

**The Five Points of Calvinism by Herman Hanko, Homer C. Hoeksma, Gise J. VanBaren;
published by Reformed Free Publishing Association, P.O. Box 2006,
Grand Rapids, Mich. 49501, 1976, 95 pages pb;
Available in Canada at Speelman's Bookhouse.**

Must the Lord helplessly wait for sinners to come to Him? Is the Lord unable to enter the heart of man unless He receives an invitation? This is the impression many evangelicals give today. Ruth Carter Stapleton, sister of the President Carter, said in an interview: "The first thing a person must do is get to the place where he will say, 'I will to be born.' So many people who have become failures in life are people who live passive lives. They often have an unconscious will to die. The hardest thing I have to do is to get an audience to imagine Jesus at the time of birth saying, 'You don't have to be born unless you really want to. This is going to be your chance. You've got to make the decision. Do you will to be born? You're going to be in my love and my care. I'll never leave you and I'll never forsake you. Do you want life?'" This is outspoken Arminianism.

The Five Points of Calvinism points to the error of Arminianism and exalts the sovereignty of grace. The format of the book is due to the fact that the chapters were originally five lectures delivered in 1966-67 in Grand Rapids, Mich., sponsored by the Protestant Reformed Churches of that area. The three authors are ministers in the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. Herman C. Hanko is professor of New Testament and Church History at the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Church; he has written chapters 1 and 2. Homer C. Hoeksma is professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament at the same Theological School, and is the author of chapter 3.. Gise J. Van Baron is pastor of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Mich.; and he is the author of chapters 4 and 5.

The first chapter "Total Depravity" reflects the Prot. Ref. position on their denial of common grace. Man "cannot do natural good. He cannot do spiritual good. He cannot do civil good" (p. 20, cf. pp. 12, 17f.). The Prot. Ref. Church was founded when the 1924 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church refuted Dr. H. Hoeksema's teaching on common grace. The Christian Reformed Church reaffirmed the teachings: "God's favor toward all men and not toward the elect alone, the restraint of sin in the life of the individual and in society, and the performance of so-called civic righteousness by the unregenerate." Dr. H. Hoeksema and Rev. H. Danhof seceded with large sections of their respective congregations as they didn't want to accept the decision of Synod. The schism spread to a number of other places.

Does my disagreement with the Prot. Ref. Church mean that I deny the doctrine of total depravity? Not at all 1 The day I read the chapter on total depravity I was robbed for the second time since living in the Philippines. Man is unable to save himself. There is no "saving good" in him. But I still believe in "the restraint of sin in the life of the individual and in society, and the performance of so-called civic righteousness by the unregenerate."

Though I cannot endorse everything the book teaches, I still recommend its reading. As Arminianism is so prevalent today, a book on the five points of Calvinism needs to be read. The fourth chapter, "Irresistible Grace," alone is worth the purchase price. In this chapter Rev. Van Baren proclaims God's sovereignty, power and grace at work in the salvation of sinners. "For ! His grace comes and breaks me down. It softens my hard heart. It bows my stiff knee. It takes my arm which would by nature raise itself in rebellion against God, and causes it to beat upon my breast so that I cry out, 'O God, be merciful to me the sinner.' That is the irresistibility of the grace of God. It makes me His child. It leads me in paths of righteousness. And it finally glorifies me according to His promise for His Name's sake through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Rev. J.D. Tangelder, lecturer at the Genevan Reformed Seminary,
The Philippines. April, 1978