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SPIRITUAL INTERPRETATION

Hermeneutics is a storm-centre of modern biblical scholarship. New schools of interpretation seem to arise every few years - bizarre, incomprehensible or stimulating. The work of twentieth century linguists, archaeologists and historians has proved of immense value to those called to preach the Word of God. Something, however, seems to be missing in much instruction given, even in orthodox theological colleges, for little attention is paid to the spiritual condition of the interpreter.

Yet this, surely, is vital, because 'the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them because they are spiritually discerned' (1 Cor.2:14). While the unregenerate can grasp, to some extent, the sense of Scripture, they can never know its meaning. This is because 'knowledge' in the Bible is more than intellectual comprehension, but includes having, in the words of Geerhardus Vos, 'the reality of something practically interwoven with the inner experience of life'. Scripture can be truly interpreted only by those indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

While regeneration is basic, certain other qualities are desirable. Reverence and humility are supremely fitting for those who would interpret the self-revelation of the Almighty. These will in turn lead to prayer, an exegetical tool as precise as, and far more useful than, any lexicon. John Owen had stern words for prayerless preachers: 'I must say, that for a man to undertake the interpretation of any portion of Scripture...without invocation of God to be taught and instructed by His Spirit, is a high provocation of Him; nor shall I except the discovery of truth from anyone who so proudly and ignorantly engageth in a work so much above his ability to manage'.

Above all, there must be a disposition to obey what is revealed. Many go astray in their understanding because they have already failed in their life. The attitude of the exegete must be that of the Psalmist: 'Give me understanding, and I shall keep your law.. I shall observe it with my whole heart'. (Ps.119:34)

E.D.

THE DAY OF THE LORD AND THE VICTORY OF THE KING

An Interpretation of Zechariah Fourteen

by Hugh J. Blair

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

The message of the Book of Zechariah can be summarised in the description of the words spoken by the Lord to the angel who spoke to the prophet 'good words and words of comfort' (1.13). There was great need for such words for a discouraged people. The Jews had come back from the long exile in Babylon to find Jerusalem laid waste and the Temple destroyed. In the first enthusiasm of the Return they had set to work to rebuild the city, and the foundation of the Temple was laid with great rejoicing. But difficulties arose. The Samaritans, being refused a share in the work, proved hostile and brought it about that for fifteen years nothing more was done. It was at that time that Haggai and Zechariah came forward with their message of challenge and encouragement to inspire the people in their work of rebuilding. The good words and words of comfort that Zechariah brought to meet the discouragement of the returned exiles came through a series of visions which he saw (chapters 1 - 8) and in a series of prophecies which he proclaimed (chapters 9 -16).

All the visions that Zechariah saw had a message of comfort and reassurance. For example, the anxiety of a man with a measuring line in his hand, concerned about the size and security of the walls of Jerusalem, was answered by the assurance that Jerusalem would not need walls to protect her, 'for I,' says the Lord, 'will be a wall of fire all around her, and I will be the glory in her midst.' (2.5).

There are times when God's people need more than such visions of encouragement could bring. Sometimes the opposition seems so strong and the discouragements so overwhelming that the best than can be offered by way of encouragement does not really get to the heart of the problem. It is to just such a situation that the later chapters of Zechariah are addressed. The earlier chapters gave to God's people encouragement for the primary task in which they were involved, the task of rebuilding the Temple and restoring its worship. But

what was the final outcome going to be? With mighty world-powers always menacing, what kind of long-range future could they look for? The answer is a long look into the future, and a long look at the eternal purpose of God, a purpose that had Christ at the heart of it. These later chapters of Zechariah focus ultimately on Christ, as was made abundantly clear when Matthew linked Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem with Zechariah 9.9:

> Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
> Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem!
> Behold, your King is coming to you ...
> Lowly, and riding on a donkey,
> A colt, the foal of a donkey (cited Matthew 21.5).

The later chapters of Zechariah look forward unmistakably to Christ, and not least chapter 14, which is the special focus of this study, summarised in the title, The Day of the Lord and the Victory of the King.

Interpreting Zechariah 14
Some Basic Principles

The prophecies in Zechariah have been given very different interpretations. Anyone who thinks that only one interpretation is right - his one! - should, to quote the words of H.L. Ellison, a noted Old Testament scholar, 'learn humility from those as good as he is who have interpreted them otherwise.'[1] There are, however, certain basic principles which must be accepted. One is that the prophecies in the latter part of Zechariah were, are, and will be fulfilled in Christ, and that is the significance of them for us. That was Peter's approach to the prophecies of Christ's salvation in the Old Testament:

> Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you ...
> To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which have now been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you. (I Peter 1. 10, 12).

But the prophecies in Zechariah 14 point to a future which is beyond anything that we can imagine. Therefore they have got to be put in terms of what has been already experienced or known, described in terms that can be understood. To take an illustration from the Book of Revelation, chapter 21 describes the streets of the new Jerusalem as being 'of fine gold, like transparent glass.' We cannot readily visualise a street like that, paved with pure gold, like trans-

parent glass, but the picture given is an attempt to give a description of something superlatively beautiful in terms of materials that we can understand. There is a parallel description of the streets of the new Jerusalem in Zechariah 8. 5:

> The streets of the city
> Shall be full of boys and girls
> Playing in its streets.

A little boy once, hearing that, interpreted it as meaning that there would be no cars in heaven! There would be perfect safety there for children. The principle that is being laid down is that when we are trying to describe something that is beyond human comprehension or experience, we have to use terms that we do know and understand. To take an example from Zechariah 14, one of the happenings of the Day of the Lord that is being described is this:

> The Mount of Olives shall be split in two,
> From east to west, making a very large valley;
> Half of the mountain shall move toward the north
> And half of it toward the south (v. 4).

The prophet goes on in v. 5 to picture that in terms of the earthquake that had happened 'in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah', an earthquake not referred to in the history of the time as recorded in the Bible, but mentioned in Amos 1.1. Things that are beyond our experience have to be described in pictures that our minds can take in. That means this: the pictures that we have in this chapter are symbolical, not to be taken literally, but expressing in pictures that we can understand events that go far beyond the picture that is given.

Another fact that has to be taken into consideration is that what we have in this chapter is a picture of a Jerusalem that is to be, but it has to be described in terms of the Jerusalem that could bring different pictures to the minds of those who first heard its message. Some would think of the city of King David; some would think of the city miraculously delivered from the army of Sennacherib in the time of Isaiah. Taking it a step further, we, with the New Testament in our hands, can think of the Jerusalem laid waste by the Romans in 70A.D.; and of the heavenly Jerusalem pictured in Hebrews 12. 22ff as 'the general assembly and church of the first-born' and, finally, parallel to Zechariah 14, of the new Jerusalem in Revelation 21 and 22. All these pictures of Jerusalem may influence our interpretation of the Jerusalem of the Day of the Lord in Zechariah, and help us to understand it.

Beyond all the pictures that we may seek to decipher, there is one clear message in the chapter that we must constantly keep before us, the message of the victory of the King. Verse 1 and verse 9 sum it up for us: 'Behold the Day of the Lord is coming ... And the Lord shall be King over all the earth.' The theme of the chapter is, 'The Day of the Lord and the Victory of the King.'

The Day of the Lord

The Day of the Lord is a concept found in many of the prophets, sometimes referred to simply as 'the Day' or 'that Day'. The Day of the Lord focused on two things, judgment and deliverance - judgment on evil-doing, and deliverance for those who put their trust in the Lord. For example, in Zephaniah 1. 14, 15 we hear this:

> The great day of the Lord is near ...
> That day is a day of wrath.

And then in Zephaniah 3. 11 - 17 this message for God's people:

> In that day ... I will leave in your midst
> A meek and humble people,
> And they shall trust in the name of the Lord ...
> The Lord your God in your midst,
> The Mighty One, will save.

Judgment and salvation will mark the Day of the Lord. We find both in Zechariah 14. This in verses 1 and 2:

> Behold, the day of the Lord is coming,
> And your spoil will be divided in your midst.
> For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem.

Jerusalem would be taken, and her inhabitants would see their possessions divided by their enemies before their eyes.

Then verses 3 to 9 give a wonderful picture of God's deliverance for the remnant of his people:

> Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations,
> As He fights in the day of battle ...
> And the Lord shall be King over all the earth.

Deliverance is set alongside judgment in the Day of the Lord.

There are Old Testament references to the Day of the Lord which clearly look forward to Christ's coming and to the redemption of His people in the New Testament. The opening verses of Isaiah 11 tell of Christ's coming:

> There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse,
> and a Branch shall grow out of His roots.
> The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him.

The prophecy comes to its climax in verse 10 of Isaiah 11:

> And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse,
> Who shall stand as a banner to the people.
> For the Gentiles shall seek Him,
> And His resting-place shall be glorious.

The Day of the Lord is the day of Christ.

Joel in chapter 2, verses 28ff, tells of what will happen when the Spirit is poured out on all flesh at 'the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord', a prophecy fulfilled, as Peter pointed out, on the Day of Pentecost.

The Day of the Lord is the day of the Spirit's outpouring.

And now Zechariah 14 tells us that the Day of the Lord is the day of Christ's Second Coming:

> In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives,

as was foretold again in Acts 1. 11 to the disciples on the Mount of Olives:

> This same Jesus, Who was taken up from you into heaven,
> will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.

Christ's Second Coming will be the climax of the Day of the Lord.

The Attack on Jerusalem

The first sign in Zechariah 14 of the coming of the Day of the Lord would be an attack by all the nations against Jerusalem:

> For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem.
> The city will be taken.

That would be God's judgment on the people who had rejected him. It happened

more than once in the history of Jerusalem. More than 70 years before Zechariah prophesied, the power of Babylon had captured the city and laid it waste, and had carried off into captivity all but the poorest people of the land (II Kings 25. 8 - 12).

It would happen again in 70 A.D., when the might of Imperial Rome would bring a terrible judgment on the city that had rejected Christ.

In Zechariah 14 the prophet is predicting one final onslaught which would be made before Christ's Return. That is again spoken of repeatedly in the closing chapters of the Book of Revelation, when the powers of evil, represented by the beast, are pictured as making war against the One Who is King of kings and Lord of lords.

It is vital to see that it is God who is in control of all that is happening: it is he who says, 'I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem.' That will be judgment on those who have rejected him. But it is more than that. It is God's way of engineering a confrontation with the powers of evil, so that his almighty power may vanquish them.[2] In Revelation 20 Satan is unleashed, but only that his forces might be massed together against the saints, and then destroyed for ever.

It happened to literal Babylon when God by the hand of Cyrus brought upon her all the evil that she had brought upon his people. It happened to Rome, the New Testament Babylon, which began to decline after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Though they could not understand it at the time, Christ had told his disciples that the manifestation of the powers of evil that would threaten them was a sign of the end of Rome's dominion:

> When these things begin to happen, look up and lift up
> your heads, because your redemption draws near (Luke 21.28).

Maybe we should be taking heart in these days from the very determination of the forces of evil to attack God's cause. Maybe Christ's return and final victory are nearer than we think. Whether sooner or later, we can be sure of the victory of God.

The Victory of God

A possible translation of Zechariah 14. 1 is 'A day is coming for the Lord.' It is not only the Day of the Lord, but a day of victory for the Lord.

The victory of God is described in this chapter in vivid symbolic pictures. The supernatural accompaniments of the victory were linked with experiences to which the hearers of the prophecies could relate, and it may help us to understand the symbolic pictures if we can identify the history incidents which perhaps formed their backcloth. It would be wrong to be dogmatic about what in each case the backcloth may have been, but it may be helpful to try to identify it.

Fighting in the Day of Battle

Zechariah 14. 3 speaks of the Lord's going forth to fight against the nations that were gathered to do battle against Jerusalem, 'as when he fought in the day of battle.' One outstanding time when the Lord fought for his people in the day of battle was at the Red Sea, when the Israelites were hemmed in by the army of Pharaoh. Moses in Exodus 14. 14 told the people, 'The Lord will fight for you; you need only be still' (NIV). Zechariah's message is that in the final battle against evil the Lord will fight as he did then; this people will need only to be still and leave the battle to him. The victory is gained by God alone.

Standing on the Mount of Olives

The same incident at the Red Sea may be the key to the picture in the next verse, which describes the splitting of the Mount of Olives:

> The Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley ... Then you shall flee through My mountain valley (vv. 4,5).

The same Hebrew word is used for the splitting of the Mount of Olives as is used in Exodus 14. 14 for the dividing of the waters of the Red Sea. Some commentators hold that there will be a literal splitting of the Mount of Olives when Christ returns. I have read that there is a geological fault in the area which might cause such an upheaval of the earth. But if this part of the prophecy has behind it the picture of God's deliverance of his people at the Red Sea, might it not be helpful to take the dividing of the Mount of Olives as parallel to God's dividing the Red Sea to deliver his people from their enemies?[3] Verse 5 can be translated, 'Then you shall escape through My mountain valley.'[4] When literal Jerusalem was besieged by the Romans in 70 A.D., some of Christ's followers, warned by his words, 'When you see Jerusalem compassed by armies, then let those in Judea flee to the mountains' (Luke 21. 20, 21), did escape. There was

no literal cleaving of the Mount of Olives, but there was a way of escape for God's people, as there will be from the ultimate attack by the forces of evil. By whatever supernatural means, the victory will be God's. One writer on Zechariah has put it like this:

> God and His people will triumph and will do so by miraculous interposition at the hour when appearances are most against them.[5]

There is an Old Testament parallel to the Lord's standing on the Mount of Olives, prophesied in v. 4:

> And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east.

The parallel is found in the prophecy of Ezekiel, another book like Zechariah containing many visions. One comes immediately in the first chapter. Ezekiel looks towards the north, and sees a storm cloud gathering and sweeping over the land, lit up with vivid flashes of fire. It is a fitting symbol of impending disaster, for the Chaldeans would come sweeping down on Judah and Jerusalem, striking terror as they went. But the prophet looks still, and out of the cloud appears the figure of four living creatures - afterwards identified as cherubim - borne on wheels, and themselves supporting a platform, and on the platform a throne (v. 26), and on the throne 'a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it.' Surmounting the whole vision is the appearance of God on his throne, still in control. 'This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord' (v. 28). The vision appears again to the prophet, in chapter 10, now in the Temple of Jerusalem, but about to move from the Temple (v. 4), and finally from Jerusalem itself, as recorded in 11.23:

> And the glory of the Lord went up from the
> middle of the city and stood on the mountain
> which is on the east side of the city.

The mountain is not identified in Ezekiel as the Mount of Olives, but it can be nowhere else. Writing in the name, Mount of Olives, we have an exact parallel to Zechariah 14. 4:

> And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount
> of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east.

This striking parallel helps us to understand the significance of the Lord's

return to stand on the Mount of Olives. Going back to Ezekiel, the significance of the removing of the representation of the Lord on his throne from Jerusalem was that God was leaving a city defiled by the abominations that had polluted the worship of the Temple. The glory of the Lord was leaving the city, but not far, and not for ever, for chapter 43. 1 - 4 records how the glory of the Lord, as seen in the vision of chapter 1, 'came back into the Temple by way of the gate that faces toward the east.' The glory of the Lord had not gone for ever, it had not gone far, no further than the Mount of Olives, standing there, still to judge sin, and still to bring salvation to his people. It is for those two purposes that 'his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east,' proclaiming to all eternity judgment and salvation.

Darkness and Light and Living Waters

It is difficult to identify specific instances in Israel's history parallel to what is foretold in vv. 6, 7 and v. 8:

> It shall come to pass in that day, that there will be no light;
> The lights will diminish. It shall be one day which is known
> to the Lord - neither day nor night. But at evening time it
> shall happen that it will be light.

There will be a day of mingled light and darkness, shattered at evening time by a sudden blaze of light.

> And in that day it shall be that living waters shall flow
> from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea, and
> half of them toward the western sea; in both summer and
> winter it shall occur.

There will be living waters flowing from Jerusalem, everywhere and all the time.

No specific parallels can be identified in the Old Testament to a blazing light at evening time and living waters flowing from Jerusalem, though Ezekiel 47 does speak of an abundant supply of healing waters flowing from the Temple. But there is a clear parallel to Zechariah 14. 8 in the New Testament, in John 7. 37, 38:

> On the last day, that great day of the feast Jesus stood
> and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come
> to Me, and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture
> has said, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.'

The scripture referred to could have been Zechariah 14. 8.

The feast referred to in John 7. 37 was the feast of tabernacles (or booths), when for a week each year the Jews thanked God for the harvest, and by living in booths or huts made with branches commemorated the fact that for 40 years in the wilderness they had lived not in houses but in temporary dwellings. It is surely significant that the feast of tabernacles is specifically referred to later in Zechariah 14, in v. 16. Perhaps the things that are commemorated by the feast of tabernacles will help us to understand the significance of the light referred to in vv. 6, 7, and the living waters referred to in v. 8. There were certain rituals which had grown up around the feast of tabernacles. One with the lighting of great lights on each side of the altar of burnt-offering, to symbolise the pillar of fire which had guided the Israelites on their journey through the wilderness to the Promised Land. That was the background to Christ's words in John 8. 12: 'I am the Light of the world.'

Another part of the ritual of the feast was the pouring out of water before the altar, to symbolise the water that God had provided for the people all through their wilderness wandering. That was the background to Christ's words in John 7. 37, 38: 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.'

The One Whom Zechariah foresaw standing on the Mount of Olives will welcome His people to the place where 'they need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light' (Revelation 22.3); and he will 'lead them to living fountains of water' (Revelation 7. 17). Zechariah's prophecy will be fulfilled beyond all that we can imagine. And it is all guaranteed by the assurance in Zechariah 14. 9: 'And the Lord shall be King.' The thanksgiving associated with the feast of tabernacles - for a harvest safely gathered in, and for God's everlasting provision for his people's needs - is a fitting celebration for those who worship the King. Those who refuse to worship the King, and who spurn the celebration of his provision, can have no share in that provision (vv. 17 - 19).

Holiness to the Lord

There is one more thing in the final verses of Zechariah's prophecy:

> In that day 'HOLINESS TO THE LORD' shall be engraved
> on the bells of the horses. The pots in the Lord's
> house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yes,
> every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness
> to the Lord of hosts (vv. 20, 21).

'Holiness to the Lord' were the words that were inscribed on a gold plate on the head-dress of the high priest, as described in Exodus 28. 36, 37. He was specially set apart to God. But Zechariah's closing words look forward to the time when every part of life will bear that inscription. Even the bells on the horses' harness, even the pots used in everyday life, all will be 'holiness to the Lord.' And every one of the Lord's people will be 'holiness to the Lord.' 'There shall no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts.' No member of a corrupt race will have any place there. The word translated 'Canaanite' can also mean 'trader'. Did Christ's cleansing of the Temple from its money-changers and its traders point forward to the new Jerusalem where there would be nothing that would mar its holiness to the Lord? The ultimate fulfilment is described in Revelation 21:

> There shall by no means enter anything that defiles or causes abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life (Revelation 21. 27).

But 'holiness to the Lord' must begin for God's people here and now. Peter in his second epistle is speaking in chapter 3 of Christ's coming again and of the Day of the Lord, as Zechariah has done. And this is what Peter writes:

> But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat: both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God? (II Peter 3. 10 - 12).

Discussion of the timing and the details of Christ's Second Coming can be unrewarding if it is no more than an academic exercise. But here is one thing that the thought of Christ's Second Coming must lead to, holiness of life. 'What manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the Day of God?' Holiness means every part of our being and our living consecrated to the Lord. It will come to its consummation when He presents us 'faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy' (Jude 24). Then eternally everything will be HOLINESS TO THE LORD.

References

1. H.L. Ellison, *Men Spake From God,* Paternoster Press, 1973, p. 131.

2. Christ's conflict with Satan in the wilderness is an outstanding example of God's use of deliberate confrontation with the powers of evil to gain a decisive victory over them. Christ was sent into the wilderness by the Spirit (Matthew 4. 1; Mark 1. 12). God took the offensive and sought the confrontation, as in Zechariah 14 and Revelation 20. See *Christ and the Tempter* by Edward Donnelly, in Reformed Theological Journal, November, 1987, p. 20.

3. In Isaiah the Day of the Lord is seen as a day in which every barrier to the accomplishment of God's purpose will be taken away. Thus, in Isaiah 11, which speaks of the Day of the Lord as the day of the coming of Christ, the Root of Jesse, verse 15 speaks of a new dividing of the Red Sea, so that it may be crossed in sandals. Parallel to this is Isaiah 2. 12ff, which speaks of the Day of the Lord as coming upon all the high mountains and upon all the hills that are lifted up. J.A. Motyer interprets both passages as speaking of the removal of every barrier that might hinder the fulfilment of God's plan for the world. (J.A. Moyter, The Prophecy of Isaiah, Inter-Varsity Press, 1993, p. 127).

4. Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, R. Laird Harris et al., Moody Press, Chicago, 1980, p. 1327, suggests that the Hebrew word nus usually connotes escape from danger.

5. Marcus Dods, *The Visions of a Prophet,* p. 161.

WILLIAM TYNDALE AND THE ENGLISH BIBLE

by C. Knox Hyndman

Knox Hyndman is minister of the Newtownards Reformed Presbyterian Church, Co. Down and lecturer in Church History in the Reformed Theological College, Belfast.

Gloucestershire is one of the most picturesque counties in England and a favourite of the present Royal family. Just over four hundred years ago a young Englishman from that county was taken from a prison cell in the Belgian castle of Vilvorde. He was to suffer the penalty for heresy and was publicly put to death at the stake. The man was William Tyndale. On the three hundred and fiftieth anniversary of his martyrdom the 'Times' newspaper wrote in an editorial of Tyndale that he was a figure of pathos, seldom remembered. It spoke of Tyndale 'dying for a doctrine that hardly anyone in England now believes'. Today the writer of the 'Times' editorial would not even consider it worthwhile to mention William Tyndale even in such a disparaging way as his predecessor had done. But editorial writers, even in respected national newspapers, are not a true guide to the real significance or worth of either men or events. Tyndale in fact died for a doctrine which is believed by a multitude which no one can count and he is remembered with gratitude by all who love the Word of God.

Early Life and University

The exact date of William Tyndale's birth is not known. It is certain however that he spent his early years in the county of Gloucestershire. The notion that William Tyndale crept out of humble origins, a small country mouse from an unimpressive clan, and dared to challenge the great and well connected of London is not true. The Tyndales, successful people in one of England's most prosperous counties, could hold their heads high. By 1522 the Tyndale family had risen to a position of real affluence and influence.[1]

The county itself was attractive, full of churches and much favoured by priests and friars among whom a familiar oath was 'as sure as God's in Gloster'.[2] Yet the county was as spiritually dark as if there was no church there at all. Like the rest of the country it was full of superstition and profound ignorance of the Word of God. The bishops and clergy were a sad reflection of the condition of the people. Those who should have been spiritual leaders in fact

lived without any concern for the people. Tyndale's comment was 'they care for the people as the fox does for the geese'. Merle D'Aubigné highlighted the spiritual plight of the county when he said 'The papal birds of prey have swooped upon it'.[3] The godly Bishop Hooper some years after Tyndale's death found about forty clergy in his diocese who could not tell who was the author of the Lord's prayer nor where it was to be found, and ten proved unable to recite it.

Tyndale went to Oxford in 1505 'brought up from a child in the University of Oxford'[4] and was probably enrolled in Magdalen Hall. His own comment gives an insight into the attitude to Scripture which was to be found even in a place of learning. 'In the university', he wrote, 'they have ordained that no man shall look at the Scriptures until he be noselled in heathen learning eight or nine years, and armed with false principles with which he is clean shut out of the understanding of the Scripture.'[5]

Oxford, where Erasmus had so many friends, was the city in which his New Testament in Greek had met with the warmest welcome. Tydnale began to read the text of Erasmus. 'He found a Master whom he had not sought at Oxford - this was God Himself'.[6] 'His life and conversation were such' says Foxe 'that all who knew him reputed and esteemed him to be a man of most virtuous disposition and unspotted life'.[7]

After graduating BA in 1512 and MA in 1515 Tyndale moved to Cambridge where he met with two young men with whom he was to form a deep bond of friendship and fellowship. John Frith and Thomas Bilney were both students at Cambridge at the time Tyndale arrived there. 'These three young scholars set to work with enthusiasm. They declared that neither priestly absolution nor any other religious rite could give remission of sins, that the assurance of pardon is obtained by faith alone'.

A Growing Conviction

Tyndale left Cambridge probably about the end of 1521 and returned to Gloucestershire where he became tutor to the family of Sir John Walsh at Little Sodbury Manor. Sir John and his wife were renowned for their hospitality and regularly invited the local clergy to their home. The tutor was invited to join the company around the table and often entered into conversation with the priests. 'Master Tyndale', says Foxe, 'as he was learned and well practised in divine

matters, so he spared not to show simply and plainly his judgement and when they at any time varied from Tyndale in opinion, he would show them in the book and lay plainly before them the open and manifest places in the Scriptures to confute their errors and confirm his sayings. And thus they continued for some time reasoning and contending together until at length they entertained a secret grudge in their hearts against him'.[8] While residing at the Manor, Tyndale also had the opportunity to preach in the open air at St Austin's Green in Bristol where two hundred years later George Whitefield was to proclaim the same Gospel.

Tyndale's table disputations, together with his open air preaching, aroused the envy and anger of the priests of the county. 'They raged and railed against him, affirming that his sayings were heresy; adding to his sayings more than ever he spoke, and so accused him secretly to the Chancellor and other of the bishop's officers'.[9]

Tyndale was called to appear before the bishop's Chancellor and though subject to great verbal abuse suffered in no other way. He was greatly distressed and began to see that ignorance and superstition die hard. He unburdened himself to an older man in the district who had himself once held the post of Chancellor to the bishop. This older man expressed what Tyndale had long been thinking. 'Do you not know that the Pope is the very Anti-Christ of whom the Scriptures speak? But beware what you say for if you shall be perceived to be of that opinion it will cost you your life'. It was encouraging to have such a confirmation of his own thinking yet it was increasingly obvious that such thinking was very rare. Shortly after this conversation Tyndale was disputing with another Doctor of Theology. The latter's final outburst was alarming: 'We had better be without God's laws than the Pope's'. Tyndale's reply is well known and provides evidence of the vision that had begun to develop in his heart: 'I defy the Pope and all his laws', he said, and then added 'If God spare my life ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scripture than thou dost'.[10]

Tyndale would no longer avoid the conclusion that if the superstition and darkness which enveloped the land was to be driven away then the people must have the Word of God in their own language. 'I had perceived by experience how it was impossible to establish the people in any truth except the Scriptures were plainly laid before their eyes in the mother tongue'.

At this time, it must be remembered, the language of the people was rarely

used in worship and Tyndale's vision was not to be easily turned into reality. Since 1408 the Church forbade the translation or printing of Scripture into English. Initially however, Tyndale did not realize what a difficult task lay ahead. He left Sodbury Manor and set off for London. The bishop at the time was Cuthbert Tunstall renowned as a scholar and true gentleman who had won the praise of Erasmus. Tyndale hoped that the bishop would be willing to act as his patron. His 'approach to Tunstall was not foolish but it was innocent. News of him as a trouble maker from Gloucestershire with radical proposals would certainly have preceded him'.[11] 'My lord answered me', said Tyndale, 'that his house was full and I understood at the last that there was no room in my lord of London's palace to translate the New Testament'. A short while later an even more disturbing realization dawned on him - that there was no place to translate the New Testament in all of England.

The Work of Translation

In May 1524 Tyndale sailed from London with a small sum of money given to him by a wealthy and sympathetic merchant, Sir Humphrey Monmouth. He arrived in Hamburg in May 1524, the fifteenth year of Henry VIII's reign. He was never again to set foot on English soil and for the remaining twelve years of his life was a fugitive with one compelling purpose - that his fellow countrymen might read the Word of God for themselves.

Tyndale was probably in Cologne in the summer of 1525 where his manuscript was being printed. When the printing had reached Matthew chapter 12, the Cologne authorities were about to arrest Tyndale and his associate William Roye and impound their work. The authorities had been alerted by the comments of drunken print workers who boasted to a Cologne scholar about the work they were doing by which 'all England would in short time be Lutheran'. Tyndale was forced to flee with his precious manuscript to Worms where the whole of the New Testament was completed early in 1526. 'Here was suddenly the complete New Testament in very portable form, clearly printed. The bare text itself was complete and without an iota of allegorising commentary. Everything that had been originally written was here, to be read freely without addition or subtraction'.[12] Thousands of copies of this New Testament reached the shores of England, often concealed in bales of cloth with the approval of sympathetic merchants.

A Modern Version

Tyndale's purpose was to provide a translation which would speak straight to the heart of the common people. In the Providence of God he was well equipped for the task. Tyndale had an exceptional gift in languages and before his death could speak fluently in seven besides English. He had of course available to him, the Greek text of Erasmus which had appeared just ten years earlier. When the translation itself was completed the new art of printing had progressed so much that the New Testament could be produced at a price which brought it within reach of many people. The boy that driveth the plough now had his Bible.

It was Tyndale's conviction throughout his work that the bare text, if given, will interpret itself. The Word of God he affirmed must speak directly in a way that can be understood by a reader alone. He aimed for everyday spoken English and made a language for the Bible which speaks to the heart. Many of the words and phrases we now use with familiarity did not exist until Tyndale coined them. His translation has moulded English speech infinitely more than many other notable literary works. It is to Tyndale that we owe such familiar phrases as 'the mercy seat', 'the tender mercies of God' and 'in Him we live and move and have our being'. 'Tyndale's conscious use of everyday words, and his wonderful ear for rythmic patterns gave to English not only a Bible language, but a new prose. England was blessed as a nation, in that the language of its principal book, was the fountain from which flowed the lucidity, suppleness and expressive range of the greatest prose thereafter'.[13]

By the end of 1529, in spite of losing his completed manuscript in a shipwreck and being forced to begin again, Tyndale had completed his translation of the Pentateuch. He had also produced a revision of his New Testament and added notes or glosses in the margins.

We can scarcely calculate the impact in England of so many copies of the Word of God going into circulation. One of the first effects however was to stir up the flame of bitter opposition. No effort was spared by leaders in the church to find, discredit and destroy those copies of the New Testament. Foremost among those leaders was Cuthbert Tunstall, a fact which greatly shocked Tyndale. Tunstall mounted what he regarded as a scholarly attack on Tyndale's work. He claimed to have discovered two thousand errors in a volume of six hundred and eighty pages. Some of these were not of course errors but the use of words which the church found offensive, for example 'congregation' used for

'church', 'love' for 'charity' and 'repent' for 'do penance'. Other criticisms were of very minor and inconsequential mistakes.

What was far more disturbing to Tyndale was the public burning of the New Testament which was the next stage of Tunstall's attack. Not only was the Scripture itself burned but many of those who believed its message were subjected to the same cruel treatment and Tyndale was to lose many of his friends who died as martyrs. Though separated by the English channel from this arena of misery and danger Tyndale was not safe from the malicious intentions of his opponents. He had to move constantly and keep on guard. Frustrated by all attempts to capture him and put an end to his influence, Thomas More had once complained of 'the heretic of England who is both nowhere and everywhere'.

Late in 1529 he had moved to Antwerp where he was to remain for the rest of his life. In this city refugees from England were welcomed and goods were despatched across the channel. There was an English house there, a residence of English merchants, some of whom were sympathetic to the Reformers. Even there however he was not safe and it was in this city that he was betrayed by a merchant named Henry Philips who had gained his confidence. Tyndale was captured by the authorities and imprisoned in Vilvorde castle in Belgium. Early in 1536, when Tyndale had been in his cell for four hundred and fifty days, he was formally condemned as a heretic and handed over to the secular authorities for punishment - that is burning at the stake. The case against Tyndale had to be thoroughly prepared and presented for 'this was not a simple, deluded anabaptist; this was a learned enemy who was a 'mighty opposite' to the leaders of the Catholic church from the Pope himself down'.[14] The issue of course remained the authority of Scripture which Tyndale upheld throughout his trial. Foxe comments on the event, 'There was much writing and great disputation to and fro between him and them of the University of Louvain in such sort, that they all had enough to do, and more than they could well yield, to answer the authority and testimonies of Scripture, whereupon he most pithily grounded his doctrine'.

Only one thing written by Tyndale during his year and a half at Vilvorde has survived. It is a poignant letter addressed to someone in authority in the prison asking for a warmer cap, for his damp, cold cell had afflicted him with severe cold in the head and perpetual catarrh.[15] He also requested a warm coat and a lamp in the evening as 'it is indeed wearisome sitting alone in the dark. But most of all I beg and beseech your clemency to be urgent with the commissary, that he will kindly permit me to have the Hebrew Bible, Hebrew grammar and Hebrew dictionary, that I may pass the time in that study'.

It is not known if these requests were granted but on 6th October 1536 William Tyndale was led out to the stake. His last recorded prayer before his execution was 'Lord, open the King of England's eyes'. That last prayer was to be answered in a remarkably short time. King Henry authorized the first official printing of the Bible. It was in fact essentially Tyndale's translation completed by his friend Miles Coverdale. A copy of this 'Great Bible' was, at the direction of Cranmer, placed in every parish in the land. The inscription on the fly leaf of this edition was taken from Proverbs 21 verse 1, 'The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; he turneth it whithersoever he will'.

Lasting Influence

Tyndale's translation has left a lasting impression on subsequent English versions of Scripture. But his influence is even more fundamental and far reaching. He and those associated with him expressed an unshakable confidence in the Word of God itself. They carried the conviction that the Word of God would accomplish all that God intended. In his own prologue to the New Testament (the first evangelical tract printed in English) Tyndale wrote, 'Give diligence reader that thou come with a pure mind, and as the Scripture saith, with a single eye, unto the words of health and of eternal life; by the which (if we repent and believe them) we are born anew, created afresh and enjoy the fruits of the blood of Christ'.

Tyndale was aware, too, that this Scripture must be faithfully expounded. He did that through his open air preaching and through his writing. In 'The Parable of the Wicked Mammon' he expounds the doctrine of justification by faith and holds out to his readers the assurance that 'God's Son's blood is stronger than all the sins and wickedness of the whole world'.

To this confidence in the Word of God was joined a life conformed to that Word. Tyndale has been compared to the apostle John with his emphasis on love and humility. Foxe speaks of the 'power of his doctrine and the sincerity of his life'. Here, surely, are the twin characteristics which will enable the church to bear a faithful witness in every generation - power of doctrine and sincerity of life.

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COVENANT OF GRACE AND THE FAMILY

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About the year 50 A.D. in the Southern European city of Philippi, a cry pierced the darkness of the night air. It was the voice of the local jailer putting a crucial question to God's servants Paul and Silas. He enquired, 'Men, what must I do to be saved?' (Acts 16:30). Moments earlier he had been prevented from suicide by Paul's reassuring words, 'Don't harm yourself! We are all here!' (Acts 16:28). Now lying prostrate before these men, whose character and conduct further exposed the wickedness of his soul, he asked this all important question. We can legitimately assume that he was prompted to ask such a question because the demon-possessed girl had been telling the citizens of Philippi the previous day, 'These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved' (Acts 16:17).

The question having been asked, Paul and Silas did not hesitate to provide the answer in sharing the gospel with this seeking soul. The remedy to his dilemma was not so much a matter of doing but of believing. 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved ...' (Acts 16:31). What wonderful news for this man under conviction of sin! Nevertheless we must never forget that these words, glorious though they are, did not constitute all that the missionaries said. Their complete answer was - Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved - you and your household.[1]

The second part of this reply is frequently ignored. The reason for this possibly lies in the fact that some people are confused as to why Paul and Silas should have made any reference to this man's household in their answer to a very personal question. Of course it is a very legitimate question. Why did the missionaries extend the gospel promise to this man's family as well as to himself? The purpose of this article is to address this question.

The Family in God's Covenant Purpose

When the missionaries included a reference to the jailer's household in response to this question about salvation we must ask - Was this reference unique in Scripture and therefore applicable to the jailer's household only in

some particular sense and therefore not to be applied in a general way? The only way to answer this question is to look at the place of the family in the broader context of God's completed revelation, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

The Place of the Family in the Old Testament

Throughout the Old Testament, from creation to the flood, through the patriarchal period, in giving the Law, and in the promises of blessing and cursing, God treated the people of God in terms of families. The current term 'extended family' can be seen vividly in principle in the organisation of the tribes of Israel in Numbers especially.

The principle, by which God deals with believers in relation to their families, is clearly revealed in Genesis chapter 17. The covenant referred to in verse 7 is the covenant of grace which God established with Abraham (see Genesis chapter 12). In Genesis chapter 17 God makes it clear that the benefits and privileges of the covenant were not limited in their application to believers only but also were extended to his family.

> I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. 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.[2]

God, in his eternal covenant, promised to be the God not only of his children but also of their children after them. The promise to Abraham finds fulfilment in his son Isaac and then in his son Jacob and so on.

> He remembers his covenant for ever, the word he commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac. He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant: 'To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion you will inherit'.[3]

The special place of the family in God's saving purposes is illustrated over and over again in the Old Testament. Noah was a man who, at a time in human history noted for its wickedness, found favour in the eyes of the Lord. In judgement God purposed to destroy the world with a flood. God in this situation of judgement dealt mercifully with his servant Noah. And very significantly the Lord said to Noah, 'Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have

found you righteous in this generation' (Gen. 7:1). The place of the family within the covenant of grace meant that not only was Noah saved from the deluge but so also was his family. (Gen. 6:18, 8:18).

Many generations later we read about the faith of Rahab the Canaanite from Jericho (Jos. 2:11). When the city in which she lived was destroyed by the Israelites not only was her life saved but so also were all the members of her family who came under the shelter of her roof. (Jos. 6:25).

The integrated nature of the family unit in the Old Testament can be observed not only in grace but also in judgement. After Achan was discovered as the man who stole the 'devoted things' from Jericho not only was he stoned but so also were the members of his family. (Jos. 7:24, 25). With reference to this event John Gray makes the comment.

> This is a classic example of solidarity of the community. As Achan's breach of the tabu involved all Israel in sin and disability his punishment involved his family and all that belonged to him.[4]

The Place of the Family in the New Testament

a. The picture in the Gospels

When we come to the New Testament we discover that there is no disparity with what we have already discovered about Godís dealings with the family in the Old Testament. We find several expressions which are entirely consistent with God's covenantal promise to Abraham. And since, to quote Edith Shaeffer, 'Christianity is Jewish'[5] these expressions ought to be interpreted in a manner consistent with their Old Testament background.

In the Gospels we take two examples, one of which illustrates the promise to the family in the covenant of grace, and the other the fulfilment. After Jesus went to the home of the new believer Zacchaeus he said, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man too, is a son of Abraham' (Luke 19:9). Jesus did not say, 'Salvation has come to you', but interestingly and significantly, 'Salvation has come to this house'. Whatever discontinuity there is between the Old Covenant era and the New, our Lord here was demonstrating that the place of the family in the covenant was unaffected.

The other example from the Gospels relates more to fulfilment than promise. In John 4:46-54 we have recorded for us the healing of the royal

official's son. The climax of this incident in our Lord's ministry is recorded in the closing words of verse 54 - 'So he and all his household believed'. In these words, especially within this Judaeo-Christian context, we cannot fail to see the connection with the Abrahamic covenantal promise, 'I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you' (Gen. 17:7).

There are those of course who would suggest that the real cleavage between Old Covenant and New Covenant era comes at Pentecost when the church officially casts off its Judean swaddling clothes and puts on its multinational and cross-cultural suit. What does the evidence in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles suggest?

b. The pattern in the Acts

The first significant piece of evidence emerges from Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost. Peter was preaching to a crowd of devout Jews who would have been very aware of their covenantal heritage. Adopting the hermeneutical principle that Scripture must be interpreted as it was originally understood, the words Peter used in the conclusion of his sermon admit of only one interpretation. He said, 'The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off - for all whom the Lord our God will call' (Acts 2:39). The words 'you and your children', not only have a familiar ring about them in the context of this article but also, as I have suggested, in the context in which Peter was preaching. Though Peter was proclaiming that the Messianic promises had found their fulfilment in Christ yet he was careful to explain that the gospel (the covenant of grace) continued to apply to believers and their children.

What happened in practice within the context of the New Testament church helps to confirm our interpretation of this text. The example of Cornelius is significant since he had no genealogical connection with Abraham, being himself a Gentile. The message that came to Cornelius from the angel was - 'Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved' (Acts 11:13b, 14). Again we see that the promise included in the message was covenantal in its form, 'a message through which you and all your household will be saved.' This promise subsequently found fulfilment through the gospel which Peter preached to the household of Cornelius. (Acts 10:44, 45). With respect to Lydia and her family, the promise of the covenant of grace finds expression in the fact that after her

conversion to Christ 'she and the members of her household were baptised'.

c. References in the Epistles

In the New Testament letters, the place of the family unit, within the context of the people of God, continues to remain prominent. In Paul's list of greetings at the end of his letter to the Romans he mentions several family connections and on two occasions sends greetings from households (Rom. 16:11, 12), and in 1 Corinthians the reference to household is in connection with baptism, 'Yes, I also baptised the household of Stephanas ...í' (1:16). In the case of Timothy it is interesting to see the blessings of salvation being enjoyed by three generations of the one family. 'I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and I am persuaded, now lives in you also' (2 Tim. 1:5).

These many references to the place of the household within the saving purposes of God in the New Testament combine to convince us that God, in the new covenant age, continues to work in terms of families and lines of generations. Referring to a text which might give the impression that a more individualistic pattern emerges in the New Testament, O. Palmer Robertson writes in relation to Acts 8:12:

> ... nothing in this text indicates that God was not also continuing to work in family units under the provisions of the new covenant. So long as marriage and family continue, the promises of the covenant also continue. The enrichment of the symbolism of the new covenant does not imply a loss of any of the blessings of the old.[6]

The Testimony of the Psalms

Although the Psalms are found in the Old Testament they are very much intertestamental in that the New Testament believers are commanded to sing them.[7] It is interesting to discover their testimony to the place of the family in Godís covenant purposes. For example, Psalm 103:

> But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children - with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts.[8]

Within the sweep of these verses three distinct generations are in view; those who fear God, their children and their children's children.

Psalm 102 concludes with words of encouragement to God's servants about their offspring: The children of your servants will live in your presence; their descendants will be established before you.[9] The word 'live' here in this text means more than physical life. This is because the word 'life' and 'salvation' were virtually synonymous in the Jewish mind, as is seen in the following two references in John's gospel:

> I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full.
> I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.[10]

The prophet Habakkuk declared: '... the righteous will live by his faith' (Hab. 2:4b). Paul uses this phrase in Romans and interprets 'live' to mean 'salvation' as is obvious from the context of chapter 1:16, 17. With these examples to guide us in the interpretation of 'live' in Psalm 102 we have here another gracious promise to the children of God's children. Other Psalms which contain similar references are - Ps. 45:16; Ps. 72:4; Ps. 78:4-7; Ps. 105:7-10; Ps. 112:2; Ps. 132:12. God's people, when they sing these songs of Zion, are reminded of the place of the family in God's saving purposes.

Conclusion Based on Biblical Evidence

Having surveyed the special place given by God to the family we are therefore able to place the statement made to the Philippian jailer in its broader biblical context. It is obvious when they said in response to his needy cry, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved - you and your household', that the phrase, 'you and your household', was not unique and unrelated to God's complete revelation. However, it is entirely consistent with the revealed will of God. Matthew Poole makes the interesting observation on this text:

> Thou shalt by this means come to obtain that life thou dost so much desire after; and not only thyself, but (God gives more than we ask) thy children and family shall be saved; in as much as the covenant, where it is entered into, is not only with them, but with their children. [11]

Matthew Henry also makes the connection with the covenant of grace. He makes the point with reference to Acts 16:31.

> Those of thy house that are infants, shall be admitted into the visible church with thee, and thereby put into a fair way for salvation. Those that are grown up shall have the means of salvation brought to them, and be they never so many let them believe in Jesus Christ, and they shall be saved; they are all welcome to Christ upon the same terms. [12]

From the biblical evidence concerning the place of the family in God's saving purpose we see the primary place given by God to the family unit. This is in sharp contrast to the humanistic view of the family which is increasingly shaping the value systems of our Western culture. In humanism the individual is given far greater priority than the family. This rampant individualism has even penetrated the ranks of evangelicalism with many churches now ministering to age groups rather than to congregations, and to individuals rather than to families. The concept behind the family pew and the priority given to family worship are for many a distant memory. Frederick Leahy writing on the family makes the point:

> The forces of humanism and unbelief have been mobilized in an unprecedented assault on the family. This is particularly the case in much modern writing of fiction, plays, films and television programmes. All too often they serve a rampant humanism. ... The family is splintered and devalued by a wave of intense ultra-individualism, highly atomistic and personal. On this view all that matters is personhood. Nothing must be allowed to stand in the way of the individual, least of all the family. [13]

It is important, in the light of such an attack upon the family, that the teaching of God's Word on this subject is rediscovered and adhered to.

Application of Biblical Family Concepts

In applying the teaching of God's Word about the family important challenges arise for parents and also for the church.

a. A challenge to parents

When Paul and Silas included the jailer's family in proclaiming the gospel to him it is clear that they did not mean God would obviate the use of means in bringing blessing to this Philippian family. The Word of God was preached to everyone in the jailer's household, 'Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house' (Acts 16:32). The jailer, using his authority as the head of his household, brought his family under the influence of the gospel. Subsequently we read that the blessings of the gospel were enjoyed in that humble European home. The jailer brought them into his house and set meat before them, and the whole family was filled with joy, because they had come to believe in God. [14]

The God who extends gracious promises to Christian parents concerning their offspring has also appointed the means whereby such promises may be

realised. He has made parents primarily responsible for ensuring that their children are brought up under the sweet influences of the gospel. Concerning Abraham with whom the covenant of grace was established God said: 'For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him'. [15]

On this text John Calvin makes the following remark:

> God does not make known his will to us, that the knowledge of it may perish with us; but that we may be his witnesses to posterity, and that they may deliver the knowledge received through us, ... to their descendants. Wherefore, it is the duty of parents to apply themselves diligently to the work of communicating what they have learned from the Lord to their children. [16]

What was said in a personal capacity to Abraham is stated very precisely to all believing parents in Deuteronomy 6:6-9. Here the truth of God and his Word is to be communicated to children in terms which are all embracing. 'Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up'. [17]

It is important to realise that this instruction is not to be given in a detached and indifferent manner. Rather the Word of God is to be communicated from parents who love the Lord with their whole being and who cherish the Word of God for themselves. 'These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts' (Deut. 6:6). Edward Donnelly summarises the responsibility of Christian parents:

> Christian education is a total process, embracing all reality. In the family Scripture is taught - but it is also lived, and it is this truth which is so effective. Children learn by imitating, and we are to live in such a way that in imitating us they are imitating Christ. [18]

When Christian parents present their child for baptism they are asking for their child to be recognised as a covenant child and they join with others in their covenant community (the church) to claim for that child the blessings of the covenant of grace. Nevertheless before the child is baptised the parents are asked to take solemn vows which relate to parental responsibility. In the Reformed Presbyterian Church these vows include the following parental promises:

> To pray that your child may be renewed and brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as signified in this sacrament;

> To seek that your child may come to know the Holy Scriptures and to know the duty of committing himself/herself to God;
> To rule well your household, exercising parental authority with firmness and love, setting the example of a holy and consistent life, and attending with regularity to personal, family and public worship. [19]

These promises do not bind the parents to anything additional to the Word of God, but additionally bind them to that which was already their duty to do. Recognition is given to the priority of prayer. Prayer is vital because parental training and example do not produce a godly offspring by themselves. God's covenant is a covenant 'of grace'. All its blessings come to us through God's sovereign mercy, not because we have earned them or deserved them. Christian parents must therefore pray that God would take the means that he has appointed and use it graciously to grant the new birth to their children.

b. The challenge to the church

From the limited survey which has been made concerning the place of the family unit in the covenant purposes of God it seems clear that the implications of the covenant carry over into the evangelistic mission of the church. The church, in its outreach, ought to be seeking by God's grace to evangelise families as was the case in Philippi. The approach of the apostles, from the biblical evidence, appears to have been to evangelise the parents and then through the parents the children. James Pennington, who has made a study of this subject in relation to missionary work in Japan, established the following principle:

> An effective family-oriented approach must begin with the parents, and if at all possible, with the father.[20]

Pennington, of course, recognises that this is the ideal. Often contacts with families come with members other than the father. Nevertheless by embracing the covenant principle the goal must always be to reach the entire family whatever services and ministry are extended to individual members. Such an approach to evangelism will in the long term provide the church with much more stable converts, converts who not only benefit from the church meetings but also from the influence of the gospel in their home.

It is obvious that Paul and Silas, still suffering from recent beatings and ministering in the aftermath of an earthquake, had not overlooked the covenant perspective as it related to the family because they said to the jailer: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved - you and your household'. As the church today ministers to those within her bounds or reaches out to the lost in the community it must always maintain a covenantal perspective.

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JAMES REID LAWSON AND THE COVENANTERS OF SOUTHSTREAM/BARNESVILLE

By Eldon Hay

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James Reid Lawson, son of James and Elizabeth (Reid) Lawson was born, 23 May 1820, and raised in Rathfriland, County Down. He received his early education in local schools, and graduated from Belfast Academical Institution in 1841. He studied theology in the Reformed Presbyterian Hall of Paisley, Scotland, under Dr. Andrew Symington.[1] Lawson came from the same Covenanter congregation as Rev. William Sommerville,[2] but he was younger.[3] He accepted the challenge of being a missionary in the British North American colonies. He was ordained by the Southern Presbytery, in 1845, in his home church.[4] Shortly before he left Ireland, an affectionate farewell celebration was held.[5]

On 5 November 1845, the Rev. James Reid Lawson arrived in Saint John, 'after a pleasant journey of one month.[6] On the next Sabbath, four days after he arrived, he preached twice in Mr. Stavely's church.[7] He worked as an assistant to Stavely[8] for the first few months, undoubtedly visiting the scattered mission stations in New Brunswick. Quite soon, however, he was called by the folk at Southstream (later Barnesville) to be minister there. At a meeting of the New Brunswick and Nova Scotia Presbytery in Saint John on 12 April 1846, the minutes note that 'A call to Revd. J.R. Lawson from Southstream requiring his services for three years promising an annual support of 60 pounds currency — is laid on the table of Presbytery. It is proposed and agreed to that Mr. Lawson be the stated supply of Southstream in compliance with the stipulation of the invitation'.[9]

Missionary Activity

What was the situation in Southstream? Presumably, Lawson was not the first Reformed Presbyterian presence there. Rev. Alexander Clarke, the first Covenanter missionary sent out by the Irish Synod may well have visited there in 1827 or 1828. Years later, writing then as an old man, Clarke relates that he had tried to raise funds in Saint John, unsuccessfully, 'in aid of a new church at

Hammond River where the Rev. Mr. Lawson, Reformed Presbyterian minister, is now placed.'[10] Clarke soon moved on: to Amherst, Nova Scotia, where he lived a long missionary life, dying in 1874.[11]

In the summer of 1831, another Irish Covenanter minister came to Saint John, the Rev. William Sommerville. In 1833, he moved to Cornwallis, N.S. But for a period of a couple of years, he made his home at Shepody, N.B., and visited places from Saint John, N.B. to Pugwash, N.S., a sort of wandering assistant to the Rev. Alex. Clarke. We have records of baptisms Sommerville himself performed, not only in Saint John, but also in Southstream and neighbouring communities. It's very highly likely that Sommerville had services in, or contact with folk from Southstream.[12] And indeed, it was later claimed that it was Sommerville who had planted the first Covenanter seed in the Barnesville area. In 1847, a year or so after coming to Southstream, Lawson wrote: 'Our dear brother Sommerville was ... with me [for] a few Sabbaths [here in Southstream], whose services are ... particularly acceptable to ... the people of my church, [he] having first planted the standard of our Covenanted testimony in this destitute locality.'[13]

After these early visits by the two Covenanter missionaries, Barnesville, in the mid-1830s, became the centre of activities by the Church of Scotland. It is highly likely that a small church had been erected in or near Barnesville for worship, just before or during the ministry of Atkinson. In April/May of 1838, the folk of Barnesville and surrounding communities — Saltsprings and Londonderry — called a Church of Scotland missionary, the Rev. Christopher William Atkinson, to be their minister.[14] And in May/June there was a piece of property bought in Barnesville for the erection of a Church of Scotland house of worship; the deed has the name of the Rev. Christopher Atkinson on it, as well as those of several laymen.[15] Presumably it was the intention to build a new church on that site. Atkinson, something of a writer,[16] was in the Barnesville area for about a year and a half. Then he contracted some sort of difficulty with folk in the congregation.

> For some reason that has ... not found its way into history, Atkinson fell out with a leading trustee with whose family he boarded and was told that he could not occupy the pulpit any longer. It was a novel way of dissolving the pastoral relation, but Mr. Atkinson, after holding open air services in the churchyard for one Sabbath, accepted the situation and left the place.[17]

Atkinson had left Barnesville and he did not return.[18] And he was not succeeded by other Church of Scotland ministers or missionaries, as far as we

know, for the next minister was the Rev. James Reid Lawson. The place was called Southstream until the mid-1850s, and thereafter, officially Barnesville.[19]

The folk in Barnesville and district must have admired Lawson. Many of them were Irish; but very few were Covenanters; most were Church of Scotland. As Lawson himself put it: at my 'entrance on that field, there were only two persons in the membership of the [Reformed Presbyterian] Church. The population, was, however, in general, friendly, and accessible to instruction, in the principles of the Covenanting Testimony.'[20] And the members of the old Church of Scotland congregation 'were received into [Covenanter] fellowship only on accepting the testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church.'[21] The fact that the former Church of Scotland folk gladly became Covenanters is witness to the ability and tact of Lawson.[22] Some old habits died slowly, for near the end of the year he came to Southstream, Lawson wrote of a difficulty:

> Two of our members were excluded from participating in our [recent] high and holy communion. Amidst the agitation and excitement necessarily connected with the election of members for the Provincial Legislature, they [these two members] forgot their solemn vows and engagements; and, yielding to the temptations by which they, in common with the other members of the Church, were assailed, abandoned the principles they had engaged to maintain, by exercising the elective franchise. I am glad to say, however, that these individuals are again 'seeking the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward:' they have privately expressed their regret at their procedure.[23]

Church Property

What about the church building, probably built just before Atkinson's time, in or near Barnesville? What about the church site, bought for a Church of Scotland church, though still vacant? Folk were obviously prepared to follow Covenanter Lawson here as well. The Atkinson Church of Scotland church building was used by Lawson and the Covenanter congregation. As for the Church of Scotland site, the trustees gave 'a quit claim deed of the property to the 'Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland, represented by the Reformed Presbytery of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia."[24] Persons named in that quit claim deed were Rev. J.R. Lawson and several laymen.[25]

Lawson too was a missionary, and he visited and held services in Jemseg,[26] in Black River, in Tynemouth Creek, amongst others. He cooperated with Stavely and with Sommerville: witness the fact that all three were present at the opening of the new Reformed Presbyterian church in Saint John in 1850. And

the same three, Sommerville, Stavely and Lawson took turns going to preach to the community of Covenanters at Houlton, Maine. Stavely and Lawson also went to Millstream/Queensville from time to time.

Nevertheless, Barnesville was to be Lawson's home and the centre of his activity. In 1851, he married Margaret Hastings of Saint John, and the two were to be the parents of a family of two sons and seven daughters. Like many families of that time, the Lawsons had their successes and failures.

> In January [1852] last, his [Mr. Lawson's] dwelling-house accidentally took fire, and was speedily and totally consumed. In the depth of winter, to be thus suddenly rendered houseless, was felt to be a heavy affliction. But Mr. Lawson states that he and his family experienced much sym-pathy and attention from persons of all classes. His house was partially insured. Though called to provide a dwelling-house for his family, he is encouraging his congregation to erect a new house of worship, that which they formerly occupied being found in various respects unsuitable. This they have taken measures to do in the course of the present season. The expense is estimated at between 250 and 300 pounds.[27]

In March of 1853, the new church at Southstream or Barnesville was opened for worship.[28] It must have been a fine house of worship, for it had 'boxed pews.'[29] The seating arrangement in the church 'included twelve family or group pews, six on each side in the form of the letter U, so that they did not face the pulpit. There was no choir loft, or musical instrument.'[30] The congregation took a good deal of pride in this church. Late in his ministry, Lawson was able to say,

> We have a commodious and beautiful house of worship, a perfect contrast to the barn-like structures which appear so frequently in country places and which are dignified with the name of meeting houses and in localities too where the people are more wealthy than in this place. In a magazine published in the United States, I saw some time ago a letter from one who had visited this place, and in that letter he made special mention of our little house of worship, so neat and so superior in its appearance to the other places of worship in our village, and which is a peculiarly gratifying circumstance, there is not a cent of debt upon it.[31]

Lawson continued as a faithful pastor at Barnesville. True, in June of 1856, he accepted a call to a new congregation in Boston, Mass., though folk in Southstream petitioned Presbytery that he not be removed.[32] Presbytery felt 'it to be their duty to consent to Mr. Lawson's acceptance of the call.'[33] The possibility of less travel no doubt weighed heavily on Lawson, whose health was

not robust. He left for Boston in the fall of 1856.[34] A year later, he chose to return to Southstream.[35] None of the church reports attempt to explain this move back to Southstream after a year in Boston. But a strong reason has come down through family tradition. 'They only stayed [in Boston] a year ... Margaret [Hastings] Lawson did not like Boston, so they returned to Barnesville.'[36]

Lawson returned to Southstream/Barnesville and carried on his work as pastor, missionary, teacher. There were regular Sabbath services, prayer meetings, Bible classes, Sabbath school. Communion season was a high point in congregational life, held once or twice a year. How many communicants? It would vary, of course. When he retired, Lawson gave thanks that 'now around our communion table there can gather from time to time nearly 50 sons and daughters of the Covenant.'[37]

Preacher, Scholar and Pastor

Lawson was a fine preacher, scholar, and pastor. He loved his congregation and was loved by them. He was also fearless. The story is told that in the neighbourhood there were some rough characters, one of whose favourite amusements 'was the refined sport of cock-fighting, and stories were told of the summary manner in which he [Mr. Lawson] broke up gatherings for this purpose when he accidentally heard of them.'[38] Lawson was also busy with his pen. He wrote a significant number of letters and articles, some of which were published;[39] as were some of his sermons and addresses.[40] Near the end of his life, from 1880 to 1882, he edited an excellent periodical called 'The Monthly Advocate'. 'The rapidly declining health of Mr. Lawson, however, rendered him unable to give that attention which he felt was necessary to editorial duties, and chiefly from this cause the publication was discontinued, to the regret of its many readers.'[41]

Lawson retired in the early 1880s; his request was finally accepted by Presbytery on 22 November 1882.42 His health had been failing for some time; he wanted to retire earlier but his conscientiousness and the wishes of his congregation and presbytery prevented that. The cause is given as partial paralysis; and it seems that it gradually incapacitated Lawson. Lawson's brief and beautiful will was written in 1888.[43] He died in 1891. His wife, Margaret Hastings Lawson, outlived her husband by some 21 years, dying on 3 December 1912.[44]

A Respected Leader

In the life of New Brunswick, Lawson's greatest public contribution was his leadership as the respected President of 'The Upham and St. Martin' auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society. He served as head of this auxiliary for over thirty years, being prevailed upon to remain as president even after resigning the pastorate. After his death, 4 July 1891, the travelling secretary of the provincial New Brunswick Bible Society, Thomas MacKelvie, penned a magnificent eulogy. MacKelvie, obviously deeply moved, wrote on the occasion of the branch meeting in mid-January 1892:

> The anniversary of the 'Upham and St. Martins' Branch was, as usual, held in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Barnesville ... Many a heart beat with emotion, and warm tears welled from many an eye as for the first time in thirty-four years the chair was unfilled by the late President and founder of that Branch. ... And it is due from your Agent that to write here what on that occasion he dared not trust to his unnerved lips, that no man ever excelled the Rev. J.R. Lawson in devotion to the Bible Society; its interests were ever in his Christian heart, his platform presentation of its work and claims were in the highest degree instructive and persuasive; and his speeches never failed to arouse sympathy and liberality for the cause. As a Covenanter his pledged loyalty to Christ embraced his firm belief of the Book and his obligation to work for its widest and most efficient diffusion; hence his devotion to the Bible Society, and his success in initiating and leading a purely rural and scattered community to the honored position of being the banner Branch of the New Brunswick Auxiliary.[45]

Lawson was the dominant figure in the Covenanter movement in Barnesville. He was a preacher of singular clearness and force. As one of those who followed after Lawson said, 'this makes it hard for a young man to please the people of Barnesville. They instinctively compare every one with Mr. Lawson, and set you down at once as inferior, because you do not come up to him.'[46] Fifteen years after Lawson's death, licentiate John Coleman 'reminded them of the good old days when Mr. Lawson so faithfully preached the Gospel.'[47] For a number of reasons, Reformed Presbyterianism declined, among them severity of climate and the emigration of Covenanters. Of course, there were many factors. In 1923, Barnesville was officially disorganized.

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2. Eldon Hay, 'Cornwallis Covenater: The Reverend William Sommerville,' *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society,* 37 (October 1995), 99-116.
3. David J. Magee, *A Story Worth Telling - Historical Sketch of Rathfriland Reformed Presbyterian Church: 1777 - 1977* (Congregational Committee, 1977), 9, 10: "Mr, William Sommerville [was ordained] on 31st May, 1831. [He] became widely known and esteemed from his work as a missionary in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia ... Mr. James Reid Lawson ... was ordained in 1845, [and] became a missionary in Barnesville, New Brunswick".
4. The ordination is described in the *Banner of Ulster,* 24 October 1845.
5. 'Address to the Rev. J.R. Lawson.' Typescript given to me by Mrs. Margaret Stewart, a descendant of Lawson's. The event described must have happened in September-October, after Lawson's ordination on 11 September, and before he sailed for British North America on 5 October 1845. The event occurred in Rathfriland congregation.
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    In the three editions, Atkinson speaks very little about his stay in the Barnesville region; and he speaks not at all of his leaving. In spite of the fact that Atkinson does not speak about building a chapel in or near Barnesville, in both the 1843 anbd 1844 editions - in that section entitled 'Roads and distances in the Province,' - there is a mention of 'Atkinson's Chapel,' (1843 ed., p. 206; 1844 ed., p. 256). Atkinson notes that the community to which he went after leaving Barnesville was Mascreen, NB (*Guide,* 1842 ed., 48-50). But it seems clear that there was a church building in Barnesville when Lawson arrived in 1846: see Sommerville, 'Lawson,' 308f.
17. Sommerville, 'Lawson," 307-8.
18. See W.G. MacFarlane, *New Brunswick Bibliography: The Books and Writers of the Province* (Saint John, NB: The Sun Printing Co. Ltd., 1895), 6 : 'Atkinson, Rev. W. Christopher, Presbyterian missionary from Scotland in Kings Co., N.B., pastor at Mascreen, a Scotch settlement in Charlotte Co., 1839-41, in latter years returned to Scotland.'
19. See Alan Rayburn, *Geographical Names of New Brunswick* (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1975), 45: *'Barnesville,* 8 mi. SE of Hampton. PO 1854-1957, Thomas G. Barnes, first postmaster. John Barnes settled in the area ca 1820. Formerly called *South Stream.'*
20. Lawson, *'Our Church in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia,'* Our Banner, 7 (April 1880), 125.
21. Sommerville, 'Lawson,' 308.
22. The Barnesville Reformed Presbyterian congregation seems to have been the only one in the Maritimes which had strong Church of Scotland roots.

23. Letter from the Rev. James R. Lawson, *Monitor* 1 (February 1847), 4.
24. Sommerville, 'Lawson,' 308.
25. Kings County Registry, Hampton, NB, Book M2, p. 492.
26. Eldon Hay, 'David Bates and the Covenanters of Jemseg,' *Reformed Theological Journal*, 9 (November 1993), 85-94.
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33. 'Report of the Reformed Presbytery of NB and NS,' *Reformed Presbyterian Synod of Ireland* minutes, 1856.
34. Thomas A. Fisher, 'Reformed Prebyterians at the Hub of the Universe,' *Semper Reformanda*, 4 (1995), 108.
35. The formal installation of Mr. Lawson took place on 15 October 1858; see Reformed Presbytery of NB and NS minutes, that date.
36. Greg Stewart, letters to author, August and October, 1989.
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    2) 'Colonial Sketches - No. 1,' *Monitor*, 5 (February 1851), 775-7. The geography of NB.
    3) 'Letters from the British North American Colonies - Climate of New Brunswick,' *Monitor*, 5 (April 1851), 805-7.
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    (ii) As noted, Presbytery accepted his retirement on November 22 of 1882.
    (iii) In the 'Church Registers for 1883,' *Our Banner,* 10 (December 1883), 405, under 'Pastoral Relations Dissolved,' there is this paragraph: Rev. J.R. Lawson, at his own request, on account of infirmity, was released from the charge of Barnesville, by Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Presbytery, in April, 1883.
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WAS EZRA RIGHT TO ENFORCE DIVORCE? ANOTHER LOOK AT EZRA CHAPTERS 9 & 10

Nehemiah 13: 23-27 and Malachi 2:10-16.

by W. Norris Wilson

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Ezra is well known as one of the great Reformers in the history of redemption. We are introduced to him in Ezra 7. One of the exiles in Babylon in the priestly line of Aaron, he had so devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of Moses that he was considered to be 'a teacher well versed' (Ezra 7:6). In the Lord's amazing providence he led the second group of exiles home to Jerusalem in 458 B.C., with a commission from Artaxerxes, the Medo-Persian Emperor, to teach the Law there. In less than five months his teaching bore fruit. The leaders approached him to speak of a serious situation that had developed in the community in the days of Zerubbabel, namely, intermarriage with the pagan peoples round about. Ezra's reaction was to humble himself and pray a prayer of abject confession of national sin.

A group gathered around him and the radical initiative to solve the problem came from them - 'Let us make a covenant to send away all these women and their children...Let it be done according to the Law' (Ezra 10:3). Ezra agreed, putting the religious leaders under covenant oath. A solemn assembly was proclaimed and a vast crowd assembled in the winter rain to be addressed by Ezra. He accused them of covenant breaking and urged them not only to confess sin, but to, 'do God's will' (Ezra 10:11) concerning it - i.e. all guilty of marrying foreign wives must separate from them immediately. It was agreed that selected elders from each town sit as local ad hoc courts to investigate each case and deal with it. After three months their work was done and they had discovered that 111 men (including 17 priests and 10 Levites) had indeed married foreigners. These were put under oath to put these wives and their children away and then make atonement for their sin. This they apparantly did. Thus Ezra has gone down as the man who enforced a mass divorce, who broke up 111 marriages. Thus our question - 'Was he right? Is enforcing divorce a morally proper corrective for apostasy?'

The Problem Stated

We need to say of course that marriage to foreigners was not wrong *per se* in the O.T., provided they accepted the faith of Israel. We have worthy precedent for this (e.g.Moses, Rahab, Boaz). It is important also to get the problem into perspective. The total number of families of returned exiles we can reckon as approximately 29,000. Thus we are dealing with 4 men out of every 1,000 (or approx. 0.4%). For Ezra of course it was not a question of the size of the problem, but of its seriousness. He viewed it as a matter of direct disobedience, of covenant breaking.

Nevertheless, some commentators are uneasy about Ezra's action here. Derek Kidner, for example, speaks of the, 'appalling scale'[1] of the action and appears to have some sympathy with the small minority of dissidents from the action (Ezra 10:15) - '...their opposition ...could have been motivated by a variety of reasons, not necessarily dishonourable'. He notes that none of their names appears on the list of culprits and so, while they may have had friends or relatives whom they may have wished to shelter, '...on the other hand the harshness of the remedy and *the lack of any obvious legal requirement of it* (italics mine) could have stirred the same misgivings in them as in a modern reader.'[2] Kidner goes on later, 'Ezra's approach... was radical: the evil must be cut out by divorce...Ezra's major surgery was indeed highly efficient; but what of the flood of divorcees and uprooted children which it let loose on society?'[3]

Kidner notes that when 25 years later Nehemiah was faced by the same problem (Neh.13) he '...made no use of the divorce procedure set up by Ezra...he could have set up court and had those marriages dissolved (but declined this) only taking steps to halt the spread ...of the trouble.'[4] Part of the reason for this, Kidner suggests, was not just difference in their personalities , but, '...quite possibly (Nehemiah's) observation of the effects of the break-up of families under the previous regime.'[5] Thus Kidner seems to wonder if such a harsh remedy was really necessary.

Other questions, however, have been asked of Ezra's action here. Firstly, how do we square this with Malachi's statements, who we believe was preaching at this time? (Some conservative scholars place him before Ezra's return, some place him after, but we may broadly view him as a contemporary of Ezra). Malachi also condemned marriages with foreigners. However he recommended that offenders be, 'cut off from the tents of Jacob.'(which we interpret to mean as excluded from the assembly of believers). Malachi was strongly opposed to

divorce and urged that it not be done on the grounds that the Lord hates divorce and views it as a thing of violence (Mal.2:15).

God's view of divorce taught in the O.T. was, of course, reinforced by Christ in the N.T. In Matthew 19 the Pharisees asked him concerning divorce - 'Why did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?' Jesus' reply, in effect, is to tell them that they are missing the point, that there is no command to divorce. When we look at the passage in question, Deuteronomy 24:1-4, we see this to be the case. It is unfortunate that some of the older Versions (e.g.the K.J.V.) give verses 1-3 a jussive force, for it is now almost universally accepted that the first three verses form the protasis with the apodosis coming in verse 4. As W.C. Kaiser comments,

> ...this construction does not make divorce mandatory, encourage and advise men to put wives away, or even authorize or sanction divorce. Instead, it simply disallows a husband to return to the wife whom he had previously divorced and who married another in the meantime...That is the only regulative statement in this passage. Therefore, it would be wrong to speak of divorce in the O.T. as a 'right'...or as something that has divine approval and legitimation...permission or toleration is different from divine approval or sanction.[6]

Jesus' point is exactly this - 'You were permitted to divorce because of the hardness of your hearts, but it was not this way from the beginning.'(i.e. 'It should not be this way, because the Lord hates divorce.') How does Ezra's action square with this?

Secondly, it may be asked - Is there not a contradiction between the action Ezra takes and what the Apostle Paul advises concerning whether a believer should divorce an unbelieving spouse? - 'If any brother has a wife who does not believe and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her'(1 Cor.7:12). It may be of course that the situation here was of one party becoming a Christian and the other refusing to convert, which is different from a professing believer deliberately marrying a non-believer. However a marriage is a marriage and who is to say that those pagan spouses in Corinth were not every bit as pagan as the pagan spouses in Ezre 9-10? So how are these questions to be answered?

The Hebrew Text

We have to ask - Is it clear that it is divorce in the technical sense that we are dealing with here? At least two O.T. scholars are hesitant on this point. W.Kaiser says this, 'is what appears to have happened.'[7] E. Merrill goes further - '...the

record is unclear on the matter, we must assume that the individuals guilty of intermarriage divorced their foreign mates. Yet the need for similar action twenty-five years later under Nehemiah suggests quite the contrary.'[8] Why this uncertainty? I believe a careful examination of the Hebrew text tells us why.

There are four significant points concerning the vocabulary used which may point to a different conclusion.

First, when the Versions (e.g.K.J.V. and N.I.V.) translate Ezra 9:2 - '...they have taken some of their daughters as wives' - the last two words do not appear in the Hebrew. Also when they translate 9:12 - 'Do not give their daughters in marriage to their sons' - the words ,'in marriage' do not appear in the Hebrew.

Second, the usual Hebrew word for 'marriage' (baal) is not used in the passage. Instead two other words are used. The Hebrew verb used in 9:12 and 10:44 is *nasa*, which means 'to take'. The Hebrew verb used in 10:2,10, 14,17,18 is *yashav*, which means 'to live, stay, or even cohabit with'.

Third, the word translated 'wife' or 'wives' in the K.J.V. in 10:2, 3, 10, 11, 14, 17, 18, 19, 44 *(nashim)* could also simply be translated as 'women'. (It is interesting that the N.I.V. only translates this as 'wives' in 10:11,19).

Fourth, the usual Hebrew word for 'divorce' is not used in either chapters nine or ten. There are in fact two Hebrew words for 'divorce' and neither is used anywhere in Ezra. Instead we have the verb 'to put out, send away' *(yatzah)* in 10:3, 19 and the verb 'to separate from' *(badal)* in 10:11.

So it is possible to translate the phrase, 'marrying foreign wives' as, 'cohabiting with foreign women'. So we ask, 'Is it possible that these women were not wives at all, but pagan concubines with whom these men of Judah were co-habiting? Could this situation have come about because of a shortage of Jewish women? Or were these women perhaps the daughters of local landowners and their co-habitees had an eye on their fathers' land? Or was it even a case like Abraham where they brought in a cohabitee when they had no son, to have one by her?' We can only speculate. In any event Ezra does not call them specifically to divorce, but to separate from these wrong partners.

Of course under the Law it was easier to get rid of a concubine. Apart from the obvious immorality there were dangers with concubines, especially if a man already had sons and she bore more. There was the possibility that a man's con-

cubine could take the uppermost place in his affections so that he would take the step of divorcing his wife to install his concubine as his actual wife (the very situation that seems to be reflected in the preaching of Malachi, Ezra's contemporary, in chapter 2:11-16). The greatest danger, however, was that these pagan women would influence these men religiously, what with all the vileness, corruption and impurity of their detestable practices (9:2,11) and lead them away from the Lord, incurring his righteous anger. Such relationships were, of course, forbidden as covenant breaking and so Ezra was perfectly right to break them up.

The above thesis, suggested in embryo by D. Cave[9], might be sustainable technically were it not for two things. Firstly, it seems to go against the natural implication of the verbs 'to take' and 'to dwell with', which, though they may not technically mean 'marry', imply this in this context (as reflected in their translation in all the Versions).

Secondly, there is in Ezra's prayer one occurance of the verb *hatan* which does actually mean 'to intermarry with' (9:14). This tips the balance against the above thesis, even though it could still be argued technically that Ezra uses the future tense here - 'Shall we intermarry with the peoples..?' and thus could be inferring that the co-habitation that is going on at present is going to lead to divorce and re-marriage, as appears to be the case in Malachi 2:11-16. However this seems to go against the natural sense of the verse, which certainly appears to be a lamenting of intermarriages that have taken place already, by the use of a rhetorical question. Also we need to bear in mind the Scriptural view as expounded by Paul that when there is a 'one flesh' relationship there is a marriage in God's eyes.

Thus we face the fact that these appear indeed to be marriages and therefore divorces that were enforced, although it is possible that, because such marriages were forbidden, they were not formally recognized and thus there did not have to be the same formal divorce ceremony as for a divorce from a fellow Jew. However, we come back to the question as to how this squares with the attitude of God towards divorce as set down by Malachi?

A Covenant Issue

The answer is found in the same passage in Malachi. God hates divorce, but he also hates disobedience to and deliberate breaking of his covenant and this is what is at stake in one of the children of Israel marrying a pagan (Exod.34:11-

16; Deut.7:1-4 - the passages that, no doubt, lay behind Ezra's prayer in chapter 9).

The Deuteronomy passage speaks of a man divorcing his wife, 'if he finds something indecent (unseemly, shameful) in her'(v.1). We know this could not be a reference to adultery, since the Law already stipulated the death penalty in that case (Deut. 22:22). Could it be that what is being referred to here is spiritual adultery, that what is envisioned here is a wife who brings shame on her husband and on all God's people by either turning to, or returning to, and persisting in, immoral pagan worship, thereby breaking covenant with God and putting herself in danger of God's judgment? Could it be that Ezra is unlocking the meaning, or providing interpretation, of that mysterious phrase in Deut. 24:1? W.Kaiser believes so - 'I believe that Ezra had this passage in mind when he observed the law and provided for the divorce of these unbelieving wives.'[10] We know that Ezra believed what he was doing was according to God's Word (See 10:3,11). He believed, in other words, that he was interpreting and applying God's Word on the matter. Such a declared perameter on Ezra's part would help to confirm Kaiser's view.

If this is so then we have an interesting case of Scripture interpreting Scripture as it unfolds organically. The 'indecent (unseemly, shameful) thing, that permitted a husband to divorce his wife, was persisting in the vile practices of pagan worship, refusing to accept the ways of the Lord and encouraging husbands to do the same. Of course there is no hint in Ezra 9-10 that, in dealing with the situation, the pagan wives were given an ultimatum to leave their pagan ways and, seeking the Lord's mercy, profess faith in him, but presumably if they had, they would not have faced divorce. Could it be that the 111 who were divorced were the hard or adamant cases?

Ezra has been called 'the father of Judaism', but it is interesting to examine the vigorous debate that ensued in Judaism over that phrase in Deuteronomy 24:1. The School of Hillel interpreted it very broadly and lightly to mean even a minor indiscretion. The School of Shammai interpreted it narrowly and strictly to mean adultery. However to Ezra greater issues were at stake in his situation - 'Shall we again break your commands and intermarry with the peoples who commit such detestable practices? Would you not be angry enough to destroy us, leaving us no remnant or survivor?' (Ezra 9:10). Compare how the seriousness of the situation was first presented to Ezra in 9:2 - 'They...have mingled the holy seed with the peoples around them.' Ezra knew that God had given his great promise regarding the holy seed in Genesis 3:15 and doubtless had the

faith of Isaiah that, in spite of God's judgment against the sin of his people, still the holy seed would be preserved (Isa. 6:13). However Ezra also knew what had happened in the past when the holy seed in the line of Seth was defiantly mingled with the unholy line of Cain (Gen. 6:1-7).

Above all, as we have said, Ezra had the conviction that what he was doing was in keeping with God's revealed will (10:3,11). It was out of this conviction that he believed that at this crucial stage in the history of redemption enforcing divorce was necessary as the lesser of two evils, potentially tragic as it was, what with all those wives and children being sent away. However we can assume, with Matthew Henry[11], that Ezra, knowing what the Law said about provision for the needy, saw to it that they would be provided for. We can view it all then as a special 'one-off' in the history of redemption when it was necessary to be cruel to be kind.

Are we then left with an argument for divorcing unbelieving spouses to-day? The answer is clearly revealed in the fullness of time in the organic unfolding of revelation. In 1 Corinthians 7:12-16, which provides an interesting parallel to Ezra 9-10, Paul gives us the answer. If the unbelieving spouse is willing to continue living with the believer then they must not divorce because the unbelieving partner,'is sanctified by the believer'(v.14). However if the unbeliever finally and irremediably deserts the unbeliever the believer 'is not bound in such circumstances'(v.15). Obviously if the believing partner resists the efforts of the unbelieving spouse to make him/her live his/her ungodly way the likelihood is that the unbelieving spouse will eventually go his/her own way and desert his/her partner. If an unbeliever chooses to desert his/her partner and his/her marriage vows then reluctantly the believer may let that partner go and sadly accept divorce. However no O.T. law or precedent institutes divorce. Neither in the O.T nor the N.T. is God encouraging, enjoining or approving of divorce. It is always a last, tragic option. God wants marriage covenants to succeed.

The answer to the apparent problem of Ezra enforcing 111 divorces is to take the whole counsel of God on the matter as that emerges in the full sweep of completed revelation. Ezra was right to do as he did in the exigencies of his stage of redemptive history, but Paul is also right and the Word through him comes to us at our stage. Matthew Henry says, 'As to the case of being unequally yoked with unbelievers, Shechaniah's counsel will not hold now; such marriages, it is certain, are sinful, and ought not to be made, but they are not null ... That which ought not to have been done must, when done, abide' - providing, we could add, the unbelieving partner is willing to remain.[12]

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THE PURITANS AND PREDESTINATION

An Introduction to and Exposition of the Westminster Confession, Chapter III: 'Of God's Eternal Decree'

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The Westminster Assembly of Divines (1643-52), 'one of the most venerable and learned conventions of Christian history', produced the doctrinal and disciplinary standards of the British and American Presbyterian churches. The Assembly met for the first time on July lst, 1643, although work on the actual Confession was not begun until the autumn of 1644. However, it was not until April 29th, 1647, that the Confession, with proof-texts, was completed and presented to Parliament. John Murray comments: 'The amount of work and time expended on the Confession of Faith will stagger us in these days of haste and alleged activism'.[1]

Perhaps true activity can only properly be measured by what it accomplishes. Certainly, as Murray writes, 'The influence exerted all over the world by the Confession can only be understood in the light of the diligent care and prayerful devotion exercised in its composition'.[2]

The Westminster Assembly derives its name from the ancient conventual church of Westminster Abbey. It was convened in 'the most ornate portion of this noble fabric',[3] the Chapel of Henry VII, but with the advent of colder weather, the Assembly moved on the 2nd October to 'the quarters with which their name is inalienably associated',[4] the so-called 'Jerusalem Chamber' (originally the abbot's parlour) in the adjoining Deanery. It therefore met in that room, not merely until the conclusion of the 1163 numbered sessions during which its important work was transacted (up to February 22nd, 1649), but through some three years more of irregular life, acting as a committee for the examination of appointees to charges and applicants for licensure to preach. It finally vanished with the demise of the famous 'Long Parliament' to which it owed its existence.

The Formulation of Chapter Three

According to Warfield, the third chapter of the Confession occupied the attention of the Assembly some part of at least twenty separate days, besides all the time given to it in the various Committees through whose hands it, or parts of it, happened to pass. The debates upon the Chapter which are signalized in the Minutes seem to have been especially careful, and they are, to an unusual extent, reported in some detail. Baillie commented: 'We had long and tough debates about the Decrees of election; yet thanks to God all is gone right according to our mind'.[5]

The record of the debates that is extant underlines the care and deliberation expended on this chapter of the Confession. The differences that existed between the constituents were not papered over in deliberate ambiguity; rather they were thoroughly ventilated. Room was made for discussion even of those matters 'considered unimportant and mere *apices logici*',[6] but when they concerned matters of moment, the doctrine of the Assembly was, after full discussion, encapsulated succinctly and definitely in this masterly document. Consequently, it cannot be said that this or that clause represents this or that party in the Assembly. 'There were parties in the Assembly, and they were all fully heard and what they said was fully weighed'.[7] But no merely party view was embodied in the Confession. Rather, the Assembly as such spoke; and it spoke its own mind.

The truth is that there was no work committed to the distinguished members of this convention in the prosecution of which they were less frustrated by differences among themselves. The deep-seated rifts which divided them lay rather in the area of church organisation and government; doctrinally they were fundamentally in unison. It is true, there were indeed differences of doctrine among them; but these were found almost entirely within the recognized limits of the Reformed system of doctrine in general, and there was little desire to press such variations to extremes, or to narrow their Creed to a party document.

> To the Amyraldians, of whom there was a small but very active and well-esteemed party in the Assembly (Calamy, Seaman, Marshall, Vines), there was denied, to be sure, the right to modify the statement of the *ordo decretorum* so as to make room for their 'hypothetical universalism' in the saving work of Christ. (cf. the Confession, iii,6; viii,5,8).[8]

However, this was the exception that proved the rule, and in dealing with the points of difference between the Supralapsarians (who were represented by

some of the ablest intellects in the Assembly - Twisse, the Prolocutor, Rutherford the seraphic Scot), and the Infralapsarians, to whom the vast majority belonged, the wise plan was adopted of setting down in the Confession only what was common ground to both. In its treatment of the problematical subject of 'God's Eternal Decree', the Assembly therefore managed to pass unscathed through the Scylla of over-generalisation and the Charybdis of over-particularisation. Everything merely individual, and everything upon which parties in the Reformed constituency differ with respect to this high doctrine, is carefully avoided, while yet 'the whole ground common to all recognised Reformed parties is given, if prudent, yet full and uncompromising statement'.[9]

The fundamental postulate underlying the Confessional statement is that God is a person, and, as a person, acts in all things purposively. In other words, the Westminster divines conceived of the universe, and all that occurs in it, teleologically. This conception was to them nothing more than one of the most basic implications of theism. To think of forces existing in the universe which act independently of God and outside of his teleological control is to sully the purity of theism with the leaven of pantheism or deism. According to B.B.Warfield, 'it is simply to assert this divine teleology - implicate as it is of common theism - and to lay it beneath all that comes to pass, that the third chapter of the Westminster Confession of Faith was written'.[10] It is therefore the simple design of that chapter to declare that whatever may be the *proximate* causes that produce the various events that come to pass, the *ultimate* cause lies in the divine purpose.

> The most remarkable thing about the chapter introduced into the Confession for this essential purpose, is the fine restraint and simple directness of the language in which it gives expression to this divine teleology which governs the occurrence of all events.[11]

However, although the Confession expresses the basic theistic philosophy of its compilers, it was not written primarily out of philosophical interests, but of religious. Consequently, it does not confine itself to a merely general statement of the divine purpose, but in accordance with its special concern, applies that teleology to human destiny, and more particularly to the doctrine of election. And here, viz., from the fifth section to the close, it will be observed with what reverential awe the whole subject is handled.

The stress, then, is on the positive side of the doctrine, which is developed in two long sections, embracing eighteen lines in the Assembly's official edition of

the Confession. This contrasts with the less than 6 lines (section 7) that is given to the brief and 'purely subsidiary recognition of the obverse of election in the undeniable fact of reprobation'.[12] No better exemplification could be had of that treatment of 'the doctrine of this high mystery', than that which the Confession recommends in its concluding section, when it exhorts that it should be 'handled with special prudence and care'. In chapter 2 of the Confession, God is spoken of as 'most holy, most free, most absolute, working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable will'. Clearly, the statement in chapter 3 was considered by the Assembly to be nothing more nor less than an extended exposition of that principle, in all its ramifications.

Furthermore, and most significantly in the light of subsequent criticisms of chapter 3, God is described in the preceding chapter as 'most loving, gracious, merciful, longsuffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin'. It is *that* God who is spoken of in chapter 3, not the harsh, capricious, and even tyrannical God that the Puritans have been accused of making him at this point. In the words of George Philip, 'we owe it to the compilers of the Confession to remember that the God of whom they speak is the one revealed ... in the Scriptures, and that he is a gracious, merciful, and longsuffering God'.[13]

The subject of the decree, therefore, according to the Confession: ...

> is uniformly conceived of as God in the fulness of his moral personality. It is not to chance, or to necessity, nor yet to an abstract or arbitrary will ... but specifically to the almighty, all-wise, all-holy, all-righteous, faithful, loving God, to the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, that is ascribed the predetermination of the course of events.[14]

Perhaps no chapter has been more distasteful, and even repugnant, to those out of sympathy with the system of doctrine delineated in the Confession than the third. Without ambiguity, it teaches double predestination, 'not in the form acceptable to modern dialectic that all are elect and all are reprobate, (so K Barth, E Brunner et al.), but in the sense of determinate differentiation on the part of God'.[15] In the opinion of many, here is a rigid, scholastic determinism that formulates a conception of God irreconcilable with his infinite love and goodness. According to Murray, 'in no creedal statement has the doctrine of God's sovereign and immutable decrees been stated in more forthright terms'.[16] However, as the same writer pertinently observes, 'the orientation expressed in this formulation conditions the teaching of the Confession throughout'.[17] In other words, the excision or even modification of the Confession at this point

would only mean a hiatus, that in order to express a completeness and unity of Christian doctrine, the teaching of subsequent chapters would need to supply.

Clearly, however, the foregoing criticism would have proved no embarrassment to the compilers, and the proof-texts adduced by the Assembly would suffice 'as an index to the biblical data in support of the thesis of the Confession ...'.[18] The reason for this is that, in Warfield's words, 'It (predestination) is fundamental to the whole religious consciousness of the biblical writers ... to eradicate it would transform the entire scriptural representation'.[19]

However, the Confession has been criticised for 'abstractionism', and is said to detach God's decrees from Christ. It is true, one may not 'detach the counsel of God from those connections which Scripture repeatedly points out to us',[20] and in this connection, Ephesians 1:4 provides a basis for resistance against any form of determinism in which the attributes of the God and Father of Jesus Christ are obscured by the menace of inscrutable fate. Barth has concentrated his criticism on the doctrine of the *decretum absolutum* at precisely this point. Apparently, he assumes that such a doctrine is foundational to the historic Reformed teaching of election, but this is rebutted by Berkouwer: '... we suggest that classical Reformed theology has been aware that this interpretation depreciates Biblical testimony'.[21]

J. G. Riddell criticises the Confession for separating the decree from salvation in Christ, and in this connection compares it unfavourably with the Scotch Confession, Article VII, which *begins* (my italics) with the election in Christ. But Riddell's criticism fails to mention that 'in Christ' is referred to by Westminster in connection with election, albeit not until section five.[22]

Another objection raised against the Westminster Confession at this point is 'that so prominent a place is assigned in it to the doctrine of election'.[23] However, the authors of these formularies would undoubtedly agree with J. Gresham Machen that the reason for this is simply that, 'Far from relegating the doctrine of Predestination to some secondary place, the Bible puts it right at the heart of its teaching'.[24] To which can be added this, from Abraham Kuyper, the great Dutch theologian-statesman: 'The Doctrine of God's election is truly not without reason called the heart of the Church'.

It is certainly arguable that the Westminster Divines afforded undue prominence to the subject under consideration, but as a modern commentator puts it: 'The danger lies, not in the prominence given to it, but in ... unguarded and

inexact enunciation'.[25] However, it was specifically to guard against this danger that the Assembly not only set forth its doctrine in general terms, but accompanied it by explanations and qualifications. Consequently, the Westminster doctrine can only be fairly represented when 'the Westminster expression of it is given complete'.[26] When it is so given, it is undeniable that every statement regarding the doctrine was intended by the makers of the Confession so to be understood that the following three propositions may be maintained:

1. God is not the author of sin;
2. No violence is offered to the will of the creature;
3. The contingency of second causes is not removed.

Thus, the characteristic of Puritan Calvinism (as of Calvinism *per se*) is the maintenance in their full integrity of both divine sovereignty and human responsibility. To be sure, both principles are held in tension, but the Puritans would construe this as antinomy, not inconsistency.[27] It is the foreordination of sin and evil that admittedly constitutes for so many the stumbling-block to the acceptance of this doctrine. But for the Westminster Divines, the norm of faith was Scripture, in which case how can the explicit import of Acts 2:23 be escaped? It refers to the arch-crime of human history, and yet stronger language could not be used to express the determinate foreordination of God in the event. Thus, 'there is no suspension of human responsibility arising from God's counsel, nor does any impugning of God's counsel proceed from the crime perpetrated by human agency. Thus we have exemplified in the clearest terms the doctrine formulated in the Confession ...'.[28]

A minor, though not entirely insignificant point is that the Divines deemed it fitting to use the terms 'predestinate' and 'predestination' with reference to those appointed to everlasting life, but the term 'foreordain' for those appointed to everlasting death. The distinction appears first in Section III, and the fact that the variation is maintained in subsequent sections (cf. Sections IV, V, and VIII) clearly indicates an intentional differentiation on their part. Linguistically, it cannot be maintained that there is any difference intrinsic to the two terms concerned that would necessitate such a distinction, 'and it cannot be that greater or less efficacy was intended to be expressed by the one term in distinction from the other'.[29] In the final analysis, it is impossible to say for sure what considerations dictated the usage concerned, as there is no record of any discussion on this issue in the Assembly's minutes. Commentators are generally agreed, though, that the Westminster Divines wished to make it clear 'that they regarded God's proceedings in regard to the elect, and in regard to the reprobate respectively, as resting upon entirely different grounds'.[30]

However, the position thus stated is somewhat ambiguous, and could easily be misleading. According to Westminster, the salvation of the elect and the condemnation of the non-elect do indeed rest on different grounds, those of grace and sin respectively. But whereas the condemnation of the guilty is never optional with God (which would impugn his justice), the Decree to save or to pass by is always optional and voluntary because (according to the Puritans) it was always according to the divine good pleasure. W. G. T. Shedd is therefore right in his strictures on the position advanced by Hetherington (in his Westminster Assembly, chap.X), who maintains that 'predestinate' and 'foreordain' are not interchangeable and synonymous. Shedd maintains that the two terms are not only equivalent terms in Scripture usage, but that lexicographers too regard them as synonymous (e.g., Stormonth), and the evidence he adduces seems conclusive.[31] Nevertheless, it can hardly be denied that the Westminster divines expressed the distinction deliberately and not accidentally and therefore that 'in the structure of the chapter as a whole the interest of differentiating between the elect and non-elect is thereby promoted'.[32] That, at least, is clear. No more, possibly, but certainly no less.[33]

In concluding this discussion on formulation, we can fitly quote Murray's words:

> In respect to fidelity to Scripture, precision of thought and formulation, fulness of statement, balanced proportion of emphasis, studied economy of words, and effective exposure of error, no creedal confession attains to the same level of excellence as that of Westminster.[34]

And he adds, 'Would that the genius for confessional formulation possessed by the divines at Westminster were present in the church today!'.[35]

The Confessional statement itself, consisting of eight sections, can be conveniently subsumed under four main headings:

I. The Decree of God in General (Sections 1 and 2)

1. God from all eternity, did by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.

2. Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions, yet hath He not decreed anything because He foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.

Absolute predestination is clearly and unequivocally asserted here, predestination in its cosmic dimensions, as all-inclusive, and embracing even sin itself. However, the statements are 'clothed in language of the utmost simplicity and most studied directness. The result is that absolutely nothing is done in these sections except barely to assert the divine teleology'.[36] In other words, they have no other purpose than to state that whatever occurs in the universe that God has made, takes place not to his astonishment, or against his unavailing efforts, but in accordance with his eternal plan and intention. More particularly, they declare that whatever happens in the field of human destiny, 'occurs not without his knowledge, or against his determination, but precisely in accordance with his eternal plan'.[37] God's decree, made from eternity, is represented as comprehending everything that takes place in time, so that he has ordained whatsoever comes to pass'.[38] The Puritans cannot be faulted at this point, certainly not on the basis of Scripture, but surely not philosophically either. In this sense: what distinguishes personality from the inanimate is that a person acts according to plan and purpose. Consequently, because God is infinite in wisdom, power and knowledge his plan must necessarily reflect those attributes; a plan, says Warfield, 'which is broad enough to embrace the whole universe of things, minute enough to concern itself with the smallest details, and actualizing itself with inevitable certainty in every event that comes to pass'.[39]

It is important to realise that although the decree of God is cosmic in its embrace, and therefore inclusive and comprehensive, it does not extend to any processes immanent to the Godhead, or to those intra-Trinitarian operations essential to Deity. God did not decree to be holy, nor to exist in three persons, for the decree does not pertain to his essential being, but to his deeds, or transitive acts *('opera ad extra')*. According to the Westminster Divines, then, the decree is God's preparation for things and events *outside* himself, 'so that nothing comes to pass ..., whether good or bad, save as the outworking in fact of what had lain in the Divine mind as purpose from all eternity, and is now unfolded into actuality as the fulfilment of his all-determining will'.[40]

However, what needs to be carefully noted in this connection is the equal emphasis with which Westminster also asserts that God is 'not thereby the author of sin'; and its corollary, that man is never coerced to act contrary to nature. Because the decree of God is not the proximate cause of sinful actions, it only makes a given action certain, while still providing that 'free agents shall be free agents, and free actions free actions; and that a given free agent shall exist, and that he shall freely perform a certain free action under certain conditions'.[41]

The Westminster divines were conscious of no constraint to endeavour reconciliation between the divine decree and human liberty. 'It is enough to know that God has decreed all things ..., and that men are answerable for their actions'. Sentiments of approbation and disapprobation, in reference to human conduct, 'would have no existence in our minds if we believed that men are necessary agents'.[42] The doctrine of the Confession, then, is the historic 'doctrine of the Reformed Churches, and maintains that nothing in the future is undetermined before God'.[43] Thus, the Westminster Standards, in common with the Calvinistic creeds generally, begin with an affirmation of the universal sovereignty of God over his entire universe, and 'brings sin within the scope and under the control of the Divine decree'.[44]

As chapter five of the Confession makes clear, the 'bare permission' of the Tridentine theologians is rejected, because the Assembly understood this to mean that in respect of sin and the Fall God is a helpless spectator *(deo otioso spectante)*, and that sin entered the universe outside the divine purpose. Moreover, 'this kind of 'permission' implies that God could not have prevented sin had he so decided, and therefore is really no permission at all, because no one can properly be said to permit what he cannot prevent'.[45] In order to exclude this view of 'permission', the Assembly assert 'such (a permission) as hath joined with it a most holy, wise, and powerful bounding and otherwise ordering and governing of (sin) ...; yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, not from God ...' (chap. 5:4). God's relation to the sin which he decrees, then, 'is not that of efficiency but permission'[46] in the sense in which the Assembly understood this term. In Calvin's words, 'God's permission of sin is not involuntary, but voluntary'.[47] (Inst.. I.xviii.3).

II. The Decree as it Pertains Equally to Men and Angels (Sections 3 & 4)

> 3. By the decree of God, for the manifestation His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life; and others foreordained to everlasting death.
>
> 4. These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.

The sequence followed in Chapter III of the Confession is itself worthy of note. 'Both order and proportion show the competence that a creedal statement would require. It is in the sections concerned with men that the care and finesse of thought and expression are particularly manifest'.[48] Here again, then, the

doctrine of the Confession is clear and unequivocal. 'The differentiation involved and the diversity of destiny arising therefrom are clearly asserted'.[49] Furthermore, it is not insignificant that the statement 'is so framed that in respect of the doctrine set forth it has equal relevance to men and angels'.[50] In this feature, it goes beyond the Canons of Dort (1618). The reason for this is that the Remonstrant tenets against which the Canons were directed dealt with a decree of God with reference to mankind 'and the issue would have been unnecessarily perplexed by introducing the subject of angels ... The Westminster Confession is oriented against the same error ... but is more embracive than the Canons'.[51]

The preceding sections (1 and 2) teach that God 'foreordains whatsoever comes to pass'. Sections 3 and 4 now further expound one aspect of that totality of predetermined things, the eternal destiny of men and angels.

> The decree of God is here set forth, (1) As to its end, - the manifestation of God's glory; (2) As to its issue in regard to mankind, - the distinguishing between the saved and the unsaved; (3) As to its finality, - it is in itself unchangeable, and in regard to is objects perfectly definite.[52]

The question whether there is a double predestination to both holiness and life and sin and death, or only a single predestination to holiness and life, was raised in the fifth and sixth centuries, during the Semi-Pelagian controversy, and afterwards in the ninth century, in the dispute between Gottschalk and Ratramnus on the one side, and Rabanus Maurus and Hincmar on the other. Both sides alike opposed the synergistic Semi-Pelagianism, but 'the stricter Augustinians affirmed the *predestinatio duplex* to both holiness and sin'.[53] and they were followed in this by both the Calvinistic reformers and the Westminster Confession.

All the Puritan divines were agreed in this, Richard Sibbes (1577-1635) writes

> that there was an eternal separation of men in God's purpose; secondly, that this first decree of severing man to his ends, is an act of sovereignty over the creature, and is altogether independent of anything in the creature as the cause of it.[54]

'God dealeth not equally with all', writes Thomas Manton (1620-1677). 'That grace is given to some and not to others, floweth from God's eternal decree. This eternal decree is a free election, or the mere pleasure of God, giving faith to some and not to others'.[55]

Anthony Burgess, a member of the Assembly, comments on John 17:2-

> We see here that God the Father hath power to appoint and determine concerning the everlasting salvation and damnation of men ... This disparity of God's grace in choosing some and leaving others, is plainly asserted by Scripture ... Take we then this truth for it is in the sovereign power of God to choose whom he pleases to salvation, and to leave the rest in their damnable estate: neither is this any cruelty or injustice in God, for he might have forsaken all mankind, and not recovered one of them.[56]

III The Decree Respecting Man in Particular (Sections 5-7).

5. Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen, in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith, or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving Him thereunto; and all to the praise of His glorious grace.

6. As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath He, by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore, they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power, through faith, unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.

7. The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, whereby He extendeth or withholdeth mercy, as He pleaseth, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by; and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice.

In these sections, the Confession moves from general principles to more particular elucidation and specification. The following propositions call for comment:

a) Election is always in relation Christ.

> His (God's) first choice of us was a founding us on Christ, and in and together with choosing us, a setting us into him, so as then to be represented by him. So that now we are to run the same fortune, if I may so speak, with Christ himself for ever ... for he is a Common Person for us, and to stand for us ... to bring to all that God ordained us unto ...We are chosen in Christ, and therefore are in as sure a condition, as for final perishing, as Christ himself ...[57]

According to Macpherson in his commentary on the Confession, the wording 'They who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ', 'naturally suggests sympathy with the Infralapsarian doctrine'[58] whilst not explicitly condemning the Supralapsarians. Shedd goes further when he refers to 'the sublapsarian preterition' as being 'that of the Westminster Confession and all the Reformed creeds'.[59]

However, whilst 'the controversy between the Sublapsarians and the Supralapsarians is one of no great intrinsic importance'[60], Murray's view that the Confession is non-committal on this debate is to be preferred. The words 'being fallen in Adam' do not imply that the elect when elected were contemplated as fallen in Adam. This would be expressly infralapsarian. Rather, 'these words simply state a historical fact on which both schools are equally agreed, and which explains the necessity for redemption by Christ ...'. In fact, the Confession is intentionally uncommitted on the order of the decrees, 'as both the terms of the section and the debate in the Assembly clearly show'.[61]

b) Election unto salvation includes all the means necessary to the attainment of the decreed end. 'The doctrine of election', says Elisha Coles, 'containeth the whole sum and scope of the Gospel. All the other parts are but the carrying out of God's first intention'.[62]

> All the ways and acts that God doth to eternity are but mere expressions of that love which he at first took up ... Christ and heaven, and whatever else God shows you of love and mercy in this world, or in the world to come, they all lay in the womb of that first act ... My brethren, when God first began to love you, he gave you all that he ever meant to give you in the lump, and eternity of time is that in which he is retailing of it out.[63]

Expounding Romans 8:30, Thomas Horton writes:

> It is clear from the text that God's Election and Predestination is necessarily and infallibly followed with other acts in the execution of it, as calling and justification etc ... (an) indissoluble connection and conjunction of the means with the end. These rings and links in this golden chain here before us are so involved one in another, as that they cannot possibly be disjoined or severed one from the other ... Predestination is not only the antecedent, but also the cause of effectual vocation. And the same grace, and good pleasure of God, that ordains us to eternal life, makes us also to embrace the means which tend to this life ...[64]

c) Election is unconditional. Writes Thomas Brooks *(1608-1680):*

> The purpose of God is the sovereign cause of all that good that is in man, and of all that external, internal, and eternal good that comes to man. Not works past, for men are chosen from everlasting; not works present, for Jacob was loved and chosen before he was born; not works foreseen, for men were all corrupt in Adam. All a believer's present happiness, and all his future happiness, springs from the eternal purpose of God.[65]

d) Election implies and necessitates Non-Election (Reprobation).

In Section 7, 'the doctrine ... of reprobation, is analysed as to its elements in a way unsurpassed in the whole compass of theological literature. Nowhere else in so few words is this delicate topic handled with such meticulous care and discrimination'.[66]

Clearly it is at this point that the doctrine of absolute predestination comes to sharpest focus and expression. 'In the whole of Confessional literature, there is no formulation that surpasses in precision of thought and expression that which we find in Section seven'.[67] It is, of course, an analysis of the clause in Section three, insofar as this clause has reference to mankind, and it elucidates the elements comprised in the fore-ordination to death of the non-elect. This is often spoken of as the decree of reprobation, 'a designation from which the Confession properly refrains', says Murray.[68] No reason or basis is specified for the passing-by of the non-elect except the sovereign will of God. If sin was introduced as the reason, then of necessity, all would be passed by, because 'all have sinned'. Nevertheless, it is of the greatest importance to note that sin is the reason given for the judicial appointment to 'dishonour and wrath', because this is the only ground upon which 'dishonour and wrath' may be inflicted without impugning the justice and righteousness of God.

The Assembly saw this distinction clearly, 'and if we once accede to the pure sovereignty of God in the differentiation between elect and non-elect, the distinction will be seen to be necessary'. 'We must go one step farther, however, if we are to discover the finesse of formulation contained in this section'.[69] This is explained as follows:

> It might be thought that the sovereign will of God applies to passing by alone and that the ordaining to dishonour and wrath is a purely judicial act in the execution of retributive justice. The terms of the Confession do not support this simplified analysis. It must be noted that the earlier clauses govern the words 'to ordain them to dishonour and wrath' as well

as the words 'to pass by'. Thus even the sovereign good pleasure of God, 'whereby He extendeth or withholdeth mercy, as He pleaseth', is expressed in the ordaining to dishonour and wrath as well as in the passing by. A little reflection will show the propriety of this construction, and the divines were not superficial or remiss so as to overlook the necessity of formulating the doctrine accordingly. We must ask the question: Why are some of mankind ordained to dishonour and wrath when others equally deserving of dishonour and wrath are not ordained to this end? Thus to regard the ordaining to dishonour and wrath as simply and solely due to judicial processes would completely fail to take account of the factors that enter into the foreordination to death. Of this failure the Confession is not guilty. The ground of dishonour and wrath is sin and sin *alone*. But the reason why the non-elect are ordained to this dishonour and wrath when others, the elect, are not, is *solely* due to the sovereign will of God. These two considerations the Confession has included when it says: 'The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will ... to ordain ... to dishonour and wrath for their sin'.[70]

According to the Confession, then, it cannot be true of the elect that they are particularly and unchangeably designated, and their number so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished, and yet this not be true of the non-elect. 'Who are the non-elect but those that are not elected, and how can we fail to affirm of them the obverse of all that is true of the elect as such'?[71] This is the meaning of Calvin's *'decretum quidem horribile fateor'*.[72] But by this, Calvin did not mean horrible in the modern sense of 'hateful' or 'repulsive'. Calvin's Latin was as accurate and elegant as any since the days of Cicero and Virgil, and in the great classical writers, 'horror' frequently signifies awe and veneration. To the Puritans, these were undoubtedly awesome doctrines. But they believed them to be 'truths which must be clearly faced and firmly asserted, lest ... we mar ... the purity of our theism and the surety of our hope of salvation ... And this is our answer to those who would fain persuade us to exscind this statement from our Confession'.[73]

IV The Practical Application and Use of the Doctrine (Section 8)

8. The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men, attending the will of God revealed in His Word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election. So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God; and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey this Gospel.

The Confession is therefore 'jealous to warn against the abuse of the doctrine formulated in this chapter ... and we are reminded that there is no direct or esoteric way of discovering God's secret counsel'.[74] According to the Confession, and according to its rule of faith, surely, 'the preceptive and not the decretive will of God is the rule of human duty'.[75] In considering this subject, then, it is essential to remind oneself of the manner and spirit in which the Puritans approached it. Anthony Burgess puts it in these words:

> This truth may be handled either sinfully or profitably; sinfully as when it is treated only to satisfy curiosity, and to keep up a mere barren speculative dispute ... This point of election ... is not to be agitated in a verbal and contentious way, but in a saving way, to make us tremble and to set us upon a more diligent and close striving with God in prayer, and all other duties ... This doctrine, if any other, should produce sobriety, holy fear, and trembling.[76]

Our study can be fitly concluded with an excerpt from a sermon by David Dickson (1583-1662) on 2 Timothy 2:19, which expresses the united belief of the Puritans on this matter.

> The doctrine of election and reprobation is a doctrine which may be safely taught and propounded unto people, albeit men say it should not be meddled with, because (say they) it makes some men despair, and others become careless what they do. I answer, let God make an answer for his own doctrine, who has commanded us to teach it ...[77]

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THE ONE AND TRIUNE GOD AND THE LIFE OF HIS PEOPLE*

by Rowland S. Ward

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I suppose there might be the thought in the minds of some that the subject of the Trinity is hardly the one that is suitable to our present need. It might be regarded as of absolutely no practical value.[1] Or another might say, 'This is 'high' doctrine, difficult for even the best minds. Is not a rousing call to faithfulness and service the need of the hour?' But faithfulness to whom? and service for what end? As ministers and elders we are all aware of how easy it is for professionalism to characterise our activities, to be so immersed in the work that has to be done that we forget why we are doing it or for whom we are labouring.

Many of you will know of a little book by Tom Wells entitled *A Vision for Missions*.[2] At first you think the book will be about mission strategy with lots of graphs and analysis, but in fact it advances the thesis that 'God is worthy to be known and proclaimed for who he is...' and spends most of its space in speaking about the character of God and what God has done for us in Christ. There lies the true foundation and impelling motive to missionary endeavour. Similarly, I wish to relate the nature of God as Triune to the life of the church since this is the most basic means of addressing the problems of the church as we near the beginning of the 21st century.

To conceive of God other than as the Trinity is to imagine a god who has no existence. John Calvin (1509-64) writes:

> But God also designates himself by another special mark [in addition to his infinity and spiritual nature] to distinguish himself more precisely from idols. For he so proclaims himself the sole God as to offer himself to be contemplated clearly in three persons. Unless we grasp these, only the bare and empty name of God flits around in our brains, to the exclusion of the true God.[3]

This witness is true. I am convinced that while the church can use graphs and statistics, as I did myself in addressing the 1995 Synod, our basic need is to recover and deepen our knowledge of God. Our consideration of this subject will embrace biblical, theological and historical aspects, but I trust you will also come to see the very important and practical nature of the subject as well.

Trinity as a Word

The use of the term Trinity immediately reminds us we are not using a word found in Scripture. However, it is an uninformed, sectarian or latitudinarian spirit which mouths the cry, 'The Bible, I say, the Bible only is the religion of Protestants.'[4] In no case is this a true claim, for every group (Protestant or otherwise) claiming 'the Bible only' has its own interpretation. We do not wish to quibble over words but we do wish to adhere to the true meaning of Scripture. Hence the necessity and honesty of declaring our understanding of controverted teachings of Scripture in a public Confession of Faith.[5] As Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck (1854-1921) put it: 'For the Holy Scripture was not given to the church by God to be thoughtlessly repeated but to be understood in all its fulness and richness....'[6]

Tertullian (AD c160-c220), the Roman advocate who became a Christian about AD 197, contributed the term *'trinitas'* to the doctrine of God as it was formulated in the 4th century. He used this term in his writings against Praxeas (AD c215), who had taught that it was the Father who suffered on the cross. But neither Tertullian nor the Councils of the 4th century supposed that they were doing other than setting out and clearing of misrepresentations the teaching about God found in the pages of Holy Scripture. That they used the language of their time was inescapable; that there were many unholy political skirmishes and worse in the conflict which raged on the subject is acknowledged; that they advanced speculations to account for the facts of Scripture is also true; but that they did correctly discern the leading points of Scripture is also our belief, and this has been succinctly incorporated in our Confession of Faith.

The Essential Doctrine

Well then, how do we state the doctrine? Our Shorter Catechism reminds us: 'There are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.'[7] Such a statement is seeking to do full justice to the data of Scripture and may be otherwise expressed in three propositions:[8]

(i) there is only one God;
(ii) the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is each God;
(iii) the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is each a distinct person.

Now our language about God is of necessity accommodated to our capacity, and its inadequacy has always been recognised. We speak of three persons not because this language is adequate but because the Bible describes the relations of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in ways analogous to relations among human persons.[9]

God is one in being or essence but within the singleness of his being there are three personal distinctions. Put plainly, we may say that God's life is not a solitary, lonely one, but has a richness and fulness reflecting the fact that God is a fellowship. Now to say God is a fellowship is not to say he is a committee, for a committee implies various individuals each with their distinctive origin, and might easily lead us to tritheism, belief in three Gods. To say God is a fellowship is to say that there is an intimacy of loving relationship, and reciprocity in the nature of God.

Some Biblical Illustrations

John beautifully expresses it: 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was face to face with God and the Word was God.'[10] Here is distinction and here is identity: distinction of person, identity of being. Or again, referring to the incarnation of the Son, we read: 'The only God who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.'[11] Commenting on this passage, J.C.Ryle writes,

> As one who lies in the bosom of another is fairly supposed to be most intimate with him, to know all his secrets, and possess all his affections, so is it, we are to understand, in the union of the Father and the Son. It is more close than man's mind can conceive.[12]

Likewise the Spirit is referred to in terms of this intimacy and fellowship. Jesus says:

> If you love me you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever - the Spirit of truth....When the Counsellor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me...He will not

> speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears...He will bring glory to me by taking what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.[13]

So singular and essential is the Spirit's work in making known Christ that we have a virtual identity affirmed in the striking expression 'the Lord is the Spirit' in 2 Corinthians 4:17.

While it is proper to see anticipations of the doctrine of the trinity in the Old Testament,[14] it is really only as we see the redemptive action of God disclosed in the New Testament that the distinctions in the very depths of deity itself are appreciated. By the same token, the truth of the Trinity would never have gained hold if it had not been intimately connected with the Christian understanding of salvation. Thus, the strictly monotheistic disciples have no embarrassment in affirming the deity of the Son and the Spirit in such a manner that we might well call the New Testament a distinctively trinitarian volume.

Again, it was the contribution of Athanasius to the debate over the person of Christ in the 4th century that he made people see that our salvation depended on Christ's deity. 'The logic of his argument goes something like this: Only God can save. Jesus saves. Therefore Jesus is God.'[15] The subsequent creedal recognition of the deity of the Spirit was inevitable.

Trinitarian Vocabulary

Theological discussion of the doctrine has produced a distinct vocabulary. Some distinctions are not helpful and are overly speculative. Still, four points are worth noting here, points which safeguard the co-equality and co-eternity of the persons in the unity of the divine essence and protect from an imbalance which produces subordinationism on the one hand or modalism on the other.

1. *Autotheos* (God-of-himself): This refers to the self-existence of the Son as to his divine essence as maintained with much emphasis by Calvin[16] and the generality of Reformed writers since. The aim is to vindicate the Nicene formulation and free explanations of it from overtones of subordinationism which might suggest, for example, that the divine essence of the Son and the Spirit was derived from the Father.

2. *Idiomata:* The traditional way of stating that the persons have in common the divine essence but differ from each other by personal properties of

Fatherhood, Sonship and Procession is to affirm that the Father is of none neither begotten or proceeding, the Son is eternally generated or begotten of the Father and the Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son. This is the kind of language used in our Confession of Faith[17] but is very liable to be misunderstood once we seek to explain it,[18] particularly because of the Nicene Fathers' speculation that eternal generation is a constant process rather than an eternal and completed act.

Without entering the labyrinth of discussion, the important point is that the role of each divine person in redemption reflects distinctions which go back to the inner life of God himself. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are each distinguished by a personal property whose nature is such that we are reminded that 'God lives from all eternity as self- communicating, self-giving love and communion.'[19] God wills himself to be called by these names since they reflect real and eternal relations.[20] The Father eternally possesses fatherhood in relation to the Son, the Son is eternally the Son of the Father, and the Spirit is eternally from the Father and the Son.

3. *Filioque* (and the Son): The famous 'filioque' clause in the confession of the Western church ultimately refers to the role of Christ in eternal relation to the Spirit. The Western Church (Roman and Protestant) confesses that the Spirit proceeds 'from the Father *and the Son*.' The Eastern (or Greek) Church, in its interpretation of John 15:26, refuses this 'double procession' clause both because of the way it was promulgated and because the more ardent objectors suppose that it implies two sources of deity in the Godhead, the Father and the Son.[21]

Not all Greeks accept this argument, and perhaps we have some confusion of thought, for even the Father's deity is not caused nor does he give deity to the Son or to the Spirit. The One and Triune God simply is. His essence is one and underived, but there is an eternal distinction of persons, the Father being first in order.

4. *Perichoresis:* This term refers to the mutual indwelling in love of the divine persons, perhaps reflected most strikingly in Jesus' statement 'I in the Father and the Father in me,' or again, 'All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.'[22]

One does not expect every believer to be able to articulate the nuances of trinitarian theology, but every healthy part of the church has convictions of trini-

tarian character since the Christian experience of salvation is never satisfied apart from recognition of the Father as the author of salvation, the Son as the purchaser and the Spirit as the applier. Indeed, we might say that only in the Reformed conception of salvation is justice done to the doctrine of the Trinity. This is as much as to say that where there is not this conception the doctrine of the Trinity is imperilled in practice if not in theory also.

Trinitarian Theology Today

Liberal theology rejected the Trinity along with other dogmas it believed to have been imposed on the simple religion of Jesus. But classical liberalism is virtually dead now. Beginning in the 1920s with Karl Barth (1886-1968), the Swiss neo-orthodox theologian, there has been a steady increase of interest in trinitarian theology in all sections of Christendom. The first volume of Barth's *Church Dogmatics* was published in 1932. In 1944 the Russian Vladimir Lossky (1903-58) wrote an influential volume from the Eastern perspective, while Karl Rahner (1904-84), influenced by Barth, although a Roman Catholic, published in 1967. Since then many other names must be added, including Thomas Torrance, the Scottish theologian.

Characteristic of much recent theological discussion is a reluctance to discuss the person of Christ in terms of his pre-existent life, but a readiness to affirm a purely functional view. In other words, Christ is not regarded as God the Son from eternity but is regarded as functioning on earth as God's agent or representative in whom God is revealed.[23]

Insofar as this approach stresses the importance of special revelation to our knowledge of God, and thus reasons from the facts of redemption as disclosed in Scripture, it is welcome, but it is too generally associated with a rejection of any validity in what has commonly been termed natural revelation and, more especially, an unwillingness to accept *all* the Biblical data as authoritative and normative. The influential Jürgen Moltmann describes his view as 'trinitarian panentheism.'[24] Apparently, following the process theology, he is not prepared to accept that God's trinitarian life has any existence in eternity but is to be regarded as constituted solely within history. In this way God is subject to limitation and suffering in a manner which does not agree with Biblical teaching.[25] Nevertheless, there are passages of considerable insight in writers such as Rahner, Moltmann and La Cugna.

The Gender of God

Of recent years we have heard much about the gender of God, and of the efforts of the more extreme feminists to legitimise the addressing of God as our Father-Mother God or the like. While the terms 'Father' and 'Son' are metaphors yet it does not follow that they are without significance. In this connection the words of Bavinck a century ago are relevant:

> The name of God in Scripture does not designate him as he is in himself, but in his manifold revelation and relation to the creature. Nevertheless, this name is not arbitrary, but God reveals himself as he *is*...In Scripture 'to be' and 'to be called' indicate the same thing from different angles. God *is* that which he *calls* himself, and he *calls* himself that which he *is*.[26]

The Son had glory with the Father before the world was (John 17:5). While some feminist theology involves reaction from inadequately expressed teaching about God, its fundamental approach can be characterised as one which does not take proper account of what is revealed in Scripture. The attempt by some to ascribe gender to God is quite misguided.

The Biblical Presentation

The biblical presentation of the Trinity is both specific and pervasive. There are succinct statements of the doctrine (e.g.: 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Timothy 1:2-5; 1 Peter 1:2; Jude 20-21), extended passages which presuppose it and interweave it into practical instruction, as well as all those passages which affirm deity of the Son (eg. John 5:18) or of the Spirit (eg. 1 Cor 2:10-11).

1. A specific passage: Matthew 28:19-20 (The Great Commission)

Several points may be made in reference to the Great Commission passage:

(1) In response to the argument that this must be a later addition, since elsewhere baptism is administered only in Jesus' name (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; 1 Cor 1:13,15), it must be said that the textual witness in Matthew is not in any doubt.

(2) In any event, I would argue that Matthew 28:19 in its original intention does not prescribe a formula so much as succinctly sum up the fact that through the work of redemption the character of God has been declared definitively and

he is to be recognised accordingly. Hence the initiatory rite of baptism as well as the teaching conveyed is to occur in just such a trinitarian context. This explanation fully corresponds with the situation in the early church as reflected in Acts and the Epistles. Where the gospel is rightly preached, people believe Jesus is the way to the Father, and rely upon him through the work of the Spirit (1 Cor 12:3).

(3) The passage shows the importance of the truth of the Trinity. Bavinck correctly affirms that

> the confession of the trinity is the sum of the Christian religion. Without it neither the creation nor the redemption nor the sanctification can be purely maintained....We can truly proclaim the mighty works of God only when we recognise and confess them as the one great work of Father, Son and Spirit. In the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is contained the whole salvation of men.[27]

In line with this approach we find very pervasive teaching throughout the New Testament.

2. An extended passage: The Ephesian Letter

Ephesians strikingly employs the truth of the Trinity. Chapter 1 verses 3-14 forms one sentence in the Greek, and was written by a man who had not separated 'amazing' and 'grace'. Verse 3 - 'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing [ie. blessings which come from the presence and power of the Spirit] in Christ' - is expanded in verses 4-6 in reference to the Father's election; in verses 7 to 12 in reference to the redemptive work of the Son, and in verses 13-14 in reference to the sealing work of the Spirit.[28]

It is important to note the tone of doxology and devotion throughout the passage. There is nothing cold, hard and rationalistic about it. Similarly, although there is very strong emphasis on the sovereignty of God it is the sovereignty of the Triune God and not of some despot or arbitrary deity.

The action of the Triune God for our salvation is regarded as involving a new creation (1:3-2:10), the fruit of the incomparable riches of God's grace in Christ Jesus (2:8), a bringing from death to life. It results in a new community (2:11-3:21) which transcends barriers of race and background and, as the church, is the Heavenly Father's family on earth, characterised by new conduct ((4:1-6:20). This new humanity in Christ, this new community, lives a life worthy of its calling (4:1), and imitates God in its life of love (5:2), with Christ as the great exemplar (5:2).

Characteristic, therefore, is unity in the truth (4:1-16 cf. John 17:20-23), a unity which allows for the diversity of gifts implicit in the metaphor of the body (4:16 cf. 1 Cor 12-14) and the pursuit of holiness (4:17ff): the old self put off and the new self put on (4:22-24). This is applied particularly to truth-telling, anger, stealing, purity of speech and behaviour.

In further application (5:15ff), the rejection of the drinking which results in uncontrolled, unwise and ungodly behaviour is contrasted with the Spirit whose constant infilling is seen in controlled, wise and godly conduct. The presence of the Spirit is seen from the four key imperatives which depend on the exhortation 'Go on being filled with the Spirit': speaking, singing (5:19), giving thanks (5:20), submitting (5:21), the last-named being expanded and applied in marriage, family and economic areas (5:22-6:9). In short, we have fellowship, worship, thankfulness and right relationships as a result of the work of the Triune God for and in his people.

Personhood

The truth of the Trinity helps us understand the nature of personhood. The modern world thinks in terms of self-contained individuality and thus of the separation of one person from another. However, the biblical presentation would encourage us to understand personhood as individuality realised adequately only in community. God is supremely personal, and his own trinitarian life is characterised by fellowship and communion, an intimacy of loving relationship and reciprocity.

We are made in God's image and thus made for communion in relationship with God and with others who bear his image. It was not good for the man to be alone (Genesis 2:18) and the communion of marriage and family reflects a fundamental requirement of real human life. Ephesians 3:15 suggests that God is not merely like a human father but 'the pattern and archetype of all fatherhood'.[29] Over against the individualism which promotes the ego, alienates and separates, we must affirm and demonstrate the life that is self-giving, which reconciles and includes, while at the same time recognising the distinctiveness of each individual.

Already we are implying the fall that progresses to utter isolation in hell, and the redemption that leads to the embrace of God's people in the fellowship of God's trinitarian life here and now (cf. 1 John 1:3) with its climax in the world to come, 'a world of love'.[30] Peter affirms the believer's participation in the

divine nature (2 Peter 1:4) not as if the Creator/creature distinction is lost, but to affirm that the unbegun and unending circle of the divine life is, as it were, opened to embrace his people.

Despotism and Coercion?

The correct understanding of the truth of the Trinity balances our belief in the sovereign power of God so that we see most clearly that it is not of a high-handed or arbitrary character. The God who predestines is the God who is love, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God and so he readily may represent God as a 'stan-dover merchant'.[31] However, believers should not contribute to harsh and unlov-ing portraits of God, or even to a tendency to regard biblical predestination as fatalism, let alone disregard the call to community and self-giving relationship in the body of Christ. We need a focus on God himself, on the God who wills that we are eternally embraced in his fellowship so that we might share in the glory the Son had with the Father before the world was. The Son has given us the pattern (Philippians 2:1-18). Well might we say that lovelessness is the most contradictory aspect of the Christian life.

The belief in God as Triune, and thus in mutual self-giving and reciprocity, is also fundamental in anchoring a proper doctrine of atonement. Any sugges-tion of coercion on the part of the Father towards his Son is completely ruled out. There is never any conflict of will or purpose but a perfect harmony of love: it not only pleased the Father to put his Son to grief, but it was the delight of the Son to drink the cup the Father had given him (John 18:11), because it was the loving desire of both Father and Son, together with the Spirit, to bring many sons to glory. Sometimes we can give the impression that redemption is a mere legal arrangement of almost impersonal character, when it is the loving purpose of God who himself is the way back to himself.

Abraham was stopped from sacrificing his son, his only son, whom he loved, by the voice of God from heaven (Genesis 22), and the Genesis account is noteworthy in indicating no resistance on the part of Isaac. But God the Father's love was so great and the Son's love so great that the Father did not stay the knife from his Son, his only Son, whom he loved, and the Son, because of the joy that was set before him - the joy of fellowship with redeemed sinners! - endured the cross, despising the shame. While the Son knew terrible fear as he anticipated his suffering, and his sweat was like drops of blood (Luke 22:44) he did not resist but willingly and lovingly went to the cross. Instead of a voice

from heaven or a legion of angels, there was a loud cry from the earth which still resonates through the ages and expresses the impenetrable mystery of the immeasurable love of God: 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?'

It is that mysterious breach in communion, that utter isolation, that endurance of hell, if you will, in an intensity that cannot be fathomed, which constitutes the ground of our reconciliation, our inclusion, our assurance of eternal life with God. We are called to realise our life in communion, a communion of love through him who loved us. Whatever disagreements we may have, may it be said: 'Behold how these Christians love one another!' We love God and we love one another because God first loved us with a love so amazing, so divine that it demands my life, my soul, my all.

References

* *The substance of an address as Moderator to the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, Armidale, New South Wales, on 27 March 1996. This Synod commemmorated the 150th anniversary of the Church's founding.*

1 So Immanuel Kant as cited in J. Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (Minneapolis 1993) 6.
2 Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh 1985.
3 *Institutes*, I, xiii, 2 (trans. F.L.Battles).
4 William Chillingworth (1602-44), Anglican latitudinarian scholar, was the populariser of the phrase in his *The Religion of Protestants a Sure Way to Salvation* (London 1638) pt. i, ch. vi., 56.
5 Cf. J.Calvin, *Institutes*, I, xiii, 3-5.
6 H.Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith* (Grand Rapids 1956) 157.
7 Q & A #6.
8 Cf. B.B.Warfield, *Biblical and Theological Studies* (Philadelphia 1952) 36.
9 The Latin word *persona* has a range of meanings from 'face' or 'mask' to 'person' in the modern sense of a self-contained individual. In trinitarian thinking it means much more than a mask such as was worn by an actor in a play - the modalistic explanation - but less than the modern sense of self-contained individuality.
10 John 1:1. The Greek preposition I have rendered 'face to face with' is *pros*, which implies movement towards.
11 John 1:18. The preferred reading, which certainly does not weaken the truth of the essential Deity of Jesus, is 'only God' or 'God the one and only' rather than 'only Son' or 'only begotten Son'. The translation 'only begotten' arises from interpreting the compound word *monogenes* in terms of its two component elements, and is followed by the older lexicons, but more recent study has shown that the word has the sense of 'only' or 'unique'. [The use of the phrase 'begotten not made' in the 4th century is distinct and legitimate in its place.] The expression 'in the bosom' is literally 'into the bosom' *(eis ton kalpon)*, cf. Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids 1971) 114, n.118.

12 J.C.Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on John*, Volume 1 (London 1869) 42.
13 John 14:15-17; 15:26; 16:13-15.
14 Cf. B.B.Warfield, 'The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity' in *Biblical and Theological Studies* (Philadelphia 1952) 28-31.
15 Alister McGrath, *A Cloud of Witnesses: Ten Great Christian Thinkers* (Leicester 1990) 20.
16 *Institutes*, I, xiii, 25: 'Therefore we say that deity in an absolute sense exists in itself; whence likewise we confess that the Son since he is God, exists of himself, but not in respect of his Person; indeed, since he is the Son, we say that he exists from the Father. Thus his essence is without beginning; while the beginning of his person is God himself.' For discussion see B.B.Warfield, 'Calvin's Doctrine of the Trinity' in *Calvin and Augustine* (Philadelphia 1956) 189-284.
17 Westminster Confession of Faith (1646) 2:3.
18 Cf. Ambrose (c.339-397) 'For here the voice is silent, the mind fails; not only my mind, but even that of angels.' [*Of the Christian Faith*, NPNF II: 10.212]. The explanations of the Nicene Fathers concerning the nature of the act which they called 'eternal generation' were not subscribed by Calvin (or Charles Hodge) nor are they endorsed by WCF 2:3; cf. B.B.Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 250.
19 C.M.LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco 1993) 354.
20 Note the discussion in John Murray, *Collected Writings* 4 (Edinburgh 1982) 58-81.
21 A good survey from the Eastern viewpoint is in T. Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Harmondsworth 1993) 210- 218.
22 John 17:21; 16:11.
23 For a helpful survey see K. Runia, *The Present-day Christological Debate* (Leicester 1984).
24 Cf. J.Moltmann, *God in Creation* (San Francisco 1985) 98-103. Biblical theism distinguishes God the Creator from his finite creation, while pantheism identifies God and the universe. Panentheism (or process theology) holds that while there is a sense in which God exists beyond the universe, essentially the cosmic process is God.
25 Cf. J.Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (San Francisco 1974) 207. Note John Murray's assessment of Claude Welch's 1952 volume *In This Name: The Doctrine of the Trinity in Contemporary Theology* : 'Our doctrine of the Trinity must be that of which God is, in and of himself, immanently and eternally, irrespective of creation and redemption. If our doctrine of the Trinity is not that, then the God whom we conceive of is not the eternal, self-existent, and self-sufficient God, but a God of whom temporality is an attribute.' [J. Murray, *Collected Writings* 4: 281]
26 H. Bavinck, *The Doctrine of God* (Grand Rapids 1951) 85.
27 H.Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith* 161. Notice also B.B.Warfield's perceptive remarks on Matthew 28:19 in 'The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity' *Biblical and Theological Studies*, 42.
28 The KJV does not render the Greek aorist participle (believing/having believed) correctly at this point and conveys the false idea of a time interval or second blessing, a sealing *after* believing. The truth is that, if we do not have the Spirit, we do not have God's seal of ownership, and we are not in Christ at all.
29 John Macpherson, *Commentary on St Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (Edinburgh 1892) 262, cf. also John R.W.Stott, *The Message of Ephesians* (Leicester 1979) 134. Interestingly, the standard 19th century works on the Fatherhood of God by R.S.Candlish and T.J.Crawford do not appear to discuss Ephesians 3:15.
30 Note the article by A.P.Pauw: 'Heaven is a World of Love': Edwards on Heaven and the Trinity, *Calvin Theological Journal* 30 (1995): 392-401.
31 John Smith, *Advance Australia Where?* (Sydney 1988) 225.

ERASMUS, LUTHER AND REFORMATION

By Frederick S. Leahy

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Two of the most influential figures of sixteenth century Europe were Desiderius Erasmus and Martin Luther. That their relationship should be considered in a Reformed journal is apparent when it is recalled that Calvin was influenced by both men and that most of the Reformers made considerable use of Erasmus' work, including his linguistic research and exegetical methods.

Their background and disposition were markedly different. Erasmus' father was a priest in the Northern Netherlands. A woman from Gouda bore him two sons, Pieter and Erasmus.[1] The year of Erasmus' birth is uncertain. It was probably 1469, but it could have been as early as 1467. Little is known of his youth and this is largely because owing to the circumstances of his birth he felt a sense of shame and tended to draw a veil over his early life. [2] He was a man of refinement and culture and all his life he struggled to reconcile Christianity and classical culture.

Luther, son of a peasant, born in Eisleben on November 10, 1483, lacked the refinement of Erasmus, hence his appeal to the middle and lower classes rather than the more cultivated. As Philip Schaff puts it, 'He was of the earth earthy, but with his bold face lifted to heaven'. [3] Both Erasmus and Luther were for a period members of the Augustinian order and both men reacted negatively to monasticism, Erasmus leaving the monastery after five unhappy years.

Erasmus, Luther and the Bible

As a student in Paris Erasmus was introduced to biblical studies following a pattern of exegesis established in the Middle Ages. There was little movement or development. It was when he came to Cambridge and heard John Colet lecturing on the Epistles of Paul that new vistas opened before him. He was influenced by and became a leader of the humanist movement in scholarship. There was a return to the original texts of Latin and Greek, and texts that had long been neglected were rediscovered. For such scholars this was an exciting time. Their ultimate aim was not the study of literature, but to obtain wisdom. This was particularly true of Erasmus. He deliberately applied humanistic principles of research to biblical studies, thus by-passing the Roman Catholic Church's rigid adherence to Jerome's Latin Vulgate. Here it must be noted that

while today the term 'humanism' denotes a man-centred philosophy, in Erasmus' time, and in that of the Reformers, it referred to a form of study which placed emphasis on the Greek and Latin classics, seeking to purify the original source material. The motto of the humanists was *Ad fontes!* — back to the sources! This does not mean that all humanists shared the same ideas: philosophically and religiously they often differed. As Alister E. McGrath comments, 'Humanism was concerned with *how ideas were obtained and expressed,* rather than with the precise nature of the ideas themselves'. [4]

In 1504 Erasmus wrote that he had firmly resolved to devote the rest of his life to the study of Holy Scripture. His *magnum opus,* his edition of the Greek New Testament (with Latin translation) appeared in 1516, the result of sixteen years of labour. Scripture had now become all-important to Erasmus as a basis for theology; that was why he considered it so important to study the original.[5]

Luther used the first edition of Erasmus' New Testament in his lectures and writings — not uncritically. Calvin did likewise and continually interacted with Erasmus' exposition of Scripture (see how often he quotes him in his commentary on Romans) and in this he was followed by Beza to an even greater extent.[6] Luther's method of working from Scripture may have been dogmatic and that of Erasmus inductive, but they were agreed that Scripture was their norm and they held to the unity of Scripture. It is interesting to remember that Luther translated the New Testament into German (and later the Old Testament), a work so masterful that it did much to create and mould modern German language.[7] Luther wished to translate the Scriptures in the language of the people — 'simple words and not those of court of castle'. Erasmus had the same vision:

> If only they (the Scriptures) were translated into all human tongues, so that not only the Scots and the Irish but also the Turks and the Saracens could read and study them ... If only the peasant sang something from them at the plough, the weaver recited something to the measure of the shuttle, the traveller dispelled the tedium of the journey with such stories![8]

Erasmus had been saying such things well before Luther's voice was heard, and it is worth noting that Erasmus was already in his fifties when Luther first attracted attention.

Erasmus, Luther and Reform

Given that Erasmus and Luther were so devoted to Scripture and influenced by it, their relationship to the Roman Catholic Church was inevitably affected, but in what way and to what extent and with what results?

Both men were scathing in their condemnation of ecclesiastical failure and abuse, Erasmus no less than Luther as he used to the full his waspish wit and biting satire. In one of his most famous works, the *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* ('hand-sword of the Christian soldier') he warned against 'that superstitious tribe of monks who lived as if there was no Christianity outside the habit'. In another equally famous work, *Moriae Encomium* ('Praise of Folly') he writes ostensibly in jest, but really in deadly seriousness. In it monks and friars are presented as stupid, ignorant and hypocritical. As Cornelis Augustis comments, by far the sharpest satire is reserved for the pope, cardinals, bishops and lower clergy:

> Everything hinges on honour, power, glory, rights, pomp and show; there is an army of scribes, copyists, and every other functionary you can name; interdicts, excommunications, papal bans are wielded; popes seek their glory in war ... And through every rank of the church it is money — the harvest of money, as Erasmus called it — that plays the chief role. [9]

Erasmus was particularly critical of the sermons delivered by the regular clergy: crude, boring and providing no food for the heart. There was a parade of pseudo-learning, but preaching had become irrelevant and theology had degenerated: 'it's practitioners spoke a secret language about unreal questions'.[10]

On all these issues Luther spoke in similar manner. Referring to the words of Christ to the scribes and Pharisees, 'You strain out gnats and swallow the camel' (Mt. 23:24), Luther says

> so it is foolish and preposterous also today and at any time to identify the Christian religion outwardly with this ostentatious display which ... is practised by the observance of distinctions between feast days, food, habits, and places while, in the meantime, the commandments of God and faith and love are utterly disregarded. [11]

On such matters as feast days, obligatory celibacy, the church's hunger for money, human ordinances, and the like, Erasmus and Luther speak with one voice. Both men agreed that reform was needed and their respective concepts of the church were remarkably alike. External structure by itself profited nothing. Indeed it was bound to degenerate if the inner substance were lacking. Externals were of no avail if they did not reflect an attitude of heart. Faith in Christ was infinitely more important than ceremonial. Erasmus and Luther alike saw excessive externalisation of the church as a hindrance to an immediate and personal relationship with God. Erasmus saw the church as essentially a spiritual com-

munity. Thus in discussing the Lord's Supper he emphasised spiritual eating and drinking, although he never actually denied the corporal presence of Christ in the sacrament, but quite clearly to him that was relatively unimportant.

Erasmus' criticisms of his church were as blistering as anything from the pen of Luther. He shared his vision of a purified church, a church that would be instrumental in the emergence of a Christ-centred society, for that was his goal, albeit in papal terms: clerics who would faithfully present the doctrine of Christ, civil rulers who would maintain law and order and restrain evil-doers, and men and women who would belong to the body of Christ. In a different form these basic ideas were to come to the fore in all stages of the Reformation.

Erasmus and Luther: Attraction and Rejection

Initially Erasmus and Luther were attracted to each other and paid tribute to each other. Erasmus approved of Luther's *Ninety-five Theses.* Indeed he found himself repeatedly described as a Lutheran and in 1559 his works were placed on the *Index librorum prohibitorum,* and Luther's books were banned by royal decree and ordered to be burned. While Luther's style was too offensive for the urbane Erasmus, he did not really wish to see him silenced. To the elector Frederick the Wise he wrote

> If Luther were to be overthrown, no god and no man would ever again be able to deal with the monks ... Luther cannot be made away with without the loss at the same time of a great deal of evangelical purity. [12]

He saw Luther as a key figure in the struggle for reform and pleaded with the ecclesiastical authorities to use persuasion rather than force in dealing with him. His well-known words to Frederick the Wise show his appreciation of the *content* of Luther's crusade: 'He has committed great sin — he has hit the monks in their belly, and the Pope in his crown!' As Augustijn comments, 'the two men were closer to each other than they were willing or able to admit'. [13] The Strassburg reformer, Martin Bucer, said that 'what Erasmus whispers, he Luther teaches openly and frankly'.

Mutual attraction, however, was destined to be replaced by mutual rejection, initial similarity by final dissimilarity. There was a sustained and growing attack on Erasmus for his alleged Lutheranism, an attack that came principally from the Sorbonne, the faculty of theology of the University of Paris. His name was too closely linked with that of Luther. Early in his struggle Luther received considerable encouragement from the humanists who mistakenly saw him as an

Erasmian and even called him 'our Martin'! It was in no small measure due to their interest that Europe soon became aware of Luther's presence. As Andrew Pettegree observes

> the two causes, the defence of humanist learning and Luther's affair, had become inextricably linked in the public eye. Those who defended Luther looked to Erasmus as a mentor, and those who sought to damage Erasmus found Luther an increasingly useful pretext. The extent of the confusion was neatly epitomised by Martin Bucer, who, after hearing Luther at the Heidelberg disputation (April 1518), pronounced him the perfect Erasmian. [14]

Increasingly Erasmus found himself under pressure to condemn Luther in print. Luther had actually written to Erasmus asking that he be accepted as a 'younger brother' in Christ, but Erasmus declined the proffered hand of fellowship. He was anxious to see ecclesiastical reform and to contend for it boldly, but he was not prepared to follow a course that could result in a complete break with his church. He saw Luther's approach as disruptive and dangerous. Finally, after much hesitation, he promised Henry VIII of England that he would openly oppose Luther. Erasmus met Henry more than once, and it must not be forgotten that Pope Leo X in 1521 awarded Henry the title 'Defender of the Faith' for his defence of Rome's seven sacraments — *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum.* Conscious of Luther's wholehearted belief in absolute double predestination (modified by later Lutherans), he shrewdly chose as his theme the freedom of the will, and *The Free Will* (1524), which he reluctantly wrote, was immédiately countered by Luther's *The Bondage of the Will* (1526). The die was cast and open controversy began and became increasingly acrimonious. Luther now likened Erasmus to Moses who led the people of God a certain distance, but had to remain in the desert! To this barb Erasmus retorted, 'I am Moses? Well, who does Luther think he is, Jesus?' [15] Luther was of the opinion that like Moses, Erasmus would die in the land of Moab.

Erasmus rejected Luther's message that an enslaved will was unable to respond to the Gospel.

> His persistent concern was to deny that man was totally passive before God's grace: a physician's ministrations were not made useless, nor a friend's advice less valuable, just because one was 'free' to accept such aids. [16]

Erasmus and Luther: Diversity

The result of this controversy was that Luther felt only aversion for Erasmus, who in turn was repelled by Luther. Why did mutual attraction give way to mutual rejection and initial similarity to final dissimilarity? Certainly there was marked difference of personality. Luther was somewhat rumbustious, earthy, courageous and passionate — in the eyes of Erasmus rather crude. Erasmus was refined, sensitive, cultured, pious, vain[17] and of an irenic disposition. He was not characterised by radical action. Carter Lindberg comments that although Erasmus strongly influenced not only Zwingli but also the radical Reformers, 'he could not himself take radical steps'. [18]

There was, however, a deeper reason why Erasmus found it easier to remain in the Roman Catholic fold than to leave it. Augustijn[19] and Lindberg[20] and others have stressed the fact that 'there was no Damascus in Erasmus' life'. He never experienced the spiritual crisis and illumination of a Paul or a Luther.

> Luther's reform movement was not initiated by the righteous an moral indignation of a Savonarola or an Erasmus directed against perceived superstitions or the corruption of the Renaissance papacy. Luther's movement was rooted in his own personal anxiety about salvation; an anxiety that, if the popular response to him is any indication, was widespread throughout Europe. [21]

Edward Donnelly speaks of Luther in similar vein:

> He came to his conviction through agonising personal experience and after a prolonged spiritual struggle which was at times fearful in its intensity. He did everything that a man could possible do to win God's favour and turned to God for help only after all his strivings had proved futile.[22]

Erasmus had nothing comparable to that. There lay the real divide between him and Luther. He never really grasped the nature and gravity of man's fallen state or glimpsed the triumph of God's grace as clearly as did the Reformers. He was completely out of sympathy with the Protestant Reformation which he saw as a disaster. While residing for a period in the Protestant atmosphere of Freiburg in Breisgau he remarked that he felt as if he were sitting beside the rivers of Babylon and could not sing the Lord's song in a strange land! He stopped short of a radical reformation of doctrine and so missed the music that filled Luther's soul.

Because of Erasmus' initial reluctance to condemn Luther, Jerome Aleander, papal envoy at the imperial court, said that Erasmus had 'laid the egg

which Luther hatched'. To this Erasmus was to respond, 'I laid a hen's egg, Luther hatched a bird of quite different breed.'

At the end of the day Erasmus was out of favour on all sides; even his polemic with Luther was considered weak by his co-religionists. Philip Schaff goes so far as to say that 'it would have been better for his fame if he had died in 1516, just after issuing the Greek Testament, a year before the Reformation'.[23] Yet in providence Erasmus helped to prepare the way for the Reformation and provided the exegetical tools which the Reformers found indispensable. Many of the Reformers were moved to study the Scriptures more carefully as a result of Erasmus' influence. He was a catalyst for the Reformation and the humanist movement of that time has been described as the midwife for that great renewal. So Schaff is right when he adds:

> Protestants should never forget the immense debt of gratitude which they owe to the first editor of the Greek Testament who enabled Luther and Tyndale to make their translations of the word of life from the original, and to lead men to the very fountain of all that is most valuable and permanent in the Reformation. [24]

When a professing church departs from the very essence of the Gospel, whatever form that departure may take, surface reforms that merely deal with resulting failures and abuses are not enough. There must be a rediscovery of the doctrines of grace and a faithful proclamation of those truths. Only then can there be a true church and the certainty of evangelical freedom.

References

1. It was not uncommon at that period for priests quite openly to have children. Concubinage was common and bishops adopted the lucrative practice of imposing an annual fine for the privilege of keeping a concubine. Clerical marriage would have meant substantial financial loss for some bishops.
2. The baptismal name, Erasmus, was taken from a list of 'saints' popular at the time. He added 'Roterodamus' because his birthplace was Rotterdam; 'Desiderius' was added later as a literary decoration.
3. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church,* W.B. Eerdmans, 1960, vol. vii, p. 109.
4. Alister E. McGrath, *A Life of Calvin,* Basil Blackwell, 1990, p.54.
5. Erasmus did not hesitate to correct the Latin Vulgate and in doing so incurred the wrath of his church. Gillian Evans points out that he 'makes a distinction between what he is prepared to say about the Vulgate text and what he is prepared to do with the Greek ... On the basis of this distinction between the sanctity of an original and a translated text, Erasmus asks whether his opponents can seriously be arguing that no change at all is possible in the Latin? If so, "What

will they make of those passages in which the existence of a corruption is too obvious to be denied or overlooked?" He protests that he has set out not to "condemn" the text but to "restore" it ...' (Gillian Evans, *Problems of Authority in the Reformation Debates,* Cambridge University Press, 1992, p.42). An example of Erasmus' correction of the Vulgate is his translation of the Greek word *metanoia* as 'repentance' when the Vulgate had 'Do penance'. This provided Luther with an exegetical basis for his assault on the sale of indulgences. The first of his *Ninety-five Theses* read 'When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said "Repent" (Mt. 4.17), he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.' Calvin said that the work of men like Erasmus showed even to children, that (the Vulgate) is vitiated in innumerable places'. (*Tracts,* vol.3, p.74. Baker Book House, 1983.).

6. As one example of Calvin's familiarity with classical literature, and his firm belief in the uniqueness of Scripture, see his comments on Demosthenes, Cicero, Plato and Aristotle in his *Institutes,* 1:8:1.
7. Luther translated the entire New Testament into German in eleven weeks, an amazing achievement. He was determined to prove that 'German nightingales can sing as beautifully as Roman goldfinches'!
8. *Enchiridion,* LB V 65B-C. Quoted by Cornelis Augustijn in *Erasmus: His Life, Works and Influence,* University of Toronto Press, 1991, p.106.
9. Ibid., p.63.
10. Augustijn, op. cit., p.104.
11. *Lectures on Romans,* S.C.M. Press, p.383.
12. Quoted by Cornelis Augustijn, op. cit., p.128.
13. Ibid., p.132.
14. Andrew Pettegree, Ed, *The Early Reformation in Europe,* Cambridge University Press, 1992, p.3f.
15. See Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther: Man between God and the Devil,* Yale University Press, 1989, p.300.
16. Euan Cameron, *The European Reformation,* Clarendon Press, 1991, p.189.
17. To a friend he wrote of other theologians, 'They merely deliver humdrum sermons; I am writing immortal works. Their uneducated nonsense finds an audience in perhaps a couple of churches; my books will be read all over the world, in the Latin west and in the Greek east and by every nation. Say that there is everywhere a huge supply of such uneducated divines as these, while such a one as I am is scarcely to be found in many generations'. Quoted by Cornelis Augustijn, op. cit., p.36.
18. Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations,* Blackwell, 1996, p.206.
19. Augustijn, op. cit., p.141.
20. Lindberg, op. cit., p. 62
21. Lindberg, loc. cit.
22. Edward Donnelly, *Luther: Man for our Day,* Evangelical Fellowship of Ireland, 1983, p.6.
23. Philip Schaff, op. cit., p.402.
24. Ibid., p.403. The Church's indebtedness to Erasmus becomes evident when in addiction to his own works, which were considerable, it is noted that he prepared an edition of Jerome's works in nine large volumes (his favourite Church Father), and editions of Cyprian, Arnobius, Hilary, Ambrose, Augustine (ten volumes), Chrysostom, Irenaeus and Origen. In an age where manuscripts were hard to find and collate this represents a monumental task. An outstanding classical, biblical and patristic scholar, Erasmus was appointed Lady Margaret Professor of Greek and Theology at Cambridge.

BOOK REVIEWS

Fighting the Good Fight: A brief history of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. D.G. Hart and John Meuther, O.P.C., 217 pp. Pbk. $11.95.

This book has been written to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of North America. It has however been written for another purpose. The authors are concerned that members of the church should know something of the origins of their denomination. They recognize as members of any denomination should, that there is a 'close connection between the church's past and the church's identity'.

The book deals not only with the origins of the church but brings us right up to the present with a consideration of its current missionary programme and an honest assessment of the tensions existing within its membership, particularly in the area of worship.

The early history of the OPC is dominated by the figure of JG Machen. Indeed the title for this book is taken from 1 Timothy 6 verse 12, the text on which Machen preached his final sermon at Princeton Theological Seminary in March 1929.

The church had its beginning in the heat of a battle, the lines for which had been drawn in 1923 with the publication of the 'Auburn Affirmation'. This document claimed to protect the 'unity and liberty' of the Presbyterian Church. The declaration in fact was a blatant act of intolerance against those who held to the authority of Scripture. The right of the church to establish certain fundamental truths as tests of theological orthodoxy was denied. Affirmationists soon gained control of Princeton Seminary and Machen was convinced that conservatives would have to start thinking about a new church. The issue which eventually led to the formation of that church was mission and what it means in the twentieth century.

The Presbyterian Church, in which Machen was still a minister, rejected the traditional missionary approach of preaching the Gospel and establishing an indigenous church. This was regarded as cultural imperialism and an unwarranted intrusion into the religious traditions of native peoples. When all attempts to recall the church to a proper biblical view of mission failed, Machen and his supporters organized the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Mission, to promote 'truly biblical and Presbyterian mission work'. The authors are fair in pointing out the anomaly of Presbyterians establishing a para-church

organization for the work of mission. Yet they show that not only was this action essential, it was also 'in accordance with the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church'.

Machen's action was however rejected by the General Assembly in 1934 and he with the rest of the Board were brought to trial in 1935. This is a sordid example of church politics in which Machen and his colleagues were denied the right of presenting their own defence. In 1936 the General Assembly upheld every verdict against the members of the Independent Board and ten days after the close of the Assembly the new denomination was formed in Philadelphia. It took the name, Presbyterian Church of America. Even then the Presbyterian Church's animosity continued and the new church was taken to court and forced to change its name. Since 1937 the denomination has been known as the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. It originally consisted of 34 ministers and 17 elders.

The book goes on to deal with the struggles of the infant church and the early split which occurred on doctrinal and practical issues notably dispensationalism and total abstinence from alcohol.

Several chapters are devoted to overseas mission which has always had a prominent place in the life of the OPC. Interesting and stirring accounts are given of the ministry of Bruce Hunt in Korea and of the work in Eritrea. The growth of several local congregations is outlined and the debate on evangelistic methods is covered. The authors reach a conclusion familiar to Reformed churches around the world. 'The tension between market oriented evangelism and Reformed evangelism is one that OP congregations will continue to experience'.

What progress has the OPC made since its formation sixty years ago? It has maintained its doctrinal commitment to the Reformed faith and its missionary vision. The authors are however disappointed at the rate of growth at home. 'As a whole' they say, 'the OPC has not grown as a denomination into the size that its founders had hoped and prayed for. From its founding size of about four thousand members, it has only gradually grown to its present number of nearly twenty thousand'. Many of her sister denominations would be overjoyed to report a five-fold increase in membership over the past sixty years. This comment surely stimulates us to examine our own expectation for the growth of that branch of the church to which we belong.

The book is simply but attractively produced although the cover photograph

of a group of participants in the eleventh General Assembly is not particularly inspiring!

The book is well written in an easily read and flowing style. There are valuable lessons here for every Reformed church and many of the issues continue to affect us. We are told how the church has struggled to keep a balance between preaching and diaconal ministry on the mission field. We are reminded that true worship is essential to the well-being of the church. And the book concludes on a note of great certainty.

'American evangelicals' say the authors, 'are prone to judge the success of the church in terms of its influence in the world, but....the church locates its hope in a kingdom that is not of this world, a kingdom that cannot be shaken.'

Knox Hyndman

Divine Meaning. Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics, by T. F. Torrance. T & T Clark, 1995, Hb, 439pp, £24.95.

It seems that as far as many Reformed people are concerned, proper theology began with the sixteenth century Reformers and the preceding centuries were characterised by darkness and error. At the very least this approach suggests that for fourteen centuries after the close of the New Testament canon the Holy Spirit was doing very little in the Church. It was in these years, however, that many of the great issues of Christology and of the doctrine of the Trinity were debated and biblical orthodoxy spelled out. Those who look to Calvin would do well to remember his impressive knowledge of the Fathers which he used to such good polemical effect.

Although the name of T F Torrance is most readily thought of in relation to such debates as the connection between science and theology, his earliest work was in the area of Patristics and he has made significant contributions to the study of the Fathers in, for example, *The Trinitarian Faith* (1988). The work under review is a weighty study of the Fathers' use of Scripture, in particular their formulation of the fundamentals of the gospel.

It is thus not an introduction to the subject such as might be found in basic histories of biblical interpretation, but is in many respects a survey of a

significant aspect of patristic theology, of as much interest to the theologian as the exegete. Those committed to a high view of Scripture such as that set out in the Reformed Confessions will baulk at Torrance's own view of Scripture set out in the Introduction. In terms strongly reminiscent of Karl Barth, Torrance speaks of Scripture coming to us 'in the limitation and imperfection, the ambiguities and contradictions of our fallen ways of thought and speech' (p8), a use of the idea of 'accommodation' which would have received short shrift from Calvin. The Barthian tone continues as Torrance speaks of Scripture addressing us and conveying the Word of God to us, and he is quite happy to say of the Bible, 'Considered in itself it is imperfect and inadequate and its text may be faulty and errant' (p10). Such unacceptable views, however, do not prevent *Divine Meaning* from being a highly useful and interesting study of the early stages of Christian theology.

It must be kept in mind that the book is made up of a number of previously-published papers on a range of patristic themes, dating back to 1965, together with several chapters containing material published for the first time. As a result the book does not provide full coverage of the hermeneutical approaches characteristic of the period. There is no treatment, for example, of the methods of biblical interpretation developed in Antioch in opposition to the allegorising tendencies of Alexandria. Instead Torrance provides a general picture of the thought-world in which those scholars were working, together with studies of various significant figures such as Irenaeus, Clement and, at considerable length in keeping with his importance, Athanasius. Readers seeking general coverage of the period will have to look elsewhere.

In the areas which are addressed, however, Torrance provides a rich and fascinating description of early Christian theologising, particularly with regard to the use of Scripture and the fundamentals of the gospel. The writers of the patristic period confronted a society in which many rival world-views were competing for allegiance and out of which new combinations of ideas were constantly arising. In chapter 1 Torrance sets out in a most helpful way the main streams of thought which impinged on biblical interpretation. Thus, for example, he explains the Jewish use of Haggadah, Halakah and allegory, and then focuses on the Hellenic strands of thought developed in response to the philosophy of Plato.

It was the legacy of Plato, rather than of Aristotle, with which the exegetes of the Church had to reckon, some more successfully than others. At the heart of the Platonic worldview was a distinction between sense and thought, between an intelligible (unchanging) world and the (changing) world of the senses.

Three developments of this basic outlook were of relevance to the rise of hermeneutics in the early Church: Stoic allegorical thought; Jewish allegorical exegesis, developed in Alexandria especially by Philo; various Gnostic schemes which widened the gulf between the world of the senses and the intelligible world into a radical dualism.

The Fathers thus faced the challenge of interpreting the Scriptures and presenting the gospel in a culture characterised by deeply rooted pluralism, a situation which has many analogies with our contemporary postmodern situation. Some succeeded in preserving the integrity of the gospel whilst others, like Clement of Alexandria, allowed elements of the prevailing philosophies to shape their approach to Scripture in harmful ways.

Torrance's grasp of the original sources is impressive and a substantial part of the book provides detailed considerations of the theologians in question. He has, of course, his own concerns, especially in the later chapters which focus on issues related to science, and at times the Fathers sound remarkably modern. That said, however, *Divine Meaning* provides a stimulating, though demanding, study of issues which have considerable contemporary relevance. Important reading for those with a serious interest in patristic theology.

W.D.J. McKay

Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism (The Battle for Gospel Preaching), Iain H. Murray, Banner of Truth Trust 1995, Pb., 159pp., £2.95.

This book is more substantial in content than its size would suggest. As usual with his historical writings, Iain Murray gives the fruit of very extensive research in a clear and readable style which conceals the vast amount of work behind the final product.

The first part of the book is an introduction to Spurgeon which gives an excellent summary of the place of the Word of God in both Spurgeon's private life and his public ministry. If we learned these lessons alone, the book would be of immense benefit. It also explains Spurgeon's attitude to Hyper-Calvinism.

The core of the book looks at the controversy itself. Few will be aware of the extent of this controversy and the frequency with which Spurgeon combated

Hyper-Calvinism in his sermons. The Hyper-Calvinists denied 'duty-faith', i.e. that it is the duty of all who hear the Gospel to believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ and that they are to be called upon to do so. They denied that the Gospel contains either a command or an invitation to believe addressed to all indiscriminately.

We read of C.W. Banks (1806-1886), editor of the 'Earthen Vessel' magazine and a Hyper-Calvinist who retained a charitable disposition towards Spurgeon and of another Hyper-Calvinist James Wells (1803-1872) who did not. Wells was a renowned preacher in London and one of Spurgeon's chief opponents. Banks' magazine was very much the battle ground for the controversy though it spilled over into several other magazines, with Spurgeon taking no direct part; his ministry, however, was evidently largely the cause and material of the debate.

Later in the book, Murray traces the departure of many of the 'Particular' and 'Strict and Particular' baptists from the 1689 Baptist Confession into Hyper-Calvinism to the influence of men like John Gill (1697-1771) and William Huntingdon (1745-1813), though the latter was not a baptist. For the uninitiated, there is a useful diagram of English Baptist history by Robert Oliver at the back of the book. Spurgeon retained an affection for the Hyper-Calvinists to the end of his life when doctrinal indifference had become fashionable, but saw their errors as disastrous to the cause of the Gospel and ruinous to men's souls, being also often linked with the deadly error of Antinomianism.

The fifth chapter gives us Spurgeon's response to Hyper-Calvinism in four parts. Firstly, Gospel invitations are universal. 'Gospel preaching for Hyper-Calvinists means a declaration of the facts of the gospel but nothing should be said by way of encouraging individuals to believe that the promises of Christ are made to them particularly until there is evidence that the Spirit of God has begun a saving work in their hearts, convicting them and making them "sensible" of their need' (p.69). Spurgeon utterly rejected this. He did not argue on the grounds of logic but from the testimony of Scripture and his sermon on Acts 3:19 is quoted. This reliance solely on the Word of God is a notable feature of Spurgeon throughout this controversy.

The second line of defence is the 'warrant of faith', which Spurgeon saw to be in the objective commands and invitations of the Gospel, not in whether one can regard oneself as a 'sensible sinner' (i.e. adequately convinced of his sin and need of Christ). 'The message is not, "Wait for feelings", it is, "Believe and live". I find Jesus Christ says nothing to sinners about waiting, but very much

about coming' (p.73). Spurgeon saw clearly that to tell a sinner to look inwardly for the warrant of faith is to direct him away from Christ and into a wild goose-chase of trying to work out whether he is convinced of sin enough and shrewdly observes that the convinced sinner does not necessarily see himself as convinced. A later chapter (pp.140ff) is given to an extract from John Brown (c. 1610-1679) on the 'Warrant of Faith' clearly bringing out the old Puritan distinction between the 'way of faith' (i.e. how God uses conviction of sin in bringing sinners to faith in Christ) and the 'warrant of faith' (which is in the commands and invitations of the Gospel addressed to sinners as such). There is also a discussion of limited atonement and the free offer (p.73ff).

The third argument is on 'human responsibility'. Here Spurgeon has the humility to recognise that human reason is not only limited but fallen (p.82) and that any difficulty we may have in seeing the relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility does not mean that they are not entirely compatible in the mind of God. This is salutary in a day when, in some Reformed circles, human reason is being exalted to the point of claiming virtual omniscience. Spurgeon saw the preeminence given to fallible human reason over the text of Holy Scripture as a great evil. The contortions some of his opponents engaged in to prove that texts do not mean what they obviously do mean speaks for itself. The human mind is to be employed in receiving the testimony of Scripture, but is not legislative. Spurgeon's grasp of the subject is reflected in phrases such as, 'If God be infinitely good and powerful, why does not his power carry out to the full all his beneficence?' (p.152).

This leads us to the fourth line of argument which is on 'the love of God'. Here again, Spurgeon relies on the testimony of Scripture to show that God does show love to the non-elect in this world using, for example, Rom. 10:20-21 and the reference to God stretching forth his hands (p. 89). He saw the denial of this love shown to all who hear the Gospel (and in the invitations of that Gospel) as misrepresenting the character of God before men. He correctly understood that to deny it is to remove an important divine inducement which God uses in bringing the elect to repentance (p.92). This is highly relevant today when apart from old-style Hyper-Calvinism, another position is being advocated, i.e., that there is a command to all men to repent but no Gospel offer reflecting divine loving-kindness towards all who hear. Spurgeon understood that part of the means whereby sinners are brought to repentance is the truth of God's lovingkindness as expressed in his declared willingness to receive them. Otherwise, since men cannot know their election prior to conversion, sinners would be confronted with a bare command to turn towards a God who, for all they knew, may bear them only hatred. On this theme, there are a few searching

pages (pp.93-97) on the need of a preacher to be so in communion with Christ and to have the love of men's souls in his own heart that he can preach in a way that reflects the love of God.

One criticism is that the author gives a chapter to Spurgeon on 1 Tim. 2:3f, calling it a 'crucial text' (pp.149-154). This reviewer finds difficulty with Spurgeon's handling of this text in view of the fact that verse 2 suggests that the meaning of 'all men' in verse 4 does mean 'all kinds of men' (which Spurgeon denies) and all the more so since verse 6 speaks of Christ giving himself a 'ransom for all'. It is a pity that such prominence is given to Spurgeon's view of this text when there are so many much more solid arguments from him.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that overall Spurgeon was correct in seeing himself as defending authentic, biblical, five-point Calvinism against the deviations of both Arminianism and Hyper-Calvinism. His position is that of the bulk of the Reformers and Puritans and there are choice quotations to this effect, especially from Calvin and Owen (pp.72, 90-91, 94, 119 etc.).

Many of the passages from Spurgeon's free-offer preaching indicate something of his God-given eloquence and should, even in written form, thrill our souls. Let us conclude with Spurgeon, 'If I preach as he would have me preach, he will certainly own his Word; he will never leave it without his own living witness. But let me imagine that I can improve the Gospel, that I can make it consistent, that I can dress it up and make it look finer, I shall find my Master is departed, and that Ichabod is written on the walls of the sanctuary. How many are kept in bondage through neglect of Gospel invitations.' (p.157).

This book should be read by all ministers and all who love the prosperity of Zion and long for the advance of that Gospel 'made known to all nations for the obedience of faith'. (Rom. 16:26).

David Silversides

The Incarnation of the Antithesis, by R.E.L. Rodgers, Pentland Press Ltd., (5, Hutton Close, South Church, Durham.), 1992, Pb., 89pp., £7.50.

There is little doubt that any list of the theological 'greats' of the nineteenth century would inevitably include the name of Abraham Kuyper. If similar lists were to be drawn up of the great European political figures or influential

educators of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, again the name of Abraham Kuyper would figure prominently. Although not as well known in the English speaking world as he deserves to be, his thinking has been influential in many areas of theological thought, not least, in that of education. It is this particular aspect of Kuyperian thought that Dr. Rodgers deals with in this slim volume.

After setting the scene with a brief introduction to the philosophical and theological Liberalism then prevalent in Holland, especially in the field of education, in the wake of the French Revolution, German rationalism and Darwinian evolutionary thought, Dr. Rodgers then gives an eight page biographical sketch of Kuyper that gives a broad overview of his life and ministry. Brief though this introduction is, it does, nevertheless, give an adequate picture of a complex, multi-talented man who saw the need to apply the sovereignty of God in every area of life. The glimpses Rodgers gives into Kuyper's life leaves one wanting to explore more deeply! Chapter two is the heart of the book in which the author sets out, largely in Kuyper's own words, the basis of Kuyper's Educational Philosophy under the three main subject areas of Calvinism, Common Grace and Sphere Sovereignty. In describing Kuyper's Calvinism Rogers identifies his recognition of Calvinism as a Life-System that influenced Religion, Politics, Science, Art and the Future as being the fundamental motivation for all that he would seek to do: 'He believed that truth must be taught in its myraid manifestations, in science, art, literature, education and politics. It must appear, he believed, in every field of humam endeavour' (p.11). The basis for the teaching of this truth was not some abstruse theological dogma but the revelation of God in the Bible, 'Kuyper held firmly to the proposition, *"Principium Theologiae est Sacra Scriptura"*, (the sacred Scripture is the principium of Theology). He went further. He taught that the Bible deals not only with such themes as Justification by Faith and the path to Eternity, but that it also 'reveals the foundations of all human life' (p.12). It was the application of this belief that formed the bed-rock of Kuyperian educational philosophy. Whilst the emphasis given to the doctrine of common grace in Kuyper's theological thought is undoubtedly as significant as Rodgers suggests, it would have been helpful if a more detailed and specific treatment could have been given regarding the importance of the doctrine in relation to education in the writings of Kuyper himself rather than in the many other sources so well used by the author. The discussion and analysis of the distinctly Kuyperian doctrine of Sphere Sovereignty is masterly and sets out with great clarity the leading principles of the doctrine and the impact that they make in various areas, especially that of education and the contrasting responsibilities of parents, the State and the

Church. Chapters three and four deal with Kuyper's involvement in education, practically and legislatively, and the role he had in the founding of the Free University of Amsterdam. A great deal of the energy and depth of commitment to firmly held principles comes across in the way that the author traces Kuyper's struggles to see biblical principles of education being applied right through to third level; 'All his life he had been a promoter of education and now he could be credited with having been instrumental in bringing in a school system from the elementary to university level' (p.55). An interesting final chapter looks at the influence exercised by Kuyper both in his home land and in other lands through the ministry of such men as Herman Bavinck, Herman Dooyeweerd and Cornelius Van Til.

This is an excellent introduction to the theological thought, applied in the field of education, of one of the major Reformed thinkers of the last century and a half. It is not, and does not claim to be, a comprehensive study either of Kuyper's theology nor of his educational practice, but it is an exceedingly useful beginning. It is recommended reading for anybody wanting an introduction to the theology of this great Dutch theologian and for those who struggle with the antithesis that exists between current educational theory and the sovereignty of God.

T.C. Donachie

Puritan Profiles, William Barker, Christian Focus Publications, 1996, 320pp., £14.99.

This book by the Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Professor of Church History at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia contains brief historical sketches of 54 influential Puritans at the time when the Westminster Confession of Faith was written. In eleven chapters they are grouped in the following categories: Officers of the Assembly; Episcopalians; Independents; Scots; Noted Preachers; Notable Scholars; London Clergy; New Englanders and Other Famous Contemporary Puritans.

There is a useful 'time-line' and helpful introduction. Barker stresses the significance and tremendous influence of the Westminster documents. He quotes John Leith who wrote that 'the Confession was not only the conclusion of one hundred and twenty-five years of Protestant theology; it was also in a real sense, along with other seventeenth-century statements of the faith, the conclusion of sixteen centuries of theological work'. The Westminster Confession

with some modifications was adopted as the Savoy Declaration of the English Congregational churches, by the London Baptists in 1677 and in America by Congregationalists in 1648 and by Baptists in 1742.

Barker reminds us that although the members of the Assembly, which met from July 1, 1643 to February 22, 1649, were all Calvinists, there were differing emphases and different views of church government and this gave rise to considerable debate, as did the issue of Erastianism which held that the civil government had the right 'to exercise jurisdiction over all matters, whether civil or ecclesiastical, and to punish all offences, even the church's excommunication being subject to civil approval' (p.12) - a view rejected by the Assembly which, like John Calvin, insisted that the church had 'the prerogative... in administering the keys bestowed by Christ, to determine who could come to the Lord's Supper and enjoy the fellowship of the church and who could be excluded for reasons of scandal or heresy' (p.13).

The Westminster Assembly of Divines consisted of one humdred and twenty-one English Puritan ministers, six Scottish commissioners and thirty 'laymen', ten from the House of Lords and twenty from the House of Commons. To make a selection of 54 of the most influential members of this Assembly is no mean task, and our author has succeeded admirably. Glancing at the contents page one sees such names as James Ussher, Thomas Goodwin, Alexander Henderson, Samuel Rutherford, Robert Baillie, George Gillsepie, Joseph Caryl, Richard Baxter, John Bunyan - not all members of the Assembly, but all either influencing it from without, as in the case of Archbishop Ussher, or influenced by it, like John Bunyan.

Ussher was invited to attend the Assembly, 'a remarkable action since Ussher... had not only declined his original appointment to the Assembly in June 1643, but he had boldly preached against the legality of the Assembly because it lacked the King's approval' (p.44). However the Irish Articles drafted by the Archbishop of Armagh for the Anglican Church in Ireland served as a model for much of the Westminster Confession and there are many echoes of those articles in the Confession.

The famous contemporary Puritans listed in addition to Richard Baxter are John Owen, John Milton and John Bunyan. One of the noted preachers listed is Joseph Caryl, famous for his commentary of the book of Job. 'It first appeared in twelve volumes, quarto sized, published between 1644 and 1666. Then it was published in 1676-1677 in two large folio volumes' (p.129). Barker

informs us that Caryl 'taught through the book of Job for the better part of three decades...' - no wonder his work was so rich and so profound.

Not only does this book put the Westminster Assembly and its work in historical perspective, but also it shows the variety of personalities involved, men from different walks of life, with different backgrounds, ages and temperaments. 'In the providence of God an amazing and fascinating group of men, supported no doubt by some amazing and fascinating women of whom we get only glimses, were brought together to produce materials that have been of great usefulness to the church of Jesus Christ, documents that are far better known than the individuals who produced them' (p.16). The value of this book is that it introduces us to the leaders of that distinguished body of godly and talented men and does so by way of concise historical sketches and cameos. Shaded insets provide additional biographical, historical and theological information. One of these is entitled "'Resolutioners" and "Protesters'" (p.104). There was a division of opinion among the Scottish Commissioners following the defeat of the Scottish army by Oliver Cromwell at Dunbar. There were those who supported the raising of an army behind Charles II and they were known as 'Resolutioners'. Others, including Samuel Rutherford, supported a Remonstrance which objected to the admission of Charles II to the Covenants and they were known as 'Protesters'. The Resolutioners regarded the Protesters as treasonable and the Protesters regarded the Resolutioners as naive in admitting Charles to the Covenants and they feared a return to Episcopacy. In the long run the Protesters were proved right when the Act Recissory of Charles (1661) undid all acts of the Long Parliament including the work of the Westminster Assembly.

Barker notes that there is a certain irony about the influence of the Westminster Assembly. 'Half a dozen Scottish delegates come south to London for more that four years to get a group averaging from sixty to eighty (the average attendance F.S.L.) Englishmen to produce a Confession of Faith, two catechisms, a Directory for Worship and a Form of Government which became standard for the Kirk of Scotland, and for Presbyterianism wherever English-speaking Christians take them round the world, but which have only a very momentary influence in England itself. It is perhaps not so unusual that our God would work in such a way "that no flesh should glory". Of the fifty-four lives profiled in this book it is the English Presbyterians described in chapters 2, 7, 8 and 9 that are probably least well-known and yet did most of the work to produce the Westminster Standards that have had such a profound effect elsewhere' (p.318).

This book is well written, well produced and well worth having. It is the author's hope 'that an acquaintance with the individuals will stimulate an even greater knowledge of the documents they produced and of the Scriptures and the great Author to which they point'. 'In giving thanks for them', he writes, 'may we glorify and enjoy their God and ours'. To that we say a hearty Amen!

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