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COVER PICTURE: Ashbel Green's home at Princeton during the time of his presidency—a building which remains comparatively little changed today. Photograph by courtesy of Princeton University Press, taken from their volume *Princeton Architecture*, 1967.

cannot any longer forsake that servant. I myself may become poor: but *that* faithful old servant has a real claim on me which I should be a wretch if I were not eagerly to acknowledge. He or she must at least have a room in my house, food and raiment, sympathy and kindness, medical aid in time of sickness, an honourable grave after I have closed his or her eyes in death.

Now, the giddy and the restless and the conceited ones, every time they change their place, make such a claim as I have been describing less and less *possible*. They therefore do *not* 'better' themselves, even though they may get a slight increase of wages every time they make a move.

But apart from this: long and faithful service is right, for long and faithful service's sake. Here is a sample of it embalmed in Scripture. And why? Because it *implies* a dutiful, and an affectionate spirit; long-suffering; meekness; patience; forbearance; gentleness; self-denial; the constant exercise of charity. Yes, to have served long in one and the same family is a sure token of the presence of not a few Christian graces, not a little real goodness.

And ye masters and mistresses, be gentle and forbearing on your side; be patient and considerate towards them! remembering that there is something to be said on both sides of this question.

I will not waste your time, or my own, by multiplying words on such a subject. I have preferred setting before you the history and the example of Deborah, Rebekah's aged nurse. If any of you have felt interested in what has been related, and in your inmost heart wish that God would give you grace to enable you to be faithful, and attached, and long in your service as she was – write down on the blank leaf of your Bible the year, and the month, and the day of the month, and immediately after it, add these words from the 35th chapter of Genesis, the 8th verse: 'Deborah, Rebekah's nurse died; and she was buried beneath Bethel under an oak: and the name of it was called Allon-bachuth', adding [from the margin], 'that is, *the oak of weeping*.'

## BOOK REVIEWS

### The New Testament Student and Theology

Ed. John H. Skilton  
*Presbyterian and Reformed*, 1976,  
226pp £2.35

This collection of essays and articles constitutes the third volume in the series *The New Testament Student*, and is dedicated to the memory of Professor John Murray. By way of preface, it contains a memorial minute from Westminster Seminary, and the text of a thanksgiving prayer for Murray's life and work. For this reason its contents will be of special interest to many readers.

There is much that is commendable in this book. The first two articles on Systematic Theology and Definitive Sanctification are by John Murray himself, and contain two of his most important contributions to journals. His piece on 'Definitive Sanctification' [which is also appearing in the second volume of his *Collected Writings*] distils the essence of his thought in an area of reformed thought in which he made an important contribution by the precision with which he expressed the total dimension of the biblical doctrine of sanctification as a 'once-for-all definitive act', as well as a life-long process. This is a telling corrective to what, at times, appears to be the pessimism and gloom of certain reformed presentations of the scriptural position, in which sanctification and holiness appear as a doubtful battle in the believer's experience. Here Professor Murray well indicates that, if it is a life-long

battle, the major victory has already been won, and a centre for divine operation established.

With a title emphasising *theology* it is not surprising that we are treated to a number of articles specifically dealing with articles of doctrine. Besides a piece investigating the definitions and relationships of systematic and biblical theology by Richard B. Gaffin, in which he draws on the foundations laid by Vos and Murray, there is a short piece from Cornelius Van Til on 'Scripture and Reformed Apologetics', characteristically written, if somewhat lacking in exegesis of scripture itself – if a cat may criticise a king! There is an excellent, popular article of J. G. Machen's, on 'The Resurrection of Christ', coupled with a more technical piece by W. P. Armstrong, first published in 1912 but of abiding value. Together they present a helpful study.

One or two articles of a more linguistic nature appear. R. H. Countess provides a valuable study, of considerable practical usefulness, of the translation of Theos [God] in the *New World Translation* [Jehovah's Witnesses], in John 1.1, 'and the Word was a god'. He shows that this translation:

- (a) Indicates ignorance of the nuances of Greek.
- (b) Establishes a principle for translation regarding the use of the article [*ho* = the] which the translators of the *New World Translation* breach themselves 94 per cent of the time!

(c) Depends on an Arian theology, and is therefore bound to a completely circular argument in which the presupposition of the translation is the same as the conclusion which the translation is intended to prove.

Countess's conclusion is that the translation 'and the Word was God' 'may not be regarded as strange in a Gospel that concludes with Thomas' exclamation in 20.28 – *Ho kurios mou kai ho Theos mou.*' [Literally: the Lord of me, and the God of me].

William Lane, the author of the commentary on Mark in the *New International* series provides an interesting critique of some of the renderings in the *New International Version* of Mark – at the invitation of Edwin Palmer, the executive secretary of the NIV committee! In view of the current interest in this translation, there is a good deal of illuminating material here.

In a more critical vein, attention ought perhaps to be drawn to a certain fragmentation in the contents of the book. In later pages, and under that general rubric of *The New Testament Student and Theology*, we are given articles on such diverse themes as, 'The New Testament Department in Covenant Seminary' [where 5 out of the 8 Th.M theses listed appear to have been written by Koreans!]; 'Purpose in Bible Collecting'; two pieces on recent articles from theological journals, a selection of book reviews, and a conglomeration of news items. This totals some thirty-six pages of material of a comparatively ephemeral nature, and gives the impression of being little more than filler. Students might well have wished for more substantial material.

Of the hitherto unpublished articles, the one most likely to attract attention and provoke com-

ment comes from the pen of Norman Shepherd, Professor of Systematic Theology at Westminster Seminary, and John Murray's successor as the chairman of the department. He gives us a twenty-five page paper on 'The Covenant Context for Evangelism', and his thesis merits more prolonged description and discussion. He has in view the much-discussed notion that *reformed* evangelism appears to be so much less successful than its Arminian counterpart.

Professor Shepherd proposes, as the solvent of this shameful situation, that 'The Covenant affords the perspective from which the evangelistic task of the church ought to be approached' [p 53]. There follow from this three basic theses which ought to provide some kind of truly biblical solution to this problem.

1. The Great Commission arises out of and is patterned after the Covenant with Abraham.
2. Reformed evangelistic methodology must be consciously oriented to the covenant of grace rather than to the doctrine of election.
3. Baptism, rather than regeneration is the point of transition from lostness in death to salvation in life.

In the exposition of these three theses, Shepherd offers a great deal to challenge and stimulate thought and reaction, and this must be regarded as one of the primary functions of the paper in view of the original context at which it was given, in a conference of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. But there are a number of criticisms of his position which must be mentioned.

Dr Shepherd makes no attempt to define his concept of *covenant*, and yet it is imperative, in view of its centrality to scripture, theology, and

history, that this term should be defined, and used with the utmost precision.

Furthermore, it will be readily recognised that the reformed constituency is very conscious, indeed self-conscious, of the criticisms which are levelled at its apparent lack of evangelistic thrust and success. We need to examine ourselves, but there is a very important difference between self-examination and self-consciousness and introversion. We need to remember, when comparisons are drawn between reformed evangelism and that of other Christians, that the statistics of evangelical religion indicate that the reformed constituency is numerically swamped by the multitudes of other persuasions. It is inevitable that the evangelism of Arminianism appears to be more frequent and more successful. Any comparison is faulty, because it is between things that differ too considerably statistically to be properly correlated.

Turning more closely to the thesis which Professor Shepherd enunciates, some further comment is necessary. He assumes that passages like Ephesians 1.1-14 are 'suffused with covenantal language'. The present reviewer agrees with this contention, and regards it as important. But Shepherd does not sustain his case by demonstration. He gives no indication as to *what covenantal language* is, and this is a great deficiency. It might be thought that this would belong to the essence of his task in view of the all-pervasiveness of covenant for which he is arguing.

This brings us to one of his major points. He writes that 'The prophets and apostles viewed election from the perspective of the covenant of grace, whereas Reformed

theologians of a later day have tended to view the covenant of grace from the perspective of election' [p 60]. The result of this, it is argued, is that the reformed preacher no longer says 'Christ died for you' – but, when these words are construed, not from the point of view of election, but of the covenant, then 'The Reformed evangelist can and must say on the basis of John 3.16, Christ died for you'.

This demands comment. First, Shepherd appears to adopt the view of the prevailing academic critique of the covenant theology of the seventeenth century [forcefully presented decades ago by Perry Miller], which suggests that the doctrine of covenant somehow makes God's secret counsels less harsh. We ought therefore to look at covenant, and not at election. This analysis, both historically and biblically we reject. It is clear that, in fact, covenant theology arose in a variety of circumstances – sacramental, in the case of Zwingli, biblical and theological, in the case of Calvin, expository and pastoral, in the case of the Puritans. Doubtless, in the case of some writers, Shepherd may be right. But it is an extreme view to charge all reformed writers with this confusion of thought, and to suggest that they have turned the order of scripture on its head. To use Shepherd's own citation – the fact is that some passages, e.g. Ephesians 1.1-14, do employ the mode of looking at covenant from the viewpoint of election. Indeed, in that passage it is necessary for the reader to *look for* covenant in the context of election. From a more practical point of view – was it because Whitefield and Edwards, Spurgeon and M'Cheyne managed to escape the old reformed strait-jacket and discover election in its

covenant perspective that they were such great evangelists? It seems highly doubtful. And therefore we are justified in wondering whether this is really the true solution at all.

Shepherd has had the courage to state to the reformed reader that a question mark hangs over the commonly accepted notion that the preacher cannot say: 'Christ died for you'. In fact Shepherd goes so far as to say that, from this covenantal perspective, the reformed preacher is *under obligation* to say 'Christ died to save you'. But that cannot possibly be a proper assessment, for no evangelist in the New Testament shows himself to have been under an inescapable burden to say that. In fact Shepherd is surely confusing two things in John 3.16, to which he refers – the truth that it was the loved world to which God gave his Son [which is affirmed], and the statement, 'Christ died to save you' [which is not affirmed]. Not only does the reformed evangelist *not* say this, the apostle John does not say it either.

But most eyebrows will be raised by Professor Shepherd's comment that 'Baptism rather than regeneration is the point of transition from lostness in death to salvation in life' [p 66] – to which, it must be added, he provides a note to the effect that 'The position here advocated should not be confused with the sacramentalist doctrine of baptismal regeneration' [ibid]. His point is that when evangelism is election-oriented it is also regeneration-oriented, so that the whole thing is viewed from the standpoint of the secret work of God. The problem with this approach is that, 'Judgments have to be made which belong properly and exclusively in the hands of God . . . Just because such judgment belongs to God, the

evangelist should not attempt even an approximation' [p 67]. This whole view, according to the author, leads to the tension in reformed evangelism of works of preparation for grace, to which he objects: 'Even the exhortation to ask for a new heart just does not square with insistence on total inability. There is nothing the unregenerate man can do or will do in the direction of his conversion' [p 69]. 'In contrast to this regeneration – evangelism – a methodology oriented to the covenant structure of Scripture and to the Great Commission presents baptism as the point of transition from death to life' [p 71]. This, he argues, is demonstrated by the emphasis in the New Testament, not on people being converted, but on their being baptised, and he cites Acts 2.41 and Acts 16.33 as illustrative of this very principle.

There are a number of strands here, and each must be criticised separately. First of all, Professor Shepherd does not seem to give due allowance to the fact that regeneration is not the only work of God. It may have precursors. Jesus said that men, unregenerate as they were, should *strive* to enter in by the narrow gate that *leads to life*. Then, in the second place, Shepherd is somewhat guilty of mishandling the texts he quotes in favour of the priority of baptism over conversion. On the one hand the verses do say what he states; but he fails to remind us of other things they state. Thus, for example, that the 3000 who were baptised were those who 'gladly received the word', and that Paul and Silas baptised the jailer *because* he believed in God. They must have borne the distinguishing marks of a work of the Spirit of God. The apostles must have judged these men to be truly regenerate. Rather

than draw attention away from conversion, these instances simply highlight that, for the adult, a profession of faith in Christ, and of conversion was a prerequisite for baptism.

Thirdly, Shepherd is guilty at least of confusion of expression, if not more. It is true that baptism is what 'should mark the passage from death to life' [p 72] but it is another thing to suggest that it actually constitutes 'the point of transition from lostness in death to salvation in life' [p 66]. This is to confuse the sign and the thing signified, and to be guilty of an offence against reformed teaching. Surely Professor Shepherd means something different from what he says? It is perhaps not surprising that, while critical of the current expressions that a man is 'truly converted' or 'really born again', and emphatic that in the New Testament the phraseology was that he was 'baptised', and that these other expressions were redundant, he does not himself manage to escape an *addition* to baptism as the expression of fruitful evangelism, when he says that 'All who have been baptised *and are seeking to do the will of God* are to be regarded as Christian brothers' [p 74, emphasis mine].

These expressions of Professor Shepherd may be seen by Baptist brethren as playing into their hands. The current baptist polemic has made much capital out of the differences and disagreements among paedobaptists over the meaning and place of baptism. The fact that the baptist position is equally out of sorts with itself and that its apologues present diverse views of the nature of baptism and its relationship, or otherwise, to both covenant and church, is beside the point! Shepherd's position does not clarify

matters. Perhaps, in view of the originality which the author is obviously seeking to inject into an important area of discussion, it is inevitable that he has not, apparently, thought through some of the implications of his teaching. For this reason it would be a pity if baptist brethren were to employ his case as typical of the position which paedobaptists are now adopting! In any event, the article leaves us somewhere in the air, and does not convey to this reviewer that the answer to a pressing predicament has been made clear, and that the gospel may now be carried by reformed men to a lost world with a freedom and power that is sadly lacking.

It would be our hope that, for the welfare of the reformed churches, Professor Shepherd would return to the drawing board, and come again, so that we may hear him further on these matters.

*The New Testament Student and Theology* may be obtained by readers who have difficulty purchasing Presbyterian and Reformed Books, from either The Evangelical Bookshop in Belfast, or the Christian Bookshop, 47 Forest Road, Edinburgh.

SINCLAIR B. FERGUSON

## **Flesh and Spirit, An Examination of Galatians 5:19-23**

Baker Book House. 127pp  
\$1.95 pbk.

Franco Zeffirelli's  
**Jesus of Nazareth**  
William Barclay

Collins, 128pp, 75p pbk.

A recent issue of a professedly evangelical journal in reviewing a title by William Barclay concludes a favourable notice with the words, 'Let us hope that the flow of his pen



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COVER PICTURE: Part of the end-paper being used in the Trust's new reprint of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, illustrating scenes from the book.

6. Is conviction of sin identical with a man's acknowledgement that he is a sinner?
7. How far are we responsible for the false converts that attend our ministry?

## MORE ON COVENANT EVANGELISM

*A reply from Norman Shepherd<sup>1</sup>*

May I express my appreciation to Sinclair B. Ferguson for his review of *The New Testament Student and Theology*, Vol. III, and for the extensive attention given to my contribution to this symposium on 'The Covenant Context for Evangelism.' The review represents the kind of analysis and criticism necessary if we are to be of help to one another in searching the Scriptures to see whether these things be so [Acts 17.11].

Since the reviewer has invited me to 'come again, so that we may hear him further on these matters,' I am grateful for the opportunity to do so in the *Banner of Truth Magazine*. Hopefully we can advance the discussion a bit further as we seek consensus on the topics dealt with in the light of God's infallible word.

The reviewer properly draws attention to my failure to provide a definition of covenant and an explanation of what is meant by 'covenant language'. An adequate response would require another article, if not a book, but I shall try to state briefly what was in view.

Covenant is descriptive of the organic relation between God and man. The very life of man, in distinction from all earthly creatures, resides in his communion with

the living God through union with Christ who by virtue of his mediatorial accomplishment has become life-giving Spirit [1 Cor 15.45]. Covenant means that there is a radical distinction between God, the Creator, and man, the creature, but at the same time points to the fellowship in life between God and man. God made man for this fellowship, and man fulfils his 'chief end' in this fellowship, glorifying God and enjoying him for ever. This is his life.

The external arrangements governing this life-giving and life-sustaining relation flow out of and are grounded in the organic relation which provides the unity and continuity throughout the successive historical covenants described in the Bible.

Covenant language is simply language which is appropriate to describe this unique relation. Covenant language does two things: First, it ascribes to God alone and to his grace, anything which man is or has. It affirms the absolute sovereignty of God. Second, it views man as a fully responsible vicegerent of God who can live and enjoy life only in loving submission to God who in love made man to be what he is. All of Biblical language is covenant language, but

<sup>1</sup>We welcome this comment by Norman Shepherd, Professor of Systematic Theology at Westminster Seminary, on the review we printed on pp 60-63 of the July-August issue.

especially in the Psalms, the songs of the covenant, do we find vivid illustration of it.

Israel in Egypt was as good as dead. God alone called Israel to life and established Israel in the promised land [Deut 7.8]. At the same time, God said to Israel, 'Set your hearts unto . . . all the words of this law. For it is not a vain thing for you: because it is your life' [Deut 32.46, 47]. Covenant language says that life is exclusively the gift of grace and that it is entered into and sustained in the way of faith, repentance, and obedience.

Pagan thinking is definitively opposed to covenant thought and language and regards it as utter nonsense. The natural man does not have the Biblical distinction between Creator and creature and therefore by definition can have no concept of covenant or covenant language. For him, the will of God and the will of man operate in a single dimension. The only kind of sovereignty that could be ascribed to God is the kind which smotheres human responsibility, and the only kind of genuine human responsibility possible is the kind which negates divine sovereignty.

Here we have the contours of the classic debate between Arminianism and 'hyper-Calvinism'. The dilemma is a holdover from the death-grip of Greek philosophy which dominated and darkened the Middle Ages. The death-grip is not loosened by holding the horns of the dilemma in tension with one another by means of a dogmatic *tour de force*.

Calvinism, and Calvinism alone, rejected the dilemma by means of its doctrine of salvation by grace [divine sovereignty] through faith [human responsibility], in terms of

which grace did not render the exhortation to faith and repentance nugatory, but provided the only foundation on which the exhortations make sense. That is to say, Reformed theology is in the genius of its conception covenant theology. In spite of the fact that the Bible from cover to cover is structured by the unfolding of the historical covenants culminating in the New Covenant in the blood of Jesus, neither pre- nor post-Reformation Roman Catholicism, nor Lutheranism, nor Arminianism paid any attention to the covenant. They could not, because they refused to make a clean break with the pagan-Greek-humanistic doctrine of man's free will. Only in the context of the Reformed faith did the doctrine of the covenant flourish.

Because Reformed theology is covenant theology and because Reformed evangelistic methodology must be expressive of the genius of Reformed theology, Reformed evangelism should be construed as covenant evangelism. To this day Arminian evangelism pays no attention to the covenant. If Reformed evangelism pays no attention to the covenant, it is really not true to its distinctive genius. The task before us is not to weave some doctrines of grace into a basically Arminian framework, nor is it to make the doctrines of grace palatable by interweaving some Arminian language with them. The unfinished task before us as Christians, reformed by the word of God, is to develop and implement a covenantal method of evangelism. My article was intended as a modest contribution to this effort.

With this background, I would like to take up three specific matters in the review which go to the heart of the article, and which can serve

as illustrative of my approach to other elements in the review which cannot be taken up without unduly lengthening this response.

1. The reviewer correctly perceives as a major thrust of my article that we should view election from the perspective of the covenant. He goes on, however, to associate this thrust with a criticism prevalent in academic circles that the doctrine of election as traditionally conceived is too 'harsh', and that 'we ought therefore to look at covenant, and not at election.'

It is essential to note that this second view in contrast to mine proposes to *substitute* covenant for election. It is clear that 'covenant' in this instance is a Biblical word which serves to mask the modern [Arminian] conception of human freedom. Indeed, such freedom cannot coexist with the Reformed doctrine of election. Hence the substitution of the one for the other. We have here an example of the dilemma derived from non-Christian philosophy described previously: either divine sovereignty or human freedom. In this case, the critics have opted for human freedom.

The Reformed answer to this modern criticism of election is not to opt for the opposite horn of the dilemma. Such a conception of divine sovereignty is, indeed, harsh, but the offence is the offence of Greek determinism rather than of divine sovereign grace. I would assure my reviewer that I have no desire to 'make God's secret counsels less harsh'. In a lengthy review of James Daane's *The Freedom of God*, I defended the historic and full-orbed Reformed doctrine of election and reprobation against that author's attack on 'decretal theology'. [See *The Westminster*

My article did not ask us to look at covenant *instead* of election. It asked us precisely and explicitly to look at election, but to do so in the only way legitimate for creatures, namely, out of the covenant relation in which God has placed us. When Paul addressed the Ephesians as the chosen in Christ, he did not pretend to a knowledge of their election identical with God's knowledge. To do so would have been to destroy the Creator-creature distinction. What he observed in Ephesus were 'saints' who were 'faithful in Christ Jesus' [1.1]. He observed their standing in the covenant [see 2.19, 20] and accounted for this solely on the basis of God's sovereign electing love.

2. Both the reviewer and I want to preach as Jesus taught us, by exhorting men to strive to enter in by the narrow gate that leads to life. But we both know that the unregenerate man has no power to enter of himself. For this reason, the reviewer stops short of finding here an exhortation to *enter*, but focusses on the *striving* as a precursor to regeneration. [We may ask in passing whether as Reformed pastors who believe in *total* inability, we really want to say that an unregenerate man can will to strive to enter any more than he can will to enter].

If, now, we look at the precise language of the exhortation in the framework of the covenant, we see that it is addressed to one who is outside of the Kingdom. The presupposition is not that he has or has not the native ability to enter, but concretely that he is outside and that he must enter to be saved. The exhortation to enter [that is the purpose of striving]

does not jeopardize the doctrine of total inability but honours the promise of the Spirit to accompany gospel exhortation with sovereign power [James 1.18, 1 Peter 1.23].

We do not want to find ourselves impaled on the horns of the dilemma: the free offer of the gospel is Arminian and the denial of it is Reformed; or, the Arminians have the free offer, but the Reformed have the gospel. The Reformed alone have both the free offer and the gospel, because they alone have sovereign grace and understand sovereign grace to be covenant grace. Only Reformed evangelists have the theological structure which justifies a vigorous and impassioned plea to all men everywhere to repent of sin and believe in Jesus Christ for salvation. Whether the great Reformed evangelists of the past were conscious of this covenantal conception we can leave an open question; but I would venture to say that the conduct of their ministries in terms of it explains their power.

3. I now sincerely regret that the antithetical way in which I stated my third thesis [Baptism rather than regeneration is the point of transition from lossness in death to salvation in life] gave reasonable grounds for the criticism that on the one hand baptism was isolated from faith and conversion, and on the other the sign and the thing signified were confused with each other. The thesis would be better stated as follows: Baptism marks the point of transition from death to life. As the article goes on to say, 'The covenantal focus on baptism does not mean that regeneration is discounted. It is rather put in proper perspective' [p 72], and 'Baptism is therefore to be understood as of a piece with

the total transformation which is salvation. It is the sacramental side of a total renewal [regeneration in the broad sense] of both the inner and the outer man' [p 73].

We must also say, of course, that the passage from death to life occurs at conversion, or regeneration, or union with Christ. But as creatures we cannot know precisely the moment when this takes place. It may take place before, or after, or in conjunction with baptism; it may never take place at all. When, then, as far as the church is concerned, does a man become a Christian? Do we not have to say, when he is baptized? The only judgment the church is capable of making is a judgment as to a man's standing relative to the covenant, and the church is obligated to remind us of the 'much neglected duty of improving our *baptism*' [Westminster Larger Catechism, 167, *italics added*].

Although the reviewer credits me with some measure of originality, I do not think the basic view which I am seeking to express is really new. Charles Hodge writes in his *Systematic Theology*, 'Unless the recipient of this sacrament be insincere, baptism is an act of faith, it is an act in which and by which he receives and appropriates the offered benefits of the redemption of Christ. And, therefore, to baptism may be properly attributed all that in the Scriptures is attributed to faith. Baptism washes away sin [Acts xxii. 16]; it unites to Christ and makes us the sons of God [Gal iii. 26, 27]; we are therein buried with Christ [Rom vi. 3]; it is [according to one interpretation of Titus iii. 5] the washing of regeneration. But all this is said on the assumption that it is what

it purports to be, an act of faith' [Vol. III, p 589].

But is the act of faith sincere?

Again I would follow Hodge in saying that what is requisite for baptism is not a profession of faith which *constrains* belief, but one which is *believable* [p 569]. The church 'is bound to refuse to recognize as Christian brethren those who deny the faith, and those whose manner of life is inconsistent with the law of Christ'; but at the same time, 'It cannot legitimately assume the prerogative of sitting in judgment on the hearts of men. It has no right to decide the question whether those who apply for the privileges of Christ's house are regenerate or unregenerate' [p 576].

The same sentiment is expressed by John Murray in his *Christian Baptism* [Phila: O.P. Comm. on Chr. Ed., 1952], p 42. Speaking of the examination of candidates for church membership he writes, 'But this examination, it must be remembered, is not conducted on the premise that to the officers of the church or to the church as a communion is given the prerogative to determine who are regenerate and who are not. It is conducted, rather, on the basis that to the ministry of the church belongs the obligation to ensure as far as possible by instruction and warning that only those united to Christ will make the confession which only such can truly make. It is the function of the church to demand an intelligent, credible, and uncontr-

dicted confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.'

There is a significant difference between these two authors and the reviewer in this area. The reviewer holds, for example, that concerning the 3000 who were baptized on the Day of Pentecost, 'the apostles must have judged these men to be truly regenerate'. Hodge writes, 'It is obviously impossible that there should have been any protracted examination of the religious experience of the three thousand converted on the day of Pentecost, or of the five thousand brought in by the sermon of Peter, recorded in the third chapter of Acts. The Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of the New Testament afford abundant evidence that the early churches did not consist exclusively of those whom the Apostles "judged" to be regenerated persons' [p 577].

This is a difference which will, obviously, have to be explored very carefully. I believe that attention to the covenantal character of Reformed theology will serve to guard the main interests of both parties, and will contribute to a resolution of the difference and a strengthening of our Reformed testimony. My immediate purpose, however, is simply to point out that the article under review moves in the line of the Old Princeton theology and in the line of my immediate predecessor at Westminster Seminary, John Murray.

## ON FACING BLINDNESS

T. C. Johnson<sup>1</sup>

From 1886 to 1889 Dabney's sight became dimmer and dimmer, until the light went out absolutely. On walking into his own brightly lighted parlor of an evening, he would often ask whether the light was on, and that, too, when facing the chandelier. Often when the sun was shining brightly, he would ask his companion of the day whether the sun shone, or whether it were cloudy; and in case of a somewhat surprised answer that 'the light' of the 'sun' was 'brilliantly shining', he would quietly say, 'The darkness and the light are the same to me.' After 1889, he was absolutely sightless.

He dreaded the coming horror of darkness until the light had almost gone, and then his dread passed away. In September, 1887, still in the clutches of a severe attack of 'cystitis', he wrote to his son, Dr Charles W. Dabney:

'I find these attacks destroying my remnant of eyesight very steadily. My vision, I knew, had been slowly declining since I left Austin. In the last five days I have lost as much ground as in the previous three months. The prospect thus suggested is well calculated to test one's fortitude; of a hopeless blindness, making me not only useless, but a burden to my family, and continued apparently only for the suffering which its prolongation may involve. . . . If I have strength to reach Austin at all, I am going to work on there as long as it is in any way possible, and try to die in the harness.'

Some months later, apparently picking up courage, once more he appealed to a specialist, in Atlanta, and was told that there was no hope for any, even the most partial vision. That was one of the hours when the shadows lay heavy upon him. When he returned from the great doctor's office that day to the home of his friend, Dr G. B. Stricker, he is said to have looked as if he had fought, with all the resources of his power, and been hopelessly beaten, like a brave soldier, who had spent himself to the utmost, but had been overcome and taken captive by his enemy, doomed. He went off alone on the piazza, and there for two hours fought another battle, with himself, for readjustment to God's providence. The fight was

<sup>1</sup>The following is an extract from Johnson's biography of Dabney. It will also remind readers of the importance of literature and tapes ministry carried on amongst the blind by the Torch Trust in the U.K., and in the U.S.A. by The Gospel Association for the Blind, 15 College Point Blvd., College Point, N.Y. 11356. The biography is now available in U.K.