

Book Reviews

WALKING WITH JESUS MILESTONES IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST

by

Timothy Cross

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“When we view the life of Jesus Christ we can only conclude ‘God has visited His people.’ Jesus Christ is incomparable. Who else could divide time into BC and AD, and who else could divide humanity into the saved and the lost ?”

Thus runs the blurb on the back cover of this A5 sized, attractively produced paperback, the latest from the pen of BRF member Timothy Cross of Cardiff. Like his previous two books, *In My Father’s House*, and *Scent from Heaven*, Dr. Cross has produced what can be said to be a devotional classic strong in orthodox Calvinistic doctrinal emphasis, with neat and enlightening expositions of Scripture Truths expressed in a delightful style of writing.

Dr. Cross has, in this volume, homed in on eleven specific and momentous events in the life of our Saviour, and as such he draws the reader to take a close look at all the implications of those incidents, which he labels “milestones”. An appropriate designation, indeed, for we begin with the “milestone” of the Lord’s birth, then follow on to the “milestone” of His baptism, then the “milestone” of His temptation.....and so on until one reaches the “milestone” of the Lord’s Ascension. Along the way the reader passes the “milestones” of the Lord’s first miracle, a famous feast, Peter’s declaration, the Transfiguration, Gethsemane, the Cross, and the Resurrection.

Each “milestone” has its own chapter, and the “milestones” are set out in the book in what is probably the chronological order of occurrence, so that in effect the book takes the reader on a “walk” as it were, through the life of Christ by focusing on these eleven salient events. In his own inimitable style, Dr. Cross looks closely at each milestone event, and draws the readers attention to significant Biblical data that one ordinarily misses in one’s every-day reading of the gospels. The result is a rich tapestry of meaning and significance, for instance, noting that Christ was born at Bethlehem, he draws attention to the full name of this district as found in the prophecy of Micah 5 : 2, that is: Bethlehem Ephrathah. How many times has one read that name, and missed the significance of its meaning in the old Hebrew tongue ? Without bogging the reader down with details of Hebrew philology the writer ‘opens up’ the meaning in clear, easily understood terms, and points us to the tremendous significance of the meaning with respect to it being the Messiah’s birthplace, and how superbly fitting it was that the Lord Jesus should have been born right there, *and nowhere else* ! It is in the exposition

Book Reviews

of details like this that Dr. Cross excels, but interwoven with all these matters one finds the profound theological insights and sturdy doctrines of the Reformed Faith viz.: "An unpopular truth, even in the 'evangelical' world, is that Jesus did not come into the world to save everyone. He came only to save God's elect." (page 15). Interspersed with all this are various quotations from the Westminster Shorter Catechism used in order to summarize, or emphasize the doctrinal import the writer exegetes from certain particular passages of Scripture.

In these devotional expositions Dr. Cross is concerned not merely to describe these "milestones" in the life of Christ, but also to apply the significance of these events to the individual believer. For instance, the chapter concerning the "milestone" of the Lord's temptations points us to the very psychology underlying those temptations, and the significance of how the Lord rebutted them. Following this, attention is drawn to the Scriptural facts concerning what Dr. Cross calls the "Divine Solidarity" between Christ and believers, a solidarity which no other religion can offer, in that the Lord Christ is one who knows and understands our temptations and weaknesses and sympathises with us. Quite a thought that, that no other religion can offer such "Divine Solidarity".

I found this book delightful reading. I wished again, that Dr. Cross had utilised the AV in his many Scripture quotations, but in spite of this and a few typographical errors here and there it must be said that this book is a devotional classic.

THE CLARK-VAN TIL CONTROVERSY-

BY

Herman Hoeksema

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111 pages paperback

Readers of the British Reformed Journal and the News Alert will by now be familiar with the fact that in the middle 1940's a convulsion reverberated through the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches in the USA. It was in fact like an "action re-run" of events that had taken place in the Christian Reformed Church in the Mid-West in 1924, when Herman Hoeksema was unjustly and illegally deposed from the ministry of that denomination on the grounds that he resisted the notions of Common Grace and the "free offer" insisted on by that denomination in addition to its Reformed Creeds.

When the Gordon H. Clark controversy blew up in Machen's denomination, the points of contention concerned the same issues. Watching from his vantage point in Grand Rapids, Hoeksema was able to trace out the course of the Clark-Van Til controversy in a series of articles he wrote for the PRC Standard Bearer in those days, and was able to interweave his reporting with all the sagacity of one who had himself gone through these same trials before.

His series of profound reports and comments have at last been gathered together and produced as a fine A5 size paperback by the Trinity Foundation under the aegis of its Director, Dr. John Robbins. This foundation has been of great service to the Christian world for some years now, publishing the "Trinity Review", and publishing the large quantity of literature written by Dr. Gordon H. Clark, and in this volume we are confronted with the facts concerning a "second front" attack on the pure Reformed doctrines, an attack that emanated

again out of the Christian Reformed Churches, whose theologians had clearly gone a long way down the route of transcendental paradox theology in order to justify the unbiblical and contradictory conclusions they drew from their "quasi-Arminianised" modes of exegesis. From the Christian Reformed Church, came scholar-theologians like Van Til, R.B. Kuiper, and Ned. B. Stonehouse to take up professorships at Machen's Westminster Seminary. They set the theological tone of that establishment, and tried to impose this on the whole denomination of Orthodox Presbyterians. Crucial in this respect was their recognition that a young and brilliant Orthodox Presbyterian scholar, candidate for the ministry, was effectively teaching the same doctrines for which Hoeksema had been cast out of the Christian Reformed Churches some twenty years previously.

The ensuing battles for the truth that took place at the highest courts of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church eventuated in Clark and his followers being exonerated of teaching anything contrary to the Westminster Standards, but nevertheless eventually being hounded out of his denomination together with a third of the communicant members. Hoeksema's comments on all these proceedings are invaluable, and present a picture of how the pure Reformed Truth suffers in these days in the very house of its friends. In commenting on the "Clark case", Hoeksema delves into the primary issues that underlay the whole controversy, examining the matters concerning God's Incomprehensibility, the Primacy of Truth, the role of the intellect, the importance of logic: "Either the *logic* of revelation is *our* logic, or there is no revelation." (page 8), the distinction between "paradox" and "contradiction", the misuse of John Calvin on the issues of Common Grace and the "free offer", the lurking Arminianism underlying the position that attacked Dr. Clark, and a host of other fascinating issues. Most enlightening is Hoeksema's discussion in Chapter 7 on the issue of "Rationalism", which is the stock-in-trade epithet that neo-Calvinist transcendentalists fling at the Reformed. It is revealing to see the real and ghastly position that Clark's foes took on the issue of faith and logic, I would call it "a Barthian's delight"! Hoeksema's exposure of this nonsense is a delight to read, as also his establishment of the correct and Scriptural position. Also presented are revealing glimpses of the Presbytery minutes that cover Dr. Clark's case, and the matters that ensued at the General Assembly when the report of the committee investigating Dr. Clark was discussed. Interesting in this connection is the fact that this committee issued a majority report which found that the complainants against Dr. Clark were unjustified, and a minority report, by one member of the committee only, John Murray of Westminster Seminary and a through and through "free offer" and "common grace" man, which merely holds that the investigations were not pursued far enough. The reader is correct if he gets the impression that there was some degree of "fudging" of the issues here, it appears that even the General Assembly in exonerating Dr. Clark yet put in the oar, as it were, to exonerate "common grace" and the "free offer" as well! Evidently an attempt at being all things to all men and finishing up as being "jackie-both-sides"! The Westminster seminary faction did not let up, however, and it was only a matter of time before the constant harassment induced all the "Clark" people to up and leave, leaving this Van Til faction with a clear field.

Hoeksema's sagacious comments on all these events are worth more than gold. This is a book which should be not only in the library of every minister, elder, deacon, student of theology, but indeed in every home. It is obtainable from the Covenant Reformed Fellowship Bookroom in Northern Ireland for £6.50 English sterling plus post and packing: contact Mr. Brian Crossett, 2 Jordanstown Road, Whiteabbey, BT37 0 QF Northern Ireland. Telephone 01232 851 089 extension 136.

Editor.