

Princeton Versus the New Divinity: The Meaning of Sin-Grace-Salvation-Revival: Articles from the Princeton Review. The Banner of Truth, Carlisle, Pa.2001. Hardcover, 342 pp. Reviewed by Johan D.Tangelder.

Why republish articles written by nineteenth century American theologians? A good question. But as I perused them I became convinced of their relevance, despite the dated language and wordiness. "The New Divinity" movement in the 1830s was much affected by the Second Awakening. The evangelists who adopted this new thinking appealed effectively to professed new converts under their preaching. What dominated the discussion were such practical issues as: How should conversion be presented? What is a legitimate use of persuasion? Can all accept the Gospel? Should it be offered indiscriminately to all? These questions were provoked mainly by the ministry of the revivalist, Charles G. Finley (1792-1875) and his, *New Measures*. Finney and like-minded claimed a recovery of the Gospel. As a result, churches grew impatient with doctrinal issues when there were fields ripe for the harvest.

Many questions raised then, we still face today. The Publisher's Introduction points out that during the twentieth century there was an increasing questioning of the alleged benefits which the New Divinity was supposed to have introduced. In Britain, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones was a leader and evangelist who challenged the correctness of what had been so long assumed. The publisher argues that there is no better starting point for re-examining the thinking which led to changes in evangelism than the articles Princeton theologians published in the *Biblical Repertory and Theological Review*

Two of the authors are well known: Archibald Alexander (1772-1851), the founding professor of Princeton Seminary, and Charles Hodge (1797-1878). Their theology, a distinctly American nineteenth-century expression of classical Reformed faith, grew out of a commitment to an authoritative Bible and respect for the Reformed Confessions. They were critical of the emotional excesses of American revivals, but nevertheless pronounced regeneration and conversion as prerequisites for a genuine godly walk. Nowhere was Charles Hodge more eloquent and persuasive than when he defended the Reformed view of fallen human nature and the sovereignty of God in salvation. Hodge viewed the difference between the Reformed faith and the New Divinity as a clash between competing doctrinal systems. The one has as object the vindication of God's supreme sovereignty in the salvation of men: the other has for its characteristic aim, the assertion of the right of human nature.

In this volume of eight articles Alexander and Hodge were responsible for the first five. Albert Baldwin Dod (1805-1845), the author of the sixth article represented Princeton's answer to Finney's view of revivals of religion. John Woodbridge, born in 1784, the author of the seventh article, was an active opponent of the New Divinity. And Dr. Thomas Cleland (1778-1858), the author of the final article, was present at the 1801 Cane Ridge revival in Kentucky. He described the "Bodily Effects of Religious Excitement." Cleland sided with the New Divinity when the division of the Presbyterian Church took place in 1838.

Why study these articles? The current developments in evangelicalism and Reformed churches are of grave concern. The impact of secularism, the lure of postmodernism, and

continued fragmentation of churches call for a renewal of faith and a love for Biblical doctrines which the Reformed tradition can offer. I commend, therefore, The Banner of Truth publisher for making available pertinent articles from the *Biblical Repertory and Theological Review*, which will greatly assist pastors in developing a sound biblical approach to preaching and evangelism today.