

THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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The Toronto School

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Recently some professedly Reformed scholars, mainly with a Christian Reformed background, and taking their cue from Professor Herman Dooyeweerd of the Free University of Amsterdam, have organized the Toronto-based American Association for Christian Scholarship. Their view of the Bible derives from their more general concept of the Word of God. That the Bible and the Word of God are not synonymous terms may be granted by the most orthodox of theologians. God spoke to Adam, Noah, Abraham, and the prophets. This speaking is not the written word, even if all that was spoken—and this is doubtful—was later written in the Bible. Then too the most orthodox of theologians admit that Jesus, the Word of God, was not literally the ink symbols written on a piece of papyrus or vellum. Furthermore, the Power of God and the Wisdom of God, as identified in *1 Corinthians* 1:24, as well as the creative Word in *Proverbs* 3:19-20, are not the Hebrew characters on a page. Hence one may legitimately say that the Bible is the Word of God, even though the Word of God is not the Bible.

But other ideas, not so legitimate, are also found in the writings of the Toronto group. There is a disconcerting tendency to refer to the Bible as a physical object consisting of paper with ink spots on it. There is a tendency to concentrate on words, printed or spoken, rather than the thought and message of which the ink spots are merely symbols. Thus Hendrik Hart (*Can the Bible Be an Idol?* 9-10) can say,

These writings are not that Word, they reveal it... We may call the Bible *in an analogical sense* the Word of God. But when we lose the analogy, the pointing beyond itself for its original meaning, the revelational witness out of sight; when we identify the two meanings, then we shall never come to Christ, as he himself said (*John* 5:39, 46). The Word of God is God, it [*sic*] was in the beginning, creator, wisdom, truth, ... We cannot say all of this about the Bible ... The Word of God is not a book at all.

One must note the confusion, the mixture of truth and error, the ambiguity in this quotation. If "these writings" are regarded as a book in the paper and ink sense, they are indeed "not that Word." But if the term *Bible* is used to designate the meaning of these writings, the message, the intellectual content symbolized in ink spots, it is indeed that Word. These writings do not merely reveal that Word. They are not that Word in some undefined "analogical" sense. They do not point to some original meaning behind the meaning of the words, something "out of sight." No, these writings *are*, or more pedantically, if you wish, this message is itself the very Word of God. Hart may say that in this way we shall never come to Christ; but the verses he cites do not support him, and other verses continue to refute him.

John 5:39 does not disparage searching the Scriptures. Even if the first verb is declarative, "you

search," Hart's implication cannot validly be drawn, for the last phrase is, "they which testify of me." If the verb is imperative, as is more likely, still less does Hart's implication follow. Furthermore, Jesus does not say or imply that the Pharisees were wrong in thinking that eternal life was to be found in the Scriptures. The other verse Hart cites explicitly states that if the Pharisees had understood and believed the Scriptures they searched, they would have believed Christ. Unbelief of Moses' writings, even on parchment as they were, precludes belief in Christ's words, spoken in the air.

In addition to these two verses that Hart quotes and misunderstands, *John* (8:32) also says, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Once again *John* (17:17) says, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." Such verses as these assert that the message of the Bible is true. It is not some "analogy" of the truth outside itself to which it points. It is itself the truth that sanctifies.

The Bible then is the truth and wisdom of God, the mind of Christ, the Scriptures that cannot be broken. Orthodoxy easily admits that the Bible does not reveal all the mind of Christ. The Wisdom of God contains secret things (*Deuteronomy* 29:29) that God has not revealed and may never reveal. But when James Olthuis (*The Word of God and Hermeneutics*, page 5) says, "It is not that the Scriptures are one part of the Word of God and that there are other parts," he seems to deny the distinction in *Deuteronomy*. At any rate, this distinction plays no role in the AACS theory. But the Biblical teaching concerning the Bible on this point seems to be satisfied by maintaining that the propositions that make up the Bible are only some of the propositions in the divine system of truth. Thus the Bible is indeed apart of the Word of God and there are other parts.

Furthermore, although these people allow that the Bible is in some sense the inscripturated Word (compare Hart, *The Challenge of Our Age*, 119), their antipathy toward propositions would seem to make inscripturation impossible. What else can possibly be inscripturated except propositions? Of course, questions and commands can be written down. These are not propositions. But does the

Bible consist only of questions and commands? *1 Samuel* 25:42 says, "Abigail ... went after the messengers of David and became his wife." This is a proposition, a declarative sentence, a piece of information. Can anyone explain how this could possibly be an inscripturation of something non-propositional, non-cognitive, meaningless? Perhaps the answer is that Hart inscripturates unintelligible nonsense when he writes, "The Word of God, God's revelation, has been inscripturated without becoming a Scripture" (118).

If the above is not quite enough to show how far the Toronto theologians are from the Calvinistic position, perhaps this concluding point will suffice to exhibit the Neo-orthodox nature of their thought. In *Understanding the Scriptures* Arnold DeGraaff writes,

To treat the Scripture as if it did not contain such general theological statements and propositional truths, therefore, would be to distort the very nature and purpose of the Word of God. The Bible wants to proclaim, not explain! It is only in his actions that God's being and his attributes are revealed (9-10).

DeGraaff's statements are so obviously false that further comment is unnecessary.

From the Horror File

This month's horror is taken from a book by Jim S. Halsey, *For a Time Such as This, An Introduction to the Reformed Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til*, published by Presbyterian and Reformed:

Suppose one engages in a defense of the doctrine of God's sovereignty as opposed to the doctrine of human autonomy (free will). Here, in the doctrine of God's sovereignty, is a "given" truth to be asserted by the concerned Christian in the face of a hostile world. Yet, as our hypothetical Christian attempts to "give a

reason of the hope that is in him," he will very soon realize that his method of defense will, in large measure, determine the doctrine which he has set out to defend. If his methodology is couched along classical lines, he will proceed down the logical path dictated by the law of contradiction... His method of reasoning will move him irrevocably toward a Satanic, deterministic god:

A. God is the Creator of all things.

B. Evil is a created thing.

C. Therefore God is the Creator of evil.

A. God has predetermined all the acts of history.

B. Man's thoughts and actions are a part of history.

C. Therefore man's thoughts and actions are predetermined by God.

The god produced in accordance with this method of apologetic would not be the God of Light but the god of darkness.

Editor's Comment

The conclusion of the first syllogism is true, and the syllogism valid. Halsey blasphemes by calling God "Satanic" and the "god of darkness." *Isaiah 45:7*, among other verses, explicitly teaches that God is the Creator of evil: "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil. I the Lord do all these things." The law of contradiction and Scripture agree; it is Halsey who defends false doctrine by an illogical method.

The second syllogism is also valid, and its conclusion true. Scripture teaches in hundreds of places that "man's thoughts and actions are predetermined by God." "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases." "Both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." "I

have hardened his heart and the hearts of his officials so that I may perform these miraculous signs of mine among them." Halsey's contempt for logic causes him to blaspheme God. This is understandable, for John identifies the Logic (*Logos*) of God with God. He who hates logic, hates God.

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