

Biblical Salvation to Confessional Dogmatics: A Necessary Trajectory*

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Introduction

The Christian faith proclaims itself to be a religion of salvation from eternal damnation. This is the shocking, insistent message of the Bible. For example, we read in Acts 4:12:

Nor is there salvation in any other name (beside Jesus Christ, J.M.B.), for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.¹

Paul wrote in 2 Thess. 1:7-8:

...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.²

* The following is a version of lectures I gave as an introduction to Soteriology in the Fall of 1984, with additions, notes, and some rearrangement of the material.

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The Lord Jesus Himself gave us this warning and this promise :

And these will go away into everlasting punishment but the righteous into eternal life (Matt. 25.46).³

Holding tenaciously to the teaching of Scripture, the Historic Christian church has always confessed its faith in the coming of Christ, as we find in the Apostles' Creed :

I believe... in Jesus Christ ...He shall come to judge the living and the dead!

The salvation which Christ has achieved by His cross and resurrection and given to the world by His out-pouring of the Spirit is a salvation from the fire and darkness of eternal *hell*. All people will be judged at the second coming of Christ, and whoever is not found "written in the book of life" will be cast "into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20.15)⁵, and along with the devil, the beast, and the false prophet, they "shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. 20.10)⁶. But all who, by God's grace, have exercised true faith in the Lord Jesus will be saved for all eternity :

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God'.⁷

In the light of this eternal judgment to come, for hell or for heaven (better: new heaven and earth!), the church holds up Christ crucified to all the world, the only Savior, the only name by which we can be saved.

I. The Contemporary Setting

However, as soon as we pronounce those heavy words, *hell*, or *salvation only in Christ*, we find ourselves confronted by opposition from the religious and philosophical world around us, East and West. And then we find Marxism making a curious alliance with modernistic Christian (or better : *pseudo*-christian) theology in the liberal ecumenical movement of the World Council of Churches, offering an alternative to the historic understanding of salvation in Christ.

A. Non-christian Religion and Philosophy

Contemporary Marxism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and secular humanism are all clamoring for the attention of the world's peoples. Each in their own way, often divided into

competing sub-groups, claim to be a *unique* way of *salvation* from some kind of a *hellish* situation, though of course they use differing terminology and accent radically different aspects of our common human experience.⁸

Human culture of the 20th century, far from posing the questions which then Christianity answers with its symbols (Paul Tillich⁹, instead confronts Christianity continually with its own (proposed) answers. Aware of this state of affairs, we must never lose sight of the fact that the proclamation of the Gospel takes place in a fundamentally hostile environment, where men and women worship their own ideas, or themselves, instead of the true God. Like Paul in Athens (Acts 17), we are faced today with a great variety of human cultures, all of which are extremely religious, absolutizing some aspect of the created order in attempting to escape the clear revelation of God around them in creation (Romans 1.20).¹⁰

The Good News of the Gospel spells Bad News for every false religion, every twisting of God's truth, every disobedient thought of man. The proclamation of the Gospel is always an antithetical activity, as well as a thetical (positive) one, calling mankind to repent from sin and to turn away from sin. Jesus explained to His disciples that it was necessary, according to Scripture, that He suffer and rise from the dead on the third day :

... and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Luke 24.47)¹¹

Missions is therefore of necessity a confrontational activity, calling men to turn away from dead idols to serve the living and true God.

This necessity of confrontation is often denied in the contemporary literature concerning "religious dialogue." For example, the religious philosopher W. Cantwell Smith proposes a kind of synthesis of all religions, whereby the absolutes of specific religious tenets are softened and transformed to serve a hoped-for "greater whole."¹² We should be fully aware, however, that this selective-reductionism-cum-synthesis, though "friendly" to various traditional religious terminologies, feelings, and concerns, is in its search for the "greater whole" just as absolute as any traditional form of Islam or Hinduism. There is tolerance for one's own (synthetic) position, but none for the historic Christian faith. Likewise, the "transcending of the present conflict of beliefs" hoped for by John Hick¹³ only establishes another conflict at another point. Synthesis movements have always existed within various religious traditions, for example, within Hinduism, and have always wound up positing another absolute.¹⁴

As I have been indicating, a fitting definition of religion must be much broader than the usual ones, for religion includes Marxism and secular humanism as "absolutizing" movements. Religion exists wherever there are *absolute* claims, where one world view is called

the only true one, where other world views are criticized from this viewpoint, and where there is active propagation of this absolute point of view. One does not have to believe in God or gods to be religious. All one has to have is a comprehensive view of life, to which you call all people to commit themselves.¹⁵

B. Marxism

Without doubt the most aggressive religion of the 20th century is Marxism, or dialectical materialism. Russia and her ideological cohorts are out to conquer the world for their revolution. It is a faith that promises utopia for the future (the "classless society"), complete with "martyrs", Holy Book (*Das Kapital*, published between 1867-94), and "evangelism" (spreading the truth of the Revolution).

Karl Marx was deeply influenced by the liberal, humanistic theology of his day in Germany. We might better call it theologically tinged humanistic *anthropology*, since the scholars involved all rejected historic Christianity.¹⁶ The most important of these men were Hegel, Bruno Bauer, and Ludwig Feuerbach, from whom Marx learned respectively the dialectical method (Hegel), radical scepticism with respect to the Bible (Bauer), and materialistic "religion" (Feuerbach).

In Marx's religion, man's *predicament* ("fallen condition") is due to the exploitation of labor by the capitalist bosses. This *economic* misery cannot be alleviated by any gradual improvement of conditions via cooperation with the bourgeoisie ("salvation by works"), but only by a radical revolution, which overthrows the ruling classes and installs the proletariat as the ruling guide for the state ("justification by faith alone"). In this way the world will eventually be won to the Gospel of dialectical materialism ("Kingdom of God"), and paradise will return to earth, for ever.

My description of Marxism is not meant to be merely ironic, for it is remarkable how parallel to Christianity Marxism can appear, which fact we must probably attribute to its roots in the pseudo-christian "Enlightened" philosophical climate of Germany in the 1830's.

We must not underestimate the power Marxism holds over the minds of men, in the West and in the East—especially to intellectuals, who find belief in Christianity "a crucifixion of the intellect." Marxism offers (delusively) a combination of scientific analysis and ethical commitment (truly Kantian!) which has had amazing appeal. That men can maintain their faith in Marxism after the horrors of the Stalin purges, the Maoist brutalities, and the massacre of more than two million Cambodians by the Khmer Rouge, is proof of its

religious, absolutist character.¹⁷ It is without doubt a fervent religion of "salvation", which has led to systematic torture, oppression, and destruction on a scale probably unparalleled in the history of the world.

C. The W.C.C. and "Liberal Christianity"

That branch of dualistic Western humanism which is emotionally attached to the language of Christian tradition we call "liberal Christianity." As J. Gresham Machen argued so convincingly in his book, *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923), liberalism is not a form of Christianity, but rather a distinct form of religion of its own. When Machen criticizes it, he is thinking of its particular shape in his day, molded by the ethical, non-metaphysical optimism of Ritschl and Harnack. With respect to salvation, Machen says this about Liberalism:

It has been observed thus far that liberalism differs from Christianity with regard to the presuppositions of the gospel (the view of God and the view of man), with regard to the Book in which the gospel is contained, and with regard to the Person whose work the gospel sets forth. It is not surprising then that it differs from Christianity in its account of the gospel itself; it is not surprising that it presents an entirely different account of the way of salvation.¹⁸

To quote an old liberal himself, Adolph Harnack, professor at the University of Berlin, in his famous work *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1900), translated into English as *What is Christianity?*, Christianity is not all dependent upon certain supernatural events in the past, but is rather a few, key, simple ideas, which Jesus (supposedly) taught:

Erstlich, das Reich Gottes und sein Kommen, Zweitens, Gott der Vater und der unendliche Wert der Menschenseele, Drittens, die bessere Gerechtigkeit und das Gebot der Liebe.¹⁹

While this kind of old-fashioned liberalism was displaced by neo-orthodoxy for some thirty years between 1935 and 1965, it has come back in strength in the liberal denominations which are generally called "ecumenical" or "conciliar," because they are members of the World Council of Churches.

Clearly, this resurgence of the old liberalism has reappeared in combination with Marxism in the "theology of liberation." Liberation theology combines some of the *rhetoric* of neo-orthodoxy with the *religious feeling* of old liberalism (all religions are fundamentally the same), together with the *social involvement* in revolutionary movements which Marxism has fostered. So, Barth, Harnack, and Marx are the strange bed-fellows functioning as central figures in the mainstream World Council theology.

We see this, for example, in the new General Secretary of the WCC, Emilio Castro. Castro, for some years head of the division of Evangelism and Mission, feels some affinity with the "evangelicals", joining with them two years ago (1983) in Vancouver to sign a statement. At the same time he professes to see God at work in other religions (a Harnackian tendency), while he is a fervent supporter of "liberation" movements such as those in Latin America which owe much of their impetus to a Marxist analysis of social conditions.²⁰

D. Liberalism in Evangelical Circles

The fact that "evangelicals" can be very positive about the WCC at this moment in time shows us that liberalism has a strong foothold in this group. The liberal evangelicals of Fuller Seminary and other colleges and seminaries, documented by Harold Lindsell,²¹ are out to lead evangelicals away from a belief in the inerrancy of the Bible, as well as the uniqueness of Christ for salvation.

Liberalism is of course firmly entrenched in the theological faculties of the universities of Europe and the United States. However, the conservative evangelical professor of missions at Tübingen, Peter Beyerhaus, was one of the few conservative evangelicals, present at Vancouver, who took a strong stand against the prevailing WCC theology. For some years he has been documenting the liberal theology of the WCC, showing it to be fundamentally a humanistic ideology, and not historic Christianity. In his book, *Humanisierung: Einzige Hoffnung der Welt?* (1970), translated into English as *Missions: Which Way?* (1971), Beyerhaus says this about the missionary task:

Aber es muss aufs neue überzeugend zum Ausdruck gebracht werden, dass Mission vor allem kerygmatische (verkündigende), sakramentale und diakonische Darbietung des ewigen Heils ist. Dieses Heil ist in den grossen Heilstaten Gottes in Christus ein für allemal begründet und kommt allein auf dem von Christus selbst verordneten Wege apostolischer Vergegenwärtigung in die Welt... Nur in seinem Ergreifen können Menschen zu ihrer wahren Humanität kommen ...²²

We ought to be grateful for this voice of Beyerhaus' and hope that his continuing efforts to resist WCC influences may have an impact in Germany and outside it. However, his own evangelical movement there, the *Kein Anderes Evangelium* (No Other Gospel) movement, gathered together in the *Konferenz bekennender Gemeinschaften in den evangelischen Kirchen Deutschlands* (the Conference of Confessing Fellowships in the Protestant Churches in Germany), is, I fear, itself partly under the influence of some liberal ideas about the authority of Scripture, the resurrection of Christ, and the salvation of heathen. Even the great leader of

this movement, the former professor at Erlangen, Walter Künneth, is, sadly, not entirely free of the corrosive liberal heritage of German theological scholarship. In the past, for example, his view of the person of Christ, has been un-Chalcedonian (one person, two natures).²³ Künneth has also not been particularly concerned about those who claim that there are (minor) contradictions in the text of the New Testament.

As the church is a world-wide phenomenon, so the theological battles of our day are not limited to one country or denominational grouping. The fight for the truth is being carried on in America by such groups as the *Evangelical Theological Society*, which recently expelled the liberal evangelical New Testament scholar Robert Gundry, for his views criticizing the historicity of the Gospel of Matthew.²⁴ We may also mention the *International Council on Biblical Inerrancy* and its congresses and publications of recent years.

However, in America, in Germany, as well as in other countries, it is an indisputable fact that a weak view of the institutional church often sabotages efforts for Reformation. We must be happy for the success of the Missouri-Synod Lutheran Church in the U.S. in getting rid of its liberal professors from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, for the success the Southern Baptists seem to be having in replacing liberals with conservatives on important church boards,²⁵ but as a whole the influence of liberalism has effectively penetrated the evangelical world in its plurality of ecclesiastical bodies, so that discipline of liberals is now virtually impossible in many cases. In the words of the late Francis Schaeffer:

Accommodation, accommodation. How the mindset of accommodation grows and expands... With tears we must say that... a large segment of the evangelical world has become seduced by the world spirit of this present age.²⁶

Even if church or institutional discipline is exercised, liberals will simply leave a more conservative church or school and go to a more liberal one. And yet the evangelicals in conservative circles will go on having "spiritual fellowship" with their more liberal friends, never working for real church union and consistent discipline.

Make no mistake: the battle against liberalism must be a battle for church unity, based on the Bible and the Reformed Confessions. Effective discipline against liberalism will only be as effective as the discipline within the church.

In The Netherlands, this battle against the false religion of liberalism is carried on, too. The Reformed Churches (*Gereformeerde Kerken, Vrijgemaakt*) with their seminary in Kampen are firmly committed to the total authority of Scripture.²⁷ Yet the Dutch churches are not satisfied with a mere commitment to inerrancy on the part of the people. There is a distinct call in the preaching and teaching of the church to *membership* in the true church of Christ,

as well. This emphasis on the church is a constant irritant to such interdenominational groups as the *Evangelische Omroep* (Evangelical Broadcasting Network), as well as to the conservative *Gereformeerde Bond* (Reformed Union) within the liberal, pluralistic *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* (Dutch Reformed Church, the one-time "state church"), who believe that there can be a spiritual fight without aiming for institutional unity—although, actually, the *Gereformeerde Bond* wants everyone to return to the *Hervormde Kerk*, the "church of the fathers." The *Gereformeerde Kerken*, however, are thoroughly convinced, in the light of Scripture and the Reformed Confessions, that the *spiritual* fight for purity of doctrine cannot be carried on without at the same time fighting for the purity of the *visible church* of Christ. This is part of the precious heritage bequeathed to the churches in The Netherlands by Klaas Schilder and others, since the original *Vrijmaking* (Liberation) in 1944, over the issue of presumptive regeneration.²⁸

Needless to say, this spiritual battle is also being fought in Korea. Our Kosin church (Presbyterian Church in Korea, with its seminary in Pusan) stands for the full authority of Scripture and is known for this stand. The church's heritage is a rich one, formed by the resistance to enforced Japanese Shinto worship.²⁹ Over against the liberal Kijang group, the Methodists, and the majority of the Tonghap group, the Kosin church demands that church life be controlled concretely by the Word of Scripture. This is a marvellous testimony and we thank God for it. However, there is abroad a spirit of "general evangelicalism" in Korea, which is also at work in the Kosin church. The so-called "success" of Paul Yonggi Cho and his Full Gospel Church in Seoul is quite impressive to some Kosin men. The big celebration of "100 Years of the Korean Church" last year (1984) was a fully interdenominational affair, with liberal churches also represented. *And the Kosin church participated with them on various occasions.* This should cause us to be concerned. Our battle is a spiritual battle against the powers of Satan and the idolatry of man,³⁰ and we must realize how important it is to fight with God's weapons. The fight against liberalism cannot be won in Korea if we cooperate with those remaining in liberal or pluralistic church-groups.

In my opinion, the greatest threat to God's cause in the world today is not Islam, Roman Catholicism, or Marxism. The greatest threat to God's cause is Liberalism, that form of pseudo-christianity which has so cleverly penetrated the West (and now the East) with its deception and lies. Let us never cease fighting this terrible enemy of the Gospel!

II. Biblical Salvation

We who hold to the authority of the Bible believe that the Bible fully conveys the actuality and the meaning of the great events of redemptive history which culminated in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. In doing so we naturally lay emphasis on the genuine, historical character of these events, as well as on Scripture itself, which alone gives us God's definitive explanation of what He has graciously and uniquely done for our eternal salvation.

A. Salvation in Time and Space

Christianity is, without question, a religion of salvation. In the Old Testament, the rescuing of Noah and his family (Gen. 6-8), God's covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12-17), the deliverance of Israel from Egypt (Ex. 13,14), with the subsequent giving of the law to Moses, and the elaborate sacrificial rituals of the Tabernacle (Ex. 20:25-30; Lev. 1-8, etc.), these are all pivotal moments in the history of redemption prior to the coming of Christ. In them God shows Himself to be the One who singles out, rescues, preserves, and forgives His people, by His own sovereign, mighty acts in time and space. It is clear that this recitation of God's redemptive acts can only be authentic if indeed these acts really occurred in history. It would be ludicrous to claim to agree with the "theology" of the Noah story while at the same time believing it to be a pious legend, without any basis in fact. That God is a God of salvation is strictly dependent upon His having done precisely what the Scripture records. This is illustrated vividly by the Exodus account. If, in fact, the entire miraculous dimension of the story is a projection of a later age upon the past, then seeing God as "saving" in the story is equally a projection.³¹

The New Testament, as the culmination and fulfillment of the Old Testament revelation, is similarly a recital, celebration, and proclamation of salvation, salvation now in the Messiah, the incarnate Son of God, salvation from "the coming wrath" (1 Thess. 1.10). And the salvation of the New Testament is wholly dependent upon the cross and resurrection, in coordination with the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Through these unique events, and through them alone, God has accomplished and grants salvation to a fallen world.³² The sacrificial work of Christ in history is the basis for all that we may enjoy in our relationship with God. Herman Bavinck wrote in his *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, vol. 3:

Hetgeen Christus door deze zijne offerande verworven heeft, is te veel om te noemen. Voor

zichzelf verwierf Hij daardoor zijne gansche verhooving, de opstanding, de hemelvaart, de zitting ter rechterhand Gods... En verder verwierf Hij voor de zijnen, voor de menschheid, voor de wereld eene onafzienbare reeks van zegeningen... uit Hem vloeien toch alle weldaden voort: de gansche σωτηρια, en dan nader de vergeving der zonden, de wegneming, αἴρειν onzer zonden, ... de rechtvaardig—making, de gerechtigheid, de υἰοθεοια ... verder de gave des Heiligen Geestes, de wedergeboorte en het kindschap uit God, ... de gemeenschap aan de opstanding en de hemelvaart van Christus, ... de ontkoming aan het oordeel, ... en eindelijk de opstanding ten jongsten dage, ... de nieuwe hemel en aarde, en de wederoprichting aller dingen.³³

This is all the glorious result of Christ's work in his "vernedering" (humiliation), on earth, from Bethlehem to Jerusalem. This is the significance of the cross.

It belongs to the historical *resurrection* to be the preeminent *sign* of salvation in the New Testament. As Paul confesses in 1 Cor. 15:14:

And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is vain and your faith is also vain.³⁴

While the current "critical consensus" of the higher critical New Testament scholars remains hostile to the historicity of the empty tomb in connection with Jesus' resurrection,³⁵ historic Christianity, echoing Paul, has always maintained that without the empty tomb we are still lost in our sins and without hope of salvation. Paul's words in 1 Cor. 15: 3—20 are one long argument to this effect. In this passage we see four things which stand or fall with the actual, historical resurrection of Christ:

- (1) the *claim* of the apostles to have *witnessed* the risen Christ (verses 5—8, 15);
- (2) the *gospel* which was *preached*, centering on the death and resurrection of Jesus (verses 1—5, 11, 12);
- (3) the *faith* of the believers in this message (verses 1, 2, 11, 14, 17); and
- (4) the *salvation* which resulted from believing in Christ (verses 2, 3, 17, 18, 20).

If there was no resurrection, says Paul, then the apostles are false witnesses of God (vs. 15), their gospel message is false (vs. 14), the believers' faith is pointless (vs. 14), and nobody has been saved (vs. 17, 18). The believers' salvation is dependent upon their faith, which is dependent upon the gospel they heard, which is dependent upon the truth of the witness of the apostles to the resurrection of Christ, which is dependent upon the actual, historical resurrection. Literally everything, then, depends upon the latter event. No resurrection, no salvation.

But Jesus *has* been raised, Paul says (vs. 20). He has absolutely no doubt about it. And therefore there *is* full salvation, from sin and eternal judgment, for all who have trusted or who will ever trust in Christ. This is termed nonsense by the German philosopher Lessing, of the 18th century, who claimed that faith can not rest on any historical facts, let alone

miraculous events:

... wenn aber 'keine historische Wahrheit demonstretet(sic) werden kann, so kann auch nichts durch historische Wahrheit demonstretet werden'.³⁶

This is Lessing's famous "Graben", the ditch separating the historical and that which can be believed by "reason." But Paul, in 1 Cor. 15, argues precisely that our faith rests wholly upon the true, miraculous resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Further, we may take the historicity of the resurrection as being paradigmatic for the entire fabric of New Testament revelation. Without the historic, bodily resurrection of Christ, the proclamation of the apostles is a sham and the belief of Christians is worthless (κενός). But this can be extended to the entire life of Christ recorded in the four Gospels. Without a real virgin birth (Matt. 1, Luke 2), without a real changing of water into wine (John 2), without a real transfiguration on the mountain (Matt. 17), yes without Jesus spitting on the ground to make clay to anoint the eyes of the blind man with (John 9.6), without each and every event of Jesus' life being historically true, both "ordinary" and "miraculous" events, then also "our preaching is vain and your faith is also vain." For our faith is directed not to some vague "Christ of faith", or some Jesus of our imagination, but to the actual, concrete Jesus of Nazareth described in so much detail in the Gospels.³⁷ The Jesus of the resurrection is the Jesus of Bethlehem; they are inextricably identical.

This makes the preaching of the cross very concrete, too. The risen Christ is exactly identical with the earthly Jesus. The proclamation of the one entails the proclamation of the other. Paul's letters only can function against the background of the history given us by the Gospels.

Jesus Christ, crucified but raised, *He* is the historical center and source of the Good News, for He, by His Life and resurrection, has made salvation a reality.

B. The Relation of Scripture to Salvation

The German New Testament scholar, Eduard Lohse, says near the end of his book, *Umwelt des Neuen Testaments* (1983), the following words:

Allein das Wort vom Kreuz, das Juden und Griechen gepredigt wird, eröffnet Rettung und Heil für alle, die es glaubend annehmen.³⁸

This is a clear, indisputably Biblical sentence, and we wholeheartedly concur with it. However, much of modern New Testament scholarship, including Lohse's, continues to undermine the message of "Rettung und Heil" (deliverance and salvation) the church ought to proclaim to the world. This is so because the so-called "historisch—kritische Methode"

(higher critical method) refuses to let the Scripture be Scripture, that is, God's infallible Word. In typically dualistic fashion, a supposedly "neutral" attitude is first adopted, whereby the entire NT text and its purported historical events are subjected to searching scrutiny. Then, after radically (or more subtly, "moderately") dissecting the text, disposing with "non-historical" additions and "contradictory statements," the "neutral" hat is taken off and the "hat of faith" is put on, so that we may "believe" what the critics (ourselves) have first debunked.

In fact, this is from the very start to abandon the perspicuous authority of the Bible, substituting instead the authority of autonomous reason. It flows from an antagonistic dualism between reason and faith, first made a *religious* attitude in the 18th century. The result is schizophrenia in one's attitude toward the Bible, God, man, and salvation. Cornelius Van Til has called this religious posture the rationalism/irrationalism of modern philosophy.³⁹

In the official circles of the World Council of Churches, this schizophrenia of modernism reigns supreme. Biblical language and quotations from Scripture stream forth out of the various publications, such as the *International Review of Mission*, but it is Biblical language made fundamentally ambiguous by a prior commitment to secularized science, scholarship, and world-view, in short, autonomous reason. Every apparently Biblical quotation, every Biblical imperative, when examined carefully, is seen to be functioning within the virulently anti-Biblical mentality of Western European "Enlightenment" (Kant, Hegel, Marx, Darwin). This is true even of the most pietistic, naive-sounding articles. It is certainly true of the now famous "BEM" document on baptism, eucharist, and ministry, presented at the Vancouver Sixth Assembly (1983), and also called the "Lima Text."⁴⁰ Who could possibly argue with the *Biblical* character of the opening section on baptism?:

Christian baptism is rooted in the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, in his death and in his resurrection. It is incorporation into Christ, who is the crucified and risen Lord; it is entry into the New Covenant between God and God's people. Baptism is a gift of God, and is administered in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.⁴¹

And yet this is in fact *ambiguous* language, ambiguous language which is continuously used in the rest of BEM, betraying its modernist background.

This is demonstrated by the articles in the April 1983 issue of the *I.R.M.* which accompany the BEM document itself. Both the Indian Roman Catholic Samuel Rayan¹, as well as the Czech Protestant Josef Smolik, show how much the BEM document is meant to function within a fundamentally modernist environment. Smolik comments on the section on baptism as follows:

The newness of life, the death of the old Adam which was experienced in baptism has to be newly experienced and continued in suffering (E. Käsemann).⁴²

This last reference is tell-tale, it being the *only* reference to a scholar. That the post-Bultmannian (meaning generally in agreement with Bultmann on the character of NT scholarship and theology, differing on the amount of what we know about the "historical Jesus") Käsemann of Tübingen is here cited *authoritatively* shows the connection between the apparent Christian, Biblical language of the BEM document and its pseudo-Christian meaning.

Moving on to the evangelicals of our day, many oppose the modernist mind-set and the "assured results" of mainstream higher criticism. Yet more and more do not. The latter maintain that the Scripture's chief purpose is to bring us into a "saving relationship" with Jesus Christ, but go on to deny the Bible's infallible, inerrant character (or else redefine "infallible" and "inerrant" in functionalist terms). Some even go so far as to deny central events of the New Testament as being historical. Robert Gundry has called both the virgin birth of Christ and the great Commission (Matt. 28) unhistorical, in his commentary on Matthew.⁴³ And yet he continues to maintain that he believes in the inerrancy of Scripture. How is this possible?

As we have mentioned above, what Gundry and many other neo-evangelicals are doing is to redefine the meaning of "inerrant". Instead of the old meaning, whereby the Bible was seen as completely truthful, on whatever subject it touched upon, including historical and geographical matters, the new meaning of "inerrancy", as defined by the liberal evangelicals, is that the Bible "inerrantly" leads us to "salvation" (an ambiguous term!) in "Christ". There are many historical errors, ethical mistakes, wrong world-views in the Bible (they say), but in spite of these "unimportant" errors the Bible is completely trustworthy as a book leading us to "faith" in Christ (whatever these terms may mean).

In 1979, Jack Rogers and Donald McKim published their book, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach*.⁴⁴ This was a full-scale attempt to try to justify the new approach to the Bible. According to Rogers and McKim, the Bible contains many "technical" errors, but this in no way affects the authority of Scripture. They then try to show that the mainstream of the historical church has held a view similar to theirs, whereby minor errors were admitted to exist, but the central message of Scripture was (supposedly) emphasized. Rogers and McKim try to argue that Augustine and Calvin, among others, held this view.

In 1982 an excellent reply to Rogers and McKim appeared, John D. Woodbridge's *Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers/McKim Proposal*.⁴⁵ Woodbridge shows very clearly that

Rogers and McKim's arguments are faulty. The mainstream historical church, including Augustine and Calvin, can be shown to have held stongly to the inerrancy of Scripture. Aand by the inerrancy of Scripture they meant that whatever the Scripture said was true, both doctrinally and historically. The inerrancy of Scripture is neither scholastic, nor a fabrication of old Princeton Seminary (which Rogers and McKim claim), but the common confession of the church down through the ages. Following in the footsteps of Karl Barth and G.C. Berkouwer, Rogers and McKim do not realize that they are really abandoning the full authority of the Bible. As Woodbridge says:

The authors' description of the Bible creates for them the same kind of dilemma that neoorthodox scholars before them faced, namely, how to distinguish the infallible 'central saving message' from the errant 'difficult surrounding material.' This is a critical problem because Christianity is grounded in human history. Salvation truths are planted in the soil of the Bible's historical discourse about things that happened.⁴⁶

For Barth, Berkouwer, and the neo—evangelicals, a narrative episode in the Bible might be *historically* untrue (even a saga or myth), but still *theologically* be true. Unfortunately, this effectively cuts the heart out of the Christian faith.

What then is a *Biblical* approach to the Bile? (We're not in the least afraid of circularity!⁴⁷ One could do worse than listen to the opening chapter of the Westminster Confession, entitled "Of the Holy Scripture." We notice how the doctrine of Scripture is connected directly with the doctrine of salvation (which the Westminster Confession treats at great length):

I. Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence, do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of his will, which is necessary unto salvation; therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his Church; ...and...to commit the same wholly unto writing; which maketh the holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.⁴⁸

We notice several things here. The Westminster Confession (hereafter WC) begins with the doctrine of Scripture, rather than the doctrine of God. Here it is following the example of such Reformed Confessions as the First and Second Helvetic Confessions (composed by Bullinger in Zürich in 1536 and 1562), and the Irish Articles of Religion (written by James Ussher in 1615). The Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Lutheran Augsburg Confession (1530) all begin with God directly, as do other Reformed Confessions such as the Belgic Confession (1561) and the Anglican Thirty—nine Articles (1536).⁴⁹ But to begin with Scripture is of course not to lose sight of the preeminence of God

Himself. For to talk about revelation in nature and in Scripture is to talk directly about how God makes Himself known to us. Notice the terminology of the WC: in *nature* we see God's goodness, wisdom, and power, and in *Scripture* He reveals Himself and His will in order that we may be saved. In this way, to begin by confessing our faith in God's Word is in no way to put Scripture above God Himself, but rather to emphasize that we come to know Him only by means of His own gracious revelation.

While focussing on the special revelation deposited in the Bible, the world of "general revelation" or "nature" is not passed over. The Protestant Reformation, being close friend of the apostle Paul, was careful to follow his line of thought in dealing with the doctrine of revelation. Particularly the book of Romans was a source of rich truth for confessional formulations and even structure.

The first Scripture references in this first chapter are to Romans 1 and 2, and to Psalm 19. The very first sentence of the WC ("Although the light of nature...") is almost a paraphrase of Paul's words in *Romans* 1.18—20:

(vs.18) For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

(vs.19) Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them (or: to them, *ἐν αὐτοῖς*); for God has shown it to them.

(vs.20) For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen (*καθορᾶται*) being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse...⁵⁰

In these verses, Paul is very clearly referring to the result of God's revelation in or through His created world: men do not use it properly, and instead of glorifying God, they wind up making idols to worship (vss. 21,23,25). Far from being a way by which non—Christians can be saved, God's revelation in creation is twisted and corrupted in the minds of fallen men, so that it has no genuine benefit to them.

In the world around us, in the starry sky at night (Ps.19.1), God's great creativity is on display. His "invisible things" (*τὰ ἀόρατα*), His wonderful personal characteristics, what the WC calls His "goodness, wisdom, and power," are fully to be seen. This is no ground for some kind of so—called "natural theology," whereby logical arguments are used to prove God's existence. Rather, in Paul's words, God actually does show Himself to men's senses and minds. But fallen man's immediate reflex is to reinterpret this clear revelation, suppressing its truth and denying its true author. In Adam and by his continual choice, fallen man resists the revelation of God around him.⁵¹

The WC, then, as it begins to talk about Scripture, sets off God's revelation in nature as

being sufficient to condemn man, but not sufficient to save him. Or rather, man's natural reaction to natural revelation is to reject it and so become more and more God's enemy. It is this radically fallen context, in which man finds himself, that the WC addresses. The preeminent function of Scripture is, as the deposit of that special, redemptive revelation of God, to be the instrument of salvation for mankind. The WC is not interested in some impersonal, "philosophical" discourse about the way God reveals Himself. No, what is at stake is the eternal state of every individual who ever lived or will live on earth. That "which is necessary unto salvation" is what the Scriptures communicate.

We notice the connection between *salvation* and *inscripturation*. Hooking up with our previous discussion of 1 Cor. 15, we see that Paul, in that passage, far from deemphasizing the role of the Scriptures in the light of Christ's resurrection, lays special emphasis upon them. In verse 3 and 4 Paul says that Christ died and rose *according to the Scriptures* (κατὰ τὰς γραφάς).⁵² The crucifixion and resurrection were not some strange, isolated events, but the fulfillment of the salvation—history embodied in the Old Testament Scriptures. The Old Testament had predicted and explained the meaning of Christ's coming, and so this "according to the Scriptures" was an integral part of the gospel Paul preached (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον vss. 1–3). That κατὰ τὰς γραφάς is repeated shows the special emphasis Paul put on the authority (and necessity) of Scripture.

We may even say that the *past*, authoritative words of Scripture concerning Christ's death and resurrection, find their counterpart in the *present* witness and preaching of the apostles. Authoritative words of witness and interpretation surround the coming of the Messiah—Deliverer, *previous* to his coming (the Old Testament) and *after* his coming (the preaching and writing (!) of the apostles). These words are in no sense a false witness, preached by "false witnesses" (ψευδομαρτυρες, vs. 15), but wholly reliable in every detail.

Illustrative of the New Testament's conception of witnessing as entailing accuracy concerning historical details (contrary to the silly conception of modern critics with respect to the alleged "pre—scientific" character of historical reports in the New Testament age), is the passage in Mark 14 (paralleled in Matt. 26) about the "false witnesses" who "bore false witness" (ἐψευδομαρτύρου) against Jesus:

(vs.55) And the chief priests and all the council sought testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, and found none.

(vs.56) For many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree

(vs.57) And some rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying, (Ἰσαυ... οὐκ ἦσαν).

(vs.58) 'We heard Him say, "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within

three days I will build another made without hands,"

(vs.59) But not even then did their testimony (ἡ μαρτυρία) agree (ἴση).⁵³

It is perfectly clear in this passage that "false witnesses" are not those whose *motives* are impure (though this is of course implicit) but those who are *not telling what actually happened*. If their "testimonies" do not agree, then they are judged to be "false witnesses." And this refers to disagreement in the details of the story the witnesses tell. For the "some" (vs.57) tell the *same story* about Jesus destroying the temple (vs.58), yet it is the disagreement in the details, the contradictions in the accounts of what Jesus actually said, which constitute the grounds for saying that their "testimony" does not "agree"(vs.59).

This whole juridical setting, and the concept of "witness", goes back to the Old Testament law. Deut. 17 gives legal guidance to arriving at a verdict with respect to an accused person. If someone

(vs.3)...has gone and served other gods (עֲבָדָה אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים) and worshiped them,...

(vs.4) and it is told you,... then you shall inquire diligently. And if it is indeed true and certain (אִם אֵלֶּיךָ יָבִיאוּ אֵת הַמִּשְׁפָּט) that such an abomination has been committed in Israel,

(vs.5) then you shall bring out of your gates that man or woman who has committed that wicked thing, and shall stone to death that man or woman with stones.

(vs.6) Whoever is worthy of death shall be put to death on the testimony(שְׁנֵי-אוֹרְחֵי) of two or three witnesses(שְׁלוֹשָׁה), but he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness.⁵⁴

This last condition is repeated in Deut. 19:15:

One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established (אֵת הַמִּשְׁפָּט) by the testimony (שְׁנֵי-אוֹרְחֵי) of two or three witnesses. (שְׁנֵי-אוֹרְחֵי וְשְׁלוֹשָׁה).⁵⁵

The call for two or three witnesses is obviously given in order to compare the witnesses. If there are material contradictions, then the accused may not be condemned.

This was what was at issue in Mark 14. The "false witnesses" were shown to be "false" by the fact that their testimony about Jesus was contradictory. Thus, legally, in the light of the (OT) Scriptural requirements concerning valid testimony, the demands had not been met, even though the general tenor of their accusations(Jesus said he would destroy the temple and then build another without hands after three days) was the same.

We naturally see the relation between this concept of "testimony" and the Scripture as the "testimony" to God's great acts of salvation, in the Old and in the New Testament. As we saw in 1 Cor. 15, the text functions as a witness to the resurrection. The redemptive—historical *facts* are transmitted authoritatively by the *words* of Paul, referring to the *experience* of the apostles and others in seeing the risen Jesus. And this apostolic testimony is

complemented by the previous, prophetic "testimony" of the Old Testament: of "first importance" is the fact that "Christ died for our sins *according to the Scriptures*, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day *according to the Scriptures*..." The facts of the cross, burial, and resurrection, along with the meaning of these events ("died for our sins"— *ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν*) are transmitted purely, without contradiction or distortion, by the Old Testament and apostolic words (soon to become the *New Testament*).

And the message of Scripture is preeminently a saving message. Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 15.2: "By this message (*δι' οὗ*) you are saved (*σωζεσθε*)..." Through the means of non-contradictory, verbal revelation, the Old Testament and the preaching of the apostles, salvation in Christ becomes a reality for the world. And from the rest of the Bible we realize that this verbal revelation (Old and New Testament) is inspired, God-breathed (*θεο-πνευστος*, 2Tim. 3.16), infallible, and inerrant. Our salvation from eternal hell (1 Cor. 15.18. "lost"— *ἀπώλοντο*) depends on it!

III. Confessional Dogmatics and Salvation

The historic Christian church has always been active in holding forth this message of Biblical salvation to the world. There has been a definite development of doctrine in the church, transmitted in the confessions and theology, based upon intense reflection on the Scripture, on the need for proclamation and teaching, and the necessity of refuting heresies and dilutions of the Gospel. Of late, however, in orthodox Reformed circles, there has been a call to do dogmatics (or systematic theology⁵⁶ in a new way. Though we may learn from this critique, I firmly believe we must hold to a *confessional* style of dogmatics. In the following we hear the critique and my response to it.

A. Objections from Three Sources and a Response

As I mentioned, there has been some discussion in Reformed circles, over the last few years, about systematic theology in general, and the traditional, dogmatical treatment of the doctrine of salvation in particular. One stream of thought would like to do away with systematic theology as a separate department of theology. The argument here is that the dogmaticians, in dealing with the Biblical teaching in particular *loci*, should really be doing "Biblical theology" in the manner of Geerhardus Vos. Systematic theology, these critics say, abstract doctrine from the flow of Biblical history and development, and as a result standard Systematic Theologies or Dogmatics tend to be more like medical textbooks or philosophical treatises, instead of the exposition of Biblical doctrine. One of the professors of NT at Westminster Seminary (Philadelphia, U.S.), Richard Gaffin, wrote an article for the *Westminster Theological Journal* entitled "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology" in 1976, in which he criticized traditional systematic theology (Reformed dogmatics) on these grounds.⁵⁷

A second attack upon Reformed dogmatics comes from the ranks of the Dooyeweerdian philosophers and theologians. Similar to the Biblical theologians, the Dooyeweerdians criticize systematic theology for being too schematic, too influenced by scholastic philosophy, and too abstract.⁵⁸ However, the Dooyeweerdians also criticize the Biblical theology movement for being "Biblicistic," thinking that one can reproduce the message of the Bible along equally schematic "redemptive—historical" lines. As soon as one does "theology", according to the Dooyeweerd school, one is performing a logical transformation upon the written Word. This logical transformation which we call "theology" is in no sense the direct teaching of Scripture. The living Word (and here there is some ambiguity as to whether the Word is Scripture or God's more comprehensive "creation" Word) speaks directly to our hearts, and does not need

any mediation of theologians to do its work. This, according to the school of Dooyeweerd, is the great fallacy of theology in general, that it thinks that it must “mediate” God’s Word to the people, whereas God’s Word has in itself the power to reach us and does not need the “assistance” of theology.⁵⁹

A third source of critique with reference to traditional Reformed dogmatics is more nebulous. It has to do with a feeling among some theologians and pastors that systematic theology is too dry, too abstract, too far away from the concerns and problems of ordinary people. In this sense we sense sympathy with the critique coming from the Biblical Theology movement and the Dooyeweerdians. Reformed theology is too intellectual, so goes the complaint, too concerned with minute details of doctrinal differences, too polemical, too removed from “life in the Spirit,” religious experience and feeling. This complaint comes from those who wish to emphasize the practical, evangelistic, and pietistic sides of the faith.⁶⁰ People see the Baptist, independent, and Pentecostal churches growing, and blame Reformed theology, chiefly systematic theology, for the fact that Reformed churches do not grow.

So, from three sides we hear pointed criticism of traditional Reformed dogmatics. Is this in any sense on target? Do we have to rethink the very basis for systematic theology?

With respect to Dr. Gaffin’s criticism I must say that I disagree with him here. No doubt some systematic theology has been done poorly, with little feeling for the flow of Scriptural revelation, but that does not mean that it in principle cannot do justice to the Bible.⁶¹ Of course every kind of theological work can be misused or badly done, but if we look at the history of Reformed theology we can look back with gratitude on the “locus” method of systematic theology followed by Calvin, Hodge, Bavinck, and others. Their writings have helped the church to understand the Bible better, to confess the truth of the Gospel in a more relevant way, and to resist heretical movements.

Still, we must agree with Gaffin that systematic theology has sometimes been done in an overly “scholastic”, too schematic way. I think we do need to bring in more clearly the insights of direct exegetical research as well as the perspective of Biblical theology. When we think of the doctrine of salvation, for example, we should look at the important exegetes’ treatment of various passages of Romans (the commentaries of John Murray, C.E.B. Cranfield, and (even) Käsemann,⁶² for example). With regard to Biblical theology, Vos’s *Biblical Theology* and other such works ought to be consulted when we try to describe what salvation means in the Bible.

With respect to the Dooyeweerdian school’s criticism, I would also disagree that systematic theology is a dangerous “logical” transformation of the Bible. Systematic theology tries to focus attention on one doctrine or problem at a time, but this does not necessarily mean that to do so is to remove oneself from the living reality of God’s powerful Word.⁶³ When we study the

Scriptural doctrine of salvation we want to know what the *Bible* says about it. We believe that the Bible, its rich textual form, is the source of all true theology. So, a “concordance” method (looking up the word “salvation” and related terms) is a very proper way to begin to understand God’s revelation about this central issue. Systematic theology is not trying to “mediate” God’s Word to others, in some elite fashion, but to understand God’s revealed truth and to bring it to contemporary expression. For this task, awareness, imagination, and creative insight are eventually just as necessary as logic!

Nevertheless, we ought never forget the wider context of dogmatic theology. Christian philosophy seeks to look at the totality of life (or central problems of existence) from a distinctly Christian point of view. Systematic theology can only gain from being acquainted with research in this area. We are painfully aware how non-Christian philosophy (Aristotle, Plato, Existentialism, Marxism) has often been integrated, consciously or unconsciously, into some Christian theology. Christian philosophy will help us avoid this error, forcing us to look at our presuppositions and our philosophical climate in which we live,⁶⁴ and to seek to make our theological language and concepts more Biblically authentic.

Third, with regard to the criticism of those who want to see a more practical theology, instead of the merely “theoretical”⁶⁵ theology of the systematic theologians, I disagree that systematic theology is *per se* abstract and impractical. Many of the issues raised in systematic theology have a historical background in raging, emotionally-charged church struggles about doctrine and life. In the fourth century, all Christians, down to the butcher on the corner, knew the difference between *homoousios* and *homoiousios* (is the Logos of the *same* substance with the Father, or of *like* substance?). *Doctrinal* issues have been the chief *practical* issues of church history. The Reformation was a theological debate about the meaning of “justification.” The meaning of baptism (what does it signify, is it for infants as well as adults?) remains a very practical issue for the church, and it is most directly dealt with by dogmatics. Think of other issues: the person and work of the Holy Spirit, the inerrancy of Scripture, offices in the church (should women be ordained?). These and many more examples show us that the “locus” method, focussing on one doctrine or problem at a time, is, or ought to be, very relevant to the most practical life of the church.

I fear that for many critics of systematic theology “doctrine” itself is something they think to be unimportant. However, by doing so they effectively abandon their ties with the historic Christian faith.⁶⁶ For example, if the inerrancy of Scripture (a vitally practical doctrine!) is not important to you, you need to be either converted, sanctified, or disciplined!

Still, we must be sensitive to legitimate grievances. As in the past, so now systematic theology must never abandon its concern for the *present* situation. Certain heresies have arisen

in our day which need more direct confrontation and refutation. I think particularly of liberalism, in this regard. Furthermore, the great historic doctrines of the church need to be expressed in ways that call us to greater devotion in evangelism, missions, and personal piety. If the doctrine of salvation becomes boring to you, then we must take care that the manner of its treatment not be the major cause!

So, to summarize, I do not agree with those who feel that systematic or dogmatic theology should be given up. But I do feel that systematic theology should be *sensitive* to constructive criticism, and that we should seek, in doing dogmatics, to be *soundly exegetical, informed by Biblical theology, in touch with Christian philosophy, and genuinely practical.*

B. The Confessional Approach

In the second and third centuries, we see distinct Christian *creeds* and a distinct Christian *theology* emerge in the life of the church. Both were tied to the character of Christian faith as a world-wide *witnessing* movement. The preaching and teaching of the church *proclaimed* the message of the Gospel, as we find it pointedly summarized in the New Testament at various places.⁶⁷ One such place is John 3.16, which is structured in the following way:

1. For God
so loved (Greek: So loved God...)
2. the world
3. that He gave His only-begotten Son
4. that whoever believes in Him
5. shall not perish
6. but have eternal life.⁶⁸

The Christian proclamation (*kerygma*) had a definite content. This content could be *summarized* in a concentrated way, such as this one verse out of the Gospel of John. But this content could also be energetically *expounded upon*, such as we see the apostle Paul doing in Romans. In the fulness of time, in the fulness of the revelation in Christ, *salvation* had come to the world. The Old and New Testaments can be seen as the authoritative, inerrant *explanation* of the *meaning* of salvation in Jesus Christ.

To know what salvation is, then, one must know *who* Jesus Christ is (the Person of Christ) and *what* He has done for us (the Work of Christ). But Christ's Person and Work cannot be isolated from other key matters of revelation. As we saw above, John 3.16 summarizes the message of salvation as a message about God and His love, the world, God's sending His only Son, the call to faith in Christ, the warning of eternal death, and the promise of eternal life.

At key moments in the Old and New Testament, we find God's people and key individuals making verbal "profession" of their faith, affirming their trust in God as creator, judge, and redeemer, and acknowledging Jesus Christ as God's Son, the only savior of the world. A few examples:

Deut. 6.4:Hear, O Israel: Yahweh our Elohim, Yahweh is one. (The Lord our God, the Lord is one.)

John 1. 49:Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God, You are the king of Israel."

Matt. 16. 16:And Simon Peter, answering, said: "You are the Christ (the Messiah), the Son of the living God."

John 20. 28:Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

Acts 8. 37:(The eunuch said,) "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

1 Cor. 8. 6:There is one God the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.⁶⁹

The apostle Paul exhorts everyone to make personal confession of faith in the following passage:

Rom. 10.9,10:... if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.⁷⁰

For Paul, public profession of faith ("confession with the mouth") is indispensable to being saved.

Furthermore, true faith repudiates false teaching. Paul warned the Galatians:

Gal. 1.7,8:...but there are some who are troubling you, who would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than that which we have preached to you, let him be cursed!⁷¹

The doctrine of justification by faith alone was not a side issue for Paul. Those who were saying that we must also be circumcized were in fact denying the Gospel itself.

Paul was very aware how Satan was busy trying to confuse and mislead people by false "gospels":

2 Cor. 11.3,4:But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.⁷²

Paul is here trying to wake up the Corinthians as to the danger close at hand: false apostles, spreading a false gospel.

So then, the true proclamation of the Gospel was at the same time a *positive* explanation of the coming of Christ and a *negative* warning about false teaching. And in response to this preaching, believers had to be conscious about what was true and what was false.⁷³

When, in the second century, we see Christian creeds and theology emerging, this development is closely tied to the positive (thetical) and negative (antithetical) aspects of the Gospel message. The Gospel has clear, positive content (such as the "six articles" of John 3.16), as well as clear, negative content (such as Paul's repudiation of salvation by faith plus works). The church called men and women to a clear, definite faith in Christ, and to repudiate all the false teaching of other religions and philosophies.

Furthermore, there were two important stimuli for developing creeds and theology in the second century.

In the first place, false teaching was becoming more and more subtle and dangerous. Gnosticism, in particular, with its supposedly "deeper doctrines", was a real threat to the purity of the church. There was a need for clear doctrinal teaching, so that contemporary heresies could be combatted and ordinary church members could be warned against such heresies.⁷⁴

In the second place, as Christianity spread and believers sought full membership in the institutional church, there was a need for summarized, rather simple explanations of the basic teachings of the Gospel. Of course the Old and New Testament writings were the basic foundation for all church teaching.⁷⁵ But there was an evident need for good summaries of the essential Biblical message, particularly for the catechumens who were preparing for baptism.

We see, then, two practical needs, which pushed the church to develop creeds and theology: the need to combat heresy, and the need to instruct new believers.

These "confessions of faith" found their form, first of all, in what was called the Rule of Faith (*regula fidei*). In the various communities of the Mediterranean world, various forms of the "Rule of Faith" were used, all of them more or less having the content of what we now call the "Apostles' Creed." It was not enough to profess that God was a "divine being." No, one had to understand that the God of the Bible is the *almighty one* (Greek: παντοκράτωρ, Latin: *omnipotens*), the *creator* of heaven and earth, and in *Jesus Christ*, the Son of God, the one who (contrary to the heretics) actually was a man, born of the virgin Mary, etc.

As time went on, and new heresies arose, forcing the church to understand the Scripture better concerning key issues, the great early church creeds were written. In a real way, as the creeds developed, they were all seen as *expansions* of the early Rule of Faith of the second century. For example, when Arius began teaching that the Logos was not actually God, it was not enough to confess that Jesus was God's Son, or even His only Son (in the words of the Apostles' Creed: "Credo... in Jesum Christum, filium eius unicum").⁷⁶ What was needed was a

creed that pointedly made clear that the Logos was identical to God the creator, one in being with God the Father. So, at the great Council of Nicea, in 325, the church adopted the phrase "homoousios" (in Latin translation: "Unius substantiae") with the Father.⁷⁷

Similarly, when the issue of Christ's two natures arose, and some denied His being fully human or divided the two natures from each other, the Council of Chalcedon (451) affirmed Christ to be both God and man, two natures in one person, The "one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten" was to be acknowledged in two natures, "inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably" (ἀσυγχύτως, ἀτρέπτως, ἀδιαφύτως, ἀχωρίστως).⁷⁸

As the church leaders gathered at Chalcedon themselves expressed, this "two-nature" doctrine was to be seen as a further clarification of the Nicene Creed, where the "homoousios" doctrine was adopted. And the Nicene Creed was itself an elaboration of the Rule of Faith, as we now have it in the Apostles' Creed.

This pattern of *further clarifying in the light of contemporary heresy* was continued in the Reformation. While the Lutheran *Augsburg Confession* (1530), written by Melancthon, had a defensive tone, trying to show to the emperor and other European rulers that the Lutheran movement was fully in line with the early church, it also had a clearly *explanatory* purpose, showing from Scripture what the doctrine of justification really was, in the face of Roman Catholic deviation from Scripture. As with the conflicts in the early church, so at the time of the Reformation, theological confusion and heresy led to deeper analysis of the Scripture, which in turn led to a renewed confession of faith.

All along, from the second century onward, this struggle to make the proclamation of the Church more and more Biblical was accompanied by the development of theology proper. As church leaders wrestled with doctrinal issues and wrote about them, the same two pressures were at work which produced the creeds: the need to combat heresy, and the need to instruct believers. But, with respect to theology proper, we may add a third pressure: as the church grew and as more and more educated people came into contact with the Gospel, there was a need for literature which addressed the problems of philosophy and thought for those raised in the Greek and Roman cultural setting. Seeking to communicate to and convince members of the higher cultural class, Christian leaders sought to bring the Bible's message across in "educated" Greek and Latin, with more "philosophical" terminology than previously was the case.

These are some, such as Harnack, who explain the entire *creedal* development (the Nicene and Chalcedonian creeds) as being entirely formed by "Hellenistic" philosophy. This is certainly an untenable position, for many reasons. For the creed-making impulse was at bottom a Biblical one, seeking to make the true Gospel known to a lost and dying world. *Salvation*, not

(Greek) "philosophical" knowledge, was the aim of the church and its creedal formulations.⁷⁹

Furthermore, while we indeed see many instances where various non-Christian philosophies begin to influence theologians (neo-Platonism, for example), in the mainstream theology, expressed in the church creeds, philosophical terminology is always used to *serve* the Biblical message. Where this was not true, in such theologians as Origen, the church itself repudiated unbiblical philosophy as contrary to revelation.⁸⁰

While we must be careful to distinguish the creeds of the church from the theological writings of her theologians, it is obvious that theologians have had a great role in formulating the creedal statements, and that there has therefore been a mutual relation between *confession* and *theology*. Confession has enlightened the heart of theological research, and theology has usually been the context in which the creeds were developed. There has never been theology without creeds or creeds without theology.

Since the Reformation, in particular, dogmatic theology has often followed the structure of the creedal formulations. The movement God—Creation—Christ—Salvation—Church—Eschatology is not so much a "logical" as a "redemptive—historical" progression.

As I see it, systematic or dogmatic theology has the basic task of elaborating on the meaning of the Gospel, as confessed in the church's creeds, giving special attention to each "major component" of the confessed dogmas. Dogmatic theology is, then, confessional theology, theology done in the light of our common, historical confessions, and following their fundamental shape.⁸¹ As with all kinds of theology, so dogmatic theology is at the service of *proclamation*, seeking to make the riches of God's revelation known to the world. It is also theology which has the task of refuting error, combatting heresy, exposing the religious lies of our generation. Dogmatic theology must also seek to build up the church, especially the office-bearers, grounding them more and more in the details and important nuances of God's Word. And finally, dogmatic theology seeks to express itself in contemporary language, especially that language which is current in the most important discussions of philosophy and science.

Rooted in historical revelation, confessing historical creeds, aiming at proclamation, repudiation of error, and the upbuilding of the church in our present historical situation, dogmatic theology seeks furthermore to *develop* doctrine for the future, the history which lies ahead of us before Christ returns to judge the living and the dead. For as the creeds of the church have expanded, so has dogmatic theology necessarily expanded down through the ages. And, we trust, this expansion, always attended with dangers, has been a good thing, part of the bounty of God's grace to us as His people. We joyfully expect more of this kind of bounty, before we see our Savior face to face.

Footnotes

1. καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἄλλῳ οὐδενὶ ἢ σωτηρία· οὐτε γὰρ ὄνομα ἔστιν ἕτερον ὑπὸ τῶν οὐρανῶν τὸ δεδομένον ἐν ἀνθρώποις, ἐν ᾧ δεῖ σωθῆναι ἡμᾶς. (Acts 4. 12)

F. F. Bruce, commenting on this verse in his *The Acts of the Apostles, The Greek Text...* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), says of the word σωτηρία: "Including, of course, the healing of the lame man, but embracing, and indeed emphasizing, spiritual healing and deliverance from judgment..." (p. 121). The same author in his *Commentary of the Book of the Acts, The English Text...* (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1954), says: "The course and duty and wisdom for the rulers was therefore clear; if they refused it and persisted in their present attitude, they would involve their nation as well as themselves in destruction" (p. 101). The liberal German scholar, Ernst Haenchen, in his commentary, *The Acts of the Apostles* (tr. B. Blackwell; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971; orig. German 14th ed. 1965), calls this, "Luke's way of asserting that Christianity is absolute" (p. 217). Is this all?

I. Howard Marshall, in *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), says of Luke's emphases: "Now forgiveness is Luke's characteristic word for the content of salvation. The conclusion must be that God has given to Jesus the title of Lord and with it His own sovereign prerogative to forgive sins and to bestow salvation" (p. 169).

We must disagree with liberal German scholar, Hans Conzelmann, in his *The Theology of St. Luke* (tr. G. Buswell; New York: Harper & Row, 1960; orig. German 2nd ed. 1957), when he says, "The predestination of the individual has not yet come to expression in the conception of the plan... Luke is not familiar with the idea of a fixed number of elect" (p. 154). To say this, Conzelmann must downplay Acts 13.48.

(For the Greek text, I support the Majority text, as printed in *The Greek New Testament: According to the Majority Text* (ed. Zane C. Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad; Nashville: Nelson, 1982). References to English translations of the Bible are from the New King James Version(1982).

2. ἐν τῇ ἀποκαλύψει τοῦ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ μετ' ἀγγέλων δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ, ἐν πυρὶ φλογός, διδόντος ἐκδικῆσαι τοὺς μὴ εἰδῶσι θεόν, καὶ τοὺς μὴ ὑπακούουσι τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (2 Thess. 1. 7, 8)

H. Ridderbos comments: "...woorden, die aan verschillende plaatsen in het Oude Testament ontleend zijn, waar de verschijning van God beschreven wordt en zijn straffend oordeel over zijn vijanden wordt aangekondigd... Hieruit blijkt dus, hoezeer de paroesie van Christus verbonden is aan de komst van Jahwe ten oordeel, volgens de oudtestamentische profetie, zowel wat de inhoud van de zaak als ook wat de voorstelling ervan betreft" (H. Ridderbos, *Paulus: ontwerp van zijn theologie* (Kampen: kok, 1966) 594).

English trans.:

"...words, borrowed from various passages in the Old Testament where the appearing of God is described and his punitive judgment on his enemies is announced... It is apparent from this, therefore, how much the parousia of Christ is linked to the coming of Yahweh in judgment according to Old Testament prophecy, both as regards its substance and its representation" (*Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (tr. J. R. de Witt; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 531).

3. καὶ ἀπελεύσονται οὗτοι εἰς κόλασιν αἰώνιον· οἱ δὲ δίκαιοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον. (Matt. 25. 46)

On the whole parable, see G.E. Ladd, "The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats in Recent Interpretation," in *New Dimensions in New Testament Study* (ed. R. N. Longenecker and M. C. Tenney; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974) 191-199. "I am unable to feel that Jesus 'brethren' can be interpreted to mean the poor and needy in general, for such a use is without parallel" (p. 195)

4. Original Latin: "Credo... in Iesum Christum... venturus (est) iudicare vivos et mortuos." See Philip Schaff's treatment of the historical origins of the Apostles' Creed in his *The Creeds of Christendom*, Vol. 1, *The History of the Creeds* (3 vols.; New York: Harper, 1931) 1. 14-23, and Vol. 2. *The Greek and Latin Creeds*, 245-55.

G. C. Berkouwer's two-volume work on the return of Christ, *De Wederkomst van Christus*, refuses to treat this aspect of Christ's return in depth, and relativizes the "judgmental" aspect (see Vol. 1, p. 284 and Vol. 2, chapter 6, "Apokatastasis?"). This betrays the influence of the universalism of Barth on Berkouwer, who later admitted in his class his doubts about the existence of hell. G. C. Berkouwer, *De Wederkomst van Christus* (2 vols.; Dogmatische Studiën; Kampen: kok, 1961-1963). The edited

and translated English edition: *The Return of Christ* (ed. M. J. Van Elderen, tr. J. Van Oosterom, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972).

5. καὶ εἴ τις οὐχ εὐρέθη ἐν τῇ βιβλίῳ τῆς ζωῆς γεγραμμένος, ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρός. (Rev. 20. 15)
This, according to *The Greek New Testament: According to the Majority Text*. See the discussion of the complicated textual problems in the book of Revelation, p. xxxii-xxxiv.
H. B. Swete, in his *Commentary on Revelation* (3rd ed.; London: Macmillan, 1911; reprint Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977), says "Here at length (cf. xxi.8) the Lake of Fire is associated with the future condition of human beings; i.e. it is treated as the counterpart of the Jewish Gehenna..." (p. 274).
"The verdict of the righteous Judge of heaven and earth consigns all whose names are not written in the book of life to the place of everlasting torment, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth."
So writes Herman Hoeksema, in his *Behold, He Cometh!* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free, 1969) 668. See also the meditation of Park Yune-sun on Rev. 20. 11-15, in his *Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* (in Korean) (Pusan: Sung Moon Sha, 1955) 392-393, making reference to H. Bavinck's thoughts.
6. καὶ ὁ διάβολος ὁ πλανῶν αὐτοὺς ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρός καὶ θείου, ὅπου τὸ θηρίον καὶ ὁ ψευδοπροφήτης καὶ βασανισθήσονται ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰῶνων. (Rev. 20. 10)
While Swete needlessly doubts the direct applicability of this verse to eschatology ("It is not certain that these terrible words can be pressed into the service of the doctrine of the Last Things..." *Commentary*, 270), Hoeksema is on target when he says: "Those who teach that the agents of darkness will ultimately be annihilated and who deny eternal punishment may base their view on falsely conceived humane considerations; but Scripture everywhere contradicts this doctrine" (*Behold, He Cometh!*, 656).
7. καὶ ἤκουσα φωνῆς ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, λεγομένης, Ἰδοὺ, ἡ σκηνὴ τοῦ θεοῦ μετὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ σκηνώσει μετ' αὐτῶν, καὶ αὐτοὶ λαὸς αὐτοῦ ἔσονται, καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς μετ' αὐτῶν ἔσται. (Rev. 21. 3)
Geerhardus Vos, in his *Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), comments on the relation of the OT tabernacle to the NT church: "It ought to be noticed that 'house of God' is not in the N.T. a mere figure of the fellowship between God and the Church, but always refers specifically to the O.T. dwelling of Jehovah. The highest realization of the tabernacle idea is ascribed to the eschatological stage of the history of redemption. This is depicted by the Apocalypse, 21:3. The peculiarity of the representation here is that, in dependence on Isa. 4:5,6, the area of the tabernacle and temple are widened so as to become equally coextensive with the entire New Jerusalem... the place will be all church" (p. 172)
See, for a typical liberal treatment of "apocalyptic," P. Vielhauer's introductions to "Apocalypses and Related Subjects," in Edgar Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha* (2 vols; ed. W. Schneemelcher; tr. E. Best et al., ed. R. McL. Wilson; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963-1965; orig. German ed. 1959-1964) 2.581-642. Vielhauer comments on Revelation: "The splendidly coloured description of the new world (21:1-8) and of the new Jerusalem (21:9-22:5) is also unique in the New Testament. By means of this the seer offers to his persecuted companions in the faith a glimpse that is full of promise into their glorious future" (p. 626). But does this future exist in fact? For an evangelical response to the liberal view of "apocalyptic," see Leon Morris, *Apocalyptic* (London: Inter-Varsity, 1973). "... the emphasis on 'the Lamb as it had been slain', i.e. on a past event of history, is both central to Revelation and absent from the apocalypses" (p. 95).
8. It is a distinct weakness of most descriptions of religion that they omit secular humanism and Marxism. Huston Smith, in his *The Religions of Man* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), discusses seven "traditional" religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. Mircea Eliade, in his *From Primitives to Zen* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), includes animism and shamanism in his anthology of religious texts. The Roman Catholic Second Vatican Council produced the "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions" (translated in *The Documents of Vatican II* (ed. A. P. Flannery; New York: Pillar, 1975) 738-742), which mentions animism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Judaism, saying, "Men look to their different religions for an answer to the unsolved riddles of human existence. What is man? What is the meaning and purpose of life?" (p. 738). Yet this search for meaning (or pretended discovery of such) is deeply imbedded in

- both secular humanism and Marxism. Often *evolution* is cited as giving us our true source of existence and present structure for life. (Marx wanted to dedicate *Das Kapital* to Darwin.)
Cornelius Van Til, in *Psychology of Religion*, (n.p.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971), gives a good critique of secular, "neutral" definitions of religion in the chapter "The Nature of Religion: Objections to the Traditional View" (p. 81-97)
9. Tillich speaks explicitly of his own theology as an "apologetic" or "answering" theology: "It answers the questions implied in the 'situation' in the power of the eternal message and with the means provided by the situation whose questions it answers" (P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (3 vols.; Chicago: U. of Chicago, 1951) 1.60. On the significance of Christian "symbols": "There can be no doubt that any concrete assertion about God must be symbolic..." (1.239).
10. H. Dooyeweerd has described this religious absolutizing in his work, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* (3 vols.; Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1953-1957). An excerpt: "Since the fall and the promise of the coming Redeemer, there are two central main springs operative in the heart of human existence. The first is the dynamis of the Holy Ghost... The second central main spring is that of the spirit of apostasy from the true God. As religious dynamis (power), it leads the human heart in an apostate direction, and is the source of all deification of the creature" (1.61).
11. καὶ κηρυχθήναι ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ μετάνοιαν καὶ ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, ἀρξάμενον ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλήμ. (Luke 24. 47)
The "Egyptian" Greek text, B, has "repentance unto (εἰς) remission of sins," but the Majority text has "and" (καὶ) here.
John Murray comments: "It is when the sense of the gravity of sin, as offence, defilement, guilt, bondage, and misery takes hold of our minds that we grasp the significance of Jesus' word... All partitions are broken down, the valleys have been exalted, the mountains made low, and the rough places smooth. There is no longer Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, bond or free. The glory of the Lord has been revealed, and all flesh shall see it together" ("The Atonement and the Free Offer of the Gospel," in *Collected Writings of John Murray*, Vol. 1, *The Claims of Truth* (4 vols.; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1976) 1.59-60).
12. See the essay by W. Cantwell Smith, "Conflicting Truth-Claims: A Rejoinder," in *Truth and Dialogue. The Relationship between World Religions* (ed. J. Hick; London: Sheldon, 1974) 156-162.
13. John Hick, "The Outcome: Dialogue into Truth," in *Truth and Dialogue*, 155.
14. "In practice India's sects have often been fanatically intolerant, but in principle they have remained notably open," according to Huston Smith, *The Religions of Man*, 85. This "practical intolerance" is true of modern-day liberalism, with respect to orthodox Christianity. For a good, succinct description of Hinduism, see *Eerdmans' Handbook to the World's Religions* (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1982) 170-173.
15. Dooyeweerd describes the chief religious "motives" in the West as being, beside true Christian faith, the Greek form-matter, the Roman Scholastic nature-grace, and the Humanistic nature-freedom motives. "The modern Humanistic ground-motive of *nature* and *freedom*... has taken its rise from the religion of the free autonomous human personality and that of modern science evoked by it, and directed to the domination of nature" (*A New Critique*, 1.62-63). "To the question, what is understood by religion? I reply: the innate impulse of human selfhood to direct itself toward the *true* or toward a *pretended* absolute Origin of all temporal diversity of meaning, which it finds focused concentrically in itself... Veritable religion is absolute *self-surrender*. The apostate man who supposes, that his selfhood is something in itself, loses himself in the surrender to idols, in the absolutizing of the relative" (1.58).
For a discussion of "comparative religion," see J. H. Bavinck, *The Church Between Temple and Mosque* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.). And: J. N. D. Anderson, *Christianity and Comparative Religion* (London: Tyndale, 1970).
16. See the article on "Karl Marx," in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (15th ed.; Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1980) 11.549-553.
Further on Marxism: F. N. Lee, *Communist Eschatology: A Christian Philosophical Analysis of the Post-Capitalistic Views of Marx, Engels, and Lenin* (Nutley, N. J.: Craig, 1974).
17. The famous phrases at the end of the *Communist Manifesto*, written by Marx in 1848, enunciate the fanatical, wild-eyed tone which all true (religious) Communism has betrayed: "Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They

- have a world to win. Working men of all countries, unite!" Cited from Karl Marx, *Communist Manifesto* (Chicago:Regnery, 1950) 48.
- For a discussion of the background to the *Communist Manifesto*, see A. J. Gregor, *A Survey of Marxism: Problems in Philosophy and the Theory of History* (New York: Random House, 1965) 144-157.
- In Russia alone, perhaps as many as 66 million perished under the Communist oppression up to 1959. This is the estimate of the émigré professor of statistics Kurganov, cited by A. I. Solzhenitsyn in *The Gulag Archipelago, Two, 1918-1956, An Experiment in Literary Investigation*, III-IV (New York: Harper & Row, 1975) 10.
18. J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (Grand Rapids:Eerdmans, 1923) 117.
 19. Adolf v. Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (Leipzig:Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1933; orig. ed. 1900) 33.
English trans.:
"Firstly, the kingdom of God and its coming.
Secondly, God the Father and the infinite value of the human soul.
Thirdly, the higher righteousness and the commandment of love" (A. v. Harnack, *What Is Christianity?* (tr. T. B. Saunders; New York: Harper & Row, 1957; orig. ed. 1900) 51).
 20. Although in his editorial article "Conversion" in the *International Review of Mission*, 72/287 (July 1983), Castro sounds quite "evangelical," he endorses the views of José Miguez Bonino (liberation theology), and Park Hyung Kyu (minjung theology).
 21. See Harold Lindsell, *The Bible in the Balance* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979).
 22. P. Beyerhaus, *Humanisierung. Einzige Hoffnung der Welt?* (Bad Salzuflen: MBK, 1970) 75.
English trans.:
"... we must convincingly express anew our unchangeable conviction that mission is a kerygmatic, sacramental, and diaconal presentation of eternal salvation. This salvation is, once and for all, grounded in God's great saving act in Christ. It comes into the world only through that apostolic proclamation which was instituted by Christ Himself... Only in attaining this salvation can man find his true *humanity*" (P. Beyerhaus, *Mission: Which Way?: Humanization or Redemption* (tr. M. Clarkson; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971) 104).
 23. Werner Harenberg, in his book *Der Spiegel on the New Testament* (tr. J. H. Burtner; London: Macmillan, 1970; orig. German ed. 1966), shows that even the "Confession Movement's" leader, Walter Künneth, has not been altogether clear about the resurrection of Jesus. Künneth claims that one can only make "paradoxical statements" about the resurrection (p. 224), it is something "totally other" which you cannot photograph (p. 225). Furthermore, Künneth denies the necessity of believing in Christ's preexistence (p. 220). With regard to the broader "evangelical" scene in Europe, there is no clear holding to the inerrancy of Scripture. For documentation, see the article by Reinhard Möller "Gibt es Regeln für eine schriftgemässe Auslegung von Gottes Wort?" concerning the 1982 meeting of the "Fellowship of European Evangelical Theologians" in the magazine *Fundamentum* 1983/2 50-66.
 24. See Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982). According to Gundry, "Clearly, Matthew treats us to history mixed with elements that cannot be called historical in a modern sense" (p. 623).
The *Evangelical Theological Society's* action of removing Gundry from membership is described in an issue of *Christianity Today* (28/3 (Feb. 4, 1984)).
 25. For an overview of the 1982 Chicago conference of the ICBI, see the two articles by Reinhard Möller, "Die Hermeneutik-Konferenz des Internationalen Rates für Biblische Irrtumslosigkeit (ICBI)," in *Fundamentum* 1983/2 66-78 and 1983/3 19-48.
On the Missouri-Synod Lutheran Church: see Lindsell, *The Bible in the Balance*, 244-273.
On the Southern Baptists, see Lindsell, *The Bible in the Balance*, 113-182.
For more developments, see article, "A Southern Baptist Rages On," in *Christianity Today* 28/8 (July 13, 1984) 32-33.
 26. Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Great Evangelical Disaster* (Westchester, I 11.: Cornerstone Books, 1984) 121.
 27. See the current professor of dogmatics in Kampen, Prof. J. Kamphuis' analysis of contemporary neo-protestantism's use of Scripture in "De Consensus als dogmatische factor binnen het huidige neo-protestantisme," in his *In Dienst van de Viede. De kerkelijke consensus als dogmatische factor* (Groningen: De Vuurbaak, 1980) 36-49. Kamphuis speaks of a liberal "consensus" about the Scripture, and he criticizes Dooyeweerd and Berkouwer for following the liberal line: "Sindsdien is deze consensus

- onverzwakt van kraht gebleven en zelfs in omvang ongemeen toegenomen sinds H. Dooyeweerd c.s. het 'grondmotief' van de Schrift ging contrasteren tegen het gezag van de Schrift zelf en G. C. Berkouwer c.s. bij handhaving van de term Schriftgeloof voor het Schriftkritisch onderzoek vrij baan maakte" (p. 41-42).
English trans. (J.M.B.):
"Since then this consensus has remained undiminished in strength and has even increased unusually since Dooyeweerd and his followers began to contrast the 'ground-motive' of the Scripture with the authority of the Scripture *itself* and since G. C. Berkouwer and his followers opened the way for higher criticism of the Bible, while continuing to use the phrase "faith in Scripture" (i.e. maintaining that they were honoring the concept of the Scripture's authority, J.M.B.)."
See also C. Trimp, *Betwist Schriftgezag* (Groningen: De Vuurbaak, 1970) for further criticism of neo-protestantism on this point.
28. For an overview of Klaas Schilder's fight for church purity, see *De Kerk* (3 vols.; ed. J. Kamphuis et al.; Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1960-1965).
 29. See Shim Koon-sik, *Till the End of the Age. The Life of Rev. Sang Dong Han, A Living Witness of the Korean Church* (ed. and trans. T. Kitai Hahn; Pusan: Kosin College, 1984). Clearly, the tolerance for Shinto worship among Korean church groups in the 1930's and '40's went together with liberal theological views in other areas. (Han Sang-dong founded Korea Seminary in Pusan in 1946.)
 30. Paul's words in Ephesians 6.10-12: Ἐνδυναμοῦσθε ἐν Κυρίῳ, καὶ ἐν τῷ κράτει τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ, ἐνδύσασθε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, πρὸς τὸ δύνασθαι ὑμᾶς στήναι πρὸς τὰς μεθοδείας τοῦ διαβόλου, ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμῖν ἡ πᾶλη πρὸς αἷμα καὶ σάρκα, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὰς ἀρματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις.
English trans.: "Finally, my brothers, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might, Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places..." Calvin comments: "God has furnished us with various defensive weapons, provided we do not indolently refuse what is offered. But we are almost all chargeable with carelessness and hesitation in using the offered grace; just as if a soldier, about to meet the enemy, should take his helmet, and neglect his shield... We ought to be prepared on all sides, so ask to want nothing... The Lord offers to us arms for repelling every kind of attack. It remains for us to apply them to use, and not leave them hanging on the wall" (J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians* (tr. W. Pringle; Calvin's Commentaries; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979; orig. ed. 1854; orig. Latin ed. 1548) 21.334).
 31. "It is impossible to overestimate the importance of the first half of Exodus for the faith and history of the Hebrew nation" (R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969) 573). "Scripture reminds its hearers that the exodus from Egypt involved political activity in an historical arena for the sake of an oppressed people with the expectation of a new life. Yet Exodus also sets these events within the theological reality of human arrogance, divine judgment, and profound faith in the ultimate plan of God" (Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 178). But did these events happen as described?
"Israel remembered the exodus for all time to come as the constitutive event that had called her into being as a people. It stood at the center of her confession of faith from the beginning... A belief so ancient and so entrenched will admit of no explanation save that Israel actually escaped from Egypt to the accompaniment of events so stupendous that they were impressed forever on her memory" (John Bright, *A History of Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959) 111, 112). But did the miracles actually take place?
 32. "Christianity is a 'historical religion,' and a 'Christianity' wholly unrelated to historical occurrences is just no Christianity at all... the age-long preparation for the coming of the Kingdom of God; the Incarnation of the Son of God; His atoning death on the cross; His rising again on the third day and His ascension to heaven; the descent of the Spirit on the Pentecostal birthday of the Church" (B. B. Warfield, "The Risen Christ," in his *The Person and Work of Christ* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1950) 541).
 33. H. Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* (6th ed., same as 2nd ed.; 4 vols.; Kampen:Kok, 1976; orig. ed. 1910) 3.320-321.

- English trans. (J.M.B.):
 "That which Christ has obtained by this sacrifice is too much to describe. For Himself He obtained by it His entire 'being lifted up,' the resurrection, the ascension, His sitting at God's right hand... And further He obtained for His own, for humanity, for the world, an incomprehensively great series of blessings... from Him flow indeed all blessings: the entire *soteria*, and then further, the forgiveness of sins, the removal, the *airein* of our sins, ...justification, righteousness, the *hiothesia* (sonship), ... further the gift of the Holy Spirit, regeneration and being children of God, ...fellowship in the resurrection and ascension of Christ, ...escape from the (last) judgment, ...the new heaven and earth, and the reestablishment of all things."
34. *εἰ δὲ Χριστὸς οὐκ ἐγήγερται, κενὸν ἔρα τὸ κήρυγμα ἡμῶν, κενὴ καὶ ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν.* (1 Cor. 15. 14)
 F. W. Grosheide comments:
 "Paulus vraagt niet, waarop de opstanding van Christus rust, hij bewijst niet, dat Christus is opgestaan. Hij redeneert en voert in zijn redenering het gestelde, d.i. dat Christus niet zou zijn opgestaan, *ad absurdum*" (F. W. Grosheide, *De eerste brief aan de kerk te Korinthe* (Kampen: Kok, 1957) 395).
 English trans. (J.M.B.):
 "Paul does not ask on what the resurrection of Christ depends; he does not prove that Christ is risen. He is reasoning, and carries the proposition (that is, that Christ is not risen) to an absurd conclusion."
35. The "moderate" NT scholar W. G. Kümmel claims:
 "We do not even have the possibility of establishing whether Paul was convinced that the tomb of the resurrected one was empty or not... Thus neither for the earliest community nor for Paul is the mention of the empty tomb required in order to justify the belief in the resurrection of Christ on the third day" (W. G. Kümmel, *The Theology of the New Testament* (tr. J. E. Steely; Nashville-New York: Abingdon, 1973; orig. German ed. 1972) 99).
36. Cited by K. Barth, *Die Protestantische Theologie im 19. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg: Siebenstern, 1960; orig. ed. 1946) 210.
 English trans. (J.M.B.):
 "But if 'no historical truth can be demonstrated, nothing can be demonstrated by historical truth.'"
37. See I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970).
 "This means that Luke conceived his task as the writing of history and that we shall fail to do justice to his work if we do not think of him as a historian... Luke was a historian because he was first and foremost an Evangelist: he knew that the faith which he wished to proclaim stands or falls with the *history of Jesus and the early church*" (p. 52) (emphasis J.M.B.). It is to be regretted that Marshall, in his later commentary on Luke (1978) has not taken this emphasis on historicity very seriously.
38. E. Lohse, *Umwelt des Neuen Testaments* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983) 206.
 English trans. (J.M.B.):
 "Only the Word of the cross, which is preached to Jews and Greeks, opens up deliverance and salvation for all who accept it in faith."
39. See C. Van Til, "My Credo," in *Jerusalem and Athens* (ed. E. R. Geehan; n.p.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1917) 3-21.
40. See "Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry" in *International Review of Mission* 72/286 (April 1983) 157-198.
41. "Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry," 162.
42. Josef Smolik, "Baptism--Source of Witness," in *I.R.M.* 72/286 (April 1983) 216.
43. See note 24.
44. J. Rogers and D. McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979).
45. J. D. Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers/McKim Proposal* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982).
46. *Biblical Authority*, 154.
47. Son Bong-ho, prof. of philosophy at Seoul National University, says in his popular article "The Theological Foundation of Biblical Research," (in Korean) (*Kosin Monthly*, March 1985): "Circularity is unavoidable... the Bible is the basis for investigating the Bible" (p. 14-15).
48. P. Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, Vol. 3, *The Evangelical Protestant Creeds, with Translations*, 3600.
 B. B. Warfield wrote this about the Westminster Assembly: "Its work was not in character political,

- but religious; and its product needed no imposition by the civil power to give it vitality. Whatever real authority the formularies it had framed possessed, was inherent in them as sound presentations of truth, not derived from extraneous sources. And by the inherent power of their truth, they have held sway and won a way for themselves to the real triumph of the voluntary adhesion of multitudes of Christian men. It is honor enough for the Westminster Assembly that it has provided this multitude of voluntary adherents... with the culminating Reformed Confession of Faith, and a Catechism preeminent for the exactness of its definitions of faith and the faithfulness of its ethical precepts" (*The Westminster Assembly and Its Work* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981; orig. ed. 1931) 72).
- John Murray praised the Westminster Confession as follows: "No creed of the Christian Church is comparable to that of Westminster in respect of the skill with which the fruits of fifteen centuries of Christian thought have been preserved, and at the same time examined anew and clarified in the light of that fuller understanding of God's Word which the Holy Spirit has imparted," in J. Murray, *Collected Writings*, 1.317.
49. Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, Vol. 3, passim, for the creeds mentioned.
50. John Murray comments:
 "We must not tone down the teaching of the apostle in this passage. It is a clear declaration to the effect that the visible creation of God makes manifest the invisible perfections of God as its Creator... If inexcusableness is the result, it is the designed result from the aspect of decretive ordination" (J. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959-1965) 1.40).
51. Calvin on Rom. 1.18:
 "The truth of God means the true knowledge of God, and to hold down the truth is to suppress or obscure it: hence they are accused of theft" (Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians* (tr. R. Mackenzie; Edinburgh: Saint Andrew, 1961; orig. Latin ed. 1540) 30).
52. Conzelmann comments:
 "Die Formulierung *κατὰ τὰς γραφάς* is betont allgemein: Die Schrift wird als Einheit gesehen" (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969) 300).
 English trans.:
 "The expression *kata tas graphas*, 'according to the Scriptures,' is deliberately general: Scripture is seen as a unity" (1 *Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (tr. J. W. Leitch; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) 255). By Paul, but not by Conzelmann! (See H. Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament* (tr. J. Bowden; New York: Harper & Row, 1969; orig. German 2nd ed. 1968) 8,9,64).
53. No particular higher critical "consensus" exists for this passage. Kümmel can comment: "...there is no need to call in question the historicity of the entire account of the proceedings against Jesus before the Sanhedrin, *in its essential features*" (emphasis J.M.B.) (Kümmel, *Theology of the New Testament*, 71). We note the irony here: Kümmel is doing precisely what Jewish law and Mark forbid: granting a validity to possibly inaccurate testimony! Lohmeyer sees the story as a possible ("vielleicht") combination of accurate reporting with imaginary elements (E. Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967) 326). H. C. Kee sees the pericope as a so-called "interpolated unit," a literary device "employed to serve dogmatic and pragmatic ends" (H. C. Kee, *Community of the New Age. Studies in Mark's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977) 56), thereby calling in question its accuracy. In general, Mark is seen as a "creative theologian who makes history serve his purpose" (R. Martin, *Mark: Evangelist and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973) 50), usually with some distortion of historicity implicit.
- On the matter of "witnesses" and "evidence," John Lightfoot cites Rabbinic authority about the exact procedures. Of three types of testimony, one is " *כשדבר יהוה כי כוונתו* of the words of them that agreed or fitted together (this also was *תפישת עדות* a standing evidence), when the words of two witnesses agreed, and were to the same purpose: *μαρτυρία ἴση*, an even evidence." (J. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*, Vol. 2, *Matthew--Mark* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1859; reprint Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979; orig. Latin ed. 1658) 2.461).
54. This fixing of the number of required witnesses (two or three) seems to be a later, more definite circumscription of the legal test than the more general "witnesses" of Numbers 35.30, both are Mosaic in origin, however! (cf. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 1, *The Pentateuch* (3 vols. in 1; tr. J. Martin; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973) 3.266, 3.380).
55. The liberal OT critic, A. D. H. Mayes, sees vs. 15 as an addition, taken from Deut. 17.6, with the

- (deliberately distorting!) "purpose...apparently to make a general principle applicable to all cases from a rule which in the source (of the book Deut., J.M.B.) applied only to capital crimes" (A. D. H. Mayes, *Deuteronomy* (New Century Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981) 289). Of course for the liberal OT critics, the book of Deuteronomy is pseudo-Mosaic, dating primarily from the 7th century B.C.
56. The debate as to the proper term, "systematic theology" or "Reformed dogmatics," is interesting, but not of crucial importance. I believe (Reformed) dogmatics is the better choice. See the discussion of "system" in H. Berkhof, *Christelijk Geloof* (Nijkerk: G. F. Callenbach, 1975) 40-41 (English trans.: H. Berkhof, *Christian Faith* (tr. S. Woudstra; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979) 39-41). For Berkhof, "system" indicates the horizon of our thought (p. 41, Eng. tr. p. 38).
57. R. Gaffin, "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," in *Westminster Theological Journal* 38 (Spring 1976) 281-299.
58. See the chapters "Philosophy and Theology, I, II, III" in H. Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought: Studies in the Pretended Autonomy of Philosophical Thought* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1960) 113-172. Dooyeweerd does not say that systematic theology is wrong in itself, but that it has been too influenced by scholastic, dualistic philosophy. "It is this very dualism which testifies to its unbiblical character. It was the result of the attempt to accommodate the Greek view of nature to the biblical doctrine of grace. In fact, this scholastic motive of accommodation resulted in a radical deformation of the central theme of the Word-revelation" (p. 194).
59. In his book *Philosophy and Scripture: A Study in Old Princeton and Westminster Theology* (Marlton, N. J.: Mack, 1978), John C. Vander Stelt, a follower of the Dooyeweerd school, criticizes the "Princeton Theology" (Hodge, Warfield, Machen, Van Til) for being rationalistic and scholastic. With respect to the character of the Scripture, Vander Stelt recommends instead of this the views of G. C. Berkouwer. Berkouwer wants to restrict the infallibility of Scripture to its "scopus," that is, its "saving purpose" (p. 328). For Berkouwer's views, see G. C. Berkouwer, *De Heilige Schrift* (2 vols.; Dogmatische Studiën; Kampen: Kok, 1966-1967). The edited English version: G. C. Berkouwer, *Holy Scripture* (ed. and tr. Jack B. Rogers; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975). Berkouwer's relation to Dooyeweerd (both professors at the Free University of Amsterdam at the same time) is unclear. Berkouwer makes very few references to Dooyeweerd and was certainly in no sense a disciple of Dooyeweerd. One of the few direct discussions with Dooyeweerd occurs in Berkouwer's *De Mens Het Beeld Gods* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1957), in the chapter on "Onsterfelijkheid" (immortality) 259-310. The English translation: G. C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God* (tr. D. W. Jellema; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962).
60. Machen complained of the "anti-doctrinal" attitude of the liberal "evangelicals" of his day in his *Christianity and Liberalism*; see particularly the chapter "Doctrine" (17-53). "But, it will be said, Christianity is life, not a doctrine. The assertion is often made, and it has an appearance of godliness. But it is radically false, and to detect its falsity one does not even need to be a Christian" (p. 19). Pentecostal leaders such as David J. duPlessis emphasize that *experience*, not doctrine, is important: "The reason for this (missionary) growth is not the ability or the education of the missionary or the use of new methods... By offering their converts two distinct experiences--the meeting with the living Christ unto 'regeneration' and the filling with the Holy Spirit unto 'power for service'--the missionaries of the Pentecostal movement have succeeded in establishing indigenous churches much faster than those missionaries who inevitably have had to transplant a *particular doctrine or theology*" (cited by F. D. Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit: The Pentecostal Experience and the New Testament Witness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970) 74) (emphasis mine, J.M.B.). The "non-doctrinal" school of Robert Schuller is interested in "church growth" rather than Biblical preaching. This kind of evangelistic pragmatism is in actuality disastrous for the Christian church.
61. See the important essay, "Systematic Theology," by John Murray, *Collected Works*, 4.1-21, for a defense of systematic theology. See also the chapter, "The Idea and Value of Systematic Theology," in C. Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, N. J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974) 1-7. Van Til says: "It should not be forgotten in this connection that the minister's duty is increasingly that of an apologist for Christianity... If the minister would be able to help his young people, he must be a good apologete, and he cannot be a good apologete unless he is a good systematic theologian... just as a thorough knowledge of the system of truth in Scripture is the best defense against heresy, so it is also the best help for the propagation of the truth" (p. 7). See further: R. J. Rushdoony, *The Necessity for Systematic Theology* (Vallecito, Ca.: Ross House, 1979).

- Note carefully John Frame's discussion of Van Til's theology in his "The Problem of Theological Paradox," in *Foundations of Christian Scholarship* (ed. Gary North; Vallecito, Ca.: Ross House, 1976) 295-330. Frame says this about Van Til:
- "We should now be able to see the peculiar structure of Van Til's 'analogical system.' *All doctrines are interdependent*, in that none can be adequately understood except in the light of the others. All doctrines are 'apparently contradictory,' in that *none exhausts the fullness of the truth*, and their non-exhaustive character limits our ability to demonstrate formal logical consistency. Yet *all doctrines are true as far as they go*, are not 'really' contradictory, and are intelligible in that even though they may be unassimilable to the forms of our logic, nevertheless provide clear guidance for God's people" (p. 329).
62. Even liberal "theologies" of the OT and NT *can* be helpful, though we should *always* beware of the false presuppositions underlying such works. See: R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (2 vols.; tr. K. Grobel; New York: Scribner's, 1951-1955; orig. German ed. 1948-1953), and the NT theologies of Conzelmann and Kümmel already mentioned. Such liberal theologies may never be allowed to function as theological authorities, and must be quoted with care.
63. Next to much appreciation for Dooyeweerd's philosophy, we have some severe objections to several of his key ideas. The written "text-word" of Scripture seems to be separated, in his mind, from the "power-word" of God's powerful Creation/Fall/Redemption "motive." For criticism of Dooyeweerd, see J. Douma, *Kritische Aantekeningen bij de Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee* (Groningen: De Vuurbaak, 1976). English trans.: *Another Look at Dooyeweerd* (tr. J. M. Batteau; Winnipeg: Premier, 1980).
64. For a very helpful analysis of modern culture, see S. U. Zuidema, *Communication and Confrontation: A Philosophical Appraisal and Critique of Modern Society and Contemporary Thought* (Toronto: Wedge, 1972). Zuidema was professor of philosophy at the Free University of Amsterdam.
65. It is to be regretted that "practical theology" has that name. As if all theology were not "practical"! In Korean this problem is compounded by calling dogmatics and apologetics "theoretical" theology (*ee-ron sin-hak*). If homiletics ever degenerates into pragmatism, it will be again disaster for the church.
66. Machen again: "...Christian service consists primarily in the propagation of a message, and specifically Christian fellowship exists only between those to whom the message has become the very basis of all life" (*Christianity and Liberalism*, 52).
67. L. Doekes, in his *Credo: Handboek voor de Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* (Amsterdam: Ton Bolland, 1975), says this about the development of creeds in the early church:
- "In het N.T. vinden wij een duidelijk omschreven homogene christelijke leer, die algemeen wordt erkend als de gemeenschappelijke leer der kerk, dus niet slechts als de geloofsovertuiging van een of meer individuele personen, cf. 1 Kor. 15:11. Deze leer heeft tot inhoud de openbaring van de drieënige God, en van Jezus Christus de enige Middelaar: John 17:3; 1 Tim. 2:5-6. De prediking, de catechese en de missionaire situatie der kerk gaven als vanzelf aanleiding tot korte en dikwijls stereotype formuleringen van het credo. Speciaal bij de bediening van de doop werd het geloof der kerk in een bepaalde vorm geciteerd" (p. 8).
- English trans. (J.M.B.): "In the N.T. we find a clearly described, homogeneous Christian teaching, which is commonly acknowledged as the common teaching of the church--not just as the faith of one or more individuals (see 1 Cor. 15:11). This teaching has as its content the revelation of the Triune God, and of Jesus Christ, the only mediator: John 17:3; 1 Tim. 2:5-6. The preaching, the catechetical instruction, and the missionary situation of the church automatically led to short and often stereotyped formulations of the creed. Especially at the administration of baptism, the faith of the church was recited, in a definite form." See Schaff's "Comparative Table of the Ante-Nicene Rules of Faith," in *Creeds of Christendom*, 2.40, 41. According to Schaff, "(the creeds) emanate from the inner life of the Church, independently of external occasion. There would have been creeds even if there has been no doctrinal controversies" (*Creeds of Christendom*, 1.5). According to J. Pelikan, "The term 'rule of faith' or 'rule of truth' did not always refer to such creeds and confessions, and seems sometimes to have meant the 'tradition,' sometimes the Scriptures, sometimes the message of the gospel" (*The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, Vol. 1, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition* (100-600) (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1971) 117).
68. Greek: *Ὅτι γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν κόσμον, ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται, ἀλλ' ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον.* (John 3.16)
- W. Hendriksen, in his commentary *The Gospel of John* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1959; orig. ed. 1954), says this about John 3.16:

"This verse sheds light on the following aspects of this love: 1. its character (so loved), 2. its author (God), 3. its object (the world), 4. its gift (his son, the only-begotten), and 5. its purpose (that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life)."

Certain questions have arisen in connection with the exegesis of this passage. Concerning the speaker at this point (Jesus or the narrator, John?), B. F. Westcott says: "It is therefore likely from its secondary character, apart from all other considerations, that it contains the reflections of the Evangelist, and is not a continuation of the words of the Lord. This conclusion appears to be firmly established from details of expression" (*The Gospel According to St. John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950; orig. ed. 1881) 54).

R. Bultmann says about this verse: "Die Sendung des Sohnes als Erweis der Liebe Gottes wie I Joh. 4.9f., 14f., 19. Das ηγάπησεν (nicht αγαπή!) beschreibt das einmalige Ereignis des Liebeserweises. Als objekt dieser Liebe wird hier der κόσμος genannt, was nicht auf einem vom sonstigen Joh. abweichenden Sprachgebrauch beruht, als bestehe der von Gott geliebte κόσμος nur aus den Gläubigen (Br.), während κόσμος sonst die gottfeindlich Welt ist..." (*Das Evangelium des Johannes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968; orig. ed. 1941), 110, 111, note 5).

English trans. (J.M.B.): "The sending of the Son as proof of God's love, as in 1 John 4.9f., 14f., 19. The ηγάπησεν (not αγαπή!) describes the single event of this love-proof. As the object of this love the κόσμος is named, which does not deviate from the linguistic usage in the rest of John, as if the κόσμος which is loved by God is composed only of believers (Br.), while κόσμος elsewhere is the world-as-enemy-of-God..."

For Bultmann, then, "world" is more than the "believers." But, while, indeed, in John the "world" is the world-as-enemy, the world-as-darkness, in this verse we ought not to see a contrast between the enemy-world which God loved and the believers whom Christ came to save. In the rest of John we see the doctrine of election clearly taught: John 6.39—"πάν ὃ δέδωκέ μοι" ("all which he has given me"); 6.44—"ἐάν μὴ ὁ πατήρ... ἔλκυσή αὐτόν" ("No man can come to me except the Father... draw him"); 15.16—"ὁὐκ ἔξελεξασθε, ἀλλ' ἐγὼ ἐξελεξάμην ὑμᾶς" ("You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you..."). And in John 3.16, God's Love is seen precisely triumphant in bringing eternal life to all the believers, while God's wrath (ὀργή) rests on all the unbelievers (3.36).

69. Original texts: Deut.6.4:

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד

Calvin comments here: "When Moses proclaims that God is one, the statement is not confined to His sole essence, which is incomprehensible, but must be also understood of His power and glory, which had been manifested to the people... Thus all other deities are brought to nought, and the people are commanded to fly and detest whatever withdraws their minds from the pure knowledge of Him..." (*Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses arranged in the Form of a Harmony* (tr. C. W. Bingham: Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979; orig. ed. 1852) 1.420).

John 1.49 : ἀπεκρίθη Ναθαναήλ καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Ῥαββί, σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, σὺ εἶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ.

Matt. 16.16 : ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ Σίμων Πέτρος εἶπε, Σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστὸς, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος.
John 20.28 : καὶ ἀπεκρίθη Θωμᾶς, καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Ὁ Κύριός μου καὶ ὁ Θεός μου.

Acts 8.37 : ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ εἶπε, Πιστεύω τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ εἶναι τὸν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν.

This verse is not supported by the Majority text text or by the latest Nestle (26th ed.) text (chiefly B). Haenchen comments: "VERSE 37 appears only in part of the 'Western' tradition: E e gig perp Sy^{hmg}, and in part in Irenaeus and Cyprian" (*Commentary on The Acts of the Apostles*, 313). Schaff, however, gives guarded support to its authenticity (*Creeeds of Christendom*, 2.6).

If it is not part of Scripture, it is at least an early witness to "baptismal creeds" being used.

1 Cor. 8.6 : ἀλλ' ἡμῖν εἰς Θεὸς ὁ πατήρ, ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα, καὶ ἡμεῖς δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς Κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα, καὶ ἡμεῖς δι' αὐτοῦ.

70. Rom. 10.9, 10 : ὅτι ἐάν ὁμολογήσῃς ἐν τῷ στόματί σου Κύριον Ἰησοῦν, καὶ πιστεύσῃς ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς αὐτὸν ἤγειρεν ἐκ νεκρῶν, σωθήσῃ· καρδίᾳ γὰρ πιστεύεται εἰς δικαιοσύνην, στόματι δὲ ὁμολογεῖται εἰς σωτηρίαν.

See the article by J. R. Wiskerke, "De confessie van de kerk," in J.R.Wiskerke, *De strijd om de sleutel der*

kennis: Een bundel opstellen over theologie en filosofie (ed. C. Trimp; Groningen: De Vuurbaak, 1978) 35-92). See particularly his commentary on Matt. 10.32 ("Whoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father who is in heaven" (p. 36-43)). "In de apostolische volmacht, die ze (the apostles, J.M.B.) van Christus ontvangen, ligt het geheim van hun kracht en het motief voor hun optreden ook als belijders besloten. Blijkens 'een ieder' (vs. 32) geldt echter de taak-tot-belijden voor een breder kring dan voor die van de twaalf apostelen alleen." (p. 38). English trans. (J.M.B.): "In the apostolic commission, which they (the apostles, J.M.B.) receive from Christ, lies the secret of their power and the-motivation for their public presence, also as confessors. However, as the 'whoever' (vs. 32) indicates, the task-of-confessing is given to a broader circle than that of the apostles only."

71. Gal. 1.7, 8 : ...εἰ μὴ τινὲς εἰσιν οἱ ταράσσοντες ὑμᾶς καὶ θέλοντες μεταστρέψαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐάν ἡμεῖς ἢ ἄγγελος ἐξ οὐρανοῦ εὐαγγελίζηται ὑμῖν παρ' ὃ ἐβηγγελισάμεθα ὑμῖν, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω.

Luther comments: "For these two things the devil practiseth most busily: first, he is not contented to trouble and deceive many by his ungodly apostles, but moreover he laboureth by them utterly to overthrow the Gospel, and never resteth till he hath brought it to pass. Yet such perverters of the Gospel can abide nothing less than to hear that they are the apostles of the devil; nay, rather they glory above others in the name of Christ, and boast themselves to be the most sincere preachers of the Gospel. But because they mingle the law with the Gospel, they must needs be perverters of the Gospel" (M. Luther, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (ed. and tr. P. S. Watson; Westwood, N. J.: Revell, 1953; based on 'Middleton' ed. of 1575, from Luther's lectures, 1531) 67).

J. B. Lightfoot comments on ἀνάθεμα "It is doubted whether ἀνάθεμα here means 'excommunicated' or 'accursed'; i.e. whether it refers to ecclesiastical censure or spiritual condition. The latter alone seems tenable; for (1) it is the LXX. translation of the Hebrew אָרַךְ, e.g. Joh. vii. 1,12.

This word is used in the Old Testament of a person or thing set apart and devoted to destruction, because hateful to God. Hence in a spiritual application it denotes the state of one who is alienated from God by sin" (*The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.; orig. ed. 1865) 78).

Referring to Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar Zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, Vol. III, p. 260, regarding later rabbinical usage, W. Hendriksen says: "The rabbinical 'herem' is a broader concept, inasmuch it comprises whatever is devoted to God, not only that which is devoted to him for destruction" (*A Commentary on Galatians* (London: Banner of Truth, 1968) 41 note).

72. 2 Cor. 11.3, 4 : φοβούμαι δὲ μὴ πως ὡς ὁ ὄφις Ἐβάν ἐξηπάτησεν ἐν τῇ πανουργίᾳ αὐτοῦ, οὕτω φθαρσῇ τὰ νοήματα ὑμῶν ἀπὸ τῆς ἀπλότητος τῆς εἰς τὸν Χριστόν. εἰ μὲν γὰρ ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἄλλου Ἰησοῦν κηρύσσει ὃν οὐκ ἐκηρύξαμεν, ἢ πνεῦμα ἕτερον λαμβάνετε ὃ οὐκ ἐλάβετε, ἢ εὐαγγέλιον ἕτερον ὃ οὐκ ἐδέξασθε, καλῶς ἀνείχεσθε.

F. W. Grosheide, in his commentary on this passage (*De Tweede Brief aan de Kerk te Korinthe* (Kampen: Kok, 1959), 301-305), sees a purely hypothetical situation being described: a possible "other Jesus," "different spirit," and "different gospel." This seems far-fetched. What Paul is concerned with is the real danger of real false teaching being spread. The false apostles are spreading this false teaching. Therefore the Corinthians must be warned.

A. Plummer comments: "We may reasonably conjecture that Ἰησοῦς, πνεῦμα, εὐαγγέλιον, which are a somewhat strange triplet, were leading terms in the teaching of the Judaizers. Ἰησοῦς rather than Χριστός for Judaizers would not use Χριστός, as a proper name" (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, n.d.; latest printing 1978) 296).

In his *A Commentary on I - II Corinthians* (in Korean) (Seoul: Yung Eum Sa, 1962), Y. S. Park says that the false teachers are probably Judaizers (p. 423).

With respect to "another Jesus," this is not another person besides the son of Mary (thus according to C. Hodge, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Banner of Truth, 1959; orig. ed. 1860) 254), but a misrepresentation of the historical Jesus (as if He supported being saved by keeping the law of Moses), as well as the risen Jesus.

C. K. Barrett says: "It might be nearer to the truth... that Paul's rivals preach the same Jesus differently (that is, according to the flesh; v. 16) apprehended, and that this results in a different Gospel and a different religious experience" (*A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper &

- Row, 1973) 275).
73. The true Jesus Christ of the New Testament is both God and man in one person. This is rejected by modern-day liberalism. See the essay "The 'Two Natures' and Recent Christological Speculation" (1911), by B. B. Warfield, in his *The Person and Work of Christ* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1950) 211-262. The essay ends: "The doctrine of the Two Natures supplies, in a word, the only possible solution of the enigmas of the life—manifestation of the historical Jesus... It is, to put it briefly, the simple statement of 'the fact of Jesus,' as that fact is revealed to us in His whole manifestation. We may reject it if we will, but in rejecting it we reject the only real Jesus in favor of another Jesus—who is not another, but is the creature of pure fantasy. The alternatives which we are really face to face with are, Either the two-natured Christ of history, or—a strong delusion" (p. 262). See also the essay by John Murray, "Jesus the Son of God," in his *Collected Writings*, 4:58-81. Murray states: "...I am convinced that a great deal of the emphasis upon the Christological in the theology of the present-day is gravely prejudicial to what is implicit in the confession of Jesus as the Son of God. In other words this is to say that the faith of Jesus with its corresponding confession that is not conditioned by the faith of God as trinity, and by the intradivine and intrinsic relations involved in Jesus' identity as the eternal Son, does not provide the Christology the biblical revelation demands" (p. 80).
74. R. Seeberg wrote about the conflict of the church with Gnosticism in the second century: "Aber wenn etwas sicher ist, so ist es dies, dass es sich hier nicht um einen leeren Streit um Worte, um ein mehr oder minder handeltes, sondern dass wirklich zwei religiöse Anschauungen mit aller Wucht aneinanderprallten" (R. Seeberg, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* (4th ed.; 4 vols. in 3; Leipzig-Erlangen: Dr. Werner Scholl, 1920-1933) 1.310). English trans. (J.M.B.): "However, if anything is certain it is this: it was here not a scholarly battle over words... but actually a forceful collision between two religious viewpoints."
75. We must disagree with J. Pelikan, who says: "Clearly it is an anachronism to superimpose upon the discussions of the second and third centuries categories derived from (J.M.B.) the controversies over the relation of Scripture and tradition in the sixteenth century..." (*The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, 115). The "public tradition" in the interpretation of Scripture, used by Irenaeus to defeat the Gnostics, was precisely the *clear, open, public* teaching of Scripture, which the Gnostics sought to elude by their secret bodies of knowledge. "Twisting" Scripture (*στρεβλῶν*, 2 Pet. 3.16) is met by the *analogy* of Scripture (the clearer illumines the less clear) and the *center* of the historical Gospel, which the *church* has faithfully *guarded* (*φυλάσσω*, 2 Tim. 1.14). After a discussion of the historical process in the recognition of the canon of Scripture by the church, professor David F. Wright, writing in the *Eerdman's Handbook to the History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), says: "...the eventual shape of the New Testament shows that the early church wanted to submit fully to the teaching of the apostles. It had been created by their preaching and now grounded itself upon their writings" (p. 106).
76. The textus receptus of the Apostles' Creed dates back to a document of the beginning of the 8th century in southern Gaul (Doekes, *Credo*, 16). Its predecessor, the "old Roman Creed," goes back to the beginning of the 2nd century.
77. We see a grand refutation of the "Kittel" fallacy ("origin shapes denotation"), unmasked by James Barr in the area of Biblical word-studies à la Kittel dictionary, in the church's choice of the term "homousios." In Pelikan's words: "And this (opposition to seeing the Logos as a creature, J.M.B.) was finally the doctrinal interest for which homousios had been a symbol—coined by Gnostic heretics, dictated by an unbaptized emperor, jeopardized by naive defenders, but eventually vindicated by its orthodox opponents" (*Catholic Tradition*, 210).
78. We must disagree with R. Seeberg, when he says: "Das Problem der Christologie hat das Chalcedonense aufrecht erhalten, nicht hat es dasselbe gelöst" (*Dogmengeschichte*, 2.266). English trans. (J.M.B.): "The Chalcedonian Creed maintained the *problem* of Christology but did not solve it." So is old-

- fashioned German "positive" theology proven to be a form of liberalism coming under the anathema of the Athanasian Creed: "Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation (ad aeternam salutem) that he also believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ... Perfect God and perfect man..."
79. Greek or humanistic philosophy must never be identified with philosophy itself! For there is no conflict or even contrast between salvation in Christ and *Christian* philosophy. There is no "philosophy" in general, any more than there is "theology" in general.
80. We must disagree with A. von Harnack's view, that the development of Christian theology was essentially a corrupting transformation of the original Christian message. He says, for example, about the first hundred years of the (NT) church's life: "Das erste Jahrhundert des Bestehens heidenchristlicher Gemeinden ist namentlich durch folgende Momente charakterisiert:..."
10. durch das Aufkommen von Richtungen, die den vom Ursprung her begonnenen Process der Verschmelzung des Evangeliums mit den geistigen und religiösen Interessen der Zeit, mit dem Hellenischen, in jeder Hinsicht zu beschleunigen trachteten, sowie durch Unternehmungen, das Evangelium von seinen Ursprüngen loszulösen und ihm ganz fremde Voraussetzungen unterzuschieben" (*Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte, I, Die Entstehung des Kirchlichen Dogmas* (3 vols.; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1980; orig. ed. 4th ed. 1909) 1.159, 1.161). English trans: "The first century of the existence of Gentile Christian communities is particularly characterised by the following features:..."
- X. The rise of tendencies which endeavoured to hasten in every respect the inevitable process of fusing the Gospel with the spiritual and religious interests of the time, viz., the Hellenic, as well as attempts to separate the Gospel from its origins and provide for it quite foreign presuppositions" (A. Harnack, *History of Dogma* (5 vols.; tr. N. Buchanan; Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1976; orig. German 3rd ed. 1893) 1.141-143).
- Even the most self-consciously "Platonizing" orthodox theologians of the early church were bound by the Gospel message. As J. W. Baker says: "Again and again we have seen the concepts and cosmology of Middle Platonism lavishly appropriated, not in order to establish equations which would make the Christian message no more than the Platonist philosophy in other dress, but to lead men beyond their philosophy to see how great might be the implications of the Gospel" ("The Permanent Significance of the Fathers of the Second and Third Centuries," a postscript to J. Daniélou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture* (tr. and ed. J. A. Baker; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973) 501, 502). Baker says further: "...This might suggest that men find in the Bible what their various philosophies and feelings predispose them to find; and in many cases this is demonstrably true. But in the second and third centuries, among the writers whose thought we have been studying, a different factor was at work. This we may call, with Turner, the 'pattern of Christian truth', or the 'Gospel message', with the title of the present work, or the kerygma, or any one of a number of names... it patently controls the whole approach of these early Fathers to the organisation and explanation of Christian truth..." (p. 504, 505). On the relation of Hellenism to inter-testamental Judaism, see M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (tr. J. Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974; orig. 2nd German ed. 1973).
81. Klaas Schilder's definition/description ("omschrijving") of dogmatics: "de wetenschap, die in onderworpenheid aan de inhoud en het doel van de Heilige Schrift, de problemen des Kerkelijk-theologisch dogmata rangschikt en systematisch behandelt in een sympathetisch-kritische reproductie van de inhoud der in de lijn der oecumenische symbolen vastgestelde dogmata" (*Kompendium Dogmatiek* (mimeographed) (3 vols.; Kampen: v.d. Berg, n.d.; orig. lecture notes in 1940's) 1.16). English trans. (J.M.B.): "(dogmatics) is the science which, in submission to the content and aim of the Holy Scripture, orders the problems of the church-theological dogmas, and systematically treats them, in a sympathetic-critical reproduction of the content of the dogmas established in the line of the ecumenical symbols (creeds)." In my opinion, the term "sympathetisch-kritisch" is open to misunderstanding (was not Barth sympathetic-critical? Harnack? Schleiermacher? etc.). Schilder of course fills it in with definitely Biblical content, in an orthodox-and-renewing way.