

# GENEVA COLLEGE

BEAVER FALLS, PENNSYLVANIA

DEPARTMENT OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE,  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND PHILOSOPHY

February 5, 1973

To the Administration of Geneva College  
and Ministers of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of N.A.

Dear Christian Friends:

I am increasingly disturbed by the very obvious influence on the Geneva campus of the Amsterdam-Toronto philosophy commonly called "Sphere Sovereignty." This movement resembles heresies long ago written off in the history of the Church. It has the marks of a sub-Christian cult, especially in its tendency to make philosophy more basic than theology, and its questioning the time-honored principle of Sola Scriptura by making man's interpretation of God's creation structures an authority co-ordinate with the Bible in the sphere of truth.

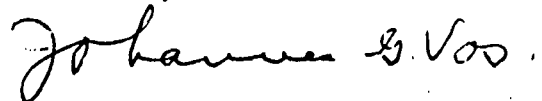
I am herewith submitting a reprint of two articles in the current issue of The Banner, weekly organ of the Christian Reformed Church. These articles bring out very forcefully the destructive and divisive character of this movement, at Calvin College, Trinity Christian College, Dprät College and in the Christian Reformed Church denomination.

The publishing agency of the Toronto movement is called "Wedge", and the movement's teachings are proving a wedge of division wherever they become influential.

Geneva students who come under this almost hypnotic spell lose their interest in "ordinary" Christianity, and care only for the Toronto movement and its propaganda.

I hope that our Church and College may be spared further infiltration with this highly doubtful philosophical movement, and that there will be the most thorough and careful consideration before another advocate of the Amsterdam school is appointed to the Geneva faculty.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Johannes G. Vos

JGV/s

COPY

GENEVA COLLEGE

BEAVER FALLS, PENNSYLVANIA

DEPARTMENT OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE,  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND PHILOSOPHY

February 19, 1973

Dear Christian Friend:

The attached Xerox reprint is from Perspective, newsletter of the Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship (Institute for Christian Studies), Toronto, Canada, Volume 7 No. 1 (January/February 1973).

Dr. Al Wolters is being considered for the position of Professor of Philosophy in Geneva College. He was on Geneva's campus last October and was interviewed at that time. I was not at the meeting and have not met Dr. Wolters.

A member of the faculty has solemnly assured me that although Dr. Wolters has his doctorate from the Free University of Amsterdam, he is nevertheless not an adherent of the Toronto movement and is in fact rather critical of the movement.

The Xerox reprint from Perspective proves that the contrary is the case. Dr. Wolters is presently employed by the Toronto Institute and is engaged in promoting their program.

I have reached the retirement age of 70 years and will not be chairman of the Bible/Philosophy Department after the end of the present semester. However after working 18 years in Geneva College I have a deep concern that the College be kept in the pathway of Biblical truth, and even though I am not consulted I feel it my Christian duty to speak up when I fear a danger to the College's commitment.

(Signed) J. G. Vos.

J. G. Vos, Professor and Department  
Chairman

COPY

GENEVA COLLEGE

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BEAVER FALLS, PENNSYLVANIA

15010

DEPARTMENT OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE,  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND PHILOSOPHY

February 26, 1973

To the Ministers of the Reformed Presbyterian  
Church of North America, and to other Christian Friends.

Dear Friends in Christ:

I am increasingly disturbed by the very strong and obvious influence on the Geneva campus of the Amsterdam-Toronto philosophy, commonly called "Sphere Sovereignty". This movement resembles heresies long ago written off in the history of the church. It has the characteristic marks of a sub-Christian cult, especially in its tendency to regard philosophy as more basic than theology, and its questioning the time-honored principle of Sola Scriptura by regarding man's interpretation of God's creation structures as an authority co-ordinate with the Bible in the sphere of truth.

I am herewith submitting a reprint of two articles in a recent issue of The Banner, weekly organ of the Christian Reformed Church. These articles bring out the destructive and divisive character of this movement, at Calvin College, Trinity Christian College, Dordt College, and in the Christian Reformed Church denomination.

The publishing agency of the Toronto movement is called "Wedge", and the movement's teachings are proving a wedge of division wherever they become influential.

Geneva College students who come under the almost hypnotic spell of this movement lose their interest in "ordinary" Christianity, and care only for the Toronto movement and its propaganda.

The advocates of this movement invariably brush off serious criticism with the claim "You do not understand". I have been hearing this for three years. I am weary of hearing that I "do not understand" the Amsterdam-Toronto philosophy, and weary of receiving offers to "explain everything." Cultists have been saying the same thing since the early Gnostics. I am familiar with the movement's literature and its spokesmen, and I really understand it and its tendencies quite well.

I hope that our Church and College may be spared further infiltration by this highly doubtful philosophical movement. I agree whole-heartedly with the views of Abraham Kuyper as set forth in his published works, but in all good conscience I must register my objections and dissent with regard to the present Amsterdam-Toronto philosophy. The Covenanter Church will no longer be a truly Reformed Church if this movement becomes dominant in our thinking and institutions.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*Johannes G. Vos*

Johannes G. Vos

SEMI-CONFIDENTIAL (not for publication). The proposal to permit a "Reformational" club was defeated by the Student Senate, after 2 hours discussion, by roll-call vote of 11-0 with 3 abstentions./JGV.

## GENEVA COLLEGE

BEAVER FALLS, PENNSYLVANIA

DEPARTMENT OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE,  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND PHILOSOPHY

February 8, 1974

To the Members of the Student Senate of Geneva College

Dear Student Senate Members:

I am retired and no longer a member of the Faculty, though still teaching part time. Several students, during the past few days, have asked me to state my opinion about the proposal for a "Reformational" or Dooyeweerdian club on the Geneva campus.

It is my purpose to deal with principles and issues, not with personalities. I hope Geneva will not permit such a student organization to be formed, for the following reasons.

(1) We refused the Catholics who wanted to have a Newman Club, and the Methodists who wanted a Methodist Club, on the ground that we do not approve denominational clubs on campus. The proposed "Reformational" club would not be denominational, but in my opinion it would be sectarian and divisive, causing polarization of students, not between Christian and non-Christian, but between Dooyeweerdian and anti-Dooyeweerdian.

(2) It is the nature of the "Reformational" movement that wherever it goes it becomes a crusade promoted by a minority of extremely zealous adherents. A Newman Club would simply be a club for Catholic students to discuss their own faith. I am convinced, however, that a "Reformational" club would be an activist "cell" of the Dooyeweerdian movement on our campus and would continually and increasingly agitate for the "Reformational" movement, and divide our Christian student body by keeping this issue in a state of agitation. This movement cannot exist peacefully parallel to other viewpoints. Its nature requires it to campaign and crusade, infiltrate and absorb to the limit of its potential. Some facts that exemplify this:

- 1/ About three months ago Dr. Steen boasted to Mr. Paul Bischoff that the movement now has about thirty students who are "solid" for it on the Geneva campus, and they intend to work on the Geneva student body until they have three to four hundred.
- 2/ At Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa, three professors have been dismissed recently for protest against increasing Dooyeweerdian influence on that campus. One of the three was Gerald O'Donnell, a Geneva graduate. O'Donnell was not a Christian, but was converted to Christ on the Geneva campus. He graduated with distinction, went to graduate school and got a doctorate in psychology, and became professor at Dordt. Because someone told me that O'Donnell was not dismissed but resigned voluntarily and Dordt would welcome him back, I telephoned Rev. Calvin Cummings of Wilkesburg. Mr. Cummings happens to be O'Donnell's father-in-law. He assured me categorically that O'Donnell and two other professors had not resigned voluntarily, but had been dismissed. He added that five Christian Reformed churches in the Iowa area have protested the dismissals.

- 3/ The "Reformational" movement, or rather a number of its prominent advocates, tried to get the Christian Reformed Church denomination to change its standards about marriage, divorce and re-marriage, in a way that would be a distinct let down from a strict position held by that denomination. The attempt failed, but it kept the Christian Reformed Church in a state of restless agitation for a year, and energies that could have been used in constructive evangelism and kingdom work were drained off to combat this attempt to subvert the denominations creed.
- 4/ Prominent members of the "Reformational" movement tried to change the National Union of Christian Schools, an effective Christian organization founded many years before the Toronto movement was heard of. A widespread, concerted effort was made to change the basis of the N.U.C.S. from the Bible as interpreted in the Reformed Confessions to the three-fold forms of the Word of God as held by the Toronto movement. The effort failed but it absorbed the energies of many Christian leaders for nearly two years in the effort to expose the hidden peril and counteract it. The Christian School movement was torn with controversy and strife by this affair.

(3) If Geneva becomes increasingly hospitable toward Dooyeweerdianism, it is going to have a serious effect on student recruitment and financial support of the College. Some facts which exemplify this:

1/ A pastor in Canada, previously unknown to me, wrote me that he wanted to send his daughter to Geneva, but hesitated because of things published in The Cabinet. Our Admissions Director, Mr. Viss, and I both wrote him reassuring him, and his daughter has now applied to Geneva.

2/ A father of two Geneva students told me he is considering withdrawing his sons from Geneva because of the Dooyeweerdian influence on our campus. He also has a daughter almost ready for college, who wants to come to Geneva, but he will not send her here if Geneva becomes increasingly hospitable to Dooyeweerdianism.

3/ Two pastors of the Orthodox Presbyterian denomination informed me that they hesitate to advise young people of their denomination to come to Geneva, because of the Dooyeweerdian influence here. One of these men had a son who graduated from Geneva. Both of them have steered a number of students to Geneva. Both of them told me that they were writing letters to President Clarke expressing concern about increasing Dooyeweerdianism at Geneva. We now have perhaps forty Orthodox Presbyterian students.

4/ The Reformed Baptist denomination has a number of students at Geneva. They are watching Geneva to see what we will do in the future. Some of their members and ministers are deeply concerned. If we become increasingly influenced by the "Reformational" movement, we are going to lose the Reformed Baptists as far as recruiting new students is concerned. Incidentally, they have asked me to speak on "The Relation of the Bible to the Word of God" at their summer youth and family conference, in New Jersey, next June. I intend to do it, the Lord willing.

5/ I personally am still urging young people to come to Geneva. But if the "Reformational" movement becomes increasingly influential here, my conscience will require me to warn young people against Geneva instead of urging them to come here.

May God by His Holy Spirit guide you to a truly wise and righteous decision.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*J.G.Vos.*

J.G.Vos, Professor Emeritus

COPY. Semi-confidential. Not for publication. The proposal to permit a "Reformational" Club on the Geneva campus was defeated by the Student Senate, after approx. 2 hrs. discussion, by a roll-call vote of 11-0 with 3 abstentions. Thus it did not even come before the Faculty./JGV

## GENEVA COLLEGE

BEAVER FALLS, PENNSYLVANIA

DEPARTMENT OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE,  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND PHILOSOPHY

February 8, 1974

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Sincerely yours in Christ,

J.G.Vos.

J.G.Vos, Professor Emeritus

## The "Reformational" Movement: Authentic Christianity or Cultic Distortion?

By J.G.Vos

Minister of the Gospel and Professor Emeritus of Bible, Geneva College

### What is the "Reformational" Movement"?

The origins of this movement go back to Abraham Kuyper, who however did not hold the characteristic tenets of the present movement. Kuyper's teachings were carried much further by two Dutch professors, Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven. More recently the Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship (AACS) and its instrument the Institute for Christian Studies (ICS) have gone even further. The center from which the movement radiates is Toronto, Canada. "Reformational" is the label applied by the AACS/ICS to their teachings.

### Present Activities among Geneva College Students

The advocates of this movement have not been able to have an adherent of the movement continue to teach philosophy at Geneva. Consequently they are now knocking at Geneva's back door. A house has been rented near the college, and a man placed there to promote the movement. Literature is to be sold, meetings are to be held.

Dordt College (Sioux Center, Iowa) until two years ago was a very good Christian college, promoting the historic Christian faith. In my opinion, Dordt College has now been substantially infiltrated and is in danger of being ideologically pirated by the "Reformational" movement. It is also my opinion that the same thing will happen to Geneva unless we are strongly on our guard, and God in His mercy spares us. It is further my conviction that the men of the "Reformational" movement do not want to influence us, they do not want to exchange views with us, they do not want two-way communication with us. They want to infiltrate, indoctrinate, and ideologically take over if they can. Years ago Ernest Gordon in The Leaven of the Sadducees wrote that liberals have never established a theological seminary in America. They "pirate" those established by evangelical Christians. Similarly, the "Reformational" movement establishes no schools or colleges of its own (the ICS is a school for graduate study), but seeks to infiltrate and capture established schools for its ideology.

### Its Good Features are not New; its New Features are not Good

What is really good and true to the historic Christian Faith in the "Reformational" movement is older than the movement. The erroneous and doubtful features are new and are distinctly their own. Thus some (not all) of their men say that man does not have a soul; some say that the Ten Commandments are not applicable today; some say that the Bible does not contain moral teachings; all say that the Bible is only one of various forms of the Word of God.

### This Movement has a different center from the historic Christian Faith

From Jesus Christ and Him crucified (I Corinthians 2:2) the center of the system has been shifted to the Cultural Mandate (Genesis 1:28). This shift is accompanied by a very defective and inadequate view of human sin (sin is regarded chiefly in social terms), and a most tragic lack of emphasis on atonement by the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Advocates of the movement say that they assume atonement and individual conversion, and go on from there. They have no right to assume these things. Paul did not in writing to the Corinthians. Millions of nominal Christians have no vital faith in Christ crucified. Since the Fall of man evangelism, missionary work, personal salvation must have priority over the cultural mandate. This must continue until the Lord returns and renews all things; the cultural mandate, though real and valid, must remain secondary. A Christian re-structuring of society cannot be authentic without individual Christians to live in it, and people become Christians by personal conversion, not by emphasis on the Cultural Mandate.



3408 Seventh Avenue, Beaver Falls, Pa. 15010  
April 3, 1974

To the Ministers of Midwest Presbytery.

Dear Brothers in Christ:

It is with shock and grief that I learn, from a newsletter sent out by my friend and former student Mr. Thomas Forman (dated March 1974) that Dr. Al Wolters has been at Lawrence, and rendered temporary help and encouragement to our work there ("Campus Outreach").

I am acquainted with Dr. Al Wolters. He spoke at Geneva a year ago and I tape-recorded his lecture. In spite of his immense learning, persuasive manner and genial personality type, this man is a heretic from the standpoint of the official standards of the Covenant Church. He denied that man has a soul, and when asked what he made of Matthew 10:28, he replied, "That text is an embarrassment to me." See Blue Banner Faith and Life, October-December 1973, pages 141-145. Dr. Wolters is not named in the article, but he was the man referred to. The article was written to show the unorthodoxy of his view of the soul.

Dr. Wolters was interviewed for the position of professor of Philosophy at Geneva, and seemed likely to get the appointment. I was solemnly assured by a member of the college administration that Dr. Wolters had no connection with the Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship (Toronto). Then a few days later there came a copy of Perspective from Toronto with his photograph and the announcement that he had been engaged to do field work for the movement.

The possibility that Dr. Wolters or any other Dooyeweerdian being appointed to the philosophy post at Geneva resulted in a petition with 17 signatures protesting such action. This petition originated with a non-Covenanter in a non-Bible department. My signature was the last on the list, and I was the only member of the Bible Department staff whose signature was appended.

This led to President Clarke calling a meeting for discussion, which was attended by a considerable part of the faculty and administration. The upshot of this was that the administration sent a letter to Dr. Wolters informing him that he would no longer be considered. At the same time a similar letter was sent to Dr. Dirk Zylstra, who had also been under consideration. I was chairman of the Bible/Philosophy Department at the time, and still have on file the carbon copies of both letters.

Note the Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, Chapter II, Error 1: "We therefore condemn the following errors, and testify against all who maintain them: 1. 'That man has no soul distinct from his bodily organization.'" Dr. Wolters' lecture flatly contradicted our official standards on this point.

I hope that the Midwest Presbytery will take appropriate action to dissociate the Lawrence "Campus Outreach" program, publicly and explicitly, from approval of and/or cooperation with the Toronto AACCS/ICS movement. This movement is working through "front" organizations all over the U.S. and Canada. They can disclaim official organizational connection, and yet extend their influence and their special teachings.

I am 71 years old and cannot expect to live in this world many more years. But as God gives me strength I intend to oppose the Toronto movement until I die. If this involves opposing friends of many years, still I intend to oppose the movement. "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*Johannes G. Vos*  
Johannes G. Vos

BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE  
QUARTERLY BIBLE STUDY JOURNAL  
3408 SEVENTH AVENUE  
BEAVER FALLS, PA. 15010 U.S.A.

August 6, 1974

Dr. Gordon H. Clark  
345 Buckingham Drive  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46206

Dear Dr. Clark:

My friend Howard Long, of Anchorage, Alaska, wrote me stating that you had consented to review The Challenge of our Age, by Hendrik Hart, for Blue Banner Faith and Life. I had asked Mr. Long to review it but he decided to pass it on to you. I am very glad you are willing to undertake this. I take it he mailed the book to you.

Before giving the book to Mr. Long I had read parts of it and made some page notations on the fly-leaf. I find it a seriously unsound book. Mr. Long thought the same about it.

Herewith I am sending you, with my compliments, the 1973 issues and the 1974 issues already published of Blue Banner Faith and Life. These will enable you to gauge the intellectual level and general capacity of our readers. It is not intended for theologians but for intelligent laymen. A few people get it in practically every congregation of the Reformed Presbyterian Church (Covenanter). There is also a considerable overseas circulation, including Britain, Australia and New Zealand.

With regards,

Sincerely yours,

*Johannes G. Vos.*  
Johannes G. Vos  
Editor, B.B. F. & L.

JGV/s

# BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

VOLUME 29

APRIL-JUNE, 1974

NUMBER 2

## *An Explanation to our Readers*

Blue Banner Faith and Life is a quarterly publication, and should come out early in January, April, July and October. During 1974 we have fallen far behind schedule. This delay was the result of various causes. In the first place, it was necessary to change printers. Rev. David Patterson (Patterson Press, Winchester, Kansas) was unable to continue printing this magazine. It was with delay and difficulty that a new printer was found. Finally Perspective Press, Lookout Mountain, Tennessee agreed to undertake the work. Then we got caught in the paper shortage. With the January-March 1974 issue partly printed, for a time it was impossible to obtain paper to finish the job. In

addition to the foregoing, your editor succumbed to a flu-type virus attack in March which has left him with a secondary eye infection which for weeks made it very difficult to read a page of print. This is now slowly clearing up. This delayed preparing copy for the present issue.

In order to catch up on our publishing schedule, it is proposed to make the present issue and the next one (July-September 1974) shorter than usual, and hopefully to get back to normal volume with the final issue of this year. Your prayers are requested, and your patience appreciated. Romans 8:28.  
—J. G. Vos, Editor

## *The Cultic Character of the Toronto Movement*

by Johannes G. Vos

**Note:** This article is reproduced, with grateful acknowledgement, from the March 1974 issue of *The Outlook*, publication of Reformed Fellowship, Inc., Grand Rapids, Michigan.

It is characteristic of pseudo-Christian and sub-Christian cults that they profess to be presenting and promoting simply true Christianity, when as a matter of fact they are promoting special views which are—to say the least—highly debatable in nature, and held by relatively small groups of very zealous promoters.

The well-known Scofield and Pilgrim Bibles have been widely advertised by their publisher, the Oxford University Press, as being simply the text of the Bible with cross-references and other helps. The advertising never states that these two editions of the Bible are saturated with a highly debatable system of interpretation known as Darby-Scofield Dispensationalism, with its false antitheses between law and grace, between Israel and the Church, and between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven. The unwary purchaser thinks he is getting a Bible with excellent helps, but may learn later that it is essentially propaganda for a viewpoint held by a minority of a minority of a minority of Christians.

When a representative of the Jehovah's Witnesses calls at your door offering you literature, if you look at the title page you will not find any mention of the Jehovah's Witnesses cult; instead, it is stated that it

is published by the "International Bible Students' Association" or the "Watchtower Bible and Tract Society." In the case of the Seventh Day Adventists, the title page will only reveal that it is issued by the "Review and Herald Publishing Association." In the case of Armstrongism, it will be labelled "The Plain Truth" or "The World Tomorrow."

**Label and Names**—With the Toronto movement, we first meet the label "Reformational." This might lead us to expect something about the great Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. The two great principles of the Protestant Reformation were *Sola Scriptura* (the Bible alone as authority for faith and life) and *Sola Fide* (justification by faith alone). Anyone who believes in these two great principles is truly Reformational. Millions of Christians who have never even heard of the Toronto movement believe these twin truths, and are truly Reformational. How, then, is the Toronto movement entitled to claim to be specially or distinctively Reformational?

If by the term "Reformational" they mean a reformation of Christianity in terms of the supposed implications of the sphere-sovereignty philosophy of Professors Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd, there is no way for the public to know this from the "Reformational" label. It would seem that this label is intended to obscure the real nature and purpose of the movement.

Then consider the corporate name "Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship." Taking

words in their ordinary and proper meaning, this corporate name would seem to imply that this association exists to promote Christian scholarship *as such*. But as a matter of fact the association quite evidently exists to promote a particular and highly controversial brand of Christian scholarship, derived from the sphere-sovereignty principles of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven. Why did they not name the organization "Association for the Promotion of Dooyeweerdianism" or "Association for the Advancement of the Concept of Sphere Sovereignty"?

The same considerations apply to the Institute for Christian Studies. When this institution was founded, the present writer naively supposed it was for Christian studies *as such*. Only after some time did he become aware that a very limited and specific and controversial segment of Christian studies was meant.

It is difficult to avoid the feeling that there is something not quite honest and aboveboard in the use of such general and inclusive terminology to denominate the organs of promotion of a highly specific and controversial ideology. Why not come right out and call things by their right names? Strict and scrupulous honesty of speech and writing should be the aim and effort of every Christian. To hide behind a misleadingly general and inclusive label is a definitely cultic characteristic.

**Another Authority above Scripture** — Another characteristic of cults is the placing of some other authority above the Bible. The Christian Scientists have Mrs. Eddy's *Science and Health with the Key to the Scriptures*. The Mormons have *The Book of Mormon* and *The Pearl of Great Price*. The Jehovah's Witnesses have the writings of Russell and Rutherford. The Friends or Quakers have their mystical "inner light." Modern Judaism has the *Talmud*, and invariably interprets the Old Testament in the light of the *Talmud*, not *vice versa*. The so-called "New Church" has the writings and visions of Swedenborg. In none of these movements is the Bible the sole and supreme authority for faith and life — for knowledge of ultimate truth and value.

The so-called "Reformational" movement has its multiple forms of the Word of God. The Bible is the written Word, Christ is the Incarnate Word, the structures of the universe are the Creation Word, and preaching is the Proclaimed Word.

No person who knows his Bible will deny that the term "Word of God" is used in connection with all of these in the Bible itself. But *only one* of them is the infallible authority for faith and life. The Bible alone is authority for faith and life — it alone is the Word of God in the *epistemological* sense. What we are to believe and how we ought to live, we learn from the Bible alone. We know nothing of Christ except from the Bible; the old Liberal antithesis

which said, "Not the Bible but Jesus Christ; not a dead book but a living Person" was a false antithesis. Christ and the Bible are not opposites, or even alternative sources of knowledge for faith and life. We are to search the Scriptures precisely because it is the Scriptures which testify of Christ.

No one who believes in the God of the Bible will question the fact that the Word of God, as wisdom and power, made the structures of the created universe what they are, and upholds them constantly by God's immanent power. But this is a *metaphysical* concept, not an epistemological one; it pertains to the sphere of *being*, not to the sphere of *knowing*. And for a valid knowledge of this metaphysical concept we must go back to the written Word, the Holy Bible. The structures of creation have no voice of their own to give us infallible knowledge for faith and life. As for preaching, it is not an alternative form of the Word of God, but the proper proclamation of the message revealed in the Bible. Preaching is truly the Word of God just so far as, and no farther than, it is true to the written words of Holy Scripture.

Thus there is in the "Reformational" movement, to say the least, an ambiguity concerning the principle of *Sola Scriptura* — the Bible alone as the infallible rule of faith and life.

**Claim to Newly-discovered Truth** — All pseudo-Christian and sub-Christian cults claim to have newly-discovered truth, previously unknown or almost unknown, which has finally brought Christianity into focus and relevance. This began with the Gnostic sects in the time of the apostles and the centuries which followed. The Gnostic claimed to have an esoteric or secret knowledge, unknown to or unaccepted by the catholic church and its members, which, they claimed, gave them real insight into the mysteries of existence.

In more modern times Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science, Unity, Armstrongism, and various other cults all claim to have new insights into truth which have finally made Christianity meaningful and relevant. This involves affirming that there has been a radical break in the continuity of the Christian Church's increasing understanding and confession of the truth revealed in the Scriptures. Joseph Smith held that until the *Book of Mormon* was discovered, Christianity was confused and erroneous.

Cult after cult has made the same kind of claim. The "Reformational" movement is no exception. The movement's men do not all say the same thing; some go further than others in affirming the reality of a break in the continuity of knowledge and confession of Christian truth. But they all hold that for centuries the truth of Christianity was obscured and compromised by the "nature-grace" dualism involved in the synthesis of Aristotle's philosophy with Christian

truth, associated especially with the name of Thomas Aquinas. Indeed, "nature-grace" has become a pejorative term in the Toronto vocabulary.

We admit the evil of the attempted "nature-grace" synthesis of Thomas Aquinas and the schoolmen of the Middle Ages. But we must protest that this erroneous tendency did not extinguish the light of Christianity until the cosmomic or sphere-sovereignty philosophy was born.

Our Lord promised that the Holy Spirit would lead His church and people into all truth. It is a certainty that this promise has been kept, and therefore that there has been a continuous and cumulative grasp of revealed truth in the church through the centuries since the time of the apostles. The early ecumenical councils cleared one truth after another — the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, His person and His two natures and their relationship. At the height of the Middle Ages Anselm of Canterbury (died A.D. 1109) defined with new theological precision the Biblical doctrine of the substitutionary atonement, in his famous book *Cur Deus Homo* ("Why God Became Man").

There has been a continuity of increasing Christian knowledge from Christ and the apostles, through Augustine, Anselm, John Hus, Wycliffe, the Protestant Reformers, the great Puritan divines and scholars down to the eminent Biblically sound theologians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries — Abraham Kuyper, Herman Bavinck, Benjamin Warfield, Charles Hodge, and numerous others including many living today. Any school of thought which regards this continuity as fractured and lapsed for ages of time fails to take seriously our Lord's promise that the Holy Spirit would lead His people into all truth. But this is just what the Toronto movement, in effect, seems to do.

**Emphasis on Special Features**—Another cultic characteristic, found in all cults, is to place much greater emphasis on the special or distinctive features of the movement than on that which is common to Christianity as such.

Thus the Mormons emphasize their peculiar doctrine of the Melchizedek priesthood out of all proportion to any ideas they may hold in common with the Christian world. With the Jehovah's Witnesses it is "Millions now living will never die." They all hold their distinctive specialities worthy of more attention and emphasis than whatever they may hold of the common faith of Christianity.

This results in movements which are *eccentric* — off the true center of Christianity. In the case of the Toronto movement, the center of attention is overwhelmingly the Cultural Mandate (Genesis 1:28), not the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 2:2).

**Downgrading of Theology** — Another cultic feature is the downgrading of theology. A visiting lecturer at Geneva College said that *theologism* (explained as thinking that existing theology, creeds and confessions of faith are all we need) is a wrong tendency. The same polemic against "theologism" or "theo-logicism" is found with strong emphasis in Dr. Evan Runner's book, *The Relation of the Bible to Learning* (new Wedge edition, pages 115-118). This is really setting up a straw man and then knocking him down.

Similarly, Liberals for years have told us that we do not need any "theory" or doctrine of the atonement. No Christian who understands Christian theology at all supposes it is all we need. We need much more, but we certainly do not need less. Theology is the systematically formulated knowledge of God. It is impossible to have too much *true* theology, just as it is impossible to have too much good health.

Thomas Aquinas (not in favor with the men of Toronto, but he said some true things all the same) said, *Theologia a Deo docetur, Deum docet, ad Deum ducit* ("Theology is taught by God, teaches about God, and leads to God"). If there is anything that American Christianity needs desperately it is not less emphasis on theology but much more. Scarcely one Christian in fifty can give a passably clear and correct statement of the theology of his own church and what distinguishes it from others. Many ordained officers have never even seen — let alone read — the official standards they profess to believe. Shall we go to Africa and warn the starving people of Biafra against the danger of overeating? Shall we tell Christians, many of whom are spiritually anemic because of lack of a grasp of true theology, to avoid the danger of "theologism" or "theo-logicism"?

The lack of a valid knowledge of theology manifests a *desperate* need in American Protestant Christianity today. Note Hebrews 5:12. "Dead orthodoxy" is a hollow charge when aimed at people who are almost totally ignorant of such basic Christian truths as original sin, vicarious atonement, regeneration, justification by faith, imputed righteousness — people who hear from their churches only a message of brotherhood, ecumenism, popular applied psychology, social activism, and self-salvation by character and human goodness.

It is difficult to avoid feeling that when we are thus warned against "theologism," it is the recognized orthodox theology of the great historic confessions and theologians that is being shunted aside, in favor of novel and debatable ideas from Toronto and Amsterdam. Incidentally, in view of Toronto's steady polemic against propositional truth or propositional revelation, it must be noted that the basic tenets of the Toronto movement, and of Dooyeweerd's philosophy, are themselves formulated and expressed in propositional statements.

**"You do not understand"** — Finally, all cults and all cultists meet serious criticism with the reply, "You

do not understand." This is often accompanied by offers to "explain everything." Of course people who use a jargon peculiar to themselves, with words and meanings peculiar to themselves, are going to be misunderstood.

But we are sure that opposition to the Toronto teachings is often the result, not of misunderstanding, but of clear understanding of what these teachings really are and where they will inevitably lead. I do not admit that I have misunderstood Toronto. I

maintain that I am against it precisely because I do understand it. The assertion "You do not understand" is a well-worn alibi claimed by heretics and cultists in all ages, from the ancient Gnostics and Pelagius to the present day. It is also an *insult* when directed to serious, competent and well-intentioned scholars. It is equivalent to saying: "You are talking about something you have not taken the trouble to find out about, or else you are too stupid to understand the profound truths we are holding."

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## *Studies in Covenant History (Conclusion)*

### LESSON 1

#### The Babylonian Captivity of the Jews

(2 Kings 25:22-30; Ezra chapters 1-7)

The Babylonian Captivity took place in four stages:

(1) In 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon left Jehoiakim on the throne of Judah as a puppet king, but took Daniel and others to Babylon.

(2) In 597 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar came again, took Jehoiachin and 10,000 leading Jews to Babylon. II Kings 24:14-16.

(3) In 586 B.C. the Babylonians came again, destroyed Jerusalem, took Zedekiah and most of the remaining people, leaving a remnant of the poorest people in the land.

(4) In 581 B.C. (following the murder of the governor they had appointed) the Babylonians came again, took 745 more captives, even after many had gone to Egypt. Jeremiah 52:30.

Jeremiah predicted that the captivity would last 70 years (Jeremiah 25:11-12). It is not specified from what precise date this 70 years is to be reckoned. Presumably, however, it is to be reckoned from the first deportation, 605 B.C. This would give the date of 535 B.C. for the end of the Captivity, which would be approximately the time of the arrival at Jerusalem of the first returning party after the fall of Babylon and the accession of Cyrus.

The Babylonian Captivity was extremely bitter medicine for the Jews to swallow. Never before had they been so disgraced and humiliated before the world. They learned in bitter experience that the way of the transgressor is hard and that the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. This humbling of their pride and breaking down of their haughty self-confidence was

necessary if they were really to be brought back to a right relationship with God.

There were also some positive benefits that came out of the Babylonian Captivity. This bitter experience permanently cured the Jews of their tendency to idolatry. For a thousand years before this time, from Moses to Jeremiah, God had been working on these people to teach them the lesson of **monotheism** — that there is only one God, the living and true God, and all others are false. Israelite history for a thousand years had been largely concerned with this lesson, which they were so slow to learn. Monotheism had always been the **official** faith of Israel, and it had, indeed, been the actual faith of the best and most consistent from the time of Adam and Eve. But the majority had been corrupt and inconsistent, and monotheism was not **consistently practiced by the nation as a whole** until after the Babylonian Captivity. What the endlessly repeated instruction and warning of the prophets had failed to do, the bitter suffering of the Captivity finally accomplished. Israel or the Jews were cured of idolatry. From this time on to be a Jew was to be known everywhere as a hater of idolatry. There is of course a spiritual idolatry which anyone can be involved in — as, for example, when we say of some greedy person that "money is his god". But the common, outward form of idolatry, in which a person really believes that there are many gods, and he bows down to a heathen image in a temple of Baal or some other "divinity" came to an end, so far as the Jews were concerned, with the Babylonian Captivity.

Thus there is at this point a major shift of emphasis in the religious thought and life of godly Jews. Before this the primary emphasis had been