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CONTENTS

GLORY AND SUFFERING IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL - A PARADOX OF DISCIPLESHIP by Edward Donnelly	5
THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH IN THE WESTMINSTER TRADITION by W. D. J. McKay	16
THE PSALMS AS A MANUAL OF PRAISE by Frederick S. Leahy.....	40
EVANGELISING IRELAND: JAMES USSHER AND THE ULSTER PRESBYTERIANS by Crawford Gribben.....	52
THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM AND ITS AUTHORS by Joel R. Beeke	66
CASE OF PROFESSOR JAMES ARMINIUS AND THE SYNOD OF DORT by Dr. Charles A. McIlhenny.....	74
BOOK REVIEWS	
David McKay, THE BOND OF LOVE: COVENANT THEOLOGY AND THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD by Edward Donnelly	90
Stephen R. Holmes, GOD OF GRACE AND GOD OF GLORY. AN ACCOUNT OF THE THEOLOGY OF JONATHAN EDWARDS by David McKay.....	91
Edward Donnelly, BIBLICAL TEACHING ON THE DOCTRINES OF HEAVEN AND HELL by Peter Jemphrey.....	94
COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM, 'ANTI-NICODEMITE' WRITINGS OF JOHN CALVIN by Frederick S. Leahy	96
Colin E. Gunton, THEOLOGY THROUGH PREACHING by Frederick S. Leahy.....	98
Duane Garrett, RETHINKING GENESIS: THE SOURCES AND AUTHORSHIP OF THE FIRST BOOK OF THE PENTATEUCH by Norris Wilson	100
Alf McCreary, SAINT PATRICK'S CITY — THE STORY OF ARMAGH by A.C. Gregg.....	101
Colin E. Gunton, INTELLECT AND ACTION. ELUCIDATIONS ON CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AND THE LIFE OF FAITH by David McKay	102
Donald K. McKim, THE WESTMINSTER HANDBOOK TO REFORMED THEOLOGY by W D J McKay	104
Geoffrey Grogan, THE CHRIST OF THE BIBLE AND THE CHURCH'S FAITH by W D J McKay	104
John Brown, GALATIANS by Edward Donnelly	105
Linda Edwards, A BRIEF GUIDE TO BELIEFS: IDEAS, THEOLOGIES, MYSTERIES AND MOVEMENTS by Edward Donnelly	105
Samuel Yull Lee, GRACE AND POWER IN PENTECOSTAL AND CHARISMATIC THEOLOGY by Edward Donnelly	105

LOOK TO THE ROCK

There are times when looking back is one of the most progressive steps we can take. The age in which we live, of course, does not recommend it. Our culture is infatuated with what is 'new' and therefore inevitably 'improved'. The current British prime minister is infamous for his advocacy of 'cool Britannia', a nation divorced from its traditions and history and rather pathetically trying to claim a fresh role in the world. Regard for the past is commonly seen as equivalent to opting for irrelevance.

The perspective of the Word of God is very different. Remembering is a key activity for the believer, one in which the past not only enriches the present but guides and strengthens for the future. At the centre of our faith is the sacrament in which, by remembering, we 'proclaim the Lord's death until he comes' (1 Cor.11:26). God's counsel to his people is unambiguous: 'Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug' (Isa.51:1).

The past illustrates mistakes to be avoided and fruitful courses of action to be explored. It stimulates us by its records of high endeavour and the suffering service which results in triumph. Above all, it encourages us by pointing to the eternal, unchanging God who, against all opposition, is perfectly fulfilling his purpose of redemption.

In this edition of the Journal we look backwards without apology - to the development of Christianity throughout this island, to the doctrinal and ecumenical achievements of our spiritual forefathers and to the ageless songs which have always expressed most profoundly and worthily the worship of the covenant people. As will be seen from the succeeding articles, we 'look to the rock' not that we may dwell in the past, but that we may be equipped, by God's grace, to shape the future.

E.D.

GLORY AND SUFFERING IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL - A PARADOX OF DISCIPLESHIP

by Edward Donnelly

Edward Donnelly is Principal and Professor of New Testament Language and Literature at the Reformed Theological College, Belfast and Minister of Trinity Reformed Presbyterian Church, Newtownabbey.

The apostle John is a writer with a profound and subtle habit of mind. He is fond of irony, of different levels of meaning, of complexity wrapped in simplicity. An especial characteristic of his gospel is the element of paradox, where apparent contradiction resolves itself, upon reflection, into luminous truth. We meet it at the very beginning, where 'the Word' who 'was with God, and... was God... became flesh'¹ (Jn.1:1,14). That last phrase must have seemed, to Greeks trained in philosophical dualism, the epitome of absurdity. Another startling irony is that of the Creator rejected by the works of his hands, for: 'He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him' (1:10,11).

Equally paradoxical is John's treatment of the theme of the glory of Christ, by which, claims Marcus Dods, 'the entire Gospel is held together'.² The first half of the book, from 1:19 - 12:50, records the manifestation of Christ's glory to the world in signs, while the second part, from 13:1 - 20:31, shows our Lord expounding his glory to his disciples by means of detailed instruction. While John, unlike the writers of the Synoptic gospels, does not record the Transfiguration, he is nonetheless deeply interested in the idea of Jesus' glory. The verb 'to glorify' - *doxazo* - is found 23 times in his gospel, while the next most frequent New Testament usage is 9 times by Luke. 'This revelation of glory is a key to the gospel'³, a vital element in the earthly life of our Lord. 'For those with eyes to see, Jesus during his ministry reveals through his words and actions the glory of God the Father'⁴.

Glory is a central Old Testament concept, 'an image of divine transcendence as it makes itself visible'.⁵ 'It does not mean God in his essential nature, but the luminous manifestation of his person, his glorious revelation of himself',⁶ seen, for example, at Sinai and in the Jerusalem temple: 'The glory of the Lord dwelt on Mount Sinai... The appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel'

(Exod.24:16,17); 'And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, a cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord' (1 Kings 8:10,11).

On such climactic occasions in the history of redemption the glory of God's ineffable being was revealed to his people. But a day was coming when his glory would be revealed more clearly: 'Arise, shine, for your light has come; and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you' (Isa.60:1-3). This glory, the true glory of God, was revealed in Jesus Christ - but in a strange and unexpected way.

The revelation of Christ's glory

Jesus - who 'was God - His only Son' (1:1; 3:16) had, as the second person in the godhead, a glory which was intrinsically and permanently his own. He was glorious before creation, for he prayed 'And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed' (17:5). He was glorious in the days of the prophets, for 'Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him' (12:41). But, with Jesus' birth and throughout his life on earth, this glory of the Son was made visible to humans. 'And the Word became flesh', writes John in a programmatic text, 'and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth' (1:14).

It is surely more than verbal coincidence that the consonants of 'dwelt' (*eskenosen*)⁷ are the same as those of the post-biblical Hebrew *shekinah*. This term, cognate with *shakan* (to dwell) and *mishkan* (tabernacle), referred to the glorious outshining of the divine nature, God present among his people. It was glimpsed by Moses in the cleft of the rock (Exod.33:22), or when 'the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle' (Exod.40:34). It was seen in the bright cloud during the wilderness wanderings (Num.14:10,21), and again at the dedication of the temple (1 Kings 8:10-11). Isaiah saw the *shekinah* in the year that king Uzziah died (Isa.6:1). Now it has appeared again in the person of Jesus. 'We have seen his glory', wrote his disciple - no longer in tabernacle or temple, but in the flesh of the son of Mary. 'The incarnate Word is the true *shekinah*, the ultimate manifestation of the presence of God among human beings'.⁸

Christ's glory was revealed clearly in his miracles. We are told, after the changing of water into wine, that 'This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana

in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him' (2:11). Just before he raised Lazarus from the dead, he challenged doubting Martha with the question, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?' (11:40). She was to see the divine glory, in other words, in the restoration of her brother to life. That such extraordinary events were manifestations of glory is to be expected.

But what is surprising is that John does not limit the revelation of Jesus' glory to his miracles, but sees it in all of his life. 'We have seen his glory' - in the acts of power, of course. But the statement includes much more. All that the Master was, did and said was a revelation to the disciples of the glory of God. 'He regards the whole of Christ's incarnate life as an embodiment of the *doxa* of God, though the glory is revealed only to believing disciples and not to the world'.⁹

Our very familiarity with the gospels can blind us to how astonishing is the story which they tell. God comes to earth. How would we have expected him to appear? Certainly not as he did.

'They saw the lowly man from Nazareth, moving among ordinary people in a backwater of the Roman Empire'.¹⁰ He creates no international stir, makes no attempt to capture the centres of political or cultural influence. He teaches, travels about with a small band of nobodies, lives an admirable life and departs from earth with few on the planet aware that he has come. Many of those who did meet him laughed at him. His first specific claim to be Messiah was made to an immoral foreign woman beside a village well in Samaria. It all seems ludicrously low-key.

Even his miracles, amazing though they were, and undoubted evidences of his deity, are relatively quiet and under-stated. He helps at a country wedding, heals at long-distance in provincial Galilee, cures one individual among the crowd at Bethesda. Marvellous enough to move his disciples to faith and commitment, but is this really what the Almighty was expected to do when he came to earth? Does the Old Testament not lead us to anticipate something apocalyptic, God judging the nations, shaking the heavens and the earth, transforming the created universe? 'Who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?' asked the prophet (Mal.3:2). But the Lord, when he did come, seemed to create scarcely a ripple.

'We have seen his glory'. Yet it was a strange sort of glory, and many who saw and heard him perceived no glory at all. 'What is striking about John's

presentation is that, although his glory was manifested powerfully in his miracles or "signs", it was above all to be seen in his present weakness, in the self-humiliation of his incarnation'.¹¹ 'As He came in lowliness we have an example of the paradox that John uses so forcefully later in the Gospel, that the true glory is to be seen, not in outward splendour, but in the lowliness with which the Son of God lived for men and suffered for them'.¹²

This becomes especially clear from the way in which John links glory with the cross. We may not be as surprised at this as we should be, since our awareness of the splendour of Christ's accomplishment at Calvary can cast over his cross a cloak of spurious sentiment and so obscure something of its horror. But a horror it was to the first century world, a place of unspeakable agony, and, above all, of shame and curse. To explain the paradox was, indeed, a great part of John's purpose in writing the gospel. 'Part of his goal, in writing an evangelistic book for Jews and proselytes, is to make the notion of a crucified Messiah coherent. The intrinsic offense of the cross he cannot remove. What he can do... is to show that the cross... is at one and the same time nothing less than... God's astonishing plan to bring glory to himself by being glorified in his Messiah'.¹³

So, again and again, Jesus' death by crucifixion is referred to as his glorification. 'The Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified... His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to Him... The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified... Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? "Father, save me from this hour"? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name. Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it and I will glorify it again"' (7:39; 12:16,23, 27,28). 'I have glorified it' - in the whole of the Son's life, no matter how inglorious it might seem. 'I will glorify it again' - in all that is about to happen, no matter how shameful it may appear. 'When he had gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once... Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son, that the Son may glorify you' (13:31,32; 17:1).

The glory of Christ is to be seen supremely in his offering of himself, the Lamb of God, on a stake at the hill of Calvary. 'Jesus' glorification and death are nearly synonymous in John'.¹⁴ 'For in the cross of Christ, as in a splendid theatre, the incomparable goodness of God is set before the whole world'.¹⁵ A strange and terrible glory!

This is confirmed by John's paradoxical use of another word - *hypsoo* - 'I lift up'. The verb usually means 'to raise high, exalt' and is so used elsewhere in the New Testament. 'Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God... God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Saviour... Therefore God has highly exalted (*hyperhypsoosen*) him' (Acts 2:33; 5:31; Phil.2:9).

But John seems to use *hypsoo* in a different sense. 'And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up... When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority... And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself' (3:14; 8:28; 12:32).

Does this 'lifted up' refer to Christ's exaltation to the Father's right hand? Not primarily, for 'He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die' (12:33). And his hearers seem to have understood, contrasting in their response 'lifting up' with unending life: 'So the crowd answered him, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains for ever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up?"' (12:34).

Why use such an ambiguous word? Because of the few inches above the ground to which crucified victims were usually raised? No, the ambiguity is deliberate, because Jesus' death was, in a real sense, his exaltation and glory. The very word which the early church used for the Lord's exaltation is that which he himself used for his crucifixion. John does not separate the humiliation from the following glory. 'Whereas in the Synoptic Gospels suffering is the path to future glory, to John it is also the arena in which the glorification actually takes place'.¹⁶ 'Lifting up' includes and links death and the victory over death. This connection was not new, for God had made it, for example, at the beginning of the classic Old Testament depiction of Calvary: 'Behold, my servant... shall be high and lifted up and shall be exalted' (Isa.52:13). 'The crucifixion is no denial of the exaltation of Jesus. In fact, paradoxically, the crucifixion is the exaltation... The hour of his suffering is thus paradoxically the hour of his greatest glory. The glory may be hidden from the sons of men. But the glory is there nonetheless'.¹⁷

Here then is the greatest paradox of all - the glory of God revealed in Jesus, and especially in that which seems to be most inglorious. 'If it be objected that nothing could be less glorious than Christ's death..., I reply that in that death we see a boundless glory which is concealed from the ungodly. For there we know that by the expiation of sins the world has been reconciled to God, the curse blotted out and Satan vanquished'.¹⁸ We cannot, dare not, try to escape

from or dilute this paradox in any way, for it is the heart of the gospel. 'We preach Christ crucified' (1 Cor.1:23) - unimaginable glory through appalling suffering. In this, as in much else, Paul and John are brothers. 'It is part of John's aim to show that Jesus showed forth his glory not in spite of his earthly humiliations, but precisely by means of those humiliations. Supremely is this the case with the cross. To the outward eye this was the uttermost in degradation, the death of a felon. To the eye of faith it was (and is) the supreme glory'.¹⁹

But what do we do with the paradox? What should our reaction be?

Recognising Christ's glory

A Christian disciple is someone who sees the glory of God in the person of his Son. Many did not, still do not, see it. 'God's glory was manifested in humiliation and suffering, visible only to the eye of faith'.²⁰ But there are those whose hearts God opens. Just as, at the moment of creation, 'God said, "Let there be light", and there was light', so 'God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness", has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ' (Gen.1:3; 2 Cor.4:6).

'We have seen his glory'. Is this true of us? Here is a searching test of true faith. As we read the Scriptures, meditate, pray and worship, are our hearts drawn out to Christ in adoration and thanksgiving? Is he, for us, 'distinguished among ten thousand... altogether desirable' (Song 5:10,11)? The apostle Peter assumes this appreciation of the Saviour's glory as the experience of every believer: 'Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory' (1 Pet.1:8).

We need to learn to recognise Christ's glory in what he is presently doing in the world. For his chosen ways of working are still, to us, surprising and we must train ourselves to discern his glory as he is pleased to reveal it. We are not the first to wrestle with this difficulty, for, as we read the gospels, it is obvious that, at times, the disciples were almost impatient with the Lord. They wanted him to do more, to make a greater impression. They believed in him and longed for him to convince those who did not believe by showing them what he could really achieve.

The note of exasperation is almost audible when 'Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?"' (14:22). We can sympathise with the disciple's perplexity. Why this

limited revelation? Why will his Master not show himself in a mighty, overwhelming display of power, something of which he is eminently capable? Then all must believe. But Jesus resolutely set his face towards the cross. He would not respond to Judas' implied request. He insisted on a revelation of glory which was veiled, quiet, impressive to some, rejected by many.

The same longing still exists, often with admirable motives, for Christ to impress the world with a much more obvious display of his glory. It lies behind much of the charismatic movement. It is why too many contemporary Christians idolise apparent 'success'. Even the desire for revival among Reformed believers can be due to a longing for visible evidences of God's redeeming power.

No one doubts that it is proper for us to long and pray earnestly for a mighty working of God in the world. Christ is the reigning King, his humiliation is ended and he sits in great power and glory at the Father's right hand. But we need to be careful that we do not, however unconsciously, find fault with the way in which the Lord chooses to advance his kingdom. He is succeeding. All is on schedule and according to plan. Scripture assures us that not a single one of Christ's sheep will be lost, that in his work there will be no failure whatsoever. To every one of his elect will come a revelation of his glory sufficient to bring them to faith.

The truth that 'there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents' (Luke 15:10) is so familiar to us that we can fail to realise how utterly staggering it is. How can it be that the conversion of a single human being should evoke such rejoicing in the abode of ultimate and infinite happiness? Because the glory of Jesus is displayed in it. We are too apt to think of such things as 'ordinary', run of the mill, just as his earthly life seemed unimpressive to most of his contemporaries. But, for those with eyes to see, the glory was there. God forbid that his glory should shine and we be too blind to discern it!

We should, in fact, thank God for Christ's present quiet revelation of his glory. We should not only accept its 'veiledness', but rejoice in it. A day is coming when the glory will be manifested in the most awesome, irresistible way. No doubts will remain, no unbelieving sneers will be possible, all will be convinced. But by then, it will be too late for faith and the day of salvation will have passed for ever. Noah, during his years of apparently pointless boat-building, may have wished at times for some dramatic inbreaking of God which would silence the mockery of his neighbours. When at last the great Flood came, the unbelieving world was convinced of the truth of his preaching. But by then the Lord had closed the door of the ark. It is right that we should long to

be able to persuade people that the flood of judgment is coming. But let us thank God that the rain, which will at the last convince them, has not yet begun to fall!

As we struggle with the unbelief around us, as we face rejection and discouragement, let us remember why. This modest revelation of Christ's glory is God's litmus test for faith, his means of separating his elect out of the world to salvation.

Reflecting Christ's glory

Christ's glory was not only revealed to his disciples but communicated to them. They received his glory in order that they might reflect it in the world. This is made clear, for example, in his high-priestly prayer: 'All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them... The glory which you have given me I have given to them...' (17:10,22). Such is still our unspeakable responsibility and privilege.

As was the case with the Lord Jesus, this glory also is shielded, veiled, associated with suffering and cross-bearing. 'For John glory, real glory, is to be seen when someone who could occupy a majestic and exalted place accepts instead a place of lowly service'.²¹ Christ's glory in us is the glory of humility, of service, of pouring out our lives for others.

For a key concept in discipleship is that of following Jesus, 'an allegiance to his person which is regarded as the decisive act'.²² 'I am the light of the world' he said. 'Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life... My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me' (8:12; 10:27).

Those who follow Jesus first receive and then reflect his glory. But what does their following entail? Surely it involves going where he went - along a path of suffering, carrying a cross. Are we ready for such a journey? Is this the glory we desire? All too often our idea of glory is a much more comfortable one, of power, victory and joy. But the paradox holds us. Glory, on this earth, is of a certain kind. 'The Son glorifies the Father by his complete obedience and faithful fulfilment of his task'.²³

So we must decide. Do we want a Christian life which is soft, pampered and stress-free? Do we long to be popular? Are we looking for health, wealth and uninterrupted happiness? Many contemporary churches and preachers claim to offer this to their adherents. The 'user-friendly' approach to Christian living has

been adopted by millions of professing believers.

But it is not the way of Christ. 'The suffering and struggle of Jesus are only alternative names for his glory. In fact, glory hurts. It is when it hurts and is accepted that it becomes glory'.²⁴ Leon Morris, commenting on Jesus' statement, 'The glory that you have given me I have given to them' (17:22), reminds us that 'just as His true glory was to follow the path of lowly service culminating in the cross, so for them the true glory lay in the path of lowly service wherever it might lead them'.²⁵ The Lord himself made plain the terrible yet glorious parabola of discipleship, following him to the depths so that, with him, we may be highly exalted: 'If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be. If anyone serves me, the Father will honour him... Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow me afterwards' (12:26; 13:36). We follow him to heaven, yes - but by cross-bearing, by the way of Calvary. This is the true follower's inescapable route, for 'This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God. And after saying this he said to him: "Follow me"' (21:19).

Amy Carmichael has expressed movingly the essential connection between suffering and true discipleship.

'Hast thou no scar? No hidden scar on foot, or side or hand? I hear thee sung as mighty in the land: I hear them hail thy bright ascendant star: Hast thou no scar?

Hast thou no wound? Yet I was wounded by the archers, spent, Leaned on the tree to die, and rent by ravening beasts that compassed me, I swooned: Hast thou no wound?

No wound? No scar? Yet, as the master shall the servant be, And pierced are the feet that follow me; but thine are whole. Can he have followed far who has no wound? No scar?'²⁶

In London, every November, a Festival of Remembrance is held for all who have served the nation in time of war. The emotional highlight of the evening is the entrance of the Chelsea Pensioners. Slowly they march in, the old, maimed veterans - and as they steadily cross the arena, the whole assembly rises to do them honour. Is it too speculative to imagine a similar parade at the last day? An occasion when special honour will be given to the weak and wounded, the despised and rejected, scarred and damaged by their warfare? Their testimony will be a simple one: 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished the

race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing' (2 Tim.4:7,8).

'We must never think of our cross as our penalty; we must think of it as our glory... The harder the task we give a student, or a craftsman, or a surgeon, the more we honour him... So when it is hard to be a Christian, we must regard it as our glory, as our honour given to us by God'.²⁷ Christ has called us to follow him through the glory of suffering to the glory of heaven. What will it mean, on that day, to be able to say, 'I bear on my body the marks of Jesus' (Gal.6:17)? His pierced hands will be reached out to us, and the captain of our salvation will say: 'Well done, good and faithful servant, true disciple and follower'. That will be glory indeed.

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21. Morris, op. cit., 1986, p.271.
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23. C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* (London: SPCK, 1978), p.504.
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THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH IN THE WESTMINSTER TRADITION

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It is clear from Scripture that the unity of the Church is both a fact and an aspiration. Thus the apostle Paul in I Corinthians 12:13 reminds his readers that 'we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free - and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.' In similar vein he states in Galatians 3:27-28 that 'all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.' It is also most significant that in Romans 11 Paul speaks of only one olive tree, onto which Gentile branches are grafted.

At the same time, that unity is to be made visible to the world. That is the burden of Jesus' prayer in John 17:21,23, 'that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you...May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.' The divisions in the church at Corinth were of deep concern to Paul: 'Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptised into the name of Paul?' (I Corinthians 1:13). Where unity exists it is to be treasured and protected: 'Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace' (Ephesians 4:3). Visible disunity cannot be a matter of indifference to the people of God.

Issues of ecclesiology have received considerable attention from Reformed churches within what may be termed the 'Westminster' tradition, who trace their doctrine and polity back to the work of the Westminster Assembly in the middle years of the seventeenth century. In examining the unity of the Church as it has been viewed in the Westminster tradition, we will take a historical approach, having as a main focus the work of the Westminster Assembly and the contribution of the Commissioners from Scotland, a land where ecclesiology has been

much debated. We will also consider some later discussions of the subject and note the diversity within this tradition.

An early confession

It is interesting to consider at the outset of this study the earliest attempt in Scotland to give confessional expression to a Reformed doctrine of the Church. Up until the production of the Scots Confession in 1560 the official church of the nation had still been Roman Catholic and Protestant believers had had to meet in private houses or in the fields. As the Reformed cause grew these 'privy kirks' (as they were known) became publicly organised congregations in a number of towns. Ultimately the Reformation became officially established in 1560 and a biblical basis for the existence of Reformed congregations was provided by 'The Confession of the Faith and Doctrine, Believed and professed by the Protestants of Scotland', whose authors included John Knox.¹

In Article XVI of the Confession ('Of the Kirk') the Church is defined as 'one company and multitude of men chosen of God, who rightly worship and embrace him by true faith in Christ Jesus, who is the only head of the same Kirk, which also is the body and spouse of Christ Jesus, which Kirk is Catholic, that is, universal, because it contains the Elect of all ages, of all realms, nations and tongues, be they of the Jews, or be they of the Gentiles, who have communion and society with God the Father, and with his Son Christ Jesus, through the sanctification of his Holy Spirit'.

This is the universal Church, the body of those who have living fellowship with the triune God. This is the body designated 'the Communion of Saints' and 'citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem', according to the Confession. Article XVI concludes, 'This Kirk is invisible, known only to God, who alone knows whom he has chosen; and comprehends as well (as said is) the Elect that be departed, commonly called the Kirk Triumphant, and they that shall live and fight against sin and Satan who shall live hereafter.'

The other aspect of the Confession's understanding of the Church is to be found in Article XVIII ('Of the notes, by which the true Kirk is discerned from the false, and who shall be judge of the doctrine'). After alluding to the deceptions and persecutions perpetrated by Satan, the Confession stresses the importance of being able to distinguish 'the immaculate Spouse of Christ Jesus' from 'the horrible harlot, the Kirk malignant', and lists the three 'notes' (or marks) of the true Church as true preaching of the Word, right administration of the sacraments and ecclesiastical discipline rightly administered. These notes identify a

true Church: not the universal Church of Article XVI but ‘particular, such as was in Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus and other places’. Alongside the universal Church consisting of all God's people, there are ‘particular churches’ in specific locations, such as, says the Confession, ‘we the inhabitants of the Realm of Scotland, professors of Christ Jesus, profess ourselves to have in our citties, townes and places reformed’. No reference is made here to a distinction between ‘visible’ and ‘invisible’ with regard to the Church, but it is clearly to the visible congregations that the test of the ‘notes’ is to be applied.

Although Article XXV (‘Of the gifts freely given to the Kirk’) recognises that some non-elect people may deceptively identify themselves with true churches, the definitions of the Church are not framed so as to allow for their presence. True particular churches together make up that part of the universal Church which is presently on earth.

When in 1560 the Reformed Church became the legally recognised national Church in Scotland, however, many clergy and members moved easily into the new structure without any real change in faith.² The Church became almost co-extensive with the nation and thus included many unregenerate. Something of this state of affairs may be reflected in the statement of the Second Book of Discipline (1578): ‘The kirk of God sometimes is largely taken for all them that profess the Evangel of Jesus Christ, and so it is a company and fellowship, not only of the godly, but also of hypocrites, professing always outwardly one true religion. Other times it is taken for the godly and elect only.’³ It would appear that more allowance is being made for the mixed condition of the national Church than was the case in the 1560 Confession. In the seventeenth century Scottish Presbyterian divines were to respond to this problem with a thorough-going distinction between the invisible and the visible Church.

The aspirations of the Solemn League and Covenant⁴

In order to gain Scottish help in their civil war with King Charles I the English Parliament entered into a political and religious bond with the Scots in 1643. This Solemn League and Covenant, in addition to various political commitments, pledged the parties to ‘the preservation of the reformed religion in the Church of Scotland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government’ and also to ‘the reformation of religion in the kingdoms of England and Ireland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, according to the word of God, and the example of the best reformed Churches’.

Of particular interest for our study is the Covenant's binding the parties to 'endeavour to bring the Churches of God in the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, confession of faith, form of church-government, directory for worship and catechising'. The Westminster Assembly had already been meeting to provide for the reformation of the Church of England. With the signing of the Covenant it was given the task of promoting religious uniformity in the three kingdoms, with the advice of a number of Commissioners from the Church of Scotland.

The Solemn League and Covenant did not envisage a single Reformed Church covering the whole of the British Isles. Instead, each kingdom would have its own national church, thoroughly reformed in doctrine and practice, and uniform with the churches in the other two kingdoms. Each kingdom therefore would have a single national church, maintained by civil and ecclesiastical authority. In this sense there would be a single united ecclesiastical body in each nation, outside of which there would be no legal institutional expression of the Christian faith. As we know, historical events did not permit the realisation of this goal, but it is vital to understand what the Westminster Assembly, within the provisions of the Solemn League and Covenant, was seeking to achieve.

The perspective of the Scottish Commissioners

Apart from the English Independents, whose views were consistently voted down by the majority in the Westminster Assembly, those within that body who had thought most deeply about ecclesiological issues were undoubtedly the Commissioners from Scotland. Among their number were men like Samuel Rutherford and George Gillespie⁵ who wrote some of the major seventeenth century defences of Presbyterianism. These were the voices who played the most significant role in formulating the Assembly's position on the nature and government of the Church, although they did not always succeed in bringing the Assembly to their way of thinking.⁶

Basic to the Scots' view of the Church was the conviction that, alongside the universal invisible Church made up of all the elect, 'there is a universal or catholic visible Church'⁷. In their view the visible Church is to be regarded as an integral whole, regardless of geographical boundaries. One historian of Scottish theology, James Walker, has used the illustration of an empire and its constituent parts. The universal visible Church is the empire. 'The Churches of the various nationalities constitute the provinces of the empire; and though they are so far independent of each other, yet they are so one, that membership in one is membership in all, and separation from one is separation from all.' Thus a

member moving from one country to another would expect to have his church membership recognised in the true church to which he went. The discipline of the Reformed Church in Scotland would be recognised by, say, the Reformed Church in the Netherlands.

The distinction between the invisible and the visible Church was of great importance to the Scots. The mixed nature of the post-Reformation Church of Scotland may have forced consideration of this issue upon them, but they held to the validity of this distinction for what they believed were sound biblical reasons. The distinction is seen most clearly when we address the question of membership in the Church.

Membership in the invisible Church is said to be on the basis of invisible grace. In other words, only those who experience the saving grace of God and who thus have a living faith in Christ are members of the invisible Church. Thus Rutherford can argue that ‘the invisible and not the visible Church is the principal, prime and only proper subject, with whom the covenant of grace is made, to whom all the promises do belong, and to whom all Titles, Styles, Properties and privileges of special note, in the Mediator do belong.’⁸

On the other hand, membership in the visible Church must be on the basis of that which is visible. The Scots rejected the view of the Independents that membership in the visible Church was only for those considered by the officers of the Church to be genuinely regenerate. The Independent belief that only those who credibly professed to be saved could be admitted to membership seemed to the Scots to be setting the church officers an impossible task. The Scots refused to define the visible Church as a company of true believers, those thought to be the objects of divine grace.

Since grace is invisible, the Scots argued, it cannot be the criterion of membership in the visible Church. All that church officers can deal with is a visible profession. As historian John Macpherson puts it, ‘A seen profession is the ground of admission to membership in the visible Church’.⁹ The principle in question is stated thus by Macpherson: ‘Just because we cannot see God going before in the bestowing of invisible grace, the ministers of the Church cannot here follow by adding such and only such to the Church’.¹⁰

We must note carefully what kind of ‘seen profession’ is required. It is not a profession of saving faith in Christ or any claim to be regenerate. As Rutherford puts it, all were to be accepted ‘so they be known 1. To be Baptized. 2. That they be free of gross scandals. 3. And profess that they be willing hearers

of the Doctrine of the Gospel.’¹¹ The ‘scandalously wicked’ are to be excluded, those of ‘approved piety’ are certainly to be accepted, but, argues Rutherford, ‘these of the middle sort are to be acknowledged members of the Church, though the Church have not a positive certainty of the judgment of charity, that they are regenerated’.¹² No profession of ‘sound conversion’ is to be required of those who legitimately make up the membership of the visible Church. The logic of this position, which Rutherford did not shy away from, was that there could be a true congregation, a true ‘particular Church’, in which not one member was regenerate.

It should perhaps be noted that later Reformed theologians, such as Thomas Boston, did not accept the view propounded by Rutherford and the men of his generation. Boston, in a discussion of the subject of the baptism of infants,¹³ argued that only those infants who have at least one parent a visible believer have a right to baptism. In a situation where cold formalism had spread to much of the Church of Scotland, Boston argued that the Church as it is visible is to be thought of as a company of visible believers. To define it otherwise was, in his view, to admit many to membership whose unregenerate condition was responsible for the low spiritual condition in which the Church of Scotland currently found itself.

The view of membership in the visible Church held by Rutherford and his contemporaries may be linked usefully with their understanding of the headship of Christ over his Church. Such headship is of course a vital factor in the unity of the Church. Again Rutherford may be taken as an example, since he considered these issues in great detail.

In *The Divine Right of Church Government* we find the unequivocal statement that, ‘Christ is the head and only head of the Church, for by what title Christ is before all things, he in whom all things consist, and is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, and hath the preeminence in all things, and he is only, solely and absolutely all these, by the same title he is the Head, and so the only Head of the Body the Church, Col. 1.17,18.’¹⁴ Rutherford goes on to stress that this is true not only with reference to the invisible Church, the body of all believers, but also with the Church as a structured body on earth. Thus he says that, ‘[Christ] is the head of his Politic body, and so a head in all externals, as well as of mystical and invisible body [sic]’,¹⁵ and again, ‘Christ is the King, yea the only King of his own Kingdom, either as this Kingdom is mystical and invisible, or as it is Politic, external and visible on earth’.¹⁶ In view of the stand which the Scottish Covenanters had to take against royal claims to authority over the Church, it is not surprising to find the unique headship of Christ

emphasised in their writings. They contended for the crown rights of ‘the King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus Christ, the only monarch of the church’.¹⁷

It is important to note, however, how Rutherford distinguishes the ways in which Christ is Head of the invisible Church and of the visible. He states in *The Due right of Presbyteries*, ‘That Christ is the Head of the visible Church, as visible, is not in all the Word of God; he is the Head of the Church catholic and invisible, by influence of the Life and Spirit of Christ, Eph.1.22,23. Eph.4.16. Coloss.1.18, and in a large sense may be called the Head of the church visible, as visible, in regard of the influence of common graces for the Ministry, government and use of the keys.’¹⁸ The distinction would appear to be between a headship founded on a living salvific union with Christ and a headship based on the external governmental structures of a visible body to which members belong. The latter Rutherford terms ‘an union with Christ, as head, according to the influence of common gifts’.¹⁹ It is this union alone which is required for membership of the visible Church. Rutherford rejects as false the view that ‘Christ is Head of the Church and the Spouse, redeemer and Saviour of the visible Church, as it is visible, which is the Arminian Doctrine of universal grace’.²⁰

As far as the organisation of the visible Church is concerned, the Scots firmly believed that each nation should have a single Reformed Church, the one true Church in that particular geographical area. As historian James Walker puts it, ‘True Churches of Christ, side by side with one another, forming separate organizations, with separate governments, seemed to them utterly inadmissible, unless it might be in a very limited way, and for some reason of temporary expediency.’²¹ One Church under one ecclesiastical government in each nation was for them the state of affairs to be maintained or sought where it did not exist. Thus James Durham states, ‘Yet it is impossible for those that maintain that principle of the unity of the catholic visible church, to own a divided way of administrating government or other ordinances, but it will infer either that one party has no interest in the church, or that one church may be many, and so, that the unity thereof in its visible state is to no purpose. This then we take for granted.’²² To maintain any other view was, they held, to allow that Christ could be divided. Such was their commitment to the unity of the Church that, as long as there was no error with regard to fundamental truths, they would not consider separating from the Church lest they be guilty of schism. As Walker sums it up, ‘In the case of a true Church, no separation in point of actual Church-fellowship can be lawful, although you must certainly separate yourself from its errors in doctrine and worship’.²³

As we have indicated above, the setting up or preserving of national Reformed churches was enshrined in the Solemn League and Covenant. The Scots were fully committed to the view that the civil rulers had the duty to enforce this state of affairs within their respective jurisdictions. This position is spelled out in detail in Rutherford's treatise *A Free Disputation Against pretended Liberty of Conscience (1649)*. In the twenty-second chapter, for example, Rutherford argues that diversity of belief, worship or church government is expressly ruled out by the Covenant. The parliament of each nation bound by the Covenant is obliged to ensure uniformity within the Reformed Church in its territory and so, at least in the Scots' understanding of the Covenant, there will be uniformity among the Reformed and Presbyterian Churches established in each of the 'three kingdoms'. The diversity for which the Independents contended was not to be permitted. As Rutherford says, 'The pretended liberty is against the Articles, matter and ends of the Covenant'.²⁴ The civil magistrate as 'the Minister of God' was 'to use the sword against false teachers who give liberty to all Religions'.²⁵ When it became clear that the government of Oliver Cromwell (an Independent) in England would not enforce such uniformity, Rutherford and his compatriots were outraged. The depth of their feelings is evident in Rutherford's challenge to the Independents, 'Confess and glorify God: yu swore the Covenant in a Jesuitical reserved sense'.²⁶

The Scots put a high value on the fellowship that was possible between national Churches united in the same Reformed Faith. They were not narrowly nationalistic in their outlook, but rather cherished contact with Reformed Churches on the Continent, and indeed Holland was to provide a refuge for persecuted Covenanters in the later years of the seventeenth century. Just as their presbyterian principles led them to a high view of the support that one congregation could give to another, so they believed that one national church could be of great help to another. This is how Rutherford states the matter: 'Sister-Churches keep a visible Church-communion together. 1. They hear the word, and partake of the Seals of the Covenant, occasionally with one another. 2. They eschew the same excommunicated heretic, as a common Church-enemy to all. 3. They exhort, rebuke, comfort, and edify one another, as members of one body visible. 4. If one sister Church fall away, they are to labour to gain her, and if she will not be gained ... they tell it to many sister Churches; if she refuse to hear them, they forsake Communion with her.'²⁷ Relations between sister churches were to serve the edification of the whole body of believers.

Some of the Scots even envisaged the possibility of holding what they termed an 'Ecumenical Synod' which would be a powerful expression of the

unity of the Church. George Gillespie believed that such a body would be acceptable 'if so it be free and rightly constituted, and no other commissioners but orthodox churches be admitted'.²⁸ Indeed in the circumstances of his day he believed that such a synod would be especially useful since 'surely it is to be wished that, for defending the orthodox faith, both against Popery and other heresies, as also for propagating it to those who are without, especially the Jews, a more strait and more firm consociation may be entered into. For the unanimity of all the churches, as in evil it is of all things most hurtful, so on the contrary side, in good it is most pleasant, most profitable, and most effectual'.²⁹

To an Ecumenical Synod would be referred *controversiae juris* - controversies of right. These would not be minor cases but only the most weighty issues of orthodox theology or the most difficult cases of conscience. Gillespie argues that controversies of fact, specific individual cases, were not generally suitable for the consideration of an Ecumenical Synod. In his view it is most reasonable that specific cases should end with the decision of a National Synod, 'unless the thing itself be so hard and of so great moment, that the knot be thought worthy of a greater decider'.³⁰ He does, however, hold that a National Synod is subordinate to 'the universal and lawfully-constituted synod' and that there is a right of appeal from an National to an Ecumenical Synod. Although such a body was never to be convened by the Reformed Churches, the Scots were convinced of the value of what Rutherford terms 'The general and Ecumenical Council of Pastors, Doctors and Elders of the whole Catholic Church visible'.³¹

The Westminster Assembly's Documents

In pursuit of the vision for unity and uniformity set out in the Solemn League and Covenant, the Westminster Assembly produced documents relating to each of the four areas specifically mentioned. Thus the Confession of Faith addresses the area of doctrine, The Form of Presbyterian Church-Government addresses polity, worship is considered in The Directory for the Public Worship of God, whilst catechising is provided for in the Larger and Shorter Catechisms.

The Westminster Divines' view of the Church is set out most clearly in Chapter 25 of the Confession of Faith.³² The first paragraph states, 'The catholic or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all'.

The second paragraph deals with the visible Church: 'The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel, (not confined to one nation.

as before under the law,) consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children; and is the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation'. Although, as R D Anderson has shown, the idea of a catholic visible Church was not to the Independents' liking, that is the view that prevailed. The same position is expressed in Larger Catechism Q62: 'The visible church is a society made up of all such as in all ages and places of the world do profess the true religion, and of their children'. Similarly the Form of Presbyterial Church-Government states, 'There is one general church visible, held forth in the New Testament'.

It is clear that, in harmony with the views of the Scots previously outlined, these documents see profession of faith as that which constitutes the visible Church. It is therefore interesting to note that among the 'proof texts' cited in all three documents is I Corinthians 12:12ff, which speaks of the many members being one body. Verse 13 reads, 'For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit' (AV). The reference here would seem quite clearly to be to those who have a saving experience of the working of the Holy Spirit, rather than to those who profess faith, whether genuinely or hypocritically. The Divines would appear to have some difficulty in deciding which texts refer to the invisible Church of the redeemed and the visible Church of those who profess faith. Even more striking perhaps is the citation of Revelation 7:9, 'After this I beheld, and, lo a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands'. If there should be any doubt that those described are truly saved, verse 14 dispels it when one of the elders states, 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb'. All those in view clearly do more than profess the true religion: for every one of them it is a living reality.

As we would expect, The Form of Presbyterial Church-Government envisages presbyterian churches being set up along national lines: 'Synodical assemblies may lawfully be of several sorts, as provincial, national and ecumenical'. Their wide vision for the unity of the visible Church, shared with the Scottish Commissioners as noted above, is reflected in the statements of the Confession regarding the communion of saints (Chapter 26). Having considered in the first paragraph the fellowship which all the redeemed, 'united to Jesus Christ their head by his Spirit', have with their Saviour and with one another ('communion

in each other's gifts and graces'), the Divines proceed in the second paragraph to that which holds true in the visible Church. 'Saints, by profession, are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification; as also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities. Which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended to all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.' It is of course the case that only those indwelt by the Spirit of the Lord can fulfil such spiritual duties.

Thomas McCrie: the bonds of unity

The vision embodied in the Solemn League and Covenant was never realised in practice. The English Independents who gained power through the rise of Oliver Cromwell would not enforce a single presbyterian polity. In Scotland the unity of the Covenanters rapidly dissolved as different political allegiances fomented division. The united, covenanted Church of Scotland fractured at various points, giving rise to numerous presbyterian bodies in the following centuries.

Thomas McCrie (1772-1835) knew the sorrows brought by division from first-hand experience. In 1806, with three other ministers, he left the Antiburgher side of the Secession Synod to form the Constitutional Associate Presbytery. It is significant that in 1821 he published *Two Discourses on the Unity of the Church, Her Divisions, and Their Removal*,³³ a classic nineteenth century Scottish Presbyterian consideration of church unity. McCrie saw himself as standing firmly in the Covenanter and Secession tradition, including in his book a vigorous defence of the Solemn League and Covenant.

McCrie takes as the theme for his study the words of Ezekiel 37:19, 'They shall be one in mine hand', which he interprets according to his postmillennial eschatology as a promise that God will indeed bring about the unity of the visible Church. It is not necessary to accept his eschatology to profit from what he says about the nature and importance of unity.

McCrie is in no doubt that the Church ought to be a united body. As he expresses it, 'The unity of the Church is implied in the most general view that can be taken of its nature, as a society instituted for religious purposes. True religion is essentially one, even as God, its object, is one.'³⁴ The same fact is evident from a more specific definition of the Church as 'a society consisting of men called out of the world lying in wickedness'.³⁵ This society, according to

McCrie, is founded on a supernatural revelation, consisting of the promise of a Saviour and a divinely instituted worship. Unity flows from men's profession of faith in the former and their observance of the latter. This holds true for the Church in the Old Testament just as much as in the New Testament.

Citing Ephesians 2:14-15, McCrie points out that by the death of Christ the traditional alienation between Jews and Gentiles has been removed as they are reconciled to God and united into one body. The fact that the Church has become diffused throughout the world as the gospel has been proclaimed to the nations in no way threatens its unity. The absence of a central sanctuary in Jerusalem, for example, makes no difference to unity. Instead, as McCrie puts it, 'The unity of the Church, in profession, worship, and holy walking, was strikingly exemplified in the primitive age of Christianity'.³⁶ All believers in every place formed one sacred 'brotherhood'.

McCrie then demonstrates the importance of unity by quoting some of the earnest apostolic injunctions to maintain unity, such as I Corinthians 1:10 and Ephesians 4:1-3. Unity is an attribute of the Church, whether considered as invisible or visible. Like his predecessors, McCrie stresses that this distinction does not imply that there are two Churches, but one, viewed from different points of view. Whilst some scriptural texts apply to the Church in its invisible aspect and some to it in its visible aspect, McCrie concludes that, 'All genuine saints are invisibly and vitally united to Christ, and to one another, by the indissoluble bond of the Spirit and of the faith; and in virtue of this it is that they increase in love and holiness, and are at last made 'perfect in one'.³⁷ McCrie does not comment on the presence of unsaved numbers within the bounds of the visible Church in this connection.

The unity of the catholic visible Church is not destroyed, although it is marred, by disunity or opposition among some of its constituent parts. The same may be said of the differing degrees of maturity found in particular churches and also of the adaptations due to the differing cultures and countries in which particular churches are found. Unity remains as long as there is 'no denial or restriction of the supreme authority by which everything in religion is ruled; no open and allowed hostility to truth and godliness; and no such opposition of sentiments, or contrariety of practices, as may endanger the faith, or destroy the constitution and edification of churches, or as may imply, in different churches, or in different parts of the same church, a condemnation of one another.'³⁸ Within the presbyterian structure which McCrie believed to be biblical, particular churches are to combine and co-operate as far as is possible for their mutual help and encouragement.

McCrie asks the question, 'What is the bond of unity in the Church?' and gives the answer 'true religion'. Within this general category he identifies five elements:

- 1 Having one Head and Lord. 'All real believers are internally joined to the Lord and derive their spiritual life and growth from him; and in like manner must Christians, in their associated capacity, be in professed subjection to him, in his divine mediatorial authority, as the one Universal Pastor, and sole Head of government.'³⁹
- 2 The unity of the faith, understood as adherence to revealed truth.
- 3 'One baptism' and fellowship in the same acts of worship, including partaking of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.
- 4 Unity in respect of external government and discipline.
- 5 The bond of mutual charity and peace. McCrie condemns both a love which ignores truth and 'a bare and cold agreement in the articles of a common faith and external uniformity in the acts of worship and discipline'.⁴⁰ Thus he concludes, 'Love must cement the union which faith has formed'.⁴¹

The rest of McCrie's treatise, which we do not have space to consider here, deals helpfully with the divisions which are found in the Church, and the biblical means by which divisions may be healed. He believes that mourning and humility are appropriate responses to the fragmented state of the Church, and concludes his study by listing several 'dangerous extremes' to be avoided, namely indifference toward unity, unscriptural means for attaining unity, impatience respecting God's providence and incredulity regarding God's promises. On the basis of his understanding of Old Testament prophecy, he looked for a great work of God that would restore the unity of all Christians at some point in the history of this present world. It is a noble and biblical vision, even if we conclude that its realisation awaits the new heaven and new earth.

James Bannerman: maintaining the tradition

The greatest work on ecclesiology from the pen of a Scottish Presbyterian in the nineteenth century is undoubtedly *The Church of Christ* by James Bannerman, published in 1869. With great thoroughness Bannerman sets out and defends the view of the Church held by his Reformed forefathers in Scotland. We will note first his views on the nature of the Church and then

consider his response to a proposed reunion of churches in Scotland, expressed in an address in 1867.

Bannerman sets great store by the distinction between the invisible Church and the visible Church, devoting an entire chapter of the first volume of his treatise to the subject.⁴² Having made the customary statement that the distinction does not indicate the existence of two separate churches, but one Church under two aspects, he makes two important points which are designed to clarify the distinction. He states first, 'The Church invisible stands, with respect to its members, in a inward and spiritual relationship to Christ, whereas the Church visible stands to Him in an outward relationship only.'⁴³ Bannerman emphasises the point by stating that the visible Church's outward relationship involves 'no more than the promise and enjoyment of outward privileges',⁴⁴ which he defines in terms of outward government, outward ordinances and outward discipline. Members of the visible Church have been brought, according to Bannerman, into a real, though external, relationship to Christ which may be termed an external covenant relationship.

The second statement Bannerman makes in order to clarify the distinction is this: 'The Church invisible is made up of true believers, and of none else; whereas the Church visible is composed of those who outwardly profess their faith in Christ, and may include not only true believers, but also hypocrites.'⁴⁵ As he points out, without an infallible knowledge of men's hearts it is impossible to secure a visible body consisting only of true believers. Hypocrites have always been included in this external covenant: 'Such has always been the condition of the Church in all ages, and such was it always intended to be.'⁴⁶ Bannerman argues that this has always been God's way. He provides an outward framework of ordinances for the benefit of his people but in addition, says Bannerman, 'To the external privileges of that visible society even sinners are invited, - not that they may rest there, but that they may go on to the invisible and spiritual society within. And even formalists are permitted to mingle in outward fellowship with true believers, in order that, if possible, they may be brought to seek for something higher and more blessed.'⁴⁷ This he justifies with reference to Jesus' parable of the tares growing together with the wheat until the Last Day, although we should note that Jesus states, 'The field is the world' (Matthew 13:38).

Bannerman believes that it is vital to make the distinction that he has expounded so that biblical statements can be correctly applied either to the invisible Church or to the visible Church. Thus statements about the perfect unity of faith in the body of Christ must be applied only to the invisible Church.

Great harm has been done, in Bannerman's estimation, when Rome has applied to a visible organisation biblical descriptions of the invisible Church.

In the following chapter Bannerman considers the Church's twofold character as catholic and local. Catholicity as applied to the invisible Church relates to the Holy Spirit's indwelling all true believers wherever they are to be found. Catholicity as applied to the visible Church is rather different 'because the bond of union among its members is a common public profession, and an outward federal relationship to Christ'.⁴⁸ The geographical separation of particular congregations does not in any way destroy this unity. Even numerous differences of opinion may co-exist with unity as long as churches do not cease to be true churches of Christ.

Thus, in Bannerman's view, the Church is one, whether considered in its invisible aspect or in its visible aspect. The spiritual unity of the invisible Church is to be regarded as of a 'higher' kind, whereas the unity of the visible, being outward rather than spiritual, is less exalted and less complete in degree, allowing as it does many diversities. Bannerman indeed admits that 'it is one of the greatest difficulties in the application and interpretation of Scripture language in reference to the Church, to discriminate the occasions on which it refers to the higher unity of the invisible from those on which the lower and less perfect unity of the visible Church is spoken of'.⁴⁹

We have a most interesting insight into Bannerman's application of his principles to practical situations in a speech on 'the Union Question' delivered on 9th January, 1867. He makes a vigorous appeal for the Free Church to pursue unity on the basis of the statements made in Chapter 26 of the Westminster Confession of Faith which we examined previously. The requirements of Christ are of more importance than church traditions, and he requires mutual help not only of individual Christians, but of Churches. Quoting the confessional phrase 'As God giveth opportunity' (26.2), he stresses the duty to seek unity. 'It is a doctrine to be held, and a duty to be prosecuted at all times and by all Churches; and if in any particular instances, separation, and not union, is advocated, most certainly the onus probandi rests upon those who defend or seek to perpetuate separation'.⁵⁰

Only two factors, according to Bannerman, should prevent union: first, if it is impossible to acknowledge the other party as Christian men or Churches; second, if, while acknowledging them as such, it is impossible to work together with them without sin. Lesser reasons are deemed insufficient. Thus with regard to the first factor, Bannerman states, 'If in fundamentals the creed and

practice of a religious society are in accordance with the Word of God, we are not only justified, but bound to acknowledge that society to be a Church of Christ'.⁵¹ However much it may differ from oneself in non-essential matters, it is to be recognised as a Church.

The second factor is equally important: 'Can the Churches, and the members and office-bearers of the Churches, work together in union without the sacrifice of conscience or principle on either side?'⁵² Where no unscriptural sacrifice is required, union is a duty. If, on the other hand, the union would impose 'a compromise of creed or duty amounting to what is wrong',⁵³ the separation cannot lawfully be healed.

Dealing with the church situation of his day, Bannerman concluded that, although he could acknowledge the Church of Scotland as a true Church, he could not be a minister in it since that would entail compromise with Erastian principles involved in that Church's link with the State. On the other hand he could see no obstacle to the proposed union with the Secession Church which was under discussion.

R L. Dabney: the issue of denominations

The centuries since the Westminster Assembly sat in London have witnessed an increasing fragmentation in Presbyterianism worldwide, resulting in a plethora of presbyterian 'denominations' in many countries. However unacceptable this would have seemed to the Westminster Divines, it is a situation which presbyterian theologians have had to reckon with and, to some degree, accept. This was reflected in the work of McCrie and Bannerman already considered above. In the United States it was considered explicitly by one of the great Southern Presbyterian theologians Robert L Dabney, for many years a Professor at Union Seminary, Virginia. The focus of our attention will be his article 'What is Christian Union?', first published in the *Central Presbyterian* in May, 1870, and reprinted in his *Discussions: Evangelical and Theological*, Volume 2.⁵⁴

Dabney begins his article by endorsing the pursuit of the spiritual unity of God's people. He states, 'No one who is governed by the principles of the gospel can fail to deplore the bitterness and injustice of Christians towards each other, which have too often attended their unavoidable differences. Every right-minded Christian, accordingly, rejoices in the legitimate means of increasing and evincing the spiritual unity of the whole body of God's people. Where this can be done without compromising conscientious convictions, we hail it as an

unmingled blessing to our common Zion'.⁵⁵

He exhibits a very different attitude to contemporary projects to bring the whole body of believers into a 'universal church union'. He clearly does not share the excitement with which some are pursuing such a goal. The question that must be asked, according to Dabney, is whether organic unity is necessary to promote spiritual unity among believers. His outlook is immediately evident when he states that 'this conviction did actually haunt and pervert the thinking of the Christian world for centuries'.⁵⁶ It is a view characteristic of Romanism and one which the Reformation did not succeed in removing from the minds of Protestants, according to Dabney's reading of church history.

Dabney believes that he can discern why this error arose in the early Church: 'the history of this delusion is especially instructive, as it shows us that its advocates from the first were chiefly led astray by disregarding the scriptural distinction between the visible and invisible church'.⁵⁷ In Dabney's view scriptural texts describing the unity of the invisible Church were erroneously applied to the visible Church, resulting in a demand for visible, organic union. Dabney compares the invisible Church to the human soul which for a time inhabits a body (the visible Church). He grants that the perfection of the visible Church (or churches) is to approach as nearly as possible that of the invisible, but can never fully achieve that goal because of its very nature as a visible organisation. Hence, says Dabney, 'the unity of the visible church will evince itself in ties of affection and brotherhood rather than in external conformity.'⁵⁸

Having listed many of the New Testament passages which he believes apply to the spiritual community of believers, Dabney contends that this is the Church which is catholic and which is one. God has also provided for the presence of that Church on earth in 'visible organised societies', the churches which together constitute the 'visible church catholic', whose highest bond of union is not an outward organism but a bond of faith and affection. None of these churches is perfect, but the closer they approach to the biblical standard, the closer they will come even in outward form.

'Meanwhile', says Dabney, 'their separate existence beside one another does not mar the catholicity of the visible church as one whole'.⁵⁹ Indeed the separation is the 'inevitable and designed result' of geographical and cultural separation and of human imperfections. The different churches are even likened to different parts of a single army. 'We are but different denominations of citizens in one kingdom.'⁶⁰ In Dabney's opinion, it is not possible to remove the causes of diversity since the Church does not have an infallible expounder of the

Bible, believers' consciences have been left free of human commandments and also men, being fallible, have always differed honestly over details. On such grounds, unity is impossible and attempts to force it are misguided. Historically, such attempts have often led to persecution.

Dabney concludes, 'I am convinced that a general organic union is no means to promote Christian union.'⁶¹ He recognises, however, that a true union of principle and love would be of great benefit to believers. He therefore offers five suggestions regarding progress in unity:⁶²

1. Where denominations in the same region are agreed in principles but kept apart by 'unessential differences of usage', they should unite.
2. Where the differences preclude such union, the denominations should 'recognise in the others a valid church character'.
3. Each denomination should recognise the validity of the ministry and sacraments of every other denomination, including practising inter-communion.
4. The disciplinary acts performed by one communion should be held valid by every other.
5. Lastly, 'all Christians should study moderate and charitable feelings towards others, and should sincerely seek to grow in the knowledge of revealed truth.'

The limits which Dabney put on inter-church co-operation are interestingly illustrated in his response to a proposed Pan-Presbyterian Alliance published in the Southern Presbyterian Review in January, 1876.⁶³ Dabney vigorously opposed the involvement of the Southern Presbyterian Church in this international body for a number of reasons. One was the lack of clarity regarding the authority which the Alliance would claim, and the probable conflict that would arise with the duly-constituted courts of the member churches. Of even greater concern to Dabney was the fact that membership of the Alliance would entail contacts with churches with which Southern Presbyterians would not permit contact in other settings. Dabney was concerned by the liberalism of some member churches, for example in Britain, and reserved his strongest condemnation for those Presbyterian Churches which had severed fellowship with his denomination because of its support for slavery. 'Abolitionism', even in the Northern Presbyterian Church, Dabney regards as the fruit of unbelief. These

churches once rejected his denomination. Though slavery is abolished, the position of Southern Presbyterians has not changed. How could there now be fellowship between the two? Indeed the very idea of organic union sought by the Alliance is clearly contrary to God's will for the visible Church. The principles behind the Alliance are, to Dabney's mind, the essence of Popery. The Southern Presbyterians, in Dabney's view, should 'leave the manifestation of Christian unity, where the Bible leaves it, in community of principles, spirit, and affections'.⁶⁴

John Murray: a different perspective

A common feature of the views expressed by each writer considered thus far is an attempt to make a clear distinction between the invisible Church and the visible. It is constantly stressed that only one Church is in view, although it seems clear that some are legitimately members of the visible Church who cannot possibly have any share in the invisible, namely those who make a hypocritical profession of faith. Without a definite visible/invisible distinction, however, it is believed by these writers that all kinds of harm will follow.

This approach was challenged vigorously by John Murray, a Scot who was Professor of Theology at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia from 1930 until 1966. He states his position thus: 'The distinction between the church visible and the church invisible is not well-grounded in terms of Scripture, and the abuses to which the distinction has been subjected require correction.'⁶⁵ He does not for a moment deny that the Church has invisible aspects or that God alone knows those who are really his, but he argues that in the New Testament the term 'church' normally designates that which is visible.

Murray examined this issue in an address given at the Leicester Ministers' Conference in 1964 under the title 'The Nature and Unity of the Church'.⁶⁶ Having established the continuity between the Church in the Old Testament and in the New, on the basis of texts such as Acts 7:38 and I Peter 2:9-10, he goes on to show that in the New Testament too the idea of 'assembly' or 'congregation' is at the forefront of usage regarding the Church. He notes the numerous references to 'churches' located in various places, such as Jerusalem and Ephesus, and also the inclusive use of the word 'church' as in Matthew 16:18 ('I will build my church'). When Jesus speaks as he does in the latter text, says Murray, 'he is thinking of those gathered and knit together after the pattern provided by the Old Testament as the people for his possession, as the community which he is to constitute, and which stands in relation to him comparable to the

congregation of the Lord in the Old Testament.’⁶⁷ Such an inclusive sense is also to be found in Paul's writings, as for example in I Corinthians 15:9 (‘I persecuted the church of God.’).

Murray goes on to argue that even in Ephesians and Colossians, where some texts appear to view the Church as the whole body of the elect in all ages, i.e. the invisible Church, a visible body is in view. A striking example would be Ephesians 5:25,26, where the Church is said to be subject to Christ. According to Murray, ‘In the context there must be a concreteness that is parallel to that which is enjoined, namely, that in like manner wives should be subject to their husbands. The exhortation would be bereft of its strongest appeal if the analogy is something that belongs simply to the invisible and transcendental realm.’⁶⁸ After dealing in a similar way with texts such as Ephesians 1:22-23 and Colossians 1:24, Murray concludes, ‘It is the church, exemplified in the saints and faithful brethren in Ephesus and Colosse, which Christ loved and of which he is the head.’⁶⁹

This exegetical study paves the way for Murray's summary statement, ‘The church may not be defined as an entity wholly invisible to human perception and observation.’⁷⁰ He contends that in the New Testament, whether the Church is viewed as the entire communion of saints or as a local assembly, it is always a visible entity. The spiritual facts which constitute someone a member of the Church are always expressed in an observable way.

Given human fallibility, there will always be some admitted into membership who do not belong to the body of Christ. This has given rise, says Murray, to a definition of the visible Church in terms of mere profession in an attempt ‘to allow for the discrepancy between the church ideally considered and the church realistically considered’.⁷¹ Murray concludes, ‘This allows for a definition that is embrative enough to include those who are not really members of Christ's body. This, I submit, is an error, and contrary to what we find in Scripture.’⁷² When Paul writes to the church at Corinth and addresses ‘them who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints’, Murray states, ‘he did not construe the church in such terms as would allow for the inclusion of those persons who might have borne the Christian name, and had been admitted to the privileges of the church, but who were not sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be saints.’⁷³ Murray finds support for his view in I Corinthians 5 where Paul recognises the presence of ‘old leaven’ to be purged out, but does not address the church as a community to be defined in terms of new leaven and old leaven.

Murray sees here a vital distinction, namely, 'that between what a situation may existentially be by reason of the sin, hypocrisy, and infirmity of men, on the one hand, and the terms in which the church is to be defined, on the other.'⁷⁴ A correct definition is required in order to maintain the character of that to which the promises of God apply. It is only to the covenant people of God that Peter's words in I Peter 2:9-10 can be applied. The same holds true for promises such as that of Christ that the gates of hell will not prevail against his Church.

Developing this point further, Murray provides a careful consideration of the scriptural designation of the Church as 'the body of Christ'. He notes, among other things, that the New Testament use of this language makes clear that there is one, united body of Christ, and that this truth is stressed by Paul on several occasions in the face of strife and division in particular, visible congregations. He concludes, 'In a word, the unity of the body of Christ is not a tenet that may be relegated to the transcendental realm of invisible, spiritual relationship, but a truth that governs, regulates and conditions the behaviour of the people of God in that communal, covenant relationship which they sustain to Christ in the institute of the church.'⁷⁵ Considering the Church in its most universal sense, Murray says, 'Hence, to maintain that the unity belonging to the church does not entail ecumenical embodiment, is to deny the catholicity of the church of Christ. If the church is catholic, then unity is catholic.'⁷⁶

Murray then demonstrates that the unity of the church relates to each person of the Trinity and focuses particularly on Jesus' prayer to the Father in John 17:20-23. He notes that the terms in which the unity of the Church must be conceived are the transcendent oneness of Father and Son. Such unity, argues Murray, cannot be divorced from faith in Christ (as verse 20 shows), it must be based on the doctrine of the Father and the Son which the apostolic witness provides, and it is the unity to which Jesus himself continued to bear witness through his apostles. Whilst spurious unity is to be condemned, the lack of unity among churches professing biblical faith in its purity is, according to Murray, 'a patent violation of the unity of the body of Christ, and of that unity which the prayer of our Lord requires us to promote.'⁷⁷ The unity prayed for is to be a witness to the world and must therefore be observable.

Whilst recognising the difficulties that seeking to remedy disunity entails, Murray argues that the complacency of so many on this matter must be exposed for the evil it is, 'dishonouring to Christ, destructive of the edification defined by the apostle as 'the increase of the body into the building up of itself in love' (Eph 4:16), and prejudicial to the evangelistic outreach to the world.'⁷⁸ When we realise how evil this failure is, he says, we will then 'be constrained to preach

the evil, to bring conviction to the hearts of others also, to implore God's grace and wisdom in remedying the evil, and to devise ways and means of healing these ruptures, to the promotion of united witness to the faith of Jesus and the whole counsel of God.'⁷⁹

Notes

1. The text is available in *The Creeds of Christendom*, 6th edition, edited by Philip Schaff, revised by David S Schaff, (Grand Rapids, 1983), volume 3, pp437-79. In quotations the spelling has been modernised by the present writer.
2. This is outlined helpfully by Iain Murray in an unpublished paper, 'The Churches and Christian Unity in Scottish Presbyterian History', pp2-4.
3. *The Second Book of Discipline*, with Introduction and Commentary by James Kirk (Edinburgh, 1980), I.1-2. Spelling has been modernised by the present writer.
4. The necessary historical background is provided by William M Hetherington, *History of the Westminster Assembly of Divines*, (Edinburgh, 1878) and A F Mitchell, *The Westminster Assembly. Its History and Standards*, (London, 1883).
5. For Gillespie's views on some of these issues see: W D J McKay, *An Ecclesiastical Republic. Church Government in the Writings of George Gillespie*, (Carlisle, 1997).
6. The Scottish influence on the Assembly's work is summarised by W D J McKay in 'Scotland and the Westminster Assembly' in *The Westminster Confession into the 21st Century*, edited by Ligon Duncan and Duncan Rankin (forthcoming). A fuller account is that of Wayne R Spear, *Covenanted Uniformity in Religion: the Influence of the Scottish Commissioners upon the Ecclesiology of the Westminster Assembly*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1976.
7. Samuel Rutherford, *The Due right of Presbyteries*, (London, 1644), p57.
8. Samuel Rutherford, op. cit., p244.
9. John Macpherson, *The Doctrine of the Church in Scottish Theology*, (Edinburgh, 1903), p64.
10. John Macpherson, op. cit., p 66.
11. Samuel Rutherford, op. cit., p251.
12. *ibid.*
13. Thomas Boston, *Miscellaneous Questions in Complete Works*, (London, 1855), Volume VI, pp125ff.
14. Samuel Rutherford, *The Divine Right of Church-Government and Excommunication*, (London, 1646), pp13-14.
15. Rutherford, *Divine Right*, p14.
16. *ibid.*
17. George Gillespie, *One Hundred and Eleven Propositions concerning the Ministry and Government of the Church*, (Edinburgh, 1647), Proposition 100.
18. Samuel Rutherford, *The Due right of Presbyteries*, pp256-7.
19. Rutherford, *Due right*, p257.
20. *ibid.*
21. James Walker, *The Theology and Theologians of Scotland 1560-1750*, 1888 edition, (Edinburgh, 1982), pp97-98.

22. James Durham, *A Treatise Concerning Scandal*, a new edition based on the edition of 1680, edited by Christopher Coldwell, (Dallas, 1990), Part 4, chapter 4, p262.
23. James Walker, op. cit., pp108-9.
24. Samuel Rutherford, *A Free Disputation Against pretended Liberty of Conscience*, (London, 1649), p267.
25. *ibid.*
26. Rutherford, *A Free Disputation*, p262.
27. Samuel Rutherford, *Due right*, p56.
28. George Gillespie, op. cit., Proposition 36.
29. *ibid.*
30. George Gillespie, op. cit., Propostion 38.
31. Samuel Rutherford, *Due right*, p332.
32. A helpful study of this subject is the article by Dutch theologian R D Anderson entitled 'Of the Church. An Historical Overview of the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 25' in *Westminster Theological Journal*, vol 59, No 2, Fall 1997, pp177-99.
33. Republished as *The Unity of the Church* by Thomas McCrie, (Dallas, 1989).
34. Thomas McCrie, op. cit., p9.
35. Thomas McCrie, op. cit., p10.
36. Thomas McCrie, op. cit., p12-13.
37. Thomas McCrie, op. cit., p15-16.
38. Thomas McCrie, op. cit., p18.
39. Thomas McCrie, op. cit., p21.
40. Thomas McCrie, op. cit., p25.
41. Thomas McCrie, op. cit., p26.
42. James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ*, 1869 edition, (London, 1960), 1.29-40.
43. James Bannerman, op. cit., 1.29
44. James Bannerman, op. cit., 1.30.
45. James Bannerman, op. cit., 1.32.
46. James Bannerman, op. cit., 1.33.
47. *ibid.*
48. James Bannerman, op. cit., 1.44.
49. James Bannerman, op. cit., 1.50.
50. James Bannerman, op. cit., 2.335.
51. James Bannerman, op. cit., 2.337.
52. James Bannerman, op. cit., 2.338.
53. *ibid.*
54. Robert L Dabney, *Discussions: Evangelical and Theological*, 1891 edition, (London, 1967), 2.430-446.
55. Robert L Dabney, op. cit., 2.430.
56. *ibid.*
57. Robert L Dabney, op. cit., 2.433.
58. Robert L Dabney, op. cit., 2.434.
59. Robert L Dabney, op. cit., 2.437.
60. Robert L Dabney, op. cit., 2.438.
61. Robert L Dabney, op. cit., 2.444.
62. Robert L Dabney, op. cit., 2.445-6.
63. Robert L Dabney, op. cit., 2.528-42.
64. Robert L Dabney, op. cit., 2.541.

65. John Murray, 'The Church: Its Definition in Terms of 'Visible' and 'Invisible' Invalid' in *Collected Writings*, (Edinburgh, 1976-82), 1.232.
66. John Murray, *op. cit.*, 2.321-35.
67. John Murray, *op. cit.*, 2.323.
68. John Murray, *op. cit.*, 2.325.
69. John Murray, *op. cit.*, 2.326.
70. *ibid.*
71. *ibid.*
72. John Murray, *op. cit.*, 2.327.
73. *ibid.*
74. *ibid.*
75. John Murray, *op. cit.*, 2.332.
76. John Murray, *op. cit.*, 2.332-3.
77. John Murray, *op. cit.*, 2.335.
78. *ibid.*
79. *ibid.*

THE PSALMS AS A MANUAL OF PRAISE

by **Frederick S. Leahy**

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In this article it is not the writer's intention to enter the debate over the exclusive use of the Psalms in worship, although holding firmly to that position. Rather the aim is to demonstrate the suitability and uniqueness of the Psalms as a manual of praise. However, there will be a response to the alleged limitations of the Psalms in this respect, or where it is felt that the Psalms have been denigrated.¹

The Inspiration of the of the Psalms

The Psalms as a manual of praise are unique in that they, as part of God's Word, are inspired- 'God-breathed'. Therefore they are free from what is false. No other verse or prose, however excellent and biblical in content, can be placed on a par with any part of God's Word - rather they must be assessed in the light of that Word.

Because God, by his Spirit, is the Author of the Psalms, they are characterized by doctrinal completeness and balance. In the Psalms, as one writer put it

[God] is lauded as Creator, praised as Benefactor, extolled as King, revered as Judge, magnified as Redeemer, confided in as High Priest, trusted as Shepherd, blessed as Comforter, adored as Friend, loved as Father, worshipped as the one only living and true God, our own God, Jehovah of Hosts, the refuge and strength of His people now, as He will be their portion for ever . Nowhere else is found exhibited so completely and exalted with such propriety and adequateness the fullness of God ...²

In essence all the doctrines of grace are to be found in the Psalms and in perfect balance. In terms of balance, no uninspired composition can match the Psalms. This is what we would expect from Spirit-given songs. David, 'the sweet psalmist of Israel' could say, 'The Spirit of the Lord spake by me and his word was in my tongue' (2 Sam. 23:1). Seventy-three Psalms are ascribed to David in the Hebrew text, and some twenty more in the Septuagint version. Many of those that are anonymous in the Hebrew may well have been written by David. So it is probable that close on two-thirds of the Psalms are from his pen. What was true of the origin of his Psalms is equally true of the rest: they

are all equally God-breathed. We would therefore, expect to find in the Psalms a comprehensive, balanced and timeless delineation of the Gospel- and that is exactly what we have. The great biblical doctrines of sin, the new birth, justification, sanctification, adoption, are all to be found in the Psalms and these truths are expounded more fully in the New Testament. In terms of salvation, the New Testament has nothing new to add to the Old.

It follows from the above that the Psalms need no revision, amendment or expurgation. In singing them and teaching our children to sing them, we may be sure that we are planting no seeds of error.

The Christ of the Psalms

We do not have to read Christ into the Psalms: he is there. Christ said that 'all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me' (Luke 24:44). Christ is at the heart of the Psalms: they are essentially Messianic. The New Testament refers to thirty-eight Psalms, at least, in which Christ is found. In these passages we see Christ as the Prophet, Priest and King of his people. His divinity is affirmed. His poverty and persecution are described. They touch on his agony, death, resurrection and ascension. It has been said that 'thirteen Psalms cluster round the Cross'.

No one book of the Old Testament is so often quoted in the New as the book of Psalms. No Old Testament book is referred to so often by the Lord: more than seventy distinct references to it are made in the account of his work given in the Gospels. This was his hymn-book from childhood days and it meant so much to him. He saw himself in those songs and knew that he had come to fulfil them. He sang them as they never had been sung before and could never be sung again - and by his Spirit he enables his people to sing them.

Before going to die, at the Passover, he sang from the Hallel (Psalms 113-118, Matt. 26:30), as was the custom. Klaas Schilder comments

What Jesus does is not affected by the fact that others also do it. The important thing is that no one in the world does a thing *in the same way that Jesus does it*. Something entirely new inheres in the singing of the Hallel the moment it comes from Jesus' lips. That new and different quality never was known in the world before and never will be repeated in it again.³

Taking the Hallel as an example, do we see Christ there, as he clearly saw himself? Take Psalm 116. 'I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and

my supplications... The sorrows of hell compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold of me: I found trouble and sorrow'. Does the experience of the psalmist exhaust and encompass the anguish and deliverance that is so vividly described? When we, in faith, listen to our Saviour speaking prophetically in this Psalm we can gladly accept the title given to it by Andrew Bonar, 'The Redeemer's Resurrection Song of Thanksgiving'.⁴

Other examples of the Christocentric nature of the Psalms can be given. In Psalm 24 we have the question, 'who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?' And the answer, 'He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart ...' That was not true of David who wrote the Psalm, nor is it true of any child of God in this life. It is true of 'the King of glory', the Messiah of whom this Psalm speaks. As we are clothed in his righteousness we may and should make this Psalm our own, singing it with our eyes on the Righteous One. As Schilder puts it

Sing lustily. Sing by virtue of the blood; sing of the blood. Sing by virtue of the cross, sing of the crown ... the Author of the psalms Himself became the Precentor of it. His Spirit has qualified us to sing through Him and with him - to sing frailly, very imperfectly, but perfectly in principle.⁵

Take Psalm 88. What is left if we take Christ and his cross out of that Psalm? A man holding on to God in the dark. And was not that exactly what the Saviour was doing when he uttered that dread cry of dereliction on the cross?

In terms of the Messianic nature of the Psalms, they may be divided into three classes: those subjectively, objectively and ideally Messianic.

Among the *subjectively* Messianic Psalms we note especially the twenty-second which goes far beyond anything experienced by David. It portrays Christ in the darkness of his desolation, the object of ridicule and scorn, surrounded by his enemies and the powers of evil, and shows, too, the victorious outcome of his suffering. In the final analysis Christ is the One who speaks in this Psalm. In the sixteenth Psalm we see Christ's trust in his Father, his joy in his Father's service and his anticipated triumph over death. In his Pentecostal sermon, Peter shows that this is so. 'David ... being a prophet ... spoke of the resurrection of Christ ...' (Acts 2:25-32).

Of the Psalms *objectively* Messianic, we may think of the second Psalm which describes the reign and triumph of the Lord's Christ (Anointed).

Similarly in Psalm 110 we are shown the Kingly Priest, Christ on his mediatorial throne, victorious over all his and our enemies.

Many of the Psalms are *ideally* Messianic in that they find their ultimate fulfilment in Christ. All of the Psalms had meaning and relevance for the psalmists and for Israel, but in the New Testament they are consistently interpreted in terms of Christ (either as Saviour or Judge) and his Church. So among those Psalms seen as ideally Messianic, we would include the twenty-third, the one hundred and sixteenth and the forty-fifth.

Every book of the Old Testament is intended to lead directly or indirectly to Christ. In this respect the book of Psalms stands pre-eminent among the entire thirty-nine. No wonder, then, that there is no one book of the Old Testament so often quoted in the New as the Book of Psalms. J. G. Murphy writes

As soon as we discern in the Psalms this Son of God, this anointed Prophet, Priest and King, we are prepared to meet with Him ... in other aspects of these sacred songs.

He proceeds to give many examples of this and concludes,

In all these appear traits that surpass anything in the experience of David or any mere man. They are scattered here and there through the Psalms, and form a series of remarkable foreshadowings of the history of that Messiah who combined in Himself the attributes of God and the conditions of man, and who passed through temptation, suffering, and death to obtain for the penitent the blessings of eternal redemption.⁶

It is not surprising, then, that on the day of Pentecost, Peter, in preaching Christ crucified and risen, turned to the Psalms – the sixteenth and the one hundred and tenth. The distinctive use made of the Psalms in the Epistle to the Hebrews is impressive. Of the thirty-three passages quoted from the Old Testament, sixteen are from the book of Psalms. Well does Michael Bushell write concerning Christ in the Psalms

The Psalms are thus seen as revealing His divinity, His eternal sonship, His incarnation, His mediatorial offices; they prophecy of His betrayal, His agony in the garden, His trial, His rejection, His crucifixion, His burial and resurrection, His ascension, and His second coming and the triumph of His kingdom.⁷

In the Psalms we have divine revelation and the Church's response to that revelation.

Imprecatory and Penitential Psalms

Regarding the Imprecatory Psalms, it needs to be remembered that they predict the righteous judgements of the Lord and that in them Christ speaks prophetically. Psalm sixty-nine is one of the great Psalms of the Cross, yet in that Psalm it is written, 'Let their table become a snare before them: ... Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not...' (vv. 22-23). Those who regard such statements as sub-Christian should read Paul's use of them as he wrote under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Rom 11: 9-10). Michael Bushell comments

Those who spurn these Psalms because of the fearful character of the sentiments expressed in them would do well to ponder the character of the God who wrote them. The imprecations of the Psalms are fearful indeed, but so indeed is the wrath of our God against those who arrogantly persecute His Church and defame His Holy Name.⁸

This leaves the Penitential Psalms to be considered. Is Christ, the sinless One, in them? In what way did he use them? What meaning could they have had for him? As part of his Bible, the Scriptures that spoke of him, they must have meant something to him, even as the baptism by John in the presence of a multitude of sinners was important seeing he had come to die in the place of such sinners. An old explanation of the place these Psalms could have had for the Saviour is clearly stated by Bishop George Horne in his excellent (and out of print) commentary on the Psalms.

In some of the Psalms, David appears as one suffering for his sins. When man speaks of sin, he speaks of what is his own; and therefore, every Psalm, where sin is confessed to be the cause of sorrow, belongs originally and properly to us, as fallen sons of Adam.... This is the case of the fifty-first, and the rest of those which are styled penitential Psalms, and have always been used in the church as such... There are no less than five quotations from different parts of the 69th Psalm, all concurring to inform us, that Christ is the speaker through that whole Psalm. Yet the fifth verse of it runs thus - 'O God, thou knowest my foolishness, and my guiltiness is not hid from thee'. The solution of this difficulty given, and continually insisted on, in the writings of the fathers, is this; that Christ, in the day of his passion standing charged with the sin and guilt of his people, speaks of such, their sin and guilt, as if they were his own, appropriating to himself those debts, for which, in the capacity of a surety, he had made himself responsible. The lamb which, under the law, was offered for sin, took the name 'guilt', because the guilt contracted by the offerer was transferred to that innocent creature, and typically expiated by its blood (see Lev. 5:6). Was not this exactly the case, in truth and reality, with the Lamb of God? ... Christ and the Church compose one mystical person, of which he is the head, and the church, the body; and as the body speaks by the head, and the head for the body, he speaks of her sin, and she of his righteousness; which consideration is at the same time a key to any claims of righteousness made in the Psalms by her, and to any confession of sin made by him ...

Nor can it, indeed, well be imagined that our blessed Lord, as a member of the Jewish church, and an attendant on the service of the synagogue, though conscious to himself of no sin, did not frequently join with his 'brethren according to the flesh', in the repetition of the Penitential, as well as the other Psalms ... If from his circumcision to the crucifixion, he bare our sin in his own body'; why should it be thought strange, that he should confess them, on our behalf, with his own mouth?"

It is worth reflecting on the practice of the Old Testament prophets to confess the sins of Israel as if they were their own, although our Saviour's position in this respect was unique.

The Catholicity of the Psalms

As part of God's Word, there is nothing narrow or sectarian about the Psalms. No denominational emphasis appears. No doctrinal distortion is present. As the Bible is truly catholic – intended for all – so are the Psalms. The Psalms were written long before the appearance of factions and denominations as we know them. They contain no partial views of truth. No doctrine is emphasized at the expense of another. They are eminently suitable as a manual of praise in all ages and in all cultures.

It follows that the Psalms are peculiarly suited to the world-wide mission of the Church, imbued as they are with the missionary spirit, Psalms 67 and 72 being examples of this vision of the spread of the Gospel and the establishment of Christ's kingdom.

In his excellent booklet, 'The Gospel in the Psalms' Professor John McIlmoyle writes

If the Apostles found the Psalms so suitable for their work of evangelising nations, it is reasonable to think that they will be a suitable medium for expressing Gospel Truth at any time and to any people. There are at least two sections of the world's inhabitants to whom they will make strong appeal. One is the Mohammedans; the other the Jews. A missionary amongst Moslems hears this testimony: 'The Mohammedans love and revere the Psalms. Their Oriental setting appeals to them; the majestic swing of their language thrills them; their characterization of God fills them with awe'. A zealous and successful young evangelist in Egypt, educated in a Moslem university and afterwards converted to Christianity, said concerning his efforts to reach his fellow-students: 'My one aim in life is to teach Christ and Him crucified to my brethren'. He always began with the Psalms, for they are, he said, full of Christ, and His character, offices, triumphs, and even the leading particulars of His life are set forth in a way which so peculiarly appeals to the Mohammedan mind that one who studies them thoroughly cannot resist their convincing power.¹⁰

The Psalter spans the ages of time as the use made of it in the New Testament proves. At the time of the Reformation, the Psalms, previously restricted to religious orders in Latin, were given to the people in their own language. Luther loved the Psalms, although not using them exclusively. He lectured on them extensively from 1513-1555. As early as 1524 he had prepared and published metrical versions of a number of Psalms. In his preface to the Revised Edition of the German Psalter, A.D. 1531, Luther wrote

Yea, the Psalter ought to be precious and dear, were it for nothing else but the clear promise it holds forth respecting Christ's death and resurrection, and its prefiguration of His kingdom and the whole estate and system of Christianity, insomuch that it might well be entitled a Little Bible ...¹¹

In his booklet, 'The Universality of the Psalms,' (out of print) Rev. R. B. Lyons, a great lover of the Psalms, wrote

Perhaps it is in the case of those who are journeying on into old age and who feel that they are standing on eternity's shore that we find the deepest, truest appreciations of God's Psalter. In a sick room or by a death-bed we turn to the Psalms. In one such case I think I must have read the greater part of the Book of Psalms, and its words seemed to be more acceptable and sustaining than any other portions of Scripture. The words of the Psalms are woven into the common metaphors of life ...

Later Lyons says, of the Psalms, 'they depict the experiences of men such as ourselves, imperfect, stumbling, sinning, aspiring, praying'.

The catholicity of the Psalter stands or falls with the catholicity of the Bible itself, for as Matthew Henry reminds us, 'it has been called the *abstract*, or *summary of both Testaments*'.¹² The catholicity of the Psalms is evidenced by their history. For thousands of years they have nourished the souls of men and women, meeting their spiritual need at every level and in whatever circumstance. What is true of God's Word as a whole, in this respect, is no less true of these God-breathed songs.

The Covenant Setting of the Psalms

In Scripture all true worship, whether prayer or praise, is a response in the context of God's Covenant of Grace. In grace God seeks us and redeems us. He has chosen to dwell among his people. He is ever faithful to his covenant promises and his people are to respond in loving obedience to that covenant. He is our God and we are his people: that is the covenant bond. The God of the Psalms is essentially the God of the Covenant, and his people are a covenant community.

It is interesting to see how often this covenant relationship is mentioned in the Psalms. God makes his covenant known to his people (25:14). His people respond that they have not dealt falsely with God's covenant (74:20). Of his anointed King, God says, 'My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him' (89:28). God is said to be 'ever mindful of his covenant' (111:5). He commanded, or ordained, his covenant for ever (111:9). Those who keep God's covenant know mercy and truth (25:10). The Covenant of Grace, confirmed with Abraham, is said to be everlasting (105:10). The saints have made a covenant with God by sacrifice (50:5).

Commenting on the words of God, 'My covenant will I not break' [Psa, 89:34], Calvin says

That the faithful, therefore, may not harass themselves beyond measure in debating in their own minds whether or no they are in favour with God, they are enjoined to look to the covenant, and to embrace the salvation which is offered to them in it. God here commends to us his faithfulness, that we may account his promise sufficient, and that we may not seek salvation any where else.¹³

Calvin sees the expression the 'way of God' (e.g., Psa 67:2) as referring to his covenant, which he terms 'the spring of salvation'.¹⁴

The covenant concept binds the Psalter together. The believer's life is consistently seen in a covenant context (e.g., Psa 103:17-18). This is true of no other manual of praise where at best there may be the occasional reference to the covenant.

Alleged limitations of the Psalms

1. *They are said to be anticipatory.* In many respects they are, as are parts of the New Testament. We must not forget the 'eternal now' in which the Godhead dwells; nor must we forget that the Christ of the Psalms is the eternal, unchanging Christ. The anticipatory is to be found in almost every manual of praise produced by man. Throughout the ages Christ is always the Coming One, and the closing prayer of the New Testament is anticipatory.
2. *They cannot be understood apart from the New Testament.* Granted there is much that is typological and prophetic in the Psalms, but that does not render them in any sense obsolete. Much of the New Testament cannot be understood apart from the Old Testament. There is organic unity in Holy Scripture. It should not be forgotten that, as Michael Bushell comments

... the Psalms abounded in prophetic concepts that to a large extent were beyond the full comprehension of God's people at that time. The Psalms could not be fully understood, especially in their eschatological character, until the coming of the Messiah. In a very real sense, then, the Psalms are far more appropriate to the New than to the Old Dispensation.¹⁵

3. *The name of Jesus does not occur in the Psalms.* Granted, but we have seen that they are totally Christ-centred, and that in the New Testament they are applied and expounded in terms of the Person and work of Christ. Sadly it is because multitudes of Christians, largely through lack of instruction, fail to see Christ in the Psalms, that this 'little Bible' is virtually cast aside. In such circles there is no real understanding of or love for the Psalms. Indeed, in some quarters there is a clear distaste for the Psalms. It is a strange irony of our time that the Psalms receive greater honour and use in Roman Catholic and Anglo-Catholic circles than among Evangelicals.
4. *Metrical versions are often paraphrastic.* Granted, but this is not an argument against the use of Psalms as praise. It is the Church's responsibility to produce metrical versions as close as possible to the original, just as the same is true of biblical translation as a whole. And it must be remembered that there is no such thing as a 'word for word' translation from one language to another, whether in prose or verse. When Dr Kenneth Dix lists parallel verses from the King James Version of the Bible and the Scottish Psalter, he misses this point.¹⁶ It is not our purpose in this article to defend any particular metrical version. We do, however, have the responsibility to produce a metrical version that is as close to the original as we would want a prose version to be.
5. *Many Psalms are prayers.* True, but they are songs of praise meant to be sung and that were sung. Besides, prayer and praise often intertwine. Many hymns of human composition are also prayers.
6. *It is regarded as unwise to sing one thing and mean another.* For example, when we sing of David and his reign, we think of One of whom he is a type (cf Luke 1:32-33). When we sing of Jerusalem and Zion, and the city of God, we think of the Church. Does every evangelical preacher take such terms literally when, for example, preaching on Psalm 87? How does he preach on Ezekiel 34:23? 'I will set up one shepherd over them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd'. But when Ezekiel wrote, David had long ago slept with his fathers. Singing one thing and thinking of its spiritual significance is not limited to the Psalter. We find it in songs of human composition: 'Jerusalem the golden, with milk and

honey blest'. 'Glorious things of thee are spoken, Zion, city of our God'; 'Land me safe on Canaan's side' etc.

We make no response to those who regard many of the Psalms as sub-Christian and unfit for the Christian dispensation. We hold a radically different view of Scripture from those who make that criticism.

Conclusion

We are commanded in the Bible to sing Psalms. Few Christians would question that. The Psalms, like the rest of God's Word, are inexhaustible. They contain spiritual treasures far beyond our comprehension. The Church can never outgrow them. We hold no brief for the life-style of the gifted poet, Lord Byron, but he struck the right chord when he wrote of the Psalter.

It soften'd men of iron mould,
 It gave them virtues not their own;
 No ear so dull, no soul so old,
 That felt not, fired not to the tone,
 Till David's lyre grew mightier than his throne!¹⁷

It told the triumphs of our King,
 It wafted glory to our God;
 It made our gladden'd valleys ring,
 The sedars bow, the mountains nod;
 Its sound aspired to heaven and there abode!

During the Reformation, there was division between the Reformed (Calvinists) and the Lutherans, principally over the Lord's Supper, a division that remains to this day. It was the Reformed, in contradistinction to the Lutherans, who embraced and sang the Psalms so enthusiastically – in Switzerland, France, other European counties, and Scotland, and then world-wide for generations. In France to be a Psalm-singer was to be known as a Protestant. In days of fierce persecution, French Huguenots and Scottish Covenanters alike found strength and peace as they sang these inspired songs of Zion.

Calvin, in his preface to his commentary on the Psalms, wrote

I have been accustomed to call this book, I think not inappropriately, 'An Anatomy of all the Parts of the Soul'; for there is not an emotion of which one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror. Or rather, the Holy Spirit has here drawn to the life all the griefs, sorrows, tears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be

agitated. ... There is no other book in which there is to be found more express and magnificent commendation, both of the unparalleled liberality of God towards his Church, and of all his works; there is no other book in which there is recorded so many deliverances, nor one in which the evidences and experiences of the fatherly providence and solicitude which God exercises towards us, are celebrated with such splendour of diction, and yet with the strictest adherence to the truth; in short, there is no other book in which we are more perfectly taught the right manner of praising God, or in which we are more powerfully stirred up to the performance of this religious exercise ... here there is nothing wanting which relates to the knowledge of eternal salvation.

Spurgeon, in his introduction to the third volume of his monumental 'The Treasury of David', says

The writing of this book has been a means of grace to my own heart. ... The Book of Psalms has been a royal banquet to me, and in feasting on its contents I have seemed to eat angels' food. ... It is the Paradise Land of devotion, the Holy Land of poesy, the heart of Scripture, the map of experience, and the tongue of saints.

Deploring the fact that the Psalms were no longer prized as in earlier ages of the church, Spurgeon recalled the days when

as Jerome tells us, the labourer, while he held the plough, sang Hallelujah; the tired reaper refreshed himself with the Psalms, and the vinedresser, while trimming the vines with his curved hook, sang something of David.

Alas! those days are gone. Many testimonials like the above, taken from men and women over many centuries, could be given. But let that of Christ suffice: it is 'written in the Psalms concerning me'. These songs of Zion are unique, incomparable and sublime. Without their use in the praise of God, the Church's loss is incalculable. With their use the Church has that book of praise that God by his Spirit has given her; and when she uses it, God is glorified.

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Denominations in America, Scotland, Ireland and Australia, and congregations in England and elsewhere, committed to exclusive Psalmody, represent a tiny minority of Christians world-wide. However, they are not to be despised or patronized on that account, and it should be remembered that churches holding unreservedly to the Reformed Faith as set forth in the Westminster Standards and the Three Forms of Unity of the Dutch also constitute a small minority. Truth must ever be sought by a study of God's Word alone.

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EVANGELISING IRELAND: JAMES USSHER AND THE ULSTER PRESBYTERIANS

by Crawford Gribben

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Staking a claim for Presbyterian zeal, the opening sentence of Patrick Adair's *True Narrative of the Rise and Progress of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland* asserted that the evangelisation of Ulster began in 1622 when the Scottish minister Robert Blair moved to Bangor.¹ Yet his assessment was wrong on several counts: Blair was neither the first Presbyterian nor the first evangelist to work in the north of Ireland. Edward Bryce had settled in Broadisland in 1613, the first of fifteen Scottish-trained ministers to begin work in the north-east of Ireland within as many years.² But the Gospel had not been introduced by Presbyterians, nor was the Reformed faith introduced first to the north. Through the dynamic leadership in the provision of theological education at Trinity College Dublin, important elements within the southern church were firmly committed to puritan theology by the time that Blair arrived in Bangor.

In 1622, the Irish church was hovering uncertainly between the influences of Geneva and Rome. The Irish church had emerged at the beginning of the reformation as a church whose retention of cultural paganism left it with very little in common with either Tridentine Catholicism or the movement for reform. Ireland rapidly emerged as a battleground for religious propaganda. Throughout the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, both communities vigorously engaged in 'confessionalisation', the slow and often painful process of educating their adherents into the distinctive tenets of their faith.³ By the early 1600s, a Roman hierarchy shadowed the Reformed leadership in every diocese in the island. With these leaders of Ireland's Catholics being rapidly assimilated to Tridentine norms, native Protestants were compelled to develop a broad ecclesiology resolutely grounded upon a basic Reformed faith.⁴ With their influence largely restricted to 'the Pale', the Anglicised area surrounding Dublin, ecclesiological pragmatism was the Protestants' best defence: welcoming all who would 'joyne against the Common and grand adversary in the Romish Babylon', the evangelism of Ireland was the declared goal of the Irish reformed church.⁵

It was this prioritisation of evangelism that led Irish protestant leaders to pursue a policy of minimal conformity. After 1615, their church was officially committed to the Irish Articles, a distinctly puritan confession of faith. Its basically Anglican contents were not designed to exclude any committed Calvinists. Those Scottish refugee ministers who dissented from full-scale Anglicanism were not required to defend the Irish church's system of liturgy and government. If they would not denounce it, they could be allowed to preach. But despite the opportunities and dangers that their situation presented, the Irish church ultimately found its puritan consensus impossible to maintain. Arminianism was perceived to be rising in influence in England throughout the 1620s, and its threat – political as much as theological – seemed to be reaching towards Ireland. Not simply an alternative Protestant theology, early modern Arminianism offered an entirely different worldview, contesting Reformed thought in ecclesiology and society, as much as in theology. As the fog of its false doctrine began to engulf Ireland, the church's Calvinistic unity came under increasing pressure. With Arminianism capturing the courts of their church, Irish puritans were being forced to choose between loyalty to their historic communion or the Reformed faith which had so briefly underpinned it. As the armies of England and Scotland were swept into a series of civil wars in the late 1630s, competing loyalties to the more developed ecclesiologies of Scottish Covenanters and English Royalists finally crippled the puritan alliance. The Irish church and its Ulster Presbyterians were being driven inexorably apart, and the puritan evangelisation of Ireland finally collapsed.⁶ Yet Ireland's reformation had begun with such promise.⁷

1. James Ussher and the Irish puritan church

The Irish reformation – to the extent that it ever occurred – was much more protracted than the reformations in either Scotland or England. As in England, its initial progress in the courts of Henry VIII made little impact on the world outside them; as in Scotland, its reformation of doctrine would extend into the seventeenth century and would advance far beyond the *via media* of the Tudor church. At the centre of this growing puritanism was the magisterial figure of Ireland's greatest churchman – James Ussher (1581-1656).⁸

Although his modern reputation rests principally upon his interest in Biblical chronology – having famously dated the Creation of the world to 6pm on 22 October 4004 BC – Ussher was better known in his own day as a champion of Calvinist orthodoxy and a defender of the independence of the Irish reformed church.⁹ Early contacts with Scottish refugees had grounded his interest in the gospel. After learning what he could from his two blind aunts, who had drilled

him in the study of Scripture, Ussher had been educated by two Scottish refugees, the strongly puritan schoolmasters James Fullerton and James Hamilton. With the rather unusual distinction of having two uncles installed as Archbishop of Armagh, it was natural for Ussher to have an interest in entering the ministry, and so he proceeded to Trinity College Dublin in 1593. The college, opened one year earlier, had been designed to provide educated clergy for mission work in Ireland, and an indication of its theological environment can be gauged from the fact that both Fullerton and Hamilton were among the college's first five Fellows.¹⁰ An analysis of Trinity's undergraduate curriculum and library records indicates that the college was rigidly anti-Catholic, and the worldview Ussher learned there remained foundational to his later published works.¹¹ He was certainly a good student, gaining his BA in 1598, and his MA, with an appointment as college catechist, by 1601. He was ordained in the same year, on the day that Continental Catholic forces, attempting invasion, were defeated at Kinsale. It was a signal warning that the Catholicism dominated his nation did not represent only theological danger: Ireland's Catholic millions always could be counted on to sympathise with European attempts to find a back door into Protestant England.

Ussher's ability soon led to increasing influence inside the university and in the wider realm. In 1603 he was appointed Chancellor of St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin. In 1607 he gained his BD and was appointed Professor of Divinity. In 1613, his millenarian interests were displayed in his Latin orations on the first resurrection of Revelation 20 and on Daniel's seventy weeks, for which he was awarded a DD. One year later he was appointed Vice-Chancellor of the college. In 1615, in the first post-reformation Convocation of the Irish church, his influence led to the adoption of the rigidly puritan Irish Articles as the church's official confession of faith, a development he sought to consolidate by unsuccessful invitations to the English puritans Richard Sibbes, Joseph Mede and John Preston to teach at Trinity.¹² In 1621 he became Bishop of Meath, a member of the Irish Privy Council in 1623, and, in a patent signed days before James' death in 1625, he was appointed Archbishop of Armagh. His ascent at last complete, Ussher was determined to use his authority to preserve the puritan outlook of the Irish church.¹³ But his responsibility would be challenged by the practical difficulties of evangelising Ireland. The natives were remaining loyal to the traditional church; the Scottish refugees rarely shared the puritanism of Fullerton or Hamilton; and the ambitious churchmen coming to power in England did not share the interests of Preston, Mede or Sibbes. A storm was brewing over Ireland's white harvest fields.

2. Plantation and revival

In part this problem was complicated by the demographics of Ulster. The north of Ireland had always been known as a difficult province. After the accession of James VI to the English throne in 1603, it took on a new level of importance in the developing *realpolitik* of the three kingdoms. Several Ulster lords – Hugh O’Neill, earl of Tyrone, Rory O’Donnell, earl of Tyrconnell, and Cúchonnacht Maguire, lord of Fermanagh – had led their followers into a conspiracy with Spain and had become the focus of Catholic political dissent. On 4 September 1607, for reasons that have never been fully explained, they fled Ireland into exile on the Continent. During the political vacuum created by this ‘Flight of the Earls’, Ulster was rapidly ‘planted’ by the English government. James promoted the settlement of Lowland Scots in Kintyre and both Scots and English in Ulster to counter the close and politically destabilising links between the Gaelic cultures of those regions. English settlers were concentrated in Armagh, Fermanagh, Tyrone, Cavan, Donegal, and Coleraine, while Scots dominated Antrim and Down.

In terms of numbers involved, the venture was hugely successful: by 1641, 22,000 English settlers had been planted in Munster, and a further 15,000 English and Scots in Ulster. Indeed, contrary to later myth-making, the native landlords were initially enthusiastic about the scheme, which they believed would provide models of civility and economic success for their people. More often, however, the settlers displaced the native inhabitants, stimulating several minor outbreaks of rebellion before 1615. Perhaps the settlers were less than well equipped to be models of good citizenship. One contemporary described the settlers as ‘all of them generally from the scum of both nations [Scotland and England], who, for debt, or breaking and fleeing from justice, or seeking shelter, came hither, hoping to be without fear of man’s justice in a land where there was nothing, or but little, as yet of the fear of God.’¹⁴

The Irish church was sensitive to the need to find pastors suitable for the unique needs of the settlers, and so they encouraged the attentions of those Scottish ministers escaping demands for the kirk’s conformity to the Arminian ceremonies prescribed by the Articles of Perth (1618). Although the Irish church was also Episcopalian, it was largely free of Arminian influence, and the Scottish ministers found its atmosphere much less threatening to their Presbyterian distinctives. They found little pressure for change. The Irish Articles were at that time the most comprehensive confession of faith in the three kingdoms, and their discussion of Reformed theology was vastly more extensive and reliable than either that of the Scots Confession (1560) or the

English Thirty-nine Articles (1562). The one hundred and four Irish Articles concentrated upon detailed soteriological themes, included covenant theology for the first time in any confession of faith, and notably omitted any discussion of church government. They were robustly anti-Catholic, being the first confession of faith to identify the Papacy as the 'man of sin' (article 80), and their publication was deliberately designed to appeal to British puritan instincts. Copies of the confession were published in London in 1629 with a short preface highlighting Ussher's appropriation of the Lambeth articles prepared by earlier English puritans but forbidden by the King from being adopted as an official Anglican creed: 'In these Articles are comprehended, almost word for word, the nine Articles agreed on at Lambeth the 20th of November Anno 1595.'¹⁵ A pointing finger in the margin readily identified the quotations for the enthusiastic reader. England's puritans were being informed that James' opposition, which had crippled English reform, had not prevented the further reformation of the Irish church.

The emphases of the articles paralleled the puritan ecumenism of the Irish church. Despite their orthodoxy and their minimalism, the new ministers were not required to swear to uphold the articles; they were simply required not to contradict them: 'If any minister, of what degree or quality soever he be, shall publicly teach any doctrine contrary to these Articles agreed upon; if after due admonition he do not conform himself, and cease to disturb the peace of the Church, let him be silenced, and deprived of all spiritual promotions he doth enjoy.'¹⁶ Neither were the refugee ministers required to submit to Episcopal ordination. The bishops of Down and Raphoe, Robert Echlin and Andrew Knox, were notably flexible. Rather than insisting upon his pre-eminence as a bishop, Knox ordained John Livingstone as one presbyter among equals, and allowed him to cross out anything in the prayer book's ordination service that he found objectionable; but Livingstone 'found that it had been so marked by some others before that I needed not mark anything'.¹⁷ Robert Blair found similar flexibility in Bishop Echlin. The Irish church was singularly accommodating to its Scottish ministers, but despite the early efforts of Edward Bryce and those Presbyterian ministers who had followed him to Ulster, progress in evangelism was slow. The harvest was plenty, but the labourers were few. Then in 1625, when the vigorous preaching of James Glendinning began to take effect, the situation began to change.

It would be impossible to describe Glendinning as a typical puritan pastor. He had taken his MA from St Andrews, but clearly was not intellectually gifted. Blair discovered him preaching in Carrickfergus, the social and administrative

centre of the Scots' presence in Ulster, but found that his preaching was so bizarre that he recommended Glendinning to return to his country church to improve his homiletic and expository ability. Glendinning took Blair's advice, returned to Oldstone, near the market town of Antrim, and so thundered the law of God that the dissolute members of his congregations began to display the most startling evidences of conviction of sin. Soon his meetings were punctuated by moans, sobs, faints and screams of terror. But Glendinning was unable to help them; despite Blair's advice, he appeared to have no clear grasp of the gospel.

The Scottish pastors took stock of their response. One mile away at Antrim, John Ridge began a monthly meeting which drew together those ministers who enjoyed clearer views of the gospel. The meetings were designed to facilitate clear Biblical exposition, beginning with a sermon on Thursday evening and then as many as a further four sermons on the subsequent day. Hundreds of people were attracted to these preaching sessions, and the basis for the Six Mile Water Revival was laid. One contemporary recorded that he had 'seen them myself stricken, and swoon with the Word – yea, a dozen in one day carried out of doors as dead, so marvellous was the power of God smiting their hearts for sin, condemning and killing; and some of those were none of the weaker sex or spirit, but indeed some of the boldest spirits ... the stubborn, who sinned and gloried in it, because they feared not man, are now patterns of sobriety, fearing to sin because they fear God; and this spread throughout the country to admiration, so that, in a manner, as many as came to hear the word of God, went away slain with the words of his mouth'.¹⁸

Unlike other occasions of revival, the Six Mile Water Revival was deep-seated and enduring. For the next five years, heightened religious interest was sustained around the area of the monthly meeting, and by 1630 its blessing extended to the southwest coast of Scotland, through the ministry of David Dickson at Irvine. The famous revival at Shotts, on 21 June 1630, was the grand crescendo of this outpouring of Christ's Spirit. Under the preaching of John Livingstone, 'near 500 had at that time a discernable change wrought on them'.¹⁹ But the revival had begun in Ulster, through the weakness of Glendinning; and it was Ussher's policy of Calvinist unity and minimal conformity that had facilitated its initial progress.²⁰ Livingstone never again knew the empowering he had experienced at Shotts; it would be interesting to know how Glendinning responded to his part in this 'surprising work of God'. There are vast silences in his later career. He became fascinated by eschatology, left Ireland on a quest to find the seven churches of Asia, and was never seen again.²¹

3. Protestant apologetics

But if the 1620s were a period of revival among the Ulster settlers, they were also marked by the development of an increasingly intellectual system of historical apologetics designed to counter the spread of Roman Catholicism in the rest of Ireland. While the Presbyterian pastors engaged in mission among the Scottish settlers, Ussher was absorbed in the distinctive needs of the native Irish. In large part this was complicated by legislation which provided for preaching in either Latin or English – both languages were foreign to the native Irish – and Ussher shared the ambivalence of his age to the Irish ‘barbarians’. Ussher was quite at home in the Latin of the European scholarly community he preferred to address, but wrote in English for his country-men, concentrating upon the intellectual defence of the faith. A series of historical studies addressed the frequent objection raised against the movement for reform: ‘Where was your church before Luther?’

With close relatives on both sides of the reformation divide – and with his uncle, Richard Stanyhurst, as a prominent Jesuit apologist – Ussher was early faced with the Catholic appropriation of Irish history and culture. Realising that the Reformed cause required a wholesale assault upon the foundations of the Irish Catholic worldview, he prepared a series of texts which sought to demonstrate that the theology of the Roman hierarchy was opposed to Scripture, to the writings of the Church Fathers, and to the historic faith of the church founded by St Patrick. But developments in England – the rise of the Arminianism the puritans so feared – complicated his approach.

In his eyes, the problems raised by Arminianism and Roman Catholicism were closely linked. In 1623, to counter both influences, Ussher published *A Discourse of the Religion Anciently Professed by the Irish and British*.²² It was an historical *tour de force*, charging the post-Tridentine Catholics with innovation and novelty, and demonstrating the basic continuity between the faith and practice of the early Irish church and the church he served. The emphasis upon soteriological themes was deliberate. Puritans throughout the three kingdoms saw Arminians as blurring the dichotomy between Rome and Geneva which the preaching of justification had earlier effected. But the threat remained intense, and in 1625, responding to the earlier polemics of William Malone, Ussher issued *An Answer to a Challenge made by a Jesuit in Ireland*.²³ It was an extensive and painstaking compilation of patristic evidences that sought to demonstrate the novelty of the Roman hierarchy’s distinctives: the authority of traditions, the real presence, confession and the priest’s power to forgive sins, purgatory and

prayer for the dead, the proper interpretation of Christ's descent into hell, prayers to saints, images, merits, and – significantly – free will. Ussher's response was robust, describing Rome as 'the great dunghill of errors'.²⁴ Malone responded in 1627, ironically indicating the popularity of Ussher's *Answer*. His title page claimed that 'if ye have ten thousand USSHERS in Christ, yet not many FATHERS'.²⁵ But Malone's fear of Ussher's influence may have been exaggerated. The number of Irish people who could read English were far outnumbered by the millions for whom Irish was the primary medium of communication. Recognising the need, the lead for a truly incarnational ministry was briefly taken by William Bedell, Provost of Trinity between 1627 and 1629, who translated Scripture into the native language and oversaw the training of students to preach in Irish. But their efforts to reach the mind and the heart of Ireland lacked spectacular success. The Protestant apologetics of the Irish puritans saw little in the way of revival.

4. The failure of reformation

But despite years of useful cooperation, the pressures caused by links to the English and Scottish churches drove Ussher and the Ulster Presbyterians into conflict. Despite his best efforts, Ussher was unable to maintain the independence of the Irish church or the Puritanism of Trinity College as the rise of Arminianism continued in the Church of England during the 1620s and 1630s. After Laud's appointment as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633, the Irish church was coming under increasing pressure to enforce conformity and to identify entirely with the English church. Laud imposed the Arminian William Chappell as provost of Trinity College with the support of Wentworth, Lord Deputy of Ireland. With Wentworth relentlessly advancing English interests in Ireland's political arena, and Laud advancing Arminianism in the universities and bishoprics, Ussher was being forced to make difficult choices. The most basic elements of his worldview were coming into conflict. Like the other puritans, he had always maintained the rights of the king and the duties of the godly prince in aligning the law of the state with the law of God and in supporting the orthodoxy of the church. But now his allegiance to the godly prince was coming into conflict with his puritan ecumenism. As the Arminians captured the ear of the king, state policy could no longer be depended upon to advance the Reformed faith. The Arminian conformity Charles was demanding necessarily offended the Ulster Presbyterians. Even greater offence was caused by his extension of the *Graces* in 1628 – apparent promises of limited toleration for Irish Catholics – at the same time as the process of Arminian deformation was crippling the church's puritan witness. Ussher, who had spent decades demonstrating that his

Reformed faith was the historic faith of the church of St Patrick, was being compelled to see that loyalty to historic Anglicanism could no longer be maintained alongside allegiance to the pan-Calvinist evangelism he had earlier fostered. The rise of Arminianism was shaking the foundation of his puritan worldview.

Others too were feeling the pressure. Bishops Echlin and Knox, whose flexibility had so facilitated early Presbyterian settlement, began to depose the Scots from ministry after 1633.²⁶ Ussher's interference minimised their depositions: it was only the most prominent of the Scottish ministers who felt the weight of opposition. The leaders of the Ulster revival were early targets. Blair was deposed in 1634, and Livingstone and others soon after. Like many of their puritan contemporaries, their aspirations for a better life turned their thoughts to the New World. Livingstone was one of a party of Scots who made an unsuccessful attempt to emigrate to New England in 1634.

With this attack on Irish nonconformity came an attack upon the pan-Calvinist consensus that had undergirded it. At the 1634 Convocation, Wentworth ensured that the Irish Articles were replaced by the vaguer and much less Calvinistic Thirty-nine Articles. The Convocation refused to repeal them, but their influence virtually disappeared in the courts of the church. Bishop John Bramhall of Derry began to criticise the resident ministers in the diocese of Down and Connor as 'absolute irregulars, the very ebullition of Scotland', who used neither Prayer Book nor altar in worship.²⁷ The bishop of that diocese, Henry Leslie, published *A Treatise of the Authority of the Church* (1637) and *Answer to Certain Objections made against the Orders of our Church, especially Kneeling at Communion* (1637) in an attempt to force the 'Presbyterian Dictators' and 'new Gospellers' to abandon what he believed to be their 'Arianism'. In 1638 the settler-converts of the diocese were similarly censured in *A Full Confutation of the Covenant*: 'the Laity ... will hear no prayer at all. While the divine Service is reading, they walke in the Church-yard, and when prayer is ended, they come rushing into the Church, as it were into a Play-house, to hear a Sermon.'²⁸

Throughout the north of Ireland, the situation was the same. The enemies of the Presbyterians identified them exclusively as 'puritanes'.²⁹ Those who refused to conform were harassed even past the point of death. Robert Cunningham, who was deposed in 1636, fled to Irvine in southwest Scotland, where he died one year later. After his death, he was summoned by the High Commission in Ireland. Despite receiving notification of his death, they fined him twenty pounds for non-appearance, and, ignoring the needs of his widow, they seized his estate as security for non-payment.³⁰

Facing situations like these, it was inevitable that Presbyterians would be radicalised. When Blair and Livingstone returned to Scotland in 1637, they dispensed with a broad church mentality but took with them Ussher's basic hostility to Arminianism and his vision for an international Reformed alliance. The theological foundations of the reformed Scottish church they imagined were quickly laid. In scenes of revival, the National Covenant was signed in March 1638. Systematic reformation began in the General Assembly held in Glasgow Cathedral later that year. Delegates defied the royal prerogative and swept away the bishops with the Laudian innovations they had brought.

Those Presbyterians who had remained in Ireland had hardened in their attitude to bishops and welcomed the developments in Glasgow. To the Irish Laudians, however, these events explained Ulster's ecclesiastical rebelliousness: 'I know that the thing which doth encourage you in this your disobedience, is the present Insurrection in *Scotland*.'³¹ But the toleration of Laudians was the price Ussher had to pay if he was to maintain any degree of influence with the English king – and that influence was badly required if the independence of the Irish church, and the possibility of puritan revival, was to be maintained. He had to be seen to compromise abroad if he was to retain the possibility of maintaining truth at home.

Thus the initial alliance of Ulster Presbyterians and Irish puritans came under increasing pressure as both groups developed competing loyalties to external organisations. Ussher's personal conflict was problematically resolved when the Covenanters came out in defiance of the king. There was quite simply no way he could countenance the Presbyterian rebellion, and in 1639 he signed an order that the Ulster-Scots should disown the Covenant and prove their loyalty to the king. It was their wide-scale refusal to do so which ultimately decimated the unity of the Irish reformed church. Competing loyalties and competing ecclesiologies had eclipsed the Great Commission.

It is therefore ironic that the most enduring symbol of Ireland's religious wars – the Irish rebellion of 1641 – should also have been inspired by the Covenanter revolution.³² With Protestants torn apart by internecine struggle, the papal nuncio took advantage of Ireland's political power vacuum to support Phelim O'Neil's rising of Confederate armies against the English administration. With papal blessing, he announced that any Catholics who refused to participate in the uprising should be excommunicated from the church. The consequences were unparalleled, and the number of victims spiralled in the popular press. Richard Baxter reported contemporary estimates that 200,000 Protestants had

been killed.³³ Patrick Adair, who moved to Ulster some four years after the 1641 rebellion, believed that some 300,000 Protestants had been murdered. Modern historians dispute these figures, but agree that 'English Protestant clergy were a particular target of the native Irish.'³⁴ Throughout the three kingdoms, puritans were horrified at the scale of the massacre. Ussher, who had been in England when the rebellion broke out, learned of the destruction of his library, and, with what remained of his church in utter disarray, never again returned to Ireland. His last years were spent in the scholarly seclusion that his earlier interests in scholarly apologetics demanded.

5. Ussher and the Westminster Assembly

Despite his exile, and the eclipse of his influence on the Irish church, Ussher continued to hold the respect of the Presbyterians. Even the most radical Covenanters continued to respect his learning. George Gillespie, for example, cited Ussher on the religion professed by the ancient Irish, his challenge to the Jesuit theology of William Malone, and his discourse of the godly prince ideology, in his extended defence of the regulative principle of worship in *The English Popish Ceremonies* (1637).³⁵ But the respect that Ussher maintained is perhaps best illustrated in his invitation to participate in the Westminster Assembly.

The Westminster Assembly had initially been called by the London Parliament to advance the reformation of the English church through a revision of the Thirty-nine Articles. As this was something which Ussher's Irish Articles had already achieved, it was natural that he be expected to share in their discussions. But he had also impressed those who favoured a more conservative reformation. In May 1643 Ussher was nominated on to a committee to advise the more conservative House of Lords as to the best method of doctrinal reform in the Church of England. His colleagues included with other luminaries from the English church, William Twisse (later Prolocutor of the Westminster Assembly) and his old friend Samuel Ward (Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, formerly an English representative at the Synod of Dort). The committee met for six days in an attempt to pre-empt the conclusions of the more radical puritans and to preserve the link with historic Anglicanism.³⁶ Their efforts were overtaken by the events of that summer, when the arrival of the Scottish Commissioners – with George Gillespie among them – brought the political demand for root and branch Presbyterian reformation.

When faced with Parliament's invitation to participate in this wider initiative, Ussher's loyalty to Anglican tradition and the ideology of the 'godly prince'

(who had condemned the proceedings) dictated his refusal to participate. Nevertheless, his influence dominated the debates, as several historians of Reformed theology have noted. A.F. Mitchell and J. Struthers claimed that the Irish Articles were ‘the main source of our Confession of Faith, and almost its exact prototype in its statement of all the more important and essential doctrines of Christianity ... the Westminster divines appear ... to have followed very closely in the footsteps of Ussher and his Irish brethren.’³⁷ A.A. Hodge argued in his lectures on *Evangelical Theology* (1890) that Ussher’s *Body of Divinity* was instrumental in securing the covenantal approach of the Westminster Confession of Faith: ‘I believe [it] had more to do in forming the Catechism and Confession of Faith than any other book in the world; because it is well known that ... this book, which he compiled as a young man, was in circulation in this Assembly among the individuals composing it. And if this is true, you could easily see how much of suggestion there is in it which was afterward carried into the Catechism – the Larger Catechism especially – of that Assembly.’³⁸ John Murray likewise argued that the covenant theology of the Irish Articles laid the foundation for the superstructure erected by the Westminster divines.³⁹ Thus the breakdown of the Irish reformed alliance had not prevented Ussher’s formidable influence shaping the contours of Presbyterian orthodoxy in its maturity. But the Confession’s distinctly Irish character was not always to be recognised.

6. Conclusion

That was Patrick Adair’s problem in miniature. Claiming that the Gospel came to Ireland with Robert Blair in 1622, he had misunderstood the extent to which the central documents of the Presbyterian tradition out of which he was writing had been decisively shaped by the writings of a theologian who was both Irish and Anglican. Yet his mistake has been regularly replicated. From its earliest beginnings, Protestant evangelism in Ireland has often been portrayed as foreign. For certain versions of Irish Catholic nationalism, it makes sense to characterise the Reformed faith as un- or even anti-Irish. But sadly, some Protestants, like Patrick Adair, have been happy for it to appear so.

It is the importing of these cultural tensions that continues to threaten mission work in Ireland. Ussher had stamped the Presbyterians with the imprint of his thought, yet his reformation failed, torn apart by the competing demands of cultural loyalties and competing systems of church government. For all their value, neither Ussher’s ‘godly prince’ nor the Presbyterians’ covenanted reformation showed much interest in the missionary zeal that Ussher’s church had initially advanced. But recovery is possible. Today, wherever loyalties to the

puritan confessions remain, Ussher's theology, if not his churchmanship, lives on. If we can finally learn the lesson of cultural scepticism – of prizing lightly our loyalties to the arbitrarily defined geographical and cultural entities that claim our fiscal and economic support – then we may at least be on the road to fulfilling the Great Commission in Ireland. It is still possible to build an evangelistic alliance based on a solidly puritan faith. Revive that priority, and Ireland's reformation might properly begin.

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THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM AND ITS AUTHORS

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Three men were primarily responsible for the writing of the Heidelberg Catechism:

- A prince, Frederick III (1516-1576), Elector of the Palatinate in Germany
- A professor, Zacharias Ursinus (1534-1583), administrator and lecturer in the College of Wisdom
- A preacher, Caspar Olevianus (1536-1587), preacher in the castle chapel and in Heidelberg's Holy Ghost Church.

In 1518, one year after posting his Ninety-five Theses protesting the errors and abuses of the Roman Catholic Church, Martin Luther visited Heidelberg, capital of the Palatinate. While there Luther defended the watchwords of the Reformation: Scripture alone, grace alone, faith alone. Nonetheless, Heidelberg and its surrounding area gradually became more influenced by Philip Melanchthon, Luther's right-hand man, than by the Reformer himself.

In God's providence, Melanchthon became largely responsible for developing Protestant doctrine in the Palatinate. Over the years a division arose in the area between those who held Reformed views and those who favored the Lutheran position on the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. This controversy became most severe in 1559, when Frederick III, 'The Pious,' became the new Elector of the Palatinate.

Becoming a German prince was quite a promotion for a man of age forty-four who had grown up in a poor family of seven children. His father was a pauper, yet the prince did not despise those early years. Instead, when he took the throne in Germany, he begged God for wisdom. He needed it. In the wake of the Reformation, Germany was torn by controversy between Lutherans and Calvinists.

Frederick's Vow

When Frederick became prince, he promised he would rely on God's Word for wisdom. Every night of his reign, he read these words from Psalm 31: 'In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; for thy name's sake lead me and guide me.' Frederick, by grace, also lived those words.

Melanchthon was dying when Frederick came to him to ask advice on how to handle the conflict between Lutherans and Calvinists. Melanchthon told him: 'In all things seek peace and moderation, which is best done by carefully holding to a fixed doctrinal position as regards the Lord's Supper and all other matters of faith. Meanwhile, summon to your land from churches of various countries such learned and pious men as can advise you best when controversy arises.'

Frederick responded by silencing the most outspoken troublemakers in his realm. He also arranged a public debate on the doctrine of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper, although he personally embraced the Calvinistic view that Christ was present in the Lord's Supper not physically but spiritually, that is, present by faith to believers (see Catechism, Questions 47, 48, 75-79). Frederick also called upon two gifted theologians, Zacharias Ursinus and Caspar Olevianus, to help him write a catechism that would provide a standard of truth for young people and adults in the church. Though Frederick directed the project, the two young men were to produce the text.

Olevianus and Ursinus

Caspar Olevianus was twenty-three years old when he came to Heidelberg. Converted at age fourteen, he had studied under John Calvin in Geneva and Calvin's successor, Theodore Beza. He also studied under Peter Martyr in Zurich.

Before coming to Heidelberg in 1560, Olevianus went to Treves, Germany, where he preached to a large congregation. He taught the doctrines of grace so richly and countered the Roman Catholic doctrine so fully that the city council asked him to leave the city. When Olevianus refused to do so, Archbishop John and his cavalry arrested the preacher and twelve other leaders of the Reformed movement. Several months later Frederick III paid three thousand florins to the government of Treves to have Olevianus released, and Olevianus had to promise that he would never return to Treves. Olevianus moved to Heidelberg, where he began to work on Frederick's catechism.

The primary author of the catechism, however, was Zacharias Ursinus, who had come to Heidelberg more out of divine compulsion than human desire. Ursinus was a modest man. When appointed principal of the College of Wisdom in Heidelberg, he had cried, 'Oh, that I could remain hidden in a corner. I would give anything for shelter in some quiet village to study theology based on the Word of God.' Melancthon, who had taught Ursinus, said of the young man, 'Ursinus has lived in our academy about seven years and has endeared himself to everybody of right feeling among us by his sound erudition and his earnest piety towards God.'

The Catechism

Ursinus was primarily responsible for the content of the catechism. Of its 129 questions and answers, nearly 100 were drawn or reworked from Ursinus's *Summa Theologiae* (Larger Catechism, which contains 323 questions for seminary students) or his *Catechesis Minor* (Shorter Catechism, which contains 108 questions for youth). Olevianus was probably more involved with drafting the section on the Apostles' Creed and with the final composition and editing. Their combined talents produced what has been called 'a catechism of unusual power and beauty, an acknowledged masterpiece.' But others, including the theological faculty and chief officers of the Palatinate church and Frederick himself, also contributed to the finished document.

The catechism was officially approved by a Heidelberg synod in January 1563. Three more German editions as well as a Latin translation followed in short order. The fourth edition of the catechism has long been regarded as the official text. That text was translated into Dutch and approved by the Synod of Dort, then later translated into English.

When the first edition of the Heidelberg Catechism appeared, the German Bible had not yet been divided into verses. Consequently, the Scripture passages listed in the margins included only book and chapter. In addition, the catechism's questions were not numbered. The Latin translation addressed these problems by including verse references and numbered questions. The catechism was also divided into fifty-two sections so that one 'Lord's Day' section could be expounded each Lord's Day.

The catechism contains more proof texts than most catechisms because its authors wanted it to be 'an echo of the Bible.' These proof texts are an integral part of the catechism, because, as Frederick notes in the preface: 'The Scripture proof by which the faith of the children is confirmed, are such [texts] only as

have been selected with great pains from the divinely inspired Scriptures.'

The 129 questions and answers of the Heidelberg Catechism are divided, like the book of Romans, into three parts. An introduction (questions 1-2) to the believer's 'only comfort' is followed by:

- Part 1 (Questions 3-11): 'Of the Misery of Man' (Rom. 1-3:20), presenting the problem of sin and arguing for the necessity of Christ's incarnation as mediator;
- Part 2 (Questions 12-85): 'Of Man's Deliverance' (Rom. 3:21-11:36), including an exposition of the twelve articles of the Apostles' Creed and the sacraments;
- Part 3 (Questions 86-129): 'Of Thankfulness' (Rom. 12-16), primarily a study of the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer.

The catechism presents doctrines with clarity and warmth. Its content is as much subjective as objective, its approach more spiritual than dogmatic. Not surprisingly, this personal, devotional catechism with its use of first and second person singular pronouns has been called 'the book of comfort' for Christians.

The catechism was first translated into Dutch in 1563 by Petrus Dathenus and published in his metrical Psalter in 1566. Its practical, experienced-based content won the love of believers in the Netherlands. Months after the catechism was published in Dutch, Peter Gabriel began preaching from it every Sunday afternoon. Other preachers soon followed his example.

The catechism was approved by several regional Dutch synods before it was officially adopted by the Synod of Dort (1618-1619) as the second of Three Forms of Unity for the church, together with the Belgic Confession of Faith and the Canons of Dort. The Church Order formulated at Dort made weekly preaching of the catechism mandatory (Article 68).

The Heidelberg Catechism has now been translated into numerous European, Asian, and African languages. It has been more widely distributed than any other Christian book except the Bible, Thomas à Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ*, and John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Soundly Calvinistic, yet moderate in tone and spirit, this 'book of comfort' remains the most widely used and warmly praised catechism of the Reformation.

A Heroic Testimony

The catechism had its enemies, however. Roman Catholics and Lutherans so vigorously opposed it when it was first published that it became known as the 'martyrs' catechism.' People who adhered to it shed their blood on German, Dutch, French, Bohemian, Hungarian, Polish, Italian, and Spanish soil. Frederick's life was also threatened, particularly because he had promised when he took the throne that he would remain faithful to the Augsburg Confession of the Lutherans.

In April 1566 the prince appeared before the Diet of Augsburg to defend the Heidelberg Catechism. His brother warned him that he might lose state, crown, and even his life, but Frederick replied: 'I believe that God who has brought me to a knowledge of the gospel still reigns. And if it should cost my blood, I would regard martyrdom as an honor for which I could not sufficiently thank Him in this life or in eternity.'

Weeks later, the vice-chancellor of Germany pronounced these charges against Frederick:

His Majesty, the Emperor, accuses this Elector of making religious innovations in the Palatinate by using a catechism not in agreement with the Augsburg Confession, and introducing into his domain the heresy of Calvinism. Furthermore, the Emperor decrees that all this must now be abolished. The Calvinist teachers and preachers must be removed from the Palatinate. Certain monasteries must be restored to the Catholic clergy, and the Elector himself must pledge to keep the Peace of Augsburg of 1555 and show himself again a faithful Lutheran. If the Elector of the Palatinate refuses to conform to these demands, he must prepare to be excluded from the peace of the empire.

As the words were read, Frederick calmly faced Emperor Maximilian II, his son Casimir, whom he called his spiritual armor-bearer, at his side. Then Frederick responded, saying:

Your Imperial Majesty, I continue in the conviction which I made known to you before I came here in person, that in matters of faith and conscience I acknowledge only one Lord, who is Lord of all lords and King of all kings. That is why I say that this is not a matter of the flesh, but of man's soul and its salvation, which I have received from my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. His truth I am duty-bound to guard. What my catechism teaches, this I profess. This catechism has on its pages such abundant truth from Holy Scripture that it will remain unrefuted by men and will also remain my irrefutable belief. As regards the Augsburg Confession, your Majesty knows that I signed it in good faith at Nuremberg and I continue to be true to that signature. For the rest, I comfort myself in this, that my

Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has promised me and all His believers that whatever we lose for his Name's sake here on earth shall be restored to us a hundredfold in the life to come. And with this I submit myself to the gracious consideration of your Imperial Majesty.

People were silent as Frederick returned to his place among the princes. Since Luther, when had anyone addressed an emperor with such godly courage?

Finally, the Elector of Saxony responded by placing his hand on Frederick's shoulder and saying, 'Fritz, thou art more godly than all of us.' The emperor said nothing. The meeting was adjourned. As people filed out, someone said, 'Why do we fight against an Elector who is better than we?'

In the end, God's grace triumphed. The Diet acquitted Frederick two weeks after the meeting and granted him permission to teach the Heidelberg Catechism throughout his domain. The words of Proverbs were once again fulfilled: 'When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him' (16:7).

The Death of Giants

Frederick died at the age of sixty-one. To those gathered around his deathbed on October 26, 1567, Frederick confessed:

My conscience is happy and at peace in the Lord Jesus Christ whom I have served with all my heart. I have been permitted to see that in all my churches and schools people have been led away from men and directed to Christ alone. I have done for the church what I could, though my power has been small. God the Almighty who cared for His church before I was born, still lives and reigns in heaven. He will not forsake us. Neither will he allow the prayers and tears, which I have so often poured forth to Him upon my knees in this room, to be without fruit. I have been detained here long enough through the prayers of God's people. It is time now that I should be gathered into the true rest with my Savior, Jesus Christ.

Sixteen years later Ursinus died in Neustadt at the age of forty-nine, leaving a widow and one son. Before he died Ursinus confessed that he would not 'take a thousand worlds for the blessed assurance of being owned by Jesus Christ.' On his grave in the Reformed Church in Neustadt is written:

**A great theologian; a victor over errors
concerning the Person of Christ in the Lord's Supper;
a powerful speaker and writer; an acute philosopher;
a wise man and an excellent teacher of youth.**

Olevianus died in Herborn on March 15, 1587, at age fifty. Before he died he was asked if he was certain of his salvation in Jesus Christ. His response in Latin was 'Certissimus' (Most certain).

With Olevianus's death, the last of three giants in faith entered into the joy of their common Lord. They left a rich legacy, teaching us by word and by example how to live and die happily, enjoying this comfort, 'that I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ' (Catechism, Question 1).

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Note: The standard translation of the Heidelberg Catechism is printed in *Doctrinal Standards* (together with the Belgic Confession and Canons of Dort), and is available for \$4.50 from Reformation Heritage Books, 2919 Leonard NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49525.

CASE OF PROFESSOR JAMES ARMINIUS AND THE SYNOD OF DORT

by Dr. Charles A. McIlhenny

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For Calvinists the Five points of Calvinism are so fundamental to the faith that Reformed believers fail to appreciate the social and political, as well as ecclesiastical, struggle out of which they were forged. They were not always part of the doctrine of the Reformed Church. The idea of a Reformed Church in those early days was not as rigorously theological and Calvinistic as it later became. There was also more at stake than just theological precision and confessional conformity. Issues of church and state were at the core of the Reformed Church's struggle for theological purity. Today these wonderful truths of the sovereignty of God in salvation are taught as though they were readily understood and acceptable automatically back in the golden days of the Protestant reformation.

A while back I presented a series of lectures on the History and Theology of the Synod of Dort focusing on the Arminian side of the argument and refuting their claims of Reformed authenticity. It became a personal revival in the doctrines and engendered a greater enthusiasm for what God did through his ministers at the Synod of Dordrecht back in 1618-19. In re-visiting these five cardinal doctrines of grace I learned that it was no mere exercise of so-called scholastically rationalized dogmas but a thoroughly biblically-based defense of these restored biblical truths. It was also a case study in church discipline: the right of the church as a spiritual court apart from the civil magistrate to uphold the Reformed faith against those that would compromise the church's doctrines. It was an exercise in learning how a group of Calvinistic ministers attempted time and time again to discipline a 'non-Calvinistic' Reformed minister. I discovered in my research how suspicion of error by these Calvinists proved to be in fact true, how that despite political intrigue to frustrate church discipline, these persistent pastors and theologians eventually won the day. Sadly, however, for the Reformed Church in the Netherlands it was a brief victory; a few years later the tide once again would turn against the defenders of pure Reformation doctrine.

I will first present a brief history of the Netherlands up to the establishing of the national Synod; then deal with the arguments of the Arminians, officially known as the Remonstrants; and finally present the Synods response to them.

Brief Geography and History:

Geographically, three major European rivers¹ emptied out from this little portion of northwest Europe making it the central commercial shipping enterprise of an emerging new world colonizing economy. A commercially ingenious people like the Dutch would help enrich the coffers of this desperately needy Holy Roman bureaucracy. Keeping its faith Roman Catholic was necessary to maintain the aging worldwide empire dominance in New World politics. As the major rivers emptied out to the sea so desperate refugees from persecutions of all kinds, religious and otherwise, fled to this lowland corner of Europe. Religious reformers of all theological persuasions and liberal minded humanists, anyone wanting political asylum, found this last outpost before launching out to the unknown of the New World. Hence the amalgam of great Reformational living side by side with brazen licentiousness such as we read about in this little land today.

The political history leading up to the assembling of the national synod at Dortrecht reveals the fascinating interplay between social-political maneuverings of a nation and the theological exercising of the Dutch church. Would the Dutch Reformed church take on a decidedly narrower Calvinistic perspective or would a much broader, more inclusive character -- inclusive of all Protestant short of being Roman Catholic. The political birth of this nation and its religious identity were tied together. At that time, unlike today, religion and politics were the only things that mattered. As the late professor H. Evan Runner used to say, 'Life is religion,'² meaning that the state as well as the church has a religious drive at the heart of its being.

Let me first give a time line of important events as background. Deep in the heart of the Holy Roman Empire, a professor of theology, Dr. Martin Luther, ignited revolution in 1517, later called the Protestant Reformation, with his Ninety-Five Theses nailed to the Wittenberg church door challenging the 'sale of indulgences.' This challenge eventually shook the mighty power of the Roman Catholic Church and along with it the Holy Roman Empire. The effect his dispute had on the ruling powers, both political and ecclesiastical, was to bring forth the modern concept of the separation of church and state.

The defender of the old faith, Emperor Charles V, of the Holy Roman Empire became the self-appointed imposing adversary of Protestantism. The link with Charles V and eventually the Synod of Dort was that Charles was for all practical purposes Dutch – born (1500)³ in the Southern Netherlands now called, Belgium. His mentor, Bishop Adrian of Utrecht⁴, later became pope. An obvious loyal deference to supporting the Roman Catholic cause in the midst of this emerging nation of immigrants bringing Protestantism with them. It was Charles V 's appointment of an unobtrusive German prince of Nassau, also appointed heir to the French principality of Orange. He would be the humiliation of the Spanish Empire defending a little known but wealthy domain in the upper 'lowlands', i.e., the Netherlands.⁵ 'William the Silent'⁶ (a.k.a. William of Orange⁷), took such serious interest in his Dutch inheritance that he became their champion, adopted the Protestant cause, and marshalled forces against the tyrannical inquisition persecuting his adopted people. It would be his son, Maurice of the House of Orange, who would oversee the establishing of the national ecclesiastical Synod of Dort, which would produce the Five Points of the Counter Remonstrants.

Roman Catholic state's zeal for their faith caused great horror and persecution to the Dutch Protestant people.⁸ With the years of war taxing as much the Spanish Empire as well as the people of the Netherlands, a truce was secretly negotiated against the objections of the Prince Maurice and the Calvinists, thus temporarily halting years of persecution against this little land of liberty. It was during these years of the truce that the Dutch Reformed Church would hammer out its identity as truly Calvinistic.

The theologically contending parties, the Remonstrants versus the Counter-Remonstrants, were also known as the pro-peace and the pro-war parties respectively. The Calvinistic side of the Protestants wanted no political or ecclesiastical leniency; the Remonstrants were too willing to compromise the perceived severity of the radical Reformers. Such leniency would allow for a turning back in the direction to Rome Church and Empire out of which they had found refuge. Also, the pro-peace party needed a broad base of support to fight more effectively for their freedom; the pro-war Protestants saw that only in maintaining their religious and theological precision as Calvinists would they be able to defend their cause successfully.

Along with this characterization of war party and peace party was the idea that the state itself was the final arbiter of God's truth on earth. The States General considered itself divinely appointed governor and protector of the true

Reformed religion. If the Holy Roman Empire was to be defeated it would take the magistrate to maintain the Protestant cause. Hence, the more liberal Protestants endorsed the Erastian concept of the magistrate's political authority over church government. According to the non-Calvinistic Reformer's theology, the kingly rule was paradigmatic of the modern state's right to rule over the affairs of the church. This theory became the 6th point of the Remonstrants against the Reformed Calvinistic party. A nation-wide church synod gathered under the auspices of the magistrate was the only sure way to protect a broad Protestant coalition. The precisionist Reformers, i.e., the Calvinists, would not be able to railroad the humanist Protestants out of the Dutch church. The Remonstrants were fearful of a 'protestant popery' called presbyterianism. If the church would manage its own laws and enforce conformity to the Reformation creeds, then who would protect against the tyranny of the presbytery? There was need for safeguards which only the civil magistrate could commandingly provide.

Why Dordrecht? Each town had its religious prejudice and proclivities; some were Roman Catholic, some broadly Protestant, some libertarian, and some even calvinistically Reformed -- the city fathers of Dort were staunchly Calvinistic.

The beginning of the theological controversy:

As a result of the resistance of the citizens of Leiden against the onslaught of the Spanish, Prince William chartered the first university which would have no ecclesiastical ties over its theological faculty. There was need for a Protestant theological seminary in the north to off-set the Romanism of the southern portion of the Netherlands (now known as Belgium); but such a university, which had for the first time no ecclesiastical connection -- a wholly secular⁹ run university.¹⁰ This state university would oversee the maintaining of the chair of theology and not any one church denomination, which would insure a broad Protestantism for all the Dutch people. Hence, whatever complaints levelled against the theological faculty professors would have to be adjudicated by the university's curators and not any one ecclesiastical body of the presbyters.

Due to the death of its first reformed professor¹¹, the Rev. James Arminius, a faithful pastor of a Reformed congregation in Amsterdam, had been appointed professor of systematic theology by curators and friends at the University. From the beginning Arminius' nomination stirred controversy because he was perceived as moderate on the Reformed scene.

Some contended that what Arminius was objecting to was more the theology of Theodore Beza than that of John Calvin. It was Beza's idea of supralapsarian predestination, a 'double predestination', which taught that God elected some for eternal life and equally chose others for eternal damnation. Arminius concluded that such a double predestination made God the author of evil and the destroyer of human freedom and morality. After all, Arminius had studied at Geneva under Beza and soon began to question Beza's particular view of double predestination. Later he was commissioned to refute an attack on Calvinism brought by Dutch humanist Dirck Volckertszoon Coornhert which he never did complete and soon modified from his already vague Reformed theology.

From the beginning Arminius' appointment was challenged by pastors and professors who were suspicious of his Reformed orthodoxy. When challenged on his views of predestination, Arminius appealed to his conformity to the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism which though foreign church documents still had some weight among the Dutch Reformed Churches. His pastoral sermons in Romans 7¹² triggered criticism but no chargeable offense. Soon he came across an exposition of Romans 9 that suited his own anti-supralapsarian questioning mind. An older broadly Reformed pastor¹³ from the north in Friesland, Rev. Gellius Sneecanus, had published non-Calvinistic interpretation of this passage.¹⁴ Though others criticized Sneecanus' theory of predestination, still the magistrates of his province received his works without objection. Arminius' admiration for this exposition began to influence him more and more away from the supralapsarian tenets of orthodox Calvinism. Arminius' own interpretation demonstrated that though the high Calvinism could be literally understood from the text of Romans 9 still, he concluded, that there must be another way. Sneecanus's interpretation seemed more plausible without adhering to strict Calvinism – more of a Melancthonian¹⁵ version of predestination.

Arminius found that the hermeneutical key to understanding Romans 9 was Paul's previous discussion in the 'Epistle to the Romans' on justification by faith vs. justification by the works. The Apostle, according to Arminius, was merely continuing this argument based on the question: 'Does not the Word of God become of none effect if those of the Jews who seek righteousness not of faith but of the law are rejected by God?'¹⁶ To misunderstand the question that the Apostle was attempting to answer distorts the true interpretation of predestination. Arminius in one of his first public disputations at the university addressed the issue of predestination by defining it as:

...the decree of the good pleasure of God in Christ by which he resolved within himself from all eternity to justify, adopt, and endow with eternal life, to the praise of his own glorious grace, believers on whom he had decreed to bestow faith.¹⁷

He argued for a predestination which preserved intact the free will of man – a freedom which could contradict God’s sovereign power, a predestination that allowed for a balance between God’s sovereignty and man’s free undetermined will. If God was going to predestinate, it would be in the way of class or group predestination rather than individual election. God would choose the class and man would decide his own free participation in that class of believers. The historic figures the Apostle appealed to in Romans 9, Jacob and Esau, were more types of two different classes of believers and unbelievers than predetermined individuals to be believers or unbelievers. The prophet Malachi had castigated the priests of Israel against the background of their elect status as loved of God and historically rejected status of Esau and his clan. These same two historic characters in Malachi were not so much considered individuals but rather God’s treatment of classes of believers represented by the patriarch Jacob and unbelievers represented by Esau. In the course of Malachi’s message one was supposed to see that the beloved of the Lord would switch places with the hated of the Lord - role reversal. Soon the Israelites would be the reprobate and the Edomites in the future age would be the elect ones offering up true incense.¹⁸ The categories of elect and reprobate as such were fixed but participation in either class was determined by the individual himself.

Yet Arminius recognized there must be a predestination of the individual; it had to be based on foreseen faith – a predestination based on foreknowledge, or foresight of future free decision of the individual. God in his omniscience would look down the corridor of time and thus know who would believe and persevere to the end. That person believing in Christ would be chosen. However, he also realized that such a foreknowledge of sure and certain future events was itself a sort of ‘unpredestinated’ predestination. How then does one distinguish between sure and certain future events merely foreseen by God and sure and certain future events foreseen because God predestined them? If the objection was against predestination as such, then Arminius really would not escape the problem of determinism vs. indeterminism. One would then have to deny the certainty of God’s foreknowledge of future events in order to protect the notion of man’s truly free and undetermined will.¹⁹ A ‘free will’ undetermined is really truly free according to some the Arminian theologians, but not according to Scripture. According to Scripture ‘freedom of the will’ is not a metaphysical dilemma but the ethical-moral deliverance from the enslavement of sin. There

was no controversy among the inspired writers of Scripture when mentioning God's foreordination of future events – the very nature of prophecy and fulfillment – and man's culpable and sinful accountability. Acts 2:23, '*... Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.*' The Apostles did not pit God's absolute sovereign control against man's subsequent responsibility. These ideas are never presented in Scripture as either/or but both/and, neither antagonistic nor dialectical.

Arminius' definition of predestination cleverly skirted that issue of who makes the final decision in predestining the lot of sinners as elect or non-elect. He did not clearly state whether it is God Who made the ultimate irresistible choice of who believes and who does not. He merely states a rather ambiguous 'God chose believers.' It's like saying that 'God saves believers!' True, but this fails to mention also that Jesus came to save unbelievers, and that he causes them to become believers. This is very similar to his argument for the security of the saints in which he stated that believers never lose their salvation. Of course, as believers, they will not lose eternal life but this fails to state whether believers can eventually become forever unbelievers – passing from death unto life and then from life unto death. The force of his predestinarian argument is that human faith makes the difference not the eternal electing work of God. Believers are the predestined and unbelievers are not. The term 'believer' and 'predestinated' were virtually interchangeable.²⁰ Supposedly every time one reads the word 'elect' as a noun in the Scriptures it refers to the believer. It is a fact that the noun 'chosen one' or 'elect' is never used in its pre-conversion state in the Bible. God never addresses the elect directly except in their capacity as believing members of the covenant community.²¹ Though this statement is true, to conclude that the elect are such because they are believers is false. The elect are made manifest to our human insight in the way of faith but one cannot conclude from the phrase in Col. 3:12 that the elect are such because of their own faith. God addressed men outside the church as sinners, not as elect-but-still-unsaved. The real question is what makes the believer the elect: God or man? Romans 9 clearly makes God the determiner of faith by grace in the sinner.

Arminius died in 1609 of TB never having been indicted by the ruling authorities of the Reformed Church. A group of ministers²² had wanted to investigate his teachings while he was at the university but he argued that it was not the prerogative of the church but the university to judge of his fitness to teach. He successfully staved off this ministerial conference on predestination. At another time a 'delegation of deputies from the consistory of Leiden'²³ sought

to engage him in discussions about his seeming aberrant views, and again he pleaded that it was not up to the church but the university to judge his fitness. Fellow seminary colleague, Franciscus Gomarus, and preaching/cartographer, Petrus Plancius, continued to indict from pulpit and letters the errors of Arminius' doctrine. Their spiteful language proved more harmful to the cause of the Calvinists than to Arminius himself. His patient and quiet demeanor kept them at bay until his death.

The Synod of Dort²⁴ finally convened in Dordrecht between November 1618 and May of 1619²⁵. Delegates from other countries were invited though not all could attend. They gathered in 180 sessions over a period of 128 days hammering out their response to the Remonstrants objections to the imposed uniformity to the Dutch Reformed Confessions. The Remonstrants were demanding religious liberty in the Reformed church, a theological-creedal freedom that would allow all of views legitimized in the church. Where then would be the place of discipline? After all, one of the important 'marks' of the church taught by the Reformers was that of church discipline, along with the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacrament. A church accommodating contradictory doctrines of predestination and salvation would be a church with an 'uncertain sound' – a confused warning to a lost and dying world.

For the Remonstrants 'Calvinism is . . . essentially immoral, since it makes the distinction between right and wrong a matter of positive enactment and thereby makes it possible to assert that what is immoral of man is moral of God . . .'²⁶ Such a description of Calvinism is a kind of distortion which failed to see that God was the source, though not an arbitrary source, of right and wrong. In Calvin's understanding to assert God's absolute control did not mean that morality was a matter of caprice on God's part either. God does not stand under law; yet his will is the source of morality. Creation law finds it's source in the holy and righteous will of God.

Arminianism protested against Calvinism because they believed that Calvinism denigrates the honor and justice of God. Arminianism argued from Romans 9 that God is not unjust in his work of salvation. To advocate that God has determined men's destiny without regard to works either good or bad was understood as arbitrary and unfair. The Apostle Paul clearly states in Romans 9, 'Is God unjust?' His answer to unfairness in God's sovereign dealings is 'not so.' Arminius wrongly concluded that God could not elect as the Calvinists asserted that he did. Then for God to be just he must take into account the good deeds of them that believe. Predestination, to be just, must foresee the good

deeds of belief of the person. Election then becomes what man chooses and not initially what God chose beforehand as the Calvinists asserted.

For Arminians Calvinism advocates that God determines man's destiny without any reference to his works -- good or bad. Is that fair? For the Judge of all the earth to arbitrarily decide ultimate destinies without considering man's own input was seen as the height of arbitrariness on God's part. This interpretation of God's will was seen as arbitrary even capricious. If God decrees whatsoever comes to pass, then human life loses its significance making it a mere shadow. The eternal decree alone is real and all else is but silhouette. Human life is merely the playing back of the eternal videotape such that man's real existence is not in time and history. That speaks to the whole issue of life and culture in general. If predestination is so pervasive over all of life, then life is mere shadow and puppetry. Does the Calvinistic interpretation of predestination in effect take away man's authentic existence? Again, the answer from the Prophets²⁸ of old is that God is sovereign and man is 'less than nothing' relative to God. Man's significance wholly depends on God's decision – not man's uncreated decision.

Researching the history behind the Five Points of Calvinism, we learn that Calvin did not invent them. The Five Points of Calvinism came as an ecclesiastical reaction to the Five (actually Six) Points of the Remonstrants.²⁹ Under the Five Points of the Remonstrants³⁰ another Dutch personality emerges along with Arminius, his own student Uitenbogaert who became the leader of the Remonstrants after Professor Arminius' death. In 1610, Uitenbogaert drafted these Five Points. After a few years of preliminary meetings and conferences, the States General in 1619 consented to the international gathering of the Synod at Dordrecht.

First of the Five Points of the Remonstrants:

'God's eternal decree elected those who believed in Christ and persevered to the end in that faith, based upon foreseen persevering faith in that person.' What that basically meant was that they believed in predestination. Everybody believed in predestination! But the question is *what do you mean by predestination?* The Remonstrants contended that predestination simply meant that God decided that the believers who persevered would go to heaven. There is a kind of truth to that! But clarity was needed to identify who Scripture taught would be believers and so inevitably persevere.

Of course, this is no different than saying 'Jesus saves believers.' It avoids the issue of why there are believers at all, what the source of that believing is, and does this faith arise from the believer or from God? And even then, it is to further question: do all men creationally have this faith – a creational gift from God – or is there a special redemptive gift given to only certain by appointment of God alone and irresistible to refuse?

The Counter Remonstrants asserted the scriptural teaching that God decided in eternity past who would believe and leave the rest to their just desserts. Predestination is not foresight of the future but rather foresight of the future was based on God's predestination. God graciously chose before the foundation of the earth some to be saved out of the mass of lost sinners. Election unto salvation becomes a mockery if God's choosing is based on man's choosing. God's election becomes man's election instead. If that were true than all glory to man for his choosing God so that God could chose him!

Second Point of the Remonstrants:

'Christ's atonement gained reconciliation for all men equally and without exception'. This basically meant that the atonement is efficacious for everybody equally and that it is up to the individual himself to make it effective for himself. That is to say, Christ's cross-work secured redemption even for those who never will experience it; that it is the individual that constitutes the effectiveness of the work of Christ; and that God waits upon man to make his salvation really salvation! This concept of the efficacy of the atonement was the heart of the message of the gospel.

The Remonstrant's challenge was really an attempt to compromise the biblical message of the cross of Christ. Is what is offered to sinners merely an atonement that really could NOT effect what Christ secured on the cross? Was it merely an atonement of great and wonderful sufficiency but no efficacy? The Synod's readily advocated the 'infinite worth and value, abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world.'³¹ Sufficiency for the whole world must be based on its powerful efficacy for God's elect. But its efficacy for sinners could not be based on the sinner's response. The atonement of the sacrifice of Christ is predicated upon what God did in eternity past, what Christ had accomplished and secured on the cross, and what the Holy Spirit does with its fruits and consequences by way of applying it to the sinner.

This Second Point of the Counter-Remonstrants has proven the most difficult to accept for those so used to hearing of the mere sufficiency of Christ's death

for each and every sinner. Mere sufficiency is not supported by the Synod though sufficiency is an important element of the atonement. It is its efficacy which is at stake. Even the Arminian realizes that efficacy is limited to the believer and it's the believer's so-called free will decision that makes it efficacious. Not so with the Synod. Their conclusion was that it is God's sovereign grace that effectuates and secures eternal redemption through the cross for all the elect. That's the glorious message of the gospel that must not be compromised in order for sinners to be converted.

Third Point of the Remonstrants:

'Regeneration by the Holy Spirit is necessary to salvation'³² but their difference with the Calvinists was that regeneration was by the will of the individual himself. This free will regeneration could not be forced upon the sinner but must be accepted freely by him. In Remonstrant theology regeneration (i.e., new birth) in the *ordo salutis* came after expressing faith; faith being its cause. While for the Reformers, faith was the fruit and not the cause of regeneration. The Synod argued that because of the total depravity of sinners, they needed an outside irresistible force that would bring to life. For the Arminian, man is not a thing to be manipulated by God like a puppet. Not that God does not manipulate, but he manipulates and controls things not persons. Persons are persons in their uniqueness distinct from things precisely at this point of 'freeness.' Personhood or personality demands an autonomy that God supposedly allows in order for man to be man and not a thing. So for the Arminian, the Calvinist makes man into a robot manipulated by God at God's behest.

What Arminius defended in predestination was not out of accord with the historic creeds of the Roman church and harmonized with the history of the church at large. In effect Arminius was asking for tolerance for his view of predestination amidst the camp of the Reformers. This he taught sufficiently among his students that eventually furthered his cause at the Synod of Dort in 1619.

Fourth Point of the Remonstrants:

'Grace is resistible.'³³ Here again for grace to be irresistible was for grace to cease to be grace. A grace that is forced becomes brute force. God does not save people against their will but in conformity to their wills. If that means making them will, then grace ceases to be gracious. The sinner on his own initiative must will to be acceptable to God. Grace, in effect, is 'polite.' To force one to be obedient takes away accountability, turns one into a robot, is to deny their

humanness and force them to love God. What kind of love is forced? Love to be authentic, according to the Remonstrants, must not be forced and coerced, especially not irresistibly. Authentic in this context meant self-made and meant self-created. This was the supposed 'risk' that God took when he gave man such a freedom and autonomy that risked possible rebellion.

Yet, Scripture never roots man's authentic humanness in anything other than his 'created-ness.' Man's humanness and responsibility were precisely so because he was created by God in every detail. To the extent that he was created by this God was the extent of his humanity whether free or not. He stayed truly free to the extent that he was not free from God's creation. The Arminian, though not literally, requires 'uncreatedness' in order to demonstrate authenticity - arguing for man's uncreatedness to maintain his true personage. That's like rejecting creaturehood in order to be recognized as God's greatest creation.

Fifth Point of the Remonstrants:

The final perseverance of believers was neither denied, nor positively asserted.³⁴ Arminius himself had not come to a clear commitment to conditional salvation. What he clearly asserted was that the believer could have assurance of his salvation if he truly believed. Christians are kept by the power of God through faith and for the Arminian it was the 'true faith' – uncompromised and persevering faith that kept him eternally. There was no automatic perseverance.

But the real question was not about the true believer needing to persevere but whether persevering preserves or God's preserves. For the Synod it was God's sovereign gracious preserving power that constituted a guaranteed security for the believer. The believer received eternal life -- and such life was really eternal not temporal or temporary.

The biblical warnings against apostasy do not reverse preservation but they do motivate perseverance in the life of the believer. The Christian though secure in Christ is still threatened by the forces of evil from within and from without. Christ was secure in his sinless nature – not able to sin, as we say but that did not mean that the temptations and struggles were mere playing at charades – a parlor game of sorts. He was really tempted. We, are, secure as we are by sovereign grace, still motivated by these threats and warnings. It is in the way of these real warnings that the elect truly persevere. We ought not to conclude that because there are dangers and threats to our faith that therefore we can possibly lose our salvation. Christ's command for Lazarus to come forth from the tomb did not imply any residual life in his 4-day-old body. Neither do the warnings to

flee from sin imply that we may fall as to lose our salvation. Many 'believers' do fall away but that is not to say that true believers lose their salvation.

Arminius himself was not clear on what later Arminians called 'conditional security' of salvation. He insisted that true believers necessarily do persevere unto the end – as long as they stay believers. The real question was do believers continue to believe unto the end by the ultimate sovereign grace of God? To whom do we look for strength to persevere but to the One who promises us eternal life in the way of faith -- recognizing that it is not based on that faith but in the way of living out that faith?

The decision of the Synod:

Historically this was the first church council ever to deal with the efficacy of the atonement and its implications for preaching the gospel. The unanimous decision of the Synod was to the detriment of the Remonstrants and the clear unquestioned commitment to the Reformation documents previously adopted by Dutch church synods. The Remonstrants complained that they were not treated as equals for this discussion but rather as the accused before a tribunal. Some of their members had to be expelled due to their misbehavior as considered by the Synod. Having their petition denied, the magistrate enforced the decree of the council. In a real sense the issue of church and state relations was as much a serious dilemma as the theological debate. The Remonstrants appealed to the magistrate for defending of their views and the Counter Remonstrants were dependent too on the enforcement by the state.

The finding of the ecclesiastical court condemned all individuals charged with disrupting the purity and peace of the church. The decree essentially banished them from coming back to the Reformed Church and even escorted them out of the United Provinces; unless, of course, they repented. The church carried out its God-given duty and disciplined those that would compromise the Reformed faith. The purity and peace of the church is not based on how little we believe of the Word of God, or how little of that Word we can get by with, but by how rich and pure we accept and receive God's infallible teachings. The irony is that about a decade later the government of the States General would banish the Calvinists and reject the ruling of the Synod of Dort. They would suffer for their faith in the long run.

Seeing the richness of these doctrines comes from reviewing the history as well as the theology of the debate. These doctrines came to prominence against

the background of controversy and a desire to seek for the purity of the church. The church is not a garage for storing all kinds of theological beliefs. It has a message to warn sinners to flee from the wrath to come. And such a call must be clear and unmistakable.

The church is not a debating society as a university is where any and every notion is endlessly debated. The church of Jesus Christ is a declaring institution, which announces the good news of the cross with all its fullness and glory to lost and dying sinners. Differences, even contradictory opinions, of doctrine cannot be tolerated in the church that seeks to uphold the Truth of Christ and the exact way of salvation. Exercising chastising discipline in the church entails adhering to 'whatsoever I have commanded.' It enables the church to be trusted with giving the gospel to the world. And like a family, the church must exercise the divinely required discipline by forbidding corrupt theological opinions even from godly men. These doctrines of salvation must of necessity be hammered out by the church and maintained whenever they are challenged. A church that tolerates every wind of doctrine degenerates into what the Book of Revelation describes as the whore of Babylon – '[she] is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.' (Rev. 18:2)

References

1. Rhine, Maas or Meuse, and Schelde
2. Henry Vander Groot, editor, *Life is Religion, Essays in Honour of H. Evan Runner*, (Paideia Press: St. Catherines, Ontario) 'The Christian Philosophy of H. Evan Runner', pg. 15.
3. According to the note from the Encyclopedia Britannica (Macropedia, Vol 2, 1976), he was the last of the emperors that sought to enroll all of Christendom under one empire: the Holy Roman Empire.
4. Later Adrian became Pope Adrian VI.
5. That organization of the Orangemen in Northern Ireland has its roots in the revolution of 1688 in England in which the English parliament got rid of Charles II in favor of his Protestant sister Mary married to a descendent of William of Orange also called William of Orange. Hence, the English-Dutch sympathies even though Dutch-English wars be-speckled the two nations over a couple of hundred years before they finally were reconciled.
6. Not well versed in the art of war but famous for diplomatic counsel.
7. William of Nassau (1533-1584) had been raised in Lutheran religious environment but had to 'convert' to Roman Catholicism in order to be appointed an heir in the Holy Roman Empire. *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, Vol. 4, article: 'William of Orange', pg. 274.
8. *Bangs*, pg. 275.

9. 'Secular' used here means separate from the oversight of the church, but nonetheless Christian in philosophy and direction.
10. Years later Abraham Kuyper's Free University (1890's) would renew this insight. A distinctively Christian academic institution not run by the church or the state, 'free' of their control yet run by the rule of the Word of God.
11. Elder Lucas Trelcatius, professor of systematic theology at Leiden, died of the plague raging through Europe at this time.
12. Arminius' view of Romans 7 deviated from the 'traditional' Calvinistic interpretation but one which still conformed to protestant orthodoxy. The struggle of the man of Romans 7 is not of the believer but rather the unbeliever. There are Dutch Reformed theologians today such as H.N. Ribberbos who hold to a similar interpretation but not from the perspective of upholding 'free will'. See H.N. Ribberbos, trans. By John R. De Witt, *Paul An Outline of His Theology*, (Eerdmans Publ: Grand Rapids), 1975, 'Section 23. The Law Impotent Because of the Flesh. The Bondage of the Law', pg. 143.
13. Known as a 'Zwinglian scholar', Bangs, pg. 193.
14. Carl Bang, *Arminius, A Study in the Dutch Reformation*, (Nashville: Abington Press) copy right 1971, pg. 193.
15. Melancthon became the sysematizer of the German Reformation but later broke with Luther's views on predestination and free will by synthesizing a modified view of free will and foreseen predestination sometimes called 'synergism' a cooperation between sovereign divine grace and human freedom.
16. Bangs, pg. 195.
17. Bangs, pg. 262.
18. Mal. 1:11
19. '. . . This is where all the trouble arises, and from every side. The supralapsarian objections have already been presented: Arminius has reversed the relationship of foreknowledge to predestination. But the objections come in from the other side, too: if God knows who will believe, is not the belief or lack of it inevitable, if not predetermined?', Bangs, pg. 352.
20. Not precisely, Arminius argued that the concept of believers and elect were not purely equivalent. The elect were believers that persevered to the end while believers as such didn't necessarily persevere to the end. See Bangs, pg. 349.
21. For example see Col. 3:12.
22. A group of five deputies from the synods of North and South Holland called upon him to discuss with him some of his opinions differing from the Confession and Catechism. Bang, pg. 268.
23. Bang, pg. 269.
24. The initial petition for a national church assembly in 1597 issued forth from the Synods of North and South Holland culminated in 1618 in the City of Dordrecht. From Bangs, pg. 225.
25. Hans J. Hillerbrand, Ed in Chief, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, (Oxford University Press: Oxford), 1996, article, 'Dordrecht, Synod of', pg. 2-3.
26. Sell, pg. 21, quote from Aubrey Moore in Sell's book, *The Great Debate*.
27. Rom. 9:14.
28. Isa. 40:12-18.
29. The sixth point came as a later document from Uitenbogaert. It advocated that the civil magistrate had alone the biblical authority to discipline and enforce the peace and purity of the church.
30. A plausible argument has been raised that the 'five points' notion has its roots in a previous controversy at the Council of Chiercy (853 A.D.), which dealt with 'condemning Gottschalk's doctrine of double predestination, ec.' Footnote from an article from the *Westminster Theological Journal*, 'The Extent of the Atonement and the Synod of Dort', Vol. 45 #2, pgs. 322-339, Fall '83.

31. Peter De Yong, ed., *Crisis in the Reformed Churches*, (Reformed Fellowship: Grand Rapids, MI), 1968, Article Three, chapter on the actual decrees of the Synod of Dort, pg. 240.
32. Alan P.F. Sell, *The Great Debate*, (Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1998), pg. 13.
33. Sell, pg. 13.
34. Sell, pg. 13
35. 1 Tim. 3:15.
36. Matt. 28: 19-20.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Bond of Love: Covenant Theology and the Contemporary World, David McKay, Christian Focus, 2001, Pb., 349 pp., £10.99

Never in history have so many books been available to the Christian public. Yet seldom has doctrinal ignorance been more pervasive. People are drowning in a sea of information, spoilt for choice, uncertain where to turn or upon what elements of truth to concentrate. What is needed is a summary of biblical doctrine which is coherent, reliable and easily digested. David McKay has provided such a summary in this notable book.

Here is a covenantal systematic theology, an attempt to view the entire spectrum of Christian teaching through the lens of God's covenant. As such, it must be judged a success. While it may not be possible, or even desirable, to posit any single theme as 'the' organising principle of Scripture, the covenant of grace is clearly foundational for any comprehensive grasp of the Bible's teaching.

Dr. McKay takes his readers through the various topics of systematic theology, showing the relevance of the covenant in every area. He moves, after setting the scene in an introductory chapter, from the being and character of God to the creation and fall of man and the provision of salvation in Christ. A study of the person and work of the Holy Spirit leads into a consideration of how redemption is applied to the sinner and how this new life is developed in sanctification. A thorough discussion of the nature, marks and ministries of the church is followed by a chapter on the sacraments, signs and seals of the covenant. The body of the book concludes with the triumphant consummation of God's saving purpose and a brief chapter on the responsibility of covenant response on the part of the individual, the church and the nation. A useful appendix presents covenant theology's definitive answer to Dispensationalism.

Such an outline, however, does less than justice to the many excellencies of this volume. Perhaps the greatest is that the author shows clearly the cohesion of Scripture, the profound unity which underlies and binds together its rich diversity. By keeping in mind the centrality of the covenant, we are enabled to fit the pieces together and to understand that Christian doctrine is not an assortment of unconnected truths but a harmonious, consistent whole. Nothing could be more stabilising for believers than a clear concept of 'the big picture' such as is provided in these pages.

The book is also refreshingly contemporary. For too many, covenant theology has an antique ring, redolent of dusty tomes and arcane speculation. A glance at these pages will dispel such a misconception. Dr. McKay has interacted with an amazing range of authors, presenting us with a digest of some of the best reformed theology of the last four or five hundred years. But his appreciation for our heritage does not seduce him into neglecting present needs. A main concern of his book, in fact, is 'to apply Covenant Theology to some of the important challenges which contemporary Christians have to face in the culture in which they live and witness' (p.10). These challenges come from both outside and within the professing church, from Darwinism and the New Age movement to the so-called 'open view' of God, feminism, the charismatic movement and theonomy. These and many more are dealt with in the appropriate context and the careful reader will be armoured against a wide range of error.

Like all who teach at the college, David McKay is a pastor as well as a professor and this comes out in the warmth and practicality of his writing. His striking title, 'The Bond of Love', epitomises the atmosphere of his book. The author's aim is not only to instruct the mind but to affect the heart, by displaying 'the warmth of the love of God. When God makes a covenant with his people, it really is 'a bond of love', that brings salvation and eternal life... Could anything be more beautiful?... To see the way in which the Lord deals with his people by means of a covenant stirs wonder and evokes worship' (pp.7,8). Only the spiritually stunted will fail to pause often, amid these pages, to adore and give thanks.

'The Bond of Love', studied and applied, will prove of immense service to the people of God.

Edward Donnelly

God of Grace and God of Glory. An Account of the Theology of Jonathan Edwards, Stephen R. Holmes, T & T Clark, 2000, 312 pages, £24.95. ISBN 0 567 08748 4

Interest in the thought of Jonathan Edwards (1703-58), long neglected or derided, was rekindled by the publication in 1949 of Perry Miller's study of this theologian who is one of the greatest that the Church has ever produced. Since

then many books on Edwards have been produced, written from a variety of perspectives and often rightly critical of Miller's perspective. Stephen Holmes, Lecturer in Christian Doctrine at King's College, London, has made a valuable contribution to our understanding of a complex and fascinating thinker with *God of Grace and God of Glory*.

In his first chapter Holmes helpfully surveys the main contributions to the study of Edwards and provides a critique of Miller's chief weaknesses. Miller and some others have regarded Edwards as pre-eminently a philosopher and have treated his Calvinistic theology as, at best, an embarrassment. Holmes joins a growing number of scholars in asserting that Edwards' theology is in fact central to his whole system of thought.

It is in chapter two ('A Vision of Glory: Edwards' Quest for God's Fundamental Purpose') that Holmes lays the foundations for what is to follow. Examining both Edwards' published works and the portions of the *Miscellanies* that remain as yet unpublished, Holmes considers Edwards' view of God's purpose in his work of creation. Of particular usefulness is the treatise *Concerning the End for which God Created the World*. A complex of motifs may be derived from such writings, including God's glory, his Name, his praise and the communication of his goodness. These come together, says Holmes, as 'one multifaceted concept involving God's perfections, and particularly his mercy and grace, being displayed, known, rejoiced in and communicated' (p.53). This can be summarised further as God's displaying and communicating his glory. Edwards understands this in Trinitarian terms, with God's communicating love and knowledge to his creatures (externally) corresponding to the going forth of the Son and the Holy Spirit (internally). Indeed Edwards strives in all of his theology to be thoroughly Trinitarian.

Chapter three develops Holmes' understanding of Edwards in relation to God's work of creation, and seeks to place Edwards in his contemporary context of the growing influence in America of the European Enlightenment. If, as the previous chapter has argued, for Edwards God's act of self-glorification is at the heart of all he does, this must be demonstrated in relation to creation and history. Holmes considers Edwards' metaphysics in terms of a response to thinkers such as Newton and Hobbes. In Edwards' view the preservation of all bodies in existence is an *immediate act of God*. Edwards is thus committed to a doctrine of continuous creation and to philosophical occasionalism. For Edwards, existence is to be present to the mind of God. This position can be clearly distinguished from the idealism of Berkeley because of the former's thoroughly Trinitarian foundations.

It is Holmes' contention that Edwards regarded *all* being as mediated Christologically and pneumatologically. This he regards as being in conflict with Edwards' commitment to 'limited atonement', a subject which comes under consideration in chapter four ('God Glorified in the Work of Redemption'). In Holmes view, the non-elect would have to be regarded as somehow less than human if they were omitted from Christ's work, and this he argues would be Edwards' view also if he were to be consistent with his own best insights. We do not have space to examine this issue in detail, but it does seem to this reviewer that Holmes is failing to distinguish sufficiently the realms of creation and redemption, and makes unwarranted deductions from what Edwards actually says. Hence the role of Christ and of the Spirit in relation to all creation is wrongly extrapolated into the realm of redemption. Edwards' commitment to limited atonement is not necessarily in conflict with his formulation of the doctrine of creation.

This issue resurfaces in chapter seven (God's Self-Glorification in the Damnation of Sinners), which follows a useful chapter on the Church. Although Edwards devoted only a small portion of his writing to the subject of hell, contrary to popular caricatures, he is committed to the traditional doctrine of eternal conscious punishment of the unsaved in hell. Holmes has major problems with Edwards' view of the reprobation of a portion of the human race, with his allowing that God is in some sense the 'author of sin' and with what Edwards has to say about the 'view across the chasm' (the reprobate seeing the elect in heaven and the elect seeing and rejoicing over the reprobate in hell). In particular Holmes finds Edwards' position to be in conflict with his views of the Christological and pneumatological determining of all being, discussed above. Holmes concludes that Edwards does not show that hell is in accord with God's justice or that God is glorified by it. In his final chapter he seeks to provide a better understanding of election and reprobation, one which owes much to Karl Barth. Our reservations about Holmes' portrayal of Edwards' view of creation can be reiterated here.

Despite these points of disagreement, this is a most stimulating study of one of the greatest Reformed theologians. It provides many valuable insights into the theology of Edwards, and even where it does not convince, it provokes thought. It is a valuable addition to the growing body of literature on the man termed by Robert Jenson 'America's Theologian'.

David McKay

Biblical Teaching on the Doctrines of Heaven and Hell, Edward Donnelly, The Banner of Truth Trust 2001, Pb, 127 pp, £4.95

This book deals with biblical teaching on heaven and hell in a most helpful way. The author writes on these subjects in a compassionate and pastoral manner. He clearly understands the thinking of people generally and how slow we are to consider such vital and weighty matters. The way he writes even on such a sombre reality as hell is compelling and gripping. It makes you want to keep reading even though the subject is so solemn. There is a wonderful clarity in how he expresses these profound and mind-stretching doctrines. His straightforward and thoughtful language brings across vividly the reality of these two destinies. The illustrations used also contribute much to the striking teaching within these pages.

One of the very strong points about this book is how these two vital doctrines are covered within the one volume. The first four chapters deal with the subject of hell, the last five chapters with heaven. To have both subjects covered so comprehensively in one book is of great value. Clearly the book can be used to help believers grow in their understanding and appreciation of such biblical teachings. But it can also be used evangelistically in confronting unbelievers with these eternal realities. Indeed the author obviously had unbelievers in mind not only in the way he brings out the challenge of the gospel but also in the way he addresses issues that he believes would be on their minds.

In dealing with the subject of hell the writer begins by giving reasons for considering such a subject. To start with there is so much teaching about it in the bible. Christ Himself speaks very frequently of judgement and of everlasting punishment. Then the fact that none of us are remote from this catastrophe is stressed. Everyone by nature is heading towards that very place. Yet the one way of escape is also made very clear. The author then writes of the widespread unbelief concerning this doctrine in our day not only among unbelievers but among many professing evangelicals. He points out that unbelief in this doctrine is a symptom of humanity's deepest problem, man-centredness. All of this gives makes the study of this subject imperative in our generation.

In chapter two the writer addresses the question 'What is hell?'. He writes of how it is a real place of torment created by God. It is a place of just, terrible and everlasting punishment. It is where the devil, his angels and the unsaved will be punished, a place of no second chances. He brings out how God rules in hell and that hell actually exists for God's glory. He addresses two common

difficulties in the minds of people. Firstly, is hell disproportionately severe? Secondly, is hell not contrary to God's character since God is love?

The third chapter is another most sobering one as the writer describes something of what being in hell will be like. Four aspects of the unbelievers torment are described, the absolute poverty, the agonizing pain, the angry presence of God they will face, and the appalling prospect of such torment never ending.

In the final chapter on hell the writer brings across a penetrating challenge for believers. He gives six ways in which the doctrine of hell should affect us. In this most appropriate way he brings the section on hell to a close.

Having been presented with the reality of hell it is then wonderful how the reader's attention is turned immediately to the subject of heaven. To start with the author mentions how this topic has been neglected and gives reasons why this is the case. He also writes on why this subject of heaven matters so much. In chapter six he spells out the foundation on which all our thinking about heaven must rely, 'Heaven is created for God's glory'. The author points right back to the original creation of the heavens and the earth and how it displayed God's glory. However with the fall this blessed state of affairs did not continue. Yet God is totally committed to his creation and to displaying his glory in all its fullness once more through it's restoration. This God will do through the atoning work of his Son transforming the lives of his people and renewing the whole universe. Indeed when Christ comes again he will usher in the glorious new heaven and earth.

In chapter seven our thoughts are directed to Jesus Christ and to why he is so closely linked with heaven. It is Christ himself who brings his people to heaven. Indeed no one can get to heaven without him. Heaven is where, for the first time, his people will see him clearly. He is the heart of all heaven's blessings. Yes, he the Lamb of God and the redemption of his own is at the heart of the glory of heaven. What blessings are showered upon believers. Because they are in Christ they can taste heaven on earth. Then when they pass from this world they will go to be with their Lord forever.

In chapter eight further blessings for those in Christ are outlined. The author writes of how our souls will be made perfect in holiness. We will live in a world where there is no sin. We will receive wonderful resurrection bodies. These will be similar to our earthly bodies in some ways but at the same time profoundly different. For unlike our earthly bodies they will be incorruptible, glorious, spiritual and filled with power. What glory awaits the believer. And to cap it all our

Lord himself will delight in us. We will be all he wants, everything he desires.

The last chapter is a wonderful climax to a most memorable book. It pictures the coming reality of the new heaven and earth in a way that most believers in our generation have not considered before. Here we read about the heavenly family as a perfect family. The very sensitive issue ‘What about our unconverted friends?’ is addressed. The author ends by spurring us on in our witnessing for Christ urging us to have a healthy heavenly perspective on our lives on this earth. I would thoroughly recommend this book and trust that it will have a wide readership.

Peter Jemphrey

Come Out From Among Them, ‘Anti-Nicodemite’ Writings of John Calvin, Presbyterian Heritage Press, Dallas, Texas, (distributed in UK by Free Presbyterian Book Room, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G36LE), 2001, 317 pages, Hdbk, US \$ 29.95.

These writings of Calvin have been translated from the French by Seth Skolnitsky. There is a twenty-three page introduction by the publishers giving the historical background to these writings and showing the importance that Calvin attached to the doctrine and practice of right worship, and in particular his understanding of *the regulative principle of worship*, namely, that whatever God has not commanded in this respect is forbidden.

In Calvin’s day, those who ceased attending Mass, because of their acceptance of Reformation doctrine, were in danger of persecution and even death. This was especially the case in France. Some sought to avoid persecution by outward conformity to Romish ritual while inwardly rejecting it. They were dubbed ‘Nicodemites’, although Calvin was not happy with the term, pointing to John 19:39 and saying that these people had nothing in common with Nicodemus (p.118f). He sees these dissemblers as ‘denigrating both the value of proper worship and the nature of the church’ (p.21), and ‘looking for cushions to put their consciences to sleep’ (p.47).

Calvin’s advice to such is to cease conforming outwardly to Romish practices, and, if possible, worship in private. ‘So let him withdraw to a place where

he would not be forced to get involved in such garbage, or to hear God's name and word blasphemed, keeping silent and dissembling as if he were in agreement' (p.93f). However, if this is not possible, 'the glory of God, which is involved here, should be much more precious to us than this perishable, fleeting life ...' (p.24). The Christian should prize the honour of Christ above his own life.

The conformity that Calvin condemns is seen as a bad example and dishonouring to God. In this connection it is intriguing to see how Calvin wrestles with the case of Naaman 'in the house of Rimmon' (2 kings 5:18), to which the Nicodemites appealed (p.71f).

That Calvin viewed the Mass with horror is evident from these pages. The Nicodemites, in his view, when they attended Mass, were guilty of 'an indirect renunciation of Jesus Christ and his gospel' (p.85).

It is interesting to note that in one place Calvin recognizes the validity of Roman Catholic baptism (p.39) and in another virtually rejects it, 'We know that baptism is so corrupted in the papacy, and so jumbled up with superstition and nonsense, that a child cannot receive it without being polluted. Thus, a father would not be able to have his child baptized without sinning. If he forgoes it, it will still be sinning, and the offence is only rejecting the sacrament that the Son of God has instituted. O what a great perplexity is this: to be able neither to do an act, nor to leave it undone without offending God in it' (p.203f). Here Calvin struggles with a problem of his own making (see *Institutes* 4.15.16). It is hard to differentiate between Rome's perversion of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, both perversions being equally radical and equally incompatible with the gospel.

This selection of writings includes four sermons relevant to the controversy and published by Calvin in 1552. There is also an exposition of Psalm 87. These expositions deal with the subject of worship in a progressive manner. They are as pertinent now as when first penned. Finally, there is the Reformer's response to 'a certain Dutchman' (Dirk Volkerts Coonhert) who had accused him of cruelty by sending 'poor folks to the slaughter', and it is a most vigorous response! Calvin's logic throughout these pages is unanswerable as he exposes the cowardice of those who fear the consequences of loyalty to Christ, and at the same time he confounds his critics.

This translation reads smoothly. There is a Scripture index and a subject index. Students of Calvin and all interested in the Reformation period will

welcome this volume. It is clearly relevant today as Christians must consider where they stand in relation to liberal churches, modern ecumenism and the Inter-Faith Movement, and as they reflect on the implications of their professed loyalty to Christ. The issues are basically the same.

Frederick S. Leahy

Theology Through Preaching, Colin E. Gunton, T&T Clark, 2001, 214 pages, Pb. £14.99.

This volume contains thirty sermons by the Professor of Christian Doctrine, King's College, London. There is a twenty-page introduction by Christopher Schwöbel, Professor of Systematic Theology, University of Heidelberg. This introduction sets the tone of what follows: 'the Bible is primarily a witness to God's communication to humanity in the history of Israel and in the story of Jesus and the witness of the human response to the address of God' (p.2). This 'conversation between God and his human creatures which began in the events which the Bible witnesses is continued through our preaching based upon the Biblical witness in our own time' (p.4). Then a step further is taken: '... the Spirit who inspired the biblical witnesses also inspires the interpretation of Scripture ...' (p.17).

Professor Gunton's first sermon is on the Bible, 2 Timothy 3:16, and in view of the foregoing, it is not surprising to read of this text, 'It does not say that all scripture is true in every word. It says that in some way or other it is the product of the spirit ... whatever inspiration the Bible has, it does not take away the capacity for errors in the writers. They do not claim infallibility' (p.25). So when we consider creation, 'we don't believe that the universe is precisely as the writer of Genesis pictured it. If we are going to try to defend that, then we are in for trouble' (p.37).

It does become wearisome when we find men of Gunton's calibre setting out to demolish the old chestnut that the writers of Scripture 'were simply the mechanical secretaries of God the Spirit, celestial word processors' who, says Gunton, 'did not have their humanity taken away' (p.25), as if any theologian worthy of the name has ever held such a view. It is sad to see this myth so assiduously perpetuated by liberal theologians, and sadder still to think that many will believe it.

So the liberal view of Scripture permeates these sermons, and at times is quite breath-taking as when, for example, we turn to the sermon on 1 Corinthians 11 : 2-16. Referring to verse 7, a man ought-not to cover his head in worship for he is 'the image and glory of God', but 'woman is the glory of the man', Gunton comments, with Genesis 1 : 26-27 in mind, 'This is simply wrong In the next two verses, Paul repeats similar points, and again I think we have to say that he is wrong But then everything changes, and in what is little more than a parenthetical remark, Paul corrects himself Having said, or at least suggested that woman is in some way subordinate to man, he completely changes his tune When Paul stops being worried about justifying his position, and turns to the Lord, everything changes The lesson of Paul is that even the wisest make mistakes' (p.147f). On that approach it may be asked what precisely inspiration is and where it begins and ends.

Gunton's rejection of astrology is timely as is his criticism of the New Age Movement. Theologically he swings between liberalism and conservatism, and one feels at times that his heart is better than his head. His sermons, on the whole, are thought-provoking. His illustrations, often from his own experience, are apposite. But something vital is missing. Again and again we are told that we are saved by Christ's death on the cross, but never *how*, never told exactly what Christ *did* on the cross. And given the clear rejection of biblical inerrancy, where is there *authority*? By what standard do we judge a sermon?

Professor Gunton is a gifted preacher. His introductions hold one's attention immediately, and are never contrived. The fundamental weakness of these sermons is the refusal to see the Scriptures as inscripturated revelation, God-breathed in the strictest sense. Once that is abandoned, the church is like a rudderless ship without chart or compass and at the mercy of every philosophical wind that blows.

Frederick S. Leahy

Rethinking Genesis: The Sources and Authorship of the first book of the Pentateuch. Duane Garrett, Mentor: Christian Focus Publications, 2000, 311 pp, £10.99

The classic expression of the Documentary Hypothesis, given by Julius Wellhausen, for long one of the mainstays of higher critical orthodoxy, has now been so effectively undermined by conservative and non-conservative scholars alike that we may (says Garrett) consider it dead, abandon it and take a new approach. However, he says, 'the ghost of Wellhausen (still) hovers over O.T. studies...like a thick fog, adding nothing of substance, but effectively obscuring vision.' Garrett's task in this scholarly but engaging book is to exorcise that ghost once and for all. Written from a conservative, evangelical perspective this masterly work, well-reasoned and exhaustively researched, fleshes out the alternative to Wellhausen and his ilk in a way that fellow conservative evangelicals will find not only engaging, intriguing, but also intellectually satisfying. Drawing on insights from form criticism and structural analysis he identifies the evidence of sources in Genesis and suggests a line of development whereby, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, these grew into the present Book in the hands of Moses at the time of the sojourn in Egypt.

The book is divided into three parts. In the first part he hammers the final nails into the coffin of the Documentary Hypothesis, and provides trenchant criticism of the critical scholarship that has followed in its wake (form-criticism and tradition history). He also answers one of the main alternative theories to have gained attention in recent years, that of R. N. Whybray, that the Pentateuch was a sixth century B.C. work. Garrett ably establishes the historicity of the text and essential Mosaic authorship (he concedes that there is evidence that the work had some revision after Moses). The key question is, What were the sources that Moses edited and arranged?

The second part answers this question. He isolates the 'toledoth' sources of Genesis 1 – 11, early written sources, and oral accounts from patriarchal times subsequently reduced to writing. Subjecting the text to literary criticism he concludes that Genesis is basically 'ancestor epic literature' and isolates the main epics. Here his discussion of 'the gospel of Abraham' deserves special mention as he sets out the 'internal theological dynamic' that drives this section.

In the third and final part he draws the threads together. How did Moses deal with the material he had thus to hand? How did he form the primeval history of Genesis 1 – 11? These questions find persuasive answers. To his final question, How were these sources transmitted?, he has a novel proposal.

This was done by the Levites whose roles as scribes and teachers began in Egypt before the Exodus. The most reasonable setting for the book's composition was the time of the sojourn in Egypt.

Though conservative readers may not go all the way with Garrett in some of the fine points of his thesis they will certainly agree that here at last is a credible and convincing alternative analysis of how the Book of Genesis came to be. Students of Old Testament at the Reformed Theological College look out – this book may well become required reading from now on!

Norris Wilson

Saint Patrick's City — The Story of Armagh, Alf McCreary, The Blackstaff Press, 2001, Hdb, 252 pp, £20.00.

This is an attractively produced, beautifully illustrated and extensively researched volume. as the title indicates, it is concerned with Ireland's patron saint and the City of Armagh, but more with the latter than the former.

The sections dealing with Patrick are useful. They include a helpful commentary on Patrick's *Confession*, as well as Dr. Ludwig Bieler's translation of both of Patrick's writings - the '*Confessio*' and the *Letter to Coroticus* - as an appendix.

McCreary correctly states that, '*Once we leave the comparatively firm ground of St. Patrick's own writings to gain a picture of the saint, we enter the world of speculation and of conjecture*'. However, he then proceeds to give too much attention and credence to the writings of the medieval authors, Muirchu and Tirechan. Indeed, it is on these unreliable seventh century hagiographers, coupled with later traditions, that McCreary is dependent for the overriding pre-supposition in his book. While it has been popular since medieval times to link Patrick with Armagh, there is little solid evidence for the belief.

Much of the book deals with the history of Armagh City. It is well written and illustrated and therefore interesting. However it means that it will have limited general appeal and particular appeal only to Armagh people. Given the

quality of its production, it is not expensively priced but most readers of this Journal will probably opt to consult it as opportunities arise rather than purchase it.

A.C. Gregg

Intellect and Action. Elucidations on Christian Theology and the Life of Faith, Colin E. Gunton, T & T Clark, 2000, 197 pages, £23.95. ISBN 0 567 08735 2

This collection brings together ten loosely connected papers on important theological subjects by Colin Gunton, Professor of Christian Doctrine at King's College, London. Gunton has built a considerable reputation in the world of academic theology and is one of the most significant voices in contemporary British theology. His perspective is conservative in comparison to many in university religious studies faculties, although those committed to the doctrines of the Westminster Standards will often wish to differ from him. Gunton, nevertheless, is a very able thinker and continually stimulates thought, even when his own conclusions must be rejected.

The first two papers consider the nature, first of 'dogma' ('Dogma, the Church and the Task of Theology'), then second of 'systematic theology' ('A Rose by any other Name? From 'Christian Doctrine' to 'Systematic Theology)'). Although these two terms are often used virtually interchangeably, there are important differences in their meanings that should not be lost. In particular, 'dogma' relates specifically to the public teaching of the Church in a way that 'systematic theology' does not. Gunton also seeks to show in what ways theology can be termed 'systematic'.

The third paper then deals with the wider subject of claims to truth under the title "I Know My Redeemer Lives": A Consideration of Christian Knowledge Claims'. Gunton examines the biblical perspectives on knowledge as teaching and knowledge of the heart, and then attempts a theological synthesis.

The following three papers tackle matters of theological ethics. Relating theology to ethics is examined in 'A Systematic Triangle: Hegel, Kierkegaard, Barth and the Question of Ethics'. The next two papers consider two key terms

in theological ethics, namely 'holiness' and 'virtue', the former taken directly from Scripture, and the latter currently of great interest in philosophical ethics.

The final four papers deal with a number of inter-related subjects of perennial concern to theologians: election, divine sovereignty, grace and freedom. These include some appreciative, though by no means uncritical, readings of Calvin's Institutes.

A number of theologians and philosophers appear repeatedly as Gunton's dialogue partners, particularly Kierkegaard, Hegel and Barth. Readers therefore need a reasonable familiarity with the thought of these writers if they are themselves to enter into dialogue with Gunton. This is not a book for beginners, and readers looking for introductory material on the subjects considered should look elsewhere. The diversity of sources from which the papers are drawn also inevitably militates against the book's unity. Those with a good theological and philosophical foundation, however, will profit from engaging with the writings of a very able contemporary theologian.

David McKay

BOOK NOTICES

The Westminster Handbook to Reformed Theology, edited by Donald K. McKim, Westminster John Knox Press, 2001, 243 pages, £15.99.

This handbook seeks to provide an overview of the Reformed tradition of theology and church life as it has developed through history and also in its contemporary expressions. A wide range of scholars representing various shades of Reformed thinking has been assembled, including familiar names such as Richard Gaffin, John Frame, John Gerstner, Richard Muller, Wayne Spear and David Wright. Most are American, with a sprinkling of British scholars. The coverage of subjects is good, including theological terms and movements, Reformed confessions, and subjects such as ethics and pastoral theology. The entries on confessions of faith are particularly helpful for navigating through the forest of Reformed creedal statements that has grown up in the last five centuries. Most entries are useful, although in a few the influence of Barth is evident, and some, such as McKim's on Scripture, restate positions that have been subjected to thorough refutations in the past. Many will find this a useful reference work, but it should be noted that all of the articles appeared in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith* (Westminster John Knox Press, 1992).

The Christ of the Bible and the Church's Faith, by Geoffrey Grogan, Mentor, 1998, 297 pages, £10.99

In this most useful book Geoff Grogan provides a comprehensive exposition of the biblical teaching on the person and work of Christ, in dialogue with contemporary views of Christ. Two strands are pursued in alternating chapters. One strand consists of a theological study of biblical teaching, covering issues such as Christ in the Gospels, Christ in the rest of the New Testament, Christ in the Old Testament, Christ in his humiliation and his exaltation, Christ as God incarnate and the uniqueness of Christ. The other strand deals with objections raised against the biblical teaching and covers, for example, historical, theological, hermeneutical, ethical and creedal questions. Grogan is a careful and reverent expositor of the Scriptures, and also a scholar who is in critical touch with contemporary thought. As a result this is an excellent study, accessible to a wide range of readers.

Galatians, John Brown, Banner of Truth, repr.2001, Hdb., 451 pp., £13.95.

Classic nineteenth century commentating - reliable, thorough, occasionally ponderous. Brown is a sure guide to the meaning of the text and his applications, heart-searching, edifying and practical, are particularly valuable. Useful for the preacher, in conjunction with a modern exegetical commentary.

A Brief Guide to Beliefs: Ideas, Theologies, Mysteries and Movements, Linda Edwards, Westminster John Knox Press, 2001, pb., 578 pp., £12.99.

A useful compendium of the key beliefs of the major world religions, extending to modern cults and New Age, pagan and occult groups. There is a wealth of fascinating detail in these pages, including extracts from various sacred texts. The material is intelligently arranged, with clear sub-headings increasing its accessibility. A valuable reference work for Christians who want more information about the increasingly pluralistic world in which we live.

Grace and Power in Pentecostal and Charismatic Theology, Samuel Yull Lee, Theologische Universiteit Apeldoorn, 2001, Pb., 297 pp., n.p.

The issue dealt with in this study is whether the charismatic movement has tended to neglect grace in comparison with its fascination with the concept of power. The author answers convincingly in the affirmative, tracing the themes of grace and power through the history of Christian doctrine, then in classic Pentecostalism and the charismatic movement, concluding with an exegetical examination of the relevant scriptural passages. Though written as a doctoral dissertation, the style is user-friendly and the scholarship unobtrusive. A thought-provoking discussion, perhaps more suitable for those involved in refuting charismatic errors.

Edward Donnelly