

June 4, 2009

Dear Friends of the Foundation:

Please see following quotation from B. B. Warfield about Calvin's theology, just sent by Art Jensen.

Grace and Peace,

Jim

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From: Arthur Jensen

Jim:

I found this quote from B.B. Warfield (1851-1921), great Princeton theolog, when he was asked to provide an exact formulation of Calvin's theology:

The exact formulation of the formative principle of Calvinism, as I have said, has taxed the acumen of a long line of distinguished thinkers. Many modes of stating it have been proposed. Perhaps after all, however, its simplest statement is the best. It lies then, let me repeat, in a profound apprehension of God in His majesty, with the poignant realization which inevitably accompanies this apprehension, of the relation sustained to God by the creature as such, and particularly by the sinful creature. The Calvinist is the man who has seen God, and who, having seen God in His glory, is filled on the one hand, with a sense of his own unworthiness to stand in God's sight as a creature, and much more as a sinner, and on the other hand, with adoring wonder that nevertheless this God is a God who receives sinners. He who believes in God without reserve and is determined that God shall be God to him, in all his thinking, feeling, willing—in the entire compass of his life activities, intellectual, moral, spiritual--throughout all his individual, social, religious relations—is, by the force of that strictest of all logic which presides over the outworking of principles into thought and life, by the very necessity of the case, a Calvinist.

If we wish to reduce this statement to a more formal theoretical form, we may say perhaps, that Calvinism in its fundamental idea implies three things. In it, (i) objectively speaking, theism comes to its rights; (ii) subjectively speaking, the religious relation attains its purity; (iii) soteriologically speaking, evangelical religion finds at length its full expression and its secure stability. Theism comes to its rights only in a teleological view of the universe, which recognizes in the whole course of events the orderly working out of the plan of God, whose will is consequently conceived as the ultimate cause of all things. The religious relation attains its purity only when an attitude of absolute dependence on God is not merely assumed, as in the act, say, of prayer, but is sustained through all the activities of life, intellectual, emotional, executive. And evangelical religion reaches its full manifestation and its stable form only when the sinful soul rests in humble, self-emptying trust purely on the God of grace as the immediate and sole source of all the efficiency which enters into its salvation. From these things shine out upon us the formative principle of Calvinism. The Calvinist is the man who sees God behind all phenomena, and in all that occurs recognizes the hand of God, working out His will; who makes the attitude of the soul to God in prayer the permanent attitude in all its life activities; and who casts himself on the grace of God alone, excluding every trace of dependence on self from the whole work of his salvation.

This is as succinct a statement of Calvin's core beliefs that I have seen. Pass it on!

Blessings!

Rev Art Jensen