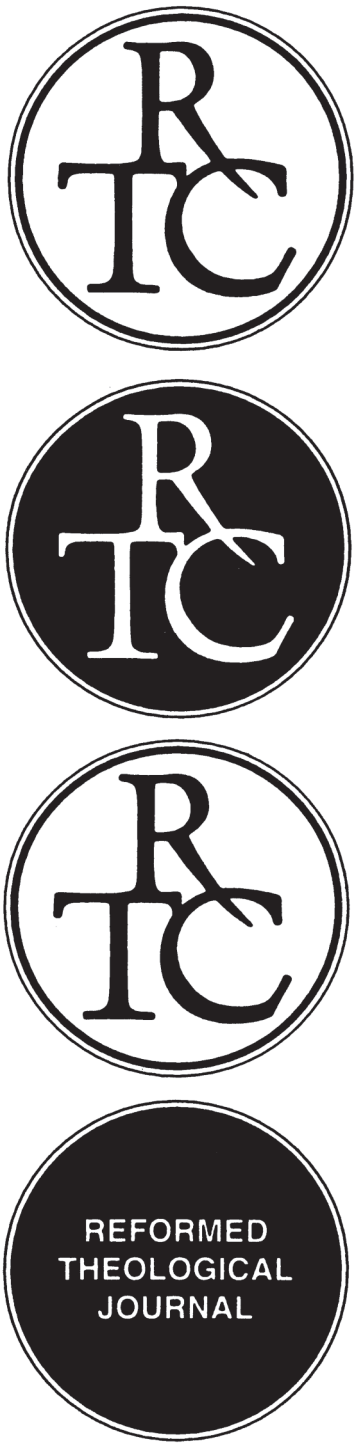

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MARTIN LUTHER: HIS LIFE AND WORK

Gareth Burke

Gareth Burke is minister of Stranmillis Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Belfast. *This paper was originally delivered as a lecture at the Shaftesbury Reformed Conference ('Reformation Then and Now') on 15th February 2017.*

Remarkable as it may seem, the Martin Luther Playmobil figure has turned out to be a huge success. In fact so great has been the interest in this product that Playmobil has declared that it is the fastest selling figurine ever! So who is this man that people are so intrigued by over five hundred years after his birth? In this paper we will endeavour to do three things. After a brief biographical introduction we will then examine his ministry and, finally, consider his enduring relevance for us today. We will not, in detail, be examining his theological convictions as others, more competent and knowledgeable, will do that elsewhere.

Who was he?

Martin Luther was born on 10th November, 1483, in Eisleben, Germany. When he was a few weeks old the family moved to Mansfeld where his father, Hans Luther, worked in a mine, in time becoming a mine manager. There is considerable debate as to whether his parents had genuine faith in Christ or not. Biographers are divided on this matter and it is difficult to make an informed and reliable comment on their spiritual state. Luther's upbringing was certainly strict. His parents would not have been paid up members of the 'Non Smacking' campaign with the young Martin able to recall vividly in later life numerous moments when he was beaten for misdemeanours. Indeed he informs us that on one occasion his mother beat him for stealing a hazelnut and succeeded in drawing blood!

Monastery life

After attendance at various schools the young Luther left home in 1521 and enrolled at the University of Erfurt. His father had ambitions for him academically, very much hoping that his son would qualify as a lawyer. In order to achieve this goal it would be necessary for Luther first of all to study the General Arts Curriculum before engaging more directly in the study of law. Luther completed these initial studies successfully.

In 1505 his life changed dramatically while returning to Erfurt to further his studies. Caught up in a fierce thunderstorm he was struck by a bolt of lightning. Fearful for his life he cried out, 'Saint Anne, help me. I will become a monk'. It would seem that his interest in entering the monastery was not just something that came upon him in the moment of the thunderstorm. For some time he appears to have been wrestling with the question, 'How can I be right with God?' In the age in which he lived entering a monastery would have seemed to Luther like a logical step in terms of obtaining peace with God. Monasticism was the way to heaven. As a young boy at school in Magdeburg he had seen an altar piece in one of the churches depicting, in symbolic form, the teachings of the church. The church was represented by a great ship in which,

> there was not one layman not even a king or prince. Alone in the prow with the Holy Ghost hovering above them were the Pope, the cardinal and the bishops, while at the oars along the sides of the ships were the priests and monks. So they

> went sailing on towards heaven. As for the laymen they were swimming in the water round the ship; some were drowning; some were holding on to the ropes thrown by the monks (who out of pity made over to them their own good works) and were hoping in this way to stay with the ship and so make heaven of it with the others. Not a cardinal, or bishop, or monk or priest was in the water – only laymen![1]

As such a few days after crying out to the miners' saint he presented himself at the door of the Augustinian monastery in Erfurt. His father, who had a very low view of monastic life, was enraged by Martin's change of career and by the thwarting of his ambitions for his son. Relationships between father and son became strained and were to remain so for many years to come.

Luther turned out to be a very diligent monk entering fully into all the rituals of monastic life to the extent that he experienced ill health and almost died. In 1507 he was ordained as a priest and on the occasion of his celebrating his first Mass he was surprised to discover that his father had turned up to witness this significant moment in his son's life. However the pressure of having his estranged father present for this important moment was nothing in comparison to the spiritual struggles and conflict which he felt within. He stood before the altar and began to recite the set introduction to the mass. As he came to the words 'we offer unto thee, the living, the true, the eternal God…' he felt an inner perplexity and distress. He says,

> At these words I was utterly stupefied and terror stricken. I thought to myself, "How shall I address such Majesty, seeing that all men ought to tremble in the presence of even an earthly prince? Who am I that I should lift up mine eyes or raise my hands to the divine Majesty? The angels surround him. At his nod the earth trembles. And shall I, a miserable little pygmy say, 'I want this, I ask for that'? For I am but dust and ashes and full of sin and I am speaking to the one living, eternal and true God."[2]

The University of Wittenberg and conversion

In 1508 Luther transferred from Erfurt to Wittenberg where he would live for the rest of his life. He took up a post at the University of Wittenberg which had been established in 1502 by Frederick the Wise, the Elector of Saxony. In the providence of God this move to Wittenberg was of great significance for Luther. He came under the protection of Frederick the Wise who was very protective of his new University and very impressed by his new controversial professor of theology. Perhaps of more significance is that it was in Wittenberg he met up with the Vicar General of the Augustinian Order, Johann von Staupitz. Von Staupitz was to mightily influence Luther. He gave him a copy of the Bible with the accompanying advice, 'Let the study of the Scriptures be your favourite occupation'. These words would remain on Luther's mind all his days. Von Staupitz encouraged Luther to preach regularly and through his guidance Luther began to study the Scriptures with a new diligence, focussing particularly on the Psalms and Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

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[1] Dolina MacCuish, *Luther and his Katie*, (Christian Focus Publications, 2001), p.5-6.
[2] MacCuish, *Luther and his Katie*, p.10-11.

As well as encouraging Luther to study the Bible von Staupitz sent him on an official visit to Rome in 1510. Steven Lawson describes the experience in this way:

> Luther hoped to find peace there by visiting sacred sites and venerating supposed relics of Christianity, but instead he discovered the gross abuses and masked hypocrisies of the priests. He became disillusioned with the corruption of the Roman church and disenchanted by the pilgrimages to adore religious relics. These objects included the rope with which Judas supposedly hanged himself, a reputed piece of Moses' burning bush, and the alleged chains of Paul.
>
> Yet worse, it was claimed that the Scala Sancta ("the Holy Stairs"), the very steps that Jesus had descended from Pilate's judgment hall, had been moved to Rome, and that God would forgive the sins of those who crawled up the stairs on their knees, kissing each step. Luther dutifully climbed the stairs in the appointed manner, but when he reached the top, he despaired: 'At Rome, I wished to liberate my grandfather from purgatory, and went up the staircase of Pilate, praying a pater noster on each step; for I was convinced that he who prayed thus could redeem his soul. But when I came to the top step, the thought kept coming to me. "Who knows whether this is true?"'[3]

The great turning point in his life was to come some years later while studying in the Tower Room in the University of Wittenberg. This is normally considered to be the moment of his conversion to Christ. Let Luther himself tell us what happened:

> I greatly longed to understand Paul's Epistle to the Romans but always came to a stand still at that expression, "the righteousness of God" because I took it to mean that righteousness whereby God is just and deals justly in punishing the guilty. Now though I had been an exemplary monk, I felt myself to be a sinner before God, and so was so troubled in conscience that I had no confidence that I could by any merit of my own ever assuage him,. Therefore I did not love a just and angry God but rather hated him and complained against him. Night and day I pondered trying to make out the meaning of Paul. At last I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that "the just shall live by his faith". Then I understood that the justice of God is that righteousness by which God, quite freely and in sheer mercy, justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt as if I had been reborn and had gone through open doors into Paradise. The whole of the Scripture took on a new meaning and whereas I had formerly hated the expression "the righteousness of God" I now began to regard it as an inexpressibly sweet and comforting word so that this expression of Paul's became to me in very truth a gate to heaven.[4]

At this stage in his life Luther was extremely busy. Indeed throughout his life he maintained a strong work ethic. In October 1516 he wrote,

> I would need two secretaries; I do almost nothing all day but write letters. I lecture in the cloister, read at meals, preach, direct the students' studies, supervise eleven monasteries, inspect the fish ponds at Leitzkau, settle the quarrel at

[3] Steven J. Lawson, *The Heroic Boldness of Martin Luther*, (Reformation Trust Publishing, 2013), p.7-8.
[4] MacCuish, *Luther and his Katie*, p.15-16.

> Torgau, expound St Paul and the Psalms and, as I said, see to my mail. Add to that the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil. See how much spare time I have![5]

The 95 Theses

However, Luther was about to become even busier as he became embroiled in 'The Indulgence Controversy' that would ultimately lead to the stirring events of 31st October, 1517. The sacrament of penance was one of the remedies for sin prescribed by the church. After confession accompanied by contrition the penitent had to do penance, that is, a punishment prescribed by the priest by which the sinner atoned in part for his sin. Part - or all – of this sentence could be remitted by purchase of an indulgence. By the sixteenth century indulgences could be used to buy off years in purgatory. They could be bought not only for yourself personally, but also on behalf of deceased friends or relatives. In 1517 Pope Leo X authorised indulgences in Germany for those who gave alms to fund the construction of St Peter's Basilica in Rome. These indulgences were crassly marketed as Steven Lawson outlines:

> The chief agent in the peddling of these indulgences was an itinerant Dominican named John Tetzel. A superb salesman, Tetzel knew how to manipulate public interest. He entered towns in a solemn procession, bearing aloft the papal coat of arms with the papal proclamation of indulgence on a gold embroidered velvet cushion. A cross was erected in the marketplace. As a crowd gathered, Tetzel preached on heaven, hell, and purgatory. He told his audience that through the purchases of indulgences, they could free their deceased loved ones from purgatory. Tetzel would call out:
>
> 'Do you not hear the voice of your wailing dead parents and others who say, "Have mercy upon me, have mercy upon me, because we are in severe punishment and pain. From this you could redeem us with a small alms and yet you do not want to do so." Open your ears as the father says to the son and the mother to the daughter…"We created you, fed you, cared for you and left you our temporal goods. Why are you so cruel and harsh that you do not want to save us, though it only takes a little? You let us lie in flames so that only slowly do we come to the promised glory."'[6]

No consideration of Tetzel would be complete without reference to his most famous jingle:

> As soon as the coin in the coffer rings,
> The soul from Purgatory springs.

There is no doubt that God was at work in Luther's life. His disillusionment with the Roman church, which had been so notable after his visit to Rome in 1510, had now come to 'the boil' as he observed Tetzel at work. The moment of confrontation arrived on 31st October, 1517, when Luther nailed his ninety five theses to the door of the Castle Church, Wittenberg. To modern ears the idea of nailing a document to a church door sounds quite weird, but in the

[5] MacCuish, *Luther and his Katie*, p.18
[6] Lawson, *The Heroic Boldness of Martin Luther*, p.8-9.

sixteenth century the church door often served as a sort of notice board or a place where you could post documents which would lead on to discussion and debate among others. Perhaps 'Facebook' or a 'Podcast' would be the modern day equivalent.

Whether Luther was aware of the mighty impact that this document would have on the church and society is a matter for debate. The fact that some of his students circulated the theses by means of the printing press certainly ensured that what he was stating was going to have a wide audience. Whilst the theses addressed the issue of indulgences and other abuses within the church, there were other statements of a more general theological nature included in the document. Some examples might prove helpful at this point:

> **1.** When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, "Repent," (Matthew 4.17), He willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.
> **21**. Those indulgence preachers are in error who say that a man is absolved from every penalty and saved by the papal indulgences.
> **36**. Every truly repentant Christian has a full remission of penalty and guilt even without indulgences.
> **45**. Christians are to be taught that he who sees his neighbour in want and does nothing to help, yet gives his money for indulgences, does not buy papal indulgences but God's wrath.
> **62.** The true treasure of the church is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God.
> **79.** To say that the cross, emblazoned with the papal arms, which is set up (by the preachers of indulgences), is of equal worth with the Cross of Christ, is blasphemy.
> **82**. If the Pope has the power of releasing anyone from Purgatory, why does he not, holy as he is, abolish Purgatory altogether by letting everyone out? This would be a far more worthy use of his power than freeing souls for money. And for what, moreover? A building!

Excommunication and the Wartburg

The Roman authorities were incensed by Luther's statement and took direct action against him. In October, 1518, at a meeting in Augsburg he was told to recant his theses, which he refused to do. In 1520 the Pope issues a Papal bull of excommunication which Luther publically burned. In January, 1521, Luther was officially excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church and in March of the same year he was summoned, by the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles the Fifth, to appear before the Diet of Worms. When his writings were laid out before him on 17th April, 1521, he was asked to recant them. He asked for time but the next day responded with his famous words,

> Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do otherwise, here I stand, may God help me. Amen.[7]

[7] Lawson, *The Heroic Boldness of Martin Luther*, p.18.

Luther was condemned as a heretic and a price was placed on his head. He was 'kidnapped' by his friends and taken to the Wartburg Castle for safe keeping. During this time of incarceration he spent much of his time translating the New Testament into the German language. His German translation of the New Testament was published on 21st September 1522.

Work, Controversy, Family and Death

On his release form the Wartburg and his return to Wittenberg his time was taken up with a hectic round of activity – lecturing, preaching and pastoring. In April, 1525, he married Katherine von Bora. Luther was involved in various controversies throughout the remainder of his life. During the Peasants' War of 1524–5, whilst having much sympathy with the grievances of the peasants, he wrote a pamphlet entitled *Against the Murdering Thieving Hordes of Peasants* in which he called for the actual insurgents (not the peasants as a whole) to be put down with the sword, and quickly, for this was the best hope of containing the conflagration. In 1529 at the Colloquy of Marburg he differed sharply with the Swiss Reformer Ulrich Zwingli regarding the issue of the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper.

On 23rd. January, 1546, he travelled to Eisleben, his home town, to arbitrate in a family dispute between two brothers. While there he took ill and died on 18th February, 1546, aged sixty two years of age. His body was brought back to Wittenberg and buried within the Castle Church, below the pulpit where he had often preached. In his last moments Luther was asked by his friend Justus Jonas, 'Do you want to die standing firm on Christ and the doctrine you have taught?' He answered emphatically, 'Yes!' Luther's last words were, 'We are beggars. This is true.'[8]

What did he do?

The writer

Martin Luther was a ***writer*.** He wrote tracts, books and commentaries. Some of these volumes are significant theological writings still referred to today such as his *On the Bondage of the Will* and his commentary on Galatians. He was also very interested in music and composed some hymns such as 'A mighty fortress is our God' and, many claim, 'Away in a Manger', although this claim is now being seriously questioned. Often his publications had colourful and memorable titles such as *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* in which he attacked the sacramental system of Rome, denied the efficacy of the Mass and asserted that there were only two (baptism and Lord's Supper) and not seven sacraments. He composed a Small Catechism and a Large Catechism for children and young people. In 1523 he composed a pamphlet entitled *That Jesus Christ was born a Jew*. In this publication he encouraged Christians to be good loving neighbours to the Jews so as to build bridges for the gospel. In the 1540s he wrote another work on the Jews entitled *On the Jews and their Lies*. This was, sadly, a somewhat anti–Semitic publication which was tragically used by the Nazis as anti –Semitic propaganda in the 1930s and 1940s. In God's providence the development of the printing press coincided wonderfully with so many of Luther's writing projects and enabled the swift dissemination of his thoughts.

[8] Quoted by Lawson, *The Heroic Boldness of Martin Luther*, p.23.

The translator

Luther was also a ***translator*.** The translation of the Scriptures into German was a project very close to Luther's heart. He believed in the power of God's Word and, as already mentioned, his time in the Wartburg was given over to the translation of the New Testament into German. Along with others he was responsible for a German translation of the Old Testament which led to the publication of a completed German Bible ibn 1534.

The preacher

Luther was a ***preacher*.** If asked as to what he considered to be his primary calling I am confident that he would have replied 'Preaching'. He is on record as having said, 'If I could today become King or Emperor, I would not give up my office as preacher.' John Piper makes the following remarks in his analysis of Luther as a preacher:

> Luther was not the pastor of the town church in Wittenberg. His friend, Johannes Bugenhagen was from 1521 to 1558. But Luther shared the preaching virtually every week he was in town. He preached because the people of the town wanted to hear him and because he and his contemporaries understood his doctorate in theology to be a call to teach the word of God to the whole church. So Luther would often preach twice on Sunday and once during the week. Walther von Loewenich said in his biography, 'Luther was one of the greatest preachers in the history of Christendom….Between 1510 and 1546 Luther preached approximately 3,000 sermons. Frequently he preached several times a week, often two or more times a day.'
>
> For example, in 1522 he preached 117 sermons in Wittenberg and 137 sermons the next year. In 1528 he preached almost 200 times, and from 1529 we have 121 sermons. So the average in those four years was one sermon every two and a half days. As Fred Meuser says in his book on Luther's preaching, 'Never a weekend off – he knows all about that. Never even a weekday off. Never any respite at all from preaching, teaching, private study, production, writing, counselling'. That's his first link with us pastors. He knows the burden of preaching.[9]

It is not possible to do justice to the prayerfulness of Luther. Every task he approached was bathed in prayer. This was especially true when it came to preaching. He was not relying on his natural gifts nor intellectual abilities but was casting himself upon God and His Spirit. Here is an example of a prayer he would have used prior to mounting the pulpit steps:

> Dear Lord God. I want to preach so that you are glorified. I want to speak of you, praise you, and praise your name. Although I probably cannot make it turn out well, won't you make it turn out well.

The pastor

Luther was also very much a ***pastor***. He was very involved with people. The home – *Lutherhaus* - which he established with Katie in the old Augustinian monastery in Wittenberg was a buzz of activity. Often students lodged there and joined with the family at meal times.

[9] John Piper, 'Martin Luther: Lessons from his life and labor', 1996 Bethlehem Conference for Pastors, p.5.

Indeed, impressed by what Dr Luther had to say over their meals some of the students jotted down some of his thoughts which eventually became well known as Luther's *Table Talk*.

He established close friendships with many people, such as Philip Melanchthon, Justus Jonas and Johannes Bugenhagen, pastor of the town church in Wittenberg. Luther was exceedingly generous, often giving away possessions to visitors and, to the despair of Katie, regularly giving gifts of money to others.

The patient in trial

Luther was a man who knew great ***trial*** throughout his life. He was often attacked and opposed, normally verbally or in print, but sometimes physically. He was frequently unwell. At different times 'he suffered from catarrh, kidney stones, constipation, insomnia, dizziness, and a buzzing – 'not a buzzing but a roll of thunder' – in his head'[10]

He, along with Katie, knew the agonising heartache of bereavement when two of their children predeceased them – Elizabeth when she was eight months and Magdalena when she was thirteen years of age. Magdalena was buried beside her sister Elizabeth in the churchyard and Luther wrote an epitaph:

> Here I, Magdalena,
> Doctor Luther's little maid
> Resting with the saints
> Sleep in my narrow bed
> I was a child of death
> For I was born in sin
> But now I live, redeemed Lord Christ,
> By the blood you shed for me.[11]

Perhaps Luther's greatest trial was what he referred to as *Anfechtungen* – darkness of soul. He was often in turmoil of mind and experienced deep spiritual darkness. Something of this agony of soul can be seen in a letter which he wrote to Philip Melanchthon from the Wartburg Castle on July 13th, 1521, while he was supposedly working flat out on the translation of the New Testament:

> I sit here at ease, hardened and unfeeling – alas! Praying little, grieving little for the Church of God, burning rather in the fierce fires of my untamed flesh. It comes to this: I should be afire in the spirit; in reality I am afire in the flesh, with lust, laziness, idleness, sleepiness. It is perhaps because you have all ceased praying for me that God has turned away from me….For the last eight days I have written nothing, nor prayed nor studied, partly from self-indulgence, partly from another vexatious handicap (constipation and piles)...I really cannot stand it any longer…Pray for me, I beg you, for in my seclusion here I am submerged in sins.[12]

[10] MacCuish, *Luther and his Katie*, p.42-43.
[11] MacCuish, *Luther and his Katie*, p.67.
[12] Piper, 'Martin Luther: Lessons from his life and labor', p.14.

The extent to which Luther was tormented in his soul and mind is reflected in a further letter to Melancthon six years later on 2nd August, 1527, when he writes:

> For more than a week I have been thrown back and forth in death and Hell; my whole body feels beaten, my limbs are still trembling. I almost lost Christ completely, driven about on the waves and storms of despair and blasphemy against God. But because of the intercession of the faithful, God began to take mercy on me and tore my soul from the depths of Hell.[13]

The family man

No consideration of the life and ministry of Martin Luther would be complete without reference to his ***marriage and family life***. In these areas he is a great example to us today. His marriage to Katherine von Bora, whilst tempestuous, proved to be close and affectionate despite a somewhat unusual courtship. In fact Luther once declared that at the time of his marriage, 'I was not in love with Katie at all, but God wanted me to take pity on the forsaken one'. Katherine was brought to the attention of Luther on 7th April, 1523, when his friend Leonhard Koppe arrived in Wittenberg with a cart in which were hidden nine nuns who had recently escaped from the Nimptschen convent. Husbands were found for eight of the nuns but not for Katie.

The suggestion was made to Luther that he should marry her, but he was not initially for the idea at all. A middle aged bachelor, settled in his ways, he felt it would also be unfair to take to himself a wife as he was condemned as a heretic, opposed by many and living constantly with the threat of death. However, despite all these concerns, he married Katie on 13th June, 1525, and on 27th June there was a huge public celebration in Wittenberg. Martin was forty one years of age and Katie was twenty six.

God blessed them with three boys and three girls. Katie was a strong woman who managed the Luther household well, but she also managed Doctor Luther well. Many will be familiar with the well-known incident when Katie appeared one morning dressed in black. Luther had been going through a period of darkness and despair and seeing his wife dressed in black he enquired, 'Are you going to a funeral?' 'No', she responded, 'But since you are acting as if God is dead I wanted to join you in the mourning'.

Many were the changes that Luther had to get used to now that he was married. He declared that 'you wake up in the morning and find a pair of pigtails on the pillow that were not there before'. He also discovered that Katie was unimpressed that he had gone for a whole year without airing his straw bed. Katie got Luther interested in gardening and they grew cabbage, lettuce, peas, beans, radishes, melons, cucumbers, strawberries and much more besides. In a letter to his friend Justus Jonas, written in October 1535, he says,

> My lord Katie greets you. She rides, drives, plants our fields, buys our cattle and pastures them and over and above she has a bet of fifty gulden that she will read the whole Bible by Easter. She is hard at it and has begun the fifth book of Moses.[14]

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[13] Piper, 'Martin Luther: Lessons from his life and labor', p.14.
[14] MacCuish, *Luther and his Katie*, p.42.

It is remarkable to see the way in which Luther was involved with his wife and family despite the hectic busyness of his life. Carl Trueman observes that,

> Today, visitors to the Augustinian cloister in Wittenberg (a gift from the elector to the Luthers on their wedding day) will see that the door frame has a little stool built into it on each side. The door frame was a present from Katie to her husband, made at a time when she felt they were not spending enough time talking to each other. Thus, at the end of a busy day, Martin and Katie could sit on either side of the door and talk to each other. Inside and upstairs, there is a window frame with a similar arrangement, presumably for when the Saxon weather made an outdoor tryst somewhat wet and cold. This in itself speaks eloquently of the love and the happiness that marriage brought into the life of the Reformer.[15]

What is he saying?

Before concluding our consideration of the life and ministry of Martin Luther we need to reflect on what he is saying to us today. We need to think about his abiding relevance and seek to extract some lessons from his life. In doing this we need to be cautious. It is important that we always remember that Luther was a child of his age. Carl Trueman's comment is a useful warning to us at this point when he speaks about 'the evangelical propensity to reinvent heroes of the past as modern day evangelicals'. We must also be very careful not to engage in any form of hagiography. Whilst it is useful for us to consider Luther's life and to draw some abiding lessons from it, we nevertheless are very aware that he was a man – a redeemed man for sure – but a man. As such we do not endorse his conviction that the Epistle of James was 'an epistle of straw'. We distance ourselves from his writings on the Jews and reject his flawed doctrine of consubstantiation as well as numerous other comments that he made and convictions which he held.

Nevertheless there are at least six lessons which we can learn from Doctor Luther.

Firstly, we can see, even in this brief study, that God is pleased to use us and to work through us 'warts and all'. There is no sinless perfection in this life. We are all sinful, yet God so often, in his grace, chooses to use us in his service. Luther was very open in talking about himself. There is a sense in which his life was laid bare for all to see. As such we see things there that we do not like nor agree with. But God used him

Secondly, his life reminds us that the Christin life is warfare. Not only was he regularly involved in conflict and confrontation, but he was especially conscious of being engaged in warfare with the devil and the powers of darkness. Visitors to the Wartburg today are still shown a mark on the wall where, it is stated, Luther threw an inkwell at the devil who was tormenting him as he engaged in the work of translating the New Testament. On one occasion he stated:

> I do not believe that it is one devil that is attacking me but the very Prince of devils. So great is his power of assailing me with Scripture that my own knowledge of the Bible is not enough to protect and help me but I must be strengthened by words of Scripture out of the mouths of my friends. This is why I

[15] Carl R. Trueman, Luther and the Christian Life, (Crossway, 2015), p.185.

> ask so earnestly for your prayers and if ever you are in the same case, the sport of the Devil, you will understand my request.[16]

Thirdly, Luther challenges us, especially those involved in the ministry of the Word, as to the amount of time we spend with our wife and our family. We have already seen the extent to which Luther was involved with Katie and with the children. They enriched his life and in conversation with Katie he was often strengthened and blessed. He stated, 'There is no more lovely, friendly, and charming relationship, communion or company than a good marriage'.

Fourthly, Luther's sheer workload is a challenge to us to stop complaining and to get fully involved in the work of God's kingdom. Surely one of his motto texts must have been 1 Corinthians 15:58, 'Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain'

Fifthly, Luther reminds us that if we are going to do anything in the work of the kingdom we need to depend fully on the Lord. His dying words, 'we are beggars', are telling in this regard. Here he expresses his twofold awareness that before God we are poor and needy and utterly dependent upon him if what we are doing in his service is going to be of any spiritual benefit at all.

Finally, Luther was, above all else, a man of the Word. Both in our churches and in our own personal lives we need to emulate him in this regard. His conscience was held captive to the Word of God as he declared at the Diet of Worms. Everything must be brought back to the Scriptures. In 1508 his friend Johann von Staupitz had given him a Bible with a few simple words of advice - 'Let the study of the Scriptures be your favourite occupation'. Luther undoubtedly heeded the advice of his friend. May God give us grace to do likewise.

[16] MacCuish, *Luther and his Katie*, p.47.

FIVE TRUTHS THAT SHOOK THE WORLD

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Anniversaries can be very important – ask any husband who has forgotten his wedding anniversary! They usually mark significant events, sometimes life-changing events, that ought to be remembered. The annual return of anniversaries such as Remembrance Day serves to keep the lessons of the past before our attention. Happy anniversaries can bring renewed joy in the recollection of good times, especially when they are viewed in the light of God's providence in our lives. Some things ought never to be forgotten.

There is certainly the danger of living in the past – of letting what is now over govern our lives to an unhealthy extent. Old hurts, old grievances, old failures, old sorrows can shape us in ways that hinder our growth in grace. We need to learn when to remember and when to let go. Churches too can live in the past, keeping the focus always on past glories and successes, conveniently overlooking the weaknesses and failures that might suggest the past was not quite as glorious as we like to think. At times we as a denomination have fallen into that trap, idealising the Scottish Covenanters in ways that made it difficult to learn from them for the challenges of our own day. To forget history, however, cuts us off from the valuable lessons regarding the providence and purpose of God that it could teach us.

2017 marks an anniversary that should be – and no doubt will be – marked in a variety of ways. On 31 October, 1517, the German Augustinian monk Martin Luther nailed a document to the door of the castle church in Wittenberg, the accepted way of raising issues for academic debate. These 'Ninety-five Theses' however were profoundly radical and marked the beginning of what came to be known as the Protestant Reformation in Europe. Luther was by no means the only theologian raising vital questions about gospel truth – Ulrich Zwingli in Zurich, for example, also played a significant role in the reforming movement – but Luther was certainly used powerfully by God to shake the foundations of established theology and ecclesiastical life in Germany and much further afield.

Luther's 95 propositions go to the heart of the gospel message and so demand our continued attention. Many historians offer explanations for the rise of the Reformation in terms of the historical and sociological circumstances of the time and some of these do have value, but we have not understood the Reformation unless we see it as a mighty work of God. In the Reformation the Holy Spirit transformed people and communities through the saving application of the Word of God. Whatever else the Reformation was, it was primarily spiritual.

The Reformation was a revolution that took the Church *backwards* - it was a rediscovery of great biblical truths that had been obscured by the Catholicism of the Middle Ages. The

Reformers went back to the biblical roots of the Christian faith and, on the basis of Scripture alone, proclaimed a message of salvation by grace alone, through Christ alone and received by faith alone, all to the glory of God alone. Multitudes experienced the true spiritual liberation that comes through an undiluted gospel. This was not just an intellectual movement – lives were transformed.

Now Luther was not perfect. Nobody knew that better than Luther himself. He had his weaknesses and, like most things to do with Luther, they were on a fairly large scale. On some issues, such as his view of the Lord's Supper, he was beyond listening to contrary opinions. There was in some of his writing a streak of crudity (shared with Erasmus, among others) that forbids quotation. His positon on a variety of matters represented a kind of half-way house between Roman Catholicism and biblical truth. We are, after all, not Lutherans, and with good reason. Nevertheless he was – by grace – a mighty man of God who was instrumental in revolutionising the spiritual life of a significant part of Europe and ultimately the world. A lesser man, a smaller man, would not have been up to the job.

But what is the heart of the Reformation? What were the great truths rediscovered during those momentous years? The fact is that the Reformation touched on every significant area of Christian doctrine. A great deal of attention was given, for example, to the biblical doctrine of the sacraments, especially the Lord's Supper. The latter, sadly, was a cause of division among the Reformers themselves. The Reformation cannot be reduced to one issue, such as 'justification by faith alone', although that was a crucial doctrine much debated at the time. A useful way of approaching the core of the Reformation is through what have come to be known as the 'Five Solas' – 'sola' being the Latin word for 'alone'. They are Scripture Alone, Christ Alone, Grace Alone, Faith Alone and God's Glory Alone. These five truths do bring us close to the heart of the Reformation theologically.

Scripture Alone (Sola Scriptura)

> 'For some years now I have read through the Bible twice every year. If you picture the Bible to be a mighty tree and every word a little branch, I have shaken every one of these branches because I wanted to know what it was and what it meant.' (*Luther, Table Talk, October 21, 1532; No. 1877*)[1]

The foundation of the Reformation was 'Scripture Alone'. A critical question that the Reformers had to answer was, 'What is the source of Christian theology?' Rome relied on a combination of written Scripture and unwritten tradition, interpreted by the 'magisterium' of the Church. The Reformers realized that this positon was in fact profoundly unbiblical and in response asserted that we must base all theology on 'Scripture Alone'. Without denying the value of centuries of study by scholars and preachers, the Reformers recognised that Scripture is the Church's only infallible rule of faith and practice. They were quite happy to cite earlier theologians such as Augustine, and drew heavily on the riches of the Church's past, yet they understood clearly that no other source of truth can be placed above or even alongside the Bible.

[1] LW 54:165. Quotations from Luther are taken from volumes of *Luther's Works*, edited by J. Pelikan and H. T. Lehman, 55 volumes (Philadelphia: Fortress Press and St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955-75), cited as LW and the volume and page number.

The Reformers understood that in the Bible we have a **unique revelation**. In the context of the Europe of their day the fact that the Bible was to be regarded as the Word of God was a largely unchallenged view. Theologians might differ as to how to interpret the Bible and as to what particular texts meant, but they generally agreed that what they were handling was God's Word.

We face a rather different challenge today with regard to the place of the Bible. We live in a pluralist culture where other religions are on our doorstep, not in the far-flung regions of the world as they usually were in Reformation days. These other religions too make claims to have divine revelations, sometimes in addition to the Bible. We also face the challenge of philosophers and theologians who assert that the very idea of 'words from God' is incoherent and incredible. In response we cannot allow ourselves to be moved from the position of 2 Timothy 3:16 – 'All Scripture is God-breathed'. *All* Scripture – the Old Testament and also the New Testament then in process of production. In the Bible alone we have the Word of God written, given by the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit who 'carried along' the authors of the various books (2 Peter 1:21).

In the Bible we also have a **unique authority**. This follows from the God-breathed nature of the book. If God speaks uniquely in these pages, then they have absolute authority in all they teach. Submission to God's Word is evidence of submission to God himself. As Christ said, 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments' (John 14:15). Claims to love God are empty without obedience to his Word.

Many of the great Reformation debates came back to the issue of the authority of the Bible. In response to Rome's appeal to unwritten apostolic tradition and the Anabaptists' appeal to the 'inner light', the Reformers were convinced that the Bible did not need to be supplemented and could not be replaced by any other source of authority.

We too need to keep asserting the unique authority of the Bible. Rome still appeals to tradition and to papal authority. Charismatics appeal to new revelations of the Spirit and 'words from the Lord'. Many Christians in practice depend on their feelings as their authoritative guide. In the wider world all kinds of authorities are cited, often centred on human reason, science and 'experts'. One major danger posed by our digital culture is the ease with which anyone can set himself up as an 'authority', subject to no checks of any kind. The very idea of authority crumbles in a Wikipedia world and the response we often have to contend with is, 'Who says so?' with the implication that my view is as good as anyone else's.

We must heartily defend 'Scripture Alone'. In this book God has given us all we need to know (although not all we would like to know). No other source of authority must be allowed to usurp its place in theory or practice. Our love for the Lord must be demonstrated in obedience to his authoritative Word in every area of life, including every area of church life.

Christ Alone (Solus Christus)

> 'But Christ took all our sins upon himself, and for them he died on the cross. Therefore it was appropriate for Him to become a thief and, as Isaiah says (53:12) to be "numbered among the thieves."' (*Luther on Galatians 3:13*)[2]

To say that salvation is by 'Christ Alone' reminds us that in Christ we have **a unique Saviour**. It is at this point, perhaps more than at any other, that we are also made aware of the difference between the world of the Reformers and our world. The Reformers wrestled mainly with conflicting understandings of precisely how Christ saves sinners. In our context we face a pluralism in which any assertion of a unique way to God is met with amazement, horror or even, increasingly, hostility. 'How,' it is asked, 'could anybody in this day and age believe that there is only one way to be right with God and, worse still, that they have a monopoly of it?'

The 'politically correct' view is that, if there is a God at all, there are many ways to him. Indeed it is possible that every way is valid for someone. Thus Christ may be fine for you, yet entirely inappropriate for others. No-one can be told he is wrong and needs to change. The very suggestion is taken as a sign of our bigotry. Although many would have no idea what 'postmodernism' means, they are in fact living on the basis of a postmodern abolition of the very notion of absolute truth. Their inability to live out such a philosophy consistently often goes unnoticed.

If we are to be faithful to God and to Scripture, however, we must assert with Peter that 'there is salvation in no-one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved' (Acts 4:12). Jesus Christ as God incarnate is not one among many saviours. In John 14:6 he makes the absolute and unequivocal claim, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me.' We must not be ashamed to assert Christ's uniqueness, although increasingly we will face pressure to be silent and will be portrayed in a very negative light.

'Christ Alone' also speaks of **a unique salvation**. The uniqueness of Christ relates not only to who he is but equally to what he has done. As we read the biblical account of the life, death and resurrection of Christ it is evident that this is the only and the God-given way for the plight of sinners to be addressed.

Consider the natural state of sinners like us: we are 'dead in…transgressions and sins…by nature children of wrath' (Ephesians 2:1,3). We are under the just wrath of God and unable to change ourselves. Christ addresses every aspect of that terrible plight. As man he atones for man's sin; as God he is able to save a vast multitude. The Reformers understood how comprehensive Christ's work needs to be and indeed is, and as the Reformation progressed that understanding became richer and deeper. Even Luther's understanding of doctrines such as justification developed in the course of his career.

Christ's life of perfect obedience supplies what we lack – the keeping of God's law in its entirety. His death in obedience to the Father's commission pays the price for our sin – 'God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us' (2 Corinthians 5:21). This unique Saviour is 'the propitiation for our sins' (1 John 4:10), taking the punishment for the sins of his people, thus

[2] LW 26:277

turning aside God's righteous wrath. His resurrection as 'the first fruits' (1 Corinthians 15:20) guarantees the resurrection of his people to share in his glory.

Every dimension of the sinner's need is addressed by Christ's redeeming work. The more we understand the true nature of our situation as sinners, deserving only condemnation and punishment, the more we will appreciate the necessity for the rich saving work of our Saviour. If we are mildly unwell, an aspirin may be all we need to put us back on top form. If, however, we are spiritually dead, a miraculous work of Almighty God is the only way of restoring the life that has gone.

'Christ Alone' testifies to a unique Saviour who has secured a unique salvation. The Reformation understanding of the person and work of Christ recaptured the essence of the biblical gospel which medieval Catholicism had done so much to obscure. Under the blessing of God the Reformers' preaching of this Saviour and this salvation brought new life and spiritual freedom to multitudes. In the intervening centuries such preaching has continued to have the same effect. Although we live in a very different culture from that of the Reformers, the heart need of every man and woman remains the same, and the proclamation of 'Christ Alone' still can and still does bring life and freedom.

Grace Alone (Sola Gratia)

> 'For if grace comes from the purpose or predestination of God, it comes by necessity and not by our effort or endeavour…Moreover, if God promised grace before the law was given, as Paul argues here and in Galatians, then grace does not come from works or through the law; otherwise the promise means nothing.' (*Luther on Romans 4:1-3*)[3]

A vital emphasis of the Reformation was that salvation is by God's grace alone, drawing on texts such as Ephesians 2:8-9 'by grace you have been saved through faith'. 'Grace' is to be thought of as the favour of God to those who deserved only condemnation and it is this grace that is the source as well as the guarantee of the sinner's salvation.

We need to notice that the pre-Reformation church did speak about salvation 'by grace' – it is a caricature to say that the theologians of that period taught salvation by works. The problem was, however, that they tried to combine an element of grace and an element of works. They believed that God gave grace to assist those who made their best effort towards salvation. The 'grace' they believed in was thought of as a kind of substance that God infused into people to strengthen their efforts, like a kind of spiritual energy drink.

The Reformers, however, realised that a consistently biblical view of salvation meant that it is 'by grace **alone**'. There is no contribution that the sinner makes, and indeed none he could make. With reference to salvation, grace excludes works entirely. One among many significant texts is Romans 11:6 'But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace'. Not only does salvation begin by grace, it also continues by grace. That is so despite the attitude of some Christians who seem to think that having had past sins forgiven by the grace of God, they must then stay in God's good books by their own spiritual efforts. That is a deadly misunderstanding. Sooner or later anyone

[3] LW 33:272

who depends in any way on works to secure God's favour has to face the question, 'How do you know when you have done enough?' The answer is, 'You never can' and the results are spiritually devastating.

The grace of God in fact provides everything required for salvation. God's amazing love for a sinful world led to the provision of a Saviour, as the familiar words of John 3:16 remind us. That Saviour by his life of perfect obedience, his atoning death and triumphant resurrection, all as the Substitute for his people, provides full salvation for all who belong to him by the divine decree of predestination. Christ gives new life to sinners, so that Paul can say that God 'made us alive together with Christ' (Ephesians 2:5). In saving union with Christ we have justification, adoption, sanctification and eventually glorification. Romans 3:24, for example, tells us that we are 'justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus'. At every point the explanation for what we have as Christians is **the grace of God**.

Such an understanding of salvation is profoundly humbling. There is nothing left in relation to salvation for which we can take credit. It is, however, also wonderfully liberating. Salvation by grace alone lifts a crushing burden from our shoulders, a burden we in fact cannot bear. We realise now that we cannot contribute to a salvation that is all by grace alone – and *we do not have to*. We do not have to do the impossible, and so we are set free from the bondage of trying to establish our own righteousness before God by our own efforts.

This was one of Luther's great (re)discoveries. When he read a text like Romans 1:17, with its reference to 'the righteousness of God', he at first thought of a righteousness by which God judges sinners and a righteousness which he demands of them. In his mind this was a righteousness which he had to produce and which he could not, despite having tried everything that the Church recommended. Then the Lord graciously opened Luther's eyes to the wonderful truth that texts like Romans 1:17 actually refer to a righteousness that God gives as a free gift of grace, the very righteousness of Christ. In the *Preface* to his Latin writings this is how he describes the discovery: 'Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise through open gates. There a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me.'[4] He was free at last!

The truth of 'grace alone' flows from the sovereignty of God in salvation. He did not have to save any, yet he has fully provided for the salvation of a vast multitude of sinners (note Revelation 7:9). This Reformation assertion of 'grace alone' echoes the truth of Jonah 2:9 'Salvation belongs to the Lord'. It is a truth that exalts God and humbles men and women.

A further consequence of the sovereignty of God in salvation which should delight the heart of every believer is the certainty we have that the work that God has begun will certainly be completed. As Paul expressed it, 'I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ' (Philippians 1:6). Such certainty strengthens our assurance of salvation and fills our hearts with joy – 'by grace alone'.

[4] LW 34:337

Faith Alone (Sola Fide)

> 'But here the point at issue is how we are justified and attain eternal life. To this we answer with Paul: We are pronounced righteous solely by faith in Christ, not by the works of the law or by love…So since we are now dealing with the topic of justification, we reject and condemn works; for this topic will not allow any discussion of good works.' (*Luther on Galatians 2:16*)[5]

It might be thought that the order in which we are considering these principles is a matter of indifference – could the five not be taken in any order as long as they are all included? The answer in fact is a resounding 'No!' The order is not random. It matters very much where each principle fits into the sequence. This is especially clear when we consider grace and faith.

The placing of 'Faith Alone' **after** 'Grace Alone' is a recognition of the order of the elements of salvation revealed in the Bible. There is an order – an *ordo salutis* as it is sometimes termed – which is not the product of human ingenuity but a reflection of the way in which God in his sovereign mercy provides salvation. Thus when 'Faith Alone' follows 'Grace Alone' we acknowledge that sinners believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation **because** of the grace that the Lord has shown to them. To reverse the order would suggest that sinners receive grace because they have believed, a thoroughly unbiblical idea that ignores the spiritual deadness that characterises the unsaved.

This crucial fact is set out in a text such as Ephesians 2:8, where Paul is expressing something of the wonder of the salvation that God has provided in Christ. The Apostle writes, 'For by grace you have been saved through faith. And that is not your own doing, it is the gift of God'. Notice how Paul includes even our faith under the idea of a 'gift' given by the grace of God. Scripture everywhere emphasises the 'gift' nature of salvation, and that is because grace precedes faith in the order of salvation.

This principle in no way detracts from the fact that sinners must believe in order to be saved. When asked by the jailer in Philippi, 'What must I do to be saved?' Paul's answer was, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved and your household' (Acts 16:31). The necessity for believing in Christ must always be impressed upon sinners. They cannot avoid that responsibility. But the reason why any sinner responds to that exhortation and actually believes in the Lord Jesus is that God has graciously enabled him or her to do so. Behind the sinner's response is the gracious action of God. A specific example of this is provided by the conversion of Lydia recorded earlier in Acts 16. In verse 14 we read that 'The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.' That 'paying attention' was not a merely outward listening to the message: Lydia clearly responded in saving faith, as a result of the grace of God she experienced. We might also note the response of the believers in Jerusalem to God's work in the life of Cornelius: 'Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life' (Acts 11:18).

The preservation of the biblical order of grace and faith is vitally important. Not least it protects against the ever-present danger of turning faith into a kind of 'work', subverting the truly gracious nature of salvation. We may reject the idea of works contributing to salvation,

[5] LW 26:137

just as the Reformers did, yet think of faith in such a way that it becomes something we contribute to our salvation, something that God accepts in the place of the 'good works' we are unable to perform. Unwittingly we then allow works to enter again through the back door, a fatal mistake. We have nothing to offer God that has any merit, not even our faith.

What kind of faith is it that saves? The Reformers were clear that faith, biblically understood, involves more than mere head knowledge or a blind willingness to accept whatever the church might teach (as medieval theologians believed). Saving faith certainly requires knowledge of the basic truths of the gospel and an acceptance of their truth, but fundamentally it entails trust in Christ as Saviour and Lord according to the Bible's witness to him.

Trust, '*fiducia*', is crucial. Paul's choice of words in Acts 16:31 is significant: 'Believe **in** the Lord Jesus', implying a movement away from self and a resting in him for salvation. Those who are saved are united to Christ by faith. That faith is nothing more than the God-given channel, the instrument, by which we receive the gracious gift of salvation. In itself faith has no merit, it earns nothing, and has rightly been compared to our holding out empty hands to receive God's gift. In our contemporary pluralist culture, we need also to affirm without embarrassment that faith must be in the Christ of Scripture. No other kind of 'faith' can save, and so we are brought back to 'Christ Alone' as considered above. These five truths are inextricably interwoven.

As the Reformers recognized when they insisted on 'Faith **Alone**', there is always a danger of allowing something else to creep in alongside faith in relation to salvation. Medieval theologians were perfectly ready to speak of faith as necessary for salvation, but Luther and his spiritual descendants recognized that when any kind of good work was thought to play a meritorious role in salvation, the biblical order was corrupted and the grace of God fatally undermined. Faith plus anything destroys the gospel. The same battle has had to be fought many times since the days of the apostles who refused to yield to the pressure of the 'Judaizing' faction in the church which wanted to assert the necessity of law-keeping alongside faith for salvation (as recorded in Acts 15 for example). There is always a temptation to believe that, even in some tiny way, our efforts contribute something to our salvation. 'Faith Alone' humbles our pride.

The Reformers were absolutely correct to insist that all of salvation is 'by faith alone'. Thus they taught the great biblical truth of justification by faith alone, emphasizing that our right standing in the sight of God is granted freely to us when the righteousness of Christ is counted as ours. We still need this profoundly biblical emphasis since, in Calvin's words, justification by faith alone is 'the main hinge on which religion turns'[6]. That blessing is received by faith alone, in harmony with Paul's statement in Romans 3:28 that 'one is justified by faith apart from works of the law', and Luther was theologically correct to add 'alone' to his German translation of the verse, even though the word is not present in the Greek text.

Salvation by faith alone is a liberating truth that ensures we do not try to carry an impossible burden of earning that salvation by our works. Salvation, however, is not by a faith that remains alone – it inevitably leads to a life devoted to our gracious God, doing the good

[6] John Calvin, , *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1559 edition, translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), III.xi.i.

works he has prepared for us (Ephesians 2:10). It is a life lived to the glory of God alone, the last of our five 'solas'.

God's Glory Alone (Soli Deo Gloria)

> 'As I have said, therefore, Paul is describing the whole of the Christian life in this passage: inwardly it is faith toward God, and outwardly it is love or works towards one's neighbour. Thus a man is a Christian in a total sense: inwardly through faith in the sight of God, who does not need our works; outwardly in the sight of men, who do not derive any benefit from faith but do derive benefit from works and from our love.' (*Luther on Galatians 5:6*)[7]

When we think about salvation, one of the hardest ideas to clear out of our minds is the conviction that 'it's all about us'. Why has God gone to such lengths in order to provide salvation for unworthy sinners like us? We know that in eternity he set his love upon us, choosing us in Christ before the foundation of the world, as Ephesians 1:4 reminds us. That is an uplifting and at the same time a humbling truth, precious to every child of God. It's easy then to conclude that the ultimate purpose of the work of Christ is our wellbeing, our enjoyment of the blessings in store for us in the new creation. Not so – it isn't all about us, and we need to remember that.

Salvation, like everything else in God's universe, ultimately serves God's glory. He is the one who says, with reference to the refining of his people, 'For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another' (Isaiah 48:11). Although we rightly delight in the blessings of salvation that are and will be bestowed on us, we know that the final goal is not our glory or pleasure or happiness, but the glory of God.

Sin robs God of his glory. Sinners have 'exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images' (Romans 1:23) and thus 'all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23). The chief goal of the work of Christ in his life, death and resurrection is the restoration of the glory of God. It is not that somehow God receives additional glory from salvation: he is and always will be infinitely glorious. In Christ, however, sinners are placed in a position where they may glorify God. Paul makes this clear in 2 Corinthians 4:6 by stating that, when a sinner is saved, God is shining into his heart 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ'. Saved sinners may now reflect, albeit imperfectly, the glory of God into a dark world. Thus God is glorified in the fruit of evangelism, and in this we have the supreme motivation for evangelism.

The biblical truths that we have considered so far in the 'solas' present a God-centered and God-glorifying view of salvation and indeed of all of life. How could any child of God want it to be otherwise? The framers of the Shorter Catechism got it exactly right when they wrote that 'Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him for ever' (Q1). We will not be able to do the latter unless by grace we do the former.

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[7] LW 27:30

Salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone will inevitably issue in a life of increasing holiness and God-centered good works. Notice how Paul's prayer for the Philippians ends with the desire that they will be 'filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God' (Philippians 1:11). Good works, as the Reformers understood clearly, flow from salvation: we do good works because we have been saved, not in order to be saved (as Ephesians 2:10 reminds us). These are works done as a result of the gracious enabling of the Holy Spirit and are evidence of the grace of God that is at work in us. As a result the redeemed are 'God's temple and…God's Spirit dwells in you' (1 Corinthians 3:16).

The resulting lifestyle has as its focus and goal the glory of God. This is a profoundly transformative understanding of our Christian calling. All of life is embraced in this perspective. As 1 Corinthians 10:31 expresses it, our Christian calling is centered on the pursuit of the glory of God: 'So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God'. Even the most apparently mundane activities are to have in view the glory of God, done with an awareness of him and, in must be said, performed by his enabling grace. Grace does not bring us to the point of entrance to the kingdom of God and then leave us to go on in our own strength. Salvation is by grace from beginning to end.

At the last day it will be seen by every creature that all things glorify God alone. On that wonderful Day of consummation 'every tongue [will] confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father' (Philippians 2:11). The Son and the Holy Spirit will share equally in that glory, as our Trinitarian theology reminds us. It will be Christians' joy and privilege willingly to give all glory to God as they begin to experience the full fruits of God's grace in Christ. God's eternal plan of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, revealed in Scripture alone, all to God's glory alone, cannot fail. Having begun a good work in us he'will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ' (Philippians 1:6). There we have a firm foundation for assurance, thanksgiving and service for the glory of God.

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

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Introduction: A Definition

Francis Beckwith in *The Encyclopedia of Biblical Christian Ethics* defines civil disobedience as,

> ...a conscious demonstration of disloyalty toward some enactment, statute, or ordinance promolgated by a body that has power to make legally binding regulations...it describes defiance of promulgations enacted by the state. Through disobedience of particular ordinances it poses a direct challenge to the authority of the promulgating body.

John Rawls, in his chapter entitled "The Justification of Civil Disobedience" (in *Moral Problems*) says it is "...a public, nonviolent and conscientious act contrary to law, usually done with the intent to bring about a change in the policies or laws of the government." Notice his stress on the nonviolent nature of the act – this, he says, is to distinguish it from an act of insurrection or revolution. Motivated by conscientious conviction such an action will be undertaken, he says, to draw attention to a state of affairs considered unjust, to raise the moral consciousness of citizens and to set in motion the dynamics of appropriate social change.

What we will address in this article is the question – When is civil disobedience a permissible option for the Christian? To go further – When does it become morally mandatory for the Christian? Finally if we grant that such action is either permissible or mandatory, what form should it take?

1. The clear biblical mandate to be in subjection to legitimate governing authorities

(A) The sovereignty of God over every nation (Daniel 2:21a, 4:17,31).

(B) Our God-given responsibility under governments:-

(i) Romans 13:1–7. We can set out Paul's teaching briefly in six propositions:-

(a) God has established, or instituted, all governing authorities (v.1b,2b).

(b) As such the government of a state is God's servant, responsible to reward those who do right and punish those who do wrong (v.3-4).

(c) To rebel against a civil authority is to rebel against what God has instituted (v.2a).

(d) Such rebellion rightly brings punishment (v.2b,4b. Note that "the sword" here symbolizes the force that may legitimately be used to maintain law and order, but also, arguably, the ultimate sanction of the death penalty for a capital offence (cf. Genesis 9:5–6, where God establishes human government in principle after the Flood). The state is to be the agent of God's righteous wrath).

(e) The proper response of every citizen is submission (v.1,5. Note how in 1 Peter 3:5 – 6 submission and obedience are used as parallel terms. Note also that when Paul speaks of being submissive it is to be done not only out of fear, but to maintain a good conscience as a Christian. Note also that when Paul exhorted the Roman Christians to be submissive to the Roman government Nero was the emperor – he who killed his mother for the throne, burned Rome and made a scapegoat of the Christians, murdering many, even burning some of them alive as street lights!).

(f) One example of submission is payment of taxes (v.6-7: compare Christ's statement on paying Roman taxes in Matthew 22:17–21 when challenged by the ardently nationalistic Pharisees who were opposed to Roman rule. Note also his example in paying the Temple Tax in Matthew 17:24–27. Even though he said that, as a true son of the King of kings, he was exempt from this, he paid anyway, so as not to give offence).

(ii) 1 Peter 2:13–17. It's important to note the context here. In verses 9-12 believers are referred to as, "...a chosen race, a holy nation...aliens and strangers in the world...(living) among the pagans." Yet they must be submissive and respectful to, "...every authority instituted among men." Note also v.13–25. Under a government and in a world which had institutionalized the unjust system of slavery, they are still to be submissive and put up with the unjust suffering resulting from this, following the example of Christ.

(iii) Titus 3:1–2. Note again the stress on being subject and obedient in the context of slavery (2:9–10). Note also verses 3–8 of ch.3 where "...foolish disobedience,...malice and...hatred" (i.e. towards rulers and authorities) are seen as marks of the old life before conversion.

2. The equally clear biblical teaching that disobedience to governing authorities is sometimes right

(A) God does not approve evil actions by governments.

(i) Another look at Romans 13:1-7.

(a) "...the one in authority is God's servant..." This does not just mean he is God's servant in the general sense that he is under the sovereign and overruling hand of God, but

that he is God's servant in the particular sense that he is held accountable to govern according to the divine standards of justice set forth in God's Word. His power is a trust exercised according to rules. It is clear from scripture that far from being a servant, a government can become a "beast" (Revelation 13). The rewarding of good and evil according to their merits is a criterion whereby citizens can measure whether a government is fulfilling its God-ordained function or not. When that ruler is no longer "God's servant to do you good" (v.4) then serious questions need to be asked.

(b) The mention of the Christian's conscience (v.5) as a motivating factor in a citizen's submission. The obvious question is – What happens when a government's actions go against the voice of the believer's conscience as that is informed by Scripture? While stating above that to be "submissive" (v.1,5), as opposed to "rebelling" (v.2), means also obeying the government, the situation alters when that government introduces a law that is contrary to Scripture. In that case a citizen can be submissive to the authority of that government in general, recognizing its overall legitimacy under God's sovereign providence, while refusing, to comply with that particular law. This will mean accepting the penalty for such action, thus acknowledging in principle that government's legitimacy. We know from early church history that this was the stance of the early martyrs, e.g. when resisting the Roman emperor's command to sacrifice to idols.

(ii) Another look at Matthew 22:21.

Christ's masterful reply to those who were trying to entrap him has quite a radical sting in its tail! In a world that thought of the state's power as being absolute and unlimited Christ's words in effect limit the power of the state by relating it to the absolute and unlimited claims of God and his everlasting sovereign rule over all. We cannot render submission to Caesar when that would bring us into conflict with that higher revealed Law of the One who has given Caesar his authority as a sacred trust to be exercised under that revealed Law.

We must take into account the prophetic condemnation of evil governments in Scripture, not just of evil laws. This condemnation is not only confined to the nations of Israel and Judah, but to most of the nations in the Fertile Crescent. Large tracts of the major writing prophets for example, are taken up with this (e.g. Isaiah chs. 13-23, Jeremiah chs. 46-51, Ezekiel chs. 25-32, the Book of Revelation, etc.). The message is clear. God may have ordained governments, but he does not approve of their evil. For believers living under such evil regimes their responsibility was clear. Not only will those called to preach solemnly warn them and call them to repentance (e.g. Jonah in Nineveh), but where that government would force them to act against God's Word they will disobey, no matter the cost (e.g. Daniel and his three friends in Babylon in Daniel chs.1 and 3).

(B) God has given us clear precedents for civil disobedience in the Bible.

(i) The Hebrew midwives who refused to obey the order of the king of Egypt to kill the newborn male Hebrew babies (Exodus 1:15–22).

(ii) Moses' refusal to accept the king of Egypt's order that the Israelites were not to be allowed to go and hold a festival to the Lord in the desert, but instead were to be subject to more privations in their enforced slavery (Exodus 5:2–18).

(iii) Obadiah's refusal to help in Queen Jezebel's policy of killing the Lord's prophets, even though he was a high official in the palace, and his deliberate opposition to that policy by, instead, rescuing as many of them as possible (1 Kings 18:3-13).

(iv) Jeremiah's public defiance of the policy of King Zedekiah and his princely advisors when he counselled the people of Jerusalem to surrender to the invading Babylonians rather than offer resistance (Jeremiah 38:1–6).

(v) Instances from Daniel and his three friends in Babylon:-

a) The refusal of Daniel and his three friends to eat food that was ceremonially unclean, even though this was official palace policy (Daniel 1).
b) The refusal of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to comply with King Nebuchadnezzar's compulsory state religion which demanded that all should worship the golden image that he had set up (Dan. 3. Note their reply in v.17-18).
c) The refusal of Daniel to address prayer to King Darius as a god, even though this was state policy for 30 days, and despite the consequences – the lions' den! (Daniel 6).

(vi) The refusal of the Apostles to stop preaching the gospel (Acts 4:1-21;5:17-42 Note especially 4:18–20 and 5:18–21, 40–42). It is of course this passage that gives those who engage in civil disobedience for religious reasons their classic texts:- "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God...We must obey God rather than men". Although strictly speaking the authorities here were religious rather than civil, yet they were operating under the sufferance of and were directly answerable to the civil power. Thus the principles are the same as in the other cases of divinely approved disobedience. The Apostles saw themselves as being under the orders of the highest Power (Matthew 28:18-20 cf. Acts 1:8), orders that were renewed in the middle of this attempt to silence them (Acts 5:18-21a). However, this right to preach was also qualified in a sense – they were not to preach in places where they were strongly opposed. They were not to deliberately cause civil unrest. Christ had given clear instruction on the matter – Matthew 10:11-16, 23 [this in a context of warning about suffering persecution for preaching (v.17-33) and the divisions and tensions such preaching will cause (v.21, 34-39)]. It's instructive to see how this was worked out in practice in Acts – see 13:50-51; 14:5-7;16:22-40 (N.B. vs. 39-40); 17: 5-10, 13-14; 18:6-11; 19:8-10, 23, 30,31; 20:1. Paul's attitude to the State was clear. While being thankful for the privileges of *pax romana* (16:37-40; 22: 24-29), he was also prepared to be submissive to the state's ultimate sanctions if necessary (25:11).

(vii) The portrayal of the opposition of the true church to the state authorities in the section of Revelation that runs from ch. 11:19 to 14:20. Satan is portrayed as using the state (the two beasts) to try to overcome the true church by enforcing false worship (cf. Daniel in Babylon). The members of the true church who wish to obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus (13:10;14:12) stand against this even though it means a conflict (12:17) that will end in death (12:11). Whether one takes this as historical (i.e. a veiled reference to the persecution under the Roman Empire), as expressing an ongoing struggle (as in the amillenial view), or speaking of a future struggle (as in the premillenial view), the principle of civil disobedience remains the same when the interests of the kingdom of Caesar clash with the kingdom of God.

Conclusion: In each of these cases of divinely approved civil disobedience we see that the essential elements are as follows:- there is a demand by divinely appointed authorities that goes contrary to the Word of God; there follows disobedience to that command, which often brings dire consequences and there is some kind of explicit or implicit divine approval of this disobedience.

3. A brief look at the expression of the scriptural teaching on civil disobedience as it finds expression in the history of Christian doctrine

(1) **Thomas Aquinas** in *Summa Theologica* Part 1, Article 4 on "Whether Human Law Binds A Man In Conscience", distinguishes between just and unjust laws and states that a law that is unjust by virtue of opposing the divine good and being contrary to the commandments of God "...must nowhere be observed."

(2) The Lutherans. Luther's view finds expression in Article 16 of the Augsburg Confession, which states that the civil power ought to be obeyed in all that can be done without sin, "...But when the commands of the civil authority cannot be obeyed without sin, we must obey God rather than men." The Lutheran Magdeburg Confession went further, affirming the duty of armed resistance to a ruler who violated the Law of God.

(3) John Calvin in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 4, section 20, teaches that the authority of human rulers is always subject to that of God, and obedience to human rulers should never lead away from obedience to God,

> ...to whose will the desires of all kings ought to be subject, to whose decrees all their commands ought to yield, to whose majesty their sceptres ought to be submitted...The Lord...is King of Kings who...alone must be heard...If they command anything against him, let it go unesteemed.

Then, in a much quoted sentence, he states,

> ...if there are now any magistrates of the people, appointed to restrain the wilfulness of Kings...I am so far from forbidding them to withstand, in accordance with their duty , the fierce licentiousness of Kings, that, if they wink at Kings who violently fall upon and assault the common lowly folk, I declare that their dissimulation involves nefarious perfidy, because they dishonestly betray the freedom of the people, of which they know that they have been appointed protectors by God's ordinance.

In his comments on a passage in Daniel he uses even stronger language. He says that when earthly rulers rise up against God they "are unworthy to be reckoned among the members of mankind. We ought rather utterly to defy them (literally, 'spit on their heads') than to obey them." (It is interesting that Calvin wrote his *Institutes* to defend the Huguenots, a dissenting minority who were suffering for their faith, and addressed his book to King Francis I of France).

(4) Samuel Rutherford, the Covenanter. In his Book *Lex Rex* he opposes the "divine right of kings", building on the ideas of John Knox who had stated, "Kings have not an absolute power...to do what pleases them;...their power is limited by God's Word." Rutherford stated that,

> a power ethical, politic, or moral, to oppress, is not from God, and is not a power, but a licentious deviation of a power; and is no more from God, but from sinful nature and the old serpent; than a license to sin.

He argues that the Law of God is King and Kings are subject to it. Thus if the King disobeys the Law he is to be disobeyed. Not only that, but such a King is to be resisted as a tyrant. Rutherford argued for the rights of individuals and corporate bodies (such as states or churches) to resist by protest, flight (where possible) and force in self-defence. He states,

> When the supreme magistrate will not execute the judgment of the Lord, those who made him supreme magistrate , under God, who have under God, sovereign liberty to dispose of crowns and kingdoms, are to execute the judgment of the Lord, when wicked men make the law of God of none effect.

It was this thinking that lay behind the civil disobedience of the Covenanters in Scotland.

(5) John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government* (1690) was written to argue the legitimacy of the English Revolution of 1688 which installed William of Orange on the throne of England. While Locke drew more on a theory of natural law for his arguments and helped to secularize the ideas of men like Rutherford, yet his view grew out of the Reformation ideas mentioned above. He spoke of a social contract theory of government where the governed owe support while their government fulfils its basic purpose which is their welfare, "...the good of mankind." If a government is failing in this, he asks is it not necessary "that the rulers should be sometimes liable to be opposed when they grow exorbitant in the use of their power and employ it for the destruction and not the preservation of the properties of their people?"

Conclusion. These ideas of the rights of civil disobedience and of revolution against tyrannical governments lie at the very roots of our modern society today, because it was Locke's ideas that were further developed in an increasingly secular way during the American and French Revolutions and were later given more radical development by Marx. This shows the importance of this line of ideas on civil disobedience.

4. To be specific, in particular, in our modern 'pluralist' society is civil disobedience either mandatory or permissible?

(1) Mandatory. This would be when a government commands or compels what is clearly contrary to God's Word or prohibits believers from doing what is clearly commanded in it. In the scriptural instances mentioned under point 2 above it was clear that disobedience was to a command by the authorities that was contrary to the Word of God. Francis Schaeffer in his book *A Christian Manifesto* (in which he adopts the view of Rutherford) states, "When any office commands that which is contrary to the Word of God, those who

hold that office abrogate their authority and they are not to be obeyed, and that includes the state." He goes on,

> When the state commits illegitimate acts against a corporate body – such as a...church...there are two levels of resistance; remonstration (or protest) and then, if necessary, force employed in self-defence.

An example would be where a government refused to allow believers to meet for worship on the Lord's Day, banned the reading of the Bible or the teaching of its doctrines. Suppose a law was passed, for example, commanding that the doctrine of the divine creation be declared to be false. Or take, for instance, the dilemma of a Christian couple in China ordered to have an abortion under the state's "one child" policy. In such cases mandatory civil disobedience seems to be the only option for the Christian.

(2) Permissible. What if a government promulgates a law merely permitting (rather than enforcing) what is contrary to the Word of God (in effect giving unbelievers the "right" to act contrary to it)? Take an example: in 1982 the state government of Arkansas ruled that creation could not be taught in the public schools there. In 1987 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that no state could insist on teaching creation along with evolution in their public schools. Many Christians (including Schaeffer) felt this was a case for mandatory civil disobedience. However others, while accepting that civil disobedience was permissible, nevertheless declined to engage in it because they argued the law here was not compelling believers to believe or teach that creation was false, or negating freedom to teach it outside the public school classroom. Likewise with the law that permits abortion. Some believers in the U.S.A. have felt this merits mandatory civil disobedience, on the basis of such texts as Proverbs 24: 11 (and this camp has split into two – those favouring violent action and those favouring nonviolent), whereas others have felt that, while civil disobedience may be permissible, it is not necessary since the law is not commanding or requiring abortions (as in the case of China above).

In cases other than in (1) above, such as mentioned in (2), where government permits what is contrary to God's Word, the situation *vis à vis* civil disobedience may not be so clear. (It is not so easy, for example, to find appropriate civil disobedience when one wishes to protest against a law that permits others a freedom to do something you may consider to be morally wrong, since it involves actions you do not yourself participate in!). However, we may say it is permissible if the following criteria are met:-

(a) The law being resisted must be clearly unjust and immoral. A particular law may be inconvenient or burdensome, but the believer's respect for law and order will require putting up with it.

(b) Civil disobedience will only come into play once all legal means of changing an unjust situation have been exhausted. Thus it is a method of last resort. Much more effective may be a public moral campaign to win the hearts and minds of people.

(c) The act of civil disobedience should be a public one before the authorities.

(d) The action should be peaceful if at all possible.

(e) There should be some likelihood of achieving a successful end. This likelihood should be evaluated in the light of, and weighed against the possibility of, possible evil side effects such as social disruption, the danger of helping promote a more general spirit of lawlessness and disrespect for the law, the possible loss of one's personal freedom and how this will impinge on one's other responsibilities such as to one's family etc.

(f) Those who participate must be willing to accept any penalty for law-breaking. This attitude will demonstrate their respect for the principle of the rule of law and distinguish their action from insurrection or mere anarchy.

5. Given that civil disobedience is a last resort, what else has Scripture to say about the believer's reaction to a government that rules unjustly?

1. Whilst it may be necessary to disobey individual commands of a government that compels disobedience to God's Law, we are not thereby free to rebel against that government. We are still under obligation to be submissive as part of our Christian testimony (1 Peter 2:13-15; cf Proverbs 24:21).

2. Justified civil resistance should be nonviolent resistance. Moses was not to lead a bloody revolt against the Egyptians. Indeed his first overhasty attempt to right Israel's wrongs, which led him to murder the Egyptian, not only was wrong and occasioned his *de facto* punishment of forty years in the wilderness, it, arguably, set back Israel's liberation forty years (humanly speaking). Whilst it can be argued that some revolutions are just (as Rutherford argued that tyrannical governments should be resisted) man-inspired revolutions are consistently condemned in Scripture (e.g. Korah's, Absolom's, Jeroboam's, etc.). The peaceful civil disobedience campaigns of Ghandi and Martin Luther King are worthy for consideration in this regard.

3. The believer's first duty before civil disobedience is prayer (1 Timothy 2:1-8) Note how Paul says this is "of first importance". Note also the goal in our praying for kings and all in authority – "that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good and pleases God our Saviour." Note also the way we are to come to prayer in this regard – "without anger or disputing (v.8)."

4. The believer's second duty before civil disobedience is to work peacefully and within the law to seek to effect needed change, always bearing in mind Scripture's teaching on the need for patient endurance of suffering that comes for being a Christian (1 Peter 4:12-13, Revelation 13:10) and Christ's teaching against retaliation in our personal relationships with others (Matthew 5:38–39). There are those who would argue that in practice one can never exhaust the possibilities of lawful democratic methods and conclude that in practically every case civil disobedience directs energy and resources away from proper democratic channels.

5. The believer must also weigh up the possibility of flight from oppressive laws when civil disobedience is futile, rather than be the passive target of tyranny. Moses took the people of Israel away from the sphere of oppression, the prophets fled from Jezebel and even Christ's family fled from Herod. This will be only for extreme cases, of course.

6. The believer will constantly be realistic. He may succeed with others in changing social institutions, but he knows that the real change needed is a change in human nature and only God can do this. Moreover as he works for justice in this world he realises that perfect justice is not attainable under the present conditions. It will only come about when Christ returns and brings in the Kingdom of God in all its fulness. Thus his first priority will be the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom. Nothing will be done that will in any way undermine that.

ROMANS 7 REVISITED

An exegesis and interpretation of Romans 7:7-25

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Introduction

The interpretation of this passage has been a matter of dispute from the time of the post-Apostolic Fathers. The major point in dispute is whether the entire passage, 7:7-25, is descriptive of a man under the law or whether, from 7:14 onwards, the description becomes one of a man under grace. In the history of interpretation, the overwhelming majority of the early church, represented by Chrysostom, Origen and Theoderet, understood Paul to be referring, throughout the passage, to his experience under the law. Augustine, at least in his latter years, and subsequent Latin/Western thought, tended towards the view that, from 7:14 onwards, Paul was describing his experience under grace, striving with indwelling sin.

The Magisterial Reformers (Calvin, Luther, Melanchthon, Beza) followed the Augustinian interpretation and, broadly speaking, the Reformed 'tradition' (Hodge, Haldane, Shedd and, more recently, Murray and Packer) has continued to do so. However, the wider modern consensus, including several representatives from the Reformed camp, is in favour of the older Greek interpretation (Stuart, Olhausen, Godet, Ridderbos and Moo).

Significantly, various modifications of these views have been suggested. For example, F.F Bruce interprets 7:14-25 as being descriptive of a man under grace but living on a lower plane than he ought to. In other words, far from being descriptive of normative Christian experience, the experience recorded is representative of a Christian in need of a significant liberation, in this present world, in order fully to enjoy his salvation. Such an interpretation contrasts vividly with the standard Reformed view, espoused effectively by Hodge, which asserts that no believer, in this present world, could rise to a degree of sanctification higher than the one described throughout this passage in its entirety.

To add to the difficulty, the debate has become rather polarised, and not a little heated, due to the frequent references to this passage, by both sides, in the Calvinist/Arminian debate. Arminians have tended to understand the whole passage as referring to a man under law while, in the main, Calvinists have understood 7:14 onwards to be referring to a man under grace. This being the case, it is perhaps necessary to warn all parties against a lurking prejudice in coming to the exegesis of the passage. However, it is as well at the outset, to state our conviction that this passage has nothing of any great relevance to contribute to that particular debate. The textual battleground on which that battle should be fought must be located elsewhere.

Context

As always, it is of crucial importance that the passage under consideration be viewed in the light of its wider context, in this case chapters 6-8. In spite of the tight logic of the epistle and the obvious interconnectedness of all its parts, it is plain that these chapters form a distinct unit of argument, the content of which is determined by the opening question of chapter 6: 'What then? Shall we continue in sin that grace might abound?' With this question, Paul, having previously established justification by faith 'apart from the works of the law', now proceeds to elucidate the relationship between justification and sanctification – again in connection with the law of God.

In that light, we understand the logical structure of the passage to be as follows. In 7:1-4, Paul presents a marriage analogy – which cannot be analysed at present in detail – designed to highlight a clear antithesis between a life *under law* and *in sin*, on the one hand, and a life *under grace* and *in obedience* on the other. This is asserted again, in a more plain and dogmatic form, in the two verses following. In 7:5, being 'in the flesh' and married to the law, produces only the fruits of sin and death, while, in 7:6, being 'in newness of Spirit' and married to Christ brings a new lifestyle – previously referred to in 7:4 as 'bringing forth fruit unto God'.

It is our understanding that the experience of 7:5 – which consists in a coming together of law, sin and death – is the experience expounded in the rest of the chapter, in which we see, in the most graphic and dramatic terms, the results of enslavement to sin. The experience of 7:6 – which consists in the coming together of life and Spirit – is then expounded in the opening verses of the following chapter (8:1-14) in which we see that the result of being 'in Christ,' or 'in the Spirit', is freedom from the enslaving power of sin and the production of the fruit of obedience.

In other words, the triad of law, sin, and death is seen in all its enslaving power in chapter 7:7-25 while the contrasting triad of Spirit/Christ, obedience and death is seen in all its liberating power in chapter 8: 1-14. Note the significant absence of any reference to the Holy Spirit in 7:7-25 and, in vivid contrast to that, no fewer than thirteen references to him in chapter 8:1-14.

This structure, then, may be schematised as follows:

7:1-4	Contrast between being under law and under grace
7:5	Thesis: To be under law is sin and death
	Exposition: 7:7-13 Doctrinal; 7:14-25 Experiential
7:6	Thesis: To be under grace is obedience and life
	Exposition: 8:1-14

It ought to be noted, however, that in the schematisation above, 7:25a is understood to be a parenthetical interjection into the flow of the argument. Bearing this in mind, it is our assertion that the entire passage under discussion – with the exception of verse 7:25a – is descriptive of a man 'under law' and, therefore, in bondage to sin and death.

Following this logical structure, we can begin with 7:7-13, which we understand to be an exposition of chapter 7:5.

Doctrinal Exposition (7:7-13)

7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet." 8 But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. 9 I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. 10 And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. 11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. 12 Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. 13 Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.

At the heart of this section is the assertion by Paul that, at one time, he was alive without the law (7:9a) and that, during this period, sin was, in some sense, dead (7:8c). However, the arrival of the law (7:9b) changed all that: with its arrival, sin revived (*anezēsen*) and, in some sense, Paul died (7:9c). Although all these references to life and death are rather cryptic, their interpretation is not as daunting as might first appear.

Beginning with the advent of the law, it hardly needs to be said that one who was trained under Gamaliel, and who was 'a Pharisee of the Pharisees', could hardly have been alive 'apart from the law' in the most natural sense of that expression – that is, without the law entirely or ignorant of it. Paul must have been referring to the advent of the law into his experience in some other way other than through mere cognitive knowledge or as a rule of life. Here, surely, 7:7 provides the key. Prior to the arrival of the law, Paul did not 'know' (*egnōn*) sin. Particularly, he did not 'know' the sin of covetousness until the law said to him 'You shall not covet' (7:7c). However, the 'coming' of the law, in some sense, roused the sin of covetousness within him (7:8b and 9b). It would seem clear, then, that the 'coming' of the law here refers to an increased awareness on Paul's part as to what the law really required. He began to see it as he had not seen it before.

Now, if this understanding of the advent of the law is correct, and it is hard to think of a coherent alternative, then it becomes easier to understand what he means by being alive, sin reviving and Paul himself dying.

Second, then, by being 'alive' prior to the coming of the law, Paul meant that his obedience to the law, as he originally knew it, was an indicator of his being alive towards God and, indeed, a sign of his inevitable justification. After all, the commandment, or 'law', was 'unto life' (7:10a). This is, most likely, a reference to the promise contained within the law itself: 'You shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgements: which, if a man do, *he shall live by them*' (Leviticus 18:5, my emphasis). If true life, therefore, is found in obedience to the commandments, then, with his then existing, external and rather shallow knowledge of the law, Paul felt himself to be 'right with God' (see Philippians 2:3ff).

Third, if this understanding of being 'alive' is correct, then it becomes fairly straightforward to identify what he means by sin being 'dead' at the same time (7:8c). That is to say, it was dead in the sense that it had no power to condemn him. Indeed, it also carries the additional idea of sin having been fairly dormant in his thinking and/or experience – after all, prior to the coming of the law, he did not 'know sin' (7:7b) which, again, in light of his upbringing, theological training and understanding, cannot refer to a mere cognitive knowledge of sin but,

rather, an experiential knowledge – however, in light of the emphasis in the context on justification, it seems to be, primarily, a reference to the fact that sin did not condemn him. Of course, the reason it could not condemn him lay in the fact that the true nature and power of sin was as yet undetected by him as long as the law was at a distance.

Fourth, if these interpretations are correct, then the resurrection of sin becomes easier to understand. Paul says that, with the advent of the law, sin 'sprang into life' (7:9b *anezēsen*). Indeed, it used the law as a 'springboard' (*aphormēn*) in doing so (7:8a). Whether this revival of sin was simply an increased awareness of its presence or a genuine stimulation of the impulse to sin is, to some extent at least, a moot point – but it would seem more faithful to the text to understand some kind of stimulation to have taken place. In other words, he experienced the (not unusual) phenomenon of coming under the increasing control of a power he had begun to resist.

Fifth, and finally, it only remains to interpret the sense in which Paul 'died'. Clearly, this 'death' must correspond to his previous 'life'. If, as we have seen, by being 'alive' prior to the coming of the law, Paul meant that he was alive towards God and in a good relationship with him, then, by 'dying', he must have meant that he died to this hope and began to see himself as falling short of God's righteous standard. The law, which he viewed as a ministry of life, had become, for him, a ministry of death. And, of course, if the keeping of God's law could not save him, then what could?

In this process, Paul speaks of himself as being 'deceived' (7:11). This deception was the work of sin which, by darkening Paul's mind, convinced him, first of all, that the law could save him. Then, with the arrival of the law in Paul's consciousness, sin 'sprang into life' in order to overpower the conviction produced by the law and, by inducing an increasing sense of despair in connection with God's justification, it slew him. This led Paul to a state of wretchedness in which the need for a deliverer became increasingly urgent (7:24).

In reflecting on this process, Paul ascribes no fault to the law of God. The law itself is not 'sin' (7:7a) and it is not 'death' (7:13a). Indeed, the law of God is 'holy' and 'just' and 'good' (7:12). However, the point being made is that the law of God, however, good and holy, could not overpower sin and, therefore, could neither justify nor sanctify the sinner. Another deliverer must arrive on the scene before there can be deliverance form the law of sin and death.

In summary, then, Paul (or Saul) was justifying himself before God relatively undisturbed by the law (which was still distant) and by sin (which was still undetected and undisturbed).

Admittedly, it is not easy to identify at what point in Paul's life he became aware of this entrance of the law as a convicting force. It cannot have been during his three days of blindness in Damascus, as has been suggested by some, for the simple reason that he had, at that point, encountered Christ. The same consideration rules out the mysterious three years spent in Arabia. It is a tempting conjecture to trace his convictions to the impression made by the stoning of Stephen – but it would only be a conjecture. What would seem plain, and spiritually and psychologically revealing, is that these convictions must have been present during his persecution of the saints, for it was in the process of carrying out this work that he encountered the Lord – in which case, the zeal of his persecution would be an evidence of an increasing concern to please a God which he was not so sure he was pleasing any longer.

Psychological Exposition (7:14-25)

It is more or less acknowledged on all hands that the verses now under consideration present a gripping personal account of a weary struggle, a weariness which is evident even in its repetitive literary form. This form, for which we are partially indebted to Godet, consists of three cycles, all of which contain three constituent parts as follows:

Cycle A: Affirmation (verse 14), Demonstration (verse 15), Deduction (verse 16, 17);
Cycle B: Affirmation (verse 18a), Demonstration (verse 18b, 19), Deduction (verse 20);
Cycle C: Affirmation (verse 21), Demonstration (verse 22, 23), Deduction (verse 24, 25).

Cycle A: Affirmation (7:14)

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.

The connection of this verse to the previous verses, through the use of the connective 'for', indicates that the argument is being further developed. The logical connection may be conveyed by means of a paraphrase as follows: 'The advent of the holy law of God brought about my death because there is a radical difference between its nature and mine. The nature of the law is holy and spiritual whereas mine is carnal and in bondage to sin'. Such a paraphrase highlights the continuity of thought and argument. Indeed one suspects that had Paul not suddenly switched into using the present tense in 7:14, there would be no real debate as to the meaning of this entire passage: 7:14-25, *read in the past tense*, would naturally convey a graphic depiction of the struggle just outlined in 7:7-14, culminating in a cry for a deliver, and, then, on finding the deliverer, issuing, first, in the marvellous declaration of 8:1, 'There is therefore, *now*, no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus' and, then, the subsequent powerful and liberating depiction of life in the Spirit (8:1-14) – so markedly contrary in spirit and tone to the struggle which had gone before.

The stubborn fact remains, however, that the narrative *does* change into the present tense and, on the face of it, such a change remains a powerful (*the most* powerful?) argument for bringing the account into Paul's new and ongoing experience as a man under grace. Indeed, so many exegetes and interpreters are so influenced by the adoption of the present tense that, for them, all other considerations fade out of view and debate ceases. However, that ought not to be the case.

In this particular mode of argument, in which principles are being illustrated from intense personal experience, and in argumentative form, it is only to be expected that the dramatic use of the present tense might be adopted. It is, in fact, a well-established argumentative technique and one in use in most, if not all, modern languages. Kuehner's *Elementary Grammar of the Greek Language*, although an older work, is representative of standard Greek grammars and is revealing on this point. In section 152:4 he writes, '*In the narration of past events, the present is frequently used*, especially in principal sentences, but not infrequently in subordinate sentences, while *in the vividness of representation the past is looked upon as present*.'

Still on the use of the present tense, it is interesting that Calvin believed Paul to be describing his experience under grace from 7:15 onwards, not 7:14. While such an interpretation allows Calvin to apply the expression 'sold under sin' to the man under law, it disallows him from

laying any emphasis on the introduction of the present tense. We infer, then, that its introduction alone cannot have been hugely significant for Calvin.

Paul often uses 'we know' to introduce a generally recognised truth (see 2:2 and 3:19). The truth here acknowledged is the spiritual nature, or origin, of God's law – which reflects God's own nature (7:12). However, it can only minister death to fallen man due to his nature being 'carnal' and 'sold under sin'. Both these descriptive terms, frequently understated by exegetes in terms of their importance and use, need to be considered.

'Carnal' or 'fleshly' (*sarkinos*) is a descriptive term used of man without the Spirit of God. It is only applied once to Christians - when they are *behaving* as people without the Spirit of God (see 1 Corinthians 3:1, 3, 4). It is important to note, however, one crucial difference between the use of the term in 1 Corinthians 3 and elsewhere in Scripture. In First Corinthians 3 it is clearly carnal *behaviour* which is being attributed to the Corinthians and not a carnal *identity* as such. In plain terms, they are *spiritual* men (that is, men owned and indwelt by the Spirit of God) but they are behaving as *carnal* men (people governed by the flesh and without the indwelling Spirit of God). However, in Romans chapter 7, the situation is entirely different. Here, Paul *is* carnal. That is his *identity*. In fact, his nature is in entire opposition to the law – which is spiritual. Furthermore, it is not the case that both he and the law are partly spiritual and partly fleshly. The contrast is absolute and total. The whole law is spiritual and the whole man is carnal.

Certainly, it remains the case that the man under grace is capable of carnal behaviour – because the fleshly principle remains within him – but on no account is he to be *defined* or *denominated* in that way. After all, the 'carnal mind is enmity against God' and 'is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be' (Romans 8:7) and 'those that are in the flesh cannot please God' (Romans 8:8). Indeed, Paul immediately goes on to tell the Roman Christians that they 'are not in the flesh but in the Spirit' (Romans 8:9) and that if they were in the flesh, they would 'die' (Romans 8:13). Far from being forced into compatibility with his earlier statement – that he himself is 'carnal' and 'sold under sin' – all these statements are meant to be read as being in stark contrast to it. In Romans 8, as a man delivered and no longer under law, Paul is simply no longer 'carnal' and 'sold under sin' as he was in chapter 7. He has been delivered.

The difficulty inherent in Paul describing himself as 'carnal' and 'sold under sin' becomes even more pointed when we remember Hodge's claim, that no believer, however advanced in holiness, can rise above the use of this language. In the light of the negative language used in respect of being carnal throughout Romans 8, this problem is so acute that F. F. Bruce, as we observed in our introduction, holds that Paul, when 'carnal' and 'sold under sin', is living on a lower plane than he ought to. Now, we suspect that this cleavage between Bruce and Hodge exposes the difficulty inherent in the majority exegesis and understanding of this passage within the Reformed camp. Far from being eased, this difficulty is further exacerbated by a closer look at the expression 'sold under sin'.

Bearing in mind the wider context of chapters 6-8, it would seem fairly evident that this phrase refers back to the analogy previously made in verses 16-18 of that chapter, in which man is spoken of as a slave to sin before his liberation to a new master – God. It appears natural, then, to see Paul referring to himself here as being under that law and a slave to sin. Significantly, the expression 'sold under sin' is a very forceful one, derived from the image of selling war slaves under a yoke. Such slaves were in a condition of absolute despotism

and entirely at their master's disposal. How can such an expression, then, be used by Paul of himself – under grace – when he had written, only a few verses earlier, 'but God be thanked, *that you were the servants of sin*, but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you. Being then made *free from sin*, you became the *servants of righteousness*' (Romans 6:17, 18 – see also verses 13, 14 and 19-22). Crucially, note also that the context in Romans 6 is not justification, but sanctification.

Cycle A: Demonstration (verse 15)

For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.

This verse is clearly demonstrating what has just been affirmed: the experience of a hard bondage to sin as the master. That is, the evidence of being 'sold under sin' lay in Paul's behaviour. Although he desires to keep the law of God, he increasingly finds himself unable to do so. Of course, as we have seen, this is due to the advent of the law into his experience as well as to the consequent arousal of his sinful, fleshly, nature. One aspect of the slave/master relationship is that slaves are not expected to understand their master's will, they are merely bound to perform it. Christ refers to this point when he tells his disciples that he will no longer call them servants but friends for 'the servant does not know what the Master does; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known to you.' (John 15:15). The meaning here, then, is that Paul could not understand his increasing and habitual disobedience to God's law and his slavish obedience to sin's power and lordship. His desire to keep God's law was made impossible by sin working out in his life what his conscience testified so strongly against. He knows sin to be wrong, but with the advent of the law and the increasing power of sin, he is losing hope of justification. Saul is dying (7:9).

Cycle A: Deduction (verse 16, 17)

If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good.

Paul announces here, again, a vindication of the law's integrity – an integrity which he is careful to maintain throughout the argument. In hating what the law forbids, even though he is compelled to practise it, he finds an evidence of the righteousness of God's holy law.

But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

This concluding refrain, which brings the first cycle to a close, presents a difficulty from whichever viewpoint one sees the passage in that Paul appears, on the face of it, to be absolving himself from guilt with respect to his own sin. This, however, is to press the words too hard. His meaning is not that he is not responsible. Rather, it is to emphasise that, in his conscience at least, he is not in agreement with the way he is now living his life. In which case, he sees himself under a greater power, one that is stronger than the conscience which ought to be guiding him as the 'captain of the ship'. This power is, of course, sin – which is here seen by him as an unwelcome and tyrannical intruder and one which was fast destroying his hope of justification.

It is difficult to let this verse go without reference again to Calvin. Just as he felt constrained to apply 'sold under sin' to Paul under the law, this time he says 'who besides (the man under

grace) can conscientiously and intelligently affirm, 'now then, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells in me?' It needs to be understood, however, that Paul is affirming this truth *in the present* – but doing so in respect of a conflict *in the past*. He is not presenting his understanding of the conflict *at the time of its occurrence* but recalling it, vividly, from the standpoint of the present, with all the interpretive benefit of hindsight. He is now able to look back and accurately discern the forces which were at work in his soul when the commandment 'came', in a way in which he could not have done when the forces were at work.

Cycle B: Affirmation (verse 18a)

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells;

Although these words constitute the beginning of a new cycle, they manifestly relate to the immediately preceding words, of verse 17. Here, Paul is effectively restating what he has just said – although he is now restating it with a view to elaborating the thought further, as we shall see.

His assertion is not designed to say that there is no spiritual good within him – which would, of course, be true – but to highlight the fact that the power dominating and enslaving his life, in his present fleshly condition, is not a good one but an evil one. It is to be understood, in relation to verse 17, as follows: 'The fact that I assent to the goodness of the law but find myself unable to fulfil its' requirements, is an evidence that I am in the grip of a hostile, evil power (verse 17). Indeed, I know that what dwells in my flesh cannot be a good thing because I find myself utterly unable to do what is good (verse 18)'.

Cycle B: Demonstration (verse 18b, 19)

'...for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practise'.

Having repeated the affirmation of verse 17 – that sin is the unwelcome and tyrannical intruder destroying his hope of justification – he then demonstrates the reality of this assertion by presenting a psychological description of how this tyranny works itself out (verse 18b, 19). In essence, all he says is this: the evidence that it is no good thing that dwells in him, as the motivating and governing power, lies in the fact that he is unable to do the good that he desires to do as well being unable to stop the practising the evil which he desires to cease. Two aspects of this struggle need to be highlighted and it is as well to do so here.

First, to argue, as some do, that Paul cannot possibly, as a man under the law, desire to do the 'good' is to misunderstand the import of his statement. The fact that Paul uses *agathon* (a more general word for 'goodness') here, rather than *kalos* (which normally refers to 'intrinsic goodness' and which he had used in 7:16) indicates that Paul did not intend to be understood as though he was stating that he was fully aware, in a spiritual sense, of the 'goodness' of the law, as he was to do later as a man under grace. Rather, he is merely affirming, again, that the moral law is right and good. However, the presence of sin, under which he is sold and to which he is utterly captive (7:14), results in a total inability to perform the good required by the law. Therefore, it is not a good thing that dwells in him as a motivating and governing power, but an evil thing – sin.

Second, it is apparent that this inability to do the good and the tendency to do the evil is a persistent, defining and characteristic of Saul's life at this point. The evidence for this is as follows. According to the cyclical nature of the passage, 7:19 is virtually a re-affirmation of 7:15. Significantly, within both these verses, the verbs used to describe the 'doing' of the evil and the 'not doing' of the good are used interchangeably. One of these, *prasso,* carries the idea of habitual, regular practice and is applied both to the doing of the evil (7:19) and the not doing of the good (7:15). Clearly, then, Paul is still describing the state of ongoing and entire slavery to sin in which he exists in the flesh. However, many exegetes, including Haldane and Shedd, while acknowledging that the terms are interchangeable, nonetheless assert that they denote intermittent action. For example, Haldane writes, '…this does not imply that he did not attempt *or, in some sense, perform* what he purposed, *but that in all he came short'* (my emphasis). The problem with Haldane's assertion here is that it makes Paul to be saying something other than what he says. Paul is not saying that he is 'coming short' – in the sense in which every genuinely good work falls short of God's holy law – but that he is in utter bondage, as he has already powerfully asserted in verses 9, 10, 14 and 15. He is habitually disobedient, enslaved to sin more powerfully than any other servant to his master.

Cycle B: Deduction (verse 20)

'Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me'.

This verse, essentially a repetition of verses 16 and 17, expressing the truth, as expressed by Godet in his commentary, 'I am not master of myself, a stranger holds me captive' (see above on verses 16 and 17 and below on verse 23).

Cycle C: Affirmation (verse 21)

'I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good'.

This verse functions both as a deduction from the foregoing as well as the opening thesis of the third and final cycle to be expounded. These cycles, depicting real conflict, become more intense as they develop.

It has been suggested that when Paul says here that he finds a 'law' here, that he is, in fact, referring to the law of God. As well as appearing unlikely, it is worth observing in the passage that when the law of God is in view, it is obviously in view either by being denominated as such (the 'law of God' in verses 22 and 25) or prefaced by the definite article (see verses 14 and 16). Furthermore, the term 'law' is clearly used in the sense of general rule or principle in verse 23. It appears best, then, to understand this assertion on the same light: 'I find then a principle that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.' To put this another way, Paul is saying that whenever he would seek to keep the law of God, sin asserts itself at such a point with all the regularity and force of a law, not merely to fight against him but to keep him in bondage (verse 23) and to bring him, ultimately, to death (verse 24).

Cycle C: Demonstration (verses 22, 23)

'For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members'.

This habitual and characteristic enslavement is demonstrated here in the most graphic terms.

Those who understand verses 14-25, in their entirety, as being descriptive of a man under grace tend to make verse 22 the main citadel of their argument, thinking it impossible that a man under the law could use the language Paul adopts here. But this is to beg the question. In order to understand Paul's meaning, there are two pressing questions to be answered.

First, what does Paul mean by 'delighting' in the law? Unfortunately, in looking elsewhere in the New Testament for direct help, we run into a difficulty: the word translated 'delight' appears nowhere else in the New Testament at all. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that its use in classical literature is also quite rare. Etymologically, and in the few places it appears among classical authors, it means to rejoice in something or together with someone. However, the more important point to determine is whether this delight in God's law is identical with the spiritual delight which the man under grace has in meditation upon the law of God. Undoubtedly, the fact that many Christians have (understandably) used these words to express their own feelings regarding the law of God, will tend to predispose them against understanding the expression as in any way applicable to the experience of a man under the law. However, we should beware of such predispositions. There is another word used for rejoicing in something, *agalliathēnai*, which is stronger in its force than the present term we are working with and which means 'to exult in'. Interestingly, Christ uses this word to describe the way in which unbelieving Jews responded initially to the ministry of John the Baptist (John 5:35). Of course, there is no question here that there 'exultation' of the unbelieving Jews in John's message was of a spiritual kind. Is it not equally possible, then, that Paul's delight in the law of God might not have been truly spiritual either? After all, since this word appears only once in the New Testament, we should allow the context considerable force in determining its meaning.

Again, and as we have highlighted above, the cycles are cumulative in feeling and force and it is to be expected, as they near their agonising end, that the language used would rise as high as it can – in much the same way in which the terms used of those who were apostasising in Hebrews 6 appear to go as close as possible to describing a Christian without doing so. Here, Paul's 'assent' to the law of God, in verse 16, is now described as a 'delight' in it – but, as we shall see in a moment, the end of the cycle is still tragic and predictable: utter bondage to sin and death (verses 23 and 24). The fact is that a man, like Saul, deeply taught in the law and desiring to fulfil it and to be justified by God in so doing, has now come to experience the real power of sin and the penetrating power of the law. While he gives full assent of reason and conscience, in this condition, to the holiness and rectitude of the law, he is powerless to obey it. This ceases to be the case when he comes under grace, as chapter 8 makes plain.

A more formidable objection, however, lies elsewhere. How can it be possible for a carnal man whose mind is in enmity against the law of God (Romans 8:7a) to delight in that same law? However, it is crucial to note that in stating the opposition of the carnal mind to the law of God, in Romans 8:7a, Paul suddenly adopts a new term for 'mind'. Instead of the word *nous*, which relates to the reason and the conscience, and which he used consistently in chapter 7:25, he adopts the word *phronema*, which clearly includes the voluntary disposition – the aspirations of the heart. These two words are really quite different in communicative content and the rejection of the one and the adoption of the other, in chapter 8, is quite revealing. In other words, it is indeed possible for the reason and the conscience to give

assent to one thing, and indeed to see its fitness and beauty, while the individual is pulled in an altogether different direction by the carnality of the wider thought processes.

For these reasons, while 'delighting' in the law of God is an admittedly strong expression, and one which, on the face of it, is most fitting as a description of the Christian's attitude to the law of God, its use here is not decisive.

The second question revolves around the concept of the 'inward man'. What part of the man, precisely, is denoted by it? In answer, it is probably fair to say that 'outward man' and 'inward man' are the most general of all the anthropological terms used in Scripture. They describe the material and immaterial parts of man respectively. Essentially, they are equivalent, again respectively, to 'body' and 'soul'. Their deployment has nothing to do with whether the person in view is under law or under grace. If it is the case, however, that 'inward man' is a reference to the soul, it would seem to indicate that Paul's entire soul was in sympathy with the law of God. But if this was the case, there would be a profound difficulty on all sides. On the one hand, if his whole soul was in sympathy with the law of God, then how could we explain that he acts to the contrary? That would make the soul subservient to the body and, whatever Paul is saying, he does not say that here, or elsewhere for that matter. Furthermore, to say so would be to root the principle of sin in the body and not in the soul – after all, if the entire soul is on the law's side, then the habitual practice of sin must be the body's fault – but this is manifestly inconsistent with what Paul has to say about a 'fleshly mind' and is also inconsistent with experience and with a truly biblical theology/psychology. Clearly, then, Paul cannot be asserting that his whole inward man is in sympathy with the law of God. What, then, are we to make of his statement? The answer lies to hand in the context.

It is clear from the context that the more general term 'inward man' is later substituted with the more specific term 'mind' (*nous* – see verse 25) which, as we have seen, denotes reason and conscience. Clearly, then, when Paul states in verse 22 that he delights in the law of God according to the inward man, he further defines this, in verse 25, by telling us that this delight is located in the realm of reason and conscience alone. In this way, it is evident that Paul's delight in the law of God, at this point in his experience, is not to be understood as the delight of heart as experienced by the man under grace but as the delight of reason and conscience in the rightness and fitness of the law of God, as may be experienced by a man still under the law.

However, although the law of God secures the delight of Paul's reason and the sympathy of his conscience, it manifestly fails to secure his obedience. This failure is due to the presence of another law, the law of sin which is at work in his members. This law prevails over the law of God and commands Paul's obedience.

In the interpretation of this passage, it is again difficult to miss an allusion to the slave/master analogy which dominated chapter 6. In verse 13 of that chapter, Paul tells Christians not to 'present (their) members' as 'instruments of unrighteousness to sin' but to present these members as 'instruments of righteousness unto God'. The importance of this presentation of our 'members' is brought to the fore in verse 16 where he reveals that what we do with our 'members' reveals who our master is: sin or God. In verses 17-22, he thanks God that the Christians in Rome had obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine delivered to them and were no longer servants of sin, bringing forth the fruit in their members, but servants of righteousness, bringing forth fruit in their members unto God.

The connection of these words and thoughts with the passage under discussion is obvious. The law of sin in Paul's members is a law which doesn't originate in these members – that, again, would be to locate the principle of sin in the body – but a law which reveals itself in these members. Sadly, its power is revealed in these members too because they yield to the law of sin rather than to the law of God. The law of sin here is 'warring' or 'setting itself in battle' against the law of his 'mind' (nous) and, whenever Paul tries to keep the law of God, which he knows to be right, he is brought 'captive' (*aichmalōtizonta*) – a word used of prisoners of war, kept or sold as slaves at the pleasure of the victor.

Again, in the light of such language, and in the wider context of chapters 6-8, it is remarkable to find Shedd claiming that this captivity must be understood as being 'relative and temporal, not absolute, endless and hopeless.' However, far from being 'relative', the bondage here is indeed 'absolute'. This yielding on the part of his members to the law of sin is not only repetitive but constant, characteristic and defining. In the terms of chapter 6, Paul is, at this point, a servant of sin bearing its fruit in his members, not a servant of righteousness bringing forth fruit unto God. Certainly, he cannot be the man of Romans 8:2 who has become free from the law of sin and death through the spirit of life in Christ Jesus – the very characteristic of such a man being that he 'does not walk after the flesh but after the Spirit' (8:1,4).

It may be objected here that the conflict being described is quite clearly identical with that equally famous conflict between the flesh and the Spirit in Galatians 5: 16-26 – which latter conflict is plainly a conflict in the experience of a man under grace. The comparison is, indeed, revealing – but only in the sense that it highlights the radical difference.

In the Galatian conflict, and in the space of eleven verses, the word 'Spirit' appears no less than seven times. The same word is conspicuous only by its total absence in the conflict of Romans 7. This absence is only rendered more conspicuous by its appearance no less than thirteen times in the opening fourteen verses of Romans 8. In other words, when Paul turns, in chapter 8, to speak of being set free from the law of sin and death (8:2), a law which was evidently in full force in the previous chapter, he ascribes this liberation to the power of the Holy Spirit. Certainly, the liberation follows on from being 'in Christ' and being under 'no condemnation' (8:1), but the liberating agent, delivering him from the tyranny of sin and death, is the Holy Spirit. The mortification of sin, so prevalent in Romans 8:1-14, and secured by the power of the Holy Spirit, is the very mortification which could not be secured by the law in Romans chapter 7. Prior to the deliverance of Christ and the arrival of the Holy Spirit, it was not sin that was being slain – it was Paul himself.

The similarity between the two conflicts is easily accounted for. Sin continues its warfare in the life of the man under grace. It does so, however, having to contend against an enemy more powerful than reason and conscience. It has to fight the Holy Spirit of God. This accounts for sin's defeat. In this connection it is worth noting the difference in language and tone between the conflicts of Romans 7 and Galatians 5. Put simply, in Galatians 5 the dominant note is not defeat but victory. The passage even begins on a victorious note: 'This I say then, walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh' and goes on in the same vein, 'if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law…they who do (the works of the flesh) shall not inherit the Kingdom of God…they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and its lusts.' The victorious nature of the conflict in Galatians 5 could not be in more stark contrast with the abject failure in Romans 7.

Therefore, despite a similarity arising from the fact of there being a conflict with sin in both passages, the flesh/law/mind conflict leads to death (Romans 7:24) while the flesh/Spirit conflict leads to life (Galatians 5: 24).

Deduction (verse 24)

'O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death?'

It is not clear whether Paul is speaking of the 'body of this death' or 'this body of death'. The phrase will bear either translation. Thankfully, in a passage of so many complexities, there is little at stake as it does not appear to make much difference if either one is adopted at the expense of the other. The point being made is that Paul's body is stamped with death.

The psychological process outlined above, and the invariable result of it – captivity to sin – demonstrates that Paul is in a truly miserable condition. He is unable and, fundamentally, unwilling to do what he knows to be right and good. With his understanding of justification, he now knows that is unable to please God and inherit eternal life. This condition can only be described as Paul describes it: 'wretched' (*talaipōros*).

Etymologically, this is the cry of a man weary with labour. It is frequent in Greek tragedy as a cry of despair. Those who believe that Paul, at this point in his experience, is under grace and not under law, tend to modify and weaken the significance of this expression. In essence, they argue that his wretchedness is not one of genuine despair but one of intense frustration only. He cannot be truly, or objectively, wretched for the simple reason that he is a man under grace and in Christ. Certainly, if Paul knew, at the time at which he was undergoing this experience, the identity of his deliverer and the certainty of his deliverance and, indeed, that he had already been freed from the dominion and tyranny of sin and that he possessed eternal life, then his 'wretchedness' is only relative.

On the contrary, however, Paul's wretchedness here is as much objective as subjective and it is absolute rather than relative. We are to make no mistake: having lost his hope of justification, and being in ever increasing bondage to sin, the power of which he was now beginning to feel as he had never felt it before, and coming under the curse of a law the magnitude of which he had never seen before, and losing all hope of justification before God, he is in genuine wretchedness with no mitigating factor whatsoever.

And when he cries out, looking for deliverance, he is not aware of where it will come from. His cry for deliverance 'Who shall deliver me?' is, at the time it was uttered, not *rhetorical* – uttered as a cry of faith and in the full knowledge of the identity of his deliverer – but utterly real and truly desperate, as he had no idea where salvation from such wretchedness could come from if not from the law of God.

Interjectory Parenthetical Exclamation (verse 25a)

I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

At this point, Godet fittingly remarks that, had Paul been writing this epistle as a philosopher, he would have passed on directly from verse 24 to 25b. He would have concluded his final cycle with the statement of his wretchedness followed by the conclusion that while with his 'mind' (*nous*) he served the law of God, nonetheless, with his flesh he served the law of sin.

However, Paul is writing the letter as both a delivered man and a deeply spiritual man. He is writing as one who now knows, in a personal and liberating way, the identity of his deliverer and, as a result, in a spirit of triumph and overflowing gratitude to God, he cannot refrain from speaking of him and interjecting his name and his relationship to him.

The interjection is also important, however, in the overall development of the argument in that it is this reference to Jesus Christ as the deliverer which provides the only real reference point for the 'therefore' which introduces chapter 8. This thought flow can, again, be communicated by means of a paraphrase: 'Who shall deliver me from this body of death? The answer is: Jesus Christ! So, therefore, there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus who do not walk in bondage to the flesh but according to the Spirit – for the law of the Spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, has liberated me from that crushing law that was working sin and death in me as I have just described'.

Deduction (verse 25b)

So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

These words clearly relate back to the words preceding the parenthetical interjection. In other words, apart from the intervention of Jesus Christ, and prior to it, his situation may be summed up in this way.

The adoption of the word *nous*, instead of 'inward man' at this point, something we have already referred to, needs further emphasis at this point.

This term is, probably, the most important anthropological term employed in the whole passage and an appreciation of its meaning is vital to a correct interpretation of the passage. No less important, is an understanding of why it was chosen to replace 'inward man' at this point and why it was rejected for *phronema*, another word for 'mind', in chapter 8.

First of all, then, we will look at its meaning. In Platonic thought, the *nous* denoted the highest human principle of reflective intelligence and moral judgment. In Greek philosophy, generally, it was uniformly used to designate the higher aspect of the human soul. In the New Testament, twenty out of twenty-three occurrences of the word come from Paul – as indeed do most of the cognate terms. In Pauline usage, it is possible to discern two mutually exclusive categories: the 'mind of Christ' (1 Corinthians 2:16) and the 'mind of flesh' (Colossians 2:18). Only those under grace possess the mind of Christ while all under the law possess the mind of flesh.

However, it is important to note that all those who possess a 'mind of flesh', while all *totally* depraved – that is, depraved in all of their faculties – are not all *equally* depraved and do not necessarily respond in exactly the same way to the divine revelation. Although the *nous*, which includes the conscience, is fallen, it continues to function as the receptor of divine revelation (Romans 1:20) and its light is only progressively extinguished by persistent and wilful rejection of God's revelation. This is clearly demonstrated in Romans 1:28 where God, due to persistent rejection of this kind, gave the Gentiles over to a 'reprobate mind (*nous*)' and, again, in Ephesians 4:17-19, where the Gentiles are spoken of as having their 'understanding (*nous*) darkened…because of the hardness of their heart (and) being past

feeling, have given themselves over to licentiousness'. There is, then, a direct causal relation between a persistent and wilful rejection of God and a thoroughly perverted 'mind' (*nous*).

This enables us to understand the ability of the Gentiles to approve the things of the law and, to a limited degree, perform them (see Romans 2:14-15). After all, the moral law is known, to varying degrees, by all men everywhere. This is the real explanation, we believe, for the exclamations of heathen writers such as Seneca, who could say, 'What is it that draws us in one direction while we struggle to go in another and impels us towards that which we wish to avoid? (Seneca, *Moral Letters to Lucilius*: Letter 52) and Euripides, who can say, 'We understand and know the good things, but we do not work them out' (Euripides, *Hippolytus*: 380).

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit of God is also able to strive with the Gentile through that Moral Law and, hence, the conflict experienced by Paul in this chapter may be experienced by the Gentile as well as the Jew – even if not to the same intensity or with the same understanding. On the face of it, the opening words of chapter 7 could be used to confine the experience outlined in the chapter to the Jewish people, who knew the will of God and 'approved the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law' (Romans 2:18). Indeed, one could go further and argue that a further restriction is imposed by Romans 7:9 – a restriction to those Jews in whom the law of God has begun to work with a new vigour. But, the fact that it is the moral, rather than the ceremonial, law of God which is in view should relax these considerations somewhat. In this connection, it is safer to say that it is the *precise vocabulary* of chapter 7 which could only be used by those with a more privileged spiritual training. In other words, the words used by Paul in describing his conflict could only be used by one taught in the law and under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit.

Of course, none of this is meant to teach that it is possible for a carnal man to possess a 'mind' (*nous*) that does not require renewal. On the contrary, even those under grace need a constant renewal of their minds by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:23) in order to discern the will of God more clearly (Romans 12:2).

Second, this understanding helps us to understand why Paul adopted 'mind' at this point in place of 'inward man'. In fact, the adoption of *nous*, rather than 'Spirit' (*pneuma*), as the antithesis of 'flesh' in Romans chapter 7 is a choice of vocabulary which strongly suggests that the man in view is under the law. Further, the introduction of *phronema* for 'mind' and its coupling with 'Spirit' in chapter 8, powerfully suggest that the writer is now delineating the experience of a man grace. In chapter 7, the judgment of his reason and conscience as to the rectitude of God's law proves powerless to save him, because he is unable to give the obedience to it which it demands for justification. Rather, he – in the totality of his being – is brought into ever deepening enslavement to the law of sin which is powerfully at work in his body. It is this wretched condition which causes him to cry out for deliverance – a deliverance which came from Christ, by his Spirit, and which liberated him from the law of sin and death and into the liberty of obedience.

Finally, in respect of the service of the law of God with the mind and the serving of the law of sin with the flesh, Shedd makes the assertion that the service of the law of sin with the flesh was occasional while the service of the law of God with the mind was habitual. It should suffice to say, in response, that the verb governing both acts of service is the same. The implication is that *both* acts of service were habitual and defining.

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TELLING TALES

A Survey of Scottish Covenanter Historiography

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Recent years have witnessed a remarkable renewal of scholarly interest in the political and religious history of seventeenth-century Scotland. The Scottish Covenanters[1] have been traditionally viewed by 'the academy' as religious bigots whose story was kept alive exclusively by their ideological descendants, the most narrow-minded of Presbyterian hagiographers. This perception is now slowly changing, and it is an important moment for historians in sympathy with the subject to join the academic conversation.

The purpose of this article is twofold. *First*, to supply a brief chronological overview and analysis of Covenanter historiography from the late 17th century to the present. This is admittedly a rather ambitious and potentially onerous task, but it is a necessary starting point for fresh studies in the field, and given the renewed interest, it is hoped, a timely one. It is surely the task of any Christian historian to examine the historical evidence in as even-handed a manner as possible, and then to 'set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us' (Luke 1:1). Of course, historical evidence must be interpreted, and this is where the historian's sympathies are inevitably revealed, even as he seeks to 'write an orderly account' (Luke 1:3). Historiography is to history what hermeneutics is to Scripture. If there can be no neutrality in the historiographical task, then there can and must be objectivity. The narrative published by an historian of the Covenanters, or of any other subject, is not inspired like the Lucan narrative in Scripture, but it must reflect an honest, contextual reading and interpretation of extant sources. It has been all too easy for secular scholars simply to dismiss as 'biased' any studies of early modern Scottish religious history that come from writers who are unapologetically sympathetic to the Covenanters; however, this attitude has not been the exclusive preserve of the secular historian.

The *second* purpose of the article is to provide a tool that might help a new generation of Covenanter historians to produce fresh and balanced studies of the subject, by prudently engaging with not only classic works on the subject (many of which need to undergo some scrutiny themselves), but in particular what has often previously been dismissed by them as 'biased' or 'secular' scholarship, and thus of no particular value. Certainly, upon evaluation, these latter studies may indeed prove to be precisely that, but an honest historian with a firm commitment to Christ as Lord of history and a belief in his providential involvement in the story of nations in both judgment and revival, may actually be surprised by the even-handedness and favourable reassessment that is emerging, especially in some recent studies by historians who would eschew any such commitments as beyond the pale of academic respectability. He may of course draw very different conclusions from the same evidence, but how often has critical primary source material been overlooked by a latter-day

[1] For the purposes of this article, we will consider the Covenanting period to be from 1638-1688, incorporating the Early Covenanter movement in its ascendency (1638-51), under Cromwellian rule (1651-60) and the later Covenanting period, best known for its martyrs (1660-88).

Covenanter historian through a refusal to engage with the secular scholar who unearthed it from the rich seams of his own church's archives in the first place?

In surveying studies both sympathetic and unsympathetic to the subject, I have of necessity needed to be selective, but in outlining the main historiographical schools and their proponents in as objective a way as possible, it is hoped that the Christian historian may be introduced to the main names and texts he will encounter in his task, have a better understanding of the historiographical context in which they wrote, and so use their works with greater discernment and care. While not simply an annotated bibliography (which would make for even drier reading!), the footnotes nevertheless supply an extensive reading list that it is hoped will increase this article's usefulness, providing a current survey of the state of scholarship in the field.

One caution should be borne in mind before proceeding. There is a contemporary phenomenon common among many younger Reformed historians (and the Christian blogosphere is replete with examples) of undertaking the task of reassessing cherished historical narratives with what can only be described as deconstructivist glee. Revelling in the newfound liberty of freedom from the historiographical straight-jacket of one's traditional party line on the church's past, their primary goal appears to be the joyful toppling of denominational sacred cows. Such tends to be the overreaction to well-worn denominational histories that are often admittedly replete with hagiography, the simplistic reductionism of complex contextual factors, and embarrassing inaccuracies.

While this article urges a measured, discerning interaction with all the materials available to denominational historians, it is not the intent of the writer to give any comfort to such wrecking-ball historiography. Ancient boundary-markers should not be lightly removed (Proverbs 22:28). Hagiography is not history, and we do not honour our heroes by whitewashing them, neither should we take pleasure in the necessary task of revealing the personal faults and theological miscalculations of our honoured martyrs and witnesses – lessons the Bible's own historical honesty teaches us. Rather, the task should be undertaken with a due sense of humility and respect for the subject itself, and indeed, the men and women and movements of the past that we cherish. Our heart's motives will determine the spirit in which this task is undertaken, which must at the very least include a commitment to the ninth commandment in our historical methodology.

Early Interpretations: Two 'Party Lines'

Ever since the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, popular interpretations of the Covenanters and their vision of British covenanted uniformity may be classified into what may be crudely called two 'party lines' – the echoes of which may be heard in more scholarly interpretive schools in subsequent centuries.

The first popular 'party line' was the one initially promoted by the restored Stuart government, which was formally enshrined in the works of the King's advocate, Sir George Mackenzie, notably his *Vindication of the government in Scotland during the reign of King Charles II*, which branded the Covenanter movement as 'a Rebellion [in which]…Covenants

were entred into by a part of the Subjects, and by them impos'd imperiously upon the rest'.[2] In summarizing this approach Laura Stewart writes,

> That Covenanters were responsible for bringing disaster down upon not only their native land, but also the entire archipelago, was asserted as political orthodoxy after Charles II…was restored to his British throne. People were encouraged to remember Covenanted government not as a comparatively representative and accountable regime that committed itself to meaningful parliamentary oversight, but as tyranny by committee.[3]

The brutal efforts to suppress the 'whig rebels' north of the border throughout the reigns of Charles II and James II had ensured a regular flow of similar anti-Covenanter satire at a popular level from Aphra Behn, George Hickes and others, that ingrained in the British imagination the trope of 'phanatical Protestants'.[4]

At the other popular extreme, of course, was the 'party line' embraced by those very 'phanatics' – the inheritors of the Covenanters' political and theological legacy, many of whom laid down their lives for the Covenanter cause under Stuart tyranny. This perspective was enshrined in the many declarations of the Cameronian 'United Societies' towards the end of the Stuart era. These explanations of Covenanter history perpetuated the old historiographical tradition of Buchanan, Calderwood and Row, bringing these first-generation histories of the Reformation up to date, to include the high watermark of Covenanter rule (1638-51) and the subsequent sufferings of a godly remnant (1660-88) in one seamless narrative of God's providence towards the godly nation of Scotland.

While the former 'party line' which stereotyped the dour Scottish Calvinist has ever remained a favourite subject of popular, and at times, 'scholarly' derision, the latter historiographical tradition has also proved remarkably resilient. In the eighteenth century, the dissenting remnant of Covenanter denominations on both sides of the Atlantic – the Reformed Presbyterian Churches – were bound to this particular interpretative strain in a series of 'Historical Testimonies' to which members subscribed.[5] Such an approach interpreted the

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[2] George Mackenzie, *A Vindication of the Government in Scotland during the Reign of King Charles II* (London, 1691), p.4. See Colin Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past – Scottish Whig Historians and the Creation of Anglo-British Identity* (Cambridge, 1993), p.19-29.

[3] Laura A M Stewart, *Rethinking the Scottish Revolution: Covenanted Scotland, 1637-1651* (Oxford, 2016), p25.

[4] Aphra Behn, *The Roundheads; or, the Good Old Cause, a comedy* (London, 1682); George Hickes, *The Spirit of Popery Speaking out of the mouths of phanatical-Protestants* (London, 1680). See Janette Currie, 'History, hagiography, and fakestory: representations of the Scottish Covenanters in non-fictional and fictional texts from 1638 to 1835' (PhD thesis, University of Stirling, 1999), p1-56.

[5] The most notable examples are *The Act, Declaration and Testimony for the Whole of Our Covenanted Reformation* (1761), sometimes known as the *Ploughlandhead Testimony*, which became the formal testimony of the Reformed Presbytery in Scotland (1761) and Ireland (1763), and the 'Historical Testimony' section of *Reformation Principles Exhibited* (Philadelphia, 1806), which performed the same function for Covenanter emigrants in America. For scholarly studies of the Covenanter tradition in America, see Joseph S Moore, *Founding Sins: How a group of antislavery radicals fought to put Christ into the Constitution* (Oxford, 2015), in Ireland, Thomas Charles Donachie, *Irish Covenanters: Politics and Society in the Nineteenth Century* (Belfast, 2016), and in Canada, Eldon Hay, *The Covenanters in Canada: Reformed Presbyterianism from 1820 to the Present Day* (Montreal, 2012). While the precise binding nature of an 'historical testimony' has been disputed by contemporary Covenanters, it seems clear that these documents nevertheless helpfully enshrined for Reformed Presbyterians an 'official historiography' which embodied their witness to the past as a grounds for a distinctive stand on a number of issues in the present. This practice of formal historic testimony-bearing has been discontinued (with the exception of minority groups like the Steelites), though the importance of historical

period of the 'Second Reformation' through a theological, often eschatological prism, and maintained that the Covenants were perpetually binding upon the three kingdoms, committing its adherents to continue the struggle for a Covenanted Reformation.[6]

Martyrologies that recorded the sufferings of the early and later Covenanting periods soon emerged, epitomized by two justly famous works: Robert Wodrow's *History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland, from the Restoration to the Revolution* (1721) and John Howie's *Biographia Scoticana* (1775, later reprinted as *The Scots Worthies*), both of which saw many successive editions, and remain in print. An antiquarian of remarkable productivity, Wodrow imbibed a similar interpretation of Providence in his multi-volume *History*, a Presbyterian *apologia* written in the context of aggressive Episcopalian revisionism,[7] and the emerging Scottish Enlightenment, 'when', he wrote, 'Providence itself is openly attacked by Satan's emissaries, the Deists and the Freethinkers upon the one hand, and the true godly are at so low an ebb in their practical improvement of the sweet management of Providence'.[8] While the *History* has been criticized for its hagiographic qualities and pre-critical approach to historical documents, its inclusion of massive quantities of unedited manuscripts and eye-witness accounts mean that its source materials continue to hold crucial value to the historian, and no serious student of the period can afford to neglect it.[9] In a similar vein, Howie's *Scots Worthies*, while containing much sentiment that contemporary scholars reasonably dismiss as hagiography, nonetheless 'performed valuable service by rescuing from oblivion much important material which, without his painstaking efforts, would certainly have perished'.[10]

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rootedness and legacy is maintained by the publications and activities of historical committees of the respective synods.

[6] See Emily Moberg Robinson, *Immigrant Covenanters: Religious and Political Identity, from Scotland to America* (2004), p.12, 129-182.

[7] (Kidd, 1993), p.50-69 and Colin Kidd, 'Conditional Britons: The Scots Covenanting Tradition and the Eighteenth-Century British State' in *The English Historical Review*, cxvii,no. 474 (2002), p.1147–1176.

[8] Letter from Wodrow to Cotton Mather, Robert Wodrow, *The Correspondence of the Rev. Robert Wodrow*, ed. Thomas McCrie (3 vols, Edinburgh, 1843), i, 389-90. For a helpful discussion of Wodrow's work, see A. M. Starkey, 'Robert Wodrow and the History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland' in *Church History*, xliii, no. 4 (1974), p.488–498. Starkey also sees Wodrow's work as a rallying cry to Presbyterians concerned of a return to English impositions on the Church of Scotland following the 1707 Act of Union.

[9] David Lachman, 'Wodrow, Robert' in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (1993), p.881. Lachman comments, 'Wodrow's history is essentially a reliable account, and Wodrow himself, in David Laing's words, 'a candid, as well as an industrious historian'. Also Ian Cowan, 'Although his narrative is written with a Presbyterian bias, the documentation speaks for itself', 'The Covenanters: A Revision Article' in *The Scottish Historical Review*, xlvii, no. 143 (1968), p.45, fn 2. As a counterpoint, the most celebrated attack on Wodrow's integrity came from Mark Napier's 1862 *Memorials and Letters of Viscount Dundee*, which challenged Wodrow's 'old repertory of fanatical invective', targeting especially his account of the famous Wigtown martyrs. A ferocious debate ensued. See Moberg Robinson (2004), p.174-9; W.J. Couper, 'Robert Wodrow and His Critics' in *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, v (1935), p.238–50. Wodrow's four-volume *History* was reprinted by Solid Ground Christian Books in 1998, but is also available for download as a pdf file at Google Books and the Internet Archive.

[10] Maurice Grant, 'Howie, John' in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (1993), p.414. The *Scots Worthies* is maintained in print by the Banner of Truth Trust. Some other noteworthy volumes in this genre that are essential resources include the anonymous work *The Cloud of Witnesses for the Royal Prerogatives of Jesus Christ: Being the Last Speeches and Testimonies of Those who Suffered for the Truth in Scotland Since the Year 1680* (Edinburgh, 1714), Patrick Walker's 1727 work, *Six Saints of the Covenant*, (ed. David Hay Fleming, London, 1901); *The Secret and True History of the Church of Scotland from the Restoration to the Year 1678* (Edinburgh, 1817), by James Kirkton (1628-99). The former two have been reprinted by Sprinkle Publications (1989) and Blue Banner (1995) respectively, but Kirkton remains difficult to find. Scanned copies of all these titles are nonetheless available at Google Books and the Internet Archive. The value of these texts lies in the use of eyewitness interviews (especially in the case of Walker), and their

The 'Whig' Historiography

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the story of the Covenanters became increasingly subsumed into what is commonly called a broader Scottish 'whig' historiography, influenced by the Enlightenment – a 'history of liberty',[11] in which their conflict with the Stuart kings was presented as a glorious episode in the story of Scotland's progressive quest for constitutional autonomy from English political tyranny. The whig school mainstreamed an interpretive tendency that has been ascendant until fairly recently, by significantly downplaying the religious and theological concerns that were central to the Covenanter worldview, and instead viewing them as champions of a particular *political* ideology. Colin Kidd has demonstrated how the political and theological moderatism of the Scottish whig school conveniently overlooked or reinterpreted many of the severer religious policies of the Covenanters that were less palatable to Victorian sensibilities, and less problematic for their construction of a post-union Scottish national identity.[12] Consequently, celebrated historians from William Robertson to P. Hume Brown offered a somewhat sanitized and two-dimensional account of an age of great political and religious complexity and controversy.[13] In so doing, they fell into what Herbert Butterfield called the 'historian's pathetic fallacy': 'the practice of abstracting things from their historical context and judging them apart from their context – estimating them and organizing the historical story by a system of direct reference to the present'.[14] Butterfield elaborates on this tendency:

> The whig historian … is in possession of a principle of exclusion which enables him to leave out the most troublesome element in the complexity [of history]. By seizing upon those personages and parties in the past whose ideas seem the more analogous to our own, and by setting all these out in contrast with the rest of the stuff of history, he has his organization and abridgement of history ready-made and has a clean path through the complexity.[15]

Such an approach has unfortunately marred many later studies of the Covenanters. There is unquestionably great practical value in applying the struggles of the past to the church's similar struggles today, and it is certainly true that 'there is nothing new under the sun' (Ecclesiastes 1:9) – the same sinful human nature, stratagems of the Devil, and resultant heresies can be found in all ages. The persecuted church of today can learn great lessons from those who suffered in the past, and those called to tackle error in the church today must seek insight from the precedent of the theological debates of the past: such is the value of church history as a pastoral and theological discipline. Nevertheless, the Christian historian

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provision of extensive primary source documentation. Most modern works on the Covenanters tend to be mined from these sources.

[11] (Kidd, 1993), p.109

[12] (Kidd, 1993), p.270

[13] See L. Charles Jackson, 'For Kirk and Kingdom: The Public Career of Alexander Henderson (1637-1646)' (PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 2012), p.8-11 and Graeme Neil Forsyth, 'The Presbyterian Interpretation of Scottish History, 1800- 1914' (PhD thesis, University of Stirling, 2003), p.18-52.

[14] Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (London, 1973), p.29. In literary theory, the 'pathetic fallacy' ascribes to inanimate objects human emotions we experience, but which naturally do not pertain to the object to which they are ascribed. Butterfield is arguing that in an analogous way, the historian in his writing may take a contemporary issue he experiences – say, gender equality – and impose is as an interpretive paradigm on an historical setting – say, the Puritan family – to which it does not pertain.

[15] Ibid., p.28-9. As a Christian historian himself, Butterfield's critique (first published in 1931), of what were for him comparatively recent Evangelical histories is nothing if not honest.

should be careful. A highly selective and simplistic reading of the past to suit present concerns may lead him to misrepresent that past by a reductionist interpretation of a very complex historical context that he doesn't really understand, explained in terms of the present context that he *does*.

This whig tendency to impose modern values of nationalism and progressivism on early modern Scotland was evident in many histories and biographies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For example, John Morison's brief work on Johnston of Wariston (1611-63, co-author of the National Covenant) in the *Famous Scots Series* (1901), afforded Wariston 'a place in the front rank of those Scottish patriots who, by their resistance to the absolutism of Charles I, saved the liberties of their own nation and largely helped to secure those of the whole kingdom'.[16] In this case, it can be argued that Wariston's legacy has been anachronistically reinterpreted by Morison to conform with his late nineteenth century assumptions of what constitutes civil liberty and Scottish patriotism. To be clear, with hindsight we may indeed conclude that the Covenanters' valiant testimony to the crown rights of Christ did indeed play a key role in establishing civil and religious liberties in these islands. The question we are asking, however, is whether the historiographical model used to draw this conclusion is a sound one: whether a modern understanding of civil and religious liberty ought to be imputed anachronistically to the early modern vision of Covenanted Britain espoused by Wariston and his colleagues. By reading modern ideals of a tolerant, even pluralistic, constitutionalism into the work of one of the chief architects of the Covenanter Revolution, we have arguably not arrived at a better historical understanding of the Covenanter vision, but have perhaps recruited him for a contemporary cause which he himself would not have felt at home with at all.

The Evangelical Historiography

As we have seen, one of the unfortunate casualties of the whig approach was a balanced assessment of the key role played by theology in the Covenanting movement. While proponents of this 'desacralized' historiography viewed the Covenanters selectively through the lens of Enlightenment Progressivism, in the nineteenth century there emerged in reaction what might be called a 'sacred' whig historiography, emanating from Scottish Presbyterian churches, and identified with Evangelicalism. The determinist reshaping of the Reformation and Covenanting past had been just one of many disastrous Enlightenment inroads into the Church of Scotland, and added another ingredient to the tensions that produced the Great Disruption in 1843. While the Reformed Presbyterian Churches had always maintained their historical testimonies to the Covenanting heritage, it was now the turn of the Evangelical party in the mainline Presbyterian churches, who responded to their moderate opponents' embrace of the new historiography with a fresh interpretive foray of their own into their professed Covenanting roots – one that restored a much-needed emphasis on early modern Scottish theology and piety. In the vein of Wodrow, dissenting Scottish Presbyterians of the Free Church, the Seceder churches and their cousins in the Synod of Ulster published a flurry of new histories and martyrologies, the most notable being those of Thomas M'Crie[17] and James Seaton Reid[18], who inspired a new generation of evangelical Presbyterian historians[19].

[16] John Morison, *Johnston of Warriston* (Edinburgh, 1901), p.11. Peter Donald has described the work as essentially 'a eulogy'. See Donald (1991), p.123, fn 1.

[17] McCrie's most influential histories were *The Life of John Knox* (1812) and *The Life of Andrew Melville* (1819). Though not himself a minister of the Church of Scotland, McCrie's works were extremely influential within it.

[18] Reid's *magnum opus* was his *History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland* (3 volumes, 1834, 1837, 1854).

Andrew Holmes has argued with some merit that these works provided an expression of self-identity for emerging evangelical Presbyterian denominations, each eager to demonstrate their unbroken theological succession with the Scottish Reformations.[20] They also functioned as a polemic against their moderate Presbyterian, Roman Catholic and Episcopalian opponents, providing an historical precursor of their own struggle for religious liberty against the Covenanters' foes in a new guise. However, the tendency of this 'sacred' whig historiography to interpret Covenanter history from the perspective and presuppositions of their own present ecclesio-political struggles likewise tended towards Butterfield's 'pathetic fallacy'. The Evangelical historiography could be just as lucid in imposing contemporary theological debates and questions of Presbyterian identity onto the seventeenth century as their moderate opponents were in imposing their secular concerns of progress and national identity. Richard Muller has helpfully summarized the problem:

> There has been … a fundamental tendency in theological and philosophical historiography to identify what is important in a past era on the basis of the seeming importance, influence, or relevance of a person, idea, or event to the present-day self-understanding of the writer or the society, *rather than asking the documents of the past era what persons, ideas, or events were then understood as important or influential* – or, indeed, rather than asking the documents themselves what concepts, language, and contexts are requisite to the understanding of the documents![21]

To apply Muller's insightful critique, the Victorian Evangelical histories may have restored to the forefront the theological concerns that drove the likes of Rutherford, Guthrie and Cameron, but did so selectively. They frequently emphasized those aspects of the Covenanting movement which they and their readers shared: a common evangelical piety, Presbyterian ecclesiology and subscription to the robust Calvinist theology of the Westminster Standards. But they also unfortunately tended to simplify the religious complexity of the era into a bitter 'Presbyterian vs. Episcopalian' feud, overlooking the remarkable consensus of Calvinist theology and Puritan piety between these two parties, which revisionists like David Mullan have called 'a vibrant evangelicalism which crossed the

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[19] Representative examples of this school include Thomas M'Crie (the Younger), *Sketches of Scottish Church History* (1841); James Aikman, *Annals of the Persecution in Scotland* (2 volumes, 1842); William Hetherington, *History of the Church of Scotland from the Introduction of Christianity to the Period of the Disruption, May 18, 1843* (1843); J.A. Wylie, *History of Protestantism* (3 volumes, 1878); Alexander Smellie, *Men of the Covenant* (1909). These writers invariably built on the archival works of previous generations, notably Wodrow, Burnet and Kirkton, occasionally drawing out fresh perspectives, but regrettably did not always contribute much by way of original documentary research. One exception which makes excellent use of archive sources and remains of considerable value, though overlooked by many historians, is James King Hewison, *The Covenanters: A History of the Church in Scotland from the Reformation to the Revolution in Two Volumes* (Glasgow, 1913).

[20] Andrew R Holmes, 'The Scottish Reformations and the Origin of Religious and Civil Liberty in Britain and Ireland: Presbyterian Interpretations, c. 1800-60' in *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, xc,no. 1 (2014), p.135–153; idem., Andrew R Holmes, 'Presbyterian Religion, Historiography, and Ulster Scots identity, c. 1800 to 1914' in *The Historical Journal*, lii,no. 3 (2009), p.615–640. See also Forsyth (2003), 49-52. For a perceptive contemporary critique of this phenomenon of Presbyterian Succession, see Iain H. Murray, *A Scottish Christian Heritage* (Edinburgh, 2006), p.277-311.

[21] Richard Muller, 'Reflections on Persistent Whiggism and Its Antidotes in the Study of Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-century Intellectual History' in Alister Chapman, John Coffey and Brad S. Gregory (eds), *Seeing Things their Way: Intellectual History and the Return of Religion* (Notre Dame, Ind., 2009), p.135. Italics original.

divisions of ecclesiological definition'.[22] Much was thus understated or excluded from these histories: the unpleasant realities of the bitter Protester-Resolutioner controversy,[23] the often vitriolic polemic of many Covenanter pamphlets and treatises, and the temperamental ferocity of several Covenanting heroes, which was often mollified by drawing attention to their undoubted piety.[24] In such ways, the Evangelical historian's account of the Covenanters and their times often demonstrated a proclivity for the whiggish 'principle of exclusion which enables him to leave out the most troublesome element in the complexity [of history].'[25]

The most enduring legacy of this 'principle of exclusion' can be found in the flood of popular Covenanter hagiography in the nineteenth century, extending to art, literature and the dozens of covenanting memorials that dot the landscape of the Scottish lowlands to this day. While important 'Ebenezers' to keep alive the memory of God's former gracious work in our nation and church, many of these memorials nevertheless characterize the Covenanters as vindicated by the Glorious Revolution and its subsequent Act of Toleration, suffering in a quest for a form of civil and religious liberty which most of their heirs ironically anathematized and refused to submit to.[26]

It is this kind of popular romanticizing that in part prompted such a revisionist backlash from twentieth-century historians like Hugh Trevor-Roper and Edward Cowan. But while one can find straw men aplenty among the more melodramatic exponents of the 'sacred' whig historiography, the more sober historians of this school like M'Crie and Reid still serve the contemporary historian of the period in important ways. For one thing, it should be noted that much of their source work was based on the essentially sound archival groundwork laid

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[22] David George Mullan, *Protestant Piety in Early-modern Scotland: Letters, Lives and Covenants, 1650-1712* (Edinburgh, 2008), p.1. Mullan's careful use of the term 'evangelicalism' to describe early modern Scottish religion is telling, and calls into question David Bebbington's thesis that Evangelicalism emerged in conjunction with the Enlightenment in the 1730s, instead showing a continuity of theology and practice that was essentially 'evangelical' extending back into the seventeenth century. See David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in modern Britain: a history from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London, 1993), and Michael A.G. Haykin and Kenneth J. Stewart (eds), *The Emergence of Evangelicalism - Exploring Historical Continuities* (Nottingham, 2008).

[23] It is noteworthy how many popular Evangelical histories of the Covenanters offer a remarkable abridgement of the Covenanter's 'Waterloo', the Battle of Dunbar (1651), and the subsequent Cromwellian occupation (1651-60). This gap has been filled recently with an important work by R. Scott Spurlock, *Cromwell and Scotland, Conquest and Religion, 1650-1660* (Edinburgh, 2007). This is the first in-depth study of the Cromwellian religious policy in Scotland, complementing the standard political and military histories by Frances Dow, *Cromwellian Scotland, 1651-60* (1st ed., Edinburgh, 1979) and John D Grainger, *Cromwell Against the Scots: the Last Anglo-Scottish War, 1650-1652* (East Linton, 1997). The most thorough study to date of the Protester-Resolutioner controversy is Kyle Holfelder, 'Factionalism in the Kirk during the Cromwellian Invasion and Occupation of Scotland, 1650 to 1660: The Protester-Resolutioner Controversy' (PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1998). The key primary source to consult is William Stephen (ed.), *Register of the Consultations of the Ministers of Edinburgh and Some Other Brethren of the Ministry Vol 1: 1652-1657 and Vol 2: 1657-1660* (Edinburgh, 1930).

[24] John Coffey has also highlighted Victorian Evangelicals' treatment of Samuel Rutherford, who frequently republished his *Letters*, which were packed with Puritan devotion, but neglected many of his weightier and controversial theological and political treatises. See John Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions: the Mind of Samuel Rutherford* (Cambridge, 1997), p.5-15. In a similar vein, British Evangelicals (including Highland Scottish Presbyterians) frequently reprinted *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter* to the exclusion of his controversial theological works. See Carl R. Trueman, 'Richard Baxter on Christian unity: A chapter in the Enlightening of English Reformed Orthodoxy' in *The Westminster Theological Journal*, lxi, no. 1 (1999), p.53–71.

[25] Butterfield (1973), p.28.

[26] See Moberg Robinson (2004), p.179-81.

by Wodrow and Howie, to say nothing of their own exhaustive archival work.[27] Understandably, for contemporary secular historians emphasizing exclusively materialist explanations for the Covenanters – economic, social, political – such works are dismissed as an example of idealist reductionism: Victorian Evangelicals writing from the same revivalist-confessional tradition as their subject, whose interpretations will be incorrigibly tainted with their own contextual biases.[28] But when read with due sensitivity to their own nineteenth century ecclesiastical and theological context, it can be argued in their defence that by focussing on the religious and intellectual facets of the Covenanter movement, these historians supplied something that is usually altogether lacking in the material reductionism of more recent studies: a window into the Covenanters' spiritual world, a mysterious and often disturbing place for those who, unlike the Evangelical historians, do not share their Calvinist theology, experience of affective piety or sheer saturation with Scripture.[29] The Christian historian understands that, 'The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned' (1 Corinthians 2:14). The secular academic is thus at the deepest level at a loss when he stands puzzling over the passionate pulpit pleadings of a Renwick, the soul-searching soliloquies of Wariston's *Diary* or the pastoral letters of a Rutherford. John Coffey's point is salient: 'Early modern writers were intimately versed in the Bible, and by virtue of their grammar school education they were equally soaked in Latin texts. Modern intellectual historians often lack their subjects' intimate familiarity with the Bible or the classics (or both!), and thus tend to provide rather partial accounts of their writings'.[30] By thus failing to engage sensitively with the Covenanters' intellectual world, and being unable to spiritually discern the Christian experience of their inner man, the secular historian will frequently affirm their fanatical credentials in the popular imagination, but do little to add to our understanding of their worldview.

The Deconstruction of the Whig Consensus

Despite this welcome return to an appreciation of the Covenanters' theological impetus in nineteenth century studies, Covenanter historiography since then has shown a gradual scholarly trend away from a religious to a political focus. For some historians, though, a restoration of scholarly balance in favour of non-religious factors did not go far enough; what

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[27] Even Ian Cowan notes, 'Of earlier writers, some like McCrie, while undoubtedly biased in their commentaries, frequently quote extensively from original sources, and should not be entirely overlooked'. 'The Covenanters: A Revision Article' in *The Scottish Historical Review*, xlvii, no. 143 (1968), p.36, fn 8.

[28] For a useful response, see John Coffey and Alistair Chapman, 'Introduction' in Chapman, Coffey, and Gregory, eds. (2009), p.9-15.

[29] As a case in point, it is not uncommon to find contemporary historians excoriating Covenanters for vitriolic language in their letters, speeches and diaries, apparently oblivious to the fact that they are actually quoting directly from Scripture. For example, Edward J. Cowan claims that Wariston's journals 'almost defy scholarly investigation', noting that 'the reader is frequently drawn up short, as when Johnston solemnly reports, "the Lord remembered me to remember him back again", a neat allusion to a temporary lapse in omniscience'. 'The Making of the National Covenant' in John Morrill (ed.), *The Scottish National Covenant in its British Context*, ed. John Morrill (Edinburgh, 1990), p.76. Of course, Wariston's comment was nothing of the sort, for as the earlier Evangelical historians would at once recognize, he was employing a common anthropomorphic phrase from the Psalter (see e.g. Psalm 42:6; 78:35, 39, 42; 98:3; 105:8; 105:42, Geneva Bible). Another favourite example selected from Covenanter sermons and speeches is the threat of 'breaking of the malignants teith' and wishing to 'breke ther jaws' – not, as is presumably implied, an ominous threat of physical violence, but a metaphor drawn from Psalm 3:7 and 58:6-7 (Geneva Bible): see e.g. John R. Young, *The Scottish Parliament, 1639-1661: a Political and Constitutional Analysis* (Edinburgh, 1996), p.220.

[30] John Coffey, 'Skinner and the Religious Dimension of Early Modern Political Thought' in Chapman, Coffey, and Gregory, eds. (2009), p.68.

was needed was an aggressive deconstructing and desacralizing of the formerly predominant whig historiographies. Foremost among this school was Hugh Trevor-Roper. In critical essays such as 'Scotland and the Puritan Revolution' (1963) and his influential book, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century* (1967), he portrayed Scotland (and other Calvinist 'success stories': Geneva, Holland, France) as under the cruel grip of unenlightened, repressive clerics, who prevented the march of humanist progress, and whom he memorably dismissed as 'a gallery of intolerant bigots, narrow-minded martinets, timid conservative defenders of repellent dogmas, instant assailants of every new or liberal idea, inquisitors and witch-burners!'[31] Thus, the Enlightenment of Northern Europe was held at bay by the backwardness of Calvinist dogma, and was liberated by the eventually victorious Arminian and Socinian 'heretics'.[32] His representation of early modern Scotland as a 'backward countr[y]…where an educated, independent laity hardly existed'[33] has since been convincingly laid to rest by the subsequent work of David Stevenson, Margo Todd, and others.[34] With Trevor-Roper the pendulum had swung to the opposite extreme from the hagiography of the previous century, but it is questionable whether his approach contributed significantly to our understanding of the so-called 'repellent dogmas' themselves, or the worldview of the 'intolerant bigots' who defended them. The field of early modern Scottish theology and piety and its outworking in the public sphere has sorely needed far more nuanced studies that avoid all such sacred and secular progressivism, and in the words of Quentin Skinner, 'use the ordinary techniques of historical enquiry to grasp their concepts, to follow their distinctions, to appreciate their beliefs and, so far as possible, to see things their way'.[35]

Recent Political Histories

By the mid-twentieth century, historians like Ian Cowan bemoaned 'the absence of Scottish works', on the early modern period.[36] That all changed in the last three decades of the twentieth century, which saw a flurry of scholarly publications from Scottish historians, recovering particularly the early Covenanter period from relative scholarly obscurity.

The most prolific writer in the field remains David Stevenson, whose many works continued the scholarly trend away from predominantly religious studies. He described his mission as follows:

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[31] Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century* (Indianapolis, 2001), p.182.

[32] Trevor-Roper (2001), p.179-219. 'Arminianism or Socinianism, not Calvinism, was the religion of the pre-Enlightenment. Calvinism, that fierce and narrow re-creation of medieval scholasticism, was its enemy: the last enemy which died in the last ditches of Holland, England, Switzerland, Scotland'. Ibid., p.199.

[33] Trevor-Roper (2001), p.206.

[34] David Stevenson's rebuttal to what he considered Trevor-Roper's 'caricature of the society, economy, politics and religion of seventeenth century Scotland', confirmed the central role of religion in a Revolution that impacted British constitutional development in remarkable ways. See David Stevenson, 'Professor Trevor-Roper and the Scottish Revolution' in *History Today*, xxx (1980), p.1–11; William Ferguson, 'A Reply to Professor Colin Kidd on Lord Dacre's Contribution to the Study of Scottish History and the Scottish Enlightenment' in *The Scottish Historical Review*, lxxxvi, no. 1 (2007), p.96–107.

[35] Quentin Skinner, 'Introduction: Seeing things their way' in *Visions of Politics* (3 vols, Cambridge, 2002), i, 3.

[36] Ian Cowan (1968), p.35-52. It should be noted that the massive influence of the Marxist school in English Civil War studies – in many respects the twentieth century heirs of the progressivism of the whig historiography – recognized the key role of the Scots, but did not produce any major studies that focused on the Covenanters. Trevor-Roper makes a compelling case that Marxist progressivism is the twentieth century successor of the whig schools. Trevor-Roper (2001), p.179-80.

> My starting point in research was to try to take a fresh look at the covenanting movement without assuming that religion was the only thing worth studying. Secular history for a secular age, perhaps, but I was well aware that it would be folly to take that too far. Obviously religious motivation was central to what happened, but I wanted to see what else there was…so I set out to "modernize" the historical approach to the covenanters, and to the whole century'.[37]

His seminal works, *The Scottish Revolution, 1637-44* (1973) and *Revolution and Counter-Revolution, 1644-51* (1977) remain standard reference works, demonstrating that early modern Scotland was a place 'where religious considerations were indeed often of paramount importance, but where political rivalries, greed, ambition, nationalism, folly and other human concerns have their part'.[38]

Another important contribution to our knowledge of the subject came with *The Scottish National Covenant in its British Context, 1638-51* (1990), edited by John Morrill. While addressing very different aspects of the Scottish Revolution, the contributors were unanimous in two respects. First, they cemented the then-emergent revisionist approach to study of the Scottish Covenanters which situated them in a British context, exploring the complex dynamics of their political, social and military connections with England and Ireland,[39] and opening a wide field of study beyond the limitations of the traditional Anglo-centric perspective.[40] Secondly, they were united in their hermeneutical emphasis, which may be summarized in the words of one contributor, 'In the first instance, the primacy must be accorded to the political process, not to ecclesiastical issues'.[41] Thus, though these essays have retained considerable value for students of the political and social history of the Covenanters, the religious concerns of their subject either take a back seat, or are dealt with in a superficial way.[42] Likewise, Peter Donald's work, *An Uncounselled King: Charles I and the Scottish Troubles, 1637-1641* (1990) and Allan Macinnes, in *Charles I and the Making of the Covenanting Movement, 1625-1641* (1991) have unearthed many valuable manuscripts that shed much light on these critical years from the English perspective of the king and his counsellors. While these are important scholarly works to consult, they again are all explicitly *political* histories.

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[37] David Stevenson, *Union, Revolution and Religion in 17th-Century Scotland* (Aldershot, 1997), p. ix-x.

[38] Ibid., p. x. Stevenson sets his scholarly parameters clearly in the opening sentence of *The Scottish Revolution*: 'The purpose of this book is to provide a political history of the period'. (Stevenson, 1973), p.13.

[39] The role of former Scottish mercenaries in the Swedish military during the Thirty Years War in the so-called 'Army of the Covenant' is also outlined in Edward Furgol's contribution, 'Scotland Turned Sweden', a helpful piece which fleshes out some of the implications of international Calvinism for Britain in the mid-seventeenth century. Edward Furgol, 'Scotland turned Sweden' in John Morrill (ed.), *The Scottish National Covenant in its British Context, 1638-51* (Edinburgh, 1990), p.134–154.

[40] The most significant contributions in this respect are John Morrill, 'The National Covenant in its British Context'; Peter Donald, 'The Scottish National Covenant and British Politics, 1638-40'; M. Perceval-Maxwell, 'Ireland and Scotland 1638-1648'. Morrill (1990), p.1-30; 90-105; 193-211.

[41] Allan I. Macinnes, 'The Scottish Constitution, 1638-51: The Rise and Fall of Oligarchic Centralism', *ibid*., p. 107. Macinnes' subsequent comment that this was 'a primacy upheld by the leading ideologues among the ministers of the Kirk' has been soundly challenged by new biographical reassessments of some of these very ministers like Rutherford and Gillespie.

[42] This is regrettably borne out even in Margaret Steele's contribution, 'The "Politick Christian": the Theological Background to the National Covenant', which has been roundly criticized by Stevenson for its multiple factual errors. David Stevenson, 'Solomon and Son, British Style' in *The Historical Journal*, xxxv, no. 1 (1992), p.209.

This cursory survey of twentieth-century political histories shows that there is a solid groundwork of contextual studies in place for new research into the Covenanters, and that significant work in particular needs to be done addressing the centrality of their vibrant faith.

Confessionalization and 'British History'

With the exception of a few of the essays in the Morrill volume above, these recent histories of the Covenanters have addressed Cowan's concerns about an 'absence of Scottish works', and the interpretive imbalance which tended to put Scotland on the periphery of an Anglo-centric historiography.[43] Continuing in this vein, the most recent scholarship on the Scottish Covenanters' historical context incorporates them into a much broader story: that of 'British' political history, and the formation of early modern European states. New historians in the field will need to familiarize themselves with this important conversation and consider what light this perspective might cast on their subject.

For several decades now, this discussion has centered on the theme of 'confessionalization': the process whereby political and clerical elites on a national and local level enforced national conformity to specific forms of religious doctrine (usually codified in written confessions), through various agents of social discipline. These agents might include influential individuals (such as at Calvin's Geneva), church courts and hierarchies, a 'professionalized' clergy educated through the state's universities, political elites and Parliaments – all of which might employ the printing press to enforce their particular reformation (or counter reformation) 'from above'. Thus, social change was accomplished through "the cultural, intellectual, social, and political functions of religion and confession within the early modern social order".[44] In recent years, however, this hermeneutic has been tempered by studies calling for a more nuanced confessionalization process that properly reflect the complexities of early modern state formation. Most significantly, the original stress on the role of elites – especially within the body politic – has been tempered by a balancing focus on the role of the masses. This has been tentatively called 'confessionalization from below'.[45]

It is from this vantage point that the most significant reassessment of the Covenanters to date has been written: Laura Stewart's *Rethinking the Scottish Revolution, 1637-51* (2016).[46] Stewart's socio-political reinterpretation considers the Scottish Revolution as a state-building experiment in which multiple social groups – and not just the social elites and clergy, where the earlier studies focused – negotiated their respective power relations as part of a confessionalization process. The covenanted state that resulted, while integrating the masses as a newly formed 'public' into the political conversation, nevertheless retained its executive power in a fragile alliance of clerical and landed elites, with clearly defined and separate

[43] Over the past fifty years, J.G.A. Pocock of the so-called 'Cambridge School' has championed the cause of 'British history' in early modern studies, 'attempt[ing] to overcome a writing of history so Anglocentric that "British history" itself has in the past denoted nothing much more than "English history" with occasional transitory additions'. John G. A. Pocock, 'The Atlantic Archipelago and the War of the three Kingdoms' in John Bradshaw, Brendan; Morrill (ed.), *The British Problem, c. 1534-1707: State Formation in the Atlantic Archipelago* (Basingstoke, 1996), p.172.

[44] Heinz Schilling, cited in Elizabethanne Boran, "Introduction", Elizabethanne Boran and Crawford Gribben (eds), *Enforcing Reformation in Ireland and Scotland, 1550-1700* (Aldershot, 2006), p.4.

[45] See Ibid., p.8.

[46] Writing in 1996, J.G.A. Pocock, commented that 'Post-Covenant Scotland and Post-Cromwellian Ireland await their revisionist historians'. Pocock (1996), p.269. Twenty years on, Stewart's work has responded to the former call.

jurisdictions. Stewart thus brings to the study of the Scottish revolution a discussion that has hitherto been largely the preserve of historians of the English revolution, with the added benefit of some forty years' reflection on the shortcomings of the Marxist school that once dominated it.

While wary of the Presbyterian interpretive tradition which she sees stretching back to the employment of Reformation history as a propaganda tool, Stewart is equally dismissive of the enduring post-Restoration narrative we have encountered, that would have us 'remember Covenanted government not as a comparatively representative and accountable regime that committed itself to meaningful parliamentary oversight, but as tyranny by committee'.[47] In a break with most of the preceding political histories, she dismisses as facile the description of the Covenanter government as a theocracy,[48] downplaying the compulsive powers of the Kirk as a serious rival to the state. Instead, the Covenanter regime emerges as a remarkably successful confessional government, legitimized (albeit begrudgingly) by the king in the 1641 parliamentary settlement; one which incorporated a much wider range of social groupings (including women) into the political dialogue than any Scottish executive before it, or for several generations thereafter. Indeed, she shows that by the parliamentary settlement of 1641, "the Covenanters had created a stable, viable regime, headed by leaders now possessing control over the enhanced organizational capacity of an autonomous state".[49] Thus, in recovering the reputation of the Covenanter state, Stewart concludes with the remarkable paradigm-shifting statement that it differed from the Anglo-centric 'republican and royalist regimes bookending its existence because it was conciliar, participatory, and comparatively transparent'.[50] This is a remarkable claim that challenges the prevailing consensus we have noted above, that views godly rule in Scotland as a backward step, much less an advance, in early modern state formation.

Stewart ends by issuing a challenge: 'It is time to examine the social, cultural, *and religious* legacy of Covenanted Scotland in greater detail' – an invitation to fresh scholarly work in the field that Reformed Presbyterians would do well to heed.[51]

This brief survey of recent scholarship reveals that Stevenson's 'political history' approach has dominated Covenanter studies until fairly recently, providing much helpful analysis of the constitutional history of the period. While echoes of Trevor-Roper's disdain for the Covenanting party can still be heard, this generation of historians engaged, if not more sympathetically, at least more systematically with their subjects with sensitivity to their own intellectual contexts. They avoided at least the overt 'secularizing teleology'[52] of Trevor-Roper, and engaged thoughtfully with the sources. However, the unfortunate result of this

[47] Ibid., p.25.
[48] Ibid., p.20.
[49] Ibid., p. 308. While Stewart catalogues several aspects of this 'organizational capacity', it was particularly effective in its fiscal and military endeavours, successfully funding and launching three invasions of England and one of Ireland, and repelling the counter-insurgency of Montrose, before finally succumbing to Cromwell's invasion in 1651. Even after Dunbar and Worcester, the strength of the Covenanter government is reflected in the fact that it took the Commonwealth some fourteen months to dismantle, and even then, the occupying power resorted to using much of the infrastructure the Covenanters had successfully established – something the Restoration government would also continue.
[50] Ibid., p.313.
[51] Ibid., p.314. Italics mine.
[52] The term is Coffey and Chapman's. Coffey and Chapman, (2009), p.3.

overwhelmingly political approach has been a tendency to simply dismiss the Covenanters as religious fanatics comparable to the adepts of Islamist fundamentalism.[53]

But if recent Covenanter history has been written as a political narrative, first and foremost, then without new, scholarly studies of Covenanter theology and spirituality inevitably, the political historian will be tempted to fall back on the usual caricatures of Scottish Calvinism that have been purveyed for centuries. The now ample supply of political histories must be balanced by a sensitivity to historical theology, and that will mean a better grasp of how their subjects understood themselves and their world from the perspective of their own worldview, not that of our twenty-first century post-Christian world.

A few scholars have led the way in drawing attention to this deficit, attempting to recover this balance, and it is to this literature of recent religious reassessments of the Covenanters that we now turn.

The Mullan Thesis: 'Scottish Puritanism'?

A major step forward in the scholarly study of the theology and spirituality of the Scottish Covenanters came with the publication of David George Mullan's provocatively-titled *Scottish Puritanism, 1590-1638* (2000). Mullan's goal was 'to open a new level of discussion about Scotland in this period',[54] building on the work of the political historians of the previous decades, and issuing a call for fresh studies in Scottish religious history:

> Recent work which has illuminated our appreciation of the political aspects of the covenanting movement needs to be supplemented by a detailed and nuanced portrait of Scottish divinity; without this our picture of events is bound to be skewed'.[55]

Mullan challenged the simplistic Presbyterian vs. Episcopalian bifurcation that characterized the traditional historiographies by arguing for a pre-revolutionary consensus in Calvinist federal theology and affective piety in Scotland, that was both 'Augustinian' and 'Puritan'. By extending his research beyond the already plundered sources of official church pronouncements and polemical publications, and delving into the sermons and correspondence of laypeople and clergy alike, he revealed a kirk that generally shared a common commitment to the centrality of the preached word, a Genevan federal theology and a decidedly 'Puritan' piety, before the consensus unravelled in the run-up to the civil wars. Like their English counterparts, the Scottish Puritans practised an intense introspective piety, marked by an often dramatic conversion experience, a strict spiritual discipline of prayer and

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[53] Drawing parallels between the Covenanters and contemporary Islamic fundamentalism – whether in the Iranian Revolution of the 1970s or of ISIS-affiliated groups globally – has been a popular trope in both the scholarly and popular press. For the former see e.g. Marty Martin and Scott Appleby, *Fundamentalisms and the State: Remaking Polities, Economies, and Militance* (Chicago, 1996), p.16; for the latter see e.g. Chris Bambery, 'Terrorism and fanaticism: Were the early Calvinists Scotland's Daesh?', *The National*, 1 December 2015. http://www.thenational.scot/culture/14858701.Terrorism_and_fanaticism__Were_the_early_Calvinists_Scotland_s_Daesh_/ (Accessed 2 March 2017).

[54] David George Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism, 1590-1638* (Oxford, 2000), p.7. Even Keith Brown, a critic of Mullan's thesis, had to concede, 'Until the publication of *Scottish Puritanism*, the religious history of early seventeenth-century Scotland was thin indeed.' Keith Brown, 'Review: 'Scottish Puritanism, 1590–1638. By David George Mullan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000' in *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, liii,no. 2 (2002), p.396.

[55] Mullan (2000), p.7.

fasting, Bible study and meditation for both the individual and family, a complex casuistry governing practical aspects of godly living, often worked out in conference with like-minded believers in conventicles, and of course a pious devotion to the public ordinances of the Church on her Sabbaths.

For Mullan, two decades of Episcopalian impositions upon the kirk, from the 1618 Articles of Perth to the Laudian liturgy preceding the Scottish Revolution certainly played a significant role in the collapse of this consensus – a subject he dealt with in his previous work, *Episcopacy in Scotland*[56]. However, heavier blame still is attributed to the reaction of the 'radical Presbyterians' who rose to defend and expand the Reformation, culminating in the 1638 National Covenant and the political and religious upheavals in Britain that followed. Strikingly, Mullan contended that the Covenanters' contribution to the collapse of the consensus lay fundamentally in an emerging theological development within covenant theology. While there had been general unanimity among Puritans that covenant theology was primarily soteriological, and applied to the salvation of the godly individual, he argues that in the National Covenant, it came to be applied to the godly nation as a body politic – a supposedly schismatic application of an otherwise unifying doctrine.[57] In carefully charting this theological progression from the works of Knox, Rollock and Bruce, and the Scottish bands of 1581 and 1596, Mullan concluded that the triumph of Wariston's national covenanting vision in 1638 was not a natural organic development, but rather a radical subversion of the covenant theology that had formerly united the kirk.[58]

In summary, Mullan's thesis essentially proposed a Scottish version of the English 'Calvinist consensus' posited by the revisionist school of Patrick Collinson, Nicholas Tyacke and Peter Lake,[59] implicitly opening the door to incorporate an established historiographical conversation about English Puritanism into Scottish religious history.[60]

Mullan's thesis has of course met with a mixed reaction.[61] Most critiques have addressed the vexed question of taxonomy – taking exception to the use of the term 'Puritan' in a Scottish context.[62] While not ignoring the important caveats on the semantic range of a contentious term, historians have nonetheless generally embraced the possibilities that Mullan's thesis

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[56] David George Mullan, *Episcopacy in Scotland: the history of an idea, 1560-1638* (Edinburgh, 1986). This view has also been shared by Allan I. Macinnes, *Charles I and the Making of the Covenanting Movement, 1625-1641* (1991), p.39-41.

[57] While a number of other political historians have discussed the development of a Scottish covenanting tradition, none had hitherto explored the conceptual links with a nascent federal theology to the same extent as Mullan. See principally, Arthur H. Williamson, *Scottish National Consciousness in the Age of James VI : The Apocalypse, the Union and the Shaping of Scotland's Public Culture* (Edinburgh: Donald, 1979), p.64-85 and Steele (1990), p.31-67.

[58] (Mullan, 2000), p.181-207, 285-317, 320-2.

[59] A useful overview of the revisionist debate in the English context may be found in Margo Todd (ed.), *Reformation to revolution : politics and religion in early modern England* (London, 1995) and Peter Lake, 'The Historiography of Puritanism' in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (Cambridge, 2008), p.346–71.

[60] Mullan has stated this historiographical link with the revisionist school of English Puritanism more explicitly elsewhere: David George Mullan, 'Theology in the Church of Scotland 1618 - c.1640: a Calvinist Consensus?' in *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, xxvi, no. 3 (1995), p.595–617.

[61] The most thorough of these are John Coffey, 'The Problem of Scottish Puritanism' in Elizabethanne Boran and Crawford Gribben (eds), *Enforcing Reformation in Ireland and Scotland, 1550-1700* (Aldershot, 2006), p.66-90 and Margo Todd, 'The Problem of Scotland's Puritans', in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, p.174-88.

[62] Maurice Lee has even suggested that the provocative title may simply be a publisher's marketing ploy; Maurice Lee, 'Review: Scottish Puritanism, 1590-1638 by David George Mullan', in *The Catholic Historical Review*, lxxxvii, no. 2 (2001), . 326–328; cf. (Brown, 2002), . 395-397.

offers students of early modern Scotland, opening a door to explore the formation of a distinctly British Puritanism.

The Todd Thesis: A 'Puritan Nation'?

If Mullan's thesis opened up the field to a more nuanced study of Scottish divinity as it filtered down from the pulpit and the universities, then Margo Todd has supplied historians with a magisterial study of Scottish spirituality between 1560 and the 1650s from the perspective of the congregation, with her work, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (2002). Like Mullan, she successfully draws the lines of historical enquiry into post-Reformation Scottish religion away from the old historiographical concentration on the formal polity debates of the higher church courts, to the spirituality of the person in the pew. In so doing, Todd has supplied historians with a remarkably comprehensive, regionally-diverse examination of local kirk session minute books – a source that the older writers largely overlooked[63] – and which provide an impressive composite picture of the experience of religion in early modern Scotland. Yet, while side-stepping the macro-level debates by which the Covenanter leaders led Scotland to revolution in 1637, Todd's micro-level explorations into the religious world of the masses have in fact supplied historians with an unsurpassed picture of the religious context of that revolution. Although a more nuanced picture of Scottish religious experience emerges – one that was more multivalent than uniform at the local level – Todd nonetheless concludes that Scotland had in fact become a 'Puritan nation' by 1637,[64] and it was this national 'Puritan' consciousness, embraced by moderate conformist Calvinists and 'radicals' alike, that explains popular resistance to the 'ecclesiastical imperialism'[65] of the Five Articles of Perth (1618), the Laudian Liturgy (1637) and, it might be added, of the post-Restoration of prelacy (1661).

Todd's research confirms Mullan's thesis of a broad Calvinist consensus within the semi-episcopalian Jacobean kirk,[66] but has also compelled historians to reconsider many cherished assumptions about the religious identity of the early and later Covenanters. While they would never acknowledge the dramatic work of the Holy Spirit in reviving Scotland, such historians nevertheless are now conceding that the picture which emerges from their sources is of a nation displaying remarkable personal attachment to and affection for the simple Presbyterian ritual of the ordinary means of grace, and the powerful preaching of the Calvinistic Gospel of grace.[67] This consideration must now be borne in mind when they try to explain the popular response to Laudian innovations in 1637, and the resolute convictions of the martyrs of the Killing Times, and it should temper, e.g. Cowan's confident assertion

[63] There are a few exceptions. Andrew Edgar, *Old Church Life in Scotland: Lectures on Kirk-Session and Presbytery Records* (Paisley, 1886), which supplies a remarkably balanced 'view from the pew', using session minutes from Mauchline, Galston, Fenwick and Rothesay parishes, the minutes of the presbytery of Ayr, and other original manuscripts to present a composite picture remarkably similar to that of Todd, though not nearly as comprehensive. More recently, Walter Roland Foster, *The Church Before the Covenants: the Church of Scotland, 1596-1638* (Edinburgh; London, 1975), also provides a helpful overview, but leans significantly more towards an analysis of the institutions of the Kirk, leaving only one chapter to examine parish life in Scotland. A more extensive use of the minutes of sessions and presbyteries can be found in the Marxist historian Walter Makey's, *The Church of the Covenant, 1637-1651* (Edinburgh, 1979).

[64] Todd, (2002), p.402-412.

[65] See John Morrill, 'A British patriarchy? Ecclesiastical imperialism under the early Stuarts' in Patrick Collinson, Anthony J Fletcher and Peter Roberts, *Religion, culture and society in early modern Britain: essays in honour of Patrick Collinson* (Cambridge, 1994), p.372.

[66] Todd, (2002), p.405-6.

[67] Todd's own explanation for the dramatic reshaping of Scotland is based on the social anthropological hypotheses of Clifford Geertz and others.

that religion was merely 'a convenient pretext for...the constitutional remoulding of the small world that was Scotland'.[68] Todd's examination of session records also reveals that the clergy's reputation for being repressive, paternalistic killjoys in the iconoclastic atmosphere of Reformation Scotland has been grossly overstated. In reality, local clergy chose their battles wisely, turning a blind eye to much traditional merrymaking, issuing comparatively lenient ecclesiastical penalties (except where they led to violence or serious sin), and redistributing fines from the wealthy among the poor. Thus, 'clearly, Presbyterian Scotland was not in practice the grim and joyless place of modern stereotype' and 'if not as merry as we might like, was nowhere near as dour as its reputation would have it'.[69]

By 1638, this 'Puritan nation' that Todd has been honest enough to reveal is a nation that would make England's Puritans envious. But in Todd's final analysis, England's failure to implement such a program in her own national Church in the 1640s and '50s would founder on her inability to implement anything approaching Scotland's network of local kirk sessions – one of the goals of the Solemn League and Covenant (1643).[70] In other words, England's lack of a national network of functioning Presbyterian church courts led to the collapse of the Covenanters' British vision, and the restoration of persecuting Stuart prelacy in 1660.

Intellectual Biography

Finally, one of the best evidences of a renewed scholarly interest in the Scottish Covenanters has been the emergence of a number of intellectual biographies that are sensitive to the historiographical dynamics discussed above, and avoid the hagiography of former centuries.[71]

Foremost among these is John Coffey's seminal work on Samuel Rutherford, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions* (1997).[72] Coffey examined Rutherford within a British context, carefully avoiding the narrowly reductionist 'secular' and 'sacred' whig representations of Rutherford as exclusively a Scottish patriot or Evangelical poet. The often-paradoxical interplay between Rutherford's rigid scholastic theology and passionate spirituality was explored with a due sensitivity to his historical and confessional context, and his work became a benchmark study for others to follow. For the same reasons, L. Charles Jackson's biography of Alexander Henderson (2015) is of considerable value,[73] following Coffey's lead in expressing a debt to the Cambridge School's contextual approach to intellectual history, and offering a thorough analysis of the theology, piety and politics of the co-author of the National Covenant and commissioner to the Westminster Assembly. This recent work presents a valuable study and a good example of the kind of inter-disciplinary

[68] Cowan (1990), p.70. See also Todd (2002), p.102, 103, 118, 119, 122.
[69] Todd, (2002), p.221, 226. Todd's example has been followed by John MacCallum's in-depth study, *Reforming the Scottish Parish: The Reformation in Fife, 1560–1640* (Farnham, 2010). Like Todd's *Culture of Protestantism*, MacCallum's careful study of the most rigorous Calvinist region of the British Isles challenges many common assumptions about Presbyterian Scotland, such as an alleged obsession with witch hunts, and a disciplinary system bordering on the misogynistic.
[70] (Todd, 2002), p.407-8.
[71] There are other biographies that are useful as contextual studies, but which do not make use of the most recently available sources. Among these are F.N. McCoy, *Robert Baillie and the Second Scots Reformation* (Berkeley, 1974); Edward J. Cowan, *Montrose: For Covenant and King* (Edinburgh, 1995).
[72] John Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions: the Mind of Samuel Rutherford* (Cambridge, 1997).
[73] L. Charles Jackson, *Riots, Revolutions and the Scottish Covenanters: The Work of Alexander Henderson* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 2015). At the time of writing, Jackson is a missionary of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church serving in Uganda.

study that deftly weaves together a theological and historical narrative of a key 'Scottish Puritan'.

Allan Macinnes has also recently produced the only scholarly biography of Archibald Campbell, Marquis of Argyll, *The British Confederate* (2014).[74] Argyll was arguably the leader of the Covenanting party in the revolutionary years (1637-40) and the period of 'kirk party' rule (1648-51), the first Covenanter martyr (1661), and another prime mover in executing the Covenanters' vision for a British confessional state, as the title of Macinnes' biography implies. Though concentrating on his remarkable political career, rather than his religious convictions, this work provides another important study, offering much fresh research into the complex period 1638-61.

As we have seen, the later Covenanting period has been especially rich in the hagiography of the popular martyrologies, but relatively sparse in the way of serious scholarly study. Yet, even here there have been a number of important contributions in recent decades, especially those of a biographic nature. Foremost among them is the Maurice Grant trilogy: scholarly yet accessible biographies of the three great Cameronian field preachers, Donald Cargill, Richard Cameron and James Renwick.[75] One of the deficiencies of many of the popular-level martyrologies has been a lack of interaction with primary sources, and a virtual absence of fresh archival work, instead depending exclusively (and often regurgitating in modern language), the customary sources of Wodrow, Howie and Walker. While not neglecting these important works, Grant pieced together significant new data from the archives to compile works that are more sure-footed and balanced than many of the older studies.[76]

Conclusion

The contention of this article has been that if the Churches are to promote fresh scholarship in the field of Covenanter history, then they need to be prepared to engage thoughtfully and honestly with a wide range of scholarship, sympathetic and unsympathetic, old and recent. It is hoped that this broad survey of the field of Covenanter historiography may be a small step in that direction, bringing us up to date with the latest scholarly developments, and where they stand in relation to the interpretive schools of the past four centuries.

Once again, our purpose has not been to 'topple sacred cows', much less fudge a commitment to the sovereign Lord of history, who often employs social, economic and political factors in addition to the regenerating power of his Spirit to accomplish his Church-building goal (Matthew 16:18). Rather, it has been to soberly assess the relative merits of the historiographical approaches that underlie the varied and often conflicting representations of the Covenanters, both in the revered annals of the Church and the less forgiving halls of

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[74] Allan I. Macinnes, *The British Confederate: Archibald Campbell, Marquis of Argyll (c.1607-1661)* (Edinburgh, 2011).

[75] Maurice Grant, *No King but Christ: The Story of Donald Cargill* (Darlington, 1993); *The Lion of the Covenant* (Darlington, 1997); *Preacher to the Remnant: The Story of James Renwick* (Edinburgh, 2009).

[76] Mention might also be made of a number of significant unpublished doctoral theses that address the later Covenanters and United Societies, several of which may be obtained online. Of particular note is Mark Jardine's study of the United Societies, and Neil Forsyth's work on the later Covenanters: Mark Jardine, 'Militancy, Martyrdom and the Presbyterian Movement in Late-Restoration Scotland, 1679 to 1688' (PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2009). It can be accessed online at https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/279523.pdf; Neil Forsyth, 'Saints and Subverters: The Later Covenanters in Scotland, c. 1648-1682' (PhD Thesis, University of Strathclyde, 2016). It can be accessed with an EThOS subscription from the British Library: www.ethos.bl.uk

academia. To discover that our heroes too had feet of clay, and that some of their principles (or their application) have in subsequent centuries been wisely modified by the courts of the churches that descended from them, should not undermine our respect for them, but help us towards a deeper understanding and appreciation of their faithful witness in their difficult age.

The devotional nature of much popular literature on the Covenanters will doubtless continue to hold value in stirring hearts and spurring on a sleepy generation of Christians facing contemporary dangers to the Church's spiritual autonomy. But the story of the Covenanters will surely benefit and serve future generations of the Church even more when read with a discerning evaluation of the dispassionate verdicts of scholars whose grasp of their world (if sadly not their faith) often exceeds our own. When this balanced historical approach is taken, the tales will still be fondly told, and at the same time, we will not be found to be telling tales.

THE RELEVANCE OF JOHN OWEN FOR PASTORS TODAY[1]

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As John Owen lay dying in 1683 his seventy-second work, *Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ*, reached the printer. A further fourteen works were published posthumously. All in all his works run to around eight and a half million words.[2] Today the standard edition of his collected works comprises twenty-four volumes encompassing around 13,000 pages. Since these, along with some ninety-eight letters, form our only access to Owen they inevitably shape how we think about him as a person.

As Peter Toon complained, there is little in Owen's writings that offers biographers some 'personal touches' to add to his biography.[3] His most recent biographer, Crawford Gribben, notes that Owen was 'famously guarded about the details of his own life.'[4] Whilst Tim Cooper points out that the result of this is that much of what is known about Owen comes from the pens of his detractors and that 'the hard part of describing the personality of John Owen is finding it in the first place.'[5]

One result of this absence of personal information, and our viewing Owen largely through his literary corpus, is that we are then apt to think of him only as a theologian. He, of course, served at various times as a chaplain in England, Ireland and Scotland, a preacher to Parliament, Dean of Christ Church and Vice-chancellor of Oxford University. He was also, as Carl Trueman says, 'an actor in some of the greatest dramas of the day.'[6] Nonetheless, because of his voluminous writings and the absence of personal information it is as a theologian that he sticks in our minds.

What is sometimes forgotten is that Owen actually spent the majority of his life as a pastor in a local congregation. This is a neglected area when it comes to Owen scholarship, again largely due to the paucity of information. The focus of this article will be on Owen's thoughts on pastoral ministry. That should not lead us, however, to side-line his work as a theologian, for, as Trueman remarks, he 'saw theology as ultimately a pastoral discipline.'[7]

We live in an age when we are apt to separate the pastor from the theologian. To the modern mind these two are often two distinct professions dealing with two different specialities. The result is that, as Douglas Sweeney writes, 'many pastors have abdicated their responsibilities as theologians, and many theologians do their work in a way that is lost on the people of God.'[8] It is a division that Owen would not have recognised.

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[1] This article is based on a talk given to the RPCI Ministers' Conference in September 2016.
[2] Crawford Gribben, *John Owen and English Puritanism: Experiences of Defeat*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p.1.
[3] Peter Toon, *God's Statesman: The Life and Work of John Owen*, (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1971), p.vii
[4] *Op.cit*., p.9.
[5] Quoted in Gribben, p.17.
[6] Kelly M. Kapic and Mark Jones (eds.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to John Owen's Theology*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), p. xiv.
[7] *Op.cit*., p.13.
[8] *Jonathan Edwards and the Ministry of the Word*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), p.199.

For Owen theology was not an abstract, academic subject, unrelated to the life of the congregation. He was not interested in abstruse or intramural theological debates. For Owen the whole idea of studying theology as an academic discipline, or for its own sake, was something anathema to him. He wrote,

> Oh, may God open the eyes of scholars to see that the issues of theology are totally different from the aims of philosophy, and that its study necessitates a different attitude of mind, another disposition of character, a new heart, than those with which they have been accustomed to approach the whole "round of human learning!"[9]

He did not view theology as just another branch of learning and rejected the 'false scholarship which aims at hacking and hewing spiritual truths to make them fit the capricious rules laid out for man's arts and sciences.'[10] Rather, theology was rooted in God's revelation and required rebirth and the subsequent frame of mind it produced in studying God's Word. He states,

> All true theology demands from its students a totally different kind of mental light, and other frames of mind and principles of intellect than those required for the pursuit of all secular arts, sciences, and philosophies. If you wish to be adept in this spiritual wisdom, you must daily cultivate a holy communion with God in the mystery of His gospel through the merits of Jesus Christ, and you must know by experience the power and efficiency of saving truths.[11]

Ultimately the whole task of theology was, for Owen, a practical one. Ryan McGraw writes,

> in Owen's view, theology and the experiential knowledge of God were largely synonymous. He believed that theology was both objective and subjective. Objectively, theology is a communication from the Father, through the Son, to the church by way of Scripture, which has been given to her through inspired prophets and apostles. Subjectively, theology is the renovation of a person from the Father, through the Son, and by the Spirit by means of God's revelation in Scripture.[12]

As McGraw adds, 'Owen taught that theology that did not grip people's hearts and bring them into communion with the triune God was not worthy of the name.'[13] In Owen's own words,

> [the] end of all true theology is the cultivation of a most holy and sweet communion with God, wherein lies the true happiness of mankind…The ultimate

[9] John Owen, *Biblical Theology or The Nature, Origin, Development, and Study of Theological Truth, in Six Books*, (Morgan: Soli Deo Gloria, 2004), p.592.
[10] *Ibid*., p.686.
[11] *Ibid.*
[12] Ryan McGraw, *The Foundation of Communion with God: The Trinitarian Piety of John Owen*, (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2014), Kindle Edition, Loc.243.
[13] *Ibid*.

> end of true theology is the celebration of the praise of God, and His glory and grace in the eternal salvation of sinners.[14]

With such an understanding of the nature and role of theology, we can begin to see how theology was for Owen intimately connected with the pastoral task. Kelly Kapic writes that Owen refused to 'divorce theological considerations from practical human application, since theological reflections are always interwoven with anthropological concerns.'[15]

In this way Owen sets before us a much-needed example of the pastor-theologian as Richard Lovelace defines such men, 'trained theologians who combine spiritual urgency with profound learning.'[16] As we examine Owen's reflections on the role of the pastor as preacher it will become clearer why there is such need of pastor-theologians.

The Pastor as Preacher and Theologian

When Owen came to deal with the pastoral office in *The True Nature of a Gospel Church and its Government* he stated that, 'The first and principal duty of a pastor is to feed the flock by diligent preaching of the word.'[17] That this is of the very essence of pastoral ministry becomes clear as he later adds, 'he that doth not so feed is no pastor.'[18]

A pastor has, of course, other duties. According to Owen, these are 'continual fervent prayer' for the flock and 'the administration of the seals of the covenant.'[19] However, even these are, to some extent, subservient to the ministry of the Word. So whenever he says that a pastor is to pray fervently for his flock, it is because 'without this, no man can or doth preach to them as he ought, nor perform any other duty of his pastoral office.'[20] When he says that a pastor is to administer the sacraments it is because 'unto them the authoritative dispensation of the word is committed, whereunto the administration of the seals is annexed; for their principal end is the peculiar confirmation and application of the word preached.' As Trueman writes, 'Owen's view was that worship was primarily a spiritual activity [and] that this spiritual activity focused upon the word preached.'[21] Everything about worship is built around the preaching of the word of God.

As Owen spells out what is involved in the preaching of the word, it becomes clear that he sees the task of preaching as a spiritual one. He notes that there are certain things required of the pastor if he is to engage in what he describes as the 'duty of pastoral preaching.' These are —

- Spiritual wisdom - by this Owen means the capacity to grasp 'the unsearchable riches of Christ' and to communicate these to the church.
- An experience of the power of the truth - a pastor must not only know the truth but must himself be transformed by the power of the truth that he seeks to communicate.

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[14] Kelly Kapic, *Communion with God: The Divine and the Human in the Theology of John Owen*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), p.33.
[15] Kelly Kapic, *Communion with God: The Divine and the Human in the Theology of John Owen*, p.33-34.
[16] Gerald Hiestand and Paul Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian: Resurrecting an Ancient Vision* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), p.12.
[17] *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold, (London: Banner of Truth, 1968), Vol. 16, p.75.
[18] *Ibid*., p.76.
[19] *Ibid*., p.77 & p.79.
[20] *Ibid*., p.77.
[21] Carl R Trueman, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p.19.

> He notes that 'a man preacheth that sermon only well unto others which preacheth itself in his own soul.'[22] In another work he states, 'a pastor's life should be vocal: sermons must be practised as well as preached…If a man teach uprightly, and walk crookedly, more will fall down in the night of his life, than he built in the day of his doctrine.'[23]

- Skill to divide the word aright - Owen describes this as 'practical wisdom' by which he means the ability not only to understand Scripture but to apply it to the needs of the congregation.
- A prudent and diligent consideration of the state of the flock - likewise the preacher must understand the needs of the flock not only in a general sense, but he must understand specific needs. Or, as he puts it, he must be 'as near as may be, with respect unto all the individual members of the church.'[24]
- Underpinning all of these Owen points out that it is necessary for the pastor to have 'zeal for the glory of God and compassion for the souls of men.' Without these he notes that 'the life and soul of preaching, is lost.'[25]

Pastoral work is not easy work. The language that Owen uses here to describe this task is the language of intensity - labour, continual intent, engagement of all the faculties, stirring up, constant exercise. He writes that it is

> incumbent on all pastors of churches to give themselves unto the word and prayer, to labour in the word and doctrine, to be continually intent on this work, to engage all the faculties of their souls, to stir up all their graces and gifts, unto constant exercise in the discharge of their duty.[26]

For Owen this is what is involved if the pastor is to feed the flock as God has ordained him to do. Not least he says that the pastor must be a true theologian who combines learning and spiritual devotion.

Owen's description of the role of the pastor as theologian takes us to the heart of a contemporary problem for many pastors. This is described by Hiestand and Wilson, who write,

> pastors don't know who they are or what they are supposed to be. Perhaps no profession in the modern world suffers from a greater lack of clarity as to the basic requirements of the job. This reveals what is nothing less than a crisis of identity.[27]

This, they note, cuts across the understanding of the role of the pastor as understood across the centuries. They state that 'in the not-so-distant past, and in many of the church's richest traditions, the pastorate was considered one of the most scholarly of vocations.'[28] The pastor was a theologian. He was engaged in the study of theology, not for the sake of theology, but for the sake of the church. The shift away from this model of pastor-theologian, as

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[22] John Owen, *Works*, Vol. 9, p.455.
[23] Quoted in Gribben, *John Owen and English* Puritanism, p.84.
[24] John Owen, *Works*, Vol.16, p.76.
[25] *Ibid*., p.77.
[26] *Ibid.*
[27] *Op.cit*., p.9.
[28] *Ibid*., p.12.

exemplified by Owen, leads Hiestand and Wilson to conclude that the outcome has been that 'theology has become ecclesially anemic [*sic*], and the church theologically anemic.'[29]

The idea of pastor-theologian is one that Owen not only exemplifies, but one that he commends in his writings. This points us to Owen's relevance to us as pastors today - that we need to think carefully and deeply about the task of the pastor. As we do so, we need to recover that vision that he is primarily called to feed the flock of God. If he is to feed them in a nourishing way then he must be someone who labours with continual intent, engaging all his faculties, stirring them up in constant exercise. He must be someone who is spiritually engaged in the task of theological study.

Perhaps the relevance of Owen's vision comes to us when he writes,

> we have lived to see and hear of reproachful scorn and contempt cast upon laborious preaching, - that is, "labouring in the word and doctrine," and all manner of discouragements given unto it, with endeavours for its suppression in sundry instances; yea, some have proceeded so far as to declare that the work of preaching is unnecessary in the church.[30]

These are seventeenth century words, but they have a powerful contemporary ring. As someone has said, the modern attitude to preaching is often 'not too long, not too much, not too deep.' In many contexts preaching is increasingly squeezed in worship services to make way for other things or it is regarded as something that merely comes at the end of the service rather than being its culmination as, having offered our praise and prayers to God, he speaks to us.

Owen's words remind us that the challenges that we face are nothing new. They are the challenges which are before pastors in every generation. Owen's relevance is in terms of the challenge that he gives us to think carefully about the role that God has assigned to us. That is the role of the pastor as a theologian who will labour diligently with spiritual devotion and who will in turn feed the flock of God.

The Role of the Preacher

As Owen considers the role of the pastor as preacher he notes that the 'one principal end of the ministry' is 'to preserve the truth or doctrine of the gospel received and professed in the church, and to defend it against all opposition.' Whilst he supports this assertion from Scripture, he also points to the need of 'this duty, especially at this time, when the fundamental truths of the gospel are on all sides impugned, from all sorts of adversaries.'[31]

Again, these are seventeenth century words but words that have a twenty-first century feel. We too live in a day when the fundamental truths of the gospel are on all sides impugned, from all sorts of adversaries. We even find these issues within the increasingly broad church of Evangelicalism, for whom Francis Schaeffer's words ring true that it 'has developed the automatic mentality of accommodation at each successive point.'[32] The challenges we face

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[29] *Ibid*., p.13.
[30] John Owen, *Works*, Vol. 16, p.75.
[31] *Ibid*., pp 80,81.
[32] Francis Schaeffer, 'The Great Evangelical Disaster' in *The Complete Works of Francis Schaeffer*, (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1984), Vol. 4, p.410.

are in one sense nothing new. Yet, as we consider Owen's relevance, we must recognise that his relevance is in part to do with encouraging us to engage with the issues of our own day, not simply to transpose his views onto our own problems.

It points us to one of the dangers of looking at Owen, or indeed any historical figure: that is the danger of wrenching them from their historical context and considering them as somehow timeless. Yet, we must remember that Owen's theology was worked out in the midst of his own struggles. He was engaging with the theological challenges of his day, just as we must engage with the theological challenges of our day.

J. I. Packer is reported to have remarked that the Puritans prepare us for everything the seventeenth century has to throw at us! It is a comment of course that we can take in two ways - either as a challenge to consider their relevance or as a reminder that all theology must be worked out in context. We need to remind ourselves that it is not enough simply to regurgitate the shibboleths of the past. Owen did not do that nor should we. He writes that there is an ongoing need 'to defend, improve, give and add new light unto old truths.'[33]

Owen challenges us - are we defending the truth of the gospel against the challenges of our own day? Are we conscious of who the real enemies of the gospel are? Or are we like an historical re-enactment society fighting ancient battles whilst modern spectators look on?

In order to fulfil this role as defender of the gospel truth Owen again points to several tasks in which the pastor must engage in order to do so.

In the first instance he says the pastor must have 'a clear, sound, comprehensive knowledge of the entire doctrine of the gospel.' How does one attain this knowledge? He adds that it is 'especially by diligent study of the Scripture, with fervent prayer for illumination and understanding.'[34] For Owen diligent study and fervent prayer are inseparable.

Owen's words strike at the heart of a false dichotomy that is often presented to us today: that is that you can either be a Word Christian or a Spirit Christian. Those who focus upon the Word are often told that they need to relax a bit on the Word side of things and be more concerned about the Spirit. On the other hand, those who focus on the Spirit are often chided for their neglect of the Word. This Word/Spirit dichotomy is a false dichotomy and certainly not one that Owen would have recognised.

For Owen diligent study was vital, but it was not enough on its own. Instead, there must be diligent study alongside fervent prayer for the Spirit to come and bring illumination and understanding. For Owen the idea that we can interpret the Scriptures correctly apart from the work of the Holy Spirit is a 'false and foolish notion.' It is a recurrent theme in Owen's writings that knowledge of the truth is not enough, there must also be spiritual wisdom in apprehending the mysteries of the gospel.

Secondly, a pastor must have a love of this same truth. In other words, Owen says we must treat this truth of the gospel 'a Pearl, as that which is valued at any rate, bought with any price, as that which is better than all the World.' He warns that 'if ministers have not a sense of that power of the truth in their own souls, and a taste of its goodness, the discharge of this

[33] John Owen, *Works*, Vol. 11, p.11.
[34] John Owen, *Works*, Vol.16, p.82.

duty is not to be expected from them.'[35] Again, he picks up the earlier theme that we must preach the Word of God to ourselves. We must be transformed by the Word and therefore passionate about the truth that we seek to preach to others for their transformation.

He points out that if we do not love the truth then we will not believe that it is worth contending for and we will give up on it. Again his words have a contemporary ring when he adds that 'some are ready to part with truth at an easy rate, or to grow indifferent about it; we have multitudes of examples [of this] in the days wherein we live.'[36] We too live in a day when we have multitudes of examples of those who are ready to part with the truth or are indifferent to it. We live in an age where our concept of tolerance often leads to the conclusion that there is nothing worth fighting for.

In his sermon *The Duty of a Pastor* Owen reflected on many of the themes that he would later develop in *True Nature of a Gospel Church*. Here he wrote that to fill our own heads and those of our listeners with pleasing words 'is very easy.'[37] However, if we are to be those who truly preach then we must love the truth, be transformed by that truth and be passionate about that truth and its communication to others.

Thirdly, the pastor must have a 'conscientious care and fear of giving countenance or encouragement unto novel opinions.' Where this has occurred he notes it has 'caused no small trouble and damage unto the church.' In his own day he says that novel opinions were put forward by some out of 'vain curiosity, boldness in conjectures and readiness to vent their own conceits.'[38] Whilst he noted on another occasion, echoing the words of Paul to Timothy, that he had encountered men with 'such itching ears after novelty, that they run greedily after every one that lies in wait to deceive with cunning enticing words.'[39]

Whilst the language we use might be different, the issues once more have contemporary resonance. We live in a day when people like to speculate, to conjecture about the gospel and to preach themselves and their ideas for self-advancement. This appeals to the age in which we live, where people are often in search of the novel. We live in days too when people having itching ears. Paul's command to Timothy in response to this is, 'But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.' Owen concurs and urges us to preach nothing new but to preserve the truth of the gospel.

We must rise to the challenges of our age but we do not do this by conforming the gospel to the culture, as is so easily and so commonly done today. Instead, we rise to the challenges of our day by critiquing the culture - social, intellectual, spiritual - with the unchanging gospel.

Fourthly, the pastor requires 'learning and ability of mind to discern and disprove the oppositions of the adversaries of truth.'[40] By this Owen means that the preacher should on one hand be able to shut the mouths of the opponents of the gospel and on the other to persuade men of the truth. This, of course, involves not only understanding what those who

[35] *Ibid.*
[36] *Ibid.*
[37] John Owen, *Works*, Vol.9, p.455.
[38] *Ibid.*
[39] Quoted in Gribben, *John Owen and English Puritanism*, p.93.
[40] *Ibid.*

oppose the gospel are saying, but also seeing the weaknesses of what they say and being able to refute them.

It also requires something else. For Owen it also requires authority. For Owen this authority comes not from the teaching office but through unction from the Holy Spirit demonstrating that the preacher has 'the Holy Spirit in his gifts and graces, for the preaching of the gospel.'[41] The more one has of this unction the more evident the preacher's authority will be. Such authoritative preaching will give the preacher's message authenticity amidst the clamour of competing voices. The preacher must not only preach the truth, he must pray for the unction of the Holy Spirit.

Fifthly, the preacher must engage in 'the solid confirmation of the most important truths of the gospel.'[42] He goes on to state that such truth is often undermined because it is weakly defended.

Owen says that we must identify the key truths of the gospel, those truths upon which all other truths depend, and we must defend those truths robustly. Again we must hear the relevance of Owen's words in our own day for, as we have noted, we live in an age when it seems that the gospel is under attack from many angles. Must we therefore fight every battle? Or, as Owen suggests ought we not to recognise and fight the key battles, defending the key truths upon which other truths depend?

Sixthly, he writes of the need for pastors to keep 'a diligent watch over their own flocks.'[43] By this he means that they must seek to protect their congregations from those who come from the outside and who would seduce them. They also need to guard, however, against errors that might emerge from within the flock.

It is not common, perhaps, for pastors to think of themselves as protectors of the flock. It is much easier for them to see themselves as defenders of the truth. But if pastors are to be truly pastoral then they will want to protect their own flock, realising the incalculable spiritual damage that false teachers can cause. As Owen notes, zeal for the glory of God must be accompanied by 'compassion to the souls of men.' Without that pastoral compassion for the flock the defence of the truth can appear as cold and heartless, as can that truth itself.

To this end Owen lays great stress upon the need for the pastor not simply to feed the flock but to pray for it. This prayer he notes is essential to the pastoral task. Continuous prayer is crucial to the pastoral task for it brings blessing to the flock; it sustains the pastor's love for his people; and it teaches the pastor what he ought to preach to his people.

Again we hear the relevance of Owen's words. Pastors preach to their people, but do they pray for them as they ought? Do they pray for themselves that they might love the flock of God and care for them as they ought? Without doubt pastors need that divine assistance to care for the flock for as John Stott used to remark, 'Sheep are not at all the clean and cuddly creatures they may appear. In fact they are dirty, subject to unpleasant pests, and regularly need to be dipped in chemicals to rid them of lice, ticks, and worms! They are also unintelligent, wayward, and obstinate.' He adds, 'Naturally one should hesitate to apply the

[41] John Owen, *Works*, Vol.9, p.455.
[42] John Owen, *Works*, Vol.16, p.82.
[43] *Ibid.*, pp 82,83.

metaphor too closely or to call the people of God dirty, lousy, or stupid! But some Christian ministers find some church members a great trial.'[44]

Finally, Owen points to the need of 'concurrent assistance with the elders and messengers of other churches with whom they are in communion.'[45] Whilst the pastor must use all his endeavours to serve God and his people, he does not labour alone. Instead, he labours alongside those who serve in his own congregation and who serve in other churches. There is a mutual labour in the gospel and mutual support in that labour. In the light of these things he states, 'It is evident what learning, labour, study, pains, ability, and exercise of the rational faculties, are ordinarily required unto the right discharge of these duties.'[46]

Whilst there is for Owen an emphasis on the centrality of preaching in the ministry it would be wrong to infer that the pastor is someone who is remote from the situation of his congregation or that the pastor is someone who is stuck in the study, or, in a view that seems to be increasingly popular with some today, that the minister is really a teacher and not a pastor. For Owen the minster's task is not only to be a preacher and theologian he is also to be a pastor.

Owen maintains that the pastoral office necessitates the holder being 'ready, willing, and able, to comfort, relieve, and refresh, those who are tempted, tossed, wearied with fears and grounds of disconsolation, in times of trial and desertion.' Just as Jesus is a High Priest who is 'touched with the feeling of our infirmities' so 'those who have charge of his flock under him ought to have a sense of their infirmities.'[47]

As Owen continues this will involve the pastor understanding the various causes of spiritual distress and how they can be addressed. It will involve the care of individuals, recognising that their diligent care is 'a principal part of their office and duty.' It will involve patience and tenderness as the pastor cares for those who are weak, ignorant and unbelieving. It will involve compassionate suffering along with those who suffer in various ways.

The work of the pastor is certainly done in the study and the pulpit. However, the remit of his care goes beyond both as, in a Christ-like manner, he enters into the trials and temptations of his congregation. In such situations the pastor is able to apply spiritual wisdom rather than leaving those who suffer to live in ignorance and confusion.

These were apt themes for Owen in the troubled time in which he lived which was a time of revolution, political upheaval, fear, uncertainty and violent persecution. They are apt themes for pastors in the troubled times in which we live. If they are to truly pastor the flock of God then pastors must enter their trials and temptations. Dan Kimball, a well-known figure in the emerging church movement, has written,

> in today's emerging culture, the role of the preacher really needs to come across much more as a caring shepherd who is on the journey with his flock than as a dispenser of information and knowledge telling people what to do.'[48]

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[44] John Stott, *The Message of Acts*, (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1990), p.329.
[45] *Op.cit*., p.83.
[46] *Ibid*.
[47] *Ibid*., p.85.
[48] Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), p.196.

This is a twenty-first century need but one identified by Owen in the seventeenth century.

Conclusion

In his vast commentary on Hebrews Owen writes, 'Ministers bless the church. It is part of their ministerial duty and belongs to their office to do so.'[49] It is a statement that takes us to the heart of his vision for the pastoral ministry. For Owen this is God's design for his church. As pastors preach the word, dispense the sacraments and deal with the pastoral issues of the flock God blesses his people.

Owen's vision of the pastor as God's gift to the church does not provoke pride on the part of the pastor, but a deep sense of humility as he considers the responsibility that God has given him. Thinking in this way encourages the pastor to diligence as he realises that it is only as he fulfils his duty faithfully that God will bring that blessing upon his people.

[49] McGraw, *The Foundation of Communion with God*, Loc.1252.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Legacy of Luther, edited by R. C. Sproul and Stephen J. Nichols, Reformation Trust Publishing, 2016, hbk., 308 pages, £14.80

In 2017 the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation is being commemorated by many Luther conferences worldwide and several Luther tours in Germany. This makes this publication very timely. The book consists of a series of essays, each focusing on a particular aspect of the German monk and dynamic Reformer, Martin Luther.

The book consists of 15 chapters, reflecting the number of contributors, along with a very stimulating introduction co-authored by the editors Sproul and Nichols. This introduction, entitled 'Why Luther Matters today', informs the reader of the productiveness of Luther during the 30 years that God gave him to instigate and promote the work of Reformation. We are reminded of his tracts, letters, treatises and volumes of sermons described as 'a virtual torrent of literature', never mind the translation of the Bible into German. When friends would speak to him of all his labours in promoting and proclaiming the gospel he would dismissively reply, 'I did nothing; the Word did everything.'

The 15 chapters are divided into three parts: Part 1: Luther's Life (4 chapters); Part 2: Luther's Thoughts (5 chapters); Part 3: Luther's Legacy (6 chapters).

This reviewer particularly profited from David B. Calhoun's treatment of 'Luther in his later years' (1530s-1546). While much is written about Luther's experience as an Augustinian monk in Erfurt, his reaction to Johann Tetzel's sale of indulgences which led to the nailing of his 95 Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg and the Diet of Worms, little is known about Luther's later years. This very valuable chapter remedies that deficiency.

A book commemorating Luther's life and work would not be complete without a chapter on 'Luther the family man'. Joel Beeke has contributed a very insightful chapter on 'Luther at home' and in it we are given a timely reminder of the source of marriage. From his lectures on Genesis 2 Luther is quoted as observing,

> The lawful joining of a man and a woman is a divine ordinance and institution...Marriage is a divine kind of life because it was established by God Himself.

In this chapter Beeke quotes extensively from Luther's writings, revealing to the reader the immense contribution that he made to Reformation thinking on this subject, all of which was solidly based on scriptural teaching. Of course Luther himself went through a personal revolution and reformation on this subject after his conversion. First, Luther rejected marriage as a sacrament. Second, Luther abandoned his vows on celibacy as unbiblical and then married the runaway nun Katherina von Bora with whom he established a very happy home. We are reminded that as a result of Luther's writing and example 'marriage and women were valued more highly.'

Other very valuable and interesting chapters are contributed on the subjects: 'Luther on Vocation', 'Luther on Christ and the Sacraments', 'Luther the Pastor-Theologian', 'Luther and Music', etc.

The only negative comment that this reviewer would make is the absence of any reference to the immense contribution Luther made to the understanding and practice of prayer in his own life and in the Reformation church. For example, no reference is made to the booklet he produced for his barber, Peter Beskendorf, entitled *A Simple Way To Pray,* which gives valuable insights into the prayer life of this great Reformer.

This compilation of essays marking the 500th anniversary of the Reformation is an excellent read for anyone who is looking for fresh insights into the revolution/reformation that shook the 16th century established society of Church and State.

Robert McCollum

The Christ of the Prophets, O. Palmer Robertson. P&R Publishing, 2004, pbk., 553 pages, £16.00

A graduate of Westminster Seminary, where he was deeply influenced by Professor John Murray, Robertson went on to teach at Reformed, Westminster (where he strongly influenced the present reviewer), Covenant and Knox Theological Seminaries, before becoming director and principal of the African Bible College in Uganda. He also served as pastor of four congregations, besides lecturing in Asia, Europe and Latin America, not to mention writing half a dozen books! His book *The Christ of the Covenants* soon became a classic milestone in the true pathway that is conservative Reformed Biblical Theology. Now *The Christ of the Prophets* is its equally important sequel, the standard Reformed textbook on the Prophets of ancient Israel.

With a sure hand, building on sound exegesis, sound judgment and argument, he takes us through the vast sweep of scriptural teaching on the subject, showing us how it all converges on the messianic prophecies of Christ. He is not afraid to engage with classic critical and liberal views, nor does he steer away from the challenges of Dispensationalism or Pentecostalism. He carefully deals with each 'hot potato' as it emerges, deftly leading us in the right paths.

In the Introduction Robertson sets the scene – whence this unparalleled body of literature? He sets out the critical and conservative approaches. He then deals with the origin of O.T. prophecy as compared with parallel texts, e.g. from Mari and Assyria. Next we come to consider Moses as the archetypal prophet, bringing God's Word, pointing to Christ. Next the question of what constituted a prophetic call and a true prophet, then the centrality of the covenant and its Law in prophecy (forthtelling). So we come to the writing prophets where he deals with critical approaches and sets forth the Biblical – Theological setting of these prophets. There follows an introduction to Hosea (e.g. the debate over Gomer), Amos (e.g. why only one reference to covenant?), Micah (e.g. the Bethlehem reference), Isaiah (a wonderful summary of the book's theology as a book, before a thorough demolition of the argument against its unity, engaging here with Dillard and Longman). Then Joel (the dating issue), Obadiah (who is Esau here?), Jonah (he defends his historicity against Dillard and Longman).

So on to the seventh century prophets. Firstly he considers Nahum (the 1:15 reference), then Habakkuk (excellent on 2:4), Zephaniah (the 'Day of the Lord'), Jeremiah (excellent introduction to the main issues, e.g. the new covenant). So we move to the exilic prophets:

Ezekiel (a long chapter ending with an excellent exposition of the temple vision in chapters 40 – 48) and Daniel (a long chapter with an excellent exposition of the 'seventy sevens'). Finally he assesses the restoration prophets – from Haggai and Zechariah (the significance of the Servant–Messiah coming to the Temple and of Zechariah's messianic visions), we come at last to Malachi (the focus on worship, marriage, work, future consummation).

This leads to the final sections of the book – foretelling in prophecy (e.g. on the future of the Gentiles), the significance of exile and restoration as key concepts and finally, how these apply to questions around the nation of Israel.

As Robertson writes in the Introduction, 'Preserved for posterity was the hope of a restoration far more glorious than the days before exile. A new covenant, a new Zion, a new temple, a new messiah, a new relation to the nations of the world – these were the expectations designed to create future hope for the people who would have to endure the trauma of deportation from their land.'

Norris Wilson

Knowing God and ourselves. Reading Calvin's Institutes devotionally, David B. Calhoun, The Banner of Truth Trust, 2017, hbk., 333 pages, £15.00

What was it that prompted the youthful John Calvin to embark on the writing of what was to become his most famous work, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*? In the Prefatory Address to King Francis 1 of France, Calvin directs us towards the answer.

He was making a plea for the persecuted evangelicals in France, 'I not unjustly ask you to undertake a full enquiry into this case.' But Calvin had other purposes too. 'My purpose,' he says, 'was solely to transmit certain rudiments by which those who are touched with any zeal for religion might be shaped to true godliness.' The heart of a pastor and a teacher lay at the very heart of this work.

In the introductory 'To the Reader' Calvin says, 'It has been my purpose in this labour to prepare and instruct candidates in sacred theology for the reading of the Divine Word, in order that they may be able to have an easy access to it and to advance in it without stumbling.' The *Institutes* are to help us in our grasp of Scripture and in the application of its truth to heart and life.

David Calhoun is therefore justified in contending that, 'Reading the Institutes devotionally is not merely one way of reading Calvin's book. It is the only way to read it.'

To make the most of this well produced book it should be read alongside the *Institutes* themselves. This can be done by using either the McNeill-Battles edition of the 1559 Institutes or the 1541 edition translated by R White.

Each chapter follows essentially the same pattern, beginning with a brief quotation from one of Calvin's writings and then an additional comment from another writer. A relevant Scripture text is printed with a further 'Notable Quote' and a prayer, again taken from one of Calvin's own writings.

The bulk of each chapter is a summary of the section of the *Institutes* being studied and it concludes with a brief paragraph entitled 'Knowing God and ourselves'. The book is relatively short, which is in keeping with Calvin's stated preference, 'By nature I love brevity'! It is printed in a clear type and laid out in a very accessible format.

One slight criticism is that the small 'boxes' containing quotations and comments from various authors can distract from the flow of the chapter. Very occasionally the content of the boxes adds little to the chapter itself.

This is certainly a very refreshing and stimulating work. Not only does it help us appreciate more deeply the great blessing which has come to the Christian church through the publication of John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, but it also lifts our hearts to heaven and to the glory and grace of God. The author's own closing exhortation is particularly fitting and could hardly fail to move any serious minded Christian to seek better 'to know God and himself'.

David Calhoun wrote this work in the midst of personal suffering and trial. He wrote it conscious of the constant pressures that come with living in this world of chaos. Yet he is able to say, 'I have found Calvin a source of solidity and strength. He challenges me, rebukes me, leads me on, gently but firmly, towards greater love for God and obedience to his Word. I pray that your study of Calvin's Institutes will bring you great blessing too.' We could not do better than agree wholeheartedly with the author's prayer.

Knox Hyndman

Seven Leaders: Preachers and Pastors, Iain H Murray, The Banner of Truth Trust, 2017, hbk., 279 pages, £12.75

Ministers of the present day church of Christ are called to serve in the current world, not hide and rest under what may have been accomplished in the past. Nevertheless, and we see this exercised by God himself as the Old Testament is referred to in the New, looking back may be used not only to warn the Lord's people but to encourage and strengthen us by showing how our spiritual ancestors were employed in the work of the kingdom. A particularly helpful way of doing this is in looking at the lives of individuals – either through biographies or by focusing on certain aspects of their characters or work. This second method enables us to learn principles which may be of pastoral help to us. Records of faithful servants of Christ still speak and bring new life today. Such assistance can be obtained from the pages of this new volume from Iain Murray.

Murray provides accounts of seven spiritual leaders from Wales, Scotland, England, Ulster and America, beginning at the end of the 18th century and continuing to the present, focusing on the 'distinctive features of their lives: in John Elias, the necessity of the power of the Holy Spirit; in Andrew Bonar, the reality of communion with Christ; in Archie Brown, the irresistibility of love; in Kenneth MacRae, the need for faithfulness to death; in Martyn Lloyd-Jones, theology and doctrine; in W. J. Grier, passing on the 'sacred deposit', and in John MacArthur, the governing authority of the Word of God'. These elements of their personalities point out to us some of our own temptations and weaknesses, attract us and link us more closely with fellow-ministers of the gospel. Reading of and listening to them we are challenged and encouraged.

An appropriate response to the book is summarised in a prayer of Martyn Lloyd-Jones, printed on the back cover: 'We thank thee for all whom thou hast raised up…to speak thy word with holy boldness, without fear or favour. Lord, make us fit to follow in their train. Make us worthy, O God, of the heritage they have sent down to us. Teach us, O Lord, to prize the things that they have, and all that thou hast made possible to us through them'.

Ted Donnelly

John Owen and English Puritanism. Experiences of Defeat, Crawford Gribben, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology, Oxford University Press, 2016, hbk., 401 pages, £47.99

John Owen is without doubt a towering figure in the history of Reformed theology, regarded by many as one of the greatest theologians of all time. But who was John Owen? What kind of a man was he? A number of writers have sought, on the basis of limited historical resources and even more limited references in Owen's writings, to provide an account of Owen's life and work. In this magisterial volume Crawford Gribben, Professor of Early Modern History at Queen's University, Belfast, offers as clear and well rounded a portrait of the real Owen as we are likely to have.

In his Introduction Gribben surveys previous efforts to summarize Owen's life, commenting on the fact that, despite very limited personal references in his writings, Owen had a big view of his own significance and was not above blatant self-promotion. Already it is clear that Gribben is not writing hagiography, suggesting that Owen is a paragon of virtue and theological correctness at all points. He writes rather as a highly qualified historian, deeply sympathetic to Owen's Reformed convictions but concerned above all to present the truth about his subject and to follow the sources wherever they lead. It is a refreshing approach.

Gribben goes on to note that much writing about Owen treats his thought as static whereas it continually evolved, although he himself never drew attention to the changes. Owen, for example, began by asserting that the death of Christ was limited in its sufficiency but in the 1640s moved to argue that it was unlimited in its sufficiency, though still limited in its efficiency. Gribben concentrates on the development of Owen's ideas in the contexts in which they intervened – providing what he terms a 'social history of ideas' (p.18). He is not viewing Owen as a spokesman for his society (as others have done) but 'will pay attention to the disputative contexts in which Owen's work was produced, disseminated, and received, by reconstructing the particular sets of circumstances that his writing addressed, and by paying attention to materiality and to the forms in which these interventions were expressed' (p.19). Gribben aims to focus on the intersection of print culture, politics, religion, aesthetics and social nonconformity. He succeeds admirably.

In the following nine chapters Gribben traces the career of Owen as pastor, theologian, academic and political player in difficult and dangerous days in England (and in Ireland and Scotland where Owen was involved at various times). Born in 1616, Owen was raised in world of 'uneasy conformity' (p.26) where the triumph of Puritanism was by no means certain and the bitterness of compromise was evident in his own home. Educated at Queen's College Oxford, Owen made significant social connections which he was able to exploit at different points in his career. Ordained as deacon in 1632 by Bishop Bancroft, a friend of Laud, Owen came to assurance of salvation through the sermon of an unknown country

preacher and five years later came his ordination as a priest, in 1643, aged 27.

Owen's first publication, in March 1643, was *A display of Arminianisme*, in which he aimed to bring himself to the attention of those who could advance his career. The book was self-consciously learned, using neologisms such as 'distorture' and 'concreated' (for which he criticised others), with a rigidly structured style and format, tending to lump antagonists together, despite their range of views. Owen's own position was developing. He here defended the view that baptism removed the inherent sin of those baptised – i.e. the guilt of sins committed (not sin inherited from Adam). In this time too Owen began his political activity, dedicating his work to Parliament's Committee for Religion. By the end of 1644 Owen was an Independent with respect to church government, though with a reputation as a peacemaker.

Subsequent chapters trace Owen's ministry during the Civil Wars, including his pastorate in Coggeshall, his preaching before Parliament and his increasing closeness to Cromwell, the army and in particular the political republicans. He preached several times before the Rump Parliament, including the day after the execution of Charles I. He began to develop his political eschatology, believing he could discern the hand of God in contemporary events – a risky enterprise as events twisted and turned in various directions. In 1649 he spent four months with the New Model Army in Dublin and later accompanied the army to Scotland. His view of Scottish Presbyterians was far from positive.

Owen was appointed Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, in March 1651, strengthening his links to the republican regime and the Rump Parliament. At this point Owen believed that the English revolution could and should be spread to Europe as part of the unfolding divine purpose. Although his reservations regarding the pomp around the Cromwellian regime were increasing, in September 1652 he was appointed Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University. He was deeply involved in national debates on the boundaries of public orthodoxy and was vigorous in opposition to Socinianism.

The later chapters trace Owen's efforts to bring about national settlement of religion. His many publications included a defence of Independency and in 1654 he sat in the first Protectoral Parliament. He praised the religious toleration of the regime, but saw it as moving away from republicanism. Gradually his fortunes declined and he fell out of favour with the Cromwells. He offered anonymous written support for those opposing the offer of crown to Cromwell and his tenure as Vice-Chancellor ended.

The Cromwellian regime ended in chaos and the restoration of the monarchy in the person of Charles II in 1660. Many republicans perished in the royalist reprisals, yet Owen managed to survive, in part through his connections with those in positions of influence. At times his disavowal of earlier position gives a strong impression of doublespeak and it is here perhaps more than anywhere else that we see a very human Owen. These years, however, were remarkably fruitful as far as his theological writing was concerned and many of his most significant works were produced..

A brief summary cannot really do justice to such a rich biographical study. Gribben has thoroughly mastered his sources and has an extensive acquaintance with seventeenth century theology and literature. Aspects of Owen's personal life are lost to us –for example his relationship with his first and second wives and the ten children who all predeceased him. Nevertheless we are given a comprehensive context against which to view Owens' massive

theological output and also his political involvement in the affairs of the day. The latter perhaps provides significant warnings to pastors and preachers who allow themselves to become embroiled in politics, especially if they are strongly convinced that they can read the mind of God in current events.

This is a study which will be of interest to anyone interested in John Owen, in seventeenth century history, the history of English Puritanism or the development of Reformed theology. It is attractively and accessibly written, despite the complexities of its subject matter and can be highly recommended.

David McKay

Martin Luther and the Enduring Word of God. The Wittenberg School and Its Scripture-Centred Proclamation, Robert Kolb, Baker Academic, 2016, hbk., 517 pages, $49.99

This is a brilliant book by a top-notch Luther scholar. Though not pitched at the popular level, ministers will discover here a mine of helpful and fascinating material to illumine their understanding of Luther and his co-workers and heirs of the Wittenberg School.

After an insightful opening biographical summary of his theological and historical roots, Kolb moves on to deal with Luther and his relationship to Scripture. He discusses with depth and clarity how the Reformer viewed the Holy Canon. The work and witness of Wittenberg were anchored in deep convictions of an inspirational 'Theology of the Word'. The author unpacks Luther's key tenets of how to interpret and apply the Bible. The first half of the volume ends by painting a magnificent, breath-taking, portrait of Luther as Professor, Preacher and Translator. The rest of the tome makes us marvel at the vast dimensions of the transformative legacy of Luther.

The truths outlined in this volume are potentially ministry-reviving and sermon enlivening. Luther's discussion of the power, sufficiency and nature of Word of God should serve to rekindle the flagging or buckling zeal of intimidated ministers. He sounds a clear note on the trumpet of an understanding of biblical preaching which, in many quarters, lies buried under layers of pragmatic considerations. For Luther, above all, it is the Word that really works. His emphasis on the need for preachers to mine the original languages will drive us back to the primitive sources with our tail between our legs.

Any New Testament student will benefit greatly from the School's clear definitions of vital Pauline vocabulary in Romans. Luther's teaching on the need for colourful metaphor, lively communication, and comprehensible vocabulary, will press us to work harder on sermons and be more mindful of hearers. Much misinformation circulates regarding the Lutheran Law-Grace distinction. Kolb clears up the myth and shows how beneficial and essential it can prove in proper, powerful, 'with-teeth' application of Scripture.

Do you want to know what Luther taught about God's Word? Do you want to know what it was that enabled the Reformer to transform the German nation? Then money will be well spent on this valuable book which is liberally scattered with memorable quotable quotes.

Andrew Kerr

BOOK NOTICES

The Unquenchable Flame. Discovering the heart of the Reformation, Michael Reeves, IVP, 2016, pbk., 192 pages, £9.99

A reprint of a book first published in 2009, this volume by Michael Reeves is as clear and readable an introduction to the great events of the Reformation as anyone could wish for. From the background to the Reformation in the religious thinking of the Middle Ages, Reeves goes on to cover Luther, Zwingli and the radical Reformers, Calvin, the Reformation in Britain and the Puritans. The final chapter, 'Is the Reformation over?' shows, graciously, but firmly, that it is not. The need for reformation continues, and always will, since, as Reeves puts it, 'the Reformation was not, principally, a negative movement, about moving away from Rome; it was a positive movement, about moving towards the gospel' (p.184). It is an exciting tale, excellently told. The addition of numerous contemporary illustrations makes this a most attractive concise study of the Reformation which can be highly recommended.

Basic Introduction to the New Testament, John Stott, revised by Stephen Motyer, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017, pbk., 216 pages, £11.99

Why should a book first published in 1951 (as *Men with a Message*) still be in print in 2017? Granted it has been updated by a contemporary New Testament scholar, but the basic structure and content remains that of John Stott. The answer is, very simply, because it still does an excellent job. In the clear and comprehensible style we expect of Stott's writings, *Basic Introduction* provides a straightforward survey of each portion of the New Testament, beginning with the crucial issue of authorship and considering also the content and context of each work. (Only Jude is omitted because of his brevity – a pity in this reviewer's opinion). In general the positions taken are soundly conservative, although Stott is open to the possibility that the 'John' of Revelation is not the author of the Gospel and epistles. The structure reflects the mind of a preacher and helps to make the material accessible and memorable. All Christians ought to have a basic grasp of the 'big picture' of the origin and content of the New Testament writings, and this is a volume well suited to providing them with what they need.

The Deacon. Biblical Foundations for Today's Ministry of Mercy, Cornelis Van Dam, Reformation Heritage Books, 2016, pbk., 253 pages, $18.00

The biblical office of deacon has too often in Reformed circles degenerated into a role involving care of property and finance, with the 'ministry of mercy' almost disappearing from sight. Many opportunities for loving service are thus lost. It is particularly good, therefore, to have this comprehensive study of the diaconate by Cornelis Van Dam, emeritus Professor of Old Testament at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary in Hamilton, Ontario. The book is divided into four sections: 'The Old Testament Background', 'New Testament Times', 'The Office of Deacon in the History of the Church' and 'The Current Functioning of the Office'. It is good to have the work of deacons grounded in the care for the poor so frequently commanded in the OT, and Van Dam's conclusion that in the NT the weight of evidence is against the ordination of women to the office is graciously argued. It

would have been good to have some further thoughts on the ways in which women *can* exercise a vital ministry of mercy both within and beyond the church today. At one or two points we might wish to disagree with Van Dam, for example regarding a role for deacons in the administration of the Lord's Supper, but in general this is a most helpful biblical and theological study of a God-ordained office, together with its present-day outworking, which offers many opportunities in our present context for practical expressions of the love of Christ.

Sermons for Advent and Christmas Day, Martin Luther, Hendrickson Publishers/Alban Books, 2017, pbk., 154 pages, £11.99

Christ Exalted Sermons of Jonathan Edwards, Jonathan Edwards, Hendrickson publishers, 2017, pbk,. 187 pages, £11.99

First published in 2007, *Sermons for advent and Christmas Day* offers a selection of six sermons of Martin Luther which go right to the heart of the gospel and show what was at stake in the Reformation. The sermons, four for Advent and two for Christmas day, consider Matthew 21;1-9, Luke 21:25-36, Matthew 11:2-10, John 1:19-28, Luke 2:1-14 and John 1:1-14. They exhibit Luther's vigorous preaching style, down-to-earth, directly addressing his hearers, driving home the challenge to faith and obedience. The focus is firmly on Christ, although from time to time Luther heads off at a tangent to lambast his opponents in strong terms. There is still much of great spiritual value in these sermons, not least in their application of the text to preachers and pastors. They bring us as close to the voice of Luther himself as is possible.

A selection of seven sermons from the large preaching legacy of Jonathan Edwards, *Christ Exalted Sermons* provides a good introduction to Edwards' preaching on the person and work of Christ. Here readers will find sermons on 'Safety, Fullness, and Sweet Refreshment in Christ' (Isaiah 32:2), 'The Excellency of Christ' (Revelation 5:5-6), 'Jesus Christ the same Yesterday, Today and Forever' (Hebrews 13:8), 'Christ Exalted' (1 Corinthians 15:25,26), 'True Saints, When Absent from the Body, Are Present with the Lord' (2 Corinthians 5:8), 'Christ, the Example of Ministers' (John 13:15-16) and 'Christ's Agony' (Luke 22:44). These are not merely historical curiosities: they are mind-instructing and heart-warming expositions of the Word of God. Whilst sermons today would not be structured according to Edwards' Puritan methodology, these are full of help for the attentive reader.

Reformations. The early Modern World, 1450-1650, Carlos M. Eire, Yale University Press, 2016, hbk., 893 pages, £30.00

Terms like 'magisterial' and 'the standard work on the subject' are easily tossed around in reviews and often amount to empty rhetoric. This large volume by Carlos Eire, Professor of History and Religious Studies at Yale University, however, come close to deserving both descriptions. Eire's two main contentions in undertaking his study are, first, that the various disparate movements that characterised these two centuries are to be viewed as interlocking 'Reformations' and, second, that religion is to be regarded as the key feature of the entire age. The latter assertion is refreshingly different from the numerous treatments of the Reformation period which view events in purely sociological or political terms, a common feature of much recent scholarship. This, however, is not presented in reductionist terms as if religion were

the sole motivating force or explanatory category that needs to be employed. In Eire's view the years leading up to the work of Luther and his associates and successors was the arena for numerous 'reformations' in European societies which set the stage for what took place from 1517 onwards. The book is divided into four parts. The first part covers the years leading up to Luther, including the nature of medieval religion, the impact of the Renaissance and the growth of humanism, and noting forerunners of Reformed thinking such as Hus. The second part covers what we may traditionally think of as '*the* Reformation', considering Luther, the Swiss Reformation, the Radical Reformation, Calvin and the Reformation in the British Isles. Recent scholarship which recognises more continuity with the medieval period than was once acknowledged is taken into account. The diversity both within and outside the reforming movements also becomes very clear. The third part examines the Catholic response to these challenges, particularly in attempts at reform, as well as noting early developments in missionary activity beyond Europe. The final part examines the outcome in terms of European society of the various reformations considered in the first three parts. This is a comprehensive history of these centuries aimed at 'beginners and non-specialists' (p.xii), readable and accessible, enlivened by numerous illustrations and quotations. In a work of this scope there will be points on which readers will disagree, as do specialists in the field, but as a wide-ranging study which takes the role of religion with full seriousness, this volume is hard to beat. 'Magisterial' indeed!

The Life and Works of Robert Baillie (1602-1662), Alexander D. Campbell, The Boydell Press, 2017, hbk., 259 pages, £75.00

In studies of the first generation of Scottish Covenanters attention is usually focused on men such as Rutherford, Henderson and Gillespie. The voluminous correspondence of Robert Baillie is used as a quarry for information on the activities of others. Baillie himself has thus far remained an obscure figure, undeservedly so. This new intellectual biography of Baillie by Alexander Campbell, a Post-Doctoral Fellow at Queen's University, Canada, seeks to redress that imbalance. Campbell has examined in depth for the first time Baillie's surviving corpus of writings, including letters, treatises, sermons and notebooks, to produce a well-rounded picture of one of the key figures in the religious and intellectual life of seventeenth century Scotland. After an opening chapter tracing Baillie's intellectual formation, Campbell then examines in detail Baillie's views on the limits and extent of monarchical power, church government, liturgical reform, the interpretation of Scripture and, finally his practice of record keeping which has proved so significant for historians. As others have highlighted in recent studies of the period, the views held by the Covenanters were far from uniform, with significant disagreements on many subjects, resulting, for example, in Rutherford and Baillie opposing each other in the dispute between Resolutioners and Protesters. Campbell's study is stimulating and full of interesting insights into the internal working of the Covenanting movement, some of which may prove uncomfortable to ideological descendants of the Covenanters who would prefer to see their heroes as of one mind on every significant issue. The findings of scholars such as Alexander Campbell, however, have to be taken into account and difficult facts have to be integrated into a faithful account of the period. Out of this painstaking study, Campbell says, 'Scotland emerges anew as a vibrant and bustling metropolis of cultural exchange and intellectual ferment situated on the periphery of an international "Republic of Letters", and the Covenanters appear as a fractious group tenuously united in Opposition to a series of common enemies' (p.23). Much food for thought.

On Augustine, Rowan Williams, Bloomsbury, 2016, hbk., 218 pages, £25.00

Although in the mind of the general public Rowan Williams is inevitably remembered as a former Archbishop of Canterbury, before he moved into an episcopal role (first as Bishop of Monmouth in 1992) he was an academic theologian, serving as Professor of Divinity at Oxford. After ten years as Archbishop he became Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, and continues to publish extensively on theological matters. He has particular expertise in the patristic period, the early centuries when the fundamentals of Christian theology were hammered out in the crucible of controversy. *On Augustine* brings together eleven papers written over a period of twenty-five years of reflection on the greatest of the early theologians. The aim is not to provide a comprehensive introduction to or overview of Augustine's thought – many such volumes are available – but rather to offer reflections on key areas of his contribution to Christian thought and life. Topics covered include time and self-awareness, Augustine's interpretation of the psalms, Christian formation, creation, evil, politics and the soul in the *City of God*, Christology, the Trinity, and the nature of love. Williams is deeply read in the original sources and the secondary literature and as a result these studies are profound, intellectually stretching and most enlightening. The chapter on 'Insubstantial Evil', for example, offers a careful defence of Augustine's view of evil – often caricatured as a belief in its non-existence – against the views of John Hick and others. This is not a book for those new to Augustine, but for those with some basic familiarity with patristic theology it is a volume that repays thoughtful study. It is not an uncritical evaluation of the great theologian, but a probing consideration of theological issues on which he made a major contribution that continues to be of significance, Readers will agree with Williams' statement, 'I believe Augustine to be a thinker supremely worth engaging with' (p.ix).

The Greatness of Humility, Joseph J. McInerney, James Clarke and Co., 2017, pbk., 197 pages, £17.50

Humility is a virtue which people often value in others, but seldom seek for themselves. It is, however, a virtue that has rightly been highly regarded in Christian thinking throughout the centuries and which Christians are exhorted to possess. This stands in sharp contrast to, for example, the Aristotelian tradition which sees humility as a barrier to greatness and to modern approaches which regard humility as debasing human value. One of the greatest exponents of the biblical and Christian approach to humility was Augustine of Hippo who argued not only that humility is of great value but that it is in fact the indispensable foundation for moral excellence and true human greatness. In this profound and comprehensive study Joseph McInerney begins by surveying the classical background to Augustine's thought, including Aristotle, the Stoics and Neo-Platonism. His study of Augustine then begins with consideration of Augustine's handling of Scripture and his view of the image of God and of sin. The third chapter concentrates on the doctrine of humility, touching on key issues such as pride, love, the will and grace. Chapter 4 focuses on the relationship of humility and human greatness, especially in Augustine's *City of God*. Positions sharply contrasting with that of Augustine are provided in chapter 5 as McInerney examines the views of David Hume and Friedrich Nietzsche. The final chapter compares and contrasts Augustine with the other thinkers considered previously and conclusions are drawn regarding the significance and value of Augustinian thought on humility. The subject of humility is of profound importance for Christians and McInerney has produced a probing and enlightening study of one of the greatest Christian theologians as he wrestles with a subject

which was of the deepest personal significance for himself. This is a valuable contribution to the study of Augustine and of Christian ethics.

The Trinity and the Covenant of Redemption, J. V. Fesko, Mentor, 2016, hbk., 414 pages, £19.99

Among modern covenant theologians one of the most prolific and profound is John Fesko of Westminster Seminary in California. The present volume is the first of a projected three volumes covering in turn the covenant of redemption, the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. Although some Reformed theologians have rejected the idea of a covenant of redemption made in eternity among the persons of the Trinity in order to provide salvation for sinners, and it took time for the doctrine to achieve a fully developed form, most Reformed theologians have held to some version of the doctrine. Such a covenant roots our salvation in eternity, in the mind of God, before the world was even created. Fesko's study is divided into three parts. Part 1 considers 'Historical Origins and Development' and offers a summary of Fesko's thorough historical study *The Covenant of Redemption: Origins, Development, and Reception*. In the two chapters comprising part 1 he examines exegesis, models, Trinity, revelation, order of salvation and love. Part 2 provides the essential 'Exegetical Foundations', examining in turn Zechariah 6:13, Psalm 2:7, Psalm 110, Ephesians 1 and 2 Timothy 1:9-10, concluding that 'there is sufficient exegetical warrant to establish the legitimacy of the doctrine' (p.123). Part 3 builds on these foundations to provide the 'Dogmatic Construction'. As he considers the trinity, predestination, imputation and the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation0, Fesko interacts fairly and comprehensively with a wide range of exegetes and theologians, both sympathetic and hostile. Having built a convincing case for the existence of the covenant of redemption, Fesko concludes his study with a brief evaluation of the importance of the doctrine, noting, for example, that 'the *pactum* [covenant] helps us to understand what it means to say the God is love' (p.359). Although it is demanding reading, this is a very significant work which will illuminate the mind and warm the heart.

The Covenant of Redemption. Origins, Development, and Reception, J. V. Fesko, Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2016, hbk., 256 pages, €90.00

This volume is not a duplicate of *The Trinity and the Covenant of Redemption*, but is rather a wide-ranging study of the historical development of the doctrine of the pre-temporal covenant established within the Trinity as the basis for the redemption of elect sinners. Fesko notes that, although this doctrine was widely accepted among Reformed theologians of earlier days, in recent times a number of significant voices have raised fundamental objections, and even the renewed interest in the doctrine of union with Christ has not often included an examination of the basis of that union (namely the covenant of redemption). Fesko aims to remedy this lack and seeks to consider the covenant of redemption in relation to issues such as theological methodology, trinitarianism, predestination, justification and imputation, and the order of salvation. He begins with the historical origins of the doctrine in the writngs of David Dickson and Herman Witsius, who in turn drew on the exegetical insight of Theodore Beza into the significance of Luke 22:29. Subsequent chapters examine seventeenth century England and Scotland, seventeenth century Continental Europe, the eighteenth century, the nineteenth century, twentieth century critics (such as John Murray, Herman Hoeksema, Klaas Schilder and Karl Barth) and finally twentieth century proponents (including Vos Kuyper,

Bavinck and Berkhof). A wide range of viewpoints is surveyed and something of the diversity within the Reformed 'family' becomes evident. Fesko is thorough and meticulous in his treatment of the sources, and his conclusions convincingly argued. He establishes, to this reviewer's satisfaction, that the provisions for the salvation of the elect made within the Trinity are best understood in covenantal terms. There is a wealth of material in this study relating to many of the fundamental areas of theology and it will be read with profit even by those who dispute Fesko's conclusions. Perhaps one of his most significant contentions is that, contrary to the claims of critics, defenders of the covenant of redemption have emphasised the centrality of divine love to the *pactum salutis.* This work makes a major contribution to contemporary Reformed theology.

David McKay