

THOROUGHGOING REFORMATION

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B S POH



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To

Dr. Peter Masters and Mrs. Jill Masters,

with thanksgiving to God

for the example you set

and the help and encouragement given

over the years.

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PREFACE

Five hundred years have elapsed since the Reformation of the 16th century, which began with Martin Luther nailing his “Ninety-five Theses” to the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. Constant ebb and flow in the progress of truth is observable in the Bible. This phenomenon has continued after the time of the apostles. As the truth spreads, a loss in doctrinal integrity takes place. As doctrinal integrity is recovered, a period of expansion of the truth occurs.

As the gospel spread in the pagan Roman Empire from the apostolic age, the Apostles’ Creed was drawn up to counter attacks on the doctrine of the Godhead. As the Christian faith settled over the Empire from the days of Constantine, all-round corruption of the Christian faith occurred – in doctrine and practice. The Reformation of the 16th century took place, which galvanized the Christian faith, including the sharpening of soteriology in the Five Points of Calvinism at the Synod of Dort. As the Reformation progressed, a discernible broadening of doctrinal opinion among the Puritans began, leading to the Particular Baptists calling for thoroughgoing reformation. Persecution against the Dissenters in the 17th century, followed by the Great Evangelical Awakening under the preaching of George Whitefield and John Wesley, meant that the Particular Baptists were hampered and distracted in their attempt to engage in thoroughgoing reformation.

As the age of missions and social concern began, the focus on the winning of souls was at the expense of distinctiveness in doctrine. C. H. Spurgeon’s warning of doctrinal downgrade, as Modernism spread, was not heeded. The Evangelicals clashed with the Modernists in the period 1910-1930, in what has been called the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy, resulting in the split-up of the Evangelicals into three main parties, viz. the Fundamentalists, the Reformed, and the Neo-Evangelicals. The Pentecostal movement arose to form a fourth camp. Since then, a realignment of positions has been taking place up to today, with those in one camp drawing near to another and, at times, totally crossing over.

A Charismatic renewal took place in the 1960’s, at the same time that there was a revival of interest in Reformed theology. The Charismatic movement and the Reformed movement became unwitting contenders in win-

ning adherents. When the Charismatic movement was in danger of dissipating into wild subjectivism, an attempt was made to steer it down to earth by incorporating elements of Reformed theology. At the same time, the Reformed movement was in danger of emphasising doctrinal and structural correctness at the expense of humaneness, making it appear similar to the militancy of Fundamentalism. This has contributed to the defection of some from the Reformed camp to become Neo-Evangelicals, and others to become amenable to Charismatism.

The apostolic teaching on the Godhead crystalised into its final form in the Nicene Creed at the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451. In the divine economy, 400 years is a short time. "With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day (2 Pet. 3:8)." It took 430 years after the promise given to Abraham before his descendants could occupy the promised land (Gen. 15:16; Exod. 12:40). Similarly, 500 years is a short time in the divine economy for Reformation truth to crystalise into an identifiable form. The question is, what is that identifiable form? Are we satisfied with possessing the Five Sola's of the Reformation and the Five Points of Calvinism? The Particular Baptists agitated for reformation beyond mere adherence to these doctrinal principles before they were distracted by the age of missions and social concern.

With fear and trepidation, this book puts forward the suggestion that the time has come to engage in *Thoroughgoing Reformation*. This is to be accomplished by adherence to right doctrine and right practice. There must be unequivocal adherence to the doctrinal standards of the past – namely the Apostles' Creed, the Five Principles of the Reformation, and the Five Points of Calvinism. There must also be the practical application of the three offices of Christ to the life of the church, as well as the threefold ministry of Christ to the mission of the church in the world.

This book follows the format of a previous book, "The Fundamentals Of Our Faith: Studies On the 1689 Baptist Confession Of Faith". It is suitable to be a textbook in seminaries and colleges for a course in Reformed Symbolics or Dogma History, from the Certificate up to the Postgraduate levels. Some degree of repetition of substance is inevitable. One who has completed the course is expected to: (i) have a clear overview of the progress of truth from the apostolic age to the present; (ii) value the Reformation heritage of truth; (iii) understand how thoroughgoing Reformation may be practically accomplished; and (iv) be able to lead the church confidently in its relation to other churches and in its own mission. It is hoped that this book will not be confined to academia, but will be a spur to pastors and church leaders to take the lead in engaging in *Thoroughgoing Reformation*.

This writer acknowledges with thanks the use of quotations from the New King James version of the Bible, published by Thomas Nelson, Inc. His dear wife has been an unfailing helper in the ministry. The life and ministry of many a servant of God have been a source of strength and encouragement to this unprofitable servant of God. Special mention is made

of Dr. Peter Masters of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, for the example, encouragement and help given through the years. The writer alone is responsible for the content of this book.

Soli Deo Gloria!

B S Poh,
Kuala Lumpur, July 2017.

Part I

THE APOSTLES' CREED

One

WHAT IS THE APOSTLES' CREED? (1 Cor. 15:1-11)

The Apostles' Creed is the best known and oldest of the historic creeds that define the true Christian faith over against heretical teachings and other religions.

1.1 Origin

- 1 *What are creeds?* Creeds are short statements of faith used by the early church to distinguish itself from those who held to heretical teachings and from other religions. Catechisms are instructional manuals, couched in questions and answers, used in baptismal classes and families. Confessions of Faith are longer statements of doctrine used by churches to declare their orthodoxy and distinctive characteristics over against the teaching of other churches. Confessions of Faith were drawn up during and after the Reformation of the 16th century.
- 2 *Why focus on the Apostles' Creed?* There are three well-known historic creeds – the Apostles' Creed, the Athanasian Creed, and the Nicene Creed. The oldest and most well-known is the Apostles' Creed. Many of the later creeds were based on this one. The Roman Catholic Church holds the unfounded view that each of the twelve apostles of Christ contributed a statement to this Creed. The Apostles' Creed existed as early as the middle of the 2nd century (around AD 140), when the disciples of the apostles were still alive. Its final, slightly expanded, form may be traced up to the 7th century.
- 3 The Athanasian Creed is named after Athanasius (AD 293-373), the champion of orthodoxy against Arian attacks on the doctrine of the trinity. This Creed is not recognised by the Eastern Orthodox Churches. Longer

than the Apostles' Creed, it consists of two main parts. The first part sets forth the doctrine of the Trinity, and the second part deals with the two natures of Christ.

- 4 The Nicene Creed was formulated at the Council of Nicaea (AD 325), revised by the Council of Constantinople (AD 381), and reaffirmed by the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451). The inclusion of the "filioque" phrase in 589, describing the Holy Spirit as proceeding from the Father "and the Son", is rejected by the Eastern Orthodox churches. The controversy over the "filioque" phrase, together with other doctrinal and political issues, were to lead to the official separation of the church into East (the Orthodox Churches) and West (the Roman Catholic Church) in AD 1054.
- 5 *How useful is the Apostles' Creed to us?* We have referred to the church Councils of the past. These so-call "ecumenical councils" must not be confused with the modern ecumenical movement. The early church councils, consisting of church leaders, were called only when necessary, to discuss doctrinal matters that threatened the peace of the church. The purpose was to expose errors and to establish the truth.
- 6 The modern ecumenical movement, consists of fixed organisations such as the World Council of Churches and other smaller, national, bodies that are formed to show forth unity between churches. Inevitably, the pursuit of visible unity is at the expense of truth. Generally, Reformed churches shun the ecumenical movement and pursue selective fellowship based on the truth.
- 7 The historic creeds were produced by the early ecumenical councils, before the churches became distinctly differentiated into "establishment churches" (or "sacral churches") and "dissenting churches". With time, such councils departed from spiritual objectives due to the heavy involvement of the civil authorities. As a result of persecution, the "dissenting churches" were driven underground.
- 8 Due to the prevalence of the cults – both old and new ones – and the pervasive presence of other religions, the historic creeds remain useful to protect the church from wrong teaching and to call others to the Christian faith.

1.2 Structure, Value, And Content

- 1 *Its structure:* Three parts of unequal length are found in the Apostles' Creed, each beginning with the phrase "We believe" (or "I believe" when used personally). The first part concerns God the Father. The second, and longest, part concerns Jesus Christ the Son of God. The third part concerns the person and work of the Holy Spirit. In view of its later development into the Nicene Creed, in which the doctrine of the Trinity

is distinguished from the doctrine of the church, we may say that there are four parts in the creed.

- 2 *Its value:* The value of the Apostles' Creed has been recognised by many. The structure of the Apostles' Creed was used by John Calvin as the organising principle of his *magnum opus*, "The Institutes of the Christian Religion", consisting of four "books". Book I is concerned with the knowledge of God as Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things created. Book II is concerned with the knowledge of God as manifested in Christ, the Redeemer of sinners. Book III is concerned with the Holy Spirit who regenerates sinners and unite them to Christ. Book IV is concerned with the Church and the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, used by the Holy Spirit to sustain the faith of God's people.
- 3 The Heidelberg Catechism of the Continental Reformed churches is basically an exposition of the Apostles' Creed. Zacharius Ursinus, the primary author of that Catechism, tells us that, "It signifies a brief and summary form of the Christian faith, which distinguishes the church and her members from the various sects."¹
- 4 *Its content:* We do not treat the creeds, catechisms and confessions of faith as infallible. However, they are useful in so far as they accurately teach the doctrine of the Scripture, which is our only authority in all matters of faith and practice. We have noted that many of the later creeds were based on the Apostles' Creed, including the Nicene Creed. Being a fuller development of the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed should be used to understand and interpret the earlier creed. However, the earlier creed is more concise, and easier to be memorised. The Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed are compared in the table below.

As with the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed should be memorised by all Christians. Although the words of the Apostles' Creed are not scriptures, they summarise well the core teaching of the Scripture.

* * * * *

1.3 Review Questions

- 1 State what are Creeds, Catechisms, and Confessions of Faith.
- 2 What are the three well-known historic creeds?
- 3 Which historic creed is not recognised by the Eastern Orthodox churches?

¹Ursinus, 1852: 117

1. WHAT IS THE APOSTLES' CREED?

- 4 What phrase in the Nicene Creed is rejected by the Eastern Orthodox churches?
- 5 How is the modern ecumenical movement different from the ecumenical councils of the past?
- 6 Why are the historic creeds still useful to us?
- 7 What do the four parts of the Apostles' Creed teach?
- 8 Which writing of John Calvin uses the structure of the Apostles' Creed as the organising principle?
- 9 Which Reformed catechism expounds on the Apostles' Creed?
- 10 In what ways is the Apostles' Creed superior to the other historic creeds?

1.4 Assignment/Discussion

There are Christians who declare that they hold to “No creed but the Bible”. This sounds so pious and correct, but what dangers are there in holding to such a sentiment?

1.5 Memory Passage (1 Cor. 15:1-4)

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, ² by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. ³ For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.

* * * * *

Apostles' Creed	Nicene Creed
We believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.	We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.
We believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; He descended to hell.	And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father.
The third day He rose again from the dead.	Through Him all things were made.
He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.	For us and for our salvation He came down from heaven; He became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and was made human.
From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.	He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried.
	The third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures.
	He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom will never end.

1. WHAT IS THE APOSTLES' CREED?

Apostles' Creed	Nicene Creed
We believe in the Holy Spirit,	And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life. He proceeds from the Father and the Son, and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified. He spoke through the prophets.
the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.	We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. We affirm one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and to life in the world to come. Amen.

Two

“WE BELIEVE” (Rom. 14:1-23)

Only true Christians can recite the Apostles’ Creed sincerely, while not all who recite the Apostles’ Creed are necessarily true Christians.

2.1 A Confession Of Personal Faith

- 1 True faith should be confessed in public (Rom. 10:10, which is descriptive of those who are converted, not prescriptive of how a person is saved). When there is true conversion, there ought to be public confession of faith verbally and by the act of baptism (Matt. 28:19; Rom. 6:1-4). The norm for a believer is to make a public confession of his faith, even under threat of persecution (Matt. 10:33 cf. v 28; 1 John 4:15).
- 2 There are exceptional situations of secret discipleship which we do not condemn or condone. Nicodemus, a secret believer for a time, is labelled as one who “came to Jesus by night” (John 3:1; 7:50; 19:39). Another secret disciple of Christ, Joseph of Arimathea, appeared in public with Nicodemus only after Christ’s death (John 19:38). Those who do not make public confession of their faith will not have strong assurance of salvation (1 John 4:15).
- 3 We do not claim belief in Christ lightly, only to be accused of hypocrisy, and have a bad conscience. Hypocrisy is easily detected by others (Matt. 6:5, 16; 23:3-7). It brings dishonour and shame to the faith professed. It deserves the woes pronounced by the Lord on such (Matt. 23:13, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27, 29). Making a confession of personal faith does not mean that one comes to faith by confessing these truths. The *fruit* of faith must not be confused with the *means* of faith. However, the doctrines of the Apostles’ Creed constitute a safe minimum (not necessarily the bare minimum) by which a person may be brought to faith. If taught

to children, God might use these truths to minister faith to them (Rom. 10:17).

2.2 The Nature Of True Faith

- 1 The living person consists of body and soul. The body is material, while the soul is spirit. The real “you” is the soul, which manifests life in the physical world via the body. The living person has a personality with three basic faculties: the mind, the heart (or affection), and the will (or volition). The mind receives and processes information, the heart feels, and the will decides and motivates to action. In conversion, all three faculties are transformed by the Holy Spirit by the means of the truth (Rom. 6:17; 2 Tim. 1:7).
- 2 The conscience may be looked upon as the *effect* of the interactions between these three faculties. When converted, the accusing conscience is laid to rest as we grow in assurance of salvation (Rom. 2:15; Heb. 10:22-23; 1 John 3:18-21). Augustine of Hippo considered the conscience as a separate faculty, and adds memory as the fifth. The Puritans generally taught or assumed that there are three basic faculties. When speaking of the conscience, however, they tend to lapse into treating it as a separate faculty.
- 3 The conscience must be trained to be healthy, i.e. to operate correctly based on the truth of Scripture (Acts 24:16 cf 23:1). A wrongly informed conscience can wreck havoc (Acts 26:9) or cause discomfort to ourselves and to others (Rom. 14:23 cf 1 Cor. 8:12). A good or pure conscience comes from doing what is right, good, and true before God (1 Tim. 1:19; 2 Tim. 1:3). Our prayers will be answered (1 John 3:22), we will be filled with the Holy Spirit (Rom. 9:1; Eph. 5:18), and used mightily by God (Col. 1:29; 1 Chron. 31:20-21). Conversely, those who adamantly reject and act against the truth will have their conscience seared (1 Tim. 4:2), i.e. hardened, rendered incapable of feeling.

We must hold to the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, as expressed in the Apostles’ Creed, with a clear conscience.

* * * * *

2.3 Review Questions

- 1 State two passages of Scripture that clearly show the necessity of confessing faith publicly.
- 2 Which two individuals were secret disciples of Christ for a time?

- 3 How will failure to confess our faith affect us?
- 4 Give two reasons why we do not lightly profess faith in Christ.
- 5 How is the Apostles' Creed helpful to salvation?
- 6 What are the constituent parts of the living person?
- 7 What are the basic faculties of the human personality?
- 8 How may we look upon the conscience?
- 9 How may we have a good, or pure, conscience?
- 10 What will happen to those who adamantly reject or act against the truth?

2.4 Assignment/Discussion

Discuss the effects of a good conscience upon the Christian and his service to God.

2.5 Memory Passage (Rom. 14:7-9)

⁷ For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. ⁸ For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. ⁹ For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

* * * * *

Three

THE HOLY TRINITY (Prov. 8:1-36)

True Christians believe in the one God who reveals Himself as consisting of three Persons, viz. the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

3.1 A Doctrine Under Constant Attack

- 1 Christians regard the doctrine of the Trinity as the teaching of Scripture; it is not a teaching derived (or inferred) from Scripture. Although the term “Trinity” is not used in the Apostles’ Creed, the doctrine of the Trinity is clearly taught. (A characteristic of the historic creeds, catechisms, and confessions of faith is the attempt to express the truths of Scripture using scriptural words and expressions, instead of using extra-biblical words, e.g. Eschatology, ordination (to office), teaching elders, ruling elders, local church, etc. In the 1689 Confession, “Trinity” is used sparingly, in Chs. 2:3; 8:2, but the doctrine is clearly spelled out.)
- 2 Round about the year AD 107, the Roman Emperor Trajan sentenced the bishop of Antioch, Ignatius (c. 35 - c. 108) to death by being thrown to the lions in the Colosseum in Rome. Tradition holds that he was a disciple of the apostle John. While on the way to Rome to be martyred, he wrote seven epistles to the churches which had ministered to him. Ignatius shows clearly the early belief in the Trinity. He speaks of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He constantly refer to the deity of Christ by expressions like “Jesus Christ our God” and “the blood of God”. The virgin birth of Christ is spoken of in more than one passage, e.g. “Hidden from the prince of this world were the virginity of Mary and her child-bearing and the death of the Lord.” “Jesus Christ was with the Father before the ages, and in the end was made manifest.” “He is the Word of the Father, proceeding forth from silence.” “He died for us that,

believing in His death, we may escape death.”¹

- 3 A converted philosopher called Aristides wrote in defence of the Christian faith against the pagans and the Jews. Of interest is the fact that it is easy to reconstruct from his statements an outline of a creed which corresponds very closely to the Apostles’ Creed.²
- 4 The earliest attacks against the Trinity came from the Jews. A certain Justin Martyr (AD 100-165) wrote “Dialogue with Trypho” in which Trypho, the Jew, claimed that the doctrine of the Trinity is contrary to the Unity of God which is taught in the Old Testament. To this, Justin replies that the theophanies or appearances of God in the Old Testament were really appearances of the Word, the Second Person of the Trinity, before the Incarnation. He also points out the indications of plurality of Persons in the Godhead in the Old Testament, e.g. in Gen. 1:26; Prov. 8, etc.³
- 5 Another early attack of the Trinity came from the Gnostics. Gnosticism believed that matter is evil while the spirit is good. God, the spiritual principle of the universe, was considered an absolute unity. The Godhead cannot unite itself with limited and evil matter. Therefore, the church’s doctrine of the Incarnation was rejected. There was also speculation whether the apparently severe God of the Old Testament is the same as the loving God of the New Testament. In Gnosticism, the “demiurge” is a heavenly being who created and control the material world, and is opposed to anything spiritual.
- 6 Christian leaders from the West and the East of the Roman Empire adopted different approaches to counter the Gnostic heresies. In the West, men like Irenaeus (AD 130-202), Tertullian (AD 160-220), and Hippolytus (AD 170-235) appealed to the unity and solidarity of the Christian tradition. They attacked Gnosticism by exposing the endless variations and inconsistencies of the secret traditions professed by the Gnostics. In the East, men like Clement of Alexandria (AD 150-215) and Origen (AD 185-254) overthrew the theories of the Gnostics by showing that the church possessed a rational answer to all their problems. They appealed not only to faith, but to reason as enlightened and guided by faith.

3.2 The Teaching Of The Apostles’ Creed

- 1 Justin Martyr’s arguments for the Trinity hold good up to today. Firstly, the theophanies of the Old Testament were actually appearances of the Son of God, e.g. Gen. 18:1, 13, 22, etc.; Josh. 5:13-15; Judg. 13:17-21;

¹Whitham, 1968: 71

²Whitham, 1968: 76

³Whitham, 1968: 83

Dan. 3:25. Secondly, there are indications of plurality in the Godhead, e.g. Gen. 1:26; 11:7; Prov. 8:1, 22, 30, 35-36. Thirdly, apart from the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is referred to in the Old Testament, e.g. Gen. 1:2; 6:3; 41:38; Exod. 31:3; Num. 11:17, 25; Judg. 6:34; Psalm 51:11-12; 104:30; 139:7; 143:10; Isa. 11:2; 63:11; Ezek. 2:2.

- 2 The New Testament makes explicit references to one, living, and true God (Mark 12:29; 1 Thess. 1:9), who exists in three Persons, e.g. Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 John 5:7 (although the authenticity of this verse has been questioned). Each Person is distinct (Matt. 3:16-17; John 12:27-28; 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:13-15). Each Person is fully divine, possessing all the divine attributes and doing divine works, e.g. creation (Gen. 1:1; John 1:3, 10; Psalm 104:30); omnipresence (Matt. 28:20; Psalm 139:7-10); omniscience (John 2:24-25; Isa. 40:13-14; 1 Cor. 2:10-11); omnipotence (Phil. 3:21; Rom. 15:19); eternity (Isa. 44:6; Rev. 22:13; Heb. 9:14).
- 3 We must beware of the errors of Modalism when teaching the doctrine of the Trinity. The three Persons of the Godhead are not different “modes” of existence of the same Person. In summary, we may say that there is only one true God, consisting of three distinct Persons, viz. the Father, the Son (or the Word), and the Holy Spirit – each Person being fully God, of the same substance (or essence), equal in power and glory.
- 4 The doctrine of the Trinity is denied outrightly by the two other “Abrahamic religions”, viz. Judaism and Islam. Another way of rejecting the Trinity is to deny the deity of Christ. This was the approach of Arianism in the 4th century, Socinianism (after Faustus Socinus, 1539-1604) in the 16th and 17th centuries, and the Jehovah’s Witnesses from the late 19th century.

“This doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and our comfortable dependence on Him (1689 Confession, Ch. 2:3).”

* * * * *

3.3 Review Questions

- 1 What do Christians believe about God?
- 2 Why is the term “Trinity” not used in the Apostles’ Creed?
- 3 Who was the bishop put to death by being thrown to the lions by Emperor Trajan?
- 4 Which converted philosopher defended Christianity in such a way that the outline of the Apostles’ Creed may be discerned?

3. THE HOLY TRINITY

- 5 What is the title of the book written by Justin Martyr in defence of the doctrine of the Trinity?
- 6 Name three champions of orthodox Christianity against Gnosticism in the West.
- 7 Name three champions of orthodox Christianity against Gnosticism in the East.
- 8 Outline Justin Martyr's arguments from the Old Testament in support of the Trinity.
- 9 Summarise the doctrine of the Trinity.
- 10 Which two major "Abrahamic religions" deny the doctrine of the Trinity?

3.4 Assignment/Discussion

Why is "Modalism" a wrong way of proving the Trinity? What is the difference between attempting to prove the Trinity and proving the Trinity from Scripture?

3.5 Memory Passage (Matt. 3:16-17)

¹⁶ When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. ¹⁷ And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

* * * * *

Four

JESUS CHRIST THE MEDIATOR

(John 1:1-18)

The person and work of Christ constitute the essence of the gospel and, therefore, of the Christian faith.

4.1 A Doctrine Under Constant Attack

- 1 From Luke 24:44-48 we learn that the essential message of Old Testament scriptures is the coming of the God-appointed Saviour who would lay down His life to save His people (cf. Luke 4:17-21). The apostle Paul summarises the gospel as “Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). He condemns those who pervert the gospel (Gal. 1:6-9), which may also be summarised as “justification by faith” (Gal. 2:16; Rom. 3:28), and also as “salvation by grace, through faith, in Christ alone” (cf. Eph. 2:8-9). Apart from denial of the Trinity, wrong teachings on the person and work of Christ arose early, many of which were condemned by the early church councils as heresies.
- 2 Wrong teachings on the person of Christ include Gnosticism, Monophysitism, Nestorianism, and Unitarianism. Gnosticism (from “gnosis”, secret knowledge) teaches that matter is evil while spirit is good. God is wholly transcendent, i.e. above and removed from creation. Jesus Christ is a heavenly messenger, and not God incarnate. Salvation is by having the right “knowledge”. The Freemasons of today have been referred to as Gnostics. An early form of Gnosticism was Adoptionism which taught that Jesus was a human being who became divine by adoption, either at his baptism or resurrection.
- 3 Monophysitism (from “monos”, one and “physis”, nature) claims that Christ has only one nature. There were two versions of Monophysitism.

One was Eutychianism (after Eutyches of Constantinople, c. 380- c. 456) which claimed that Christ had a nature that was a mixture of the divine and human. Another version was Apollinarianism (after Apollinaris of Laodicea c. 350) which held that Christ had a human body and a human soul, but his mind was taken over by the eternal Logos.

- 4 Nestorianism (after Nestorius of Constantinople, c.386-451) claimed that Christ existed as two persons, the human Jesus and the divine Son of God.
- 5 Unitarianism rejects the deity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity. An early form of this was Arianism (after Arius of Alexandria, AD 250-336) which claimed that Christ is the Son of God who was created by God the Father at a point in time. Arius claimed that the Son is “homoiousios” (of similar substance) as the Father. Athanasius (A.D. 293-373) contended against Arianism, showing that the Son is “homousios” (of the same substance) as the Father, i.e. of the same being. Socinianism of the 16th and 17th centuries, and the Jehovah’s Witnesses which arose from the late 19th century, similarly deny the deity of Christ.
- 6 Wrong teachings concerning the work of Christ came in the form of Pelagianism in the 4th century, Arminianism in the 17th century, and Liberalism in the 19th century. Pelagius was a British monk who lived and taught in Rome around AD 380. He denied original sin and taught free will. Pelagius was opposed by Augustine of Hippo, Algeria (AD 354-430), who taught “total depravity” and “salvation by grace, through faith”.
- 7 Pelagianism was replaced by Semi-Pelagianism which sought a middle ground between Pelagianism and Augustinianism. It emerged again after the Reformation in a modified form in Arminianism which was rejected by the Reformed churches at the Synod of Dort in AD 1618-1619.
- 8 Theological Liberalism began in the early 19th century and is rooted in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schleiermacher in Germany. It spread to Britain and America in the early 20th century, embracing the “higher criticism” of modern biblical scholarship. It spawned other movements such as the Social Gospel, Feminism, and Liberation Theology. It denies the divinity of Christ and the authority of Scripture.

4.2 The Teaching Of The Apostles’ Creed

- 1 *His person*: Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God who took upon Himself perfect human nature by being born of the virgin Mary. He is, therefore, one person with two natures: the divine nature from eternity, and the sinless human nature from the incarnation.

- 2 His divinity is indicated by His titles “Christ” (“the Anointed”) and “the Son of God” (Matt. 1:23; Luke 1:35). He is God’s only begotten Son (John 1:18; 3:16; etc.), while those who are saved by faith in Him are adopted children (John 20:17; Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 3:26). The term “begotten” does not mean creation but describes the relationship between the Father and the Son. (“Begotten from the Father before all ages”, Nicene Creed.) He is also known as the Word, who existed eternally with the Father and the Spirit. Through Him all things were made (Gen. 1:1-2; John 1:1-3).
- 3 The humanity of Christ is indicated by His titles “Jesus” (“Saviour”) and “the Son of David” (e.g. Matt. 22:41-45; Luke 1:31-33). His title “Son of Man” is messianic, from Psalm 8:4; Dan. 7:13, and the book of Ezekiel. It reflects His human nature (Mark 2:27-28; John 5:27; 6:27, 51, 62) as well as His divine nature (John 1:51; 3:13-14; 6:27, 51, 62). His humanity was derived from Mary, but without her sin (Rom. 1:3; Gal. 4:4). Mary was never sinless, as claimed by the Roman Catholics, and expressed her need of salvation (Luke 1:47). Jesus Christ was conceived by Holy Spirit and sheltered from the sin of Mary (Luke 1:35; Heb. 4:15). He grew and developed as a true human being (Luke 2:52). He was capable of human feelings (John 11:35; Luke 22:41-44; Mark 11:12; John 19:28).
- 4 *His work*: Jesus Christ is the Mediator who performs the twofold task of representing God to man, and man to God. It is necessary, therefore, that He is both human and divine. “He suffered under Pontius Pilate” shows that: (i) it was a historical and factual event; (ii) Christ died under judgement, and not from sickness or accident; (iii) He died as an offering for the sin of His people (cf. John 18:38; 19:4; 1 Pet. 2:22). “He descended to hell” meaning He suffered the torments of hell: (i) the wrath of God fell on Him who acted as substitute for His people; (ii) the sins of His people are fully atoned for; (iii) the guilt of His people is cancelled (Isa. 53:5, 10-11; 2 Cor. 5:21). “He rose again from the dead”: (i) His righteousness is imputed to His people for acceptance before God (Rom 4:25; 2 Cor. 5:21); (ii) The power of death is destroyed (1 Cor. 15:54-57); (iii) He gives power for living a sanctified life (Rom. 8:12-14).
- 5 *His ongoing work*: Ascension to heaven, future judgement. As God and Man in one person, in His glorified body, Jesus Christ has “ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty”. To be seated at the right hand of God is to be given the position of highest authority over all creation (Mark 16:19; Eph. 1:20-23). He continues His work as Mediator (1 Tim. 2:5), interceding for His people (Heb. 4:16) and empowering them in His service (2 Cor. 5:20).

6 Christ will return “to judge the living and the dead” (cf. Acts 10:42; 2 Tim. 4:1). The dead will be raised (1 Thess. 4:16). There will be the separation of the elect from the reprobate (Matt. 25:33). The reprobate will face “the second death”, when body and soul are cast into eternal suffering in hell. The elect will dwell with the Lord in eternal blessedness (2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:22 - 22:5).

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).”

* * * * *

4.3 Review Questions

- 1 State the three ways Paul summarises the gospel.
- 2 State four wrong teachings on the person of Christ.
- 3 Name an early form of Gnosticism and a modern form of it.
- 4 What does Monophysitism teach concerning Christ?
- 5 What does Nestorianism teach concerning Christ?
- 6 What does Unitarianism teach concerning Christ?
- 7 Who opposed the teaching of Pelagius?
- 8 What two teachings emerged after Pelagianism was condemned?
- 9 Where did Theological Liberalism begin and what are its characteristics?
- 10 Why are the two natures of Christ necessary to His work of salvation?

4.4 Assignment/Discussion

The objection is often raised by unbelievers that if Jesus Christ is the Son of God, then God must have married and have a wife. Things become more confused because the Roman Catholic Church refer to Mary as the Mother of God. Should we refer to Mary as the Mother of God? How would you explain the use of the title “Son of God” in the Bible to unbelievers?

4.5 Memory Passage (John 1:1-5)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

* * * * *

Five

THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE GIVER OF LIFE (John 14:8-21)

The Holy Spirit gives us spiritual life through faith in Christ, sustains our faith by the word of God, and empowers us to serve God.

5.1 Ancient And Modern Errors On The Holy Spirit

- 1 Montanism (also called the New Prophecy) was a movement started by Montanus in Phrygia, Asia Minor, in the late 2nd century. Not much is known of the movement except what the defenders of the orthodox faith said about it. Together with two women prophetesses, Montanus claimed that the sign gifts from the time of the apostles had lingered on, bringing new revelations and ecstatic experiences. Tertullian (AD 160-220) of Carthage, who defended the doctrine of the Trinity against Gnosticism, was to become a Montanist in his later years. He was of a fiery temperament and became disillusioned with what he perceived to be complacency in the church. In the subsequent decades after Tertullian's death the Montanists became extremely radical, if not outrightly heretical. Under the reign of the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius, circa AD 161-180, there was sporadic executions of Christians which coincided with the spread of Montanism. Montanism was finally condemned at a synod in Hierapolis (in Turkey) around AD 177, and also by the bishop of Rome.
- 2 Sabellianism denied the Trinity and claimed that God consists of one person, who appears in different modes – as the Son after the resurrection, then as the Holy Spirit. The one God successively revealed Himself as the Father in creation, the Son in redemption, and the Holy Spirit in regeneration and sanctification. Sabellius probably originated from Libya but was teaching in Rome around AD 215. Sabellianism was opposed

by Tertullian in North Africa and by Hippolytus in Rome. Tertullian gave Sabellius' doctrine the name Patripassianism, meaning "the father suffered", since the Son is only a manifestation of the Father. Sabellius used the term "homousios" to mean that the father and the Son were "one essential person". The term was used by Athanasius of Alexandria later to mean the Father and the Son are "of the same substance", over against Arius who claimed that the Father and the Son are "homoiousios" ("of similar substance").

- 3 While dealing with the Trinitarian controversies, the Nicene Creed was drawn up which stated that "We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father *and the Son*, and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified." The Eastern church objected to the "filioque" phrase (Latin, meaning "and the Son"), claiming that John 15:26 teaches that the Holy Spirit proceeds only from the Father – "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me." This difference became one of the causes of the Great Schism between East and West in AD 1054. The "filioque" phrase becomes the accepted teaching of Western and Protestant Christianity due mainly to the writings of Augustine of Hippo.
- 4 Old errors tend to reappear, often under different names. The origin of Pentecostalism has been traced to Edward Irving (1792-1834) who founded the Catholic Apostolic Church in Britain.¹ It was claimed that the charismatic gifts had been revived, including the extraordinary offices of apostles, prophets and evangelists. Prophecies, healing, tongues and ecstatic experiences were prominent. As the Pentecostal movement developed and spread in America, its similarity to the Montanist movement has been noted. The largest of the Pentecostal denomination is the Assemblies of God. A small number of the movement diverted to hold to "Oneness theology" in which the Trinity is denied and replaced with Modalism. In this, they are similar to Sabellianism. The Charismatic movement started in America in the 1960s and share much in common with the Pentecostal movement. Today, it is hard to differentiate between the two movements since the beliefs and practices are similar.

5.2 The Teaching Of The Apostles' Creed

- 1 The Nicene Creed expounds on the Apostles' Creed by affirming three main truths. First, "we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life." The Holy Spirit is "the Lord", a title referring to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This shows that He is inseparable from, and represents the Son of God, on earth. See John 14:16-18, 26; 15:26; 16:7. The doctrine

¹Dallimore, 1983

of “the co-inherence of the divine persons” (John 17:22-23) makes it possible for the Trinity to be in believers and with believers (Matt. 28:18-20), by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is “the giver of life”. He is the *principle* of creation, while the Son of God may be considered the *agent* of creation (cf. Gen. 1:1-2; John 1:1-3; Psalm 104:30; Prov. 8:30). The work of regeneration and sanctification is accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit, who applies the redemptive work of Christ, and the written word of Christ, to the elect (Rom. 10:17 cf. Matt. 4:4; 1 Pet. 1:22-23 cf. 2 Pet. 3:18). The importance of reliance on the Holy Spirit in our service to God cannot be over-emphasised. We are to be filled with the Spirit to serve God effectively (Eph. 2:10; 5:18; Col. 1:29).

- 2 The Nicene Creed says, “He proceeds from the Father and the Son, and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified.” The relationship between the three persons of the Godhead is to be noted. Just as the Son is eternally begotten of the Father, the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is a divine person, not a force, a power, or an influence. We refer to the Spirit as “Him”, not as “it”. Modalism must be avoided in explaining the Godhead, e.g. ice turning into water, water into steam. It is not wrong to pray to the Holy Spirit, in exceptional circumstances, since He is divine. However, the relationship between the three persons is such that we should normally address our prayer to the Father, in the name of the Son, and in the power of the Spirit (John 16:23-24).
- 3 The Nicene Creed further says, “He spoke through the prophets.” Spirit and word cannot be separated, just as Christ and Spirit cannot be separated, and Christ and the word cannot be separated. The written word is given by the Son of God, by the inspiration of the Spirit (John 16:12-15). The word is used by the Spirit to convince, convict, and convert (Rom 6:17; 10:17; 1 Pet. 1:22-23). The Spirit drives the believer back to the word for spiritual growth (Matt. 4:4; 2 Pet. 3:18). The Liberals dwell on the word without the Spirit. The Charismatics dwell on the Spirit and undermine the word. The Liberals tend towards rationalism, the Charismatics towards mysticism. The Pentecostals claim to hold to the inerrancy of Scripture, but that is not the same as holding to the sole authority of Scripture, which includes its sufficiency. It is suggested that the Apostles' Creed be amended to “We believe in the Holy Spirit, who inspired the writing of the Holy Scripture.”

As we serve the Lord, let us remember His words in Zechariah 4:6, “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit.”

5.3 Review Questions

- 1 State the teaching of Montanus about spiritual gifts.
- 2 Which well-known church father joined Montanism?
- 3 What did Sabellianism teach about the Trinity?
- 4 What phrase in the Nicene Creed was objected to by the Eastern Church and what does it mean?
- 5 How is Pentecostalism similar to Montanism and how is it similar to Sabellianism?
- 6 What does the Nicene Creed teach about the person of the Holy Spirit?
- 7 What does the Nicene Creed teach about the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son?
- 8 What does the Nicene Creed teach concerning the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the word of God?
- 9 How does the Holy Spirit use the word to save sinners?
- 10 How does a believe grow spiritually?

5.4 Assignment/Discussion

Charismatics often accuse other Christians of not believing in the Holy Spirit. What do they mean, and how would you answer them?

5.5 Memory Passage (John 14:15-18)

¹⁵ “If you love Me, keep My commandments. ¹⁶ And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever’–
¹⁷ the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

* * * * *

Six

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

(Eph. 3:1-21)

The universal church manifests itself in the world as local churches made up of those who have experienced the forgiveness of sins and live in expectation of the resurrection and everlasting life.

6.1 Perennial Errors Concerning The Church

1 In the first three centuries after the apostles, up to about the time of Constantine (274-337), the church faced problems of wrong teachings, mainly concerning the Trinity and the Person of Christ. The excommunicated heretics and their followers would be regarded as cut off from the true church. There were groups, however, who distanced themselves from the mainline churches because of the perceived spiritual decay in them, with the result that two streams of Christianity developed, viz. “dissenting Christianity” and “establishment Christianity”. The latter, also known as the Catholic Church, must not be confused with the Roman Catholic Church, which was only one of the many churches that were independent of one another. The Catholic Church was characterised by sacralism, i.e. holding to a “territorial church concept” and infant baptism. It was opposed to the various dissenting churches, many of which were teaching errors and heresies of one kind or another. The dissenting churches held to the “gathered church principle” and practised believer’s baptism. They included the Montanists, the Novatians (Cathari), and the Donatists. The Novations of the 3rd century were accused of causing schism by refusing readmission to the church of those who have repented of denying the Lord while under persecution. The Donatists of the 4th and 5th century, in North Africa, were accused of the same thing.

- 2 Round about AD 450, Pope Leo (390-461) began to assert the supremacy of the church of Rome over all others, calling itself the Roman Catholic Church. The other Orthodox churches opposed the claim of Roman pre-eminence, and came to be known as the Eastern Orthodox Churches. The Great Schism between East and West of the Roman Empire occurred in AD 1054, when the Eastern Orthodox Churches excommunicated the Roman Catholic Church while the Roman Catholic Church responded by excommunicating the Eastern churches. The dissenting churches that arose included the Albigenses, the Paulicians, the Bogomils, and the Waldensians. By that time, the establishment churches of the East and the West had declined spiritually to what became known as the Dark (Medieval) Ages. The Catholic Church, prior to the claim of supremacy by Rome, had been the custodian of the truth expressed in the Apostles' Creed. It has now declined spiritually and morally and departed from the teaching of the Apostles' Creed, although still professing to uphold it.
- 3 The Lollards arose in Britain, and the Hussites in Europe, at the dawn of the Reformation, proclaiming truths that were consistent with the Apostles' Creed. When the Reformation burst upon the scene, the dissenting churches were represented by the Anabaptists, of which there were several branches, some of which held to extreme views. On examination, it will be found that the Reformed churches and the mainline Anabaptist churches upheld teachings that were consistent with the Apostles' Creed. Calvin expounded the Christian faith in his "Institutes of the Christian Religion" based on the Apostles' Creed. Reformed Baptists today would have no difficulty affirming the Apostles' Creed, although it is not so well-known or well-used among them as among other Reformed churches.
- 4 Protestantism has diverged into a broad spectrum of churches, many of which struggle over the definition of the church and the degree of fellowship that is possible between churches. At one end of the spectrum are the more ecumenical-minded churches, at the other end are the more isolationist churches. The teaching of the church in the Apostles' Creed would provide some help in this perplexing issue.

6.2 The Teaching Of the Apostles' Creed

- 1 The Apostles' Creed links the doctrine of the church with the Holy Spirit, under the third "We believe" statement. We have seen that the Holy Spirit, who inspired the writing of the word of God, is the giver of spiritual life. By the hearing of the word of God, the Spirit regenerates the sinner to new life in Christ (Rom. 10:17; 1 Pet. 1:23). Since the regenerate alone constitute the church, it is understandable that the doctrine of the church is placed together with the Holy Spirit. However, it will be quite appropriate to treat the doctrine of the church under a separate "We believe", as is done in the Nicene Creed.

- 2 The universal church is referred to in the expression “holy catholic church”. The word “holy” shows that only those who are regenerate belong to the catholic, i.e. universal, church. Believing in “the communion of saints” means believing in the local church. The word “communion” means “fellowship” or “a shared life”. The word “saints” is used in the Bible to refer to believers. The universal church manifests itself in the world as local churches, i.e. gatherings of believers bound together by covenant to worship and serve God. Believers are expected to become members of a local church. Fellowship between believers is expressed primarily through the local church (John 17:22-23; 1 Cor. 12:12-31). (Fellowship between churches will be discussed in the next chapter.)
- 3 A true church will possess the basic marks of, (i) the gospel being proclaimed; (ii) the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper being carried out correctly; and (iii) church discipline being rightly administered. The expression “the forgiveness of sins” points us to: (i) the atoning work of Christ; (ii) conversion; (iii) sanctification; and (iv) assurance of salvation. Atonement for sins and reconciliation with God is achieved by Christ’s death and resurrection (Heb. 9:15). Repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ, together, constitute conversion (Acts 2:38).
- 4 The Holy Spirit, who dwells in the believer upon conversion (Gal. 3:2), will give holy desires and the ability to live in obedience to God’s will (Rom. 8:9-11). The process of growing holier is sanctification. Assurance of salvation to varying degrees is experienced upon conversion (Rom. 8:16). Believers have every reason to be assured of their acceptance before God (John 6:37; 10:28-29; Rom. 8:38-39). Those with problems of assurance should focus on feeding on God’s word, living in obedience to the word, and engaging in regular prayer instead of seeking assurance for its own sake.
- 5 The Creed speaks of “the resurrection of the body” and “the life everlasting”. Here, perseverance in the faith is involved. True believers will persevere in the faith to the end of their lives, despite the trials and suffering that come to them (Matt. 10:22, 32-33; Rom. 8:16-17). They derive comfort and strength in the Christian hope, i.e. the certainty of resurrection of the body (Matt. 24:29-31; 1 Thess. 4:14-18) and eternal life in heaven (Tit. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:3-4). Between the resurrection of the dead and the blessedness of eternal life is the judgement of the last day and the re-creation of the universe (2 Pet. 3:10-13).
- 6 Judgement will mean condemnation to the unrighteous who are not clothed in the righteousness of Christ (Matt. 25:31-34, 41). These will include unbelievers and nominal Christians (Matt. 7:21-23). The eternal suffering, of body and soul, of the unrighteous in hell is also called “the second death” (Rev. 20:13-15). Heaven is already qualitatively perfect.

However, it is not yet in the final state God intends it to be. The remaking of the universe will result in heaven being on earth, and earth being in heaven, where righteousness dwells (2 Pet. 3:10-13; Rev. 21:1-4). All the elect will be gathered there, to be with the Lord forever.

The church is made up of those who are submitted to Jesus Christ, who says of them, “the kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:21).”

* * * * *

6.3 Review Questions

- 1 State the two characteristics of those who make up the local church.
- 2 In the first three centuries after the apostles, what wrong teachings were faced by the church?
- 3 Name the two streams of Christianity that developed.
- 4 What characterised each stream of Christianity?
- 5 What groups arose in Britain and Europe at the dawn of the Reformation?
- 6 What dissenting groups were in Europe when the Reformation occurred?
- 7 What are the three marks of a true church?
- 8 What four things are pointed to by the expression “the forgiveness of sins”?
- 9 What is “the Christian hope”?
- 10 What two events lie between the resurrection of the dead and the blessedness of life in heaven?

6.4 Assignment/Discussion

Suffering for the faith is part-and-parcel of the Christian life. Discuss this.

6.5 Memory Passage (2 Tim. 2:19)

¹⁹ Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

* * * * *

Seven

VALUE OF THE APOSTLES' CREED

(Jude 3-4, 20-25)

The Apostles' Creed, together with the Five Points of Calvinism and the Five Principles of the Reformation, will help individual Christians in their faith, and churches in interchurch fellowship, in a globalised world.

7.1 Challenges Posed By A Globalised World

- 1 Improved technology brings improved transportation and communication, resulting in increased travel, migration, and interaction between people and nations. Ideas spread fast, some of which affect people temporarily as a flash in the pan, others more permanently. Wrong teaching on the Bible may appear to be new when, in fact, they are different manifestations of old errors. "There is nothing new under the sun (Eccl. 1:9)."
- 2 From our study of the Apostles' Creed we may conclude that it was drawn up under the pressures of paganism, which appeared in the forms of Gnosticism and schism arising from persecution. Gnosticism speculated that the God of the Old Testament was different from that of the New, and denied the incarnation, claiming the divine could not have taken on human nature since matter is inherently evil. The schism of Novatianism (3rd century) arose, which refused readmission to church of those who were repentant after denying the faith while under persecution. (Similarly, Donatism in the 4th and 5th centuries.) Today, the doctrine of the Trinity is denied by Islam and misunderstood by those from Hindu background. Islam believes in an absolute god, "Allah", while Hindus believe in many deities. The person of Christ is also misunderstood or denied. The Muslims reject the deity of Christ, claiming that if Jesus is the Son of

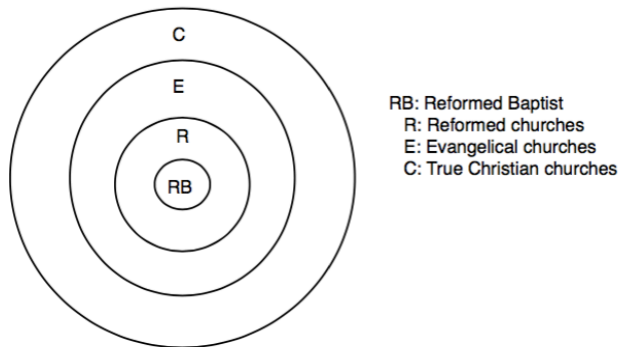
God that would entail God having a wife. The Jehovah's Witnesses deny the deity of Christ, claiming that He is the highest of God's creation.

- 3 The Five Principles of the Reformation was directed at countering the wholesale doctrinal, practical and moral corruption in the Roman Catholic Church, known as *sacralism*. This was mirrored in the Orthodox Churches in the Eastern Roman Empire. "Sola scriptura" became the formal principle of the Reformation, upon which the other principles rested. "Soli Deo gloria" may be called the crowning principle of the Reformation, for that is the ultimate purpose of restoring the teaching of Scripture. The other principles, viz. "sola fide", "sola gratia" and "solus Christus", together, declare the doctrine of salvation, or the gospel. Underlying these principles is another undeclared one, viz. "semper reformanda", meaning "always being reformed". This may be called the *spirit* of the Reformation, which the Particular Baptists were most anxious to demonstrate in their church life. Today, there are those who adopt Reformed theology without seeing the practical implications. They would hold to non-cessation of the sign gifts, adopt contemporary worship, and engage in questionable contextualisation in missions.
- 4 Arminianism arose in the early 17th century to challenge the Reformed doctrine of salvation. The Synod of Dort met and declared as erroneous the Five Articles of Remonstrance drawn up by followers of James Arminius. The Synod of Dort put forth the biblical doctrine of salvation under five points of doctrine, which was later rearranged under the acrostic TULIP, and called the Five Points of Calvinism. Today, there are those who stop short at the Five Points while claiming themselves to be "Reformed", practise the altar call, adopt a worldly ethos ("Young, Brash, and Reformed"), and are non-cessationist (or "continuationist").

7.2 The Use of the Apostles' Creed

- 1 Not all who profess believe in the Apostles' Creed (e.g. the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches) understand the doctrines of the Creed in the way we do. For example, the Roman Catholic Church claims itself to be the "mother church" within which alone salvation is found, and perverts the ordinances and the gospel. In a globalised world, with pagan religions surrounding us, the Apostles' Creed will help Christians to both confess their faith as well as defend themselves against the onslaught of contrary teachings. The Apostles' Creed, together with the Reformation Principles and the Five Points of Calvinism, will help churches in practising selective fellowship based on the truth of Scripture, and separation from churches guilty of sin, doctrinal errors, and worldliness. The more truths are held in common, the closer the possibility of fellowship, and vice versa.

- 2 To be Christian, a church needs to hold to the doctrines of the Apostles' Creed. To be Evangelical, a church needs to hold to the sole authority of Scripture, the gospel of salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone, and the necessity of evangelism. To be truly Reformed, a church would need to hold to Reformed theology, uphold the primacy of preaching and teaching God's word, be confessional, adhere to the Regulative Principle of worship, and have the spirit of Reformation (i.e. hold to "semper reformanda"). There are churches today claiming to be Reformed when they are not really so. Upholding the Apostles' Creed is a first step towards defining the Christian faith in a pluralistic world. We must then proceed to define ourselves as Reformed in the broad Evangelical world.
- 3 We may represent selective fellowship between churches as follows:



It makes no sense fighting for the Christian faith in the pagan world and then allowing it to be perverted in the Christian circle. It is, therefore, necessary to practise separation and selective fellowship between churches.

* * * * *

7.3 Review Questions

- 1 What circumstances connected with paganism caused the Apostles' Creed to be drawn up?
- 2 Which religion and which cult deny the deity of Christ?
- 3 What is the system of error held by the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Churches called?
- 4 What sort of principles of the Reformation may we regard "sola scripture" and "soli Deo gloria"?

- 5 What do “sola fide”, “sola gratia” and “solus Christus” together teach?
- 6 What undeclared principle may be called the spirit of the Reformation?
- 7 What acrostic helps us to remember the Five Points of Calvinism?
- 8 How does the Apostles' Creed help the Christian in his faith?
- 9 What are the documents that, together, may help churches in inter-church fellowship?
- 10 Give the three characteristics of an Evangelical.

7.4 Assignment/Discussion

Discuss the value of memorising the Apostles' Creed, and how this may be encouraged among God's people.

7.5 Memory Passage (The Apostles' Creed, Slightly Amended)

We believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

We believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; He descended to hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, [who inspired the writing of the word of God].

[We believe in] the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

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Part II

THE FIVE PRINCIPLES OF THE REFORMATION

Eight

THE FIVE PRINCIPLES OF THE REFORMATION (Joshua 4:1-7)

The five “sola’s” of the Reformed Faith are fundamental principles that characterise the theology of Protestantism over against Roman Catholicism. Like the memorial stones set up by Joshua, these Reformation principles have a rich history and serve to strengthen faith.

8.1 Events Leading To The Reformation

- 1 The early disciples carried out the Great Commission, “from Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). John, after exile to the island of Patmos, was based in Ephesus until his death in AD 98. Mark brought the gospel to Egypt, and Thomas to India. Missions and intermittent persecutions kept the early churches pure in membership and doctrine. There are clear statements of adult baptism upon conversion in the early writings, and no mention of infant baptism. Infant baptism was first mentioned by Tertullian only around AD 220. The Episcopal form of church government began to develop after the death of the apostles. Bishops ruled over many churches in geographical regions called “dioceses” or “parishes”, helped by lower officials. The Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox churches practise this form of church government. The Church of England, and the Methodist and Lutheran denominations, also practise this form of church government.
- 2 The Roman emperor Constantine (AD 272-337) professed faith in AD 312 but did not get baptised until he was on his deathbed. (Some scholars question the genuineness of his conversion, wondering if it was a political tool to unite the empire.) He issued the Edict of Milan in AD

313 which commanded official toleration of Christianity and other religions. Heresies of various kinds – notably on the Trinity and the person of Christ – appeared and were dealt with at the various “ecumenical councils”, some of which were chaired by the Roman emperors. Church and state began to be intertwined. The church of Rome, being located at the capital of the empire, began to grow in prominence. The title “Pope” (meaning Father) was generally used of all bishops by the early third century. Pope Stephen I (254-257) was the first bishop to explicitly claim primacy, although opposed by others. Pope Damasus I (366-384) was the first pope to claim primacy based on Matthew 16:16-19.

- 3 Medieval Christianity split into the Eastern Orthodox Catholics and the Roman Catholics when Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne, King of the Franks, as Holy Roman Emperor in 800. The Eastern Emperor and the Byzantine Empire felt slighted after having withstood the Germanic barbarian invasions and upheld the faith for centuries. (The nomadic tribes in Asia were pushing the Germanic tribes westward.) Back of the political-social divide were disputes over papal authority. The East-West Schism was formally sealed in 1054 when each excommunicated the other. The dissenting groups were persecuted by the establishment churches. These groups included the Albigenses, the Paulicians, the Bogomiles, the Waldensians, the Lollards, and the Anabaptists. They largely kept to believer’s baptism, although holding to some doctrinal peculiarities as well.
- 4 At the eve of the Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church was particularly influential in the West. Governments were under its influence, immoral priests ignorant of the Scriptures were propagating superstitious ideas and upholding the human traditions of the church. A priest and theologian by the name of Martin Luther (1483-1546) struggled to find peace with God through asceticism. He finally came to peace with God through faith in Christ, whose imputed righteousness alone assured him of acceptance before God. He began to preach the doctrine of “justification by faith, in Christ, alone”. The sale of indulgences for the dead (“certificates to heaven”) by one Johann Tetzel outraged Luther. The many abuses of the Roman Catholic Church drove Luther to nail the “Ninety-five Theses”, a list of questions and propositions for debate, to the door of the Wittenberg Castle church in Germany. This event, on 31 October 1517, marked the official beginning of the Reformation.
- 5 Martin Luther was called to the town of Worm and urged to renounce his teaching, to which he responded, “Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and

will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen.” The doctrine of “sola scriptura” had been boldly proclaimed. It became known as “the formal principle of the Reformation”, upon which rest the other principles.

8.2 The Spread Of Reformed Theology

- 1 As the Reformation spread, other notable Reformers were raised up by God, including Philip Melancthon, Heinrich Bullinger, Martin Bucer, Ulrich Zwingli, and William Farel. Another was John Calvin (1509-1564), who trained as a lawyer in France, and escaped to Switzerland after his conversion in 1533. Upon being challenged by William Farel about his selfish seclusion for academic pursuit, Calvin came to Geneva to preach. By his preaching and writing he developed the system of theology later called Calvinism, which included the doctrine of predestination and the absolute sovereignty of God in the salvation of man from eternal damnation. Calvin spent his final years promoting the Reformation in Geneva and throughout Europe. One of his students, John Knox, brought the Reformation to Scotland.
- 2 The Reformation spread to Britain from the late 16th century to the end of the 17th century. A religious reform movement, known as *Puritanism*, arose within the Church of England which spilled over to other denominations. The Great Ejection of 1662 caused 2,000 Puritan ministers to join the Nonconformists in the work of reforming the church. The Puritans were well-known for their preaching and pastoral care. Their writings were most influential, even up to today. They became known as “the second-generation Reformers”.
- 3 Although not expressed as a list until later, the five principles of Reformed theology were clearly characteristic of the teaching of the Reformers and the Puritans. The Latin word “sola” means “solely” or “only”. (i) *sola scriptura*, by Scripture alone; (ii) *sola fide*, by faith alone; (iii) *sola gratia*, by grace alone; (iv) *solus Christus*, through Christ alone; (v) *solus Deo gloria*, glory to God alone. The Reformed church was troubled by the spread of Arminianism from 1610. The Canons of Dort, published in 1619, helped to stabilise the situation, giving rise to *the Five Points of Calvinism*, not to be confused with *the Five Principles of the Reformation*.

We believe that the Reformed faith is the closest expression of the system of teaching taught in the Bible, requiring us to carry out practical reforms in personal and church life.

* * * * *

8.3 Review Questions

- 1 What fundamental principles characterise the theology of Protestantism?
- 2 What two things kept the early churches pure in membership and doctrine?
- 3 What two things about the church developed after the death of the apostles?
- 4 What was the date the Reformation started?
- 5 What is the doctrine of “sola scriptura” also known as?
- 6 Name some of the leading Reformers other than Martin Luther.
- 7 Who are the Reformers associated with Geneva and Scotland?
- 8 What event caused the Puritans in Britain to join the Nonconformists?
- 9 What were the Puritans known as?
- 10 State the five “sola’s” of the Reformation.

8.4 Assignment/Discussion

Discuss the concluding statement, “We believe that the Reformed faith is the closest expression of the system of teaching taught in the Bible, requiring us to carry out practical reforms in personal and church life.”

8.5 Memory Passage (Psalm 19:7-11)

- ⁷ The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul;
The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;
⁸ The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes;
⁹ The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.
¹⁰ More to be desired are they than gold,
Yea, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
¹¹ Moreover by them Your servant is warned,
And in keeping them there is great reward.

* * * * *

Nine

SOLA SCRIPTURA (2 Tim. 3:1-17)

The doctrine of “sola scriptura” states that the Bible alone is the authority in all matters of faith and practice.

9.1 Recovery Of The Doctrine

- 1 The sole authority of Scripture, “sola scriptura”, is also known as “the formal principle of the Reformation”, for it is the underlying principle for all doctrinal discussion. The church imperceptibly departed from “sola scriptura” for reasons that are easy to understand.
- 2 Apart from the doctrine of Scripture, the early church wanted to follow the examples set by the Lord and the apostles (John 13:14-17; 1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17; Heb. 13:7). While the principle of following the Lord and the apostles is never questioned, disagreement has arisen over *how* we are to imitate the Lord and the apostles. John Owen said that an apostolic example “has the force of a divine institution”¹. When the principle of imitation was wrongly extended to church leaders in later ages, and to the practice seen in well-established churches, problems arose.
- 3 Furthermore, the Roman Catholic was actively propagating superstition and church traditions. The idea of “papal infallibility” was already entrenched in medieval theology, although officially defined later at the First Vatican Council (1869-1870). It is held that what the pope proclaims “ex cathedra”, i.e. in his official capacity, on faith and morals, is to be accepted as infallible.
- 4 Martin Luther was outraged by the many human innovations and superstitious teaching in the church, e.g. the selling of indulgences by Tetzl.

¹Owen, Works 16, p. 197.

In worship, there were images, prayer to the saints, the wearing of surplice, the burning of incense, etc. The people were mere spectators. The choir sang in Latin. Scripture and prayer by the priests were in Latin, which the people could not understand. The mass was an enactment of the sacrifice of Christ for the propitiation of sin.

- 5 The Reformation attempted to remove all these innovations of the Roman Catholic Church. The Reformed churches retained the liturgy and the use of the prayer book. The surplice was retained by the Lutheran churches and the Anglican church. The reading of Scripture was reintroduced, with prayer, in the vernacular tongue (cf. 1 Cor. 14:23-25). Preaching was based on the read Scripture and applied to the hearers. Congregational singing of psalms in the vernacular tongue was reintroduced (cf. Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). In the 17th century, hymn singing was introduced in England, which spread to other Reformed communions. Some today cling on to exclusive Psalm-singing, citing their understanding of the Regulative Principle of worship.
- 6 The contribution of the forerunners of the Reformation must be noted. John Wycliffe (1320-1384) was a priest and theologian at the University of Oxford. He denied the doctrine of *transubstantiation* and emphasised the importance of preaching and the primacy of Scripture. His followers, known as Lollards, travelled everywhere to preach. Wycliffe, together with his good friend John Purvey, translated the Bible into English.
- 7 The teaching of the Lollards influenced John Huss (1369-1415), a priest and professor of theology at Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic. He spoke against the Roman Catholic mass, the sale of indulgences, and the office of pope. He was pronounced a heretic and burned at the stake in 1415. The followers of Huss and his fellow martyr, Jerome of Prague, became known as “the Czech Brethren” and later as “Moravians”.
- 8 Martin Luther was influenced by the Moravians. He providentially triggered off the Reformation on 31 October 1517. Martin Luther translated the Bible into the German tongue. The Wycliffe Bible was never printed and made widely available. Gutenberg’s printing press appeared only in 1440. William Tyndale (1494-1536), a leading figure of the Protestant Reformation in England, translated the New Testament into English. It was printed in Germany and smuggled into England. King Henry VIII broke with the Roman Catholic Church in 1534. Tyndale, however, was burned as a heretic in 1536. Although Tyndale’s translation of the Old Testament remained unfinished at his death, his work became the basis of subsequent translations of the Bible, including the “King James” version of 1611.

9.2 Implications Of The Doctrine

- 1 The sole authority of the Bible implies that Scripture is *sufficient, complete, final, and perspicuous*, i.e. capable of being understood (2 Tim. 2:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:19-21; Isa. 8:20). Three things are needed to help us understand Scripture.
 - i The correct rules of interpretation must be followed. Basic rules are: taking the text plainly, taking the text in context, comparing Scripture with Scripture. From these arise the subrules that help us determine the correct meaning.
 - ii Teachers are given to us by God, both of the present (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11) and of the past (2 Tim. 2:2; Heb. 13:7). Books and Confessions of Faith are included under the latter.
 - iii The Holy Spirit must enlighten us. We must be born again and receive the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:14; 1 Pet. 1:22-23; 2:1-2). Once converted, the Spirit will help us grasp the spiritual sense of the word (Gal. 3:2; 1 John 2:20-21, 27).
- 2 Errors of the past tend to reappear. Beware of the following errors:
 - i *Adopting human traditions and pragmatism*: This was the error of the Roman Catholic Church. Contextualisation (or accommodation) in missions and syncretism have been practised, e.g. Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) in China approved veneration of the dead. While acknowledging the need for appropriate adaptation and application of the truth to different situations, we must beware of perverting the gospel, adopting pagan elements, and becoming worldly.
 - ii *Questioning the inspiration and uniqueness of Scripture*: This was the error of Modernism (or Theological Liberalism) which started in Germany in the 19th century. C. H. Spurgeon fought against it during the Downgrade Controversy. A series of books called “The Fundamentals” were published in America in the 1900s to counter Modernism. Modernism denies the miracles and supernatural events of the Bible (e.g. the virgin birth of Christ, the resurrection). It is claimed that the Bible “contains the word of God”, while other parts developed with the church and need to be identified by “scientific methods” such as textual criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism. The inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture was attacked in the name of proud scholarship.
 - iii *Undermining the sufficiency and completeness of Scripture*: This is the error of the Charismatic movement, which claims the continuation of the sign gifts such as tongue-speaking, healing and prophecy. The Sovereign Grace group of churches² hold to the Five Points of Calvinism and the sovereignty of God, but also to “continuationism” (or

“non-cessationism”). They also practise contemporary worship and adopt questionable contextualisation in missions.

Holding to “sola scriptura” requires that we know the Bible well and be joined to a faithful church.

* * * * *

9.3 Review Questions

- 1 Define “sola scriptura”.
- 2 What is “sola scriptura” also known as?
- 3 What is “papal infallibility”?
- 4 What language was used in the worship service of the Roman Catholic Church?
- 5 What were some elements of worship retained by the Reformed, Lutheran, and Anglican churches?
- 6 What were the followers of John Wycliffe and John Huss known as, respectively?
- 7 Into what languages was the Bible translated by Martin Luther and William Tyndale, respectively?
- 8 What does the sole authority of the Bible imply about Scripture?
- 9 What three things are needed to help us understand Scripture?
- 10 What three errors must we beware of with regard to Scripture?

9.4 Assignment/Discussion

Believing in “sola scriptura” would require us to encourage and support the translation of the Bible into different languages. Why is this so?

9.5 Memory Passage (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

¹⁶ All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

* * * * *

²Not to be confused with the Sovereign Grace Baptist churches.

Ten

SOLA FIDE (Gal. 3:1-14)

The doctrine of “sola fide” states that faith (in Christ) alone is the means by which a person is declared not guilty by God, and treated as righteous instead, based on the righteousness of Christ imputed (credited) to him.

10.1 Recovery Of The Doctrine

- 1 The imputation of Christ’s righteousness by faith was a doctrine taught in the early church up to the time of Augustine (354-430) of Hippo. Augustine himself wrote on this subject in his work, “The Spirit and the Letter”. His emphasis, however, was upon the grace of God in salvation, as he battled against Pelagianism. As the Roman Church gained ascendancy, the doctrine of justification by faith was perverted. The *ground* of justification was changed from the righteousness of Christ to the righteousness infused in the individual. In other words, it is no longer Christ’s imputed righteousness that saves, but the individual’s righteousness that saves. The *means* of justification was changed from faith in Christ to the sacrament of baptism. In the case of infants, they are justified even before they have the ability to understand the gospel and to respond with faith. Baptism functions “ex opere operato” or “by the working of the act”. The *definition* of justification was changed. Instead of a judicial act of declaration, justification became confused with sanctification. The Roman Catholic Church began to teach that justification was pardon plus renewal, a position formalised at the Council of Trent (1547, session VI). Based on James 2:14-17, the Roman Catholic Church claimed that acts of faith and deeds of repentance are the basis for pardon by God.
- 2 Martin Luther, while teaching through the book of Romans in 1516, never had assurance of salvation. He was particularly troubled by Romans 1:17, ‘For in it [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed

from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith”.¹ The Roman Catholic Church was teaching that God manifests His righteousness to condemn those without faith. The light broke upon Luther some time in 1517. It dawned upon him that Romans 1:17 was talking about the imputed righteousness of Christ. He later found additional support from Augustine’s writing on the subject. Luther’s understanding on the subject developed as he expounded on Galatians, and published the commentary in 1531. By that time, the Reformation was well on its way.

3 Martin Luther’s theology and spiritual life had been challenged and shaped by the teaching of the Moravians. The Moravians, in turn, were to use Luther’s writings to influence others. As the Reformation spread, the doctrine of justification by faith became known as “the material principle of the Reformation”. Martin Luther said, “On this article rests all we teach and practice.”¹ John Calvin also commented that justification is “the principal ground on which religion must be supported”.² The Puritans wrote much on this doctrine. John Owen’s book “The Doctrine of Justification by Faith”, published in 1677, became a classic.³ The perversion of this doctrine is a perversion of the gospel itself (cf. Gal. 1:8-9).

4 When the 18th century dawned, John Wesley had graduated from, and Charles Wesley was still studying at, Oxford University. Together with George Whitefield, they founded the “Holy Club” and became known as “Methodists”. In 1735 the Wesley brothers sailed to Georgia in America on a mission trip. John Wesley wrote of his experience, “I went to America to convert the Indians; but, oh, who shall convert me?” Upon their return, they attended the Aldersgate Street meetings held by the Moravians in London. On 21 May 1738, Charles Wesley came to faith through hearing Martin Luther’s commentary on Galatians read. Three days later, on 24 May 1738, John Wesley was converted through hearing the Preface to Martin Luther’s book on Romans.⁴

10.2 Implications Of The Doctrine

1 In the New Testament, “sola fide” is taught in order to counter reliance on law-keeping. During the Reformation, “sola fide” was taught to counter reliance on the sacraments. The Puritans upheld “sola fide” while doing battle against nominalism, in which professing believers showed no holiness of life. In their preaching, they emphasised the necessity of conviction of sin for there to be true conversion. The law does not save, but

¹Quoted in Jüngel, Eberhard, “Theological Essays”, p. 189.

²Calvin, J., “Institutes of the Chirstian Religion”, Book 3:11:1

³Owen, Works, Vol. 5.

⁴The conversions of the Wesley brothers are described in Dallimore, “Geroge Whitefield”, Vol. 1, pp. 179-198.

the preaching of the law is necessary to secure conviction of sin (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:24-25). John Calvin wrote of the “Threefold Use of the Law” – the pedagogical use, the civil use, and the moral use. The Puritans were emphasising the first use of the law in order to secure the third use of the law. While maintaining a clear distinction between law and gospel, both must be preached together. The emphasis on the preaching of the law together with the gospel was wrongly criticised as “preparationism” by those who held a low view of conversion. A Scotsman called Robert Sandeman (1718-1771) began teaching the idea that “faith alone” excludes conviction of the heart, or feelings. In other words, faith is mere intellectual assent to the truth of the gospel. There is a failure to understand that saving faith involves the mind, the heart and the will. Otherwise, there will be no external fruit of “works” (James 2:19). Sandemanianism became the forerunner of “easy-believism” of latter years.

- 2 In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Evangelicals were cooperating in missions and social issues, while under-emphasising doctrine. The Confessions of Faith fell out of use. In the late 19th century, Modernism arose which attacked the doctrine of “sola scriptura”, thereby undermining “sola fide”. A theological movement called Neo-Orthodoxy arose to provide itself as an alternative to Modernism, but its emphasis on subjective experience at the expense of propositional truth was not acceptable to the Fundamentalists. Fundamentalism (or Old Evangelicalism) managed to check the spread of Modernism, but sadly became fragmented after 1930.
- 3 The Second Great Awakening (c. 1790-1840) in America brought numerical increase to the churches but weakened the gospel with “easy-believism”. The doctrine of “sola fide” was wrongly used to support the idea that faith in Christ is all that is needed to be a Christian, without the need of holy living. The idea of the “carnal Christian” was introduced to describe those who have “made Christ their Saviour but not their Lord”. A “crisis experience” of some kind is needed to bring them to a higher level of spirituality. In the 20th century, the rise of the Ecumenical movement and the Charismatic movement drew the Neo-Evangelicals and Roman Catholics together by the common concerns over secularism and social issues (poverty, abortion, divorce, drug-addiction, suicide, LGBT, etc.) The doctrine of biblical separation was ignored (2 Cor. 6:14-18; Rom. 16:17-18; 2 John 10), while easy-believism spread.
- 4 In the 21st century, the Seeker-sensitive movement (or Postmodernism) seeks to draw into the church as many as possible of the unchurched people by giving them what they want. Jokes, music, good lighting of the premises, and relationship issues are maximised while doctrine is minimised, with the result that the gospel of “justification by faith” is muted. The New Perspective on Paul (NPP) attempts to redefine the

doctrine of justification along Barthian line, in which it is claimed that justification is finalised on judgement day.⁵ The errors of the past have a way of reappearing in some other garbs.

Martin Luther rightly called “justification by faith” “the article of a standing or falling church”.

* * * * *

10.3 Review Questions

- 1 Define “sola fide”.
- 2 What three things about “justification by faith” was changed by the Roman Catholic Church?
- 3 What phrase in which verse of the Bible troubled Martin Luther?
- 4 What was the doctrine of “justification by faith” called as the Reformation spread?
- 5 Which commentaries of Martin Luther were used by God to convert John and Charles Wesley?
- 6 How is “sola fide” used in the New Testament and how was it used during the Reformation?
- 7 What did critics of the Puritans call their approach of preaching the law with the gospel?
- 8 What is the Sandemanian understanding of faith?
- 9 How does easy-believism misuse “sola fide”?
- 10 How is “sola fide” sidelined in the Seeker-sensitive movement?

10.4 Assignment/Discussion

Why is “justification by faith” “the doctrine by which the church stands or falls”?

⁵Karl Barth (1886-1968) is regarded as “the Father of Neo-Orthodoxy”.

10.5 Memory Passage (Gal. 3:10-11)

¹⁰ For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.” ¹¹ But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.”

* * * * *

Eleven

SOLA GRATIA (Eph. 2:1-10)

The doctrine of “sola gratia” states that God alone initiates the salvation of undeserving sinners by choosing the elect from eternity, providing the ground of salvation in the death of Christ, and causing faith to operate in the elect by the power of the Holy Spirit.

11.1 Recovery Of The Doctrine

- 1 In “sola scriptura” the Reformers declared the authority of Scripture over church traditions. In “sola fide” they declared that faith alone justifies, not the works performed by the sinner. Linked to “sola fide” was “sola gratia” in which the grace of God is declared to be the cause of faith and, therefore, of salvation. Faith is the *means*, or instrument, by which we receive salvation while grace is the *efficient cause* of faith. The Roman Catholic Church also taught the necessity of “grace”, but put a different meaning to the word. To both Protestants and Roman Catholics, grace is the unmerited favour of God shown to undeserving men. To Protestants, God’s grace leads to the gift of faith by which the sinner is justified. To Roman Catholics grace operates in such a way as to enable the sinner to merit more graces, enabling him to do works that, together with faith, justifies him before God. Salvation is, therefore, a *synergism*, i.e. divine grace operates with human co-operation. Protestants believe in *moner-gism*, i.e. divine grace alone saves. Like the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox churches also hold to synergism.
- 2 When Arminianism troubled the Reformed churches, the question of salvation by grace was brought to the fore. The Arminians affirmed the doctrine of salvation by grace alone, but put a spin the the meaning of grace differently from the Roman Catholics. The claim is made that man is given “prevenient grace” (a term that had appeared in Roman Catholic

theology) by which the Holy Spirit enables him to understand the gospel. Prevenient grace is distributed to everyone, without which no one is capable of receiving salvation. Since man has free will, those who respond in faith will be saved.

- 3 John Owen, in “A Display of Arminianism”,¹ shows that Arminianism is opposed to the Bible’s teaching of the immutability of God’s decree, of predestination, and of original sin. They teach that grace, in which the Holy Spirit works by moral persuasion in the hearing of God’s word, may be successfully opposed by human will. Arminianism is, in reality, another form of Pelagianism, known as Semi-Pelagianism.
- 4 Hyper-Calvinism affected a section of the Particular Baptists in the 18th century, resulting in the gospel not being preached. Hyper-Calvinism emphasises the sovereignty of God at the expense of human responsibility. The gospel is not to be “freely offered” to the hearers as, among them, are the non-elects whom God does not intend to save. To offer the gospel freely to such would be to make God appear insincere. The gospel, therefore, is offered only to those who show signs that they are seeking salvation, i.e. those who are awakened by the Holy Spirit.
- 5 We have referred to the Second Great Awakening in America during which the gospel was perverted by “easy-believism” (or “decisionism”). A chief protagonist of easy-believism was Charles Finney (1792-1875). He believed that revivals could be produced with the right combination of human techniques. He denied original sin and the need for regeneration by the Holy Spirit. He was, in fact, a Pelagian. We have noted how Evangelicalism clashed with Modernism in the early 20th century. After the Scopes Trial of 1925,² Evangelicalism in America fragmented. By 1950, Neo-evangelicalism and Ecumenism arose, finding common ground in social concerns. From the 1960s, there was a Charismatic renewal, at the same time as the Reformed recovery. The Charismatics emphasise subjective feelings and the restoration of the sign gifts, while Reformed people emphasise the objective truths of Scripture and the sovereignty of God. Apart from the Reformed and some sections of other Evangelicals, the doctrine of “sola gratia” is hardly heard today.

11.2 Implications Of The Doctrine

- 1 Today, those who are Arminian or hold to a modified Arminianism would call an evangelistic meeting a “revival meeting”, practise the “altar call”, and engage in decisionism in personal witness. Coupled to a prevailing

¹Works, Vol. 10.

²The Scopes Trial in America was orchestrated by the Modernists and the mass media to cast a bad light on the Evangelicals (the “Fundamentalists”) who opposed the teaching of evolution in schools.

man-centredness, the necessity of teaching “sola gratia” is obvious. A lack of appreciation of the doctrine of Total Depravity lies at the bottom of the perversion or denial of “sola gratia”. If man is sinful in his total being – including his will – there is no possibility of him saving himself. Neither can he do anything to contribute to his own salvation. This condition of man is described as “spiritual death” in the Bible (cf. Eph. 2:1-3). Repentance and faith in Christ are the gifts of God which enable him to receive the salvation fully accomplished by Christ.

- 2 The doctrine of “sola gratia” is inseparably connected with the doctrine of regeneration. In regeneration, the Holy Spirit implants new life in the soul to instantaneously change the whole man so that he is enabled to respond to the gospel (John 3:3, 5-8; 1 John 3:9). *Regeneration* is solely the work of God by the Spirit, normally accompanied by the preached word (Rom. 10:17; 1 Pet. 1:22-23). Regeneration is not a “all-at-once” work of the Spirit, but a “once-for-all” work of the Spirit. It leads to enlightenment, conviction, repentance, and faith. These are the *effects*, while regeneration is the *cause*. These effects, and especially conviction, might be drawn out in time. However, once complete, the new birth cannot be reversed (1 John 3:9; 2 Cor. 5:17). *Conversion* (i.e. repentance and faith) is both a gift and a duty (cf. 2 Chron. 15:2; Acts 2:38; Rom. 10:13; 1 John 3:23). The Arminians over-emphasise the duty, leading to many false conversions. The Hyper-Calvinists emphasise God’s sovereignty, failing to freely offer the gospel to sinners. The command of Scripture is for us to preach to all alike, and to let the Holy Spirit apply the preaching to the elect (cf. Matt. 23:37; John 3:16-17; etc.).
- 3 There are Reformed people who hold to the “all-at-once” view of regeneration, who are consequently hampered in continuing to minister the word of God to seekers until they are saved. They have the mistaken view that since regeneration is the work of God, and only those regenerated can understand and respond to the truth, it makes no difference what we preach on, or how we preach. Instead of gospel sermons, they focus on teaching the Bible in a consecutive manner. They fail to understand that the gospel may be preached from any passage of the Bible, and that the message must distinctively be on “Jesus Christ and Him crucified”, aimed at the saving of souls (cf. Mark 2:17; Luke 24:44-47).

A true appreciation of salvation by God’s grace leads to deep humility and thanksgiving – characteristics not seen in much of evangelicalism today.

* * * * *

11.3 Review Questions

- 1 Define “sola gratia”.

- 2 Compare “sola scriptura”, “sola fide” and “sola gratia”.
- 3 In salvation, what is “synergism” and what is “monergism”?
- 4 According to John Owen, what doctrines of the Bible are opposed by Arminianism?
- 5 During the Second Great Awakening, what and who perverted the gospel?
- 6 What do the Charismatics emphasise in contrast to the Reformed people?
- 7 A lack of appreciation of which doctrine lies at the bottom of the denial or perversion of “sola gratia” seen today?
- 8 What two contrasting view of regeneration are found among Reformed people?
- 9 How do Arminians and Hyper-Calvinists differ in their understanding of conversion as a gift and a duty?
- 10 What possible adverse consequence in gospel preaching follow those who hold to the “all-at-once view” of regeneration?

11.4 Assignment/Discussion

Deep humility and thanksgiving should characterise those who properly grasp the doctrine of “sola gratia”. The complain of some Christians toward Reformed people is that they seem to be proud of their theology. Assuming this to be true of at least some Reformed people, what may we say about their grasp of “sola gratia”?

11.5 Memory Passage (Eph. 2:8-9)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.

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Twelve

SOLUS CHRISTUS (Col. 1:9-18)

The doctrine of “solus Christus” states that salvation for fallen man is provided by God in Jesus Christ alone, the Mediator who offered up Himself as the substitute for His people to bear the punishment of their sins, and was resurrected to give them new life and reconciliation with God.

12.1 Recovery Of The Doctrine

- 1 The first issue countered by this doctrine is the Roman Catholic denial that Jesus Christ is alone the Mediator between God and men (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5). The Roman Catholic Church teaches the necessity of the priesthood to administer the sacraments, thereby ministering grace to the people. The Roman Catholic Church also teaches that the souls of the departed held in purgatory are helped by the intercession of the faithful, prayer to the saints for them, and the veneration of religious relics. The Reformers, starting with Martin Luther, taught “the priesthood of all believers”, meaning that believers may draw near to God in worship, without the mediation of human priests. Christ, our High Priest, has finished His work of salvation and is interceding for His people in heaven (Heb. 9:11-15; 10:19-22). This does not undermine the roles of ministers who teach the word of God and administer the special ordinances.
- 2 The second issue countered by this doctrine is the Roman Catholic teaching that Christ’s death on the cross must be supplemented by the sacraments, without which there will be no salvation. A person must be baptised by a priest of the Roman Catholic Church, confess their sins to the priest, attend the mass, etc. in order to be saved. Not only does the Roman Catholic teaching deny salvation by grace, through faith in Christ, but it also denies the sufficiency of Christ’s death to make atonement for sin. The Reformers, however, taught that salvation was by Christ’s work alone. John Calvin spoke representatively: “Our acquittal is in this

– that the guilt which made us liable to punishment was transferred to the head of the Son of God (Isa. 53:12). We must specially remember this substitution in order that we may not be all our lives in trepidation and anxiety, as if the just vengeance, which the Son of God transferred to himself, were still impending over us.”¹

- 3 Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374), or Petrarch, was an Italian scholar and clergyman. He is considered the “Father of Humanism”, a philosophy that sparked off the Renaissance. The Renaissance was the period of great revival in art, literature and learning in European history between the 14th and 17th centuries. It paved the way for the Reformation of the 16th century. During the Renaissance, it was widely believed that natural revelation was sufficient to lead us to know God and, therefore, Christ was not the only way of salvation. Here again, John Calvin spoke representatively: “When we see that the whole sum of our salvation, and every single part of it, are comprehended in Christ, we must beware of deriving even the minutest portion of it from any other quarter.”² The 1689 Confession states this concerning Christ who is the only Saviour for sinners: “This promise of Christ and the salvation which comes by Him, is revealed only by the word of God. The works of creation and providence with the light of nature do not reveal Christ or His grace even in a general or obscure way. How much less, therefore, can those who are devoid of the revelation of Christ by the promise (or the gospel) be enabled by the light of nature to arrive at saving faith or repentance.”³ The 1689 Confessions states this concerning Christ who is alone the Mediator: “This office of Mediator between God and man is proper only to Christ, who is the Prophet, Priest, and King of the church of God, and this office may not be transferred from Him to any other, either in whole or in part.”⁴

12.2 Implications Of The Doctrine

- 1 We have noted how Theological Liberalism arose in Germany and affected the churches worldwide in the early 20th century. Liberal scholars embraced the “higher criticism” approach to the study of the Bible, while rationalism and “the theory of evolution” of Charles Darwin were gripping the minds of many. A liberal theologian, Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930), propagated the idea of “the universal fatherhood of God” and “the universal brotherhood of man” (a belief also held by the secretive religious society called Freemasonry). Today, this same idea has been resurrected in Universalism, i.e. the idea that all good people will

¹ Calvin, Inst., Bk. 2:16:5

² Calvin, Inst., Bk. 2:16:19

³ 1689 Conf., 20:2

⁴ 1689 Conf., 8:9

be saved regardless of their faith, and that all roads lead to heaven. The Bible teaches the universal creatorhood of God (Acts 17:28) and the universal neighbourhood of men (Luke 10:25-37). Only those who know Jesus Christ as Saviour know the true God (John 1:12-13; 14:6).

- 2 The doctrine of “the priesthood of all believers”, like all correct doctrines, can be misunderstood, misapplied, or abused. Rightly understood, it means that those who are in Christ have the right to draw near to God in worship, to serve Him, and to interpret the Scripture without the intervention of a human priest (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; Eph. 4:16-17; Matt. 20:25-27). This doctrine is abused when it is claimed that all views are equally valid, that there is no need for teachers of the word in the church, and that we may serve God in ways contrary to the teaching of Scripture and bypassing the local church (cf Acts 13:1-3; 14:27).
- 3 Jesus Christ as the only Mediator between God and man, and the only Head of the church, holds the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King. We should, therefore, not focus on His priesthood to the exclusion of His other offices. The truth that Christ holds the three offices was taught by John Calvin⁵. The Puritans developed on this doctrine, e.g. John Owen.⁶ In the 1689 Confession (1689, Ch. 8:10), it is stated that “This number and order of offices is essential (or necessary).” This clause came from the 1644/46 Confession. It shows that the Particular Baptists were in advance of the other Puritans in their understanding of the practical importance of the offices of Christ. The work of reformation involves bringing every facet of church life under the headship of Christ, which encompasses the three offices.

Believing in “solus Christus” does not diminish our worship of, and service to, the Triune God but enhances our desire to glorify God alone.

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12.3 Review Questions

- 1 Define “solus Christus”.
- 2 What is the meaning of “the priesthood of all believers” as taught by the Reformers?
- 3 In salvation, what is “synergism” and what is “monergism”?
- 4 What is the second issue countered by “solus Christus”?
- 5 What was the Renaissance?

⁵Calvin, Inst., Bk. 2:15.

⁶Owen, Works, Vol. 1:85-100.

- 6 What was widely believed during the Renaissance?
- 7 What idea was propagated by the liberal theologian Adolf von Harnack?
- 8 What is the idea propagated by Adolf von Harnack known as today?
- 9 In contrast to the idea propagated by Adolf von Harnack, what does the Bible teach?
- 10 What offices does Christ hold as Mediator between God and man, and as Head of the church?

12.4 Assignment/Discussion

Consider how the doctrine of “the priesthood of all believers” may be abused. How would you counter those abuses?

12.5 Memory Passage (Col. 1:15-18)

¹⁵ He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. ¹⁸ And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

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Thirteen

SOLI DEO GLORIA (Rom. 11:25-36)

The doctrine of “soli Deo gloria” states that everything right, good and true that is done by man is due to God’s enabling and therefore all glory must be ascribed to God alone.

13.1 Recovery Of The Doctrine

- 1 The Roman Catholic Church venerates Mary the mother of Jesus, the saints canonised by the church, angels, the popes, and the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The Reformers advocated instead “soli Deo gloria” which is Latin for “glory to God alone”. This is often abbreviated S.D.G. The veneration of saints arises from the idea that it is possible for man to do more good works than is needed for his standing before God so that some of the “excess” merits can be given to others. Martin Luther took issue with this and taught that God alone is to be glorified. (Remember his outrage at the sale of indulgences by Tetzel.) The Reformers rejected the doctrine of “apostolic succession” in which is claimed that the pope succeeds Peter as “Vicar of Christ” (i.e. the earthly representative of Christ) and is, therefore, the head of the church on earth.
- 2 The Roman Catholic Church gives a different spin to the word “glory”, like what is done with other words such as “faith” and “justification”. Way back in AD 787, the Second Council of Nicaea was held by the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches to restore the use and veneration of icons which had been officially suppressed by the Emperor Constantine. The Council defined three levels of adoration and glorification: “latria” is glory directed to the Holy Trinity, “hyperdulia” is glory directed to Mary the mother of Jesus, and “dulia” is glory directed to the saints in general. In the Greek of the New Testament, “latria” means

“worship”, while “dulia” means “service”. John Calvin wrote, “The distinction of what is called *dulia* and *latria* was invented for the very purpose of permitting divine honours to be paid to angels and dead men with apparent impunity. For it is plain that the worship which Papists pay to saints differs in no respect from the worship of God.”¹ At the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), the Roman Catholic Church made it clear that God alone is deserving of glory. It is to be noted that the Council was held for spiritual renewal of the church and to attract Protestant churches to rejoin it. The claim that God alone is deserving of glory sounded hollow in the ears of the informed Protestants.

3 Over against the claim of papal power, the Reformers asserted the sole authority of Scripture. Over against the division of life into sacred and secular, the Reformers saw all of life as lived under the lordship of Christ. The Puritans taught the sovereignty of God over every aspect of the believer’s life. All of life is to be lived to the glory of God. The Catechisms of the Presbyterians and the Particular Baptists ask, “What is the chief end of man?” and give the answer, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever.” The so-called “Puritan work ethic” (or “Protestant work ethic”) emphasises diligence, hard work, and moral rectitude in the Christian life. Little wonder men like Sir Isaac Newton (mathematician and physicist), Sir James Simpson (discoverer of chloroform), Michael Faraday (discoverer of electricity), James Montgomery (well-known poet), Daniel Defoe (“Father of Modern Journalism”) excel in their pursuits because of their faith. The founding of America in the early 17th century, the development of Puritan theology throughout the 17th century, the revivals that took place in the 18th century, the Industrial Revolution in the late 18th and the 19th centuries, the rise and expansion of the British Empire, the rise of the modern missionary movement beginning with William Carey (the “Father of Modern Missions”) – all these may be directly attributed to the Reformation principle of “*soli Deo gloria*” and the Puritan work ethic. Sadly, when there is success, man departs from God, as is happening in nations once blessed by God.

13.2 Implications Of The Doctrine

1 Two Bible verses, among others, remind us of “*soli Deo gloria*”: (i) the apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 10:31, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God”; (ii) we are reminded in Romans 11:36, “For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.” However, the fallen human race is so prone to become proud of his own ability “to build a tower whose top is in the heavens”, and to “make a name for

¹Calvin, *Inst.*, Bk. 1:12:2.

ourselves” (Gen 11:4). Roman Catholicism inconsistently teaches that all glory is to be given to God when, in practice, part of the glory goes to man. Arminianism has a similar tendency of claiming part of the glory of salvation for the sinner who “decides to accept Christ”, often by saying the “sinner’s prayer” or “walking the aisle” (i.e. responding to the altar call). In the Christian life, there is a tendency to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think (Rom. 12:3), forgetting that whatever good accomplished is by God’s grace (2 Cor. 12:9). We must always remember that “We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do (Luke 17:10).”

- 2 We glorify the Trinitarian God best when we serve Christ in and through His church. This is because: (i) the glory of God is in His church; (ii) the Holy Spirit works powerfully in God’s people in the church; (iii) the glory of the Father and the Son is made manifest by the Holy Spirit in the church (Eph. 3:20-21; John 17:22-23 cf. John 16:14; 1 Cor. 12:13).
- 3 We have seen that the doctrine of “*solī Deo gloria*” is inseparable from the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. It is also inseparable from the doctrine of the providence of God. Our ambition is to glorify God alone. Our trust is in the God who is sovereign. The sovereign God extends His *special providence* to His people. The effects of “*solī Deo gloria*” are so unlike fatalism, which produces inertia (inactivity) and hopelessness. John Calvin said, “But when the light of Divine Providence has illumined the believer’s soul, he is relieved and set free, not only from the extreme fear and anxiety which formerly oppressed him, but from all care. For as he justly shudders at the idea of chance, so he can confidently commit himself to God. This, I say, is his comfort, that his heavenly Father so embraces all things under His power – so governs them at will by His nod – so regulates them by his wisdom, that nothing takes place save according to His appointment...”²

Solī Deo gloria!

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13.3 Review Questions

- 1 Define the doctrine of “*solī Deo gloria*”.
- 2 How did the veneration of saints in the Roman Catholic Church arise?
- 3 Why was the Second Council of Nicaea held?
- 4 What are the three levels of adoration and glorification defined by the Second Council of Nicaea?

²Calvin, Inst., Bk. 1:17:11.

- 5 What did the Reformers assert over against papal power?
- 6 How did the Reformers understand life in contrast to the Roman Catholic division of life into secular and sacred?
- 7 What does the Puritan work ethic emphasise?
- 8 What two Bible verses remind us of “soli Deo gloria”?
- 9 How do we best glorify the Trinitarian God?
- 10 What two doctrines are inseparably connected to the doctrine of “soli Deo gloria”?

13.4 Assignment/Discussion

“We glorify the Trinitarian God best when we serve Christ in and through His church.” Discuss.

13.5 Memory Passage (Rom. 11:33-36)

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! ³⁴ “For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?” ³⁵ “Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?” ³⁶ For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

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Fourteen

THE SPIRIT OF THE REFORMATION (Jude 3-4, 20-25)

“Semper reformanda” is Latin meaning “always being reformed”. We are not introducing another principle in addition to the five principles of the Reformation. Rather, this was the underlying spirit of the Five Principles of the Reformation.

14.1 Review

- 1 The five “sola’s” of the Reformed Faith are fundamental principles that characterise the theology of the Reformation over against Roman Catholicism. Like the memorial stones set up by Joshua, these Reformation principles have a rich history and serve to strengthen faith.
- 2 The doctrine of “sola scriptura” states that the Bible alone is the authority in all matters of faith and practice. This is “the formal principle of the Reformation”.
- 3 The doctrine of “sola fide” states that faith (in Christ) alone is the means by which a person is declared not guilty by God, and treated as righteous instead, based on the righteousness of Christ imputed (credited) to him. This is “the material principle of the Reformation”.
- 4 The doctrine of “sola gratia” states that God alone initiates the salvation of undeserving sinners by choosing the elect from eternity, providing the ground of salvation in the death of Christ, and causing faith to operate in the elect by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- 5 The doctrine of “solus Christus” states that salvation for fallen man is provided by God in Jesus Christ alone, the Mediator who offered up Himself as the substitute for His people to bear the punishment of their

sins, and was resurrected to give them new life and reconciliation with God.

- 6 The doctrine of “*soli Deo gloria*” states that everything right, good and true that is done by man is due to God’s enabling and therefore all glory must be ascribed to God alone. This may be called “the crowning principle of the Reformation”.

14.2 Relevance

- 1 The Roman Catholic Church has not changed in any substantial way. If anything, its doctrine and practice have become more pronounced, e.g. papal infallibility, salvation by works, prayer to Mary, etc. Our Roman Catholic friends and relatives need to hear the gospel to be saved. Belligerence towards them is unbecoming of the gospel of Christ. Respect and compassion are needed as we proclaim the gospel to them. Co-operation in gospel work with them is not possible (Gal. 1:8-9; 2 Cor. 6:14, 17).
- 2 The five sola’s of the Reformation stand as a bulwark against the many perversions of the truth today. Most Evangelical churches today are Arminian in soteriology (the doctrine of salvation) and promote easy-believism instead of the biblical gospel. The altar-call is widely practised in public meetings, the Alpha Course is used in group studies, and “The Four Spiritual Laws” is used in personal evangelism. *Charismatism* emphasises subjective feelings and pursues tongues, healing, and prophecy. *Postmodernism* looks upon numbers as the measure of success in gospel work and advocates the “seeker-sensitive” approach to winning souls. It is opposed to traditional churches, questions objective truth and resents any authority structure. Encompassed under Postmodernism is *New Calvinism* which combines Charismatic teaching with Calvinistic soteriology. It has much in common with the Neo-Evangelicalism of the 20th century – advocating social action, contextualisation in evangelism and missions, co-operation with Roman Catholics and Liberals, etc. The New Calvinists practice contemporary worship, are non-cessationists (believing that the sign-gifts have been restored), and are worldly in outlook (“Young, Restless, Reformed”). The Sovereign Grace churches, which are to be distinguished from the Sovereign Grace Baptist churches, are New Calvinist.
- 3 The Reformation saw not only the recovery of important biblical doctrines, but the serious application of those doctrines to the Christian life and the church. The Puritans saw their ministry as part-and-parcel of the Reformation. Among the Puritans were the Particular Baptists who attempted to carry the work of reformation to its logical conclusion – by restoring believer’s baptism in place of infant sprinkling, hymn-singing,

and what they believed to be the biblical form of church government. They believed that the principle of “sola scriptura” is inseparable from the principle of “semper reformanda” (always being reformed). Sadly, the spirit of the Reformation was lost during the spiritual revivals of later years when the focus shifted to soul-winning, missions, and social concerns. These, not wrong in themselves, were carried out at the expense of the truths recovered during the Reformation.

- 4 The resurgence of Reformed theology today should not be allowed to remain an academic matter, but must encompass the idea of “semper reformanda”. We do not want to use the Five Sola’s defensively only, but also constructively. We call upon all Christians and churches to consider adopting the first and the last of the sola’s – “sola scriptura” and “soli Deo gloria”. We then invite them to consider adopting the other three “sola’s”, which will lead them to an appreciation of “The Five Points of Calvinism”.

The Five Principles of the Reformation and the Five Points of Calvinism must not only be taught, but applied as well. *Semper reformanda!*

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14.3 Review Questions

- 1 What is meant by “semper reformanda”?
- 2 Name the five “sola’s” of the Reformation.
- 3 Give three examples of doctrine and practice which have not changed in the Roman Catholic Church.
- 4 Describe what most Evangelical churches are like today.
- 5 Describe Charismatism.
- 6 Describe Postmodernism.
- 7 Describe the New Calvinists.
- 8 Apart from the recovery of important biblical doctrines, what characterised the Reformation?
- 9 What did the Particular Baptists believe about “sola scriptura”?
- 10 State the conclusion of this chapter.

14.4 Assignment/Discussion

“Reformed Christians are fighting a 16th century battle instead of moving on in the Christian life. Their dogma is hindrance to missional living.” Discuss.

14.5 Memory Passage (Jude 3, 20-23)

³ Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. ²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. ²² And on some have compassion, making a distinction; ²³ but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.

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Part III

THE FIVE POINTS OF CALVINISM

Fifteen

WHAT ARE THE FIVE POINTS OF CALVINISM? (Heb. 5:12-14)

It will be tragic if those who claim to be Reformed do not know of “The Five Points of Calvinism”.

15.1 Run-up To The Reformation

- 1 One characteristic of the Reformed Faith is belief in the system of salvation called Calvinism, claimed to be taught in the Bible. The summary of this system has been called “the Five Points of Calvinism”. It is also called “the Doctrines of Grace”. Some argue that it should be “Doctrine”, in the singular, referring to the one system of salvation of the Bible. How did the Five Points of Calvinism arise? What are those Five Points? Why are they important?
- 2 *The rise of Pelagianism:* Due to the corrupting influence of pagan philosophy, many of the early church fathers of the 3rd and 4th centuries departed from the biblical doctrine of salvation. Examples include Tertullian of Carthage (d. AD 220), Hilary of Poitiers (d. AD 368), Ambrose of Milan (d. AD 397). (Carthage is now a suburb of Tunis, Tunisia. Poitiers is in France, Milan in Italy.) Little is known of Pelagius “Bretto” Morgan (c. 360-418). He was a British monk who stayed a long while in Rome. He lived an ascetic life and had great power of speech. The doctrine peculiar to him became known as Pelagianism. It may be summarised as consisting of the following points:
 - i At the Fall, Adam harmed only himself, not his posterity. There is no such thing as original sin.
 - ii Man’s will is free. It is up to man to do good or evil.

- iii God's grace is given to those who show that they deserve it. The grace of God can be resisted.
- iv God's decree of election and reprobation is based on foreknowledge. Christ died for all men. By Christ's instruction and example, a person can be led to higher perfection.

3 *Augustine against Pelagianism*: Augustine was bishop of Hippo in North Africa from AD 395 to AD 430. He is famous for his books "The Confessions of Saint Augustine" and "The City of God". Augustine opposed the teaching of Pelagius. His teaching became known as Augustinianism, which may be summarised as consisting of the following points:

- i At the Fall, all mankind sinned in Adam. Human nature became totally corrupt.
- ii By Adam's sin, human free will was totally lost. Man can will only evil.
- iii If man does any good, it is because of God's work of grace. Since man can do nothing without grace, so he can do nothing against it. It is irresistible.
- iv From eternity, God made a free and unconditional decree to save some. Christ came into the world and died for the elect only.

Pelagianism was condemned by the Councils of Carthage (AD 418) and of Ephesus (AD 431). The "ecumenical councils" of those times were gatherings of church leaders to deal with challenges to the teaching of the church.

4 *The Reformation*: The Reformation began in 1517 when Martin Luther, a converted Roman Catholic monk and theologian, nailed his "Ninety-five Theses" to the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg, Germany. John Calvin, another convert from Roman Catholicism, escaped from France to Geneva where he taught powerfully for many years. He wrote his "magnum opus" called "Institutes of the Christian Religion". The final version of this work appeared in 1559. The Reformation spread throughout Europe. The Reformation was characterised by Five Principles, not to be confused with "The Five Points of Calvinism", including "sola scriptura", "sola fide", "sola gratia", "solus Christus", and "soli Deo gloria".

5 *Calvinism and Arminianism*: In 1609, a Dutch seminary professor called James Arminius died. In 1610, the followers of Arminius drew up five articles of faith in "The Remonstrance" and presented it to the State Church of Holland, demanding that the Belgic Confession of Faith and the Heidelberg Catechism be changed. In 1618, a national synod (84 delegates, including 26 from 8 foreign countries) rejected Arminius's teaching. The circumstances of the time was such that it was not condemned as heresy. Unlike Pelagianism, Arminianism does not deny original sin

and the bondage of the will. Instead, it teaches “prevenient grace” by which man is enabled by God to make decisions in response to the offer of salvation. The Synod of Dort set forth the true scriptural teaching which became known as “The Canons of Dort”, and was published in 1619. It is often summarised as “the Five Points of Calvinism”. These “Five Points” are often rearranged under the acronym “TULIP” for easy remembrance.

Since “The Five Points of Calvinism” concern the doctrine of salvation, we may not treat them as irrelevant to us today. Any error in the message and/or presentation of the gospel is certain to have adverse effects on the hearers.

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15.2 Review Questions

- 1 What system of salvation is held in Reformed Theology?
- 2 What is the alternative name of “The Five Points of Calvinism”?
- 3 Who was the British man who caused a stir in Europe by his teaching on salvation?
- 4 What was his teaching called?
- 5 Which bishop in North Africa countered Pelagianism?
- 6 At what ecumenical councils was Pelagianism condemned?
- 7 How did the Reformation of the 16th century begin?
- 8 What are the Five Principles that characterise the Reformation?
- 9 In what year was “The Remonstrance” put forward by the students of James Arminius?
- 10 In what year was “The Canons of Dort” published?

15.3 Assignment/Discussion

There are those who would regard themselves as “Reformed” simply because they hold to “The Five Points of Calvinism”. What are the characteristics of Reformed Theology? What are the practical implications of being “Reformed” in personal and church life?

15.4 Memory Passage (Heb. 5:12-14)

¹² For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³ For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. ¹⁴ But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

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Sixteen

TOTAL DEPRAVITY (Eph. 2:1-10)

Total Depravity teaches that fallen man's sinful nature affects every part of his being.

16.1 About Total Depravity

- 1 *Man's nature is totality depraved:* The nature of man is morally and spiritually corrupt, making man perverse, sinful, and twisted in his entire being. The "total" is that of extent, not of degree. No part of his person is spared from pollution of sin. Each person is capable of being more sinful than what he is. The sinful nature in man has been passed down from Adam and Eve, and not picked up by imitation. Sinful actions can be learned by imitation, but not sinful nature. (Rom. 5:12; Eph. 2:1-3; Psalm 51:5; 58:3). Man is doubly guilty – first, in the sin of Adam, who was the representative head of the human race; and second, in his own acts of sin (in thoughts, words, and deeds). Man is faced with a dual problem. His guilt before God makes him deserving of God's condemnation, and his sinful nature makes him disqualified from heaven. Due to total depravity, man is not willing nor able to return to God. He has no ability to make himself better, nor to make up for the sins he has committed against God. The light of nature does not reveal any way of salvation. Keeping the law of God cannot save him (Rom. 1:18-21; 3:20). In short, man is helpless and hopeless, unless God intervenes to save.
- 2 *The bondage of the will:* This is an expression used by Martin Luther, to express the truth that the human will is bound to his sinful nature. The human will is "free" only in the sense that a person is capable of making a decision and acting without external compulsion. In reality, all the person's decisions and actions are affected by sin because his will is sinful. This does not mean that the person is incapable of doing any

good. He is not as bad as he could be, and he is not as good as he should be (Rom. 3:10; James 2:10). Why is man still able to do some good?

- i God's common grace is at work in the world, to man's good (Matt. 5:45).
 - ii God's image in man was not totally erased by the Fall (Gen. 9:6; Rom. 2:14-15; 13:5).
 - iii God restrains evil by providence (Prov. 21:1), by conscience (Rom. 14-16), and by civil governments (Rom. 13:4).
- 3 *The need for God's grace:* Man is not righteous (Rom. 3:10) in his behaviour and in his nature: (i) he has not kept God's law perfectly; (ii) he has a sinful nature which he has no power to change. His sins must be atoned for, which Christ came to do (Heb. 9:22, 27-28). He needs perfect righteousness to stand before God, which Christ came to give (2 Cor. 5:21). "Double imputation" is a teaching of the Bible – the believer's sin is imputed to (i.e. counted as taken by) Christ when He died on the cross, while Christ's perfect righteousness is imputed to (i.e. counted as given to) the sinner when he believes (Rom. 5:15-17). This was the truth that liberated Martin Luther from his struggle for righteousness. Conviction of sin often precedes conversion (i.e. repentance and faith), to varying degree in each person. It can be prolonged and severe, as experienced by Augustine of Hippo and John Bunyan, before they entered into the peace of salvation. If a person is saved, it is by the grace of God. When a person is saved, all glory belongs to God.
- 4 *The means of salvation:* Man is "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1-3). A dead man cannot rise by his own power, for he has none. God must regenerate him by the power of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3, 5; 11:43-44; 1 Pet. 1:23). God has ordained the means of hearing His word to save (Rom. 10:17). Christians have a responsibility to preach the gospel (Rom. 10:14-15; Matt. 28:18-20). Hearers have a responsibility to repent and believe (Ezek. 3:18-19). Repentance (Acts 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25), and faith (Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 1:29) are gifts of God. Salvation, therefore, is by grace, through faith, in Christ alone.

We are guilty before God because of Adam's fall and because of our sinful actions. We have no righteousness of our own because we have inherited a sinful nature which we are unable to change. Our whole being is sinful. We are totally depraved.

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16.2 Review Questions

- 1 What does Total Depravity teach?

- 2 In what sense is man's depravity "total"?
- 3 What is the effect of total depravity upon man in relation to God?
- 4 In what sense is the human will "free"?
- 5 Why is man still able to do some good?
- 6 In what sense is man not righteous?
- 7 What is "double imputation" in salvation?
- 8 How may a spiritually dead person be made alive?
- 9 What is the means used by God to save?
- 10 How should we look upon repentance and faith in salvation?

16.3 Assignment/Discussion

If we preach "the need to repent and believe" and "the inability of man to repent and believe" at one and the same time, would we not be contradicting ourselves? How should we understand the cry of the hearers, "Men and brethren, what shall we do (Acts 2:37)?" and "Sirs, what must I do to be saved (Acts 16:30)?"

16.4 Memory Passage (Eph. 2:1-5)

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ² in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³ among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. ⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).

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Seventeen

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION (Eph. 1:3-14)

Unconditional Election teaches that God has chosen from eternity a fixed number of people to be saved, based solely on His own will.

17.1 About Unconditional Election

- 1 *Man deserves eternal damnation:* We must consider man in relation to the law, and to God. Under “Total Depravity” we saw that man is born with a sinful nature. He offends his Creator by sins of *omission* and sins of *commission*. The law of God, written on his heart and revealed in Scripture, makes demands of him (Rom. 2:12-16). Man fails to carry out what is commanded, and transgresses against what is prohibited. He sins against God in his thoughts, words, and deeds (Rom. 1:18-32). The law of God exposes the sin of man (Rom. 7:7-12). The law of God also reveals what the Creator is like. He is the almighty One who is all-knowing and has existed eternally. He is holy, just, and abundant in mercy (Exod. 15:11; Deut. 32:4; Jonah 4:2). While man is totally depraved, God is perfect in His glory. Sin is serious because it is the offense of the creature against his Creator. If man is to be saved, God must act in mercy.
- 2 *Predestination is a teaching of the Bible:* From before creation, God has planned for the salvation of the elect (i.e. those chosen for salvation), and the damnation of the reprobate (i.e. those left to perish in their sin). Predestination is clearly taught in the Bible (Eph. 1:4-6). The elect will be called out by the gospel and be saved through faith in Jesus Christ. Although the number of unbelievers seem to outnumber the believers everywhere, in every generation – even in times of revival – an innumerable number of people have been chosen for salvation (Rev. 7:9). This

number of people is fixed from eternity, and are represented symbolically by the 144,000 of the tribes of Israel in Revelation 7:4. None of the elect will be lost (Rom. 8:38-39). Everyone of them will arrive safely in heaven (John 10:28-29; Luke 10:20; Rev. 13:8; 17:8). Reprobation is the other face of the same coin. If God has predestined some to salvation, He has passed by others for damnation. The salvation of the elect will manifest forth God's glorious grace, and the damnation of the reprobate will manifest forth His glorious justice (Eph. 1:5-6; Rom. 9:22-23).

- 3 *God is sovereign*: God is in control of *creation*, *providence*, and *salvation*. Being *omnipotent* (all-powerful), *omniscient* (all-knowing), and *immutable* (unchanging), God is the author of salvation. All these attributes of God are relevant when we consider God's decree, i.e. His unchanging plan for all things. Although God is omniscient, His decree was not made based on what He foresaw would happen, but rather because of the good pleasure of His will (Acts 15:18; Eph. 1:5). This includes the choice of those who are saved (Rom. 9:11-18). The faith and good works of those saved are the results of, not the cause of, God's choice (John 15:16; Eph. 2:10; James 2:5).
- 4 John 3:16 is often quoted by the Arminians to support the idea that Christ has died for everyone in the world to make salvation possible, and that salvation is based one's act of believing in Christ. The correct understanding, however, is that God's love is not confined to the Jews but for other nations ("the world"), and that faith is the means, not the cause, of salvation. Another passage often quoted by the Arminians is Romans 8:29, from which it is claimed that God predestined the salvation of the elect based on the foreknown act of believing. However, the word "forenew" is better understood as "loved beforehand" (cf. Gen. 4:1; 2 Tim. 2:19). Furthermore, it is the persons who are "foreknown" by God, not their actions. Similarly, we must be careful to understand passages such as 1 Timothy 2:4, 6 in the light of other passages such as 2 Timothy 1:9 and 2:10. During the Arminian controversy of the 17th century, the moot question was raised whether God included the fall of Adam in His decree (Supralapsarianism), or He foresaw the fall and permitted it to happen (Infralapsarianism). Put another way, was the decree of election made, logically, before the fall or after the fall? Whichever view is held, God must be seen as sovereign, while not being the author of sin.
- 5 *God saves by the covenant of grace*: God deals with people by way of covenants. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve failed to keep the "covenant of works". The covenant of works continue to be in force, all through history, to today. The covenant God made with Israel at Mount Sinai (Horeb) was basically a reaffirmation of the covenant of works, also known as "the old covenant". It is based on human effort, at keeping the law of God (Lev. 18:5). All who rely on their own effort will fail to be

saved. God announced His plan of salvation to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden when they fell (Gen. 3:15). Salvation was to be by grace, through faith, in the Seed who was to come (cf. Gal.3:16). This covenant has been revealed progressively, from the Garden of Eden to the time of Moses (Deut. 29-30), until it appears in all its glory as the “new covenant” in the New Testament. It is called “new” in contrast to the “old covenant” that Israel was familiar with (Heb. 8:1-13). Salvation is by God’s grace, as found in Jesus Christ, for all God’s elect whether in the Old Testament or after.

- 6 Practically, we do not know who are elect until they repent and trust in Christ. Our duty is to preach the gospel to all (Rom. 10:17; Matt. 28:18-20). Who hears, and when, is determined by God (Rom. 10:14-15; Acts 17:27, 30). On the part of the hearers, it is not for them to know whether they are elect. Their duty is to repent and believe, after which they will know that they have been chosen by God. Salvation, from beginning to end, is by the grace of God, i.e. by His mercy shown to undeserving sinners. It is not based on any foreseen good in, or done by, those saved.

The cry of the tax collector in Luke 18:13 takes on new significance, “God, be merciful to me a sinner!”

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17.2 Review Questions

- 1 What does Unconditional Election teach?
- 2 What two types of sins do we commit in relation to God’s law?
- 3 Why is sin serious?
- 4 Who are “the elect” and “the reprobate”?
- 5 What effects will salvation and damnation have upon God’s glory?
- 6 What two Bible verses are often quoted by the Arminians to support their view?
- 7 Does it matter whether we are Supralapsarian or Infralapsarian?
- 8 How were the elect in the Old Testament saved?
- 9 What is the duty of Christians in regard to the gospel?
- 10 What is the duty of hearers in regard to the gospel?

17.3 Assignment/Discussion

Believing in Unconditional Election has not hampered missions and the preaching of the gospel. Examples of great preachers and soul-winners are George Whitefield and C. H. Spurgeon. Examples of great missionaries are William Carey, Adoniram Judson, and David Brainerd. What could have motivated these men in their work?

17.4 Memory Passage (Eph. 1:3-6)

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵ having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

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Eighteen

LIMITED ATONEMENT (Rom. 5:6-11)

Limited Atonement (or Particular Redemption) teaches that Christ's death was designed for the elect alone, to make atonement for their sins.

18.1 About Limited Atonement

- 1 *The necessity of atonement*: Atonement for sin is needed because God is not only merciful but also just. His mercy strains to save, while His justice strains to punish. The salvation of the sinner must be accomplished without involving God in self-contradiction. God provides the solution Himself by sending His only begotten Son to the world, to take on perfect human nature while remaining divine. His death on the cross as the perfect substitute for the elect accomplishes their salvation, which is shown by four key words.
- 2 The first word is *expiation* ("hilaskomai", Rom. 2:17; Heb. 1:3), which means making up for the offence of sin, by vicariously taking the punishment due. This is looking from man's perspective. The second word is *propitiation* ("hilasterion", Rom. 3:25), which means enabling God to receive sinners, by His wrath being turned away. This is looking from God's perspective. The third word is *redemption* ("apolytroton", Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:14; 4:30), in which a price, or *ransom* ("lytron", Matt. 20:28) is paid, to set the person free – not from Satan, but from the punishment due for sin from God. The fourth word is *reconciliation* ("katallage", Rom. 5:11; 2 Cor. 5:18-19), which is peace, or acceptance, with God. William Tyndale struggled to find an English word that encompasses the sense conveyed by all four words, finally coining a new word to express it – "at-one-ment". This is accomplished by double imputation – the im-

putation of sin to Christ when He died on the cross, and the imputation of His righteousness to the sinner when he believes (Rom. 4:22-25; 2 Cor. 5:21).

- 3 *Christ's death for His people*: The Old Testament animal sacrifices were a *type* of Christ's death on the cross. A life must be laid down in order that we might have life. Blood must be shed for the cleansing of sin. John the Baptist pointed to Christ as the *antitype* – "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29)!" Christ's death was a sacrifice in the sense that He was the perfect substitute for His people, dying to make atonement for their sin (John 6:39; 17:24). No other substitute was good enough (Heb. 10:4, 10). The ransom price of blood has been paid (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). Only those who belong to Christ will listen and follow Him (John 10:26-27). Salvation is for the elect only (Rom. 5:15, 19; 2 Tim 1:9-10 cf 2:10). Christ's death was not for everyone (Matt. 1:21; 20:28; Luke 19:10). Atonement for sins was limited to Christ's people. Christ's death was particularly for them. Even human logic shows the inconsistency of Christ dying for all, without all being saved. Had God failed?
- 4 *Contrary voices*: Apart from Arminianism, a pervasive contrary view of the atonement is Amyraldism (or Amyraldianism). It is also known by various other names: the School of Saumur, Post Redemptionism, Moderate Calvinism, Four-point Calvinism, Hypothetical Redemptionism, and Hypothetical Universalism. Named after Moses Amyraut (1596-1664), a French Protestant theologian, it teaches that God foreordained a universal salvation, which is offered to all on condition of faith. Man has the power to believe, but lacks the willingness to believe because of inherent depravity. This teaching is often expressed as "Christ's atoning death is sufficient for all and efficient for some". However, in question is not the efficacy of Christ's death, but the intent or purpose of His death. Amyraldianism was held by well-known men like Richard Baxter, Andrew Fuller, and J. C. Ryle.
- 5 B. B. Warfield, a well-known Reformed theologian, calls Amyraldianism "a logically inconsistent form of Calvinism and therefore an unstable form of Calvinism".¹ The Bible passages used to support the view are also those used by the Arminians. One group of Scripture passages speak of Christ dying for "all" men (Rom. 5:18; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; 1 Tim. 2:4-6; Heb. 2:9; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:1-2). However, a careful examination shows that they do not mean every individual in the world will be saved, e.g. Heb. 2:9 cf. vv. 10-13; 1 John 2:1-2 cf. vv. 15-17. Other passages speak of Christ dying for "the world" (John 1:9, 29; 3:16-17; 4:42; 2 Cor. 5:19; 1 John 2:1-2; 4:14 etc.). John Owen² shows that "the world" is used in a number of ways, one of which is to refer to all nations instead

of just the Jews (cf. Rom. 3:29-30; Gal. 3:26-29).

6 *Practical implications:* In the 18th century, the Particular Baptists who held to Limited Atonement were troubled by Hyper-Calvinism. It was claimed that the ground, or warrant, for coming to Christ for salvation is knowing that one is elect. There was resistance against “the free offer of the gospel”, claiming that it smacks of Arminianism. The Arminians reacted to Limited Atonement by replacing it with a general atonement, in which it is claimed that Christ died to make salvation possible for everyone, but without definitely saving anyone. The response of the sinner to the gospel call is necessary to secure salvation. While other Particular Baptists were happily engaged in soul-winning without changing their view on Limited Atonement, those like Andrew Fuller reacted to Hyper-Calvinism by adopting Amyraldianism. In reality, Limited Atonement has never been a hindrance to evangelism. The true Calvinists have been encouraged to evangelise and to engage in missions because of the certainty that the elect will respond to the gospel call. They are assured that Christ’s sheep will hear His voice as the gospel is proclaimed. They take comfort that “salvation is of the Lord” rather than dependent on their ability and zeal in preaching and outreach. Well-known Calvinist preachers who engaged in soul-winning have included George Whitefield and C. H. Spurgeon. Well-known Calvinist missionaries have included William Carey, Adoniram Judson, and David Brainerd.

We evangelise and engage in missions because the Lord says, “I lay down My life for the sheep... they will hear My voice (John 10:15, 16).”

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18.2 Review Questions

- 1 What does Limited Atonement teach?
- 2 What do “expiation” and “propitiation” mean?
- 3 In “redemption”, what are we set free from?
- 4 What does reconciliation achieve?
- 5 In what sense was Christ’s death a sacrifice?
- 6 How is Amyraldianism often expressed?
- 7 Name some well-known men who had held to Amyraldianism.

¹Warfield, “The Plan of Salvation”.

²Owen, “The Death of Death”.

8 How does B. B. Warfield describe Amyraldianism?

9 How do Hyper-Calvinists react to the doctrine of Limited Atonement?

10 How do Arminians react to the doctrine of Limited Atonement?

18.3 Assignment/Discussion

The “warrant of faith” has been a contention in history. Does a sinner need to know that Christ died for him before he comes to Him? Do we need to feel our need of Christ before we come to Him? Do we need to see sufficient change in our life before coming to Christ? Need something be achieved within the person – in mind, heart, or will – before he comes to Christ? Or is the warrant outside of himself, and found only in the word of God – the command to come to Christ (John 3:16; Acts 2:38; 16:31; 1 John 3:23)? Discuss how Hyper-Calvinism and Arminianism would have different opinions on this, in contrast to Calvinism.

18.4 Memory Passage (John 10:11-16)

¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.
¹² But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. ¹³ The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. ¹⁴ I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. ¹⁵ As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. ¹⁶ And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

* * * * *

Nineteen

IRRESISTIBLE GRACE (Rom. 8:28-39)

Irresistible Grace teaches that the Holy Spirit's work of regenerating the elect unto salvation is incapable of failing.

19.1 About Irresistible Grace

- 1 *The Holy Spirit is involved in salvation*: All three persons of the Trinity are involved in our salvation (Rom. 8:14; 1 Cor. 6:11; 1 Pet. 1:2). The Holy Spirit is the *agent* who applies the work of Christ to the elect (1 Pet. 1:22-23; Isa. 44:3). He does so by the *instrument* of the hearing of the word of God (Rom. 6:17; 10:17) and, in particular, the gospel of "Christ crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2; Gal. 1:6-9). The Holy Spirit is irresistible, or invincible (cannot be overcome) in His work (Eph. 1:19-20; Rom. 8:11). Irresistible Grace is considered under the chapter on Effectual Calling in the 1689 Confession (Ch. 10).
- 2 *The order of salvation ("Ordo solutis")*: The 1689 Confession (3:6) gives the order of salvation as: Election (from eternity), Redemption (in Christ's death), Effectual Calling "to faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season", Justification (God declaring the person not guilty), Adoption, Sanctification (the process of growing in holiness), Glorification (preservation unto salvation). This is based on Rom. 8:29-30. Together with 1689:10:1, it is clear that Effectual Calling includes the doctrine of Irresistible Grace. Logically speaking, and not necessarily occurring chronologically, there are three important stages in Effectual Calling: (i) Conception; (ii) Gestation; and (iii) Conversion. Effectual Calling is followed by Reconciliation and Assurance, before Sanctification. Each of these stages consists of two elements.

- i In *Conception*, the word is heard effectually, giving spiritual life the person (the Internal Call), as the Spirit comes to dwell in him (John 5:25; Gal. 3:2).
- ii In *Gestation*, the sinner is awakened to his spiritual condition and convicted of his guilt before God (1 Cor. 1:23-24; Acts 2:37; 16:29).
- iii In *Conversion*, the convicted sinner is enabled to come to Christ in repentance and faith (John 6:37; 10:27; Acts 11:18; Eph. 2:8-9).
- iv *Reconciliation* with God is accomplished when He justifies us upon faith in Christ, and adopts us as His children (Rom. 3:28; 8:15; 2 Cor 5:18-21). Also, there follows the experience of forgiveness of sins and peace with God which, together, constitute *Assurance*. This is distinct from growing in holiness, which is *Sanctification* (Rom. 8:15-17; Gal. 5:22).
- v There might be resistance against the truth along the way, but the elect will finally be saved. God's grace is irresistible/invincible (Isa. 55:11; Jer. 31:18, 33). Throughout, as the word is proclaimed and applied by the preacher, the Spirit is at work in regenerating the elect hearer, enabling him to respond.

3 *A complete order of salvation*: A complete order would include Predestination, Redemption, Conception, Gestation, Conversion, Reconciliation, Assurance, Sanctification, Glorification. Effectual Calling covers the work of the Spirit, by the instrumentality of the word, in giving new life in Christ. It includes Conception, Gestation, and Conversion. As noted already, the Gestation period may be short or drawn out. (See 1689:10:1 cf. para. 4 & 15:3). Some Reformed writers¹ leave out Gestation, or place it before Conception, therefore treating Gestation as the work of the Spirit that is not yet saving, as happens in the non-elect who hear the gospel.² Regeneration, i.e. the work of the Spirit in bringing about the new birth (John 3:3, 5; Tit. 3:5), results in Effectual Calling (1689:15:1 & 10:1, 2). God is the author of the Effectual Call, while the elect receive the Effectual Calling (cf. Eph. 4:1). (Many writers do not differentiate the call from the calling, i.e. between the subject or author, and the object or beneficiary, of the call. Also, the term "regeneration" is used instead of "initial regeneration", and is regarded as "a momentary act", like justification and adoption.³

4 *Effectual Calling and Irresistible Grace*: Irresistible Grace looks more closely at the work of the Spirit in applying the word to the elect. Looked at from the point of cause-and-effect, Effectual Calling is the effect while Irresistible Grace – conveyed by the Effectual Call – is the cause.

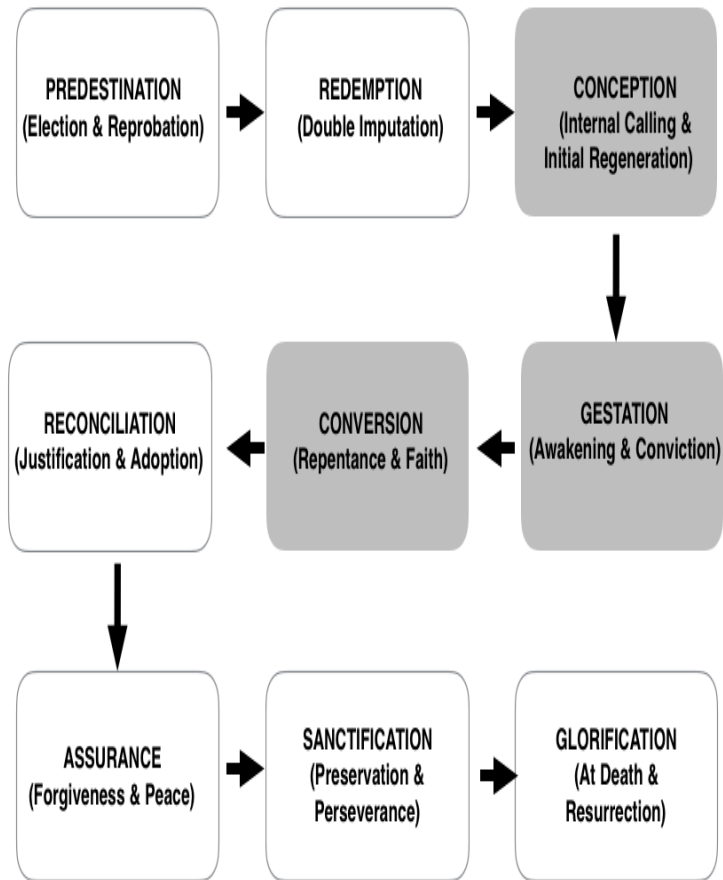
¹ e.g. Murray, J., "Redemption Accomplished and Applied"

² e.g. Murray, I. H., "The Old Evangelicalism", pp. 21-22.

³ e.g. Murray, J., "Redemption Accomplished and Applied", p. 87.

5-3. The complete order of salvation.

Effectual Calling



We must trust the Holy Spirit to save the hearers by preaching the word “in season and out of season” (2 Tim. 4:2). We preach until the hearers are converted, or we are unwanted (Luke 10:10-11; Acts 18:4-11; 19:8-10).

* * * * *

19.2 Review Questions

- 1 What is meant by *Irresistible Grace*?
- 2 State the role of the Holy Spirit in salvation and the instrument used.
- 3 State the two elements in each of these stages of salvation: (i) Conception; (ii) Conversion; (iii) Reconciliation.
- 4 What stage lies before *Conversion* and what elements are included in it?
- 5 What stages follow *Reconciliation*?
- 6 What stages are covered under *Effectual Calling*?
- 7 What is *Regeneration*?
- 8 How is *Irresistible Grace* related to *Effectual Calling*?
- 9 Why will the elect be saved despite resisting the work of the Holy Spirit in him?
- 10 What is the role of the preacher throughout the work of the Spirit in regeneration?

19.3 Assignment/Discussion

The idea of instantaneous regeneration, as taught by Professor John Murray in his book “Redemption Accomplished and Applied”, has been challenged by Dr. Peter Masters in his book “Physician of Souls”, who advocates an “elongated view” of regeneration. What are the merits and demerits of each view?

19.4 Memory Passage (John 6:35-40)

³⁵ And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. ³⁶ But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. ³⁷ All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. ³⁹ This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. ⁴⁰ And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

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Twenty

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

(John 10:22-30)

“The Perseverance Of The Saints” teaches that the elect will continue in the life of faith to the end of their lives despite trials and temptations.

20.1 About Perseverance Of The Saints

- 1 *Who are the saints?:* “Saints” or “holy ones” refer to all true believers (Rom. 1:7). They have been made clean by the blood of Christ, and are accepted as God’s children. This differ from the wrong teaching of the Roman Catholic Church which canonises (i.e. officially declares) exceptionally pious people as “saints”. Despite trials and temptations, the elect will not totally or finally fall away from faith (John 10:28-29). God preserves them in the faith, while they persevere in the midst of trials and temptations. As we work at persevering in the faith, God is at work in preserving us in the faith (Phil. 1:6; 2:12-13; Rom. 8:38-39).
- 2 *How will they persevere?:* The certainty of perseverance does not lie in the believers, but in God. God, who saves by grace, continues: (i) to provide strength by the Holy Spirit in His people (Rom. 8:13-14; Phil. 2:12-13; Col. 1:28-29), (ii) to use *the means of grace* to strengthen His people (Heb. 10:24-25; 1 Pet. 2:1-3), and (iii) to exercise *special providence* over His people (Rom. 8:28; Heb. 13:5-6). God will certainly preserve them because: (a) His decree of election cannot be changed (Rom. 11:29; 1 Cor. 1:8-9); (b) Christ’s death and intercession are sufficient and effectual (Heb. 10: 14; 7:25; Luke 22:32;); (c) the Holy Spirit in believers ensures that the seed of life endures (1 John 3:9); (d) the covenant of grace cannot be broken (Heb. 6:17-18; Jer. 32:40). Trials test our faith, and temptations draw us away from holy living (in James

1:2; 12 the same Greek word, “peirasmos”, is used). The elect will persevere in faith and in holy living because the Holy Spirit in them gives: (i) the desire to live a godly life (Rom. 8:5); (ii) the ability to obey the word of God (Rom. 8:10); (iii) a love for the Lord, who first love them (John 14:21, 24; 1 John 3:9); (iv) a quickened (lively) conscience to do right (1 Tim. 1:5, 19).

- 3 *Will the elect fall into sin?*: Even true believers may fall into grievous sins because of: (i) the attacks of Satan (Luke 22:31; 1 Pet. 5:8); (ii) the temptations and trials of the world (James 1:2, 12); (iii) the remaining corruptions in their own nature (1 John 2:16); and (iv) neglect of *the means of grace* (Heb. 10:24-25). If they harden their hearts and continue in sin: (a) God will be displeased and the Spirit grieved (Eph. 4:30); (b) God’s blessing will be withdrawn and their conscience will be hurt (1 Tim. 1:5, 19) ; (c) others will be stumbled (Rom. 14:13; 1 Cor. 8:9); and (iv) God will chastise them to bring them to repentance (Heb. 12:9-10). They will be forgiven, but they may have to bear the consequences of their sins (James 1:13-15; 1 John 1:9; 2 Sam. 12:14; Heb. 12:7-8).
- 4 *What about professing believers who fall away?*: They were never true believers (Heb. 6:4-11 cf. 12:7). The question may be asked, “Then why should there be warnings about eternal damnation?” The warnings are use by God to keep the elect persevering, while hardening the unbelievers (Heb. 12:3-11). Note that this doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints is different from the Antinomian teaching of “once saved, always saved”, regardless of how you live. God demands holy living in His people (Matt. 7:21-23; 2 Tim. 2:19).
- 5 *What is the value of this doctrine?*: “The Perseverance of the Saints” ministers great comfort in times of trials, and assurance in the life of faith. The assurance of salvation comes not from any special feelings but from: (i) faith in the promises of God (Rom. 8:32-35; Heb. 13:5); (ii) the witness of the Holy Spirit in the believers (Rom. 8:16-17; 1 John 5:13); (iii) the pursuit of a clear conscience and good works (Heb. 10:12-23; Eph. 2:10). Assurance may be weak in some, but all true believers will be kept persevering (1 Cor. 1:8).

Have you backslidden? Are you tempted to give up the faith? Return to the Lord, persevere on, and God will preserve you!

* * * * *

20.2 Review Questions

- 1 What is meant by the Perseverance of the Saints?
- 2 Why will the elect certainly persevere in the faith?

- 3 Why will God certainly preserve the elect?
- 4 How does the Holy Spirit enable the elect to persevere?
- 5 Why do true believers fall into grievous sins?
- 6 What happens when God's children harden their hearts and continue in sin?
- 7 What happens to God's children who repent of sin?
- 8 Why are warnings of eternal damnation given in the Bible?
- 9 What is the value of the doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints?
- 10 How do believers gain assurance of salvation?

20.3 Assignment/ Discussion

The lack of assurance is a problem in some believers, while there are people who feel sure of their salvation when they do not have a credible profession of faith. How should we address problems like these?

20.4 Memory Passage (Rom. 8:37-39)

³⁷ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

* * * * *

Twenty-one

IMPLICATIONS OF THE “FIVE POINTS” (1 Cor. 14:6-12)

Understanding the Five Points of Calvinism helps us to live faithfully before God in an age of rapid changes, confusion, and muted call to spiritual battle.

21.1 Some Implications

- 1 *The biblical doctrine of salvation*: “The Five Points of Calvinism”, also called “the Doctrines of Grace”, is a *summary* of the doctrine of salvation. They are the five fingers, not the whole arm, let alone the whole body. Nevertheless, they stand or fall together and are helpful in making clear the doctrine of salvation. Hence, some choose to refer to them as “doctrine” (singular) instead of “doctrines” (plural). Bear in mind that there are those who hold to Four Points (or Four-and-a-half Points), leaving out Limited Atonement, and claiming that “Christ’s death is sufficient for all, and efficient for some”. Today, many Evangelical Christians are Arminian or Semi-Arminian, holding to “free will”, and having difficulty reconciling “divine sovereignty” with “human responsibility”, in salvation and the Christian life.
- 2 *These doctrines must be handled with care*: We must not use them as a “five-pointed club” to bash others. Many true believers do not have the opportunity of exposure to the truth. For truth to be established, error must be exposed and rejected (Jer. 1:10). However, let us do it with patience and compassion. It has taken many of us that long to understand these truths. There is much we still need to learn (1 Cor. 10:12).

- 3 *These doctrines must be propagated:* The Doctrines of Grace have changed many lives. If not taught and corrected, how will the next “Apollos” be helped? Cf. Acts 18:24-26. Some were never truly converted because they had never heard the true gospel. When confronted by the true gospel in the Doctrines of Grace, they were broken and saved. Others had never been weaned of self, despite having trusted in Christ for salvation. The Doctrines of Grace have humbled them and made them more useful in God’s service. It is to be noted that the older hymns tend to express these doctrines better than the modern ones.
- 4 *Reject the altar call:* The practice of the altar call comes from the stable of Arminianism. It is contrary to Calvinism and produces adverse effects.
- i It gives the impression that Christ’s death is not quite sufficient to save;
 - ii It makes the hearers think that their action of “walking the aisle” contributes in some way to their salvation;
 - iii It tends to produce many false converts;
 - iv It makes evangelism to such people more difficult as they think they are already saved;
 - v It fills the church with professing believers who are not truly born again.

Sadly, there are those who profess to be Reformed but adopt the altar call. Similarly, the use of “The Four Spiritual Laws” of the Campus Crusade for Christ is Arminian. Mere intellectual assent to those “Laws” and the act of saying “the sinner’s prayer” do not save.

- 5 *Reject practical Hyper-Calvinism:* There are those who profess to be Reformed but do not believe in bringing the gospel to others. They claim to believe in “providential evangelism”, i.e. proclaiming the gospel only when providentially given the opportunity, instead of seeking out opportunities to do so. Outreach effort organised by the church is frowned upon. There might be a professed belief in the preaching of the gospel, but the gospel is seldom preached with freedom and joy. We believe in bringing the gospel to others, which is as much due to God’s providence and enabling as it is due to human effort (Rom. 10:14-15; Matt. 28:18-20).
- 6 *Reject practical Antinomianism:* This is connected with the idea that one can have Jesus Christ as Saviour first, and then have Him as Lord later. Such a person is referred to as “a carnal Christian”. It arises from the belief that once a profession of faith is made, the person will never lose his salvation regardless of how he lives. It gives assurance of salvation to those who are not concerned to live holy lives. It does not see the importance of the law of God in sanctification. It fails to see that holy

living is a characteristic of true conversion. “New Calvinism”, with the tag line, “Young, Restless, Reformed”, encourages a worldly attitude and behaviour. It is basically Antinomian (i.e. rejection of the law of God), while holding intellectually to the Five Points of Calvinism.

Let us uphold the Five Points of Calvinism as a true summary of the biblical doctrine of salvation, and proceed from there to be truly Reformed.

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21.2 Review Questions

- 1 Why do some people propose calling the Five Points of Calvinism the Doctrine (singular) of Grace?
- 2 Which point of doctrine is left out by some who would call themselves Reformed?
- 3 If these doctrines must not be used as “a five-pointed club”, how should we use it?
- 4 In what ways have the Doctrines of Grace changed lives?
- 5 Where does the altar call come from?
- 6 State the adverse effects of the altar call as practised by the Arminians.
- 7 Why do Calvinists avoid the use of “The Four Spiritual Laws” of the Campus Crusade for Christ?
- 8 Why must we reject “providential evangelism”?
- 9 What is wrong with the Antinomian idea of “once saved, always saved”?
- 10 What is wrong with the New Calvinism movement?

21.3 Assignment/Discussion

To be Reformed in the right sense, there must be adherence to the totality of the Bible’s teaching and not merely to the Five Points of Calvinism. Also, it means the need to reform the doctrine, worship, and government of the church. In other words, we need to be subject to Christ, the Head of the church, in His offices as Prophet, Priest, and King. Will there ever be full agreement on these matters?

21.4 Memory Passage (John 8:12)

¹² Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”

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Part IV

SEMPER REFORMANDA

Twenty-two

WHAT IS “SEMPER REFORMANDA”? (Eph. 4:1-6)

To understand the concept of “semper reformanda” and its relevance to us today.

22.1 Its Origin And Meaning

- 1 The Reformation of the 16th century was a watershed in the history of the church. It was a work of God – a spiritual revival involving the preaching of God’s word, the salvation of souls, the recovery of biblical teaching and practice, and the founding of new churches. John Calvin (1509-1564) may be considered a spokesman of the Reformation. In his *magnum opus*, “The Institutes of the Christian Religion”, which was revised and enlarged a number of times until its final edition in 1559, he says: ‘Christ “loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish,” (Eph. 5: 25-27.) Nevertheless, it is true, that the Lord is daily smoothing its wrinkles and wiping away its spots. Hence it follows that its holiness is not yet perfect. Such, then, is the holiness of the Church: it makes daily progress, but is not yet perfect; it daily advances, but as yet has not reached the goal.’¹
- 2 As the Reformation spread, there were calls for the spirit of the Reformation to be maintained. John Robinson, an early leader of the English Separatists based Leiden in the Netherlands, addressed those of his church

¹Calvin, J., Inst., Bk. 4:1:17.

migrating to America in 1620 (called the Pilgrim Fathers): “I charge you before God and His blessed angels, that you follow me no further than you have seen me follow the Lord Jesus Christ. If God reveals anything to you by any instrument of His, be as ready to receive it as you were to receive any truth by my ministry, for I am verily persuaded the Lord hath more truth yet to break forth out of His Holy word. For my part, I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of those reformed churches which are come to a period [i.e. a full-stop] in religion, and will go, at present, no further than the instruments of their reformation. The Lutherans cannot be drawn to go beyond what Luther saw; whatever part of His will our God has revealed to Calvin, they will rather die than embrace it; and the Calvinists, you see, stick fast where they were left by that great man of God, who yet saw not all things. This is a misery much to be lamented, for though they were burning and shining lights in their times, yet they penetrated not into the whole counsel of God; but were they now living, would be as willing to embrace further light as that which they first received, for it is not possible the Christian world should come so lately out of such thick anti-christian darkness and that perfection of knowledge should break forth at once.”²

- 3 In Britain, the Particular Baptists were pushing for reformation beyond what the paedobaptist Puritans had arrived at. Writing against infant baptism, Benjamin Keach stated: ‘Our first Protestant Reformers were raised up to restore those grand fundamentals of faith, more than to reform matters of discipline, and about this rite of infant-baptism and some other ceremonies. “The path of the just is as a shining light, that shines more and more to the perfect Day, Prov. 4. 18.”’³
- 4 In the Netherlands, during the Second Reformation, which corresponded with the age of the Puritans in Britain, there was a similar call for the spirit of the Reformation to be continued. It was urged that while the Reformation reformed the doctrine of the church, the lives and practices of God’s people always need further reformation. In 1674, a devotional was written by an important figure of the Second Reformation called Jodocus van Lodenstein, in which were found these words, “The church is reformed and always [in need of] being reformed according to the Word of God.” The verb is passive – the church is not “always reforming” but is “always being reformed”. Although the Reformers did not use the phrase, it expresses well their belief. This phrase is often shortened to “semper reformanda”, i.e. “always being reformed”.
- 5 Like anything good, right, and true, the term “semper reformanda” has been abused. It is often taken to mean the church must actively reform itself, by adjusting traditional doctrine and practice to suit the times. The

²Broadbent, E. H., “The Pilgrim Church”, pp. 245-246.

³Keach, B., “Light Broke Forth”, 1696, pp. 226-227.

principle of “sola scripture” is forgotten. The Modernist Swiss theologian, Karl Barth (1886-1968), used the phrase much to advocate change in the dead orthodoxy seen in the churches around him. From the 1960s, radical Roman Catholic theologians like Hans Küng used this term to advocate reform within the Roman Catholic Church. In 1967, the United Presbyterian Church in the USA rejected the inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture under this modern understanding of the phrase. It is also used by the Federal Vision movement to advocate either a need to change Reformed theology or to recover an earlier version of it. According to the Federal Vision, no one is finally regenerate, elect, or justified until the last day. Their view of justification is in line with the NPP (the New Perspective on Paul), and the view held by Karl Barth, and similar to Roman Catholic teaching.

22.2 Implications Of Semper Reformanda

- 1 While the term “semper reformanda” has been abused by some, it is more common to find those who are “Reformed” only in doctrine but are not “Reformed” in practice. In other words, they do not adhere to “semper reformanda”. The Particular Baptists of the 17th and 18th centuries were misunderstood and suffered much for holding to believer’s baptism, the autonomy of the local church, and the liberty of conscience. They held that the task of reformation should not stop at doctrine, but be extended to worship and church government, and to the separation of church and state. For ourselves today, consistency in upholding “semper reformanda” would require that we separate from those in serious errors while reforming ourselves according to the Bible.
- 2 The doctrine of separation from sin, wrong teaching, and worldliness (Rom. 16:17; Gal. 1:9; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15; 1 John 2:16; 2 John 10) must be held together with the doctrine of love between the brethren (John 17:20-23; Eph. 4:1-6; 1 John 4:1, 7). These apply primarily to individuals within the local church but should be extended to interaction between churches (1 Cor. 3:21-23; 4:16-17). Selective fellowship is based on the truth (Eph. 4:4-6), and also on the spirit of the truth (Eph. 4:1-3; Acts 4:32). The more truth we share in common, the greater is the likelihood of fellowship. Also, the more mutual acceptance is found in like-minded people, the greater is the possibility of fellowship.
- 3 The 1689 Confession states in Chapter 26:4 that Jesus Christ is the head of the church. In Chapter 8:1 it is mentioned that Jesus Christ is “the Mediator between God and man; the prophet, priest and king; head and saviour of His church”. Chapter 8:10 contains a clause, “This number and order of the offices is necessary.” This is not found in the Westminster Confession nor in the Savoy Declaration. Instead, it came from the 1644

Confession. The Particular Baptists, being Separatists, wanted to carry on reform by subjecting themselves to the three offices of Christ. “Semper reformanda” will require us to reform the local church according to the three offices of Christ. It is further proposed that the Lord must be imitated in His ministry, not just in His character (1 Cor. 4:16-17; 11:1; 2 Tim. 3:10; Tit. 1:5). The apostle Paul shows this in his own ministry. An all-round ministry as shown by our Lord (Matt. 4:23; 9:35) must be aimed at in regard to the ministry of the church in the world.

While practising separation from those in serious errors we must reform our churches according to the three offices of Christ and the pattern of ministry set by the Lord.

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22.3 Review Questions

- 1 How should we look upon the Reformation of the 16th century?
- 2 What did John Calvin teach about the holiness of the church when he expounded on Eph. 5:25-27?
- 3 What was John Robinson appealing for when he addressed the Pilgrim Fathers before they sailed?
- 4 In Britain, what were the Particular Baptists pushing for when they insisted on believer's baptism instead of infant sprinkling?
- 5 What does “semper reformanda” mean?
- 6 How does the Federal Vision movement abuse the term “semper reformanda”?
- 7 While “semper reformanda” has been abused by some, what is the more common problem?
- 8 The Particular Baptists of the 17th and 18th centuries were misunderstood and suffered much for what issues?
- 9 Selective fellowship is based on what two ingredients?
- 10 State the conclusion of this study.

22.4 Assignment/Discussion

There are those who claim themselves to be “Reformed” but do not seem to uphold “semper reformanda”. How may we recognise such? Do they not have the right to be known as “Reformed”? Do we have the right to stop them from calling themselves “Reformed”?

22.5 Memory Passage (Eph. 4:1-6)

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, ² with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, ³ endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

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Twenty-three

THE PROPHETHOOD OF CHRIST

(Rev. 2:12-29)

The principle of “semper reformanda” requires that the church submit to Christ’s prophethood.

23.1 Significance Of Christ’s Prophethood

- 1 Jesus Christ is the great prophet promised by God who would come to His people (Deut. 18:18 cf. John 1:45; 4:25; Acts 3:20-22). A prophet reveals (forthtells and foretells) God’s will (Deut. 18:18). In the Old Testament, a prophecy that turned out be false, or turned the people away from God, would require the prophet to be put to death (Deut. 18:20; 13:5). Jesus Christ is Himself the incarnate Word, so that he who has seen Him has seen the Father (John 1:1-3; 14:7, 9). The risen Christ continues to strive with His people to bring them into closer conformity with His word (Eph. 5:25-27). In other words, He reveals God and His will to His people.
- 2 Prophethood is concerned with doctrine and the word of God. A church that submits to Christ’s headship will show submission to His word. There will be an appreciation of correct doctrine and the authority of Scripture, shown practically in three ways.
 - i The teaching and preaching of God’s word will be central in the life of the church. The Roman Catholics would commonly say, “We are going to church for the mass,” while Protestants would say, “We are going to church to hear the word of God.”
 - ii The church would want to sort out its doctrine of salvation, since this concerns the gospel, the core teaching of the Christian faith (1 Cor.

2:2; Gal. 1:9). Following the Reformation of the 16th century, three views of the gospel emerged: Calvinism, Arminianism, and Amyraldianism. Which is the biblical view? Calvinism upholds the so-called Five Points of Calvinism, while fully-fledged Arminianism holds to the Five Points of Arminianism. Amyraldianism does not hold to Limited Atonement, claiming that “Christ’s death is sufficient for all, and efficient for some”.

- iii A good Confession of Faith would be accepted as the doctrinal basis of the church. Churches that trace their origin – historically or doctrinally – to the Reformation would hold to one of the Confessions that arose during or after the Reformation. These are “Reformed churches”, characterised by confessionalism (i.e. the esteem for, and use of, the Confession of Faith). Churches that arose after the Reformation tend to be content with a short Statement of Faith, of 10 to 20 articles, e.g the Methodist denominations, the Plymouth Brethren, and the Evangelical Free Churches.
- 3 In the early 20th century, Theological Liberalism developed within the Protestant ranks. Liberalism is Modernist in outlook – rejecting accepted ideas, and the miracles and supernatural events of the Bible. Modernism relies on human ability, the rational faculty, and the scientific approach in the study of the Bible. It is claimed that the Bible is not infallible (incapable of error) and not inerrant (without errors). The Evangelicals,¹ who were Conservative in outlook, united to counter the Liberals. They held that the Bible is infallible and inerrant as originally given, and has been preserved pure by God’s providential care through the centuries. The copying errors in the process of transmission are so minimal that they do not affect the doctrine of the Bible.
- 4 The characteristics of Evangelicals are adherence to the sole authority of Scripture, the gospel of justification by faith, and the belief in evangelism. Once Liberalism was contained, the Conservatives split into three camps: the Reformed, the Fundamentalists, and the Neo-evangelicals. By the end of the 20th century, another camp appeared, viz. Charismaticism.
- 5 The Reformed are characterised by their adherence to Reformed theology (the Five Sola’s), covenant theology, confessionalism, the primacy of preaching, and traditional worship. It is not possible to be Reformed and non-cessationist or dispensationalist.
- 6 The Fundamentalists are characterised by a tendency to be over-literal in their interpretation of Scripture, the practice of aggressive separation, holding tenaciously to dispensational premillennialism, and a lack

¹The term “Evangelicals” encompasses the non-Liberal Protestants who later split into the Fundamentalist, the Reformed, and the Neo-Evangelical groups.

of patience with those who use Bibles other than the King James Version (KJV).

- 7 The Neo-evangelicals are characterised by a tendency to be ecumenical-minded, placing emphasis on social concerns, being non-cessationist, and being open to contemporary worship. The Ecumenical movement emphasises organised, visible, unity between churches at the expense of truth.
- 8 Charismatism began with the Pentecostal movement from the early 20th century and merged with the Charismatic renewal movement of the 1960s. The Charismatic renewal movement emphasised the restoration of the extraordinary gifts and the subjective aspect of the Christian life. The charismatic renewal was largely welcomed by the Neo-evangelicals and the Roman Catholics. Excesses such as dancing, making sounds like animals, speaking in tongues, and prophecies were associated with the churches of the Vineyard Movement and John Wimber in the West, and the churches of the Full Gospel Assemblies and Paul Cho Yonggi (later changed to David Cho Yonggi) in the East. Historically speaking, the Charismatics are not Evangelical. In spirit and doctrine, they are not Conservative.

23.2 Implications Of Prophethood

- 1 In practising selective fellowship, we want to avoid the extremes of laxity and rigidity. There are fundamentals of the faith over which we cannot compromise, while there are differences over non-essentials of the faith which we must tolerate (cf. Eph. 4:4-6; Heb. 6:1-3; Phil. 3:15-16). (We are not saying the so-called non-essentials are not important, but rather that they do not cause immediate harm to the faith, e.g. whether one is premillennial, postmillennial, or amillennial.)
- 2 Arminianism is similar to Pelagianism, but they are not exactly the same. Pelagianism denies original sin and holds that the human will is capable of choosing between good and evil without special divine aid. Arminianism, as held by the Methodists and many other Evangelicals today, believe in total depravity but also “prevenient grace”, i.e. divine grace that precedes human decision, and that Christ died for everyone to make salvation possible. They also uphold the Evangelical belief in justification by faith and the need to evangelise. Arminianism was rejected by the Synod of Dort but never condemned as heresy. It is an error concerning the *mechanism* of salvation, not the *manner or way* of salvation.
- 3 Charismatism undermines the authority of Scripture by teaching the continuance of the sign gifts, including tongue-speaking and prophecy (2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:4). It emphasises subjective feelings at the expense

of correct doctrine. It focuses on the ministry of the Holy Spirit at the expense of the glory of Christ (cf. John 14:17; 16:13-15). Fellowship with Charismatic churches is not possible.

- 4 We may have various degrees of fellowship with Fundamentalist and Neo-evangelical churches that are Arminian in soteriology, depending on how much of other truths we share in common. It is difficult to have fellowship with Neo-evangelical churches that have adopted Charismatic beliefs and practices, or are involved in the modern Ecumenical movement.
- 5 Fellowship with Liberal churches is not possible. Liberals not only have a low view of Scripture, but also do not believe in an exclusive gospel and the need for evangelism.
- 6 Fellowship between individual Christians operate on the same basic principles – the more of truth we hold in common, the greater is the likelihood of fellowship; the more of love for the Lord shown by submission to His word, the greater is the likelihood of co-operation in gospel enterprises. It is possible to love doctrine, to be correct in doctrine, and yet lack submission to Christ as prophet. Beware!

In the process of submission to Christ's prophethood, we keep in mind the admonition to "love the brotherhood (1 Pet. 2:17)".

* * * * *

23.3 Review Questions

- 1 What does the Old Testament reveal about Christ?
- 2 As prophet, what does Christ reveal to His people?
- 3 An appreciation of correct doctrine and the authority of the Bible will show itself in what three practical ways?
- 4 What does Modernism think of the Bible?
- 5 What do Evangelicals believe about the Bible and its preservation?
- 6 State the characteristics of the Reformed.
- 7 State the characteristics of the Fundamentalists.
- 8 State the characteristics of the Neo-evangelicals.
- 9 State the characteristics of the Charismatics.
- 10 Why is it not possible to have fellowship with Theological Liberals?

23.4 Assignment/Discussion

What difficulties do you foresee in our interaction with those who Fundamentalist, and those who are Neo-Evangelical? What difficulties might we encounter with those who are Reformed?

23.5 Memory passage (John 14:15-18)

¹⁵ If you love Me, keep My commandments. ¹⁶ And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—
¹⁷ the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

* * * * *

Twenty-four

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST

(Heb. 7:14-28)

The principle of “semper reformanda” requires that the church submit to Christ’s priesthood.

24.1 Significance Of Christ’s Priesthood

- 1 Christ’s high-priesthood is taught in detail in Hebrews 7-10. In the Old Testament, the high-priest officiated in the worship at the tabernacle and the temple. The high-priest had to be appointed from among the priests, the descendants of Aaron, of the tribe of Levi. Christ’s high-priesthood is of the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 5:6; 6:20; 7:15, 17 cf. Ps. 110:4; Gen. 14:18-20). It is superior to the priesthood of Aaron and the Levites (Heb. 7:11, 16, 22; 8:1-6). Christ needed no sacrifice for Himself (Heb. 7:27). He offered up Himself as the perfect sacrifice for His people (Heb. 9:12-14, 25-26; Matt. 20:28). As our high-priest, the risen Christ continues to intercede for His people in heaven (7:25; 9:24). He is able to sympathise with those who are tempted (Heb. 2:18; 4:15).
- 2 In the life of the church, priesthood is concerned with worship, prayer, and the pastoral care of God’s people. Practically, submission to the priesthood of Christ will be shown in the following ways. *First*, the worship services will be in accordance to the Regulative Principle. This is a characteristic of Reformed churches. The Regulative Principle basically states that in the worship of God, whatever is commanded by the word of God must be followed while anything not commanded is to be rejected. The opposing principle was in the past called the Normative Principle, which states that whatever is not forbidden by the word of God may be allowed (or, is permissible). Since the Bible teaches by commands, pre-

cepts, instructions, and examples we have often to establish the “norm” (in contrast with the “exception”) to follow. It is better, therefore, to refer to the opposing principle as the Permissive Principle.

- 3 *Second*, the prayer meeting of the church is important. It is for good reasons that we have “the high-priestly prayer” of our Lord in John 17, which sets an example for the pastoral prayer in a worship service and also for corporate prayer. Church members must not neglect the prayer meetings of the church, just as they should not neglect the two main services on the Lord’s day. (The fourth commandment requires that the day be kept holy, which began with worship and ended with worship. See Exod. 20:8-11 cf. Num. 28:10 cf 4).
- 4 *Third*, pastoral care of the members is part-and-parcel of church life. Different churches place different emphasis on this and carry this out in different ways. Extremes must be avoided – that of heavy shepherding, and that of non-existent shepherding. Most personal problems are resolved when members attend the public meetings regularly to hear God’s word and be in fellowship with others. The principle of “the priesthood of all believers” require that we minister to one another instead of relying totally on the elders of the church to help us in our spiritual life (Exod. 19:6; 1 Pet. 2:9 cf. 1 Cor. 12:26). Mature members should look out for the welfare of weaker members (Matt. 18:6).
- 5 We have seen how the Evangelicals in the 20th century split into three camps after countering Theological Liberalism – the Reformed, the Fundamentalist, and the Neo-Evangelical camps. A fourth camp arose, viz. the Charismatic camp, which became particularly influential from the 1960s. As the 21st century dawned, Postmodernism set in. There is disillusionment with the rationalism of Modernism, and the subjectivism of the Charismatic movement. At about the time of the Charismatic renewal of the 1960s, there was a revival of interest in Reformed theology, so that two strands of influence come into play – Charismatism and Reformed teaching.
- 6 The Neo-Evangelicals have embraced Postmodern characteristics such as the seeker-sensitive approach to evangelism, singing of choruses and gospel songs, and the practise of contemporary worship. Some from the Fundamentalist and the Neo-Evangelical camps have embrace Calvinistic doctrines while others are influenced by Charismatism. The Fundamentalist Calvinists are cessationists while the Neo-Evangelical Calvinists are non-cessationists (or continuationists) who also practise contemporary worship. The Fundamentalist Calvinists would not identify themselves as “Reformed” as they are non-confessional nor hold to Reformed theology. The Neo-Evangelical Calvinists would call themselves “Reformed” when in reality they hold only to Calvinistic soteriology and not to Re-

formed theology, are non-confessional, and practise contemporary worship. They have been called the New Calvinists.

24.2 Implications Of Priesthood

- 1 We have seen that it is possible to have fellowship with Fundamentalist and Neo-Evangelical churches that are Arminian in soteriology, depending on how much of other truths we share in common. It is difficult to have fellowship with Neo-Evangelical churches that have adopted Charismatic beliefs and practices, or are involved in the modern Ecumenical movement. The Ecumenical movement advocates visible, organisational, unity among churches at the expense of truth.
- 2 Apart from doctrine, the issues involved also determine to some extent the interaction we have with others. In relief work during a natural disaster, we co-operate with non-Christians (atheists, Roman Catholics, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, politicians, social-workers, etc.), and we work in fellowship with other Evangelicals. Co-operation is different from fellowship, which involves acknowledging one another as brethren in Christ. For us, interfaith worship is not possible.
- 3 Many churches which are new to the Reformed faith fail to extend the work of reformation to worship. Not only do the special ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper fall under the purview of the priesthood of Jesus Christ, the style of worship does as well. The Regulative Principle of worship must be applied to the types of songs sung, the instruments used, and the overall spirit or mood of the worship created or pursued. Leviticus 10:3 shows that worship must arise from a heart of reverence for God and be concerned for its witness to others. We posit traditional worship consistent with the Regulative Principle, over against contemporary worship.
- 4 There are other churches that fail to emphasise the importance of the corporate prayer meeting. It is not a good idea to combine the church prayer meeting with the weekly Bible Study as each will be weakened by the lack of time. Many churches have succumbed to the influence of Charismatism in practising simultaneous prayer, contrary to the principle of the understanding, and the principle of orderliness, of the Bible (1 Cor. 14:8-9, 12, 16; 14:31, 40).
- 5 Pastoral care should not be narrowly focussed on pastoral visitation, but be extended to the nurture of spiritual maturity in the members. Spiritual maturity is shown not only by growth in knowledge of God's word, but also by prayerfulness and a concern for the welfare of others. Church members must not only grow in spiritual knowledge, but also in involvement in the life of the church.

Submission to Christ's priesthood requires the adoption of biblical worship, a high regard for corporate prayer, and the practice of biblical pastoral oversight.

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24.3 Review Questions

- 1 Which part of the Bible gives detailed teaching on the high-priesthood of Christ?
- 2 As high-priest, what did Christ do, and continues to do, for His people?
- 3 Priesthood is concerned with what three matters in the life of the church?
- 4 What principle governs worship in Reformed churches?
- 5 What are the characteristics of Neo-Evangelical churches that have adopted Postmodernism?
- 6 What are the differences between the Fundamentalist Calvinists and the Neo-Evangelical Calvinists?
- 7 Why are Neo-Evangelical Calvinists not truly Reformed?
- 8 In our interaction with others, what is the difference between co-operation and fellowship?
- 9 Why is simultaneous prayer wrong?
- 10 How must we view pastoral care in the life of the church?

24.4 Assignment/Discussion

The extremes of heavy shepherding and non-existent shepherding are to be avoided. What are the roles of the pastor, the elders and the members in the work of pastoral oversight?

24.5 Memory Passage (Heb. 9:11-15)

¹¹ But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. ¹² Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³ For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit

offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? ¹⁵ And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

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Twenty-five

THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (Heb. 7:1-10)

The principle of “semper reformanda” requires that the church submit to Christ’s kingship.

25.1 Significance Of Christ’s Kingship

- 1 Christ’s kingship is taught in the New Testament (Matt. 2:2, 6; 27:11; Rev. 17:14; 19:16) and alluded to in the Old Testament (Gen. 49:10; 2 Sam. 7:12-16 cf. Matt. 22:41-46; Zech. 9:9 cf. Matt. 21:5). Jesus Christ is a King indeed (Matt. 21:5, 9)! None is like Him. His kingship is inseparable from His priesthood, i.e. He is the priestly King (Heb. 7:1-3 cf. Gen. 49:10; Psalm 110:1-2, 4). Along the same line, His kingship is inseparable from His prophethood, i.e. He is the prophetic King who rules by His word (Matt. 28:18-20; Rev. 1:16; 19:13, 15-16). He has a kingdom that is not of this world (John 18:36; Luke 17:21), does not extend by force (Matt. 26:52; Eph. 6:17), grows imperceptibly (Matt. 13:31-32, 33), and extends to eternity (Dan. 2:44; 7:14; Luke 1:33).
- 2 In the life of the church, kingship is concerned with church discipline, church government, and outreach. Practically, submission to the kingship of Christ will be shown in the following ways. *First*, there will be church discipline practised in the congregation. Christ the King rules His church by His own laws in the Bible. Candidates for baptism will be examined to determine if there is a credible profession of faith. Participants at the Lord’s Table would be informed that it is meant for baptised believers who are not under church discipline in any church. Sins of commission and omission will be dealt with by the three steps of admonition, suspension, and excommunication. The practice of discipline is a

mark of a true church – the other marks being the preaching of the gospel and the right administration of the special ordinances (i.e. baptism and the Lord's Supper). While the church exists to edify one another (Rom. 14:19; 1 Cor. 10:23; Eph. 4:12, 16) and seeks to do all things to God's glory (Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 6:12, 20; 1 Cor. 10:31) discipline must not be neglected (1 Cor. 5:12-13).

- 3 *Second*, there will be a desire to practise the biblical form of church government. If the Bible is the only authority in all matters of faith and practice, the form of church government must be determined from it. While this was an unsettled issue during the Reformation and the Puritan age, it is not to be left unpursued. Human traditions must not be allowed to replace biblical principles. The Bible teaches the autonomy of the local church, the priority of the ministry, the validity of ruling elders, the unity of the eldership, rule by elders, and rule with congregational consent (Heb. 13:7, 17; Acts 15:6, 12, 22; 1 Cor. 5:4-5).
- 4 *Third*, there will be organised outreach by the church (Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 17:21; 1 Cor. 9:5), while spontaneous personal outreach is encouraged (Acts 1:8; 2:47; 4:31; 5:42; 8:4). In the days of old, kings led their armies into battle (2 Sam. 11:1). Today, we do not use literal swords but "the sword of the Spirit" which is the word of God (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12). In the same way, elders should take the lead in opening up preaching points and in the weekly outreach. Local outreach should extend to wider church planting (2 Cor. 10:15-16).
- 5 The Puritan age of the 17th and 18th centuries ended with churches being troubled by Socinianism on the one hand, and Hyper-Calvinism on the other. Socinianism was an earlier form of Theological Liberalism which denied the deity of Christ and adopted a rationalistic approach to Scripture and to faith. Hyper-Calvinism emphasised the sovereignty of God at the expense of human responsibility. Many Presbyterian and General Baptist churches became Unitarian because of the influence of Socinianism. A number of Particular Baptist churches became Hyper-Calvinistic, due to the influence of John Gill and John Brine.¹ John Gill, whose writings strengthened the churches against Socinianism, nevertheless tended towards Hyper-Calvinism. This was taken a step farther by John Brine.
- 6 The Evangelical Revival in the mid 18th century that accompanied the preaching of George Whitefield and the Wesley brothers (John and Charles) was welcomed by many Particular Baptist churches. By the end of the 18th century, leading to the beginning of the 19th century, the Particular Baptists and the New Connexion General Baptists were co-operating

¹ Oliver, R. W., "History of the English Calvinistic Baptists, 1771-1892".

closely in the work of missions. The emphasis on missions was accompanied by a de-emphasis of doctrinal distinctives. The same phenomenon was observed in America. Partly due to the influence of the General Baptists, the Particular Baptists lapsed into the one-pastor-many-deacons form of church government, in which decisions are made by congregational democracy. Among the Presbyterians, there was disagreement over the eldership when the Westminster Assembly met. Controversy over the matter resurfaced in the 19th century but remained unresolved.

25.2 Implications Of Kingship

- 1 Evangelical churches generally do not have problems with church discipline, since it is one of the three marks of a true church. There might have been excess in one direction or another in the exercise of church discipline – either of being too rigid or too lax – but the necessity of upholding church discipline was never questioned. The spirit of Reformation – “semper reformanda” – was lost, however, in so far as church government was concerned. Historically, four systems of church government have come down to us, viz. Episcopacy (or Prelacy), Presbyterianism, Independency, and Congregationalism. For long, Independency was confounded with Congregationalism, leading to confusion. Each church seemed content with the system it had inherited. Newer denominations experimented with different styles of government, but ended up adopting one of these four forms. For example, the Plymouth Brethren, attempt to restore “the simplicity of the New Testament” but ended up practising an elementary form of Independency. The Methodists ended up practising a modified form of Presbyterianism in Wales, while those of the Wesleyan kind practise Episcopacy. “Semper reformanda” is also not seen in local outreach, which is left to individual initiatives, i.e. the practise of spontaneous personal evangelism. If there is organised evangelism, the method of post-modernism is followed, i.e. using the seeker-sensitive approach, the adoption of contemporary worship, having home cell-groups, etc.
- 2 Reformed Presbyterians are stuck where the Westminster divines left them. The issue of the eldership, unresolved at that time, which surfaced again in the 19th century, is no longer a matter of concern for them. So is infant baptism and the synodical system of church courts. The same may be said of Reformed Anglicans and the Dutch Reformed Churches.
- 3 A number of Reformed Baptists have adopted the Absolute Equality view of the eldership and the method of Congregational democracy in decision-making, failing to see that their spiritual forebears, the Particular Baptists of the 17th and 18th centuries, practised clearcut Baptist Independency.² The Absolute Equality view of the eldership (or “Parity View”)

was accompanied, in a number of instances, by the “heavy shepherd-ing” approach of pastoral care which intruded into the legitimate personal space of church members, causing much harm to the individuals concerned. Insufficient attention has been given to the recovery of the biblical principles undergirding outreach and missions. e.g. preaching a distinctive gospel message from any passage of the Bible, going to the same people on a weekly basis, witnessing until the hearers are converted or the preachers unwanted, initiatives in outreach by the elders, etc. (See later.)

Submission to Christ’s kingship requires the adoption of biblical principles in church discipline, church government, and outreach.

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25.3 Review Questions

- 1 How is Christ’s kingship related to His other offices?
- 2 State four characteristics of Christ’s kingdom.
- 3 In the life of the church, what areas come under the kingship of Christ?
- 4 What are the three steps of church discipline?
- 5 State six principles of church government.
- 6 How should the local church carry out outreach?
- 7 What are the characteristics of Socinianism and Hyper-Calvinism?
- 8 How did close interaction over missions with the General Baptists affect church government among the Particular Baptists?
- 9 Among Evangelical churches, what areas need reformation?
- 10 What harmful view of eldership has been adopted by some Reformed Baptist churches?

25.4 Assignment/Discussion

Compared to church discipline and the form of church government, outreach is talked about most. Does this mean that the outreach carried out by most churches are biblical? As with worship, the general opinion seems to be that outreach is left to personal initiative, taste, and ingenuity. Comment.

¹Poh, B. S., “A Garden Enclosed”.

25.5 Memory Passage (Rev. 19:11-16)

¹¹ Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. ¹³ He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. ¹⁵ Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. ¹⁶ And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

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Twenty-six

CHRIST'S TEACHING MINISTRY

(Matt. 4:12-25)

The principle of “semper reformanda” requires that the church imitate the all-round ministry of Christ, beginning with the teaching ministry.

26.1 Significance Of Christ's Teaching Ministry

- 1 The apostle Paul played a special role in setting the pattern of church life in the New Testament age. He was an apostle “born out of due time” (1 Cor. 15:8 cf. 1:1; 9:1-2). The marks of an apostle was seen in him (2 Cor. 12:12), and he was accepted as an apostle by the other apostles (Gal. 2:7-9). Paul's writings were regarded as Scriptures (2 Pet. 3:1-2, 14-16). The things written by Paul are commandments of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37). When Paul says, “Imitate me” (11:1), what does he mean? Three areas are discernable: (i) In personal life, i.e. sanctification (Phil 2:2-8; 3:17 “imitators” as in 1 Cor 11:1); (ii) in church life (14:33 cf. 7:17); and (iii) in service (Phil 3:10 cf. Col 1:29; Phil 3:12-14, 16).
- 2 Important hermeneutical principles to keep in mind when “imitating Paul”.
 - i Commands given to apostles are meant for the churches, unless it can be shown that those commands are specifically for the apostles, or unique for the time and circumstances. Examples: Matt. 18:15-17; 28:18-20; 1 Cor. 11:23ff.
 - ii Apostolic examples “hath the force of a divine institution” (Owen 16:197). We are not to imitate the example in a mechanical, literal fashion. Instead, we are to determine the principle involved. Once the principle is determined, we are to strive to apply that principle,

- i.e. to make effort to achieve the ideal. Some principles to strive for are: (i) support of full-time preachers (1 Cor. 9:5; 1 Tim. 5:17 cf. Acts 18:3; 20:33-35; 2 Thess. 3:7-9); (ii) rule by elders in the church (Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 3:1ff.); and (iii) orderly worship in the church (1 Cor. 14:27, 31, 40 cf. 7:17; 14:33).
- iii The *norm* is to be distinguished from the *exception*. Allowance must be made for the transition between the Old Testament age and the New Testament age. The Scriptures were given gradually and cumulatively. The relationship between the two Testaments has been well-stated as, "The New Testament teachings are in the Old concealed, the Old Testament teachings are by the New revealed." Examples of transitional practices include: (i) the appointment of Matthias to replace Judas (Acts 1:23-26 cf. Rev. 21:12-14); (ii) the determination of God's will by the casting of lots (Acts 1:26); and (iii) the sign gifts to mark the beginning of the New Testament age (Acts 2:17; Heb. 2:4; 2 Cor. 12:12).
- 3 Apart from submission to Christ's three offices, the principle of "semper reformanda" requires that we imitate the Lord in His ministry in relation to the world. Reformation must be extended from within the church to the church's relation to the world. These points may be noted:
- i Paul's ministry was modelled after the Lord's and in accordance to the Lord's commands: in carrying out the Great Commission, in evangelism, in training preachers, in good works, in baptism and the Lord's Supper, etc.
- ii Matthew's Gospel was "prepared for converts from Judaism".¹ Paul was one such convert. It seems certain that he had learned of the Lord's ministry from Matthew's Gospel, apart from receiving direct revelation from the Lord. Matthew's Gospel was written before the destruction of the temple in AD 70, probably in AD 50.
- iii Written for Jewish converts, Matthew's Gospel attempts to show that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies as the King and Messiah of Israel. The birth of Christ is described in Chapters 1 and 2. The ministry of John the Baptists is given in Chapter 3. The beginning of Jesus's ministry is described in Chapter 4, in two parts. First, there is the private, personal, preparation for ministry, in His temptation (vv. 1-11). Second, there is the inauguration of His public ministry, after John the Baptist was imprisoned (vv. 12-25). It is important for us to understand the character of Jesus's ministry and its relevance to us today.

¹Origen (c. AD 185-254), "Ecclesiastical History", 6:25. Quoted in the MacArthur Study Bible.

26.2 Character And Relevance Of The Teaching Ministry

1 *Christ's ministry had a definite beginning (12-16):*

- i The Lord had begun preaching (cf. Luke 4:23). Andrew and Peter, formerly followers of John the Baptist, had followed Christ for a time before returning to fishing at Capernaum (John 1:40-42).
- ii The public ministry of the Lord officially began after John was imprisoned (v. 12), for rebuking Herod Antipas for his sin (14:3-4). The Lord moved to Capernaum after the people of Nazareth tried to murder Him (Luke 4:16-30).
- iii The call to the gospel ministry follows the same pattern. There is the private and personal preparation of the man, through various trials and temptations. There are also the experience of preaching and the providences in life before one becomes certain of God's calling. How we must pray for men who are truly called to ministry!

2 *Christ's ministry had a definite theme and task (17-22):*

- i The Lord's ministry has a definite theme, viz. the need for repentance before one could enter kingdom of God (v. 17). This is exactly the same as that of John's (Chap. 3:2). This is not surprising, as John was His herald or messenger.
- ii Four of the twelve disciples were called at this time, viz. Peter and Andrew, and James and John. All of them were fishermen, all of them left all to follow Him, all of them became "fishers of men".
- iii The theme of repentance to enter God's kingdom involves the winning of souls to Christ (cf. Luke 5:32). The continuing task of the church until Christ's return is encapsulated in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20). We learn from this never to lose sight of the Great Commission. "No vision, no missions!"

3 *Christ's ministry had a definite method (23-25):*

- i It was an all-round ministry, consisting of three activities, viz. teaching, preaching the gospel, and doing works of compassion. Matthew 4:23 is a key verse – "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people." This is repeated in Matthew 9:35 when the Lord was at the peak of His ministry – "Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people." The miraculous gift of healing has been withdrawn, but good works continue to be expected from the disciples of Christ (Tit 3:8, 14). Here, we focus on the teaching ministry.

- ii Three factors distinguish the acts of preaching from teaching (cf. Matt. 11:1): the mode of delivery, the audience, and the purpose to be accomplished. Teaching ("didasko") imparts doctrine, to a homogeneous group, to dispel ignorance. Preaching ("kerusso") authoritatively proclaims God's will, to a mix audience, to change lives.
- iii There is considerable overlap between teaching and preaching, but it is helpful to keep clear the distinction between them. "Teaching" is also a general term that covers all modes of imparting knowledge by words, e.g. 1 Timothy 3:2; 4:11; 6:3; 1 Corinthians 12:28-29; James 3:1. This is the sense of the word when used with respect to Christ's overall ministry. A key passage is Ephesians 4:11-16, which shows that the teaching of God's word to build up the faith of believers is an important aspect of the church's ministry.²
- iv Apart from building up the faith of church members, there must be the training of preachers. The Lord trained disciples before sending them forth to preach (Luke 9:1; 10:1). Paul trained up Timothy, Titus, Silas, Luke, and others (Acts 20:4-6). A key passage is 2 Timothy 2:2, which shows that churches are to work in co-operation in the training of preachers. Note that Ephesus was likely the "mother" of all the Asian churches.
- v We learn from this that a seminary or college to train preachers may be started when there are model churches in existence. The trainers are experienced pastors. The students are members of the churches. In all this, the primacy of the word of God must be upheld.

An all-round ministry requires the building up of the faith of believers while engaging in gospel preaching and good works.

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26.3 Review Questions

- 1 Paul imitated Christ not only in personal life but also in what other areas?
- 2 State the three hermeneutical principles that must be kept in mind when "imitating Paul".

²Owen, J., on Eph. 4:8-13, "The thing aimed at is, the bringing of all the saints and disciples of Christ, the whole church, to that measure and perfection of grace which Christ hath assigned to them in this world, that they may be meet for himself to receive in glory. The means whereby this is to be done and effected is, the faithful, regular, and effectual discharge of the work of the ministry; unto which the administration of all his ordinances and institutions doth confessedly belong." (Works 15:11) "...the edification of them that are converted unto God and do believe. Herein consists that feeding of his sheep and lambs that the Lord Christ hath committed into them; and it is mentioned as the principal end for which the ministry was ordained, or for which pastors and teachers are granted unto the church, Eph. iv. 8-13." (Works 15:116).

- 3 Apart from submission to Christ's three offices, what does the principle of "semper reformanda" require of us?
- 4 Which Gospel was most likely read by the apostle Paul?
- 5 What may we learn from the Lord about the call to the gospel ministry?
- 6 What was the theme of the Lord's ministry?
- 7 In the all-round ministry of the Lord, what three activities are involved?
- 8 What are the three factors that distinguish the act of preaching from the act of teaching?
- 9 Which key passage shows the importance of building up the faith of believers in the church?
- 10 Which key passage shows that full-time preachers must be trained up?

26.4 Assignment/Discussion

An all-round ministry requires teaching believers while engaging in gospel preaching and good works. What are the likely consequences of an unbalanced ministry?

26.5 Memory Passage (Eph. 4:11-16)

¹¹ And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

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Twenty-seven

CHRIST'S GOSPEL MINISTRY (Matt. 9:35-38)

The ministry of the church must extend from teaching believers to the winning of souls.

27.1 Significance Of Christ's Gospel Ministry

1 The Reformation of the 16th century recovered not only important biblical truths, but also the zeal for missions. This is seen in John Calvin's attempt to evangelise Europe, including a failed mission to Brazil.¹

i In the 18th century, the Moravians were exceptionally zealous in sending out missionaries to foreign lands. "This was the first time in the history of Protestant Europe that a congregation of orthodox Christians had deliberately resolved to take the gospel to the heathens (J. E. Hutton).²"

ii The Particular Baptists were also extremely missions-minded. Preachers were sent out to plant churches throughout Britain in the 17th century. Following the Great Awakening from the 1730s, under the ministries of George Whitefield and John Wesley, the first Particular Baptist missionary society was formed in 1792 which sent out William Carey (1761-1834) and his friends to India. Due to his 87-page book, "An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens" published in 1792, and his subsequent extensive labour in India, Carey has been called "the Father of Modern Missions". Following that, many missionary organisations were started on both sides of the Atlantic, including the one that sent Hudson Taylor to China and another which sent Adoniram Judson to Burma.

- iii Sadly, as the Evangelicals focussed on missions in the 19th century, doctrinal distinctives were sidelined. By the 20th century, the modern Church Growth Movement was making its voice heard, which advocated the use of a scientific approach and the adoption of business marketing strategies in evangelism and missions, e.g. contextualisation, being success oriented, the seeker-sensitive approach, chronological preparationism, etc.
- 2 Our aim is to recover the biblical approach to missions. The apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:1, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ". Paul plays a special role in setting the pattern of church life in the New Testament age (Gal. 1:15-16; 2:7; 2 Tim. 3:10). Three aspects of Paul's ministry need to be noted: (i) his understanding of the Great Commission; (ii) the relationship between local church growth and wider church planting; (iii) the training of preachers.
- 3 The principle of "semper reformanda" requires that we follow the pattern set by the Lord of an all-round ministry, which included teaching, preaching the gospel, and good works. These are included in the Great Commission. We note the following about preaching the gospel:
 - i In any gathering of God's people to hear God's word, we expect some non-believers to be present (Acts 2:38-39; 1 Cor. 14:23, 24). Believers must be built up in the faith, at the same time that the gospel is preached to win souls within the church.
 - ii Acts 2:39 shows that there are the temporal and spatial dimensions to gospel preaching. The gospel must be preached to those outside the church, and to those of the future generations.
 - iii The gospel, to be distinguished from "the whole counsel of God" (1 Cor. 2:2; Acts 20:20-21 cf. v. 27), is to be preached to win souls to Christ from any passage of Scripture (Luke 24:44-47). A good grasp of Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology will help the preacher to identify which constitute a "passage" to use in gospel preaching.

27.2 Character And Relevance of Christ's Gospel Ministry

- 1 *It was an extension of the teaching ministry (Matt. 9:35).* Comparing Matt. 9:35 with 4:23, we realise that the Lord had kept to the same pattern of ministry from the beginning.
 - i The theme of His ministry must not be over-looked, viz. the necessity of repentance, in order to enter the kingdom of heaven (4:17 cf. 3:2). The membership of Christ's church consists of those who have been

¹Haykin, M., "John Calvin on Missions".

²Hutton, J. E., p. 182.

born again of the Spirit, shown by repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ. Teaching in the church includes the preaching of the gospel. The pattern of beginning the Lord's day with worship and ending the Lord's day with worship is a time-honoured one. It is also biblical (cf. Num. 28:1-10; Acts 3:1; 10:9; 20:7ff.). There still exist churches whose historical beginnings stretch to the time of the Puritans and the Reformation. Unlike modern churches, these have a history of having two main services on the Lord's day. Having two services on the Lord's day allows for one service to be dedicated to teaching the believers, while the other to winning souls to Christ. The church members attend both services, which are intended to start and end the Lord's day with worship.

- ii Not all in the church will be engaged in direct gospel work, but all have a role to play. The apostles were not only to pray for others to be sent forth, but to offer themselves to be sent forth (cf. Isa. 6:8). We are to be "salt of the earth" and "light of the world" (Matt. 5:13-16). We are also to be fishers of men (Matt 4:19). Each believer has been given gifts for the edification of the church (1 Cor. 12:27-31; 14:26; Heb. 5:12). Each has been baptised in the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:31; Gal. 3:2; Rom. 8:9). Opportunities for gospel work abound (Matt. 9:37). We must pray for the filling of the Spirit, to enable us to be used in the work of the Great Commission (Acts 4:31; Rom. 8:11; Col. 1:29).

2 *It was a soul-winning ministry (Matt. 9:36).*

- i Preachers must travel regularly, and in a planned manner, to win souls. In Mark 6:6, travelling in a circuit implies a route that is planned and repeated (cf. Luke 9:51-52; 1 Cor. 9:5). Gospel preaching should not be confined to within the church. The gospel is to be brought to those outside the church. The leading teacher of the church is to be sent (cf. Acts 13:1-3). The extraordinary offices of apostle, prophet and evangelist have been withdrawn. They were given for the founding of the New Testament church. The ordinary office of pastor-teacher remains (Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 5:17). The work of evangelists is subsumed under responsibility of the pastor (2 Tim. 4:5). Today's "missionaries" perform the function of evangelists but do not possess the office (Rom. 10:14-15). Many Reformed preachers today do not place emphasis on systematic outreach and church-planting because their idea of ministry have been influenced by Richard Baxter's book "The Reformed Pastor", and Charles Bridges's book "The Christian Ministry". Both writers were Anglicans, who believed in the territorial concept of the church.³
- ii Local church growth must go hand-in-hand with wider church planting (2 Cor. 10:15). The Great Commission is about local churches planting other local churches. It is a command given to the apostles

and meant for the local churches (cf. Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 11:23). Outreach and evangelism must be planned, not left to providence. Beware of practical Hyper-Calvinism! What about the method? Gospel preaching is to be carried out publicly and from house to house (Acts 20:20). Normally, elders must take the initiative to start preaching points. The same households or groups are to be visited regularly, until souls are converted or the preachers unwanted (Matt. 28:19; Acts 18:4-8).

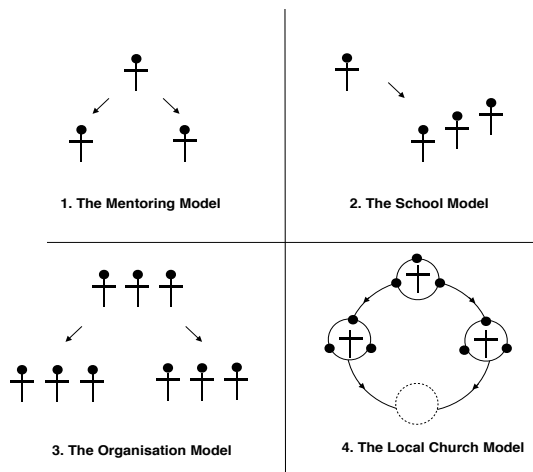
3 *It was a soul-winners' ministry (Matt. 9:37-38).*

i The training of preachers is essential. It is part-and-parcel of the Great Commission. The Lord trained up the twelve and the seventy (Luke 9:1; 10:1). Paul trained up Timothy, Titus, Silas, and others (Acts 20:4-6). Timothy was asked to train up other teachers (2 Tim. 2:2). The context shows that this is a reference to full-time preachers. Timothy was an apostolic representative, setting an apostolic example (Phil. 3:17). This "hath the force of a divine institution" (John Owen).⁴ Not all preachers are equipped to train other preachers on a formal basis. Not all churches are called upon to train preachers. Ephesus was the "mother" of the churches in Asia. The training of preachers was done in concert with the other churches.

ii A church-based, personal, approach to training is taught (cf. Matt. 18:19; 28:18-20). The principle of accompaniment in training is seen (Mark 6:1, 6; Acts 20:4-6). Doctrine and practical experience are given equal emphasis (Acts 20:20-21, 27; Luke 9:1ff; 10:1ff.) The advent of the internet has enhanced the possibility of the sharing of resources and distance learning, but it should not be allowed to replace the personal interaction of localised training. Today, four basic models of missions are seen: the Mentoring Model, the School Model, the Organisation Model, and the Local Church Model.

We believe the last is biblical – local churches coming together to train preachers. Ill-trained missionaries often have to learn the hard way, and may cause long-lasting harm in the mission field. Examples include ignorance of past doctrinal controversies, want of social skills, the adoption of questionable church-growth ideas such as contextualisation and chronological preparationism,⁵ etc.

³Contrast this with the view of the Nonconformists: "When, therefore, there are great opportunities and providential calls for the preaching of the gospel unto the conversion of souls, and, the harvest being great, there are not labourers sufficient for it, it is lawful, yea, it is the duty of pastors of particular churches to leave their constant attendance on their pastoral charge in those churches, at least for a season, to apply themselves unto the more public preaching of the word unto the conversion of the souls of men." (Owen, J., Vol. 16, p. 85.) "Two peculiarities distinguish the Baptist history of the seventeenth century. It was the age of public disputation; and ministers devoted a large amount of time to evangelistic work." (Angus, J., 1895, pp. 183-190.)



A church without a vision for missions will stagnate and die.

* * * * *

27.3 Review Questions

- 1 What is the special role of Paul in the New Testament age?
- 2 What three things should be noted about Paul's gospel ministry?
- 3 What do the temporal and spatial dimensions of Acts 2:39 mean in practice?
- 4 What is the advantage of having two services on the Lord's day?
- 5 Under "an extension of the teaching ministry" what two main points are made about teaching in the church?
- 6 Under "a soul-winning ministry", what two main points are made about the effort to win souls?
- 7 Under "a soul-winners' ministry" what two main points are made about the training of preachers?

⁴Owen, J., Vol. 16, p. 197.

⁵The idea that the history of salvation must be taught, often stretching over months and even years, before the presentation of the gospel of "Jesus Christ crucified".

- 8 What four basic models of missions are seen today?
- 9 What are some examples of questionable approaches to missions?
- 10 What conclusion may we make about a church that is without a vision for missions?

27.4 Assignment/Discussion

Comment on the following: (i) "The same groups are to be visited regularly until souls are converted, or the preachers are unwanted;" (ii) "Local church growth must go hand-in-hand with wider church-planting."

27.5 Memory Passage (Acts 2:38-39)

³⁸ Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

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Twenty-eight

CHRIST'S COMPASSIONATE MINISTRY (Tit. 3:1-14)

The teaching and gospel ministries of the church must be accompanied by the ministry of compassion (or good works), and not replaced or overshadowed by it.

28.1 Significance Of Christ's Compassionate Ministry

- 1 Under the kingship of Christ, we saw how a recovery of mission-mindedness followed the Great Awakening under George Whitefield and the Wesley brothers.
 - i The Particular Baptists co-operated with the General Baptists of the New Connexion in missions but, sadly, this was accompanied by a de-emphasis on the doctrinal distinctives. The same situation was observed among the other denominations.
 - ii The pursuit of inter-denominational co-operation in missions was accompanied by the condemnation of denominational rivalry and religious bigotry "which frequently appears under the guise of a zeal for truth".¹ History showed that the pendulum had swung too far the other way. Theological Liberalism appeared in the late 19th century, spread, and grew to a head in the early 20th century. This, as we have seen, was met head-on by the conservative Evangelicals, who then split into three main camps – the Fundamentalists, the Reformed, and the Neo-Evangelicals. A fourth grouping, viz. Charismaticism, arose, consisting of the Pentecostal movement of the early 1900s and the Charismatic renewal movement of the 1960s.

¹Brown, R., p. 140.

- iii Along with a recovery of mission-mindedness following the Great Awakening was a recovery of “good works”.
- 2 Consider the rise of compassionate ministries among the Evangelicals:
- i John Newton (1725-1807), an Anglican minister and former slave shipmaster spoke out against slave trading. He had an influence upon many young Evangelical Christians, especially William Wilberforce (1759-1833) who fought for the abolition of slavery in Parliament. In America, slavery was finally abolished in 1865.
 - ii At the same time, various medical, moral and educational charities were formed, including the Sunday School movement. Co-operation in these works led to denominational barriers crumbling down, and distinctive doctrinal convictions melting away. This was the age of Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) winning souls to Christ in London, George Müller (1805-1898) and his orphanage in Bristol, Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) and the evangelisation of China. These benevolent works were an extension of those of John Newton and William Wilberforce in Britain, William Carey (1761-1834) in India, and Adoniram Judson (1788-1850) in Burma.
 - iii After the confrontation between Theological Liberalism and Conservative Christianity in the early 20th century, the Neo-Evangelicals were on the forefront of carrying on the work of missions and social action. Some joined the ranks of the Roman Catholics in Latin America in propagating Liberation Theology which support the oppressed and emphasise class struggles. Others promulgate the modern church growth ideas of Donald McGavran and Peter Wagner that repudiate social action while advocating social and marketing strategies to gain numerical success. Others advocate the social action of Ron Sider and John Stott which have cause consternation in some quarters.
 - iv By the end of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century, the Missional Church Movement has taken over in which the earlier ideas of contextualisation and inculturation are combined with the postmodern ideas embracing the seeker-sensitive approach to reach out to the unreached. The New Calvinists like Tim Keller and John Piper are among the chief advocates.
- 3 What of the Fundamentalist and Reformed camps on missions and social action?
- i We have noted that, after the confrontation between the Conservatives and the Liberals, there were some readjustment and realignment of individuals in the four camps – the Fundamentalist, Reformed, Neo-Evangelical, and Charismatic camps. There have been Charismatics who adopted Reformed theology (often, only the Five

Points of Calvinism) and Reformed men who adopted Charismatic ideas. The same may be said of the other groups.

- ii Among the Fundamentalists who have adopted Reformed theology, there have been those who advocated Theonomy, which is basically the attempt to christianise politics, economics, and the other institutions in society. The impact of Theonomy (or Reconstructionism) has been minimal – confined largely to the realm of the theoretical.
- iii Traditionally, Evangelical churches – including the Fundamentalist and Reformed – have actively engaged in missions and social concerns. It remains to work out a biblical basis for the relationship between the two areas of concern. Newer Reformed churches struggle over the relationship of good works to missions and evangelism.

28.2 Character And Relevance Of Christ's Compassionate Ministry

1 *Good works are the fruit, not the cause, of saving faith.*

- i Justification is by faith alone, but the faith that saves will result in works of piety and mercy (Rom. 3:30; 5:1; Gal. 2:16; James 2:20). Such “good works” are acts of devotion to God or compassion for man, arising from faith in Christ. (See Matt. 23:23.) Our focus here is on works of compassion. Good works are commanded by God (Mic. 6:8; Matt. 25:38-40; Luke 10:25-37) and expected from all true believers (Eph. 2:8-10; Tit. 3:8, 14; James 2:20).
- ii Just as the church should organise outreach, so also it should organise good works (Matt. 4:23; 9:35). Since good works are to accompany teaching and preaching the gospel, there is ample scope for such works, e.g. outreach to prisoners, old folks' homes, hospitals, free tuition to the poor, etc. While the word is to be taught regularly, good works may be done as and when needed (cf. Acts 18:4; Mark 6:5; Matt. 11:1).
- iii Natural disasters, which often occur, provide opportunities for good works. The danger is to be diverted away from the primary work of teaching and preaching the gospel.

2 *The primacy of the word must be preserved in the life of the church.*

- i The Great Commission is about planting churches, not doing good works. Good works, however, are not excluded. A church should not be known solely for its social work, but for upholding and propagating the truth (cf. Phil. 2:14-16). On the other hand, a church without good works has failed to understand Great Commission (Matt. 5:13, 14, 16). Good works should accompany, not overshadow or replace, the word of God (Matt. 5:16; 6:3.)

- ii Knowing our limitations is important (Gal. 6:10; Matt. 26:11). We want to minimise the possibility of producing “rice Christians”, i.e. those who profess faith to gain material things from the church. We look for genuine conversion, wrought by the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:14), by the hearing of the gospel (Rom. 10:17),

3 *The apostle Paul showed that good works must continue in the churches.*

- i The apostle Paul personally engaged in good works (Gal. 2:10; Acts 11:27-30; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:1, 5). His teaching is that corporately, the church is to give (Gal. 6:10; Acts 6:1-4; 11:27-30. Also Rom. 15:26; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:1, 5). Individually, we are to give. It is more blessed to give than to receive. C. H. Spurgeon said, “Brethren, I do not think much of a conversion where it does not touch a man’s substance; and those people who pretend to be Christ’s people, and yet live only for themselves, and do nothing for him or for his Church, give but sorry evidence of having been born again.”²
- ii The indispensability of good works, not just financial giving, is to be noted. True faith shows itself good works (James 2:17-18; Tit 3:8, 14). Good works adorn the gospel (Matt 5:16). However, the church does not trumpet its good works. Instead, the word of God is to be propagated with zeal and compassion.

The church should be known more as a centre of truth rather than of social work, although plentiful good works are to be done quietly, in conjunction with the preached word.

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28.3 Review Questions

- 1 What was recovered after the Great Awakening, and what was de-emphasised?
- 2 What else was recovered following the Great Awakening?
- 3 After the confrontation with Theological Liberalism, who were at the forefront of missions and social action?
- 4 Describe the Missional Church Movement.
- 5 Who were the people advocating Theonomy?
- 6 What is the relationship between good works and saving faith?
- 7 How should good works be done by the church?

²Spurgeon, C. H., Sermon on Acts 16:13, 14, “Lessons From Lydia’s Conversion”.

- 8 What must be preserved in the life of the church?
- 9 What is the relationship between good works and the word of God?
- 10 State the conclusion of this study.

28.4 Assignment/Discussion

C. H. Spurgeon wrote, “A man who is perfect before the Lord lays out his substance for God’s cause, depend on that.” Giving of our substance is doing good works. It may not be good works in some situations (cf. Mark 12:41-44). Comment.

28.5 Memory Passage (Micah 6:8)

He has shown you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justly,
To love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God?

* * * * *

Twenty-nine

THOROUGHGOING REFORMATION! (Rev. 1:4-20)

The churches of Jesus Christ must continue to be reformed (“semper reformanda”) according to the word of God, and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Intelligent effort is needed, faithfulness to the word of God must be aimed at, and there must be dependence on the Holy Spirit to work in, and through, us (cf. Col 1:29).

29.1 A Review Of “Semper Reformanda”

1 *Overview of the progress of truth:*

- i God’s revelation was known to Adam and passed down to his children. With time, the truth became diluted. God called Abraham and the truth was passed down to his descendants.
- ii Again, truth was diluted, this time within the nation of Israel. The coming of the promised Saviour brought truth to a focus in the world.
- iii As the gospel spread in the world, the truth became diluted till the Reformation took place. As Reformation truth spread, it became diluted until the Evangelical-Liberal Clash (or the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy) took place in the early 20th century. Since then, the process of sharpening the focus of truth is not yet complete.
- iv This broad overview of the progress of truth shows that there was ebb and flow as the truth advanced. It seems obvious that after Pentecost, the most significant event in church history was the Reformation of the 16th century. Following that, and on a smaller but nevertheless significant scale, was the Evangelical Realignment following the Evangelical-Liberal Clash of 1910-1930.

2 *The Reformation, and sample personalities:*

- i Dawn of the Reformation (14th and 15th centuries): The Lollards, the Hussites, and the Anabaptists were preaching the gospel despite widespread superstition and persecution from the Roman Catholic Church.
- ii The Reformation (16th century): It began with Martin Luther (1483-1546) nailing the “Ninety-five Theses” to the doors of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. John Calvin (1509-64) systematised the teaching of the Reformation. John Knox (c. 1514-72) brought the Reformation to Scotland.
- iii The Separatist Movement (mid-16th to mid-17th centuries): John Robinson (1575-1625) who migrated to the Netherlands, William Bradford (1590-1657) who sailed to Massachusetts agitated for thorough-going Reformation.
- iv Puritanism in Britain (mid-17th to mid-18th centuries): The Puritans have been called the second-generation Reformers. There were Richard Sibbes (1577-1635), John Owen (1616-83), Hanserd Knollys (c. 1599-1691), and John Bunyan (1628-88) in England; Samuel Rutherford (c. 1600-61) in Scotland; and John Cotton (1584-1652) in America. This period corresponds to the “Dutch Second Reformation” or Nadere Reformatie (“Another Reformation”) in the Netherlands.
- v Revival and Missions (mid-18th to end of 19th centuries): Revival preachers included George Whitefield (1714-70) and John Wesley (1703-91) in Britain, and Jonathan Edwards (1703-58) in America. Missionaries included William Carey (1761-1834) in India, Adoniram Judson (1788-1850) in Burma, Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) in China.

3 *Evangelical Realignment, and sample personalities:*

- i The Evangelical-Liberal Clash (early 20th century): This is often referred to as the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy. As noted already, those who stood against the Liberals are better referred to as Evangelicals. They contended with the Liberals from 1910 to 1930, after which the Evangelicals broke into three camps, viz. (i) the Fundamentalist camp, which included men like Carl McIntyre (1906-2002), Bob Jones Sr. (1883-1968), and Bob Jones Jr. (1911-1997); (ii) the Reformed camp, which included J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937), B.B. Warfield (1851-1921), James Orr (1844-1913), Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981); and (iii) the Neo-Evangelical camp, which included Harold J. Ockenga (1905-1985), Carl F. Henry (1913-2003), and Billy Graham (b. 1918). At that time, the Charismatic movement arose in the guise of Pentecostalism, which merged with

the Charismatic renewal of the 1960s. The personalities of the movement include David du Plessis (1905-1987), John Wimber (1934-1997), and G. E. Patterson (1939-2007) in the United States of America, David C. K. Watson (1933-1984), and Michael C. Harper (1931-2010) in the United Kingdom, and Paul (later changed to David) Cho Yonggi (b. 1936) in South Korea.

- ii The Reformed and Charismatic movements (mid-20th century): From the 1960's there was a revival of interest in Reformed theology, at the same time that there was a Charismatic renewal. The two streams have become unwitting contenders in the bid for attention in Christian circles. Cross-overs take place across-the-board, leading to heterodoxy in many cases. John R. W. Stott (1921-2011) was an Anglican Reformed writer who turned Neo-Evangelical by advocating social actions and teaching annihilationism¹. There were Reformed men who attempted to incorporate Charismatic teachings to Reformed theology, calling themselves “Reformed Charismatics”. In recent days, there have been Charismatics who adopt Calvinistic teaching, the outreach methods and spirit of Postmodernism, and who eschew traditional classifications such as Evangelical, Conservative, and Liberal – preferring to be all inclusive while expressing disillusionment with organised Christianity. Many of them rely on Wayne Grudem’s “Systematic Theology”, which seemed tailored to strengthen their otherwise weak doctrinal base.² These are all characteristics of the so-called Emerging Church Movement. Some of them have called themselves Reformed, when they are better described as New Calvinists.
- iii The Reformed movement today: We acknowledge the right of others to hold to their views. Our disagreement with them does not call into question their faith or sincerity. We posit the Reformed faith as the system of theology closest to the Bible’s teaching. We have noted that “the Lord hath more truth yet to break forth out of His Holy word (John Robinson)”. The way forward is not to create an amalgamation of Reformed teaching with other systems, or to accommodate Reformed theology to the Charismatic, or other, movements. The sure foundation that has been established should be built upon by turning “to the law and to the testimony (Isa. 8:20)”. Do we not believe in “sola scriptura”? Does not the Spirit of God speak to His people via the word? Are not all true spiritual experiences those prompted and regulated by the word of God? We would humbly call upon brethren from other streams to consider adopting the Reformed faith – in both

¹The belief that the soul gradually ceases to exist in hell.

²It is to be noted that another Anglican Reformed writer, J. I. Packer, had proposed in the Anglican Journal “Churchman” in 1980 how the Charismatics could strengthen their weak theology. His book, “Keep In Step With The Spirit”, approves of much that is seen among the Charismatics.

its theology and practice. Afterall, truth is not the monopoly of any particular group of people.

4 *Characteristics of the various movements today:*

- i Liberal – Modernist in outlook, rejecting accepted ideas, the miracles and supernatural events of the Bible. The Bible is not infallible (incapable of error) and inerrant (without errors).
- ii Evangelical – Conservative in outlook. There is belief in the sole authority of Scripture, the gospel of “justification by faith”, and the imperative of evangelism.
- iii Fundamentalist – Tendency to be over-literal in Bible interpretation, practises aggressive separation, holds tenaciously to dispensational premillennialism, cessationist, and lacks patience with those who do not hold to the King James Version of the Bible.
- iv Reformed – Adheres to the Five Sola’s of the Reformation, the Five Points of Calvinism, covenant theology, cessationism. Confessional, upholds the primacy of preaching, and the Regulative Principle of worship.
- v Neo-Evangelical – Tendency to be ecumenical-minded, emphasises social concerns, non-cessationist. Open to contemporary worship, church-growth approach to missions, and Postmodernist in outlook (seeker-sensitive, progressing with the times, etc.).
- vi Charismatic – Historically, not Evangelical. In spirit and doctrine, not Conservative. Instead, Postmodernist in outlook. Emphasises subjective experiences at the expense of propositional truths. Non-cessationist, practises contemporary worship.

29.2 The Way Ahead

Our focus here is upon Reformed praxis which, of course, is based on Reformed theology.

1 *The need of reformation in church and ministry:*

- i Those who hold to the Five Points of Calvinism are Calvinistic in soteriology, and do not deserve to be considered Reformed.
- ii Those who hold to the Five Points of Calvinism and the Five Sola’s of the Reformation are Reformed in theology, but not necessarily in practice.
- iii Those who are Reformed, i.e. possessing all the Reformed characteristics mentioned above, should have the spirit of the Reformation, “semper reformanda”. That means desiring to reform the church from within and in relation to the world, i.e. submitting to the three offices of Christ, and practising the all-round ministry of Christ.

- iv It is not good enough to define our church by negative statements such as “We are not Charismatic”, “We do not believe in the continuation of the sign gifts”, “We are not ecumenical”, etc. Are we able to state positively that “We uphold the Reformed faith in theory and practice”, “We practise organised outreach”, “We believe that local church growth should go hand-in-hand with wider church-planting”, “We are a confessional church”, etc.?

2 The need to train gospel workers:

- i The pattern set by Christ and the apostle Paul, and the normative pattern for the New Testament (2 Tim. 2:2) must be noted and followed. The formal training of preachers, missionaries, and gospel workers need to be undertaken by groupings of like-minded churches. The sharing of resources between seminaries/colleges and the wider use of modern technology may be undertaken without undermining the biblical principles of church-based training involving personal interaction, hands-on practice, and spiritual growth.
- ii We do not want gospel work to suffer the *Plateau Effect* (the *Law of Diminishing Returns*, “the gain is not worth the pain”), just as we do not want the church to be affected by the *Pareto Principle* (where 80% of the work is done by 20% of the members). We walk by faith, at the same time believing that God honours the use of means. It is imperative to train up preachers of the gospel to avoid these two tendencies. Put in biblical terms, we want ours to be growing and working churches, churches that remain vibrant and united, to “grow up in all things, into Him who is the head – Christ – from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love (Eph. 4:15-16)”.

3 The need to encourage regulated church-planting:

- i Apart from initiating church planting by our own church, the right people burdened with desire to start faithful churches will be providentially reached by information disseminated through print and the digital media. The New Testament teaches the centrality and uniqueness of the local church in God’s purposes. Parachurch organisations are not countenanced.
- ii Resources should be made available for studies in Reformed doctrine and practice. Procedures to plant and establish Reformed churches should be made available.
- iii Reformed churches should be prepared mentally and practically to supervise the planting of new churches and the reformation of exist-

ing ones, until such time as the new churches are able to stand on their own.

We are Reformed Baptist in doctrine, practice, and spirit. We consider ourselves the spiritual descendants of the Particular Baptists of the 17th century. However, our love for Zion is such that we desire to see other Reformed churches prosper, and other Evangelical churches drawn to closer conformity with the truth of Scripture.

* * * * *

29.3 Review Questions

- 1 What three ingredients, stated in the introduction, are needed for churches to continue being reformed?
- 2 What may be observed in the advance of truth through the ages?
- 3 Name the groups of people who were preaching the gospel just before the Reformation.
- 4 List down the movements that arose following the Evangelical-Liberal Clash of 1910-1930.
- 5 What two movements experienced a renewal in the 1960s?
- 6 State the first need for the way ahead, for Reformed churches.
- 7 State the second need for the way ahead, for Reformed churches.
- 8 What two tendencies do we want to avoid in gospel work?
- 9 State the third need for the way ahead, for Reformed churches.
- 10 In what sense are we Reformed Baptist?

29.4 Assignment/Discussion

How would you respond to the following: (i) What right have you to define “Reformed” in your way? (ii) Have we no right to use the name “Reformed” in the way we mean? (iii) Do we all have to become Reformed Baptist before you regard us as truly “Reformed”? (iv) You cannot be Baptist if you are truly Reformed because all the Reformers of the 16th century were paedobaptists.

29.5 Memory Passage (Rev. 1:8)

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord,
“who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

* * * * *

Part V

CONCLUSION

Thirty

CONCLUSION (2 Chron. 19:31-37)

This book is about engaging in thoroughgoing reformation in our churches and ministry. It is addressed primarily to those who call themselves Reformed, and secondarily to those who love the Lord and His cause on earth but have not seriously considered the Reformed faith as an option. In other words, it is primarily a call *for* thoroughgoing reformation, and secondarily a call *to* thoroughgoing reformation. Four parts have been covered in this book, which we will briefly review.

30.1 A Review

- 1 *The Apostles' Creed*: We live in a pluralistic world which is more and more like a global village. Ideas spread, and people travel. The church needs to distinguish itself from other religions, not merely in outward rituals and place of worship, but also in belief. Compromises in the truth occur rampantly in churches such that it will be necessary to distinguish the true churches from the apostate ones. The Apostles' Creed helps us to determine which church we must separate from and which church we may have fellowship with. The doctrine of selective fellowship based on the truth runs parallel with the doctrine of separation from sin, doctrinal errors, and worldliness. In today's world, we would need to separate from the Roman Catholic Church, as well as the Liberal, Ecumenical, and Charismatic churches. This does not mean that we show disrespect or hostility to individual members of those churches. The reverse is the case. The influence of religious and secular ideas upon our children is another matter of concern. Children from Christian homes grow up and go away for studies, national service, or business trips. This writer knows of cases of children from Christian homes taken away forcibly (after a tsunami occurred, and in war) to be raised in orphanages of other religions. It is expected that in such situations, the Apostles' Creed

which is memorised will be used by God to help them withstand the onslaught of indoctrination and to draw many of them to faith in Christ.

- 2 *The Five Principles Of The Reformation*: All Evangelical Christians would be attracted to the first and fifth principles of the Reformation, viz. “sola scriptura” and “soli Deo gloria”. There are those who do not have a clear understanding of these doctrines and their implications. Once conquered by these doctrines, they would be open to the other three principles of the Reformation, viz. “sola fide”, “sola gratia”, and “solus Christus”. Afterall, what are these doctrines but the gospel? The appreciation of these doctrines would drive them to consider the Five Points of Calvinism.
- 3 *The Five Points Of Calvinism*: It is safe to say that the vast majority of Evangelical Christians are Arminians or semi-Arminians. Their greatest difficulty will be with the doctrine of Limited Atonement. Another possible difficulty is with the Perseverance of the Saints. Once these difficulties are overcome, there will be whole-hearted acceptance of all five Points. Indeed, there have been those whose acceptance of the Five Points of Calvinism constituted an experience almost like conversion! The five Points stand or fall together. Those who hold to the Amyraldian position will have to bear the burden of inconsistency in their belief. Those who embrace the Five Points as the true gospel will experience the liberty, comfort, and strength of God’s grace in salvation.
- 4 *Semper Reformanda*: “Semper reformanda” is not so much a doctrine than an attitude. It may be called “the spirit of Reformation”. A person or church that is truly Reformed will not be content only to hold to the Five Principles of the Reformation, much less the Five Points of Calvinism. Instead, there will be a desire to work out the implications of the Five Principles of the Reformation and the Five Points of Calvinism in practice. The question is, “How do we go about implementing thoroughgoing reformation?” We have put forward what we believe to be a solid paradigm¹ for practising thoroughgoing reformation – firstly, by reforming the life of the church from within and secondly, by reforming the ministry of the church in relation to the world. From within, the church should be reforming itself by submitting to the prophethood, the priesthood, and the kingship of Christ, who is its only Head. In relation to the world, the church should pattern its ministry according to that of the Lord and the apostles. There are the three prongs of the church’s ministry – the teaching ministry to build up the church, the gospel ministry to win souls to Christ, and the compassionate ministry of doing good works in conjunction with the other two ministries.

¹Will it be claiming too much to call this the *Unified Theory of Gospel Ministry (UTGM)*?

30.2 The Call To/For Thoroughgoing Reformation

- 1 *To those who are not truly Reformed:* The name “Reformed” has gained considerable acceptance in recent years such that there are many who have called themselves such but have not understood what it means traditionally. There are those who have embraced the Five Points of Calvinism as the biblical doctrine of salvation but have progressed no farther. It is to be noted that the Five Points of Calvinism are only a summary of the system of salvation taught in the Bible. They are like the five fingers on the hand. What we want is the whole hand, and not just the fingers. Among the practical implications are the need to reject the altar call in evangelism, and all evangelistic tools that are Arminian, e.g. the Four Spiritual Laws of the Campus Crusade for Christ, and the Alpha Course, and the adoption of persuasive evangelistic gospel preaching. The adoption of the biblical doctrine of salvation makes one Calvinistic. To be Reformed, we must proceed beyond adopting the Five Points of Calvinism.
- 2 *To those who are theoretically Reformed:* There are those who have adopted the Five Points of Calvinism and the Five Principles of the Reformation, but have not understood the practical implications. We know of a whole denomination of churches which call themselves Reformed, but practise the altar call in evangelism, engage in aesthetic worship², are open to women leading public services, and have no difficulty with using pictures of Jesus and the crucifix. The call to such churches is for them to be Reformed in practice, and not merely in doctrine.
- 3 *To those who are stagnantly Reformed:* Many are the churches that have a good Reformed heritage, that value the writings of the Reformers and the Puritans, that are confessional and adhere to the Regulative Principle of worship, but have become stagnant in the work of reformation. While we value the writings of the Reformers and the Puritans, it is to be noted that they did not get all things right in their time. We recall the words of the Separatist, John Robinson:
“For my part, I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of those reformed churches which are come to a period [i.e. a full-stop] in religion, and will go, at present, no further than the instruments of their reformation. The Lutherans cannot be drawn to go beyond what Luther saw; whatever part of His will our God has revealed to Calvin, they will rather die than embrace it; and the Calvinists, you see, stick fast where they were left by that great man of God, who yet saw not all things. This is a misery much to be lamented, for though they were burning and shining lights in their times, yet they penetrated not into the whole counsel of God;

²Worship is seen as art, in which what are seen and heard take on paramount importance. Instead of merely having a drum set as found in much of contemporary worship, there is an elaborate orchestra.

but were they now living, would be as willing to embrace further light as that which they first received.”

The plea to those who are stagnantly Reformed is for them to heed these words of Robinson, and to progress to thoroughgoing reformation.

- 4 *What of the Reformed Baptists?:* We do not expect all our Reformed brethren to turn Reformed Baptist,¹ although this writer believes that many will if they truly hold to “semper reformanda”, i.e. to the spirit of the Reformation. There are bound to be those who remain non-Reformed-Baptist by conviction. More importantly, however, is the need for Reformed Baptists to re-examine whether they have been consistently Reformed. It is hoped that this call to thoroughgoing reformation will be heeded by them as well.

We have noted that constant ebb and flow in the progress of truth is seen in the Bible as well as in church history. It is naive and impractical to attempt “to restore the church of the New Testament” without reference to God’s work in building His church through history. This the Restoration Movement is trying to do. Similar attempts by various groups such as the Plymouth Brethren and the Churches of Christ (Campbellites) in the past have ended in these churches facing the same struggles, and repeating the same mistakes, as others in times past. The attempt to be non-denominational ended with these churches being denominations in practice. Why reinvent the wheel? Would it not be better to stand on the shoulders of giants so that we can see farther? True fellowship between believers transcends space and time, and is based on truth. The Holy Spirit had worked in God’s children in the past as they delved into Scripture. We do well to learn from them.

The Reformation of the 16th century was a mighty work of God. Not only was there a recovery of important truths of the Bible, there were souls saved, churches established, lives transformed, and benevolent works carried out. The Reformation was the mother of all subsequent Evangelical revivals. The call to, and for, thoroughgoing reformation in our days is made with the consciousness that God must bless our effort. It is significant that most of the reforming kings in Judah did not engage in thoroughgoing reformation. The oft repeated refrain is, “The high places were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places” (1 Kings 22:43; 2 Kings 12:3; 14:4; 2 Chron. 20:33). In the case of Jehoshaphat, we are told further, “for as yet the people had not directed their hearts to the God of their fathers.” Superficial reformation, though appearing extensive and impressive as in the case with Jehoshaphat, leaves the hearts of God’s people untouched. Jehoshaphat failed in another area, viz. in having fellowship with apostate King Ahab of Israel. He received the stinging rebuke from God, “Should you help the wicked and love those

¹ See Poh, B. S., “What Is A Reformed Baptist Church”, Good News Enterprise, 2017.

who hate the LORD? (2 Chron. 19:2)” Hezekiah and Josiah were the only kings who thoroughly purge the nation of the high places.

May we be found faithful in our days, to the glory of God Triune. Amen.

* * * * *

30.3 Review Questions

- 1 What is this book about?
- 2 How does the Apostles’ Creed help us in our relation to other churches?
- 3 In today’s world, what churches should we separate from?
- 4 How should we relate to believers in such churches?
- 5 Which two of the Five Principles of the Reformation would we introduce to other Evangelicals first?
- 6 Which two of the Five Points of Calvinism are likely to be problematic to other Evangelicals?
- 7 In practising thoroughgoing reformation, how should the church be reforming itself from within?
- 8 In practising thoroughgoing reformation, how should the church be reforming its ministry in relation to the world?
- 9 Among the practical implications of being Reformed, what should we reject in evangelism?
- 10 What were the two areas of failure in Jehoshaphat’s reformation in Judah?

30.4 Memory Passage (2 Chron. 31:20-21)

²⁰ Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and he did what was good and right and true before the Lord his God. ²¹ And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, in the law and in the commandment, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart. So he prospered.

* * * * *

MEMORY PASSAGES

1 WHAT IS THE APOSTLES' CREED?, 1 Cor. 15:1-4

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, ² by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. ³ For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.

2 “WE BELIEVE”, Rom. 14:7-9

⁷ For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. ⁸ For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. ⁹ For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

3 THE HOLY TRINITY, Matt. 3:16-17

¹⁶ When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. ¹⁷ And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

4 JESUS CHRIST THE MEDIATOR, John 1:1-5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

5 THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE GIVER OF LIFE, John 14:15-18

¹⁵ “If you love Me, keep My commandments. ¹⁶ And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—¹⁷ the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither

sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

6 THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH, 2 Tim. 2:19

¹⁹ Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

7 VALUE OF THE APOSTLES' CREED, The Apostles' Creed, Slightly Amended
We believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

We believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; He descended to hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, [who inspired the writing of the word of God].

[We believe in] the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

8 THE FIVE PRINCIPLES OF THE REFORMATION, Psalm 19:7-11

⁷ The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul;

The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;

⁸ The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;

The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes;

⁹ The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever;

The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

¹⁰ More to be desired are they than gold,

Yea, than much fine gold;

Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

¹¹ Moreover by them Your servant is warned,

And in keeping them there is great reward.

9 SOLA SCRIPTURA, 2 Tim. 3:16-17

¹⁶ All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

10 SOLA FIDE, Gal. 3:10-11

¹⁰ For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." ¹¹ But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith."

11 SOLA GRATIA, Eph. 2:8-9

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.

12 SOLUS CHRISTUS, Col. 1:15-18

¹⁵ He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. ¹⁸ And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

13 SOLI DEO GLORIA, Rom. 11:33-36

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! ³⁴ "For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?" ³⁵ "Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?" ³⁶ For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

14 THE SPIRIT OF THE REFORMATION, Jude 3, 20-23

³ Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. ²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. ²² And on some have compassion, making a distinction; ²³ but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.

15 WHAT ARE THE FIVE POINTS OF CALVINISM?, Heb. 5:12-14

¹² For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³ For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. ¹⁴ But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

16 TOTAL DEPRAVITY, Eph. 2:1-5

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ² in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³ among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. ⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even

when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).

17 UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION, Eph. 1:3-6

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵ having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

18 LIMITED ATONEMENT, John 10:11-16

¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. ¹² But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. ¹³ The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. ¹⁴ I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. ¹⁵ As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. ¹⁶ And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd..

19 IRRESISTIBLE GRACE, John 6:35-40

³⁵ And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. ³⁶ But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. ³⁷ All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. ³⁹ This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. ⁴⁰ And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

20 PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS, Rom. 8:37-39

³⁷ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

21 IMPLICATIONS OF THE "FIVE POINTS", John 8:12

¹² Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

22 WHAT IS “SEMPER REFORMANDA”?, Eph. 4:1-6

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, ² with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, ³ endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

23 THE PROPHETHOOD OF CHRIST, John 14:15-18

¹⁵ If you love Me, keep My commandments. ¹⁶ And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—¹⁷ the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

24 THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST, Heb. 9:11-15

¹¹ But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. ¹² Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³ For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? ¹⁵ And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

25 THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST, Rev. 19:11-16

¹¹ Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. ¹³ He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. ¹⁵ Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. ¹⁶ And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

26 CHRIST’S TEACHING MINISTRY, Eph. 4:11-16

¹¹ And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we

all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

27 CHRIST'S GOSPEL MINISTRY, Acts 2:38-39

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

28 CHRIST'S COMPASSIONATE MINISTRY, Micah 6:8

He has shown you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justly,
To love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God?

29 THOROUGHGOING REFORMATION!, Rev. 1:8

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

30 CONCLUSION, 2 Chron. 31:20-21

²⁰ Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and he did what was good and right and true before the Lord his God. ²¹ And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, in the law and in the commandment, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart. So he prospered.

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