



NOVEMBER 2000

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL



REFORMED THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE
FOUNDED 1854

Theological Seminary of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland
98 Lisburn Road, Belfast, Northern Ireland BT9 6AG

Vol. 16

NOVEMBER 2000

© Reformed Theological Journal

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

Edited for the Faculty of the

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

REV. PROFESSOR EDWARD DONNELLY, B.A., M.Th.

REV. PROFESSOR FREDERICK S. LEAHY, M.Th.

REV. PROFESSOR R.L.W. McCOLLUM, B.Agr., M.Th.

REV. PROFESSOR W.D.J. McKAY, B.A., B.D., M.Th., Ph.D.

REV. PROFESSOR W.N.S. WILSON, M.A., M.Th.

REV. C. KNOX HYNDMAN, B.A.

REV. DR. H.J. BLAIR, PROFESSOR EMERITUS

REV. DR. A. LOUGHRIDGE, PRINCIPAL EMERITUS

VERA CROMIE, *Librarian*

by

EDWARD DONNELLY

C. KNOX HYNDMAN

FREDERICK S. LEAHY

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Editorial Address:

MSS., Books for Review, Correspondence and Subscriptions should be addressed to: Reformed Theological Journal, 98 Lisburn Road, Belfast, Northern Ireland BT9 6AG.

Subscriptions:

£4.50 plus postage U.K. 65 pence. U.S. \$10.50 post paid. \$Can. 13.50 \$A 13.50. In common with most periodicals, subscriptions run until cancelled.

The Reformed Theological Journal is on microfilm at Widener Library, Harvard Divinity School U.S.A. and is available for purposes of research.

ISSN 0268 - 4772

www.RPC.ORG

E-mail: RTJ@RPC.ORG

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THE JESUS OF HISTORY

Some two thousand years ago the eternal Christ came to this earth in a new way. As 'the Angel of the LORD' he had previously appeared to men and women, like Abraham, Hagar or Gideon. At Bethlehem, however, the second Person of the Trinity became incarnate. 'The Word was made flesh'. Jesus of Nazareth was not a human being. He was and is the God-man — 'the man Christ Jesus'. He took our human nature to himself, but he never ceased to be God. Always he is a divine Person. The mystery of the Person of Christ matches that of the Holy Trinity. The precision of the Westminster Shorter Catechism in stating this doctrine cannot be surpassed: 'the eternal Son of God became man, and so was, and continueth to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person for ever'. As stated in the letter to the Colossians, '... in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily', that is, in bodily form.

In the wake of the antisupernaturalism of the Enlightenment of the early eighteenth century, a radical shift appeared in Christology. Theological modernism took hold largely within Protestantism, and the quest for the historical Jesus began. Men like David Friedrich Strauss saw the Gospels as largely mythical. In his view, it was the ideas of Christ that mattered, not his person. So Jesus himself was no longer essential to Christianity. Bruno Bauer went even further and denied that Jesus ever lived!

Generally speaking, theologians of liberal bent were endeavouring to find a convincing alternative to the orthodox doctrine of the Person and work of Christ. B.B. Warfield's comment is pertinent: 'Great difficulty has been experienced ... in the attempt to construct a historical sieve which will strain out miracles, and yet let Jesus through; for Jesus Himself is the greatest miracle of them all'. In more recent times, as a result of the influence of Karl Barth, it became common to speak somewhat vaguely about 'the Christ-event', and the continuing trend in liberal circles is to attempt to reconcile the history of the Gospels, and the gospel witness, with prevailing philosophical and cultural moods. At best we are offered a Christ who points the way to salvation, whereas he is the way itself. For all who accept the bible as divinely inscripturated revelation, Jesus is 'God over all blessed for ever'.

F.S.L.

SAMUEL RUTHERFORD - COVENANTER EXTRAORDINARY PREACHER, PASTOR AND POLITICAL THEORIST

by Robert L.W. McCollum

Robert McCollum is minister of Lisburn Reformed Presbyterian Church, Co Antrim, and Professor of Pastoral Theology, Homiletics and Covenanting History in the Reformed Theological College, Belfast.

A visit to the old Cathedral graveyard at St Andrews reminds the visitor of previous generations who are long since forgotten. His eye may nevertheless light on the following lines on the tombstone of one seventeenth century Covenanter minister, Samuel Rutherford, who continues to be a familiar name to many.

What tongue, what pen, or skill of men,
Can famous Rutherford commend!
His learning justly raised his fame
True godliness adorned his name
He did converse with things above,
Acquainted with Immanuel's love.

Samuel Rutherford was born 400 years ago in 1600, of respectable parents, his father being a farmer, in the village of Nisbet in the parish of Crailing in Roxburghshire. As a three year old boy he had a near encounter with death when he fell down the village well. His playmates ran to raise the alarm and when help arrived young Samuel was sitting on a hillock cold and dripping. He informed his would be rescuers. 'A bonnie white man came and drew me out of the well'. Andrew Bonar makes the comment:

Whether or not he really fancied that an angel had delivered him, we cannot tell, but it is plain that, at all events, his boyish thoughts were already wandering in the region of the sky.'

Rutherford — Student

After being educated in the border town of Jedburgh he went to Edinburgh in 1617 to study at what is now the university. Graduating in 1621 with a

Master of Arts degree he was made regent of humanity (professor of Latin language and literature) in 1623. The young scholar may have relished the prospect of spending all his life in the sheltered confines of the university but such was not to be. According to an entry in the records of the burgh of Edinburgh for 3 February 1626 it had been 'declared by the principal of the college, (John Adamson), that Mr Samuel Rutherford, regent of humanitie, has fallen in fornication with Euphame Hamiltown, and has committit ane grit scandle in the college.'² This led Rutherford to resign his office and to devote his energies to private study. Most of Rutherford's biographers have sought to defend Rutherford suggesting that his real offence was simply 'marrying without academic or episcopal authority'.³ However the weight of the evidence presented by John Coffey in his recent research would indicate that Rutherford was in fact guilty.⁴ It also appears that the Lord used this turbulent period in Rutherford's life to lead to his conversion. Although few details of his conversion are known, yet in one of his letters he speaks of 'loitering on the road too long' and in another he refers to 'the wasted years before he discovered the loveliness of Christ.' And thereafter we find Rutherford pleading with people to come to Christ early in life. In a letter to Jean Brown he has a word of advice for her son Patrick:

I desire Patrick to give Christ his young love, even the flower of it; and to put it by all others. It is good to start soon to the way; he should therefore have a great advantage in the evil day.⁵

Rutherford — Preacher

Rutherford was not to remain in quiet solitude for long. In 1627 he was ordained to the Christian ministry and installed in Anwoth, a rural parish in Kirkcudbright in Galloway. This was at a time in the history of the Church of Scotland when episcopacy was becoming increasingly dominant. James II detested Presbyterianism viewing it as a threat to his royal supremacy. He reasoned that if hierarchical government was dispensed with in the church it would not be long until they dispensed with it in the state. And so he coined the phrase, 'nay bishop, nay king.' Although he died in 1625 his son Charles I inherited his prejudices and in Archbishop Laud he had a very willing enforcer of his policy. By 1627 the door was closing on presbyterial ordination but Rutherford was installed in Anwoth just before the door was firmly barred.

His preaching in Anwoth soon began to attract attention. Though he did not possess an attractive voice, it being rather shrill, yet he has been described as

'one of the most moving and affectionate preachers in his time, or perhaps in any age of the church'⁶

Aspects of his preaching, which deserve mention, are his beautiful way with words, his graphic use of metaphor and above all his constant focus upon Christ. An English merchant travelling in Scotland made the following observation.

I came to Irvine, and heard a well favoured, proper old man with a long beard, (David Dickson), and that man showed me all my heart. Then I went to St. Andrews, where I heard a sweet majestic looking man (Robert Blair) and he showed me the majesty of God. After him I heard a little, fair man (Rutherford) and he showed me the loveliness of Christ.⁷

A more recent evaluation of Rutherford's intellectual and verbal agility is no less enthusiastic.

His poetic gifts had a full and free expression in the pulpit. He had no restraint when showing sinners the loveliness of Christ. His heart burnt fiercely, his imagination soared to great heights, but through it all he spoke to men in a simple, quaint and telling manner, and such preaching was highly effective for spiritual awakening and spiritual refreshment.⁸

A glance at some of Rutherford's sermons illustrates how the doctrines of grace were preached in compelling and imaginative language. For example, on the workings of grace in the life of a sinner, we get a feel for his style.

The omnipotence of grace working powerfully overawes the soul leading the thoughts and reason captive. And Christ works so strongly on the reasoning faculty, ravishing the understanding ... that all the witty reasonings are mastered, the mind is silenced and strongly drawn to apprehend Christ's beauty. So that, without a choice, the mind cannot but convincingly see that there is none so desirable, none so fair and lovely as Christ. The mind is brought to a spiritual drunkenness, a sweet fury of heaven propension, and to conclude 'I cannot pass such a love as Christ.'⁹

In another sermon we see how clearly Rutherford understood the relationship between 'word' and 'Spirit' as the God appointed means of grace.

Preaching, indeed is God's mean(s) that He has appointed for that end, and the way that He ordains for bringing souls to Him. But when all is done, it is not the only mean(s) of bringing us to Him. The special thing is that which is spoken by our Saviour Himself (Jn 3:8) that wind that bloweth where it listeth, and no man knoweth whence it cometh or whither it goeth. We may preach unto you until our head rive (be rent) and our breasts burst; aye, we may preach unto you until doom's day, and yet that will not do the turn unless the upward calling of the Spirit be joined therewith. For an outward ear is one thing and Christ's loosing all knots and removing all impediments another thing.¹⁰

When it came to appealing to the sinner to forsake his sin and flee to Christ, Rutherford was a master. With reference to Ezekeiel 18:33 he makes the point about God, 'He rejoices in the homecoming of a sinner'. And then he presses home the application.

...come home to Him and seek His face, repent of your ill-ways, and so make the Lord dance and sing that He has gotten home one who was sinning away from Him. Come home to the Lord and repent of sin that there may be a Psalm over thy repentance in heaven.¹¹

Such preaching was not without its impact. This Covenanter preacher, who would rise at three in the morning to pray and study and meditate on God and his Word, may have laboured in a remote isolated country parish, yet crowds flocked to hear him from neighbouring parishes and towns throughout the south-west of Scotland. Many were soundly converted to Christ. This explains why this region of Scotland remained so loyal to the Crown Rights of the Redeemer in face of intense persecution a generation later.

Rutherford - Pastor

Rutherford's preaching was matched by his pastoral care of his congregation. The man who was a master in the pulpit was also a skilled pastor in the home. The one who, in the early years of his ministry, laid his young wife and two of his children in the grave was able to comfort those in any trouble with the comfort he himself had received from God (2 Cor. 1:4). The depth and feeling of his pastoral care becomes evident in his letters which will be considered later. Such was the thoroughness with which Rutherford approached his pastoral labours that he was considered a marvel to his contemporaries. A neighbouring minister, James Urquhart of Kinloss, said of him:

For such a piece of clay as Mr Rutherford I never knew one in Scotland like him. He seemed to be always praying, always preaching always visiting the sick, always teaching in the schools, always writing treatises, always reading and studying.¹²

Rutherford - Author

When Urquhart said that Rutherford was always writing he touched on what would be Rutherford's legacy to subsequent generations of Christians. The minister in Anwoth had 16 books published in his lifetime with several others being published posthumously. The most famous of his books are *Lex Rex* (The Law is King) and his *Letters* both of which have gone through numerous editions and are still in print.

It was his first publication which brought him to the attention of the authorities. In 1636 he wrote a book which bore the Latin title 'Exercitationes pro Divina Gratia'. This was a scholarly attack against the Arminians. The Episcopal party in general held Arminian views and so they seized upon this opportunity to silence Rutherford. He was called before the Court of High Commission in Wigtown by Bishop Thomas Sydserff because of his nonconformity to the acts of Episcopacy, and because of this book against Arminians. Rutherford was found guilty, deposed from his ministerial office and banished to Aberdeen. After nine years of industrious pastoral labour this devoted pastor was separated from his flock for 18 months.

Rutherford — Correspondent

Although Rutherford sorely felt this painful separation yet he was enabled to triumph in the midst of adversity. He mournfully said concerning his enforced silence, 'I had but one eye and they have put it out'¹³ In another letter he put it this way. '... next to Christ I had but one joy, the apple of the eye of my delights, to preach Christ my Lord; and they have violently plucked that away from me'.¹⁴

The Episcopal party may have separated this pastor from his parish but it could not separate him from Christ. In a letter to the minister of a neighbouring parish, Rev William Dalgleish, he wrote:

My Lord Jesus is kinder to me than ever he was. It pleaseth Him to dine and sup with His afflicted prisoner. A king feasteth with me and His spikenard casteth a sweet smell. ... I dare not say but my Lord Jesus both fully recompensed my sadness with His joys, my losses with His own presence. I find it a sweet and rich thing to exchange my sorrows with Christ's joys, my afflictions with that sweet peace I have with Himself.¹⁵

Such was his sense of Christ's presence in his banishment that he described himself to be in Christ's palace and from this setting a new work opened up for him. If his lips were closed his pen was busy. Of the 365 letters which were subsequently published 220 were written from Aberdeen. His correspondents were chiefly persons from Galloway where Anwoth was situated and Ayrshire, the two counties which had been most affected by his ministry. He wrote to all classes of people, to Lairds and their Ladies, to ministers of the gospel, to friends and Christians in humble circumstances.

These letters, for which Rutherford continues to be famous, have been considered by some to be second only to the Bible in spiritual usefulness. They are intensely pastoral in content and emerged from the pen of a man who was well acquainted with grief. About his letters a modern scholar writes, 'They are ... deeply personal, full of pastoral advice to women suffering from depression, bereavement and lack of spiritual assurance.'¹⁶

An example of this pastoral care is found in the counsel he gave Lady Kenure (Jane Campbell) on the death of her daughter. Rutherford comforted this Christian lady with the thought that:

She is not sent away, but only sent before, like unto a star, which going out of our sight doth not die and vanish, but shineth in another hemisphere.¹⁷

To this same lady, who experienced many sorrows, Rutherford wrote in another letter:

The thorn is one of the most cursed, and angry, and crabbed weeds that the earth yieldeth, and yet out of it springeth the rose, one of the sweetest-smelled flowers, and most delightful to the eye, that the earth hath. Your Lord shall make joy and gladness out of your afflictions; for all His roses have a fragrant smell. Wait for the time when His own holy hand shall hold them to your nose; and if ye would have present comfort under the cross, be much in prayer, for at that time your faith kisseth Christ, and He kisseth the soul.¹⁸

The spiritual comfort Rutherford imparted to numerous individuals he also communicated in several pastoral letters sent from Aberdeen to his precious flock in Anwoth. In one such pastoral letter he wrote:

I know this world is a forest of thorns in your way to heaven; but you must go through it. Acquaint yourselves with the Lord: hold fast Christ; hear His voice only. Bless His name; sanctify and keep holy. It is day; keep the new commandment, 'Love one another'; let the Holy Spirit dwell in your bodies; and be clean and holy. Love not the world: lie not, love and follow truth. Learn to know God. Keep in mind what I taught you; for God will seek an account of it, when I am far from you.¹⁹

Reference has already been made to Rutherford's earnest and affectionate preaching of Christ in Anwoth and his pleading with sinners to embrace the Saviour. Such evangelistic passion is also found in his letters as he applied the gospel personally. To the young John Gorden of Cardoness he wrote:

Oh how sweet a day have ye had! But this is a fair day that runneth fast away. See how ye have spent it, and consider the necessity of salvation! And tell me, in the

fear of God, if ye have made it sure. I am persuaded that ye have a conscience, and begin to indent and contract with Christ in time, while salvation is in your offer. This is the accepted time, this is the day of salvation. Play the merchant; for ye cannot expect another market-day when this is done. Therefore, let me again beseech you to 'consider in this your day, the things that belong to your peace, before they be hid from your eyes.'²⁰

Rutherford, having begun to write to this young man about the salvation of his soul, continued with the following earnest entreaty so illustrative of his style:

Dear brother, fulfil my joy, and begin to seek the Lord while He may be found. Forsake the follies of deceiving and vain youth: lay hold upon eternal life. Whoring, night-drinking, and the misspending of the Sabbath, and neglecting of prayer in your house, and refusing of an offered salvation, will burn up your soul with the terrors of the Almighty, when your awakened conscience shall flee in your face.²¹

Although Rutherford felt acutely pain of separation from his beloved people yet he had such rich experiences of Christ in Aberdeen that he was led to write to Alexander Gorden:

My dear brother, I cannot but speak what I have felt; seeing my Lord Jesus hath broken a box of spikenard upon the head of His poor prisoner, and it is hard to hide a sweet smell. It is a pain to smother Christ's love; it will be out whether we will or not. If we did but speak according to the matter, a cross for Christ should have another name; yea, a cross, especially when He cometh with His arms full of joys, is the happiest hard tree that ever was laid upon my weak shoulder. Christ and His cross together are sweet company, and a blessed couple. My prison is my palace, my sorrow is with child of joy, my losses are rich losses, my pain easy pain, my heavy days are holy and happy days.²²

These excerpts from his letters demonstrate that the Lord turned Samuel Rutherford's exile in Aberdeen as a means to extend the gospel. In providence it also provided the Christian church, in subsequent generations, with a spiritual legacy which has proved helpful to many.

Rutherford — College Professor

Rutherford's exile in Aberdeen was of shorter duration than he might have expected. The Episcopal liturgy that Charles II and Laud were imposing upon the Scottish Church eventually produced what some have called 'The Covenanter Revolution'. The spark which ignited this was Jenny Geddes throwing her stool at Dean Hannay when, in July 1637, he began to read the new

Laud's liturgy in Edinburgh for the first time. This led to the signing of the National Covenant in February 1638 and the historic General Assembly of November 1638 which re-established the crown rights of Christ in the church. By this stage Rutherford was back in harness playing an active part in the Assembly and working among the parishioners he cherished at Anwoth. The Assembly, however, prevailed upon Rutherford to use his exceptional gifts in the training of men for the ministry. Reluctantly Rutherford accepted but only on the condition that he be permitted to preach every Sabbath. In 1639 he was made professor of Divinity at St Mary's College, St Andrews. Subsequently he was made Principal of New College and Rector of St Andrews.

For over twenty years Rutherford faithfully taught a generation of students, many of whom were to experience the extreme persecution inflicted upon the Covenanters between 1660 and 1688. In men like Peden and Cargill and their younger colleagues we see evidence of love and loyalty to Christ pulsating through their spiritual veins. That they were able to endure to the end owed much, on the human level, to the little fair man in St Andrews who, not only taught his students the doctrines of the faith, but also showed them the loveliness of Christ.

Rutherford — Commissioner At Westminster Assembly

The Solemn League and Covenant was signed in 1643 between the English parliamentarians and Scottish Covenanters to overthrow the increasingly tyrannical reign of Charles I. One provision of the covenant was:

The preservation of the reformed faith in Scotland, the reformation of religion in England and Ireland in doctrine, worship, discipline and government according to the Word of God and the example of the best reformed churches.

To fulfil this stipulation in the covenant the remit of the Westminster divines, already in session, was broadened to include the drafting of a Confession of Faith and Directory for public worship. Eight Scottish commissioners, one of whom was Samuel Rutherford, were appointed to join the Assembly. From 1643 to 1647 Rutherford spent most of his time in London. His contribution there, with that of his fellow Scots, was immense. It is reported that he played a very large part in the framing of the Confession, the Directory for Worship, and the Catechisms. Robert Baillie wrote of him, 'His presence was very necessary'.

Rutherford — Political Theorist

During Rutherford's time in London he wrote the work for which, apart from his letters, he is most famous. It is called 'Lex Rex' or 'The Law is King'. Here Rutherford demonstrated the need for government by constitutional law. He was not proposing a republic; he was proposing that definite legal bounds be set to the power of the king. For example, in it Rutherford proposed:

A limited and mixed monarchy had glory, order, unity from a monarch; from the government of the most and wisest it hath safety of counsel, statutes, strength: from the influence of the Commons it hath liberty, privileges, promptitude of obedience.²³

In many ways it charted the path towards modern British democracy. It is a monumental work. Charles I confessed that it was never likely to be answered. Dr Alexander Smellie affirms that it is 'the constitutional inheritance of all countries in modern times.'²⁴ More recently Francis Schaeffer has drawn attention to the influence of Rutherford and Lex Rex on the United States Constitution.

Here was a concept of freedom without chaos because there was a form. Or, to put it another way, here was a government of law rather than of the arbitrary decisions of men — because the Bible as the final authority was there as the base.²⁵

Lex Rex was published when the English civil war was in progress and provided the spiritual basis for the Parliamentarians to rise up against the tyrannical reign of their king. Of course this made Rutherford unpopular with the Cavaliers or king's men.

Rutherford — Ecclesiastical Statesman

Soon after Rutherford returned to Scotland, after his stay in London, the Covenanters held the reigns of power in both Church and State in Scotland. By this stage Charles I was a prisoner of the English Parliament. Some Scottish nobles, who were emotionally loyal to this king of Scottish ancestry, made a secret Treaty with him called 'The Engagement'. In the Treaty the nobles agreed to raise an army in Scotland to help the King regain his throne. In return the King promised to permit the Solemn League and Covenant to be sanctioned by parliament and to support Presbyterian church government throughout his realm for three years after which time the form of church government would be established by a commission of divines. When the fact of the Engagement

became publicly known in Scotland, early in 1648, many of the Covenanters were opposed to the plan.

The commission of the Assembly met, of which Rutherford was a prominent member. It issued a statement that the Engagement was sinful and involved perjury by breach of covenant vows and would therefore draw the displeasure of God on the church and nation of Scotland. The royalist nobles were in control of the Parliament and so the protests of the Assembly were ignored. An army was raised, marched south and was defeated by Cromwell at Preston. The Engagement thus had failed in its objectives but had sad consequences for Rutherford and the Scottish nation. Cromwell purged the Scottish Parliament of Royalist sympathies, which left the stricter Covenanters in control. On 4th January 1649 the Parliament passed an Act of Classes, which enumerated four classes of persons ineligible for public office because they were guilty of breach of covenant. Scotland, now professing to be a Christian and a Reformed nation was stipulating scriptural qualifications for those serving in the civil government of a nation covenanted to Christ. The political theory Rutherford had defined in *Lex Rex* was becoming a reality.

A few weeks after the Act of Classes became law Charles I was executed by the English. Both church and state in Scotland condemned the regicide as a breach of the Solemn League and Covenant. In the tide of emotion that followed Charles's son was invited to Scotland to take the throne. Cromwell reacted to these plans, marched north and soundly defeated the Scots at Dunbar in September 1650. Nevertheless, the Scots persevered with their plan and crowned Charles II king at Scone, near Perth, after he had subscribed to the Covenants. Following his coronation Samuel Rutherford delivered to him a speech in Latin on the duty of kings. Cromwell could not tolerate this threat to the nation and again prepared to engage the Scots. The recently defeated Scots army needed reinforcements. Parliament and Assembly consulted and decided to pass certain Resolutions by which people disqualified by the Act of Classes could be restored to positions in the state and in the army. The passing of these Resolutions not only grieved Samuel Rutherford but also inflamed his passions in opposition to them. Along with twenty-one other ministers he protested the legality of the action taken by the General Assembly in ratifying these Public Resolutions but received very little support. Subsequently he and his friends became known as Protestors. It hurt him deeply that his friend David Dickson strongly opposed him and that another friend Robert Blair sided with the Resolutioners. This controversy resulted in a deep and sometimes bitter division in the ranks of the Covenanters. Rutherford was often attacked for the posi-

tion he adopted. Writing to Simeon Ash, a Puritan minister in London in 1656, Rutherford complained of treatment meted out by the Resolutioners.

they do persecute the godly, and in pulpits and presbyteries declaim against us as implacable and separatists.²⁶

Rutherford may have been in a minority in opposing the public Resolutions but J G Vos comments.

most of the really earnest Christians of Scotland were numbered in the ranks of the Protestors.²⁷

To this statement Hetherington adds:

the writings of the Protestors are thoroughly pervaded by a spirit of fervent piety, and contain principles of the loftiest order, stated in language of great force and even dignity, of which we find but few similar instances in the productions of the Resolutioners.²⁸

These historians vindicate the stand taken by Rutherford and the Protestors. Their conclusion is based on the fact that many of the people admitted to public office by the public resolutions became, after 1660, some of the chief persecutors of the Covenanters. David Dickson admitted to a lady who visited him on his death bed in 1662:

I must confess, madam, that the Protestors have been much truer prophets than we were.²⁹

Rutherford — Target for Martyrdom

After Charles II assumed power in 1660 he began his persecuting measures. In Scotland the leading Protestors were the first to experience the cruelty of his reign. In the autumn of 1660 Rutherford's book *Lex Rex* was condemned as treasonable. All copies of it, that could be found, were to be gathered before the middle of October and burned at the Mercat Cross in Edinburgh and at the gates of the College in St. Andrews. Early in the spring of 1661 Parliament cited Samuel Rutherford to appear before the bar of the house to answer charges of treason. The messengers found Rutherford on his death bed. His response to them was:

Tell them I have a summons already before a superior judge and judicatory, and I behove to answer my first summons; and ere your day come, I will be where few kings and great folks come.³⁰

A few days later Rutherford died. Before he died four members of his Presbytery came to visit him. He made them welcome and said:

My Lord and Master is the chief of ten thousand, none is comparable to Him in heaven or earth. Dear brethren, do all for Him; pray for Christ, preach for Christ, feed the flock committed to your charge for Christ, do all for Christ: beware of men-pleasing ... the chief Shepherd will appear shortly.³¹

Thus died Samuel Rutherford exalting Christ in the morning of March 18, 1661.

The year 2000 marks the four-hundredth anniversary of Samuel Rutherford's birth. The record of his life remains a constant challenge to those who would serve Christ today. His service for the Lord was Christ-centred from beginning to end. Through his preaching his listeners were able to observe the loveliness of Christ. That kind of preaching is much needed today. His preaching was colourful, with well chosen illustrations and graphic metaphors. As such it became a visual presentation of the truth. Twenty-first century preachers could learn much from his methods.

In pastoral care Rutherford excelled. His love for the flock of God within his parish and beyond its bounds found expression in his preaching, his prayers, his visits, his catechising and his letters. The Church of Christ today needs such loving and attentive pastors.

Finally, Rutherford saw Christ in all his majesty describing him often as his 'kingly king'. The overriding principle of his life was to glorify his Saviour by applying the kingship of Christ to every area of life. Samuel Rutherford was not a perfect man but as a loyal Covenanter, who served Christ in the seventeenth century, he is a worthy example for his spiritual descendants in the twenty-first century.

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A PILRIMAGE OF FAITH

The Life and Faith of Abraham, as summarised in Hebrews 11

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.

Hebrews 11 gives significant Old Testament examples of faith as being 'sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see' (Hebrews 11:1, NIV¹). These examples see Old Testament heroes of faith at decisive moments in their spiritual experience, and use them to challenge us, surrounded by such a cloud of witnesses, to faith of the same kind, 'like precious faith' (II Peter 1:1).

The purpose of the present article is to look at the outstanding example in Hebrews 11 of such a faith, the faith of Abraham, 'the father of the faithful,' and to see its relevance for believers today. How relevant the life and faith of Abraham are for us today is confirmed by the original context of Abraham's coming on the scene of history. Genesis 11 describes how man in his pride and self-sufficiency decided that he could find security for himself and his future by his own efforts: 'Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth"'

Derek Kidner says, 'The project is typically grandiose; men describe it excitedly to one another as if it were the ultimate achievement - very much as modern man glories in his space projects'.² But God then took a hand to demonstrate the folly and futility of man's efforts to find a Do-It-Yourself unity and security and to perpetuate his own achievements: 'The Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city.' The half-built tower of Babel became a monument to man's inability to organise his own affairs.

But God had his plan for mankind, and his way of unity and security. The story - the history of a world's redemption - begins very simply - so simply that we might easily miss it - in Genesis 11:10: 'This is the account of Shem.' God had in his purpose a man, a family, a people, the descendants of Shem, the Semites, the Jewish people, through whom he would work out his plan of salvation for the world. That plan came to focus at the end of the chapter on one

man, Abraham. Let us now concentrate on him, as his life and faith are summarised in Hebrews 11.

1. Obeying God's Call

'By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would afterward receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going' (Hebrews 11:8, NKJV)

(a) Abraham was called

God's new beginning for mankind started on its human side when God called Abraham. It is quite clear that God took the first step. God called Abraham, and Abraham by faith responded to that call.

It is possible to think of the call as happening in two stages: Abraham was called to go out from Ur of the Chaldeans; and he was called to go on from Haran. The record in Genesis 11:31 tells us that Terah, Abraham's father, was led to leave Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan. Joshua (24:2,3) told the people of Israel, 'Long ago your forefathers, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the River and worshipped other gods. But I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the River...' The suggestion is that it was to get away from the gross idolatry of Ur that Terah was led to go, taking Abraham with him. Stephen in Acts 7:2 attributes the call from Ur in Mesopotamia to God, and declares that Abraham himself heard the call there: 'The God of Glory appeared to our father Abraham while he still dwelt in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran. "Leave your country and your people" God said, "and go to the land I will show you." So he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After the death of his father God sent him to this land where you are now living.'

It is tempting to assume that there were two separate calls, and to go further and take the two calls as marking two distinct stages in Abraham's spiritual experience, and to say that the call to leave Haran was a call to repentance; and the call to move on from Haran was a call to faith and full commitment. But the Bible does not separate repentance and faith like that. When Jesus began his public ministry in Galilee, he said, 'Repent and believe' (Mark 1:15). And Paul summarised the missionary message that he proclaimed to both Jews and Greeks as the message of 'repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ' (Acts 20:21). Repentance and faith are inseparable. And repentance, no less than faith, is the gift of God (Acts 11:18).

I must question, therefore, whether there were two calls to Abraham. There was a call given in Mesopotamia (as Stephen declared in Acts 7:2,3). There was the same call given again in Haran with the same clear command, 'Go!' And Abraham went. He was called to go. That meant turning his back on Ur of the Chaldeans. He was called to go on to the place which he would afterward receive, on to Canaan in faith. We cannot separate repentance and faith. And we cannot separate obedience from both of them.

(b) Abraham was obedient

Genesis 12:4 makes it more explicit: 'Abraham went, exactly as the Lord said to him.' Every step of the pilgrimage of faith was according to God's command.

We need to be reminded continually that obedience is an essential feature of faith. Faith is obedience. Faith is not responding to an invitation; it is obedience to a command. 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ' is not an invitation or an appeal; it is a command. That is why Paul in Romans 10:16 can speak of unbelievers as those who have not obeyed the gospel. And he goes on at the end of the chapter to speak of unbelieving Israel as 'a disobedient people.'

Further, obedience is an essential evidence of faith. James is insistent that faith that does not show itself in action is not real faith at all: 'faith without works is dead.' And he goes on immediately to use the faith of Abraham as his illustration of how real faith shows itself: 'Was not Abraham our father justified' (meaning that the reality of his faith was vindicated) 'by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?' That supreme act of obedience was the supreme evidence of Abraham's faith. J. A. Motyer gives a telling summary of what James is saying: 'Do you really understand what faith is? Do you understand that the life of faith is the life of consecrated action, of practised obedience to whatever God may command?'³ 'By faith Abraham obeyed.' Obedience was the essential feature of his faith.

(c) Abraham was expectant

'A place he would later receive as his inheritance'

It is true that the record in Hebrews 11 tells us that that Abraham did not know where he was going. The details were hidden from him, but we are told both in Genesis and Hebrews that he had a very definite destination and a very definite prospect in view. God's command to him in Hebrews 12 was 'Go to

the land that I will show you.' A more literal translation of the Hebrew verb is, 'that I will cause you to see.' There was a land to be seen at the end of the pilgrimage, and God would bring him to it. There was a definite destination.

Hebrews 11:8 describes it as 'a place he would later receive as his inheritance.' His receiving of the land of Canaan was his entering into a possession that was already his by God's appointment. The word 'inheritance' suggests several things for his encouragement - and for ours. His name was already written into the title-deeds; the inheritance was his. As an inheritance it was a simple gift, not depending on his deserving or anything that he could do. It was a deed of gift.

Verse 10 of Hebrews 11 gives another angle on Abraham's expectancy: 'He was looking forward to the city with foundations.' It was something that he and those who followed him were looking forward to. That expectancy would not be disappointed: 'God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them' (v.16).

Abraham's faith looked forward not only to a city that God had prepared for his people; it looked forward to a country better than Canaan. He and future believers who shared his faith 'were longing for a better country - a heavenly one.'

There is still more. Abraham's faith was more than faith in a city and a country that would be given. It was faith in Christ Who was to come. But we must leave that prospect beyond all prospects till later when we consider Abraham as believing the promise.

For now, let us summarise Abraham's pilgrimage thus far. It began with God's call; it proceeded with Abraham's obedience; and it was sustained by his expectation. And all of it was 'by faith.' What was involved in that faith? Genesis 15:6 puts it in one decisive sentence: 'Abraham believed the Lord.' That meant two things. Abraham believed the word that God had spoken, the promise that he had given. Response to the gospel begins there. And, secondly, he trusted the Lord Who had given the promise. The pilgrimage of faith can begin and go on in no other way.

2. Lodging in the Land

By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a foreign country
(Hebrews 11:9 NKJV)

We now find Abraham in the land of promise. 'By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country' (Hebrews 11:9). Various terms have been used to describe his status and the status of those who succeeded him - strangers, aliens, sojourners, foreigners. The picture is of someone who is not a permanent resident, staying temporarily in a home that is not his own. Weymouth's translation of the New Testament gives the sense of it: 'Through faith he came and made his home for a time in a land which had been promised to him as in a foreign country.' 'Lodger' at least gives the sense of an impermanent resident.

The point is that that is the kind of status that is given to the people of God right through the Bible. God's promise to Abraham of the land of Canaan described it as 'the land where you are now an alien' (Genesis 17:8), literally, 'the land, your lodging place.' The whole nation of Israel in Egyptian bondage were described as 'aliens in Egypt' (Exodus 23:8). The proclamation of Cyrus in Ezra 1:1-4, authorising the return of the exiles, speaks of them as 'sojourners'.

More important for us, the same description is given of God's people in the New Testament. Peter addresses his first letter 'to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia' (NKJV, which gives an alternative translation and interpretation in the margin, 'sojourners, temporary residents'). Names of towns today can be added to Peter's list, for this is God's word for all believers today. That justifies our taking this picture of Abraham's lodging in the land as the Christian's status in the world today. He is a temporary resident in another land than his own, someone whose permanent home is somewhere else, someone who is on the citizenship roll of a different country from the one where he is presently living. The significance of that can be brought out by a series of contrasts that are found in Hebrews 11:9,10,11-16.

(a) The contrast between a foreign land and a homeland

The NKJV translation of Hebrews 11:14 is, 'Those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland.' They recognise that they are only foreigners on the earth, and they seek a homeland. That describes Christians living in this world. The people to whom Peter first wrote his letter had their addresses in Pontus, Galatia and elsewhere, but they never thought of their adopted country as their homeland. They probably took a full share in the life of the cities where they lived, but their deeper allegiance was elsewhere.

Paul has the same thought in Philippians 3:20: 'Our citizenship is in heaven.' And the Philippians to whom he wrote would understand exactly what he

meant. Philippi was a Roman colony; many of them may have had Roman citizenship, and they often looked to Rome and thought of Rome. Paul reminds the Christians in Philippi that they have another and more influential citizenship in heaven.

Dean Alford was dean of Canterbury until his death in 1871. On his tomb at St. Martin's, Canterbury, there is the epitaph that he himself suggested. It consists of four Latin words whose translation is 'the inn of a traveller on his way to Jerusalem'. That might be fittingly written not merely of our last earthly resting place but of our whole life on earth. Is that not the truest description of a Christian in this world? Our home is not here. We are happy enough to be sojourners, to stay for a while, to enter whole-heartedly into many of the things around us; but all the time our heart's allegiance is elsewhere. This is not our rest. We are looking forward to our homeland.

(b) The contrast between the temporary and the permanent

Abraham's sojourn in Canaan was in a tent: 'he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.' A tent is a symbol of the temporary existence that is ours on earth, a frail and flimsy structure with nothing permanent about it.

Even when Abraham knew that his destination was the land of Canaan, he looked beyond that to an eternal fulfilment. Canaan was still a country in which he and his descendants lodged as those who were moving on. They lived in tents, still nomads, for they looked forward to 'the city with foundations whose architect and builder is God.'

It is good for us to sit lightly to the things of earth, which can be so swiftly swept away by the storms of life, like a tent in a gale, and to look towards, and to look for the things which are eternal.

(c) The contrast between an earthly country and a heavenly

'Truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country' (Hebrews 11:15,16, NKJV).

Weymouth translates the first part of the verse, 'If they had cherished the remembrance...' That is perhaps one of the greatest dangers in the Christian

life, that we might think wistfully of the life that we left when we turned from the world and turned to Christ. It was that kind of wistful remembrance of the past that was the undoing of the Israelites who had left Egypt. Listen to them: 'we remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost - also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!' And before long they were ready to select a leader who would take them back to Egypt (Numbers 11:5,6; 14:4). It is only a short step from a hankering for past pleasures (?) to going back to them. That was a step that Abraham and those who followed him were not prepared to take, for one very good reason: 'now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country.' The contrast between an earthly country and a heavenly country is enough to keep us from going back to the past.

The fact is that for Abraham Canaan was a foreign country, alien territory; it could never be his permanent home. God sent him into Canaan as an alien land. He said to him in Genesis 17:8, 'Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger' (literally, the land of your alien-ship), 'all the land of Canaan.'

Thinking of the contrasts between the country where Abraham was a lodger and the country to which by faith he looked forwards, words of Christ's, recorded in John 17, come to mind. Speaking to the Father about his disciples, he said (v. 11), 'These are in the world,' and then in v.16, 'They are not of the world.' 'In the world' and yet 'not of the world' - does that not describe Abraham's position in Canaan? And the Christian's position in the world?

More than that, Christ sent his disciples - and sends his followers still - into that alien world: 'As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world' (John 17:18). He prays for those whom he sends: 'I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one'(John 17:15). With his prayer as our safeguard, we can live with confidence as lodgers in the world.

3. Believing the Promise

By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised (Hebrews 11:11, NKJV)

The illustration of faith in Hebrews 11:11 is linked not with Abraham but with Sarah. But v.12 goes on to include Abraham - necessarily, for he was the

father of the child of promise! 'Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude - innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.'

Romans 4:18ff gives full credit to Abraham's faith, 'who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be." And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was able also to perform.'

Sarah by faith believed that God was faithful who had promised. Abraham by faith was convinced that what God had promised he was able to perform. We must take Abraham and Sarah together in the pilgrimage of faith as believing the promise.

(a) The faith of Sarah was faith in God's promise

She did not come naturally to that faith. Indeed, when she first overheard God's promise that she and Abraham would have a son she laughed in unbelief (Genesis 18:12). God answered that unbelief by a question, 'Is anything too hard for the Lord?' and in a renewal of the promise, 'I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son.' And when the promise was fulfilled Sarah laughed again, in a completely different way, and she commemorated her laughter in the name she gave her son, Isaac, meaning 'laughter'. The laughter of unbelief had changed to the laughter of thankful astonishment. And all because she judged him faithful who had promised. Faith is not easy at times, but faith in God's promise is faith in One for Whom nothing is too hard.

(b) The faith of Abraham was faith in God's power

God's power is power to do what on human terms is quite impossible. Humanly speaking, Abraham and Sarah could never have a son. But Abraham 'did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised' (Romans 4:20,21,NIV)

God's promise to Abraham and Sarah was the promise of descendants. In Genesis 15:5 God gave Abraham an object lesson. He told him to look up to the heavens and count the stars, if he could count them - an impossible task.

Then God promised, 'So shall your descendants be.' Hebrews 11:12 sees the promise fulfilled: 'And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants, as numerous as the stars in the sky.' Their faith was abundantly justified.

But immediately, in Hebrews 11:13, comes what seems to be a discordant note: 'These all died in faith, not having received the promises,' repeated in v. 39: 'all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise.' They believed, but they did not receive the promises. Is it possible to explain and resolve this apparent discordance? The word 'For', beginning v. 14, suggests that what follows is going to address the problem.

Abraham received part of the promise when Isaac was born, but there were two other parts of the promise that was originally given to him, the promise of possession of the land that God would give him, and the promise of blessing of the world through him. Details are given in Genesis 12 and Genesis 17. Verses 14-16 tell us that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did not mind not receiving the land. They were looking for something better! 'Now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.' God might well have been ashamed to be called their God if he had simply failed to fulfil the promise of a land, but not if he was going to give them something infinitely more and better. A material fulfilment in the gift of the land of Canaan - though there was a literal fulfilment recorded in Joshua 21:43,45 - would not have satisfied. A boy who at the age of four or five is promised a bicycle by his father will hardly be satisfied if on his twenty-first birthday the promise of a bicycle is kept, when what he might be looking for then would be the latest sports car!

Those to whom the promise was first made had come to see that God had a far better fulfilment in view. What that better thing would be is suggested in Genesis 17:8, when God confirmed his covenant between him and Abraham and his descendants: 'Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession: *and I will be their God.*' That last sentence tells us what the promise of the land really meant - not merely a place to live in, but the tangible evidence that God was the God of His people. How much better that is than any literal land!

That is how the Epistle to the Hebrews resolves the apparent discordance between 'God is faithful Who promised' and 'These did not receive the promises.' God had provided something far better.

The same is true of the promise of a son. God did fulfil the promise of Isaac and of a multitude of descendants. But there was a far more wonderful fulfilment. For, as Paul argues in Galatians 3:16, the promise of a seed - singular, not plural - was fulfilled not in many descendants but in One, the Lord Jesus Christ. Abraham's faith in the promise was ultimately faith in Christ Who was to come. Christ himself leaves us in no doubt that Abraham looked beyond the birth of Isaac to an infinitely better fulfilment, for he paid this tribute to Abraham's faith in John 8:56: 'Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.'

The third part of the promise to Abraham was the promise of blessing to the world: 'In you all the nations of the earth shall be blessed' (Genesis 12:3). It was this part of the promise that was most imperfectly fulfilled in the Old Testament. For Israel largely failed to bring God's blessing to the world. The promise of blessing for the world was fulfilled only in Christ. The promise of the seed was narrowed down to One, our Lord Jesus Christ. But the last verse of Galatians 3 points to a further fulfilment: 'If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.' How wonderfully the promise of a multitude of descendants given to Abraham is narrowed down to One, the Lord Jesus Christ, and then broadened out again to a great multitude which no man could number of all who are his!

Let the last verse of Hebrews 11 give the answer to the apparent problem of a promise unfulfilled. The heroes of faith in Hebrews 11 'were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something' - and Someone - 'better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.' Do not let division into chapters hide from us how that perfection comes. Hebrews 12:2 identifies Christ as 'the originator and perfecter of faith.' The faith of Old Testament believers could not be perfected till Christ came. But God provided Someone better for us - Christ the Perfecter of faith - so that they and we together should be made perfect through him. Abraham by faith saw that that day would come and rejoiced in it. And now, as Christ described it in Matthew 8:11, he is sitting down with Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven - the promise perfectly fulfilled in Christ and enjoyed to all eternity.

4. Passing the Test

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son (Hebrews 11:17,NKJV).

Here was the test, as recorded in Genesis 22:2: 'Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.' What was the significance of the test that God proposed?

(a) The Measure of Commitment

Various suggestions have been made about God's purpose in setting this test. God meant it to teach Abraham that contrary to the practice among Abraham's neighbours God did not require human sacrifice. Or to teach Isaac that God required of him as of his father an unquestioning submission to the will of God. Or to teach both Abraham and Isaac that the Lord can be trusted to provide in every conceivable situation of need - a point that is stressed in Genesis 22 in the name that was given to the place.

But the writer to the Hebrews sees it more simply. Twice over he says it: 'Abraham offered up Isaac'; 'he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son.' That was the length that Abraham was prepared to go in faith and in the obedience that is the evidence of faith. That was the measure of his commitment.

God was going to bring blessing to the world through Abraham and through his seed, his descendants - and One Seed in particular. Blessing for the world through God's covenant people, and ultimately through the Lord Jesus Christ, demands complete commitment.

Here was the ultimate test of obedience. What God wanted was not the sacrifice of Isaac but the personal total surrender of Abraham. Was there anything or anyone dearer to him than God? To be a medium of blessing to the world demands the commitment of Psalm 73:25: 'Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You.' That is the measure of commitment.

(b) The Measure of Sacrifice

The poignancy of the sacrifice that was to be made comes out in the words 'his only begotten son'. There was no need for the writer to the Hebrews to add the phrase which we find in Genesis 22, 'whom you love.' The son of a promise whose fulfilment was so long in coming, his only begotten son, the only son of Abraham and Sarah, was inevitably a beloved son. There is an additional note

of poignancy in the verb that is used in Genesis 22: the tense means 'whom you have come to love', something that the passing of the years had confirmed and consolidated. That was the measure of the sacrifice that was asked - the giving up of an only, beloved son.

(c) The Measure of Trust

It is the Epistle to the Hebrews which puts the test of Abraham's faith and Abraham's commitment in the context of God's promises: '*he who had received the promises* offered up his only begotten son.' The implication of sacrificing Isaac is clear. The promise to Abraham was, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called.' If Isaac was dead, there could be no fulfilment of the promise of a seed; there could be no fulfilment of the promise of a multitude of descendants like the stars of the heavens and the sand on the seashore in number.

When Abraham first received the promise of a multitude of descendants in Genesis 15:5, his response was given immediately: 'He believed the Lord.' He is still believing the Lord. He does not know how the promise can be fulfilled if Isaac was dead, but he is still trusting, still believing the promise. That is the measure of his trust. But there is more there than trust in God's promise; there is faith in God's power.

(d) The Measure of Faith

Here is Abraham's tremendous leap of faith: 'accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead' (Hebrews 11:19). Abraham's faith was faith in the resurrection,

That was no fanciful assessment of Abraham's faith, written by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews 2000 years afterwards. The evidence for Abraham's faith that God could raise Isaac from the dead comes in Genesis 22:5, where Abraham says to his young men, 'Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.' The vital word in Hebrews 11:19 is the word 'accounting'. It is an accountant's word, meaning 'reckoning,' 'balancing up the books'. That is just what Abraham did. On the one side he put all his doubts, his realisation that if Isaac were sacrificed there could be no fulfilment of the promise, his questioning whether God could really mean him to do this thing. And on the other side just this: God has given his promise. Then Abraham made his calculation. Even if it means God's having to raise Isaac from the dead, his promise will not fail.

There come times for all of us when we have to make that kind of calculation, to put on the one side all the doubts and questionings that we have, and then on the other the promises of God, guaranteed to us in Christ. What then must our reckoning, our accounting be? Surely this, that we are fully persuaded that 'what God has promised, He is able also to perform.'

(e) The Measure of Fulfilment

The writer to the Hebrews says that Abraham did receive Isaac back 'in a figurative sense'. James Moffatt, whose translation of the Bible into modern English goes back as far as 1913, translated it like this: 'He did get him back by what was a parable of the resurrection.' Here is a picture, like the pictures in Christ's parables, to help us to understand the resurrection, Christ's resurrection from the dead. What Isaac's being brought back meant to Abraham can help us to understand the meaning of Christ's coming back from the dead.

For Abraham it meant that the promise was confirmed. It might have seemed that the promise was gone for ever. But now it was confirmed. At Calvary it might have seemed that all the promises of redemption that God had made had been dashed. But Christ's resurrection meant 'Yes' and 'Amen' to all the promises that God had made.

For Abraham, Isaac's return as it were from the dead meant that hope was restored. The two on the Emmaus Road had thought that their hopes were gone. 'We were hoping,' they said, 'that it was He who was going to redeem Israel' (Luke 24:21). Their meeting with the Risen Christ gave hope anew.

For Abraham, Isaac's return meant blessing for the world. God renewed the promise: 'Because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son...In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice' (Genesis 22:16,18). That promise would come to its ultimate fulfilment in the Risen Christ. When the apostles went out into the world with the gospel, they preached Jesus and the resurrection. That message is still bringing the world to his feet. The final consummation will see 'a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God Who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"' (Revelation 7:9,10)

References

1. Quotations from the Bible are mostly from the New King James Version, sometimes from the New International Version, and occasionally the writer has ventured to give his own translation
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4. NIV applies the verse to Abraham, and says of Sarah that she was barren. That involves reading an alternative Greek text. In a footnote NIV takes the commonly accepted text and translates it as referring to Sarah.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE

A brief examination of the recent Roman Catholic and Lutheran Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

by Stephen Tracey

Stephen Tracey is Minister of Omagh Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Co. Tyrone, N. Ireland

On 31st October 1999 (Reformation Day), The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification was signed in Augsburg, Germany, by the Lutheran World Federation and the Vatican. This was a milestone of enormous proportion. Unlike Evangelicals and Catholics Together it is not merely an informal dialogue among friends; it is a formal ecclesiastical agreement that took 30 years to achieve. The Declaration seeks to remove misunderstandings on Justification and also lifts many of the condemnations issued by Lutherans and Catholics against each other. In this article we propose briefly to examine some aspects of the Declaration.

In any controversy of faith the differences are often reduced to a razor-sharp line. On one side is God's truth, and on the other error. The problem we face is that we live in a generation in which, as D A Carson puts it, drawing lines is rude. (Especially razor-edge lines!) We are made to feel like Philistines and bigots when we draw lines to separate the gospel from all that is an aberration of it. We are living in the New Dark Ages, an age marked by an anti-authoritarian stand, a leaning towards pessimism and a disdain for depth. Appearance is what really counts. In such a world a doctrine as intensely authoritative, orderly and incisive as Justification, will not long survive. The shallow, hand-clappy, impatient Church will cut and hack at the doctrine until it fits more perfectly with the world we live in and then proceed to 'do' its evangelism with a gospel that it believes to be culturally 'relevant'. It is what one American Episcopalian Bishop calls 'rewriting the Bible for every new age'. This is the New Dark Age in which we live. The way to move out of that darkness is by taking a step back: back into biblical truth - 'true truth'. This is nowhere more pressing than in the doctrine of Justification.

1. Sola Scriptura

To begin with, in any doctrine, we must establish proper biblical foundations. In the preamble the Declaration begins by stating,

The doctrine of justification was of central importance for the Lutheran Reformation of the sixteenth century. It was held to be the "first and chief article" and at the same time the "ruler and judge over all other Christian doctrines." The doctrine of justification was particularly asserted and defended in its Reformation shape and special valuation over against the Roman Catholic Church and theology of that time, which in turn asserted and defended a doctrine of justification of a different character. From the Reformation perspective, justification was the crux of all the disputes.¹

This statement raises two problems. Firstly, was justification the crux of all the disputes of the Reformation? Secondly, has there been any change in Roman Catholic theology since then?

The crux of all the disputes.

Strictly speaking Justification was not the crux of all disputes. At root it was a question of authority. The Reformation was a return to the Bible. The word of God was let loose from the empty traditions of men. The Lutheran Reformation was not just concerned with faith alone (*sola fide*), it was first of all concerned with Scripture alone (*sola Scriptura*). While the material cause of the Reformation was *sola fide*, the formal cause was *sola Scriptura*. It is for this reason when Luther was asked by Johann Eck at the Diet of Worms, 'Will you recant or not?' he replied,

Unless I am convicted by Scripture or by right reason (for I trust neither in popes nor in councils, since they have often erred and contradicted themselves) - unless I am thus convinced, I am bound by the texts of the Bible, my conscience is captive to the Word of God, I neither can nor will recant anything, since it is neither right nor safe to act against conscience. God help me. Amen.²

The issues which are thus neatly by-passed by present-day Lutherans and Catholics are issues such as papal authority and 'infallibility'; tradition; the teaching office in the church; in short, the whole question of authority. At the Reformation the point of dispute was simple: Is the gospel what Scripture says, or what the (Roman) Church says? The Reformers insisted upon *sola Scriptura* - God's word alone. Rome insisted upon God's word *and* church tradition.

Change in Roman Catholic Theology?

At no point has Rome changed its position with regard to this principle. Where the Reformers emphasized *solus* ('alone' - *sola Scriptura, sola gratia, solus Christus, sola fide*), Rome has emphasized *et* ('and' - Scripture *and* tradition, Christ *and* Mary, grace *and* nature, faith in Christ *and* works or indul-

gences). Despite the fact that many who call themselves evangelical Catholics display a new attitude to Scripture, the view of the Church of Rome remains unaltered, from the Council of Trent, through the Second Vatican Council, to the New Vatican Catechism.³ The Declaration makes strenuous efforts to imply that it is based on a new understanding of Scripture by both churches,⁴ however, as long as the issue of *sola Scriptura* is not addressed, any discussion of justification is academic. As long as Rome maintains that Scripture *and* tradition are to be accepted, that the Church judges the true meaning of Scripture, and that the teaching office of the Church contributes to the salvation of souls, it is the Church that confers grace and not Christ. It does not matter what words the document uses to describe justification. The Church has placed itself above the Scriptures and between the sinner and Christ.

2. What is Justification?

Much of the debate at the Reformation centred on whether God declares us just, by a judicial pronouncement or actually makes us just by working in us. In the Declaration this aspect is not clearly discriminated.

Making righteous or declaring righteous?

The Reformers stressed that the biblical doctrine of justification means that God, the righteous judge, actually declares sinners to be just. Rome went further and said that God does declare us righteous but he does so because we actually are righteous and God has made us so. He has made us righteous, by infusing grace into us. We will return to this point later, at present we are simply establishing the difference in definition. Several statements in the Declaration indicate that 'making' righteous is the predominant thought.

4.2 Justification as Forgiveness of Sins and Making Righteous

27. ...The justification of sinners is forgiveness of sins and being made righteous by justifying grace...

Appendix to 4.2

By justification we are both declared and made righteous. Justification, therefore, is not a legal fiction. God, in justifying, effects what he promises; he forgives sin and makes us truly righteous.

There is a failure to clearly establish that justification is solely a matter of verdict and status. We know that God's grace changes people but he begins by changing their legal status. God's way is to deal with our guilt and our status and

then to deal with our heart and will and mind. In justification God does not make us truly righteous, he declares us to be truly righteous in the sense that he constitutes a new judicial relation between us. This is no legal fiction, it is the verdict of the Judge of all the earth. What this section shows is that while Rome still maintains its view of justification as both declaring and making righteous, Protestants have clearly grown muddled in their thinking.

However, Rome does not completely deny that justification refers to the ruling of the judge on a person's legal standing. The words are clearly used in this way in the Bible and the evidence is overwhelming.⁵ What Rome is concerned with is that justification is more than 'legal fiction'. It asserts that God does declare us righteous but he does so because we actually are righteous and God has made us so! This is not a mere confusion of sanctification and justification on the part of Rome, it is a change to the nature of justification. R C Sproul puts it like this,

For Rome God both makes just and declares just. For Protestants God both makes just and declares just - *but not in the same way*. For Rome the declaration of justice *follows* the making inwardly just of the regenerate sinner. For the Reformation the declaration of justice follows the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the regenerated sinner.⁶

We will return to this subject in more detail when we look at the subject of imputation. At this point we are establishing that the debate is not concerned merely with language. The real issue is the ground of our justification. Are sinners justified because God has put righteousness into them (infused) or because he counts the righteousness of another as belonging to them (imputation)?

Regeneration/Renewal and Justification

The Lutheran and Catholic understanding of Renewal and Justification is stated in the following way (note that it is under the heading of Justification),

4.2 Justification as Forgiveness of Sins and Making Righteous

22. We confess together that God forgives sin by grace and at the same time frees human beings from sin's enslaving power and imparts the gift of new life in Christ. When persons come by faith to share in Christ, God no longer imputes to them their sin and through the Holy Spirit effects in them an active love. These two aspects of God's gracious action are not to be separated, for persons are by faith united with Christ, who in his person is our righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30): both the forgiveness of sin and the saving presence of God himself.

In a rather vague way, we are informed that both Lutherans and Catholics recognise that justification and regeneration cannot be separated. Lutherans hold that justification 'is not dependent on the life-renewing effects of grace in human beings'.⁷ Catholics, however, 'insist that God's forgiving grace always brings with it a gift of new life'.⁸ What is troubling about these sections is that they put statements regarding regeneration and statements regarding justification too close together. This has always been the error of Rome, to comprehend 'renovation as well as forgiveness under the head of justification'.⁹ It is no easy thing to discriminate the relation of justification and regeneration. The change of nature and the change of state are simultaneous. Reformed theologians are all agreed that God never justifies without also regenerating, for, 'whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified'. Although Reformed theologians may debate the question of precedence,¹⁰ they all accept the primary fact that God's action in regeneration does not enter into his action in justification. John Macleod puts it like this,

We may distinguish the two spheres without separating them; and we may rightly lay stress on the strictly forensic character of Justification.¹¹

3. Justification and the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness

The Declaration defines justification as follows,

11. Justification is the forgiveness of sins (cf. Romans 3:23-25; Acts 13:39; Luke 18:14), liberation from the dominating power of sin and death (Romans 5:12-21) and from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:10-14). It is acceptance into communion with God: already now, but then fully in God's coming kingdom (Romans 5:1-2). It unites with Christ and with his death and resurrection (Romans 6:5). It occurs in the reception of the Holy Spirit in Baptism and incorporation into the one body (Romans 8:1-2, 9-11; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13). All this is from God alone, for Christ's sake, by grace, through faith in "the Gospel of God's Son" (Romans 1:1-3).

This statement raises two questions. First, are we accepted as righteous in Christ, and in what way does Christ's righteousness become ours?

Accepted as perfectly righteous?

The above statement fails to make clear whether the sinner is accepted as perfectly righteous in the sight of God. All we are told is that justification is 'acceptance into communion with God'. In fact it leaves open the need for further atonement of sins upon which the whole Roman system stands. The rest of

the paragraph is simply confusing. The document reads, 'It unites with Christ and with his death and resurrection'. It does not say that justification unites *us* with Christ, it seems to say that *justification itself* unites with Christ. This is all rather confusing. It implies that justification is something separate from Christ and his work and that somehow it joins with Christ and does believers some good. This kind of ambiguity is not helpful.¹³ By way of contrast, the Westminster Larger Catechism is marked with simplicity and clarity,

Question 70 What is justification?

Justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners, in which he pardons all their sins, accepts and accounts their persons righteous in his sight; not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed to them, and received by faith alone.

Imputation of Christ's righteousness?

Let us suppose, on the other hand, that the Declaration intends to say that justification does indeed unite us with Christ, does this signify an acceptance of the doctrine of imputation? Apparently not. The document uses the word 'impute' only once. We are told, in paragraph 22,

We confess together that God forgives sin by grace and at the same time frees human beings from sin's enslaving power and imparts the gift of new life in Christ. When persons come by faith to share in Christ, God no longer imputes to them their sin and through the Holy Spirit effects in them an active love.¹⁴

The imputation of Christ's righteousness is entirely missing. Nowhere does this document assert that the immediate ground of our pardon and acceptance with God is the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us. Rather what is suggested is that justification is an infusion of righteousness into us, not a legal declaration of righteousness over us. At one point we are told, 'The foundation and presupposition of justification is the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ. Justification thus means that Christ himself is our righteousness, ...'¹⁵ Later we are told, 'persons are by faith united with Christ, who in his person is our righteousness'.¹⁶ This statement implies that it is the quality of Christ's character that counts in our justification and fails to speak with clarity about the death of Christ.

On the cross Christ was counted as a sinner. He was not a sinner, but he was reckoned to be the sinner in the sight of God. The result is that all who believe in Jesus are counted as righteous. We are not righteous, but we are reckoned to be so in the sight of God because just as our sin was counted as belonging to

Jesus, so his righteousness is counted as belonging to us. Hence Luther speaks of *iustitia alienum*, an 'alien righteousness' - the righteousness belonging to another, and *iustitia extra nos*, a 'righteousness outside of or apart from us'. Perhaps no one has ever put it as clearly as John Bunyan,

That there is no other way for sinners to be justified from the curse of the law in the sight of God, than by the imputation of that righteousness long ago performed by, and still residing with, the person of Jesus Christ.¹⁷

This is the doctrine of Imputation - the Great Exchange. What many Protestants today forget is that the righteousness 'still resides with Christ'. We are not justified on account of anything 'wrought in us'. Our righteousness never counts before God. It is the righteousness of Christ. Without it there is no justification; without it there is no gospel.

The Mediatorial work of Christ

The justification of sinners is 'directly connected in Scripture with the Mediatorial work of Christ, as a satisfaction rendered to the Law and Justice of God'.¹⁸ The Declaration appears at times to approach this, for example,

15. In faith we together hold the conviction that justification is the work of the triune God. The Father sent his Son into the world to save sinners. The foundation and presupposition of justification is the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ. Justification thus means that Christ himself is our righteousness, in which we share through the Holy Spirit in accord with the will of the Father. Together we confess: By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works.

25. We confess together that sinners are justified by faith in the saving action of God in Christ.

Here mention is made of 'Christ's saving work' and 'the saving action of God in Christ'. This all sounds very good and encouraging. Yet it falls far short of biblical clarity. The justification of sinners is grounded entirely upon the substitutionary life and death of Jesus. In becoming our legal representative and substitute his obedience to God is counted as our obedience and his death is counted as our death, 'For as by one man's disobedience many were made (reckoned to be) sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made (reckoned to be) righteous'. Romans 5:19. The sin of one man put us into the ranks of sinners. In the sight of God, before we had sinned ourselves, we were already regarded by him as sinners: while the obedience of one man puts us into the ranks of the

righteous. In the sight of God, without any righteousness of our own, we are regarded by him as righteous.

The death of Christ was sufficient to cover the sins of all men, but it was strictly representative. He died for his own, all the Father had given him. It was a strictly legal, substitutionary atonement. All for whom Christ died will be justified and none will be lost. The glory of the gospel of God at this point is blinding. The guilt of every single sin of every single one of God's elect, was laid on Jesus and the exact punishment due those sins was poured out on him. Rome teaches that there is no direct link between the work or righteousness of Christ and the forgiveness of individual men. Christ's work only merited the communication of personal righteousness to a man. This personal righteousness is the grounds of justification and so, in an indirect way, it can be said to be 'for Christ's sake' or 'in Christ's saving work' but it is, in reality, another gospel. It moves us away from Calvary and Christ into Church and Sacraments. The vague allusions to Christ's work in the Declaration are deeply disturbing.

4. Justification By Faith Alone

While God justifies the ungodly, Scripture makes it clear that it is only those who believe in Jesus. When we turn to the Declaration we read the following,

4.3 Justification by Faith and through Grace

25. We confess together that sinners are justified by faith in the saving action of God in Christ. By the action of the Holy Spirit in Baptism, they are granted the gift of salvation, which lays the basis for the whole Christian life. They place their trust in God's gracious promise by justifying faith, which includes hope in God and love for him. Such a faith is active in love and thus the Christian cannot and should not remain without works. But whatever in the justified precedes or follows the free gift of faith is neither the basis of justification nor merits it.

26. According to Lutheran understanding, God justifies sinners in faith alone (*sola fide*). In faith they place their trust wholly in their Creator and Redeemer and thus live in communion with him...

27. The Catholic understanding also sees faith as fundamental in justification. For without faith, no justification can take place. Persons are justified through Baptism as hearers of the Word and believers in it...

There are two areas in which these sections fail to do justice to the doctrine of *sola fide*. The first is that faith is not accepted as the grounds for justification. Secondly; what is the meaning of 'by' faith?

Faith or Baptism?

Paragraph 25 states that Lutherans and Catholics confess together that 'sinners are justified by faith in the saving action of God in Christ', (NB. not faith in Christ!) and then in the very next sentence we are told, 'By the action of the Holy Spirit in Baptism, they are granted the gift of salvation'. Which is it, faith or baptism? Paragraph 27 states, 'Persons are justified through baptism'. It cannot then be by faith.

Baptism, in the view of Rome, is the sacrament of spiritual rebirth. The baptized person is cleansed of all his sins and incorporated into Christ. The effects of baptism are said to be the removal of the guilt of sin and all punishment due to it. The sacraments come between Christ and the sinner, and in fact become a surrogate Christ. This is not the gospel of Scripture. (cf. Rom 3:25-26; 4:20, 22; Gal 3:26; Eph 1:12-13; 1 Jn 5:10).

Justified 'by' faith

In Scripture justification is never said to be *dia pistin* (on account of faith), it is always 'by' faith in the sense that it is through faith. Faith is the instrument, the means by which we lay hold of Christ. In the document we are told that Lutherans believe that 'God justifies sinners *in* faith alone', '*In* faith they place their trust wholly in their Creator and Redeemer...'. This seems to place the emphasis upon the act of believing rather than on Christ himself.¹⁹ Rome places faith in the category of preparing us for justification, along with six other things, fear, hope, love, penitence, a purpose of receiving the sacrament, and a purpose of leading a life of obedience. In a sense then, faith is one of several works, none of which, Rome says, justifies us, but which prepare us for justification. Rome insists that faith is necessary for justification, what it denies is that it is faith alone. Hence, to speak about justification *in* faith rather than *by* faith is to leave room for something more than faith. The following statements from the appendix to this section, (part 4.3) show that this is indeed the case.

If we translate from one language to another, then Protestant talk about justification through faith corresponds to Catholic talk about justification through grace; and on the other hand, Protestant doctrine understands substantially under the one word, 'faith,' what Catholic doctrine (following 1 Cor. 13:13) sums up in the triad of 'faith, hope, and love'.

We emphasize that faith in the sense of the first commandment always means love to God and hope in him and is expressed in the love to the neighbour.

The burden of the Reformers was to demonstrate that faith is simply the instrument by which we lay hold of Christ. Faith is more than assent to truth; it is a casting of the soul upon the mercy of God in Christ. Justification by faith alone therefore means nothing other than justification on account of Christ. Faith is the hand by which we lay hold of him. As Joel Beeke says,

The sinner is justified by Christ's sacrifice alone, not by his act of feasting upon or believing in that sacrifice by faith.

Conclusion

Several years ago someone brought me an acorn gathered from 'Luther Oak', which grows on the spot where Luther is reputed to have burnt the Papal Bull which excommunicated him from the church. I planted that acorn in a container and am in the process of making it into a bonsai, a miniature tree. To do so I must cut the roots and trim the leaves. The doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone in Christ Alone has had its roots cut and its leaves trimmed. The once mighty oak is now only a dwarf. There is only ever one winner in the current trend of dialogues and declarations. Rome grows larger and the gospel of free grace is diminished. In these New Dark Ages we need a new Reformation.

References

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3. See Herbert M. Carson, *The Faith of the Vatican*, (Evangelical Press, Darlington, 1996), pages 39-40.
4. See, for example, paragraphs 7, 8 and 14
5. See the excellent work of Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*. (Tyndale Press, London, 2nd edition, 1960), pages 224ff.

6. *Ibid.*, page 75. (Italics his).
7. Declaration, paragraph 23
8. Declaration, paragraph 24
9. William Cunningham, *Historical Theology*, vol. 2, (Banner of Truth, Edinburgh, 4th edition, 1960), page 18
10. See John Macleod, *Scottish Theology in Relation to Church History Since the Reformation*, (Knox Press, Edinburgh, [reprinted jointly with Banner of Truth], 1974), pages 124-133
11. *Ibid.*, page 128
12. Declaration paragraph 11.
13. Sadly this is perfectly in line with Roman Catholic ambiguity, see William Cunningham, *Ibid.*, pages 12.
14. Declaration, paragraph 22
15. Declaration, paragraph 15
16. Declaration, paragraph 22
17. John Bunyan, *No Way To Heaven But By Jesus*, Works of the English Puritan Divines, (Thomas Nelson, London, 1845), page 120. (Italics added).
18. James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification*, (T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1867), page 310.
19. This also seems to be the case in paragraph 31 'We confess together that persons are justified by faith in the Gospel "apart from works prescribed by the Law" (Romans 3:28).'
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THE NORMATIVE USE OF SCRIPTURE IN REFORMED ETHICS¹

by W. H. Velema

W.H. Velema is a minister of the Christian Reformed Churches in The Netherlands. He is Professor Emeritus of the Theological University in Apeldoorn where he taught different subjects from 1966 to 1996.

I. The Normative Use of Scripture Attacked

Reformed ethics is the ethics that acknowledges God's sovereignty over man's life. It wishes to obey God by listening to his commandments. We depend on Holy Scripture as the Word of God to have knowledge of God's commandments. God's general revelation gives some knowledge of his commandments. Nevertheless we cannot by-pass the Scriptures if we wish to be truly engaged in Reformed Ethics.

From this definition it is evident that Reformed ethics considers Scripture to be the norm, the criterion for human action. By definition Reformed ethics wishes to make a normative use of Scripture. The adjective 'normative' in the heading might therefore well be regarded as redundant. After all, the 'normative' is clearly implied in the essence of Reformed ethics.

Nevertheless, it is not without reason that the adjective 'normative' occurs in the title. It indicates that there is an ethics which makes reference to Scripture, but in which Scripture is not normative. There is the example of the work of Prof. Dr. H. Kuitert. In and outside the Netherlands he has become noted for his progressive views in the area of systematic theology and ethics — views that many still regard as Reformed, at least as a legitimate variant within the Reformed family. Kuitert has written a great deal and in the course of years undergone considerable change. In 1985 he wrote an interesting article entitled 'Theologie en ethiek.'² In this article he reviews the fundamental principles of James M. Gustafson's book, *Theology and Ethics* (1982). Kuitert uses Gustafson's book in order to present his own views on the relationship of theology and ethics. Kuitert's fundamental principle is to regard theology as the check on or the justification of Christian truth in the presence of the culture one lives in.³ Theology explains why ethics can be engaged in with arguments that

are discernible to every one; why ethics is not dependent on theological arguments.⁴ Kuitert himself speaks paradoxically: Theology is required to explain why ethics does not need theological argumentation. This derives from the conviction that Kuitert has expressed in recent years, that one needs not be a believing Christian in order to know what is permissible and what is not permissible.⁵ He has disturbingly said that the Bible is a book of tales, not of morals. Special revelation is not necessary in order to be able to discover the right directives to action. On the contrary, theology -- as Kuitert conceives of it -- namely, theological theory, precisely makes the secularism of morality legitimate.

Is there in this way still room for an appeal to Holy Scripture? According to Kuitert, it is still appropriate to appeal to Scripture, but not in the customary way that Reformed ethics has been doing all along. After all, so says Kuitert, it is unacceptable for Christians to appeal to revelation: 'A person does not follow a commandment of God because it has been revealed, but because there is a reason for keeping that commandment.'⁶ The essential point at issue is the reasonableness of the reasons, the appropriateness of the arguments. Both Christians and non-Christians are able to recognize reasonableness and appropriateness, without referring to God as the One who commands.

What function can Scripture still have then in Kuitert's ethics? He states very frankly that Christians can have 'additional reasons' for keeping moral directives for action. He derives the phrase 'additional reasons' from R. S. Downie, *Roles and Values*.⁷ For example, an additional reason for the protection of human life is man being the image of God. Kuitert also speaks of an 'additional authority,' signifying that God requires it. However, according to Kuitert, these 'additional reasons' do not alter the epistemological point, that the goodness and reasonableness of the commandment is discernible apart from discernment into God the Commander.

Any one who is familiar with the substance of Gustafson's book will understand that Kuitert profoundly differs in opinion from Gustafson. Gustafson calls the kind of conception that Kuitert submits 'anthropocentric theology.' What Kuitert objects to in Gustafson's view is that his choice for a non-anthropocentric startingpoint is nevertheless utilitarian and consequently anthropocentric.⁸ The question arises: How is it that Kuitert reproaches a plea for a theocentric orientation of theology and ethics with anthropocentrism? In my judgment, that is due to the fact that Kuitert down deep has no room for revelation from above and from outside our world. It is for that reason, that for Kuitert a theocentric project is nevertheless anthropocentric.

I also wish to briefly consider what the appeal to Scripture in Kuitert's ethics achieves. He gives a telling, and at the same time bewildering illustration in his book *Suicide*. After he has come to the moral conclusions, in a subsequent chapter he goes on to review the biblical data, as 'additional reasons' for the moral decisions. It is interesting that he reviews these data only to make clear that up till now ethics has used these data in a completely wrong way. According to Kuitert, if you use the biblical data in the right way, then you arrive at the same conclusion on the basis of reasonable, moral arguments, namely, that suicide is an evil, but *not* morally condemned by the Bible-writers.

For Kuitert the appeal to Scripture functions only to support the result of preceding moral deliberation. At the same time, it serves to censure the traditional appeal to Scripture and to demonstrate that in Reformed ethics Scripture has been appealed to in a wrong way. If I may put it rather strongly: According to Kuitert, we must concern ourselves with Scripture in order to demonstrate that in Reformed ethics Scripture has been appealed to in a wrong way.⁹ According to Kuitert, our concern with Scripture is 'supplementary.' Therefore, we cannot expect help from Kuitert as we discuss the topic of 'the normative use of Scripture.'

II. Three Models for the Use of Scripture

In which way can we do justice to the *normative* use of Scripture in Reformed Ethics? I take it that I do not need to sketch in detail what problem is associated with this question. Every one who, in obedient subjection, appeals to Scripture is confronted with the following question: Which commandment is still in force today and which one is no longer in force today? Can we arbitrarily quote any Scriptural passage to legitimize our ethical decisions? It is evident that even Scripture itself already deals with this question. The so-called Council of Jerusalem dealt with the question, which commandments were still in force for the Gentiles? The answer is quite plain: 'For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well' (Acts 15:28-29).

We see already within Scripture itself a development of what is still in force and what no longer is in force. Moreover, there has been some further development with regard to this decision. It is evident that we do not keep all of this Council's decision, and we have no difficulty with that. After all, in the first Epistle to the Corinthians the matter of eating from what's been offered to idols

is drawn into the problem of the strong and the weak. So it does not disappear as a problem from the field of view, but it is dealt with on a different, a lower level than that of the Council of Jerusalem. After all, now it is part of the sphere of the conscience of a Christian. As far as abstaining from blood and from meat of strangled animals, this is no longer a problem to us. Therefore, only one of the four decisions that were made at the Council of Jerusalem remains in force for us.

How can that be accounted for? Which criterion can we establish or opt for one commandment above the other commandment? Is it simply arbitrary? Or is Kuitert right in his approach as expressed in 1981: The point of view that some one has not only determined what he reads, but also what he leaves out.¹⁰ In other words, from out of a previously taken point of view, one is selective in his reading, and includes some and excludes other Bible passages. A person may say that he appeals to the Bible, whereas in fact he uses the Bible only to confirm his already established point of view. It is for this reason, according to Kuitert, that the word 'biblical' has a very arbitrary meaning.

To be sure, we may not easily ignore this reproach. We can indeed be guilty of being biased while in the meanwhile claiming to appeal to the Bible alone. If we wish to do justice to the expression 'normative use' in the title of this lecture, then we must look at ourselves in the mirror that Kuitert holds up to us.

At the same time I wish to briefly look at this problem from another angle. Then I'm thinking of new questions that were not known in the days of the Bible-writers, such as *in vitro* fertilization, nuclear warfare, environmental pollution, and economic systems. How are we to find our way through these questions? How do we do justice to the normative use? Must we say together with Luther that we must devise new Decalogues? That cannot be the obedience to the commandment of God as the Lord God means it. For then we *compose* the commandment in order subsequently to *obey* it. This is precisely our objection to many contemporary ethical conceptions.

There are three basic models of appeal to Scripture in ethics, or if you will, three hermeneutical keys for understanding and applying the Biblical commandments.

1. There is the *reduction model*. For example, one concentrates or reduces all the commandments of God to the command to love. Fletcher's situation ethics is a clear illustration of this reduction.¹¹ Another example of this reduction model can be found in the well-known report of the Gereformeerde Kerken

in the Netherlands, entitled *God with us*, dealing with the nature of the authority of Scripture. Although this report mentions smaller commands that are directed to the particulars, yet the great love commandment takes precedent.¹² Because this report speaks about smaller commands, I suspect that this report does not simply advocate a situation ethics. However, these smaller commands do not have any substantive import or significance. They are entirely subordinate to the great love-commandment. To me, the difference with Fletcher seems less than one might suppose at face-value. At any rate, a reduction takes place.

A third example is the report published by a synodical committee of the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands, entitled *In liefde trouw zijn* [Being faithful in love]. It mentions four normative moments in marriage ethics, namely mutuality, durability, safety, and freedom. Here the reduction does not confine itself to one word. Nevertheless the biblical commandment with regard to marriage and sexual relationships is reduced. Every relationship between persons, married or not married, homosexual or heterosexual, is permitted, provided that it answers to what I call the minimum of these four terms. I must add that the reduction goes even so far that 'durability' does not comprise a durability for life.¹³

One may well wonder whether the ethics of Karl Barth is not to be classified under this model. In his *Church Dogmatics* II, 2 Barth writes about the *mandatum concretissimum* [the most concrete command] and the *voluntas specilissima* [the most specialized will]. The important thing is then the *Gebot der Stunde* [the command of the hour].¹⁴ Besides this there is no commandment of God, according to Barth. The Roman Catholic author J. van Dijk, in a dissertation defended under Hans Kung, has argued that this is a form of situation ethics and is one of the most distinctive traits in Barth's ethics.¹⁵

I myself would not want to classify Barth under this reduction model. His view on the 'command of the hour' is related to his entire view on Holy Scripture and his entire view on God. I would rather approach his ethics from out of his fundamental principle with regard to God.

2. There is the *model of models*. I have not selected this term merely as a play on words, as will become clear soon. This model emphasizes that the Bible provide clues, pointers, but no prescriptions. The Bible gives pointers and advice, but does not provide norms. In this context words are used such as 'paradigm', 'example' or 'model.' The term 'imitation' can, for instance, function as such a paradigm. J. H. Yoder, in *The Politics of Jesus*, even builds a political ethics on this term. However, what is missing is the real *normativity* of God's

statutes and commandments. This model is searching for the line between 'then' and 'now.' It is trying to do justice to the distance between what was said 'at that time' and what is called for 'now.' It wishes to maintain the unchangeability of God's will without falling into an unhistorical approach. And conversely, it wishes to do justice to the historical character of the biblical exhortations without lapsing into situation ethics. The indirect appeal to Scripture is decisive. One can only come to a conclusion by way of comparison and through analogies. In an essay in 1969 Kuitert reviewed the German New Testament theologian J. Blank as an illustration of this model. At that time Kuitert himself was sympathetic to this model. He thought he was moving in the line of R. Schippers, who taught ethics at the Free University in the 50's. Kuitert was attracted to the historical variability, while at the same time trying to hold on to something invariable.¹⁷

It is, however, questionable whether this indirect appeal to Scripture does justice to the normative use. Who determines what is and what is no longer part of the historical character of the commandment? A clue, a pointer, or an example may have some force, but no *obliging* force. In my judgment, that is inadequate and insufficient. An indirect appeal to Scripture does not entail any normative use.

Gustafson's project fits under this model. He argues for theocentric ethics. He takes a strong stance against the idea that man is the 'measurer' of all things: 'Culturally, religiously, theologically, and ethically, man, the human species, has become the measure of all things; all things have been put in the service of man. Man is always the *measurer* of all things.'¹⁸

Gustafson has noted 'the anthropocentric preoccupations of culture and religion, and hinted that a theocentric perspective would require a radical shift in thinking and attitude, and consequently in action. The difficulty with such theocentricity is that a process of conversion, of transformation of perspective, is required, and that (if one is concerned about change) this is practically hard to achieve.'¹⁹ Gustafson wants a change in this regard. He wants to involve Scripture again. Does he want to make a normative use of Scripture? I do not receive that impression.

3. There is the model that proceeds from *various layers in the Bible*. We encounter that in the Dutch theologian, Bijlsma. In his dissertation he discusses it under the subject of 'the appeal to the Bible.' He distinguishes between historical authority and redemptive authority, later supplemented with parenetic authority. It comes down to this, that the commandment receives its authority

from God's acts of redemption. The acts of God evoke the commandments. Redemption creates the commandment. The commandment continues to be a sign and a safeguard of redemption. The redemptive authority ranks above the authority of the literal commandment and brings the old commandment to fulfillment in a new redemptive-historical background.²⁰

In this model there is a hierarchy of emphases. We must push through to the mysterious centre that asserts its authority to the farthest contours of happenings, incidents, proverbs, and regulations that have been recorded for us in the Bible.

A new version of this model that proceeds from the idea that there are various layers in the Bible is the view of Dr. H. M. Vroom. He ascertains a plurality of views within the Bible itself. There is no unchangeable criterion to determine if some one has understood the Scriptures. We run up against the phenomenon of diversity even in the discussion of the scope of Scripture and of the ultimate criterion for testing theological assertions. Even when one regards Jesus Christ as centre, then again one encounters the fact that people think so differently about him — so Vroom remarks.²¹

How then do we come to a decision? We may trust that Jesus Christ gives to his church the Holy Spirit, who shall guide her into all the truth. We must accept each other and thus dare to venture upon the uncertainty of the journey — so Vroom maintains.

It seems to me that in Vroom we are left with less than in Bijlsma. Here is a fundamental relativism. The way to arrive at the ethical conclusion runs, however, by way of various layers in the Bible or — if one wishes — by way of the plurality within the Bible itself.²²

Though these three models make an appeal to Scripture, they do not make normative use of Scripture. For making ethical judgments they make some use of certain words, concepts, terms, and ideas from Scripture. However, Scripture as such is not the criterion for making ethical judgments.

III. A Fourth Model for the Use of Scripture

There is an alternative model that does justice to the historical framework of Scripture and at the same time maintains the constant 'normativity' of Scripture for ethical action. I wish to call this model the *redemptive-historical* model. It seeks to do justice to the progression of revelation, which is how Scripture itself determines what is and what is no longer normative.

Justin-Martyr already employed this model. He and his contemporaries came into quite a fierce discussion with the Jews and were forced to determine which of the commandments were and which were no longer in force. We may well regard Justin Martyr's model as a first hermeneutical method to give account of the use of the law in the life of a Christian. His model includes the familiar threefold division between civil, ceremonial, and moral laws.

The German theologian A. Peters has made a fascinating inquiry into the use of the law by the scholastic theologians. He points out that, since the first part of the thirteenth century the following threefold division was employed: moral commandments, cultural prescriptions and judicial prescriptions. He refers then to the Decalogue as a reflection and summary of the law of nature. In the same 13th century the theologians reverted to Aristotle's book on Politics. The moral law is the continuous thread that runs through all prescriptions. Thomas Aquinas combined the familiar three-fold division from the early church with insights that he derived from Aristotle.²³

It is evident that the moral law stands out as having permanent validity. Frequently one sees the moral law summarized in the Decalogue. Also Calvin continuously refers to this law as he expounds the righteousness that God requires.

From various angles objections have been raised against this distinction. B. J. Oosterhoff has pointed out that the Old Testament itself does not make this distinction. According to him, those who employ this distinction read back into the Old Testament texts a distinction that was made later. They make out of this moral law a separate category and act as if God gave this moral law to Israel entirely isolated from the other laws in the Old Testament.²⁴

I believe we must take this objection seriously. It would be incorrect to consider the moral law as a timeless entity entirely isolated from the other laws. We must clearly state that the moral law too has been interwoven with the whole of the revelation of God in the period of the Old Testament. We may not take the moral law out of its context. It is a whole together with the other laws. We may not overlook the historical framework within which we have received this law. If I understand the observation of B.J. Oosterhoff rightly, then that is particularly what he is concerned with. I would like to honour that observation. The Decalogue has the flavour of the Old Testament (think only of the reference to the 'ox' and the 'ass').

This does not mean, however, that within the body of law of the Old

Testament we cannot distinguish certain blocks or units. I remind you of what in Old Testament theology is called the 'book of the covenant' (Exodus 20:22-23:33); the code of holiness (Leviticus 18-20); and the laws in Deuteronomy (12:1-25:16).

Furthermore, within that totality of the laws the Decalogue has a distinctive place. B.J. Oosterhoff also speaks of the peculiar and particular significance of the Decalogue. I cannot refer to all the Old Testament scholars whom I have consulted to show how they define this special significance of the Decalogue. I only refer to a few of them. Walther Zimmerli speaks of the catechetic purpose, namely, to count the Ten Commandments on our ten fingers.²⁵ Gerhard von Rad calls the Decalogue an 'adequate circumscription' of all of Yahweh's will with regard to Israel.²⁶ H. van Oyen, an ethicist in Basel alongside of Barth, speaks about the Decalogue as the *nervus rerum* (the very nerve of the matter) and about the unique and central significance of the Decalogue for the entire Old Testament message.²⁷ Hartmut Gese refers to a universal systematics of five circles: God, the holy, the family, humanity, the neighbor. P. J. Verdam, a jurist, speaks about some sort of moral code, around which the Mosaic law has been constructed.²⁸ Finally, Brongers calls the ethical Decalogue the constitution of all of Israel's legislation.²⁹ The Decalogue is also called the key to all of Old Testament law. These definitions may suffice to point up the distinctiveness of the Decalogue within the totality of Israel's legislation.

In the Decalogue we have a particular declaration of God's commandments. Those words summarize everything else that is commanded. Everything else is an elaboration of the Decalogue and is determined by the Decalogue. The Decalogue comprises the core-words of God.

Has that continued to be so in the New Testament? There are theologians who maintain that if the Decalogue had kept this special place in the new dispensation, then this should have been stated explicitly. Then God should have revealed in the New Testament once more the Decalogue in its special significance and now without the Old Testament wrapping.

However, if you proceed from the continuity between Old and New Testament, then you will realize how unfair this point is. It is precisely the other way round. Because there is continuity, therefore such a new revelation cannot be expected. What may be expected in the New Testament is that the Decalogue is made use of in a number of places. That is in fact also the case. I cannot here enumerate all the texts where we encounter in the New Testament touching upon some or more of the Ten Commandments. I only remind you of Jesus' conver-

sation with the rich young man (Matt 19:16-26) and of Paul's words in Romans 13:8 and 9. Without distinctly quoting here the Decalogue, its central and fundamental significance comes through clearly. I maintain therefore that both in the Gospels and in the Epistles the Decalogue is not done away with, but is rather still in force.

Has nothing happened then to the law? Has the law then continued to be the same? In order to answer this question, I first of all remind you of Matthew 5:17. There Jesus says that he has 'come to fulfill the law.' Calvin, in his discussion, distinguishes between *doctrina* (doctrine) and *vita* (life). What is Jesus doing here first of all? Is he interpreting the law or is he fulfilling its commandments?³⁰ It would be incorrect to make a contrast between these two, as if Jesus' interpretation would not be made verified by his own life, and as if Jesus' own life in obedience to the law would not have anything to do with the interpretation he gives of the law.

Without mentioning all pro- and counter-arguments that are put forward in the exegetical discussion, I, along with Herman Ridderbos,³¹ posit that the point at issue is first and foremost Jesus' interpretation of the law. The phrase 'I have come' refers to the messianic authority with which he expounds the law. He is not first of all speaking about his obedience for our benefit. Rather he is first giving instruction in the law. He states explicitly that the law has not been abolished. The law continues to be in force. But how? Has Jesus then not done something to the law?

There are two points to which we must particularly pay attention. The Lord Jesus has summarized the law in the twofold command of love. You will remember that he quotes the Old Testament texts where loving God and the neighbor is commanded (Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18).

Is this summary then something new? For the answer to this question we listen to John 13:34: 'A new precept (commandment) I give you, that you love one another;³² just as I loved you, that you love one another.' The new thing in this commandment is not that now love is required. The new thing lies in the fact that Jesus Christ makes Himself an example to his disciples. Bultmann has pointed out that the Greek *kathos* contains the foundation and the illustration. The disciples must act in love in the power and in the manner of Christ.

What has Jesus done to the law? He has fulfilled it. That means: He has expounded it with messianic authority whereby his own example of loving normatively determines the *modus quo* (manner in which) of obedience to the law.

In this connection I must point to the passages in which Jesus is explicitly held up as an example. I am thinking of John 13:15, where Jesus states that he regards his display of love in the washing of the feet of the disciples as normative. Also Peter speaks about the example that Jesus has left us, that we 'should follow in his steps' (1 Pet 2:21). What that example entails is made explicit: Do not retaliate, do not make threats, rather entrust yourself to him who judges justly (cf. verse 23).

Precisely in these two texts it becomes evident that Jesus' example does not substitute for the work that he vicariously performs for our benefit. On the contrary, precisely where Jesus is called an example, it turns out that being partaker of his work of redemption is a condition for following the example.

However, once we have seen that well, then Christ's example must appear to full view and full force. It is remarkable that in 1885 H. Bavinck, at the start of his tenure in Kampen, wrote an essay about the imitation of Christ. In 1918 Bavinck slightly revised and published the essay again.³³ To him the imitation of Christ comes down to obedience to God's commandment. He concentrates this then on the cultural mandate. According to him, carrying out that mandate is the essential content of the imitation of Christ. There are also contemporary authors who interpret the imitation as obedience to the commandment of God. W. P. de Boer, for example, in his dissertation, 'The Imitation of Paul,' provides remarkable insight. I am of the opinion that he rightly offers fundamental criticism of W. Michael's interpretation of *mimēomai*, 'to imitate', in Kittel's *Theological Dictionary*.³⁴ I agree with the result of his inquiry and consider the practical working-out to be very significant.

I would like to point up yet that Christ's being example is not confined to the two texts that I just mentioned. All those texts in the Epistles of Paul where he exhorts the church to do as Christ did, 'to bear with each other' (Col 3:13), 'to walk in love' (Eph 5:1), 'to forgive one another' (Eph 4:32) — point to Christ as the example.

Once we have seen all this well in its broad meaning and its profound significance, then we also discover the link with Paul's words in Romans 13: 'The fulfillment of (the) law is love' (verse 10), after he first has called love the summary of the law (verse 9).

This passage is often abused. Many deduce from it that love has come in the place of the commandments. However, a summary does not replace that which it summarizes. We must put it precisely the other way round: the summary exists

by virtue of the fact that something can be summarized. Thus love does not displace or replace the law. The verb 'to fulfill,' which is used in this text, shows that the summary is not something additional, rather is indispensable. Without love obedience to the law is not full. Something is missing then. That's what Jesus has made clear with his life of love and with his self-surrender even to death: he impressed that upon them in his teaching and in the life that he lived as an example to them. I agree with Ridderbos when he writes: The fulfilment of the law consists in this, that in an unequalled way Christ threw light upon the love-character of the obedience that the law required. W. Schrage rightly posited in a study in 1962 that love as fulfillment of the law does not imply that love replaces the law.³⁵

As to what it means concretely that the law can be obeyed only in love, Jesus has made clear in the Sermon on the Mount. There the commandments of the Decalogue are disclosed in their broadest meaning. From all this we can infer that we may not put the command to love in competition with obedience to the concrete commandments of the Decalogue. The point at issue in the various commandments is really the right disposition. But the right disposition is not the only norm.

We are given here the biblical argument we need in order to make a clear stand against the tenor of the ethical passages in the synodical report *God with us* that I referred to earlier. It will be evident that on the basis of the relationship between law and love we reject any situation ethics. Situation ethics makes a reduction that does not do justice to the continuing validity of the commandment as taught by the Lord Jesus. In such-like models there is no normative use of Scripture.

The same thing must be said with regard to the biblical notion of imitation. I get the impression sometimes that to some the imitation becomes a new, independent norm that takes the place of the law. I am thinking, for instance, again of Yoder's use of imitation in his political ethics. In my judgment, it is incorrect to talk about imitation in the way he does. According to Scripture, imitation refers to the way in which Christ out of love fulfilled the law. Imitation is not a new norm that was unknown till now. Rather it stands for the love shown by Christ. Imitation signifies: we cannot be partakers of his redemption without participating in his demonstration of love. In my book, *Geroepen tot heilig leven* [Called to holy living] I have shown that imitation is the most cogent circumscription of sanctification.³⁶ It is not biblical to call for the imitation of Christ while disregarding the commandments. On the contrary, the imitation binds us to the commandments. Imitation makes clear how we are to fulfill those commandments.

A beautiful summary of this thought can be found in the phrase that Paul uses in I Corinthians 9:21 and Galatians 6:2, 'the law of Christ.' That is no other law than the law of God his Father. It is, however, the law as Christ expounded and kept it. In the new dispensation we can speak no longer about the law of God outside of Christ. That is what Paul meant by the phrase 'the law of Christ.'

Because of constraints of time and space, I cannot explain more fully how Paul in 1 Corinthians 9 moved between the lawless liberalism of the Gentiles and the formalistic legalism of Judaism. I can only say here that the notion 'the law of Christ' over against the Gentiles maintains the validity of the law for the Gentiles, and over against the Jews explicates the law as something they too are bound to, though not in a legalistic way. In my book, entitled *Geroepen tot heilig leven*, you will find a discussion of this passage (1 Cor 9:20-21) in greater detail.³⁷

In summary, the Decalogue is the fundamental law of the Kingdom of heaven, because Christ asserted the law after the example of his own fulfilment thereof. Thus we have a very positive approach for the normative use of Scripture in Reformed Ethics. There is much more than only a few words or a few central terms. The reduction model falls short when it concerns the normative use. The same thing must be said with regard to the model of models. Though it may be broader than the reduction model, its broadness narrows the radicalness of its obedience. The models are examples, paradigms. 'It may be this, but it may also be that.' It is more a recommendation than a norm. Unfortunately I must say the same thing about the model that proceeds from various layers in the Bible. None of the advocates of this model manages to pinpoint where the norm is for still enforcing certain commandments of the one layer in the other layer. For example, if the redemptive authority is decisive, then the result is that redemption limits the commandments in their validity.

The positive element in the redemptive-historical model is that Jesus himself draws the lines in the progression of the history of revelation. He shows what is of lasting validity and how what is of lasting validity must function within believing communion with him. A general term as 'redemption' does not give any right to limit the validity of the commandments. No, Jesus Christ himself, who is the redemption, asserts with messianic authority the lasting validity of the commandments. Sometimes the third model (layers) can come close to the fourth model (redemptive-historical). Then the layers are stages in the progression of revelation. The approach of Dr. Vroom makes clear, however, that he is not thinking of successive stages, but of conceptions that exist alongside of each other, and sometimes are contradictory to each other. Also for this reason, that

he has adopted this principle of pluralism as contradiction, is this model of layers not acceptable to me.

I am looking for progression on the basis of continuity, for a fulfilment that is not so much a change as a deepening, on the basis of the unity of God's revelation in Old and New Testament. Is it possible to speak of variables on the basis of a constant? I have some difficulty with this formulation. After all, the constant is not given to us apart from the variability. Only remember how I spoke about the historical setting of the Decalogue.

At this point it is appropriate to say something about the fascinating and instructive book of Allen Verhey, *The Great Reversal*. This book is a penetrating study of the ethical data in the New Testament. His proposal actually comes down to seeing God's historic-eschatological act in Jesus Christ as the pattern within which our actions must be enacted.

I consider this an essential and worthwhile suggestion, to the extent that it concerns the contours of the Kingdom within which must be acted. Yet, Verhey also says: 'Paul provides no theory of discernment, no analysis of the elements of decision making, but the pattern is clear'. Indeed, Paul did not draw up a handbook on ethics. To be sure, he did not outline and analyze various theories, and afterwards express his preference. That's what one can expect from a handbook on ethics. But Paul did do more than Verhey credits him. Paul did in fact point to the commandments and prohibitions. He pointed out sin and rebuked sin in actual situations. He called to a Christian walk of life.

God's redemptive-historical act in Jesus Christ is decisive and of crucial significance. Christology provides the motive for the exhortation and for ethics. One must add that pneumatology no less provides that motive. In my book *Geroepen tot heilig leven* I discuss the two motives in greater detail.

Nevertheless, the *motives* are not equivalent to the *norms*. Motives and norms are two different things. They must be looked at in relationship to each other, but cannot be identified with each other. In Verhey's clever survey of the exegesis many parenetic (exhortation) passages in the New Testament, the norms have lost significance. Verhey derives the motives from the norms. And with the help of these motives we must again come to Christian action.³⁸ Verhey speaks about various sources, such as Jewish and Hellenistic moral wisdom. It is true that these sources of wisdom were never normative for Paul in the same way that God's action in Jesus Christ was. But is that true with regard to the commandments of the Old Testament as we find them normatively used in the

New Testament? Is God's action in Jesus Christ a new and higher norm with regard to the Old Testament commandments? I would venture to disagree.

IV. New Testament Exhortations in Connection with the Law and Christ

How must we conceive of it that a believer comes to obey the law? How does Scripture function normatively in forming ethical judgment? How do the ethical and paranetic passages of the New Testament relate to the Decalogue and the imitation of Christ. Let us look at a few examples.

1. There are precepts with regard to sexuality and marriage (1 Cor 6:12-20; 1 Thess 4:3-7). Paul elaborates on these exhortations in a positive way in Ephesians 5:22-33, but also in Colossians 3:18f. in the so-called 'household codes.' Peter likewise works out these exhortations in a positive way in a so-called 'household code' in 1 Peter 3:1-7. The striking thing in these 'household codes' is that Paul and Peter bring up the mutuality in the relationship between husband and wife. That was not done in the Jewish and pagan setting. We see in the use of this commandment clearly the ongoing influence of Jesus' example. His obedience in love must also mark the relationship of husband and wife in their mutual love.

We also encounter this commandment as a boundary when entering the Kingdom of God. Only think of Revelation 21:8 and 22:15, where it is stated explicitly that the sexually immoral people are outside. Consider also 1 Timothy 1:9-10.

2. There are the passages that deal with eating idol meats. There the first commandment is at issue (1 Cor 8:4-6). Because idols do not have any real existence and need not be reckoned with as idols, the way to eating idol meat is unobstructed. Whether one makes use of that freedom depends again on the situation and on the relationship to the brother or sister in the situation — so Paul makes clear in verses 7 through 13 of 1 Corinthians 8. That is how the love to Christ and living after his example has a distinct place in the way in which the first commandment is to be obeyed in the actual situation of idol meats. The problems between the strong and the weak in Romans 14 and 15 and the command to be forbearing and avoid giving offence are dealt with in a similar way.

The issue at stake is the requirement to love the neighbour in every day life. In their application to actual situations these commandments have a general nature. We can put it this way: Their actual significance is not limited to the use in a single situation. Their use also applies to other situations.

3. In I Corinthians 7 we read how Paul works out the matter of marriage for each person in a different way. The seventh commandment is at issue. First, in the verses 1 through 6 he points up the general regulation about how husband and wife are to conduct themselves with each other. Notice how he emphasizes the principle of mutuality. Then, in verses 10 through 38, Paul moves to the individual, personal application. It is clear that he does not give a rule here that is in force for every one. He writes how it might be done in certain cases, not how it must be done everywhere and among all. Then in the verses 39 and 40 he again positively gives a general rule.

4. I go on and remind you of very general, but nevertheless pronouncements that apply to and are in force for every one in his actual situation, in passages such as Philippians 2:1-5 and 12-18; Ephesians 4-17-32; and Colossians 3:5-17. It is evident that in these passages we are given the application of the law of Christ — so commandments that are given with the Decalogue, permeated with the love of Christ. That is the new thing in the life of the believers. The law of Christ is the important thing. Christ must become transparent in the obedience to the commandments.

5. We also encounter texts in which the contours of a Christian walk of life are pointed up. I am thinking of passages such as Philippians 1:9-11 and Colossians 1:9-11, as well as Romans 12:2 and Ephesians 5:17.

When you take these passages seriously, then you cannot but think that the believers are enjoined nothing but some general principles. You may call them markers that serve to guide on the way of the Christian life, as for instance, 'the will of the Lord' (Eph 5:17); 'the will of God, namely, that which is good and well-pleasing and perfect' (Rom 12:2);³⁹ 'keen discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent ... filled with the fruits of righteousness...' (Phil 1:9f.);⁴⁰ 'clear knowledge of His will consisting in all spiritual words and understanding, so as to live lives worthy of the Lord, to (His) complete delight, in every good work... and growing in the clear knowledge of God' (Col 1:9-10)⁴¹

These are important instructions, recorded in Scripture in order to be given concrete form. They are themselves not yet the concrete commandments. But these normative words may not be ignored when the concrete commandments are given actual form.

I have the impression that in the passages that I just referred to, we encounter a point that was considerably less common in the Old Testament, namely, the way in which full-grown (mature) Christians must and may go about with the commandments of God (cf. Eph 4:13f.; Heb 5:14; also 2 Pet 3:18; Eph 4:24f.).

Of course, that does not mean that we as full-grown (mature) Christians in making moral decisions are no longer bound by the commandments. Precisely in the freedom wherewith Christ has set us free we are bound to the commandments. It means that the Lord requires from us a greater activity, a more intensive, spiritual activity. I recall that my predecessor in Apeldoorn, Prof. W. Kremer, said in an academic address: 'The New Testament does not wish to fall into merely repeating the extremely detailed legislation of the Old Testament. Rather it leaves a lot of room open for prophecy, for the *dokimazein* of the congregation, for giving account to God for herself and not for being judged in everything by others.'⁴²

This approving (or examining) the things that God requires from us in the actual situation can at the same time do justice to the specific situation of New Testament believers with their *charismata* (gifts of the Holy Spirit). Remaining unmarried or otherwise (dealt with in 1 Cor 7) and the disposition one chooses in the tension between the strong and the weak (as I also mentioned already), can do justice to these two matters.

I remind you at the same time that we must not overestimate this approving (or examining) the things that God require from us, as if the entire *ethos* of the New Testament consists in that. Precisely in the Epistles, in which these terms occur, do the writers go on to say concretely what God commands and what God forbids.

Nevertheless this approving (or examining) the things that God requires is an important mandate to the church of the New Covenant. In doing so she demonstrates a spiritual maturity.

In this light, I also consider it possible to be obedient to God's commandment in an entirely new situation, amid questions that the writers of the Old and New Testament were not yet familiar with — questions of atomic war and global ecology, of economic systems and medical technology.

There are theologians who say simply and plainly: We cannot find answers in the Bible for such-like social-ethical questions.⁴³ I fully acknowledge that appealing to Scripture with regard to these new questions is much more difficult than in certain situations of a Christian's personal life, in his relationship to his fellowman, believer or otherwise. Nevertheless it is possible to appeal to Scripture also for the large questions of social ethics. Indeed, more headwork is required of believers. More know-how of world-affairs is also needful than for answers in personal ethics. One must receive information from the medical or

economic science; one must be willing to enter into the problem of the ecological crisis and into factual data concerning arms and arms-systems.

Precisely the fact that so much more information is needed from the various areas of reality, brings with it also this, that Christians will differ sooner among themselves on the answers to be given, for all these data are easily weighed differently. The difference of opinion among Christians will also be greater because the biblical data are easily interpreted differently. It will be needful to seriously consider the biblical data. What I mean is this: We cannot straight away go to one or two Bible-texts of one or two Biblical accounts with the events described in them. Rather we must trace the principles.

Allow me to say something more about this. In addition to the normative data of the Decalogue entwined by the demand of love as the fundamental law for Christian action, there is the significance of the Kingdom as horizon of our action. In Matthew 6:33 the Lord commands us to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. Christian living is living within the Kingdom and serving the Kingdom. Within that Kingdom this rule is in force: 'Everything that does not spring from faith is sin' (Rom 14:23).⁴⁴ Within this frame-work there is also this biblical truth, that believers are in the world, but not of the world (John 17:11-19). They may therefore not become fashioned after the pattern of this world (Rom 12:2), and they are to walk in line with the Spirit (Gal 5:25).

The Bible presents normative words that must be taken into account when approving things that are pleasing to God. That is the strenuous, but at the same time a fascinating task, which the church receives.

There are more of such norms. I am thinking of the notion that man is the image of God. Helmut Gollwitzer has written in his little book, entitled *De Marxistische Religionskritik*,⁴⁵ that one cannot combat communism any better than by having the notion of man as the image of God appear to full advantage. The primary responsibility of man over against God, inherent in this notion, prevents us from accepting together with socialism the primacy of the community above the individual. I am thinking of the fact that God has instituted marriage. The great charter of marriage is given to us in Genesis 2:18-24. It is no wonder that both Jesus and Paul explicitly refer to this passage.

I am thinking of another norm, viz., that governing authorities as instituted by God (Rom 13). It is not by accident that modern ethicists dismiss precisely the two last-named norms. They interpret these data in such a way that they arrive at an entirely opposite result in comparison to what was maintained in

Reformed ethics up to forty years ago. They maintain that Romans 13 is resistance-literature, and that Genesis 2 — in line with Barth — must be read from out of the perspective of the covenant. Grace dominates over creation and relativizes what God says about data from creation. We shall therefore have to examine in every possible way both the biblical norms and the data from our world.

What does the redemptive-historical model have as a result? I would like to remind you of a distinction that Calvin makes. He uses it with regard to the laws that are to be made in the state. He wants to have them measured by the laws of the Bible, even though they in fact get to look entirely different. He says then: The *aequitas* of the laws must be maintained when they are molded into new forms; the *constitutio* — that is, the actual formulation and the outward form can vary.⁴⁶

Allow me to apply this distinction within the framework of the redemptive-historical progressions. The *aequitas*, as fundamental law of the Kingdom, namely, the Decalogue together with the love-command, and all those norms that I referred to a moment ago from the totality of the Kingdom-message of the New Testament, continue to be the same throughout the ages. Here no change is to be expected nor to be feared. The point at issue is the ever-operative commandment of the everlasting God. The actual formulation and outward form that fit the actual situation can differ. Take, for instance, the commandment that slaves be obedient to their masters. We do not have anything as such to do with the constitution of this particular commandment — at least so I hope. However, the *aequitas* of the fifth commandment, namely, that there is to be a relationship of authority in the daily work-situation, is still operative today in an entirely different situation.

It is better to leave Calvin's Latin terms behind us. In Dutch I wish to use the words: 'gehalte en gestalte.' In English one might say, matter and form, construct and content. 'Content' comes close to how Calvin uses *aequitas*, 'construction' *constitutio*. The point is that we have to do with something lasting with the constant of the will of God. However, we receive that constant given in an historical situation, in a *construct* that exhibits the features of the time in which the commandment is revealed. The *construct* can change; the content must stay the same. In this distinction I am close to Gordon J. Spykman. In an address to the Theological Conference of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod in Chicago in 1984, he looked for the solution in the distinction 'norm' and 'form.'⁴⁷ My proposal is not essentially different from his. I do, however, select different terms, because I am of the opinion that the norm is not made known to

us apart from the form. The point at issue is that the norm comes to us in an historical packing. In order to distinguish the lasting, constant commandment of God from the historically determined composition, we can best use the terms 'content' and 'construct.' The benefit of these terms is that the *content* is never without the *construct*, neither in the days of the Bible, nor today.

V. Two Practical Cases

In conclusion, I'd like to apply this model to two practical problems in order to illustrate how the model works.

In vitro Fertilization

Without being able to deal with all aspects of this problem, which is still amply being discussed, I do wish to say the following:

Eighty-five percent of the fertilized eggs is wasted, while only fifteen percent comes to a viable pregnancy and thus to childbirth. An essential question is whether we, as we hold that a fertilized egg is human life, may use — in whatever early form — 85% embryonic human life as a means to bring the remaining 15% to life. Accepting such a high percentage of wastage means in fact, that the one part comes to nothing (or is wasted) for the use of the other. May we use human life, even though only in embryonic stage, as a means for causing another human life to be born? Do we not in this way lay violent hands on the mandate to protect human life (the sixth commandment) and the fact that man is the image of God (that is, never to use it as means for another purpose)? For the rest, it must be said that also the sixth commandment has such force, because it concerns life that is image of God. After all, the sixth commandment does not concern the life of animals.

Those who advocate *in vitro* fertilization start generally speaking from the longing of infertile women for a child. Theirs is a legitimate longing, indeed. However, may that legitimate longing be determining as answer to the objection that 85% of the fertilized eggs is sacrificed for 15%? If you take this longing as a determining startingpoint, then you must realize that there are various consequences. I mention now only the fact that it may be necessary to preserve the fertilized egg for some time — however briefly — in the freezer. Is that permissible? And if that is permissible, for how long a period is that permissible? How old may a fertilized egg be before being implanted into the woman? In general one says: No older than fourteen days. But why must one draw the line there? And what is the reason for freezing the fertilized egg only for a brief period of time before implanting?

Sometimes, if a woman cannot physically go through pregnancy, the embryo is entrusted to another woman as guest-mother or surrogate-mother for a period of 9 months.

I have insurmountable difficulty with this entire process. I believe that here the chain of sexual intercourse — fertilization — pregnancy -- giving birth is broken. I acknowledge that the Bible writers did not yet know of this possibility. The Bible therefore does not disapprove of this in an explicit way. However, according to the Bible, sexual intercourse is an indispensable link for human reproduction, which is then bound up with the spiritual-physical relationship of husband and wife? If one excludes sexual intercourse from the process of reproduction (or procreation), one is engaged in manipulation. If one proceeds from the justified longing of the parents, then one is in fact engaged in teleological ethics. Within this form of ethics the utilitarian argument is always again decisive. Whatever causes man to reach his goal in the best way is allowed, because the goal itself is allowed.

In the Netherlands I have heard two more arguments in favour of *in vitro* fertilization, which I wish to mention here. First there is this argument: After ordinary sexual intercourse it is natural and normal that many fertilized eggs are simply washed away in the menstrual stream. They do not become attached to the uterine wall. Although they were fertilized, no children are born from them. My counter-question is: May we do what God in his sovereign good pleasure does when he creates men? May we mete out to ourselves the right to throw away eggs that technology fertilized, in order to cause other fertilized eggs to come to birth? Are we then not taking the work of God the Creator into our hands? The uterus, as far as conception is concerned, is replaced by a little glass dish. That is an artificial reproduction.

Next, I come to the second argument in favour of *in vitro* fertilization, namely, that we do not add anything new. That is not true, however. After all, the way in which the fertilization comes about is new. Indeed, we do not create the sperm cell and the egg cell. However, we do create the place where and the circumstances under which the fertilization takes place. As far as the *modus quo* is concerned, therefore, there is something new. Dr. Schroten speaks in this connection about the structural changes of creation. To him this idea is acceptable, because he proceeds from a creation in the making. I am of the opinion that fertilization through technology in the laboratory is a new way of fertilization which has everything to do with structural changes in creation. To be sure, many supporters of *in vitro* fertilization (Reformed ethicists as Douma, Noordegraaf and Troost) will renounce the argument of a creation in the making.

Nevertheless, in my conviction, an essential change is introduced into the process of reproduction.

From out of a teleological line of reasoning — namely, that these parents are entitled to having a child of their own — one can no longer speak normatively about the place of the somatic-natural factors in the procreation of man. Precisely because procreation has been embedded in the love-intercourse of husband and wife, it may not be detached from that. Whoever does detach that, abandons the human way in which God wants to give us children. He goes the way of technology and artificiality, the way of the laboratory, not to say the way of the factory. All occurring problems given with this method must be approved. Once one has entered that way, one cannot wave any of them aside.⁴⁸

B. Abortion

For the second application of my model, I wish to refer you to the observation of Lewis B. Smedes that fetal life is a person-becoming life. That lays upon us the moral burden of protecting fetal life.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, Smedes denies that abortion during the first six weeks is killing a human being. Moreover, he maintains that abortion should be severely restricted after the first six weeks through the twelfth week. According to Smedes, abortion after the third month should no longer be allowed.

It strikes me as strange that there is a period during pregnancy during which abortion is actually no longer allowed, and yet at other times it is considered admissible. It points up that Smedes himself is uncertain as the status of the fetus during those weeks. Should that uncertainty not lead to the conclusion that abortion is unlawful?

On what basis does Smedes think that after twelve weeks the fetus is a person? Does being a person depend on ‘becoming a functioning human body’? At any rate, after twelve weeks that human body cannot exist independently outside the uterus.⁵⁰

Is he not making this mistake, that he arbitrarily restricts man’s being a person to a later period of pregnancy? According to Smedes, before the seventh week the fetus is not yet a person. After the sixth through the twelfth week the fetus may be a person. After the thirteenth week the fetus is a person for sure. We must indeed maintain: From the very beginning we have to do with that life from which God makes a person. The pattern of genes that is present from conception on contains all the characteristics of personality. David did not

speak about his beginning as a person after the third month of his mother's pregnancy. Only a clear-cut line can help us.

The redemptive-historical model supplies us with norms for answering ethical questions. The important thing is that we must truly listen to Scripture and not have already made a decision for which we wish to find some approval in Scripture afterwards. This is the abuse of Scripture.

I am convinced that precisely with this model we can frankly and sincerely face the questions that come at us today. It is my prayer that the Lord will keep us from spasmodic efforts and grant that our love may abound more and more with full knowledge and keen discernment, so that we may approve the things that are excellent (Phil 1:10), as we work with the Word of God.

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THE COVENANTERS IN AMERICA AND THE WAR OF 1812

by Gordon J. Keddie

Gordon Keddie is minister of Grace Reformed Presbyterian Church, State College, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. He is the author of a number of biblical commentaries in the Welwyn series.

From her beginnings in 17th century Scotland, the Reformed Presbyterian Church has held that the Bible's doctrine of the Lordship of the risen Christ required that both men and nations confess Jesus Christ as King. This implied, furthermore, that men and nations should bind themselves to him in formal covenants. Consequently, when the Revolution Settlement of 1690 reinstated Presbyterianism as the established religion in Scotland, but did so without renewing the Covenants of 1638 and 1642 (the *National Covenant* and the *Solemn League and Covenant*), the so-called 'Covenanters' — the extreme politico-religious right of the national Church of Scotland at that time — stood aloof from what they believed to be a backslidden church in a corrupted state and sought to maintain a distinctive testimony to what they called the 'Crown Rights of the Redeemer'. In the next century, having been joined by the Revs. John McMillan (1706) and Thomas Nairn (1742), these scattered 'Societies' of Covenanters would organize as the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland (1743 to the present), together with sister Covenanter denominations in Ireland and North America.

Practical 'political dissent' against the 'covenant-breaking' state and its 'immoral' constitution, meant that Covenanters would not take any oaths of allegiance and therefore could not and would not serve in any capacity that required a commitment to the legitimacy of any government that was not established on Christian principles. They did not serve in the armed forces, or in public office. They refused to serve on juries or, with the extension of the electoral franchise, exercise the vote. Not voting in elections came to be the great marker of Covenanter dissent and, indeed, it was a practical term of membership in Reformed Presbyterian Churches across the world well into the twentieth century. In the free air of the new United States, with a benign government and a thriving Protestant culture', such a monolithic polemic against the government was bound to come under pressure. This paper seeks to show that, although the RP Church did not divide over this issue until the 1830's, the seeds of a softening of their dissent -- the beginnings of their later schism -- were sown at the

time of the War of 1812. Four generations, an ocean and the American Revolution now removed the Covenanters from the 'Killing Times' in Scotland, and the new republic was truly a world away from the absolutism of the Stuart kings. Rethinking of their principles and their application was inevitable.

THE COVENANTERS IN AMERICA

In the newly formed United States of America, an indigenous Reformed Presbytery was organized in Philadelphia on February 21, 1798. This was the second to bear that name. The first Reformed Presbytery had existed from 1774 to 1782, at which time the three ministers, Revs. John Cuthbertson, Matthew Lind, and Alexander Dobbin entered the new Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. David Carson suggests that the brevity of that first Presbytery resulted from a change of view concerning the 'descending obligation' of the covenants; that is, the question as to whether the Scottish Covenants applied in the New World as they had in the Old. The conclusion of the Presbytery was, as Carson puts it, that the 'descending obligation of the covenants' did not descend across the Atlantic.² Clearly, the emergence of the United States had rendered dissent against the (British) Revolution Settlement of 1690 an anachronism. When, after 1782, the remnant Societies in America were gathered under the ministries of James Reid, and then William King, both sent out from the Scottish Reformed Presbyterian Church, and, later, James McKinney from Ireland, there arose the rudiments of an Americanized application of the doctrine of Christ's Mediatorial Kingship to the politics of a new land. Carson notes that, 'Under McKinney, therefore, a remnant of the church maintained its position of dissent from the government, but shifted the basis of that dissent from the Solemn League and Covenant and the Revolution Settlement to the secular nature of the new American constitution. This marked a new intellectual beginning for the church and was the answer to the question of the relationship of the Scottish [Reformed Presbyterian, GJK] church to the United States that satisfied the remnant of the society people.'³

A generation later, the RP Church was on the verge of the New School/Old School split (It occurred in 1833). In his short-lived periodical, *The American Christian Expositor*, Alexander McLeod addressed the question, 'What then is it to be a Covenanter?' To be a true Covenanter, he asserted, is, 'To promote the progress of the true religion, until man, in his individual and collective capacity, shall bow to the divine law, and confess the sovereignty of Messiah;...' The term 'collective capacity' is the key to the Covenanters' vision for the nations.

They emphasized political reformation in which nations would acknowledge Christ and rule according to biblical principle. Perhaps the most influential, and most representative, statements of the Covenanting position in the New World, prior to the War of 1812, were Alexander McLeod's sermon, *Messiah, Governor of the Nations of the Earth* (1803), Samuel B. Wylie's pamphlet, *Two Sons of Oil* (1803), and *Reformation Principles Exhibited* (1806), also written by McLeod—the last being the subordinate standard of the church, supplementary to the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, which stated the distinctive positions of the RP Church.

Alexander McLeod

Alexander McLeod was born in Scotland on 12 June 1774. He was a 'son of the manse.' His father, the Established Church (i.e., Church of Scotland) minister of Bunessan, Isle of Mull, became something of a footnote in cultural history by the visit to his manse, shortly before Alexander was born, of none other than Dr. Samuel Johnson and James Boswell, on their celebrated West Highland journey. In 1792, the teenage Alexander emigrated to America where, within a year, he became, in his own words, 'one of the first fruits' of James McKinney's ministry in Princetown, New York.⁵ After college and theological education, just one year after the reorganization of the Reformed Presbytery, he was licensed to preach the Gospel. The next year, 1800, he declined a call to Coldenham, New York — today the oldest continuing RP congregation in the USA — on the ground that there were slave-holders in the membership of the congregation. In 1801 he began a ministry in New York that was to last over thirty years. He died on 17th Feb. 1833, just prior to the disruption of his beloved church. His biographer, S. B. Wylie, testified to the inseparability of McLeod's life from the history of the denomination.⁶ The RP church may have numbered about a thousand members by 1800. By 1806, when Presbytery received McLeod's draft of *Reformation Principles Exhibited* as a subordinate standard of the Church, there were only five ministers in the denomination.⁷ These few men were to shape the position and direction of Reformed Presbyterianism for the next two centuries.

Messiah, Governor of the Nations of the Earth began its life as a sermon on Rev. 1:5 preached in the RP Church, Chambers Street, New York in 1803.⁸ In it, Alexander McLeod sets forth, very simply, the doctrine of Christ's mediatorial Kingship. Scripture shows that the risen Jesus has a specific commission as *Mediator* and as such has authority over all things. This truth is attested by the Holy Spirit, faithful ministers, the Church, angels of light and all creatures. Particular applications are made with respect to the nations: since he is Ruler of

the nations, they are to honour him, ministers must call nations to obedience and his people are to bestir themselves to righteous anger and action when the nation rebels against his Kingship.⁹

Reformation Principles Exhibited was written by McLeod at the direction of the Presbytery of 1804,¹⁰ and was received and ratified as the doctrine of the RP Church on 15th. May, 1806.¹¹ It has since then remained the basis of successive editions of what is now called *The Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church*.¹² There are two parts to it - an historical survey of the Church 'as a Visible Society in Covenant with God' and a systematic statement of doctrine, 'The Declaration and Testimony.'¹³

Three emphases are particularly prominent in this work. Indeed, they may be properly understood as *the distinctive Covenanter doctrinal complex*. First, there is the kingly rule of Christ over men and nations; second, the notion that the central covenant-idea in Scripture implies that individual and corporate relations with God necessitate 'covenanting,' or at least involve covenants; and, third, a view of the nature and role of civil government and the relationship of Christians to that government based on a distinctive interpretation of Romans 13:1-7 and other passages of Scripture. The first is held in common with classic Reformed theology, while the second and third are applicatory formulations peculiar to the Covenanting perspective.

1. The Kingship of Christ over men and nations. Jesus Christ is the Incarnate Son of God appointed by God to the office of Mediator, (DT: VII.1), which has the three sub-offices of prophet, priest and king, (DT: VII.6), these being of eternal duration, (DT: VII.7).¹⁴ The 'mediatorial kingship' is one part of the Mediator's threefold office of prophet, priest and king. A distinction between the 'mediatorial kingship' and what is called the 'essential kingship' by the standard Reformed theologians¹⁵ is implied in the assertion of the eternal Sonship of Christ (DT: VII.3), and his possession of the Divine attributes (DT: VII.2). It is in Christ's work of atonement that the authority which was his because of his eternal Sonship comes to expression, in his mediatorial capacity, as a granted and purchased authority exercised to the benefit of his Body, the Church (DT: X.2,3). Christ is Head of the Church and is also Head over all things to the Church, (DT:XX.1). The former headship resides in the mystical union of believers with Christ as well as his kingly authority over the corporate body. The latter consists in his authoritative direction of all things for the advancement of his eternal Kingdom — including reprobate men and fallen angels. All human beings, without exception, are subject to him, certainly

involuntarily but also in the sense that they are required to acknowledge him of their own volition (DT:xx.3).

2. The centrality of the covenant-idea. Christ the Mediator fulfilled the conditions of the Covenant of Redemption, made in the counsels of eternity by the Triune God (DT: IX.1,2), and thus believers in Christ enter into covenant relation to him (DT: IX.7).

Jesus Christ is King and Covenant-Head for the believer and the Church is the Covenant community, that is, 'those who are distinguished from the rest of mankind by the dispensation of the covenant of grace' (DT: XXI.1).

The notion of 'being in covenant' is to pervade the engagements we make with others in this life, whether individually and corporately, and whether such engagements are 'religious' or 'social' (DT: xxVII.4). Such covenants are of the order of promissory oaths and are only binding insofar as they are in accord with the teaching of the Word of God. What is more, such covenants may be perpetually binding upon a society of men: 'Covenants entered into by an individual or a community, continue binding upon those who enter into them, either personally or by their representatives, so long as such persons live, unless the covenants have limited their own duration to a certain other period.' (DT: XXVII.5).

When McLeod refers to the 'solemn covenant' entered upon by those who formed the Reformed Church in Geneva in 1537 as 'ecclesiastical covenanting' based upon the fact that the Church is a 'Covenant Society', he understands this to be a covenant bound by the Covenant of Grace. On the other hand, he says, the practice of 'national covenanting' is 'a very different thing', because it is based upon the principle that, 'Nations are bound to honour Messiah.'¹⁶ The matter of the relation of the nation to God receives fuller exposition in the chapters DT: XXIX and XXX in the Testimony.¹⁷

3. The role of Civil Government. Civil government is ordained by God for peace and order, (DT: XXIX.1), and is to rule according to the moral law of God, recognizing the supreme authority of Christ, (DT: XXIX.2, 3, 6). The Christian magistrate is to support the Church of Christ and suppress idolatry, immorality and the like, while 'supporting the independency of the church', (DT: XXI.7).

The practical application of these principles is writ large across McLeod's 'Historical View' of the RP Church.¹⁸ Three facets of this application are particularly significant.

(1) *Establishment of religion.* With reference to Scottish Presbyterianism in general, McLeod observes, 'Having organized the Church as the peculiar kingdom of the Redeemer, upon principles which maintained the exclusive headship of Christ, they demanded that the crown of the nation should be laid at the feet of Messiah. They required that the Church should not only be tolerated to establish her distinct ecclesiastical organization, but that she should hereafter be supported by the civil power of the nation in the enjoyment of her established rights'¹⁹ This is grounded on Scriptural principles, McLeod argues, 'God preserves the world on account of his Church. Christ administers the government of the universe in subordination to the Church; angels and men are commanded to obey him; and all civil constitutions should be nursing fathers and nursing mothers to the Church.'²⁰

As a result of this — that is, the assumption of the doctrine of the duty of the state to establish the church — the covenants, National and Solemn League, were contracted,²¹ and attempts followed to uphold, by law, the Reformed cause. 'The Presbyterians,' notes McLeod, 'used power with moderation. They never proposed to render men pious by compulsion. They restrained open irregularities; they punished the profanation of the Sabbath, daring blasphemy, and public overt acts of idolatry. They procured acts of Parliament to exclude from civil office all those who, evidently disaffected to the reformed constitution, might be expected to make use of their power and influence to subvert the beautiful and venerable fabric.'²²

The 'venerable fabric' of the covenanted state perished under royalist/episcopalian persecutions in 17th century Scotland and never revived, even after the 1690 Revolution Settlement, but the establishment principle, and the vision of the covenanted nation which flows from it, remains, at least implicitly, in the standards of the RP Churches across the world, at the threshold of the 21st century.

(2) **Not all governments are 'ordained of God.'** This is the distinctive Reformed Presbyterian understanding of Romans 13:1-7. When Cromwell subjugated Scotland in 1651, the question arose as to whether he was a usurper or the lawful ruler. The party in favour of Cromwell, according to McLeod, '...reasoned thus: "the powers which he exercises are in themselves lawful, and he has acquired from God's Providence a right to exercise them. The powers that be, are ordained of God."²³

The Protesters were not convinced, asserting that Christians could not 'own as his [God's] ordinance anything which is contrary to his law.'²⁴ They had

previously asserted that 'allegiance to the house of Stuart was synonymous with "rebellion against heaven"'²⁵ Their position was that a government in rebellion from a national covenant, or one which would not enter into covenant with God, was not, in the usage of the term by Paul the Apostle in Romans 13, 'ordained' of God.

(3) **The right of dissent.** A government without the divine approbation, in the sense above noted, 'might not only be lawfully resisted, but completely overthrown.'²⁶ Abuse of power, says McLeod, necessarily leads, from the Divine point of view, to the forfeiting of the right to use it.²⁷

Romans 13 again enters the picture, when McLeod attempts to refute the 'doctrine of passive obedience and nonresistance' held by those who said that no power, of whatever stamp, could be 'lawfully disowned.' 'The constant cry,' he declares, 'was a perverted scripture passage: "The powers that be are ordained of God." Reason and Scripture, *and nature*, revolt at such maxims.'²⁸ Reason and Scripture, however 'clear' or 'just', are so easily perverted by the 'torrent of selfishness' in fallen man, whereas, 'Nature pleads a more forcible eloquence. When a man *feels* himself oppressed, he will believe that resistance is lawful. Whensoever *the powers that be* are hostile to a person's interest, inclination and personal safety, he will believe it lawful to use means for overturning such power. The maxims of truth are universally consistent and capable of universal application, but the doctrine of passive obedience to every kind of civil power, is necessarily inconsistent with itself.'²⁹

In the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, McLeod finds justification for the prior resistance of the Scottish Covenanters, even though the Covenanters maintained their dissent even after the Revolution Settlement of 1690. Because the Covenants were not included as binding in that settlement, the Covenanters could not recognize the rulers 'as their magistrates.- They were united to them by no moral tie.'³⁰

McLeod can justify the earlier rebellion of the Covenanters by seeing the same spirit in the later Revolution -- doubtless 'nature' teaches all men, Presbyterian and Covenanter, the same 'maxims of truth' -- but it is perfectly clear that each group had its own presuppositions and that these differ one from another. In the one it was revulsion from the Roman Catholicism of James II that initiated the movement, while with the other it was the sin of 'covenant-breaking.' That difference was precisely what kept them apart after 1690.

Samuel B. Wylie

Samuel B. Wylie was born in Ireland and fled from there to America because of 'efforts (he) made in favor of Irish independence'³¹ in the run up to Wolf Tone's rebellion. He arrived in the New World in 1797 and in 1800 became the first Covenanter minister to be ordained there. The greater part of his ministry was exercised in Philadelphia, where he pastored a congregation from 1803 till his death in 1852, having taken them into the New School branch of the Church in 1833. He was also Professor of Greek at the University of Pennsylvania. His memory lives on in the name of the Chambers-Wylie Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) on Broad Street, Philadelphia. His most significant work was *The Two Sons of Oil*, an exposition of the relationship between the church and the civil magistrate said by William Glasgow, the historian of the RP Church, to be 'the best presentation of the position of the Covenanter Church that has been written.'³² It was from this position that Wylie was to renege in the years before 1833 and so become the leader of the New School section of the RP Church.

The curiously entitled, *The Two Sons of Oil*, was published in 1803.³³ The 'two sons' are the 'anointed ones' of Zechariah 4:14; that is, Zerubbabel, representing the state, and Joshua the priest, the church.³⁴ The remainder of the book is devoted to a detailed delineation of the nature, interrelationships and roles of magistracy and ministry. Both agree, he says, in declaring that God alone is the source of authority; in being subject to the Mediator; in being independent of and coordinate to one another;³⁵ in owning the moral law as the standard of administration; in having different levels of judicatories; in being accountable of honor only if faithful to the Law of God; and in having a common goal — the glory of God.³⁶

With respect to the role of civil government — the third part of what we have called the distinctive Covenanter doctrinal complex — Wylie takes the same approach as McLeod and deals thoroughly with the three main aspects of the subject, namely, the establishment of religion, the ordination or otherwise of government by God, and the right of dissent against covenant-breaking governments.

1. The establishment of religion. One of the duties of civil government, in exercising power *about*, but not *in*, the church, is to defend and protect the 'religion of Jesus alone.'³⁷ Wylie argues most persuasively on this point: 'The dispute, then, will not turn upon the point whether religion should be civilly

established, - (we take it for granted that Americans think so, seeing they have done it;)'³⁸ What he meant by this is that 'religion' had been established in America by the Constitutions of States and Federation, in that these uphold 'rights of conscience' such as 'sanction every blasphemy which a depraved heart may believe to be true.' The religion of 'liberty of conscience' is legally established, and this, says Wylie, is rebellion against the Law of God. The 'dispute', then concerns, '...what religion ought to be civilly established and protected,- whether the *religion of Jesus alone* should be countenanced by civil authority, or every *blasphemous, heretical and idolatrous abomination* which the subtile malignity of the old serpent and a heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, can frame and devise, should be put on an equal footing therewith.'³⁹ He concludes, 'The former we contend for - the latter we reject. The latter however, is the plain doctrine of the constitution.'

2. Not all government is 'ordained of God.' Wylie counters those who would quote Romans 13:1 ('The powers that be are ordained of God') to show that all governments are ordained by God, by drawing a distinction between divine ordination in the sense of providential occurrence and ordination of a moral and preceptive nature. The latter is that found in Romans 13:1, he says. Legitimate, God-ordained government is preceptive as well as providential. Therefore, any government that denies God's law cannot be said to be ordained of God, and therefore cannot demand the support of the people of God 'for conscience' sake.'⁴⁰

3. The right of dissent. The Christian's duty consists in mourning the 'prevailing abominations', praying and working for reformation, doing nothing which might seem to be a 'homologation of their illegitimate authority,'⁴¹ doing everything lawful in itself and not compromised by 'immoral circumstance,' and giving offense to no one while waiting patiently for the Lord to 'bring back the captivity of Zion'⁴² — meaning the triumph of the Covenanter dream of a covenanted church in a covenanted state.

The War of 1812

The War of 1812 was to have unforeseen significance for the American Covenanters. The causes of this second war between the United States and Great Britain need not be expounded here. The fact of the War with that particular nation placed the RP Church in a perplexing position. Could the Covenanters, a large proportion of whom were aliens of British origin, support a war waged by a country with an immoral constitution?

The RP Church had, from 1806, officially held that the U.S. government was indeed *immoral* and that it was not, *as constituted*, an ordinance of God. This is clearly the implication of the eighth 'error' condemned under Chapter XXIX of the 'Declaration and Testimony.' This said that it was an error to hold, 'That a constitution of government which deprives unoffending men of liberty and property is a moral institution to be recognized as God's ordinance.'⁴⁴ Covenanters could not, therefore, do anything in support of such a constitution — that is, such as might involve them in what they called the sin of *incorporating* with the nation in a defective constitution. They might not take the oath of allegiance, or, if immigrants, the oath of naturalization.⁴⁵

Did this mean, however, that they could not bear arms in defence of the nation? It seems that two quite separate factors were involved in the answer to the charge of disloyalty. The first concerned the nature of the U.S. Constitution — how defective was it, really? The second related to the matter of taking, or not taking, the Oath of Allegiance. Prior to the ratification of the Constitution — that is, all through the Revolutionary War — Covenanters bore arms on the American side. With the Constitution in force, however, and regarded by Covenanters as immoral, on account of its failure to acknowledge Christ as the King of the nation, the pressure was toward withdrawal from any such commitment. At the same time attachment to the U.S. was strong in the Church and there was a desire on her part, perhaps in reaction to social and political pressure, to make clear that any attachment to Great Britain had been cast off. The Oath of Allegiance, as that which, when taken, incorporates the swearer with a Constitution that is held to be immoral, then assumed a crucial significance for Covenanters, as can be seen from subsequent discussion in the Church.

Discussions in the RP Church from 1812 -1815 inevitably focused on the implications of the war for the membership of the church. On August 12, 1812, the RP Synod appointed Messrs. Gibson, Wylie and McLeod to report on matters relating to 'our brethren that are aliens in this country' and 'be authorized also to consider the situation of all our connections in relation to these privations to which they may be subjected on account of our Testimony.' Wylie records the conclusions, which may be summarized as follows:⁴⁶

First, Synod supported the republican form of government and, in preferring the United States above all others, rejected 'all allegiance to any foreign jurisdiction.'

Second, Synod defended its disapprobation of the Constitution as 'a matter of conscience wholly founded on the omission of ...(the)... duty' of recognizing the Kingship of Christ.

Third, Synod instructed alien members to present an oath of allegiance, prepared by Synod, to the authorities, to allay any suspicions of disloyalty.⁴⁷

The Reformed Presbyterian 'Oath of Allegiance'

The Reformed Presbyterian 'Oath of Allegiance' was written by Alexander McLeod⁴⁸ and read as follows: 'I, A. B., do solemnly declare, in the name of the Most High God, the searchers of hearts, that I abjure all foreign allegiance whatsoever, and hold that these States and the United States are, and ought to be, sovereign, and independent of all other nations and governments; and that I will promote the best interests of this empire, maintain its independence, preserve its peace, and support the integrity of the Union to the best of my power.'⁴⁹

Three features of this oath call for comment. In the first place, one notes the scrupulous avoidance of any statement which could be construed as incorporating the swearer in the U.S. Constitution. The U.S. Oath of Allegiance specifically mentions that document, of course. Second, the Synodic oath goes beyond the U.S. Oath in that it specifically includes the State governments. Third, and most significantly, there is an indication of a change of direction in Synod in the fact that the Constitution is objected to, not because of what it contains in the way of positive immorality, but for what it *omits*. Gilbert McMaster, writing in 1832 from the standpoint of what was to be 'New School' Reformed Presbyterianism after 1833, asked the question, '...does it not appear to have been the intention of Synod, under a testimony against whatever might be found amiss in the government, to leave the people in all they found moral, to hold civil and political communion with the States?'⁵⁰ He then alleged that since the Union of these States depended on the Federal Constitution, 'The oath ...obliges to support the Constitution in its true spirit and interest, as it is that which gives existence to the Union ...and without which the Union must cease.'⁵¹ Furthermore, '...this oath ...not only recognizes the legitimacy of the United States Government, but effectually repeals any contrary legislative act, which, in our judicatory may have preceded it.'⁵²

McMaster's 'New School' view in 1832 had evidently colored his memory of the facts, for if one thing is clear, it is that the Synod two decades earlier was not prepared to sweep away previous acts. That is precisely why the measures of 1812 were, in the end, so ambiguous. The Synod allowed itself to be forced by the war and possible harassment, if not persecution, to declare itself for America rather than continue to stand aloof from it. It was this ambiguity which led to the later struggles in the Synod and the division in 1833.

Suffice it to say that the Covenanters supported the war against Britain 'to a man'⁵³ and many did indeed serve in the armed forces.⁵⁴ The question of the immorality, or otherwise, of the U.S. Government did not arise again until the Synod of 1821.

MCLEOD'S 'WAR SERMONS'

In 1814, when the British were threatening the eastern seaboard of the USA, Alexander McLeod preached a series of sermons in New York which were published in 1815 under the title, '*A Scriptural View of the Character, Causes and Ends of the Present War.*' In these, he seeks to show the true moral character of the British government — he sees it as part of the 'general anti-christian apostacy'⁵⁵ — and then goes on to argue the legitimacy of a defensive war against Britain. Comparing America and Britain, he concludes that, 'They are both *found*, in some instances, *wanting*. But the difference, in point of immorality, between them is great. There is scarcely any comparison.'⁵⁶ Having thus justified the USA as, so to speak, the lesser of two evils, McLeod discussed some points of principle.

First, he affirms the *principle of expatriation* over against the British notion that her subjects could never become citizens of another country. This was the rationale behind the impressment of American seamen by the Royal Navy and a chief cause of the War.⁵⁷

Second, on *military service*, he cautiously advised, 'We must not do evil that good may come of it. If the terms, upon which admission into the army,... be absolutely sinful, it becomes a duty, even when the course of the war is just, to reject the terms and of course to withhold a support that cannot otherwise be afforded.'⁵⁸ Thus does McLeod take a moderating stance on a facet of the controversy which was to erupt in the RP Church only after the war-scare had subsided. His position is in a nutshell; serve in a just war, but do not incorporate with an immoral government, *if such there be*. This caution did not prevent him from closing his message with an effusion of extremely timely patriotism: 'America gave to the civilized world, the first specimen of a country great and enterprising, capable of order and prosperity without kings, without nobles, without degrading the lower classes of the community into a state of servitude, and without making of religion and its ministers, an engine of political power... It is already admitted everywhere by men capable of reflection, that republicanism, that a true Representative Democracy is the best form of government for a people at peace.'⁵⁹

The effect of McLeod's wartime sermons was, at one and the same time, to affirm the time-honored principles underlying the Covenanting movement, while signaling the possibility, even necessity, of modifying their application in the context of the American republic. The democratization of American Christianity was beginning to touch the Covenanters in such a way as to make them less and less Scottish and more and more American.⁶⁰

Two presuppositions remained unbroken throughout the period. One is the doctrine of the Kingship of Jesus Christ, as *Mediator*, over men and nations, and, the other is the position that only a government that is obedient to the Scripture, God's Word, can be recognized as an 'obedience of God'.⁶¹

On two points, however, there were changes. First, whereas the U.S. Government was formerly declared to be positively immoral, in 1815 it was guilty only of sins of omission, although these were held to be grave. Second whereas Covenanters before could not support the Constitution to the extent of bearing arms, now in 1815 there was little or no impediment, just so long as incorporation with the immoralities — omissions — was avoided. In the two decades after the War of 1812, the effects of these apparently small shifts were to rip the Reformed Presbyterian Church apart.

Subsequent Developments

Subsequent developments in the Reformed Presbyterian Church were to see deepening division between what would emerge as a 'New School' perspective on the distinctive political theology of the Covenanters, led by the leading 'fathers' of the church, Wylie and McMaster, and a slowly hardening 'Old School' reaction, which would find its leadership in the younger men, most notably James R. Willson. McLeod took a moderating position, sympathizing to some extent with his lifelong colleagues, but trying desperately to keep the church together. His death, just before the split, preserved his reputation with both sides of the church thereafter, and it is not certain that he would have gone with the New School, although his son, John Neil McLeod, who succeeded him in Chambers Street church before his death, was a leading actor in the division and took the congregation into the New School.

The years following the War of 1812 can only be sketched very briefly. As the population of the United States grew, the Reformed Presbyterian Church became an ever smaller minority, even though it had shown steady growth, mainly through immigration from Britain. The political dissent position — that which particularly distinguished the RP Church from the larger Presbyterian

bodies — was proving, at least in the eyes of some, to be an obstacle in the way of progress for the Covenanting Cause.

Before too long, it became clear that changes were in the air, and this inevitably manifested itself in the discussions and actions of successive Synods. Of these, the Synods of 1821, 1825, 1831 and the Eastern Subordinate Synod of 1832 were particularly significant in years prior to the division in August, 1833 at Philadelphia.⁶²

In 1821, a Mr. James Willson from Illinois inquired concerning jury duty, and was told by Synod, ‘..that no connection with the laws, the officers, or the order of the state is prohibited by the church except what truly involves compliance with immorality.’⁶³ Presumably, ‘compliance’ is synonymous with incorporation, the term used in earlier times. The outright ban was gone. Mr. Willson was left to make his own conscientious decision as to whether to serve or not.

Union with the Presbyterians was mooted in 1825, something unheard of even a decade and a half before.⁶⁴

Then in 1831, following an inconclusive debate on the subject, ‘free discussion’ was allowed by Synod through the pages of Alexander McLeod's *American Christian Expositor*. McLeod dissented from this action.⁶⁵ He was ‘grieved,’ he said in his petition. He clearly foresaw further trouble and felt the unity of the body in the bonds of peace would suffer serious damage in a ‘free-for-all’ public debate between a vigorous ‘reforming’ party and an awakening and hardening conservative response. McLeod was sympathetic to the need for change, but not at the expense of a schism in the church.

The Eastern and Western Subordinate Synods met in 1832 at the direction of what was to be the General Synod in future. These meetings were to alternate and help the expedition of business without the added burden of traveling vast distances by horse, coach and boat. It was at the E. S. Synod that Samuel B. Wylie presented the ‘Pastoral Address’ that was to indicate his repudiation of his own earlier treatise, *The Two Sons of Oil*, and precipitate the division of the RP Church. It was at this time that pamphlets on each side started to appear with increasing frequency, triggering a polemic which was to continue for decades.

Wylie and the other dissidents were suspended from the ministry by a *pro re nata* meeting of the E.S. Synod on 25 November, 1832. At the next meeting of the Eastern Subordinate Synod, in April, 1833, there was trouble when the

Clerk, John Neil McLeod, under suspension at this time, sought to function as Clerk. The result of the debate on this point was that Wylie and his 'New School' party withdrew, thereby preparing the way for the final division in the General Synod later in the year.

When General Synod met in August 1833, in Wylie's church in Philadelphia, the division was already a *de facto* accomplishment. Synod, in effect the Old School party, withdrew from meeting in that building, so as to avoid unnecessary friction, and was constituted at another location.⁶⁶ The April seceders — the 'New School,' (or, in Old School eyes, the 'New Light') party — were thus left to themselves, to be subsequently organized as a separate Synod, retaining the name of the last Synod of the united church (The General Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church), and her Minute books, but effectively abandoning the covenanting political theology which had brought her into being in the Old World and the New.⁶⁷

What is important to note for the purposes of this paper is that in the two decades after the War of 1812, there was a significant swing away from the conviction that the U.S. Government was immoral by its very nature, and the concomitant practical position that to engage in any kind of political activity implied approval of the U.S. Constitution and rendered those involved guilty of incorporation in the sins of the Constitution. Throughout the 1820's, more and more Covenanters inclined to the view that the Constitution could be subscribed except where it is demonstrably immoral. That is to say, the onus had moved from proving the Constitution moral enough to be supported at all and at any point, to proving that immoralities existed in it sufficient to justify any dissent except in these particular immoralities. The division of 1833 saw a (narrow) majority of the American Covenanters reassert the former principle, and so set a course which survived the buffeting of almost a century and a half, until in the 1960's, with much controversy but no division, the Old School RP Church adopted the position of the New School on political involvement. What had begun in the upheavals of 1812 was later to turn full circle. But that is another story.

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13. The 1824 edition of *Reformation Principles Exhibited*, to which reference has already been made, is identical to that of 1806 except for some historical notes and a chapter on 'Adoption.'
14. References in parentheses in this and the succeeding two sections refer to the doctrinal part of *Reformation Principles Exhibited* (i.e., The Declaration and Testimony, hence DT), by chapter (Roman numeral) and section (Arabic numeral). These are taken from the 1824 edition.
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16. *Reformation Principles Exhibited*, Part I: 55.
17. Chapters XXIX, 'Of Civil Government', and XXX, 'Of the Right of Dissent from a Constitution of Civil Government', have been pervasively revised in the present century (1928 and 1969).
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19. Ibid.: 62.
20. Idem.
21. Ibid.: 63.
22. Ibid.: 64.
23. Ibid.: 69.
24. Ibid.: 76.
25. Ibid.: 75.
26. Ibid.: 64.
27. Ibid.: 83; cf. 108, 'The declaration of American Independence is a national comment on that great principle for which covenanters universally contended: "we are not bound to own, as God's ordinance, every one without exception, who may providentially have power in his hands.'"

28. *Ibid.*: 84 (emphasis his).
29. *Idem.* (emphases his). Note: The appeal to nature, i.e., human consciousness, is a recurring phenomenon in McLeod's argumentation. In this he follows the school called Scottish Realism, which boasted among its proponents Thomas Reid, Thomas Chalmers and Sir William Hamilton. James McCosh, a native Scot who became the President of Princeton University, described the three principle tenets of the movement in his book, *The Scottish Philosophy*:
1. The inductive method -- the first philosophical school to do this 'avowedly and knowingly' (p.3).
 2. Self-consciousness as a method of observation - 'Reid in particular is ever appealing to men's actions and language, as a proof that there must be certain principles beliefs and affections in the mind.' (p.6).
 3. The principles reached in this way 'are prior to and independent of experience.' These principles are 'in the very constitution of the mind, and have there the sanction of the Author of our nature.' Reid calls these the principles of 'common sense' -- hence the movement is sometimes called 'Scottish Common-Sense Philosophy' -- and says they are 'natural, original, and necessary.' (p.6). McCosh adds, significantly, 'The United States of America, especially the writers connected with the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches, have felt pleasure in acknowledging their obligations to Scottish thinkers.' (p.9).
30. *Reformation Principles Exhibited*: 88.
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35. *Ibid.*: 13. Wylie, interestingly, defends the Westminster Confession XXIII, 3, which declares that magistrates have the right to call Synods of the Church; a doctrine denied by the RP Church in her present standards. Says Wylie, 'Let it be considered that he can convoke synods, not formally as ecclesiastical judicatories, but only as members of the commonwealth, in which character they are his subjects.' (page 14).
36. *Ibid.*: 16.
37. *Ibid.*: 37.
38. *Ibid.*: 36.
39. *Ibid.*: 37.
40. *Ibid.*: 50.
41. *Ibid.*: 46.
42. *Ibid.*: 49.
43. It is interesting to note that Wylie repudiated this position prior to the division in the RP Synod of 1833. These revised views were expressed, at the direction of the General Synod, in a pamphlet prepared as a 'pastoral address' to the members within the bounds of the Eastern Subordinate Synod. Wylie, with the Rev. James Milligan and an elder, Charles McClew, elder, made up the Committee to draft this letter. The next day, 26th. April, 1832, after discussion, two paragraphs were expunged (the first and fifth), and the amended address was sent to the congregations. The minority then published the original address in toto 'as expressive of their sentiments on the momentous events to which it alludes, and as indicating the true course of policy to be pursued by the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the United States.' (S.B. Wylie, *et al*, *The Original Draft of a Pastoral Address* (New York: 1832): 3), The first paragraph reviews the trends in the nation and the world and finds a happy situation universally, where the

Bible is 'the great *panacea* of the nations' that is effecting the 'wonderful revolution' of blessing then deemed to be coming upon the USA. (Ibid.: 6). This paves the way for the fifth paragraph, in which the argument is advanced for allowing of 'diversity of opinion in reference to certain points of application' of the political dissent question. (Ibid.: 9) The precise point, of course, was whether or not the United States government was to be viewed as immoral and therefore 'an ordinance of the devil.' or as a God-ordained institution not only allowing, but even commanding the happy involvement of Christians. If so, then dissent — not seeking political office, not voting, not serving in the armed forces, that is, not taking the oath of allegiance — could not be justified as a practical term of communion involving disciplinary sanctions in the RP Church. 'Let not, then, the illiberal vagaries of insanity and fanaticism' tarnish the 'bright lustre' of 'our principles' was the message of the minority. Thus did Samuel Wylie repudiate his earlier conclusions about the U.S. government, on the basis of his own review of the condition of the world -- he seemed, with his committee, to see the dawning of latter-day (post)millennial glory in his day.

44. *Reformation Principles Exhibited*, II: 106.
45. Immigrants from Britain and their children were technically aliens on this account, with the possible exception of American-born descendants. At any rate, the charge was made against them that they were British subjects, presumably on account of their public aloofness from the Constitution.
46. Wylie, op. cit.: 132.
47. Idem.
48. Ibid.: 143.
49. Ibid.: 132.
50. Ibid.: 134.
51. Ibid.: 135. Wylie here quotes McMaster's pamphlet, *A Brief Enquiry into the Civil Relations of Reformed Presbyterians in the United States*. (Schenectady: 1833).
52. Ibid.: 138.
53. Ibid.: 141.
54. D.S. Faris, 'Reminiscences of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in South Carolina', *The Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanter*, (1876), XIV: 56. 'In the war of 1812 the Southern Covenanters were enthusiastic supporters of the nation's rights. Those who conveniently could went into the army voluntarily. Others were drafted. A multitude of names could be set down, if necessary.'
55. Alexander McLeod, D.D., *A Scriptural View of the Character, Causes and Ends of the Present War* (New York: 1815): 73.
56. Ibid.: 99.
57. Ibid.: 175ff.
58. Ibid.: 182.
59. Ibid., p.213. (emphasis his). McLeod's view that *representative* republicanism is the best form of government rests on two lines of argument and in this order (see p.61 ff.). First, *common sense* supports it -- after all, men in voluntary associations naturally organize on a *representative* basis. This is McLeod's Scottish Realism. Second, *Scripture* exemplifies it. This is present in the Covenants of Works and Grace, where Adam and Christ are representative (see 1 Cor. 15:44f.), and in the way officers are elected in the Church.
60. See Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (Yale: 1989) for a wonderful treatment of the period of we are discussing.

61. Two centuries on, the first is still firmly held by Reformed Presbyterians, but the distinctive interpretation of Romans 13 has been largely abandoned.
62. Carson, op. cit.: 101.
63. *Minutes of Synod*: 70.
64. *Ibid.*: 107.
65. *Minutes of Synod (Glasgow version)*: 206.
66. David Scott, *Narrative of the Division of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, U.S.*, 1833 (Rochester: 1863): 28.
67. Throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, the RPC(GS) declined to a handful of congregations. Her liberal arts college in Cedarville, Ohio, was eventually conveyed to a Baptist organization, and has thrived under their management. In the mid-twentieth century, the remnant was revived by the accession in 1947 of Gordon H. Clark and his supporters (from the OPC), and, through union with the then Evangelical Presbyterian Church (1956), they became the Reformed Presbyterian Church (Evangelical Synod). In 1982 this body merged with the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), bequeathing to the united denomination Covenant Seminary (St. Louis, Mo.) and Covenant College (Lookout Mountain, Ten.), both thriving Christian institutions.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Journey. A pilgrim in the lands of the Spirit, Alister McGrath, Hodder & Stoughton, 1999, 152pp., hbk., £9.99.

This simple primer is a new departure for Alister McGrath, teacher of theology and prolific author. An attempt at providing a usable and memorable outline of Christian experience, this book is, in his own words, 'an invitation to use the framework of the journey from Egypt to the promised land to make sense of the personal pilgrimage of faith' (p.23). As such, it must be judged a modest success.

After three introductory chapters, Part 2 divides 'the journey through the wilderness' into four stages, in each of which reflection is offered on the same three major themes: Landmarks: creation, exile, redemption and consummation; areas of Wilderness: doubt, failure, fear and suffering; aspects of Oasis: refreshment, rest, fellowship and the feast. Each sub-section is illustrated from the writings of a well-known Christian, from Anselm of Canterbury, through Susanna Wesley and Alexander MacLaren, to John Stott.

McGrath's adoption of the Egypt to Canaan motif is helpful. He encourages us to cope with the present by recollecting the past and anticipating the future. His main concern is to deepen Christian experience, 'linking thought, imagination and feeling, as we appreciate the full richness and depth of our faith' (p.14). For this book has arisen from his personal struggle out of a superficial intellectualism into a more holistic faith. 'It was as if there was one part of my life which dealt with ideas, and this somehow never seemed to come into contact with anything else... I had understood things, but had failed to appreciate them... It took me ten years to sort myself out, but it was worth it' (p.3).

Such humble candour moves and challenges the reader. The author recommends meditating on Scripture, visualising its images, seeking to place ourselves within the biblical incidents. He emphasises, rightly, that we do not know truth until we feel it and are changed by it. 'Spirituality is about the internalisation of our faith' (p.10). Here is valuable advice for a hurried, shallow, information-saturated age.

It is also useful to be reminded of the resources available from previous generations. Too many contemporary believers are woefully ignorant of the riches of the Christian tradition. McGrath's quotations may whet the appetite of some to 'take up and read' these authors for themselves. He might, however, have

mined his sources more rewardingly. C.S. Lewis, for example, has more significant insights into the journey towards heaven than the rich and tempting food provided at the feast celebrating Aslan (pp.144,145).

Dr. McGrath has made a sincere and timely plea for a deeper, more consistent Christian experience. He is obviously striving to write in a popular style and at times this betrays him into condescending infelicities (as in several comments on p.30). The main criticism of this volume must be that the content is rather thin. To anyone who has read, for example, Calvin or the Puritans, these pages will seem disappointingly elementary. Yet many believers have been taught little about experiential Christianity and will find here a useful starting-point. While the claim of the jacket-blurb that this is 'major work of spirituality' is considerably over-blown, it will serve as a reliable introduction to richer writings.

Edward Donnelly

Grace in Galatia, Ben Witherington III, T & T Clark, 1998, 477pp., pbk, £17.50.

In the world of biblical commentaries 'new' does not always mean 'improved' and the heart sinks on reading, from the jacket blurb of this volume, that 'Professor Witherington draws upon an array of new discoveries and methods, especially in archaeology, social history and literary study. What eccentric novelties are we about to meet? Is a writer already known for 'socio-rhetorical' commentaries on several other Pauline epistles going to produce a trendy and idiosyncratic re-reading of the text? Such fears are groundless. In these pages Ben Witherington provides us with a thoughtful and stimulating exposition of a key portion of Scripture.

He regards Galatians as the apostle's earliest extant letter, written around 49AD to the churches in South Galatia which he had founded during his first missionary journey. The epistle thus pre-dates the Jerusalem Council and Paul's Jerusalem visit referred to in Galatians 2 is that recorded in Acts 11:30. The exposition is thorough, with Greek words adequately explained and illuminating theological exegesis.

One of the unusual features of Dr. Witherington's work is that he classifies this letter as a piece of deliberative rhetoric. Galatians is more like an ancient speech than any other New Testament document. Several of the normal epistolary features are absent and it seems clear that it was designed for the ears of its

recipients, aimed at convincing them to take a particular course of action. He outlines the letter therefore in rhetorical categories: an *Exordium* (1:6-20) to introduce the theme, gain attention and establish the speaker's authority; a *Narratio* (1:11-2:14) to set the stage; the *Propositio* (2:15-21), outlining the main question at issue; the *Probatio* (3:1-6-10), in which seven reinforcing arguments (3:1-18; 3:19-4:7; 4:8-20; 4:21-5:1; 5:2-15; 5:16-26; 6:1-10) are advanced; the *Peroratio* (6:12-17) to sum up. While, in certain places, slightly forced, this is a persuasive structure, supported by copious references in Quintilian and other masters of rhetoric.

The author's main purpose is to show that Galatians is not so much about how one enters the Christian life as how one goes on and grows within it. He claims that Luther's emphasis on justification by grace through faith is more a fundamental presupposition of the epistle than its theme. 'The argument is misperceived if it is seen as some sort of general polemic in favour of faith and against "works righteousness"' (p.172). 'The issue... is — What should the role of the Mosaic Law be in the life of a Christian believer, whether Gentile or Jew... should the Galatians submit to circumcision?... It cannot be stressed enough that... Paul is arguing with Christians about the proper and improper ways of getting on with their Christian lives... The Mosaic Law and obedience to it is not, in Paul's view, how one got into Christ, how one stays in Christ, or how one goes on in Christ' (ibid).

As in any similar work, the reader will probably not agree with all of Witherington's interpretations. This reviewer, for example, sees no warrant in 3:28 for women preachers (contra e.g. p.293). His position on the permanent obligation of the moral law needs clarified. He is slightly too enamoured with sociology, as when he informs us that 'we have basically a D-Quadrant group situation in Galatia, various of the features of which Paul is trying to firm up' (p.208). Although differing considerably from E.P. Sanders, he agrees with the latter's view that early Jews related to the Law in terms of 'covenantal nomism' rather than works-righteousness (see for example p.345). This theory has been shown to be fallacious, with indisputable evidence that the Jews were indeed, as has always been thought, bogged down in legalism.

A repeated feature, 'Bridging the Horizons', seeks to apply the teaching in a contemporary way. The author's style is admirably lucid and interesting throughout and evidences a warmth of devotion which supplements admirably the clarity of exposition. On the whole a useful addition to commentaries on this epistle.

Edward Donnelly

T. F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography, Alister E. McGrath, Edinburgh T & T Clark, 1999, pp.xiv + 300, £24.95

The book is in fact two books. There is a memoir of Torrance's career up to his retirement in 1978; of chief interest here is the account of Torrance's missionary background in China. (A charming Epilogue recounts Torrance's trips in 1984 and 1994 to the China of his youth). But there is little that helps the reader to understand what Torrance is like as a man, his passions or hates, what makes him laugh and cry, his working methods, his friends and foes. I suppose that this is one price that one pays for writing a memoir of a living person.

The second book is an account of Torrance's theology. I shall concentrate on this.

There are four chapters, on Torrance's place as a conduit for the influence of Karl Barth's theology in the English speaking world. (McGrath coins a new English noun, 'Barth-reception'); on revelation and salvation; on natural theology; and on theology and the natural sciences. There is also a full bibliography of Torrance's writings to date, around 600 items.

As with the memoir, in the theological half of the book there is little attempt to get under Torrance's theological skin, no critical engagement. He is taken largely at his own estimate of himself. And given his voluminous published writings it is a bit of a surprise that McGrath relies quite a lot on Torrance's Auburn Lectures (delivered when he was a temporary teacher aged 24) and an unpublished autobiographical memoir, 'Itinerarium Mentis in Deum'. Once when I was in Alister McGrath's office at Wycliffe Hall (to examine a doctoral candidate) I happened to ask what was in a rather large, battered suitcase in the centre of the floor. 'It contains', he said 'the unpublished sermons of Tom Torrance'. It is to be hoped that Alister did not feel obliged to read through them all, because he makes scant use of them here. For Torrance's Scottish theological background McGrath relies heavily upon *Disruption and Diversity: Edinburgh Divinity 1846-1996*, edited by D. F. Wright and G. B. Badcock, and *Christ, Church and Society* edited by David Ferguson.

It is unfair to assess a book by standards that it does not set itself. So let it be said that this is a book that cannot fail to fascinate anyone interested in Scottish theology and Reformed theology in the 20th century and before. There is much interesting information and comment, though I was sorry that in discussing 'Barth-reception' in England McGrath missed the part played by the

Congregationist theologian Alex Whitehouse. Anglican astigmatism? McGrath admirably succeeds in bringing to the fore the central Torrentian themes: the reality and objectivity of God, the theological significance of the *homoousion* in the Christian doctrine of salvation, and the importance of theological method. And he writes illuminatingly of the influence on Torrance of his teacher H. R. Mackintosh, and of the influence of Athanasius, Calvin and of course Barth.

Torrance has written and published so much that it is almost impossible to encompass it in one book. Nevertheless McGrath has succeeded in limning its main features. At a period in which radical theologies of various kinds were in the ascendant, Torrance courageously gave ringing emphasis to God's objectivity, and to the central importance of the trinity and the incarnation for Christian theology.

But one central claim of Torrance's which McGrath draws out will cause disquiet, the resolute fusing together of theology and soteriology and epistemology. It is one thing to say, with Athanasius, that God himself is incarnate in Jesus Christ. It is another thing to say that 'Revelation is God himself' (p. 155). In his anxiety to avoid various 'dualisms' (the baneful influence of which, if indeed they do exist, is not at all obvious), Torrance fuses together the economic and immanent trinities, and reconciliation and revelation. God is what God does. But could not God have done other than he did? Torrance would appear to eliminate the place of divine volition and intention. This fusion has led him to distort the history of theology. According to Torrance, Athanasius was not a 'dualist' but Augustine was. But this means that if (besides Athanasius) Calvin is to be another of one's heroes (as he is for Torrance) then Calvin's manifest Augustinianism must be downplayed to the point of distortion. It is unfortunate that the few critical remarks about anyone in this book are quite misplaced. In two places (p. 139, 144) McGrath rather curtly dismisses the work of Richard Muller. But Muller has seen the way in which Torrance has systematically misread Church history in an effort to 'Barthianise' it. (See 'The Barth Legacy: New Athanasius or Origen Redivivus? A Response to T. F. Torrance' (*The Thomist*, 1990).

This emphasis upon the fusion of ontology, soteriology and epistemology is doubly curious given Torrance's emphasis on the fact that the universe is contingent, something that might not have been. (p. 191) For if God had chosen not to create, as he could have if the universe is contingent, then there would (presumably) have been no economic trinity. But if the economic trinity is the

immanent trinity, and if the economic trinity is God, then had God not created he would not have existed! So either both the universe and God are contingent, or the universe and God are both necessary. Hardly a welcome result.

The idea of the universe being contingent is at the heart of Torrance's approach to the relations between theology and science to which McGrath comes in the final chapters of the book. What Torrance says about theological method is wholly correct, it seems to me. Theology, like any intellectual discipline, should aim to follow the contours of what is being studied; not to impose, but to expose. But this is easier said than done. For Torrance the reality to be exposed in the case of theology is the basic Trinitarian nature of God and what this implies. But how does he know that? How does he know that the correct theological method does not have a significant place for natural theology, for example?

Torrance's interest in science is wholly methodological and not in areas of potential conflict and cooperation between science and religion. He stresses the different content of the two disciplines, their common realist approach (p. 234). McGrath says that Torrance develops natural theology in a way that departs from Barth. But what Torrance gives us is not recognisable as natural theology, but rather a theology of nature. As McGrath shows elsewhere in the book, Torrance remains hostile, as Barth was, to natural theology as this is usually understood.

This is a beautifully-produced book, enhanced by numerous delightful photographs. Perhaps unwittingly, McGrath's prodigious energy has given us a portrayal of Torrance's ideas warts and all.

Paul Helm

A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith, Robert L. Reymond, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998, 1210 pages, various prices.

This major work from the pen of Robert Reymond, Professor of Systematic Theology at Knox Theological Seminary in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, is designed to cover the whole range of topics in Systematic Theology and offers a serious challenge to works such as Louis Berkhof's *Systematic Theology* as the standard Reformed textbook in the field.

On opening the book, the reader's first impression is likely to be that, in contrast to some other theological textbooks, Reymond quotes a great deal of Scripture in full and exegetes it in some detail. In place of the familiar strings of 'proof texts', such as those supplied by Berkhof, we have extensive expositions of Scripture. The great advantage of Reymond's approach is that his readers will see clearly from what biblical sources he derives his conclusions, whether they agree with him or not. Theology that is not derived from Scripture is worthless, and Reymond takes considerable pains to demonstrate that his theology is thoroughly biblical. Being presented only with a biblical reference in support of some theological proposition leaves the reader to make the necessary connections between the two, and if he cannot see the connection (as sometimes happens with Berkhof, for example) there is no way to check the writer's exegesis. In this regard Reymond's method is much more satisfactory.

The method used is in some respects more like 'Biblical Theology' than 'Systematic Theology'. Thus in the treatment of the deity of Christ in chapter 8, Reymond considers in turn Jesus' self-testimony, Paul's Christology, and the New Testament witness of each of the Non-Pauline writings. Having surveyed the biblical material in this way, however, the systematic theologian has the responsibility of synthesising the material, bringing the disparate parts into a coherent whole, since God's revelation in Scripture is a unified body of truth. He must, of course, not *impose* an alien system on his material but must demonstrate the interrelationships that already exist between the elements of each doctrine and between doctrines. It is in this task that Reymond leaves something to be desired. On a number of occasions the reader is left with the survey of biblical material and no synthesis is provided. This is very noticeable in the section on eschatology in chapter 25, where the lack of a properly systematic treatment of the New Testament material runs the risk of confusing the reader rather than clarifying the sequence of events revealed in Scripture. Reymond, as it were, examines in detail all the elements required for the building, but stops short of describing the final construction. Beginning students in particular may find this a disadvantage in using his book.

A common complaint about Berkhof's *Systematic Theology* is that it is written in a compressed style that makes it difficult to read for any length of time. In this respect Reymond is far superior, and compares well with Grudem's *Systematic Theology*. (Calvin's *Institutes* remain in a league of their own). The style is modern and flows well. The page layout and typeface also enhance readability and Greek and Hebrew terms are given in both original and transliterated forms. In general this is a 'user-friendly' volume which should be acces-

sible to a wide range of readers. One complaint is that most of the bibliographical material is confined to footnotes, with a brief general bibliography at the end of the book. The addition of bibliographies at the end of each chapter would have been helpful.

As far as content is concerned, Reymond's book is a faithful representative of confessional Calvinism as set out in the documents of the Westminster Assembly. Thus in ecclesiology he is unashamedly presbyterian and paedobaptist. (A Baptist colleague recently commented that he felt Berkhof's treatment of baptism is much fairer to opposing views than is Reymond's). He does, however, hold a supralapsarian position with respect to the order of the divine decrees and provides one of the most extensive defences of this view to be found in modern Reformed textbooks. The present reviewer disagrees with this view, but Reymond's thoroughness is to be commended. It is helpful to have a work of this scope which has been able to take account of recent developments in theology. Thus the 'openness' view of God propounded by Clark Pinnock and others is examined and found radically deficient. In relation to justification, which is most definitely back on the theological agenda, Reymond interacts critically with the document *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*. When Roman Catholicism is considered, it is in terms of the statements of the recent *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the definitive modern exposition of official Roman Catholic dogma, thus avoiding accusations that changes in Rome's position are not being taken into account.

Several appendices deal with particular issues which (presumably) the author regards as especially important. Thus there is a treatment of the Five Points of Calvinism and an examination of the identity of the man described in Romans 7:14-25 (although we find John Murray's exegesis of the passage more convincing). It is less clear why we have a consideration of the historicity of Paul's conversion, and the treatment of Anselm's view of the atonement could have been integrated into the body of the book.

On a number of issues Reymond adopts a position that is significantly different from his predecessors. Thus, for example, his approach to the doctrines of Scripture and of God may be characterised as 'presuppositional', drawing on the work of Cornelius Van Til. With regard to Scripture (chapter 2), this means that the Bible is regarded as self-attesting, so that belief in its inspired character does not depend ultimately on 'evidences' but on its own testimony, particularly that of Christ himself. With regard to the doctrine of God (chapter 6), Reymond sees no value in the traditional arguments for the existence of God, by

which many have set considerable store. These arguments, such as the ontological and the cosmological, are in his view fundamentally unsound and should not be used. His belief in God, he asserts, is based on God's revelation in nature and providence (including the *sensus deitatis* which all men possess as God's image-bearers), his propositional revelation in Scripture, his personal revelation in Christ and his saving revelation through the work of his Word and Spirit.

In considering the attributes of God (chapter 7), Reymond abandons the traditional classifications of the attributes in terms, for example, of communicable and incommunicable, and opts for a study of the attributes in terms of the Shorter Catechism answer to the question 'What is God?' Thus he speaks of God as infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. The treatment is refreshingly different, yet thoroughly biblical.

A more radical departure from the traditional Reformed position is to be found in Reymond's treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity (chapter 9). Drawing on the Nicene Creed, it has become axiomatic in orthodox theology that the Son is 'eternally generated' by the Father. It is argued that this expression makes a statement about the eternal relationships existing within the Trinity, however far they may be beyond human comprehension. Calling on the support of Calvin, however, Reymond rejects this view as encouraging mistaken ideas of the Son's inferiority to the Father. Reymond also rejects the statement of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed that the Holy Spirit 'eternally proceeds' from the Father and the Son (with Eastern Orthodoxy rejecting procession from the Son), seeing in it a similar risk of unbiblical subordinationism. The texts that speak of the Spirit 'going out' from the Father are to be interpreted in terms of the Spirit's mission in the world. Faced with the problem that the Westminster Confession uses the traditional language, Reymond is uncertain which view the Westminster Divines took, but believes that on balance they probably supported his approach. Clearly there is work here for the historical theologians to do in assessing this contention.

In this substantial volume Reymond has produced a most useful and thorough study of the whole span of Systematic Theology which strives throughout to be faithful to the Word of God. A careful study of its content will reap rich spiritual rewards. Will it replace Berkhof as the standard textbook? We think that on account of its strengths it probably will. No textbook is perfect, however, so don't throw away your Berkhof, or Hodge, or Turretin, and certainly not your Calvin.

W.D.J. McKay

Henry Drummond, A Perpetual Benediction, edited by Thomas E. Corts. T & T. Clark, 1999. Hb.xxxiii, 141pp. £18.95.

This attractively produced book contains seven essays by seven theologians, all ardent admirers of Henry Drummond and his work. It has appendices, selected references, a chronology of significant events in the life and history of Henry Drummond and a useful index. There is a Foreword by Timothy F. George which is an epitome of Drummond's life and career and an Introduction by the Editor, Thomas E. Corts, headed by the question, 'Who was Henry Drummond?'. This question is answered by reference to certain leading characteristics of Drummond: '(I) He was a great friend who carefully tended a close circle of friendships, especially with D.L. Moody, the American evangelist; (ii) a convincing speaker with special concern for Christian work among boys and among college students and was called 'the greatest leader of young men this century has seen'; (iii) a Great-Commission believer, unafraid of modern science, sensitive to common sense issues while thoughtful about personal evangelism; (iv) one of the earliest of modern Christian authors to gain and maintain wide popular appeal. For these reasons and more, this modest servant — today most famous as author of "The Greatest Thing in the World" — deserves to be remembered'. (p.xxv).

Drummond came of a well-known family of seed merchants in Stirling, Scotland, and his Uncle Peter established the famous 'Drummond Tract Depot'. When twelve years of age he was sent to boarding school and at fifteen years he matriculated at the University of Edinburgh. Later, by an impelling inner compulsion and sense of call, he entered upon the study of theology in the Free Church of Scotland, Glasgow. In the final year of his studies (1874), when Moody and Sankey came to Scotland to hold Gospel campaigns, Moody, fascinated by Drummond's personality, was drawn to him and engaged him to be his assistant in his campaigns, for he quickly recognised his genius as a skilled communicator and a scintillating orator as well as an evangelistic counsellor. His association with Moody brought much fame to Drummond and on several occasions he was invited to America to speak at Moody's conference centre at Northfield. 'Although so closely associated with Moody the campaigning revivalist, Drummond is said not to have fully understood sudden conversion'. In his book, 'Natural Law in the Spiritual World', he endorses the principle that people do become Christian instantaneously but remarks that 'probably for the majority the moment is unconscious'.

Drummond was not strong on doctrine. In fact, he adopted a distinctly antidoctrinal position (p.35). 'He deplures attempts to set out "cut and dry"

theology and actually praises 'vagueness' as a sign of truth. 'You cannot live on theological forms', he contends, "without ceasing to be a man" (p.36). Insofar as he did express doctrinal views, he seemed suspiciously broad — especially to the Highland presbyteries of his church that censured him for heretical tendencies. He dismissed the federal theology of seventeenth-century Calvinism as an elaborate rationalism. Unlike most evangelists, for instance, he rarely spoke of the need for repentance (pp.35,36). To the Free Church theologian James Denney, Drummond's writings were entirely alien, judging his 'Natural Law' 'an entirely unconvincing work, a book that no lover of men will call religious and no student of theology scientific' (p.37). The weakness of his teaching on sin, in fact, induced certain other evangelists to refuse to appear on the same platform with him. The orthodox at Moody's Northfield Conference, Drummond reported, 'fell upon me and rent me' (p.36).

Drummond constantly downgraded doctrine in the scheme of things. 'The New Evangelism', he said, 'must not be doctrinal'. He even repudiated an article of the Creed for he rejected the doctrine of the resurrection of the body as too materialistic. The spiritual must take precedence over the physical (p.37). This liberal tendency should be seen as another effect of his romantic approach to the Christian faith (p.37). Now all of this rejection flies in the face of the biblical emphasis on doctrine. Drummond must not have paid much attention to Paul's epistles to Timothy and Titus where the Apostle frequently mentions the importance of doctrine — e.g., I Tim.1:3,4; I Tim.1:10;4:6,13,16; 5:17; 6:1,3ff; II Tim.3:10,16;4:2,3; Titus 1:9; 2:1,7,10. There is also Paul's great doctrinal teaching in Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians and his eschatological teaching in I and II Thessalonians. Consider, too, the great doctrines associated with Abraham: (I) Election; (ii) Effectual Calling; (iii) Revelation; (iv) Faith; (v) Assurance; (vi) Righteousness; (vii) Imputed Righteousness; (viii) Justification; (ix) Separation; (x) Sanctification, etc. These doctrines seemed not to interest Drummond.

Drummond developed an intense interest in science which he seems to have preferred to theology. He readily accepted Charles Darwin's teachings and theories and became a whole-hearted advocate of the theory of evolution. This book describes Drummond as 'dignified, smartly turned out, with angular features and a drooping moustache; he looked the ideal gentleman. Like Gladstone whom he followed in politics, Drummond possessed a commanding eye. His gaze would penetrate his hearers to the core'. (p.30) 'He took up the characteristic late-Victorian concern with psychic influences and like Gladstone he was fascinated by seances; he wrote a paper on 'Mesmerism and Animal Magnetism' and he practised hypnotism. There is early evidence of an interest

in the borderlands of spiritism and psychology, religion and naturalism. 'Drummond's "Natural Law in the Spiritual World" was to be founded on the hypothesis that there is a firm connection between the two' (p.32) but he evidently did not consider the Bible's condemnation of such abominations (Deut. 18:10ff).

Drummond was greatly influenced by Professor A.B. Davidson and Dr. Marcus Dods. He sympathetically deplored the deposition of Professor W. Robertson Smith whose liberal teachings impressed him. Dods, Smith and A.B. Bruce (associates of Drummond) were subjected to trial for heresy in the church courts and from his own writings it is fairly clear that he had accepted the views of those scholars. This underlines Dr. Alexander C. Cheyne's opening sentence of his essay, 'The Religious World of Henry Drummond', 'Henry Drummond has never been an easy person to categorize' (p.3).

This book, small in size, neat in its dust-jacket, is expensively priced at £18.95 but its contributors have handled their assignments with commendable thoroughness.

William McKnight

Conflict and Triumph: The argument of the book of Job unfolded, by William Henry Green, Banner of Truth, 177 pps. £3.95.

First published in 1874 and authored by a lecturer who taught at Princeton for nearly 50 years, this volume is not an exegetical commentary on Job, rather it seeks to give a broad overview of the book, focusing attention mainly on the chief protagonists, Job, Satan, the three friends, Elihu and the Lord. The text used is the New King James Version.

The book opens with a discussion of Job's happy estate. In our first encounter with the man from Uz we come face to face with his simple faith, a religion entirely devoid of ritual, with a strong emphasis on personal piety and family worship - and God blessed him! Green proves convincingly that, while there are exceptions, godliness and happiness generally go hand in hand, reminding us of the words of the apostle 'godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come'.

The second chapter, on Satan, gives a profound insight into the enemy of our souls and his efforts to destroy God's people. However, this is no pre-occupation with evil for the sake of it, and this wise pastor of souls not only leads us on to consider the glory of Christ in his defeat of Satan, but also demonstrates that, in spite of all the devil's machinations, he ends up doing the work of God.

A further chapter deals with Job's affliction. We are reminded that God's servant knew nothing of Satan's malicious design or the sovereign purpose of God in bringing him through such horrendous circumstances, yet he was sustained and prevented from railing against his Maker. In all of this God's grace is magnified because Job's spiritual privileges were few in comparison to ours. He did not have access to the sympathy of the incarnate Saviour, he had no clear views of eternal blessedness, and knew little about the doctrine of chastisement, yet he persevered. The chapter ends with the prayer that 'he whose grace supported Job in all his dreadful trials hitherto might grant like grace to us - grace according to our need'.

The next two chapters trace Job's continuing conflict and interaction with his three friends. These 'physicians of no value' are mercilessly exposed and their differing attempts at solving Job's problem are helpfully distinguished. The writer demonstrates how they torture Job for crimes he has not committed, make irrelevant applications to his case, become more obdurate and incorrigible as time progresses and undertake to explain his problem as if they had full knowledge of his case. With friends like this, for whom providence has no enigmas, who needs enemies! Chapter seven, entitled Job's triumph, deals masterfully with the great utterance 'I know that my Redeemer liveth' (Job 19:25-27). Suffice to say that after reading Green's comments I was led to preach on this text!

A chapter is devoted to Job's refutation of his three friends and this is followed by another one on Elihu. The latter is particularly helpful in discriminating, in a clear and helpful manner, between the sentiments propounded by Elihu and those which had previously been advanced by his three friends. Green maintains, for instance, that whereas Eliphaz understood suffering to be punitive, Elihu understood it to be curative. As a result of Elihu's speech Green concludes that 'Job is purified and instructed; his piety is heightened, and his knowledge of divine things is increased by this affliction. So that the doctrine of Elihu, far from conflicting with the rest of the book, finds its ample justification and support' (P131).

The final chapter is on the LORD himself. Green states that God does not give a definitive answer to Job's queries and 'has no intention of placing himself at the bar of his creatures and elevating them into judges of his conduct' (P138). However, the Lord's revelation of himself is designed 'to bring him to the deepest humiliation and contrition for all his rash and impatient utterances and all the improper reflections he had cast upon God's dealings with him in his providence' (P140). In all of this 'Job's piety is elevated and his welfare and happiness are promoted' (P141). In the words of James 'Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord - that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful' (James 5:11).

The book concludes with two helpful appendices on 'The place of Job in the scheme of Holy Scripture' and 'The doctrine of immortality in the Old Testament'. This is not a volume which will provide precise exegetical insight on the text of Job, but its great strength lies in the author's ability to clarify the main themes in a most helpful manner. If you find the middle section of Job confusing, this book will help you to distinguish the wood from the trees. Thoroughly Reformed, warmly pastoral and deeply devotional, this is a book I thoroughly enjoyed, and since the price is so readily affordable I can only recommend it highly.

Jeff Ballantine

Calvin & The Calvinists, Paul Helm, Banner of Truth, 81 pp, hb 1998, £6.95.

This book by Paul Helm, Professor of the History and Philosophy of Religion at Kings College London is a reprint of the 1982 edition. It is an expansion of an article published in the SJT 1981. The aim of the essay was to show that Calvin and the Puritans were theologically speaking as one, and thus to support the truism that Calvin was a Calvinist. Scholars believed that Puritan theology departed significantly from, and even opposed, the theology of John Calvin. This study rejected such a view and did so by examining the work of one of its exponents, Dr R T Kendall's 'Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649'

(1981). Helm in this volume focused on the doctrines of the Atonement and of Saving Faith. The book has a scripture and author index and is divided into five chapters.

In the opinion of Dr Kendall, John Calvin was neither an Amyraldian nor a Universalist in his doctrine of the Atonement, but 'Arminius and Calvin have in common the belief that Christ died for all'. All are not saved however. Kendall maintained that such a view of the atonement provided the basis for assurance of salvation. In reply Professor Helm endeavoured to demonstrate that Calvin taught that Christ's atonement was intended for the elect and secured remission. He reviewed the debated 'all' passages in Calvin's commentaries and sought to show the unanimity between Calvin and the Westminster Confession of Faith. Helm pointed out that Kendall's view of Calvin in which he differentiated between the scope of the atonement and the intercession of Christ was a novel position. The problem of assurance, Helm suggested, was not resolved by Kendall's view but only deferred from 'How do we know that Christ died for me?' to 'How do I know that Christ intercedes for me?'

Dr Kendall saw a divergence between Calvin and the Puritans regarding the doctrine of faith. In Calvin, Kendall argued, faith was God's act in opening blind eyes; in the Westminster Confession of Faith, faith was man's act. In Calvin the will in conversion was passive; in the Puritans it was active. Calvin taught that repentance followed saving faith, but the Puritans maintained that repentance preceded faith. Kendall accused the Puritans of deforming the gospel of salvation by grace into a gospel of works-righteousness. He virtually accused the Westminster Confession of Faith of being an Arminian document. Again, Professor Helm argued that there was no vital break between Calvin and the Puritans. Although faith was an act of the will it was not an unaided act. The Larger Catechism did speak of faith as a 'condition' but not a meritorious condition - merely a condition of connection. Helm indicated that there was a preparation for salvation by the law, not in the sense that man prepared himself, but man may be prepared by the Spirit. (Rutherford - 'no preparation of deserving' but a 'preparation of order'.) Evangelical repentance according to Calvin and the Westminster Confession of Faith, Helm asserted, followed faith.

Although more and more scholars have rejected Kendall's thesis this book is still relevant. It is lucidly written, focuses on the heart of the gospel and may be useful in clarifying our views of fundamental truths. A weakness of this reprint is that there has not been appended a reply by Dr Kendall to allow the reader to properly evaluate Helm's objections. Professor Helm described Dr Kendall's use of certain evidence as 'cavalier and unscholarly', of taking sentences out of con-

text, and failing to observe the drift of Calvin's thought. 'It seems almost as if Kendall has begun with a view of what the relationship between Calvin and the Puritans must have been and has scoured the literature for evidence to support this view!' p80. The reader is left wondering how his opponent would reply to such serious charges.

David Sutherland

BOOK NOTICES

Protestant Scholasticism. Essays in Reassessment, edited by Carl R. Trueman and R.S. Clark, Paternoster Press, 1999, 344 pp., £24.99.

This collection of essays is a work of major significance which should help to dispel the pernicious myth that Protestant theology in the eighteenth century was marked by a process of decline from the biblical theologies of Luther and (especially) Calvin into an arid, rationalistic system of dogma. The 'Scholasticism' of the period was in fact often richly biblical, as devout scholars sought to tease out the implications of the insights of the first generations of Reformers. Only at a later period, when the biblical foundations were eventually undermined, did rationalism become a dominant force. The authors of these eighteen essays are among the foremost experts in their respective fields, including as they do Richard Muller, Lyle Bierma, Robert Godfrey, Carl Trueman, Joel Beeke and Martin Klauber. A wide range of subjects is covered, with studies of, among others, Beza, Peter Martyr Vermigli, Zanchi, Ursinus, William Perkins and Scottish Reformed Scholasticism. Anyone with a serious interest in the history of Reformed theology should read this work.

Thomas Boston as Preacher of the Fourfold State, Philip Graham Ryken, Paternoster Press, 1999, 357 pp., £24.99.

Thomas Boston was an outstanding pastor and theologian in eighteenth century Scotland, whose book *Human Nature in its Fourfold State* exercised widespread influence for good on the spiritual lives of many people. In this thoroughly researched but readable study Graham Ryken examines Boston's great

work in its historical context and in the process provides a heart-warming survey of Boston's understanding of the whole sweep of God's redemptive plan realised in Christ. Great themes such as the Covenant of Grace, union with Christ and the glory prepared for God's people are expounded and applied by Boston in a most helpful way, and Ryken's enthusiastic study opens up some of the riches of Boston and encourages readers to turn to *The Fourfold State* for themselves. This is a valuable addition to the Rutherford Studies in Historical Theology.

W.D.J. McKay

On Giants' Shoulders: Studies in Christian Apologetics, Edgar C. Powell, Day One Publications, 1999, 262pp., £8.99.

In this book the author confronts the non-theistic view of the universe, including man, and demonstrates convincingly the intellectual and moral bankruptcy of godless philosophy. He is well qualified for the task. His loyalty to the Word of God, his experience in teaching geology (among other subjects) and his extensive reading, not only of Reformed thinkers, but also of the main evolutionary and atheistic writers of our day, are apparent throughout his book, which abounds with telling quotations - especially from those holding to a non-Christian view of the universe.

Powell writes in a reasonably popular style, but lucidly and pungently as he exposes the weakness and inconsistency of modern unbelief, and in particular that of evolutionists. He shows the utter hopelessness of a world-and-life view that has no place for God, and does so by letting atheistic thinkers speak for themselves. His research has been thorough, his approach fair and courteous, while relentless in demolishing many of the myths to which multitudes cling. There are useful charts, questions for further study, a glossary of terms and indices. His book has been described as 'a challenge to the sceptic and a comfort to the saint' - both alike should read it.

Evangelical Eloquence, A Course of Lectures on Preaching, R.L. Dabney, Banner of Truth Trust, 199, 361pp., £3.95.

R.L. Dabney, Professor of Church History and then of Theology at Union Theology Seminary, and later of Theology at Austin Seminary, Texas, was one of the greatest theologians of the Southern Presbyterian Church in America. He ranks with such men as J.H. Thornwell, W.G.T. Shedd and the Hodges. Anything from his pen is to be treasured. First published in 1870, these lectures to the alumni and students of Union Theological Seminary, are of lasting significance. Every aspect of the preacher's task is exhaustively discussed: his commission, text, requisites of the sermon, rules of argument, diction, the preacher's character, style, action, deportment, etc. Nothing of importance is overlooked in this deeply spiritual study, and the closing chapter on Public Prayer is a fitting and necessary conclusion to a masterly work.

Dabney points out the many pitfalls to be avoided by the preacher of the gospel, while concentrating on giving positive guidance for this noblest of tasks. A man of exceptional erudition, he writes in a style of English now sadly a thing of the past. Consequently the reader's vocabulary will be considerably increased! Every divinity student and minister of the Word (regardless of age) should read this book. It would be hard to exaggerate its importance. It is more timely now than ever.

Frederick S. Leahy

EX LIBRIS**God Manifest in the Flesh**

Here is a young man scarcely thirty-three years of age, emerged from obscurity only for the brief space of three years, living during those years under the scorn of the world, which grew steadily in intensity and finally passed into hatred, and dying at the end the death of a malefactor: but leaving behind Him the germs of a world-wide community, the spring of whose vitality is the firm conviction that He was God manifest in the flesh. If anything human is obvious, it is obvious that this conviction was not formed and fixed without evidence for it of the most convincing kind ...

If Christ were not God, we should have a very different Jesus and a very different Christianity. And that is the reason that modern unbelief bends all its energies in a vain effort to abolish the historical Jesus and to destroy historical Christianity. Its instinct is right: but its task is hopeless. We need the Jesus of history to account for the Christianity of history. And we need both the Jesus of history and the Christianity of history to account for the history of the world. The history of the world is the product of the precise Christianity which has actually existed, and this Christianity is the product of the precise Jesus which actually was. To be rid of this Jesus we must be rid of this Christianity, and to be rid of this Christianity we must be rid of the world-history which has grown out of it. We must have the Christianity of history and the Jesus of history, or we leave the world that exists, and as it exists, unaccounted for. But so long as we have either the Jesus of history or the Christianity of history we shall have a divine Jesus.

— B.B. Warfield, *The Lord of Glory* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1907), pp.275,276,278.