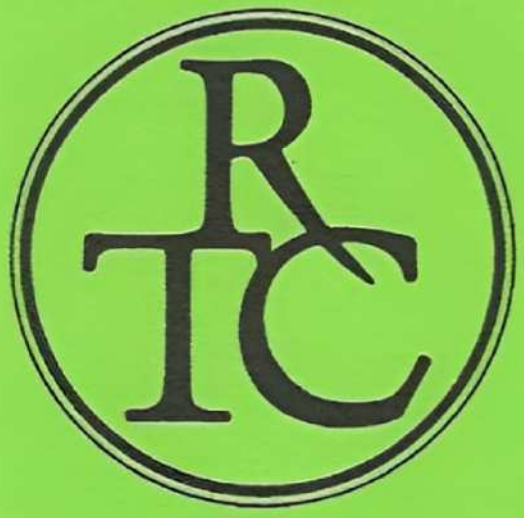

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PRESBYTERIANISM IN IRELAND UNDER THREAT - THE EJECTION OF 1661

Robert L. W. McCollum

Robert McCollum is Professor of Pastoral Theology and Homiletics at the Reformed Theological College, Belfast, and Minister of Lisburn Reformed Presbyterian Church.

Three hundred and fifty years ago, on 8th May 1661, the Irish Parliament met in Dublin. In that Assembly the Episcopal party was dominant and a significant declaration was passed by both Houses (Commons and the Lords) forbidding all non-conformists to preach. This legislation was principally levelled against the growing number of Presbyterian ministers in the country.

Just prior to this Jeremy Taylor, Bishop of Down and Connor, had taken separate action, declaring in a single day 36 churches vacant within his diocese which had been occupied by Presbyterian ministers. One of those affected, Patrick Adair, comments on Taylor's high handedness:

> He did not make any process against the ministers, nor suspend or excommunicate; but he simply held them not to be ministers, they not being ordained by bishops.[1]

What were the Presbyterian ministers to do, 80 of whom were now ministering in Ireland? One option open to them was to apply to the bishop in the local diocese for ordination and by doing so accept episcopacy. The majority of these men believed in the "Divine right of Presbytery" and so to acquiesce to the pressure to conform, by the State and the established church, would have been a betrayal of principle and also of the Covenant to which they had so recently pledged to adhere. In the event 70 of the 80 ministers refused to conform and, in the words of Finlay Homes, "chose the costly path of nonconformity."[2]

Presbyterianism planted in Ulster

To understand the convictions of these Irish Presbyterian ministers we need to consider what shaped and moulded their convictions. Lowland Scots, with Presbyterian sympathies, began to arrive in Ulster in significant numbers

as a consequence of the Hamilton and Montgomery Settlement (1606) and the Ulster Plantation (1610). This first generation of Scots in Ulster was not a pious people but they were a practising people. They were sons and daughters of the Scottish Reformation and were attached to the preaching pattern of their own ministers as well as to the Presbyterian mode of worship.

Presbyterian ministers followed this migration and were favourably received by the Reformed and scholarly Church of Ireland primate Archbishop James Ussher. With the blessing of Ussher, men like Robert Blair (Bangor), Josiah Welsh (Templepatrick) and Robert Cunningham (Holywood) all carried out their ministries within the parish churches. ("Pres-copalianism" some have called this arrangement).

The faithful preaching of these ministers along with the enormous impact of the Six Mile Water Revival (1625) brought about a spiritual transformation. The majority of the planters were now a pious people holding firm convictions regarding the Reformed Faith and Presbyterian polity.

Presbyterianism in Ireland encounters opposition

The growth and development of Presbyterianism within the bounds of the established church was increasingly being viewed with suspicion and alarm by the bishops. Opposition arose and men like Blair, Welsh and Livingston were suspended from practising their ministry by the Bishop of Down, Echlin. Archbishop Ussher had to intervene on behalf of the deposed men but was overruled by Archbishop Laud and the King in London.

Many of the ministers had returned to Scotland by 1637 and were influential in opposing the attempt to introduce "Laud's Liturgy" into the Scottish Church. They, along with the majority of the Scottish nation, signed the National Covenant by which they swore to maintain the spiritual independence of the church under Christ and the Presbyterian form of church government.

Back in Ireland the authorities, Thomas Wentworth, the Lord Deputy, and the bishops were concerned lest families of Presbyterian conviction subscribe to a similar covenant. To prevent this an Oath was drawn up called the "Black Oath", which all Presbyterians were obliged to take or suffer very severe penalties. "According to this Oath they were required not only to swear allegiance to King Charles, but to swear also that they would never at any time oppose anything he might be pleased to command, and further, that they would renounce and abjure all covenants, such as the National Covenant, which had been the means of saving Presbyterianism in Scotland."[3]

The enforcers of this Oath were the Episcopal ministers and church wardens who were required to make a "Return" of all the Presbyterians resident in each parish so that the authorities would have a record of everyone required

to take the Oath. Not surprisingly the majority of the Presbyterians refused to take the Oath. To escape retribution many fled to Scotland. But not everyone escaped the rigours of Wentworth and the bishops. Thomas Hamilton describes the sufferings endured:

> The details of the cruelties which they inflicted are not merely harrowing - they are sickening...Respectable men were, on their refusal to perjure themselves by taking the Black Oath, bound together with chains and thrown into dismal dungeons. Pursuivants from Dublin travelled up and down Ulster, arresting and imprisoning. The most exorbitant penalties were inflicted. Mr Henry Stewart, a gentleman of large property, his wife and two daughters, and a servant named James Gray, on refusing to take the oath, were arrested by a sergeant-at-arms, carried up to Dublin, and committed to jail. On 10th September, 1639, they were brought before the Star Chamber, 'a court in which the substance as well as the forms of law and justice were equally despised,' and in which several of the bishops sat. They were all pronounced guilty of high treason...The sentence of the Court was then pronounced. Mr. Stewart was fined in £5000, Mrs. Stewart in £5000 more, their two daughters in £2000 each, and Gray, the servant, also in £2000, making £16000 altogether. To crown all, they were to lie in jail in Dublin until the last farthing of these monstrous impositions should be paid! But bad as all this was, it is as nothing when compared with other atrocities which were indulged in, to compel submission to this monstrous oath.[4]

Wentworth, not content with these afflictions being suffered by the Presbyterians in Ulster, devised a plan by which all Presbyterians would be banished from the North of Ireland. However, before the plan could be executed changes were taking place in England. The Long Parliament had been recalled; Wentworth was impeached, tried and found guilty and beheaded at Tower Hill on 12th May 1641. In the mystery of providence Wentworth did the Presbyterians a favour. When the native Irish rose up in Rebellion in 1641 many of the Presbyterians were back in Scotland and were saved from the atrocities committed against the Planters.

Presbyterianism formally established

A Scottish army, under major general Monroe, arrived at Carrickfergus in April 1642 to quell the Irish uprising. In the summer of that year the chaplains and officer-elders of some of the regiments of Monroe's army formed a Presbytery at Carrickfergus.[5] The first meeting was held on 10th June when Rev. John Baird, chaplain of Campbell's regiment, and later minister of Derrykeighan in County Antrim, preached on the text of Psalm 51 verse 18, "Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem."[6]

From the beginning the Presbytery was not intended to serve only the army and applications for membership were invited from parishes across the

country. In a short space of time 15 applications were received, all from counties Antrim and Down. The structure of Presbyterianism in Ireland was beginning to take shape.

Presbyterians subscribe the Covenant

Something very significant took place regarding this fledgling Presbyterian Church in 1644. The previous year the Scottish Presbyterians and the English Parliamentarians had entered into a Covenant - called the Solemn League and Covenant. The outbreak of Civil War in England in 1642 had led to this Solemn League and Covenant between Scotland and England in 1643. This Covenant among other things pledged to bring the churches in these kingdoms (England, Scotland and Ireland) "to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, confession of faith, form of church government, directory for public worship and catechizing...according to the Word of God and the best example of Reformed Churches."[7]

With respect to Ireland the Solemn League and Covenant attributed the deplorable state of the church and the kingdom of Ireland to what was called "the enemies of God" and a reformation of religion in Ireland was one of the earnest endeavours of the Scottish signatories of that Solemn League and Covenant. Accordingly the Scottish Assembly in March 1644 appointed ministers to administer the Covenant in Ireland. On 1st April 1644 the Presbytery in Ulster agreed that the Covenant should be administered to Munro's army, and Patrick Adair records:

> In those places where the Covenant was administered to the army the whole country about came and willingly joined themselves to the Covenant.[8]

Patrick Adair informs us of the procedure that was followed by those who had taken the Black Oath a few years earlier.

> ...those who had taken the Black Oath were not admitted to the covenant till they at first publickly declared their repentance for it. It was reported by the worthy Mr. Weir - who administered the covenant at Carrickfergus, where least was expected - that there were 400 who had renounced the Black Oath publickly, and taken the covenant; and 1,400 of the army and of towns and places about, besides women who had not taken the same, and now entered into the covenant.[9]

The manner in which the Covenant was offered to the people in each locality demonstrates the serious and spiritual nature in which this act of covenanting was entered into. Patrick Adair outlines the procedure:

> The covenant was taken in all places with great affection; partly with sorrow for former judgments and sins and miseries; partly with joy under present consolation,

> in the hopes of laying a foundation for the work of God in the land, and overthrowing Popery and prelacy, which had been the bane and ruin of that poor church. Sighs and tears were joined together, and it is much to be observed, both the way ministers used toward the people for clearing their consciences in order to the covenant, in explaining it before they proposed it to the people, and from Scripture and solid consequences from it, clearing every article of it - and thereafter offered it only to those whose consciences stirred them up to it. Indeed, they were assisted with more than the ordinary presence of God in that work in every place they went to, so that all the hearers did bear them witness that God was with them. And the sensible presence and appearance of God with them in these exercises did overcome many of those who otherwise were not inclined that way, so that very few were found to resist the call of God.[10]

"This Covenant became a bond of union for those who loved liberty and was instrumental in reviving piety and true religion in the Province".[11] It also strengthened the commitment of these Protestant dissenters to the principles embodied in Presbyterianism.

While this act of covenanting was taking place, mainly among the Presbyterians in Ulster, two momentous things were going on in England. First of all at the request of Parliament the Assembly of Divines had convened and was carrying out its monumental work at Westminster in London. Secondly, at the same time, the Civil War was being waged between the Roundheads (Parliamentarians) and Cavaliers (those loyal to King Charles I). The Roundheads, under the command of Oliver Cromwell, were successful and after some deliberation executed the King on 30th January 1649.

Presbyterians and the Cromwellian Commonwealth

The Covenanted Presbyterians in Scotland and Ireland believed the execution of King Charles I to be a breach of covenant. Although they had sided with the Parliamentarians in the war to defeat the aims and objectives of Charles they nevertheless considered his person to be inviolable. In the Solemn League and Covenant they had vowed:

> We shall, with the same sincerity, reality, and constancy, in our several vocations, endeavour, with our estates and lives, mutually to preserve the rights and privileges of the Parliaments, and the liberties of the kingdoms; and to preserve and defend the King's Majesty's person and authority, in the preservation and defence of the true religion, and liberties of the kingdoms; that the world may bear witness with our consciences of our loyalty, and that we have no thoughts or intentions to diminish his Majesty's just power and greatness.[12]

In response to the execution of the King the Irish Presbytery met at Belfast on 15th February 1649. The Presbytery drew up a "Representation" which they ordered to be read from every pulpit. In it they condemned the

execution of the King in the strongest terms. The Presbytery also arranged for the renewal of the covenant on the Sabbath week after their meeting. Adair in his Narrative informs us that "the Representation was read in the whole congregations of the presbytery, except by three ministers...and the covenant was renewed everywhere with great affection among the people;"[13] The commitment of the presbytery to the covenant is evident when it "ordained that those who refused to take the covenant in a due manner, should be declared enemies to it publickly before the congregations where they dwelt."[14] The sentiments of the "Representation" were noted and provoked a hostile response from the Cromwellian party - now governing the country. John Milton, the celebrated English poet of the 17th century and author of *Paradise Lost* had been appointed Latin secretary to the new Council of State and he was commissioned to answer the Presbytery. W. T. Latimer in his history of the Irish Presbyterians describes his pungent reply:

> He (Milton) published a reply to the Presbyterian protest so full of scurrility as to be unworthy of the greatest Englishman of the age. He calls Belfast a "barbarous nook of Ireland," accuses the Presbytery of exhibiting "as much devilish malice, impudence, and falsehood as any Irish rebel could have uttered," and declares that by their actions he might rather judge them to be "a generation of Highland thieves and redshanks."[15]

The Irish Presbyterians were unmoved and undaunted by such a verbal attack and they continued their protest against Cromwell and the members of his government whom they denounced as usurpers.

In an attempt to bring the Irish Presbyterians into submission the Cromwellian party drew up an Oath, known as "The Engagement". It bound all who took this Oath "to 'renounce the pretended title of Charles Stuart and the whole line of the late King Charles, and every other person as a single person pretending to the government', and binding them also to be true and faithful to the commonwealth against any king or other person." [16]

The Irish Presbyterian ministers were ordered to take this Oath, but they refused, being conscientiously persuaded that Charles's son was the legitimate king and that his father's execution was murder. Such a response did not ingratiate these men to Cromwell or his government but they were men of principle and were prepared for whatever consequences their actions provoked. And there were consequences clearly identified and vividly described by Thomas Hamilton in his history of Presbyterianism in Ulster:

> The ministers were summoned before the governors - soldiers were sent to their churches to overawe them - they had their houses surrounded by dragoons, and were arrested and thrown into jail. Some fled to the woods, or hid themselves in other places where they could find concealment, or escaped to Scotland - anything but do what in conscience they felt to be wrong. In the end they were ordered to

> leave the kingdom. It was a trying time. Only six or seven of them dared to remain in Ireland, and these disguised as farmers or peasants. Sometimes a congregation would be seen, or the sound of their voices heard, as they sang their psalms, and listened to some outed minister, in a field or secluded mountain glen, by the light of the stars or the moon.[17]

It became clear to Cromwell and his advisors that Presbyterian ministers were not going to be easily silenced so a plan was hatched to banish all the leading Presbyterians of Antrim and Down, ministers and people alike, to the Province of Munster. A proclamation was issued in May 1653 containing a list of Presbyterians to be banished. They were ordered "within a specified time, and under severe penalties, to remove to the counties of Kilkenny, Tipperary and Waterford."[18] Had this policy been implemented the history of Ireland over the subsequent centuries would have read very differently. In the event other counsels prevailed. Cromwell, with the reins of power securely in his hands in the three kingdoms, recognised that the Presbyterians in Ireland, "though they and he did not agree on many points, were peaceable, well-disposed people, not likely to give him much trouble".[19]

Thus the persecution under Cromwell ceased and exiled ministers returned to Ireland to continue their ministry. At the same time other settlers arrived from both Scotland and England, many of them associating with the Presbyterians. Congregations grew rapidly and new congregations were planted. The testimony of Patrick Adair is worth noting:

> Thus, this poor church being in a great measure restored to former freedom, and enjoying their ministers who had been banished, the Lord so countenanced their labours that many other congregations, in places of the country that had not been planted before, began to seek for ministers to be settled among them [20]

The Presbytery was aware of the bitter dispute between the Resolutioners and Protestors that had divided the Covenanted Presbyterians in Scotland (Church of Scotland). It is clear from Patrick Adair's narrative that the Irish ministers were in sympathy with the more moderate group - the Resolutioners.[21] The Act of Bangor passed by the Presbytery in 1654 included a clause that gave the Presbytery authority to interview and examine young men from Scotland before installation to a congregation in Ireland. The Act contained a clause about such ministerial candidates "that they should be peaceable i.e., not violent in either of those ways now debated in Scotland; but, whatever were their private thoughts, they should be of that temper as to be submissive to their brethren, and not trouble this church with their opinions."[22] They wanted to ensure that men of a Protestor outlook would not be ordained in Ireland. The young men, after passing these "trials" were then required at their ordination to declare their adherence to the Solemn League and Covenant

and they were also called upon to subscribe to the Act of Bangor.

By 1660 eighty congregations had been formed and the number of ministers had increased from 24 to 70. The Presbytery in Ulster was divided into local meetings or sub-Presbyteries - Antrim, Down and Route in 1654, Laggan in the West in 1657 and Tyrone in 1659. The Synod of Ulster was beginning to take shape.

Presbyterians in Ireland and the Restoration

With the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1658 steps were soon taken to restore the monarchy. Presbyterians in Ireland, as in Scotland and England were active among those who, in 1660, invited Charles II to become king. They had high hopes that the new King would not only honour the Covenant but would also act favourably towards the covenanted Presbyterians in the three kingdoms - having himself subscribed the Solemn League and Covenant in 1649 and then again at his coronation in 1650. The Long Parliament was recalled after 10 years suspension. It was largely made up of men with Puritan sympathies. They began by rescinding two Acts which were in opposition to the monarchy. The Solemn League and Covenant was openly owned and acknowledged among them. They also consulted as to how to promote it and were instrumental in having it hung up in houses and in some churches. Patrick Adair comments on how things looked from a Presbyterian perspective in the spring of 1660:

> Thus, for a moment, things wore a comfortable aspect with a Parliament such as formerly had been the instrument of reformation; and the King, then at Breda, was looked on as a covenanted King who would not resile from the solemn engagements that he was under.[23]

However, Irish Presbyterian hopes of a settlement which would honour the Covenant were soon extinguished. Just prior to the Restoration a Synod was held in Ballymena. It decided to send two ministers to the King with an address in which "they humbly reminded his Majesty of God's wonderful dealing with him in his preservation and restoration, on which they heartily congratulated him; but, withal, they humbly petitioned the settling of religion according to the rule of reformation against popery, prelacy, heresy, &c., according to the covenant."[24]

When the two ministers, William Keyes (Belfast) and William Richardson (Killyleagh), arrived in London they soon realized that hopes of having their petition well received were slight. They met up with Sir John Clotworthy and some leading Presbyterian ministers in the city, such as Edmund Calamy and Thomas Manton. These men, Patrick Adair informs us, "when they saw the address, told the brethren they thought the plainness of it,

for the covenant and against prelates would make it unacceptable to the Court."[25] They sought the advice of other distinguished gentlemen who promised assistance in gaining access to the King but only if all references to the covenant and prelacy were deleted.

Keyes and Richardson were in a dilemma, having had clear instructions from the Synod to present to the King the exact wording of the address. In the end they yielded to the pressure being exerted on them and removed the offending references to covenant and prelacy. The address, as amended, was read to the king who received them favourably.

When Keyes and Richardson returned home they were asked to report to their brethren at a meeting in Ballymena. While recognising the difficulties that they faced "the brethren did signify their dislike of that alteration to the address; that being more displeasing to them than all they had done was pleasing."[26] For all of the new King's fine words they were fearful of what the future held for them as Presbyterians.

Presbyterians persecuted under Charles II

Soon after the King's restoration he declared himself for prelacy and against the Covenant. Immediate steps were taken to restore episcopacy in Ireland. Charles himself nominated persons to fill the vacant bishoprics. John Bramall, associated in Presbyterian minds with persecution in the 1630s was appointed Primate. Presbyterian ministers had to conform to episcopacy and seek ordination by a bishop. The new bishops were consecrated on 27th January 1661 and quickly set about dismantling Presbyterianism. The leading enforcer of this policy was Jeremy Taylor, Bishop of Down and Connor. For example, Adair records for us that "this bishop did in one day in his visitation declare 36 churches vacant", regarding Presbyterian ministers "not to be ministers."[27]

Of the 80 Presbyterian ministers in Ireland at that time only 10 conformed. Out of principle the other 70 faced the consequences of being ejected from their pulpits. Most of them remained in the vicinity of their parishes and carried on pastoral visitation as usual, preaching in remote locations at night. Those who continued their ministry in a more public manner often incurred the wrath of those in authority. For example, Thomas Kennedy, when ejected from the parish of Donaghmore, remained among his people and continued his ministry in a log house near Carland. For this act of disobedience he was imprisoned in Dungannon jail where he was not permitted to see or even receive letters from his wife. W. T. Latimer in summing up this period of persecution writes:

> At this time the Presbyterian clergy occupied a most difficult and dangerous position, in which they acted with great courage and consistency. Deprived of

> their houses of worship, without definite means of support, among a poor and widely-scattered people, proscribed by the Government, persecuted by the prelates, these ministers of the Gospel played the part of soldiers faithful to their Lord and Master.[28]

The Parliament in Ireland at this time was at pains to please the new King, Charles II. Not only did it legislate for the restoration of episcopacy, but it also passed an Act for burning the Solemn League and Covenant. In accordance with this Act the magistrates of every town of importance in Ireland were ordered to burn the Covenant. They all obeyed except Captain Dalway of Carrickfergus. As punishment for his disobedience he was fined £100. Later the fine was remitted when he produced a certificate indicating that he had complied with the law and had the Covenant publicly burned.

The Solemn League and Covenant, to which all the Presbyterians in Ireland had so recently shown such a firm attachment was now by this public burning regarded by the State as a traitorous document. This clearly had an influence upon the ejected ministers who were not wanting to give the authorities any further grounds to intensify the persecution. According to Patrick Adair:

> They resolved to go about their duty with as great prudence as they could - considering they had many adversaries and watchful eyes upon them, and not a few to represent them to the magistrates as disloyal and rebellious persons, if any ground had been given. They thought it more suitable to their case and more profitable to their flocks to do somewhat among them in a private way, without noise or alarming the magistrates, and thus continue among their people, than to appear publickly in preaching in the fields, which could have lasted but a very short time, and would have deprived them of the opportunity of ordinarily residing among their people - which in the case of some who took another course, came to pass.[30]

Adair is alluding to the ministry of three of the ejected ministers: Michael Bruce (Killinchy), John Crookshanks (Raphoe), and Andrew McCormick (Magherally). They openly defied the authorities "in assembling large crowds of people whom they excited by passionate preaching in support of the Covenant and against episcopacy."[31] These men eventually had to flee to Scotland where Crookshanks and McCormick were killed at the Battle of Rullian Green in November 1666. This left no-one among the Presbyterian ministers in Ireland who would take a public stand for the Covenant.

In 1668 Patrick Adair tells us that an allegation was made to the Lord Deputy, Lord Ossory, that the Presbyterians were renewing the Covenant. Upon investigation this proved to be false, which satisfied Lord Ossory. The authorities in Ireland, as long as the Covenant was kept in the background, were willing to take a more relaxed view of Presbyterianism and the persecution gradually subsided.

There were many people in the country, however, who were still firmly attached to the Covenant and its principles. They assembled in large crowds to listen to the preaching of Scottish minister, Alexander Peden, and also David Houston who had settled in Ulster. With reference to his ministry a complaint was made to the Lord Lieutenant in 1694. This referred to Houston as:

> a clergyman that preached up the solemn League and covenant, accusing the people of Scotland for not sticking to their League, and having a congregation of 500 resolute fellows that adhere to him.[32]

Presbyterianism as it emerged from the persecution

a) The stand taken by the 70 ejected ministers in 1661 secured the future of Presbyterianism in Ireland. In a tribute to the men of that generation H C Waddell commented:

> the self sacrifice of these ejected ministers secured the continuance of Presbyterianism in Ireland. Had they failed, the ultimate effect would have been fatal. Their uncompromising loyalty, under God, saved the church.[33]

b) Up to the 1660s the fledgling Presbyterian Church had been cradled within the structures of the Church of Ireland. The persecution of the 1660s brought an end to that relationship. When persecuting measures became less stringent congregations erected their own meeting houses for worship and built manses for their ministers.

c) It is clear that the pressures from the State against the Covenant gradually caused Presbyterianism in general to relinquish its attachment to the Covenant - the Covenant that had been so important to Presbyterians prior to the Restoration.

d) Among the Presbyterians in Ulster there were several thousand who remained firmly attached to the Covenant and its principles. Since they maintained their allegiance to the Covenant they continued to be called Covenanters. Apart from the preaching of Peden (until his death in 1686) and Houston (until his death in 1696) this group of Presbyterians was bereft of ministers. With direction and encouragement from Scotland these Christians formed themselves into Societies or Fellowship meetings. Their first minister, William Martin, was ordained at the Vow (near Ballymoney) in 1757. Six years later in 1763 the Irish Reformed Presbytery was formed, later to become known as the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland. This Presbyterian body still expresses a commitment to covenanting as a theological principle and also to the Solemn League and Covenant as perpetually binding. The Reformed Presbyterian Church renewed the Covenant as recently as 1990.

Conclusion

1661 was certainly a turbulent year for Presbyterianism in Ireland. It could have spelled the death-knell of Presbyterianism in this island. Thankfully, by God's grace, it survived even though the majority relinquished an attachment to the Covenant. Presbyterianism was certainly under threat at that period of history but God not only preserved it, but has continued to do so over the centuries as it has testified to Jesus Christ as Saviour and the only King and Head of His Church.

Notes

1. Patrick Adair, *Irish Presbyterian Church* 1623-1670, (The Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland, 2007), p.251.
2. Finlay Holmes, *Our Irish Presbyterian Heritage,* (Belfast, 1985), p.41.
3. Thomas Hamilton, *History of Presbyterianism in Ulster,* (Mourne Missionary Trust, 1982), p.53.
4. Ibid., pp.53, 54.
5. Patrick Adair, op. cit., p.92.
6. Finlay Holmes, op. cit., p.27.
7. *Solemn League and Covenant,* para.1.
8. Patrick Adair, op. cit., p.103.
9. Ibid., p.103.
10. Ibid., p.103.
11. Ibid., pp.103, 104.
12. *Solemn League and Covenant,* para.3.
13. Patrick Adair, op. cit., p.154.
14. Ibid., p.158.
15. W. T. Latimer, *A History of the Irish Presbyterians,* (Belfast 1902), p.108.
16. *The Engagement Oath 1649,* quoted in Thomas Hamilton, op. cit., p.71.
17. Thomas Hamilton, op. cit., p.72.
18. Ibid., p.72.
19. Ibid., p.73.
20. Patrick Adair, op. cit., p.208.
21. Ibid., pp.208, 209.
22. Ibid., p.211.
23. Ibid., p.237.
24. Ibid., p.241.
25. Ibid., p 242.
26. Ibid., p 243.
27. Ibid., p 251.
28. W. T. Latimer, op. cit., p.135.
29. Patrick Adair, op. cit., p.254.
30. Ibid., p.257, 258.
31. Finlay Holmes, op. cit., p.41.
32. Classon Porter: *Biographical Sketches,* quoted in Adam Loughridge, *Covenanters in Ireland,* (Cameron Press, Belfast 1984), p.13.
33. H C Waddell, *Tercentenary Book of the Presbytery of Route* (Belfast 1960) p.27, quoted in Finlay Holmes op. cit., p.41.

WHO WERE "bene haelohim" (THE SONS OF GOD) IN GENESIS 6:2, 4 AND JOB 1:6; 2:1?

Norris Wilson

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In the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (p.114) E. Martens claims that the identical Hebrew phrase translated "the sons of God" occurs in only four places – Gen.6:2, 4; Ps.29:1; Job: 1:6; 2:1 and Job 38:1. Strictly speaking this is not so – the identical phrase occurring only in Gen. 6:2, 4 and Job 1:6; 2:1. Thus our discussion will focus on these two passages. The key point to be addressed is this – is Scripture referring here to men or angels?

Firstly Genesis 6:1-4. W. C. Kaiser in his book *More Hard Sayings Of The Old Testament* (p.32) states, "Few texts in the history of interpretation have aroused more curiosity and divergence of opinion than Gen.6: 1- 4 has. It is at once tantalizing and deeply puzzling." The three main scholarly interpretations are that "the sons of God" are (1) angels/spirits, (2) human judges or rulers, (3) the godly descendents of Seth.

Though (1) is probably the oldest view (espoused for example in the extra-canonical Book Of Enoch, chapter 6, and by various church fathers, e.g. Origen) and is the one most favoured by scholars to-day[1], we believe it is to be rejected on the following grounds:

Firstly the immediate context. The expression appears without explanation so the author must assume it is readily identifiable, however, there has been no identifying of an angelic heavenly court up to this point.

Secondly if these are angels then mankind is here punished for their sins, but verses 1 to 8 all concern humanity and its wrongdoing.

Thirdly there is no biblical evidence that angels, being essentially spiritual beings (Heb.1: 14), are capable of sexual relations with women (note our Lord's explicit words in Matt. 22:30; cf. Mk. 12:25; Lk. 20:34–36). Moreover, if they were fallen angels would they be referred to as "sons of God"? If they were unfallen then surely we would not expect sinful behaviour from them!

The second interpretation (that the "sons of God" were despotic human rulers/judges who acquired large harems by force[2]) we believe is also to be rejected on the following grounds:

Firstly while proponents of this view argue that the Cainite dynasty in chapter 4 is the proper background, the problem is that nowhere does the context speak of kingship.

Secondly while in the Old Testament an individual king may be referred to as "son of God" there is no evidence that groups of kings were styled "sons of God".

Thirdly the idea that forced polygamy, as the wrong committed here, is implied in verse 2 cannot be sustained. There is no sense of coercion here and the verb "lakah" ("took") is the normal Hebrew expression for marriage.

Thus we are left with the interpretation pursued by most Protestant conservative scholars[3] that the "sons of God" are the godly line of Seth which mingles disastrously with the godless line of Cain.

Firstly the context. It is clear that chapters 4 and 5 are developing and contrasting the two lines of development from Adam – the ungodly Cainites and the godly line of Seth. Thus chapter 6:1-8 tells how the two lines mingled, resulting in a community of wickedness.

Secondly the expression "sons of God" can be taken metaphorically as a genitive of quality meaning "godly sons". This is attested by the Sethite context where references to godliness abound (e.g. Enosh who "began to call on the name of the Lord" in 4: 26, Enoch who "walked with God" in 5:22-24, Lamech who saw the hope of comfort in spite of the painful toil caused by the curse in 5:29, and Noah who, thanks to God's grace, was righteous and blameless and "walked with God" in 6:9).

Thirdly the expression "sons of God" is used in the O.T. of those who have been chosen to stand in covenant relationship with God, for example Deut. 14: 1-2 when Moses declares to Israel, "You are the sons of the Lord your God..." (cf. Exod.4:2; Deut. 32:5; Pss.73:15; 80:15; Isa. 43:6; Hos. 1:10; 11: 1).

Fourthly although the expression "sons of God" refers to the Sethites this does not mean that the parallel expression "daughters of men" must refer exclusively to Cainite women. It can refer to women regardless of parentage. The key point is that among these daughters were godless Cainites. The key phrase here is "they took to wife from all whom they chose", i.e. they were undiscriminating.

It is not without significance that this action is described in language that deliberately echoes the sin of Eve in Gen.3: 6. She "saw...that the fruit was good (pleasant)...and she took..." Likewise the godly sons of Seth in 6:2 "saw that the daughters of men were good (fair) and they took..." This deliberate parallel, echoing the garden temptation and followed immediately by God's extreme reaction, shows that we are meant to take this very seriously indeed. As Eve deliberately rebels by unlawfully choosing the forbidden fruit, so the sons of God sin in choosing wives from the forbidden lineage. Like Eve they exercise a freedom that ends in disaster when they embrace unrighteousness.

Of course no marriage prohibition has been explicitly stated in Genesis yet. However, this is like other things that could be said to be stated embryonically in Genesis only to be stated explicitly in Mosaic legislation. We often find Moses rooting things back to the patriarchs and the pre-patriarchal situation (e.g. the requirement of a lamb offering in 4:3–5, the clean versus the unclean animals of 7:2, the tithing of Abraham in 14:18–21). Moses is here illustrating how religious intermarriage is calamitous for the godly. Their unrestricted licence merely serves to accelerate the downfall of the whole human race. Later generations were to realise the bitterness of the disastrous results of mingling the holy seed with the ungodly – from Moses' day to Ezra's.

Against this background we now turn to Job 1:6 and 2:1. It is true that most interpret the term "sons of God" to refer to angels here, forming an angelic court in God's presence (although no term for such a court is used, nor do angels play any part in the drama, or even have a mention in it). However, having established that the term refers to humans in Gen.6, it could be argued that such an interpretation appears to run counter to the analogy of Scripture. So is it possible that the term in Job also refers to humans? We believe it is for the following reasons:-

Firstly there are obvious historical links between the two passages. The events recorded in Job, especially in the prose prologue and epilogue, go back to the patriarchal and pre-patriarchal period. Scholars agree that while the final composition of the book may be later than the events, the events have this historical provenance. Some of these links are as follows. Job lives in the land of Uz. Uz is first mentioned in Gen.10 as the grandson of Shem whose sons settled in the eastern hill country. The next mention of an Uz is in Gen.22 where, again in the line of Shem, a nephew is born to Abraham in Ur. Ezekiel in 14:14 links Job with Noah as a godly patriarch. Moreover Job is linked spiritually with Noah and Abraham when he is described as being "blameless" (Job 1:8). Then, like Noah and Abraham, Job is the spiritual head and priest of his family and later acts as a priest for his friends, offering up sacrifices on their behalf and interceding in prayer for them. Official priests and a central shrine are not mentioned. Instead it is the patriarchal, clan type of organization reminiscent of Abraham's time. Then, like Abraham, Job's wealth is measured in terms of animals and servants. The only unit of money mentioned (42:11) belongs to the patriarchal age (Gen.33:19). Then, just as there was no strong central government in the Syrio-Palestine of Abraham's day, so Job's land is subject to the raids of pillaging tribes. Also Job's longevity (42:16) is matched only in Genesis. Finally it could be said that the epic character of the prose story has its closest parallels in Genesis.

Thus while it may not be possible to set the events of the Book of Job before the Flood with the first people described as "the sons of God" (the Shemites), here we have a family associated with Shem and his descendents.

The "sons of God" here, as evidenced by their behaviour, would be Job and his family/clan at least. We have a picture of peaceful family unity in the feasting (though the verb used here for feasting is not the one that speaks of religious feasting it is on occasions used of feasts associated with worship e.g. 1 Ki.3:15) and of regular approach to God by way of sacrifice. Job may be "a son of the east" (1:3) but he was no "son of Belial". Rather he fitted Moses' description of the true Israelite, "the son of the Lord his God" (Deut. 14:1). Job prepared his heart and offered burnt offerings to atone for sin we are told "all the days" until "the day came when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord and the adversary (Satan) also came among them."(1:5-6).

We must now address ourselves closely to the terms used in 1:6 and 2:1, especially the verb "yatsav"("to present oneself before the Lord", literally "to take one's stand before the Lord.")

This verb is usually taken in the sense of presenting oneself as a courtier to give an accounting of one's activities at a session of the royal council.[4] However, an examination of its use in other passages shows that it speaks of God's people coming before him through sacrifice to worship (Num.23:15) or to hear his word (Exod.19:17; Num.11:16; 23:3; Deut.7:24; 31:14). A central question that God asks Job when he finally speaks at the end is, "Who then is able to stand ('yatsav') before me?" (41:10). Again the verb is used by Elihu in 33:4–5. Claiming to be a true representative of God he challenges Job, "Set things in order and take your stand ('yatsav') before me." Clearly taking such a stand is no light matter. It's clear from chapters 1 and 2 that Job can stand before God because he fears God, shuns evil, is blameless and upright and offers acceptable sacrifices for sin. That is why God draws Satan's attention to Job. Even when Satan, who like Cain must "go out from the presence of the Lord" (1:12; 2:7), is permitted to put Job to the test and he loses possessions and family Job does not react sinfully but comes again with the godly to stand before the Lord (2:1). Even when Satan is allowed to afflict Job with terrible physical suffering Job is submissive and does not sin in what he says.

However its clear that by the time we come to the end of chapter 37 Job's attitude has become sinful. In his attempts to justify himself and put God in the dock he has slipped into spiritual pride. Thus God's question, "Who then is able to stand ('yatsav') before me?" The answer is in Ps.5:5, "The proud shall not stand ('yatsav') before your sight." The context of God's question is the section on Leviathan and the answer is given as God reflects on Leviathan as an exemplar of pride. God asks, "Will he cut a covenant with you to be your servant for ever? (41:4)...his heart is as hard as a stone (v.24)...he is king over all the sons of pride (v.34)." The answer to God's question is to be a true son of God, renounce pride, repent of it and humbly experience the personal reality of God (42:1–6). God's anger burns against sin (42:7) but he shows the way forward. As in chapter 1 God's children must approach by way of sacrifice –

"Go to my servant Job and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves. My servant Job will pray for you for I will accept his prayer (literally, 'I will lift up his face') and not deal with you according to your folly...and the Lord accepted Job's prayer ('lifted up Job's face')." This later expression is especially poignant speaking as it does of the Lord face to face with his child. So, in spite of all that he comes through, in the end Job proves to be a true child (son) of God, showing us the way to be accepted as we come to take our stand before God. Thus the "sons of God" here are as they are in Gen. 6: 1–4.

We now deal briefly with anticipated objections to this interpretation of Job 1:6; 2:1.

1. It says in 2:1 that Satan came among the sons of God "to take his stand before God." Firstly this clause is disputed and even omitted by some versions on grounds of scribal dittography. Secondly if the sons of God are good angels why is Satan among them? (This has led many to conclude that Satan is one of the sons of God rather than an intruder). Is it not more appropriate for him to appear among fallen earthly human beings, especially since this is his admitted sphere of operations? Thirdly the whole point is that Satan cannot stand before God, it being stressed on both occasions that (like the rebel Cain) he "went out from the presence of God." Fourthly the preposition "al" ("before") is ambiguous. Usually it means "before", but here it can be translated "against". Satan was taking his stand against God.
2. What of Zech.6:5 (cf. 1:10 ff.)? Here we read of, "four spirits (or winds)...going out from taking their stand (the same expression as in Job 1:6; 2:1) before the Lord of all the earth." We happily concede that it is best to interpret these spirits as holy angels who can stand before God and are agents of divine judgment. The sons of God in Job are not however identified in this way.
3. Commentators speak of parallel (though as we have said not identical) expressions in the Psalms that speak of a heavenly court of angels which they argue we see in Job 1:6; 2:1. This however is not so obvious when we look more closely at these references. In Ps. 29:1 we have "bene elim" ("sons of gods"), but in this context this can be taken as false gods being challenged to worship the true God. In Ps.82 we have "elohim" ("gods"), but in context these are clearly human rulers or judges. In Ps. 89:5–8 however "bene elim" clearly does refer to a heavenly court of holy angels. Nothing of what is said about them here, however, is said in the Job references and the expression used is different from that in Job. Again Ps.97:7 refers to "elohim" (cf.96:5), but again this seems to clearly refer to false "gods". 1 Kings 22:19–23 (cf. Ps. 103:19–22) is also adduced, but again, while this clearly does refer to a heavenly court, the

terminology used is different. It speaks of "tseba hashamayim" ("the host of heaven") "standing before the Lord" (but the verb is "amad" not "yatsav"). Thus while these and other references establish the reality of a heavenly angelic court they do not establish that this is what is being referred to in Job 1:6; 2:1

4. What about the reference to "all sons of God" ("kal bene elohim") in Job 38:7 where the expression is nearest to that in Gen.4 and Job 1-2? In verses 4 to 7 we have a poetic description of the initial stages of the creation of the earth using the picture of the laying of the foundations of a building. When the cornerstone is laid "the morning stars sang together and all sons of God shouted for joy." The argument is that this is third day of creation activity and since mankind was not created until the sixth day this must be a reference to angels singing. Thus sons of God here are angels. However, while on the surface this may appear to be a strong argument it can be answered.

Firstly we do not have in scripture definite information on when the angels were created.

Secondly the stars were not created until the fourth day, so how could they have been there singing on the third day?

Thirdly there are those who would argue that these verses refer to the first day when earth as foundational matter in space, to be then formed in day three, was created.

Fourthly if the verses refer to day three why should God focus only on the beginnings of what was done on the third day?

Fifthly this is obviously a poetic description (stars do not actually sing!) where the concern (as in the rest of the chapter dealing with creation) is not on sticking to the chronology of the creation account of Genesis.

Sixthly what the writer is obviously doing is taking elements from the various days and remixing them to paint his picture around the central metaphor of the rejoicing that in those days accompanied the laying of the foundation stone of an important building (cf. Ezra 3:10–11). This means that he can bring in humanity (sixth day) when he does.

Seventhly we need to remember the way mankind's creation on the sixth day is described – "Let us make mankind so they may rule. So God created mankind; in his image he created them (this is one aspect of what it is to be a son of God) and blessed them and said to them, "I now give you (plur.) every plant; you (plur.) shall have them for food." Thus all sons of God were created in Adam on that sixth day, though because of the fall not all will turn out to be godly. When Adam sang for joy on that sixth day (Gen.2:23) all sons of God sang with him.

Those who are true sons of God praise him for the wonder of his creation

of the earth.

Finally on the basis of the analogy of the whole of Scripture we must take into consideration what the New Testament writers do with the phrase "sons of God" and how they apply it to human experience. Jesus is of course the Son of God (Mk.1:1), sent by the Father (Luke 20:13) and acknowledged as such by him (Matt. 17:3). This is also the central Christian belief (Jn. 20:31), message (Acts 9:20) and confession (Matt.14:33), which Jew (Matt. 16:16) and Gentile alike (Mk.15:39) must make However the central experience for the believer in the Old and New Testaments is the new birth by which we actually become the sons of God. "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become the sons of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." (Jn.1:12). This is through the gracious work of the Holy Spirit, "the Spirit of sonship, by whom we cry "Abba, Father", testifying with our spirit that we are the sons of God..." (cf. Gal. 4:6 – 7). It's small wonder then that John exclaims to fellow believers, "How great is the love the Father has lavished upon as that we should be called the sons of God! And this is what we are! Dear friends now we are the sons of God and what we will be has not been made known. But we know that when he appears we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is." In the meantime our calling is to be like Noah, Abraham and Job – "blameless." "Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, the sons of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation in which you shine as stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life." (Phil. 2:14–16).

Notes

1. e.g. G. Wenham, Genesis 1–15, Word Bible Commentary, Vol.1, 1999, p.140; W. A. van Gemeren, "The Sons of God in Gen.6:1 – 4 (An Example of Evangelical Demythologization?)", *Westminster Theological Journal.* 43 (1981), pp.320–348.
2. e.g. M.G. Kline, "Divine Kingship and Genesis 6: 1 – 4." *Westminster Theological Journal* 24 (1961 – 2), pp.187 – 204; A. R. Millard, "A New Babylonian 'Genesis' Story." *Tyndale Bulletin* 18 (1967), p.12; A. P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis,* (Baker, 1988), pp.181–182.
3. e.g. C. F. Keil, *Old Testament Commentary, Volume 1: Genesis,* pp.127–139; W. H. Green, "The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men." P.R.R., Volume 5. (1984), pp.654–660; J. Murray, *Principles of Conduct,* (Eerdmans), pp.243–249; G. L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties,* (Zondervan, 1982), pp.79–80.
4. e.g. J. E. Hartley, The Book of Job, N.I.C.O.T., (Eerdmans), p.71.

PRESENTATION IS A BIG DEAL[1]

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> Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences (2 Corinthians 5:11)

On the whole, most preachers emphasize sermon content in their preaching. This is as it should be. However, you must also present this content to your congregation. You must preach your sermon. Writing and reading differ from preaching and listening. Preaching is oral communication.[2] You therefore gear your sermon content for preaching and listening. You have a solid outline, good details, a strong conclusion, and a captivating introduction. "Yet sermons do not come into the world as outlines or manuscripts. They live only when they are preached."[3] Content and delivery go together. "Both are important."[4] Not only so, "without skillful delivery, we will not get that content across to a congregation."[5] As has often been said, the preacher needs to get out of the way of the message. This accentuates the importance of presentation and delivery. How so? "Listeners remember the delivery of poor speakers, they remember the content of good speakers....Excellent delivery disappears from the awareness of the listener."[6] Presentation is a big deal!

To emphasize this is the case, here are some areas of consideration. Communicating God's truth is a two-way street; it is reciprocal. It is soul to soul. This reciprocal process involves *how* you say what you say. In other words, *manner* is as important as matter. This also means body language and gestures are important. They convey emotion and enhance persuasion. "Delivery by the body [either] aids or hinders....There is no in between....How the body is used, misused or fails to be used will have much to do with the speakers effectiveness."[7]

Preaching is God communicating his truth

Here is my basic definition of preaching. *Preaching is God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - communicating his truth in our world to people in the pews through human instruments in order to change their thinking, bridle their emotions, and alter their wills for the purpose of converting sinners, sanctifying saints, and preparing people for heaven.*[8] The foci of our

discussion are the need to communicate truth and the human heart consisting of mind, emotions, and will. We begin with some thoughts on communicating God's truth.

First, good communication is a two way street. W. G. T. Shedd speaks of life under God which is present in both preacher and hearer. He then explains, "For, the relation which properly exists between the Christian preacher, and the Christian hearer, is a *reciprocal* one, or that of action and reaction."[9] The pastor making eye contact with the people in the congregation is therefore of great importance; "it is by looking that he catches their expression of countenance and enters into living sympathy with them."[10] "To sympathize," says Dabney, "is to be affected with our fellow-man because we see him affected."[11] Broadus adds that, "in addition to the involuntary effect upon the speaker of seeing the countenances of his hearers, he can watch the effect produced and purposely adapt his thoughts, style, and manner to their condition at the moment."[12] T. David Gordon describes the situation:

> In the monologue of a sermon, for instance, the hearers do not speak at all, but they do reply visibly, if we are alert to notice. We can notice whether people appear to be following with interest or whether they appear to be entirely uninterested, and we can adjust our volume, our tone, our manner, our vocabulary to be sure that they have followed the current point before we move on to another.[13]

This is part of the reciprocal relation between pulpit and pew. But then Gordon adds this note:

> On occasion when suffering through an unusually bad sermon, I have glanced around to observe others in the congregation, and noticed that virtually no one in the congregation was looking at the minister. He had lost the entire congregation, yet seemed oblivious to the fact that he had done so.[14]

Such should not be the case. You cannot be oblivious to the feedback you receive from the congregation. Your relation to the people in the pews is reciprocal, or should be.

Second, when you cultivate this reciprocal relation, you will find that it involves a reciprocal sympathy of soul to soul. This idea may make you uncomfortable and you may at first reject it. Bear with me. Dabney urges, "Let the preacher's own soul be fully penetrated and aroused by sacred emotion."[15] I shall discus this further below. Dabney continues, "The heavenly flame must be kindled first in your own bosom, that by the law of sympathy it may radiate thence into the souls of your hearers."[16] From the perspective of the listener or viewer, Haddon Robinson says,

> In essence, empathy is sympathetic, muscular response in which your listeners, in a limited way, act with you. Because these subliminal actions tap feelings,

> listeners are more likely to feel what you want them to feel and hopefully what you wish them to feel about your ideas.[17]

There is, or ought to be, a vital connection between pulpit and pew. This is part of the divine dynamic. God is present in his congregation to apply his covenant Word proclaimed by his covenant servant to the hearts of his covenant people. God's purpose is to link pulpit and pew, soul to soul, in the preaching event.

W. G. T. Shedd emphasizes the need for plainness in preaching style. Consider his statement in light of the reciprocal soul to soul relation between pulpit and pew.

> There is a prodigious power in this plainness of presentation. It is the power of actual contact. A plain writer, or speaker, makes the truth and the mind impinge upon each other. When the style is plain, the mind of the hearer experiences the sensation of being touched; and this sensation is always impressive, for the man starts when he is touched.[18]

Calvin attributes this "touch" to God's use of his means.

> It is certain that if we come to church we shall not hear only a mortal man speaking but we shall feel (even by his secret power) that God is speaking to our souls, that he is the teacher (maistre). He so touches us that the human voice enters into us and so profits us that we are refreshed and nourished by it.[19]

Preaching, says Calvin, "is a living reality and full of hidden energy which leaves no man untouched."[20]

Preaching is God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - communicating his truth in our world to people in the pews through human instruments. The reciprocal relation between preacher and listener in this communication is soul to soul.

Words, voice, and body

Now we come to a different aspect of this communication. *First,* some definitions are in order. The use of *words* is spoken language. The topic of voice, on the other hand, is a reference to paralanguage, how you speak, your tempo, pitch, intonation, etc. The third element is the use of your body, kinesics or *body* language. How you use your voice, paralanguage, and how you use your body, kinesics, fall into the category of wordless communication. They are nonverbals in contrast to verbal or spoken language. Remember these distinctions as we proceed.

Second, because the reciprocal relation of preacher and listener in communicating God's truth is soul to soul, presentation of the truth involves more than the words you utter. Your words, rooted in God's truth, are of great

importance. But how you speak, how you use your voice, is as important as what you speak. In addition, as Adams points out, "Delivery involves not only the use of voice, but also bodily action, which has also been called body speech, body language, visible speech, and the sign language of speech."[21] When you read a sermon, it may seem very ordinary. Listening to the same sermon transforms it. You hear the emphases, pauses, voice inflection, etc. Seeing a video of the same sermon and watching the preacher adds an important dimension. "You may be surprised at how much content and feeling are conveyed through bodily action itself."[22] Why is this the case? "More of the personality is involved in conveying the thought."[23] In thinking about presentation and delivery, you must therefore consider not only the words you speak, but also the use of both your voice and your body. You must consider these three as they work together. "A congregation is a 'visience'[24] as much as an audience and is affected as much (if not more) by what it sees as by what it hears...."[25]

Third, proper use of voice and body language in sermon delivery conveys thoughts and feelings. The older homiletics professors spoke of the management of the voice and of the body under the heading of "action." Dabney says, "By this we intend all those functions of the body, by its organs and members, which convey to the audience the orator's *thoughts and feelings.*"[26]

Consider the use of voice. "The interesting thing about the physiology of the voice," says Adams, "is that when you learn to feel the emotions that grow out of content, the voice and the appropriate bodily action will follow without your giving conscious attention to them."[27] This "is the power of the soul mysteriously speaking through the corporeal...." and the very sound of a voice "suggests often some sentiment, and awakens it in the hearer." You communicate feeling by the use of your voice.

Another aspect of the use of voice is making sounds. "Onomatopoetic words ('buzz,' 'bang,' etc.) are sounds that have turned respectable by becoming words...The freest of preachers know how to use them and do not hesitate to do so."[28] In a sermon on breaking bad habits and forming new habits, my conclusion included this warning, "Uh! Uh! Uh! Don't hit that snooze button!" Members of the congregation visibly reacted with a start when I exclaimed, "Uh! Uh! Uh!"

Consider too the communication value of actions or gestures. Broadus quotes Herbert Spencer:

> To say, "Leave the room," is less expressive than to point to the door. Placing a finger on the lips is more forcible [sic] than whispering, "Do not speak." A beck of the hand is better than "come here." No phrase can convey the idea of surprise so vividly as opening the eyes and raising the eyebrows. A shrug of the shoulders would lose much by translation into words.[29]

Dabney also commends such action and sign-language.

> When the orator can combine it with the spoken language, he acquires thereby exceeding vivacity of expression. Not only his mouth, but his eyes, his features, his fingers, speak. The hearers read the coming sentiment upon his countenance and limbs almost before his voice reaches their ears; they are both spectators and listeners; every sense is absorbed in charmed attention.[30]

Both of these nonverbals, your voice and your body language, contribute to verbal content. They help convey your thoughts and feelings about a subject.

Fourth, do not underestimate the value of these nonverbals involving voice and gesture. "Not only do your voice and gestures strike the audience's senses first, but your inflections and actions transmit your feelings and attitudes more accurately than your words."[31] Broadus concurs, "In many cases a gesture is much more expressive than any number of words."[32] Considering presentation in its totality, "body language is more persuasive than words; it speaks directly to the spectator's subconscious, and thus has a deeper effect than the intellectual word."[33] This is the case because "men use gestures, postures, costumes, facial expressions, and styles of movement to reveal their thoughts, feelings, intensions, or personalities...."[34]

Adams therefore gives this warning,

> Delivery in its bodily form can make all the difference in speech. By delivery, a preacher can completely deny everything that he says. Is that going too far? Well, what if he gives a wink of the eye as he says it? Actions do speak louder than words. Our bodies 'wink' in more ways than with the eyes.[35]

Walters adds to the warning,

> Much audience ("visience") research indicates that nonverbal language is more potent than verbal language. Most communication of feeling from the pulpit is on a nonverbal level. Credibility and trust are possible for the hearer/viewer only when there is a congruity between the verbal and the nonverbal messages. Where they are incongruous, the nonverbals prevail.[36]

Notice that Walters and others speak about communicating *feeling*. "Pathos [feeling or emotion] is crucial, not incidental, to God's communication."[37] How you seem to *feel* about an important topic, communicated through a detached voice and dispassionate body language, undermines the urgency of your message. Nonverbals are therefore exceedingly important. You must not underestimate their value. "Generally speaking, we can say that a person's nonverbal behavior has more bearing than his words on communicating *feelings or attitudes* to others."[38]

Nonverbals, emotion, and persuasion.

First, since *how* you use your voice and your body in presenting God's truth communicates your feelings and emotions, these nonverbals relate to persuasion. At the same time, remember our definition of preaching. Preaching is God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - communicating his truth in our world to people in the pews through human instruments *in order to change their thinking, bridle their emotions, and alter their wills....* So how do you reach the will? Dabney is emphatic, "It is the emotions which immediately move the will. To produce volition it is not enough that the understanding be convinced; affection must also be aroused."[39] Here, the preacher has a great advantage. "This is the promised power of the Holy Ghost, quickening the dead soul and new-creating its diseased affections."[40] In the words of Jeff Arthurs,

> My argument is not a plea to discount logos [words]. Neither is it a plea to bypass the role of the Holy Spirit in preaching. It is my conviction that the Holy Spirit converts and sanctifies the whole person, not just the mind, and the Holy Spirit appeals to the mind and emotions to move the will.[41]

You must therefore imbibe the emotion of the text, and you must convey the emotion of the text.

Second, imbibe the emotion of your text. This begins to take place when you do your exegesis and derive your exegetical point. If you do your work well, your exegetical point is the *truth of God.* When this truth begins to burn in your soul, it impacts how you feel. Dabney urges, "Let the preachers own soul be fully penetrated and aroused by sacred emotion. The heavenly flame must be kindled first in your own bosom...."[42] This takes place with the dual action of word and Spirit and arises from the prayerful exegesis of your text. "We should ask not only 'What does it mean,' but also 'How does it make me feel?'"[43] Arthurs then recommends,

> Once the preacher has identified the affective content of the text, then he...should embody it. I use the word 'embody' because much of the communication of pathos [feeling or emotion] occurs nonverbally. When preachers genuinely feel the mood(s) of the text, the audience will more likely respond.[44]

For example, consider Hosea 11:1, "When Israel was a youth I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son." God tells Pharaoh, "Israel is My son, My firstborn" (Exodus 4:22). And as Calvin says, "The nativity of the people was their coming out of Egypt."[45] God loved his son. Yet the people spurned him. Hosea 10:13, "You have plowed wickedness, you have reaped injustice, You have eaten the fruit of lies." Hosea 11:2-4 recalls God's manifest love for his son.

> The more they called them, The more they went from them; They kept sacrificing to the Baals And burning incense to idols. Yet it is I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them in My arms; But they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of a man, with bonds of love, And I became to them as one who lifts the yoke from their jaws; And I bent down and fed them.

God speaks of Israel as a father speaks of his only son. But in this case, are the hopes and aspirations of a father realized in his son? No! This son repudiated his Father. With the longings of a father whose dreams and expectations for his son are destroyed by degeneration worthy of death, this Father cries out, "How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I surrender you, O Israel?" (Hosea 11:8). It is against this background that you should hear Hosea 11:1, "When Israel was a youth I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son." Failure to feel the poignant love and sadness in this text is a profound failure to grasp its meaning. You must imbibe the emotion of your text.

Third, your duty is to convey the emotion of your text as a part of its meaning. How do you do this? Listen again to Jay Adams, "The interesting thing about the physiology of the voice is that *when you learn to feel the emotions that grow out of content, the voice and the appropriate bodily action will follow* without your giving conscious attention to them."[46] Your preparation kindles a fire in your soul. "Passion [feeling or emotion] in preaching is primarily a theological issue arising out of a preacher's strong awareness that God wants to accomplish something through the sermon."[47] As J. W. Alexander warns, "Let every preacher despair of delivering that discourse with true, natural, effective warmth which he has prepared with leisurely coldness."[48]

In good presentations, the feelings, emotions, and passions arising from your study, preparation, and understanding of *God's truth* are contagious. "Rhetorician and preacher Hugh Blair writes, 'The only effectual method [of moving the listeners' emotions] is to be moved yourself....There is an obvious contagion among the passions.'"[49] Arthurs insists that, "This 'contagion' is indispensable to preaching."50. Dabney agrees, "The heavenly flame must be kindled first in your own bosom, that by the law of sympathy it may radiate thence into the souls of your hearers."[51]

Fourth, nonverbals are a primary means of this contagion. "Bodily delivery is the language of emotion. Delivery is to emotion what language is to thought."[52] Think about it. When you study, you use your body. You hold your books, read with your eyes, and analyze with your brain. You take notes with your hands, writing on a ruled pad or typing on your computer. When wrestling through a concept you get up, take a short walk, and return to your desk. Thus you internalize the message and truth of Scripture. "When our bodies have helped us internalize the meaning of the truth..., we are more able to externalize and extend it to the congregation."[53] As indicated above, this

meaning includes an emotional element. We desire "to express to others the gamut of truth-feeling that is within."[54] When this is the case, "[w]e shall find natural vent and expression of excitement, urgency, intensity, awe, zeal, reverence, love, joy, tenderness, compassion, indignation, abhorrence, strength, animation, aliveness, and more."[55]

Fifth, these nonverbals come to expression best and are most persuasive in descriptions and illustrations. Part of the difficulty is that too many pastors deal almost exclusively in the domain of bare propositions. When this is the case, applications turn to exhortation, and "it is useless to urge right feeling by mere [ex]hortation: Let the preacher present, instead, those truths which are the objects of moral emotion."[56] How do you best present these truths? "This must be done by the preacher's descriptive power."

Love of family and neighbour involve many different emotions. When our youngest daughter reported a third miscarriage and the loss of another baby, I found myself leaning against the kitchen sink looking into our backyard. I was grieving. But surprisingly, I was not just grieving for our daughter and her loss. I found myself also grieving over the loss of her siblings by miscarriage decades earlier. Jesus often availed himself of such fellow-feelings. When a young lawyer asked, "Who is my neighbour?" (Luke 10:29), Jesus told the poignant story of the good Samaritan with just enough detail to strike the young man's conscience and get his point across.

Telling such stories allows expressions of voice and body to convey the impact of Scripture so that men and women, young people and children "may feel the word of God," not only intellectually but also emotionally.[57]

The 'action' that matters

First, appearance and stance matters. "Is the speaker neat, clean, well-groomed? Does he walk with a certain amount of zest and confidence? Does he really care about himself, about his cause, about his audience? The appearance provides a preliminary answer to these questions."[58] What about the degree of informality or formality of dress? "As a general rule, a public speaker will dress one notch higher than the audience."[59]

When you take your stance behind the pulpit, if you use one, assume a comfortable stance with feet apart. Shifting your weight forward slightly to the balls of your feet thrusts you forward. You will do this naturally if you are eager to enter upon your sermon. "Among the commonest faults of preachers is leaning on the pulpit."[60] Stand back from the pulpit so that you can easily glance at notes without burying your chin in your chest. "The arms should at first hang quietly by the side."[61] Avoid putting your hands in your pockets. "Speakers need an alert, on-the-top-of-it posture which has flexibility and freedom and yet is poised for action. The body should suggest an attitude of

humble confidence."[62] How you present *yourself* is the beginning of the formal presentation of your sermon.

Second, countenance and eye contact matter. "Expression of countenance has great power."[63] This is certainly the case in looking at small children. An expression of disapproval often evokes tears. You can improperly convey this same look of disapproval when a mother is wrestling with a crying baby in the congregation. Broadus counsels, "When a man is possessed with his subject, and thoroughly subordinates all thought of self, his countenance will spontaneously assume every appropriate expression."[64] Chapell adds, "Smile. If you can smile in the pulpit you can convey every other needed expression."[65] Lighting is an issue here. "Because facial expression is very important, your people need to see your face. Therefore illumine the pulpit with a strong light, placed at an angle that keeps your eyes from being thrown into shadow."[66]

"Within the sermon itself the most powerful instruments of the preacher's body for impact on the congregation are his eyes....Maximal eye contact is ideal."[67] Notes and manuscripts are the great hazard. Learn to use them. "You must look at [your] people! The eyes can spit fire, pour out compassion, and preach Christ in you. When you deny people your eyes, you really deny them yourself."[68] Open up to the congregation. "Eye contact conveys honesty, directness, warmth, good will and interest toward the audience."[69] In addition, "it is by looking that [the preacher] catches their expression of countenance and enters into living sympathy with them."[70] Dropping your eyes to look at your notes when you close a section of your sermon or state your homiletical point drastically undercuts your effectiveness. Countenance and eye contact matter.

Third, gestures also matter. Gestures "should be motivated by your content. If they are not, then you are merely discharging nervous energy."[71] Again, the best gestures accompany description and "because gestures grow from feeling, and should not be planned as such, you must learn to relive the circumstances of the situation you are describing."[72] You can paint pictures or reference directions with hand motions. "Remember that most movement should reflect the audience's perspective."[73] You may describe the Western Wall in Jerusalem in relation to the former location of the Most Holy Place. If you tell the congregation that the temple faces east, you point to your left. The Western Wall is on your right. You should paint the mirror image of what the congregation sees.

"The clenched hand, the pointed forefinger, etc., are very effective when their peculiar meaning is wanted, and otherwise are proportionally inappropriate and damaging."[74] It is better to use an open hand with all fingers extended than an accusing forefinger. Most of us are more animated in private conversation than in public presentations. You must learn to translate this animated speech to the pulpit. "Most congregations, it would seem, according to audience research, favor liveliness, action, and expressiveness in the

preacher because they are thereby helped to understand and celebrate the truth."[75] Gestures matter.

Maybe it's not too late for you to learn

Paul Andrews preached at the memorial service in the seminary chapel where William Vickerson, his old homiletics professor, had taught. Dr. Vickerson recently took Paul under his wing and led him through a refresher course on preaching. As Paul concluded his sermon,

> [he] turned to 2 Corinthians 4 and began reading in verse 16. By now Paul sensed the power of God's Spirit grip him more strongly than he had ever experienced before.
>
> "The apostle Paul declares to us by the Holy Spirit that the outer man - that is, the body - is decaying. He speaks of the heartaches and trials of life as 'momentary light affliction.' Remember his own afflictions - his thorn in the flesh, his many beatings and persecutions, his imprisonments, the mocking and shame he underwent for the Lord. He speaks of all that as momentary light affliction!
>
> "That may sound incredible to you, but he means exactly what he says. All this compared to eternity is like nothing! Fleeting! Momentary! Like a little puff of smoke. It's here, then gone.
>
> "And waiting on the other side is what? What's on the other side? I hear some brother back there quoting it for me. Waiting on the other side is 'a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!' Imagine that! A far more exceeding weight of glory!" Paul's voice boomed forth with emphasis and victory.
>
> "Take this cane, for example," he said as he reached down into the shopping bag and pulled from it Dr. Vickerson's wooden cane. Lifting it high for all to see, he continued, "William Vickerson leaned on this cane for all these years. Since 1977 he has not spent a day without its assistance. Not a day, that is, until now. Today he needs it no more. And so he has instructed me to do what I'm about to do as a visible sign, to serve as an unforgettable reminder, if you will, that where he is there are no canes, no wheelchairs, no thick glasses, no hearing aids. There are no leg braces or artificial knees. There is no shortage of breath for the asthmatic, no shortage of strength for one weakened and sapped by disease; no lung cancer, chemotherapy, or radiation treatments. None of that.
>
> "Please be assured, dear friends, that what Dr. Vickerson has instructed me to do here today was not done out of any personal animosity toward God in heaven or toward this inanimate wooden object here on earth. He lived out his latter years grateful for its support and help. There wasn't the slightest hint of anger or bitterness in this man of God.
>
> "But from now on when you think of Dr. William Vickerson, don't imagine for a moment a man weak and crippled, trudging those streets of gold with a cane in his hand. HE NEEDS THIS CANE NO MORE! PRAISE GOD! HE NEEDS IT NO MORE!"
>
> As Paul said those last words he stepped to the side of the pulpit and seized the cane at each end. From the corner of his eye he caught a glimpse of Dr. Vickerson's sister. Handkerchief in hand, she smile radiantly through her tears, in

> anticipation and full knowledge of what was about to happen.
>
> Then holding the cane up high for all to see, he brought it down against his extended knee with a violent force. The clear, crisp snap of the cane splintering in two echoed against the walls and high ceiling of the spacious chapel. Then holding the two halves of the cane high into the air, his face aglow with the Spirit of God, he cried out:
>
> "O DEATH, WHERE IS THY STING? O GRAVE, WHERE IS THY VICTORY?"[76]

After Paul preached his sermon, the seminary president pronounced the benediction and the guests began to leave for the buffet dinner hosted by the seminar. Then this little interchange took place between Paul and President Miller.

> "Young man, your message was excellent. I'm sure Vic is very pleased with what you had to say—and *how* you said it."
>
> "Some of our students and graduates greatly distress me," President Miller continued in a more somber tone. "Their theology is orthodox and their sermons are excellent biblical expositions, yet their effectiveness in ministry is greatly hindered by their determination to divorce personality from preaching. They insist upon throwing the truth at their congregations unemotionally, without passion or warmth. They come across as coldhearted and uncaring.
>
> "At the same time, in private conversations with them, I know they have a great heart for God. Many of them come to me weeping over the lack of visible fruit from their ministry. I wish they could understand that the Scripture teaches them to adorn their preaching with their warmth, their personality. In fact, I feel like making copies of your message today and sending it to them. Maybe it's not too late for them to learn."[77]

Maybe it's not too late for you to learn too.

Final suggestions

Review the soul to soul connection of pastor and parishioner in the preaching moment. Think through how your demeanour and body language affect those sitting in the pews before you. Learn to discern the vital connection God gives you with your congregation.

As a part of your exegesis, get a sense of the emotions the Spirit evokes in and through the text. In this light, think about your sermon point, application, outline, and presentation. As you preach, watch for the congregation's nonverbals. How are the people responding? What are they saying to you? Think about this. Often, as "the nonverbals of a speaker decrease, the 'nonverbals' of the audience increase; they talk, turn in their seats, look around, shuffle their bulletins, look through their papers, some even going back and forth to the restroom."[78] After you preach, consider what changes you need to make to improve your nonverbals and better communicate God's truth

to your congregation.

Review Paul Andrew's conclusion. Think about the use of voice, facial expression, eye contact, gestures, and the emotions they evoke. How would these nonverbals contribute to the message in the actual preaching situation? Remember, every preacher and teacher can learn and improve.

Notes

1. The following material is from Dennis J. Prutow, *So Pastor, What's Your Point?* (Philadelphia: Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, 2010), pp.315-331. Used by permission.
2. For a discussion of the characteristics of orality, see my arguments in chapter 7 of *So Pastor, What's Your Point?*
3. Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), p.201.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), p.315.
7. Jay Adams, *Pulpit Speech* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), pp.148-149.
8. For an exposition of this definition of preaching, see chapter 2 of So Pastor, *What's Your Point?*
9. W. G. T. Shedd, *Homiletics and Pastoral Theology* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, and Co., 1877), p.259.
10. John A. Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons,* Revised ed., J. B. Witherspoon (New York: Harper and Rowe, Publishers, 1944), p.351.
11. Robert L. Dabney, *Sacred Rhetoric* (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1979), p.247.
12. Ibid.
13. T. David Gordon, *Why Johnny Can't Preach* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2009), p.64.
14. Ibid., pp.64-65.
15. Dabney, p.247.
16. Ibid., pp.247-248.
17. Robinson, p.210.
18. Shedd, p.64.
19. T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), p.42.
20. Ibid., p.30.
21. Adams, op. cit., p.148.
22. Ibid., p.154.
23. Ibid., p.113.
24. The word 'audience' emphasizes listening to audio. Walters coins the word 'visience' to emphasize vision and those looking at a presentation as well as listening to it.
25. Gwyn Walters, "The Body in the Pulpit," *The Preacher and Preaching*, ed. Samuel T. Logan (Phillipburg: P&R Publishing, 1986), p.448.
26. Dabney, p.303. Emphasis added.
27. Adams, *Pulpit Speech, pp.38-39.*
28. Jay Adams, *Preaching with Purpose* (Phillipdburg: P&R Publishing, 1982), p.95.
29. Broadus, op. cit., p.348.
30. Dabney, op. cit., p.323.
31. Robinson, p.202.
32. Broadus, p.348.
33. Hans Van Der Geest, *Presence in the Pulpit* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), p.3. Cited by Walters, p.455.

34. J. P. Spiegle and P. Marchotka, *Messages of the Body* (New York: MacMillan, 1974), p.3. Cited by Walters, p.455.
35. Adams, *Pulpit Speech*, p.148.
36. Walters, "The Body in the Pulpit," p.455.
37. Jeffrey Arthurs, "Pathos Needed," *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching*, ed. Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), p.592.
38. Albert Mehrabian, *Silent Messages* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1971), p.44. Emphasis added.
39. Dabney, p.234.
40. Ibid., p.230.
41. Arthurs, p.591.
42. Dabney, p.247.
43. Arthurs, "Pathos Needed," p.593.
44. Ibid.
45. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 1:386.
46. Adams, *Pulpit Speech*, pp.38-39. Emphasis added.
47. Paul Scott Wilson, "The Source of Passion," *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching*, ed. Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), p.589.
48. J. W. Alexander, *Thoughts on Preaching* (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), p.32.
49. Lester Thonssen and Baird Craig, *Speech Criticism* (New York: Roland, 1948), 364. Cited by Arthurs, p.593.
50. Arthurs, "Pathos Needed," p.593.
51. Dabney, pp.247-248.
52. Adams, *Pulpit Speech*, p.149.
53. Walters, "The Body in the Pulpit," p.454.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. Dabney, p.242.
57. "Of the Preaching of the Word," *The Confession of Faith* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1985), p.380.
58. Adams, *Pulpit Speech*, p.149.
59. Robinson, p.207.
60. Broadus, p.352.
61. Ibid.
62. Adams, *Pulpit Speech*, p.150.
63. Broadus, p.350.
64. Ibid.
65. Chapell, p.320.
66. Robinson, p.212.
67. Walters, "The Body in the Pulpit," p.458.
68. Chapell, p.319.
69. Adams, *Pulpit Speech*, p.151.
70. Broadus, p.351.
71. Robinson, p.208.
72. Adams, *Pulpit Speech*, p.153.
73. Robinson, p.208.
74. Broadus, p.354.
75. Walters, "The Body in the Pulpit," p.456.
76. Bruce Mawhinney, Preaching With Freshness (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 1991),

pp.227-228.

77. Ibid., pp.230-231.

78. T. W. Chadwick, *A Study to Determine What a Pastor is Communicating Nonverbally From the Pulpit.* D. Min Thesis, Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1976. Cited by Walters, p.454.

"I AM THE TRUE VINE"

John Watterson

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1. Introduction

On the night of his betrayal, Jesus ate a final meal with his disciples. He told them of his departure, and having spoken words of comfort about the promise of the Holy Spirit, Jesus began to instruct the eleven about the mission on which he was sending them, saying, "I am the true vine," (John 15:1). Appropriate to the image of a vine whose branches produce a harvest of grapes for the vinedresser, the overriding emphasis of the following discourse, vv.1-16, is on fruitbearing: John uses the noun "fruit" (karpos), eight times in these 16 verses, and only twice in the rest of his Gospel. Moreover, this fruitbearing is the result of the vital union between Jesus and his disciples: when the life of the vine rises up and spreads out into the branches, they bear fruit. Lenski writes,

> As the natural vine through its branches and the care they receive brings abundant fruit for the delight of the owner of the vine, so does Jesus in a far higher sense through his disciples for the glory of God.[1]

But what sort of fruit? Commentators differ about the significance of the fruit that Jesus promises and his Father desires. For some the fruit is the "fruit of the Spirit". Lenski is typical:

> Strange things have been said about the term "fruit", making the branches themselves the fruit of the vine, and then reasoning that the fruit of the branches must be similar, namely other branches, souls joined to Christ by us...The production of branches is wholly the business of Christ, the vine. The fruit of the branches consists in grapes. What this fruit really is, is plainly told in Scripture:...Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 5:9; Heb. 12:11; Phil. 1:9-11.[2]

Bruce, Boice[3] and Hughes[4] agree. Commenting on verse 8 Bruce writes, "The 'fruit' of which this parable speaks is, in effect, likeness to Jesus (the same may be said of the ninefold 'fruit of the Spirit' in Gal. 5:22f)"[5]. But others do see in the parable the expectation of converts, especially as Jesus develops the metaphor in verse 16. Kruse comments:

> Jesus returned to the theme of the earlier part of the chapter, the vine and the branches, and the function of the branches to bear fruit for the gardener...that fruit is the entire outcome of the life and ministry of the disciples carried out in obedience to Christ and enjoying his presence through the Spirit. When Jesus said the disciples were to 'go' and bear fruit, the 'going' most likely refers to their missionary endeavours. The 'fruit' they were to bear in their going would be new believers.[6]

However, it is generally accepted that the initial development of the vine parable has subjective fruit in view. For example, Beasley-Murray writes,

> If we are to ask what fruitbearing signifies, the broad answer of Bultmann is adequate: 'every demonstration of vitality of faith, to which, according to vv. 9-17, reciprocal love above all belongs'...; we may add, in the light of v. 16, 'to which also effective mission in bringing to Christ men and women in repentance and faith belongs'.[7]

Against this background of interpretation, the emphasis of Milne is distinctly different. He writes that,

> we should...beware of interpretations of this passage which concentrate solely on our inward relationship with the Lord. Its real thrust is the renewal of the mission of Israel through Jesus the Messiah and the disciple community. While more 'subjective' aspects are not entirely absent...the primary motive remains bracingly objective and missionary...That is the principle implication of Jesus' saying, *I am the vine, you are the branches.*[8]

What is particularly significant here is that Milne's interpretation is not just a matter of the exposition of a single verse; rather, it depends on a mission-focused interpretative perspective which he applies to the whole of the Farewell Discourse, John 13-17.

The purpose of this paper is to examine evidence that supports Milne's interpretation. The paper is not an exhaustive exegesis of the words of John 15:1 but an examination of the major themes threaded through it and the Farewell Discourse. First Milne will be allowed to speak for himself, outlining his "mission perspective" and its application to John 13-17. Then evidence will be adduced from Jesus' saying, "I am the true vine"; and the Old Testament background to the saying will be outlined. John's presentation of Jesus' strong sense of mission and the importance of fruitbearing will also be considered. Finally, an assessment will be made and conclusions drawn.

2. The structure of the Farewell Discourse

Before describing the structure that Milne proposes for the Farewell Discourse, it would be useful briefly to outline the structure of the Gospel of John; the following has been adapted from Köstenberger[9].

(a) *The Prologue* (1:1-18) introduces us to the Word, the source of being, life and light, identified as Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, the source of grace and truth and the revealer of the Father.

(b) The *Book of Signs* (1:19-12:50) opens with the preaching of John the Baptist and the inception of Jesus' ministry (1:19-51). John the evangelist presents us with Jesus as the fulfilment of the Old Testament as John the Baptist points to Jesus, the Lamb of God. The narrative moves on to the Cana Cycle (2:1-4:54) which opens and closes with "signs" performed in Cana of Galilee, and describes Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem, the Judean countryside and Samaria. Although Jesus came to that which was his own, his own did not receive him, and the growth of opposition is charted through the Festival Cycle (5:1-10:42), which revolves about Jesus' attendance at feasts in Jerusalem. Despite the signs that displayed his glory and testified to his Messianic identity, many remained blind in their rejection of the Christ. John 11:1-12:50 closes the *Book of Signs* by narrating a climactic sign (the raising of Lazarus) and the hardening of the Jewish leaders. This provides a transition to next section of the Gospel.

(c) The *Book of Glory* (13:1-20:31) commences with the Farewell Discourse (chapters 13-17). The Passion narrative (the arrest, trial and execution of Jesus) is related in chapters 18-19. The resurrection and three resurrection appearances during the first week are recounted in chapter 20. The *Book of Glory* closes with a statement of the purpose for which John wrote his account of the Gospel (20:30-31).

(d) The Gospel closes with an *Epilogue* (chapter 21) which relates the encounter between Jesus and Peter and an affirmation of the truth of the testimony in the Gospel.

We now turn our attention to an outline of Milne's commentary on the events, teaching and prayer recorded in John 13-17. In skeleton, Milne's outline is as follows:

(a) The foot-washing (13:1-17)

(b) The coming of the night – Judas (13:18-30)

(c) The farewell discourses (13:31-16:33)

Discourse A *"Let not your hearts be troubled"* (13:31-14:31)

1. The absence of Jesus (13:31-38)
2. The blessings of his 'absence' (14:1-31)

Discourse B *"So I send you"* (15:1-16:33)

1. The cruciality of mission and principles of effective mission (15:1-17)
2. The opposition to mission (15:18-16:4)
3. The resources which God makes available for the work of mission (16:5-33).

(d) Intercession: the prayer of consecration (17:1-26)

Milne considers 13:31 to be "the text of these entire discourses: 'Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him'"[10], but he announces this towards the middle of his exposition of chapters 15 and 16. At the start of his exposition of chapters 13-17, however, he identifies mission as a most significant motif and he allows this theme a firm hand on the tiller of his interpretation[11]. This appears as early as his comment on 13:20 ("Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me."). Here Jesus draws a parallel between the mission on which the Father had sent him and the mission on which he is sending his disciples. Milne's comment is unexceptionable: "Jesus' reference to the sending of the disciples (13:20) is in terms which anticipate 17:18 and 20:21." Morris[12] and Carson[13], for example, make the same point. But Milne proceeds to give the verse a more immediate thematic significance: "This is a key statement for the interpretation of the entire block of teaching which will follow (chapters 13-16)". Moreover, he proceeds to distance himself from some traditional uses of the Farewell Discourses:

> These 'upper-room discourses' have been commonly interpreted in terms of the intimate communion between Jesus and the disciples prior to his departure from them. While there is evident validity in that approach, it has frequently failed to recognise that the real context of these chapters is the impending mission of the disciples to the world. Those addressed are not just disciples but apostles (lit. 'sent ones')...The analogy is that of a commanding officer giving his troops final instructions and encouragement on the eve of a most dangerous mission in which he will lead them.[14]

Milne's point is that while John's Gospel has been dominated up to this point by the mission of the Son in person, "now, the second mission comes increasingly into focus beside the first, not in any sense to replace it...and still less to rival it, but rather to carry it forward under new conditions."[15]

So when Milne comes to comment on the Farewell Discourses themselves (13:31-16:33) he prefaces what he has to say with a general comment

> A more general question concerns the essential focus of these chapters. What does Jesus have in view in his instruction of his disciples here? We have already indicated the emergence at this point of what could be referred to as a minor motif in the earlier music, the mission of the disciples. While it is stated only in a preliminary way at 13:20, and will not emerge fully until the second discourse in chapters 15-16, it is arguably the underlying theme throughout.[16]

In Discourse A (13:31-14:31) Jesus' purpose is to comfort his disciples. The departure of Judas has "sprung the trap": a train of events has been set in

motion that will result in the death of Jesus. Now Jesus binds the remaining eleven closer to himself and speaks to them *"en famille"*, issuing a "new commandment...that you love one another". Milne observes that the newness of the commandment resides not in its novelty (it was not novel), but in its "new covenant" setting. Jesus is creating a "new covenant" community. The significance of the mission perspective is noted even here: "We note also the evangelistic power of love. A loving community, says Jesus, is the visible authentication of the gospel."[17] But the disciples are confused by the news that Jesus is going away, and so Jesus speaks of three benefits they will receive from his departure: it will secure their future destiny (14:2-6); it will complete his revelation of the Father (14:7-11); and it will result in their being equipped for serving Jesus' ongoing mission in the world (14:12-26).

At this point Jesus makes the first of his references to the Holy Spirit (14:15-17, 25-26). It is the Spirit who imparts power for the "greater works" described in 14:12-14. These "greater works" are not more spectacular miracles, but

> the works of the greater mission in 'Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth'...Such an interpretation is perfectly in keeping with the 'mission' perspective, which as we have already shown is the key to interpret this whole 'last discourses' section of the gospel.[18]

Milne notes five other blessings that attend the gift of the Spirit: the Spirit will unite the disciples to the risen Jesus in a new intimacy of communion (14:17-21); the Spirit will unite the disciples with the Father (14:23); the Spirit will support the disciples in their loving obedience to the teaching of Jesus (14:21-24); the Spirit will teach the disciples (14:26); and the Spirit will impart the gift of Jesus' own peace (14:27).

Opening his discussion of Discourse B (15:1-16:33), Milne reiterates the importance of the mission motif for his interpretation:

> The context, the post-Easter mission of the disciples, gives an impressive unity to this whole body of 'upper-room' teaching. Discourse A, which is primarily concerned with allaying the disciples' fears, lays the foundation for their education in mission, the explicit centre in discourse B.[19]

The section headings that Milne uses ("the cruciality of mission and principles of effective mission"; "the opposition to mission"; "the resources which God makes available for the work of mission") demonstrate his commitment to the mission motif. Commenting on Jesus' saying "I am the true vine", he writes, "The image of the vine serves the 'mission' theme in two important ways. In the first place, it was the supreme symbol of Israel...The image of the vine has a second, less theological, pointer to mission. The vine is

an essentially utilitarian plant; it exists to bear fruit...This function is reflected in Jesus' stress on fruit-bearing (explicitly in verses 2, 4-5, 8, 16)". He proceeds to warn that

> we should therefore beware of interpretations of this passage which concentrate solely on our inward relationship with the Lord. Its real thrust is the renewal of the mission of Israel through Jesus the Messiah and the disciple community...Jesus by his exaltation in death and resurrection will be removed tangibly from the world. The disciples are sent into the world, as was Jesus, to carry on the task in his 'absence'. This is the principle implication of Jesus' saying, *I am the vine; you are the branches* (5).[20]

> The portion John 15:1-16 closes with Jesus reiterating the fruitbearing calling of the disciples. They were chosen and appointed to this, and the verb translated "appointed" or "set apart" is also used in verse 13 for Jesus' 'setting apart' his life for us. It has other New Testament usage in the context of people being set apart for special service within the Church (Acts 13:46-47; 1 Tim. 1:12)[21]

Milne continues to draw on the mission perspective in his commentary on Jesus' prayer in John 17:

> What is the significance of the fact that Jesus, in sending the disciples out into the world in his name, not only instructs them concerning the mission, but prays for them in their mission (6-23), and in the course of the prayer offers himself in sacrifice? The answer lies in the amazing truth that the work of the disciple community in mission is taken up into the inner dialog of the Godhead, and into vital association with the self-giving of the Son which lies at its heart. Thus the historic mission of the church in the world, encompassing both the immediate witness of the disciples (6-19) and the widening mission across all the ages to the present (20-26), is embraced by this prayer.[22]

Milne's commitment to mission as an interpretative perspective on John 13-17 is clear. But he does not press the motif too hard. On John 15:8 he writes,

> The purpose of this fruit-bearing function is stated – this is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit (8). This links with 13:31, the statement which is the text of these entire discourses: 'Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him.' The ultimate purpose of the coming of Jesus, viz. the glorifying of the Father...is realised primarily through the effective mission of the disciple community.[23]

Note the limiting function of the adverb "primarily", and that Milne is careful to link "the fruit-bearing function" to "the effective mission of the disciple *community*" (emphasis added): not everyone is involved directly in "mission", and perhaps Milne is conscious that some might feel that individually their contribution to mission-oriented fruitbearing is minimal. So

he cautions against over-emphasising the missionary perspective of his interpretation, to the exclusion of other gifts and graces produced through union with Christ: "The fruit-bearing which glorifies the Father, and is the product of 'pruning' and 'remaining', is finally inclusive of all the works, graces and ministries of the living Lord in his people."[24]

Enough has been said to demonstrate that Milne's exposition of John 13-17, and especially John 15:1-16, is strongly influenced by his identification of the post-Easter mission of the apostles as a major theme in the Farewell Discourse.

3. "I am the true vine"

We come now to a closer consideration of Jesus' saying, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser." This is the last of the seven great "I am" sayings of the Gospel of John. There are four elements to this saying: Jesus' self identification ("I am..."); the use of the word "true" and the related "replacement motif" which is peculiar to John's Gospel; the metaphor of the vine; and the unique inclusion of the Father in this "I am" saying. This section will deal with the first and second of these matters; the vine metaphor will be addressed in the following section, and the importance of the reference to the Father will be considered in section 5.

3.1 Jesus' self-identification

There is something profoundly disturbing that in a Gospel that presents us with the pre-existent, divine *Logos* who created all that is and himself "became flesh", people ask the question, "Who are you?" How can minds be so darkened that they do not instantly recognise "the light of men", "the true light, which enlightens everyone"? Yet so it is. In John 1:19 it was priests and Levites sent from the religious authorities in Jerusalem who asked John, "Who are you?" This was no idle or general question; they wanted to know the source of John's authority to baptise – was he the Christ, or Elijah or the Prophet? Later, against the background of the healing of the man born blind, and in a debate about authentic witness bearing, the Jerusalem Pharisees asked Jesus, "Who are you?" (8:25). Finally, after the resurrection, when Jesus appeared to his disciples beside the Sea of Galilee, John pointedly tells us that they dared not ask him, "Who are you?" because "they knew it was the Lord," (21:12).

Indeed, discovering the identity of the Son of God is at the heart of John's Gospel. John states his purpose in writing: "these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). The first purpose clause is generally taken to mean either "that you may continue to believe" or "that you may come to

believe". The majority of scholars favour the former, while Carson claims "firm syntactical evidence"[25] for the latter. On Carson's reading, the question being addressed is not "Who is Jesus?" but rather "Who is the Christ? Who is the Son of God?" – not questions that Christians would ask because already they would know the answer. In the end of the day it is a matter of emphasis: a gospel written to convince unbelievers of the identity of the Son of God will also build up believers, and one designed to instruct believers in their understanding of who Jesus is will also help to evangelise unbelievers.

There is a richness to the revelation of the identity of Jesus in John's Gospel. This is conveyed, for example, by the astonishing variety of ways in which Jesus is confessed and described[26]. In addition we read of Jesus' self-identification; (possibly) seven times "I am" *(egō eimi)* without a predicate and (certainly) seven times "I am" with a predicate: "I am the bread of life" (6:35,48); "I am the light of the world" (8:12); "I am the door of the sheep" (10:7,9); "I am the good shepherd" (10:11,14); "I am the resurrection and the life" (11:25); "I am the way and the truth and the life" (14:6); "I am the true vine" (15:1,5).

The "I am" sayings without predicate are not all of equal theological importance; some are simple identifications, e.g. John 6:20. But the phrase is cognate to the divine name YHWH; for example, eg eimi is how the LXX translates the final phrase in Isa. 41:4 ("I am he"). That it has this significance in John 8 is beyond dispute. While speaking with a group of Jews, Jesus identified himself twice by means of the *egō eimi* formula: "I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins," (John 8:24); "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he," (John 8:28a). It may be that he had in mind Isa. 43:25, "I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins." The LXX renders the opening phrase of this text *egó eimi egó eimi*. When the Jews became abusive, Jesus made a profound self-declaration, "Before Abraham was, I am," (John 8:58). This is the only passage in the New Testament that sets in apposition the verbs *genesthai* ("to come into being through process of birth or natural production", BDAG) and einai ("to be"). Carson observes here "strong linguistic connections with Isaiah 40-55" and conceptual links to Isa. 41:4 and Isa. 43:13 ("Also henceforth I am he")[27]. Ladd comments: "By this idiom Jesus lifted himself far above all contemporary messianic hopes and claimed that in his life the historical epiphany of God was taking place."[28] The Jews well understood Jesus, and they took up stones to throw at him.

Turning now to the "I am" sayings with a predicate, we observe that each illustrates a function that Jesus performs: he sustains, illuminates, admits, cares for, gives life, brings to the Father and makes fruitful. He does this not relatively, e.g. *like* manna, or *like* light and so on, but absolutely, as only the "I

am" can. The meaning of his saying "I am *the* true vine" is to be understood in terms of the Johannine significance of true and truth, and the meaning of the vine metaphor. We will consider these in turn.

3.2 "True" in John's Gospel – the replacement motif

John's Gospel draws heavily on the symbols of the Old Testament and exhibits a replacement motif in which Jesus is shown to be the anti-type which replaces the type. So, for example, Jesus is the true Tabernacle (1:14); he supersedes Moses (1:16-18); he is the Lamb of God, the sacrifice that actually takes away sin (1:29); he is Jacob's ladder (1:51) and therefore the new Bethel; and he is the true temple (2:19-21); he replaces the barrenness of Judaism with the wine of the Messianic age (2:1-11); he is "greater than our father Jacob" (4:12); and he is the substance of the feast of Tabernacles (7:37-39). In sum, Jesus is the *truth*, he is *true*.

Ladd suggests that we must go back to the Old Testament to find the roots of John's use of the word *truth*. The relevant Hebrew word is *emeth*. When used of men and things, emeth designates their trustworthiness and reliability; deeds and words are emeth, reliable, because they correspond to the facts. In this sense emeth is like the Greek idea of *alétheia, truth*. The most distinctive use of *emeth* in the Old Testament is to describe the character of God in his dealings with his people – God can be trusted; he is faithful. Emeth is often coupled with chesed, covenant love, most notably at the giving of the covenant at Sinai (Ex. 34:6). For John al theia is the Old Testament *emeth* (John 1:14,17). So, to know the truth is to know God's saving purpose.[29]

The redemptive understanding of truth is illustrated by John's use of the Greek word *true*. In fact, Greek has *two* words that can be translated "true": al thinos, which means "true in the sense of real, genuine" and aléthés, which means "true in the sense of truthful". The former is the stronger of the two; *alethinos* suggests an objective quality, al th s a subjective quality. Occasionally *aléthinos* can mean veracious as opposed to false, e.g. "For here the saying holds true..." (John 4:37). More characteristically, however, it emphasises the qualitative difference between real and shadow, between the original and the copies, between the heavenly and the earthly. But, Vos explains, "the difference between the higher things and the lower things is not Platonically conceived, as though there were more reality of being in the former than in the latter. Both are equally real. The difference comes in through an appraisal of quality."[30] So in John's writings, *aléthinos* often carries the significance of anti-type as opposed to type, or ultimate as opposed to provisional. For example, Jesus was "the true light" (John 1:9) not as opposed to the false light of pagans, but in contrast to the partial prophetic light that preceded him. The manna that the Israelites ate was real food, provided by God; but it was only a type of the

true bread that would satisfy spiritual hunger. Jesus claimed to be the *true bread* (John 6:32) not because of a closer correspondence between him and some transcendent standard than between the manna and that standard, but because he himself is the standard: in himself he is the true bread.

We turn now to consider the meaning of the vine metaphor so that we can understand the significance of Jesus claiming to be the *true* vine.

4. The vine, a metaphor for Israel

The vine and the vineyard were common sights in Canaan, and from ancient times they took on symbolic significance. When Jacob blessed his sons, he spoke of the fruitfulness of the inheritance to be allotted to Judah under the figure of the abundance of the grapevine and wine (Gen. 49:11). The metaphor for peace and prosperity from the days of Solomon onwards was for every man to live in safety "under his vine and under his fig tree" (1 Kings 4:25). The vine became the symbol of Israel, and amid the nationalism of the Maccabean period, the vine was adopted as a common image on ceramics and coins. Josephus relates that a large, golden vine was draped over the entrance porch of the magnificent temple erected by Herod; and coins minted during the Jewish rebellion of AD 68-70 once again bore the image of the vine[31].

The vine was Israel. The biblical metaphor of the vine as symbolic of Israel first appears unambiguously in the late 8th century BC in the writings of Isaiah and Hosea, and in Psalm 80. It is thought that Psalm 80 was composed during the last days of the northern kingdom of Israel, between the first invasion of Tiglath-pileser III in 734 BC and the destruction of Samaria by Shalmaneser V in 722 BC[32]. The psalm laments the complete failure of Israel to be what she was meant to be. The "vineyard song" of Isaiah 5 is the classic passage identifying Israel as the vine, planted and provided for by God, but producing perverse fruit. Hosea 10 develops a similar theme, with emphasis on the blessing that God bestowed and the corrupt use to which the northern kingdom of Israel put God's blessing. The vine metaphor is pursued and developed in the late 7th and early 6th centuries by Jeremiah and Ezekiel during the period when judgement on the vine became an historical fact. The use of the metaphor demonstrates four phases: planting and flourishing; failure to produce good fruit; destructive judgement; and promise and hope.

(a) Planting and Flourishing

Israel was a "vine brought out of Egypt" (Ps. 80:8). She was the special object of the care and protection of God. For her sake, God spared no labour: he prepared a fertile country and cleared the ground of stones, driving out the pagan nations of Canaan and providing for the protection of the vine (Ps. 80:8-9; Isa. 5:1-2). The vine itself was of the finest kind (Isa. 5:2a; Jer. 2:21a) and

God's rightful expectation was a good harvest (Isa. 5:2b). Indeed, Israel became a luxuriant vine, yielding fruit (Hos. 10:1a); to the south "the mountains were covered with [the vine's] shade", while to the north "the mighty cedars [were covered] with its branches", and westward and eastward "it sent out its branches to the sea and its shoots to the River" (Ps. 80:10-11). Israel became "fruitful and full of branches" and from among its strong members came rulers so that Israel's influence was felt among the nations of the Fertile Crescent, (Ezek. 19:10-11).

(b) Failure to Produce Good Fruit

But for all her advantages and early promise, Israel failed to produce good fruit; the choice vine degenerated and became wild (Jer. 22:21). When God looked for grapes appropriate to his investment in preparation and planting, he found only wild grapes (Isa. 5:2c); he "looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, an outcry!" (Isa. 5:7). Israel knew blessing, but the people abused their fruitfulness: "Israel is a luxuriant vine that yields its fruit. The more his fruit increased, the more altars he built; as his country improved, he improved his pillars. Their heart is false." (Hos. 10:1-2). Israel treated the annual harvests she was given by the LORD as though they resulted from her devotion to the cults of Baal and Asherah; her maintenance of "cultic sanctuaries was simply turning part of the profit back into the business. Altars and pillars were the holy machinery which produced the prosperity – a typically Canaanite understanding of cult"[33].

(c) Destructive Judgement

Judgement was inevitable. Asaph, the author of Psalm 80, describes how the Assyrians plundered Israel: "Why then have you broken down its walls, so that all who pass along the way pluck its fruit? The boar from the forest ravages it, and all that move in the field feed on it." (Ps. 80:12-13). Notice the agency of God who broke down the protective wall set about his people so that Israel could be plundered. Jeremiah writes of the desolation of Judah by the Babylonians: "Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard; they have trampled down my portion; they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. They have made it a desolation; desolate, it mourns to me. The whole land is made desolate, but no man lays it to heart," (Jer. 12:10-11). Ezekiel especially uses the metaphor of fire for this judgement; the wood of the fruitless vine is fit for nothing but to be gathered and consumed by fire (Ezek. 15:1-8); this fire has begun in the ruling house so that no ruler is left (Ezek. 19:12-14).

(d) Promise and Hope

Yet though the vine is cut down and burned with fire, Asaph urges God to persevere with the project initiated in the past: "Turn again, O God of hosts!

Look down from heaven, and see; have regard for this vine, the stock that your right hand planted, and for the son whom you made strong for yourself." (Ps. 80:14-15). The "son whom you made strong for yourself" is Israel (Ex. 4:22-23), but more specifically he is "the man of your right hand" (Ps. 80:17a), i.e. a Messianic king; and because God's hand is upon him, he is sure to succeed even against all the odds[34].

Asaph asked God to turn. Hosea promised that Israel would return and blossom once again: "They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow...they shall blossom like the vine; their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon." (Hos. 14:7). Isaiah expressed hope for Israel's restoration under the familiar metaphor of the vineyard: "In that day, 'A pleasant vineyard, sing of it! I, the LORD, am its keeper; every moment I water it.'" (Isa. 27:2-3). An alternative reading for "a pleasant vineyard" is "a vineyard of sparkling wine" which is an excellent counterpoint to the sourness of Isa. 5:2,4[35]. Isaiah throws this hope forward to "that day", the great future day in which the Lord's work will come to fulfilment. As a result of God's blessing and protection, "In days to come Jacob shall take root, Israel shall blossom and put forth shoots and fill the whole world with fruit." (Isa. 27:6). Motyer observes in these words that "the total vine system (root, bud, blossom and fruit) is wholesome and effective in every part."[36]

5. The Father and the fruit

In our consideration of Jesus' saying, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser", we have examined the Johannine self-disclosure of Jesus in the words "I am" and the adjective "true", and we have looked at the Old Testament background against which he called himself "the vine". Before we apply this data to Jesus, we will turn our attention to the second part of the saying: "and my Father is the vinedresser".

Of the seven "I am" sayings of John's Gospel, only in this saying is the Father ascribed an active role correlative to that of Jesus: the vine sends its life out into the branches and the vinedresser tends them in order to increase their yield. Commentaries generally pay considerable attention to the nature of the cultivating activity that Jesus ascribed to his Father, the "taking away" and "pruning" of John 15:2. It is sufficient for our purpose to note (a) that the Father cultivates the branches of the vine, and (b) that the Father looks for fruit. These two roles of the Father correspond to the representation of God in the vineyard song of Isaiah 5. There we saw that God (a) took great care over the vine ("What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" Isa. 5:4), and (b) looked for fruit from the vine ("and he looked for it to yield grapes," Isa. 5:2). Isaiah also tells us what the fruit was for which God looked: justice and righteousness (Isa. 5:7). These ethical fruits are not mere

abstractions, but are to be the characteristics of the daily life of Israel. First and foremost justice and righteousness are expressive of the character of God, but even in this sense they are known because they are worked out in practice: "Let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practises steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD." (Jer. 9:24).

God gave his Torah, the expression of his nature, to Israel so that her social, economic and political life, as well as her religious practice, might be modelled on his own character. Was this merely so that Israel might enjoy the benefits of God's redemption? No, God's will was that holiness should be given flesh in the social and national life of Israel so that through conformity to God's likeness, Israel would carry light to the Gentiles. Thus the use of the vine as a metaphor for Israel is best interpreted in the light of Israel's purpose as the people of God. Already we have heard hints of this in the "vine texts" quoted. Israel was so blessed by God that she spread abroad, north, south, east and west (Psalm 80). It is true that the nation was cut back to a charred stump (Ezekiel 15, 19) but God's purpose is not to be frustrated (Isaiah 27) and in days to come the divinely nurtured vine will fill the earth so that the whole world will become the Lord's vineyard.

Israel's purpose began with the calling of an individual, Abraham, the story being set against the backdrop of the post-Flood table of the nations (Genesis 10) and the Babel story of the arrogance of men (Genesis 11). Abraham is commanded to leave his land, kindred and father's house, and to go to the land that God will show him; God promises that he will bless Abraham, and that the circle of blessing will widen out to those who bless Abraham, and ultimately to all the kinship groups on earth (Gen. 12:1-3). Wright comments that "a new world, ultimately a new creation, begins in this text"[37]. The promise is developed in the covenantal texts of Genesis 15 and 17, and comes to a climactic confirmation in Gen. 22:16-18, "...and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice" (verse 18).

Wright points out that "blessing for the nations is the bottom line, textually and theologically, of God's promise to Abraham,"[38] the promise to Abraham sets the trajectory for the mission of his offspring to the nations. The Hebrew root "to bless" appears five times in Gen. 12:1-3, and Wright demonstrates that this has four dimensions. First of all, blessing is creational and relational; it concerns God's purpose for creation – fruitfulness, fertility, abundance and rest – and healthy vertical and horizontal relationships. Secondly, blessing is missional and historical; it entails the imperatives "Go...and be a blessing". These are teleological and must be worked out in the context of human history. Thirdly, blessing is covenantal and ethical. The blessing promised to Abraham is set within a context of covenant relationship, and his response of faith and obedience (justice and righteousness) is held up

as the pattern to be followed. Finally, blessing is multinational and Christological, because through the offspring of Abraham, the blessing will extend to all the families of the earth.[39]

The election of Israel did not terminate upon them alone. Israel was to desire blessing so that God's way and salvation might be known among the nations and the fruitfulness of (a renewed) creation extend to the ends of the earth (Psalm 67). Israel's election was fundamentally missional, rather soteriological.[40] But, as we have seen, Israel failed in her mission by becoming like the nations to whom she was supposed to bring blessing. So Israel's mission devolved upon a single individual (Ps. 80:17), one who, contra Israel (Isa. 5:7), would establish justice in the earth and upon whose law the coastlands would wait (Isa. 42:4).

No Old Testament text calls this individual "the true vine". The words for *branch, shoot* and *young plant* in Isa. 4:2; 11:1 and 53:2, respectively, are distinct from the words used for *branch* in Ps. 80:10 and Ezek. 19:14, and stock in Ps. 80:15. Clearly Israel, an agrarian society, had a rich agricultural vocabulary. Nevertheless, it is attractive to see in the promises of Isa. 4:2; 11:1 and 53:2 a recapitulation of the promise of Ps. 80:14-17 of a coming individual who would be the instrument of the restoration of Israel; and therefore the basis for the fulfilment of the promises of Isa. 27:2-6 and Hos. 14:7. In this regard, the promise of Jer. 33:15 is striking: "In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land." The promised Branch will produce the fruit for which God looked in his planting of Israel (Isa. 5:7).

When Jesus says, "I am the true vine," he is claiming to be this promised individual: he is the fulfilment of the vine metaphor applied to Israel; he will produce the fruit for which God looks. As we learned in section 3, he does not mean, "I am a true, as opposed to Israel being a false, vine." That Israel was God's vine was no charade: Israel was chosen, blessed and given a mission by God. But Jesus alone embodied the complete will and purpose of God, which Israel only foreshadowed in part. Like Israel, his appointment was not *personally* soteriological, but missional. He came so that in him blessing would extend to all the families of the earth. This is achieved within a covenantal and ethical context: faith and obedience are required, justice and righteousness are provided and looked for. It entails the missional imperative to "go!": both his own going "from his Father's house", and then the going of his disciples, into the world. The result is creational and relational blessing: fruitfulness, fertility, abundance and rest.

6. Fruit and mission in John's Gospel

The last line of evidence that we need to consider is John's portrayal of

Jesus' strong sense of mission and Jesus' representation of this mission in terms of fruitbearing.

Jesus clearly understood that he had been sent into the world by the Father. The Greek verbs translated "to send" *(apostelló and pempó)* appear 26, 21, 36 and 60 times in the Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, respectively; when only references to God sending or Jesus sending or being sent are counted, these totals reduce to 17, 14, 27 and 52 (plus a reference to the pool of Siloam which John pointedly indicates means "Sent", John 9:7). Divine mission is a more prominent theme in John than the Synoptics. In John's Gospel the verb to *send* expresses the fundamental relationship between God and Jesus in the world (e.g. John 3:17; 4:34; 5:23-24, 36; 6:29, 38-39; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3); Jesus was sent by God into the world with a mission.

Jesus "came to that which was his own", but he understood that his mission was to encompass more than Israel (John 10:16). It is significant that although Jesus' initial ministry was among the Jews, John portrays him towards the start of his public ministry and at its end ministering to Samaritans (John 4) and Greeks (John 12). It is worthy of note that the harvest motif appears in both of these encounters; moreover, these are the only places outside the Farewell Discourse in which Jesus uses the word karpos, "fruit". On the former occasion, as Samaritans were coming out to meet him, Jesus directed the gaze of his disciples to the people and said, "Lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together," (John 4:35-36). In his account of the later encounter with the Greeks, John juxtaposes the end of John 12:19 ("Look, the world has gone after him") and the start of John 12:20 ("And there were some Greeks...") to show that the arrival of the Greeks seeking to see Jesus was typical of the world going after him. Hearing of their request, Jesus declares, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit...Father, glorify your name" (John 12:23-24, 28). Here John links together mission, suffering, fruitbearing and glory, themes that are prominent in the Farewell Discourse. In both John 4 and John 12 it is clear that the fruit to which Jesus refers is the men and women whom he came to save.

Just as the motif of being sent characterises the relationship of the Father and Jesus in the world, so it forms the pattern for the relationship of the disciples to Jesus, e.g. John 9:4; 13:20; 17:18; 20:21. This sending of the disciples on mission is expressed in John 15:16 in terms of appointment (*ethéka*, "I appointed [you]") and departing (*hupagéte*, "that you should go forth").[41] We have already observed that Jesus used the former word in verse 13 to speak of his laying down his life for his friends. In John 12:24 he spoke of falling into the earth and dying in order to bear much fruit; in John 15:16,

having spoken again of laying down his life, he speaks of the going forth of his disciples to bear fruit, abiding fruit (this is the last mention of *karpos* in the Gospel). The strong presumption is that the fruit here is the same as that in John 12:24, namely men and women saved through the preaching of the gospel of the death and resurrection of Jesus. This is clearly his meaning in John 4:35-38 where the disciples are exhorted to engage in the work of harvesting.

7. Assessment and Conclusion

It is time to draw the threads together and make an assessment of Milne's thesis. He claimed that "the real context of [John 13-16] is the impending mission of the disciples to the world" and that in that passage the mission of the disciples "comes increasingly into focus beside the [the mission of Jesus], not in any sense to replace it...and still less to rival it, but rather to carry it forward under new conditions,"[42] so that the real thrust of Jesus' saying, "I am the vine; you are the branches" is "the renewal of the mission of Israel through Jesus the Messiah and the disciple community."[43] Is this claim sustained by the evidence? I believe it is.

(a) The background to the vine metaphor is the mission of Israel to the nations. Israel, pictured as a vine, was the object of the blessing of God. But Israel's election and blessing did not terminate in her own salvation; it was missional. Israel was to be an incarnation of the character of God, as expressed in the Torah, and in this way take "justice and righteousness" to the nations. Israel failed in this mission, and the prophets announced that Israel's mission would devolve upon an individual.

(b) The mission motif is prominent in John's Gospel. Jesus was self-consciously aware that he had been sent into the world by the Father to fulfil the mission of Israel, i.e. he was the individual foretold by the prophets who would bring justice and righteousness to the nations. He articulated this consciousness frequently, but especially in the Farewell Discourse he expressed it by saying, "I am the *true* vine, and my Father is the vinedresser". As the source of "justice and righteousness" he replaced Israel, as the anti-type replaces the type. Unlike Israel he would not fail to produce the fruit for which his Father looked.

(c) The fruit of Jesus' work is not first and foremost a moral change in men, i.e. the expression of justice and righteousness in their character, but the creation of living men in whose character a moral change will be seen. Living men are the "much fruit" of which he spoke when he described his mission, and in order to bear this fruit he died.

(d) Jesus knew that his mission role was fulfilled by his dying, and having completed his task, his longing was to return to his Father. The task of taking the gospel of "justice and righteousness" out to the nations he

delegated to his disciples. He constituted them "new Israel" through incorporation in himself, the true vine, and equipped them for their mission by giving them the Holy Spirit. The fruitbearing of the disciple community is the ingathering of men and women before it is the appearance of the fruit of the Spirit in the lives of the disciples. *The life of Jesus at work in the disciples is as much the cause of the former as it is of the latter.*

(e) Nevertheless, mission cannot be divorced from the ethical requirement to produce Christ-likeness (the practical outworking of justice and righteousness). Milne's application of the mission perspective to the exposition of John 13-16 is balanced by a healthy understanding that the mission of Christ can only be carried out by those who bear the hallmarks of the character of Christ. In this respect, the difference between Milne's interpretation of John 13-16 and the traditional interpretation is largely one of emphasis. Traditionally the fruit produced by the life of the vine in the branches has been understood in terms of Christ-likeness, though the importance of mission has received some acknowledgement. Milne simply reverses the emphases, and in so doing he provides a corrective to individualistic, pietistic approaches to the Farewell Discourse.

Perhaps the most important contribution in Milne's exposition of John 13-16 is that it alerts us to the presence in the passage of a body of teaching on the true nature of mission. What is mission like? Look at the teaching of Jesus in John 13-16. The mission of the Church is first and foremost the mission of the Triune God (John 14:12-28; 16:7-15). The vine and its branches are a single organism: the Church cannot fulfil her commission unless she maintains her vital connection with her Lord (John 15:1-17). When she does so, the life of Jesus will find expression in the growth of the Church and in the lives and characters of Christ's members. But let those members beware! The mission of Jesus was one of suffering before it was one of fruitbearing (John 15:18-16:6). But suffering will give way to joy because Jesus has fulfilled his mission (John 16:16-33). The mission teaching of the Farewell Discourse deserves closer attention than, perhaps, it has traditionally been given. Milne writes,

> If this perspective is correct, then these discourses have an urgent relevance to a church facing the enormous challenge of world evangelisation...Viewing the discourses in this way also, one hopes, removes them from the rather esoteric and enclosed atmosphere in which they have been traditionally set, and allows us to bring them out into the marketplace where they and this whole gospel surely belong.[44]

Notes

1. R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel,* (Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), p.1027.
2. R.C.H. Lenski, op. cit., pp.1029-1030.
3. J.M. Boice, *The Gospel of John,* (Zondervan, 1999), Vol.4, p.1185. He sees nothing more than the fruit of the Spirit in vv.1-16.
4. R.K. Hughes, *John, That You May Believe,* (Crossway, 1999), p.353. On vv.1-2 he writes, "In John 15 the fruit Jesus speaks of is not primarily evangelism but simply the reproduction of the life of the vine in the branch. Jesus is looking for the fruit of his life in us". He proceeds to enumerate the subjective fruit of the Spirit. He reads the same message in verse 5.
5. F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel and Epistles of John,* (Eerdmans, 2002), p.310. On verse 16, Bruce comments, "Jesus now harks back for a moment to the figure of the vine and its fruit...this is the enduring fruit of lives in union with the ever-living Christ, bearing witness to his abiding grace;" op. cit., p.312.
6. C.G. Kruse, *John,* (Tyndale New Testament Commentary Series, IVP, 2003), pp.317-318.
7. G.R. Beasley-Murray, *John,* (Word Biblical Commentary Series, Second Edition, 1999), p.273. The reference is to R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John,* (Blackwell, 1971). See also, for example, L. Morris, *The Gospel According to John,* (NICNT, Eerdmans, 1992), p.676; and D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John,* (IVP, 1991), p.517.
8. B. Milne, *The Message of John,* (The Bible Speaks Today Series, IVP, 2008), p.220.
9. A.J. Köstenberger, *John, in Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament,* edited by G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson, (Apollos, 2007), pp.415-512.
10. Milne, op. cit, p.220.
11. Among the commentaries consulted by the author, only Carson (*The Gospel According to John,* IVP, 1991) came close to declaring a significant motif (namely, the evangelisation of Jews, proselytes and God-fearers) that might tie John 13-16 together, but he does not develop this in his commentary.
12. L. Morris, *The Gospel According to John,* (NICNT, Eerdmans, 1992), p.623.
13. D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John,* (IVP, 1991), p.471.
14. Milne, op. cit, p.201.
15. Op. cit., p.201.
16. Op. cit., p.205.
17. Op. cit., p.206.
18. Op. cit., p.215.
19. Op. cit., p.218.
20. Op. cit., pp.219-220.
21. Op. cit., p.223.
22. Op. cit., p.237.
23. Op. cit., p.220.
24. Op. cit., p.222.
25. D.A. Carson, op. cit, p.90.
26. Beasley-Murray, op. cit, p.lxxxi, lists: the Word, *monogenés theos, monogenés huios,* Son of God, the Son, Son of Man, a teacher come from God, a prophet, the prophet that should come into the world, the Messiah, King of Israel, King of the Jews, the Holy One of God, the Lamb of God, the Coming One, the Man, the Sent One of God, *egó eimi,* a Paraclete, Rabbouni, the Lord, my Lord and my God.
27. Carson, op. cit, p.358.
28. G.E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament,* (Eerdmans, 1975), p.251.
29. Op. cit., pp.264-267.

30. G. Vos, *Biblical Theology,* (Banner of Truth, 1985), p.356.
31. C.G. Kruse, op. cit, p.310.
32. A. Weiser, *The Psalms,* (SCM Press, 1965), p.547.
33. J.L. Mays, *Hosea (Old Testament Library,* SCM Press, 1969), p.139, quoted by D. Kidner, The Message of *Hosea, (The Bible Speaks Today Series,* IVP, 2008), p.92.
34. J. Goldingay, *Psalms,* (Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms, 2007), Vol. 2, pp.542-543.
35. A. Motyer, *The Prophesy of Isaiah,* (IVP, 1993), p.222.
36. Op. cit., p.223.
37. C.J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God,* (IVP, 2006), p.200.
38. Op. cit., p.194.
39. Op. cit., pp.208-220.
40. Op. cit., p.263.
41. G.R. Beasley-Murray, op. cit, p.275.
42. Milne, op. cit, p.201.
43. Op. cit., pp.219-220.
44. Milne, op. cit, p.205.

THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

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The Question

Can a believer lose faith, fall away from Christ, and be lost forever?

Francis Turretin put the question more fully:

> whether a true believer who is called according to God's purpose and truly justified, furnished with a faith not dogmatical and temporary, but living and saving, can...lose faith...and finally remain in unbelief and impenitence, and so cut himself off from a right to the kingdom of heaven and from the state of adoption and be eternally condemned.[1]

The Westminster Larger Catechism teaches:

> Q.79. *May not true believers, by reason of their imperfections, and the many temptations and sins they are overtaken with, fall away from the state of grace?*
> A. True believers, by reason of the unchangeable love of God, and his decree and covenant to give them perseverance, their inseparable union with Christ, his continual intercession for them, and the Spirit and seed of God abiding in them, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Notice how the *question* refers to factors that may cause even a true believer to stumble, but the *answer* musters the many elements of the grace of God that will secure his recovery and endurance. The true believer will persevere to the end and can never be lost.

The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints – formulated at length in the Canons of Dort (1618-19)[2] and more succinctly in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1647)[3] and in subsequent Reformed confessions[4] – is a distinctive Reformed article of faith. Herman Bavinck informs us that "Pelagians, Roman Catholics, Socinians, Remonstrants, Mennonites, Quakers, Methodists and so forth, and even Lutherans have taught the possibility of a complete loss of the grace received...the Reformed alone, maintained this doctrine and linked it with the assurance of faith."[5]

1. Biblical Foundation

The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is a biblical doctrine.

John 9-10

After our Lord Jesus had healed the man born blind, the Pharisees "cast him out" (John 9: 34), having agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be "put out of the synagogue" (Greek *aposunagógos genétai,* John 9:22). This is the language of excommunication, a dreadful judgment – banished from the kingdom of God and delivered to Satan. Our Lord found him and supplied the only possible grounds for comfort and peace. The Good Shepherd declared the hirelings' judgment null and void. This man had believed in Christ, had entered the sheepfold by the door, was saved *and could not be lost.* "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any one snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:11, 27-29). The sheep will never perish.

Romans 8

When a sinner has been justified by faith in Christ alone (Rom. 1-4), "much more" is to follow. He must live, war, advance, and overcome (Rom. 5-8). Indeed God will complete the work that he has begun: "whom he predestined, these he also called; whom he called, these he also justified; and whom he justified, these he also glorified" (Rom. 8:30). John Murray writes:

> The apostle enumerates only three elements [in verse 30, i.e., calling, justification, and glorification]. These, however, as the pivotal events in our actual salvation, serve the apostle's purpose in delineating the divine plan of salvation from its fount in the love of God to its consummation in the glorification of the sons of God. Glorification, unlike justification, belongs to the future. It would not be feasible in this context...to regard it as other than the completion of the process of salvation and, though 'glorified' is in the past tense, this is proleptic, intimating the certainty of its accomplishment.[6]

God will complete the work of salvation in each one, and nothing can prevent it. Indeed nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:38, 39). Many factors militate against the completion of the work: tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, angels, principalities and powers, experiences present and future, not forgetting the wretchedness of our "flesh".[7] Despite it all, we are eternally loved and inseparable from God and Christ.

Other biblical statements

We could accumulate many more biblical statements in support of this truth. Paul wrote to the Philippians that he was "confident of this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6) and to the Corinthians that God "will confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:8).[8] Peter wrote to the pilgrims of the dispersion of the inheritance reserved for them, "who are kept by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:5). Our help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth. He will not allow our foot to be moved, and he never sleeps. He keeps Israel. He will preserve our going out and coming in from this time forth and for evermore (Psalm 121).[9]

Dogmatic considerations

Such references are but the tip of the iceberg. When we consider God's character, his love, his decree, his everlasting and sure covenant, the believer's union with Christ, the indwelling of the Spirit of God, the present possession of eternal life, and the fact that salvation is all of grace, we are compelled to conclude that, if a believer could be lost, then that would run counter to the whole force of biblical teaching. The very notion seems alien to the entire corpus of biblical truth.

Our God is from everlasting to everlasting, his power knows no limits, his character is faithful, his word is true, and he does not change. "For I the LORD do not change, and you, sons of Jacob, are not consumed" (Mal. 3:6). God's love never ceases: "I have loved you with an everlasting love" (Jer. 31:3). His eternal decree, sovereign and free, is immutable; what he ordains will take place. His choice of covenant to express his relationship with his people heralds his great faithfulness. His covenant with Abraham is everlasting (Gen. 17; Psalm 105:8-10), and with David "everlasting and secure" (2 Sam. 23:5), as it is in Christ (Heb. 13:20). His covenant is compared with a marriage covenant and we recall what Christ said about that: "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder." Paul was thinking of God's covenant when he wrote that the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable (Rom. 11:29). The history of Israel, and that of individual believers, bears out this truth many times over.[10] If the covenant is everlasting and immutable, then the election of grace which operates in and through the covenant cannot be any less so (Rom. 9:11). Hence our spiritual union with Christ, the cause of which can be traced back into the eternal counsel, is unchangeable. This is the Father's will, that Christ should not lose one of those whom he has given him but that he should raise them up at the last day (John 6:39). We have the promise, "I will never leave you nor forsake you", and "lo, I am with you, even to the close of the age" (Heb. 13:5; Matt. 28:20). It all points to the constancy and steadfastness of our

God and Saviour and also to the almighty power which is present in the lives of his children to guard and defend them. Christ sent the Spirit to abide with his disciples for ever (John 14:16). The believer, born of the Spirit, has already "passed from death to life" (John 5:24). "He who lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:26).[11]

Grace and man's total inability

It is not surprising that the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints received its fullest formulation, as a result of the conflict with the Remonstrants (or Arminians) in the 17th century, in the Canons of Dort. The Arminian way of thinking had a long prehistory. The crucial, recurring questions are "What is fallen man's condition?" and "How much can he contribute towards his own salvation?" Human vanity does not readily accept the biblical disclosure that fallen man is *dead* in trespasses and sins and *totally unable* to contribute anything towards his salvation. It is Ezekiel's picture of the valley of dry bones (Ezek. 37). Ezekiel was not sent to those dry bones to tell them to pull themselves together!

Such was Pelagius' version of the gospel, in the fifth century. He came to Rome teaching free will, that a man is fully able to decide for God. Augustine opposed him[12] as did the Council of Carthage (418), which affirmed that original sin had passed to all men and that grace was thus indispensable to salvation. Around that period, a weaker form of Pelagius' doctrine appeared in Southern Gaul in the region of Marseille. The monks there thought that fallen man was spiritually weak but had retained a knowledge of good and evil that enabled him to take the first step towards God and, when he did so, God would respond and meet him with grace.[13]. In 529, the Council of Orange denounced this scheme (later known as "Semi-Pelagianism"). Arminian thought follows similar lines.[14] The logic is destructive of the doctrine of perseverance. If man contributes something towards his own salvation, then to that extent there is weakness and he can have no assurance that he will endure to the end.

Objections answered

Wherever the biblical doctrine is opposed, it is common to find its opponents appealing to the fact that the Bible contains exhortations to endure, warnings, and examples of falling away.

Plainly, our Lord *exhorted* his disciples to abide in him (John 15:1-10). "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). Paul wrote to the Colossians, that they would be presented holy, blameless, and above reproach in God's presence – "if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from your hope of the gospel" (Col. 1:22, 23). "He who endures to the end will be saved" (Matt. 24:13). "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). Demas forsook

Paul, being "in love with the present world" (2 Tim. 4:10).

The idea that such exhortations and warnings disprove perseverance is mistaken. In the **first** place, many of these things were spoken (or written) to a mixture of genuine believers *and* merely outward professors of the faith (who had the appearance of being believers without being converted) i.e., sheep and goats, wheat and tares. **Second,** such exhortations and warnings are instruments of the Holy Spirit to prevent believers from falling away and to secure their perseverance. **Third,** where men do fall away and perish, in no case can we demonstrate that they once possessed *saving* faith. On the contrary, the Scripture indicates that they were never spiritually alive. For example, long before Judas Iscariot showed his true colours (his inner nature), while as one of the twelve he went about preaching and working miracles, our Lord knew then that he was a devil, the son of perdition (John 6:70; 17:12). In this connection, some alleged examples of those who have fallen away are far from certain. Was Demas' desertion of Paul a desertion of Christ (2 Tim. 4:10)? When he left to go to Thessalonica, was it as a non-Christian, or as a minister seeking a safer place to preach? Was his love for the present world a love for the unbelieving world outside the church, or a desire to remain alive and to "save his life"? Did he commit apostasy or did he repeat John Mark's cowardice (Acts 15: 38)? We may fear the worst in his case, but we may have to admit to uncertainty about it.

2. Apostasy

Warnings about apostasy, falling from grace (Gal.5:4), falling away without the possibility of being restored (Heb. 6:6), committing a sin that can never be forgiven (Matt. 12:31,32; 1 John 5:16), are sometimes thought to make the doctrine of perseverance untenable.[15]

Apostasy *(apostasia)*, a term quite rare in the New Testament,[16] in the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint) translates three Hebrew words: *kerîthûth* divorce,[17] meredh rebellion,[18] and *meshûvâ* backsliding, turning away.[19] This connection reveals the covenantal force of the term. A marriage covenant is annulled by divorce; rebellion against a king is the renunciation of a treaty; backsliding is turning away from God's covenant, just as repentance is a turning towards God.[20]

The critical question is, Can a true believer commit apostasy, desert the covenant, renounce his faith, forsake God forever? Since we know that the church contains a mixture of believers and hypocrites, sheep and goats, and since the sheep cannot perish, the conclusion ought to be that the goats alone, who only profess outwardly the faith but lack true faith, are the only ones who can commit apostasy. Not all goats abandon the covenant during their lifetime, but those who remain within the church till their death will ultimately be exposed and removed by the Lord when he returns.

However, certain New Testament passages seem, to some at least, to stand in the way of such a plain solution – to constitute an insuperable difficulty to the Reformed doctrine, and to require the conclusion that even true believers can turn away and be lost. Hebrews 6:4-6 and 10:26-29 are the foremost.

Hebrews 6: 4-6

> For it is impossible, respecting those once having been enlightened, and having tasted the heavenly gift, and having been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and having tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the coming age, and having fallen away, to renew [them] again to repentance, having again crucified to themselves the Son of God and having shamed [him].[21]

How can someone be *enlightened* and then fall away with no hope of recovery?[22] What does it mean? The context will help us decide.

It seems that this letter is addressed to Jewish believers in Jerusalem, a short time before the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, which happened in AD 70. These Jewish Christians had once lived according to the Sinai covenant. It seems that at first they had rejected Christ and perhaps even been among the crowd that clamoured for his crucifixion. They had then heard the apostolic preaching, seen the miracles, repented, confessed Christ Jesus and been baptized according to the new covenant (as in Acts 2:23, 33-47, Heb. 2:3). This had led to persecution (Heb. 10:32). They had endured that and it had subsided (Acts 9:31). Their sense of Jewish identity was strong and they had continued to be zealous for the law (Acts 21:20). Now they were once again coming under pressure to renounce Christ and return to the old covenant ministry. Ananias the high priest was still in office (Acts 23:2), and they were so familiar with the Mosaic customs which generations of their fathers had kept. Why endure exclusion and family division (Heb. 12:3; 13: 13)?

Against such a background, we can ask, When were they "once enlightened"? When did they taste the heavenly gift, partake of the Holy Spirit, taste the good word of God and the powers of the coming age? By any reckoning, these were immense privileges. What does the writer mean? Could he be referring to the inward illumination of the soul by regeneration of the Holy Spirit?

If these things refer to true conversion, and if they actually *did* fall away, then we would be facing a case of true believers departing from the living God.[23] The writer gives sufficient indication that this was not his meaning. Immediately afterwards, he speaks about ground that receives much rain and some produces good crops while other parts produce only thorns and thistles, the crop of the curse. The former are the better things that pertain to salvation, showing that the latter were not saved. Thus the writer is clearly aware that there might be some who do not enjoy the reality of salvation (Heb. 6:7-9).

Another interpretation must be found. It is possible that the writer is thinking of their history, the fact that they had made the transition from old to new covenant, and the outward privileges of that new covenant into which they had come. The Light of the world had indeed shone on them all (Isa. 9:2; 60:1). They had indeed experienced the Holy Spirit and seen the signs and wonders done in his power. They may indeed have performed those miracles or been healed by them. It is possible, it seems, for unbelievers to perform miracles (Matt. 7:22; John 11:51). Historically speaking, they had experienced the transition from the types and shadows to the spiritual substance, Christ's advent, and the outpouring of the Spirit of promise.[24] However, if the historical development is in mind, that does not rule out all subjective experience. Rather they did *experience* new covenant privileges to a remarkable degree, but without conversion. John Murray has written:

> It is possible to give all the outwards signs of faith in Christ and obedience to him, to witness for a time a good confession and show great zeal for Christ and his kingdom and then lose all interest and become indifferent, if not hostile, to the claims of Christ and of his kingdom. It is the lesson of seed sown on rocky ground...
>
> We must appreciate the lengths and the heights to which a temporary faith may carry those who have it...
>
> The Scripture itself, therefore, leads us to the conclusion that it is possible to have very uplifting, ennobling, reforming, and exhilarating experience of the power and truth of the gospel, to come into such close contact with the supernatural forces which are operative in God's kingdom of grace that these forces produce effects in us which to human observation are hardly distinguishable from those produced by God's regenerating and sanctifying grace and yet be not partakers of Christ and heirs of eternal life.[25]

If they had known that historical step forward into the new covenant, made public confession of Christ in baptism, experienced signs and wonders by the Holy Spirit, and then, desiring to return to the Jerusalem temple, priesthood and altar, they renounce Christ, they are "crucifying *again* for themselves" the Son of God. This is apostasy; this is not, however, a case of true believers falling away.

Hebrews 10:26-29

> For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?

The same applies to Hebrews 10:26-29. Two additional comments need to be made:

1. We might think that "sinning wilfully" could describe all our sins but it is much more specific. The Old Testament distinguished between sins of ignorance and sins committed with a high hand (Num. 15:27-31). For the latter (presumptuous rebellion, bringing reproach on the Lord, despising his Word) there is no atonement, no forgiveness: his guilt remains. The Letter to the Hebrews is not concerned with a transgression of commandments but a deliberate, wholesale departure from God, revoking the covenant in its entirety (Heb. 3:12).
2. Some find it perplexing that the writer can speak of an apostate as having been sanctified by the blood of the new covenant. Since Christ died for the elect, how could this be true? Whereas the Scriptures make it clear that Christ died for the sheep (John 10:11) – the doctrine of Particular Redemption – yet the Scriptures also sometimes speak of atonement *for the people* (Lev. 16:5, 24, 34). The sacrifices of the Day of Atonement were offered for the nation. Christ came to save *his people* from their sins (Matt. 1:21). There is no contradiction: Christ died for the church (collectively) and for the elect (distributively). There are those who remember his death at the communion table but who do not have a saving interest in it. If they later commit apostasy, they indeed will have despised his blood and renouncing an interest in it.

Galatians 5: 2-4

> Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

This is not as difficult as the Hebrews passages already considered, and so a brief explanation will be sufficient. When Paul says that they have "fallen from grace", he is not describing their subjective experience but a change in their doctrine. He is not suggesting that their regeneration has been reversed, rather that the gospel has been perverted. He had preached the pure message that a man is justified by grace alone without law-keeping; others had come with a different message, requiring circumcision. Galatians who listen to these have "fallen from" relying on God's grace alone. The basis of their hope has shifted. This does not contradict the truth of the perseverance of the saints. It is noticeable that Paul, having anathematized the peddlers of a false gospel, seeks the restoration of those overtaken in a trespass (Gal. 6:1). If we take the letter as a whole, and read these words in context, evidently Paul is urging the mature (hopefully the leaders, who have not been deceived) to recover those

who have gone astray. Indeed, if that is not possible, why write the letter, since the letter itself is aimed to recover them from their error?

Practical difficulties

Pastorally this is a very difficult area. How can the church, especially its pastors, know when someone has committed apostasy and when he has fallen but is still a believer? Both fall and we may not see any difference at the time. How can we tell which is which? When a trembling soul fears that he has committed unforgivable sin, how do we know what to say? When should we pray, recover, and assure? When can we do nothing? "There is a sin unto death and I do not say that he should pray about that" (1 John 5:16).[26] We cannot pray for an apostate and yet we should intercede with all our heart for the wandering sheep. There is no place of repentance for the apostate, but we must restore the fallen. We would not want to take inappropriate action. We dare not reassure the apostate, nor would leave the fearful to his anxieties, but desire to see his soul at rest. (In the case of one who fears he has committed unforgivable sin, the first step is to discover whether he understands what that sin is. We must not leave him to labour under any misapprehensions.)

There are biblical cases that seem so alike yet were opposite. What was the difference between Peter's threefold sworn denial of Jesus and Judas' betrayal? One was a child of God, the other a devil, but how could we tell? Their motivation seems to have been very different: Peter was afraid of the Jews but Judas loved money. Both "repented" – and yet very differently: Peter wept bitterly, because he loved the Lord; Judas afterwards realized that he had betrayed the innocent, but there was only woe for him. Christ interceded for Peter that his faith would not fail, even though Satan buffeted him. What was the difference between the prodigal son and Esau? Neither valued his inheritance: each sold it cheaply. One came to his senses and his father ran to embrace him as he returned; the other found no place of repentance. How did they differ?

The early church faced this problem. In AD 250, under severe persecution by the Roman Emperor Decius, not a few members denied the faith and sacrificed to idols. When the persecution stopped, they wanted to be received back into the church. Some (the Novatians) refused but the church as a whole said yes.[27]

Several considerations may help us:

1. Election is secret. We cannot know who is elect and we cannot read the hearts of men. The Lord knows those who are his (2 Tim. 2:9).
2. A person's feelings are not a sure guide. Some Christians never attain to assurance of salvation but are tormented by fears, sometimes irrationally.[28] Apostates do not always live in fear. They are sometimes

callous and careless.

3. Time is a consideration. When the first generation out of Egypt refused to enter the land, they had already seen the Lord's miracles in Egypt and at the Red Sea and they had already tempted God ten times (Num. 14:22). Centuries passed before God told Jeremiah not to pray for Judah.[29] Hebrews 6:7 speaks of land that drinks in the rain that *often* comes upon it. When our Lord Jesus warned the Jews about blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, he knew that over a long history, God had sent his servants, and that now he, the heir, was present, and after him there was only the Spirit to come, the last witness. They were running out of possibilities.
4. The disposition of heart is relevant, even though we may not see it. There are different dispositions in those who sin in ignorance and those who sin with a high hand.[30] Since apostasy and wandering both entail sin, it is right to ask whether the one who falls knows sorrow and repentance. Further, when a person has a tender conscience, and he is fearful that he has committed the unforgivable sin, that very tenderness suggests that he has not callously spurned the Son of God.

We know that our God is longsuffering and abounds in mercy, ready to forgive (Psa. 86:5) and he has instructed the church, in particular through its pastors, to recover the wayward and restore the fallen (James 5:19, 20). Failure to do so makes them guilty (Ezek. 34:4). Paul was eager to restore and comfort the excommunicated man when he repented (2 Cor. 2:6-11). Indeed, the process of church discipline involving attempts at recovery can be instrumental in exposing what is in a man's heart.

Jude's letter

Jude addressed a serious falling away. Perverse teachers were advocating uncleanness, rejecting authority, and causing divisions; and many were listening. Jude tells the church to recognize a difference between two cases. Of those teachers who were corrupting the church, he says that they do not have the Spirit and are appointed for vengeance. Others, weak and foolish sheep, had fallen into their trap, and those the church must save, pulling them out of the fire. How striking that Jude can conclude such a letter with a doxology glorifying the God who is able to keep us from falling and present us faultless before his throne – the glory of perseverance in the midst of the shame of apostasy!

3. Clarification

"Once saved, always saved!" Michael Milton correctly warns that, "The perseverance of the saints is not merely 'once saved, always saved'."[31]

There are those who teach that there can be a moment of faith, in which salvation is conferred and that afterwards, even if a man were to lose his faith

completely, he could not lose his salvation. For example, "You and I are not saved because we have an enduring faith. We are saved because at a moment in time we expressed faith in our enduring Lord."[32] "The Bible clearly teaches that God's love for His people is of such magnitude that even those who walk away from the faith have not the slightest chance of slipping from His hand."[33]

This is an erroneous distortion of biblical truth and very dangerous. For a start, saving faith is not a momentary event but a permanent work of God within his children. The idea that a person can be forever safe even if he turns away from Christ is contrary to our Lord's own teaching (e.g. John 15). A person who "walks away from the faith" dare not presume on his eternal security and peace. Furthermore, to divorce our preservation from our faith is to ignore or contradict Peter: we are kept by the power of God *through faith* (1 Peter 1:5).

This leads us to think more clearly about what perseverance really is.

> The perseverance of the saints reminds us very forcefully that only those who persevere to the end are truly saints. We do not attain to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus automatically. Perseverance means the engagement of our persons in the most intense and concentrated devotion to those means which God has ordained for the achievement of his saving purpose. The scriptural doctrine of perseverance has no affinity with the quietism and antinomianism which are so prevalent in evangelical circles.[34]

When we think of endurance, we should not think in terms of standing still, or of merely "holding on", but rather of pressing forward, of running a race and fighting the good fight of faith. It is not static but dynamic. Watchfulness, diligence, pressing towards the goal, presenting your bodies as living sacrifices, being transformed by the renewing of your minds, presenting yourselves as servants of righteousness, pursuing holiness, crucifying the old man and his lusts and deeds – this is the language of perseverance.

Those who accuse us of turning grace into works have missed the mark utterly. This is God's grace in us. We are his workmanship! Indeed, our assurance and peace are connected with these evidences of the grace of God continuing to operate within us (e.g., 1 John 2:28, 29; 3:19-21).

Some who consider themselves "Reformed" say that they prefer to call the doctrine "the preservation of the saints" rather than the perseverance of the saints. However, this betrays a weakness in their understanding. Whilst the Bible is clear that the Lord preserves his people, that truth must be held in synthesis with the call of God to persevere.

4. Pastoral benefits

Many spiritual benefits flow from the doctrine of the perseverance of the [illegible]

First, it promotes obedience. Some believe that the doctrine of perseverance encourages sloth: if I think that I cannot fall away, then I will become complacent and indolent in the Christian life. This was the sixth error refuted in Chapter V of the Canons of Dort:

> Error: By its very nature the doctrine of the certainty of perseverance and salvation causes false security and is harmful to godliness, good morals, prayers, and other holy exercises. On the contrary, it is praiseworthy to doubt.
> Refutation: This error ignores the effective power of God's grace and the working of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. It contradicts the apostle John, who teaches the opposite with these clear words: *Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure* (1 John 3:2, 3). Furthermore, it is refuted by the example of the saints in both the Old and the New Testament who, although they were certain of their perseverance and salvation, nevertheless continued in prayer and other exercises of godliness.

It is essential to appreciate that to persevere is to persevere in godliness and good works. In some circles, "effort" and "good works" are discounted. Whilst it is certainly true that we are not saved by our own works, nor do we depend on our own efforts, nevertheless we are saved in order that we might employ all our ransomed powers in the service of the Lord. Paul holds the balance here: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:8-10). Those who are born again by the Spirit of God also live by the Spirit and he leads them in the paths of obedience. Understanding the true nature of perseverance prevents complacency and motivates the child of God to press forward.

Second, the doctrine of perseverance strengthens faith in God, love for God, and joy in God. As I grasp the truth that he will never allow me to be lost, I renew my trust in him. As I learn his love, I love him; and knowing that it is an everlasting love deepens the wonder and stirs up my love. As I discover that the bond is unbreakable, my joy abounds. All this and more takes on broader and richer dimensions as I ponder the Trinitarian aspects of it. I have a Father in heaven, who will never let me go, who has loved me with an everlasting love; I have a Saviour who will never let me be taken from his hands, who has loved me from eternity, who daily intercedes for me, and who brings me to himself; and the Spirit of God never leaves me nor forsakes me, who stirs up in my heart the love of God, and who fills me with joy and peace in believing. As I ponder the ecclesiastical dimension, it becomes even richer because I belong to a people who cannot be separated from the love of God in Christ Jesus, and who will be filled with eternal praise of joy for the truth of God's preservation

and our perseverance. We press on together. Indeed, the doctrine of perseverance helps me to care for and strengthen my brothers and sisters, to pray for them with hope, to seek the wanderer, and not to lose heart when there is nothing that I can do.

Third, this doctrine strengthens and comforts me in the struggle with sin. The Christian life is a lifelong struggle with sin (Rom. 7). In that struggle, the Christian is constantly in danger of many falls: he is full of weakness, assaulted by the world, the flesh and the devil. Though he might fall many times, he will not be lost. The Lord will lift him up. He has examples to confirm it. Even King David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, sinned, and for a time was removed from his throne and even from the covenant land, but the Lord forgave him and restored him.

Fourth, the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is indispensable to their assurance.[36] Assurance of being in a state of grace is undermined if it is possible that tomorrow that may all be lost.

Fifth, the doctrine of perseverance is a mighty bulwark in the midst of life's worst distresses. When, for instance, Alzheimer's disease begins to take its toll, and confusion and loss of memory sets in, the believer will never be lost. He may no longer recognize his own wife and children, but the Lord will not forget him. Pastors have sometimes noticed that such sufferers still recall the Scriptures learned since youth and we are justified in thinking that the brain's physical decay does not destroy the work of the Holy Spirit in the inner man. Our inner life is a mystery: God's omnipotence is an unchangeable fact. James Montgomery wrote:

> And when these failing lips grow dumb,
> And mind and memory flee,
> When thou shalt in thy kingdom come,
> O Lord, remember me.

When brothers disappoint us, when men fail us, when church discipline breaks down through abuse, we draw help and comfort from the same source. David's men talked of killing him: he strengthened himself in God (1 Sam. 30:6). Paul wrote:

> At my first defence no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered out of the lion's mouth. And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and preserve me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory forever and ever. Amen! (2 Tim. 4:16-18).

He was applying the truth of perseverance to his extreme distress: men fail us, but the Lord never fails us. This article began with a case of invalid

excommunication, of wicked abuse of power within the church. The Good Shepherd overrules it, and we can find peace in that fact. Even in death, the last enemy – our experiences vary so much in death, some falling asleep, others struggling – when all is lost, nothing is lost, because the Lord will keep our souls in the bundle of life. The closing pages of Pilgrim's Progress warrant attention here.

> Then said Christian, Ah! My friend, the sorrows of Death have compassed me about. I shall not see the Land that flows with milk and honey. And with that a great darkness and horror fell upon Christian, so that he could not see before him...Hopeful therefore had much ado to keep his brother's head above water...Hopeful would endeavour to comfort him, saying, Brother, I see the Gate, and Men standing by it to receive us...To whom Hopeful added these words, Be of good cheer, Jesus Christ makes you whole. And with that Christian broke out with a loud voice, Oh, I see him again! And he tells me, When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you.[37]

Sixth, the doctrine of perseverance enables us to enjoy the hope of glory that God has placed within us. Eschatology (the doctrine of last things) cannot have its strongest impact on us apart from the doctrine of perseverance. If we hear of those things which the Lord has prepared for those who love him, but we have no certainty that we shall enjoy them, our hope is tinged with doubt and anxiety, the appalling fear that we might never actually enter the heavenly country, the new heavens and earth. But when we, having trusted in Christ, know that nothing shall ever separate us from him, we can journey on full of hopefulness. The holy city is more beautiful to us when we know that we have an interest in it. Our citizenship is in heaven. This in turn strengthens us daily. As one writer put it, "The eternal glories gleam afar to nerve our faint endeavour."

Seventh, this truth weakens Satan. He cannot destroy God's elect. Yes, their deadly enemy is stronger than they, but God is too strong for him. Indeed, Satan's strategies are turned upside down and his attacks are actually used to build up the saints (Rom. 5:3-4). Furthermore, our victories bring glory to our Lord, who gives us the victory.

Finally, perseverance glorifies God, and the doctrine of it is glorifying to him. Much praise is given to God for the truth of the perseverance of the saints.38. When we meditate on his keeping care, we are moved to worship him. When we look back on those times when, having fallen, we are raised up, our hearts are stirred with thankfulness. "I am his and he is mine forever and forever!"[39]

Some Further Reading

Michael A. Milton, *What is Perseverance of the Saints? Basics of the Reformed Faith Series* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2009).

John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1955).

Robert A. Peterson, *Our Secure Salvation: Preservation and Apostasy* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2009).

John Owen, *Works,* Volume 11 "The Doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance Explained and Confirmed" (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1965).

Notes

1. Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology,* tr., George Musgrave Giger, ed., James T. Dennison, 3 vols. (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1992-1997) , vol.2, pp.594-5, Fifteenth Topic, Q.16 (original edition 1679-82).
2. It is the 'Fifth Head of Doctrine' and is found, for example, in *Book of Praise of the Canadian Reformed Churches,* Authorized Provisional Version (Winnipeg: Premier, 2010), pp.575-581.
3. See also the Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 17 and the Shorter Catechism Questions 35 and 36.
4. Confession of Faith of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists, 1823, article 34: Those whom God has made acceptable in the beloved, has effectually called, and sanctifies by his Spirit, cannot totally and finally fall away from a state of grace, but will certainly be enabled to persevere to the end and shall be saved. Their perseverance depends, not upon their own will, but upon the immutability of God's decree, the election of grace, the strength of the Father's love, the sufficiency of Christ's propitiation, the efficacy of his intercession, their union with Christ, the indwelling of the Spirit, the seed of God within them, the nature and steadfastness of the covenant, and the promise and oath of God. It follows that their perseverance is certain and infallible. It is true they may, through the temptations of Satan and the world, the great strength of their inward corruption, and their neglect of the means of grace, fall into sins, and, for a time, continue therein, and thereby incur God's displeasure, grieve the Holy Spirit, impair their grace, lose their comfort, harden their hearts, wound their consciences, involve themselves in temporal judgments, do injury to others, and give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. Nevertheless, they will be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation; yet their fall will be made very bitter to them. Those who continued to live in undisturbed sin, and flatter themselves that they are in a state of grace, have much reason to fear that they deceive themselves. For perseverance in grace implies not only continuance in the possession and enjoyment of the privileges, but also continuance in holiness, diligence, and watchfulness, in a holy walk and conversation, in earnest devotion to all duties, and in the use of all means of grace. Nothing is more opposed to sin than perseverance in grace; and he that so endures in grace to the end shall be saved.
5. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics,* tr. John Vriend, ed. John Bolt, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003-2008), vol.4, pp.266-7.
6. John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1959 and 1965, and in one volume 1968), vol.1, p.321.
7. Rom. 7:24; 8: 26, and 35-39.
8. See also 2 Tim. 1:12; Eph. 1:13,14; 2:4-7; 4:30.
   Robert A. Peterson, *Our Secure Salvation: Preservation and Apostasy* (Phillipsburg: P&R,

2009) presents substantial textual support from OT and NT. In addition to passage noted already, he includes: Luke 22:31-34; John 6:35, 37-40, 44; 17:9-12, 15, 24 (p.27); 1 Cor. 11:27-33; 1 Thess. 5:23-24 (p.69); Heb. 6:17-20; 7:23-25; 1 John 2:18-19; 5:18 (p.85). The Westminster Assembly's proofs include others beside these: 2 Peter 1:10; 1 John 3:9; 2 Tim. 2:18, 19; Jer. 31:3; Heb. 10:10, 14; 13:20, 21; 9:12-15; John 17:11, 24; 14:16, 17; 1 John 2:27; 3: 9; Jer. 32:40; 2 Thess. 3:3; etc.

10. Peterson, *Our Secure Salvation*, pp.11-25.
11. Consider the factors listed in the Larger Catechism Q. and A. 79.
12. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th ed. (London: A & C Black, 1977), pp.369ff. Augustine had not arrived at the clarity that the church later possessed. For example, he thought that there were two types of grace: grace in baptismal regeneration and a second grace of perseverance. Therefore he thought that a man could be justified and yet not be elect and thus not receive the grace of predestination.
13. The Semi-Pelagians (this term was coined c.1570) taught that God willed to save everyone but foresaw that only some would believe and that he chose them on the basis of foresight.
14. Louis Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1969), pp.150ff contains a succinct description of Arminian ideas.
15. Passages relevant to apostasy include: Gen. 25:19-34; Num. 13-16; Jer. 7:16; 11: 14; 14:10-12; Matt. 12:22-37; Mark 3:28-30; Luke 12:10; Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26-29; 12: 14-17; 1 John 5:16,17; 1 Pet. 4:14; Gal. 5:4; 1 Tim. 1:13; Acts 3:17, 25; Jude 11 and 22ff.
16. Acts 19:9; 21: 21; 2 Thess. 2:3.
17. Deut. 24:1, 3; Isa. 50:1; Jer. 3:8; Matt. 5:31; 19:7; Mark 10:4.
18. Jos. 22:22.
19. Jer. 2:19.
20. Backsliding and repentance are the same root but opposite in substance.
21. This is my rough translation of the Greek, seeking to show the series of participles and the syntactical construction of the sentence.
22. Calvinists and Arminians find the sentence difficult: Calvinists are obliged to explain the falling away, and Arminians the exclusion of any possibility of a second repentance.
23. Some would argue that the sentence is hypothetical and therefore we do not have a case of believers falling away. Whilst this is correct, it would seem that the possibility is seriously entertained, and therefore this line of reasoning would appear to be weak.
24. This is sometimes presented in terms of the distinction between historia salutis and ordo salutis.
25. Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1961), p.152-3.
26. Compare Jer. 7:16; 11:14; 14:11.
27. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p.204.
28. When a case involves mental illness, it can be intractable. The case of William Cowper is instructive in this respect.
29. 1 Sam. 12:23: in ordinary circumstances a prophet sins if he does not pray for the people.
30. Acts 3:17; 1 Tim. 1:13.
31. Michael A. Milton, *What is Perseverance of the Saints?* (Phillipsburg: P & R, 2009), p.19.
32. Charles Stanley, *Eternal Security* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), p.78.
33. Stanley, *Eternal Security*, p.72. 'According to Jesus, what must a person do to keep from being judged for sin? Must he stop doing something? Must he promise to stop doing something? Must he have never done something? The answer is so simple that many stumble over it without ever seeing it. All Jesus requires is that the individual "believe in" Him.' p.63.

1. Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, p.155.

35. John Owen's treatment of this doctrine fills the 11th volume of his works, 666 pages! Chapter 10, 'The Improvement (i.e., Application) of the Doctrine', spells out some of its benefits to the believer: obedience, consolation, etc.
36. Note the order in the Westminster Larger Catechism: Q. 80 *Assurance* follows Q.79 *Perseverance*.
37. John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, reprinted from the edition of 1895), pp.181-3.
38. Job 1-2; Eph. 3:10.
39. Notice how this has entered Christian hymnology; for example, 'A debtor to mercy alone', 'I've found a Friend, O such a Friend', and 'Loved with everlasting love'.

THE LAW WAS MADE FLESH

Iain D Campbell

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Writing in the evangelical magazine *The Briefing* some years ago, David Sheath described the relationship between the believer and the law in the following manner:

> The Mosaic law is of great value to the Christian because it gives such a comprehensive expression to a life shaped by love of God and neighbour. It is God-given directives of how the principles of love are applied in specific circumstances and it is therefore extremely useful for the Christian in thinking how to love today. A helpful analogy is to think of the Mosaic law as you would a retired professor: he is very useful to go to for advice, but he no longer sets the exams.[1]

The illustration is certainly homely; and we ought to be very grateful that the retired professor is accessible and willing to help us. But the point is precisely that: he is retired, and no longer busying about the place. Someone else has taken over his teaching syllabus, and the best he can do is advise us on how we might consider living for Jesus Christ in this world.

Much of modern evangelicalism has bestowed such an *emeritus* status on the Ten Commandments. If they are relevant to our lives at all, it can only be in a carefully nuanced sense. Fred Zaspel, writing on "New Covenant Theology", uses a different analogy; he says that 'Jesus is to Moses what the butterfly is to the caterpillar',[2] the law of Moses is normative only insofar as it comes to us with the maturity and full blossoming which Christ affords. Only to the extent that Christ homologates it is the Mosaic law binding.

The argument on development of revelation within the canon in these approaches is well taken, as is the attempt to do justice both to the permanence of the salvation story and the temporariness of many of the older forms of the narrative. But this is often weakened by the assumption that the law itself is a homogeneous unit, which virtually disappears when it is subsumed under the full revelation of the incarnation.

Classical theology - as far back as the patristic period - did not regard the law as a complete unit, however. In his study of the development of early Christian thought, Ronald Heine notes that "the problem concerning the use of the Old Testament by the church came into special prominence in the mid-

second century when the church was disengaged from Judaism and had become predominantly Gentile."3. While other issues entered into that problem, the right understanding of the law was a major component. That the blessing of Abraham had come upon the Gentiles could not be denied, but whether the law of Moses was still a requirement of covenant life could not easily be settled.

Heine examines the teaching of Justin Martyr. Justin, Heine notes, "begins his defence by arguing that the God of the Old Testament and the God of the Christians is the same God",4. but also notes that the new law (= Christ) has replaced the old law of Moses. The former is eternal where the latter was temporary. However, that is not the whole story. Recognising that the Old Testament is *Christian* Scripture, Justin argued for distinctions within the law of Moses:

> He divides the law into two categories. The first may be referred to broadly as the moral law, though Justin does not give it a name. This law refers to the worship of God and righteous living. It is universal and eternal and probably to be identified primarily with the Decalogue, though Justin never makes that identification explicit...Justin divides his second category of law into two further parts. One part relates to what he calls 'the mystery of Christ'. This he calls a prophetic element in the law. The other part, Justin argues, is the law that was given to the Hebrews "because of the hardness of their heart" (*Dialogue* 44.2). By this second part he means what we refer to as the ritual or ceremonial law.[5]

The upshot of this discussion is that for Justin, Christians required to have a three-fold perspective on the law of Moses. First, they should recognise in it some ceremonial elements which were for the Jews only, ritual elements which were superseded by Christ. Second, they should recognise in it a prophetic element which anticipated Jesus, and pointed forward to him. Third, they should recognise in it a moral element "that has eternal validity for Christians as well as Jews."[6]

Even Reformed theologians like John Frame who are happy to work with the classical division of the law as moral, ceremonial and civil, however, are afraid that this causes more problems than it solves:

> the distinction between "moral" and "ceremonial" is not as helpful as we might have thought...*moral* is just a label for those laws we believe to be currently normative, rather than a quality of the laws that leads us to that conclusion. The same is true for the label ceremonial.[7]
>
> ...some laws called ceremonial have little to do with ceremonies ... it seems as though theologians call certain laws "ceremonial" not because they share a certain subject matter, but rather because they are judged not appropriate to the new covenant.[8]
>
> ...among the civil laws are at least some that apply to nations other than Israel – that is, some that are not merely civil, but moral.[9]

If this is true, then the retired professor has been well settled and domesticated within Reformed theology.

A recent study of the threefold division has not only answered the questions raised by Frame, but has virtually settled the issue. Philip Ross's *From the Finger of God* is a timely reminder that the division is no arbitrary or alien imposition on the canon, but is, in fact, only the recognition of the nature of the law as originally given. "The Mosaic law does not apply without exception to the Christian," Ross argues, "but nor can we dispense with it altogether. One part of the law is non-binding, another binding in its underlying principles, and another ever-binding".[10] The confessional position of Westminster - that the ceremonial laws are abrogated under the New Testament, that the civil laws have expired except to the extent of their "general equity"[11], and that the moral principles of the Decalogue are strengthened under the gospel - is a conclusion arrived at on redemptive-historical grounds. So Ross: "if the source of Christian confessionalism is Scripture - read as a coherent, progressive and self-interpreting whole - then the threefold division of the law need not roll over and die."[12]

Jesus and the Law

On this basis, therefore, we must examine the relationship of Jesus Christ to the law of God. A right understanding of this theme is vital to our view of the plan of salvation. In his own words, Jesus came to fulfil the law, not to destroy it (Matthew 5:17). This statement is axiomatic for our understanding of all subsequent reflection on the Old Testament. There is a principle in New Covenant Theology which is worthy of consideration: we must begin with what is final in order to understand what was primary. The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. So where does that leave the law? In what sense did Jesus fulfil it?

Whatever the precise meaning of the phrase, it must also be set side by side with those statements in which Jesus made it plain that some Old Testament legal material was, in fact, to be abolished. Jesus declared, for example, that the day was coming when worship would not be centralised or localised as the Old Testament had demanded (John 4:21). He also demonstrated in his teaching that the material aspects of the earlier redemptive history were to be subsumed in the new covenant in his blood (Matthew 26:28), rather than in the blood of lambs, goats and bullocks. The emphasis on fulfilment and non-abolition of the law is valid, notwithstanding the fact that elements of that law were, in fact, to be set aside by the advent, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Yet integral to Jesus' teaching is the fact that the moral law remains. In response to Jesus' statement to the rich young man that if he would enter life he must keep the Commandments, his interlocut asked, "Which ones?"

(Matthew 19:18). Jesus' citation from the Decalogue – "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honour your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Matthew 19:19) - is as powerful a statement as any as to the continuing validity of distinguishing the moral aspects of the law from others.

Interestingly, Jesus cites only from the second table of the law – it may well be, as Hendricksen surmises, that "failure to observe the second table implies failure to keep the first."[13] In addition, the summary statement drawn from Leviticus 19:18 – "but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord" – will be cited by Jesus in Matthew 22:40 as the second great commandment, fundamental to "the law and the prophets", and second only to the commandment demanding allegiance to God alone.

But the point is clear – the commandments which relate to eternal life are not so much the civil and ceremonial precepts, but the moral ones. The same point is reinforced by Paul's summary statement in Romans 13:8-10, where the 'law' is illustrated by direct reference to the Ten Commandments:

> *Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

This is a point helpfully explored by B.B. Warfield in a brilliant treatise on "Jesus the Measure of Men". "Our blessed Savior," he writes, "as the Perfect One, full of all righteousness and holiness, is the embodiment of the law."[14] Christ humbled himself in this life, as the Larger Catechism points out, "by subjecting himself to the law, which he perfectly fulfilled" (Q.48); in addition to which he was the very incarnation of that law which he kept on behalf of his people.

Warfield describes the life of the incarnate Saviour as the "plumb-line of perfection...let down into the seething mass of imperfect men".[15] As such, the history of the man Christ Jesus is nothing less than an increasing disclosure of the ethical and moral absolutes of God's commands. What Warfield calls "the ever-growing glory of the revelation of [Jesus'] perfect life"[16] is what attracts us to him; to love the commandment as something "holy and righteous and good" (Romans 7:12) is to love him whose holiness and righteousness and goodness are the enfleshment of the law's character.

The Word made flesh

This, it seems to me, is a necessary corrective to the 'retired professor' analogy, and to every other analogy that absolutises the contrast between Jesus

and the law. That there is a contrast is implicit in several biblical passages; but how far may we push the idea that Jesus is the new Torah?[17] To the extent that Jesus eclipses Moses, does he hide the law from our view altogether?

Warfield's use of the word "embodiment" is important in this connection. In what sense were the Commandments, the unchanging moral principles of the law of God, embodied in Christ? Several preliminary observations are warranted.

First, *the Commandments were a revelation of the God of Sinai,* given in the context of theophany. They constituted a declaration of God's will, and functioned as the Book of the Covenant (Exodus 24:7) only because they first emanated from the God whose laws they were. The re-writing of the Commandments in Exodus 34 was in the context of the descent of God, the revelation of his name, and the proclamation of his attributes (Exodus 34:5-7). In writing the words of the covenant, God revealed his glory, reflected in the fact that the glory-cloud was over the ark, which housed the written word of the law.

There can therefore be no disparity between theophany and incarnation. What was revealed in awesome glory at Sinai is enfleshed in human nature in Galilee. In Jesus Christ the glory has been veiled, but it is revealed nonetheless. The transfiguration functions as the new covenant counterpart of Sinai, enabling John to say "we beheld his glory" (John 1:14). What thundered at Sinai is now present in the God-man, the fire of the divine nature burning in the bush of our frail nature (to paraphrase John Owen), yet not so as to consume it.

Second, *the Commandments were a re-publication of the moral impulses* written into the heart of the first Adam. These were collapsed into one external prohibition about the non-eating of fruit from a particular tree. In actual fact, this prohibition, upon which death was threatened, represented a dramatising of the very stipulations which would later be given to Israel in the Decalogue. So when Thomas Boston, for example, comes to deal in his *Human Nature in its Fourfold State* with the corruption of man's nature by the fall, he can only do so in the light of the Ten Commandments which, he says, were broken by man all at once, defacing the image of God in man at a stroke. What God required of man at Sinai in writing was what he had required of him at Eden intuitively.

This position is clearly articulated in the Westminster Confession of Faith, which says that the law, after Adam's fall "continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness; and, as such, was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments, and written in two tables" (XIX.2). But this also has to be carefully nuanced; although there was a re-publication of the law at Sinai, there was no re-publication of the covenant of works.[18] As the preface to the Ten Commandments makes clear, the law was given to a redeemed people (Exodus 20:2), within the context of a grace covenant. Sinai was a re-publishing of the standards God required of Adam, but not a new edition of the arrangement

under which these standards were revealed. In the words of the *Marrow of Modern Divinity,* "Adam heard as much in the garden as Israel did at Sinai, but only in fewer words and without thunder."[19]

Now, in Jesus Christ, the Second Man, the last Adam, has come. "He took up the controversy just where it had before so disastrously ended," according to George Smeaton.[20] He is to restore what he did not take away (Psalm 69:4) and he does so by appearing as the Adam in whose whole Person the moral perfections of God are robed in human nature. Adam, created in innocence, moral purity and righteousness, was a "type" of the coming One (Romans 5:12), who would stand before God where Adam stood, with no need of redemption as Israel had, and who would, through his own rectitude and the imputation of his own law-keeping, deliver his people. In Adam, we lost our righteousness. In Christ, the Lord himself is our righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6). This could not be the case unless the Ten Commandments were embodied in the single life of the last Adam, just as they had been embodied in the single life of the first. In the last Adam there is no thunder either, simply the lifting of the glory cloud that left the disciples of Jesus seeing no man but the Saviour (Luke 9:34-36).

Third, *"the end of the commandment is love"* (1 Timothy 1:5, KJV). The Bible constantly draws a relationship between law and love (cf John 14:23, 15:10), drawing on the fact that the Commandments had no meaning except as means towards a deepening love for God. So Jesus can teach the lawyer that the Commandments require love for God and neighbour (Luke 10:27), just as Moses had taught in Deuteronomy 6:5.

Love, as Paul puts it in Romans 13:10, is the fulfilling of the law. But that does not mean that love fulfils the law by setting it aside. It is precisely here that we find the true meaning of the new covenant – the moral precepts are engraved on the *heart.* There is an affectionate aspect to obedience in the new covenant that was not prominent in the older form of the covenant, although it was never entirely absent either. The older form was predominantly externalised, although the moral requirements of the law could never be met by mere external observance alone. The newer form of the covenant is stripped of such scaffolding, and is predominantly internalised, yet the moral requirements of slavery to Christ can never be satisfied by internal predisposition alone. For that reason, the law of love is the law of Christ, and the law of Christ is none other than the law of the Ten Words which he embodied and exemplified.

Now, in Jesus Christ, the God who is love has appeared among men in the person of his Son. His earliest life on earth is summarised in terms of his increasing "in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52). He loved his Father and he loved his people (John 13:1; 14:31). The duties of the law in respect of our relationship to God find their perfect embodiment in Jesus, as do these duties in respect of our relationship to others. For this reason there is no incongruity

between stating that as new covenant believers we have an impulse, an ability and a desire to obey God's law which formerly we did not have, and that we have an example in the person and work of Jesus which now we are to follow (1 Peter 2:21). In Christ we are as innocent as Adam was, but we are more safe; for us there is no possibility of being excommunicated from Paradise.

Ten Commandments in One Life

So, as revealing the nature of God, as re-publishing the moral code imprinted on the heart of Adam, and as expressing the true nature of love, there can be no incompatibility or incongruity between the moral Word inscribed in stone, and the eternal Word incarnate in flesh. The imprint of Jesus Christ is upon the commandments, and the imprint of the Commandments upon Christ. The messianic prediction of One who would "magnify his law and make it glorious" (Isaiah 42:21) is magnificently fulfilled in Christ. In his humiliation, the law has its exaltation.

This must surely be included in our understanding of Christ as our example. Our salvation is necessary precisely because we have not been like Jesus; we have not followed his example. For those who were unlike himself he gave himself, bearing our sins in his body on the tree (1 Peter 2:24). But for those for whom this is true, it is also true that "Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps" (1 Peter 2:21). He came, as Rabbi Duncan once put it, to save the very opposites of himself, but not so as to leave them such.

Christ as our example for living belongs to the whole doctrine of the New Testament concerning the believer's renewal. God's people, under both the Old and the New Testaments, were saved for a purpose: to be holy as God himself is holy (Leviticus 19:2, Matthew 5:48, 1 Peter 1:15-16). For us, that means conformity to the image of Jesus Christ, who is the image of God. This, to use the terminology of John Murray, is the pattern of sanctification. He writes:

> the law of God, the revealed will of God, and the example of our Lord are the criteria and patterns according to which sanctification proceeds. The law of God is the transcript of God's perfection; it is God's perfection coming to expression for the regulation of thought and conduct consonant with his holiness.[21]

To separate obedience to God's law from the example of the Lord himself is to bifurcate what Scripture clearly joins together. We cannot be followers of the example of Jesus Christ if at the same time we are wilful lawbreakers: "every lack of conformity to the law of God is lack of conformity to God's likeness, and all conformity to the law is but conformity to that pattern which is the primary and ultimate pattern of sanctification."[22] To live like Christ is to magnify the law and make it glorious in our own lives, not in order to satisfy

ourselves, but in order to please God.

So what is the example of Jesus Christ? It is, surely, the example of ten commandments embodied in one perfect life. Is this not what the sinlessness of Christ means - that he did not break the law of God; not one commandment was once broken by him. It may not be permissible for us to draw a picture of Jesus, but in fact it is possible for us to find his likeness in the very words of the Decalogue itself.

It would be profitable, in other words, to look at the life of Jesus through the lens and prism of each of the commandments. The things the commandments required he did perfectly. The things the law forbade he avoided meticulously. His pattern was the holiness of his Father, and his ethic the ethic of Sinai. The tables of the law, which together embody the ultimate norm of love for God and love for others, are written into every aspect of the life of Christ.

Christ the embodiment of love to God

First, the law required that Israel have no God but Jehovah. The redeemed people of God were to be bound exclusively to the God who could not be seen, yet who spoke the words of the covenant. He identifies himself as the God who covenanted himself to be the God of this people exclusively, and so redeemed them out of the house of bondage. They were to be his, and he was to be theirs. "Have no others gods before me" (Exodus 20:3) becomes the foundation for all the rest.

Jesus calls God his Father, but written over the whole of his life in addition is his subjection to the Father as his God. In the covenant of redemption, the Father covenanted to be God to the Son, and in the accomplishment of redemption, the Son acknowledges his Father to be his God (Matthew 27:46, John 20:17). He is the servant of Jehovah, and his food and drink is to do the will of the one who sent him (John 4:34). It is this fact that settles his controversy with the devil (Matthew 4:10); the devil wants Jesus to worship him, but Jesus can give God's glory to no other. Ultimately, it is this that drives him to the cross; Jesus goes out to his allotted portion because he loves the Father, and will obey the Father's commandment (John 14:31). He has no other god.

Second, the law required that Jehovah be worshipped spiritually, not with any unauthorised helps or false representations. God not only made himself the object of Israel's worship, but its regulator too. God was not to be represented by anything in heaven, in the earth, or under the earth. The jealousy of God is invoked as the reason for spiritual worship (Exodus 20:5).

As the subordinate servant, Jesus worshipped God. His whole life was an offering to God. His death as a sacrifice was his greatest act of worship. An

in all his adoration of God, Jesus worshipped God simply and biblically, both in the synagogue (Mark 6:2) and in private (Matthew 26:30). Israel went into exile because the people 'feared the Lord and also served their carved images' (2 Kings 17:41), but no carved image was ever formed, or ever worshipped by Nazareth's most famous carpenter.

Third, the law demanded reverence for the name of God, violation of which was a capital offence (Leviticus 24:16). The name of the Lord was revealed to Moses (Exodus 3:14), and represents the way in which God reveals himself in his creation: his name is majestic in all the earth (Psalm 8:1). God's name is also a remarkable accommodation. The God who hides himself (Isaiah 45:15) is also the God who introduces himself. The third commandment prohibits blasphemy: God is to be revered and reverenced.

Ironically, it was for blasphemy that Jesus was crucified (Mark 14:64), yet his reverence for the name of God is everywhere apparent, not least in his assertion that Jesus revealed the name of God to those whom the Father had given him (John 17:6); in that name he had kept them (John 17:12), and by his Spirit he continues to reveal that name to them (John 17:26). He is the embodiment of respect for the name of Jehovah. Ultimately, Jesus IS the name of God.

Fourth, the law required the keeping of a Sabbath holy to the Lord. This had significance both for creation (Exodus 20:11) and for redemption (Deuteronomy 5:15). By his own example, and by the law governing the gathering of manna in Exodus 16, God showed that the seventh day of the week was to be the Sabbath day for his old covenant people.

Sabbath-breaking was often laid to Christ's charge, yet the way in which he dealt with the charge led to the claim that he himself was Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28). Far from breaking it, the day was his; he alone could show the true nature of it. His lordship over the Sabbath did not endure merely for the three years he was on earth, but is his in perpetuity. By a new act of creation and redemption - his own resurrection - as he transferred the "Day of the Lord" from the end of the week to its beginning. He observes, fulfils and embodies the Sabbath principle. He works as a carpenter for six days of the week, and worships God on the seventh. He fulfils the righteousness of the law in his employment and in his rest. And he gives a better "Sabbath" to his new covenant people to enjoy.

Christ the embodiment of love to others

With the fifth commandment, the law applies the sovereignty of God to every area of our personal relationships. "By the first table," writes Thomas Watson, "we walk religiously towards God; by the second, we walk religiously towards man. He cannot be good in the first table that is bad in the second."[21]

The fifth commandment concerned respect for parental authority. Home is the primary training ground for this. Children are to grow up with a recognition that their lives are subject to the authority of their parents. However, the Puritans recognised that the underlying moral principle here is of subjection to all legitimate authority, which is why Thomas Watson, for example, suggests that we all have different kinds of fathers - there are, he says, political fathers, ancient fathers, spiritual fathers and "domestic" fathers as well as natural ones.

Jesus is the perfect embodiment of this standard. His heavenly Father is the one whose business he must be "about" (Luke 2:49, AV). But by way of submission to his heavenly Father, it is also written of Jesus that he came to Nazareth and was subject to his earthly parents (Luke 2:51). To the end of his life he showed that respect, not least in his transference of the care of Mary into the hands of John (John 19:26-7). No mother ever had a more loving son. Indeed, Jesus was a much better son to Mary than she was a mother to him.

But the respect of Jesus for authority is exemplified in his teaching that one should render to Caesar what belongs to him (Matthew 22:21). In a sense that became true of his own life, as Caesar claimed it and as he was crucified in a Roman tribunal and at the bar of an imperial court. Notwithstanding the principle that "we must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29), the willingness of Jesus to be taken and put to death in this way was only the outworking of the principle that honour must be given to those who are in authority. John Frame's pertinent insight that behind the fifth commandment is the idea of authority as a blessing[24] also undergirds Jesus' actions from infancy to maturity.

Sixth, in its prohibition of murder, the law required respect for life, forbidding the intentional taking away of life, and requiring everything necessary to be done to sustain life and to preserve it. Anything less was an assault on the image of God in man (Genesis 9:6). But as Jesus himself taught, the commandment went further, prohibiting unrighteous anger too (Matthew 5:21-26).

Although Jesus himself exhibited anger, it was never uncontrolled, and always measured. Jesus perceived himself on a mission to destroy the devil's kingdom, a kingdom characterised by disease, distress and death. It is not inconsequential that Mark's first recorded miracle is one in which a demon says to Jesus, "Have you come to destroy us?" (Mark 1:24), or that the Gospel records close, not with death, but with resurrection. The Prince of Life does all that he can to preserve life and not to endanger it. At last, that means that he must forfeit his own.

Seventh, the law proscribed adultery. The creation ordinance of marriage was designed to make a sinless Paradise better. By it, one man and one woman were to be joined together for life. Again, Jesus brought out the deeper meaning of the commandment, which required not just purity of action but

purity of thought: the lustful look, he said, was itself a breach of this commandment (Matthew 5:28).

Jesus, the perfect man, embodies the standards of moral and sexual purity demanded in the law. Although he never took a human wife, he showed deference to women, always maintaining the proper decorum, perfectly controlling his natural emotions and human passions, always respecting purity over pleasure. To be alone with a woman was not a problem to him (John 4:27; 20:14), and his commitment to the principles of chastity and faithfulness was evident both in his teaching and in his example. Mary was not a perpetual virgin, but her firstborn Son was, married only to his blood-bought church.

Eighth, the law required respect for property, declaring theft to be morally inexcusable. Faithfulness in commerce, restitution of property, care in our use of our goods and for the welfare of others are all included in this law (see Larger Catechism, Q 141). This is reflected in the complex Old Testament legislation regarding property, theft and restitution (for example, in Exodus 21:33-22:15, Leviticus 19:13) and at last becomes the basis of the Jubilee year, in which lost property is restored and redemption accomplished (see Leviticus 25). This special Sabbatical year, the year of the Lord's favour (Isaiah 61:2), becomes a paradigm for the ministry of the Lord (Luke 4:21).

Jesus is careful to pay lawful taxes (Matthew 17:24ff, 22:17ff), and his parables often draw on the morality of handling money, goods and property. He had, by his own admission, no place to lay his head (Matthew 8:20), and little property of his own. But he respected what belonged to others, and was always guarded and measured in his dealings with others. Interestingly, his words to those who came to arrest him were, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me?" (Matthew 26:55). The most honest man who ever lived was finally arrested as if he was the country's most notorious thief.

Ninth, the law required honesty in dealing with men and with God. False accusations were abominable to God, as were dishonesty and lying. God's law is perfect, and demands perfection – truth in the inward being (Psalm 51:6). Jesus is the very embodiment of Truth, both by his own admission (John 14:6), and in the testimony of others (cf. John 18:38). Of Jesus Peter can say, after all he witnessed of him, that there "he committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth." (1 Peter 2:22).

Finally, the law forbade covetousness and required contentment with one's condition. The love required by the law is the law of the love which 'does not envy or boast' (1 Corinthians 13:4), neither rejoicing in a neighbour's loss, nor desiring a neighbour's gain. Jesus is the perfect incarnation of contentment; without a place to lay his head, he does not covet the home of any other. He works miracles to improve the lot of others, but never to improve his own. He saved others, but himself he will not save. His over-riding concern at

every point is "your will be done" (Matthew 26:42).

Jesus our Righteousness

According to Paul, the work of the Holy Spirit is to transform us into the likeness of Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:18), to make us like our Saviour. He is what men ought to have been, the straight-edge which shows how warped in sin we have become. Full of grace and truth, Christ confronts us, to return to Warfield "with the spectacle of his perfect humanity".[25] His personal rectitude and immaculate character show him to be the unfallen Adam, the unadulterated Israel, the perfect Man, the Lord of glory. It is in these perfections that he becomes the righteousness of his people; embodying the law, he is subject to the law; fulfilling the law of his God, he subjects himself to the twisted, self-interested abuses of the law on the part of his accusers. That, at last, is the basis of our redemption.

Those of us who profess to love him also profess to love his character and long to see it replicated in ourselves. There is no love for Jesus without love for the law of God, which finds its perfect expression in him. Our longing is to be obedient, to be like him, even when our burden is how unlike him we actually are. May God enable us to see Jesus for who and what he is, so that, walking in the Spirit, the righteousness of the law might also be exhibited in us (Romans 8:4), just as it was in him.

Notes

1. David Sheath, "Moses and Me: The relationship of the Mosaic law to the Christian life", *The Briefing*, Issue 315 (December 2004), p24.
2. Fred Zaspel "The Continuing Relevance of divine law", in Tom Wells and Fred Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense* (New Covenant Media, 2002), p.157.
3. R.E. Heine, *Reading the Old Testament with the Ancient Church: Exploring the Formation of Early Christian Thought* (Grand Rapids: BakerAcademic, 2007), p.47.
4. Heine, *Reading the Old Testament*, p50.
5. Heine, *Reading the Old Testament*, pp.50-1.
6. Heine, *Reading the Old Testament*, p.52.
7. J.M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life: A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2008), p.214.
8. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, pp.214-5.
9. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, p.215.
10. Philip S. Ross, *From the Finger of God: The Biblical and Theological Basis for the Threefold Division of the Law* (Tain: Mentor, 2010), p.2.
11. For an excellent discussion of this topic see Sinclair Ferguson, "An Assembly of Theonomists? The Teaching of the Westminster Divines on the Law of God", in W.S. Barker and W.R. Godfrey (eds), *Theonomy: A Reformed Critique* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990).
12. *From the Finger of God*, p.353.
13. W. Hendriksen, *Matthew* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1982), p.725.

14. B.B. Warfield, "Jesus the Measure of Men" in *Selected Shorter Writings* (Nutley: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1973), Vol.2, p.688.
15. "Jesus the Measure of Men", p.689.
16. "Jesus the Measure of Men", p.689.
17. Tom Wells, "The Meaning and Source of Moral Law", *New Covenant Theology*, p.166.
18. As is argued, for example, in B.D. Estelle, F.V. Fesko and D. Vandrunen, The Law is not of Faith (Welwyn: Evangelical Press, 2009).
19. *Marrow of Modern Divinity*, p.21.
20. G. Smeaton, *Christ's Doctrine of the Atonement* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2009), p.308.
21. J. Murray, "The Pattern of Sanctification" in *Collected Writings of John Murray, Vol 2: Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2009), pp.306-307.
22. Murray, "The Pattern of Sanctification", p.307.
23. Thomas Watson, *The Ten Commandments* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2009), p.122.
24. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, p.589.
25. Warfield, "Jesus the Measure of Men", p.691.

BOOK REVIEWS

Preacher, keep yourself from idols, Derek Tidball, Inter-varsity Press, 2011, pbk, 207 pages, £8.99

As the title of this book suggests, the author has taken the concluding words of John's first epistle "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" and has applied them to the preacher of the gospel serving Christ in the 21st century. This book does not deal with the mechanics of preaching but with the pitfalls into which preachers can all too easily fall.

This publication begins with a well crafted introduction about the nature of idolatry. It is a timely warning showing how prone we all are to this evil and the quotation from Calvin, that "the human mind is, so to speak, a perpetual forge [factory] of idols", reminds every preacher of the importance of being vigilant.

The book is divided into four sections: the idols of self, the idols of the age, the idols of the task and the idols of the ministry. Each section is then subdivided into chapters as the author identifies with razor sharp precision the various temptations to which a preacher is particularly vulnerable. Twelve idols are identified and are associated with: the pulpit, authority, popularity, success, entertainment, novelty, secularization, oratory, immediacy, professionalism, busyness and familiarity. He recognises that this is not an exhaustive list and urges the reader to search his heart for idols that may have crept in and are marring his ministry.

This reviewer found the section entitled "the idols of the age" particularly helpful and challenging. There is the recognition that the apostle Paul had to confront certain idols in Corinth associated with the ministerial office in the first century. For example, when he was in that city he refused to use "the eloquence", "the human wisdom" or "the techniques of persuasion" of that culture, but "resolved to know nothing ... except Jesus Christ and him crucified". In this section Tidball identifies the idols of success, entertainment, novelty and secularism. Some churches, Tidball recognises, are run like a business and a pastor can be pressurised into producing results. If he succumbs to this pressure and begins to worship the idol of success then other idols are likely to raise their heads - the idols of entertainment, novelty and secularism. Any perceptive reader of this review will clearly discern where these idols have taken many 21st century preachers.

Throughout this book the author is careful to maintain a helpful balance. For example, when warning against the idol of entertainment he is careful to point out that we as preachers "have a responsibility to speak in a way that communicates in the contemporary cultural context". Very helpful suggestions are then provided to encourage preachers to communicate their message to a 21st

century congregation without undermining the integrity of the gospel content.

The author correctly warns his readers against the idol of oratory, but recognises that monotony, dullness and mediocrity can be characteristic of much preaching today. The balance of his presentation is illustrated when he writes: "So let us work, and work harder at the art of persuasion, than we often do. The chief error of the time is probably not that we use too much oratory but too little, not that we overcraft our words but do not craft them enough. At the same time we must always be alert to the way in which oratory becomes an end in itself. We preach because we enjoy the music of the words we produce, rather than because they are instruments of the Spirit's transforming power. When that happens, we find ourselves bowing down to the idol of human words and mere rhetoric. Preacher, keep yourself from idols."

This is a very helpful book on preaching. The seasoned preacher needs to read it and reflect on its application to his own preaching and then repent of whatever idols have crept in over the years. The preacher who is a novice will read this book with profit as it will alert him from the outset to the many idols that can so easily seduce him and render his ministry ineffective. Compared to the cost of residential conferences on preaching this little volume is relatively cheap and should prove to be a rich blessing to every faithful minister of Christ.

Robert McCollum

Christians and Pagans. The Conversion of Britain from Alban to Bede, Malcolm Lambert, Yale University Press, 2010, hbk., 329 pages, £30.00

To most Christians the story of the coming of Christianity to Britain is a closed book. They may have heard one or two names from the period, such as Ninian or Augustine, and if Irish, they will have heard of Patrick. The little they know, however, may well contain a large dose of legend and pious embellishment. The coming of the Christian faith to these shores is one nevertheless well worth telling, and this new book from Malcolm Lambert, formerly reader in medieval history at Bristol University, is well suited to illuminating our darkness on the subject.

Lambert begins with a chapter entitled "The Lost Church" which serves as a reminder that Christianity was present in Britain during the period of Roman control which ended at the beginning of the fifth century. The written sources are scant and so considerable weight must be placed on archaeological evidence provided by the remains of buildings, monuments and memorials, and artefacts associated with worship. This difficulty will resurface at different points in the story which Lambert tells, but he demonstrates a thorough acquaintance with the most recent archaeological findings relevant to the

period, along with an ability to make clear to non-specialist readers their significance (at least in broad outline). He concludes that, with the exception of the military sites in the north of England, Christianity was a phenomenon of the lowlands of Britain, stronger in the country and in country towns. It was, in fact, closely connected with the Roman presence.

The withdrawal of Roman forces in 411 left the British church to its own devices, but it did not signal its demise. Still maintaining links with the continent, the church engaged in mission and in its new situation began to expand. It is into this period that Patrick fits, and Lambert engages in some careful detective work to separate fact from fiction in the story of Patrick. An important feature of Christians and Pagans is the attention which the author gives to Ireland, Wales and Scotland, as well as England. The result is a well balanced narrative that avoids the weaknesses of excessive focus on England.

The great challenge faced by the church in the succeeding centuries was the arrival of large numbers of immigrants and invaders from Germanic pagan tribes such as Angles, Saxons and Jutes. Lambert recounts the process by which British Christianity was pushed to the margins of the country, to what we consider to be the "Celtic" regions. The influence of Ireland in the evangelisation of the south of Scotland and the northern parts of England, with the foundation of monasteries at significant locations such as Iona and Lindisfarne, is a major element in the Christian history of these islands. At the end of the sixth century Gregory the Great sent Augustine to evangelise the south of England and to bring a distinctively 'Roman' brand of the faith with him. Conflict was inevitable and in the end Rome, with its wealth, power and international connections, was victorious.

The story that unfolds up to the days of the great historian Bede in the eighth is full of interest, with struggles between secular rulers and churchmen figuring largely in the narrative. The interplay of politics and religion was as complex in Anglo-Saxon Britain as it is in many places today. The careers of larger-than-life figures such as Bishop Wilfred would provide ample material for novels or television series. In some ways it is amazing that living, witnessing Christian communities emerged from the conflicts and rivalries that characterised the history of the church in this period, yet they did, and their roots proved to be strong. There were many weaknesses in the churches, and a considerable mixture of error in some cases, but the gospel did spread - under the overruling providence of God.

Lambert has constructed a clear narrative, characterised by careful scholarship and judicious use of the available sources, written and archaeological, which reads well and is accessible to non-specialists. It will serve to enlighten anyone interested in the history of Christianity in the British Isles in a period which is too little known and about which misconceptions abound.

David McKay

The Life of Charles Hodge, A. A. Hodge, Banner of Truth Trust, 2011, hbk., 655 pages, £17.00

Charles Hodge is rightly regarded as one of the leading theologians of the nineteenth century. His life's work centred on Princeton Seminary where he studied and became Professor of Systematic Theology. This biography was written by his son A. A. Hodge just two years after the death of his father. At the insistence of his children, Charles Hodge during the last year of his life complied reminiscences of his childhood and youth. The first part of the book is therefore strictly speaking an autobiography.

Hodge was blessed with a godly mother who took her children regularly to public worship and at home taught them the doctrines of the Westminster catechisms. Hodge describes his own religious experience as unremarkable "unless it be that it began very early." Home was not the only influence on Hodge's spiritual growth. He grew up under the gracious ministry of Ashbel Green – later President of Princeton. He also spoke of the profound influence which his teacher, and later colleague, Archibald Alexander exerted on him. Hodge lived at a time when Princeton was visited by a special time of spiritual awakening and undoubtedly he, along with his fellow students, received personal blessing during that period.

Many will know Charles Hodge primarily by his writings – his major three volume work on Systematic Theology and his commentaries on Romans, Ephesians and 1 Corinthians. This biography opens a door into the life of the man behind the writing. He is shown to be a man who displayed the Christian graces in his home, his study, the classroom and through times of personal illness and loss.

Although the author determined in his writing "not to intrude my opinions of or affection for my father", it is still true that the close relationship of a father and son means that there are insights which would be known only within the family. Hodge's devotion to his first wife, the former Sarah Bache, and to his children is evident. He kept up a regular correspondence with his mother and his brother who was a little older than he was and on whom he relied for counsel and occasionally for financial help. "The whole family correspondence is suffused with the glow of his rich and full happiness, having their springs in his religion, his family and his beloved work."

Hodge the professor is seen as a man of real intellect and warm devotion. His lectures were more than an opportunity to impart knowledge. One of his students B. B. Warfield was prepared to speak of his teacher's limitations as an exegete, "in questions of textual criticism he constantly went astray." However for Warfield that was a minor matter! His assessment of Hodge's exposition of Scripture was one of gratitude and admiration. "I thought then (as a student) as I think now (as a College professor) that Dr Hodge's sense of the general

meaning of the passage was unsurpassed. He was my ideal as a teacher."

Another former student concurs. William Paxton of New York emphasized the warmth of Hodge's lectures: "what he gave us was bread from our Father's table. We were deeply impressed with the conviction that the thought most in his mind was Christ, the being nearest to his heart was Christ, the centre of all his theology was Christ."

Hodge had a wide ranging interest in the issues of the day which he retained till the end of his life. He lived of course, through the period of the Civil War and had decided views on the war itself, the reasons for it and what should be the response of the church to it. He had a catholicity of spirit though always combined with wise discernment. During his time studying in Europe he worshipped in many different churches. Writing to his colleague Archibald Alexander about one service he noted, "There was nothing in the whole service which appeared to me at all adapted to make men wiser of better."

Though Hodge was essentially a Seminary professor he did not close himself off from the church. He was a decided Presbyterian and participated regularly in the meetings of the General Assembly playing a crucial role in dealing with some of the controversies which arose during this period. Contemporaries agreed that his preaching was not in one sense "popular". However when speaking without the use of manuscript his preaching entered a different dimension and brought great blessing to his hearers.

This is undoubtedly a significant biography which deserves this re-publication and which has been produced in a very attractive format. It contains insights which will be of real value to many Christians, for example on the attitude of parents when a daughter is married or when struggling with illness or facing loss and financial pressure. However the book will be of particular value to those who are called to leadership in the church of Christ. Long held assumptions will be challenged, personal godliness will be held up as a thing to be greatly desired and the view of Christ's church in the world will be widened.

Knox Hyndman

A Gracious and Compassionate God: Mission, salvation and spirituality in the book of Jonah. Daniel C. Timmer, New Studies in Biblical Theology 26, Apollos: Inter Varsity Press, 2011, 201pages, pbk., £12.99

This stimulating, sound and thorough work by the Associate Professor at Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, is to be highly recommended as an example of how to do Biblical Theology. It is excellent background reading for any pastor preparing to preach a series on the little Book of Jonah (which as he says is "full of surprises") or any theological student who wants to learn how

to do biblical–theological interpretation. As he states in the Introduction, "Jonah centres on the grand theme of the Bible: the manifestation of God's unmerited grace to those who have sinned against him...It also draws the reader into the progressive unfolding of God's intention to bless all nations through his chosen people...The ideal reader must of course understand the text first, but he understands it in order to 'stand under' it in humility, with the prayer that its life-giving and life-transforming truth would be brought to bear on him by the Spirit of God himself, resulting in his sanctification and God's glory...The book of Jonah...was written to facilitate spiritual change in its readers and our study of the book is not complete until we have wrestled with it on those terms." Timmer discusses the biblical text in detail, always paying attention to redemptive history and its Christocentric focus and providing much insight into its historical background, as he spells out how the book helps us to understand the doctrines of salvation, spirituality and mission. He is not afraid all the way through to engage with a wide body of critical opinion and evaluate it in the copious footnotes.

In the opening chapter he discusses the wider theology of mission in the Old Testament in which the Book of Jonah is set defining it as "the transmission of testimony regarding God's person and works of salvation and judgment, usually for the intended purpose of producing faith in his promises of salvation and judgment and conformity to his character and will" (p.39). The second chapter is a brief discussion of conversion and spirituality in Jonah as set against its redemptive-historical background. The next four chapters are detailed expositions of the four chapters of Jonah thoroughly exploring the issues in helpful and insightful ways. The final chapter then explores how the book applies to us to-day under the themes of Christ, sin, judgment, salvation, mission, conversion, spirituality, the gospel, imitation of God and conformity to Christ. The helpful bibliography runs to over thirty pages!

All-in-all a very welcome, helpful, stimulating and timely conservative work.

Norris Wilson

BOOK NOTICES

Faith Unfeigned, John Calvin, translated by Robert White, The Banner of Truth Trust, 2010, hbk., 189 pages, £14.50

The main part of this new volume of Calvin's writings consists of four sermons preached in 1549 (and reworked for publication in 1552) dealing with how to maintain one's faith and integrity in a situation of religious opposition and even persecution. The sermons are On Fleeing Outward Idolatry (Psalm 16:4), *On Suffering Persecution for Christ's Sake* (Hebrews 13:13), *On Valuing Membership in God's Church and the Freedom to Worship Him* (Psalm 27:4) *and On Striving to Serve God Purely in a Christian Church* (Psalm 27:8). Added to these are a short exposition of Psalm 87 and three relevant letters to Edward VI, to an unidentified friend and to Nicolas Duchemin. Robert White has previously translated several of Calvin's works and here again he provides a version in a style that reflects Calvin's vigorous direct address. In these translations Calvin speaks forcefully to the contemporary reader. It is of course necessary to "translate" what Calvin says into the situations faced by God's people today, but in a world where persecution is a harsh reality for many members of the Body of Christ, Calvin, who knew at first hand that of which he spoke, has much to teach us.

These Last Days. A Christian View of History, edited by Richard D. Phillips and Gabriel N. E. Fluhrer, P & R Publishing (Distributed in the UK by Evangelical Press), 2011, pbk., 193 pages, $13.99

"Eschatology" – the doctrine of "the last things" – has too often been avoided by Reformed preachers and teachers, with the result that the field has been left to those with strange ideas which have little grounding in the Scriptures. This leaves Christians confused and even cynical about what may be known of these matters. Considerable help towards a biblical understanding of eschatology is provided by this book which brings together papers given at the Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology in 2010. The outstanding roster of speakers includes Sinclair Ferguson, Don Carson, Alistair Begg, Michael Horton, Ligon Duncan, Cornelis Venema, Richard Phillips, Jeffrey Jue and Paul Tripp. The papers take a chronological approach, beginning with "The Christ of History" (Ferguson), then moving to the two great elements in a Christian view of history – "The Present Evil Age" (Carson) and "The Age of the Spirit" (Begg). The privileges of believers are examined in "The Resurrection Hope" (Horton), "The Eternal Glory" (Duncan) and "Partakers of

the Age to Come" (Carson again). The remaining four papers were given in conference seminars and address some significant issues in eschatology: "The Four Main Millennial Views" (Venema), "A Pastoral Guide to Life after Death" (Phillips), "Evangelical Eschatology, American Style" (Jue) and finally and helpfully "The Radical Implications of Eternity" (Tripp). Together these papers make a very informative collection which will advance believers' understanding of eschatology and which will also help them to live fruitfully in the light of these great truths.

The Christian Faith. A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims On the Way, Michael Horton, Zondervan, 2011, hbk., 1052 pages, $49.99

There are many systematic theologies written from a Reformed perspective available on the market, and a number have appeared relatively recently. Can yet another be justified? Horton's approach to systematic theology draws on the twin themes of narrative and covenant as structuring principles. He writes, for example, at the outset about "The Dogma Is the Drama" (p.13). By this means Horton seeks to provide a study of theology that is more closely shaped by the nature of the biblical material than is possible with some traditional synthetic approaches. The titles of the main parts of the book reflect this narrative theme: "Knowing God", "God Who Lives", "God Who Creates", "God Who Rescues", "God Who Reigns in Grace" and "God Who Reigns in Glory". That said, the plan of the book looks fairly familiar, beginning with the presuppositions of theology, and proceeding to the nature of God, creation and providence, the creation and fall of man, the person and work of Christ, salvation and the church, and concluding with eschatology. Sometimes the narrative/covenant approach makes a significant difference to the treatment, sometimes it does not. It is perhaps not quite as radical a departure as it might at first appear. In comparison to popular Reformed textbooks of the present day, such as Reymond and Grudem, Horton is rather less exegetical, but provides considerable interaction with contemporary theology and philosophy. This is therefore not the best starting point for students and others interested in theology, but is better suited to those who have some basic knowledge of theology and philosophy. The lack of bibliographies and guidance on relevant reading (apart from footnote references) is also a disadvantage. Horton is an able scholar and a good communicator, but this is not a book for beginners. Those who have a good grounding in the subject, however, will find it stimulating reading.

From the Finger of God. The Biblical and Theological Basis for the Threefold Division of the Law, Philip S. Ross, Mentor, 2010, pbk., 426 pages, £12.99

In recent debates about the place of the Law of God in Christian ethics and life it has become common to find writers dismissing the traditional division of the Law into three categories, moral, civil and ceremonial. This threefold division was accepted among Christians for centuries and came to be enshrined in confessional statements such as the Westminster Confession of Faith (chapter 19). Movements such as Theonomy have claimed to accept the Westminster Confession whilst rejecting the threefold division of the Law. In this substantial exegetical study Philip Ross seeks to defend the traditional understanding of the Law. He does this by means of detailed, painstaking examination of the relevant Old Testament and New Testament texts, taking readers from Moses, through the prophets and the psalms, to the actions and preaching of Jesus and on through Acts to the teaching of the apostles. This is material that needs to be read slowly and thoughtfully. It is not an "easy" book (Hebrew and Greek words are not transliterated and the bibliography runs to 34 pages) nor could it be, given the subject matter. It is, however, a very important work with wide-ranging practical implications, and a valuable contribution to a vital contemporary controversy.

The Deity of Christ, edited by Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, Crossway, 2011, hbk., 311 pages, $24.99

The doctrine of the deity of Christ has come under constant attack down through the history of the church and so is in continual need of restatement and defence. This collection of essays by a team of leading theologians which includes, for example, Gerald Bray, Andreas Köstenberger, Stephen J. Nichols and Raymond Ortlund, aims to re-state the biblical doctrine and also to answer the main contemporary challenges to this vital truth. The particular challenges in view here are those posed by the "lost gospels", the worldwide expansion of Islam, religious pluralism and the proliferation. In this respect the book is ahead of most others in the field which take little account of, for example, Islam. After a chapter surveying "The Deity of Christ Today", five chapters cover the deity of Christ in Old and New Testaments. Gerald Bray next considers the doctrine in church history, Robert Peterson seeks to formulate a systematic understanding of this element of theology, whilst the final chapters address the challenge of the cults and of pluralism. For pastors, students and serious readers, this is valuable addition to the literature on the deity of Christ.

Jonathan Edwards's Apologetic for the Great Awakening, Robert Davis Smart, Reformation Heritage Books, 2011, hbk., 366 pages, $30.00

Was the Great Awakening in New England in the eighteenth century a genuine work of the Spirit of God? Central to any attempt to answer this question are the writings of Jonathan Edwards, who was intimately involved in the unfolding of the revival and its aftermath. His works such as *The Distinguishing Marks of a work of the Spirit of God* have shaped thinking about revivals ever since. In this comprehensive study pastor and teacher Robert Davis Smart examines Edwards' defence of the Awakening and the contrary view set forth by Boston minister Charles Chauncey. The debate between these two able writers is the core of Smart's book. He begins by setting the debate in its historical context, both in the ecclesiastical and social life of New England and also in Edwards' life and ministry. Smart then considers some of the main explanations offered for the events of the Awakening, both contemporary and modern. The bulk of the book is then devoted to a close study first of Edwards' understanding of the revival, especially as set out in *The Distinguishing Marks and also in Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion, then of Chauncey's Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England, and finally of Edwards' last response to Chauncey in his famous A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections.* A chapter on the legacies of the two different approaches to the revival rounds off the study. Smart demonstrates, among other things, that the differences between the two antagonists centred on their understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit, whatever other factors may have been involved, and that in fact each man influenced the other significantly. Smart has made a profound contribution to our understanding of one of the key episodes in American religious history and has provided much food for thought in a day when there is much confusion about the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Gospel Commission. Recovering God's Strategy for Making Disciples, Michael Horton, Baker Books, 2011, hbk., 316 pages, $19.99

In two of his recent books Michael Horton has analysed the unbiblical message currently shaping many churches *(Christless Christianity)* and has restated the core of the gospel and its radical implications *(The Gospel-Driven Life).* In The Gospel Commission he seeks to call the church back to its central God-given task of disciple-making, and away from many of the activities which have replaced that calling. Christians are not called to build their own kingdom according to their own ideas and methods: they are to follow the pattern given by God tin the Great Commission, with regard both to goals and

to methods. The book is essentially an extended exposition of the Great Commission of Matthew 28. Horton brings to bear his formidable theological and philosophical knowledge and acute analytical capacities to show the true nature of the divine mandate to make disciples and also to depict the culture in which that mandate is to be carried out. There can be few more thorough examinations of the church's disciple-making ministry. Horton is informative, challenging, stimulating and encouraging, writing in a vigorous and accessible style that leaves the reader in no doubt about his message. This is a book that will give Christians, particularly church leaders, a clear biblical vision for mission, and will rekindle flagging spirits in the work of making disciples of all nations.

God in New Testament Theology, Larry W. Hurtado, Abingdon (Distributed in the UK by Alban Books), 2010, pbk., 152 pages, £13.99

In his latest book Larry Hurtado, Professor of New Testament at New College, Edinburgh, considers the subject of "God" in the New Testament. Surprisingly this is a neglected subject in New Testament studies, as Hurtado shows in his first chapter, which surveys recent scholarly contributions in this field. In subsequent chapters he examines in detail the nature of "God" as revealed in the New Testament, turning then to the relationship between "God" and Jesus and between "God" and the Holy Spirit. He puts inverted commas around the name "God" to underline the fact that the NT does not use the term for some generic deity, but reveals the one true God who is also the God of Israel, the God of the Old Testament, who alone is to receive worship. In the process contemporary pagan ideas about the gods are comprehensively critiqued and dismissed by the NT writers. The fact that this worship is to be accorded to Jesus makes clear his status as Son of God. Here Hurtado locates the driving force for the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, which is, he says, "essentially a christologically shaped statement of monotheism" (p.47). The picture is completed by the New Testament's description of the work of the Holy Spirit in enabling a rich experience of God in the hearts and lives of his people. All the elements are present in the NT for the later formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity. Hurtado's conclusions will not surprise any who read the NT as God-breathed Scripture, but against the background of academic scepticism regarding the coherence and acceptability of NT teaching, Hurtado has done a thorough and valuable job of analysing the relevant NT material and drawing appropriate conclusions.

Islam. A Short Guide to the Faith edited by Roger Allen and Shawkat M. Toorawa, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2011, pbk., 195 pages, $20.00/£12.99

It may well come as a shock to those who know Eerdmans as publisher of Christian books to find a book on Islam by, among others, Muslim authors appearing under its imprint. It is a reflection of the multi-faith culture that prevails in academia and related spheres that this should be so. Leaving aside these concerns, why should such a book be reviewed in a Reformed journal? No-one can be unaware of the growing influence of Islam in the West, and few news bulletins fail to contain at least one story from regions of the world where Islam is the dominant faith. In addition, anyone engaged in frontline evangelism in our cities will almost inevitably encounter Muslims of various kinds. To do the work of the gospel faithfully it is essential to understand something of the beliefs and practices of Muslims. Many Christians rely entirely on books written by other Christians, and many of these are helpful. Nevertheless, if we were to talk to a Muslim whose only acquaintance with Christianity was through books written by Islamic apologists, our first response would be to encourage him to read what Christians say about themselves, and above all to read the Bible. As good witnesses we ought to be willing to listen to what Muslims say about themselves. This compact yet wide-ranging collection of essays offers a good entry point for understanding Islam from the perspective of its own adherents and of others sympathetic to its outlook. The 15 short chapters written by a variety of scholars cover all the essential issues, the Qur'an, Muhammad, Sharia law, Islamic philosophy, Shi'ites and Sunnis, the mosque, women and Islam, and Islam's relations with Judaism and Christianity. Clearly written and with a helpful glossary and bibliography, this is a useful resource for understanding a major religious force in the modern world.

Early French Reform. The Theology and Spirituality of Guillaume Farel, Jason Zuidema and Theodore Van Raalte, Ashgate, 2011, hbk., 244 pages, £65.00

William Farel tends to be remembered for two things: his dire threats of divine judgement which persuaded the future reformer John Calvin to settle in Geneva, and his marriage to a very much younger woman, which caused alienation from the other reformers. He deserves better, and this scholarly work should serve to advance the rehabilitation of Farel's reputation which has been under way for some years. Farel was a reformer in French-speaking Switzerland who made a very significant contribution to the progress of the

Reformation in that region and who should not be last in Calvin's shadow. Zuidema and Van Raalte offer two things in this book: the first part examines Farel's theology and spirituality in the wider context of the French reforming movement, whist the second part provides translations of several of Farel's writings which would usually be unobtainable by most readers. Those writings are *The Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed* (a brief exposition of both documents, published in 1524), *A Summary and Brief Exposition* (a key survey of fundamental Reformed doctrines, 1529/1534), together with an explanation for why the Summary needed to be written and a collection of *Liturgical Practices and Forms* drafted by Farel for use in Geneva (1533). Anyone interested in Reformation history, especially in French-speaking lands, will profit greatly from reading this material, gaining in the process a more balanced understanding of the development of reform in Geneva and appreciating better one of its outstanding exponents.

David McKay