

*[Review of Berkhouwer's Doctrine of Election, Sangre de Cristo Seminary Library. Unpublished]*

Berkhouwer's Doctrine of Election, by Alvin L. Baker, pp. Viii + 204; Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1981. Reviewed by Gordon H. Clark

This book should not be reviewed. It should be read. Chapter one describes the decline of Christianity in the Dutch churches, repeated in the life of G. C. Berkhouwer. This was due to a rejection of Scripture, a replacement of logical thought by existential experience, and an unwillingness on the part of pastors to preach on predestination and election. In abandoning fundamental doctrines as 'speculative,' and restricting interest to matters of 'faith' alone, "Berkhouwer's methodology strips Christians of the means of answering questions Scripture also speaks on" (p. 46). "Berkhouwer has left less and less room for an objective sense of God's determining salvation for individuals" (p. 49).

Since Berkhouwer's decline from the Scriptural position has been gradual, the author very honestly cites orthodox passages (e.g. pp. 51Ff, et passim) which are inconsistent with Berkhouwer's final views (cf. p. 67).

His final views also are inconsistent and irrational as Baker so carefully shows in many places. He further points out Berkhouwer's rejection of various passages in Scripture: "Berkhouwer has no plausible explanation for such passages" (p. 86). The quotation on page 92 denies the immutability of God and surely implies arbitrariness in the sense of undependability which Berkhouwer himself, as well as I, repudiate. On the following pages Baker very clearly states and expounds many relevant Biblical passages. It is devastating. For example, "He also writes that the idea of the fixity of the decree of election devaluates [?] election. One wonder how the idea of fixity . . . can devalue election."

Chapter Six (pp. 115-161), Berkhouwer's Denial of Reprobation, is a masterpiece of careful analysis. To review it would do more injustice to it than my skimpy review of the preceding.

If one were to try to sum up Berkhouwer's deepest and controlling principle, simplistically in one sentence though very accurately nonetheless, it would be that preacher should preach "religiously," that is, they should tell the congregation what they want to hear, not what God tells us they should hear.

Every page is studded with footnotes and the bibliography (pp. 181-204) is exhaustive if any is.

Now, dear reader, I have written a review that should not have been written. If you think this has given you a good idea of the book, tear up the review and read the book.