "The Genevan Confession," in Reid, *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, 31. Whether the word "kept" in this article could indicate some reference to church discipline is an interesting question. A similar phraseology is in the French Confession, Article XXIII: "there can be no Church where the word of God is not received, *nor profession made of subjection to it*, nor use of the sacraments." Glenn Sunshine sees this language in the French Confession as a reference to discipline (more broadly conceived) as the third mark of the true church; see Glenn S. Sunshine, "Discipline as the Third Mark of the Church," in *Calvin Theological Journal* 33, no. 2. (1998): 472-473. To my mind this is likely true with regard to the French Confession. The dependence of the Belgic Confession on the French Confession makes this all the more plausible. Concerning the Genevan Confession, the emphasis seems to be on the reception of the Word of God as evidenced in life, without any reference to church discipline per se. Recent scholarship has questioned the traditional understanding of the line of influence from Calvin to the French Confession: see Lyle Bierma, *Font of Pardon and New Life: John Calvin and the Efficacy of Baptism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 177-178.

25 John Calvin, *Treatises Against the Anabaptists and Against the Lib-*
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of discipline immediately after this, but he would not call that discipline a third mark of the true church. In fact, he admonished that an individual is not justified “in withdrawing from the church” when discipline is not exercised as it ought to be.²⁶

One finds Calvin’s teaching that there are two marks of a true church throughout the various editions of the *Institutes*, and repeatedly in the final 1559 version. In Book IV, chapter 1, Calvin stated it four times. First, under the supplied heading, “*The marks of the church and our application of them to judgment*,” Calvin repeated what he stated in 1536: “Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ’s institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists.” Again, in the same paragraph: “If it has the ministry of the Word and honors it, if it has the administration of the sacraments, it deserves without doubt to be held and considered a church.” In the next paragraph he said again: “We have laid down as distinguishing marks of the church the preaching of the Word and the observance of the sacraments.” Finally, two paragraphs later: “The pure ministry of the Word and pure mode of celebrating the sacraments are, as we say, sufficient pledge and guarantee that we may safely embrace as church any society in which both these marks exist.”²⁷

Some object by pointing to Calvin’s comments on Jeremiah 33:17-18, published in 1563.²⁸ There the prophet declares God’s promise that there will never cease to be a Davidic king in Israel, or the Levitical priest. Calvin commented that the kingly rule of Christ and the priestly work of Christ in the church are the two marks of a true church. He calls the kingly rule Christ’s “government” and “laws,” and coordinates the priestly rule with the sacraments. Do “government” and “laws” refer here to discipline, or to the rule of the Word, or to both? Did Calvin in fact change his mind later in life? The statement does not say enough to give a clear answer to the question. Regardless, it is established that Calvin consistently and clearly taught that the pure

ertines (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 60.

26 Calvin, *Treatises Against the Anabaptists*, 60, 65.

27 Calvin, *Institutes - 1559 edition*, 1023-1025 (4.1.9-12).

28 John Calvin, *Commentary on the Prophet Jeremiah and the Lamentations* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 4:257.

preaching of the Word of God and the faithful administration of the sacraments are the only marks of a true church.

Calvin's insistence on two, not three, marks of a true church is even more striking when one considers how many of Calvin's fellow reformers taught that church discipline *was* the third mark of a true church. The most significant example is Calvin's mentor himself, Martin Bucer, "who claimed that discipline was the third mark of the true church, the other two being the pure preaching of the Gospel and the proper administration of the sacraments."²⁹ The significance of this is heightened by the fact that Bucer's influence on Calvin was especially strong in the area of ecclesiology. Calvin implemented Bucer's program in Geneva in a more complete way than Bucer himself was ever able to in Strasburg. Yet, "Calvin and Bucer did part company... on the issue of discipline defined by Bucer as the exercise of the 'power of the keys' as a third mark of the church."³⁰

Besides Bucer, Theodore Beza, who was Calvin's successor in Geneva, held to three marks of the true church. As Bucer had mentored Calvin, so Calvin mentored Beza.³¹ Yet, on the question of the marks of a true church they disagreed. Beza "characteristically... maintains three marks of the church."³² John Knox maintained three marks of the true church as well, most notably *while* he was pastoring the English

29 Jeffrey Watt, "Consistories and Discipline," in *John Calvin in Context*, ed. R. Ward Holder (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 103. Amy Nelson Burnett, a leading contemporary Bucer scholar, has made the case that Bucer's understanding of church discipline included more than censure from the Consistory, encompassing even catechetical instruction. Even if this is so, it nonetheless remains the case that Bucer believed that church censure was part of the third mark of the true church. Amy Nelson Burnett, "Church Discipline and Moral Reformation in the Thought of Martin Bucer," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 22, no. 3 (1991): 438.

30 Glenn S. Sunshine, "Discipline as the Third Mark," 470.

31 Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors*, 38. Calvin commented that Beza loved Calvin "more than a brother" and honored him "more than a father."

32 Tadataka Maruyama, *The Ecclesiology of Theodore Beza: The Reform of the True Church* (Genevan: Librairie Droz, 1978), 23-24. Beza once said he would be content with the first two marks because the third would follow as fruit; see Maruyama, 47.

congregation in Geneva during Calvin's time there.³³ To the names of Bucer, Beza and Knox may be added "Peter Martyr Vermigli, Pierre Viret (not consistently), Girolamo Zanchi, and others."³⁴ To be sure, some reformers did not view church discipline as a third mark of a true church, Luther and Bullinger being the most noteworthy. But the contrast between Calvin and the reformers closest to him is remarkable, emphasizing the importance of the questions stated in the introduction of this article.

No Low Regard for Church Discipline

The explanation for Calvin's failure to teach church discipline as a third mark of the true church is not that Calvin had a low regard for the importance of church discipline. The above-mentioned history of his work in Geneva bears this out. The important place church discipline had in Calvin's broader theology bears it out as well.

First of all, church discipline was for Calvin one of the church's uses of the keys of the kingdom. "Discipline depends for the most part upon the power of the keys,"³⁵ Calvin wrote. Calvin's high view of *discipline* as a key of the kingdom followed from his high view of the keys generally. Calvin saw Matthew 18:18, in distinction from Matthew 16:19 and John 20:23, as referring specifically to the discipline of excommunication.³⁶ By this discipline of the church God declared to people that their sins were either bound to them or loosed from them. Calvin understood this was true only if the discipline was based on the Word of God, dismissing any power for the church independent of the Scriptures. But when the church speaks in discipline on the basis of the Word, "the Lord testifies that such judgment is nothing but the proclamation of His own sentence, and whatever we have done on earth is ratified in heaven."³⁷ This binding and loosing of people's sins is a declaration that one is inside or outside the kingdom of Christ.

Secondly, this power of the keys is related to Calvin's broader theology of the church. For Calvin, the church is the central place in which God preserves order in the world after the fall. Calvin saw

33 Maruyama, *Ecclesiology of Beza*, 24, see especially footnote 16.

34 Maruyama, *Ecclesiology of Beza*, 211.

35 Calvin, *Institutes - 1569*, 1229 (4.12.1).

36 Calvin, *Institutes - 1559*, 1211-1214 (4.11.1 and 2).

37 Calvin, *Institutes - 1559*, 1214 (4.11.2).

the beauty of God in the order of the cosmos, in the order of created man, and the order of man in society, as particularly demonstrative of the glory of God revealed in creation.³⁸ However, this order was radically disrupted by the fall. He believed that remnants of this order still exist, but *essentially*, that is, spiritually,³⁹ it is gone because man has turned against God, destroying this order in himself and thus all things man (in head Adam) represents. The *imago dei*, which is the ordering of a man spiritually first of all, has its seat in the soul of a man. This image has been destroyed in the fall.⁴⁰

Though there is a use of the law of God that restores some order in the society even among the unbelieving, Calvin viewed the visible church as that entity in which is realized “the history of God’s restoration of order in the world.”⁴¹ In the visible church the means of grace are administered. In the visible church the keys of the kingdom are found. Therefore, in the church the *imago dei* is restored in the souls of God’s people. Thus, it is here that order is being restored in men in this world.

Calvin taught that in the visible church Christ truly reigns as King. Christ surely “govern[s] the devil and all the wicked, but not by His word, nor by the sanctifying power of His Spirit. . . The peculiar government of God is that in His church only, where by His word and Spirit He bends the hearts of men to obedience.”⁴² For Calvin, the church is the kingdom of Christ’s rule of grace visibly manifest on earth in the church: “The Kingdom of Christ shall in every way be happy and blessed, or that the church of God, which means the same thing, shall be blessed, when Christ begins to rule.”⁴³ The orderly governing of the church visible by people being restored to order in their souls is an aspect of that order Christ restores in His kingdom: “By *the kingdom*

38 Benjamin Charles Milner, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Church* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 10.

39 That is, the spiritual center was gone and with it some of the external order as well.

40 Milner, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Church*, 38.

41 Milner, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Church*, 83.

42 John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 3:260-261 (Micah 4:3).

43 John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*, 2:410 (Amos 9:13). See also his comments on Isaiah 65:20 and Psalm 18:43.

of God we must understand the renovation promised in Christ; for the perfection of order which the prophets had everywhere promised would exist at the coming of Christ, cannot exist unless God assembles under his government those men who had gone astray.”⁴⁴ Church discipline has a preeminent place in this restoration of order in Christ’s kingdom. The most important part of ecclesiastical power according to Calvin “consists in jurisdiction.” And the whole jurisdiction of the church pertains to “the discipline of morals.”⁴⁵

In fact, Calvin thought so highly of discipline in its relation to the order restored in the church that he famously stated that discipline was the church’s “sinews, through which the members of the body hold together.” So important is discipline to the kingdom of Christ on earth that “all who desire to remove discipline or to hinder its restoration... are surely contributing to the ultimate dissolution of the church.”⁴⁶ This discipline is of no effect without the work of the Spirit. But the Spirit works by Word and discipline to make men teachable, creating a new people in Christ Jesus. The church is thus the restored order in the world as the visible kingdom of Christ. The people who make up the church, themselves being restored to order from the inside out, will live orderly in Christ’s kingdom and world. “In the concept of discipline then, we have the heart of Calvin’s doctrine of the kingdom of Christ.”⁴⁷

Third, notice the importance of church discipline in relation to Calvin’s view of the glory of God. As is well known, for Calvin, the glory of God was the end of all religion. A prime example of this is in Calvin’s reply to Cardinal Sadoletto:

It is not very sound theology to confine a man’s thoughts so much to himself, and not to set before him as the prime motive of his existence zeal to show forth the glory of God. For we are born first of all for God, and not for ourselves....It certainly is the duty of a Christian man to ascend higher than merely to seek and secure the salvation of his own soul. I therefore believe that there is no man imbued with

44 John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of Evangelists*, 3:333 (Mark 15:43).

45 Calvin, *Institutes - 1559*, 1211 (4.11.1).

46 Calvin, *Institutes - 1559*, 1230 (4.12.1).

47 Milner, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Church*, 178.

true piety, who will not regard as in poor taste that long and detailed exhortation to a zeal for heavenly life, which occupies a man entirely concerning with himself, and does not, even by one expression, arouse him to sanctify the name of God.⁴⁸

For Calvin, the honor and glory of God was the chief aim of the redeemed. In Calvin's thought, this aim ought to affect the way we respond to the means of grace (which Calvin also viewed as the two marks of a true church): the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. By these two means God comes down to us on earth audibly and visibly. To dishonor the sacrament is to attempt to besmirch the glory of God Himself. Indeed, the Consistory of the church ought to ensure that God's majesty is being preserved by disciplining those who do not honor the glory of God by respecting the sacrament.

Calvin's first purpose of church discipline meets this concern:

The first [purpose] is that they who lead a filthy and infamous life may not be called Christians to the dishonor of God... And here also we must preserve the order of the Lord's Supper, that it may not be profaned by being administered indiscriminately. ... If he [the pastor] knowingly and willingly admits an unworthy person whom he could rightfully turn away, [he] is as guilty of sacrilege as if he had cast the Lord's body to dogs.⁴⁹

Already in the 1537 "Articles Concerning the Organization of the Church," Calvin had stated that the first reason for excommunication is that the sacrament be not "soiled and contaminated" by attendance of those who by confession and/or life declare they have no part in Christ. The reason is that "in this profanation of his sacrament our Lord is gravely dishonored."⁵⁰ It was precisely this concern that led Calvin dramatically to hold back the sacrament from Berthelier in 1553. In a letter to Viret, Calvin explained to his friend that before he had walked down to St. Pierre Cathedral that day, he "took an oath,

48 John Calvin, "Reply to Sadolet," in Reid, *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, 228.

49 Calvin, *Institutes - 1559*, 1232-1233 (4.12.5).

50 Calvin, "Articles of Organization," 50.

that I had resolved rather to meet death than profane so shamefully the holy Supper of the Lord...In truth, I should rather die a hundred times, than subject Christ to such foul mockery.”⁵¹ The right of the church to bar the impenitent from the table of the Lord was for the glory of the Lord.

But God’s honor in His *Word* must be maintained as well:

In order to obviate contempt of the Word it is imperative that the pastor and elders should care for each individual member of the flock and admonish each in particular by the solemn message of the divine Word. Such admonition of the individual forms the basis of church discipline. If anyone refuses to hear the special warnings...he must be excluded from the fellowship of the faithful so that Christ who dwells in its midst be not blasphemed and dishonored.⁵²

The Word, just as the sacrament, must be held in highest esteem, for it is the Word of the glorious God.

Fourth, the importance of church discipline to Calvin’s theology can be seen in Calvin’s understanding of the relation between the fatherhood of God and church discipline. Calvin believed that an intimate knowledge of the fatherhood of God was indispensable to the piety of God’s people:

I call ‘piety’ that reverence joined with love of God which the knowledge of his benefits induces. For until men recognize that they owe everything to God, that they are nourished by his fatherly care, that he is the Author of their every good, that they should seek nothing beyond him—they will never yield him willing service.⁵³

Calvin believed *church discipline* was one of the chief expressions of the fatherhood of God over His people, and thus a means of nourishing true piety in them. Calvin’s doctrine of discipline is sometimes

51 “John Calvin to Pierre Viret, Letter CCCXXV, 4th September 1553,” in Bonnet, *Letters of John Calvin*, 423-425.

52 W. Niesel, quoted in Geoffrey L. Barnes, “Calvin’s View of Church Discipline,” unpublished paper submitted to the Calvin Seminar hosted by F.L. Battles, (1961), 6.

53 Calvin, *Institutes - 1559*, 41 (1.2.1.)

cast as a cold and angry endeavor. In fact, Calvin sought to carry out discipline as a faithful reflection of God's good fatherhood. For Calvin the other two purposes of church discipline (the first being the honor and glory of God) were "that the good not be corrupted by the constant company of the wicked," and that the sinner "overcome by shame for their baseness would repent."⁵⁴ In other words, the purpose of church discipline is the fatherly and pastoral care of the sons and daughters of God.

To this end Calvin recommended that the severity of discipline be "joined with a spirit of gentleness."⁵⁵ He rebuked the Anabaptists and some of the church fathers for their harshness in discipline, and he warned, "unless this gentleness is maintained in both private and public censures, there is danger lest we soon slide down from discipline to butchery."⁵⁶ Adeptly, Calvin applied the image of oil and vinegar when he explained the process of discipline: "Let us not be so sharp in rebuking others for their faults that we forget to mix oil with the vinegar, or to act in a spirit of gentleness."⁵⁷ Thus, for Calvin, to enact church discipline was "to love Christ's poor sheep as He loves them, and to save by a single admonition thousands from perdition."⁵⁸ In practice, Calvin carried this out with his Consistory. Most of the cases of discipline were resolved with fatherly admonitions. In fact, the Consistory functioned more as a "counseling service than a tribunal."⁵⁹ The main interest was reconciling sinners to each other and to God.

So exalted was church discipline in Calvin's theology and practice that some scholars have wrongly concluded that Calvin held church discipline as the third mark of a true church in spite of his own explicit teaching. Fred Graham states, "...Calvin chose to include this godly discipline as the third mark of the church. The other two major

54 Calvin, *Institutes* - 1559, 1233 (4.12.5).

55 Calvin, *Institutes* - 1559, 1236 (4.12.8).

56 Calvin, *Institutes* - 1559, 1238 (4.12.10).

57 John Calvin, *Sermons on Galatians*, (Audubon, NJ: Old Paths Publications, 1995), 802 (sermon on Galatians 6:1-2).

58 Quoted in Robert White, "Oil and Vinegar: Calvin on Church Discipline," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 38, no. 1 (1985): 37.

59 Jeffrey Watt, *The Consistory and Social Discipline in Calvin's Geneva* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2020), 226.

branches of the Reformation—Lutheran and Anglican—did not.”⁶⁰ G.S.M. Walker concluded that for Calvin, “The Church cannot be defined solely with reference to the Word and Sacraments; discipline must be added as the third characteristic note or mark.”⁶¹ Wrong as this conclusion is, it reflects the importance of church discipline in Calvin’s theology and practice.

Why No Third Mark

Why, then, did Calvin not make church discipline the third mark of the true church? The answer is two-fold. First, though in some ways Calvin and Bucer were influenced positively by the radical Reformation’s emphasis on church discipline (as stated earlier), Calvin’s negative reaction to the Anabaptists’ excessive zeal for church discipline kept him from making it a mark of the true church.

After returning to Geneva from Strasburg, Calvin continued interactions with the Anabaptists. In 1544 he wrote the tract *Brief Instruction for Arming All the Good and Faithful Against the Errors of the Common Sect of the Anabaptists*. Here Calvin argued against the radical practice of church discipline. The Anabaptists held to a pure church notion, hence, discipline was severe. If one committed a sin, the ban (excommunication) was enacted immediately, and often the person was judged unregenerate.

The Anabaptists constantly criticized the magisterial reformers for lacking concern about godliness in the church. The Anabaptists were quick to cut themselves off from any church that did not excommunicate as quickly and fervently as they did, declaring every other church to be false for lacking the mark of church discipline. In the tract, Calvin addressed the question of whether a church that is not as strict in discipline or even fails to enact the ban can be called a church:

The debate is over this: they think that wherever this order is not properly constituted, or not duly exercised, no church exists, and it

60 W. Fred Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary: John Calvin & His Socio-Economic Impact* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1971), 161.

61 George S. M. Walker, “Calvin and the Church,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 16, no. 4 (December, 1963): 385.

is unlawful for a Christian to receive the Lord's Supper there. Thus they separate themselves from the churches in which the doctrine of God is purely preached....We on the contrary confess that it is certainly an imperfection and an unfortunate stain in a church where this order is absent. Nevertheless, we do not hold it to be the [mark of the] church...nor do we hold that it is lawful for people to separate themselves from the church.⁶²

Calvin turned to the parable of the wheat and tares and the parable of the catch of fishes in support of his view. The field in which there are wheat and tares, and the net in which there are different fish, is the church. There is no perfectly pure church made up exclusively of the faithful. The Anabaptist insistence that a whole congregation is corrupted if any unregenerate person partakes of communion was too much for Calvin.⁶³ Hyperbolically, but not by much, he made the point, "they spurn association with all men in whom they discern any remnant of human nature."⁶⁴ Calvin's own approach was more balanced, "Let us take thought of what we can do. And when we have done what was in our power and duty, if we cannot achieve what we had hoped to and what would have been desirable, let us commend the rest to God that He might put His own hand to it, as it is His work."⁶⁵

In this context, Calvin was willing to go so far as to call church discipline the "substance" of the church, but not a mark. In what was possibly his strongest statement regarding church discipline, he said, "Now I readily acknowledge that discipline also belongs to the substance of the church...and when discipline is absent, as when the ban is not practiced at all, the true form of the church is to that extent disfigured. But this is not to say that the church is wholly destroyed and the edifice no longer stands, for it retains the teaching on which the church must be founded."⁶⁶

After Calvin treated the two marks of a true church in the *Institutes* (pure preaching and faithful administration of the sacraments), instead

62 Calvin, *Treatises Against the Anabaptists*, 57. Brackets are in the source material.

63 Calvin, *Treatises Against the Anabaptists*, 58.

64 Calvin, *Institutes - 1559*, 1027 (4.1.13).

65 Calvin, *Treatises Against the Anabaptists*, 65.

66 Calvin, *Treatises Against the Anabaptists*, 60.

of speaking next of church discipline as a third mark, he turned to polemics against the Anabaptists for their extremism with discipline.⁶⁷ This is the case only from the 1541 French edition on.⁶⁸ It is telling that only after Calvin's time in Strasburg did this polemic become a part of the *Institutes*. And it is telling that Calvin put the polemic in this place. This is evidence that Calvin had a stronger negative reaction to the Anabaptists than Bucer. It is also evidence that the Anabaptist view of discipline was why he did not advance a third mark as Bucer did. Maruyama concludes, "One of the main reasons why many Reformers limit the marks of the church to two is their apologetical posture against the Radical Reformation. This is the case with both Bullinger and Calvin."⁶⁹

Secondly, Calvin's understanding of church discipline had a nuance that precluded him from making it the third mark. Calvin's view was that church discipline was something of a *support* to the two marks of the true church. A balcony has supports under it that are not the balcony but uphold the structure. When those supports come down, the balcony may stay up for a time, but eventually it will fall. That is how Calvin viewed the relation of church discipline to the true church known in her two marks. Calvin believed that when preaching and sacraments are corrupted, the church *immediately* loses her true character—the balcony falls: "But *as soon as* falsehood breaks into the citadel of religion and the sum of necessary doctrine is overturned and the use of sacraments is destroyed, surely the death of the church follows."⁷⁰ But when *discipline* is not exercised, the balcony of the church in these two marks does not *immediately* crumble. The church still, for a time at least, "retains the teaching on which the church must be founded."⁷¹ The balcony will fall *eventually*, so that "all who desire to remove discipline or to hinder its restoration...are

67 Calvin, *Institutes* – 1559. In 4.1.12 Calvin deals with the marks of the true church. In 4.1.13 ff he speaks against "the Anabaptists who wish to appear advanced beyond other men."

68 John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion - 1541 Edition*, ed. Robert White (Edinburgh, UK: Banner of Truth, 2014), 265-270.

69 Maruyama, *Ecclesiology of Beza*, 24.

70 Calvin, *Institutes* - 1559, 1041 (4.2.1); emphasis mine.

71 Calvin, *Treatises Against the Anabaptists*, 60.

surely contributing to the *ultimate* dissolution of the church,⁷² but not immediately. Because of this perceived difference between preaching and sacraments and discipline, Calvin did not deem discipline a mark itself. Robert White is correct when he expresses Calvin's view thus: "Although the church exists by sole virtue of Word and sacrament, it is discipline which ensured the efficacy of both in the Christian congregation."⁷³ Discipline supports the marks of a true church and thus the church herself, but it is not a mark of the true church for Calvin.

Conclusion

The claims of some scholars that Calvin held church discipline to be a third mark of a true church are incorrect. Nonetheless, others are also incorrect to argue that the Belgic Confession and other reformed confessions are out of accord with Calvin when these confessions make church discipline the third mark of the true church. Calvin's great emphasis on discipline—theologically, and in practice—meant that it was inevitable that the Reformed would codify church discipline as the third mark of the true church.

Though Calvin's point that discipline supported the preaching and sacraments is helpful to keep in mind, one could also argue that preaching supports the marks of the pure administration of the sacraments and the faithful exercise of church discipline. Without pure preaching and faithful discipline, the sacraments will be corrupted by unworthy partakers. Does that mean the sacraments ought to be the sole mark? And though where the gospel is not preached there is *immediately* no church, is it not the case that preaching generally becomes gradually poorer until the gospel is lost? In all three—preaching, sacraments, and discipline—there can be a gradual decline that kills the church. Often, these decline together.

The Reformed consensus that manifested itself in the Reformed confessions saw the necessity of all three marks supporting each other. The later Reformers also saw that without explicitly stating

⁷² Calvin, *Institutes* - 1559, 1230 (4.12.1). Already in 1537, Calvin had this view that discipline *supports* the other two marks of the church: a "church cannot *retain* its true condition without observing this ordinance." Calvin, *Articles of Organization*, 50.

⁷³ White, *Calvin on Church Discipline*, 25.

it, Calvin really viewed church discipline important enough, both theologically and in practice, to be the third mark of a true church. The practice of church discipline was in constant need of defense in Geneva after Calvin's death. To what would the defenders turn to make their case but to Calvin's own theology and example? And what would they conclude as they turned there for support? Manetsch argues that "Beza and his colleagues made explicit what had remained implicit in Calvin's theology, namely, that church discipline rightly practiced was an essential mark (*nota*) of a true church, inseparable from the pure preaching of the Word and the proper administration of the sacraments."⁷⁴ Kingdon argues that "an important root" for the addition of the third mark of the true church, "is to be found in Calvin's Geneva."⁷⁵ Ronald Cammenga's conclusion is, "What the confessions have to say about Christian discipline reflects Calvin's view."⁷⁶ Calvin's explicit teaching on the marks? No. But his view of church discipline in theology and in practice? Yes.

May God give us an appreciation for the process that the Spirit used to guide the church into this aspect of the truth now codified in our confession, that church discipline is a mark of the true church. And may God make us fervent and faithful as Calvin himself in maintaining this mark in spirit and in truth.

74 Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors*, 188.

75 Robert Kingdon, *Reforming Geneva: Discipline, Faith, and Anger in Calvin's Geneva* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2012), 11.

76 Ronald Cammenga, "Calvin's Struggle for Church Discipline," in *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal* 43, no. 2 (April, 2010): 4.

“Committing the Truth to Faithful Men”: A Centennial History of the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary

Douglas J. Kuiper

CHAPTER TWO 1940-1959

The second phase of the history of the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary (1940-1959) is a continuation of the first phase (1925-1939) in several respects. The same professors (Herman Hoeksema and George Ophoff) taught essentially the same curriculum in the same facilities (a room in the basement of First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, MI). Students came and went. The Theological School Committee (TSC) continued its oversight of the school.

Yet several factors give this historical phase a flavor all its own.

First, the seminary curriculum expanded. The curriculum was essentially the same as previously, but a few subjects were added. More significantly, the pre-seminary course was implemented, a third professor was called (and the call twice declined), a postgraduate course was added, a student club was organized, and investigations were made whether the seminary could provide a course for teachers of Protestant Reformed elementary schools that had been established.

Second, harbingers of upcoming changes were evident. In the third phase of the school’s history (1960-1979), the faculty would be replaced and a new school building would be erected. Though these had not yet happened, many noted the inadequacy of the facilities and the increasing age of the professors. Both Herman Hoeksema and George Ophoff suffered serious strokes in the second phase.

Third, two historical events defined this second phase: war and schism. The United States was involved in three major wars during this era of the seminary's history: World War II (1939-1945), the Korean War (1950-1953), and the Vietnam War (1954-1975). Especially the Second World War affected the seminary significantly. This was probably the major contributing cause of decreased student enrollment: "We were particularly impressed by the fact that our school has never before had so few students," wrote Cornelius Hanko in a report to the TSC of a school visit in the spring semester of 1944.¹ Other effects will be noted later in this chapter.

The seminary was also affected by the controversy regarding conditions in God's covenant and the subsequent schism of 1953. This stands to reason: the seminary is a denominational seminary and the controversy took place within its denomination. The instructors were not the only capable theologians in the Protestant Reformed Churches in America (PRCA), but they were certainly the oldest capable theologians. That Hoeksema and Ophoff were united in their opposition to a conditional covenant is a reason for thanksgiving; the seminary was not hopelessly divided. However, students and members of the TSC sided either with or against the professors.

Fourth, other aspects of the history indicate that both the PRCA and their seminary were becoming more widely known in the Reformed church world, both in Europe and in the United States. While the average size of the student body decreased during these years, the number of prospective students from outside the PRCA increased.

The history of the seminary in the 1940s and 1950s, regarding both continuity and development, is the subject of this chapter. In turn, the chapter will examine the students, the education, the educators, the facilities, and the overseers of the seminary during this era.

Students

Graduates

During the first phase of the seminary's history, forty-six men applied for admission to the seminary, forty-two were granted admis-

1 Cornelius Hanko, "Report to the Theological School Committee," April 4, 1944 (Wyoming, MI: PRCA Archives), 426:15. All subsequent references to the "Archives," unless noted, are to the denominational archives of the PRCA.

sion, and twenty-four eventually became ministers in the PRCA.² By comparison, during the second phase, far fewer applied for admission, eighteen graduated, and sixteen became ministers in the PRCA. Bear in mind that the second phase is also five years longer than the first—twenty years, versus fifteen.

The names of the graduates and the place of their first charge are as follows:

1940	John Heys	One year postgraduate; Hope, Walker, MI (1941)	
1943	Sebastian Cammenga	Orange City, IA	
	Walter Hofman	Holland, MI	
	John Piersma	none	
1944	James Van Weelden	Sioux Center, IA	
1946	James Howerzyl	Oskaloosa, IA	
1947	Homer Hoeksema	Two years postgraduate; Doon, IA (1949)	
	Edward Knott	Home missionary	
	Gerald Vanden Berg	Grand Haven, MI	
	1953	Emanuel Emanuel	Randolph, WI
	Robert Harbach	Lynden, WA	
	Marvin Koerner	none	
	George Lanting	Grand Haven, MI	
1955	James Mc Collam	Holland, MI	
1955	Herman Hanko	Hope, Walker, MI	
1956	Gise Van Baren	Doon, IA	
	Bernard Woudenberg	Creston, Grand Rapids, MI	
1957	Alvin Mulder	Kalamazoo, MI	

Jason Kortering, David Engelsma, and Robert Decker were doing their pre-seminary and seminary studies during this era of the seminary’s history, but did not graduate until 1960, 1963, and 1965, respectively.

2 Douglas Kuiper, ““Committing the Truth to Faithful Men’: A Centennial History of the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary,” in *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal* 55, no. 1 (November 2021), 59-60.

Several comments about the graduates are in order. First, John Heys and Homer Hoeksema went on to do postgraduate work at the seminary. A fuller explanation of the postgraduate program will be given later in this chapter. Second, most of the graduates were born and raised in the PRCA or the Christian Reformed Church (CRCNA). The exception of Marvin Koerner will be noted presently. The other exceptions are Emanuel Emanuel, Robert Harbach, and James Mc Collam, each of whom came to the PRCA from the Reformed Episcopal Church.³

Third, two of the graduates never entered the ministry in the PRCA. Not long after being declared a candidate, John Piersma “requested suspension of his candidacy” and the synodical committee declared him to be “no longer licensed to preach in Prot. Ref. Churches.”⁴ He graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1947 and served nine pastorates in the CRC.⁵

That Marvin Koerner would serve in the pastoral ministry was not God’s will. Mr. Koerner began his studies in the pre-seminary department in 1948, but was preparing for ministry in the Reformed Church of the United States (RCUS), of which he was a member.⁶ In 1953, nearing the end of his seminary instruction, he expressed to the

3 *Acts of Synod 1951 of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America*, 43. (Any reference to minutes and actions of the broader assemblies of the PRCA is identified as “Art.” when referring to the particular minute. Absence of “Art.” indicates that the reference is to the page.) See also Robert Harbach, interview by Russell Dykstra, Summer 1983 (Archives, 270:3). Harbach recounts his progress from dispensational theology to covenant theology and Calvinism, and his coming into contact with the PRCA. This enabled him, as well as Emanuel and Mc Collam, to understand the issues in the conditional covenant controversy relatively easily. Having come to reject dispensationalism in favor of covenant theology, these men had no difficulty understanding the unconditional character of the covenant.

4 “Announcement,” *Standard Bearer* (September 1, 1943), 19:496.

5 Richard H. Harms, *Historical Directory of the Christian Reformed Church* (Grand Rapids: Historical Committee of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, 2004), 297.

6 Minutes of the TSC, May 14, 1948. All minutes, supplements, and correspondence of this era are currently found in Archives locations 141, 426, and 606.

TSC his desire to be examined with a view to candidacy in the PRCA.⁷ This request synod granted. When he received no call within three years, he asked synod to extend his candidacy for another three, which synod did.⁸ After three more years, when he still had not received a call, synod announced “that Mr. Koerner is no more a candidate for the ministry in our denomination.”⁹

Finally, of the sixteen who graduated and entered ministry in the PRCA, only seven served the PRCA for their entire life. Sebastian Cammenga, Walter Hofman, James Howerzyl, Edward Knott, and James Van Weelden left the PRCA in the schism of 1953, and eventually returned to the CRC. Howerzyl and Knott later affiliated with the United Reformed Churches.¹⁰ Alvin Mulder joined the CRC in 1962.¹¹ In 1959 James Mc Collam resigned as pastor of the PRC in Holland, and Emanuel Emanuel of the PRC in Randolph, when they accepted calls to congregations in the United Presbyterian Church.¹² Gerald Vanden Berg resigned his pastorate in Oak Lawn, IL, in 1970.¹³ The seven who served the PRCA for their entire life are John Heys, Homer Hoeksema, George Lanting, Herman Hanko, Gise Van Baren, and Bernard Woudenberg.

This aspect of the seminary’s history illustrates points that are common to the history of the true church in every age: God gives pastors and teachers (Eph. 4:11), but also removes some from office according to His good pleasure. In other instances, He purposefully

7 *Acts of Synod 1953*, 60.

8 *Acts of Synod 1956*, Art. 108.

9 *Acts of Synod 1959*, Art. 88.

10 Harms, *Historical Directory of the Christian Reformed Church*, 171, 230, 236, 254, 369.

11 Harms, *Historical Directory of the Christian Reformed Church*, 283.

12 For Mc Collam, see Minutes of Classis East, October 7, 1959, Arts. 11-12, and Supplements 2-5 (Archives 460:2 and 154:8.3). For Emanuel, see “Randolph Protestant Reformed Church, 1943-1993: 50 Years of God’s Faithfulness” (Randolph, WI: Randolph PRC, 1993), 9. The United Presbyterian Church in the USA, which both Emanuel and Mc Collam joined, had formed in 1958 in the merger of the Presbyterian Church of the USA (with English roots) and the United Presbyterian Church of North America (having Scottish Covenanter roots).

13 Minutes of Classis West, September 2, 1970, Articles 14, 18-20.

directs men to train for the ministry, but never permits them to enter the ministry. And, more specific to the PRCA, this aspect of our history illustrates our great need for students. If only a fraction of those who enter seminary actually enter the ministry, and only a fraction of those serve the PRCA for their entire life, we need men—many men.

Non-graduates and Other Applicants

Several students began their studies with an eye on ministry in the PRCA, but either ceased from all preparation for the ministry, or transferred to another seminary and entered the ministry of another denomination. Carl Reitsma began his pre-seminary studies in 1945. He took a leave of absence to study in the Netherlands in 1949, and resumed his studies at our seminary in 1951, but did not complete the 1951-1952 school year. He later served churches in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Church of New Zealand, and the CRCNA.¹⁴ Students John Hofman and James Kok left the denomination at the time of the 1953 schism, completed their education under the oversight of the De Wolf group, and served most of their pastorates in the CRCNA.¹⁵

Other students began their studies expecting to serve other denominations. In addition to Marvin Koerner, who later became a candidate for ministry in the PRCA, two men studied with a view to ministry in the RCUS: Harley Bittner¹⁶ and Herman Mensch. Mr. Mensch was admitted in 1945. He was the only student in the regular seminary course in the 1947-1948 school year. (The only other student was

14 Minutes of the TSC, May 7, 1945; May 25, 1949; May 18, 1951; March 14, 1952; April 25, 1952. See also Harms, *Historical Directory of the Christian Reformed Church*, 304.

15 Harms, *Historical Directory of the Christian Reformed Church*, 229, 255.

16 Mr. Bittner applied for admission in 1945 and was accepted, but the record does not indicate that he ever began his studies. The minutes suggest that this failure was due to “difficulties with the draft board” (Minutes of the TSC, Jan. 18, 1945; May 7, 1945). In addition, his name is not listed in the list of ministers of the Eureka Classis, which suggests that he never entered the ministry in the RCUS. See *History of the Eureka Classis Reformed Church in the U.S., 1910-1985*, ed. Committee on History (Green Bay: Reliance Publishing Co., 1985), 133-35.

Homer Hoeksema, who was studying in the postgraduate course.) Mr. Mensch was examined by his classis in 1952 and began serving the RCUS congregation in Isabel, SD. From 1955-1957 he served in Leola, SD. He then returned to Isabel, and in 1958 he was “taken off the roll of Classis,” and Isabel as a congregation left the denomination.¹⁷

Henk De Raad and Henry De Bolster moved from the Netherlands to study at the seminary. While in the Netherlands, they had left the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN),¹⁸ convinced that Klaas Schilder’s covenant view was correct. When Carl Reitsma was studying in the Netherlands, he met and encouraged De Raad and De Bolster to study in the Protestant Reformed Seminary. They arrived in the summer of 1950, and studied a year before being placed under censure by their consistory and expelled from the seminary.¹⁹ One who knows the history of the PRCA recognizes that it was only a matter of time before things would come to a head: at the very height of the controversy in the PRCA regarding the unconditional character of God’s covenant, two men who were convinced of the Liberated

17 See *History of the Eureka Classis Reformed Church in the U.S., 1910-1985*, 27-30, 134, and Robert Grossman, “Outline History of the Reformed Church in the United States, 1725-1995” (Garner, IA: Elector Publications, 1995), 84-85, 88-89. In 1959 the congregations of Isabel and Forbes, SD, requested to join the PRCA, largely through Mensch’s influence; see *Acts of Synod 1959*, Arts. 43, 53.

18 In English the name means the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. The GKN was the denomination that was formed in 1892 when those who followed in the tradition of the 1834 *Afscheiding* and those who followed in the tradition of the 1886 *Doleantie* merged.

19 Minutes of the TSC, December 2, 1949; January 27, 1950; April 21, 1950; July 12, 1950; September 14, 1951; January 18, 1952; and *Acts of Synod 1952*, 45-46. In addition, De Bolster recounts his life story, including this chapter in it, in his autobiography *Blessings and Struggles: The Pilgrimage of Henry R. De Bolster* (n.p., 2003), 50-52, 55-79. He recounts his experiences in the PRCA from his own perspective; whether it always accurately portrays the PRCA, especially the professors, I doubt. But the professors were on one side of the controversy, and these two students on the other. In the end, De Bolster concluded his studies at Calvin Theological Seminary and served several pastorates in the Christian Reformed Church. He ended his active career as president of Redeemer College. See Harms, *Historical Directory of the Christian Reformed Church*, 180.

(Schilderian) view of the covenant were studying under men who were ardently opposed to the Liberated view!

Several other men applied for admission to the school but either never began their studies, or ended them very briefly. Walter Vis, of Hull, IA, was admitted, but that he ever moved to Grand Rapids to begin his studies is not certain. What is clear is that by the next spring he informed the TSC that he no longer intended to study at the seminary.²⁰ Homer Kuiper had been admitted in 1938 and discontinued his studies in 1942.²¹ Already in 1942, and again in 1946, he made formal requests to be readmitted. In 1946 the TSC expressed itself not in favor of his readmission, but asked synod to make the final judgment. Synod's response, in essence, was that the TSC must bring a firm recommendation.²² The only references to Homer Kuiper later in the TSC minutes are of him as a member of the TSC, not a student in the school! This suggests that the reason for his discontinuing did not regard his spiritual character or doctrinal soundness.

At least five other men applied for admission to the school with a view to ministry in the PRCA during this time period. The TSC detected blatant factual errors in the application of one of these men, which inclined the TSC to prefer not to admit him. When it conveyed these matters to him, he did not respond.²³ Two other men were told to finish their high-school education, get a college education, and then reapply—something that appears not to have happened.²⁴ And two others were enrolled for a time.²⁵

While Mr. De Bolster and Mr. De Raad were the only two who actually came from the Netherlands to study in the seminary, others from the Netherlands expressed interest, especially in the late 1940s. One of them was fairly explicit about how he envisioned matters would work out: He would study at the seminary for one year, graduate, get

20 Minutes of the TSC, May 10, 1949; April 11, 1947; *Acts of Synod 1946*, Arts. 40-42.

21 Kuiper, "Committing the Truth", 64.

22 *Acts of Synod 1946*, Art. 55.

23 Minutes of the TSC, March 5, 1948; August 31, 1948; September 10, 1948; *Acts of Synod 1948*, 61; *Acts of Synod 1949*, 63.

24 Minutes of the TSC, February 18, 1955; September 8, 1955.

25 Minutes of the TSC, May 26, 1952; September 12, 1952; July 25, 1958.

a call to a congregation in the PRCA, and then continue his seminary education for two more years while serving as a pastor. What seemed plausible to him did not compel the TSC.²⁶ In another instance the TSC worked with a brother from the Netherlands, who in the end could not satisfy the immigration requirements.²⁷ At least two other men, probably from the USA but not members of the PRCA, made inquiries but never formally requested to be admitted.²⁸

One other man from the CRCNA requested permission to take seminary courses—that is, not to be formally enrolled, nor to take the entire seminary program, but to take selected courses as he preferred. The TSC and synod granted his request, but made plain that this permission could be withdrawn at any time, and that such permission should not be construed as implicit approval of his ever becoming a regular student.²⁹

As mentioned in the introduction, the PRCA was on the ecclesiastical map. Men in the Netherlands, particularly among Schilder’s followers, and men in the USA, particularly in the CRC and RCUS, were aware of it. Without a doubt, the presence of Herman Hoeksema was a factor in this awareness. The fact that Hoeksema had a stroke in 1947 made the matter more urgent in the minds of some: If they were ever going to sit at Hoeksema’s feet to learn, they had no time to wait.

In this respect, the history of the seminary in the second phase was a development over the first phase. During the first phase, numerous men either left the seminary to continue their education elsewhere, or entered the PRCA ministry for a time but then left it. However, as best it can be determined, all began their studies intending to become ministers in the PRCA. During the second phase that changed. In this way God was using the PRCA for the advancement of the knowledge of the doctrines of sovereign grace in others who would serve in other denominations.

26 Minutes of the TSC, January 6, 1948; March 5, 1948.

27 Minutes of the TSC, April 22, 1949; August 1, 1949; December 2, 1949; January 27, 1950.

28 Minutes of the TSC, July 12, 1950; February 16, 1951; September 18, 1953; January 8, 1954.

29 Minutes of the TSC, September 4, 1953; *Acts of Synod 1954*, Arts. 73-76.

This change in circumstances also required the TSC to appoint a subcommittee to “study the matter of the eligibility of aspirants to our school from outside of our churches”³⁰ and to report to the next meeting. Whether this mandate was specific to the men who applied at that meeting, or more general, is not clear, and nothing more can be found in the minutes.

Effects of the War

The decreased student body was likely an effect of World War II. One could argue differently: without a question, God knew whom He intended to be ministers in the PRCA, and the war certainly did not hinder Him in carrying out His purposes.

Historically, the fact remains that the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, as amended in December 1941, required every American male between the ages of 21 and 44 to register for the draft. Exemptions were granted, but not without good reason. One good reason for an exemption was that a man was either enrolled in a seminary program, or was currently in college and pre-enrolled in a seminary.

This explains the increased urgency of the development of the pre-seminary program, and the applications for pre-enrollment in seminary. With a view to assisting any man who desired to be pre-enrolled, the TSC held special meetings on September 9, 1942 and October 9, 1942: Homer Hoeksema, Edward Knott, and Gerald Vanden Berg were pre-enrolled at that time. This also suggests that those men who seriously felt the call to the ministry would do what they could to be exempt from the draft; in other words, even World War II cannot be the sole explanation for the decreased student enrollment.

After the war, veterans applied for admission.³¹ Consequently, the TSC’s secretary was mandated to “seek recognition of our school for the Veteran’s Administration so that veterans can attend our school and

30 Minutes of the TSC, February 16, 1951.

31 Marvin Koerner, George Lanting, and Jack Van Dyken (who applied, but apparently did not attend seminary) were veterans. The archives include receipts of book purchases that Lanting made, because the TSC had to note that they were legitimate purchases for the purpose of his seminary education, so that he could be reimbursed by the Veterans Administration; see Archives, 614:7; and Minutes of the TSC, May 18, 1951.

receive support from the government.”³² The Department of Public Instruction of the State of Michigan granted this request, meaning that the government paid for the schooling of these men.³³ Apparently, the recognition of the VA needed renewing on a regular basis, for later minutes indicate continued correspondence between the TSC and VA.³⁴

Academic Requirements

Initially, the seminary had not specified that an applicant needed any amount of prior education. Some who were admitted had not even completed a high-school education.³⁵

The TSC proposed changes in this regard to Synod 1949, which changes were to be incorporated into the Theological School Constitution. These included that none would be admitted who did not have at least a complete high-school education, and that none could take his final exam who had less than a C average during his school years.³⁶ Synod adopted this change. Accordingly, in 1955 the TSC advised two men as it did (see footnote 25 above).

The next question regarded which college-level courses a prospective student must have. When the annual notice “call to aspirants to the ministry” appeared in the March 1 and 15, 1956 issues of the *Standard Bearer*, an objection was brought to the TSC that the announcement did not accurately state which subjects were required.³⁷ The TSC asked synod’s input, and synod instructed it to submit a revised catalog to Synod 1957. Synod 1957 adopted the TSC’s recommendation with one amendment. Now, not only did the applicant need to have a high-school education that included at least one year of general history and one year of church history, but the applicant also needed to complete the following college-level courses before being admitted to semi-

32 Minutes of the TSC, March 5, 1948.

33 Minutes of the TSC, August 31, 1948; *Acts of Synod 1948*, 61-62.

34 Minutes of the TSC, March 14, 1952; April 25, 1952; September 12, 1952; January 30, 1953. See also the TSC reports to Synod, as found in *Acts of Synods 1948, 1949, and 1952*.

35 Kuiper, “Committing the Truth”, 61.

36 *Acts of Synod 1949*, 65-66, and Art. 38.

37 Minutes of the TSC, May 17, 1956; *Acts of Synod 1956*, 72-73.

nary: two years each of Latin, Greek, and German; one year each of philosophy and psychology; and one semester of logic.³⁸

Tuition

In 1939, classis adopted a tuition fee of \$70 per year per student, including those studying for ministry in the PRCA.³⁹ The fees were never collected. The TSC asked Synod 1945 whether to maintain and enforce this rule. In response, synod declared that students for the ministry in the PRCA needed to pay nothing, while students who studied for the ministry in other churches needed to pay the \$70 tuition fee.⁴⁰ Synod 1948 then reversed the decision, insisting that even students studying for ministry in the PRCA should pay tuition.⁴¹ Later minutes note that students had paid, or would soon pay, their tuition.⁴² In 1955, three students requested that the fee be waived because of their financial straits, and the TSC granted the request.⁴³ Jason Kortering states that he was the only one he knew who paid tuition.⁴⁴ Perhaps he was the only one of his era, but he was not the only student to do so in the history of the seminary.

Student Club

An exciting development in this era was the beginning of a student club. A precursor to this club was the dogmatics club that Herman Hoeksema conducted every Wednesday morning (during school hours) during the 1940-1941 school year.⁴⁵

The club continued and developed. The rector informed Synod 1943:

We might report as a matter of interest, that in the beginning of the school-year, a club was organized of the students and the faculty, for

38 *Acts of Synod 1957*, 156, and Arts. 93-94.

39 Kuiper, ““Committing the Truth””, 74-75.

40 *Acts of Synod 1945*, 57-58, and Art. 60.

41 *Acts of Synod 1948*, Art. 69.

42 Minutes of the TSC, February 16, 1951.

43 Minutes of the TSC, February 18, 1955; *Acts of Synod 1955*, 80.

44 Jason Kortering, interview by Mark Hoeksema, June 20, 2009 (Archives 270:5, CD 6).

45 *Acts of Synod 1941*, 65, and Art. 63.

the purpose of discussing topics of a theological and philosophical interest. We met rather regularly every three weeks. One of the students would introduce a subject that was assigned to him, and then the matter would be opened for general discussion. Our club bears the name Epi Pasin Aleetheia (Epsilon, Pi, Alpha). We meet in turns at the home of one of the members of the club. Some very interesting meetings we had.⁴⁶

Epsilon, Pi, and Alpha are Greek letters; often a collegiate student club would be identified with three Greek letters. Interestingly, the three Greek letters were the first letters of a Greek phrase that probably means “upon all truth,” in the sense of being based on truth. An alternative meaning would be “unto” or “for all truth,” in the sense of aiming to come to a deeper understanding of truth. At any rate, the “all truth” is significant: the student club had as its goal to discuss current ideas in relation to truth.

That the club continued to meet regularly, and even maintained its “official” status (a club with a three-letter Greek acronym for a name is not informal) is evidenced by the minute book of the meetings of December 18, 1953 through May 4, 1956, which is currently in the possession of the archives. Students and faculty attended regularly. At one meeting, Dr. De Vries of Calvin College “introduced the subject concerning the days of creation in the light of science and Scripture.”⁴⁷ At other meetings, papers evaluating some aspects of the thinking of Karl Barth, James Daane’s work on common grace, and Alexander De Jong’s book on the well-meant offer, were presented, as well as other timely topics.

Gise Van Baren, who faithfully recorded the minutes, and who was present at all of the meetings recorded in the book except the last, informed the club of the reason for his absence:

Members of Epsilon Pi Alpha Club:

Because of a so-called unwritten law concerning the prerequisites of one who aspires to the ministry in the Protestant Reformed Churches, of which “law” you are all well aware, the undersigned feels constrained to absent himself from this meeting in order to make

⁴⁶ *Acts of Synod 1943*, 60.

⁴⁷ Minutes of the E.P.A., December 18, 1953.

another attempt to fulfill said prerequisite. For this reason I ask to be excused from this meeting. If so mandated, I will make a report (not necessarily complete) at the next meeting concerning the success or failure of this venture.

Sincerely,
G. Van Baren⁴⁸

The unwritten “law” was that a student not be married while in seminary, in order to devote himself more fully to his studies; but also that he get married before he enter the ministry, in order to have a life helper when he was in the ministry. The strict keeping of “law” would mean that during his last semester of seminary the student would both begin preparing for his synodical examination *and* work to attract the attention of an eligible woman. Apparently, Gise had a date the night the student club met! The matter was urgent; he was soon to graduate.

Education

Curriculum

The education that these students received was essentially the same as in the first phase. It was a basic curriculum, with heavy emphasis on the knowledge of the original languages of Scripture, exegesis of the Scripture, dogmatics, and church history. In the practical theology department, courses were offered in public speaking, homiletics, catechetics, and church polity. English grammar and composition was also taught, because a college degree was not required.⁴⁹

Apart from the introduction of a more formal pre-seminary course and a postgraduate course, the only significant curriculum change was the addition of a class in missions. In treating a report of the mission committee, Synod 1952 instructed the TSC and faculty to propose to the next synod a missionary training program.⁵⁰ In the fall of 1953, students Hanko and Woudenberg expressed a desire to take such a course.

48 Note stapled to Minutes of the E.P.A., May 4, 1956.

49 Minutes of the TSC, February 10, 1949, Supplement B, contains a list of the courses offered in the 1948-1949 school year.

50 *Acts of Synod 1952*, Arts. 65, 67.

Length of the School Year

The school year customarily began in September and ended in May or early June. During the war years, especially beginning in 1944, the United States government required students who were exempted from the draft to go to school through the summer. The TSC therefore decided to continue school through the summer, emphasized that this should not be a special course but a continuation of the regular course, and recommended to synod that the professors’ wages be adjusted for the work they would do in the summer.⁵¹ Presumably, the school met in the summer of 1945 as well; the first reference to school not meeting again during the summer is in May 1946.⁵²

Pre-seminary

As noted in the last article, the push for a pre-seminary course of study became strong in 1938. In January 1939 a subcommittee of the TSC proposed, and the TSC reported to the classis of the PRCA, the vision of a four-year course of study that included four years each of Latin, Dutch, English, and Greek (both classical and biblical); two years of Bible history and public speaking; and one year each of algebra, geometry, secular history, Hebrew, psychology or logic, and philosophy. In the end classis approved teaching Latin, English, Dutch, mathematics, general history, and Bible history to those who did not have a high-school education, and advanced Latin, Dutch, German, biblical Greek, Bible history, and logic to those who did. To implement this plan as broadly as possible, classis recognized, would require the equivalent of four full-time professors. And the plan should not be implemented all at once but phased in.⁵³

At its next meeting, classis approved the TSC advertising for students to enroll in the pre-seminary course, hiring ministers in the Grand Rapids area to teach the courses as needed, and asking the consistory of First PRC to house the program in the church’s basement.⁵⁴

51 Minutes of the TSC, April 28, 1944.

52 Minutes of the TSC, May 10, 1946.

53 Minutes of the Classis, January 11 and 12, 1939, Art. 17, Supplement 5.

54 Minutes of the Classis, June 7 and 8, 1939, Art. 19.

The plan was ambitious. For one thing, implementing it to the fullest would mean that ministers taught higher-level mathematics, classical Greek (not to be confused with biblical Greek), philosophy, and psychology. Ministers with a college education would ordinarily have studied these subjects in college, but teaching them requires a level of competency in these subjects beyond what a minister generally has. For another thing, in June 1939 there were nine churches in West Michigan.⁵⁵ The pastors of two of them, Hoeksema and Ophoff, were already committing as much time as possible to the seminary. Two other churches were vacant. So five men were being asked to share the work of two full-time positions, in addition to being full-time pastors, writing for the *Standard Bearer*, and serving on denominational committees.

Implementing the pre-seminary program required a trained man, and the seminary and synod preferred to train their own man.⁵⁶ The way to prepare for a pre-seminary course to provide prospective ministers with a college education, therefore, was to establish a postgraduate course to prepare a professor. But the TSC was of the opinion in 1944 that “the time is not ripe to take action now.”⁵⁷ No reason for this is stated; low student enrollment was probably the main reason, but the effect of the war on the denomination was perhaps another.

Two years later, the time was riper. The TSC reminded Synod 1946 of its goal,⁵⁸ and synod mandated the TSC to draw up a plan “for the enlargement of the curriculum, including an eventual college course” and to present to Synod 1947 “a man or number of men whom they consider worthy and capable of such a course, with a view to an eventual chair in our college.”⁵⁹ The following year the TSC proposed the names of four men: Revs. Peter De Boer and Lambert Doezema, and prospective candidates Homer Hoeksema and Edward Knott. Apart from Revs. Hoeksema and Ophoff, of all the clergy and candidates in

55 They were Byron Center, Creston, First, Grand Haven, Holland, Hope, Hudsonville, Kalamazoo, and Roosevelt Park.

56 *Acts of Synod 1947*, 30-31, 32, 38-39, 45-46.

57 Minutes of the TSC, April 4, 1944.

58 Minutes of the TSC, April 12, 1946; see also *Acts of Synod 1946*, 40-41.

59 *Acts of Synod 1946*, Art. 57.

the PRCA, only these four had a college degree.⁶⁰ Synod added five names to this nomination, and called Candidate Hoeksema.⁶¹

Synod called Mr. Hoeksema on Tuesday, June 10, just before it concluded its business. One week later his father, Herman Hoeksema, had a stroke.⁶² When Candidate Hoeksema accepted the call, the TSC had to face the question whether the seminary could provide him the postgraduate course that he was promised. It decided to do its best; but as part of his training, would he please teach Greek, English grammar, and public speaking to student Herman Mensch? Apart from that, he was to devote himself to his postgraduate studies and take on no other responsibilities, except for preaching.⁶³

A man was being prepared to teach the pre-seminary course. But were any students interested? The TSC advertised for students, and six expressed interest. Five of the six, however, made clear that they desired Herman Hoeksema to instruct them, and whatever he could not provide they would gladly take from Calvin College.⁶⁴ This response of the students deflated the TSC somewhat; the pre-seminary program was intended to take the place of another college such as Calvin, but these men were willing to attend Calvin if Herman Hoeksema could not teach them.

Because the TSC brought no recommendation to Synod 1948 about whether Herman Hoeksema should continue his postgraduate studies, synod faced the question without the committee’s guidance. Synod was initially of a mind to declare him eligible for a call and ask area ministers to help with seminary instruction. Later the synod realized that if Herman Hoeksema was going to resume some of his seminary

60 *Acts of Synod 1947*, 30.

61 *Acts of Synod 1947*, Art. 130.

62 Gertrude Hoeksema, *Therefore Have I Spoken: A Biography of Herman Hoeksema* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1969), 295.

63 Minutes of the TSC, July 25, 1947; August 8, 1947; August 13, 1947.

64 *Acts of Synod 1948*, 62. Their names were Herman Hanko and Bernard Woudenberg, who would eventually become ministers in the PRCA; Marvin Koerner, who would later graduate from the seminary program; John Hofman and Carl Reitsma, who would study at the seminary but eventually leave the PRCA; and Charles Westra.

labors, the assistance of his son Homer was vital. In the end synod approved that Homer study in the postgraduate course for another year.

On the agenda of Synod 1949 was the TSC's recommendation "to appoint Mr. Homer C. Hoeksema for a period of two years as professor for college subjects at our school, and to give clerical assistance to Prof. H. Hoeksema."⁶⁵ After much discussion, on Friday, June 3, synod mandated the TSC to bring a nomination for professor to the synod in session. The TSC met that Friday evening and proposed an aggregate, to which list synod added some names, and out of which it called Rev. Lambert Doezema to be professor, with Rev. Peter De Boer as his alternate.⁶⁶ The idea was that the new professor would teach Latin, Greek, English grammar and composition, public speaking, hermeneutics, poimenics, all of church history, and New Testament history. Herman Hoeksema would then focus on all of dogmatics, Dutch, homiletics, catechetics, concepts, and New Testament exegesis, while George Ophoff would take every subject related to the Old Testament, and church polity.⁶⁷ With a new professor called, Homer Hoeksema was declared able to receive a call.⁶⁸

When both Revs. Doezema and De Boer declined their calls,⁶⁹ the efforts toward establishing a pre-seminary program came to a halt for the time being. Student enrollment was picking up again in the early 1950s, but the students had expressed a preference to attend Calvin College. In addition, the denomination's attention was fixed on the controversy regarding conditions in God's covenant, which would climax in 1953. When synod next called a third professor in 1959, it did so not to establish a pre-seminary program, but to replace George Ophoff, who had been declared emeritus. Not until 1964 would the

65 *Acts of Synod 1949*, page 64 and Arts. 31, 32, 36.

66 *Acts of Synod 1949*, Arts. 85-91, 96-97. The TSC proposed the names of the Revs. Lambert Doezema, Cornelius Hanko, Herman Veldman, Richard Veldman, and Gerrit Vos. Recognizing the rule of Article 6 of the Theological Constitution that states "In electing professors, Synod shall give preference to one already a minister of the Gospel," the synod nevertheless supplemented the aggregate with the names of Rev. Peter De Boer and Candidate Homer Hoeksema.

67 Minutes of the TSC, June 14, 1949, Supplement 1.

68 *Acts of Synod 1949*, Art. 111.

69 *Acts of Synod 1950*, Art 22.

work of planning a pre-seminary course resume, and not until the 1970s would it become a reality.

Postgraduate Course

That the postgraduate course was a means to prepare a man to teach in the pre-seminary department has been noted. More, however, must be said. Already in 1940 John Heys asked the synod to postpone his eligibility for a call for a year, so that he could do postgraduate work at the seminary.⁷⁰ Synod desired the brother to give his reason for desiring this, and he did so orally during his *practica* exam. Satisfied with the reason, synod granted his request.⁷¹ What his reason was, and what courses he studied during that year, the record does not say.

The only other student to take a postgraduate course offered by the seminary was Homer Hoeksema. Clearly, the postgraduate course was not meant to be merely an extended seminary course, but a substantive course focused on particular doctrines or issues. Herman Hoeksema intended to teach a course that focused “on the subject of predestination, including a critical study of Barth’s former and most recent exposition of the doctrine of ‘*Erwählung und Verwerfung*’” (election and reprobation). George Ophoff intended to do a more focused course on Old Testament prophecy.⁷² Ophoff’s plan was carried out, but Hoeksema’s could not be because of his stroke. This did not mean that Homer’s load was any lighter, however. In addition to teaching Greek, English grammar and composition, and public speaking to Herman Mensch, and to taking Ophoff’s course on prophecy, he had three other major assignments: write a commentary on the epistle to the Philippians, and on the prophecy of Micah, as well as attend Ophoff’s class regarding the exegesis of Isaiah.⁷³

Such is the extent of a postgraduate course taught at our seminary. Newly called professors today are expected to further their education before beginning to teach, but this further education does not take place at the seminary, nor under the tutelage of the current faculty. The

⁷⁰ *Acts of Synod 1940*, 66.

⁷¹ *Acts of Synod 1940*, Arts. 33, 43, 45, 66, 67.

⁷² *Acts of Synod 1947*, 30-31.

⁷³ *Acts of Synod 1948*, 60.

seminary exists solely for the purpose of preparing men to preach the gospel; preparing men to teach men to preach is beyond that purpose.

Normal Training Course

Over the span of four years, from 1948-1952, Protestant Reformed school boards encouraged the TSC to expand the seminary with a view to training Protestant Reformed teachers. In the West Michigan area, Adams Street School and Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School had formed. School societies also existed in Edgerton, MN; Hull, IA; and Redlands, CA. The need to train teachers was obvious, and the school societies looked to the seminary for help. Could it establish a normal training course (the customary term in that day for a teacher training college)?

The first request for help came from the Society for Protestant Reformed Education in Grand Rapids (the society that supported the Adams Street School). In a letter dated March 1, 1948, the Education Committee of that society noted that plans to build a school were underway and then wrote,

This committee is charged with the responsibility to devise ways and means whereby a suitable teaching staff can be assembled. It is understood, of course, that the staff must be particularly qualified to teach a Protestant Reformed point of view.

For the reasons set forth, this committee would like to know to what extent the facilities of the Theological School can be made available to prepare persons interested in the teaching profession.⁷⁴

The TSC informed Synod 1948 of this request, and synod answered that “we have no facilities for a complete normal course. However, that we can supply, we hope, the very necessary Protestant Reformed point of view by having prospective teachers take Principles of Education and read specified outside literature upon educational subjects, as produced by our men and others.”⁷⁵

74 Society for Protestant Reformed Education, March 1, 1948, Archives 426:16.

75 *Acts of Synod 1948*, Arts. 63, 80.

The Society brought a similar request to the TSC in May 1949, as did the consistory in Randolph, WI.⁷⁶ The TSC again brought the matter to synod, which referred the matter to “the faculty and the Theological School Committee for study and possible execution.”⁷⁷ To Synod 1950 the TSC reported that Herman Hoeksema drew up an outline for a six-week summer course on the Principles of Education, which George Ophoff would teach. But when the TSC informed the school boards of this, and asked how many prospective teachers they would send, it received no response. In fact, Ophoff had already been giving some instruction of this nature to a teachers’ club that had been organized in 1948. Synod received this for information, and made no further decision.

In August 1951 the TSC again received requests from representatives of the Adams and Hope schools regarding the same matter. After further consideration, it decided that it could not treat the matter further, because the training of teachers was not part of the mandate of synod to the TSC, is not an ecclesiastical matter, and belongs to the organic life of the church.⁷⁸

Thus was ended the TSC’s involvement in the matter, and thus began an awareness that the school boards themselves should federate, and through a federation work toward teacher training. The Federation of Protestant Reformed School Societies received a report in October 1957 regarding establishing a seminar to help prepare teachers to teach covenant children. To set up a normal school was not possible; but to establish a seminar to teach principles of education, among other topics, was possible. The committee to investigate recommended that “this seminar be under the chairmanship of our theological professors who will also serve in the capacity of instructors.”⁷⁹ But a further history of the federation of school societies is not the purpose of this article.

76 The pastor of Randolph at this time was George Lubbers, whose daughter, Agatha, was one of the first Protestant Reformed teachers.

77 *Acts of Synod 1949*, Art. 37.

78 Minutes of the TSC, March 14, 1952.

79 Archives 447:2.

Educators

Hoeksema and Ophoff

Herman Hoeksema and George Ophoff gave the seminary all the time and energy that they could devote to it. This is not to say that they had as much time as was desirable. In 1941 the TSC granted Hoeksema a four-week leave of absence to visit churches in the western U.S., and again in 1942 he was gone for several weeks immediately after the start of the school year.⁸⁰ Both men had weighty responsibilities in addition to teaching.

Until 1944, both were full-time pastors as well as full-time seminary professors. To call them “full-time seminary professors” is to acknowledge that they were the only seminary professors, and that they put many hours into the school. Synod recognized this. When in 1947 it treated an overture from Kalamazoo PRC “to appoint Rev. H. Hoeksema as full-time professor at our Theological School,” it gave as part of its answer that “the term ‘full-time professor’ is a misnomer in this case, since Prof. Hoeksema is full-time professor now.”⁸¹ Yet, in the minds of many, and even in the terminology used in that day, he was “part-time” because he was also pastor of a congregation.

Synod 1947 also requested Herman Hoeksema “to devote all his time to our school, and we mean with this that he be requested to ask his consistory to be severed from his congregation,” gave him one year to consider the matter, and promised him a one-year leave of absence, should he accept, to give him time to prepare his exegetical notes for publication.⁸² His answer was that he would gladly take the one-year leave of absence, but would not accept the appointment “to become full-time professor.” His reasons, expressed in writing, were that after his stroke he had a weakened condition, and that he was discouraged that “there is not much heart for the school.”⁸³ Synod urged him to reconsider.⁸⁴ That Hoeksema did in fact teach during the 1948-1949 school year the records indicate; but he was terse and final in his response to Synod 1949: “Hereby I let you know that I cannot

80 Minutes of the TSC, April 1, 1941; September 2, 1942.

81 *Acts of Synod 1947*, Art. 64.

82 *Acts of Synod 1947*, Art. 66, 68, 69.

83 *Acts of Synod 1948*, 68-69.

84 *Acts of Synod 1948*, Art. 108.

see my way clear to accept your appointment as ‘full-time’ professor at our school.”⁸⁵

By contrast, George Ophoff began to devote himself exclusively to the work of the school when Byron Center PRC disbanded in 1944. To be clear, this did not merely happen by default. The TSC recommended to Synod 1944 that Ophoff still be considered a part-time professor, and that his salary be set accordingly, because “other fields of labor could and should be opened for Rev. Ophoff.”⁸⁶ Synod instead began to pay him a full-time salary. The TSC informed Synod 1945 that Ophoff’s instruction reflected the fact that he had more time to devote to his work in the seminary.⁸⁷ This last statement does not suggest that his work had previously been grossly deficient, but simply indicates the problems inherent in asking a man to do two full-time jobs.

Hoeksema and Ophoff had been appointed to their positions by the combined consistories in 1925 and the classis of the PRCA in 1933,⁸⁸ but they had never been properly installed using the “Form for the Installation of Professors of Theology.” Synod 1947 decided that the oversight should be corrected.⁸⁹ The official installation was postponed until after Synod 1948 because of Hoeksema’s illness,⁹⁰ and Synod 1949 then mandated that it happen after either Lambert Doezema or Peter De Boer accepted the call in 1949 to be professor.⁹¹ But neither men accepted the call, and I have found no further indication that this installation ever took place.

Because of the busyness of their work and the press of other labors, both men needed assistance to do their work. Some of the assistance was mechanical and secretarial: after his stroke in 1947, Hoeksema used a wire (tape) recorder to record his notes, and his son Homer would type and edit them. This continued even when Homer was pastor in Doon and South Holland.⁹² Later synod provided funds so that students Woudenberg and Mulder could stencil and mimeograph

85 *Acts of Synod 1949*, Art. 59.

86 *Acts of Synod 1944*, 73-74.

87 *Acts of Synod 1945*, 56.

88 Kuiper, ““Committing the Truth””, 66-67.

89 *Acts of Synod 1947*, Art. 67.

90 *Acts of Synod 1948*, Art. 70.

91 *Acts of Synod 1949*, Art. 120.

92 *Acts of Synod 1949*, 63; *Acts of Synod 1950*, Art. 24.

Ophoff's class notes.⁹³ The assistance also took the form of area ministers helping with seminary instruction (of which more presently).

The close of this second era in the seminary's history witnesses the last years of the seminary labors of these two stalwarts. Hoeksema would not be declared emeritus until 1964, but Ophoff was already declared so in 1959. During the 1956-1957 school year, Ophoff "was stricken . . . with a very serious affliction, and was, therefore, for some time unable to carry on in the School"; in fact, he was unable to teach for about three months.⁹⁴ His work was finished with the completion of the 1957-1958 school year, for he suffered a stroke in 1958 and was unable to teach during the 1958-1959 school year.⁹⁵ Synod 1959 appointed Homer Hoeksema to replace him.⁹⁶

The war did not affect the content of the instruction that Hoeksema and Ophoff gave; it only affected, as previously noted, their summer vacations in 1944 and 1945. Did the controversy affect their instruction in any way? Herman Hanko, a student at the time, said that, while the instructors "were up to their eyeballs in the controversy, they did not carry the controversy into the seminary, except when they had to do battle with Henry De Raad and Henry De Bolster."⁹⁷

Herman Hoeksema and George Ophoff were men. Yes, they were strong men, especially spiritually, but also physically; they bore great burdens. They were gifted men. And they were faithful men—faithful to the doctrines of sovereign grace, but also to the churches whom they served. Their faithfulness stands out brightly against the dark backdrop of the many students they taught who graduated from the seminary but left the PRCA.

Yet, they were only men. Their gifts and their strengths came from God, who used them as His means for the good of the PRCA. He governed their innate weaknesses and overruled their sinful natures, also for the good of the PRCA. Scripture records the names

93 Minutes of the TSC, September 6, 1956; May 1, 1957.

94 *Acts of Synod 1957*, 154, 157.

95 *Acts of Synod 1959*, 98-100; Minutes of the TSC, July 25, 1958; September 5, 1958.

96 *Acts of Synod 1959*, Art. 98.

97 Herman Hanko, interview by Mark Hoeksema, February 24, 2009 (Archives 270:5, CD 4). See also De Bolster, *Blessings and Struggles*, 68-71.

and actions of many men whom God used for Israel’s good (see the book of Judges; 2 Samuel 23; and Hebrews 11), so that the church may remember her mighty men as gifts from God, and thank God for them. The PRCA of Hoeksema’s and Ophoff’s day remembered them and were thankful for them.⁹⁸

So ought we. Hoeksema and Ophoff taught many men sound doctrine and the skills necessary for capable exegesis of the Scriptures. During the years 1925-1959, Hoeksema and Ophoff taught forty men who would be pastors in the PRCA, in addition to other men who did not graduate. In one sense, the number is small; many seminaries graduate forty students in one year. In another sense, it is significant: to date, as the PRCA nears her centennial, she can count 100 men who have graduated from the Protestant Reformed seminary and entered the active ministry in those churches. A full 40% of them were taught by Hoeksema and Ophoff, and another 40% by those who were personally instructed by Hoeksema and Ophoff.

Others

Hoeksema and Ophoff were merely men, the work of the seminary was great, and they had other weighty responsibilities as well. They could not do the work alone. Others had to help them, as had been true in the first phase of the seminary’s history.

In 1940, the TSC appointed from its own midst a committee to “study the possibility and advisability of appointing more instructors of the school.”⁹⁹ Two years later the TSC proposed that “two ministers be appointed to give instruction in two branches of study,”¹⁰⁰ not apparently as a temporary measure, but on a continual basis. Synod’s response was not to expand the theological school faculty at the time, “due to the present conditions which exist in our churches.”¹⁰¹

98 See articles in *Standard Bearer* 16, no. 22 (September 15, 1940), commemorating the 25th anniversary of Herman Hoeksema’s ordination; George M. Ophoff, “Anniversary Address,” *Standard Bearer* 32, no. 1 (October 1, 1955), on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of Hoeksema’s ordination; and articles in *Standard Bearer* 38, no. 18 (July 1, 1962), in connection with Ophoff’s death.

99 Minutes of the TSC, April 1, 1940.

100 Minutes of the TSC, April 12, 1942.

101 *Acts of Synod 1942*, Art. 40.

Yet many ministers, and even some students, assisted the faculty. Student John Piersma taught a subject in his senior year;¹⁰² what subject he taught is not stated, but more than likely was a beginners-level language course. That Homer Hoeksema taught some courses during the 1947-1949 school years, when he was doing his own postgraduate studies, has been previously noted.

When Doezema and De Boer declined the call to be professor, the ministers Richard Veldman, John Heys, and Gerrit Vos assisted by teaching Greek, Latin, and German, respectively.¹⁰³ And during the 1958-1959 school year, when Ophoff could not teach, Herman Hoeksema taught Ophoff's exegesis course, while the Revs. Herman Hanko and Bernard Woudenberg taught church history and Old Testament history.¹⁰⁴ Gerrit Vos appears to have taught Dutch regularly for several years, and is listed among the professors in the 1958 Yearbook.¹⁰⁵

Facilities

Building Location

From 1926-1953, the seminary met in the basement of the First Protestant Reformed Church at the corner of Fuller Ave. and Franklin St. in Grand Rapids. The TSC, at the request of the professors, occasionally asked First's Council to make minor modifications to the room, such as to "install fluorescent lights"¹⁰⁶ and to "get a base-plug in our school room, so that we can use our wire recorder."¹⁰⁷

After the schism of 1953, the group that followed Hubert De Wolf had taken virtual control of the church building by changing the locks, and the seminary's possessions (books, furniture, equipment) were still in the basement. Before the 1953-1954 school year began, the TSC asked the "present occupants" of the building whether a school room was available. The correspondence is of historical value; I quote it exactly as it appears in the archives:

102 Minutes of the TSC, June 2, 1943.

103 Minutes of the TSC, August 12, 1949; August 19, 1949; September 13, 1949; *Acts of Synod 1950*, 28.

104 Minutes of the TSC, September 5, 1958; November 20, 1958; *Acts of Synod 1959*, 98.

105 *Acts of Synod 1958*, 45, 118.

106 Minutes of the TSC, April 12, 1946.

107 Minutes of the TSC, August 31, 1948.

To “The Consistory of 1st PRC,”

Inasmuch as it is rumored that the building of 1st PRC is kept locked day and night; and whereas our committee will meet Fri. eve. Sept. 4, '53, and our School will commence its activities Sept. 15 '53, our comm. desires to know whether the building is accessible for both the meetings of our comm. and the sessions of school. Please, let the undersigned know before the 4th of Sept. '53.

w.s. George Lubbers¹⁰⁸

At its meeting on September 4, 1953, the TSC was informed that “the consistory of First PRC” (the consistory of the De Wolf group) would not meet for two more weeks, so it could not give a response by the desired date. Having treated the matter, “the consistory” responded to George Lubbers as follows:

Dear Brother:

In re your request for our reaction to the use of our building for Theol. School purposes, the Consistory decided that whereas two of the faculty of our school are considered by us to be schismatic we cannot grant the use of the said building so long as the said faculty members are retained.

Yours in the Lord,
Consistory First Prot. Ref. Church
S. De Young, clerk¹⁰⁹

The response has a certain irony to it. Not only, of course, does it indicate that the De Wolf faction turned tables on the Protestant Reformed Churches by declaring Hoeksema and Ophoff to be schismatic, but it also still claimed ownership of the seminary: “our school.” At the

108 Minutes of the TSC, August 28, 1953. A copy of the letter is stapled to page 224 of the minute book. The letter is also found in *Acts of Synod 1954*, 47, though in a more polished form.

109 Minutes of the TSC, September 18, 1953. The letter is inserted loose-leaf in the minute book. The “schismatic” faculty members, of course, were Hoeksema and Ophoff. And just two weeks earlier the loyal and lawful Consistory of First PRC had sent a letter to the TSC to the effect that Mr. Sid De Young, member of the TSC and elder at First PRC, had been deposed, and therefore could no longer serve on the TSC. See Minutes of the TSC, September 4, 1953, Supplement I.

same time that it called the seminary “our school,” this consistory found itself unable to teach its own student, James Kok, “because we have no seminary.”¹¹⁰

Having received this response, the TSC asked Fourth (Southeast) PRC if the seminary could meet in its basement, and appointed a committee to move the seminary property from the basement of First PRC. Fourth agreed to that, and the school met there for one year. This was not without hardship; the TSC informed Synod 1954 that “many of the books at this present time are still packed in boxes. This is neither good for the books nor the school. Our library is next to useless during the present time.”¹¹¹ During the 1954-1955 school year, the seminary met at Adams Street School,¹¹² because the congregation of Fourth PRC was divided by the controversy.¹¹³ Presumably, when the loyal group was awarded the building of the First PRC,¹¹⁴ the seminary resumed meeting there.

Already in 1946, with a view to adding a pre-seminary program and enlarging the faculty, the TSC was looking for another piece of property to use exclusively for the seminary,¹¹⁵ but the time was never right. The details will be included in a future chapter devoted exclusively to the seminary building.

Equipment and Library

Recording machines, mimeograph machines, tape recorders, a cabinet in which to store faculty notes, bookcases—the minutes of the TSC indicate that the TSC provided these things as needed.¹¹⁶

110 *Acts of Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches of America* (De Wolf group) 1954, 36-37.

111 *Acts of Synod 1954*, 48.

112 Minutes of the TSC, September 10, 1954; November 5, 1954; February 18, 1955; May 6, 1955.

113 James Holstege, *Archives and Anecdotes: 75 Years at Southeast Protestant Reformed Church* (Grand Rapids: Southeast Protestant Reformed Church, 2019); Richard Teitsma, interview by Russell Dykstra (Archives 270:3).

114 G. Hoeksema, *Therefore Have I Spoken*, 332-333.

115 Minutes of the TSC, meetings between September 4, 1946 and May 6, 1955.

116 Minutes of the TSC, January 18, 1945; February 10, 1949; Sep-

The library continued to expand. The TSC decided to buy every book written by Herman Hoeksema for the library’s use.¹¹⁷ It instructed the faculty to spend up to \$500 for library books, and later increased the figure to \$1000.¹¹⁸ Again it decided to investigate what books the library needed.¹¹⁹ Even in that day, the TSC and faculty appreciated the value of owning a first edition of a classic work: in 1958 the TSC authorized payment of \$40 for the two-volume critical edition of the New Testament prepared by Constantinus Tischendorf, published in 1869.¹²⁰

As the library grew, the faculty recognized the need to organize the library, put call numbers on the books, and set up a card filing system to find the books. This began already in 1953.¹²¹

By helping fund the library, the entire denomination recognized the value of a good library for the theological school. In 1952 synod granted the request of the TSC to assess each family fifty cents a year for the school library; before the schism of the following year, this would have brought in about \$650 annually.¹²² The TSC also received gifts for the school library: \$14.33 from Randolph, WI PRC, collected at the church picnic; an unspecified amount from Hull, IA; and \$100 from the Men’s League (league of men’s societies of the churches in Michigan).¹²³

Overseers

Prior to 1939, the body of oversight had been called the curatorium, a common word in Dutch circles of that day to refer to those who oversee a museum, library, or educational institution. When the PRCA divided into two classes, Classis East and Classis West, and formed

tember 29, 1950; September 12, 1952; December 6, 1957; March 13, 1958; November 20, 1958; May 16, 1958; April 16, 1959.

117 Minutes of the TSC, September 29, 1950.

118 Minutes of the TSC, September 12, 1952; January 30, 1953.

119 Minutes of the TSC, December 6, 1957.

120 Constantinus Tischendorf, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 2 vols. (Lipsiae: Giesecke and Devrient, 1869). The volumes are currently in the rare book (restricted) section of the library.

121 Minutes of the TSC, January 30, 1953; March 27, 1953.

122 *Acts of Synod 1952*, 134, 152; see 104-105 for the family statistics.

123 Minutes of the TSC, August 8, 1947; December 22, 1950.

a synod, the curatorium became a synodical committee known as the Theological School Committee.¹²⁴

One of the first things the TSC did was draw up a Constitution for synod's approval. Synod 1941 adopted this Constitution,¹²⁵ which specified how many members would be on the TSC (Art. 2), which committee officers should be chosen (Art. 3), what the duties of the TSC were (Art. 4), and how often it should meet (Art. 5).

While it was required to meet no less than twice a year, the TSC ordinarily met every quarter from 1940-1959, and more often as needed. Its mandates were clearly spelled out in its 1941 constitution, and the minutes reflect that it adhered to its mandates. One task *not* assigned to it, to which the curatorium had attended, was that of examining students with a view to graduation; from 1940 on, this would be done on the floor of synod.

Prior to 1940, the curatorium had consisted of one officebearer from each congregation. Individual consistories were free to choose their representative, and appoint him for a one-year term. The curatorium met the day before classis, so that the representatives from the churches outside of Michigan could more easily attend. After 1940, the synod itself appointed eight men to three year terms, on a rotating basis. Because the TSC Constitution required that the members "live within a reasonably short distance from the school," the committee members were usually from West Michigan; but in 1954, when several former members of the committee had left the PRCA with the De Wolf faction, Rev. Gerald Vanden Berg, of Oak Lawn, IL, was appointed for a one-year term.¹²⁶ At its organizational meeting that year, the TSC voted Vanden Berg to be its secretary, and immediately reconsidered the matter in light of his living in Oak Lawn; George Lubbers, who had served in that capacity for many years, was reappointed.¹²⁷

Synod 1941 also adopted another Constitution, that of the Theological School, that regulated what would be taught; how professors

124 *Acts of Synod 1941*, Art. 28.

125 *Acts of Synod 1941*, Art. 71, and pages 72-74.

126 *Acts of Synod 1954*, Art. 68.

127 Minutes of the TSC, September 10, 1954.

would be appointed and retired; how students would be received, promoted, examined, licensed, and expected to behave; and the calendar of the school year.¹²⁸ Both the original constitutions of the Theological School Committee and of the Theological School are of historical value, and regulated the governance and oversight of the school. They are included as appendices A and B.

The war affected the work of the TSC. While the seminary was an official institution in the minds of the members of the PRCA (it was the only post-college institution in which a man could study if he desired to enter the pastoral ministry in our denomination), matters were different in the eyes of the state. The war was the impetus for the seminary to be officially recognized by the civil government as an educational institution. With a view to ensuring the military deferment of the students, the TSC appointed its secretary to “take steps that our school be recognized by the Selective Service.”¹²⁹ That this goal was attained has been indicated previously, in the section regarding students.

In 1951, the TSC investigated seeking the accreditation of the “Accrediting Association of Bible Institutes and Bible Colleges.” The minutes indicate that a reason for considering this matter was government recognition. The outcome was that the TSC decided not to pursue the matter, both for practical reasons as well as principle: the schools that were part of that association were fundamentalist, not Reformed-Calvinistic.¹³⁰ Still today the seminary is not an accredited institution, although efforts are underway to receive degree-granting status and to become accredited.

Conclusion

Through two more decades God guided, governed, and preserved the seminary as well as the denomination. From an earthly viewpoint, wars between earthly nations probably contributed to a decreased enrollment. Spiritual wars within the denomination took their physical and psychological toll on the professors. But from God’s viewpoint, the work did not depend on Hoeksema and Ophoff with their assistants.

128 *Acts of Synod 1941*, Art. 68, and pages 68-72.

129 Minutes of the TSC, December 22, 1950.

130 Minutes of the TSC, February 16, 1951; April 13, 1951; May 18, 1951.

God was bringing the denomination to see that the strength of these men was almost depleted and their days were numbered, but that He, not they, was its rock and strength.

By the end of the 1950s, the denomination was thirty-five years old. Those who had been middle-aged when they joined the PRCA in 1924 were now elderly; many of those who were young had left; but others remained, had matured, and were prepared of God to lead the denomination forward. She would recover from the schism and grow, and the seminary would enjoy His blessing for many more years.

Appendix A¹³¹

1941 Constitution of the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches

Article 1

The Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches has for its purpose the training of future ministers of the Word for the aforesaid churches.

Article 2

This institution is located at Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Article 3

The supervision and administration of the institution belongs to Synod itself. However, Synod shall appoint a Committee consisting of no less than eight members to do the work of Synod in the interim between synodical meetings.

Article 4

At this institution, the following branches of study shall be taught: the basic scriptural languages, Hebrew and Greek, and such other

131 The proposed Constitution is found in the Acts of Synod 1941, Supplement XXVIII. Synod 1941 made amendments to the proposal, as indicated in Article 68. Later Synods made other changes to the Constitution. However, in many respects the Constitution adopted in 1941 is similar to the Constitution as we have it today.

languages Synod may decide upon; Hermeneutics, History of Dogma, Dogmatics, Conceptions, Homiletics, Typology, Exegesis, Isagogics, Sacred History, Catechetics, Poimenics, Church History, Church Polity, and other subjects as may be agreed on by Faculty and Synod.

Article 5

The professors are appointed on salaries, determined by the Synod and for definite departments. The rule shall be to appoint only such men who have especially prepared themselves for the particular branch or branches they are to teach.

Article 6

Whenever a professor is to be appointed, the Theological School Committee shall propose names at the meeting of the Synod. The aggregate shall be discussed at this meeting and in this discussion the advice of the Theological Faculty shall be sought. After this discussion and consultation, the Synod shall proceed to make a nomination from the aggregate. From this nomination Synod elects a professor. In electing professors, Synod shall give preference to one already a minister of the Gospel.

Article 7

The installation of professors of Theology shall take place according to the Form, after they shall have signed the Formula of Subscription.

Article 8

A professor shall serve three years and after that four years if re-appointed. If after this he be re-appointed, such appointment shall be permanent. But this shall not be interpreted to mean that, having received a permanent appointment, he can thereafter not be dismissed, but that thereafter his services at the school can be terminated only through the Synod formally retiring, expelling, or deposing him and for reasons urgent, cogent and legitimate.

Article 10

Emeritus professors who are honorably retired and who had received a permanent appointment, are entitled to a pension from the churches, since they, just as the ministers, devoted all their gifts and talents entirely and exclusively to the service of the churches.

Article 11

The instruction shall be given by the professors and, if need be, by assistants, appointed by the Faculty with the approval of the Synod or its Theological School Committee.

Article 12

Permission to pursue the course of study at the school shall be granted by the Synod, upon recommendation of the Theological School Committee, to such an aspirant only who comes supplied with a testimonial of his Consistory that he is a member in full communion, sound in faith and upright in walk, as also a certificate from a reputed physician showing him to be in good health.

Article 13

Promotion to a higher grade shall take place after the successful issue of the examinations. The Faculty shall decide whether a student merits promotion.

Article 14

The examinations at the end of the semester shall be written, but the final examinations of the students graduating in Theology shall be oral and shall be conducted by the professors in the hearing of the Synod.

Article 15

The Faculty shall license a student to preach a word of edification in the meetings for public worship, when it deems him ready.

Article 16

The school year shall be divided into two semesters of an equal number of weeks. The months of June, July and August shall be set apart for summer vacation. There shall be a Christmas vacation of approximately two weeks and an Easter vacation of one week.

Article 17

The student shall conduct himself in and out of school as it becomes him as a Christian. Failing in this, he shall be admonished by the Faculty and in case the admonition is not heeded, by the Faculty in conjunction with the Theological School Committee. If after these repeated admonitions the student remains obstinate, he shall be expelled from school. In case a gross sin has been committed, he shall, with approval of the Theological School Committee, be expelled immediately.

Article 18

The students shall pursue the course of study at the school with diligence. They shall regularly attend the classes and conduct themselves in accordance with the rules of this institution.

Article 19

This Constitution drafted upon the instruction of the Classis of the Prot. Ref. Churches, and accepted by that of June 1 and 2, 1938, and amended by the Synod of 1941, remains in force until another Synod shall have amended it.

Appendix B

1941 Constitution of the Theological School Committee of the Protestant Reformed Churches¹³²

Article 1

While the Synod itself shall care for all matters that pertain to the proper administration of our Theological School, there shall be a Theological School Committee whose duty it is to supervise the school in the interim between synodical meetings, and to advise Synod on matters pertaining to the welfare thereof.

¹³² The proposed Constitution is found in the Acts of Synod 1941, Supplement XXIX. Although later Synods revised it, in many respects the Constitution adopted in 1941 is similar to the constitution as we have it today.

Article 2

The Theological School Committee shall consist of no less than eight members. There shall be an equal representation of elders and of ministers on this committee at all times. They shall be elected by Synod for a term of three years and are eligible for re-election. Because their duty is the proper administration of the school in the interim between synodical gatherings, the brethren appointed shall be chosen from the midst of those that live within a reasonably short distance from the school.

Article 3

This Committee shall choose from its own midst a president, vice-president, secretary and assistant secretary. This election shall take place annually, although retiring officers are eligible for re-election.

Article 4

The duties of this Theological School Committee shall be as follows:

1. To appoint delegations of two brethren each to visit the classes, so that the school receives a monthly visit from the committee. The object of these visits is: a/ to observe whether the instruction given is in full accord with the three Forms of Unity and in harmony with the true character of instruction as defined by the Constitution of the School. b/ to bring a written report to the committee of these visits, which reports shall contain suggestions for the improvement of the school that the visiting delegation thinks necessary and advisable.

2. To meet with the Faculty and the students together or separately, in case of difficulties among the students themselves, among the Faculty, or between the students and the Faculty. In such instances, such a meeting shall only take place at the request of the Faculty or the students, or both.

3. To co-operate with the Faculty, in case the latter deems this necessary, in the exercise of discipline. No students shall be expelled permanently from the school without the approval of the Committee.

4. To make the necessary arrangements and preparations for the final examination of the student or students, which takes place before the Synod.

5. To approve all extra financial disbursements during the course of the school year. The Committee shall appoint a delegation of two residing within easy reach of school to approve such disbursements.

6. To submit to Synod any recommendations it may have for the improvement of our school administration.

7. To submit an annual, written report of its work to the Synod.

8. To interview aspirants to our school, and to advise Synod as to their admission to the school.

Article 5

The Theological School Committee may meet as often as circumstances require, but it shall meet prior to Synod to adopt its report, and at the beginning of the School year.

Article 6

The Constitution as ratified by the Synod of 1941, can be altered by Synod.

The Salvation of the Insane: Introduction

Barrett L. Gritters

Reprinted here is a short but significant article by the Rev. Herman Hoeksema, written in 1943, entitled “The Salvation of the Insane.” Originally the article was printed in the 33rd annual report of the Christian Psychopathic Hospital Association (CPHA). CPHA was one of the many names of the institution now named Pine Rest Mental Health Services, headquartered in Cutlerville, MI, south of Grand Rapids. Hoeksema’s article is found along with the 33rd annual president’s report, the report of the medical superintendent, a financial accounting of the institution (including income from the “Farm and Garden” of over \$12,000, and disbursements of over \$250,000), pictures of the eleven staff members of the hospital (two men and nine women), and a report of the hospital pastor, Rev. R. Heynen. Hoeksema, well known as a theologian by then, must have been asked, or volunteered, to write a theological perspective of the institution and its work. His short article concludes the sixteen-page pamphlet.

The twenty-first century reader may be offended at certain words or expressions that were common in the early 1900s, like “mentally deranged,” “insane,” even “idiots.” The reader may question Hoeksema’s exegetical conclusion that “the lunatic [of Matthew 17] was probably only an epileptic,” or wonder what he meant when he described psychological problems as “mental *diseases*.” One could wish Hoeksema had written more in order to answer some interesting questions on which a pastor of his stature probably had an opinion.

Nevertheless, the short article is significant and worthy of reprinting for several reasons:

1. Hoeksema calls the hospital “our institution,” by which phrase he claims some ownership of the hospital, but more importantly indicates a real cooperation of many Reformed churches who had established and were maintaining the hospital. Some six years after this article was printed, the president of CPHA would ask the PRCA, through the editor of the *Standard Bearer*, to promote the planned

addition of a children's branch to the facility. In a little piece entitled "A Psychopathic Hospital for Mentally Defective Children," the Rev. Gerrit Vos heartily agreed to the request and encouraged the readers to "put yourselves behind this plan when the opportunity is given to you" (*Standard Bearer*, Dec. 1, 1949). It is apparent that in the 1940s, the PRCA was consciously and enthusiastically a part of Pine Rest. Hoeksema writes here that it is "our calling as believers to give ourselves to this work," which he called "Christian mercy." The other denominations asked to assist were the Reformed (RCA), Christian Reformed (CRCNA), and Netherlands Reformed (NRC).

2. Hoeksema is supportive of the fact that "we employ a special pastor for this work," a full-time minister whose sole calling was to bring the Scriptures to the Reformed men, women, and children who were institutionalized. Hoeksema would have been comfortable with this because the Church Order used by most Reformed churches of that day included what is still found in the PRCA's Church Order, Article 6, that ministers are "at liberty to serve in institutions of mercy," as long as they are "admitted in accordance with the preceding articles" (Articles 2-5) and are "subject to the Church Order."

3. Hoeksema's main purpose, however, was not to remind the readers of the PRCA's 'part-ownership' of the institution, or to call attention to the legitimacy of a Reformed pastor employed by such an institution, but to argue theologically that the Reformed faith alone is able properly to minister to the mentally distressed church member and their families. This is the main value of the article.

Herman Hoeksema writes this piece in 1943, at age 57. Thus, the article is the fruit of the mature thought of a pastor who had, by then, preached through the Heidelberg Catechism twenty-seven times (the first volume of his *Triple Knowledge* was published in the same year; in its introduction, he claims to have preached through the Catechism that often). In 1943 he was pastor of a church numbering over 500 families, or over 2000 members, at the height of his strength and theological reflection. As a pastor of so many people, now for almost thirty years, who must have by then seen a thing or two, and as a teacher in the PRCA's theological school, his writing here does not express youthful immaturity, but age and wisdom.

The Salvation of the Insane

Herman Hoeksema

We call our institution at Cutlerville the “Christian Psychopathic Hospital.” And although it is difficult for me to account properly for the meaning of that adjective *psychopathic* in connection with *hospital*, the meaning is plain enough. It is a hospital for the Christian care and treatment of psychopathic patients, of those who suffer from mental derangement.

Now it appears to me that is more than co-incidental that especially people of Reformed persuasion should conceive of the need and possibility of such an institution, and should consider it their Christian calling to devote their time and energy as well as their gifts to establish and maintain a hospital for this purpose. That they feel the need of such an institution cannot be explained from a mere want of similar hospitals in the world. There are a number of large State institutions of this kind. They are well equipped, and usually have an able staff of physicians and nurses. And especially in late years, a good deal of study has been made of mental diseases, their treatment and cure. But we feel that mere institutional care and treatment of the insane is not sufficient. We want a Christian hospital. And to be sure, in this we are also motivated by the conviction that the care of the insane belongs to the work of Christian mercy, and that as such it is our calling as believers to give ourselves to this work.

But it seems to me, that there is another underlying conviction that prompts us to establish specifically Christian hospitals for psychopathic patients. The work itself, of caring for the insane, must have a specific character. The patients are entitled to and can respond to Christian treatment. They need more than physical care, more than psychological attention, they need spiritual treatment. That this is our conviction is evident from the fact that we employ a special pastor for this work. Now a pastor is called to feed Christ’s sheep through the ministry of the Word. It is, therefore, the conviction of Reformed people, that even insanity does not exclude one from the fold of Christ’s

flock. The insane may very well belong to them that are saved by the marvelous grace of God.

Why should it be raised as a question, whether the insane may be saved? It often is asked, especially in regard to certain outstanding cases of insanity. And it is this question that I would like to discuss briefly in the few moments allotted me to speak.

I do not pretend to possess technical knowledge of insanity, and in speaking on this particular subject I do not need to pretend this, which is one of the reasons why I chose it. I am aware that mental diseases are not always alike, and that experts group them into several distinct classes. But all this, together with the causes and treatment of these maladies, I can leave for the psychiatrist, while I need to speak of insanity only in a general way, as far as it concerns my subject. Let it be sufficient then, to state by the insane I refer in general to all those objects of pity whose mental faculties are deranged. This may be the case either temporarily or permanently. The disorder may be hereditary and from birth, or may reveal itself later in life. And the mental derangement may be rather complete, or it may be in part, and effect only a certain phase of the psychological experience and reaction of the patient. But the point I wish to emphasize in connection with my subject is, that to the degree that these patients are psychologically abnormal, they do not and cannot react upon the outside world and their environment as normal rational-moral beings. They have no intelligent will.

It is this fact that gives rise to the question as to the salvation of the insane. Salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ. It is out of faith in the Lord Jesus that we are justified, have peace with God, and appropriate all the spiritual blessings of salvation. But faith is a certain knowledge, as well as a hearty confidence. It is, to be sure, not a natural but a spiritual knowledge, but it is knowledge withal, which requires a normal mind to exercise it. One must be able to understand the gospel, in order to believe, and one must grow in the knowledge of Christ, that is, in the knowledge of the gospel, in order to increase in faith, and to grow in grace.

But it is evident that for many of the insane this is impossible. They are, in their condition of mental derangement, beyond the reach and influence of the gospel. You cannot preach the gospel to them. They

cannot be instructed in the things concerning the kingdom of heaven. Some are in this condition from their birth, or from early childhood, so that they never received any religious instruction, and they have no conception whatever, as far as we can tell, of the most elementary truths of the Christian faith. Others fall victims to this malady later in life, and although this is not true of all of them, many lose hold upon the truths they once understood. How, then, can they believe? The conscious act of saving faith, whereby they are assured of all that God has revealed in His Word, and apply it to themselves, and whereby they rely upon the promises of God in Christ, they cannot perform. They cannot accept and embrace Christ it would seem, surely not by a conscious act of faith. How then can they be saved? Must not those, who are born in such a sad state, be considered outside of the grace Christ, and are not others that later in life become subject to this disease, fallen from grace?

This position would seem to be supported by many phenomena in the insane. Frequently, those that once were apparently sincere Christians, both according to their confession and their walk, leading men in the church perhaps, if they become insane, seem to change into the very opposite of what they were before, and thus leave the impression that they have become utterly devoid of grace, or that all their former life and walk were a lie. Some of them fall into a state of utter despair and spiritual melancholy, and believe that they are reprobates, and all attempts to rouse them from this condition are in vain. Others are proud and puffed up in their hallucinations, still others reveal themselves as positively wicked, and those that once humbled themselves on their knees in prayer in praise, now often raise a rebellious fist to heaven, and curse and swear, or mock and blaspheme. I have known such a man that was reputed to be a child of God, and to whom those that had known him in his normal mental state all gave witness that he was an exemplary Christian, who would stand in the grounds of the asylum whose inmate he had become, and literally raise his fist to heaven to curse the Most High in His face. And other acts, apparently quite incompatible with a state of grace, the mentally deranged are known to commit, among which the attempt to commit suicide is not uncommon.

In the face of all this, does not the conclusion seem justified that many of the insane must be considered lost? Are not those who are born without the light of normal reason beyond the saving reach of the grace of Christ? And have not others, who in later life become wholly devoid of that light, fallen from grace, and do they not belong to those that were once enlightened, but whom it is impossible to bring back to repentance? Or, to put the same question in a different light and view the matter from a higher angle: would God permit His elect children, whom He would save by grace, through faith, to lose their very faculty whereby they are able to lay upon the Savior and upon the promises of salvation?

It is here, it seems to me, that the Reformed faith is a great and strong consolation, and this explains, in part, why they establish specifically Christian asylums for the insane, and even assign them pastors, whose calling it is to watch over, and to feed the flock of Christ. There certainly is no consolation here in the doctrine that salvation is of him that willeth and of him that runneth. The doctrine of freewill cannot offer any comfort here at all. For according to it, salvation depends upon man's choice in last analysis. It is all prepared, but man must accept it. It is all of grace, but man must be willing to receive that grace when it is offered him. And what is more, even as his first acceptance of Christ depends on his own will, so his continuance in the state of grace is contingent upon his own choice, day by day, unto the end. For, according to this view, it is indeed grace that preserves him, and without grace he cannot stand, but whether he will receive this grace or fall from it depends upon himself. Apply this doctrine to the insane, and if you are but consistent, you must conclude that they are lost, unless special provision is made for them. They cannot accept Christ. You cannot persuade them by the most sensational altar call to believe. And if it is true that God has chosen to salvation those of whom He foreknew that they would believe in Christ and persevere to the end, it becomes a very serious question whether He would ever allow them to become insane.

But this is not the truth as taught in the Scriptures. Salvation is not of him that willeth, neither of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. And on the basis of the Word of God, the Reformed faith emphasizes that this mercy, the saving grace of God in Christ, is

both absolutely sovereign, and always first. The saving, efficacious grace of God is not dependent upon the will of man, nor does its operation follow the latter's choice and determination, but man's will to believe is already the fruit of the grace of Christ. And, besides, although it is perfectly true that no man can believe whom he has not heard, it is also true that Reformed people, on the basis of Scripture, have always made a distinction between faith as a power or spiritual faculty, and faith as a conscious act on the part of the believer. It is by the power of faith that one is ingrafted into Christ, becomes one plant with Him, and lives from Him. There is always the first beginning of grace, the first implanting of the seed of faith and of the new life, the first ingrafting of the sinner into Christ, which is an immediate work of the Holy Spirit, not dependent on or bound to the means of grace. This seed of the new life, this power of faith, whereby one is ingrafted into Christ, may therefore be wrought by almighty grace in the heart of anyone, regardless of his mental state, whether he is capable of hearing the gospel or not. And this work of grace, once accomplished, is never undone. It rests in the good pleasure of God's own will. It flows forth from His unchangeable purpose of election. For whom He did foreknow, them He also did predestinate to be conformed according to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren, and whom He did predestinate them He also called, and whom He called He also justified and glorified. No one, no power on earth or in hell, not even devil possession or insanity, can pluck Christ's sheep out of His and out of the Father's hand! The insane may certainly be saved, and may certainly be preserved unto the end!

But the question might still be asked: is it not rather probably that they are lost, even though in the abstract we grant the possibility that they can be saved? Is it not very improbable that God would permit His children whom He has chosen to become insane? Did He not form His people unto Himself in order that they should proclaim His praises? And is this not very often impossible in the state of insanity, yea, is not the very opposite frequently observed in their lives? I would, in reply, call attention to the following:

1. I do not consider it improbable, but very probable, that God, Who to the glory of His grace in the beloved, delivers us from all the power of sin and death and of the devil, would also deliver some of

His children from the unspeakable misery of insanity, which is, after all, only a phase of the death in which we lie by nature. And Scripture here supports us. It has very little to say about madness and insanity. Even the lunatic was probably only an epileptic. But it does speak of demoniacs. And although devil possession was most probably not the same as insanity, the two have many common characteristics. And some of them were surely saved. If God did permit His children to become devil possessed for a time, why should He not allow them to become mentally deranged?

2. It is true, that God formed His people for Himself that they should tell His praises and declare His marvelous virtues. But let us not forget that even by us who enjoy our normal reason this is done only in beginning as long as we are in this world. We have only a small beginning of the new obedience. Perfection comes hereafter. In glory we shall forever speak of the glorious praises of the God of our salvation, and then in perfection, without sin. But from this praise of God in perfection these that are mentally deranged here on earth are not excluded. Even of them, therefore, it may be said that God formed them unto His praises forever, if they are His children.

3. Nor is there anything in this idea that is contrary to the fundamental teaching of Scripture with respect to the purpose of God's election and its objects. For God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence (2 Cor. 1:27-29). Now I do not wish to be understood as inferring that this passage of Scripture teaches us that we must look for God's elect especially among idiots and insane people. But I do mean to say, that in the light of this general principle it is conceivable that God also has His elect among the mentally deranged, in order that in the world to come He may all the more gloriously show forth the power of His grace, that is able to lift us out of deepest misery into the highest glory of His everlasting covenant!

Review Article: *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*

Barrett L. Gritters

The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma by Bessel van der Kolk. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2014. Pp. 445. \$19.00. Softcover. ISBN 978-0143127741. Reviewed by Barrett L. Gritters

One of the most intriguing, informative, and compelling reads, Bessel van der Kolk's book about trauma's effects on mind and body and how to treat them is, at the same time, a very dangerous book. Its *description* of the wounds that emotional violence inflicts on body as well as soul is useful, but its *prescription* for remedying the damage and healing the wounds makes the book as harmful as one might wish it could be helpful—helpful, that is, if it were written by a Christian scholar of the soul.

Everyone is reading van der Kolk's work. In its thirty-ninth printing since its publication in 2014, the book has sold many millions, so that what little criticism it may receive probably sends the author, as they say, crying all the way to the bank. When I went to Barnes and Noble to purchase the book quickly before a trip to a cottage this summer, the young female clerk not only knew what position, on which shelf, and in what area to find the book in the massive store but said, "I have the book, too." It has been on the *New York Times* bestseller list for about 150 weeks, approximately thirty weeks in the number one spot.

The book was published in 2014, so a review in this journal in 2022 needs explanation. There has been a general resurgence of interest in the book. The explanation of some is the 'trauma' of the COVID-19 epidemic. Others surmise it has gone 'pop' because trauma itself has gone mainstream. One of the book's theses is that trauma is the central reality of the human experience and that there can be no healing

for humans until they reckon with that reality. Van der Kolk is one of instruments by which American society is reforming and redefining itself on the basis of traumatic injury: betrayal, oppression, abuse, and victimhood.

But the book is also increasingly popular among Christian and conservative Christian readers. One reviewer said that Christian campus ministries are using it to “foster a trauma-informed pastoral dialogue.”¹ A review from the Biblical Counseling Coalition (a conservative source for advice on counseling) calls it “an excellent secular book on the experience and treatment of trauma,” with ‘secular’ being the only caveat in an otherwise positive review.² In the circles in which I run, I have heard parents, pastors, elders, and more who have read or plan to read van der Kolk.

The book’s pop status should not be surprising. From many points of view, it is difficult to put down, even if the language is technical at times and some concepts are dense. But van der Kolk’s wide experience (fifty years of treating patients and leading scientists in large research studies) gives him the ability to offer scores of anecdotes and poignant stories that make the book gripping, his scientific assertions difficult to deny, and the more complex parts of the book bearable.

Critical as this review will be, in the end, it nevertheless strongly recommends this non-Christian book to pastors, teachers, elders, and others who must learn about the horrific and lasting damage that violence of all sorts does to a person’s soul and body, especially to children. I wish I had known the reality described in this book at the beginning of my ministry, almost forty years ago. I will even admit to the difficulty of objectivity in judgment here because in much of my ministry I saw damaged children but did not comprehend either the depths of the damage or (often) the cause. I did not know about remedies except those that were naïve, at best, and maybe even damaging for their lack, because I did not know the spiritual carnage they

1 Julia Yost, “By Our Wounds We Are Healed,” *First Things*, October 2021, 49.

2 Brad Hambrick, “A Reflection on *The Body Keeps the Score*, Trauma, and Counseling,” Biblical Counseling Coalition, September 18, 2019, accessed September 30, 2022 (<https://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/2019/09/18/a-reflection-on-the-body-keeps-the-score-trauma-and-counseling/>).

suffered. Since God does not let us rewind the clocks of our ministries, my hope is that van der Kolk's book, and this review of it, will help pastors minister to wounded sheep with deep compassion and a sensitivity that reflects the Lord Jesus in His wise care.

At the time of publication, van der Kolk was president of the Traumatic Research Foundation in Brookline, MA, which he founded. Born in 1943 in The Hague, Netherlands, his education was at the University of Hawaii, Manoa (1965) and the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine (1970); his residency at Harvard Medical School was completed in 1974. Van der Kolk developed special interest in trauma when he worked at the Boston Veterans Administration treating troubled Vietnam veterans for whom the diagnosis Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was first used in the late 1970s. Gradually his practice included victims of traumatic sexual assault, children in particular, which makes his study compelling for churches who increasingly face the burden of ministering to these damaged members.

Van der Kolk's description of traumatic stress (and the resulting 'disorder') is largely dependent on the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM)*. The quotations within the following quotation are from the APA's *DSM-V*:

A person is exposed to a horrendous event "that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others," causing "intense fear, helplessness, or horror," which results in a variety of manifestations: intrusive reexperiencing of the event (flashbacks, bad dreams, feeling as if the event were occurring), persistent and crippling avoidance (of people, places, thoughts, or feelings associated with the trauma, sometimes with amnesia for important parts of it), and increased arousal (insomnia, hyper-vigilance, or irritability). This description suggests a clear story line: A person is suddenly and unexpectedly devastated by an atrocious event and is never the same again. The trauma may be over, but it keeps being replayed in continually recycling memories and in a reorganized nervous system. (158-159)

The horror of the event is especially acute for those whose memories of the event have been lost, according to van der Kolk. Then, the event continually assaults the victim without the victim knowing

why, manifesting in bodily afflictions as well as mental and emotional distress.

The Book's Strengths

1. The effects of trauma on the body and mind

The first positive value of the book is its demonstration (by dozens of studies including thousands of patients) of the damage done to the *body* and *brain* by emotional trauma. Events like a child repeatedly observing his father beat his mother with no way to stop the violence, or a young girl being sexually assaulted by her uncle, will wound and then scar the child for life *in his or her brain*. For this alone the book ought to be read by pastors, teachers, and elders. But it also is a must-read by anyone who imagines that their violence towards a child (sexual or verbal) will not have the effect of a grenade going off in their face (as one man recently described to me his experience of trauma as a boy).

Van der Kolk's central thesis regarding the effects of trauma is not new: emotional trauma causes physiological changes in persons, including significant changes in the gray matter of our brain. In the nature of the case, because the victim was helpless, most trauma victims learn to ignore or try to silence the body's 'alarm bells,' our 'fight or flight' mechanism. But rather than helping them, this either allows the slightest triggers to set off the memories, or puts the alarm bells and memories on auto-play, which "engrave[s] those memories ever more deeply in the mind" (67). Then, the repeated rush of adrenaline from these memories wreaks havoc on the body. According to van der Kolk, it is the cause of auto-immune problems, unexplained muscle pain, bowel irregularities and digestion difficulties, chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, asthma, insomnia, and the like (268). The body keeps the score. "[T]he bottom line is that the threat-perception system of the brain has changed, and people's physical reactions are dictated by the imprint of the past" (67). Restoration and healing must recognize the changes that trauma has done to the body and brain. It is not difficult to accept most of van der Kolk's main thesis.

Van der Kolk convincingly demonstrates that the trauma is especially devastating when inflicted upon children: "Childhood trauma is radically different from traumatic stress in fully formed adults" (157).

Again, “children with histories of abuse and neglect learn that their terror, pleading, and crying do not register with their caregiver. Nothing they can do or say stops the beating or brings attention and help. In effect they’re being conditioned to give up when they face challenges later in life” (115). And, “Eventually they may learn to cover up their fear by putting up a tough front. Or they may spend more and more time alone, watching TV or playing computer games, falling even further behind on interpersonal skills and emotional self-regulation” (117). In one study, a researcher found that “by far the most important predictor of how well his subjects coped with life’s inevitable disappointments was the level of security established by their primary caregiver during the first two years of their life” (163). “Having a biological system that keeps pumping out stress hormones to deal with real or imagined threats leads to physical problems. . . . To relieve their tension, they engage in . . . self-harming activities” (160).

Pastors and elders, as well as teachers and school administrators, must be alert to these signs in children. And although they must not automatically trace them back to parental violence, or have unhealthy suspicions, they must not ignore the real possibility of severe emotional distress the child endured who behaves badly.

2. The erroneous use of medicine to treat the effects of trauma

Second, van der Kolk may be considered heroic in his push-back against the default remedy of medicine, as the *modus operandi* of most secular and even many Christian therapists. Early in the book, this secular scientist makes a powerful argument against medicine as the primary remedy for trauma victims. By doing so, van der Kolk swims against the powerful current of big government and bigger business (Big Pharma). Government’s politics and business’s greed (the monetary statistics he presents are shocking; see pages 36,37), combined with a good dose of laziness (it is easy to send troubled patients home with a pill and move on to the next patient) as well as helplessness (there are multitudes or damaged people hardly able to function, and not nearly enough psychiatrists), make for a current that can hardly be resisted. But van der Kolk resists.

He argues that we may not justify the constant use of drugs for PTSD by likening drugs for a trauma victim to dialysis for a kidney

patient, as though trauma disorder is a permanent condition without remedy. That, he says, it is not. His resistance to the use of drugs is especially significant in light of the fact that when psychotropic drugs were first discovered in the 1950s and 1960s to be useful especially for depression, he was one of the loudest early proponents for them. The drugs finally brought some peace for patients and even safety for those who treated them. But soon van der Kolk saw that what helped temporarily was being used permanently, with the effect that treatment to address “the real issue” was neglected. Even though medications are helpful to put the patient in a position to receive therapy, van der Kolk believes that their continued use only masks what problems lie at the core. “The drug revolution that started out with so much promise may in the end have done as much harm as good. The theory that mental illness is caused primarily by chemical imbalances in the brain that can be corrected by specific drugs has become broadly accepted, by the media and the public as well as by the medical profession. . . . The SSRIs can be very helpful in making traumatized people less enslaved by their emotions, but they should only be considered adjuncts in their overall treatment” (36). Later, he said, “All too often, however, drugs . . . are prescribed instead of teaching people the skills to deal with such distressing physical reactions” (103). Additionally, not only do medications only mask underlying issues, but they also have their own very detrimental side effects, especially for children, causing children to lose motivation, lack curiosity, and be at risk of becoming obese and developing diabetes (37).

As a pastor, I was always willing to suggest the possibility of medications for serious mental and emotional distress. For almost twenty years now as a seminary professor, in the class on pastoral counseling I suggest to the students that if medicine is used for mental distresses, it should be as an “adjunct” to the biblical help that the pastor or another counselor gives. As a man with a broken leg will use crutches until the break heals but then dispose of the crutches, so a Christian will view medicine for emotional and mental distress. Of course, this is not an absolute rule, but a general guideline. Van der Kolk provides powerful secular arguments to support this stance. Christians who are open to the use of drugs will be cautioned against a quick, naïve, and simplistic view of them. Van der Kolk is not alone among secular scientists in his pushback against drugs for mental care.

3. *The importance of body care*

Bodily exercise might not profit for the life to come, but it does profit for this life (1 Tim. 4:8). A non-Christian psychiatrist, van der Kolk sees this truth very clearly and helps Christians avoid the error of disparaging bodily health over against health in soul and spirit. A negative reviewer of the book makes a related point when he offers this positive criticism: “Perhaps the most important contribution of the book is the way it pushes back against what Percy Walker called ‘the San Andreas fault in the modern mind,’ i.e., the Cartesian mind-body split.”³ Van der Kolk’s book is titled, *The Body Keeps the Score*, so it is not a surprise that he addresses bodily well-being at length and argues a reciprocal relation between body and soul: the health of the body influences the mind, and the health of the mind influences the body.

Christians know the importance of the body. In the ecumenical Apostles’ Creed, Christians express their central hope in the “resurrection of the body.” Reformed Christians confess in the Heidelberg Catechism that we belong “body and soul” to our faithful Savior because Jesus redeemed us in both body and soul (Lord’s Day 1). God loves His people in their bodies too. Christians must care for their bodies. At the same time, they know that the well-being of their body is related to the well-being of their soul, for “a merry heart doeth good like a medicine” (Prov. 17:24). Van der Kolk demonstrates this clearly. And even though he does not recognize that man has a soul and the soul’s relationship to God, he does recognize that humans are more than gray matter, and thus makes a distinction between man’s brain (the gray matter) and man’s mind (whatever that may mean to him). Van der Kolk’s subtitle is *Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*.

Because traumatic experiences assault our entire being, restoration and healing must recognize the damage done to one’s entire being. So, although we will critique van der Kolk’s remedies, we will not be well served by ignoring his reminder that human beings are *one* and must be treated as one. Good exercise, sufficient rest, eating well and drinking alcohol in moderation are all important for well-being, and healing the body relates to healing the soul.

3 Yost, “By Our Wounds We Are Healed,” 50.

4. *Critical of DSM-V*

Van der Kolk is unashamedly critical of the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. The *DSM-V* is the fifth edition, the 2013 and most recent update of the manual. It is the principal authority in the United States for professional psychiatric diagnoses, but van der Kolk believes the association is motivated by money and has even regressed into the nineteenth-century medical practice of describing symptoms rather than causes (166). Surprising to this reviewer is that there are other major organizations of professionals who also dislike the APA's *DSM-V*, including the American Psychological Association (also "APA," made up of over 133,000 professionals, compared to the Psychiatric Association's 44,000), and the United States government's own National Institute of Mental Health (whose budget in 2020 was \$1.6 billion). According to van der Kolk, these institutions, among others, criticize the *DSM* for its symptom-based diagnosis. To put this in practical terms, the *DSM*'s diagnosis of "oppositional" to describe a troubled teen will result in improper *care* when the proper diagnosis, he asserts, might be the teen's attempt to protect one's self from danger (167).

Among other serious concerns about the *DSM-V* about which Christian pastors, elders, and Christian doctors ought to be aware (for example, in "gender dysphoria disorder" being relabeled without "disorder" in its description), this must be kept in mind.

5. *Other lessons of importance*

Van der Kolk's studies are also reminders to Christians, if they really needed one, of the importance of careful parental nurture of children in their early years. Parents today will be reminded of the importance of reading rather than screens, of family discussion and physical activity rather than watching television. Van der Kolk's pathetic concession to day care for children notwithstanding, the book gives evidence of what many want to deny: that most troubled adults were neglected or abused as children.

The Christian also will not be surprised that one aspect of therapy found to be of great help to victims is working together with groups in which each member depends on other members: "Social support is a biological necessity, not an option, and this reality should be the

backbone of all prevention and treatment” (169). Van der Kolk cannot say that all the members of a community should use their gifts for the advantage and salvation of all the other members (see the Heidelberg Catechism’s explanation of “the communion of saints,” Lord’s Day 21). He must admit to much of what the gospel teaches even though he will not confess the origin of it in Holy Scripture’s special revelation.

Finally, pastors and other counselors will find helpful van der Kolk’s description of behaviors that may well be indicators of attempts to survive trauma, and not rebellious behavior with no explanation other than “rebel” (280).

The Book’s Dangers

As was said, *The Body Keeps the Score* is more valuable for its *description* of traumatic injury than for its *prescription* for remedies. But to say this is an understatement. The prescriptions are Christless and therefore gospel-less, graceless, and godless. Although the book is filled with echoes of biblical themes, the echoes (now to change the figure and borrow from the apostle Paul) are but a form of godliness that deny the power thereof (2 Tim. 3:5).

I read the book with great interest to see whether this Dutchman-turned-American would reveal his faith or lack of it in any explicit way. I searched the comprehensive index for a reference to Religion, Christianity, Faith, and God, and found none. There is no mention of God in the book except a reference to feeling *godforsaken* (337), which is no reference to Jehovah of Christianity and has no similarity to the Psalmist’s distress in Psalm 42 but, in fact, is part of the English-language’s euphemistic blasphemy. There is one hint of van der Kolk’s relation to Christianity in a brief and negative reference to his “stern Calvinistic parents.” The tone is very negative because he referred to these stern people in his own therapy when he imagined them as “two hulking, dark, and threatening objects” (301). Van der Kolk truly knows the form of piety, but consciously rejects its power in the gospel.

The book ought to be read with utmost caution, especially as to its remedies for traumatized Christians. I propose five areas to keep in mind with this book:

1. Too broad a definition of trauma

First, van der Kolk contributes to the increasingly common error of ‘concept creep,’ in which a certain concept undergoes ‘semantic expansion’ so that it includes topics which were not intended to fit under that label. This is not a new phenomenon. As with the term *abuse*, the term *trauma* is victim of this concept creep. “Trauma has come to signify a range of injuries so broad that the term verges on meaninglessness,” and the term is “uselessly vague—a swirl of psychiatric diagnoses, folk wisdom, and popular misconceptions.”⁴

Van der Kolk’s failure sharply to define trauma allows the concept to creep both horizontally and vertically. Horizontal creep allows the definition to be very broad, so that almost every *form* of suffering becomes trauma (losing a job, being unable to work during COVID, or growing up in poverty, called “developmental trauma”). Vertical creep allows the slightest degree of injury to be traumatizing; the threshold is lowered. Psychiatrists have argued for five decades about what constitutes trauma, but van der Kolk does not reckon with this. He even claims that he was traumatized when his clinic was forced to shut down. He had a session of therapy and was able to “move on.” So much for trauma.

Calling an event by the wrong name brings confusion and disorder in society, as it will in ecclesiastical life. For example, labeling a sin “abuse” is serious. But what really *is* abuse? Careful definition is required, especially if the label affords the sin its own privileged set of rules for treatment. Likewise, what *is* trauma? Careful definitions are demanded. Making every bad experience traumatic does injustice to those who have been truly traumatized; if everyone has been traumatized, eventually the truly traumatized will get lost in the mountain of cases.

This broadening of the definition of trauma fits, however, with the promotion of the “cult of the victim” mentality, the #MeToo movement, born in 2017 (which may also explain the book’s more recent surge in popularity).

4 Eleanor Cummins, “The Self-Help No One Needs Right Now,” *The Atlantic*, (October 18, 2021), accessed September 30, 2022 (<https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2021/10/trauma-books-wont-save-you/620421/>).

Van der Kolk himself became a victim of this concept creep when he was fired from his own Institute for traumatizing his employees. Female employees claimed a toxic work environment which gave them a sense of dread, nightmares, and emotional whiplash. They called it “betrayal trauma.”⁵

Christians understand the importance of definitions. It has to do with truth. And justice.

2. *The theory of repressed memory*

One of the more dangerous faults is van der Kolk’s promotion of the theory of repressed memory, or “recovered-memory theory,” which he calls “traumatic memory” (173-201). This theory holds that the memories of trauma are usually repressed and then forgotten, and if not fully forgotten, then fragmentary and disorganized. A trained therapist can help resurrect and reorganize the memories. The outcome will be the truth of what happened in the past. This theory stands at the heart of van der Kolk’s book, because the memory of the trauma is stored in the body rather than in the brain. The body keeps the score.

Van der Kolk devotes two significant chapters (11 and 12) to the subject, opening with his own involvement in 2002 with the high-profile cases of the Boston priests accused of molesting boys decades earlier, and van der Kolk’s testimony in court. His retelling of the story is captivating. The controversy involved the admissibility of the reconstructed memory as evidence against the accused priest. Van der Kolk speaks of the “complexities of traumatic memories,” as well as the controversy and “passions that have swirled around this issue since psychiatrists first described the unusual nature of traumatic memories in the final decades of the nineteenth century” (173, 174). The author of the theory was Sigmund Freud. In the 2002 Boston case, the testimony from the resurrected and reconstructed memory was admitted as part of the evidence to convict the priest and sentence him to prison.

To be clear, the debate over repressed memory is only partly whether such memory exists (the extent of memory loss and the accuracy of its reconstruction is debated). It is mostly whether a therapist ought to be trained to resurrect and reconstruct this memory,

5 Yost, “By Our Wounds We Are Healed,” 53.

and whether such forgotten-but-now-resurrected memories should be trusted.

A large number of secular psychiatrists have rejected the theory. Julia Yost supposes that the theory was long ago permanently discredited by the scandal of false accusations in the McMartin Preschool case in the 1980s.⁶ To my knowledge, most Christian therapists are vehement in their rejection. One Christian therapist, professionally trained, state licensed, and employed at Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services advised me that when looking for professional counselors for parishioners with mental troubles, I should have nothing to do with a counselor who holds the theory of repressed memory. Pastors and elders ought to be aware of the serious questions about repressed memory theory.

3. *'Spiritual but not religious'*

The descriptive phrase is mine, not van der Kolk's. But using the expression is my recognition of van der Kolk's desire to address the need for health within a man (in his spirit) without dependence on God (religion). But his creed is Christless and therefore God-less and therefore without hope for anyone. The apostle Paul's haunting description of Gentile unbelievers (without hope and without God, Eph. 2:12) applies here: van der Kolk offers vain hope in a therapy that outwardly resembles Christianity but has nothing of its gospel in Jesus Christ.

4. *"Crazes that have plagued psychiatry"*

The descriptive phrase is van der Kolk's (252), not mine. Over the generations, secular scholars of psychology and psychiatry have regularly asserted that their discoveries are the key to mental well-being. Christians ought to be skeptical of the confidence with which a new program for healing is presented to be key. Indeed, advances have been made, both in medicine and in therapeutic approaches. On the other hand, when a program is presented with as much confidence as van der Kolk's, it would be naïve to approach it with anything other than great skepticism.

6 Yost, "By Our Wounds We Are Healed," 54.

Theater, yoga, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), rescripting one's life, and similar approaches all become part of van der Kolk's liturgy of healing in this secular worship in a world without God. One is not surprised to learn that yoga is proposed as a physical discipline for bodily health. But one's heart breaks for the children who are asked to imagine a life without abuse in order to "create supplemental memories," even "alternate memories in which your basic human needs are met and your longings for love and protection are fulfilled" (302). As appealing as theater may be to pretend you are someone else (333-337), it appears to be another mask to hide a reality that must be faced. To be asked to imagine that good happened when it did not, and will not, is to turn down a path that leads away from God and Christ rather than to Him.

The Christian pastor, elder, counselor, must not be simplistic in his work or naïve in her expectations when working with traumatized Christians, but he or she must not do less than start with the gospel of Jesus Christ, the mercies of God for His wounded children, the promise of strength to endure heavy burdens, and the community of believers who will embrace the wounded and support them till life ends. They must not be impatient for quick healing for those whose wounds have misshapen them, but they must still bring the suffering sheep into the presence of the living and loving Christ to find in Him their hope and healing. Less than this makes a pastor guilty of the horrible sin of being a "slight healer" or "superficial healer" (Jer. 6:14; 8:11), which is no healer at all. Being Christian and growing as a Christian is not simple: old things are passed away and all things become new (2 Cor. 5:17), but not overnight. Recreating us in the image of God is a lifetime work of God through the gospel. Van der Kolk's book fails at the deepest level when it leads away from the gospel rather than to it.

What Remains

Reformed Christians can take one more lesson from the fact that the book echoes with biblical themes but does not name them, that the book resembles Christianity but inverts it. What are these biblical themes? We have mentioned a few: the communion of saints, the importance of bodily health, the vital relation between body and soul. Will a Christian scholar develop the Christian's ability to counsel wounded

sheep by pointing out the *biblical* truth behind some of the advances in psychiatric studies? Let Christians never adopt the secular cures for soul care. May the “form of godliness” in worldly psychology never seduce them to “deny the power” of the gospel that is needed for traumatized Christians. At the same time, may we always grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, also regarding the healing of damaged souls.

Book Reviews

Reformed Ethics, Volume 2: The Duties of the Christian Life, by Herman Bavinck. Ed. John Bolt Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021. Pp. xx + 522. \$43.25. Hardcover. ISBN: 978-0801098222. Reviewed by David J. Engelsma

Volume two of Herman Bavinck's monumental exposition of Reformed, and, therefore, Christian, ethics goes a long way toward fulfilling the alluring promise of volume one. Another volume will follow. Volume one set forth the truth of ethics in general (see my review of volume one in the November 2019 issue of this journal). Volume two presents the nature and content of Reformed ethical behavior concretely and specifically.

As the subtitle of the book declares, Reformed ethics consists of duties. These duties are threefold: chiefly, duties toward God; duties toward our neighbor; and also, surprisingly, duties toward ourselves. This last, which is rarely, if ever, argued in a work on ethics, Bavinck finds mainly in Jesus' command to love the neighbor *as we love ourself*. If we love ourself, we have duties toward ourself, which include duties toward our body and duties toward our soul. These duties are spelled out in commandments seven through nine of the Decalogue.

In his consideration of these three great areas of the Christian's duties, Bavinck explains and applies the ten commandments of the law of God, if only, in some instances, very briefly. Obviously, the first four commandments specify the Christian's duties toward God. Commandments five through ten are the specific content partly of our duties to the neighbor and partly of our duties to ourselves. For example, the sixth commandment forbids suicide, including a morbid desire for death, as well as the murder of another. In the treatment of suicide, strong as is Bavinck's condemnation of the evil, he declines to judge all suicides as lost:

Suicide is a great sin, of course, deserving eternal perdition, but though the sin may be terrible, the sinner may still be justified. The judgment about a person must be made on the basis of that person's entire life rather than on the basis of one act... We do not know what God can

work at the very last moment in the heart of such a sorely tried person. In any case, formally speaking, suicide is not the sin against the Holy Spirit, and thus can be pardoned (381).

Describing the Christian life as obedience to the law raises important questions, which Bavinck considers in magisterial fashion. One consideration concerns viewing the Christian life as obedience to the law or viewing it as love for God and the neighbor. Bavinck's analysis is that the two options are not mutually exclusive. The orthodox Reformed judgment is that love does not rule out law. "The Reformed insisted that for the believer, only the curse of the law was abolished, not the law itself" (5). As for the importance of love,

Viewed properly, there is only one duty, that of love, which is the fulfillment of the law (Rom. 13:10). And there actually is only one object of that love—namely, God (101).

But God obligates one to love Him by the duty of obeying the ten commandments.

The book opens with a thorough, incisive examination of the conflicting evils of nomism and antinomism and with a lengthy critique of the biblical concept regarding Christian behavior known as "adiaphora." After a tedious examination of the truth of the adiaphora, Bavinck concludes with the doctrine of Paul in Romans 14, 15: "a realm of the permissible remains, in addition to that of duties" (59). For Bavinck, as a typical Dutchman, this realm of the adiaphora includes a glass of wine and a good, after-dinner cigar. So, he states.

In volume one of this projected three-volume set, Bavinck admonished ethicists (which includes all preachers) to be specific in condemning bad behavior and in exhorting holy behavior. In this volume, Bavinck carries out his own counsel, sometimes to the extreme. Idolatry can consist of undue esteem of famous sports figures, for example, for a boy in the 1940s, Hal Newhouser, and, for an adult more recently, who should have known better, Larry Bird (obviously, not the examples of Bavinck). Allowing one's attention to wander during the sermon is violation of the third commandment. Dinner parties should "be spiced with witty conversations about literature, art, history, and philosophy and with music and singing... Toasts...

are illegitimate according to Voetius, since they lead to intemperance and drunkenness” (347). Again with appeal to the Dutch theologian, G. Voetius, Bavinck deplores the scanty dress of some females, even at church. A Dutch painter “portrays all the young women from the Hague as having fake hair and false bosoms” (351). In the middle seventeenth century, Dutch synods took decisions condemning certain fashions in dress and appearance, including the long hair of men. The more things change, the more they remain the same! Without a reference, wisely, to Mrs. Bavinck, the Reformed ethicist warns against females spending an inordinate amount of time dressing for the day. On the ethical subject of clothing, Bavinck insists on special garb at the services of worship. In the twenty-first century, this would rule out jeans. And “tattooing [is] forbidden in Holy Scripture” (433).

The Irish as a nation are too much given to drink. Evenhandedly, Bavinck criticizes his fellow countryman, the poet Bilderdijk, for the use of opium.

An incredibly well read and learned theologian, Bavinck borrowed liberally of “the riches of the Egyptians” (see Exodus 12:35). The book abounds with quotations and weighty—and lengthy—consideration of the writings of the Greek philosophers and of the modern philosophers and other secular writers. Like old Israel with the wealth of Egypt, Bavinck pressed the thoughts of the ungodly into the service of Reformed truth. Characteristic is his reference to and quotation of the German, atheistic philosopher, Schopenhauer with regard to the evil of pedantry:

When we speak, especially in connection with politics, of doctrinaires, theorists, savants, and so forth, we mean pedants, that is persons who know the things well in the abstract but not in the concrete.

Bavinck added, “Directly opposite to this is the *genius*” (408). With commendable humility, Bavinck did not identify himself, or his colleague, Abraham Kuyper, as instances of this category of thinkers, as he might have done.

Venturing into areas seldom heard of in Reformed teaching on ethics, Bavinck calls for love of the angels and love for animals and nature. Long before the “save the earth and animals” crowd appeared on the scene, Reformed theology was there.

There are weaknesses. Bavinck pays far too much attention to ancient Greek pagan writings and thinking, as also to contemporary secular thinkers. An egregious instance of this exaggerated scholarship, but by no means the only one, is Bavinck's discussion of the concept of the "collision of duties" on pages 63ff. In this case, the editor, whose editing is otherwise as learned and instructive as Bavinck's work itself, aggravates the Dutch theologian's esoteric scholarship with lengthy, abstruse footnotes.

Regarding the invaluable work of Bolt and his assistants, who knew that the Remonstrants at Dordt accused the supralapsarian Gomarus with violation of the third commandment—duplicity concerning the truth of God's name—in that he signed the infralapsarian Canons? (189, footnote 40)

Treatment of the seventh commandment is very brief, containing nothing concerning divorce and remarriage. But this vitally important subject will be the entire content of the third volume of this extraordinarily significant set of Reformed ethical theology.

Come, volume three!

Even though anticipation of this volume is laced with apprehension: marriage, divorce, and remarriage!

Arminius and the Reformed Tradition: Grace and the Doctrine of Salvation, by John V. Fesko. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2022. Pp 152. \$25.00. Softcover. ISBN 978-1601789341. Reviewed by Douglas J. Kuiper

Today some scholars argue that James Arminius was an orthodox Reformed man, with orthodox teachings, who was mistreated by the Reformed churches. Men such as Carl Bangs,¹ Roger Olson,² Keith Stanglin, and Thomas McCall³ promote this view.

1 Carl Bangs, *Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1971).

2 Roger E. Olson, *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006).

3 Keith Stanglin and Thomas McCall, *Jacob Arminius* (Oxford, Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 2012). In addition to coauthoring this bi-

In response, orthodox Reformed scholars have reexamined our understanding of Arminius and his teachings, both doctrinally and historically. Have we missed something? Did the Reformed churches in fact mistreat Arminius? The result has been a scholarly and biblical defense of the doctrines of sovereign grace as developed in the Canons of Dort, as well as a historical rebuttal to Bangs, Olson, Stanglin, McCall, and the like. In other words, Reformed scholars have not *ignored* Arminius's sympathizers, nor simply *denied* the charges, but *demonstrated* them to be wrong, both doctrinally and historically. Richard Muller is one Reformed scholar who has done so; another is W. Robert Godfrey.⁴

The volume under review is another welcome addition to this defense. It further buttresses the arguments that Arminius's teachings were outside the bounds of Reformed orthodoxy, as Reformed churches have always said they were. Specifically, the book is a historical examination of Arminius's doctrine of salvation. (A historical examination is not a doctrinal or exegetical evaluation of Arminius's views in light of Scripture. Rather, it studies Arminius's writings, compares them to the Reformed confessions and to writings of Reformed men in his day, and then determines by a comparison whether Arminius was within the bounds of Reformed thinking or not.)

One indication of a good writer is that he gives the reader a clear indication of what he is going to say, and how he will develop his point. Fesko does so in his introduction: "[T]his book's thesis is that Arminius's soteriology differs sufficiently from that of his Reformed contemporaries and Reformed confessional norms to warrant the conclusion that he was not Reformed. His soteriology is an alternative Protestant conception" (5).

ography of Arminius, Stanglin and McCall have coauthored several books focusing on Arminius' theology, and Stanglin has written additional books and articles alone, or with other coauthors.

4 W. Robert Godfrey, "Arminius: A New Look," in *Saving the Reformation: The Pastoral Theology of the Canons of Dort* (Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust, 2019): 185-227.

Summary

Fesko pursues his thesis in six chapters. The first demonstrates that Arminius taught that man must do what is in him, and God will give him grace; in other words, God helps those who help themselves. Fesko also shows that Arminius learned this idea from medieval sources, especially theologians whom Rome considers orthodox. Arminius taught what the Reformers rejected, namely, that God and man work together in salvation, and that in a sense man's work is first. Fesko also shows that Arminius's ideas of what faith is and what man must do with his faith were not Reformed. Underlying Arminius' view of salvation was a wrong view of man.

That Arminius differed from the Reformed creedal position on predestination is beyond dispute: the Remonstrants at the Synod of Dordt were explicit that they were troubled by the Reformed presentation of the matter. In chapter two, Fesko demonstrates that Arminius employed the idea of God's middle knowledge to develop his view of predestination. Middle knowledge is "a conditional and consequent knowledge of future contingents by which God knows of events because of their occurrence" (36). Using layman's terms, the point is that God knew how humans would act in the future, not because He ordained every detail of history, but because He knew what circumstances humans would find themselves in, and how generally humans respond to those circumstances. This enabled Arminius to teach that man must respond to the call of the gospel by his own will, a free will. In the end, therefore, one cannot claim that Arminius' idea of salvation was anywhere close to the Reformed view, and that the reformers overreacted to him on this point.

In chapter three Fesko demonstrates that Arminius viewed God's work of calling as resistible, that the reformers and Reformed confessions teach it to be irresistible, and that the two positions cannot be reconciled.

That God's people are united to Christ, and in that union with Christ are both justified and sanctified, is orthodox Reformed teaching. Arminius would have agreed that union with Christ brings these two benefits. However, the Reformers spoke of justification as the ground (and in that sense, cause) of sanctification. Emphatically, according to the Reformers, sanctification and its fruits are not the reason why we

are justified. However, Arminius related the idea of union with Christ and its various benefits in different ways: first, he did not teach that justification was logically prior to sanctification; second, he spoke of justification as being an ongoing process, and the final justification in the day of Christ's return as being given to those who "end their days in the faith of Christ" (81); and third, he did not view justification as the ground for receiving eternal life, but only as making it possible that one would receive eternal life. This Fesko demonstrates in chapter four.

Arminius' view of justification by faith alone is suspect, as chapter five demonstrates. Arminius denied that God imputes "Christ and his righteousness to us for righteousness" (92), teaching instead that God views one's *faith* as righteousness. Faith, in other words, is not the means by which a sinner is righteous, but the reason that a sinner is righteous. In this respect Arminius taught differently than Reformed writers of his own day, and than the Reformed confessions of his era.

That some Christians would persevere in their faith, Arminius taught as being highly probable. The Reformed confess that it is certain, because of God's unchangeable election and His infallible preservation of His saints. Arminius took a different approach: man's own faithfulness to God explains his perseverance. Therefore, one might be a child of God today, but not persevere. In this respect too he was at odds with Reformed orthodoxy, Reformed fathers of Arminius' day, and the Reformed confessions. This the sixth chapter demonstrates.

Evaluation

Fesko's argument is compelling. When Arminius' own words indicate that his thinking did not accord with Reformed orthodoxy, how can his sympathizers compellingly argue that he did? One can argue that Arminius was a Protestant, that is, not Roman Catholic; but to argue that he was *Reformed* requires a significant redefinition of what it is to be Reformed. And granting that Arminius was not Roman Catholic, the fact remains that both he and Rome explain man's salvation as being in some respect dependent on man's works, while the Reformed fathers and confessions view man's works as the fruit and demonstration of his being saved.

In the process of making a compelling argument, Fesko makes several other points worth remembering. Implicitly, he reminds us of

the need to discern. Just because two theologians (Calvin and Arminius, for example) use the same terms does not mean that they mean the same thing by those terms. Again, if two theologians appear to teach two similar doctrines, but relate the two doctrines differently, they are not in agreement. To argue that Arminius' theology was in harmony with Reformed teaching requires one to ignore fundamental definitions and relationships. Fesko says, "As a matter of history, to view Arminius's soteriology as Reformed is an effort to rewrite history, and it disrespects his work" (130).

Second, the historical standard by which to judge a man and his teachings is ultimately the confessional statements of that man's own day, and the statements of other men of that man's own day. Fesko says at one significant juncture, "the orthodoxy of Arminius's doctrine of justification, therefore, should be judged according to the historical and confessional norms of his period—namely, the *Belgic Confession* and *Heidelberg Catechism*—not those of a later date" (88). Whether men today think that Arminius was fairly treated and is rightly understood is not the determinative issue.

Third, when men are controversial in their own day, and the controversy is settled against them, men of a later day ought to be slow to rise to their defense. The best judges of a man's orthodoxy are the men who live with him, who hear him firsthand, who observe his conduct, and who can see the immediate effect of his teachings. By comparing Arminius's views to those of other men of his day (such as the notable Reformed men Antonius Walaeus, Antonius Thysius, Andreas Rivetus, Johannes Polyander, Theodore Beza, Franciscus Gomarus, and Sibrandus Lubbertus), Fesko shows that Arminius was at odds with the leading orthodox theologians of his day. By this historical standard must Arminius be judged.

In the end, the matter is decided by Arminius's own words, and those of his followers. Significantly, the Synod of Dordt judged the Remonstrants on the basis of their own writings. Fesko judges Arminius on the same basis.

All of which leads one to a very practical conclusion. In the early seventeenth century the Reformed churches judged the doctrine of Arminius and his followers to be aberrant. Today, many in Reformed churches would defend Arminius. Such are not truly Reformed, and

should not be in Reformed churches. Reformed men should view these men who intentionally defend Arminius as spiritually dangerous. And Reformed churches must never let down their guard against the Arminian error.

A Biblical Case Against Theistic Evolution, ed. Wayne Grudem. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022. Pp. 248. \$16.00. Softcover. ISBN: 978-1433577031. Reviewed by Daniel Holstege

Although somewhat repetitive and a bit dry in places, at least to this reviewer's taste, this book is worth reading for the edification of one's faith "that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Heb. 11:3) and of one's conviction that theistic evolution is a deadly compromise of that faith.

At the occasion of preaching a series of sermons through Genesis 1-11 to the congregation of which I am the pastor, I came across this recent book against theistic evolution. The book consists of six chapters by different authors which were originally part of a much larger book by some twenty-five authors entitled *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique* (2017).

The proponents of theistic evolution with whom the authors of this book contend include Francis Collins (founder of The BioLogos Foundation – see biologos.org, an influential hub promoting theistic evolution), Karl Giberson, Peter Enns, Denis Alexander, and John Walton. Other influential men in evangelical circles who have come out in favor of theistic evolution are also named: Bruce Waltke, Tremper Longman, Tim Keller, and N. T. Wright (32-33).

In the first chapter, Wayne Grudem, a prominent evangelical theologian, defines the theistic evolution that the authors of this book reject, namely, the theory that God created matter in the beginning, but then all things, including life and all living beings on earth, evolved into existence over many eons by purely natural processes. He then summarizes some of the arguments that form the content of subsequent chapters.

In chapter two, John D. Currid, professor of Old Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary, demonstrates that theistic evolution is incompatible with the Old Testament. He explains and refutes five common ways that proponents of theistic evolution deny the obvious meaning of Genesis 1-3 to make room for their evolutionary beliefs, including the mythological, allegorical, and etiological interpretations. Currid and the other authors in this book rightly teach that “Genesis 1-3 bears all the markings of Hebrew historical narrative” (52), and if we deny that, “we will remove the historical foundation on which all the remainder of the Bible rests” (54).

In chapter three, Guy Prentiss Waters, professor of New Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary, shows how utterly incompatible theistic evolution is with the New Testament. He surveys the data of the New Testament that make reference to Genesis 1-11 and shows that the inspired writers of Scripture considered these chapters literally true. He proves that “Jesus regarded the entirety of the events of Genesis to be fully historical” (91). He shows that for Paul, “Adam is not simply one historical man among 10,000 human beings who existed at the same time. Adam, rather, is the ancestor of *every* human being” (103). This is a “matter of first importance” because in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15 Paul teaches a parallel between Adam and Christ so significant that it is “at the heart of his gospel” (101). Waters criticizes Denis Alexander, Scot McKnight, John Walton, and Peter Enns for the way they explain these passages. In various ways, they deny a historical Adam, original sin and guilt, and the entrance of death as a punishment for sin. Waters says about one of them, and by implication all of them, “This understanding of sin and redemption is indisputably semi-Pelagian and arguably Pelagian” (113). Theistic evolution leads to Pelagianism! The old heresy from hell that we are not guilty and depraved sinners in Adam, but we are all able to choose good or evil, to follow Adam or Christ, to climb the ladder to heaven on our own! But as Waters points out, that is not Paul’s doctrine. Paul teaches that Adam was the first man; by him sin entered the world and death by sin; and we all sinned and died in Adam. But Christ was the last Adam; by Him came righteousness and life; and all who believe in Him will receive eternal life.

In chapter four, Gregg R. Allison, a professor of theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, shows that theistic evolution is not in harmony with the doctrinal standards of the Christian church of all ages. He surveys the creeds of the church throughout history, including the Nicene Creed, Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, Westminster Confession, and others. He shows a large degree of consensus in the Christian tradition on the interpretation of Genesis and thus on the fundamental doctrines about God, man, and creation. He shows how two versions of theistic evolution are incompatible with the creeds: the one that says God left natural processes to work alone without his intervention *and* the one that says God supervised the process. “Christian leaders who hold to [either form of] theistic evolution stand outside the church’s historical position on that issue” (154).

In chapter five, Fred G. Zaspel, a pastor of a Reformed Baptist church in Pennsylvania, argues that contrary to the claim of many, the prominent nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Presbyterian theologian B. B. Warfield did not endorse the theory of theistic evolution as it is taught today. Whereas Warfield did express some openness to evolutionary ideas, Zaspel shows that until his dying day he remained critical and skeptical of Darwin’s theory and taught no theory of evolution himself. “Warfield asserted in 1916 [about five years before his death] that he had left theistic evolution behind him years earlier,” says Zaspel (176).

In chapter six, the last chapter, Wayne Grudem lists twelve common beliefs of theistic evolutionists that conflict with Scripture. For example, the beliefs that Adam and Eve were not the first humans, that humans were doing evil long before Adam and Eve, that death existed long before the fall, that God did not directly create the various kinds of animals, and that there never was an original paradise. He then shows how theistic evolution undermines eleven significant Christian doctrines. He asks, “Why is this entire issue of theistic evolution important?” In answer, he writes, “theistic evolution, as an overarching explanation for the origin of all living things, leads to several destructive consequences for a number of Christian doctrines. Theistic evolution is not at all a harmless ‘alternative opinion’ about creation, but will lead to progressive erosion and often even a denial

of at least the following eleven Christian doctrines...” (218). In his opinion, the most important doctrine that is eroded and denied is “the truthfulness of the Bible.” Theistic evolutionists like to say, “The Bible doesn’t teach science.” Karl Giberson and Francis Collins write in their book *The Language of Science and Faith*, “The Bible is not even trying to teach science. Nowhere in the entire Bible do we read anything that even hints that the writer is trying to teach science.” But Grudem rightly replies to this strawman argument, “The question is not whether the Bible ‘teaches science’ (whatever that might mean). The question is *whether the Bible is truthful in all that it affirms*, on whatever topic it wishes to speak about” (222).

However, I have a couple criticisms of the book.

Early on, general editor Grudem makes the curious remark that “this book is not about the age of the earth. Many Christians hold to a “young earth” position (the earth is no more than ten thousand years old), and many others hold an “old earth” position (the earth is about 4.5 billion years old). This book does not take a position on that issue, nor do we discuss it at any point in the book” (12). Later, Gregg Allison adds a footnote with the odd remark that the debate between old earth creationists [e.g. the day-age theory, framework hypothesis, and gap theory] and young earth creationists “is in a different category than the debate about theistic evolution” (150). Considering that the authors of this book affirm that Genesis 1-3 is a *historical* narrative that presents *literal* facts, how can they not also take a position against the old earth theories? You cannot fit billions of years into the creation week unless you do violence to the obvious interpretation of the simple narrative of Genesis 1.

Furthermore, while I grant that we cannot say that all “Christian leaders who embrace theistic evolution are not or cannot be true disciples of Jesus Christ” (154), should we not in a book like this admonish such Christian leaders for their false teaching and exhort them to believe and teach the truth? Grudem makes clear that this is not just a friendly debate but a serious matter that undermines the truthfulness of the whole Bible. He writes, “Many of the second- and third-generation followers of those who hold to theistic evolution today will abandon belief in the Bible altogether, and will abandon the Christian faith” (219)! But in the same chapter, he can speak warmly

of “our friends who hold to theistic evolution” (194). I wholeheartedly embrace the instruction of Paul that “the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth” (2 Tim. 2:24-25). But there are other instructions too, including that we leaders in the church must “be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.” (Titus 1:9). It seems to this reviewer that the authors should have issued a sharper exhortation and reproof toward the “Christian leaders who embrace theistic evolution.”

But apart from that, I appreciated and benefited from the book and judge that it succeeds in making a biblical and theological case against theistic evolution. Reading and meditating on the arguments in the book will yield good fruit, including the strengthening of one’s defense against the onslaught of theistic evolution and of one’s personal faith in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

The Klaas Schilder Reader: The Essential Theological Writings, ed. George Harinck, Marinus De Jong, & Richard Mouw, transl. Albert Gootjes and Albert Oosterhoff. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2022. Pp. xvi + 608. \$49.99. Hardcover. ISBN: 978-1683595939. Reviewed by David J. Engelsma

Klaas Schilder was a Dutch Reformed churchman, theologian, author, and editor of a Reformed periodical in the Reformed churches in the Netherlands in the early to middle years of the twentieth century. He died in 1952. Schilder was dubious about the doctrine of common grace developed by Abraham Kuyper. He remarks that “Kuyper and Bavinck had squeezed the notion of common grace from the pages of Calvin’s *Institutes* and developed it considerably” (10). His less than enthusiastic acceptance of the doctrine of Kuyperian (cultural) common grace occasioned close contact with Herman Hoeksema and the Protestant Reformed Churches in the 1930s and 1940s. The result of this contact was schism in the Protestant Reformed Churches over Schilder’s doctrine of the covenant.

In the theology of Schilder, the covenant is conditional, dependent for its continuance with a human and for bestowing the blessing

of everlasting salvation upon him on one's fulfilling to the end the condition of faith. Many with whom the covenant was originally established suffer loss of the covenant and forfeiture of its blessings by failing to believe, or failing to continue to believe to the end. To this conditionality of the covenant in the theology of Schilder, Hoeksema objected, as a denial of the grace of covenant salvation. For Hoeksema, all salvation is unconditional.

This book, which is a collection and edited number of Schilder's more important writings—magazine articles, printed form of lectures, a few printed sermons, and the like—although sorely lacking in clarity in many of the pieces (due to Schilder's own unique way of thought and obscure style of writing), is clear with respect to Schilder's doctrine of a conditional covenant. With explicit reference to Hoeksema and to the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church of 1924 that adopted the doctrine of common grace, Schilder declares that "in every offer of the gospel, the promise, which is conditional, returns, but also the threat" (32). "Promise and demand [of the covenant] belong together. God withdraws the promise when the demand is not honored" (45). "Since trust was the condition precedent for the covenant relationship, when God sees that it is broken, his wrath comes to the fore" (45).

An aspect of Schilder's doctrine of the covenant is that "the reprobate are also in the covenant"; he criticizes those who teach that "the covenant was established with the elect only" (60).

Reading the printed form of these lectures on the covenant, which were delivered in the United States in 1939 and 1947 to Protestant Reformed audiences that included Hoeksema, one puzzles over the question, why did Hoeksema consider Schilder a doctrinal ally and therefore open up the Protestant Reformed Churches to the influence of Schilder, an influence that nearly destroyed the Protestant Reformed Churches in a schism?

However this may be, the book also contains the written form of lectures by Schilder that reveal that, although he had difficulties with the doctrine of common grace of Abraham Kuyper and the Christian Reformed Church, in the end Schilder approved this doctrine of common grace (33, 34). "In conclusion, I would be prepared to sign the three points [of common grace as adopted by the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in 1924, for his refusal to sign which Hoeksema

was deposed—DJE] provided they are clarified somewhat” (34). For himself, Schilder preferred a different analysis of the seemingly positive actions of the ungodly with regard to human culture.

Schilder and certain of his colleagues made a definite contribution to Reformed preaching by their plea for what has come to be known as “redemptive-historical preaching.” By this is meant that the preacher must proclaim the history of the Old Testament as revelation of the redeeming ministry of Jesus Christ.

A sermon on “historical material” is only a *sermon* when it identifies God’s work of self-revelation for salvation in Christ *as that work has advanced to the specific “era”* in which *the text places* us, and when it *relates* that specific “point” of development of God’s aforementioned salvific work *to its entire “line”* (throughout all ages and Scriptures) (467).

The critique of the theology of Karl Barth, which theology was in its ascendancy in the days of Schilder, carrying nearly all before it, also in the Dutch Reformed churches, is sound. Surprisingly, given the difficulty of Barth’s paradoxical theology, Schilder’s analysis of Barth and warning against the Barthian theology are among the clearest sections in the book.

Especially interesting, and wise, was Schilder’s counsel to the Reformed citizenry of the Netherlands in the 1940s regarding their Christian calling over against the German Nazi occupation of the country. There were two conceivable, honorable responses to the Nazi occupation. One was to go underground in order to resist the invasion with force of arms. The other was to submit without yielding to Nazi ordinances that involved disobedience to God. Godly, Reformed men chose both options. Schilder counseled the latter, and gave advice how to follow this course (see Part VI on the “German Occupation”). Despite his careful warning that the Reformed citizens not engage in violent, revolutionary actions against the occupying German army, Schilder was jailed for several months for his refusal to insist on total submission to the invaders and for his public view of the Germans as invaders, not the legitimate government of the Netherlands.

As I have already intimated, a very serious drawback of the book is the often incomprehensible thought of the author. When he is ad-

addressing theologians on fundamental truths of theology, as he is for the most part in the first half of the book, he is over the head and beyond the mental grasp of most readers. Schilder thought differently than most theologians. He came at doctrines in his own unique way. He expressed his understanding of them in novel expressions and figures. I forced myself to read every page and every sentence on every page, but often had not the slightest idea what Schilder was saying. My lack of understanding may have been my own weakness. But I challenge anyone to understand Schilder's treatment of the pluriformity of the church:

We observe that there is a going against good pluriformity in the historical, wrong church formation, neglect of ecclesiastical discipline, and false institutes. That leads to unity that is contrary to God's Word. There is also everywhere an incomplete adoption of good pluriformity. Nothing else is possible (96).

Or this, a purported explanation of the apostolicity of the church:

The church's apostolicity...is the "fourth" mark. The Apostles' Creed itself calls the church the "Christian church," thereby following its most recent dating. Those who believe this recognize in Israel the patriarchy...of the church. If apostolicity...and patriarchy both represent certain forms of church government, the latter term testifies of the gathering work around Abraham as a father by blood, along with the recognition of his spiritual fatherhood. For the prophets, priests, and kings born of Adam, Adam would first of all have been the father of believers, and only then and on that account their father according to the flesh (292).

This is the whole of the explanation of the fourth mark of the church. What does it *mean*? What does it have to do with the apostolicity of the church? Why does not this purportedly Reformed description of the apostolicity of the church say so much as one word about the church's being founded on, and characterized by, the doctrine of the apostles, which is how the Christian church, to say nothing of Reformed theology, has always defined apostolicity? I am sure that the intelligent Schilder had something in mind by this description of apostolicity, and even that what he had in mind is profound. But

what this may be escapes me, as it will escape the vast majority of Reformed laymen, who are accustomed to view apostolicity in terms of the church's relation to the apostles.

One struggles with the temptation to conclude that Schilder refused to treat any doctrinal subject from the traditional viewpoint, with traditional terminology, and within the context of traditional concepts.

No one will argue with the opening line of the acknowledgments by the translators, that “translating Klaas Schilder is a daunting task” (xv).

Strikingly lucid, and moving, in comparison with the theological chapters are the few sermons included in the book, for example, the sermon on 1 Peter 4:17, the beginning of judgment at the house of God. In the sermons, the profound theologian speaks as a pastor to the simple folk, the Dutch farmers and their wives. In the sermons, he was, and is, understood.

Ministers will be rewarded for their hard labor in reading the book. The average layman will find the book hard going, so much so that even with the best of intentions he will give up before he reaches the clearer second half.

The Concise Marrow of Theology, by Johann Henrich Heidegger, transl. Casey Carmichael. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019. Pp. 256. \$40.00. Hardcover. ISBN: 978-1601786005. Reviewed by Marco Barone

Johann Heinrich Heidegger (1633–1698) was a Swiss Reformed theologian and professor of theology at the university of Zürich. Although not well known in the Reformed English-speaking world, he was known by older Reformed theologians. Authors such as Francis Turretin and Heinrich Heppel refer to him often.

The Concise Marrow of Theology (*Medulla Medullae Theologiae Christianae*, 1697) was intended to be an educational and mnemonic tool for beginners. It was intended to supplement two works by Heidegger that were more advanced and extensive: *Medulla Theologiae Christianae* (*Marrow of Christian Theology*, 1696) and *Corpus Theologiae Christianae* (*Body of Christian Theology*, 1700). Writing

three systematic theologies of varying size and depth was a common practice among many Reformed theologians of the past, a practice followed also by Herman Bavinck.

The Introduction gives the reader handy information properly to enjoy Heidegger's style and method, which might appear strange to many readers who are not acquainted with the writings of the so-called Reformed Scholastics. The work includes a dedicatory epistle, a preface to the reader, and twenty-eight chapters (or *loci*), divided into short sections that cover basically every aspect of systematic theology. Being a condensed summary of Reformed theology, the book's chapters contain only positive definitions and brief explanations, with no developed exegetical, polemical, or practical parts that can be found in lengthier works from other Reformed scholastics (for instance, Peter van Mastricht's *Theoretical-Practical Theology*, Wilhelmus à Brakel's *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, and Heidegger's untranslated *Corpus Theologiae Christianae*). This book is representative (although a partial one, given its nature of a summary) of that era of Reformed continental theology that Ryan Glomsrud calls high orthodoxy (xiv). Glomsrud, the writer of the book's introduction, relies on Richard A. Muller's division of high orthodoxy (1640 to 1725), placed between early orthodoxy (1565-1640) and late orthodoxy (1725-1770).

The sections of each chapter are brief, but they do not lack precision and clarity. For instance, the twenty-first chapter, "On Grace and Calling," carefully expounds the gift and activity of faith. The covenant of grace, although described in a somewhat contractualistic way, is "perpetually and immutably one in matter and substance" (80), though "diverse in regard to economy" (83), and the recipients of its promises are defined by election: "He also promises life to those 'who believe alone (Acts 10:43), and only the elect believe (Titus 1:1)'" (77). The last chapter, "On Glorification," contains some heartwarming passages:

The perfection of the knowledge and love comes in the names of the *vision of God, His face, and knowledge...* Of what sort that vision will be we will see when we will see. It is certain that it will not be of essence... It will be no dry contemplation... But God *knows* and *is known* through love. Therefore, the vision of God, His virtues, works, intellect and will, is through the most pure love of God because no one can be blessed who does not love God and enjoy His love. This vision

will be joined with the full sense of the favor of God because it will not simply be a vision of the face of God, which also can be indignant, but the “light of the face of God” (Ps. 36:9). (209)

Theology is a science that is inimical to carelessness, shallowness, vagueness, impatience, and pride. The Reformed church needs the precision, depth, clarity, patience, and humility of Reformed Scholastics such as Heidegger. Those who made *The Concise Marrow of Theology* available in the English language deserve gratitude. This includes the publisher, which has published many publications of the same kind and period.

Exalted Above the Heavens: The Risen and Ascended Christ, New Studies in Biblical Theology, Volume 47, by Peter C. Orr. Downers Grove, IL: Apollos-Intervarsity Academic, 2018. Pp. 252. \$28.00. Softcover. ISBN: 978-0830826483. Reviewed by Marco Barone

This book is a scholarly study of the identity, location, and activity of the risen and ascended Christ. As such, the book focuses on the human nature of Christ, on the man Jesus of Nazareth, and not so much on His divine nature.

Chapter one is an introduction that briefly outlines the purpose and contents of the book. Chapters two to four discuss the identity of the exalted Christ. In chapter two, “The exalted Christ and the earthly Jesus,” Orr discusses the disciples’ need for special revelation to be able to recognize the raised Jesus, the biblical usage of names in general and of Jesus’ new name (Eph. 1:20-21) in particular, and Jesus as being made Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36) and Son of God (Acts 13:33; Rom. 1:4). Orr concludes that the resurrection was not a mere demonstration of what Jesus already was. Rather, although Christ obviously remained the same individual (6-9), the resurrection was an expansion and full expression of Jesus’ divine identity. There is a connection between Jesus’ and the believers’ respective experiences:

The resurrection does *change* the identity of the risen Christ. He is not simply *shown* or *declared* to be the Son of God; his resurrection

means that he is powerfully appointed Son of God *in the realm of the Spirit* ... We see something of a parallel later in the letter where Paul describes believers as ‘sons of God’ (8:14) ... We will only enter into the full experience of our sonship when we are raised from the dead (8:23)—when our bodies are redeemed. Our experience, then, mirrors Christ’s—who was fully God’s son before this resurrection but entered into the full experience of his sonship following his resurrection from the dead. (34-35)

Chapter three, “The exalted Christ and the Spirit,” begins to unravel a common theme of the book: the bodily absence of Christ from his people. Though Christ is painfully absent from the saints, He is closely with them by the Holy Spirit in them.

Christ ... is present in a *personal* sense by the presence of the Spirit himself in the believer ... If the Spirit is present to the believer, then Christ is ... The ‘density’ of mediation that the Spirit provides is such that if the Spirit is ‘in’ a person, in a *real* sense Christ is too. However, this ‘real’ presence of Christ is a qualified presence. The presence of Christ by the Spirit must be understood in the context of the absence of Christ ... To have the Spirit is to have Christ because the Spirit is the Spirit *of* Christ. (44)

Chapter four, “The Exalted Christ and the Church,” posits that “in a way not true of the earthly Jesus, the exalted Christ can and does fill the church ... the cosmological description of Christ is a development in his identity following his resurrection and exaltation” (73).

Chapters five to eight treat the location of the exalted Christ. Chapter five, “Ascension, Exaltation, and Absence,” explains the importance of the bodily absence of Jesus for the full genuineness of his humanity as an individual man who possessed a discrete and localizable body. Though Christ is present with the believers in a real and true way, this presence is never unqualified but mediated by the Holy Spirit. Thus, Christ is both truly absent and accessible to the saints.

Chapter six, “The Body of the Exalted Christ,” discusses the nature of Jesus’ exalted body by expounding in what sense Christ’s body is physical, heavenly, spiritual, discrete, and glorified. The chapter’s conclusion is edifying.

The exalted Christ remains a human being with a distinct human body. However, it is a glorious body and it will be the prototype for the body of believers to be transformed to. Christ remains a human being and brings humanity into glory ... Christ's possessing an individual body is not merely accidental to Paul's theology: it is *essential*. And not merely for our eschatological salvation but for the very exaltation of the son—who will remain as 'firstborn'. (114)

Chapter seven, "Paul and the Bodily Absence of Christ," further develops the importance of the bodily absence of Jesus both for our eschatological hope and for the true humanity of Christ.

Chapter eight, "The Epiphanic Presence of Christ," beautifully expounds further on the relation between Christ's absence and presence. Though absent, Christ is made manifest in the ministry of Paul (136-140), in the saints as "letters" (140-142), and in the transforming vision of Christ the saints have in His life and gospel (142-152). Through these means, Christ's "epiphanic presence has powerful epistemological, transformative and eschatological (death or life) effects in the world ... The Spirit, who shares Christ's divine status as 'Lord' [52-53, 146] enables the epiphanic presence of Christ to penetrate the very depth of the recipient's being" (152-153).

Chapters nine and ten elaborate on the exalted Christ's activity. In His activity on earth (chapter nine) Christ made Himself absent by sitting at the right hand of God, which, among many things, indicates that His work of salvation is completed. However, Christ is still active as He is leading His accomplished work to the final consummation through the progress of the gospel and the saints' perseverance. The New Testament's descriptions of Christ's work in and from heaven (chapter ten) clearly reveal Christ's divinity, since the New Testament writers assume and expect Christ to act from heaven in a way that only Jehovah God can do.

The final chapter contains pastoral reflections that perhaps needed a longer treatment. Based on the previous discussions, Orr discusses humanity's central place in God's work of redemption (the Word became, not an angel, but man) and our future bodily glorification. Christ's bodily absence creates intense longings in the saints, longings soothed by the means through which Christ makes himself present and active by the Holy Spirit. Orr ably connects the dots by showing how

“Christian hope, Christian life, Christian faith and Christian theology are all inextricably bound up with the exalted Christ” (203).

Orr’s arguments and goals may appear obvious to some (for example, that Jesus’ body is localizable, discrete, and individualized would seem intuitive to many Reformed people). However, that is not uncontroversial in Christendom (see, for instance, the Lutheran doctrine of the omnipresence of Christ’s body), and the book offers good material against those errors.

The book is not written at a popular level. A properly in-depth critical evaluation of Orr’s numerous exegeses can be made by readers who, differently from the present reviewer, know biblical languages. That said, Orr’s arguments are understandable to any attentive reader.

The book will also be of interest to those who like philosophical questions such as the nature of time and space and their relation to God and to the head of creation (Christ), since “whatever our understanding of space and place, Acts claims Jesus’ ascension as a paradigm-shifting relocation that alters the balance of space” (92).

The Doctrine of Scripture: An Introduction, by Mark D. Thompson. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022. Pp. 206. \$17.99. Softcover. ISBN: 978-1433573958. Reviewed by David J. Engelsma

The unique nature of this excellent summary of the Protestant doctrine of Scripture is that it establishes the doctrine about Scripture from the teaching of Jesus. Admittedly, even for this approach to the doctrine of Scripture, Scripture itself is necessary, and fundamental. Scripture is self-authenticating. We know Jesus and His view of Scripture from Scripture, not elsewhere. But once Scripture has revealed Jesus to us as Himself the very Word of God, we learn the truth about the Bible from Jesus: “We turn to the Bible to learn of Jesus, and it is the Jesus we find there who provides us with the appropriate attitude toward the Bible” (25).

This approach to the doctrine of Scripture is striking, if not unique. Ordinarily, conservative theology moves from Scripture to Jesus. The truth about Scripture is not derived explicitly and fundamentally from

the teaching of Jesus about it. The viewpoint of this volume is that “the Christian doctrine of Scripture must return again and again to the person, words, and work of Jesus Christ” (59). Jesus is not only the content of the Bible. He is also the determinative Lord of Scripture. The task, therefore, both of the author of the book, *The Doctrine of Scripture*, and of the reader is “to attend to each aspect of Jesus’ attitude toward the Scriptures” (59).

Right belief and confession concerning the doctrine of Scripture, therefore, is faith in and submission to Jesus Christ. Unbelief concerning Scripture, for example, denial of the Bible’s “trustworthiness,” which is the rubric under which Thompson treats the infallibility, or inerrancy, of the Bible, is unbelief with regard to Jesus. Whatever other implications this (sound) viewpoint may have, it certainly “ups the stakes” in the ongoing controversy between errancy and inerrancy, fallibility and infallibility.

How this works out in determining one’s belief concerning the Bible is illustrated in the church’s confession that the Bible is clear (“clarity”). Repeatedly, Jesus carried on controversy with His foes by an appeal to the Old Testament with the words, “have ye not read?” (Matt. 12: 3, 5). The implication of the question is that the Bible is clear on the subject being debated. Similarly, the church is compelled to confess the infallibility of Scripture by Jesus’ affirmation that Scripture “cannot be broken” (John 10:35).

When the book comes to examine the truths of Scripture’s sufficiency and efficacy, it begins with the teaching of Jesus on these qualities: “Once again we begin with Jesus, what he had to say about Scripture, and how that directed the approach of his apostles and is in fact reflected in the Old Testament itself” (158).

Appropriately, the first chapter is titled, “Jesus and Scripture.” The subtitle is, “The Christian Starting Point for Understanding Revelation and the Bible.”

In keeping with the design of all the books in this splendid series on all the doctrines of the Christian faith, the book is both thorough and succinct. Pertinent biblical references abound. Reliance on the doctrine of Jesus does not preclude numerous quotations of the early church fathers and of the Reformers. Luther and Calvin are allowed to weigh in on the topic. B. B. Warfield gets the last word on the “truthfulness”

(infallibility) of Scripture: “Every part of Holy Writ is thus held alike infallibly true in all its statements, of whatever kind” (156).

The author does not shy away from entering into the heated controversy, now found in “evangelical” Christianity, over the inerrancy, or infallibility, of Scripture. With appeal especially to Jesus’ words in John 10, that Scripture cannot be “broken,” but not without careful examination of the basic issue in the controversy, and cautious nuancing, Thompson, almost surprisingly for a conservative evangelical scholar in our day, comes down on the side of the angels.

He adds some observations that explain certain apparent discrepancies in the Bible, for example, the appearance of one, or more than one, angel or angels at the tomb of the risen Christ on the morning of the resurrection (150).

Thompson rejects “dictation” (76ff).

He ought to reconsider his assertion of a “double agency” in the production of Scripture, even though he means by the phrase to acknowledge God’s use of the differing, distinctive characteristics of the human instruments in the inspiring of Scripture (100). One “Agent” breathed forth the Bible. Holy men wrote the Bible as they were irresistibly carried along by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:21; my translation).

Treating of the translation of the Bible (the original manuscripts being lost), contending that translation does not detract from the versions’ being the Word of God to the readers, Thompson does not fail to refer to the “Wicked Bible,” with its command to commit adultery (116).

The nature of the book as a summary of the doctrine and its purpose of instructing the Christian church make it suitable and profitable for the layman. Suited as the summary is for the Christian layman, it lends itself also to the useful instruction of the beginning seminarian with regard to the source of all theology, as validated, explained, and defended by Jesus Himself. Indeed, if this reviewer is any indication, the minister who has been in office for many years will benefit from, and enjoy, this relatively short, but comprehensive, work on what has been the foundation, source, and sure guide of all his life’s labor.

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