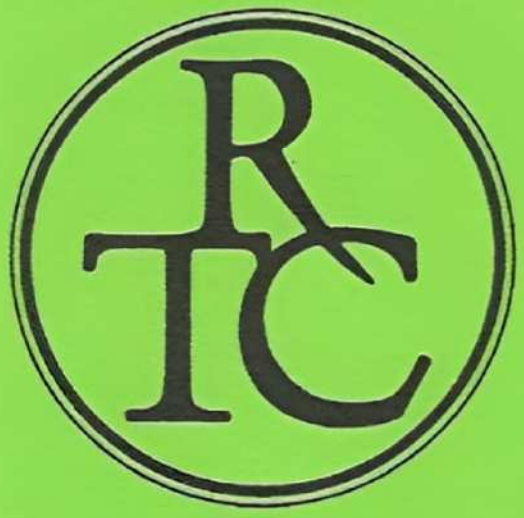

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REV. PROFESSOR EDWARD DONNELLY, B.A., M.Th.
REV. PROFESSOR ADAM LOUGHRIDGE, M.A., M.Litt., D.D.
REV. PROFESSOR FREDERICK S. LEAHY, M.Th.
REV. PROFESSOR R.L.W.McCOLLUM, B.Agr.
REV. PROFESSOR W.N.S.WILSON, M.A., M.Th.
REV. C.KNOX HYNDMAN, B.A.
REV. DR.H.J.BLAIR, PROFESSOR EMERITUS

THOMAS HAMILTON, *Librarian*

by

EDWARD DONNELLY
C.KNOX HYNDMAN
FREDERICK S.LEAHY

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FREE INDEED

Within the past few years the world has increasingly been made aware of the value of freedom. Everyone would of course subscribe to the desirability of freedom, but the sight of nations gaining liberty from totalitarian regimes and of hostages receiving liberty after years of cruel captivity have heightened in the public consciousness the value of freedom. When however we examine the faces of men and nations which have been set at liberty we see not only the expected expressions of joy but also frowns of bewilderment. How long will it take the freed hostage to regain that equilibrium which was lost during the years of captivity? How can the nation which has gained its freedom be sure that it will not simply exchange one kind of dictatorship for another? Freedom is like a delicate plant which needs to be cared for and treated correctly if it is to survive.

The Church of Christ is made up of people who have, in Him, been set at liberty. Their freedom is from a captivity far more cruel and powerful than that of any totalitarian dictatorship or fundamentalist extremist. It is the Christian who is armed with the necessary grace and direction which enable him to enjoy that freedom. 'You will know the truth and the truth will set you free.'

The faithful exposition of this perfect law of freedom is essential for the health and well being of Christ's Church. The articles included in this issue of the *Journal* reflect commitment to provide material helpful to the preacher in his exposition of the Word, and which will help every believer in his understanding and application of that Word to life.

To receive the Word aright there must be an unshakeable conviction of the inspiration, sufficiency and reliabilty of the Word of God written. The authority and inerrancy of Scripture are clearly presented in an article on William Whitaker, an English theologian of the Elizabethan period. The Christian life is one of faith, and the article on Aspects of Faith in the Epistle to the Hebrews rightly concludes that 'our study of faith..must lead to Christ'. The authorship and meaning of the passage in Jeremiah chapter 31 dealing with the New Covenant are considered and the Christian is reminded of the inestimable privilege of being brought into the Covenant people of God.

True liberty is also enjoyed in Christian worship when it is according to the direction given in Scripture. The exclusive use of the Psalms in praise is part of that direction. Therefore the question of the inclusion in Scripture of other songs said to be used in public worship is considered in an article on 1 Timothy 3 verse 16. The article on Alexander McLeod Stavely, an Irish Canadian Covenanter, gives interesting and stimulating insights into the life and work of a faithful preacher of the Word.

It is our prayer that this issue of the *Journal* will help those who preach, and all who receive the Word of God to walk more perfectly in that freedom with which Christ has made us free.

C.K.H.

ALEXANDER McLEOD STAVELY : IRISH-CANADIAN COVENANTER

by Eldon Hay

Eldon Hay is Professor of Religious Studies at Mount Allison University in Sackville, N.B., Canada. He has a special interest in the Covenanters in Canada.

Rev. Alexander McLeod Stavely had been living for 36 years in Saint John, New Brunswick, when the Great Fire of June 1877 destroyed much of that city. Stavely wrote a few days later

> ...Words... can give you only a very faint idea of what it is to see a large and prosperous city laid in ruins.... The beautiful house, in which for twenty -seven years we worshipped the God of our fathers, has been completely destroyed.... With it my own comfortable dwelling-place, the chief part of my library and manuscripts (this I regard as a sad bereavement), and nearly everything in the shape of furniture, &c., &c., has been burnt with fire, and all our pleasant things laid waste.[1]

Not long after this disastrous fire, Stavely returned to the land whence he had come. What is the story and the witness of this man?

The Boy becomes a Man

Little concrete information survives about Stavely's early life. He was born June 9, 1816, the fourth child of Rev. Dr. William J. Stavely and Jane Adams, Kilraughts, Co. Antrim. Clearly, the youngster had "the prayerful training of a godly father and mother."[2] The boy's grandfather was 'the Apostle of the Covenanters,' William Stavely.[3] Alexander had two older brothers, and three sisters. Like Alexander, the oldest brother, William, emigrated to the new world. Some of Stavely's letters to his sisters survive, and provide valuable first hand accounts of Alexander's activities in Saint John.[4] Alexander was educated by his father, at the Old College Belfast, at Edinburgh University,[5] and at the Divinity Hall, Paisley. Stavely first appears in the minutes of the Northern Presbytery of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland (Covenanter) in June of 1836. Thereafter, his name often occurs in presbytery matters, up until his licensing.

On September 6, 1837, Alexander McLeod Stavely was licensed by the Northern Presbytery.[6] From that time, Stavely was engaged in preaching to different congregations in Ulster, and in places beyond Ulster, notably Manchester. In 1838, it is reported that "Licentiate Stavely" was paid £4 for "his Mission to Manchester."[7] Similar statements indicate he went to Manchester in 1839 and 1840.[8] Perhaps his journeys to Manchester provided opportunity for reflection, for Stavely eventually offered himself as a missionary to Canada.

His ordination took place on May 12, 1841. A correspondent of the *Belfast News-Letter* outlines the event.

> On the 12th (of May) ult. the Directors of the Home and Foreign Missionary Society of the Reformed Presbyterian Church met in the Rev. Mr.Toland's Meeting house, at Kilraughts, to ordain Mr. Alexander McLeod Stavely, son of the Rev. Dr.Stavely, Ballymoney, prior to his embarkation for St. John, New Brunswick, to take the oversight of a congregation there, which had forwarded to him a unanimous call to become their pastor. The services of the day were commenced by the Rev. James Dick, who preached a most excellent discourse from the words—"And he has in his right hand seven stars"—Rev. 1.16. The Rev. Mr.Toland next gave a brief narrative of the circumstances which led to their meeting that day, in the course of which he read a most interesting letter from St. John, detailing the amount of spiritual destitution which existed in that city, and urging the Directors of the Mission, in the most earnest manner, to send them Mr. Stavely, to break among them the bread of life. Mr.Toland was followed by Dr. Stavely who, having put the usual questions, offered up a most impressive prayer, in the course of which Mr.Stavely was set apart to the work of the Ministry by the laying on of hands. A very excellent charge having been given to the young Minister, by the Rev. Mr. Cameron, the Rev. Thomas Houston concluded the services of the day by preaching a most suitable discourse.[9]

Late in June Stavely sailed from Greenock in Scotland by the merchant ship "Eagle," bearing with him the love and prayers of many friends. On the 3rd of August he safely reached Saint John, where he received a cordial welcome.[10]

The Situation in Saint John

Saint John is the place in the Maritime region where the Covenanter story begins. There in the early 1800s, a group of Covenanters wrote to the American Covenanter Synod, asking for preaching ordinances. In response, a couple of Covenanter clergy made an exploratory trip to Saint John in 1821, organized the Covenanters there into a Society, wrote to both the Scots and Irish Synods,

asking that they give the situation in Saint John serious consideration, and "urgently requesting them to send missionaries to these steadfast yet destitute people."[11]

The first Covenanter missionary to British North America was the Rev. Alexander Clarke, who came to minister to the Covenanter society in Saint John, N.B. in 1827.[12] Although Clarke established, or re-established the Covenanter Society in that city, his ministry in Saint John lasted for only a few months, going to Amherst, Nova Scotia in 1828. Clarke settled in Amherst, although he did not entirely sever his relationship with the small Covenanter society in Saint John, and on Oct. 11, 1835, "the Reformed Presbyterian Meeting-House was opened, by the Rev. Alexander Clarke."[13]

A second missionary, William Sommerville, came out in 1831, and was a roving associate of Clarke until 1833, when he was tentatively invited to Horton and Cornwallis, in the Annapolis valley. Sommerville's association with Clarke had not been altogether unfruitful. In April of 1832, the two had combined, with elders, to form the New Brunswick and Nova Scotia Reformed Presbytery. At the same time, the two Covenanter clergy contended not a little, though the precise reasons evade us.[14] Clarke alone opened the Saint John R.P.Church in 1835, though he indicates "Mr. Sommerville was ... invited but did not come."[15] Sommerville's tentative invitation to the Annapolis Valley extended to a life time work in that area. The Presbytery which the two had established languished after 1836, and fell into virtual disuse. Sommerville was the one who increasingly dealt with the Covenanter situation in Saint John.

It is clear that the Covenanter community to which Stavely was to come, had long prayed for and looked forward to a resident Covenanter clergyman. The city's Covenanters were never a large group, but they did have a tenacity. Clarke helped with the building of the church in that city; and after he came to the new world, Sommerville visited Saint John from time to time; but it was largely 'lay folk' who persisted in keeping Covenanterism alive. The congregation of Saint John kept appealing regularly to the Irish Synod for someone to come[16]. At last, their prayers for a full-time missionary were answered. Alexander McLeod Stavely, arriving on August 3rd, went immediately to work. The local press noted that

> The Reformed Presbyterian Meeting House in this City was open for Divine Service on Sunday last (August 8), when the new Pastor, the Rev. Mr. Stavely, who arrivied from Belfast, last week, via Greenock, preached two acceptable Sermons to large and respectable congregations.[17]

Stavely's Ministry in Saint John

Stavely was a diligent pastor, a fine preacher, an assiduous worker. And the Covenanter cause flourished. Although the house of worship was situated in a remote part of the city, attendance was very encouraging. Many Presbyterians from the North of Ireland , attracted by the young preacher's fresh presentation of the truth, worshipped there at least part of each Sabbath and contributed liberally for the support of ordinances. Soon after Mr. Stavely's arrival the Lord's Supper was administered. The Rev. Wm. Sommerville, of Nova Scotia, assisted in the services.... Thus was the work fairly inaugurated, and through the agency of Sabbath schools, social meetings during the week and monthly gatherings of teachers for conference and prayer, it was carried on with many tokens of Divine favour.[18]

By the late 1840s, the Covenanters had outgrown their former humble house of worship and a new, larger and more centrally located sanctuary was opened. Much of the money for the new building came from Saint John Covenanters. In additon, Stavely made the first of several long trips south of the border in order to raise funds. Sharing with his sisters many details of his journey—fascinating places and eminent persons—Stavely confesses that the effort was nonetheless arduous.

> I am quite wearied by my long absence and wish to return. ... I feel that I have done all in my power to raise funds & hope to make the people nearly £400 the less in debt by my absence.... I have therefore been employed every Sabbath, and generally speaking, once or twice every week in preaching.... Collecting money for ... a church in another country is no easy task. There is a great deal of labour & anxiety and I long for the end of my exertions.[19]

However, the new church must have been a source of pride to pastor and people. Now centrally located, the Covenanters

> erected a handsome and elegant church, capable of accomodating some 500 to 600 people, with a capacious school room in the basement story, and a manse in the rear now nearly completed, so that the minister can step out of his own room into the pulpit. The internal arrangements of the building are well appointed.... The whole reflects the highest credit on the taste and talent of architect.[20]

At services marking the opening of the new church, Stavely was assisted by his friend, Rev. Wm. Sommerville, and by the Rev. J.R. Lawson who had come from Ireland in 1845, and lived and pastored in South Stream (later Barnesville),

New Brunswick. He became a New Brunswick neighbour of Stavely. The Rev. Robert Stewart, another Covenanter clergyman from Ireland, came to the new world in 1849. After some visitation of Covenanter mission stations, he settled in Melvern Square, N.S., a somewhat near neighbour of Sommerville. In the mid 1840s, the presbytery which Clarke and Sommerville had founded was revived. Clarke himself finally splintered from his erstwhile brethren and joined the American New School Reformed Presbyterian Church in the late 1840s.

Stavely joined the other brethren—Sommerville, Lawson and Stewart—in widespread missionary endeavours throughout the Maritime region. Of particular concern to Stavely was the little mission station of Millstream. Sometimes Covenanters from that community came to Saint John to worship. In Feb., 1855, Stavely writes

> ... We have enjoyed a peculiarly comfortable (communion) season.... On last Sabbath morning, some of our friends arrived from Millstream, a settlement some sixty miles distant from St. John. They left on Friday, and journeyed all night without tarrying, that they might be present with us in good time. They had observed our fast on Friday, meeting in society. To undertake such a journey in the depth of a New Brunswick winter was trying to flesh and blood; but they did not think it too much for the privilege of uniting with their brethren in communicating at a sacramental table. On Tuesday morning they left for their home in the wilderness, when the thermometer indicated 26 degrees below zero. We have had the coldest weather in St. John this week that has been for many years, and I would have felt very anxious for their safety in such a freezing atmosphere, had I not fully believed in the superintending care of that gracious Being whom they love to serve. It will gratify you to know that, at Millstream, where they have a very large society, and a good Sabbath-school, conducted by its members, there is an effort being made to erect a house of worship. A considerable sum has been already subscribed, and the building will shortly be proceeded with. The winter season is peculiarly adapted for "hauling" logs and timber, as is the spring for proceeding with the work. Such an erection as I have referred to is much needed, as there is no place in the settlement at all large enough to contain the hearers, when any of your missionaries visit that locality. Mr. Lawson has kindly consented to use his influence in obtaining for the new house the pews of his old one.[21]

The church of which Stavely spoke was finally opened in the fall of 1859, Stavely officiating. Its stark simplicity must have been in sharp contrast to the church in Saint John.[22] Stavely made several journeys to Millstream, quite apart from the opening of the church.

> On Saturday morning I myself left for ... Millstream, where I preached three times on last Sabbath. The evening service was at the house of our "Deacon" Mr. (Hamilton E.) Grinden. He & his wife are members of that Society and had twin children to baptize. Mrs. G's extremely delicate state of health rendered it altogether impracticable to her to attempt coming out to the Church through the day. This Mr. Grinden is a most worthy man and a very devoted Covenanter. His history is rather interesting had I time to speak of it. His Father who died two or three years ago was for 50 years Coroner of Bristol England, and a man of high social position. ... His son Hamilton E. (Grinden) to whom I have referred, took to teaching shortly after his arrival in the Province. He was then a member of the Church of England. He has a brother-in-law a Rector in New Brunswick—a brother a Rector in Nova Scotia, and other brothers distinguished literary men. ... Not very long before my last visit to Ireland I married Hamilton E. (Grinden) to the daughter of one of our families at Millstream, and he has since resided there. Having a neat farm and little store, with the addition of frequent remittances from the proceeds of his father's estate at home he lives very comfortably. ...Mr.G. is a little eccentric but wonderfully neat & orderly in all his arrangements and a most devoted admirer of the Doctrine, Dis(cipline) & Gov(ernment) of the Covenanting Church.[23]

Pastor, preacher, presbyter, fund-raiser, missionary, Stavely also published some of his sermons and addresses. Many of them have been gathered together in the book *Sermons and Addresses*, published in 1878.[24]

Stavely was also a husband and father. He was married on the 21st April, 1852, to Margaret Cameron, daughter of Ewen Cameron, of Saint John, a descendant of the Camerons of Inverness, and closely connected with the Clan MacDonald. To the Stavelys were born three daughters, only one of whom was to live to mature womanhood.[25] Margaret Cameron was a very worthy helpmate.

> A personality of indescribable charm ...Mrs. Stavely was remarkable for many fine traits of character, but perhaps the dominant note was fixity of purpose. During her life ... she often had to face peril, and whether amid the horrors of cholera ... or in the midst of a burning city, she always showed the utmost heroism and composure, so strong was her trust. With the Bible as her constant companion, she was devoted to the cause of missions.... and in St. John especially she effected much by her social work. Kindly and generous, she loved the poor, and many, both in Canada and in this country, will feel that they have lost in her an ever-constant helper. Her vitality and vigor were indeed amazing and, blessed with a buoyant disposition, she never was known to be downcast. Wherever she went she made friends, and to those friends, whether poor or rich, she was true as steel. (She lived a) life of simple faith in

> Jesus Christ which was the key-note of her character from her earliest childhood.[26]

The Great Fire of 1877 was an event that shook the Stavelys; yet their faith in Christ overcame despair.

> I feel now, for a season and a time, very much as the master of a vessel would do when his noble ship lay stranded and broken up on the beach, and he awaited advices (orders) from head quarters as to what disposal should be made of the wreck. Still we can say and sing, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble, therefore we will not fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." The Prince of Life, the Captain of Salvation, is still at the helm.[27]

Before returning to his native land, Stavely had three further tasks. One was the rebuilding of the Saint John R.P. Church. The second was presiding at the funeral of the Rev.Wm. Sommerville. The third was transferring the presbytery from the Irish to the American Synod.

In Saint John, all the R.P. church property had been destroyed. Although insured, the insurers themselves became bankrupt as a result of the conflagration. Stavely's tenacity is evidenced in the manner in which he handled the crisis. He gathered the remnants of his congregation together, set the machinery of congregational life in order, and collected funds. "The indomitable old pioneer set to work at once, crossed over to Scotland and Ireland, where he got a very sympathetic reception, and collected ... funds." [28]

> The congregation has succeeded in rearing a building for public worship, which serves their purpose, upon a new and more central site than that on which the old building perished in the great fire of 1877. They have completed the basement story of what will form, when finished, a superior Church. And in this temporary hall they are worshipping from Sabbath to Sabbath. Through the exertions of Mr.Stavely, and the generous response made to his appeal both at home and abroad, the congregation is able to enter upon the enjoyment of the building, as far as it has been carried forward, without any considerable debt.[29]

Stavely went to Cornwallis for the funeral of his dear friend and long-time associate, Rev.Wm. Sommerville. Stavely's sermon on that occasion, *The Blessed Dead*, together with a biographical sketch, was preached on October 6, 1878 in the Reformed Presbyterian Church at Cornwallis.[30]

The process of moving the New Brunswick and Nova Scotia Presbytery

from Irish to American jurisdiction had been long in process. It appears Stavely had always favoured it, and Wm. Sommerville had consistently opposed it. Stavely believed that the long term stability of the Covenanter cause in the region required closer supervision and fellowship than that offered by the trans-oceanic Irish Synod. Stavely's conviction seems reasonable; though his hope that the transfer would give long-time help to the Covenanter cause in Maritime Canada did not materialize. Partially due to Stavely's patient and persistent leadership, the transfer was amicably agreed to by all the parties, although not until after Sommerville's death. The transfer was effected on June 2, 1879.[31]

Stavely might well have returned to Ireland, quite apart from the Great Fire of 1877. A frequent traveller to the United States, he had also crossed "the Atlantic no less than ten times to visit his friends, forming friendships wherever he went."[32] The Great Fire undoubtedly speeded up the decision. Stavely's colleague Lawson remarks that "by the great fire of 1877 which swept over St. John, our brother ... being much discouraged, demitted his pastoral charge into the hands of the Presbytery and returned to Ireland, followed by the best wishes of his people and the whole community."[33]

Stavely's Ministry in Ireland

Stavely returned to Ireland in 1879. Although not immediately installed in a congregation, he was far from idle. In 1881, he became Moderator of Synod. His sermon on that occasion was entitled *The Sum of Gospel Preaching*.[34] As part of his role as moderator, he attended and addressed the Scottish R.P. Synod in the same year. In 1882, he wrote an obituary for an old friend, and long-time associate of the Covenanter mission in Canada, the Rev.Dr. Thomas Houston.[35] The Stavelys' daughter, Lizzie, Mrs. James McMaster, died as a young woman in Ireland.[36]

Stavely was one whose faith was not long dampened by sadness and grief, even amongst friends and family. So it is not surprising that "on Wednesday, 10th December 1884, the Eastern Presbytery installed the Rev. Alexander M'Leod Stavely to the pastoral charge of the united congregations of Ballyclare and Larne", in Country Antrim. On that occasion one of Stavely's brothers addressed him:

> After a life of activity and usefulness in other fields of labour, in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, but especially in the important city of St. John, you returned to your own, your native land. For some time you

> have been doing good service in watering many of our congregations, rendered vacant through the removal of honoured fathers and brethren by death and otherwise. And now ... I bid you welcome, and God-speed in this new sphere.[37]

With characteristic diligence, Stavely went to work, labouring here for fifteen years. During his ministry in Ballyclare "the church was renovated, the manse enlarged and improved, and the congregation freed from debt; and the meeting-place in Larne repaired and made more commodious."[38] In 1899, the increasing infirmities of age compelled him to cease from pastoral work, after more than sixty years.[39] He died preacefully on July 9, 1903.

Stavely, a Covenanter on two continents! Gawin Douglas, in his tribute, remarked that Stavely

> possessed an eminently attractive personality.... As a man and a Christian, his endowments were of a superior order. His dispositions were amicable. His manners were bland, kind, and courteous. His appearance was stately and striking. He was a lover of peace, and of all good men. He was an accurate and finished scholar. He was a good preacher. He was a great Bible reader, and his sermons were packed with Scripture. Like Barnabas, he was a son of consolation. As a Presbyter, he was well-informed, judicious and conciliatory. He was an ardent and devoted friend of the Missions of the Church.... While he was kind and conciliatory, he was steadfast as a witness for the grand principles of the Covenanted Reformation, and by his candid and loving spirit was influential in commending them to others. He was a good raconteur.... He was exemplary in all the relations of life, a loving husband, and affectionate father, and a true friend. He was an ideal host; to know him was to love him, and the more he was known the better he was loved.... After a ministry of sixty years, exercised in St. John, N.B., and in Ireland, his native land, he has entered into the joy of his Lord.[40]

References

1. Alex. M'L. Stavely, "The Great Fire in St. John, N.B.," *Covenanter*, 1877, pp. 287-9.
2. Robert Sommerville, "Missionaries of the Reformed Presbyterian Church to the Lower Provinces of Canada, Alexander McLeod Stavely," *Olive Trees*, 1899, p. 248. Hereafter, Robt. Sommerville, "Stavely."
3. See Adam Loughridge's article "William Stavely: The Apostle of the Covenanters," *Reformed Theological Journal*, Nov. 1989, pp. 44-50.
4. The letters are found in PRONI D1792. In some of these letters, the oldest brother William, a resident in America, is mentioned.
5. Alexander McLeod Stavely ...matriculated in two successive university sessions, 1833-34 and 1834-35 for 1 Lit., and 2 Lit., meaning 1st and 2nd year general Arts, and gave

his place of origin as Antrim. He did *not* graduate (Mrs. Jo Currie, Special Collections, Edinburgh University Library, in a letter written May 15, 1991).

6. Northern Presbytery minutes were housed in the Reformed Theological College when I was in Belfast in 1988. I read the pertinent minutes into a tape recorder, and later transcribed them. According to those minutes, the Northern Presbytery met in Ballymoney, Wednesday September 6, 1837.

> Mr. Alexr. McL. Stavely delivered a lecture on John 15:1-7 inclusive which was sustained. As Mr. S. had now finished the usual course of trials, the Court agreed to tender to him License, which he professed himself willing to accept. The moderator then addressed to him some inquiries in relation to personal religion, and to his views concerning the preaching of the Gospel, which he answered to the satisfaction of the Court. At the request of the moderator, Mr. Cameron proposed to Mr. Stavely the Formula of Questions to Candidates to License, to which he gave assent: afterwards, by solemn prayer, (the Presbytery) licensed him to preach the glorious Gospel, and then tendered to him suitable advice.

Very commonly, Stavely is said to have been licensed in 1839. The discrepancy may be capable of a *partial* explanation. In a hand-written statement which is obviously the obituary of Stavely, "extracted from the minutes of the R.P. Synod in Ireland by J.D. Houston, Clerk," dated "R.P. Manse, Coleraine, 6th June 1904," we find:

> (Stavely) was licensed to preach in 1837. Two years later he was ordained and sent as a missionary... (PRONI, D/1792/E)

Yet such dating, while correctly maintained the 1837 licensing, would put Stavely's ordination in 1839, when it clearly took place in 1841. On the other hand, the printed version of the (same) statement "Minute in regard to the Death of Rev. Alexander M. Stavely," we find:

> (Stavely) was licensed to preach in 1839. Two years later he was ordained and sent as a missionary ...(*Covenanter*, 1904, p. 195)

This statement clearly implies the correct dating of Stavely's ordination, but it sacrifices accuracy as to his licensing. With few exceptions, the mistaken 1839 date has been consistently repeated: though not always. See J.C.K. Milligan, "Covenanter Ministers of Half a Century," *Our Banner*, Feb., 1884, p. 72, who writes:

> A.M. Stavely, Ireland; licensed, 1837; ordained as Missionary May 12, 1841; pastor St. John; United States Synod, 1879; Ireland, May, 1881.

7. See "Abstract of the Treasurer's Account of the Home and Foreign Missionary Society. For the Year Ending July, 1838."

> *Disbursements*
> Mr. A.M'L. Stavely, for his mission to Manchester £4.0.0
> *Home Stations*
> Mr. A.M'L. Stavely, Licentiate, £1.10.0

This document is housed in the Reformed Theological College, Belfast.

8. See "Abstract of the Treasurer's Account of the Home and Foreign Missionary Society. For the Year Ending July, 1839."

> *Disbursements*
> Mr. A.M'L. Stavely for his Mission to Manchester £5.10.0
> Alexander M'L. Stavely, Licentiate, £5.0.0
> See "Abstract of the Treasurer's Account of the Home and Foreign Missionary Society. For the Year Ending July, 1840."
> *Receipts*
> A Friend, by Mr. A.M'L. Stavely, licentiate £1.0.0
> *Disbursements*
> Mr. A.M'L. Stavely, for his Missionary labours £7.10.0
> Do., for his Mission to Manchester £3.0.1
> Mr. A.M'L. Stavely, for second visit to Manchester, and other Missionary labours, £7.19.0

These documents are also found in the Reformed Theological College.

9. The account, entitled "Reformed Presbyterian Church," was published in the Nova Scotia publication *Guardian*, 1841, 14. A fuller account is given in "Ordination of a Missionary for the British North American Colonies," *Covenanter*, 1841, pp. 142-3.
10. Robt. Sommerville, "Stavely," p. 250.
11. W.M. Glasgow, *History of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in America* (Baltimore: Harvey & Harvey, Publishers, 1888), pp. 165-6.
12. "In 1822, the Northern Presbytery had licensed James Warnock and furnished him with credentials when he intimated his intention of emigrating to New Brunswick. His venture was of a private nature and he received no support from the Church at Home." Adam Loughridge, *The Covenanters in Ireland: A History of the Reformed Presbyterian Church* (Belfast: Cameron Press, 1984), p. 69.
13. New Brunswick Courier, Oct.12, 1835.
14. In 1833 the two men were not in agreement. See Wm. Sommerville, 'Letter to Dr. J.R. Willson, Aug.8, 1833.' Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, Willson papers, box 7.
15. See A. Clarke, 'Letter to Rev. Jas.R. Willson, Wed. Oct. 14, 1835.'
16. See *Minutes of RP Irish Synod*, Moneymore, July, 19f., 1836. Item 12 notes that:

    > The Rev. Thomas Houston, one of the Secretaries of the Missionary Society... lays on the table of Synod... a letter from the Presbytery of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and a petition to that Presbytery from the Congregation at St. John's.

17. 'Announcement,' *New Brunswick Chronicle*, Sat. Aug. 14, 1841.
18. Robt. Sommerville, "Stavely," p. 250.
19. 'Letter from Stavely to his sister, April 9, 1850, from Atlanta Georgia,' PRONI D1792/E/6.
20. "Opening of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of St. John, N.B.," *Monitor and Missionary Chronicle*, 1851, pp. 763-4.
21. A.M. Stavely, "St. John, New Brunswick," *Covenanter*, 1855, pp. 278-9.
22. For an account of the church opening, see "Reformed Presbyterian Colonial Mission, New Brunswick," *Covenanter*, Nov. 1859, 315. The pews from Mr. Lawson's old church did not get moved to the new building, for the seats in the Millstream church

    > were planed planks two inches thick and varied in length from 6 ft. to 8 ft. to 10 ft. These seats were 16 inches wide. (W. Harvey Dalling, "The History of the Covenanter Church in Kings County, *Newsletter of the Kings County History and Archival Society*, April, 1984, p. 2).

    Pews these seats were not.

    > The Millstream church had backless benches. (Grace Aiton, *The Story of Sussex and Vicinity*. Sussex: Kings County Historical Society, 1967, p. 97).

23. 'Letter from Stavely to his sister, written from Saint John, N.B., Wed., July 9, 1873.' PRONI D1792/E/11.
24. *Sermons and Addresses*, St. John, Barnes and Co., 1878. The "Index to Contents" indicates the following:

    SERMONS
    The Perpetuity of the Gospel
    Redeeming the Time
    SKETCHES AND ADDRESSES
    The Life and Times of Knox
    The Historical Position of the Reformed Presbyterian Church
    The Benefits of Bible Circulation
    United Efforts necessary to the Evangelization of the World
    The Supremacy of the Bible
    The Results of Bible Circulation
    Universal Diffusion of the Gospel
    Past and Present in Bible Circulation

    The book has now been made available in the series of the *Canadian Institute for*

Historical Microreproduction (CIHM). no. 18859.

25. Jane was the widow of Dr. Hamilton, later becoming the wife of the Rev. J.B. Armour, Ballymoney.
26. "Former St. John Woman dies in Ireland." *Saint John Telegraph*, Sept. 26, 1905.
27. Stavely, "The Great Fire in St. John, N.B.," pp. 287-9.
28. Rev. Gawin Douglas, "Alexander M'Leod Stavely." *Olive Trees*, 1903, pp. 344-7.
29. 'Colonial Mission Report, June, 1879.' *Covenanter*, 1879, pp. 253-7.
30. Saint John, N.B., Barnes and Co., and R.A.H. Morrow *and* New York: Anson D.F. Randolph & Company, c. 1878. CIHM, 25832.
31. 'Report of the Committee on Union with Presbytery of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia,' "Minutes of Synod," New York, May 28f, 1879, reported in *Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanter*, 1879. pp. 213-4.
32. "Former St. John Minister Dead," *Saint John Telegraph*, July 31, 1903.
33. J.R. Lawson, "Our Church in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia," *Our Banner*, 1880, pp. 124-6.
34. Published separately and in the *Covenanter*, 1881, pp. 277-85; 309-18.
35. A.M. Stavely, "The Late Dr. Houston," *Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanter*, 1882, pp. 191-2.
36. "Death of Mrs. McMaster," *Saint John Telegraph*, Nov. 6, 1882, p. 3.
37. "Installation at Ballyclare," *Covenanter*, 1885, pp. 13-21.
38. Rev. Prof. Lynd, "Memoir of the Rev. A.M. Stavely," *Covenanter*, 1903, p. 352.
39. An account of the retirement social is found in "Ireland," *Olive Trees*, 1899, pp. 113-4; republished from the *Ulster Echo*.
40. Op. cit., p. 346.

IS I TIMOTHY 3:16 PART OF A HYMN?

By Edward Donnelly

Edward Donnelly is Professor of New Testament Language and Literature in the Reformed Theological College, Belfast.

> *"Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great:*
> *He appeared in a body,*
> *was vindicated by the Spirit,*
> *was seen by angels,*
> *was preached among the nations,*
> *was believed on in the world,*
> *was taken up into glory."*

This verse is a magnificent Christological statement, rich in content and lyrical in expression. It is generally regarded as being part of an early Christian hymn - that is, a portion of praise composed by some unknown believer and used in the worship of the New Testament church. Paul is understood to be quoting from this hymn, much as a modern preacher might include in his sermon a verse from Wesley or Newton.

The purpose of the present article is to examine this claim in order to discover whether or not it is well-founded. If, as we believe, it can be shown to be based on exceedingly slender evidence, we may then be entitled to call in question the concept of New Testament hymns in general. Many commentators will be seen to have made an elementary exegetical blunder, which has given birth to a generally accepted but misleading conclusion.

Agreement of Commentators

Among commentators on I Timothy the consensus is widespread that 3:16 is part of a hymn. Guthrie refers to "the Christian hymn contained in this verse"[1] and Hendriksen describes it as "the hymn from which Paul now quotes six lines".[2] Barclay is even more categorical: "Here we have a fragment of one of the hymns of the early Church. It is a setting of belief in Christ to poetry and to music, a hymn in which men sang their creed".[3] Lenski begins cautiously, but soon becomes more dogmatic: "While it is true that we cannot prove it, we..

take it that Paul is quoting a Christian hymn or rather a psalm... Since these lines were used in a hymn in the congregations.."[4]

Scholarly opinion is not absolutely unanimous. Calvin, without comment, treats the verse as prose. Blaiklock allows for a catechetical as well as a liturgical use: "In verse 16 Paul ends with what may have been one of the doctrinal antiphonal chants by which the church, before the whole New Testament was in its hands, propagated and established doctrine. Pliny, the governor of Bithynia in A.D.110, told how his investigators found that the Christians, at their dawn meeting, sang alternately a hymn to Christ as God. This may have been part of the hymn".[5] Simpson writes of "a confession of faith which reads like a citation from canticle or catechism. We seem to be listening to a primitive epitome of Christological instruction.."[6] Earle describes it as a "striking credal statement".[7] On the whole, however, the preponderance of opinion considers the words to be a hymnic fragment. Gundry's summary is a fair one: "By common consent I Timothy 3:16 contains a quotation from an early Christian hymn".[8] What can be said against this consensus?

Personal Bias?

It would be ingenuous to pretend that a Reformed Presbyterian can approach the question from a position of neutrality. Our church, in common with a number of other denominations and in line with what was once a much more widespread practice, uses in the public worship of God only the 150 Spirit-given psalms, hymns and songs of the Book of Psalms. We believe that the psalter is a complete and perfect manual of praise and that there is no Scriptural warrant for the use of any other material. But if it is the case that this and other verses in the New Testament are quotations from Christian hymns, then our views on worship are due for drastic modification. We might be thought to have a vested interest, as it were, in defining such passages in a particular way.

Does this disqualify us as exegetes? Surely not. It simply means that we must recognise our interest, guard against bias, be scrupulously careful in our scholarship. Commitment to a position does not preclude an honest examination of evidence which might threaten it. A student who is already persuaded of the divinity of Jesus Christ, for example, may legitimately seek to answer objections which may be raised against that doctrine. Provided that he is honest with

the evidence, we do not accuse him of bias. In fact, to be aware of our interest and to take steps to guard against special pleading is a great deal better than the stance of commentators who seem unconscious of the extent of their own bias. As we shall see, their case is so weak that no charge of prejudice can fairly be levelled against those who challenge it.

What is the Evidence?

On what grounds is it alleged that I Timothy 3:16 is part of a hymn? The evidence is meagre - startlingly so, in view of some of the rather dogmatic assertions already quoted. A vast edifice of supposition has been erected upon a most fragile foundation. The conclusion is founded on only two basic premises:

a) *Paul is quoting a fragment from a longer piece, written by someone else.* This assertion is supported by three arguments:

(i) The passage begins with a relative pronoun, *hos* ('who'), which has no antecedent. The sentence is therefore incomplete, proving that it has been taken from a larger fragment. Guthrie writes of: "the masculine relative evidently referring to Christ, who was no doubt mentioned in an earlier part of the hymn which was omitted from the citation".[9] Hendriksen makes the same point.[10]

(ii) Words are found here - such as *"appeared.. was believed on.. was taken up" (ephanerothe, episteuthe, anelemphthe)* - which are not used elsewhere in the same way by Paul. Therefore these words were not originally written by him. He is quoting another author.

(iii) The truths expressed here are more extensive than the context of the letter requires. The verse, in other words, is top heavy, slightly incongruous. While it serves Paul's purpose well enough, it bears the marks of having been designed for another context. One commentator goes so far as to state that: "this passage (vs.14-16) is without grammatical or doctrinal connection with the material which immediately precedes or follows".[11]

b) *The piece from which Paul quotes is an early Christian hymn.* The only argument for this assertion is the lyrical and rhythmic quality of the Greek. Guthrie states that "the lyrical quality of this hymn.. is most impressive in the

Greek"[12] and in Lenski's opinion "the form is striking indeed and also beautifully rhythmic".[13]

Apart from these two premises and their supporting arguments, no other evidence is offered in support of the contention that the verse is a hymn fragment.

Evaluating the "Evidence"

a) Paul may well be quoting. He is fond of doing so. But we must recognize that there is no compelling reason to conclude that he must be. He may equally be the original author of these words.

(i) His use of the relative pronoun without an antecedent is frequent throughout his writings. The meaning, as here, is almost always apparent and it is not seriously suggested that every instance marks a quotation.

(ii) The proportion of unusual words in this verse is no higher than in the remainder of the Pastoral Epistles. This criterion, advanced extensively by the higher critics, is invalid and, if used consistently, would disprove Pauline authorship of the three letters in their entirety - a conclusion which the commentators referred to above would not support.[14] In any case, an author must be free to use whatever vocabulary he wishes, and, especially when dealing with sublime themes such as those mentioned here, it is understandable that he will from time to time express himself in unaccustomed ways. We cannot confine a great writer within a linguistic straitjacket. As E K Simpson puts it: "Great souls are not their own mimes".[15]

(iii) Far from being incongruous, the verse fits into the context perfectly. The apostle is moving in thought from the solemn duties of the officers of the church to the sin of apostasy. What link could be more fitting than the glorious Person of Christ, whom the elders and deacons serve and the truth of whose gospel must not be perverted? Lock finds that "this section primarily gives the reason for the regulations in the preceding chapters.. it also leads on to the warning against false teaching and the advice about Timothy's teaching which follows. It thus becomes the very heart of the epistle".[16]

b) In the second place, there is absolutely no evidence that these words originally formed part of a hymn or song of praise. The material is certainly

lyrical and rhythmic in quality. There is close parallelism of structure, with six aorist passive verbs, each immediately followed by a dative noun. Internal rhyme is present. The style is terse, compact, somewhat cryptic. All of these features might well apply to a song of praise. But they need not do so, and various other explanations are entirely possible.

(i) It is a fact that, in moments of deep feeling, many writers and speakers adopt, probably unconsciously, a form of rhythmic, lyrical language. In Romans 11:33-36, for example, the apostle, overwhelmed by the glory and grace of the gospel, expresses himself most movingly and poetically. Yet it is not suggested that he is quoting part of a hymn. Ruth's pledge of commitment to Naomi (Ruth 1:16,17) is a piece of magnificent poetry which could be set to music. But the cadences are of deep emotion, not artistic composition. Paul may be similarly moved here.

(ii) More probably, this verse, if a quotation, may be taken from an early creed or catechism. Such documents were much in use in the post-apostolic church[17] and were often written in terse and striking language as an aid to the memory of new converts. In the period before the Canon of Scripture was completed such brief confessions of faith would have been of especial value. It is interesting that the word which Paul uses at the beginning of verse 16 - *homologoumenos* - is directly linked with the cognate *homologia* ('confession'). Lenski translates it here as "confessedly"[18], and, although he believes the confession to have been made in a congregational hymn or chant, it may equally well refer to a spoken epitome of the faith.

(iii) Several factors render it unlikely that this could be a fragment from a hymn. If, as alleged, we have hymnic quotations here and in a multitude of other New Testament passages, there must have been a flourishing hymnody at the time. It is surely strange that the earliest extant non-inspired hymns date from late in the 2nd century. Again, while several psalms are quoted repeatedly in the New Testament, no 'hymn' is quoted more than once. Why such sparing usage?

Our conclusion must be that the case for this verse as a hymn fragment (and for hymnic fragments as a whole) is embarrassingly weak. All is pure conjecture and comes to little more than the assertion that because the passage has rhythm it must have been sung in worship. Hendriksen's statement is representative: "Paul quotes from a beautiful early Hymn in adoration of the Christ.. Here we have proof of the fact that there was at least a beginning of

hymnody during this early period".[19] The 'proof' is Hendriksen's unsupported statement that it is so. With all due respect to an exegetical giant, we must say that interpretation could hardly become more biased or unscientific.

Weaknesses in the "Hymnic Fragment" Theory

a) *Form-critical influence.* This basically destructive and rationalistic method of criticism divides Scripture into its putative component parts - parables,legends, sayings, etc. The human writers of the Bible become little more than editors, piecing together material from other sources. The discovery of 'hymnic fragments' has coincided with form-critical study and has been actively pursued by some of its leading exponents. Commentators who do not themselves espouse form-critical methodology seem to have been influenced by this prevailing climate.

b) *Hopelessly subjective criteria.* Once started on the scent of hymnic fragments, the excitement of the chase takes over and the researcher soon begins to find them everywhere. R P Martin identifies 4 main types of hymns (although he acknowledges that not all may have been used in public worship): sacramental (Eph.5:14; Tit.3:4-7; Rom.6:1-11; Eph.2:19-22); meditative (Eph.1:3-14; Rom.8:31-39; 1 Cor.13); confessional (1 Tim.6:11-16; 2 Tim.2:11-13); Christological (Heb.1:3; Col.1:15-20; 1 Tim.3;16; John 1: 1-14; 1 Pet.1:18-21, 2:21-25, 3:18-21; Phil.2:6-11).[20] Other scholars have suggested as hymnic candidates: Matt.11:25-30; Acts 4:24-34; 1 Cor.2;9; 1 Tim.1:15; 2 Tim.1:9,10; Tit.2:13,14; 1 Pet.1:3-5, 2:4-8,11-13. But the criteria for identifying these hymns are imprecise, debated and subjective - often amounting to little more than the opinion of the writer. The increasing list of alleged fragments is becoming ridiculous and is discrediting the whole enterprise. In the very nature of the case it is extremely difficult to demonstrate if a particular passage is poetry or not, and, if poetry, impossible to prove whether or not it was intended to be sung.

c) *Exegetical bias.* Perhaps the most common mistake in exegesis is for an interpreter to read back into the New Testament his own circumstances, experiences, preferences and mental attitudes. We would smile, for example, at a preacher who told his congregation that Matthew the publican kept a public house. Yet it would seem that those who see in this and other verses portions of 'Christian hymns' may be guilty of the same elementary blunder. They themselves are accustomed to singing human hymns and see no problem with

their composition and introduction into worship. They assume, without any firm evidence, that the New Testament church followed the same practice and then extrapolate on the basis of this unwarranted conjecture. We have seen that there are, at the very least, some grounds for calling into question the whole genre of New Testament hymns. The case for their existence is very far from proven.

References

1. Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, ad loc.
2. William Hendriksen, *A Commentary on the Epistles to Timothy and Titus*, ad loc.
3. William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, ad loc.
4. R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon*, ad loc.
5. E.M. Blaiklock, *A Study Guide to the epistles of I and II Timothy and Titus*, ad loc.
6. E.K. Simpson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, ad loc.
7. R. Earle, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol.11, p.370
8. In 'The Form, Meaning and Background of the Hymn quoted in I Timothy 3:16', from *Apostolic History and the Gospel*, W W Gasque and R P Martin, eds.
9. Op. cit.
10. Op. cit.
11. *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol.XI, p.418
12. Op. cit.
13. Op. cit.
14. For a brief discussion of this point, see Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, pp 594,595, 607-610.
15. Op. cit., pp.15,16. He continues with splendid eloquence: "How wide the interval betwixt Horace's roughest-hewn Satires and his stateliest Odes, or between the sepulchral pomp of Tennyson's In Memoriam and the money-grubbing jingle of his Northern Farmer! What a contrast between the ornate luxuriance of the more sonorous cadences of Paradise Lost and the tragic austerity and loin-girt athleticism of Milton's latest work, the Samson Agonistes! In minds of the finest texture strands of likeness and unlikeness intertwine".
16. W. Lock, *The Pastoral Epistles*, ad loc.
17. Paul's use of phrases such as "here is a trustworthy saying" (1 Tim.1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim.2:11; Tit.3:8) may have been quotations from similar credal statements.
18. Op. cit. Cf. "by common consent", Guthrie, op. cit., "by common profession", Earle, op. cit.
19. Op. cit., p.142
20. *New Testament Foundations*, Vol.2, pp 262ff.

ASPECTS OF FAITH IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

by Hugh J.Blair

For over thirty years Hugh J. Blair was Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament in the Reformed Theological College, Belfast.

The best known chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews is chapter eleven, with its wonderful list of Old Testament heroes of faith. It is thrilling to read what men and women were enabled to do through faith. But it would be a mistake to think that all we can learn about faith in Hebrews is to be found in chapter eleven. The fact is that the definition of faith in the first verse of that chapter, while very important, is a limited one: "Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (NIV). Faith is the faculty which perceives the reality of the unseen world, and Hebrews 11 gives unforgettable illustrations of that.

There are other aspects of faith in Hebrews - faith in the promises of God, closely linked with faith in the unseen; faith in the Word preached; faith that receives righteousness; faith that gives assurance. It is possible to find in Hebrews a progression in faith from faith in the unseen to full saving faith in Jesus Christ, involving personal trust and full commitment. Our study of aspects of faith in Hebrews must lead us to Him.

I. Faith in the unseen

"In Hebrews faith is the faculty to perceive the reality of the unseen world of God and to make it the primary object of one's life" (G.E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, p. 584). That aspect of faith, while it finds its most obvious illustration in Hebrews 11, occurs right through the epistle. Indeed, "the reality of the unseen world of God" might be taken as a basic theme of Hebrews. A key verse is chapter 10, verse 1: "The law" - that is, the Old Testament dispensation - "is only a shadow of the good things that are coming - not the realities themselves" (NIV). The Old Testament dispensation was a shadowy copy of a perfect reality. And faith looks beyond the shadow to the reality. Thus the earthly tabernacle was a pale copy of the real Temple of God. The earthly sacrifices were a remote reflection of the One Sacrifice that could really be effective. The earthly priesthood was an inadequate shadow of the

perfect priesthood of Christ. All the parts of the Old Testament dispensation pointed beyond themselves to the reality of which they were the shadows. The faith of Old Testament believers looked beyond the shadow to the reality - a reality that for them was still unseen. The faith of New Testament believers, too, still looks forward to what is unseen: "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (II Cor. 4.18).

The great value of Hebrews 11 is that it gives us concrete examples of those who lived by that kind of faith in the unseen. In some of the cases it is explicitly stated that their faith looked beyond what was visible to what was unseen. Noah, for example, was "warned by God of things not seen as yet" - the coming judgment of the Flood. His faith accepted that, and he built the ark.

Abraham gives the outstanding Old Testament example of that which looks beyond what is seen and transitory to what is unseen and eternal. He went out, with no knowledge of where he was going; that was still unseen to him. Even when he knew that his destination was the land of Canaan, he looked beyond it to a spiritual fulfilment. Canaan was still a foreign country in which he and his descendants merely sojourned as those who were moving on. They lived in tents, still nomads, for their faith looked forward to a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Canaan was a partial fulfilment of the promise, but it was visible, and the unseen still beckoned them. "They were longing for a better country - a heavenly one" (11.16). Joseph's faith looked forward to something that was still unseen, the return of his people to Canaan, and showed itself in his dying instruction that his bones were to be taken back there.

It is expressly stated that Moses endured as seeing Him Who is invisible. He could have had so much that was visible - wealth and power as the son of Pharaoh's daughter - but he turned his back on that to share suffering with his people. What could be seen by him in Egypt was the wrath of the king, but he was strong against that by his faith in the invisible God. It is noteworthy that for Moses the unseen in which he believed was a Person, not just a future. At the Red Sea what could be seen was the army of Egypt behind and the Red Sea before. Faith looked to the unseen God Who could make a way through the sea and destroy their enemies. In the Passover all that could be seen was the blood of the lamb on the lintel and the doorposts; faith trusted God for deliverance.

Basic to the faith in the unseen shown by all the heroes of faith in Hebrews

11 was faith in the God Who is invisible but Who proves the reality of His existence by rewarding those who diligently seek Him (v.6). It was also faith in a world which was made not from things which were seen but by the word of God, and which continues to have beyond what is seen a reality which is unseen and eternal (v.3).

It is unfortunate that division into chapters hides the fact that the opening verses of chapter 12 point us to the supreme example of faith in the unseen, Jesus, "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame." He is described as the Author, or, better, the First Leader of faith - not our faith - and the Perfecter, the Perfect Example, of faith. Westcott's commentary on Hebrews puts it clearly: "In Jesus Christ Himself we have the perfect example...of that faith which we are to imitate, trusting in Him. He too looked through the present and the visible to the future and the unseen. In His human nature He exhibited faith in its highest form, from first to last, and placing Himself as it were at the head of the great army of heroes of faith, He carried faith, the source of their strength, to its most complete perfection and to its loftiest triumph."

What He could see - what was visible - was the Cross with its suffering humiliation and shame. What by faith He looked on to was the joy that was set before Him, the joy of bringing many sons unto glory, referred to in Hebrews 2: 9,10 - wonderfully parallel to 12: 2 - where again He is described as the Captain, the First Leader, of our salvation. Now He is invisible to us, seated at the right hand of the throne of God. We have to exercise faith in Him our unseen Saviour and Lord. We do that by looking away from everything else to Him, "looking away unto Jesus, the First Leader and the Perfect Example of faith" in the unseen.

II. Faith in the Promise

Hebrews 6:12 speaks of those who "through faith and patience inherit the promises." The concept of promise runs right through the Bible. Indeed it has been taken as the link which binds the Old Testament and the New Testament together. In the Old Testament promise is looking forward: in the New Testament it is seen as fulfilled in Christ. Paul in his sermon in Pisidian Antioch, recorded in Acts 13, said, "We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again."

The Epistle to the Hebrews has the Old Testament as its background, and so we can expect to find promise figuring very significantly in it. Words linked with promise occur at least 17 times. Inevitably then faith in Hebrews is faith in the promise, seen not only in the verse quoted from Hebrews 6 but in the linking of faith with the promise in the history of Abraham in Hebrews 11: "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise"(v.9). "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son" (v.17).

The promise in view is very clearly identified as the promise to Abraham: in Hebrews 6:12 the writer exhorts his readers to be "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises," and immediately identifies the promises he is discussing by saying, "For when God made promise to Abraham...."

There were three parts of the promise to Abraham:

(a) *The promise of a seed.*

The faith that accepted that part of the promise was faith in something that was humanly impossible, for, humanly speaking, Abraham and Sarah could not have a child. Romans 4: 18ff describes the faith of Abraham who "being not weak in faith... staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform." And Hebrews 11:11 describes the parallel faith of Sarah, who "judged him faithful who had promised." The faith of both was faith in the promise of God.

Abraham's faith in the promise of a seed was tested to the uttermost when God commanded him to offer up Isaac. It is the Epistle to the Hebrews which puts that test and the faith which met it in the context of God's promise: "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son" (11.17). The implication of sacrificing Isaac is clearly set out. The promise was "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." If Isaac was dead, there could be no fulfilment of the promise of a seed. Then there comes Abraham's tremendous leap of faith, "accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead." That was no fanciful assessment of Abraham's faith, written by the writer of Hebrews nearly 2000 years afterwards. The evidence for Abraham's faith that God could raise Isaac from

the dead comes in Genesis 22.5, where Abraham says to his young men, "Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and we will come again to you ."

The vital word in Hebrews 11.19 is the word "accounting." It is an accountant's word, meaning 'reckoning,' 'balancing up the ledger.' That is what Abraham did. On the one side he put all his doubts, his realisation that if Isaac were killed, there could be no fulfilment of the promise, his questioning whether God could really mean him to do this thing. And on the other side just this; God has given His promise.Then Abraham made his calculation: Even if it means God's having to raise Isaac from the dead, His promise will not fail. There come times for all of us when we have to make that kind of calculation - to put on the one side the doubts and questionings that we have; and then on the other the promises of God, guaranteed for us in Christ. What then must our reckoning be? Surely this, that we are "fully persuaded that what God has promised, He is able also to perform."

The fulfilment of the promise of a seed was beyond anything that Abraham could have imagined. For, as Paul argues in Galatians 3:16, the promise of a seed - singular, not plural - was fulfilled not in many descendants of Abraham, but in One, the Lord Jesus Christ. There was a still further fulfilment. At the end of Galatians 3 Paul says, "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."All who are linked to Christ by faith are counted as the seed of Abraham. It is wonderful how the promise of a multitude of descendants promised to Abraham is narrowed down to One, the Lord Jesus Christ; and then broadened out again to a great multitude which no man can number, of all who are His.

(b) *The promise of a land*

The promise of a land was mentioned first in Abraham's call as recorded in Genesis 12:1: "Leave your country, your people and your faither's household and go to the land I will show you" (NIV), or, better, "the land that I will cause you to see." That was confirmed in the covenant of Genesis 17: "The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God." That last sentence tells us what the promise of a land really meant - not merely a place to dwell in, but a tangible evidence that God was the God of His people. Hebrews 11 helps us to understand that much more was involved than a piece of land. The patriarchs looked for a better country - a heavenly one. "Therefore

God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them." Calvin gives a succinct summary of what the promise of the land means for us: "To dwell in the land by right of inheritance means nothing less than to remain in the family of God."

(c) *The promise of blessing for the world*

God's promise to Abraham included this: "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." It is this part of the promise to Abraham that was most imperfectly fulfilled in the Old Testament. For Israel largely failed to bring God's blessing to the world. God had called them to be His separate people, so that their distinctive life-style might be a witness for Him. But ever more tragically their history proved to be a history of compromise instead of obedience, and so their witness was ineffective. Israel's failure in distinctiveness led to failure in mission. That happens still when the church, as P.T. Forsyth put it, "is established on good terms with this world instead of being a foreign mission from another ."

Yet there was some fulfilment in the Old Testament of blessing for the world through Abraham and his descendants. Solomon in his prayer at the dedication of the Temple prayed that all the peoples of the earth should know God's name and fear Him even as Israel did (I Kings 8: 41-43). Many of the Psalms have a vision of blessing for the world. For example, Psalm 67, verse 1 is a prayer for God's mercy for His people: "God be merciful unto us and bless us." Why? "That Thy name may be known in the earth and Thy salvation among all nations."

But it is especially in the prophets that the vision of blessing for the world is most clearly seen. Isaiah saw that the function of Israel as God's servant was to be a light to the Gentiles; and he saw, too, that that function could be perfectly fulfilled only in the perfect Servant. Jeremiah saw that Israel's failure to keep the old covenant demanded a new covenant, and part of that new covenant was the promise, as quoted in Hebrews 8:11, "All shall know me, from the least to the greatest." Hebrews 8:6 sees the new covenant as "a better covenant, which was established upon better promises," and the verses which follow define the better promises as the promises of Jeremiah 31: 31-34, fulfilled when Christ in the Upper Room said, "This is the new covenant in My blood." It was "shed for many for the remission of sins." The promise of blessing for the world was fulfilled in Christ. In the end, faith in the promise is faith in Christ, in Whom all the promises of God are Yes and Amen. He was, and is, the perfect Seed

of Abraham, through Whom blessing comes to the world, and Who provides a sure dwelling-place for His people, now and for ever.

III. Faith in the Word Preached (the Gospel).

Hebrews 4:2 defines faith as faith in the Word preached by referring to those who received no benefit from the Word preached, because it was not "mixed with faith in them that heard it." The first part of the verse defines what was preached as the good news, the evangel; those who hear it are evangelised. Faith is faith in the Word preached, or faith in the Gospel.

(a) *The Good News*

The first part of Hebrews 4:2 might be translated, "We are recipients of the good news as they were too." The previous chapter gives the tragic story of the people of Israel who because of their unbelief failed to enter into the possession that was promised to them. They had received good news then, as those to whom this letter was first written were receiving good news in their day, but they had no faith in the gospel, and so they failed to enter in. The Old Testament is full of 'gospel'. The Hebrew words for 'tidings', 'good tidings', and the verbs linked with them, translated 'preach', 'publish', 'show forth', 'bring good tidings', occur frequently and correspond to the Greek noun and verb meaning 'gospel' or 'to preach the gospel'.

We must be grateful to the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews for giving a special insight into what the good news involves. It is good news of *rest*. "We who have believed do enter into rest" (4:3). (1) It is a special rest, described in 4:1 and 4:5 as God's rest; 4:4 speaks of God's resting from all His works after Creation. Rest for Him was the rest of achievement and fulfilment, and rest for us must be, not our achievement but His. That is why this chapter goes on to say, in v.10, "He that is entered into his (His?) rest, he also hath ceased from his own works as God did from His." Calvin says, "God cannot work in us until we rest." The Shorter Catechism's definition of saving faith leaves us in no doubt; "Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and *rest upon Him alone* for salvation..." (2) The word 'rest' in these chapters of Hebrews is further used to describe the conquest of the land of Canaan by Israel. Those who did not believe failed to enter into that rest (3:19) - the rest of possession and security.

The good news is that God's rest of salvation, and of possession and security is still available (4:9).

(b) *The Word Preached and Heard*

The phrase in Hebrews 4:2 translated 'the word preached' in AV is literally 'the word of hearing' and is translated in NIV as 'the message they heard.' The AV is to be preferred, for the Greek word translated 'of hearing' is applied to a message that is proclaimed. In Romans 10:16, quoting the Greek version of Isaiah 53:1 - 'Lord, who hath believed our report?'- it is applied to the rejection of the preaching of the gospel. The message they heard was the Word preached.

The tragedy was that the Word preached, the good news of rest, did not do the people of Israel any good. Failure to experience God's rest is put in three ways in this chapter. Verse 1, people come short of it, like a runner failing to reach the tape. The promise is heard, it is there, but it is not reached. That can happen every time the gospel is preached. People hear it, and perhaps go a certain distance in making a response to it, but they do not go the full way, the way of full commitment to what they have heard. Then, as in verse 2, they get no good out of what might have benefitted them. "The word preached did not profit them." That, too, can happen so easily. Then, as in verse 6, they fail to enter into the possession that they might have had. "They to whom it was first preached as good news did not enter into it." The blessing was there, the rest was there, for the taking, but they did not enter into it. What went wrong? The answer is in one word - unbelief. To use the vivid picture of verse 2, the missing ingredient was faith. "The word preached" was not "mixed with faith in them that heard it."

(c) *The Response of Faith*

Faith in the good news and in the Word preached is the essential response that is required if that Word is to bring any benefit. The need for a positive response of faith is first put negatively in repeated warnings in these chapters against unbelief. Various strands in unbelief are identified. Unbelief is seen in *defection* - 'departing from the living God' (3:12) - putting one's trust in something other than a God Who is alive. A heart that turns away from God is already 'an evil heart of unbelief.' Unbelief is seen in *disobedience* - 'they do always err in their heart; and they have not known My ways', quoted from Psalm 95:10; first the heart wanders, and then the feet step out of God's ways. Unbelief is seen in *delay*: the stress on 'Today' in chapters 3 and 4 gives urgent

warning against the folly of procrastination. Unbelief is seen in the unsuspected hardening which results from the *deceitfulness of sin* - 'lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulnes of sin' (3:13).

The positive response of faith and the steps that must be taken to faith are indicated by the four occurrences of 'Let us' in chapter 4.

'Let us therefore fear ... ' (4:1). There is a danger that we should be too casual. The Word, pictured in 4:12 as 'alive and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword', can stab us broad awake and inspire in us a godly fear that is one step towards faith.

'Let us labour therefore ...' (4:11). That raises a difficulty, for faith is trusting, not labouring. But the word translated 'labour' does not mean 'work': it means 'to give urgent attention' (See Galatians 2:10; II Timothy 4:9, 21; II Peter 1:10). Let us give urgent attention to believing.

'Let us hold fast our profession ...' (4:14). Again that seems to be putting too much responsibility on believers. But look at the first part of the verse: "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." And compare Hebrews 10. 23: 'Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for He is faithful that promised." Our faith is anchored there.

'Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace...' (4:16). That is the one action of faith, to which the gospel and the Word preached will bring us, to rest in the welcoming mercy and grace of God.

IV. Faith that receives righteousness

The greatest function of faith is to make us right with God: it is by faith that we receive righteousness. The Shorter Catechism puts it concisely and accurately in its definition of justification: "Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone." Righteousness is by faith alone.

It has been claimed that that aspect of faith is lacking in Hebrews. Professor George E. Ladd writes, "Faith in Hebrews has a distinctly different emphasis

from that in John and Paul. The latter conceive of faith as personal trust and commitment to Jesus that brings union with Christ and therefore salvation. In Hebrews faith is the faculty to perceive the reality of the unseen world of God and to make it the primary object of one's life..." We have seen that faith in Hebrews does perceive the reality of the unseen world, but it goes on from that to accept the promise of God; and further still to respond to the Word preached and the good news proclaimed; and, as we shall see now, still further to become the channel by which the righteousness of God becomes ours. Hebrews is just as concerned as Paul or John with the righteousness that is ours in Christ, received by faith alone. Hebrews like Paul in Romans 1: 17 and Galatians 3: 11 quotes the great Old Testament declaration of justification by faith alone from Habakkuk 2: 4; "The just shall live by faith" (Heb.10.38). In Hebrews 11, Abel by faith obtained God's witness that he was righteous (v.4), and Noah became heir of the righteousness that is by faith (v.7). In Hebrews 12:23 the new Jerusalem is seen as the dwelling-place of righteous men made perfect, and the list of heroes of faith in Hebrews 11 includes those who through faith wrought righteousness.

The righteous shall live by faith.

That word was spoken first by the prophet Habakkuk in a day of violence when the very existence of Israel was threatened by the Babylonians. In face of the threat of Babylon, Habakkuk proclaimed, "The one who is righteous by faith shall live (shall survive)" (2:4). Paul took up that word as the great watchword of his own experience, and Martin Luther discovered it from Paul and made it the watchword of the Reformation.

It has been argued that Habukkuk had no idea of such an application when he uttered this word to his disheartened people. He was only telling them that if they were faithful to their God, He would bring them safely through. But Habukkuk meant much more than that. Reading the whole verse - "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith" - we find a contrast between, on the one hand, the pride and self-reliance of the Babylonians, and, on the other, the dependence of the man who trusts in God alone. The pride and self-sufficiency of the Babylonians could have only one end, vividly portrayed in the subsequent verses - doom and destruction; but there is life for the man who trusts in God alone. "The one who is just by faith shall live."

Hebrews 10:38 underlines that truth, and then goes on to say, adapting the Greek translation of Habakkuk 2:4, "But if any man draw back, my soul shall

have no pleasure in him." The Hebrews to whom the letter was first written were wanting to go back to the ceremonial law of the Old Testament and to put their trust in outward things. That is in direct contradiction to faith in Christ alone and must result in perishing. But, the writer claims in v.39, "We are not of the drawing-back party going on to perish, but of the faith party, going on to salvation." Salvation is by faith alone. Hebrews has the same message as Paul: "The just shall live by faith."

The righteousness of Abel

Abel "offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous" (11:4). Scripture gives only one characteristic of Abel's sacrifice that made it more excellent than Cain's: it was offered "by faith." Therefore he was accepted by God as righteous, justified by faith. Cain's offering was not by faith, and so he was not accepted as righteous. God's acceptance of Abel's offering was His testimony that Cain lacked the faith that would have made him and his offering right with God. From the beginning of the history of fallen man justification was and is by faith alone.

Noah - heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." (Heb.11:7).

There were certain clearly marked elements in Noah's justifying faith:

(a) He listened to God's warning of judgement to come, "being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear..." Just as in the case of Paul's setting of faith against the background of the wrath of God in Romans 1:18, Noah's faith is set against the background of God's judgment on sin.

(b) He accepted the means of salvation that God had provided: "he prepared an ark." He obeyed God's command in every detail (Gen.6:22), on which Derek Kidner comments, "Noah's entire obedience expressed entirety of faith."

(c) By faith Noah entered into the ark. That was the sign of his acceptance of God's covenant blessing: "With thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark" (Gen 6:18). And in Genesis 7:1 the Lord confirmed his righteousness by faith: "Come thou and all thy house into the ark: for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation." In entering into the ark he

"became heir of the righteousness which is by faith ." The world outside the ark was condemned through unbelief: Noah was saved through faith.

The faith that brings us to a perfect fellowship

Hebrews 12:22-24 gives a wonderful picture of those who share in the fellowship of the heavenly Jerusalem - "an innumerable company of angels... the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven... the spirits of just men made perfect." That last phrase has a special significance for our study of justifying faith in Hebrews. "You have come to the spirits of righteous men made perfect." Those who are sharing in that perfect fellowship are those who have been made perfectly righteous through faith in Christ.

The faith that works righteousness

Hebrews has one more link between faith and righteousness. When the writer comes near the end of his list of heroes of faith in Hebrews 11, he finds - like many a writer or speaker - that time and space are running out! And so he puts a lot of names together - Gideon, Barak, Samson and others, and describes what they did through faith: "who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness..." We stop there: "who through faith worked righteousness." Surely faith and works are quite contradictory when it comes to righteousness. "A man is not justified by the works of the law but by the faith of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 2:16). "For by grace are ye saved through faith... not of works" (Eph. 2:8,9). There is no contradiction. The man who is saved through faith will do good works. Ephesians 2:10 leaves us in no doubt: "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." So Hebrews can speak of those who through faith worked righteousness - one item in a long list of achievements of those who believed. Hebrews can come to its climax with this benediction: "Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect *in every good work* to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

V. Assurance of Faith

The final aspect of faith in Hebrews that we consider - Assurance of Faith - gives an opportunity of retracing our steps on the journey of faith, for every

aspect of faith that we have looked at has a note of confidence and assurance about it.

1. Faith is faith in the unseen. Hebrews 11:1 tells us how sure that faith is, for by it we are "confident of what we hope for, assured of what we do not see."

2. Faith is faith in the promise of God. The chapter in the Westminster Confession of Faith on Assurance says, "This certainty is not grounded upon a fallible hope...but upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation." Assurance rests on the promises of God.

3. Faith is faith in the Word preached (the Gospel). Hebrews 4 warns against unbelief in the Word preached, and ends with a positive note of what faith enables us to do ; "Let us therefore come boldly" - with absolute confidence - "unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

4. Faith is faith that receives righteousness. The quotation of Habakkuk 2:4 - "The just shall live by faith" - in Hebrews 11:38 is introduced in v. 35 with the exhortation , "Cast not away therefore your confidence." That confidence is the confidence of a man who knows that he is right with God by the righteousness of Christ imputed to him and received by faith alone.

Assurance of Faith in Hebrews has not only given the opportunity of retracing our steps on the journey of faith, it can also stand on its own and point us to the object of faith from which our confidence is derived. It is vital that ultimately we should focus not on faith but on the One upon Whom our faith rests.

Two grounds of assurance are underlined in Hebrews: the faithfulness of God and the finished work of Christ. The faithfulness of God, proclaimed in Hebrews 6:13-19, is the foundation of what 6:11 calls "the full assurance of hope." (It is virtually impossible to make a clear distinction between 'hope' in the Biblical sense and 'faith' or 'trust': in the Psalms, for example, the words are interchangeable). We can have assurance of hope because the promises of God are sure. Two "immutable things" - God's promise and His oath that He will keep His promise - are the guarantee of the hope that is set before us. Then the writer gives a vivid picture to confirm that hope - the picture of an anchor, sure and stedfast, entering within the veil where Christ has gone before us. Ultimately assurance of hope focuses on Him.

The finished work of Christ is clearly in view throughout the epistle to the Hebrews, but especially in chapters 7 to 10, where He is seen as the perfect priest and the perfect sacrifice. "This Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him" (7:24,25). "Now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (9:26). The argument comes to its climax in 10:11-14: "Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

What follows from that? This! "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith...." (10: 19-22). "Let us draw near." That is all that faith can do: that is all that faith must do.

It is significant that the passages in Hebrews which speak of assurance of hope and assurance of faith both speak of entering within the veil. Hope reaches within the veil to the spiritual reality which is there, to Christ our Forerunner, Who is there, His work of accomplishing our salvation completed (6: 11, 18-20). By faith we ourselves come within the veil by the new and living way that He has consecrated for us, to receive the blessings that are there for us.

So our study has come full circle, back to faith as that which is confident of what we hope for, convinced of what we do not see. Still our link to what is within the veil is by faith, assured faith nonetheless. One day it will be by sight, when we shall see face to face and know even as also we are known.

WILLIAM WHITAKER AND THE WESTMINSTER DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

by Wayne R. Spear

Wayne R. Spear is Professor of Systematic Theology and Homiletics in the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, U.S.A.

The first chapter of the Westminster Confession of Faith sets forth the teaching of the Bible about general and special revelation, and particularly, about the Word of God written. As it deals with the very source of that truth by which we are saved, and by which we live, it is of crucial importance.

As Presbyterian churches have engaged in discussions of the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture in the last hundred years, they have had to deal with this first chapter of their confession. Those who were modifying or abandoning the doctrine of the full divine inspiration of the Bible had either to reject the Westminster doctrine, or reinterpret it.

The first alternative was taken by a majority in the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. when the "Confession of 1967" was adopted. The committee which drafted the new Confession asserted that its statement about the Bible "...is an intended revision of the Westminster doctrine, which rested primarily on a view of inspiration and equated the Bibical canon directly with the Word of God. By contrast, the preeminent and primary meaning of the word of God in the Confession of 1967 is the Word of God incarnate."[1]

One attempt to reinterpret the Confession to accommodate a rejection of inerrancy was made by two Presbyterian scholars, Jack B. Rogers and Donald McKim.[2] Their book was evaluated by *Christianity Today* as the most significant theological book in 1983. The thesis of the book is that the doctrine of inerrancy is a product of decadent Protestant scholasticism, and especially of the "Old Princeton theology" of the Hodges and B.B. Warfield. Further, they argue that this kind of theology did not gain influence within the Puritan party in Britain until after the time of the Westminster Assembly. They attempt to give an historical interpretation of the Confession's statements on Scripture that would allow for the presence in it of historical and scientific errors. Its

"infallibility," in their view, lies in the Bible's saving function.[3]

In seeking to interpret the Westminster Confession, it is a valid approach to investigate its theological setting and background. Alexander F. Mitchell provided valuable assistance when he traced the parallels between the Confession and the Irish Articles of 1615, composed primarily by James Ussher.[4]

Jack Rogers added to our knowledge in his doctoral dissertation, when he indentified from the Minutes of the Assembly the committee of seven who produce the initial draft of the Confession.[5] The chief authors, Rogers believes, were Reynolds, Burges (s), Temple, Herle, Hoyle, Gataker, and Harris. The dissertation seeks to illuminate Chapter One of the Confession by an examination of the writings of these seven men. Rodgers' study provided the background for the later book written by himself and McKim.

These studies in the background of the Westminster Assembly, while containing information that is of value, have overlooked an important source of the theology of the Westminster Confession. It is the thesis of the present article that behind the views articulated in Chapter One of the Confession lies the work of a formative English theologian from the Elizabethan period, William Whitaker. The article will give evidence of a strong connection between Whitaker's *Disputation on Holy Scripture*[6] and the topics, views, and even the wording of the Confession's chapter on Scripture. Whitaker's book will then be used to shed light on some particular expressions in the chapter. Finally, the significance of Whitaker's work for the issue of inerrancy will be presented.

William Whitaker

William Whitaker, born in 1547 or 1548, received his theological training in Trinity College, Cambridge. While there, his abilities brought him to the attention of John Whitgift,later Archbishop of Canterbury. In 1579 or 1580 he was appointed by Elizabeth as regius professor of divinity at Cambridge. In 1586, on Whitgift's recommendation, he was made master of St. John's College, Cambridge. According to his biographer, "...under his teaching the doctrine of Calvin and Beza came to be regarded as of far higher authority than that of the fathers and the schoolmen."[7] He participated in the composition of the strongly Calvinistic Lambeth Articles.

Whitaker's writings were polemical. He lived in a time of fierce controversy between the Protestants and Roman Catholics (the Spanish Armada sailed in the year in which his *Disputation* first appeared). English Roman Catholics had founded Douay College in Flanders whose mission was to train missionaries to recapture England for the papacy. Whitaker's principal literary opponents were Robert Bellarmine and Thomas Stapleton. It was reported that Bellarmine held him in such esteem as an opponent that he placed Whitaker's portrait in his study in Rome.[8] Twenty-six years after Whitaker's death in 1595, the Roman Catholic Sylvester Norris, in a book addressed to the students at Oxford and Cambridge, described him as "their Prime (as they account him) Cantabrigian light...attended with huge troops of followers."[9] Among the students Norris addressed would be men who later sat as members of the Westminster Assembly.

Whitaker's influence on the Westminster Assembly

While doing research for my doctoral dissertation in the unpublished Minutes of Westminster Assembly, I tabulated the frequency with which the names of various authors were mentioned in the debates of the Assembly. At the top of the list was the name of William Whitaker. I found this surprising, since I was otherwise unfamiliar with him or his work.

Later while examining the Table of Contents of Whitaker's *Disputation*, it occurred to me that the topics he dealt with formed the substance of the First Chapter of the Westminster Confession. Further study has confirmed that this is indeed the case.

The *Disputation* deals with six questions, as follows:

I. The Canonical Books of Scripture
II. The Authentic Edition of Scriptures
Vernacular Translations of Scripture.
III. The Authority of Scripture
IV. The Perspicuity of Scripture
V. The Supreme Tribunal for Interpreting Scripture
The Means of Interpreting Scripture
VI. The Perfection of Scripture

Though they occur in a different order, these are the very topics dealt with in Sections II-IX of Chapter One of the Confession:

Sections II and III	The Canonical Books of Scripture
Sections IV and V	The Authority of Scripture
Section VI	The Perfection of Scripture
Section VII	The Perspicuity of Scripture
Section VIII	The Authentic Edition of Scripture
	Vernacular Translations of Scripture
Section IX	The Means of Interpreting Scripture
	The Supreme Judge for Interpreting Scripture

It may seem strange that there is not a separate discussion in Whitaker of the doctrine of general and special revelation, which is stated in Section I, Chapter One, in the Confession. The reason for this lies in the controversial orientation of Whitaker's book. The doctrines of revelation and the inspiration of Scripture were not in dispute between Rome and the Reformers. Even so, there are statements made here and there in Whitaker which have parallels in the first Section of the Confession. Two examples may be cited.

The Confession asserts that one of the reasons God committed His revelation to writing was "...for the more sure establishment and comfort of the Church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world..." In this argument against *unwritten* traditions, Whitaker said,

> For God willed that his word should be written by Moses, the prophets and the apostles, for this very reason, that there was a certain risk that the true teaching would be corrupted, or destroyed, or consigned to oblivion, if it were not written and published in books.[10]

The first section of the Confession states that whereas "...it pleased the Lord, at sundry times and in divers manners, to reveal himself...,"now *scripture* is "...most necessary; those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased." Whitaker has a chapter on the necessity of Scripture. Scripture is necessary, he writes, because "...God does not teach us now by visions, dreams, revelations, oracles, as of old, but by the scriptures alone; and therefore, if we will be saved, we must of necessity know the scriptures."[11] While Whitaker's wording is different, the essential view is the same.

It is not denied here that the Irish Articles of 1615 helped to shape the language of the Westminster Confession.[12] Ussher lived after the time of Whitaker, and was undoubtedly familiar with the earlier theologian's writings. However, the Irish Articles omit some topics dealt with by Whitaker and the Confession. The Articles, which are quite brief, contain no statement on the

authentic edition of Scripture, the authority of Scripture (in relation to the church, which is the burden of Whitaker's treatment), the final judge or tribunal for the interpretation of Scripture, or the means for interpreting Scripture. The Irish Articles are a secondary source, but not the primary source, for Chapter One of the Westminster Confession.

The dependence of Chapter One of the Confession upon Whitaker's *Disputation* is seen at times in the very words that are used. The most striking example is in Section VIII of the chapter, where the propriety of making and using vernacular translations is being asserted. The Confession says that because all the people of God "...are commanded, in the fear of God, to read and search them (the Scriptures), therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, that the word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship him in an acceptable manner, and, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, may have hope."

In Whitaker's discussion of the same point, similar expressions are found: "But God hath commanded all to read the scriptures: therefore all are bound to read the scriptures." Chrysostom's words are quoted, based on John 5:39, that Christ "sets them upon a very diligent investigation, since he bids them not to *read*, but to *search* the scriptures." He cites Oecumenius on Colossians 3:16, "...that the doctrine of Christ should dwell in us...*most abundantly*." "The Lord therefore willed us to be learned ...'that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.'" [13] "The Confession does not mindlessly copy Whitaker's language; this is not plagiarism. The conjunction of the terms "God commanded," "dwelling plentifully", "read and search," and "through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope," occurring in the same order as in Whitaker, however, is significant. It seems that the one who drafted the statement in the Confession either had the *Disputation* open before him, or knew Whitaker so thoroughly that the very wording of the book came to mind.

Illumination of the Confession from Whitaker

Since Whitaker's *Disputation* appears to be a primary source of the doctrine of Scripture in the Westminster Confession, his book will be useful to shed light on the meaning of the statements of the Confession. Two examples of such usefulness will be given.

In Section VIII of the First Chapter, the Confession holds that the Hebrew

Old Testament and the Greek New Testament were authentical because they had been "...by his (God's) singular care and providence kept pure in all ages."

This statement has sometimes been understood as asserting that extant Hebrew and Greek manuscripts of the Bible (or at least one) are perfect copies of the autographs. Sometimes the conclusion is drawn that the use of textual criticism is illegitimate.

In Whitaker's treatment of the question of the authentic edition of Scripture, he is responding to the pronouncement of the Council of Trent that "...the old Latin vulgate edition should be held for authentic in public lectures, disputations, preachings, and expositions,..."[14] The word "authentic" is used in this context to mean "having authority that is not open to challenge." The Roman Catholic defence for the use of the Vulgate was that the existing Hebrew and Greek manuscripts of the Bible had been corrupted by Jews and heretics (the latter being the Greek Orthodox). The Vulgate, they held, had been translated while the Hebrew and the Greek MSS were still uncorrupted, and was therefore more reliable.

The Confession's statement about the Hebrew and Greek MSS being "kept pure" must be understood against that background. For Whitaker, and for the Westminster Assembly, the Hebrew and Greek editions were to be finally appealed to because they were closer to the scriptures as originally written by inspired prophets and apostles. Whitaker cites words from Jerome: "We are compelled to have recourse to the Hebrews, and to seek certain knowledge of the truth from the fountain rather than from the streamlets."[15]

Whitaker did not hold to the *absolute* purity of existing manuscripts. He was aware of variations in existing Hebrew and Greek copies, and made use of rather sophisticated methods of textual criticism. For example, he discusses whether the pronoun in Genesis 3:15 (as to the one who will crush the serpent's head) should be masculine or feminine. To support his views, Whitaker cities the Hebrew copies; the Septuagint reading; the Chaldee Paraphrases; variant copies of Vulgate; the sense of the passage itself; commentaries by Augustine, Cyprian, Irenaeus,Pope Leo, Jerome, Chrysostom, and recent Roman Catholic writers.[16]

Whitaker allows for occurrence of copyists' mistakes. He says of the Old Testament, "...it is very possible that the books, which may have been previously in some disorder, were corrected by Ezra, restored to their proper

places, and disposed according to some fixed plan, as Hilary in his prologue affirms particularly of the Psalms."[17] He solves one difficult reading by suggesting that the Hebrew vowel points (but not the consonants) may be wrong.[18] In dealing with a variant reading in Psalm 22:17, he cites references to *some* Hebrew copies (but not all) which have the reading which he believes is the original .[19]

Although Whitaker does not dismiss the possibility of some errors in transmission, he believes strongly that no significant mistakes have crept in: "Now we, not doubtfully or only with some probate shew, but most certainly, know that this Greek edition of the new Testament is no other than the inspired and archetypical scripture of the new Testament, commended by the apostles and evangelists to the christian church."[20]

The statement in the Westminister Confession about the purity of the Hebrew and the Greek texts,then, does not eliminate the propriety and usefulness of textual criticism. It does affirm the *substantial* accuracy of the copies which are available to us.

A second expression of the Confession which is illuminated from Whitaker is in the ninth section: "The supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined ... can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the scripture."

Some have held that "the Holy Spirit speaking in Scripture"is a reference to inspiration, so that the meaning of this expression is simply that the Scripture itself is the supreme judge.[21]

Whitaker's discussion of this point shows, on the contrary, that this statement refers to the Spirit's work of *illumination*. Over against the Roman view that the Church, and ultimately the Pope, had the final power to interpret Scripture,the *Disputation* asserts that the power rests with the author of Scripture, the Holy Spirit:

> ...the supreme decision and authority in the interpretation of scripture should not be ascribed to the church, but to the scripture itself, to the Holy Spirit, as well speaking plainly in the scriptures as also secretly confirming the same in our hearts.[22]

Whitaker does not mean that the Spirit gives a new revelation of the truth, but that He enlightens the mind of the believer to understand and embrace the

true meaning of the Scripture. The Spirit guides as sound methods of interpretation are used.

Whitaker has a very helpful discussion of hermeneutics, whose principles may be summarized thus:

1. Prayer is necessary for reading the Scriptures so as to understand them.
2. We ought to understand the words used by the Spirit in the Scriptures, consulting the original languages.
3. We must consider which words are used in their proper or literal sense, and which are used figuratively.
4. We ought to consider purpose, circumstances, and context of each passage.
5. One place must be compared and collated with another: the more obscure places with the plainer.
6. We should consider dissimilar as well as similar passages.
7. Our expositions should accord with the analogy of faith, i.e. the general tenor of scripture as found in the clear places.
8. The unlearned should seek help from others, and from commentaries.[23]

The concern of this discussion of the supreme judge in religious controversy is not just how church disputes can be settled, but how God's people can come to a settled and heartfelt conviction about the truth. Whitaker writes,

> The Roman pontiff can indeed compel in one sense, that is, terrify, and restrain by fear, and punish with death, but he cannot compel us to believe that this is the will of God, and to receive the scripture as the voice of God. It is the Holy Spirit who persuades us to believe this, who leads our minds to form true opinions, and makes us hold them firm even to our last gasp.[24]

The implication of this view is that resolution of controversial issues in the church must involve earnest prayer for the assistance of the Spirit, and careful and loving use of the Scripture to persuade those who are otherwise minded. Majority decisions do not by themselves produce faith.

Whitaker and the inerrancy of Scripture

Rogers and McKim, in the work cited earlier, do not assert specifically that the doctrine of inerrancy was foreign to the Westminster divines, but that is the conclusion to which their argument leads. They hold that there has been a "central church tradition" concerning Scripture which did not assert its inerrancy

in all matters.[25] This "central tradition" they frequently refer to as "Augustinian." With regard to the Westminster Assembly, they maintain that the Augustinian tradition prevailed in the Puritan party in the Church of England until after the time of the Westminster Assembly, and is therefore reflected in the Westminster Confession. It is their claim that the "...first recorded use in English of the word *inerrant* occured in 1652."[26] The implication is that, for the Westminster Assembly, with its focus on the saving message of the Bible, on the priority of faith over reason, and on the importance of the inward testimony of the Spirit, the issue of inerrancy was irrelevant.

It is the contention of this article that the thesis of Rogers and Mckim regarding the Westminster Confession is refuted by the knowledge that the Assembly was strongly influenced by Whitaker. His work was done before the "new science" became influential, and before the rise of the Protestant Scholasticism of Francis Turretin. *Yet he has a very explicit doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture derived from his conviction that the Holy Spirit is the author of the very words of Scripture.*

The question of the inspiration and full trustworthiness of Scripture was not an issue in Whitaker's controversies with Roman Catholics. Nevertheless, he discusses the matter incidentally when treating various heresies regarding the Bible. His words are clear, and worth quoting at length:

> At the same time that we justly condemn the heresies which I have mentioned,we cannot but wholly disapprove the opinion of those, who think the sacred writers have, in some places, fallen into mistakes. That some of the ancients were of this opinion appears from the testimony of Augustine, who maintains, in opposition to them, "that the evangelists are free from all falsehood, both that which proceeds from deliberate deceit, and that which is the result of forgetfulness."

Responding to Erasmus, who conceded that a "slip of memory" might have happened in a gospel writer, Whitaker says,

> But it does not become us to be so easy and indulgent as to concede that such a lapse could be incident to the sacred writers. They wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, as Peter tells us, 2 Pet. 1:21. And all scripture is inspired of God, as Paul expressly writes, 2 Tim. 3:16. Whereas, therefore, no one may say that any infirmity could befall the Holy Spirit, it follows that the sacred writers could not be deceived, or err, in any respect...Therefore we must maintain intact the authority of scripture in such a sense as not to allow that anything is therein delivered otherwise than the most perfect truth required.[27]

Whitaker's belief in the inerrancy of Scripture appears at a number of places in the *Disputation*. He rejects the view that church councils have absolute final authority, on the ground that "...it is the special prerogative of scripture, that it never errs."[28] By contrast (as the Westminster Confession also affirms), councils may err.[29] Among Whitaker's reasons for rejecting the canonicity of the apocryphal portions of Esther is the presence of "...many incongruities and inconsistencies, which it is impossible to reconcile...."[30] The examples which Whitaker gives primarily concern historical questions. Further, the authenticity of the Septuagint version of the Old Testament is rejected by Whitaker, in part because of problems with numbers occurring in the genealogies. As Jerome said, "...the LXX. sometimes erred in their numbers."[31] For Whitaker, such errors must be a corruption of the Scripture as originally given by the Holy Spirit, who speaks only truth.

Rogers and McKim criticize Turretin for holding that "...the authority of Scripture was based on its form of inerrant words."[32] Were the criticism valid, it would apply equally to William Whitaker, a century earlier than Turretin, and to the Westminster divines who were so strongly influenced by Whitaker. The Confession did not use the term "inerrancy;" however, it did speak of Scripture's "infallible truth and divine authority," of which we are fully persuaded by the inward work of the Holy Spirit.[33] In the chapter on Saving Faith, the Confession says that "By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the word, for the authority of God himself speaking therein..."[34]

Like many others, Rogers and McKim make an invalid distinction between the *form* of the Bible, and its *substance*. For them, faith is a response to the central saving message of the Bible, not to its whole content, and not to its details. Whitaker and the Westminster Assembly did not make the distinction in that way. They could distinguish the clear from the obscure. They spoke of that which was essential for salvation in distinction from other matters which were not necessary for salvation. But they held that the whole Bible was true, because the God who cannot lie is its ultimate author.

Conclusion

It is to be regretted that the theological contributions of Whitaker are not better known. Perhaps the polemical nature of his writing, with elaborate argument and counter-argument, has diminished his appeal. Also, much of his work remains untranslated.

If the thesis of this article is true, then there is much future work to be done

to ascertain the extent to which Whitaker's theology influenced not only the first chapter, but the whole of the Westminster Confession. Since that Confession remains the standard of sound teaching for many Christians around the world, any light on its meaning should be welcome. William Whitaker's works are one important source of such historical light.

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JEREMIAH 31: 31-34
AN INTERACTION WITH THE WHOLE SPECTRUM OF SCHOLARSHIP ON THE AUTHORSHIP AND MEANING OF THE PASSAGE.

by Norris Wilson

Norris Wilson is Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament in the Reformed Theological College, Belfast.

Debate on authorship

A review of the spectrum of scholarly opinion shows that their conflicting views on the authorship of this passage may broadly be divided into four camps.

1. *The view that Jeremiah himself was the author.*

R.K. Harrison rejects the view that the section in which this passage occurs is either late-exilic in date or by someone other than Jeremiah. He says, "Theories of the latter kind ... lean heavily upon critical re-constructions of Isaiah, with their entirely unwarranted assumptions and unproven conclusions."[1] For him they are "unquestionably genuine sayings of Jeremiah."[2] Such a view is shared by J. Skinner. In a detailed argument against Duhm, who had set the passage in the post-exilic period and belittled its significance, he concludes, "the conception of Israel's relation to God as founded on a historic covenant occupies a real ... place in the theology of Jeremiah. From this it is but a step to the anticipation of a New Covenant ...It must have been written by Jeremiah."[3]

2. *The view that the passage was written by a close contemporary or contemporaries.*

John Bright begins by saying of chapters 30-31,

> Few portions of the book have evoked sharper disagreement among

> scholars, both as regards the date and interpretation of the various sayings, and as regards their relationship to Jeremiah. Chiefly because the style is at certain places remarkably similar to that of the latter chapters of Isaiah, and because much of the material seems to require a date during the period of exile, a number of scholars have argued that relatively few of these sayings are genuine utterances of the prophet.

After discussion of such views he concludes that chapters 30-31,

> contain genuine sayings of Jeremiah ... uttered relatively early in his career ... together with other words of his uttered much later ... the material has in certain cases subsequently been expanded and supplemented in such a way as to apply Jeremiah's prophecies more directly to the situation of the exiles living in Babylon ... however, nothing in these chapters need date after approximately the middle of the Exilic period.[4]

He concludes that though there may be some adaptation, there is no essential distortion of Jeremiah's thought. So, while on the one hand saying of the passage: "As regards its authenticity, one can only say that it ought never to have been questioned", yet he goes on to make a more guarded conclusion than Harrison. "Although the passage may not preserve the prophet's *ipsissima verba*, it represents what might well be considered the high point of his theology"[5]

J.A. Thompson concurs with this view on the passage.

> On the surface at least, it would seem extraordinary to deny it to Jeremiah, who was undoubtedly responsible for a great deal that was noble and far-reaching in its implications. [6]

Earlier he had concluded with regard to chapters 30-31 that they contain genuine sayings of Jeremiah from early and later periods of his career which passed through the hands of an editor or editors who may have expanded or adapted his thought to a later situation, but who did not distort it. Thus like Bright he says:

> Even if the passage does not preserve the *ipsissima verba* of Jeremiah it represents a high point in theological thinking of which he was the source. It is at least as likely that a giant in theological thinking should rise to these heights as that his successors should.[7]

There may be editorial re-working, but,

> it would seem strange indeed if Jeremiah's remarkable theological insights did not lead him through to this point, especially in view of the fact that he was on the verge of stating the doctrine on a number of occasions.[8]

Having said this Thompson is loath to allow this editing work to the so-called "Deuteronomists". He argues that,

> the section is all but poetic in form and may have had a poetic original, if indeed, it is not in verse form as it is. In that case it is not prose, so that it would be wrong to speak of the characteristic prose style of the book of Deuteronomy.[9]

In this context we mention W.L. Holladay who vigorously rejects the view that these verses do not come from Jeremiah, reaching similar conclusions to Bright and Thompson.[10] We mention also the view of J.P.Hyatt,

> It is entirely possible that the wording of vv31-34 is not Jeremiah's. The style is more prolix than his, and in some places a bit awkward, especially in v32. Nevertheless the thought is essentially his. We cannot now identify with precision the disciple or editor who may be responsible for the present form. He may have been Baruch. He probably was not the Deuteronomic editor, in spite of the presence of some Deuteronomic phrases. Had that editor been responsible for the new covenant passage ... his style and phraseology would be prominent and unmistakable. [11]

It must be added here in conclusion that the majority of exegetes regard the passage in at least some degree as coming from the historical prophet Jeremiah.

3. *The view that the section is the work of the later "Deuteronomists".*

E.W. Nicholson says,

> The passage is composed in the characteristic style of the prose in the book of Jeremiah and very probably comes from a Deuteronomistic author.[12]

It is noticeable that Nicholson is not entirely conclusive in this. Again he says,

> there are ... reasons ... in favour of regarding this passage as pointing for its composition to the Deuteronomists.[13]

What are these reasons and how do we assess them?

(i) Similarity of language and style. However this does not *per se* prove "Deuteronomic" authorship. This could equally show (as some have argued) that both Jeremiah and the "Deuteronomists" (supposing they existed) were inheritors of a characteristic prose style.

(ii) The content. Much is made of the parallel in Deuteronomy 30:5-6 where Nicholson says, "the same message is in essence set out."[14] However while it may be clear that both passages have the same essential message, the striking thing is the difference in the way this is described in the two passages. In Deuteronomy 30:5-6 the three essential elements are: God will bring them back to the land, He will circumcise their hearts, and they will then obey His command to love Him. In Jeremiah 31:31-34 however the three essential elements are: God will make a new covenant, He will set His law on their hearts, and they will know Him. In my judgement not only are these differences in themselves significant, but in fact Jeremiah's expressions in each case represent a significant further step forward from Deuteronomy's. The thought in Jeremiah while it parallels the pattern in Deuteronomy follows through to greater heights. This, it could be argued, rather than pointing to Deuteronomic composition points elsewhere.

(iii) Nicholson argues that the promise of a new covenant in Jeremiah 31,

> conforms to the pattern of a series of covenant renewal ceremonies in the Deuteronomistic presentation of Israel's history. Like them it makes its appearance ... at a crucial moment in Israel's history and like them its purpose is to usher in a new phase in the relationship between Yahweh and his people. [15]

It would appear that Nicholson views the "Deuteronomists" as having a schematic view of Israel's history with covenant ceremonies appearing at crucial moments in her history. Thus Moab comes after the wilderness experience, Shechem after the conquest, Gilgal after the coming of Kingship, Josiah's covenant after the apostasy of Manasseh and now the 'new covenant' after 587 B.C. and the exile. In coming to such a climax in their scheme the "Deuteronomists" reach one of the high points in the entire Old Testament. However, neat as this theory is, we take issue with it here. The point is that the 'new' covenant is so new that it breaks the pattern. It is of an entirely different order from the covenant renewal ceremonies in which Israel's leaders renewed

the people's allegiance to an original covenant. It is not a new phase in the relationship between Yahweh and his people: it is a completely new relationship! (Anyway it's doubtful if one can argue successfully that each covenant renewal in the tidy scheme did in fact usher in a new phase in the relationship).

The 'new covenant' does not add on to the latest covenant renewal, it goes right back to the beginning and, upon the premise that the basic Mosaic covenant (on which the renewals built) is now defunct, sees a day coming when a 'new' covenant will replace it. The 'new covenant' also breaks the pattern in Nicholson's hypothetical "Deuteronomic scheme" in that it has what we would call this eschatological (or at least future) reference which makes it different from what has come before. It is a promise of something still to come, something Yahweh will take the initiative in doing, rather than Israel's leaders. Thus while we agree with Nicholson that the passage is one of the high points in the Old Testament we question his attempt to fit it into a "Deuteronomic" scheme. Rather it far transcends such a proposed scheme and thus leads us to question his (albeit tentative) conclusion that the passage "points for its origin to the Deuteronomists."[16]

4. *R.P. Carroll joins the minority (e.g. Duhm) who attribute the passage to a post-exilic, but non-Deuteronomist source.*

He says:

> ... in view of the fact that the Deuteronomists do not themselves at any point in their writings propose a new covenant ... it must be questioned whether they are responsible for this addition to the cycle.[17]

One can take immediate issue with such a view. After all, though the writer of Deuteronomy does not speak of a new covenant in so many words, he does speak of a dramatic work of God which will effect a radical change, discontinuous with what lay in the past (Deut. 30:5-6) Anyway, for Carroll we have here an author who, following on from the "Deuteronomists", has learned his theology from them, but is in critical dialogue with them.

For the Deuteronomists, with the broken covenant it is all over. The logic of their position is that hope came to an end in 587 B.C. This author transcends this by asserting a new divine initiative, thereby taking a, "leap of hope into the utopian future", in which the law is transposed, "from the stories of Mosaic legend ... to the mind of the community". He further comments,

> it is a pious hope rather than a programme of social organisation ... Such utopianism ... represents a fundamental weakness of biblical prophecy ... it predicts a splendid future but is unable to show how such a state may first be achieved and then maintained permanently without disintegration into the chaos which preceded it ... The utopian society characterized by this metaphor of *'berith'* (covenant) does not and cannot exist, (the verses) utilize motifs and sayings from the past to construct an idyll of the future.[18]

Thus the passage is what he would call a minor "postscript" to "Deuteronomism" that "rescues a resonant word *'berith'* from oblivion",[19] and radically transforms it into a metaphor. Thus while in chapter 11 the "Deuteronomists" used the word as a theological motif or regulative principle, for organizing and presenting history, here a 'post-Deuteronomist' transforms it into a utopian metaphor.

In response to Carroll I feel this radical position should be rejected for the following reasons:

(i) Clearly in its language and style the passage could be taken as belonging to the Jeremianic prose type. Take for example its use of the covenant formula, 'I will be their God and they shall be my people', which is common to prose passages in Jeremiah chapters 7,10,14,30 and 32.

(ii) Carroll argues that the logic of the "Deuteronomists'" position is that the covenant is broken, is inoperable and therefore hope has come to an end in 587 B.C. However, this is just not the case. As already pointed out, assuming that the "Deuteronomists" ever existed, while they do not speak of the new covenant situation of Jeremiah 31:31-34 in so many words, they reach out for something which is at least parallel, if not so well spelt out, in Deuteronomy 30:1-10. Carroll gets round this by speaking of this latter passage as a "late piece", a "late addition", but he gives no grounds for such a conclusion.

(iii) Is it in fact true to say that in our passage the word *'berith'* is used purely as a "metaphor of an arrangement with an imaginary community"?[20] Strictly speaking the new covenant is not a metaphor for the new situation, it is the new situation. The metaphor is the law written on hearts as a result of the covenant, not the covenant itself. The new covenant situation is as real as the old. Moreover Carroll's assertion that in 31:31-34, "This future *'berith'* is not an obligation between two parties with ... moral regulations"[21] is not so. There will still be two parties and there will still be the law to be kept. What is new

is a full forgiveness and a new relationship with God.

For these reasons then we reject Carroll's views of the lateness and nature of the passage. Likewise while admitting with Nicholson similarity in language and thought to the so-called "Deuteronomists" (assuming they existed at all) yet it does go beyond them as we have seen. This does not require a later date or authorship. It is surely better to take the author as Jeremiah himself interacting with and responding to current thinking and to the failure of the attempts at reform earlier, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The meaning of the term 'covenant' in this context

Most scholars recognize the importance of this passage. For Nicholson it, "is one of the most important (passages) in the book ... it represents one of the deepest insights in the entire prophetic literature in the Old Testament."[22] Bright says, "it is certainly one of the profoundest ... passages in the entire Bible."[23] For Hyatt this is, "the most important single teaching of Jeremiah where his religious thought reaches its climax. It is one of the mountain peaks of the Old Testament."[24] For Harrison it, "marks a watershed in Hebrew religions and cultic life."[25] It is important to note its significance for the New Testament writers where it is quoted in full in Hebrews 8:8-12 and in part in Hebrews 10:16-17. It lies behind the words used at the Last Supper (1Cor.11:25 cf.Luke 22:20). This passage was responsible for the distinction eventually made between the Old and New Testaments (or covenants), a distinction adumbrated in 2Corinthians 3:5-14 and in general use in the Church by the end of the second century A.D. These facts are bound to influence one's hermeneutics so it is quite startling to find the following in R.P. Carroll,

> ... the exegesis of vv31-34 is straightforward and the interpretation of the piece would be simple were it not for the fact that many commentators insist on reading (it) as 'one of the profoundest and most moving passages in the entire Bible' (e.g. Bright, 287; cf. Thompson, 579-80). This Christian appreciation of a minor and prosaic hope for the future ... while irrelevant for the meaning of the text, complicates the treatment of the section... [26]

This raises the whole question of hermeneutics. Is it possible to ignore or even reject the complete history of interpretation that might cause one to bring *a priori* notions to a passage, and opt for Carroll's *a posteriori*[27] approach, interpreting it in entirely a vacuum? Such an approach with its implied

rejection, or at least ignoring, of Christianity itself is surely to be rejected. The parts of Scripture are not isolated fragments to be interpreted in a vacuum. They fit into a whole sweep of revelation which must be taken into account.

What then is the new covenant as Jeremiah sets it down? The background to the announcement of a new covenant is the covenant relationship inaugurated between Yahweh and Israel at Sinai (Exod.19:1-24:11). Basic to that covenant and its continued existence was Israel's obligation to obey the divine stipulations or terms (cf. Jer.11:1-8) laid down by the Lord of the Covenant. A parallel with the secular international treaties cannot be denied here. Failure to obey the covenant laws (i.e.the moral law) would entail judgment in the form of covenant curses. However Israel's history since the days of Moses is summed up here as one of persistent failure to live according to the terms of the covenant. "All this happened", says Yahweh, "although I was their Lord ('Ba'al)". The use of this word is significant. On the one hand it can be seen as an ironic pun, i.e., it was through turning to gods like "Baal" that Israel had demonstrated her disobedience. On the other hand the word means "a husband". This figure of Yahweh as the husband and Israel as the wife was known in prophetic teaching since the time of Hosea and was in fact used by Jeremiah in chapter 3. Its use here adds a new dimension of intimacy to the covenant relationship, i.e., rather than being a cold suzerainty treaty it was more of the order of a marriage covenant. Israel however has broken covenant, committed spiritual adultery. The fault lies with her, not with the covenant.

When will the new covenant come about? An apparent difficulty faces us in the expressions, "days are coming when I will make a new covenant" (v31) and "this is the covenant I will make ... after those days". Bright seeks to overcome the difficulty by translating the second phrase "this is the covenant I will make ... when that time comes", thus making the two phrases equivalent. However I think the best way to take it is to put the stop after "Israel". Thus the making (cutting) of the covenant comes about in "those days". The Lord then goes on to spell out the effect of the making of the new covenant in "those days", by speaking of its effects that will be experienced "after those days " in which it was made.

Whom will the new covenant be with? Rudolph suggests we should delete the phrase "and the house of Judah" in v31. He understands "house of Israel" to refer to the northern Kingdom and not the whole people, north and south. Both Carroll[28] and Bright[29] suggest the phrase referring to Judah is an expansion, as "the house of Israel" seems to refer to the whole nation. However

the point here, if we leave the phrase "and the house of Judah" where it is in v31, is that all the troubles of the past, with the nation being divided, are going to be transcended. God will go right back as it were, to the beginning and deal with all his people.

What would the new covenant entail? This of course is the key question. Duhm who takes the passage as the work of a post-exilic scribe belittles its significance. He argues that if the writer had been thinking of the need for a higher kind of religion he would have spoken of a new *'torah'* (law) rather than a new *'berith'*, a *'torah'* of a different content and character. Skinner summarizes his view as follows:

> Since he says nothing of this we must assume that he is thinking only of the old law, with all its ritual prescriptions about clean and unclean foods, external holiness, and so forth; and when he speaks of it as written in the inward part he simply means that every Jew will know it by heart, and not at second-hand through the construction of professional teachers. Of a higher revelation of God, of personal communion with God, or of a regenerate heart in the sense of Christianity Duhm finds in the passage no suggestion whatever.[30]

We might add to this Swetnan's interpretation of the new feature as the making available in the synagogues (or wherever Jews are found) of copies of the Mosaic Law.[31] Skinner however goes on to answer Duhm. He wonders why a legalist would speak of a new *'berith'*:

> The old covenant surely afforded scope for the memorising of the old law to any conceivable extent. Committing to memory is after all a purely human exercise, whereas what is promised in the text is a divine operation on the hearts of men. Moreover, learning by heart does not supersede the necessity for human instructors, so that the antithesis really implied in the language is between an external law, written in a book or on tables of stone, and the dictates of the inward moral sense informed by true knowledge of God.[32]

Nevertheless Duhm's argument raises the question of what is meant by "the law" in v33. I think Duhm is wrong to assume this is the ceremonial law. Surely what it means is the moral law written in the Ten Commandments. Is this not borne out by the implicit contrast made between this law "written" in stone (Exod.31:18) or in a book (Exod.24:7) and now "written" on the heart? (This latter idea was not new for Jeremiah. He speaks of sin "engraved on the tablet" of Judah's heart in 17:1). Here we would concur heartily with Hyatt,

> The new covenant does not involve the giving of a new law; that is unnecessary. For Jeremiah the first covenant was the covenant made at Sinai, and the law was the moral law, perhaps primarily the ethical decalogue, certainly not the ceremonial prescriptions. [33]

However we would take issue with Skinner who does not equate the law here with the moral law written in the Ten Commandments which he speaks of as, "an imperfect manifestation of the law of God in the form of external commands." [34] For him Jeremiah envisages here a "better revelation of ... the essential ethical will of God"[35] and he looks on to Jesus' pronouncements concerning the law's 'fulfilment'.

Nevertheless, again in answer to Duhm, we could say that the ceremonial aspect of the law is included here as well. If it is, as we have argued, the moral law that is within the purview of v33, then surely it is the grand fulfilment of the ceremonial law that is within the purview of v34. The whole point of the ceremonial law and its comprehensive sacrificial system was the removal of sin. However it could not really deal with sin committed deliberately and with premeditation (Num.15:30), the very kind of obdurate disobedience that rejected Yahweh's 'hesed' (mercy) to His people in the covenant and broke its terms. Thus it is not too much to suggest that Jeremiah foresees some fulfilling sacrifice to provide a complete forgiveness.

Carroll is right then when he says that the author here "foresees a form of relationship between Yahweh and nation that will avoid the defects of the old system of 'berith' by virtue of internalising the divine instructions ('Torah')."[36] The covenant is new in the sense that it will confer a new inward motivation and power for fulfilling the law already known. God is going to bring about the necessary change of His people's inner nature so that their past failure to obey His law will be replaced by both the will and the ability to do so. Obedience will be spontaneous. Jeremiah could see that the Mosaic covenant had failed not just because of the people's ingrained obduracy, but because of its externality. In a sense it was like the international treaties of the day. Now it gloriously transcends them for it will touch the life deeply and inwardly in mind and will. Obedience will spring freely from the depths of men's being. Moreover the offer and experience of forgiveness would be a new incentive for such obedience. The archetypal covenant promise "I will be your God and you will be my people" will not be fulfilled and the relationship established until the new covenant is cut.

Moreover when the fulfilment comes there will be no need for intermedi-

aries to instruct people to "know Yahweh", because when the work is done in their hearts they will know him. Two things need to be said about this verb 'yada' (to know).

(i) H.B. Huffmon has shown how the verb has a treaty background and denotes the personal commitment of a vassal to his overlord. Quite apart from this significant treaty background it is the verb that describes intimate personal relationships. Thus Thompson is right here to suggest,

> The verb *know* here probably carries its most profound connotation, the intimate personal knowledge which arises between two persons who are committed wholly to one another in a relationship that touches mind, emotion, and will.[37]

The new covenant is nothing short of a complete intimate one-to-one relationship of an individual with God entailing spontaneous love and obedience. As Skinner says,

> ... it is a national covenant, made with the house of Israel; and at the same time it is individual, resting on the possession, by each member of the community, of personal knowledge of God.[38]

(ii) Hosea had put great emphasis on the "knowledge of God", and likewise Jeremiah does (e.g.22:15-16).

Now Jeremiah's thought reaches its zenith in that it envisages what he sees as necessary becoming attainable. All in whose heart the law will be written will know Yahweh as the prophets had, directly and intimately.

As Welch says,

> In all this Jeremiah was bringing to its full expression and its inevitable conclusion the fundamental thought in Hosea ... when Jeremiah made the new covenant individual in its terms, he was only bringing out what was implicit in the thought of his master.[39]

In conclusion on the matter of interpretation we must take our stand in the Christian tradition with scholars like Skinner, Nicholson and Hyatt and echo Bright's words,

> So we must go beyond Jeremiah's word and beyond B.C. We must follow Jeremiah's word ahead to the gospel, for it is to the gospel that it points us and drives us; and until it has driven us there it has not discharged its function. We hear Jeremiah's word '... I will make a new

covenant ...' - and that is promise. We also hear the gospel word, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" - and that is fulfilment. [40]

For the Christian the cutting of the new Covenant is in the very flesh of the God-man on the cross.

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Covenantal Gospel, C Van der Waal, Inheritance Publications, Neerlandia, Alberta. 1990. 192pp. CN $17.95.

This an English translation of a Dutch work by Cornelis Van der Waal, who died in South Africa in 1980. His chief concern is to show how the gospel revealed in Scripture is from first to last a "covenantal gospel". The theme of "covenant" in Van der Waal's view runs throughout Scripture and a gospel which neglects the covenant is no gospel at all. His agenda is clear from the outset: he writes in conscious opposition to such views as Dispensationalism, Pentecostalism, Pietism and what is intriguingly called "horizontalism".

In general the book is well written, although a few oddly-sounding phrases creep in, along with the unusual spelling "thorah" for the Jewish Law. Each chapter is divided into numbered sections, which is helpful in the absence of a subject-index, although this does result in a certain fragmentation of the argument.

In the first chapter Van der Waal examines a number of covenants between persons, clans and peoples which are recorded in the Old Testament, and from this he deduces a number of features common to this type of covenant. Only then does he move on in the second chapter to look briefly at ancient Near Eastern Treaties in other cultures, thus ensuring that his view of covenant is rooted in Scripture first and foremost.

Chapter three gives a survey of the various descriptions of God's covenant with his people, beginning with the covenant with Noah and ending with the covenant renewal when Samuel retired as judge. It is very unfortunate that the author did not complete the study of the period from David onwards.

Chapter four examines God's covenant with Adam, chapter five considers law and gospel in relation to the Sinai covenant, chapter six stresses the vital truth of the unity of the covenant, chapter seven examines the relationship between the New Testament and the Law of Moses.

This all leads up to chapter eight, "The Covenantal Structure of the New Testament Gospel", where Van der Waal seeks to show that all the features of Old Testament covenants are to be found again in the New Testament, i.e. the

historical prologue, the conditions, the threat of judgement and so forth. The evidence must of course be culled from the whole of the New Testament since the covenant is not expressly set down in full in any one place.

Chapter nine considers the theme of "covenant vengeance" in the New Testament, relating this very closely to the period up to the fall of Jerusalem in AD70. Van der Waal puts much stress on this period both here and in chapter 10, "The Foundational Period of the New Covenant".

The final chapter is fittingly entitled "The Lasting 'More' of the New Covenant" and here the author deals especially with the bringing in of the Gentiles and the fulfilment of the covenant themes of the Old Testament.

There is much in this book to delight those who hold to Covenant Theology and many passages of Scripture are helpfully dealt with. The unity of the covenant, especially, needs to be stressed in the present theological climate.

Not all Van der Waal's views, however, will find ready acceptance, although they will certainly stir debate. Only a few can be mentioned. The author takes considerable pains to deny that Adam had any inborn sense of the law of God - in his view such knowledge had to be revealed explicitly - nor has anyone such an awareness of God's requirements. Reformed Theology has generally held that such a knowledge was given and to some extent still remains after the fall, so that all are without excuse.

Van der Waal also rejects the view that the Covenant of Grace was made only with the elect and he blames this position for a denigration of the Sinai covenant. Unfortunately he does not explain or defend his contention further. Reformed theologians have generally regarded the Covenant as having been made with the elect in Christ, and if this view is rejected, the implication must be thought about carefully.

Finally we mention the prominence given to the fall of Jerusalem, the outstanding example of covenant vengeance in Van der Waal's view. On this basis much of the New Testament is related exclusively to this period, including Romans 9-11! This seems to give undue emphasis to an event which, while important, does not have such vital significance.

Our greatest reservation is with regard to the author's almost total neglect of the relationship between Covenant and Kingdom. Only a few sentences are

given to this question, yet it seems to us that this is a vital issue, not least because Jesus came proclaiming the Kingdom of God. Some would argue that "Kingdom" should have the priority in analysing Biblical theology. Van der Waal fails to address the question and we are left to wonder what he might have said had he lived to deal with II Samuel 7, the covenant with David promising an eternal Davidic King.

The author's bibliography lists only books cited and so is by no means a comprehensive listing of works on the covenant: there is no mention for example of Vos or Murray, and of course nothing written since 1980 is included. The bibliography will be of most use to those with a working knowledge of Latin, German, Dutch and French.

The book repays careful study and stimulates thought even where agreement does not result.

W.D.J. McKay

Church History, P.K.Keizer, Inheritance Publications, Neerlandia, Alberta, Canada, 1990. 213pp. CN $12.95, U.S. $11.90

This book is a general history of the Christian Church covering the period from the New Testament to 1965.

The author, P.K.Keizer, was a minister of the Reformed Churches (Liberated) in the Netherlands and also taught Church History at a Reformed high school in Groningen. His approach to history is clearly stated in the Preface - " According to Revelation 12, the history of mankind revolves around the history of Christ's church. This is the justification for the political and social excursions which are made every now and then to retain as much as possible a sense of the true unity of history."

This "sense of the true unity of history", is perhaps the greatest strength of the book. The author displays a clearly stated recognition that God is sovereign in the history of the world and of His Church. Mr Keizer writes with a deep pastoral concern and frequently calls on his readers to make practical applications from the lessons of history. In the chapter on the 'Enlightenment' for example he urges his readers, "Never enter into a debate about the existence of God. Such a debate assumes that a justification of God's existence is necessary and therefore it accepts, in essence, the basic position of the rebellion in paradise."

The author considers the history of the Church since New Testament times in seven periods. Each of these chapters is divided into numbered paragraphs and free use is made of sub-headings, points and overviews. This is deliberate since the book 'is designed as a textbook and not as a reader'. This format does however give the book a rather disjointed feel.

The book suffers also from a certain imbalance which is clearly the result of its origin and the constituency for which it was originally intended. Readers in the United Kingdom will be disturbed that the Reformation in Scotland receives less than one page while that in Holland receives nine pages. Again the final section of the book which covers the period 1795 to the present day ("the struggle to be and remain a true church ") is devoted entirely to the Church in Holland.

The author has aimed his book specifically at the high school student. It will however have a wider appeal and does have value for those who want a clear overview of Church history. Because of its format it will be of particular help as a basic reference work.

Knox Hyndman.

Schilder's Struggle For the Unity of the Church, Rudolf Van Reest, Inheritance Publications, 1990. Hb.471pp. CN$29.95, U.S.$26.60.

K.C. Van Spronsen (1897-1979) wrote under the pen name "Rudolf Van Reest", referred to in this review as Van Reest. He tells the moving story of Dr. Klaas Schilder's struggle to uphold the truth of God's Word in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, a struggle which led to Schilder's suspension and deposition both as a minister and Professor of Systematic Theology. This action, taken in 1944, was not on the grounds of doctrine, but ostensibly on grounds of church order. Schilder could have come out of hiding from the Nazis to defend himself, but his appeal that he might be allowed to do so "for the sake of truth and justice and for the sake of the Church of Christ" was refused by the Synod. So it was that the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) were established with a membership of over 100,000.

Schilder's only crime was that he strenuously opposed the liberalism that was infecting the churches and the increasingly dictatorial stance of the Synod. The latter he saw as destroying the idea of free churches in federation. Presbyterian church government, with its concept of 'superior' and 'inferior' courts (not the happiest terminology) is anathema to churches of the Dutch

Reformed tradition which sees such a structure as 'hierarchical' and 'synodocratic.' That point is stressed throughout this book. Certainly Schilder suffered at the hands of colleagues who showed little or no love or compassion and who disowned one of their finest preachers and theologians. Schilder is best known in the English-speaking world for his trilogy on the sufferings of Christ, one of the most profound works on the subject ever written.

Van Reest traces the decline in the Dutch churches from the early 1920's, a decline which, incidentally, was also under way in America and the British Isles at the same time. Theological modernism, 'Higher Criticism's' first-born child, was taking hold world-wide, robbing much of Protestantism of its message, replacing the doctrine of grace with a tepid moralism.

This book is translated by Theodore Plantinga of Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ontario, with a useful introduction by Jacobus De Yong of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches - a sister federation of the Liberated Churches in the Netherlands. There is something amounting to hero-worship in Van Reest's portrayal of Schilder, whom he knew and loved. That is understandable. It would be a mistake to write off this work as purely of interest to the Dutch. The story of Schilder's struggle to save the churches and maintain unity based on loyalty to the Word and the Confessions deserves to be known. There are many lessons to be learned with immense profit from this account. Schilder was "a good soldier of Jesus Christ," and as such he endured much hardness as he took his stand not only against liberalism, but also against Nazi philosophy which was having such damaging effects in the Netherlands during the occupation. Long before the outbreak of war, when some ecclesiastical papers in the Netherlands were actually praising Hitler, Schilder struck a warning note. Little wonder, then, that he was imprisoned by the Nazis for a period.

Van Reest's account shows how a number of Dutch theologians and ministers cooperated with the Nazis, while some of their colleagues languished and died in concentration camps! In the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands some 8,000 people were members of the Dutch Nazi movement. When others were silent or compromising, some believing that Germany would win the war(!), Schilder stood unwaveringly for the truths of the Gospel. As a result he was misrepresented and vilified and finally cast out as one who troubled Israel. His uncompromising witness for truth and righteousness was a standing condemnation of his weak-kneed colleagues. He could no longer be tolerated. In this respect it is interesting to note certain similarities in the experience of

J.G.Machen in America, W.J.Grier in Ireland and K.Schilder in the Netherlands. All three contended for the truth roughly in the same period of time, and all three were shamefully treated by their brethren.

Van Reest writes in a gripping and forceful way. His material could have been better arranged. His four chapters averaging 95 pages each, the longest having 137 pages, are really sections rather than chapters. There is some repetition, although this is never boring. There are four appendices, the first, by the translator, dealing with relationships between Schilder and Herman Hoeksema of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. This reviewer knows of no biography of Schilder available in English. This book is the next best thing. It deserves to be read beyond Dutch Reformed circles. It is a valuable study in church decline and the cost of contending for the Faith.

Frederick S. Leahy

The Atonement of the Death of Christ, H.D. McDonald, Baker Book House, 1985. 371pp. Hb. $19.95.

Dr.McDonald, who lectured in London Bible College for 27 years, discusses in this volume the death of Christ in the Faith of the Church, the Revelation of Scripture and the History of Doctrine. Thus the reader has a comprehensive overview of this crucial doctrine. McDonald insists that the gospel was prior to the church and that "while the church exists only by the gospel, it also exists only for the gospel" (p.14). Thus, at the outset, he is on firm Protestant and Reformed lines, and, what is more important, on a firm biblical basis. This is a good beginning, for the doctrine of the Cross lies at the heart of the gospel. That gospel has to be enunciated and that means doctrine. The writer discusses this and then focuses on two vital areas - the atonement and the resurrection, and the atonement and experience. "Without the resurrection the cross cannot be understood as atoning, and without the cross the resurrection cannot be experienced as redeeming" (p.40). McDonald rightly refuses to separate the cross and the empty tomb. "The cross and the resurrection belong together as the one fact of man's redemption" (p.40).

In part 2, the author surveys the subject as dealt with in the New Testament, stressing the prominence given to it. "One third of the Gospels' story has allusion to and focuses on Christ's actual sufferings." He outlines the centrality of the Cross in the synoptic Gospels, the book of Acts, the Pauline corpus, the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Johannine literature and the Petrine Epistles. Throughout, the penal and substitutionary death of Christ is stressed.

His third section reviews the various theories of the atonement ranging from the Church Fathers to the Reformers and then to modern theologians as diverse as Dale, Forsyth, Denney, the Hodges, Barth, Brunner, and many more. In each case he gives a synopsis of the doctrine held. Often he adds a corrective comment. Strangely, Candlish is consistently spelt Chandlish (pp.8, 322, 323,365). His examination of liberation theology in this connection is most helpful. "In its final reading," he says, "liberation theology is hardly to be distinguished from a form of religious humanism - a humanism touched by emotion. Its concern is with the humanising of animal man rather than with the salvation of fallen man" (p.340).

McDonald is primarily concerned in this work with the nature of the atonement and his conclusion, in keeping with the book as a whole, is thoroughly orthodox and evangelical. Wisely he makes no attempt to devise a syncretic formula of the various theories discussed, but he does insist on two requirements fundamental to any credible doctrine of the atonement. "Such a doctrine must, on the one hand, be related to the holiness and love of God; and, on the other hand, it must be expressed in terms of sacrifice and substitution" (p.344). He quotes with approval the statement of B.B.Warfield, "The theology of the writers of the New Testament is very distinctly a 'blood theology'." This book is succinctly written, abounding in quotable quotes, and reflects exhaustive and accurate research. It is well worth its price and well worth having. A comprehensive bibliography, index of authors and Scripture index add to its usefulness.

Frederick S. Leahy

Gospel and Church: An evangelical evaluation of ecumenical documents on church unity, Hywell R. Jones, Evangelical Press of Wales, 1989. 176pp. £8.95.

To many evangelicals the practice of ecumenism among the mainline denominations appears to be an escape from doctrine. In fact it is an expression of the theologies that have come to prevail in many parts of the professing church . The study and exposition of these theologies is an area into which many evangelicals may fear to tread, but Hywell R. Jones' study of documents expressing ecumenical theology over the past three decades is sure-footed and helpful.

There are five chapters in the book covering five main areas in which ecumenical theologians have been able to come to to agreement. The first

chapter, "Scripture and Tradition," is by far the longest, but it goes to the heart of modern ecumenical theology and its problems: the issue of supreme authority. It is an extended treatment of the statement "Scripture, Tradition and Traditions" which was adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order held in Montreal in 1963. (The"Montreal Statement.")

As a background to this document Jones discusses the developments in Roman Catholic theology which surfaced at the Second Vatican Council, particularly in the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum.* In this document Roman Catholics were encouraged to study the Bible for themselves and a more fluid idea of tradition was propounded, but the magisterium of the Roman Church remained the rigid confine within which sacred scripture and sacred tradition were to be understood and interpreted.

In the face of this rigid assertion, the Protestant churches of the World Council of Churches (W.C.C.) were finding an authoritative role for this more fluid idea of tradition. The Montreal Statement did this by distinguishing between ecclesiastical traditions which could err, and "the Tradition" which did not. This "Tradition" is not properly defined, beyond being an "ecumenical historiography" which enables us to approach Scripture freed from sectarian dogma and so find in the authoritative Word of God doctrines which are integrative and not divisive.

Many hailed their concept of "Tradition" in the Montreal Statement as an "ecumenical breakthrough", but Jones rightly points out that it is a novel concept without content - "ecumenical newspeak" - and a breach with Protestantism and the Bible. This is the breach that has made possible the achievement of many other " ecumenical breakthroughs."

Chapters two and three consider the work of the Anglican- Roman Catholic International Commission (A. R. C. I. C.), which in 1982 claimed to "have reached agreement on essential points of eucharistic doctrine"; and in 1987 claimed to have cut the Gordian knot of the Reformation, the respective places of faith and works in justification. Two matters of ecclesiology are covered in chapters four and five. Firstly there is the attempt by the Faith and Order Commission in its report "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" (1982) to define "the faith of the Church throughout the ages" in terms of ordinances administered by ordained officers of the Church. Then in chapter five the Church's missionary task and the nature of the gospel which she presents to the world are discussed in response to the W.C.C. statement "Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation." (1982).

While the documents evaluated in this book may not be of general interest, they are handled in a very helpful way. They are placed in the context of the history of the ecumenical movement, and are used to document the directions being taken by modern theology. The author is penetrating in his analysis of these trends and gives us a well documented account of how they are expressed in ecumenical documents. He is also biblical in his critique, and always leaves us with a clear statement on the nature and importance of the biblical truths which are coming under attack.

If there is an overarching theme in this book it is the futility of any theological endeavour or ecumenical activity which does not submit to the sole authority of the Scriptures as God's word to man. In the chapters on the A.R.C.I.C. documents and the Montreal Statement it is interesting to note how they retrace the steps of the Reformation debate, but deliberately replace clarity with confusion, leaving gaps and shadows where the Reformers (and Trent) made dogmatic assertions of faith. Jones also shows how some perceptive ecumenists are despairing of building one church upon the diverse theologies which spring from a critical view of Scripture. In response to this concern he concludes with an appeal for true ecumenism. Jones rejects "W.C.C. ecumenism", but calls for an "evangelical ecumenism [not] restricted to private fellowship on the one hand or parachurch organisations on the other." Rather he says, "This is an ecumenism which the gospel creates. It is an ecumenism which in turn commends the gospel."

A. Stewart