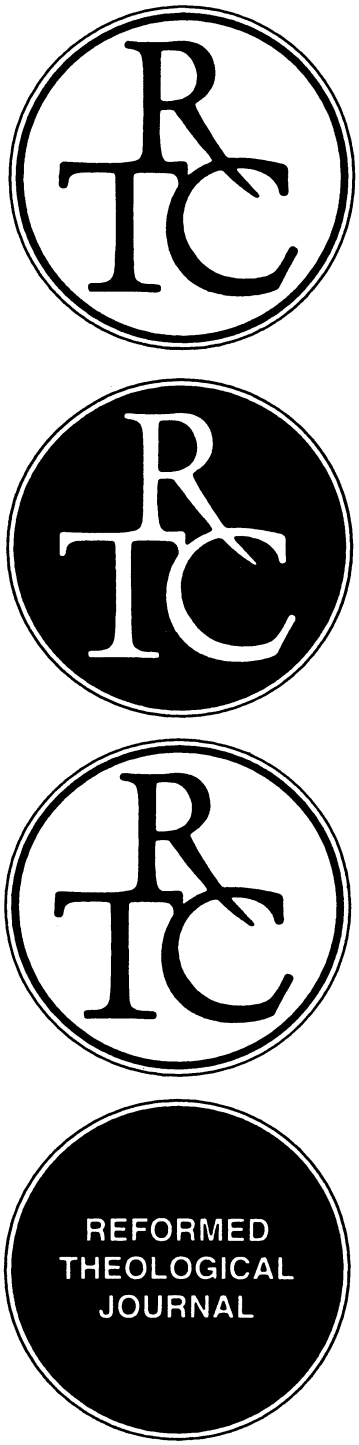

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by

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THE CHALLENGE OF PLURALISM

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Setting the scene

The Christian Church worldwide faces many challenges today, as it has always done. The Lord warned – and indeed promised – his church, 'In the world you will have tribulation' (John 16:33), and among the sources of that 'tribulation' are the competing ideologies which shape the world's thinking. We might debate which challenge among those faced by the church is the most serious, but it would be hard to dispute that one of the most serious is *pluralism*.

In the theological context, pluralism is the denial, in one form or another, that Jesus is the only way to God, or indeed that there can be only one way to God. The growth of pluralism in western societies has been fuelled by certain trends in modern thought which abolish the idea of absolute truth and reject the possibility of worldviews which purport to explain the whole of reality. The preeminent version of this approach is postmodernism, which we will consider in more detail later in this study. Another factor in the growth of pluralism is the vastly increased exposure which people now have to a range of religions other than Christianity, not least through the internet and allied social media. Whereas in past generations people usually had to travel to distant lands in order to experience the lived reality of other religions, now they can see and hear about these religions and in fact may encounter adherents of some of them living in their own country. As a result old beliefs about the uniqueness of Christ and the Christian faith are increasingly called into question.

In our present context the claims of Christianity to offer the unique path to God are met with several **negative responses**, singly or in combination:

Incredulity: many people cannot understand how any intelligent person could nowadays believe that a Jewish carpenter who lived 2000 years ago and who died as a criminal at the hands of the Roman authorities could be the only way to God. Surely, it is argued, you would have to commit intellectual suicide to embrace such a view, and we have long outgrown such silliness.

Hostility: Whilst the claims of Christianity have often been written off as foolish – in the first century they were 'folly to Gentiles' (1 Corinthians 1:23) - increasingly they are regarded as dangerous. The years of conflict in, for example, Northern Ireland are often cited as evidence that Christianity, far from being a force for good, actually causes hatred and division. On the basis of little or no knowledge of the Troubles people regard the conflict as two sets of Christians killing each other. More generally, Christianity is regarded as a religion that oppresses minorities, such as the gay and the transgender communities, depriving people of the right to be whoever they choose. The world would clearly be better off without such primitive superstitions.

Concern: This reaction has usually quite different roots from the first two we considered. The presence of people from other religions as neighbours, friends and even in some cases relatives inevitably

raises questions about the implications of the exclusivity of Christianity's claims for those who follow another path. Is hell really the destiny of that kind Muslim neighbour or that daughter who converted to Hinduism at university? The questions become a lot more pressing when they involve people we know.

This cultural context in which we live raises profound **pastoral** and **missional** questions, as well as **theological** ones:

> Is Jesus the only Saviour?
> Are any followers of other religions saved?
> How should Christians view other religions?

These issues, however, are not new. The Church has faced them in the past and has had to find answers to the questions they raise. In some respects our present situation is very similar to the world in which the New Testament Church worked and witnessed. The early Christians had to contend with a great diversity of religious options on offer in the societies around them. In fact we are in some respects closer to the world of the New Testament Church than have been many generations of our spiritual forefathers. Once Christians were inclined to notice the differences between their world and that of the NT; we may be more likely to notice the similarities.

Despite ministering in such a pluralist environment, however, there was a strong consensus in the early church, and in the church of the following centuries, that certain basic propositions were true. Two of particular relevance to the pluralistic challenge were:

(i) The teaching of the Bible is **true** and whatever differs from it is **false**.
(ii) Jesus Christ is the **only Saviour** and without a knowledge of him and the gospel, and a conscious commitment to him, no-one can be saved.

Increasingly in the twentieth and now in the twenty-first centuries this traditional view has been questioned vigorously. It has been qualified or abandoned by many theologians, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, and their views have gradually filtered into the general culture, shaping the attitudes of many. In response we will consider the view of truth that underlies much pluralist thinking, the main views that have been held regarding the uniqueness of the Christian claims, Christ as sole Redeemer, and the possibility of salvation apart from a conscious commitment to Christ.

Postmodernism and truth

The philosophy which has exercised the most powerful influence on contemporary culture is postmodernism, which began to take shape as a distinct worldview in the 1970s. Since then its shape has been constantly changing – by its very nature postmodernism does not have a single set of doctrines to which 'postmodernists' have to sign up, and its influence is in some respects waning, such that philosophers and social theorists now speculate about the nature of 'post-postmodernism'. Nevertheless it has been a significant force in shaping western thinking and has also contributed much to the rise of contemporary pluralism.[1]

[1] Some useful introductions to postmodernism are: David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Cambridge MA and Oxford UK: Blackwell, 1990); Steven Connor, *Postmodernist Culture. An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary*, 2nd edition (Cambridge MA and Oxford UK: Blackwell, 1997): Stuart Jeffries, *Everything, All the Time, Everywhere. How We Became Postmodern* (London and New York: Verso, 2021). From a Christian perspective: Roger Lundin, *The Culture of Interpretation. Christian Faith and the Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993); J. Richard Middleton and Brian J. Walsh, *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to* Be (Downers Grove:

We may usefully begin by contrasting postmodernism with its predecessor *modernism*.

Modernism, the worldview that was dominant in western thinking before the rise of postmodernism, developed in the eighteenth century and grew out of the Enlightenment, the Age of Reason as it is often termed. Without going into detail, we can say that central to modernism was a confidence that human reason is of itself sufficient to discover truth and the establish the **one correct** understanding of reality, the one true explanation of everything that exists. Truth, according to modernism, is to be **discovered** and human beings have the capacity to discover it. By this means a single true account of everything is possible.

Postmodernism, on the other hand, believes that truth is not discovered, but is **manufactured**. Human beings do not discover an already existing truth, they make it. The roots of this approach are to be found in existentialism, a philosophy which holds that meaning is created by the individual. Building on this foundation, postmodernism holds that meaning is created by social groups, rather than individuals, and by the language used by the group. For the postmodernist personal identity and even the contents of thought are regarded as **social constructs**.

One consequence of the development of postmodernism is a vigorous rejection of all attempts to produce a single over-arching explanation of reality. Belief in such an over-arching explanation was characteristic of such worldviews as Christianity and Marxism. Within postmodernism, despite its diversity, all the so-called 'grand narratives' that have shaped western thought and culture are regarded as discredited. Thus the rational order at the heart of modernism is dismissed as literally 'nonsense'. This is well summed up by David Harvey: 'fragmentation, indeterminacy and intense distrust of all universal or "totalizing" discourses (to use the favoured phrase) are the hallmark of postmodern thought'[2]

In the past when one framework for describing reality was considered by the influential thinkers of the day it was replaced by a new one which was considered to be more satisfactory. Different thinkers might disagree as to which was the best worldview, but in general all were convinced that there was such a thing as the one correct worldview that embraced the whole of reality – life, the universe and everything. From the perspective of postmodernism that approach is utterly misguided and, indeed, futile.

The goal of postmodernism is to do without absolutist frameworks for knowledge altogether. There are therefore no 'metanarratives' in the postmodernist worldview – no large scale theoretical interpretations that claim universal validity. From this perspective the claims of Christianity and indeed of almost every religion are meaningless. The claims of Christianity to universal validity are, on postmodern principles, entirely without foundation or meaning. The same verdict applies to a worldview such as Marxism, which claims universal validity, and it is interesting that some of the most trenchant critics of postmodernism are Marxists.

There is, however, a crucial flaw at the heart of postmodernism: it is a worldview which rejects the possibility of worldviews. Despite its dismissal of other 'metanarratives' claiming to provide an explanation of all of reality, postmodernism is itself an attempt to provide such an over-arching explanation of everything, and so on its own principles it is impossible. Postmodernism offers a set of truth claims stating that all truth claims are false. If no 'metanarrative' can claim to be absolute truth, postmodernism cannot claim to be absolute truth, and yet that is precisely what it claims. On close inspection it becomes apparent that postmodernism is self-contradictory and so self-destructive.

Inter-Varsity Press, 1995); Marcus Honeysett, *Meltdown. Making Sense of a Culture in Crisis* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2002).

[2] David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p.7.

As a result of the influence of postmodernist ideas on western thinking, the contemporary cultural climate in which we are called to live and minister is, in the words of Terry Eagleton, 'the laid-back pluralism of the post-modern'[3] From the soil of postmodernism pluralism grows.

The three main views of Christian uniqueness

Having examined the roots of pluralism, we now turn to consider the central issue that it raises: how are we to evaluate the truth claims of Christianity? Three main views need to be considered.

(i). Exclusivism. The traditional (orthodox, biblical) view maintains that the truth claims of Christianity are true in an absolute sense and that whatever conflicts with them is false. This position includes the ideas that God has revealed himself **uniquely** in the Bible and that Jesus is the **unique** incarnation of God, the **only** Lord and Saviour. Whilst God has revealed himself in creation (as Paul indicates in, for example, Romans 1:19ff), the truth required for salvation is contained in the 'God-breathed' Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16) and points exclusively to Jesus.

This view can be traced back to the Bible itself, both Old Testament and New Testament, and is evident in the preaching of the New Testament Church as it reached out to the surrounding world. The claims of any other religious sources are therefore to be regarded as fundamentally false and if elements of truth are to be found in them, these are derived from God's revelation in creation, in man's constitution or in Scripture. There were a few exceptions even in the early church. An example is Justin Martyr (c.100-165), who believed that the divine Logos worked in all men so that they could discern the truth, although that knowledge of God was distorted and incomplete. In Roman Catholicism exclusivism took the form of a denial that salvation was available *extra ecclesiam* (outside the church), a view first formally stated at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.

(ii). Inclusivism. This view maintains that the central Christian claims are true but goes on to adopt a much more positive view of other religions and has grown in popularity in modern times. Although inclusivists generally hold that God has revealed himself **definitively** in Jesus Christ and that Jesus is somehow **central** to God's provision of salvation for human beings, they are also willing to allow that salvation is also available through non-Christian religions.

Thus inclusivism is much more optimistic about the spiritual prospects of adherents of other faiths and can envisage some of them (perhaps many of them) sharing in the blessings to which Christians look forward. Although Jesus is still held by inclusivists to be (in some sense) unique, normative and definitive for religious belief and life, they also claim that God's revelation and salvation are not confined to Christian sources. The central claim of inclusivists is that God also reveals himself and provides salvation in other religious traditions, including those which have no place for the Jesus to whom the Bible bears witness.

The development of the inclusivist approach can be traced through the history of various ecumenical Protestant gatherings which took place in the twentieth century, particularly in the activities of the World Council of Churches after World War Two. The Liberal Protestantism represented in churches which were members of the WCC was becoming increasingly open to the possibility of other religious traditions offering valid ways to God, and the pace of that change has gathered speed in the intervening years. Exclusivists would find the WCC and similar ecumenical organisations a hostile environment.

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[3] Terry Eagleton, 'Awakening from modernity', *Times Literary Supplement*, 20 February 1987.

These movements in Protestant thinking have been matched by changes within Roman Catholicism. Although historically Rome's claim has been *semper eadem* ('always the same'), major changes in both theology and practice have taken place in recent times. Of major significance was the calling of the Second Vatican Council by Pope John XXIII in 1962. The meetings of the council lasted until 1965 and the goal of the papacy was *aggiornamento* ('bringing up to date'), so that Catholicism was equipped to deal with the challenges of the modern world. Although the effects of Vatican II at the grassroot level have been varied and much debated, at the level of the clergy and the theologians there have been radical changes.

A powerful influence on the thinking of the council was the theology of Karl Rahner, the German philosopher/theologian who developed the notion of 'anonymous Christians'. Alongside traditional, exclusivist, views, we also now find within Roman Catholicism a new perspective on other religions. This is well summed up in the document *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. Regarding adherents of other faiths, we read:

> Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience – these too may achieve eternal salvation.[4]

In contemporary Roman Catholic theology there is a strong element of pluralism, indeed, some would even argue, of universalism. This is a long way from traditional Roman Catholic perspectives and would not be embraced by all Catholics, but many of the leading opinion-formers are committed to an inclusivist model.

We might note at this point that inclusivists generally distinguish between the **ontological** and the **epistemological** grounds of salvation. The **ontological** ground of salvation answers the question as to who or what saves the sinner. The **epistemological** deals with the issue of how much knowledge the saved sinner has of the identity of the who or what that saves him.

If we consider both grounds from an inclusivist perspective, we note that most inclusivists accept that sinners are, by one means or another, saved by Jesus Christ and so he is the ontological ground of salvation. Thus far they agree with exclusivists. The difference is profound, however, when we see that inclusivists assert that those who are saved do not necessarily know that they are saved by Christ, and that they do not need to know who has actually saved them. Although they may believe that they are saved by some other religious figure or some other religious system, they are in fact saved by Christ. He is therefore not necessarily the epistemological ground of salvation. This fits with Rahner's idea that people may be Christians – 'anonymous Christians' – without realising it.

(iii). Pluralism. Almost inevitably some theologians and philosophers have gone beyond inclusivism and have embraced a full-blown pluralism. At heart this is a rejection of the view that the Christian faith is in any sense superior to other religious traditions. Pluralists deny that God has revealed himself in any unique or definitive way in Jesus Christ. Instead they hold that God reveals himself to varying degrees in all religious traditions. According to this model Jesus Christ may be regarded as one among many great religious leaders who have been used by God to provide 'salvation' – and there are of course many possible definitions of what that salvation actually is. In fact for some pluralists Jesus Christ may be relegated to a very subordinate role in the universe of faiths. The Christian faith, according to

[4] Dogmatic Constitution on the Church 2:16, in Austin Flannery, O.P. (ed.), *Vatican Council II. Volume 1 The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, New Revised Edition (Northport NY: Costello Publishing Company and Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1996), p.367.

pluralists, becomes one of many equally legitimate human responses to the same divine reality, none of which can claim to have absolute authority or finality.

Among leading exponents of the pluralist position are such theologians as John Hick, from a Liberal Protestant perspective, and Paul Knitter and Raimundo Panikkar, from a Roman Catholic perspective. A useful survey of pluralist thinking is the collection of papers from a conference held at Claremont Graduate School in California in March 1986 entitled *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, edited by Hick and Knitter[5]. The titles of some of the papers gives a flavour of the perspective of the contributors: 'The Non-Absoluteness of Christianity' (John Hick), 'Plurality and Its Theological Implications' (Langdon Gilkey) and 'The Buddha and the Christ: Mediators of Liberation' (Aloysius Pieris, SJ). Knitter sums up the pluralist approach well when he writes in the Introduction that the participants were:

> Exploring the possibilities of a pluralist position – a move away from insistence on the superiority or finality of Christ and Christianity toward a recognition of the independent validity of other ways.[6]

For all the diversity evident among participants, they were united by a rejection of the exclusivist model, and indeed of the inclusivist alternative, and a commitment to a pluralist vision.

The pluralist position has generated critical responses from those holding an exclusivist position, aimed at a variety of audiences. Among scholarly contributions to the ongoing debate we may note the work of Don Carson, Harold Netland and, most recently, Daniel Strange.[7] In the remainder of this study we will simply be considering a number of key issues raised by the pluralist debate.

The Only Name

Exclusivists in defending their position have invariably cited Acts 4:12, Peter's words to the Jewish leaders when he appeared before the Sanhedrin: 'And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.' On the face of it, this seems to be a clear statement of the exclusivist position regarding the uniqueness of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. As we would expect, however, this traditional understanding of the text has been challenged by inclusivists and pluralists.

In his 1985 book *No Other Name?*[8] Paul Knitter claims that the language of v.12 is *devotional*, not doctrinal. By that he means that the aim of Peter is to express love for Christ and consecration to his service. It is not to be taken as saying anything about the condition or destiny of non-Christians. To take the words in this latter sense is to misunderstand their significance completely and thus imputes to Peter and to the early church a view – an exclusivist view – which they did not hold. In fact, on closer inspection it is evident that Knitter's position is ultimately universalist. In his view no individual is excluded from a saving relationship with God, whatever his religion or lack of it.

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[5] John Hick and Paul F. Knitter (eds.), *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* (London: SCM Press, 1987).
[6] *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, p.viii.
[7] D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God. Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Leicester: Apollos, 1996); Harold A Netland, *Dissonant Voices. Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth* (Leicester: Apollos, 1991); Harold Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism. The Challenge to Christian Faith and Mission* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press and Leicester: Apollos, 2001); Daniel Strange, *'For Their Rock Is Not As Our Rock'. An evangelical theology of religions* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2014).
[8] Paul Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1985).

In response we may note first of all that far from being an unthinking emotional outburst, Peter's words are stated in the text to be the result of the working of the Holy Spirit who indwelt him and qualified him to be God's spokesman and a channel of divine revelation: 'Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them' (v.8). The form of his statement is also strongly negative – 'no other name' – precluding other possibilities in an exclusivist fashion. Even the final clause, 'by which we must be saved' carries negative connotations, indicating that being saved is not optional and that there is one way by which that can be accomplished.

We might note at this point that if we were to adopt the perspective of postmodernism, our appeal to a divine revelation becomes meaningless. In principle the possibility of a deity communicating truth, and absolute truth at that, is ruled out. Absolute truth claims are impossible, and within a postmodern worldview the ability of language to communicate truth is denied. To argue about the 'real meaning' of any text, Acts 4:12 included, would be to engage in an exercise in futility. The devastating implications of the acceptance of postmodernism for any truth claims, Christian or other, are evident.

Since, however, we reject the self-contradictory claims of postmodernism, we can note that Peter here is presenting a reasoned argument. This is evident, for example, in v12 when Peter connects the two clauses with *gar* ('for'). There is, he states, salvation in no one else *because* no one else has been given (by God) as Saviour. It is clear that v.12 builds on what has been stated in v.11 'This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.' The allusion to Psalm 118:22 regarding the rejected stone that has become the cornerstone is very clear. This being the case, v.12 can be seen as a conclusion drawn from earlier divine revelation. Indeed, Peter is demonstrating that in the person and work of Jesus that prophetic passage has been fulfilled.

The focus of v.12 is on 'salvation', with Peter using the terms *sōtēria* ('salvation') and *sōthēnai* (to be saved'). The passive voice of the verb *sōthēnai* indicates that people cannot save themselves and that an external agency is required if anyone is to be saved.

The meaning of *sōtēria* is much debated. Two modern suggestions that have been offered are directly opposed to the traditional exegesis of the text. One suggestion is that the term means 'healing', since the questions to be addressed by Peter arise out of the healing of the man lame from birth at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple (3:1ff). Another suggestion that reflects the influence of Liberation Theology is that the salvation in view is 'liberation' from the kind of injustice and oppression which such a lame man would have experienced in that society. What then is the actual meaning of the terms Peter uses?

To begin with, we recognise that salvation in the NT includes every aspect of the restoration to wholeness and wellbeing that is effected by the work of Christ in his life, death and resurrection. Ultimately there will indeed be complete healing from all diseases and liberation from injustice. The proposed interpretations of salvation in Acts 4:12 as healing or liberation are not without some basis in NT usage. Salvation is a comprehensive concept that expresses the richness of God's redemptive work in Christ.

Having said that, however, we also need to note that the noun *sōtēria* is not used in this general way in the NT. When Peter refers to the healing of the lame man in 3:16 he says, 'the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this *perfect health* in the presence of you all.' Instead of using *sōtēria*, describing the healing in terms of salvation, Peter uses the word *holoklēria* (ESV 'perfect health'). Peter's choice of terminology suggests that *sōtēria* has a different meaning. Whilst this is not an absolute proof that *sōtēria* does not have the meaning 'healing' in 4:12, it is nevertheless a very strong argument.

We should also note the key place given to 'the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth' in 4:10. Peter then goes on to expound the wider significance of the name, beyond this particular example of miraculous healing. The healing of the man is ascribed to the power of that name and by the end of v.10 the healing has been explained to Peter's interrogators. Salvation (*sōtēria*) is now said to be 'by' that name, the name of Jesus. In v.11 Peter depicts salvation as a function of 'the stone that the builders rejected', which has 'become the cornerstone'. Peter is citing the prophecy of Psalm 118:22 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone'. There can be no doubt about the identity of that stone, not least since Jesus applies the Psalm to himself in Matthew 21:42 in debate with the religious authorities. The language of the laying of a chief cornerstone who is Messiah Jesus describes his salvific work in terms of building a new temple, a place where God dwells in covenant fellowship with his people. The unique foundation is Christ – a single God-ordained and God-given foundation for the building that is the redeemed people of God and the place where he dwells with them in love and grace. This is emphasised in 1 Corinthians 3:11, where Paul states, 'For no-one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.'

Drawing these strands together we can say that *sōtēria* embraces the whole of the Messiah's redemptive work, a work that is applied in stages until the final eschatological consummation at the Lord's return in glory. The NT does not teach that full healing or full liberation will take place on this side of the eschaton. These blessings await the Lord's return. To interpret *sōtēria* in these terms in, for example, Acts 4:12 is to confuse the 'already' with the 'not yet', to use the language that has become standard in NT theology regarding the work of Christ and the coming of the kingdom of God.

What stands out in such texts, and what is particularly important for our purposes, is the fact that the whole process of salvation, past, present and future, is attributed exclusively to Christ and that this salvation begins with repentance and forgiveness of sins. As we read in Acts 5:31, 'God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Saviour to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins'. These blessings are central to salvation, with ultimate healing and liberation as consequences, and the unanimous testimony of the NT is that this *sōtēria* is found only in Christ.

Two main truths about salvation emerge from Acts 4:12:

(i). Exclusiveness. There is no other Saviour beside Christ and no salvation except in him. Acts 4:12 is a clear declaration of the exclusivity of the way of salvation which God has provided definitively in Christ. This is evident even in the names that he bears. The names 'Jesus' and 'Christ' emphasise his uniqueness as Saviour and Messiah. We may bear in mind that such teaching was given in full awareness of the diversity of religious claims found in the surrounding cultures.

The world of the NT church was as profoundly pluralist as the one in which we are placed and the exclusive claims of Christianity were not made from a position of ignorance of the alternative religious that were available. That awareness is stated, for example, in 1 Corinthians 8:5-6 'For although there may be so-called gods in heaven and on earth – as indeed there are many 'gods' and many 'lords' – yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.' Far from this being an acceptance of the existence of other deities, it is a statement of the unique and absolute claims of the Christian Triune God. The exclusiveness of Christianity is asserted in the face of a pluralism as diverse as any we may face.

(ii). Universality. This is an aspect of Acts 4:12 and similar texts that should not be missed. There is a truly biblical 'universalism'. It is not the universalism that claims every person will ultimately be saved, as many pluralists argue, but it is rather an assertion that the Good News of salvation through faith in Christ alone is for the world. Salvation is not confined to one ethnic, socio-economic, educational or other group, however defined.

The biblical gospel has a worldwide reference. Note Peter's statement that 'there is no other name *under heaven* given among men by which we must be saved' (Acts 4:12). Included are people from every race and every class. No merely human difference excludes from the possibility of salvation through Christ alone. There is no other Saviour for any sinner and all the peoples of the world need that unique Saviour who has been 'given' by God.

The exclusivist position is not in fact narrow, despite assumptions that it must be so. It is profoundly significant that when the whole company of those saved by Christ is gathered at the last day it will be 'a great multitude that no one could number, from all tribes and peoples and languages' (Revelation 7:9). All other 'saviours' are at best merely human and so in need of salvation themselves. We must never lose sight of the fact that Acts 4:12 has powerful **missional** significance which is in no way compromised by a commitment to exclusivism and a rejection of pluralism.

Pagan Saints?

Writers such as Peter Cotterell in his 1990 book *Mission and Meaninglessness*[9] argue for the possibility of the salvation (through Christ) of some who have never heard explicitly of him. Cotterell believes that there are people who, on the basis of what they perceive in creation, seek God in faith. As a result,

> [they] may, by the grace of God, be saved through the passion of that only saviour of whom, through no fault of their own, they have not heard.[10]

Such a position, Cotterell believes, is fitting to our common sense and our common view of justice. It is the contemporary value system that must act as judge of what is and is not acceptable. His claim is that,

> The stark exclusiveness of a salvation that is offered only to those who are of the privileged few who overtly hear the proclamation of the Good News would appear to be not a biblical exclusiveness.[11]

A significant concept that is encountered in these debates is that of the 'pagan saint'. It is found, for example, in Clark Pinnock's 1992 book *A Wideness in God's Mercy*.[12] He begins by stating that,

> A *fundamental point* in this theology of religions is the conviction that God's redemptive work in Jesus Christ was intended to benefit the whole world.[13]

His basic position regarding the possibility of salvation without an explicit knowledge of Christ or of the gospel is in harmony with the view of Cotterell. He argues that a combination of general revelation and the illumination of the Logos makes salvation possible for those who respond appropriately.

In support of his view Pinnock makes use of a most unusual interpretation of Deuteronomy 4:19 which reads 'And beware lest you raise your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and the

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[9] Peter Cottrell, *Mission and Meaninglessness: The Good News in a World of Suffering and Disorder* (London: SPCK, 1990.
[10] Cotterell, *Mission and Meaninglessness*, p.78.
[11] Cotterell, *Mission and Meaninglessness*, p.78.
[12] Clark H. Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy. The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992).
[13] Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy*, p.17.

stars, all the host of heaven, you be drawn away and bow down to them and serve them, things that the Lord your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven.' The conclusion Pinnock draws from this text is that 'With liberality Yahweh permitted the nations to worship him in ways not proper for Israel to do.'[14] Although the text says nothing about the Lord permitting the nations to *worship* sun, moon and stars, Pinnock employs these words to ascribe to God an acceptance of the worship of created things instead of the Creator (contrary to, for example, Romans 1:18-25). Pinnock also cites the practice of Naaman according to 2 Kings 5:18, claiming that God accepted his worship when he bowed down in the 'house of Rimmon'. That Naaman's action may have been no more than outward conformity to certain ceremonies is not considered. Both cases are used by Pinnock to support his argument that 'Scripture often hints at how merciful God is, even in the realm of religion.'[15]

With regard to what he terms the 'holy pagan tradition' Pinnock recognises that a deceptive and corrupting influence is exerted in and through many 'religions' (using 'religion' in an objective sense to mean a certain set of beliefs) and he does trace this influence unambiguously to the activity of Satan. He does not hold that all religions are valid ways to God. His concern, however, is with the salvific value of 'religion' in a subjective sense, a set of religious practices, a particular way of life.

It is regarding religion in this subjective sense that Pinnock speaks of holy pagans. They have, as he expresses it, 'faith, neither Jewish nor Christian, which is nonetheless noble, uplifting, and sound.'[16] Among those who had such faith he includes Abel, Noah, Job, Daniel, Melchizedek, Rahab, Ruth, Naaman and Cornelius. Of them he states:

> [They] were believing men and women who enjoyed a right relationship with God and lived saintly lives, under the terms of the wider covenant God made with Noah.[17]

This latter covenant, Pinnock claims, is a 'third way' of relating to God alongside the 'old covenant' with Abraham and the 'new covenant' in Christ. Pinnock designates this 'a global or cosmic covenant':

> In Noah, God established a global or cosmic covenant with all nations, with all Gentiles, a covenant with the whole human race prior to his dealings with Abram or the Jewish people.[18]

This covenant, according to Pinnock, prepares the way for the covenant with Abram, and both covenants are universal in scope.

In responding to Pinnock, we might note first that the 'old' covenant is actually that made at Sinai (see Hebrews 8:6-13) and the 'new' is a fulfilment of the Abrahamic promises and covenant (see Galatians 3:29). Regarding the Noahic covenant, although it has been variously interpreted even among Reformed theologians, it cannot be seen as a way of salvation different from salvation by faith in the Seed promised to Abraham, (Genesis 22:15-18).[19]

How are we to deal with the proposed examples of 'pagan saints' offered by authors such as Cotterell and Pinnock? What these authors fail to recognise is that many of these men and women were in fact able to

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[14] Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy*, p.101.
[15] Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy*, p.101.
[16] Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy*, p.92.
[17] Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy*, p.92.
[18] Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy*, p.21.
[19] See Michael D. Williams, *Far as the Curse is Found. The Covenant Story of Redemption* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2005), cpt.5, and Richard P. Belcher, Jr., *The Fulfillment of the Promises of God. An Explanation of Covenant Theology* (Fearn: Mentor, 2020), cpt.6.

have a sufficient knowledge of the way of salvation provided by God on the basis of the covenant with Adam in Genesis 3, especially the crucial promise in v.15 of the 'seed' of the woman, the Messiah. As Paul states in Galatians 3:16 with reference to the repetition of the promise to Abraham, the seed is Christ.

We may therefore say that Abel, Noah and others in the OT were not 'pagans' but were simply saints who had faith in the covenant promises of God. Into this category we can fit Rahab, who in Joshua 2:11 refers to the God of Israel as 'the Lord', using his covenant name. In some unstated way she had come to saving faith in the God of the covenant, even in Jericho. The case of Melchizedek is also relevant. Even though he was outside the family of Abraham he had a knowledge of the truth and Abram accepted his ministrations. Accurate understanding of the truth and knowledge of God was clearly transmitted through channels other than the line of Abraham. The designation 'pagan' does these people a grave injustice.

In the NT Pinnock highlights the magi (Matthew 2:1-2), the centurions (one in Matthew 8:10, the other in Matthew 27:54 at the crucifixion), the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:22) and Cornelius (Acts 10:1-11:18).

In response we may note first that the magi could well have had sufficient knowledge of the Lord and of his truth before they set off on their journey, and we might well attribute that journey to their faith. They could also have come to faith at some subsequent point before their meeting with the Messiah. Regarding the first centurion and the Canaanite woman, there seems to be no compelling reason to deny that they could have previously heard about and believed in Christ, before the incidents recorded in the Gospels, much as was the case with Rahab in the OT, before the Israelites reached Jericho. The second centurion seems to have come to faith as he watched the suffering of Jesus and heard his words from the cross. It is therefore his conversion that is recorded in Matthew 27, and so he is really no different from any converted Gentile in the New Covenant. None of these could or should be termed a 'pagan saint'.

The case of Cornelius is also instructive. He is clearly at the outset a moral and religious man. In a vision God says to him, 'Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God.' Nevertheless, Cornelius must send for Peter to come and preach to him and his household. He can be seen as a man on the way to conversion, moved by the grace of God, but not one who is as yet truly converted. A crucial statement is to be found in Acts 11:14. When Peter arrives at the house of Cornelius he is told, according to his own account to the church in Jerusalem, that the message received by Cornelius from God was that Peter 'will declare to you a message by which *you will be saved*, you and all your household.' It is evidently at the time of Peter's preaching that Cornelius is converted and baptised with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44ff). Pinnock is mistaken when he states that 'here was a Gentile in a good and acceptable relationship with God.'[20]

None of these examples offers support for the concept of 'pagan saints'. Whether in the OT or the NT, they were 'saints' by virtue of God-given saving faith in the Messiah provided by the God of the covenant.

[20] Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy*, p.95.

Salvation for those who never heard?

For some Christians a troubling question arises from the debate on pluralism. What about those who have never heard the gospel of salvation through faith in Christ? Some wonder whether God will make exceptions for those who never heard. Several responses to this question may be noted:[21]

(i). Strong optimism. Among professing evangelicals this position was taken by Sir Norman Anderson, who stated confidently that many will be saved without an explicit knowledge of Christ. In his 1984 book *Christianity and World Religions* he stated:

> I myself cannot doubt that there may be those who, while never hearing the gospel here on earth, will wake up, as it were, on the other side of the grave to worship the One in whom, without understanding it at the time, they found the mercy of God.[22]

Anderson describes the response of such a person as 'an adoring recognition of his Saviour and a comprehension of what he owes him.'[23]

(ii). Strict neutrality. This was the view held, for example, by J. I. Packer, who accepted that it would be *possible* for God so to work in an adherent of another religion that he realised his sin and threw himself on God's mercy for salvation. In heaven such a person would discover how he had actually been saved. Packer also held, however, that 'we have no warrant from Scripture to expect that God will act thus in any single case where the gospel is not yet known'.[24]

(iii). Mild optimism. This is the position expressed by, for example, John Stott. Without denying the uniqueness of Christ as Saviour, Stott in considering the condition of those who never heard the gospel acknowledges his attraction to the view of Norman Anderson, but then states, 'I believe the most Christian stance is to remain agnostic on this question'. He does however add, 'I am imbued with hope'.[25]

In evaluating these positions, we note that, as Packer states, Scripture offers no grounds for speculating that God will save any without a knowledge of the person and work of Christ as set forth in the gospel message. Almost all would regard the case of those who die in infancy and those who lack the necessary mental capacity to understand the gospel as exceptions to this principle. For all others it is evident from Scripture that without explicit knowledge of Christ and commitment to him in repentance and saving faith, there is no salvation.

In Romans 1:18ff Paul demonstrates that all human beings are 'without excuse' for their continued 'ungodliness and unrighteousness'. The reason is that 'what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them'. Paul goes on to state what God has revealed: 'his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature'. That revelation in nature, however, does not result in conversion, as Paul's vivid description of human sin in v.24ff demonstrates.

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[21] A helpful survey is provided by Hywel R. Jones in chapter 6 of *Only One way? Do you have to believe in Christ to be saved?* (Bromley: Day One Publications, 1996).
[22] Norman Anderson, *Christianity and the World Religions. The Challenge of Pluralism* (Leicester and Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984), p.154.
[23] Norman Anderson, *Christianity and the World Religions*, p.154.
[24] J. I. Packer, 'Evangelicals and the Way of Salvation' in *Evangelical Affirmations* edited by Kenneth S. Kantzer and Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), p.123.
[25] David l. Edwards and John R. W. Stott, *Essentials: A Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1988), p.327.

Similarly in Romans 2:12ff Paul shows that the knowledge of God present in the human conscience does not lead to salvation. It is true that Gentiles 'who do not have the law' may on occasion do things that are in harmony with God's requirements, they may 'by nature do what the law requires', the reason being that 'the work of the law is written on their hearts'. However, 'on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus', the Day of Judgment, the Gentiles' consciences will sometimes excuse them, but sometimes accuse them. Since God's standard is perfect obedience to his requirements, that mixed response to conscience will not be acceptable nor will it result in salvation.

It is of course true that judgment will be on the basis of the light any individual possesses, and so those who have not heard the gospel will not be condemned for not responding to a message they did not hear. Nevertheless, it is clear from Scripture that all fall short of the standard they have known, whether the Scriptures, nature or conscience. Each sinner is 'dead in…trespasses and sins' (Ephesians 2:1) and the only answer is the salvation through Christ proclaimed in the gospel. To the question, 'What must I do to be saved?' there is only one response – 'Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved' (Acts 16:32). The need for explicit faith in Christ is well summed up in *Westminster Confession of Faith* 10:4 'much less can men, not professing the Christian religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever.' This is above all a **missionary mandate** that requires the proclamation of the gospel to the ends of the earth.

‘TO YOU HE SAID, O MY HEART, “SEEK MY FACE”’ (PSALM 27:8) – THE DOCTRINE OF THE BEATIFIC VISION

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Introduction: ‘They will see his face’ (Revelation 22:4)

‘We boast,’ asserts the apostle Paul, ‘in hope of the glory of God’ (Rom. 5:2). Historically, the Christian tradition has understood this hope of glory in terms of the beatific vision: the immediate, intuitive, and transforming knowledge of God which the saints enjoy in God’s presence.[1] John Calvin, as a representative of the Reformed tradition, comments,

> The hope of the glory of God has shone upon us by the Gospel, which testifies that we shall be partakers of the divine nature, for when we shall see God face to face, we shall be like him.[2]

Likewise, the seventeenth-century English pastor-theologians who framed the Westminster Standards regarded ‘the immediate vision and fruition of God the Father, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, to all eternity’ as the epitome of the happiness of the saints at the day of judgment.[3] But in contrast to this historic Reformed reception of the catholic doctrine of the *visio Dei*, the beatific vision has been displaced in contemporary Reformed theology by what Michael Allen has characterised as ‘eschatological naturalism,’ i.e., a focus on ‘the resurrected body, the shalom of the city, and the renewal of the earth.’[4] Although neo-Calvinism’s attention to the ‘earthy character’ of hope has given new and necessary emphasis to the ethical consequences of the Christian hope,[5] it has also led to God being ‘instrumentalized’ and his providential ends ‘immanentized’ - the narrowness of the new eschatology has ‘cropped God out of the picture.’[6] Such a this-worldly hope attenuates the promise of the gospel, and partakes of the ‘eclipse of heaven’ which has already darkened the secularised Western mind.[7]

Nevertheless, the climax of the gospel *is* that the saints ‘will see [God’s] face’ (Rev. 22:4), and this paper argues that if Reformed eschatology - and, indeed, Reformed preaching and pastoral care - is to provide a faithful and illuminating articulation of this ‘hope of glory’ it must turn from eschatological naturalism and recover and re-envisage the doctrine of the beatific vision as the substance of mankind’s true happiness.

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[1] After this paper was substantially complete, the author’s attention was drawn to Volume 12, Issue 3 (2022) of the *Credo Magazine*, ‘The Beatific Vision,’ which contains a number of articles that persuasively demonstrate the Reformed reception of the doctrine of the *visio Dei*. https://credomag.com/magazine_issue/the-beatific-vision/ [accessed 1 March 2023].

[2] J. Calvin, *Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries: A New Translation*, R. Mackenzie (trans.), D.W. Torrance and T.F. Torrance (eds), (Edinburgh, 1991), viii.105.

[3] *Westminster Larger Catechism*, Q&A 90. Cf. Q&A 86 and *Westminster Confession of Faith* 32.1 concerning the intermediate state.

[4] M. Allen, *Grounded in Heaven: Recentering Christian Hope and Life on God* (Grand Rapids, 2018), p.7-8.

[5] E.g., J.R. Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, 2014), p.239-82; N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope* (London, 2007), p.199-302.

[6] Allen, *Grounded in Heaven*, p.17.

[7] J.K.A. Smith, *How (Not) to be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids, 2014), p.48-51.

The argument will proceed in three steps. First, we will see that the doctrine of the beatific vision gives theological expression to the promise that eternal life consists in the knowledge of God. Second, since it pleases God to shine the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, Reformed Christology must take cognisance of the doctrine of the beatific vision. Finally, we will observe that since the beatific knowledge of God in Christ is transformative, the doctrine of the *visio Dei* has implications for the Reformed understanding of the human *telos*, i.e., man's chief end. As we proceed, references to Thomas Aquinas (1225–74), and the church fathers Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335–c. 395) and Cyril of Alexandria (c. 376–444) will gesture towards the catholicity of the tradition in which the doctrine of the beatific vision developed.

'This is eternal life, that they know you' (John 17:3)

The doctrine of the beatific vision is, to borrow John Webster's expressive little phrase, 'contemplative paraphrase'[8] of Christ's affirmation that eternal life consists in the knowledge of God (John 17:3). Commenting on John 17:3, Aquinas acknowledges the affective dimension to this life-giving knowledge of God: 'it is love which moves one to this vision, and is in a certain way its fulfillment: for the completion and crown of beatitude is the delight experienced in the enjoyment of God.' Love for God is both the motivation for and the reward of the *visio Dei*. Nevertheless, Aquinas's emphasis is on *seeing* as an act of intellectual reception: 'Still, the substance of beatitude consists in vision.'[9]

Aquinas insists that man's happiness cannot consist in any created good. We were made with an 'appetite' for 'the universal good' which nothing else will satisfy - if this is true in this age, then how much more so in the age to come! 'God alone constitutes man's happiness'[10]—and because man is an intelligent creature, i.e., made with a capacity for knowledge and understanding, his '[f]inal and perfect happiness can consist in nothing else than the vision of the Divine Essence.'[11] Moreover, since 'every creature has goodness by participation,' the intellect of man will enjoy perfect happiness only 'through union with God as with that object, in which alone man's happiness consists.'[12]

At this point one might object, as Herman Bavinck does, that '"vision as to essence" and "comprehension" are completely synonymous,' and that a 'corollary of vision of God in his essence would be the deification of humanity and the erasure of the boundary between the Creator and the creature.'[13] In other words, only God sees God - to see God comprehensively as he is essentially is to be God. Such a sight of God is not available to creatures, who find instead that God dwells in unapproachable light and cannot be seen (1 Tim. 6:16). Andrew Davison is surely right that to see God, to be like him, to participate in the divine nature, is not 'even faintly, vaguely, even partly within the capacities of even the most upstanding person by her own powers, or even an unfallen person, or even the highest seraph or archangel.'[14] However, Aquinas would reply that although

[8] J.B. Webster, 'Biblical Reasoning', in *Anglican Theological Review*, 90 (2008), p.749.
[9] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on John*, para. 2186, https://aquinas.cc/.
[10] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 1a2ae.2.8, https://ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa/summa.
[11] Aquinas, *ST* 1a.2ae.3.8.
[12] Aquinas, *ST* 1a2ae.2.8, 1a2ae.3.8.
[13] H. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, J. Vriend (trans.), J. Bolt (ed.), 4 vols (Grand Rapids, 2004-2008), ii.190.
[14] A. Davison, 'A Sideways Glance at the Beatific Vision: Exploring the Network of Christian Doctrine in Light of the Beatific Vision', in *The Credo Magazine*, 12 no. 3 (2022). In this regard Davison makes the important observation that the doctrine of the beatific vision is profoundly anti-Pelagian.

> he who sees God's essence, sees in Him that He exists infinitely, and is infinitely knowable; nevertheless, this infinite mode does not extend to enable the knower to know infinitely.[15]

In other words, God hides nothing from the seer in the beatific vision; limits are experienced only because of the creature's finite capacity.[16] God's essence is immense, and we can never step back far enough to 'take it all in.'

The question of *how* God's essence can be seen is one of dogmatics' most vexed problems.[17] In broad brushstrokes, the church in the West affirmed, and in the East denied, the possibility of the essential vision of God. Calvin, with characteristic sobriety, writes of only 'a new and ineffable mode of vision, which we have not now.'[18] Vladimir Lossky observes that East and West agree that the promise that we *shall* see God indicates that the object of the vision will be God himself and not a representation - unlike our experience in this age in which the knowledge of God is always mediated (e.g., through creation or Scripture, Psalm 19), in the age to come the knowledge God will give of himself will be direct and immediate.[19]

It is important in this regard that the accent in the *visio Dei* falls not on the metaphysics of how the saints will see but on the beatitude which the vision of God will bestow. The Reformed speak about the happiness, enjoyment, and delight that the glorified saints have in the vision of God. Citing, *inter alia*, Psalm 17:15 ('I shall behold your face in righteousness') Calvin comments,

> If God contains the fullness of all good things in himself like an inexhaustible fountain, nothing beyond him is to be sought by those who strive after the highest good and all the elements of happiness.[20]

William Ames wrote that

> to "see God", in the phrasing of Scripture, does not signify either the sight of the eyes or the mere speculation of the intellect, but every sort of enjoyment of God, inasmuch as it causes our blessedness.[21]

John Owen regarded the soteriological goal of the knowledge of God as

> a filling of the blessed with ineffable delight in the eternal praise of God and the Lamb, made possible by "that light of glory in which divine things [are seen] face to face."[22]

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[15] Aquinas, *ST* 1.12.7.
[16] Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ii.191. Cf. M. Levering, *Jesus and the Demise of Death: Resurrection, Afterlife, and the Fate of the Christian* (Waco, 2012), p.112.
[17] G.C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ* (Grand Rapids, 1972), p.375.
[18] Calvin, *New Testament Commentaries*, v.268.
[19] V. Lossky, 'Problem of the Vision Face to Face and Byzantine Patristic Tradition', in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 17 no. 2 (1972), p.231.
[20] J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, F.L. Battles (trans.), J.T. McNeill (ed.), 2 vols (Philadelphia, 1960), 3.25.10.
[21] W. Ames, *A Sketch of the Christian's Catechism*, T.M. Rester (trans.) (Grand Rapids, 2008), p.8, quoted by J. Schendel, 'The Reformed orthodox and the *visio Dei*', in *The Reformed Theological Review*, 77 no. 1 (2018), p.27.
[22] R.A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca.1725*, 2nd ed., 4 vols (Grand Rapids, 2003), i.245, quoting J. Owen, *Theologoumena*, I.iii.6.

‘The knowledge… of God in the face of Jesus Christ’ (2 Corinthians 4:6)

For Owen, ‘face to face’ meant specifically ‘in the face of Jesus Christ’ (2 Cor. 4:6). God shines the light of the knowledge of his glory into human minds by means of the incarnate Son. Not only in this age, nor in the intermediate state, but also in the age to come Christ ‘shall be the means and way of communication between God and his glorified saints for ever.’[23] As Allen observes, John 6:46 (‘not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father’) excludes any other sight of God than that which is in Christ.[24] Bavinck likewise avers that Matthew 11:27 (‘no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him’) is still operative in heaven.[25] It therefore behoves Reformed dogmaticians to order their Christology to the beatific vision - if the Son of God became human so that humans might know God (John 1:18), then if humans are to see God it must be in Christ or not at all.

There is no beatific vision apart from Christ. Hans Boersma claims that when Owen treated the beatific vision as ‘the ultimate theophany’ he corrected a ‘twofold christological deficit’ in Aquinas’s understanding the *visio Dei*, namely,

> (1) Aquinas rarely alludes to an eternally continuing link… between Christ’s beatific vision and ours; and (2) for Aquinas the beatific vision is not theophanic… [i.e.,] Christ is not the object of the beatific vision.[26]

Simon Gaine has responded to this claim that Aquinas regarded the whole fabric of the new creation as theophanic, but he did not thereby confuse the eye’s theophanic vision of Christ with the intellect’s beatific vision of the divine essence.[27] The difference and the connection between these two types of vision is expressed well by Suzanne McDonald relative to Aquinas and Owen: for Aquinas, she writes, Christ ‘is instrumental to the possibility of us experiencing the beatific vision—whereas Owen insists that Christ is *also* intrinsic to the essence of the beatific vision.’[28]

Michael Allen and Thomas Weinandy adopt alternative approaches, both based on the Christology of Cyril of Alexandria, to understand Christ’s role in the *visio Dei*. It is well known that Cyril found in the hypostatic union the grammar he needed to articulate how it was possible for the impassible God to suffer. Allen deploys this Cyrillian grammar of the suffering of the impassible God to articulate how it is possible for the invisible God to disclose himself.[29] Meanwhile, Weinandy uses Cyril’s grammar of the hypostatic union to elucidate the nature and redemptive significance of Christ’s own vision of God.[30]

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[23] J. Owen, ‘ΧΡΙΣΤΟΛΟΓΙΑ: Or, a Declaration of the Glorious Mystery of the Person of Christ’, in W.H. Goold (ed.), *The Works of John Owen*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh, 1862), p.241, 242, 271.
[24] Allen, *Grounded in Heaven*, p.77.
[25] Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ii.190.
[26] H. Boersma, ‘Thomas Aquinas on the Beatific Vision: A Christological Deficit’, in *TheoLogica*, 2 no. 2 (2018), p.144.
[27] S.F. Gaine, ‘Thomas Aquinas, the Beatific Vision and the Role of Christ: A Reply to Hans Boersma’, in *TheoLogica*, 2 no. 2 (2018), p.165-6. See also S.F. Gaine, ‘The Beatific Vision and the Heavenly Mediation of Christ’, in *TheoLogica*, 2 no. 2 (2018), p.116-28.
[28] S. McDonald, ‘Beholding the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ: John Owen and the “Reforming” of the Beatific Vision’, in K.M. Kapic and M. Jones (eds), *The Ashgate Research Companion to John Owen’s Theology* (Abingdon, 2016), p.150.
[29] Allen, *Grounded in Heaven*, p.84-7.
[30] T.G. Weinandy, ‘Jesus’ Filial Vision of the Father’, in *Pro Ecclesia*, 13 no. 2 (2004), p.189-201.

Allen's affirmation that the humanity of the divine Son enables vision of God is richly Trinitarian -

> the whole Trinity wills and works divine visibility… the Father works visibility by his loving and expressive will, the Son works visibility by his receptivity toward the triune prompting and the flesh prepared by the Spirit, and the Spirit works visibility by bringing love of the Father into the truthful face of the Son's appearance.[31]

The vision of God in the face of Christ is not reducible to the vision of the Son's humanity - rather, we see the *person* of the Son, who is the subject of the hypostatic union. The Reformed tradition understood that '*God* really is seen' in the particular humanity of Christ.[32] Bringing this insight into relation with the fact that the external works of the Trinity are undivided enables Allen to 'affirm that the whole Godhead is marked by an attribute of expression.'[33] Yet God remains invisible, his invisibility being 'a metaphysical marker' of the Creator-creature distinction - as already observed, only God sees God. Therefore, 'any other sight is by gracious participation' in the One who is the 'image of the invisible God' (Col. 1:15).[34] Although we cannot see the divine essence, we will see God 'by means of theophanic (and specifically Christophanic) disclosure.'[35] Just as in this world we see all things by the light of the sun, so in heaven we shall see God by the light of the Son. As Jonathan Edwards wrote,

> 'Tis God's pleasure that Christ should be the light, the Sun of heaven, by which God should be seen and known there, for it pleases the Father that in him all fullness should dwell.[36]

Weinandy's account of the *visio Dei* 'in the face of Jesus Christ' builds on the doctrine of the hypostatic union and the Trinitarian nature of redemption. Observing in Cyrillian fashion that 'It is truly *the Son of God* who is man… It is truly *man* that the Son of God is… The Son of God truly *is* man,'[37] leads Weinandy to speak of the incarnate Son's 'hypostatic vision' of God.[38] In contrast to the traditional view that '[t]he beatific vision necessarily flows from the Son to the humanity that is personally united to him,' Weinandy argues that 'it is through the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Sonship, that the Son of God as man experienced his human hypostatic vision of the Father,'[39] and that only in the resurrection, and 'through the full light of the Holy Spirit' did he attain 'the full human hypostatic vision of his Father and so the full human vision of who he is as the divine Son.'[40] In other words, in his incarnation Christ's knowledge of God was truly that of a *viator*, and it is in his glorification that he entered into the condition of the true *comprehensor*.

Weinandy's insight is then to allow the nature of the incarnate Son's hypostatic vision to inform our understanding of the saints' beatific vision, and it is here that the trinitarian nature of the sight of God becomes apparent. As God's adopted children, the saints in heaven 'share in the glorious incarnate Son's hypostatic vision of the Father.' This is possible because they are 'fully conformed into the likeness of the risen Son through the power of the Holy Spirit,' and thus 'share in the incarnate Son's glorious filial heavenly vision of the Father.' Thus, the glorified saints 'experience God not [merely

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[31] M. Allen, 'The Visibility of the Invisible God', in *Journal of Reformed Theology*, 9 no. 3 (2015), p.266.
[32] Allen, *Grounded in Heaven*, p.80.
[33] Allen, *Grounded in Heaven*, p.82.
[34] Allen, *Grounded in Heaven*, p.85.
[35] Allen, *Grounded in Heaven*, p.85-6.
[36] J. Edwards, *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, *Volume 18*, *The 'Miscellanies': Entry nos. 501-832*, A. Chamberlain (ed.) (New Haven, 2000), p.430.
[37] Weinandy, 'Jesus' Filial Vision', p.192.
[38] Weinandy, 'Jesus' Filial Vision', p.193.
[39] Weinandy, 'Jesus' Filial Vision', p.196.
[40] Weinandy, 'Jesus' Filial Vision', p.198.

objectively] as a being over against themselves, but as a Trinity of persons in whose life they now subjectively share.' They also 'come to know who they truly are - sons and daughters of the Father.'[41] This is what it will mean to see God no longer 'in a mirror dimly,' but 'face to face,' and to know fully, just as we are fully known (1 Cor. 13:12).

'We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is' (1 John 3:2)

It is in the above sense that Weinandy understands the idea of deification.[42] 'We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is' (1 John 3:2). If to see God comprehensively is to be God - then, without violating the Creator-creature distinction, to be granted the *visio Dei* is to be 'deified,' i.e., made, as 1 John 3:2 says, 'like him.' This hoped-for transformation is neither static nor remote. For one thing, John proceeds to write, 'everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure' (1 John 3:3). In other words, attention to the beatific vision, far from being a distraction, is the main incentive for ethical practice in the here-and-now.[43] For another thing - as Boersma summarises the teaching of Gregory of Nyssa - humans 'find their telos when in union with Christ they become ever purer, in an ever-increasing growth in the beatific vision.'[44]

Gregory regarded the beatific vision as the *telos* of the Christian life. Hence Boersma endeavours, through a *ressourcement* of Gregory's teaching, to address the loss of Christian hope and identity which is consequent upon the lack of attention given to the *visio Dei* in contemporary eschatological thinking.[45] He turns to Gregory's sixth homily on the Beatitudes, his commentary on *The Life of Moses*, and his *Homilies on the Song of Songs*.

In his homily on the sixth beatitude ('Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God'), Gregory acknowledges two obstacles to seeing God: first, God's uncreated essence is inaccessible to creatures; second, human beings lack purity. The sermon is, therefore, an exhortation to strive after 'the holiness without which no one will see the Lord' (Heb. 12:14). It would be a grand thing, suggests Gregory, to have a Jacob's ladder or a fiery chariot to carry us effortlessly to heaven there to behold God; but in reality, virtue is only attained with seriousness and struggle.[46]

But in light of our actual experience of lack of holiness, this just makes an intolerable burden of purity, so in *The Life of Moses* Gregory changes tack. By means of Moses' theophanic experiences at the Burning Bush (Exodus 3), on Sinai (Exod. 20:21), and in the cleft of the rock (Exod. 33:20–23) Gregory presents purity not as an achievement but as progress, and the beatific vision not as a terminus but as kindling a perpetual desire to see more of God.[47] In the *Homilies on the Song of Songs* Gregory re-presents the ascent - which in his homily on the sixth beatitude looked impossible - as 'growth in the divine life, spurred on by a desire that never comes to a point of rest. Christ… is a never-ending source of enjoyment.'[48] Gregory teaches, says Boersma, that we attain our *telos* only insofar as we aim at knowing God, i.e., the beatific vision.[49]

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[41] Weinandy, 'Jesus' Filial Vision', p.200.
[42] Weinandy, 'Jesus' Filial Vision', p.200.
[43] Allen, *Grounded in Heaven*, p.91.
[44] H. Boersma, 'Becoming Human in the Face of God: Gregory of Nyssa's Unending Search for the Beatific Vision', in *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 17 no. 2 (2015), p.131.
[45] Boersma, 'Becoming Human', p.132.
[46] Gregory of Nyssa, *Homily 6: On the Beatitudes*, https://afkimel.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/6th-homily-on-beatitudes1.pdf.
[47] Boersma, 'Becoming Human', p.144.
[48] Boersma, 'Becoming Human', p.150.
[49] Boersma, 'Becoming Human', p.151.

This is not a Platonic flight from the shadowlands to the realm of ideal forms. Christ's bodily resurrection affirms and patterns God's purpose to perfect our creaturely nature in fellowship with himself (1 Cor. 15:49; Phil. 3:21). Man is the union of soul and body, and even Aquinas acknowledges that 'separation from the body is said to hold the soul back from tending with all its might to the vision of the Divine Essence. For the soul desires to enjoy God in such a way that the enjoyment also may overflow into the body.'[50] Matthew Levering is surely right: 'In the beatific vision, far more than now in the communion of faith, we will be able to follow Paul's command to "glorify God in your body" (1 Cor 6:20).'[51] The mistake of the new eschatology is to forget that 'in your body' is relativised by 'glorify God' - that it is the vision of God in his glory that informs, fills, and directs every movement of soul and body of the saints in heaven.

Conclusion: 'To you he said, O my heart, "Seek my face"' (Psalm 27:8)

So to centre the Christian hope on the beatific vision is not to dismiss bodily resurrection and the restoration of the earth. It simply puts them in their proper place - they belong to the circumference, not to the centre.[52] As Aquinas insists, God claims the centre for himself, and calls us come there in order to commune with him: 'To you he said, O my heart, "Seek my face"'[53] (Ps. 27:8; cf. John 17:24). Christ 'fills all in all' (Eph. 1:22), and his people's *telos* is to be 'filled unto all the fulness of God' (Eph. 3:19). Indeed, *pace* Middleton, humanity's destiny is ordered not to the cultural mandate (Gen. 1:28) but to Sabbath rest (Gen. 2:2 - 3); not to day six, but to day seven of creation week.[54] Put another way, God, not the renovated cosmos, is 'the context for redeemed human life.'[55] This is the point of Revelation 5:13 - 14. The face of every creature is turned not to other creatures but toward the throne of God. God will be all in all, and worshipped by all. Reformed eschatology and preaching must be ever mindful that any other ultimate focus than that of the beatific vision devolves into idolatry, i.e., the worship of the creature rather than the Creator.[56]

The triune God is the only centre with sufficient weight of glory to hold. Indeed, as Gregory teaches, it is as the infinitely attractive and satisfying centre that God himself guarantees that there can be no ennui in his presence, and no possibility of a second fall,[57] but, like an imperishable rose, only progress unto ever more unfolding of the flower's perfection. God himself is immutably beautiful, and utterly happy in the contemplation of himself - and for the saints to behold him in his beauty is to share in his beatitude. Face-to-face with her Husband, the Bride will be ever fruitful - the sons will attain to ever greater maturity by looking into their Father's face. This is the *telos* of redeemed humanity, and the retrieval of the doctrine of the beatific vision is necessary if Reformed preaching and pastoring is to communicate it, and its ethical imperative, faithfully to the church.

Finally, Reformed eschatology must listen also to Cyril because Cyril provides the grammar necessary to articulate the 'thick' Trinitarian and Christological implications of the beatific vision for our understanding of the Christian hope. Allen is surely right that by neglecting the doctrine of the *visio*

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[50] Aquinas, *ST* 1a2ae.4.5.
[51] Levering, *Jesus and the Demise of Death*, p.114.
[52] Allen, *Grounded in Heaven*, p.124.
[53] A word-for-word translation of a grammatically complex Hebrew cola.
[54] I.A. Morales, '"With My Body I Thee Worship": New Creation, Beatific Vision, and the Liturgical Consummation of All Things' in *Pro Ecclesia*, 25 no. 3 (2016), p.340; H. Boersma, 'Neo-Calvinism and the Beatific Vision: Eschatology in the Reformed Tradition', in *Crux*, 56 no. 3 (2020), p.25.
[55] Middleton, *New Heaven and New Earth*, p.156.
[56] Allen, *Grounded in Heaven*, p.128.
[57] Boersma, 'Becoming Human', p.141.

Dei we have rendered ourselves 'tone-deaf' to Christ's affirmation that 'whoever has seen me has seen the Father' (John 14:9).[58] Indeed, as Allen and Weinandy demonstrate in their different ways, Cyril reminds Reformed dogmaticians and pastors that the beatific visibility of the invisible God testifies to the richly textured Trinitarian nature of redemption, the 'deep reality… that this triune God determines to be seen by those who do not enjoy his eternally full divine sight on their own.'[59]

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[58] Allen, *Grounded in Heaven*, p.86.
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‘BROADLANE’ REFLECTIONS ON THE LIVES OF SOME COVENANTER MINISTERS IN LIMAVADY

Brian Dunwoody

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Introduction

The Roe Valley in north-west County Londonderry is a remarkably beautiful part of Ulster and has a rich history. There is a long agricultural tradition, not least due to particularly fertile soil. On its eastern boundary lies a range of hills stretching from Benevenagh in the north to Benbradagh, overlooking the town of Dungiven, in the south. To the west lies Loughermore hill. Its northern boundary is Lough Foyle with its abundance of fish and in the near distance is Donegal.

Evidence of human habitation dates back perhaps 5,000 years; the Broighter Gold unearthed in 1896 is attributed to the Celts. There is also a long Christian heritage from the time of Colmcille in the 6th century, to Canice and to Aidan who, though more associated with Lindisfarne, is said to be buried at Magilligan on the shores of the lough.

The Vikings and the Normans had some influence here, but the area was largely under the control of the O’Cahan clan until they chose the wrong side in the wars against Queen Elizabeth I and were forced to flee Ireland in 1607 – the famous ‘Flight of the Earls’ from Rathmullan in neighbouring County Donegal. This ushered in the Plantation of Ulster, the arrival of English and Scottish settlers, the founding of Coleraine, Newtownlimavady, Ballykelly and Eglinton. It also brought Presbyterianism. Drumachose Presbyterian Church in Limavady was founded in 1655, Ballykelly Presbyterian Church, in 1656.

The history of Covenanters in Ulster dates from about 1744 and from the outset Limavady and the Roe Valley played an important part in that story. Covenanters first met for worship at Drummond, on the east side of Limavady. In 1757 William Martin, born in May 1729 in the rural townland of Ballyspallen near Ballykelly, was ordained as the first Covenanting minister in Ireland at The Vow near Ballymoney. In 1772 he emigrated to South Carolina.

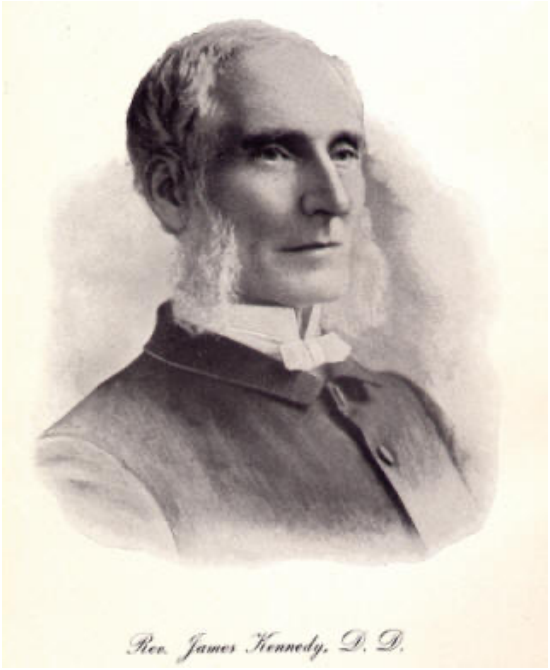
The first regular minister of Limavady was Matthew Lynn from Cairncastle near Larne in Co. Antrim, also ordained at the Vow in 1763. He preached in the open air, in barns or in homes round the Bannside congregation, which comprised Drimbolg, Garvagh, Ballylaggan and Limavady.

Professor Adam Loughridge has noted that the wider Limavady area provided 5 of the first 8 Covenanting ministers in Ireland – William Martin, Andrew McClenaghan, William James, Thomas Hamilton and William Gamble who was born near Ballykelly in 1763.

Establishing its independence of the Bannside congregation, Limavady opened its first church building at Broad Land or ‘Broadlane’ on the outskirts of the town in 1806. It cost £400, could house 320 people and retained that name for decades to come. It was demolished and a new building constructed

and opened in 1888. Broadlane's first minister, Rev. Clarke Houston, arrived in September 1814. However, in a time of post-war recession it seems that the congregation was unable to fully pay him and by 1818 he had been lured to Cullybackey. It wasn't until ten years later that Limavady had its second minister.

There have been twelve settled ministers in the congregation's history, with surviving written session minutes dating back to the third of these in the early 1840s. For this article I have chosen three men who at various times between 1843 and 1975 made very significant contributions to life in Limavady and the surrounding area, as well as to the wider RP Church, and whose ministries covered times of not just local change, but national and international upheaval. I conclude by drawing attention to the contribution of the Limavady congregation to the wider RP Church in more recent times.



1. Rev James Kennedy 1843-70

James Kennedy was the congregation's third pastor; he stayed for 27 years, significantly longer than those who preceded him, Rev. Clarke Houston and Rev. Arthur Fullerton. This very gifted and godly man is actually something of a hidden gem in RP history, a man worthy of further study and one who made a very considerable contribution in Limavady, in the wider Irish church and, indeed, beyond these shores.

Born at Drumreagh near Ballymoney in 1818, one of at least four brothers, he was brought up in the Ballylaggan congregation. He studied at RBAI, went to the Theological Hall at Paisley in Scotland to hear the lectures of Andrew Symington, and as a licentiate was called to Limavady, ordained and installed in May 1843. His elder brother, Joseph, already lived at Limavady and had been elected an elder in Broadlane in 1829. He and his family later emigrated to Philadelphia in 1834.

Prior to this Broadlane had been vacant for two years and had been suffering from various problems for longer. However, Mr Kennedy's arrival in 1843 coincided with that of around 40 families and two

elders who had left a local Presbyterian Church, Derramore, and joined with the Covenanters to form the united congregation of Derrybeg and Broadlane, Newtownlimavady – two buildings, perhaps two sets of loyalties. This was a tremendous boost in numbers and potential finances and by 1844 there were at least 11 societies scattered around the area.

Shortly after this, of course, came what became known as the Great Famine, the effects of which lasted into the 1850s and well beyond. No direct mention is made of it in any congregational records, though it did have an impact in this area. Instead, what we see is that in general the congregation went from strength to strength:

- Communion seasons were held three times a year, instead of twice
- Successive visitations by the Western Presbytery effusively commended the work
- The societies flourished
- New elders were elected
- The first deacons were elected in 1851 – an event so significant that it was reported in both the 'Belfast Monitor' and in the American church's 'The Covenanter' magazine.

Mr Kennedy was an avid visitor of his flock as well as a diligent catechiser of the young people. He also had a great love and gift for open-air preaching, and this was used to great effect not least during the great spiritual awakening of the '1859 Revival'. Rev. Killen of Ballykelly Presbyterian Church referred to the 'remarkable' impact of his preaching at a time when some evening meetings went on until 2 or 3 in the morning! He himself voiced concerns about some aspects of what was happening but admitted that 50 members of his congregation from Magilligan to Dungiven showed evidence of spiritual revival; further, 11 young people were admitted to membership in July 1859 alone.

Mr Kennedy's gifts were not confined to theology. He was a very able administrator both inside and outside the church. In May 1850 he advertised the opening of an English and Classical School in the town, at which he would be teaching. He was a popular speaker at events both in the local community and further afield. The 'Belfast Weekly News' reported his clear reasoning and 'great ability' in a two hour lecture on 'The Deluge' given at Larne in 1859. In 1865 his lecture on the subject of 'Sleep' given to the Dunbrock Young Men's Literary Society was described in the local press as 'masterly'.

And there is plenty of evidence that his consistent character, eloquent preaching, scientific and religious knowledge, training of the young and attention to the sick and dying were much appreciated. In 1855 he founded a Juvenile Missionary Association (JMA). Over the years he received gifts of money, a valuable saddle horse and even the use of a farm.

In the wider church he was actively involved with home missions, psalm tune revision, the publication of a periodical magazine and in preparations for an Aged Ministers' Fund. In 1865 he contributed to a report on 'prevailing social evils' and in 1870 he founded the Temperance Association in Broadlane.

All this is not to say that there were no problems in Limavady. There were tensions between Derrybeg and Broadlane, not least over finances. By the 1860s an annual detailed list of subscribers was being published. The prevailing unease over voting and national education was a distraction at times, but the overall health of the congregation remained good. Numbers of members in 1866 were 260; down slightly to 244 in 1870.

In 1848 Mr Kennedy had married Eliza Conn of Coleraine. By the end of 1861 they had 8 children. The eldest, Thomas, died aged 13 in 1863 and is buried at Broadlane. So, too, is the fifth, Annie, who was almost 15 when she died in September 1870.

Three months earlier Mr Kennedy had received a call from the Fourth Congregation of New York City, a call which he felt led to accept. The evidence is of a very emotional parting for everyone. Mr Kennedy was installed in New York on 13th November, 1870. He ministered there for over 25 years and was appointed Moderator of the American Synod in 1875. He retired to Canada in 1896 and died in January 1898. In 1887 he had declined the offer of a chair at Geneva College, deeming himself to be too old.

Interestingly, his second son, George, born in 1852, had studied at Queen's College, Belfast; in America he was ordained by the Lakes Presbytery and served as a pastor in Ohio from May, 1878. In 1882 he did accept the Chair of Professor of Greek at Geneva College.

As the editors of 'The Covenanter' wrote upon his death, Rev. James Kennedy 'was among the foremost ministers of his time in ability, faithfulness and efficiency.' Having left Ireland in 1870 they also acknowledged that, despite several published works, he was not therefore so well known to the younger generation of Irish ministers as he might otherwise have been. It is fair to say that has remained the case for well over 100 years.

2. Rev Samuel Kennedy 1896-1924

Five ministers later we come to Limavady's 8th minister, another Kennedy – Rev. Samuel Kennedy, a Ballyclare man who had spent two years as pastor in the Stranorlar congregation in Donegal before

accepting the call to Broadlane in October, 1896. It is not clear whether or not he came from a Covenanting family, but he certainly became a convinced RP.

This was another ministry of just over 27 years. It included Britain's participation in the Great War, though, again, little reference is made to this momentous event in the congregational records apart from the high cost of living. It is worth pointing out that under some of Mr Kennedy's immediate predecessors detailed record keeping of session and committee meetings had all but lapsed on occasions. This occurred most strikingly under Rev. William Dick (1875-94), a gifted man not averse to challenging both presbytery and synod on matters of procedure and The Code.

Mr Kennedy ushered in a sustained period of much-needed stability. Not only are there surviving minutes of session and committee meetings, but also Mr. Kennedy's own notes of meetings.

During the last few years of the century Queen Victoria celebrated her Diamond Jubilee (1897) and the Boer War was being fought by the British in South Africa (1899-1902). In conversation just a few years ago I was delighted to discover that a member of probably the most prominent family in the congregation at that time, Annie Maud MacDonnell, was awarded the Royal Red Cross for her work with the Irish Field Hospital in South Africa; she was the first nurse to enter Pretoria with British troops there. Indeed 15 years later she was further decorated for her work at the Dublin Castle temporary field hospital during the Easter Rising in 1916. One of her sisters, Margaret Eliza, also trained as a nurse and worked for many years as a medical missionary in southern India. The Kennedys' niece, Laura, taught Sabbath School in Broadlane and was still around in Ballykelly in the 1990s.

These were interesting years in the wider Limavady community. The first electric street lighting was installed in 1896. In January 1897 a Mrs McLaughlin died aged 112 years; she was thought to be 'the oldest subject of Her Majesty in the British Isles.' Within the Broadlane congregation Mrs McLelland of Greysteel lived to the age of 105; whilst quite a few others lived well into their 90s.

Mr Kennedy was the first minister to live in a manse, purchased by the congregation in 1896. It was located in Catherine Street, next to the Ulster Bank. His successor, Rev R. B. Lyons also lived there before moving to a new manse in the late 1950s. It was later turned into flats.

Mr Kennedy was also responsible for a few other 'firsts.' He began to keep a roll of those who attended communion – averaging 65 in the years to 1914, and he revised the communion roll every two years. He also kept detailed records of births, marriages and deaths. During his 27 years, a total of 111 people were admitted to membership. There were periodic discussions on the subject of covenant renewal, which eventually took place in 1911, 100 years after the meeting of the first RP Synod.

We also find that four men went into the ministry in these years – Rev. Robert J. (RJ) McIlmoyle (1900), Rev. James Blair (1905), Rev William H. Pollock (1906) and Rev. John McIlmoyle (1913). Blair and McIlmoyle were prominent, and large, families in Broadlane, Pollock much less so. All served with great distinction. Of his former pastor, John, later Rev. Prof. McIlmoyle, said, 'Mr Kennedy has been more to me than any other man outside my home.'

In 1900 Mr Kennedy addressed an issue that had plagued some of his predecessors going back almost 50 years – that of voting in elections. Much of the problem revolved around one David Hopkins whose family had joined Broadlane in 1842 following the split in Derramore Presbyterian and who was elected a deacon in 1851. In March 1857 session expressed its sorrow that up to nine church members had voted at the recent parliamentary election, including Hopkins. Having been suspended from privileges, he was readmitted in October.

In 1872 Hopkins was elected an elder. Ten years later, as the issue of Home Rule for Ireland gathered pace, he again admitted he had voted in 1880, was admonished and later restored. Though clearly there remained some ill feeling between him and the then minister, Rev. William Dick. Twice in the 1890s he admitted voting and whilst restored to membership he did not return to the session. He died in 1900, having also served on the local council and Board of Guardians. His granddaughter, Greta Gault, married Rev. John McIlmoyle whilst his youngest daughter, Matilda Louise, married Rev. R. J. McIlmoyle. Some would say these were his greatest legacies to the RP Church.

Returning to the subject of Covenanters and voting, in 1900 some correspondence in the 'Coleraine Chronicle' was very critical of the Church's position. In a detailed reply, Mr Kennedy went to great lengths to explain the position on the British Constitution:

> … no "good men" could swear an oath to uphold a corrupt, Christless Constitution…with the Queen in law the effective Head of the Church…

And in response to the previous correspondent's sneering at the numerical strength of the Covenanters, he wrote, 'Only superficial minds estimate the value of a cause by the numerical strength of its advocates.' He concluded that there was more than one way to take part in politics, that Covenanters were already politically active, just not in elections, and of course, relatively few men were actually entitled to vote in those days – and no women.

Throughout these years there was a lot of political pressure to vote placed on Covenanters by friends and neighbours. Perhaps, as Rev. Dr Tim Donachie has concluded in his detailed study of the subject, more might have been done to educate church members about why the church adopted the position it did – something proposed at Synod in 1893 by the then minister of Limavady, Rev. James Stewart.

In April 1904 Mr Kennedy married Miss Sophia McKay of Molesworth in Cookstown, a member of the Grange congregation. The local newspaper listed all the (almost 90) gifts they received and noted that if anyone was looking for the couple they were honeymooning in Ayr! Miss McKay's sister married Rev. J. A. Lyons of Cullybackey. He was regularly asked to preach in Broadlane at the Fast Day service, prior to Communion.

The Kennedys had no family of their own, but they adopted their niece and nephew – Jean and Russell, who was later ordained to the ministry. Both grew up in Limavady and Jean Kennedy was later very prominent in the wider church, lived in Belfast and was a member of the Dublin Road congregation there.

Like his predecessor, James Kennedy, Samuel Kennedy was a skilled administrator. In 1915 he was appointed Clerk of Synod, a position he held for 22 years. A visitation of presbytery to Limavady in 1917 again resulted in a very positive finding, with the congregation in a 'healthy condition'; family worship was generally observed and the church property was 'in admirable condition.' In the years after 1918 average attendance at communion was 68.

In late November 1921 Mr Kennedy received a unanimous call to Knockbracken. Six weeks later the deacons and committee agreed an increase to his salary of £10 per annum – bringing it up to £210. In early February he declined the call; but there is no suggestion of a link between these events.

Samuel Kennedy was also held in the highest regard by the members of his congregation and by the wider community. The 'Coleraine Constitution' newspaper of 25 December 1909 carried a report of

a social event in Broadlane which had been well supported by other churches despite it being one of the worst of wintry nights. It spoke warmly of Mr Kennedy and also of the soloists and other musical performers. In June 1922, to mark his 25 years of service, he was presented with a beautiful Illuminated Address, a wallet of notes and a silver rose bowl.

In September the following year the first meeting of Broadlane Covenanter Young People's Union (CYPU) took place with 20 young people in attendance.

In the middle of 1924 Mr Kennedy accepted a call to the Rathfriland congregation where he remained until his retirement in August 1944, after 50 years in the gospel ministry. For almost all of that time he was a member of the Congregational Aid Committee, serving as its convener for 33 years. He also served on the Foreign Mission Committee.

At Synod in June 1915 a prize was offered for the two best Pamphlets on the 'Distinctive Principles of the Church.' Mr Kennedy's essay, 'Christ, Lord of All', won the first prize of £10 and was subsequently published at a cost of 3 pence.

Mr Kennedy died in December 1948. Throughout his career he was known for his piety, diligence and mastery of detail. In their Illuminated Address of 1922 the Broadlane members expressed their deep appreciation of him and his wife. Part of what they wrote to him states:

> During the whole period of your ministry you have made conscientious and careful preparation for the pulpit; you have faithfully preached the Gospel of Christ and have never shunned to declare the whole counsel of God, or to expound and defend the principles of the Reformed Presbyterian Church.

And of his wife:

> … a true help-meet in your ministerial labours. In the furtherance of the cause of Missions, in teaching in the Sabbath School and in the improvement of the Praise Service, she has always taken the deepest interest.

3. Rev RB Lyons 1924 – 1975

Less than a month after Rev. Samuel Kennedy's departure, a call was made out to a licentiate of the Northern Presbytery, Mr Robert Biggart Lyons, the result of which was his ordination and installation in Broadlane on 23 October 1924. He was Limavady's 9th, and at almost 51 years, to date their longest serving minister, and during those years he did not receive a call to anywhere else. For these reasons, and many more, he is worthy of our attention.

Mr Lyons, known through his life as 'RB' was born on 19th March 1900 at Ballygan, on a small farm 3 miles west of Ballymoney near Macfin. His father was an elder in the Ballymoney church; his uncle, Rev. Alexander S. Lyons, was minister in Newry; two Lyons cousins also became ministers. He was the youngest of ten children, three of whom had died before he was born. He was also the seventh son of a seventh son and his mother's name was Lyons, though no relation to his father. As a toddler he had suffered burns to the top of his head which meant that hair never again grew there, so he combed his hair forwards to cover the scars and when playing or refereeing sport as he did for many years, he wore a hairnet – which, as a young man, probably took some courage.

He arrived in Limavady with an impressive academic record. At home he had been greatly influenced by Professor Ramsey of Ballymoney RP Church, a renowned Greek and Hebrew scholar. He went to Magee College and then to Trinity College, Dublin, where he won a Gold Medal as well as a 'blue' for football.

Among his first utterances as the new minister were his gratitude to Almighty God and the debt he owed to his parents, his brothers and sisters, who had sacrificed so much to get him through college. He believed that from his earliest childhood his mother wished him to be a minister. The influences

of his early upbringing never left him – hard work, physical activity, reading, humour and a knowledge of the Bible. Three of his older brothers became elders.

To appreciate something of the longevity of his ministry, think of the fact that he was around during six decades - through the post-war recovery of the 20s, the economic depression of the 30s, the Second World War and its aftermath in the 40s, the relatively growing prosperity of the later 50s and early 60s, and then the outbreak and early years of the 'Troubles' up to the mid-70s. The world in the 1970s was very different from what it had been in the 1920s. And he kept a diary through all that.

Just to give a flavour of Mr Lyons, let me give a brief mention of something from each decade of his ministry.

He chaired his first session meeting, aged 24 and straight out of college, at a Precommunion service. Five of the much older elders were present and he invited to preach Rev. James Blair of Milford, a 'son' of the congregation. The elderly, experienced and quite unwell, Clerk of Session, Mr Robert McIlmoyle, father of RJ, did however make it to church on the Communion Sabbath.

The congregation was in a comfortable state financially. In 1925 there was a credit balance of '£13 odd' but Mr Lyons' proposal to raise all monies by freewill offering was thought to be too radical; a brave young man, though, for even suggesting it at his first full session meeting.

In 1928 RB married Jean McCollum of Boghill, from the Ballyclabber congregation. They were to be blessed with four children – Elizabeth, Jennifer, Morrell and Margaret. Congregational life in the 1930s had many encouragements but as time went on and economic hardship deepened, church finances dipped. In 1936 RB's offer to accept a £10 reduction in stipend – from £200 p.a. to £190 – was refused; the following year it was accepted, and also for 1938.

Thereafter, things began to improve. A number of generous legacies eased the financial pressure. Electric lights were installed. The WMA, the CY and the Sabbath School began to flourish. The annual business meeting in January accompanied by tea, entertainment and the distribution of Sabbath School prizes became a highlight for many years. Guest speakers (ministers and missionaries) and guest performers added to the occasion. One still remembers what he and his sister sang 'Leaving on a Jet Plane.' His final such meeting was in 1975.

In addition to bringing members of the congregation together, Mr Lyons saw such occasions as opportunities to extend links to both the wider church and the wider community. Local ministers from other churches were invited to speak; soloists and the children's choir from Ballyclabber came along and he, in turn, accepted reciprocal invitations.

The idea of the church at the heart of the community appealed to him very much. For example, in the 1940s he began to teach mathematics part-time at the local Technical College, which both augmented his income and gave him the opportunity to extend his contacts further by coaching and refereeing soccer. In 1940 and 1942 he served as President of the Recreation Club and he and Mrs Lyons were active supporters of Girl Guides and Boy Scouts. He was also involved with the Workers Education Association and during the war he served as an ARP Warden as well as teaching First Aid and working in the NAAFI at Ballykelly Air Force base, to which he cycled the 6 miles there and back. He was certainly a man who was known in the community; he was also very adept at making the most of his garden to supplement the family's diet in times of rationing.

Worth recounting is the story of Frank Leighton, a 21-year-old RAF volunteer from England who was billeted for a time in Limavady, who came to worship in Broadlane and was befriended by the manse family. In his memoirs he gives a very good insight into life in the Lyons family; it obviously touched him. He went on to serve in Malta and after the war moved to Canada. Many years later he was greeting visitors to his church in Vancouver. They were from Newry, Co. Down, and knew the family of Mr Alec Lyons. Contacts were established, the Leightons came to visit Morrell and Thelma Lyons in Belfast, and a reciprocal visit took place to Canada. Frank died in October 2019 aged 99.

The manse door in Catherine Street was always open and over many years a lot of people dropped in for refreshments and a good chat.

In the later 1940s two of Mrs Lyons' brothers, Marcus and William McCollum, both unmarried at that stage, travelled over the hill from Coleraine to Ballykelly having bought farms there. In 1949 Marcus and another cousin, William G. McCollum who farmed at Greysteel, were elected as elders in Broadlane. Marcus is the father of Rev. Edward and Rev. Samuel, and the grandfather of Rev Philip Dunwoody. A decade later William G. relocated to Ballylaggan RPC.

During the 1950s there were very significant changes of personnel at all levels in the church – births, marriages, deaths, emigrations. It was in this decade that the church hall, the Crawford Hall, was built. Space does not permit the inclusion of the full story of how the money was raised and the project completed. Suffice to say that the Crawfords were self-made millionaires in the oil industry who spent their early lives in Broadlane in quite inauspicious circumstances before emigrating to America in the 1880s. Two sons in particular, John and David, never forgot their Limavady roots. From the 1930s they made fairly regular visits 'home' to visit their mother's grave at Broadlane. They proved to be generous benefactors around the town and even as far as Castlerock – the name 'Crawford' adorns streets in Limavady; and Mr Lyons was able to avail of their financial support for the hall and other amenities around the church building.

It is worth mentioning that the current manse was also purchased in the late 1950s on Rathmore Road. The Lyons family moved in early in 1960.

During the 1960s congregational life flourished in many ways. Two Blair families each had 5 children in the Sabbath School, as did the two McCollum families. The Fallows, Haslett and another Blair family weren't far behind. Other family groupings such as Fergusons were notable for their numbers. In February 1965 gifts were presented to mark Mr Lyons' forty years in the ministry with a host of McIlmoyles brought along to speak, including Vincent, a son of RJ, who had retired to Limavady and who was to make a very important contribution to congregational life until the early 1990s. Along with two of his first cousins, James Blair and Ernest Fallows, he was ordained to the eldership in April 1967.

By now the town itself was rapidly developing. Broadlane's buildings were no longer on a broad lane or on the edge of town; they were part of a main thoroughfare, Greystone Road. In fact the 'grey stone' was situated in the church grounds. An afternoon Sabbath School attracted children from the local area; some can still recall sitting the exam in the dining room in the manse as well as Mr and Mrs Lyons turning up on their front doorsteps in times of difficulty or bereavement, usually with some cakes or other food.

Interestingly, it is not until the early 1970s that there begins discussion of a monthly meeting for prayer and Bible study. By this time Mr Lyons' health was declining. Attendance at his final Communion season in 1975 was 68, and he officially retired in early September that year. Perhaps the gifts given

to him and Mrs Lyons reflect something of the new technological age. He received a gift cheque to mark his 50 years in the ministry; Mrs Lyons was presented with a gold bracelet and a washing machine!

Mr Lyons died in August 1976 and is buried in Broadlane graveyard. Mrs Lyons stayed in Limavady for many years before eventually moving to a nursing home in Belfast where she died in November 1998 in her 96th year.

Rev. RB Lyons was held in great affection as a pastor and preacher in Limavady. In the wider church he twice served as Moderator of Synod – in 1942 and 1965. He had a great love for the Psalms; in 1932 he wrote a well-received pamphlet on 'The Universality of the Psalms'. From 1936 to 1972 he jointly edited 'The Covenanter' renamed 'The Covenanter Witness' in 1967. For 31 years he was convener of the Witness Bearing Committee; he was also Convener of the Aged and Infirm Ministers' Fund and was an early member of the CYPU committee in the 1920s.

He had a sharp mind and a very sound theology; he was often to be found on synodical committees when a tricky issue needed solving. In 1942 during World War 2 he was quick to write to the 'Belfast News Letter' welcoming the King's call for a national day of prayer. Two years later he led his session to condemn the local council for opening the town's cinema on the Sabbath Day to help raise money for war charities. In his annual report to Synod as editor of 'The Covenanter' he would thank 'the few' of his colleagues who had contributed articles whilst berating the great majority for their inertia.

By the later years of his ministry there is no doubt that a session comprising men younger than himself, and drawn from the farming community, was largely compliant to his views. This from the minutes of November 1972:

> The question of having deacons in each congregation was sent down from Synod to sessions for consideration. After discussion it was agreed that the office of deacon was established in the early church on grounds of compassion, that this need had largely passed away in modern times, and that the temporal affairs of a congregation were satisfactorily served by a committee.

One wonders who led the discussion and how long it lasted. No matter who eventually succeeded Mr Lyons, he was always going to have a hard act to follow in a session and in a congregation where one man had effectively presided for so long. Thus Rev. John Hawthorne's early years in Limavady were not always easy.

As for Mr Lyons, there is no doubt that his ministry was marked by faithful preaching, vision, orderliness and compassion. He left the congregation in a position of numerical, financial and spiritual strength.

Conclusion

From the mid to late 1970s, after Mr Lyons, there is a perceptible change in both the composition of the congregation and in its outlook: less rural based, more people with third level education and probably a greater impetus for overt outreach work. This continues to the present day, though the rural membership remains strong.

Broadlane's contribution to the wider Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland is not insignificant:

- In total to date Limavady has produced 15 ministers for the RPCI – among the largest number of any congregation. Two others ministered entirely in America having emigrated in the eighteenth century. In William Martin it provided the first Irish minister of the Irish church.
- It seems to have been among the first to ordain deacons – in 1851. By 1898 the practice of electing a committee was beginning to be reintroduced and for over a century this remained the case. However, Synod in 1974 decided that congregations should revisit the subject, and in 2005, under Rev. Robert Robb, session took the decision to return to ordained deacons, the first of whom were installed in January 2006.
- It was among the first congregations to set up a CYPU (Covenanter Young People's Union) – in 1922 – and from three of its members came the idea of an annual CY Conference. This was held, not surprisingly, in Limavady in January 1923. In more recent times it has taken place in Portrush at the end of August.
- The congregation has a long association with the work of Church Camps, dating back to the 1940s and most especially since the 1970s. At least 34 members have served as cooks, officers, committee members or camp leaders, again, among the largest number of any congregation.
- Since the 1980s at least 6 students for the ministry have spent placements there.
- Members have also shown many years of dedicated service on a variety of other synodical committees – from WMA and Women's Fellowship to Congregational Aid, Missions, Holiday Convention and Relief Fund. This in addition to responsibilities in Broadlane itself as well as to the Western Presbytery, for that is the nature of committed church membership.

In the Limavady community Broadlane was the first congregation to hold annual Holiday Bible Clubs. These '5 day clubs' ran for over 30 years from 1984 and at their peak in the 1990s had well over 110 children on the roll. It was also among the first to hold 'Mums and Tots' as a form of outreach.

It has been remarked that all history is, in essence, 'local' history. It is also the case that a degree of inspiration can be drawn by modern readers from those in the past, living in very different circumstances to today, who sought to live out their Christian faith in very practical ways. This often includes ministers whose diligent, faithful and godly examples shine forth and whose influence continues to be felt down through the generations.

Sources and further reading

The above article is based on chapters from my 'BROADLANE – A History of Covenanters in Limavady and the Roe Valley 1760-2020' published in 2020. A much fuller list of sources and further reading may be found in it, including references to newspapers, session minutes and minutes of the Western Presbytery of the RPCI. Below are some more general works which may be of interest.

Douglas Bartlett, *An Illustrated History of Limavady (Leim an Mhadaidh) and the Roe Valley from Prehistoric to Modern Times* (2010)

T.C. Donachie, *Irish Covenanters, Politics and Society in the 19th Century* (2016)

Samuel Ferguson, *Brief Biographical Sketches of some Irish Covenanting Ministers* (1897)

William Melancthon Glasgow, *History of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in America* (1888)

Frank Leighton, *Frayed Lifelines, A Siege Survivor's Story* (2002), pp 123-4

Adam Loughridge, *The Covenanters in Ireland* (2nd ed. 1987)

William J. Roulston, *Foyle Valley Covenanters, A history of Bready Reformed Presbyterian Church 1765-2015* (2015)

David H.A. Wright, *Ballylaggan Reformed Presbyterian Church, Two Hundred and Fifty Years of Covenanter Witness in Bannside 1763-2013* (2014)

‘O BLESSED AND THRICE GLORIOUS LORD JESUS’. THOMAS GOODWIN (1600-1680) AND THE THREEFOLD GLORY OF THE SECOND PERSON OF THE TRINITY

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Introduction

Thomas Goodwin (1600-80) was an English Puritan pastor and theologian. He was ranked alongside John Owen (1616-83) as a principal leader of seventeenth century Independency, the two of them labelled by Anthony à Wood as ‘the two Atlases and patriarchs of independency.’[1]

Information regarding Goodwin’s life can be accessed in the two memoirs of his life found in the beginning of *Works* 2:vii-lxxv.[2] Since this article is concerned with Goodwin’s Christology it is appropriate to highlight from his memoirs Goodwin’s delight in Christ. His son remarks that following his father’s retirement from public life Goodwin studied primarily the Scriptures: ‘The love and free grace of God, the excellencies and glories of our Lord Jesus Christ, were the truths in which his mind soared with greatest delight.’[3]

In February 1680 Goodwin was seized by a fever which, after a few days, ended his life. In his dying hours he had ‘strength of faith and assurance of Christ’s love.’[4] He confessed, ‘Christ cannot love me better than he doth; I think I cannot love Christ better than I do.’[5] He died on 23 February 1680.

The Christ whose ‘excellencies and glories’ thrilled him, figures prominently in Goodwin’s theology. Indeed, he urged all fellow Christians ‘to have Jesus Christ continually in one’s eye, an habitual sight of him.’[6]

Thomas Goodwin discusses the glory belonging to the second Person of the Trinity under three headings. As he himself writes:

> And indeed Christ hath a threefold glory. The first essential, the same with God his Father, he the Son being co-equal to him, God of God, and very God. The second, belonging to his person, as now constituted God-man…Thirdly, The glory of his mediatorship acquired by himself.[7]

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[1] à Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, p.98.
[2] The first was written by Robert Halley, D.D., and the second by Goodwin’s son, Thomas Goodwin. This volume 2 is from *The Works of Thomas Goodwin*, 12 vols. (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1861-66, [Reprinted] Eureka, CA: Tanski Publications, 1996). Note: subsequent references to Goodwin in this article will be noted in the following format*: Shortened treatise title, Works* volume number: page number.
[3] *Memoir, Works* 2:lxxiv.
[4] *Memoir, Works* 2:lxxiv.
[5] *Memoir, Works* 2:lxxv.
[6] *Ephesians, Works* 2:411.
[7] *Knowledge, Works* 4:494.

This article attempts two goals. First, to give the contours of Goodwin's Christology and, second, to demonstrate that the personal glory of Christ is the centre of Goodwin's Christology. This will be followed by an analysis and critique.

The Essential Glory of the Second Person of the Trinity

Since the essential glory of Christ is foundational for Goodwin's discussion of Christ's personal and mediatorial glories, in our travel with Goodwin, this will be our first, although brief, port of call.

Goodwin's exposition of the divinity of the second person of the Trinity is entirely in harmony with the orthodoxy of the Reformed tradition. He states unequivocally that

> Christ is God; not as appearing only in the form of God, as some of late, or by office only, but God by nature; the right God, the true God, the great God, the only God, the living God.[8]

And if Jesus is the Son of God, 'then necessarily, in point of rational inference, he must be God essentially…If God begets a Son he must be God, the living true God.'[9]

Christ's essential glory is the fulness of perfections that is infinitely present in the Godhead. All the essential attributes of deity have been communicated to the eternally begotten Son by the Father. Furthermore, the Son, despite his becoming God-man and the Mediator of God's elect, loses none of his essential attributes though, being God, his essential glory is as invisible as God is.

In Goodwin's Christology, the Son's essential glory is the foundation of and prerequisite for his personal and mediatorial glories. Christ's essential glory as a person of the Trinity is the '*substratum* and foundation' of his glory as God-man[10] because in Jesus Christ 'dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.'[11]

The 'double glory'[12] of the God-man

As stated above, there is nothing particularly unique in Goodwin's exposition of the divine nature of the second person of the Godhead and his accompanying essential glory. When it comes to the glory of the God-man matters are somewhat more complex. The glory of the God-man is double, it is personal and mediatorial.

To make sense of Goodwin's exposition of the God-man's double glory we first must engage with his construction of the second person of the Trinity's assumption of a human nature. It is important to note that according to Goodwin this assumption occurs in two stages, which he calls, *elected* and *united*.[13] Goodwin argues that since Christ eternally existed, being the eternal Son of God, and since God's decrees are eternal, God's predestination of the second person of the Trinity to assume a human nature entails that from eternity the second person took 'on him the real title and repute of God-man,

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[8] *Knowledge, Works* 4:431.
[9] *Knowledge, Works* 4:431.
[10] *Knowledge, Works* 4:461.
[11] Col 2:9. As the Authorised Version is the Bible which Thomas Goodwin used, all subsequent Scripture references will be to this version.
[12] *Knowledge, Works* 4:493.
[13] See *Knowledge, Works* 4:488-493.

and sustain[ed] and bore the personage of God-man afore his Father.[14] Although Christ did not exist as God-man until his incarnation, from the moment he in eternity accepted the office of God-man he was constituted as the God-man. '[H]e was thenceforward God-man contracted, although the marriage was to be after consummated, when the Word took flesh.'[15]

That the second person is *considered* God-man from eternity undergirds Goodwin's Christological thinking at various steps. From all eternity the Father bestows on the second person of the Godhead a personal glory in addition to his essential glory as God.

In commenting on Paul's words in Colossians 1:15, 'Who is the image of the invisible God', Goodwin writes, '[T]here is a double image of God in Christ; the one *essential*, as he is second person; the other *manifestative*, as the glory of God shines in the face or person of Jesus Christ, as man.'[16] This manifestative, or personal, glory is distinct from the Christ's essential glory; it is also distinguished from the glory that accrues to Christ as the Mediator of God's elect. Christ's personal glory is 'abstracted from the work of redeeming us men from sins and wrath.'[17] Christ's personal glory is the glory of 'his person simply, considered as God-man.'[18]

To highlight Goodwin's position, it is helpful to contrast how Goodwin might interpret Paul's statement, 'For by him were all things created,'[19] to how Thomas Manton, a fellow Commissioner to the Westminster Assembly, would. Manton insists that Paul is not referring to the God-man who is a creature as to his humanity, but to his divine nature as the Creator of all things.[20] To make the contrast more pointed, where Goodwin, because in his schema the God-man is considered God-man from eternity, might say, 'By the God-man all things were created,' Manton would say, 'By God, the second person of the Trinity, *who would one day become the God-man*, all things were created.' Goodwin sees the second person having a distinct existence, a modality even, as God-man, before and apart from his incarnation in time.

This can also be illustrated, again by way of contrast to Manton, by Goodwin's exposition of John 17:5, 'And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory I had with thee before the world was.' What is the glory Christ had with the Father before creation? Manton's view is that Christ is praying that his divine nature will be more clearly manifested than it was during the incarnation (when it was obscured). He also prays that his human nature be 'raised to the full fruition of the glory of the divine nature, and freed from those infirmities to which, by the exigence of Christ's office upon earth it was subjected.'[21] What is noteworthy here is that although he can write, 'Christ had a double glory - the glory of his person, and the glory of his office'[22] - Manton does not abstract the glory of his person, as God-man, from the glory of his office in the way Goodwin does. Goodwin has Christ requesting that his Father give him the 'glory, which I the man had with thee in the idea of this glory, in the predestination of me, ordained unto me before the world.'[23] Christ is asking, according to Goodwin, for his personal glory as God-man, abstracted from his office as mediator, to be restored to its former lustre.

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[14] *Knowledge, Works* 4:489.
[15] *Knowledge, Works* 4:490.
[16] *Knowledge, Works* 4:462.
[17] *Knowledge, Works* 4:455.
[18] *Knowledge, Works* 4:493.
[19] Col. 1:16.
[20] Manton, *Christ's Eternal Existence*, 42.
[21] Manton, *'Sermons Upon John XVII'*, 186.
[22] Manton, *'Sermons Upon John XVII'*, 189.
[23] *Knowledge, Works* 4:484.

Goodwin's conclusions in these two passages of Scripture are grounded on the presupposition of the existence of the God-man, as God-man, prior to his actual incarnation. By contrast, Manton proceeds on the assumption that the second person of the Godhead, although foreordained from all eternity to become the God-man, has no personal glory as the God-man until his incarnation in time. In his view, before the incarnation, the only glory the Son of God had was his essential glory as a member of the Godhead. Goodwin posits a hard distinction between the personal and mediatorial glory of Christ such that Christ, as God-man, is seen abstracted from his mediatorial work. Goodwin bifurcates Christ's person and Christ's work.

One can observe a distinct and descending scale of glory within Goodwin's theology of the thrice glorious second person of the Trinity. (i) His essential glory is unsurpassed and cannot be added to or diminished. It is the foundation of and vastly superior to (ii) the glory Christ has as the God-man, ordained to be so from all eternity by the Father. Indeed, the glory Christ has as the God-man, his manifestative, or personal, glory, is but the reflection and effect of his essential glory and so inferior to the glory which the second person has in common with his Father.[24] In turn, that manifestative, or personal, glory is the precursor to and outshines (iii) the glory of the Lord Jesus as the Redeemer of his people.[25]

Thus for Goodwin, Christ has a threefold glory, one glory, essential, belonging to him as God, and then as God-man, possessing a 'double glory,'[26] personal and mediatorial. What is critical to note is that the personal glory of the God-man is distinct from the glory Christ has as Mediator. In fact, the God-man would have enjoyed this glory even if he had never been assigned the work of redemption in the *pactum salutis*.

What are the glories of the 'double glory' of the God-man?

In this section the double glory of the God-man will be explicated.

The God-man's Personal Glory

What makes the God-man, elected in eternity and united in time, glorious in his person? In Book III of *The Knowledge of God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ*[27] Goodwin addresses himself to 'the glory of [Christ's] person, and the relation thereof, simply considered and abstracted from the work of redeeming us men from sins and wrath.'[28] This glory of the God-man, is delineated in two ways as the glory 'inherent in him' and the glory 'adherent or appertaining to him.'[29]

A. Inherent Glory

The glory inherent in him is the glory Christ has by virtue of the hypostatic union between the second person of the Godhead and man. As such, Christ is the 'image of the invisible God' (Colossians 1:15)

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[24] *Knowledge, Works* 4:463.

[25] What is driving Goodwin here is not any desire to diminish the glory of Christ's work of redemption. He indeed speaks of it as a glory, but a glory that is 'superadded, over and above, unto the glory of his person, as God-man.' *Knowledge, Works* 4:493. He does not mean that it is a superior glory to Christ's personal glory but that it was in addition to his personal glory which is vastly superior. Rather than diminishing the mediatorial glory of Christ, Goodwin wishes to maximise Christ's personal glory as the God-man. He writes that the benefits of Christ's mediatorial work such as redemption and heaven which believers receive by faith 'are all far inferior to the gift of his person unto us, and much more to the glory of his person itself. His person is of infinite more worth than they all can be of.' *Ephesians, Works* 1:99.

[26] *Knowledge, Works* 4:493.

[27] *Knowledge, Works* 4:454-569.

[28] *Knowledge, Works* 4:454-5.

[29] *Knowledge, Works* 4:455.

and the attributes of the divine essence, which are invisible, are made visible in Christ. He argues that in this verse Paul is referring to Christ, not simply as second person of the Holy Trinity, but to Christ as the God-man. It could not be a reference to Christ as second person because '[t]he Godhead and person of Christ, considered simply as second person, is in himself as invisible as the Godhead, or person of the Father.'[30] In Christ, the God-man, we see 'an edition of the Godhead, in all the perfections of it'[31] though inferior to Christ's essential glory just as the rays of the sun are inferior to the sun itself.[32]

B. Adherent Glory

In contrast to Christ's inherent glory as God-man by virtue of the hypostatic union, there are also glories given to him, what Goodwin calls glory adherent to him, which are part of his personal glory.

First, Christ was decreed to be the God-man prior to all other decrees, that is, he was predestined as the God-man, absolutely.[33] The primary reason for the hypostatic union was the glory of Christ. Goodwin acknowledges that Christ was also chosen to be the God-man for the redemption of fallen humanity, but this was not God's first intention. 'Upon the glorifying this second Person did God's decree primarily pitch.'[34] What chiefly prompted the Father to ordain Christ to be the God-man? 'I say, it was Christ and the glory of his person.'[35]

Second, Goodwin insists from Colossians 1:16 that all things were created by Christ and 'for him.' Christ 'was set up as a universal end of the whole creation of God.'[36]

Goodwin offers an additional example of the personal glory of Christ as God-man. The backdrop here is God's intention to create anything at all. Goodwin says that two eminent ends for which God created all things are 'the manifestation of himself, and his glorious perfections to creatures reasonable, that they might glorify him,' and 'to shew his love, and communicate his goodness unto those creatures reasonable, which he would set himself to love.'[37]

Christ's glory is that he, even 'without the superadded project of redemption,'[38] is the highest possible manifestation of the glory of God, higher 'than if millions of several worlds had been created every day on purpose to reveal God to us.'[39] Further, in the union of the two natures in the God-man, God has shown his love and communicated his goodness in the highest possible way.

The God-man's Mediatorial Glory

Second, what makes the God-man, elected in eternity and united in time, glorious in his work? That is, what is the mediatorial glory of Christ?

In this section Christ's work of redemption in his office of Mediator will be explained, particularly as it intersects with Goodwin's perspective on the personal glory of the God-man.

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[30] *Knowledge, Works* 4:462.
[31] *Knowledge, Works* 4:462.
[32] *Knowledge, Works* 4:463.
[33] Goodwin is not attributing either temporality or a chronological order to the eternal decrees but rather a logical interconnectedness.
[34] *Ephesians, Works* 1:98.
[35] *Ephesians, Works* 1:100.
[36] *Knowledge, Works* 4:472.
[37] *Knowledge, Works* 4:477.
[38] *Knowledge, Works* 4:477.
[39] *Glory of the Gospel, Works* 4:232.

Christ's mediatorial glory has its source in the eternal *pactum salutis*.[40] Although mankind was created in a state of 'amity and friendship with God,'[41] their fall required reconciliation. God, who is rich in mercy, determined that some of those rebels should be restored to peace with him and has therefore sent his ambassadors throughout all ages with the message of reconciliation.[42] But how should he reconcile them? Goodwin argues that God could have pardoned rebels without requiring the satisfaction of his justice, and therefore that the atonement was not necessary.[43] However, since among other reasons, pardon without satisfaction 'would not manifest such depths of love'[44] and since God in his plan of reconciliation 'means to bring all his attributes upon the stage'[45] Christ was ordained to die.

The Mediator of God's elect, Goodwin insists, must be both God and man because only the God-man can bridge the distance between God and man and by his work bring the two parties together. Goodwin develops his understanding of the mediatorial work of Christ in terms of satisfaction, more specifically, the satisfaction of God's honour. Sin is an evil *against* God and a great dishonour *to* God[46] and satisfaction is compensating God for loss of honour, it is a restoration of honour. [47]

Goodwin anchors his discussion of Christ's satisfaction in Paul's words in Philippians,

> Who, being the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.[48]

Since the worth of the satisfaction depends on the worth of the person, Christ's work is of infinite value because he is an infinite person. However, keeping in mind that from eternity the second person is the God-man contracted, Goodwin does not move directly from the Son of God as he is the second person of the Trinity to his work as Mediator. Rather, he speaks of the fulness of the Godhead being personally communicated to the man Jesus and then this God-man, in his personal glory, accomplishing the work of satisfaction.

In order for Christ to exercise effectively the office of Redeemer, three components are necessary to make Christ's satisfaction actually satisfactory.

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[40] *Man's Restoration, Works* 7:540.
[41] *Christ the Mediator, Works* 5:3.
[42] *Christ the Mediator, Works* 5:4; *Ephesians, Works* 1:126.
[43] John Owen interacts with similar views to Goodwin's and comments that these views 'are very great absurdities…[and] it would have seemed strange to me that any men of judgment and orthodoxy should have been so entangled in some of these sophisms as to renounce the truth of their account, unless I had happened at one time myself to fall into the same snare.' *Divine Justice, Works,* vol. 10:508.
[44] *Christ the Mediator, Works* 5:15.
[45] *Christ the Mediator, Works* 5:16.
[46] 'But the greatest evil of sin lies in the injury by it done unto the honour, and sovereign glory, and to the person of God himself, which is the thing that makes sin so heinous…' *Christ the Mediator, Works* 5:103.
[47] Goodwin does not reference Anselm in this connection, but the early part of his discussion (Books 1-3) in *Christ the Mediator* certainly follows the contours of Anselm's dissertation, *Why God Became Man*. For example, Anselm writes, 'Thus [for a creature] to sin is the same thing as not to render his due to God. . . One who does not render this honor to God takes away from God what belongs to him, and dishonors God, and to do this is to sin.' *Why God Became Man*, p.119.
[48] Phil 2:6-8.

1. He must have an essential glory as God to give worth to his work.

2. He must additionally have a manifestative glory that is creaturely and unique to him and personal.

3. He must undergo an obscuring of his glory that is also an obscuring of his person.[49]

This is what Goodwin sees in Philippians 2:6-8. The God-man has an essential glory because he is God. He has, additionally, a manifestative glory that is creaturely and unique to him and personal. This Christ has in his predestination as God-man which was consummated in his incarnation. Goodwin sees Paul's statement that Christ was in the 'form of God' as a reference to his manifestative glory as the God-man.[50] [I]n this respect Christ God-man may be said in a safe sense to be 'equal with God,' as here in the text [Phil 2.6], not in essence, but in a communication of privileges.[51] Christ, having this personal glory, then has it obscured by, in that nature 'taking the form of a servant, humbling himself, being emptied, or of no reputation, and becoming obedient in his life, and this to the death of the cross, as being the last part of this payment.'[52]

Christ must be found in the 'same frail condition of passable nature that sinful man are found in' and seek not his own glory due to him as the God-man but be willing to have it obscured and veiled; indeed, 'robbed and spoiled of all manifestative glory whatsoever was due unto him' by the worst debasement possible, 'even the death of the cross' and willingly, that is, Christ must 'humble himself…and all this to the glory of God the Father.'[53]

Having thus retraced the condescension of the second person of the Trinity to be our Mediator, from God as God, to God-man, to God-man humiliated to the form of a servant, or, from essential glory as God, to the manifestative glory as the God-man, to the God-man robbed of his manifestative glory for the glory of his Father, Goodwin concludes:

> I appeal even to the justice that is in all men's hearts, if it doth not both equalise the dishonour done to God by sin, and also bring in a greater overplus of glory than was taken from God by it, and so make a full amends.[54]

Does Christ receive any glory from his work of redemption? No, if one means a change to Christ's essential glory. That can neither be diminished nor increased. No, if one means a change to Christ's personal glory. 'He hath not increased his personal glory by his own merits.'[55] However, 'there is a glory [which] shines out of his works of mediation, and a glory of his offices, which is additional to his personal glory due unto his person.'[56] That is, although all was done to the glory of God the Father, 'Christ hath a name above every name which we are to magnify and adore.'[57] In fact, Goodwin writes, 'the work of redemption itself was ordained principally for Christ's glory, more than for our salvation', and '[t]he plot of redemption therefore was subjected to the glory of Christ, and not Christ to it.'[58]

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[49] *Christ the Mediator, Works* 5:106.
[50] *Christ the Mediator, Works* 5:107.
[51] *Christ the Mediator, Works* 5:107.
[52] *Christ the Mediator, Works* 5:111.
[53] *Christ the Mediator, Works* 5:111.
[54] *Christ the Mediator, Works* 5:112.
[55] *Christ the Mediator, Works* 5:126.
[56] *Christ the Mediator, Works* 5:126.
[57] *Christ the Mediator, Works* 5:11.
[58] *Ephesians, Works* 1:100.

So what are those glories that make up Christ's mediatorial glory? Goodwin elucidates many including his uniqueness as the only mediator between God and man,[59] his victory over Satan[60] and his public display as victor in his ascension,[61] the presentation in heaven of his sacrifice accomplished on earth,[62] and that Christ is the only One in whose name Christians should pray.[63]

The Centrality of the Personal Glory of the God-Man

Goodwin does not spill much ink discussing the essential glory of the second person of the Trinity even though it is the '*substratum* and foundation' of his double glory as God-man.[64] Christ's essential glory is not the centre of Goodwin's Christology.

Neither is Christ's mediatorial glory the centre. Goodwin admits that the Bible speaks most about the mediatorial work of Christ but that is

> because our being miserable and sinful is that which is our present and immediate concern, which we are most solicitous about in this world, whilst we are sinners; yea, and continues our concern until we, by that final sentence and judgment passed at latter day, have them for ever declared and published to be forgiven.[65]

In the preceding passage one sees hints of where Goodwin's Christology leads. Christ's mediatorial work is the predominant focus of most Christians because our miserable and sinful state is our present and immediate concern. However, when that concern ends at the final judgement, the focus of the saints will be on the personal glory of the God-man. That personal glory is the centre of Goodwin's Christology.

To highlight this Goodwin asks and answers his own question.

> If you would ask, which of these two glories belonging to God-man are the greatest? Your own thoughts, I believe, have by this time cast and determined, that this of his personal glory doth infinitely exceed that of his mediatory glory.[66]

This section will demonstrate the pride of place given to Christ's personal glory which leads to the conclusion that this glory is the centre of Goodwin's Christology.

First, God ordained the hypostatic union chiefly for Christ's glory, not for the redemption of fallen humanity. 'Upon the glorifying this second Person did God's decree primarily pitch.'[67] What chiefly prompted the Father to ordain Christ to be the God-man? 'I say, it was Christ and the glory of his person.'[68]

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[59] *Revelation, Works* 3:15.
[60] *Christ the Mediator, Works* 5:296.
[61] *Christ the Mediator, Works* 5:307.
[62] *Christ Set Forth, Works* 4:60.
[63] *Ephesians, Works* 1:81.
[64] *Knowledge, Works* 4:461.
[65] *Of Election, Works* 9:98.
[66] *Knowledge, Works* 4:498.
[67] *Ephesians, Works* 1:98.
[68] *Ephesians, Works* 1:100.

Second, humanity is created for Christ, the God-man's, companionship. 'When one hath a son that is marriageable, he thinks of a wife, a companion for him; and thus the Father did for his Son, and chose the persons whom, and gave them him.'[69] This proposition hints at Goodwin's supralapsarian understanding of the order of the decrees.[70] To delineate the historical lapsarian positions is beyond the scope of this essay. It is enough to say that Goodwin does not consider himself a 'pure superlapsarian'.[71] He posits that God had two designs with regard to the elect. He first designed that they would have union and communion with the Trinity and then designed that they would fall into sin. Further, these two designs, first as unfallen and then as fallen, correlate to the two relations the elect have with Christ, the God-man. Referencing Ephesians 5:23[72] Goodwin asserts that Christ is head of the Church in God's consideration of the elect as unfallen, and that he is the Saviour in relation to those same elect now considered as fallen.[73]

Being head of the Church, considered as unfallen, multiplies the personal glory of Christ. Being the Saviour of the Church, considered as fallen, exalts the mediatorial glory of Christ. However, this mediatorial relation to the fallen Church is secondary to his relation to them as head. Goodwin's language intimates this. The 'first' plot relates the elect to Christ as head; the 'after' plot to him as Redeemer.[74] The second relation is 'subordinate and subserving the other.'[75] Christ redeems the elect in order that God's first intention might stand, that the God-man might have companions for his glory.

Third, we see the primacy of Christ's personal glory with respect to Adam and the Covenant of Works. Goodwin insists that Adam could not have obtained eternal life by his obedience. The reward Adam was promised was the continuation of the happy life he enjoyed in paradise as long as he continued obedient. Spiritual life, on the other hand, is only the gift of God through Jesus Christ.

In terms of Goodwin's Christology it is important to note the way he employs Adam as a type to explain both Christ's personal and mediatorial glory. Adam, postlapsarian, is a type of Christ vis-a-vis his work of redemption. Paul uses this Adam/Christ, type/antitype in Romans 5. But in terms of Christ conveying to us the heavenly life, Goodwin states that this is the antitype of Adam in his prelapsarian innocence. 'But then, in that other work, his bestowing upon us that spiritual and heavenly condition of life, in a conformity to his own personal glory…in this, Christ had for his type Adam's estate and condition before his fall.'[76]

This means that for Goodwin, the elect's translation to glory depends not so much on Christ's death but on his person.[77] Goodwin's intention is not to diminish the importance of Christ's mediatorial work but to put it in its proper place relative to the person of Christ. The work of Christ was to remove 'the impediment [to] this their first intended glory.'[78] For Goodwin, Christ's personal glory is chief. Even an unfallen Adam required a God-man to bring him to the eternal state of glory.

Fourth, Goodwin distinguishes between grace the elect receive by virtue of union with Christ's person and grace the elect receive based on Christ's work. In his discussion of Ephesians 1:4-9 he states that

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[69] *Knowledge, Works* 4:501.
[70] He addresses this in a number of places, most significantly in *An Exposition of the First Chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians* (*Ephesians*, *Works* 1:1-564) and in his treatise entitled *Of Election* (*Of Election*, *Works* 9:1-498).
[71] Goodwin employs the term *superlapsarian* for *supralapsarian*.
[72] For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.
[73] *Of Election, Works* 9:344.
[74] *Ephesians, Works* 1:118.
[75] *Ephesians, Works* 1:118.
[76] *Of the Creatures, Works* 7:87.
[77] Cf. *Of the Creatures, Works* 7:50; *Of the Creatures, Works* 7:87.
[78] *Of the Creatures, Works* 7:87.

holiness, adoption, and acceptance with God were God's first intention for the elect, considered as unfallen, and could have been conferred even if humanity had not sinned. They are grounded on Christ's person, not on his mediatorial labours. Then there are other blessings that the elect, considered as fallen, receive because of Christ's work. Redemption, justification, and calling 'are three other blessings, founded upon our relation to Christ through his *merits*.'[79]

What this means is that Christ's redemptive work was remedial, to restore to the elect, now fallen, what they had virtually because of union with Christ the head. Goodwin's elevation of the person of Christ over his work can be observed in this comment in the context of the double gift of Christ to his elect, both as Head and Saviour, where he writes: 'whereof the gift of him as of a Redeemer to us is of the two the least.'[80]

Fifth, we gain some insight into Goodwin's understanding of the priority of Christ's personal glory by looking at what he says regarding Christ's mediatorial or dispensatory kingdom. Goodwin makes a distinction between the dominion that Christ has as he is God, and by extension, what he by natural inheritance has as the God-man, on the one hand, and the reign he exercises as the Mediator between God and his Church on the other. Christ's relationship to the Church as Mediator is temporary. When his work of mediation is fully ended after the day of judgement, 'when sins shall finally be forgiven, and then for ever forgotten,'[81] Christ will give up his mediatorial kingdom and reign over that kingdom he had as God and as God-man, 'abstracted from the consideration of this world, or what we were, or Christ as Redeemer for us therein.'[82] The personal glory of Christ eclipses the glory of his mediatorial work even as his eternal kingdom eclipses his mediatorial reign.

Finally, Goodwin's conception of the beatific vision further underscores that Christ's personal glory, as abstracted from his mediatorial glory, is chief in his Christology. What will the saints view in heaven after the day of judgement and the laying down of Christ's mediatorial kingdom? Clearly, in answer to Christ's prayer in John 17:24, the glory of Christ. But what aspects or dimensions of Christ's threefold glory will they view? When the eternal state dawns

> then will the person of Christ, God-man, as the glory of the Godhead, shining and communicating itself to us, through that human nature the Godhead dwells in, be set forth to us, to entertain us for ever with the sight of the glory of God in the face of Christ…And that face will make a heaven to us when redemption shall be forgotten, through the present glory viewed and possessed, and sins remembered no more; but the glory of God, and the personal glory of the Lamb, shall be our light and happiness for ever.[83]

It has now been shown from a variety of perspectives that Goodwin elevates the personal glory of the God-man above his mediatorial glory, and his person above his work. He is able to do so, in part, because he conceives of Christ receiving his personal glory in two stages: (i) At his appointment to and acceptance of the office of God-man, and, (ii) at the actual incarnation. This, in turn, enables Goodwin to posit Christ having a relationship with the elect apart from his mediatorial work on their behalf. Christ is the head of the elect (considered as unfallen) before he becomes the Saviour of the same elect (considered as fallen). The primacy of Christ as head of the elect and their relation to his Person in eternity past, as God's first design regarding the elect, also becomes the primary focus in

[79] *Ephesians, Works* 1:114 (emphasis original).
[80] *Ephesians, Works* 1:121.
[81] *Of Election, Works* 9:99.
[82] *Of Election, Works* 9:99.
[83] *Knowledge, Works* 4:565-566.

eternity future when the elect will gaze on the personal glory of the God-man, as abstracted from his mediatorial glory.

Analysis and Critique of Goodwin's Christology

Having outlined the contours of Goodwin's Christology it is appropriate to end with a brief analysis and critique of his thought. It has been demonstrated that Goodwin's Christology bears a distinctive characteristic. While others, along with Goodwin, speak of the essential, personal, and mediatorial glory of Christ, in Goodwin's proposal, there is a hard distinction between the double glory of the God-man, his personal and mediatorial glory. As a result Goodwin is able to theologise about the personal glory of the God-man *apart from his mediatorial glory*. Furthermore, this personal glory is the centre of his Christology, the most prominent glory of the second person of the Trinity.

The way into an analysis is to look at Goodwin's interaction with the question, 'Why the incarnation?' Although Goodwin never designates the Christology of the Medieval Scholastic, John Duns Scotus, as an influence on his own, he describes him as 'the wisest of [the school-men]'[84] and echoes of Scotus's work appear in Goodwin's. Most significantly for our purposes, Scotus's insistence that the incarnation should not be thought of primarily as a response to the fall parallels Goodwin's formulation of the personal glory of Christ.

When, in his exposition of Ephesians, Goodwin entertains the hypothetical question of what would have happened if humanity had not fallen, he writes that he does not, and dares not, affirm that Christ would have become incarnate.[85] However in *Of the Creatures, and the Condition of their State by Creation,*[86] he states that though in the course of events Christ actually did take human likeness and frail humanity, being born of a woman, 'yet in God's primary intention, his chief and primary decree, his eye and first aim was at his Son's having such a state and condition in his human nature as he hath now in heaven glorified.'[87] That is to say, had there been no fall, the incarnation would have taken place in some other (undesignated) way. As Goodwin says elsewhere, Christ's due as God-man, 'was to have had a glorified nature, such as now he hath in heaven.'[88] Goodwin's conviction that Christ's incarnation was not chiefly for human redemption but for the glory of the God-man appears repeatedly throughout his corpus wherever he discusses the reason for the incarnation.

Calvin and the Incarnation

Goodwin expresses a great deal of respect for Calvin, referring to him as 'holy and most judicious'[89] and as 'a man of so great a judgment.'[90] However, he does not share Calvin's restraint regarding the reason for the incarnation. There is what Derek Thomas terms, '[t]he problematic statement'[91] in Calvin, 'Even if man had remained free from all stain, his condition would have been too lowly for

[84] *Ephesians, Works* 2:272.
[85] *Ephesians, Works* 1:99.
[86] *Of the Creatures, Works* 7:1-128.
[87] *Of the Creatures, Works* 7:74.
[88] *Knowledge, Works* 4:559.
[89] *Of the Blessed State, Works* 7:358.
[90] *Of Election, Works* 9:93.
[91] Thomas, *A Theological Guide*, 209.

him to reach God without a Mediator.'[92] Calvin, however, does not linger long on that hypothesis but immediately speaks of humanity 'plunged by his mortal ruin into death and hell'[93] and therefore needing a redemptive mediator. The human need for redemption is the soil in which Calvin plants the incarnation. He rejects 'the vague speculations that captivate the frivolous and the seekers after novelty' particularly the speculation that 'Christ would still have become man even if no means of redeeming mankind had been needed.'[94] Calvin does not suggest that the fall of Adam is to be presupposed as the reason for the predestination of Christ as Head and Redeemer,[95] but he is unwilling to go beyond the explicit statements of the Scriptures.

> It is quite enough for me to say that all those who propose to inquire or seek to know more about Christ than God ordained by his secret decree are breaking out in impious boldness to fashion some new sort of Christ.[96]

Thus for Calvin the issue is not whether the Scriptures *refute* the view held by Osiander[97] that Christ would have taken human form if Adam had not fallen.[98] The proper question is, rather, what do the Scriptures *positively teach*? On this basis, for Calvin, the person and work of Christ must never be bifurcated. '[W]henever Christ is mentioned we should not in the least depart from the grace of reconciliation.'[99] 'In short, the only reason given in Scripture that the Son of God willed to take our flesh…is that he would be a sacrifice to appease the Father on our behalf.'[100] Calvin insists that the Word of God limits our theological positions. For that reason he does not present the predestination of Christ as God-man without the consideration of the fall into sin.

Owen and the Incarnation

This same discretion is seen in John Owen, Goodwin's friend and colleague at Oxford University. Owen's engagement with the question of the reasons for the incarnation is found in his *Exercitations on the Epistle to the Hebrews,* particularly Exercitation XXVI where he addresses the origin of the priesthood of Christ.[101] He begins by stating that the priesthood of Christ was not ordained by God with respect to man in the state of innocency thus linking Christ's priesthood with human sinfulness. He opposes the views of the Schoolmen and Osiander who, while acknowledging the pre-existence of the Son of God also affirm that the incarnation would have happened had sin not entered the world.[102] He further mentions that Osiander revived this position but was opposed by Calvin, among others. He then takes up the Socinians before returning to interact with the view of the Schoolmen and Osiander.

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[92] John Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.12.1. John Owen states that even if the angels and men had persisted in their sinlessness the Son of God would 'have been the immediate head and ruler of angels and men…for the representation of God unto them, as the cause and end of their being, the object and end of their worship and service, should have been in and by his person, as the image of the Father, and by and through him they should have received all the communications of God unto them.' *Works,* Vol. 18:34. Here Owen seems to capture Calvin's intention. Where he differs from Goodwin is that Owen sees this as being true of the Son of God in his pre-incarnate state, essentially considered, that is, the Son of God 'was the essential and eternal image of the Father antecedent unto all consideration of his incarnation.' *Works*, Vol. 18:33.
[93] *Institutes*, 2.12.1.
[94] *Institutes*, 2.12.4.
[95] *Institutes*, 2.12.5.
[96] *Institutes*, 2.12.5.
[97] Andreas Osiander (1498-1552) was a German Lutheran theologian.
[98] *Institutes*, 2.12.5
[99] *Institutes*, 2.12.5.
[100] *Institutes*, 2.12.4.
[101] Owen, *Works*, Vol. 18:14-42.
[102] Owen, *Works*, Vol. 18:21.

Owen feels the need to refute this position, although it had already been refuted by others, because 'some are still of this judgment, or seem to be.'[103] Without citing Goodwin, he summarises the very view held by Goodwin on the person of the God-man considered apart from his mediatorial work. He concludes that to posit an incarnation without respect to redemption is both '*unwritten . . . contrary to what is written…*and*…destitute of any solid spiritual reason* for the confirmation of it.'[104]

Goodwin and Speculation

What one observes in both Calvin and Owen is an aversion to speculation. Goodwin does not share that aversion. He admits that the Scriptures speak primarily about the mediatorial glory of Christ '*though they are not altogether silent in the other*, and thereby call and draw our thoughts and intentions most fixedly thereupon'.[105] Additionally, when discussing the Beatific Vision he acknowledges that his insistence that the saints will see the personal, not the mediatorial, glory of the God-man the 'gospel treats not of, but only hints; we discern it but by collecting what glory must needs be due to that man in whom the fulness of the Godhead personally dwells.'[106]

In Goodwin's Christology we see a hard distinction between the person of the God-man and his work as Redeemer. However, Goodwin's grounds for this assertion are not rooted in biblical exegesis but in human reasoning. It is not the explicit teaching of Scripture and, although it might not be contrary to the Scripture, neither is it deducible by such good and necessary consequence from Scripture as to compel faith. There is within Goodwin a speculative tendency. His bifurcation of the person and work of Christ is not both a good and necessary consequence that can be deduced from Scripture. Here Goodwin moves beyond exposition to speculation. The only incarnation the Scripture treats of is the one that actually occurred when 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners' (1 Timothy 1:15). To posit a different incarnation other than the one the Bible presents is to speculate.

Appreciating Goodwin

In contrast to other theological giants within Reformed orthodoxy, there is an unhealthy speculative strand in Goodwin's Christology. However much it ought to be criticised, it is salutary to note that his view on the absolute predestination of Christ as God-man is not ultimately fatal, either to his Christology or the pastoral usefulness of his theology. It is a strand that runs through his corpus but not a strand that if tugged on would unravel his life's work.

Goodwin's commitment to Scripture saves his speculative elements from rendering a fatal wound to his Christology. Although at times his thought is clearly speculative, he nevertheless recognises that the Scriptures speak primarily of Christ's mediatorial work, [107] although not silent on his personal glory, and therefore his mediatorial work should take up most of believers' thoughts. Goodwin in fact follows this sage advice and the bulk of his work deals with humanity as fallen into sin and with Christ as the sole Mediator of God's elect.

To say that Goodwin's insistence that Christ was absolutely predestined as the God-man is not ultimately fatal to his Christology and pastoral usefulness perhaps does not convey the encomium his

[103] Owen, *Works*, Vol. 18:21.
[104] Owen, *Works*, Vol. 18:22 (emphasis original).
[105] *Of Election, Works* 9:98 (emphasis added).
[106] *Glory of the Gospel, Works* 4:267.
[107] *Of Election, Works* 9:98.

work deserves. Despite the reservations noted above, our examination of Goodwin's treatment of the threefold glory of Christ has set in sharp relief the multifaceted glory of the second person of the Holy Trinity, and specifically the glory of his person. The eternal Son of God, who as God has an essential glory, has, by God's decree, assumed a human nature and, now and forever, the glory of God has become visible in the God-man. Christ, the God-man, has all the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him bodily. We owe a debt to Goodwin for drawing our attention to, and drawing out our adoration for, the magnificence of Christ's person. As Jones writes, 'He, more than perhaps any of his British contemporaries, had an intense focus on the glory of the God-man, Jesus Christ.'[108]

In addition, Goodwin's emphasis that this second person of the Trinity, who is glorious in himself as God, and who has a super-added glory as the God-man, also has an additional glory as the Mediator of God's elect is salutary. Undoubtedly his Christology and pastoral theology would have been strengthened if he had more closely linked the person and work of the God-man, that is, if he had highlighted that the God-man has no glory as God-man except that he is God-man *and* Redeemer of God's elect.[109] But it would be both unwarranted and ill-advised to neglect the immense contribution Thomas Goodwin makes to our understanding of Jesus Christ. For his Christology has constantly in view the goal of doxology, and that the whole church should share in his own heart-felt ascription:

> Even so be it, O blessed and thrice glorious Lord Jesus; to whom be glory for ever. Amen.[110]

[108] Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*, 159.

[109] Warfield acknowledges that there are elements of truth in differing accounts of the incarnation but state they should not be studied atomistically or independent of each other. He writes: 'Rather, they form parts of one closely concatenated sphere of truth, the center of which lies in the soteriological Incarnation of the Bible; and it is only as each finds its proper place as a segment of the great sphere of truth formed about that constitutive face, that it possesses any validity, or even indeed reaches to the height of its own idea.' *The Principle of the Incarnation*, 143.

[110] *Knowledge, Works* 4:456.

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CALVIN AS PASTOR IN HIS COMMENTARIES A FEW REMARKS

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1. The Reformation, pastoral care, and Calvin

On occasion one reads observations on the neglect of consideration of the pastoral richness of the Reformation in contemporary theological reflection on pastoral care. Two examples suffice: Gerhard Gronauer[1] in 2001 and twenty years later, Stephan van der Watt[2]. They also offer reasons and causes for this observation. However, supplementary to their conclusions, another explanation may be suggested: could it be that we have a general encyclopaedic problem, namely the separation of so-called practical theology (of which pastoral care is a part) from biblical, systematic, and historical theology?

Given Calvin's importance – both for his role as instrument in the hand of the Lord, and also for the value of the literature that flowed from his pen – it could yet be a bit risky that we, in Reformed circles, are so completely and constantly under the impression and conviction of both the perpetual value and contribution of the inheritance left by him, Calvin, to the church of Christ throughout all subsequent centuries that we no longer give enough attention to the primary sources in order to exploit the richness of biblical exegesis regarding important theological themes. Hence this article intends to explore some texts from commentaries and a few other writings by Calvin concerning pastoral care.

2. A pastoral intention – especially with regard to the training of pastor

Many of us would not need much convincing when it comes to the value of Calvin's commentaries both for ourselves and for the churches within which we serve. While Calvin's work can be read with great appreciation by all believers, it is perhaps of particular importance to those who preach the Lord's Word and those training to do so in the near future.

In this regard, the facts speak for themselves: Calvin's focus from the beginning was to move normal people to use Scripture,[3] so that they may come to understand it, and so that the spreading of the gospel may be facilitated by his work in this way. The *Institutes,* which is widely regarded as his most famous and most important work, saw the light for the same reason. From the outset, with the authoring of the first version of his *Institutes* in 1535, the primary issue for Calvin was the correct interpretation of Scripture and the equipping and guidance of ordinary believers in arriving at such correct

[1] Gerhard Gronauer, 'Reformatorische Pastoral- und Seelsorgelehre im Vergleich. Zwinglis »Der Hirt« (1524) und Bucers »Von der wahren Seelsorge« (1538)', Hg. Thomas Schirrmacher (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2002), pp.95-142.

[2] Stéphan van der Watt, 'Wholehearted Commitment to Sound Pastoral Theology and Care. What Martin Bucer and John Calvin can teach today's Pastors', (CTJ 56.2, 2021), pp.231-263.

[3] Vgl. Wulfert de Greef, *Johannes Calvijn – zijn werk en geschriften*, (Kampen, 1989), p.81.

interpretation. This is clearly a pastoral intention. Calvin's interpretation and understanding of Scripture makes up the bulk of the literature that he produced, and from the second version of his *Institutes* onward he specifically placed his focus on the theological student. The introduction to all the subsequent versions confirms this. Calvin states among other things in his 1539 version's 'Letter to the Reader' (*Iohannes Calvinus Lectori*):

> ...it has been my purpose in this labor to prepare and instruct candidates in sacred theology for the reading of the divine Word, in order that they may be able both to have easy access to it and to advance in it without stumbling. For I believe I have so embraced the sum of religion in all its parts, and have arranged it in such an order, that if anyone rightly grasps it, it will not be difficult for him to determine what he ought, especially to seek in Scripture, and to what end he ought to relate its contents. If, after this road has, as it were, been paved, I shall publish any interpretations of Scripture, …[4]

What Calvin writes here is even more interesting when one considers that,

> [T]hese words appeared in the second edition of the Institutes, published in August 1539, and thus before Calvin's first Scripture commentary (Romans), which was dictated October 18,1539, and published in 1540.[5]

3. Calvin as pastor in his commentaries

This takes us to the subject of *Calvin as pastor in his commentaries*. The focus therefore is to illuminate Calvin as *pastor* or *shepherd* – thus his ministry through pastoring – as well as his pastoral work as it comes to the fore in his writing, especially in his commentaries.[6]

Obviously, Calvin's pastoral care cannot and should not be separated from the preceding Reformation. As a Dutch theologian[7] (Henk van der Meulen) stated in 2019:

> The classical protestant approach to pastoral care has its origin in the Reformation. This reformation movement is not to be seen as loose from its prehistory and the traditions of the Middle Ages that it absorbed into itself (pastoral care, confession of sins, parish), but is essentially pastoral by nature. The renewal of church and theology wishes to serve by acting as a tilting juncture which can be grasped by him who is searching, particularly for salvation of the soul. The Reformation brings it to the fore that this steadfastness is singularly to be found in the gospel of God's grace, which was preached publicly and discussed personally. For this reason, the preaching and pastoral work were considered inseparable from one another by the Reformers. The intimate bond between preaching and pastoral work in various forms remained primary up until [the 20th century …when] the kerygmatic pastoral approach of Eduard Thurneysen became the leading approach. Until the sixties of the

[4] OS III,6,18-26. (Cf. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (translated by Ford Lewis Battles), *The Library of Christian Classics*, (ed.) John T. McNeil, Vol. XX. (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1960), pp.4-5.
[5] Footnote 4 in Battles' translation of Calvin's letter to the reader in his *Institutes* (Battles, 1960), p.5.
[6] One could also have discussed the subject of Calvin as teacher or doctor, with reference, for instance, to his exegesis and his view of 'building the church'. With such a focus, however, the subject matter would have consisted of Calvin's role as teacher, as the one who teaches particularly in his commentaries.
[7] Cf. Henk van der Meulen, 2019, *Herderlijke zorg. Een profiel van het klassiek protestantse pastoraat*, https://www.theologie.nl/artikelen/pastoraat/herderlijke-zorg-een-profiel-van-het-klassiek-protestantse-pastoraat/ (accessed on June 30, 2023).

> previous century pastoral work in our country [The Netherlands] was first and foremost ministry of the Word…

The perspective that I outline – that of looking to Calvin as pastor or shepherd – is, of course, not in itself a new approach within the broader field of Calvin research. Over and above the many articles[8] and contributions in collective works that discuss this issue, various books such as those by D. Wilhelm Kolfhaus (already in 1941),[9] by Jean-Daniel Benoit[10] in French (also translated into Dutch)[11] and the more recent by Randall C. Zachman (2006) in American English[12] have been published, all with Calvin as shepherd or pastor indicated in the title of the book. In the case of Kolfhaus and Benoit the entire content of their books is taken up with this topic.

Nevertheless, even though the subject of Calvin as pastor is neither original nor new, it may invite mild disagreement, as his *commentaries* do not immediately suggest themselves as a catalyst for conversation on this particular matter. We may be tempted to ask if it is not slightly far-fetched to say that Calvin can be held up as a shepherd from the text of his own commentaries.

Although Benoit in standard work on Calvin's view on pastoral care mainly analysed Calvin's letters, he quotes on his title page from Calvin's commentary on 1 Thess. 3:10. This may provide an answer to those who would deem this approach (from Calvin's commentaries) to be farfetched. In this quote Calvin states that the teachers ('les Docteurs') not only have the task to bring people 'to faith in Christ within one day or one month, but also that they must *bring this faith which has started to its completion*' (my emphasis).[13] This reference to ministers or teachers regarding their role as shepherds or pastors is clear.

Our attention must now be diverted to focus on the following areas:

1. Other fields or areas, as indicated in recent research, where Calvin's pastoral role comes to the fore;

2. the place of Calvin's commentaries within his broader oeuvre;

3. remarks regarding Calvin's view of pastoral work in a selection of his commentaries.

3.1. Other fields highlighting Calvin's pastoral role

Calvin's role as pastor has been discussed in several academic subsections of Calvin research.[14] It has also been addressed in recent publications – unfortunately not from primary sources in many instances. Nonetheless, it will be of some value to briefly list some of these fields:

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[8] Cf. Shawn D. Wright, 'John Calvin as Pastor' (SBJT 13.4, 2009), pp.4-17; Reijer J. de Vries, 'Individueel pastoraat bij Calvijn', (TR *Theologia Reformata* 54.1, 2011), pp.43; Stéphan van der Watt, 'Re-appreciating the significance of historical perspectives and practices of reformed pastoral theology and care today' (STJ 4.2, 2018), pp.753-774; Van der Watt (2021).

[9] D. Wilhelm Kolfhaus, *Die Seelsorge Johannes Calvins* (Neukirchen: Erziehungsverein Neukirchen, 1941).

[10] Jean-Daniel Benoit, *Calvin, directeur d'âmes* (Strasbourg: Oberlin, 1947).

[11] Jean-Daniel Benoit, *Calvijn als zielzorger*, translated by A.J.A. Mondt-Lovink, (Nijkerk: G.F. Callenbach, s.a.).

[12] Randall C. Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher, Pastor, and Theologian. The Shape of His Writings and Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006).

[13] It's the case in Benoit's original French publication (1947) as well as in the Dutch version (s.a.).

[14] Cf. e.g., Wright (2009).

- Calvin gave a lot of attention to the development of a church order and emphasised the need of such a church order with particular pastoral consequences.

- Following on from the previous point, Calvin's attention to liturgical aspects (think for instance of the comprehensive reformation of the marriage ceremony) and especially his role in importing and adapting the Psalms for use during church services has in and of itself a pastoral character.

- The emphasis that Calvin gave to the catechising of youth as well as of adults, comprising everything from the content and structure to the curation of the *Geneva Catechism,* is further evidence of his pastoral concern. All these aspects cannot but clearly indicate Calvin's pastoral approach to everyday matters of ministry, partly under the influence of Martin Bucer.[15]

- Furthermore, the theme of shepherdship or pastoral care comes strongly to the fore in Calvin's comprehensive and extensive correspondence, wherein his pastoral approach and nurturing nature shines through.[16] (Mention must be made of the thorough handling of this correspondence by Benoit, who delivered probably the most important contribution on the matter in the 20th century.)

- Calvin's untiring dedication to his preaching takes up a central position in our understanding of his life and work – but this probably goes without saying. It is noteworthy, however, that upon reading Calvin's sermons one comes to a deeper impression of the pastoral dimensions that these sermons took on. He climbed up the pulpits of Geneva more than 4000 times;[17] for long stretches of time, he preached every day of the week, and in most cases, he preached twice on a Sunday. His successor in Geneva, Theodore Beza, writes that very serious illness and exceptional circumstances were the only reasons that withheld Calvin from preaching. It is therefore no overstatement to say that Calvin's preaching is one of the main fields where his pastoral approach and character are manifestly clear.[18]

- Various of Calvin's theological treatises, such as his answer to Sadoleto and his treatise regarding the Holy Communion, were written with internal structures presenting a pastoral character.

- It must also be mentioned that Calvin's magnum opus, the *Institutes*, had a pastoral goal in and of itself, a theme on which Wright (2009) provides further elucidation. We need only look at Calvin's letter to King Francis I of France, which already testifies to this approach in the 1536 edition (written in 1535) of this work.

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[15] Cf. Matthieu Arnold, 'Strasbourg', in Herman J. Selderhuis (ed.) *Calvin Handbook*, (Grand Rapid, MI: Eerdmans), pp.38-41, specifically p.40.

[16] Paul Fields, 'Letters', in Herman J. Selderhuis (ed.) *Calvin Handbook*, (Grand Rapid, MI: Eerdmans), p.10:
'Calvin's more than 1,200 extant letters are useful for understanding him as in individual, pastor., and counsellor as he dealt with personal issues, analyzed events around him, and advised colleagues and leaders concerning spiritual matters.'

[17] Wim Moehn, 'Sermons', in Herman J. Selderhuis (ed.), *Calvin Handbook*, (Grand Rapid, MI: Eerdmans), pp.173-181.
Cf. also T.H.L. Parker, *Calvin's Preaching* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992).

[18] Cf. Éric Kayayan, 'Exhortation in Calvin's sermon on 2 Timothy 3:16-17' (*Koers – Bulletin for Christian Scholarship* 66.1&2, 2001), pp.39-51.
Cf. also the second chapter of Parker (1992) with a whole discussion on Calvin's ‚Pastoral Intention' (pp.8-16).

- We can add to this list by mentioning the weekly gathering of the preacher's colleagues, which had an inherent pastoral character. (This happened on Fridays during the *Congrégations*.)

- New research regarding the minutes of the church (city) council[19] has surfaced during the last decade or two and shows how immensely sympathetic Calvin was in his pastoral approach to members of the congregation; this is in direct opposition to the cliché which is still believed and sold for truth that he was a tyrant.[20] This perspective on the example that Calvin set for colleagues and the faithful in Geneva (as well as in Strasbourg) was actually mentioned 80 years ago (i.e. by Ernst Pfisterer[21] and Kolfhaus, 1914, but has unfortunately been neglected by English speaking authors).

- Another aspect which has been researched many a time by Calvin scholars and which has given rise to the publication of many studies is that of his 'humanitas'[22] which we might translate as 'sympathetic humaneness' (or sometimes 'humanity').

But what about his commentaries?

3.2. The place of Calvin's commentaries within his broader oeuvre

The bulk of the 59 thick books that are the contents of the CO (*Calvini Opera* – his collected works) with various *supplementa* (additional edition volumes**),** is made up of different volumes of Calvin's interpretation of Scripture. It is necessary, however, to differentiate between three different types or genres of text that have all become known as 'commentaries'.

> Firstly, there are those publications that were meant to be *commentaries* by Calvin, which were edited by Calvin himself before publication. This means, technically speaking and from Calvin's own point of view, they are his only commentaries.
>
> Secondly, there are those publications that consist of notes that were taken by persons who were present at *lectures* delivered by Calvin, the so-called *lectiones*. In most cases Calvin did not edit or even look at these notes before they were published. (It must be kept in mind that his very first position in Geneva as a young man of just 26 was to host lectures about the interpretation of Scripture – hence 'lectures'.)
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> Thirdly, there are those publications that, while they were aimed at interpreting or commenting on Scripture, were not originally authored to be commentaries, but were preached orally and then written down as *sermons* (later by persons officially appointed by the city of Geneva for this purpose). As was the case with notes of his lectures, Calvin barely had the time or opportunity to even read these sermons before publication, much less to edit them.

With regard to the subject under discussion, we shall refer only to those commentaries by Calvin which were initially written by him to be used as such: those which he painstakingly wrote down and

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[19] Cf. Kingdon's work in this regard, e.g. Robert Kingdon, (ed.), *Registers of the Consistory of Geneva in the Time of Calvin, Vol. 1: 1542-1544* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).
[20] Cf. Volker Reinhardt, *Die Tyrannei der Tugend: Calvin und die Reformation in Genf* (München: C.H. Beck, 2016).
[21] Ernst Pfisterer, *Calvins Wirken in Genf* (Essen: Lichtweg-Verlag, 1940).
[22] Cf. i.a. Christian Link, *Johannes Calvin – Humanist, Reformator, Lehrer der Kirche* (Zürich, TVZ, 2009).

personally edited for publication; those which he dedicated to a particular person of prominence and influence, rounded off with an appropriate and measured preface.

This brings us to the chief focus of this contribution: a few observations and remarks on John Calvin as pastor in his commentaries. In this regard I am deliberately not focusing on the sermons which would have been aimed at layfolk in the congregation, including religious refugees and illiterate adults. While the Reformation was the drive behind the construction of many schools, Calvin would have preached to many who did not have the ability to read. I am also deliberately not focusing on Calvin's readings and lectures about books of the Bible aimed at students, many of whom would have been young boys in their teens. The focus here will be some of the official commentaries, as discussed above – those prepared and edited by John Calvin to be used as such.

3.3. Calvin as pastor in his commentaries – some notes

When reading Calvin's commentaries, it is wise to differentiate between various levels or elements in the text.

The main target audience would have been the theologically educated academics both from within and without the boundaries of Geneva, which explains why these commentaries were first published in Latin, the language of general academic work in Europe at the time. However, other interested church members would have been included by means of translations of Calvin's commentaries, which were almost immediately made available in French. Seen in this light, we can now observe a similar phenomenon regarding the pastoral value of Calvin's commentaries to that which has been observed regarding his role as missionary.[23] This phenomenon is that Calvin used his commentaries to equip and empower other pastors (ministers) for their pastoral work within the local congregations where they served. In taking this approach to interpreting and illuminating Scripture, Calvin ensured that he could give pastoral tools to pastors and even elders far beyond his geographical reach, and as we now know, well beyond his own lifetime.

Increasingly then, the pastoral character of his commentaries can be seen. For Calvin the main focus is knowledge of God and knowledge of ourselves, as is also the case from the very first sentence of his *Institutes*. Mankind, illuminated by the light of the Word, in relationship with the Lord – present with the Father, in Christ, through the Spirit – stands front and centre for Calvin in his interpretation. This can naturally be seen in his commentaries.

In this regard, Calvin's commentaries on the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) are very insightful. In terms of their content these epistles are presented in a *pastoral* fashion, hence the name that we use for them. During my reading I was struck, not for the first time I might add, by the crystal-clear line of teaching and the very specific focus on the edification of the church (without being too technical about the term) that Calvin has in his commentaries on these letters.

The aspect of pastoral care offers a host of surprising results. In his commentary on 1 Tim 1:2, for instance, Calvin writes: 'For the reason why God at first receives us into favour and why he loves us is that he is merciful.' Is it possible for a more pastorally focused comment to be made regarding the gospel? Furthermore, does this not offer the perfect foundation for pastoral care?[24]

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[23] Cf. Victor E. d'Assonville, 'Die teoloog as sendeling – Op soek na 'n sleutel vir Calvyn se sendingbeskouing' (*Koers – Bulletin for Christian Scholarship* 79.4, 2014) pp. 35-43

[24] Interestingly enough, in the introduction to his commentary on this letter – 1 Timothy – Calvin writes that this letter was written for the sake of others and not primarily for Timothy's sake. 'Because', states Calvin, 'even though it is obviously

How closely the proclamation and preaching of the gospel is intertwined with pastoral empathy and compassion shines through in something that the apostle Paul says in 1 Tim. 1:15, 'The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.' Regarding this verse Calvin says that Christ exhibited his grace in a special way in the life of Paul. The grace bestowed on Paul shows that the path to salvation is open to anyone, regardless how infamous a sinner they might have been before. In writing about this verse, Calvin approaches the doubts that some believers might struggle with in a particularly pastoral manner when he states:

> What was the reason why Paul aroused attention by these words, but because men are always disputing with themselves about their salvation? For, although God the Father a thousand times offers to us salvation, and although Christ himself preached about his own office, yet we do not on that account cease to tremble, or at least to debate with ourselves if it be actually so. Wherefore, whenever any doubt shall arise in our mind about the forgiveness of sins, let us learn to repel it courageously with this shield, that it is an undoubted truth, and deserves to be received without controversy.[25]

In his commentary on 1 Tim. 1:16,17, Calvin connects the honour of God with the pastoral responsibility and kind-heartedness towards the individual. This aspect is well and truly a key principle for Calvin as shepherd, as it clearly illustrates his pastoral care for the believers of his day and, by the grace of God, for the believers of all times, as his commentaries are to this day translated far and wide to the furthest reaches of the earth.

While it would be possible for me to continue with numerous examples of Calvin stepping forward to fulfil his calling as pastor and minister in his commentaries, this contribution is unfortunately limited. At this particular nexus it would be apt, I believe, to indicate the theological lines that are clear in Calvin's work.

Pastoral work is always directed at and involved with the individual, always within the context of the local congregation. Later in his commentary on 1 Timothy, for example, Calvin strives to indicate how essential the calling of the Lord is when it comes to the choice of office bearers, whether they be ministers of the Word (VDM – *Verbi Divini minister*) – teaching elders in the Presbyterian context – or elders. While elders are also called to fulfil a shepherding role, this does not exclude the shepherding of the minster (VDM) himself.

What becomes increasingly evident as one follows Calvin's thoughts throughout his commentary, as he in turn walks in Paul's footsteps and under guidance of the Holy Spirit, is that pastorship and the pastoral work of the pastor only comes into its own within an orderly ecclesiology, and thus, the teaching of the church: what (and whose) the church is, who the office bearers are and what their tasks and calling are, the relationship between the sound teaching and pastoral care (as in preaching, house visitation, and catechising), as well as the sacraments and how they are celebrated.

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about the education and equipping of Timothy, there are a host of things included in this letter that would not have been included if this letter was only meant for Timothy.' Calvin motivates his reasoning even further, confirming what we already know, that these letters, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus as well as the one addressed to Philemon, served as circulars from the very beginning of the church, read aloud in the time of the Early Church in the worship services of local congregations, so becoming part of the canon as Word of God; and so it still is for us today.

[25] Calvin on 1 Tim. 1:15, cf. https://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/calvin/cc43/cc43005.htm (accessed on June 30, 2023).

In this sense I would like to mention a few important theological principles in Calvin's work that should be applied to the overall theme of Calvin and Pastoral Care.

4. Principles for pastoral work according to Calvin

4.1. Holy Spirit – point of departure

Calvin's fundamental point of departure for his theology and therefore for pastoral work is that Scripture is God's authoritative Word through which he reveals himself to man. The certainty of this is not based on the authority of the church but on the witness of the Holy Spirit.[26] Therefore Calvin's hermeneutics has the unity of the *whole* Scripture (*tota Scriptura* and *una Scriptura*) as foundation, of course in its connection with *sola Scriptura*. This does not leave any room for a superficial Biblicism where verses of texts are interpreted outside their narrow and broader contexts.

Respect for and obedience to God is of such an overwhelming nature that, according to Calvin, the praxis of daily life or information from outside Scripture can never be the final measure for interpreting it. The immeasurable significance of this insight for pastoral work is obvious. One should never look for justification from Scripture for some action after the fact. As the Lord is the speaking God (*Institutes* 1.7.4), the pneumatological consequence of believing this is immense. That Calvin, as a Theologian of the Word, is characterized as a Theologian of the Holy Spirit therefore should be understood to be complementary, in the same way that Reformed churches, being churches of the Word, should be churches of the Holy Spirit too. Hence the primary question should never be 'What do I want, what do I need? What do we want, what are our requirements, what are our needs?. It should rather be 'What does the Lord tell us in his Word?' Not the 'spirit of the age' (*Zeitgeist*), but the 'Spirit of Christ' should determine our thoughts, our actions, our life, our belief, our theology, and the church. Real theology, and being real, true church could, according to Calvin, be a reality only as a result of obedience to the Word of our Lord. This applies to pastoral work as well.

4.2. Spirit and Word

The intrinsic bond between the Word and the Holy Spirit is theologically presupposed, not only concerning Scripture, but also with regard to the comprehensive matter of being church. This aspect is characteristic of a Reformed, scripturally founded theology and has implications not only for theology itself, but also for what it means to be church, and for the individual believer living out his faith.

Calvin stresses this point particularly when he writes in 1539 that Scripture, as the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit cannot be separated.[27] His emphasis refers to the Roman Church, with its insistence on the authority of the church, as well as to the Anabaptists, with their claims regarding the Spirit within them. Both groups offend the Spirit by separating the Spirit and Word. It is impossible to say that the church is being governed by the Spirit if, at the same time, the Word is buried.

The reason for this is that the Spirit has bound himself irrevocably to his Word. The Spirit has been promised not to reveal a new teaching, but to impress the truth of the gospel on our minds (OS I, 465).

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[26] Cf. Willem van 't Spijker, *Calvin – A Brief Guide to his Life and Thought* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009).

[27] In his reply to the letter of Sadoleto, *Responsio ad Sadoleti Epistolam*, OS I, 457-489.

It is not possible to claim that the church is governed by Christ, while God's Word is simultaneously subjugated to the authority of men/the church ('the tendency is to…bury the Word of God' (OS I, 465). The Spirit goes before the church to enlighten her in understanding the Word; all teaching or beliefs should be tested and proved by the Word, that is, Scripture (OS I, 465-466). On these grounds Calvin defines the church as,

> the society of all the saints, a society which, spread over the whole world, and existing in all ages, yet bound together by the one teaching, and the one Spirit of Christ, cultivates and observes unity of faith and brotherly concord (OS I, 466).

By persevering in the true faith, a faithful testimony to a sound teaching is rendered.[28] Sound teaching, which is occasionally characterized by Calvin as the teaching of Christ,[29] is however, no rational, intellectual concept - as it was seen by scholastic theologians - but refers directly to *vita*, i.e. life.[30]

4.3. Ecclesiological consequences

When one, like Calvin, thinks of the Spirit as the Spirit of Christ, it is self-evident that the bond between Spirit and Word also has an application for the edification of the church and thus for pastoral work. One could perhaps even speak of a pneumatological ecclesiology, because the marks ('notes') of the church – *notae ecclesiae* – cannot be considered as happening without the involvement of the Holy Spirit; the same is the case with pastoral work. How would one be able to preach the pure Word without the guidance of the Spirit? How would one be able to minister the sacraments in a pure way, without the working of the Holy Spirit? And how could the believers be able to partake in the sacraments without the role of the Holy Spirit (cf. Heidelberg Catechism, Q.75)? The Holy Spirit as Spirit of Christ lets us share in the acts of salvation by Christ. How would one be able to comfort the broken-hearted, to encourage those in grief, to help the weary, to take pastoral care of the flock without the Holy Spirit doing it through his Word?

Pastoral care seen in the light of Calvin's commentaries on the Pastoral Epistles is part of the edification of the church. Proclamation (preaching and teaching the Word) should always build up the faith as well as edify the church.[31] Proclamation accomplishes this objective in three ways: (1) it teaches (*instruare*); (2) it builds up (*aedificare*); and (3) it educates (*erudiare*).[32] The church is bound by one teaching, and by the singular, one Spirit of Christ.[33]

4.4. The Trinity and grace

Even the way Calvin explains the relationship between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit has pastoral implications. In general Calvin avoids philosophical concepts in explaining the Trinity; also, he steers clear of any speculative language or elucidations. The importance of our faith in the Holy Spirit is expressed by him in his Catechism of 1542/1545 as follows:

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[28] Cf. Comm. on Heb. 13:7, COR II/XIV, 237.
[29] Comm. on 2 Tim. 4:3, CO 52, 386.
[30] Comm. on 1 Tim. 6:3, 4, CO 52, 256.
[31] Comm. on 1 Tim. 6:2b-3, CO 52, 323-324.
[32] Cf. Victor E. d'Assonville, 'Woordverkondiging by Calvyn – enkele implikasies vir die opbou van die kerk in Afrika' (NGTT, 44.3&4, Sept. & Dec.), pp. 266-275.
[33] OS I, 466.

> … the Spirit of God, while he dwells in our hearts, makes us feel the virtue of Christ. (Romans 8:11). For when our minds conceive the benefits of Christ, it is owing to the illumination of the Holy Spirit; to his persuasion it is owing that they are sealed in our hearts (Ephesians 1:13). In short, he alone makes room in us for them. He regenerates us and makes us to be new creatures. Accordingly, whatever gifts are offered us in Christ, we receive by the agency of the Spirit.

One could say Calvin bases his view on a Christological foundation. Following Scripture, he emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. Indeed, Calvin never reflects on the Holy Spirit on his own. The risen Christ acts through his Spirit. 'The Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually unites us to himself.' (*Inst.* 3.1.1). How do we share in that which Christ did for us? The Holy Spirit is the one who lets us share in it. The Holy Spirit incorporates us in Christ and he incorporates Christ in us.

By confessing the Holy Spirit as Spirit of Christ, who proceeds from the Father as well as the Son, and through his pure Trinitarian thinking with a Christological emphasis, Calvin takes care to prevent the erroneous development of a kind of mysticism or a one-sided charismatic track. Pastoral care, within the frame of what we would call solid dogmatics, is always a matter of confession and praxis.

4.5. The whole congregation

When one takes these distinctions of Calvin into consideration, it becomes clear why Calvin's scripturally founded theological reflection – also regarding pastoral care – is on the one hand so logical and on the other hand so simple. Calvin, not without reason, has always underlined the simplicity of the gospel. The gospel has to be proclaimed. 'One does not have to be an expert or a scholar to believe it or to understand it 'because each believer has the sword of the Lord [Spirit], the Word of God (cf. Eph 6:17)', Calvin says in his letter to Sadoleto.

What is taught in the theological lecture room today will be preached from the pulpits in the churches tomorrow. Theology is not only 'theoretical', a matter of no effectual consequence for the church of Christ. Hence Calvin's theological reflection on the Holy Spirit is not of an arbitrary kind as if only of academic interest, because Calvin's ministry as theologian of the Word intends to be ministry of the Word.

'Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies [the Word]' (1 Thess. 5:19,20). When the church, when a congregation, does not bow before the Word of God anymore, when the church of Christ is not obedient to the Word of God alone, when the Word alone is no longer preached, then such a church, such a congregation, is not only no longer Reformed, it is no longer alive; it is, in fact, dead. Such a church, which is disobedient to the Word and therefore extinguishes the burning coals of the Spirit, is indeed a dead church, although they have the name that they live (cf. Rev 3:1,10).

5. Conclusion

My initial reading of Calvin on the subject of his pastoral approach and convictions as revealed in his commentaries and some other writings indicates that there is a wealth of knowledge still to be discovered – especially in the primary sources.

On the very last page of a relatively unknown volume of an Asian Calvin Congress, Seun-Joong Joo makes a striking remark in a devotion on John 10:1-10 (a classical text regarding pastoral work):

> There are many voices in the world vying for our supreme attention. Calvin said that these voices were the false inventions of men. So, you and I must choose to heed the call of our shepherd's voice. May it be that we listen solely for the voice of Jesus Christ and flee from all others. **Stay close to the Shepherd!**[34] (Emphasis by Joo.)

Stay close to the Shepherd! One could add: stay close by following the voice of *the* Shepherd, *the* Pastor, his Word.

The spectacular thing about Calvin and his commentaries, as well as other writings, because he sticks so rigorously to the biblical text (in stark contrast to many contemporary commentators or preachers), is that we do not discover Calvin as pastor and minister in the end. He, Calvin, is only the instrument; he shows us the way to the true Shepherd, the true Teacher, the Anointed, the Christ, who, to use the words of the Heidelberg Catechism (the Lord's Day 12), is our highest Teacher and our only Shepherd (High Priest), and who is King in all eternity, for ever and always.

[34] Seung-Joong Joo, 'Stay close to the Shepherd – John 10:1-10', *in* Sou-Young Lee (ed.), *Calvin in Asian Churches, Vol 2* (Seoul: Korean Calvin Society/The Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary, 2004), p. 175. (Proceedings of the Eight Asian Congress on Calvin Research, January 22-24, 2002.) pp. 169-170.

BOOK REVIEWS

2000 Years of Christ's Power, Volume 5: The Age of Enlightenment and Awakening, Nick Needham, Christian Focus Publications, 2023, hbk., 663 pages, £21.99.

The eagerly awaited fifth volume in Nick Needham's highly acclaimed history of the Christian Church has been well worth the wait. In this volume the accomplished author deals very effectively with the major issues of relevance to Christianity which took place in the course of the 18th century. Extending as it does to over 660 pages, the book provides us with a very comprehensive overview of this era in Christian history.

The first four chapters are of particular relevance to those of us who live and minister within Britain and Ireland. The first chapter covers the Enlightenment very thoroughly and Needham shows the challenge which its emphasis on the sufficiency of human reason posed to Christianity. The second chapter deals with the much more uplifting topic of the Evangelical Revival in England and Wales. In the next chapter, the attention of the reader is turned to the Evangelical Revival in Scotland, with a particularly enjoyable account of how the Highlands became Protestant and Presbyterian. Then the fourth chapter takes us across the ocean to examine the Great Awakening in America.

The remaining three chapters of the book may not seem to be quite as relevant to modern-day Christians in these islands, but they are still well worth reading. Chapter 5 deals with Lutheranism in Germany and also gives us a very good overview of the Moravian movement. Then in Chapter 6 Needham focuses upon developments within Roman Catholicism prior to the outbreak of the French Revolution. He also highlights the devastating impact of that revolution upon Roman Catholicism. He even has a short section outlining how French Protestants were persecuted during the Revolution. Finally, in chapter 7, as was the case in his previous volumes, Needham doesn't overlook the history of Eastern Orthodoxy; such history is of increasing relevance to us given the impact of globalisation and the influx of refugees and asylum seekers from this religious background. Few of us, for example, would previously have heard of Tikhon of Zadonsk or of Paisius Velichkovsky, but it's good to have our horizons expanded in this way.

Needham follows the commendable pattern laid down in his previous volumes of including copious extracts from original documents, thereby giving us a fuller understanding of the topics being covered. For instance, the reader is given ready access to Bengel's 'Rules for Textual Criticism' as well as to a substantial extract from John Wesley's sermon at the funeral of George Whitefield.

This volume should prove immensely helpful to all who teach the history of the Christian Church of the 18th century. It will serve as an excellent textbook for theological students and given that it combines fine scholarship with readability, it can also be warmly commended to general readers who wish to enhance their knowledge and understanding of Christianity in this time period. In a footnote found within the introduction to the book, the author informs us that he is intending to add another volume to his account of 2000 years of Christ's power, something to be keenly anticipated given the excellence of this, and of all the preceding volumes, in the series.

Raymond Blair

Christ and the Culture Wars, Ben Chang, Christian Focus Publications, 2023, pbk., 229 pages, £11.99.

In presenting the gospel to our society Christians are finding that one of the greatest obstacles to gaining a hearing is the prevalence of what may be termed 'identity politics', with its focus on issues of social justice. Christianity is portrayed as oppressive and dangerous and Christian speakers may find themselves 'cancelled' or 'no-platformed'. In fact it is not only Christians who are facing this challenge – even such feminists as Germaine Greer, J K Rowling and Kathleen Stock (herself a lesbian) have become embroiled in controversy for asserting that transgender women are not in fact women.

In setting the scene apologist Ben Chang identifies four key elements in the social justice movement – feminism, racial justice, gay pride and trans rights – and in the first part of his book analyses the development of each of them. His treatment of each is balanced and up to date in the sources cited. Rather than quote second-hand summaries of the views of campaigners, which Christians are sometimes guilty of doing, he allows them to speak for themselves. There is no value in presenting a view of opponents which they themselves would not recognise. Too often Christians have themselves been the victims of caricature and misrepresentation, and we should know not to fall into that trap.

In the second part Chang examines three common Christian responses to these challenges. The first he terms 'mirroring', where Christians adopt the same kind of heated rhetoric as their opponents (witness too many internet posts) and at times the same kind of campaigning tactics, such as boycotts. The second approach is arguing against the views of opponents (when permitted to speak), much in the way Christian apologists confronted the New Atheists such as Dawkins, Dennett and Harris. The tactics of some social justice campaigners are to try to silence any arguments against their views. The final approach adopted by many Christians is that of ignoring the issues raised, perhaps in the (mistaken) view that they do not really involve the church. In different ways Chang sees each approach falling short of what our mission requires.

The positive case is put in the third part, where Chang argues for the importance of *narrative* and contends that as Christians we have a better story to present, the gospel story. Much of the biblical revelation is in fact narrative, and that in itself should show us how important a category it is for our beliefs and practice. It is a story that in fact resonates with many of the issues that concern the people to whom we take the gospel, dealing with matters such as equality, oppression, and liberation. The true answers are found in the biblical story, especially in the language of 'redemption'. Chang firmly asserts that the language of justification, propitiation and reconciliation must also be used in presenting the gospel, but it is the redemptive perspective that speaks especially clearly to our culture. The language of redemption ought therefore to be especially prominent in our evangelism. His final chapter sets out the need for Christians to *live redemptively*, putting these biblical principles into practice. We are called to present the Good News in word *and* deed.

There is plenty of scope here for debate and even disagreement, given the complexity of the current trends in thought that we wrestle with, and the varying responses of mirroring, arguing and ignoring which Chang examines, and finds wanting, illustrate this quite clearly. Nevertheless he has provided a fine up-to-date treatment of key biblical principles, practically applied, that will stimulate gospel thinking and living. These issues will not disappear any time soon and we need to understand the biblical approaches open to us. It is crucial that pastors and teachers are equipped to train those for whom they have responsibility to be gracious and courageous disciples in a challenging cultural environment.

It is worth noting that even since the writing of this book, there has been significant pushback against, for example, the transgender perspective even among those who would in no sense share our Christian beliefs. Perhaps the campaigners have pushed their agenda too far even for some who would otherwise be sympathetic to the social justice ideology. We may await developments with interest.

David McKay

Some Pastors and Teachers: Reflecting a Biblical Vision of what Every Minister is Called to Be, Sinclair B. Ferguson, Banner of Truth Trust, 2017, hbk., 802 pages, £18.00.

Banner of Truth, in publishing this major tome, has provided the Christian Church, and ministers of the gospel in particular, with an invaluable resource. The book is unusual in that it is not material that the author recently sat down to write for publication. Rather it is a collection of articles and essays that were written over the course of his life and carefully and constructively compiled in this one volume. The best way to describe the nature of this book is to read the author's own explanation:

> While this is a big book, it only seems long! For each chapter is an entity on its own. Readers can enter and leave at any point they choose. No chapter is completely dependent on the previous chapter, or for that matter on any other chapter in the book. I hope, therefore, that it may be a volume that readers will enjoy dipping into, here and there. Yet, as will be clear from the Contents pages, it does have an overall shape, progressing from studies of three great pastors and teachers who have influenced me, to reflections on specific doctrines, and then on to the work of preaching and teaching the gospel. In this way, the book covers many, if by no means all, of the themes and tasks of Christian ministry.

The book consists of 5 sections, divided into thirty-nine chapters.

The first section, 'Pastor and Teachers: Three Johns', introduces three men who have had a profound influence on the author – John Calvin, John Owen and John Murray. These biographical sketches remind the reader of the immense contribution they made to the Christian Church in their lifetime, and through their writings have provided a priceless legacy for future generations.

The second section, covering six chapters, concentrates on Calvin and the great doctrines of the Christian faith that he exegeted and crystalized through his prolific ministry of preaching and writing. Extremely helpful is the chapter by Ferguson on 'Calvin on the Lord's Supper and Communion with Christ'. In our 21st century evangelistic world there is much muddled thinking about the meaning and purpose of the Lord's Supper. This article should remedy this deficiency.

'Puritans: Pastors and Teachers' is the title given to the third section. In these pages the author introduces his readers, over nine chapters, to the witness of the Puritans. He concentrates on John Owen and in separate chapters the author elucidates Owen's views on: 'the Doctrine of the Person of Christ', 'the Glory of Christ', 'the Priesthood of Christ', 'the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit' and 'Christian Piety'. Ferguson encourages his readers to engage with Owen and provides a chapter on how best to approach the 16-volume set of this erudite Puritan.

The final two sections, consisting of nineteen chapters, cover a range of topics under the general headings of: 'The Pastor and Teaching' and 'The Pastor and Preaching'. Students for the Christian

ministry will derive much benefit from these pages as they will supplement classes taken in Pastoral Theology and Homiletics.

Chapter headings from the final section indicate the range of material provided, such as 'The Preacher as Theologian', 'Preaching the Atonement', 'Preaching to the Heart', and 'Preaching the Reformed Theological Tradition'. One particular chapter stands out for this reviewer. It is 'Preaching Christ from the Old Testament Scriptures'. As we are to preach Christ from all the Scriptures, every preacher needs whatever help is available to do this effectively. In Ferguson's development of this topic we could have no better guide.

With these comments I enthusiastically recommend this publication to all ministers of the gospel, and also to every thoughtful Christian who wants to learn more about the Christian faith and the work to which his minister is called.

This volume should find a place in every pastor's library and would serve as a companion volume to the 4-volume set of John Murray's *Collected Writings* also published by the Trust.

Robert L. W. McCollum

In the Fullness of Time: An Introduction to the Biblical Theology of Acts and Paul, Richard B. Gaffin Jr., Crossway, 2022, hbk, 448pages, $44.99.

Luke is responsible for writing most of the New Testament, closely followed by Paul. Any book that can help students of Scripture understand the theology of these two authors will provide a major way into the thought of most of the New Testament. That is what Dr. Richard Gaffin Jr. has given us in his book *In the Fullness of Time.* The book is based on his lectures on Acts and Paul at Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia) where he is Professor Emeritus of Biblical and Systematic Theology.

Gaffin adopts a biblical-theological approach to Acts and Paul, building on the Reformed tradition pioneered by Geerhardus Vos and Herman Ridderbos in particular. He highlights the historical progression of the New Testament as Christ moves from the state of humiliation to exaltation, fulfilling the promises of the Old Testament and establishing the kingdom of God through his death, resurrection, ascension, and pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost.

Gaffin's interpretation of the New Testament is also eschatological, for he sees the whole of the New Testament revelation as eschatological, not in the sense that it is exclusively concerned with the end times, but rather that it is the endpoint and climax of the process of revelation because (as Hebrews 1:2 makes clear) the coming of Christ fulfils Old Testament promises and expectations and brings about the in-breaking of the coming age into this present age. This perspective is developed particularly in dealing with Paul's theology, the centre of which Gaffin sees as 'determined by the triangulation of his Christology, soteriology and eschatology' (p.238).

The book is divided into two parts. The first half treats Luke/Acts by focusing on Pentecost as the hinge of the two books. Gaffin shows how the giving of the Holy Spirit is the essence of Christ's work - the kingdom gift *par excellence.* Pentecost is not some peripheral add-on to the work of Christ, but the climactic event in the complex of events that includes the cross, resurrection and ascension. One of the strengths of Gaffin's exegetical work in dealing with Pentecost is that he continually relates it

to all that Luke says about the Spirit in his Gospel as well as Acts. He develops the significance of Pentecost for the church, for the Trinity and for our understanding of salvation.

The second half expounds Paul's theology through the lens of Christ's resurrection, which Gaffin sees, along with his death, as 'the main or intended entrance [to Paul's thought], in distinction from other possible places of entry' (p.235). He focuses on Christ's resurrection as opposed to his crucifixion, not because he thinks resurrection is more important or fundamental, but only because it has received less attention in the theological tradition of the Western church, as far as soteriology is concerned: '[I]t does need to be recognized that in this predominant preoccupation with the death of Christ, the resurrection has been eclipsed in significant ways. In particular, the doctrinal or theological significance of the resurrection has tended to be overlooked.' (p.303). Gaffin does an excellent job of redressing that balance, showing the controlling importance of the resurrection for Christ himself, in the salvation of believers (not only for our justification but also for our sanctification) and in understanding the nature and purpose of suffering in the Christian life.

Gaffin's exegetical precision is a great strength, as he works methodically through the major texts relating to his topics; so too is his comprehensive grasp of the history of interpretation, which he neatly summarizes at various points in the argument. He provides readers with a model of what a biblical-theological approach to a scriptural theme and, although he makes it clear that he is lecturing in the classroom rather than preaching from the pulpit, there is wise and suggestive application to the life and needs of the church today.

This reviewer has no major reservations about this book. Although there are many footnotes referencing works cited, a general bibliography at the end of the book would increase its value even more. When it comes to show the significance of Christ's resurrection for the church, the emphasis falls on its implications for sanctification rather than justification. This is perhaps due to the contemporary confusion there is about the place of good works in the life of the believer, and Gaffin shows how a proper understanding of the resurrection preserves us from the Scylla of antinomianism and the Charybdis of legalism. Since Paul asserts in Romans 4:25 that Christ was raised for our justification, it might have been helpful to see more of Gaffin's reflections on the relationship between resurrection and justification.

This is a most helpful and enlightening book for anyone who wants to understand the deep structures of the thought of two of the major authors of the New Testament. It should certainly be read by theological students and pastors before preaching on Luke/Acts or the letters of Paul.

Warren Peel

BOOK NOTICES

Mental Health and Your Church. A Handbook for Biblical Care, Helen Thorne and Dr. Steve Midgley, The Good Book Company, 2023, pbk., 191 pages, £9.99.

For good reasons the subject of mental health is being extensively discussed both inside and outside the church. Whereas once a 'stiff upper lip' was the key response to the traumas of life, it is increasingly recognised that at times that approach can be profoundly damaging, and pastors, among others, have to be well equipped to offer the best (biblical) help to those who suffer these burdens. *Mental Health and Your Church* is an excellent resource for pastors, elders and, in fact, any Christian with a heart of compassion for his or her brothers and sisters in the church. The authors are well equipped to provide instruction and support – Midgley is Executive Director of Biblical Counselling UK and Thorne is a counsellor, author and trainer of wide experience. The book is divided into three sections. Section 1: 'Understanding Mental Illness' covers fundamental issues such as dealing with a diagnosis, the biblical understanding of mental illness, medication and talking therapies. The authors recognise the complexities of mental health and see the value of different components in a solution, all within a biblical framework. Section 2 asks the vital question 'What can we do?' and offers a series of 'calls' – to raise awareness, to relate, to remember, to refine and to practically resource. Common questions are also addressed, including confidentiality, safeguarding and record keeping. Section 3 moves on to consider 'Caring in practice' and examines anxiety, depression, addiction, psychosis and, very important, caring for carers. The book is full of Bible-based wisdom and practical advice to equip those called to care for friends, family and others who may struggle with issues on mental health. No one book can provide a full course in all the matters that might be of help, and it is essential that carers understand the limits of their skills and responsibilities. Nevertheless, this is a very helpful handbook that will be of great value in church life and ministry.

The Doctrine of Election, John Calvin, translated from the French by Robert White, The Banner of Truth Trust, 2022, hbk., 236 pages, £15.00.

The doctrine of election is bound up with the name of John Calvin in the popular mind, generally to Calvin's discredit. He is often portrayed as the author of a harsh doctrine concerning an unloving God who acts towards men and women in an entirely arbitrary way. The best antidote to such caricatures is to listen to what Calvin actually taught. Although we might turn first to Calvin's monumental *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, other valuable sources are also available. In this volume renowned Calvin translator Robert White brings together several diverse sources for Calvin's doctrine of election – first is *On the Eternal Election of God*, an address given to the weekly assembly of ministers and laypeople in Geneva; second are four sermons on Jacob and Esau and God's choice of the younger; third we have a selection of four sermons on Ephesians 1, taken from Calvin's great series on the whole of Ephesians, all dealing with aspects of election. Three appendices provide extracts from Reformed doctrinal statements from Calvin's lifetime, an examination of critics of Calvin's doctrine and an address by White on 'Calvin and the Preaching of Election'. White is a highly competent translator and the pieces gathered here are very readable, as well as theologically very helpful. Essential reading on a vital aspect of the Reformer's theology.

Martin Bucer. An Introduction to His Life and Theology, Donald K. McKim and Jim West, Cascade Books (an imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers), 2023, pbk., 142 pages, £19.00.

Despite some significant recent studies, Martin Bucer (1491-1551), the Reformer of Strasbourg, remains largely unknown even to those with an interest in Reformation history. For that reason this wide ranging volume by two fine scholars is most welcome, and not just for historical reasons. Bucer was known above all as a peace-maker, with a profoundly irenical temperament, but he was also a man of strong convictions and a theology deeply rooted in the Scriptures. He was involved, for example, in the frustrating debates of the Colloquy of Marburg (1529), which failed to produce Protestant unity on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. After a chapter surveying what is known of Bucer's life, McKim and West proceed to present the key elements of Bucer's theology in the next eight chapters, covering Holy Scripture, God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, Sin and salvation, Church and Ministry, Word and sacraments, and the State and Last Things. McKim and West present the essentials of Bucer's theology in a clear and concise form, not weighed down by technical references. The final chapter considers Bucer's abiding significance, dealing with matters such as the centrality of Christ, the church as a community of love, and the sacraments as a force for unity. There is much in Bucer's writings that is of contemporary significance and it is unfortunate that so little of his work has been translated. His views are most readily accessible in the Tetrapolitan Confession which he drafted. For anyone keen to profit from this overlooked Reformer, McKim and West's book is an excellent starting point.

Treatise on Grace And Other Posthumously Published Writings, Jonathan Edwards, edited by Paul Helm, The Lutterworth Press, 2023, pbk., 131 pages, £19.50.

This volume was first published in 1971, but the passage of some 50 years has not reduced its significance in any way. It well deserves to be reprinted. Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) was probably the most significant theologian produced in North America at any time in history and his writings always repay careful study. The three documents brought together here had never previously appeared in a collection of Edwards' writings. They are *Treatise on Grace*, *Observations Concerning the Scripture Economy of the Trinity and the Covenant of Redemption* (in effect an extract from Edwards' *Miscellanies*) and *An Essay on the Trinity*. A concise and illuminating Introduction is provided by Paul Helm, himself a profound theologian and philosopher, dealing with historical, theological, and philosophical issues raised by these writings. He defends Edwards against some of the accusations raised against him regarding (alleged) departures from covenant theology as formulated by Reformed thinkers up to the 18th century and points out significant emphases in Edwards' view of the covenant, especially regarding the importance of the role of the Holy Spirit, which Edwards considered to have been underplayed by other covenant theologians. The intertwining of the doctrines of the Trinity, the covenant and grace is a prominent theme. There is much of value in these documents and in Helm's comments, and the reprinting of the volume is full justified.

Charles Hodge. American Reformed Orthodox Theologian, edited by Ryan M. McGraw, Vandenhoek and Ruprecht, 2023, hbk., 339 pages, €140.00.

Charles Hodge (1797-1878) was one of the most significant Reformed theologians of the nineteenth century and a formative influence on what became known as the 'Princeton Theology' associated with Princeton Theological Seminary. This weighty volume brings together the expertise of eight scholars who teach in the USA, Sweden and the Netherlands, in pursuit of a deeper understanding of various aspects of Hodge's thought. Chapter 1 (by Paul Gutjahr) offers an overview of the life and thought of Hodge. In chapter 2 Aza Goudriaan considers Hodge's engagement in his *Systematic Theology* with

such philosophers as Descartes, Spinoza, Kant and Hegel. Subsequent chapters examine Hodge's view of theology as a science (Ryan McGraw), his relationship to Reformed Orthodoxy (Scott Cook), his doctrine of the Trinity (McGraw and Cook), his understanding of sin (C. N. Wilborn), his view of the office and nature of Presbyterianism (Alan Strange), his view of the validity of Roman Catholic baptism (Mark Herzer) and his understanding of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist (Stefan Lindholm). Hodge was involved in a number of debates within the Reformed tradition and among his Reformed contemporaries, and at various points took a view which others did not share, for example regarding Roman Catholic baptism. For those with a serious interest in Reformed theology and in Hodge's massive contribution to the tradition, this is a key set of studies.

Calvin's Ecclesiology. A Study in the History of Doctrine, Tadataka Maruyama, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2022, hbk., 473 pages, $65.00.

The amount of ink devoted to debating the doctrine of the church in the sixteenth century shows in a striking way the great significance attached to this doctrine by the Reformers and their opponents. Ecclesiology was not a peripheral matter, of secondary importance. In fact ecclesiology was central to many of the concerns that motivated the Reformation. It comes as no surprise that the contribution of John Calvin to the discussion occupies a pivotal position in any study of Reformation ecclesiology. Despite a plethora of articles examining aspects of Calvin's views on the subject, few monographs have been produced in recent times, and so this volume by Tadataka Maruyama, former president and professor of church history at Tokyo Christian University, is especially welcome. His approach is chronological, tracing the development of Calvin's thought from his earliest reforming activity. Studies of Calvin's ecclesiology have generally treated it as a finished product, usually from the period of the final editions of the *Institutes*, and so Maruyama's study fleshes out in an almost unique way the developmental path that Calvin's thinking followed. The book is divided into four chapters. The first ('Academic Formation and Catholic Ecclesiology') describes the influences that shaped Calvin in his early days and his first steps in establishing a Reformed ecclesiology. The second chapter ('The Early Genevan Reformation and Practice of Catholic Ecclesiology') brings the figure of Farel into focus and gives extended attention to Calvin's *Two Epistles* (1537). The third chapter ('The Strasbourg Period and a Transition to New Ecclesiologies') traces the influence of Martin Bucer during Calvin's time in exile in Strasbourg and also notes divergences between the two, based on the results of recent scholarship. The final chapter ('Reformed Ecclesiology and Reformation Ecclesiology') considers Calvin's views around the year 1555, when he finally triumphed over opposition in Geneva to his reforming programme. Maruyama's study is profound and draws on a thorough knowledge of the original sources along with the best of contemporary scholarship. His chronological approach provides a richer portrait of the reformer and serves in some respects as an intellectual biography of Calvin. The Genevan Reformer's thinking on this crucial doctrine is of much more than historical significance – it must continue to shape Reformed ecclesiology (of course critically evaluated), and Maruyama's work will be essential reading for many years to come.

David McKay