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EDITORIAL

The reader has in his hands the seventeenth iteration of *The Confessional Presbyterian*. It features Herman Bavinck on the cover and there are several very fine articles on our portrait subject leading off the contents. James Eglinton, the author of the recent Bavinck, provides a helpful opening biographical article, after which we are pleased to offer several pieces on aspects of Bavinck's thought, "Christian Science" (Cory Brock), "Leading Ideas in Calvin's *Institutes*" (Gregory Parker, Jr.), and "the Two Kingdoms and Reformed Social Ethics" (Ron Gleason). Following the GPTS address by new president Dr. Jonathan Master, the contents unfold in what has become the normal order of materials: biblical/expositional/exegetical—historical—and doctrinal/historical-doctrinal. There is a selec-

tion from an unpublished commentary on Judges and Ruth (Tom Reid), an accounting with much new information of the university studies and ordination of Scottish Presbyterian and Westminster Divine George Gillespie (Chris Coldwell), a piece on Samuel Rutherford's theology and practice of preaching (Matthew Vogan), and a companion article to one appearing in the last issue, continuing to cover the subject of John Owen's pastoral theology (Angelo Valle). The *Articles* section is finished out with, "*Animus Imponentis* & Confessional Integrity in the OPC's Creation Report" (Lowell Ivey), an assessment of the Credobaptist Interpretation of Jeremiah 31 (Robert Golding), and "Enchurchment as a Feature of Christian Conversion in Evangelistic Practice" (Zachary Groff). There is a nice *Reviews* section this year, where we have also instituted a new feature, *Reviews in Brief*, where we are able to cover many books with some shorter assessments which otherwise would not receive any notice. Next follows the entry for *Psallo* for 2021, a selection from Psalm 32. As announced in prior issues, our long time regular translation feature has

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Herman Bavinck: An Interpreter of Modernity

By James Eglinton

This year marks the centenary of the death of Herman Bavinck (1854–1921), the great neo-Calvinist dogmatician, whose intellectual efforts were central to his movement's attempt to draw on the resources of historic, orthodox Calvinism in addressing the new intellectual and social questions of the late modern age. One hundred years ago, he died a household name in his native Netherlands. His declining health had been followed in the national press for some months, a period in which he learned of the first of many schools to be named in his honour.¹ Shortly after this, Bavinck—a member of the Order of the Lion of the Netherlands, and of the Royal Academy of Sciences—died, and received a state funeral.² In the years that would follow, streets would be named in his honour in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht, Kampen, and Hoogeveen. Indeed, his impact on his native culture is well illustrated by the fact that his eponymous street in Rotterdam, *Herman Bavinckstraat*, did not receive that name until 1983, sixty-two years after his death.³ Clearly, he did not leave Dutch culture unchanged.

Particularly in the final two decades of his life, Bavinck's reach also extended across both the North Sea, and the Atlantic: he became well known amongst Presbyterians in both in the United Kingdom and in North America. In his own lifetime, of course, the extent of that international impact was certainly limited by linguistic factors: while his 1909 Stone Lectures, given in Princeton and later published as *Philosophy of Revelation*,⁴ gave the English-speaking world a powerful introduction to his clear, carefully-reasoned, and culturally-engaging theological voice, the overwhelming majority of his *oeuvre* remained untranslated for most of the twentieth century. As such, in that period, the kind of non-Dutch figures who invoked his name often did so as part of a plea for more of Bavinck's writings to be made available in translation.⁵

In the early twenty first century, of course, those lonely pleas have been heard: Bavinck's *magnum opus*, the four volume *Reformed Dogmatics*,⁶ has been available in English for over a decade, and has become a firm favourite amongst Reformed and evangelical pastors, theologians, and seminarians. This is to say nothing of the impact of the Korean, Portuguese, and Chinese translations of the same work in their respective contexts. Indeed, while Bavinck still enjoys a faint degree of name recognition in mainstream Dutch society—earlier this year, for example, the nation's most popular weekly news magazine, *Elsevier Weekblad*,⁷ carried a story on his life to mark the centenary of his death—it is certainly the case that he is now vastly more influential outside of the Netherlands than he is there. The question of why, a century on from his death, Bavinck

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1. James Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), pp. 288–90.

2. Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, p. 290.

3. "Vroegere wethouders krijgen straatnaam," *Het vrije volk: democratisch-socialistisch dagblad*, 3 Feb. 1983.

4. Herman Bavinck, *Philosophy of Revelation: A New Annotated Edition*, eds. Cory Brock and Gray Sutanto (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2018).

5. Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, p. 243.

6. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4 vols. ed. John Bolt, tr. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003–8).

7. Gerry van der Lijs, "Theoloog met grote invloed op het protestantse denken," *Elsevier Weekblad*, April 30, 2021.

has become so popular overseas is itself a fascinating one. Clearly, Bavinck belongs amongst the first rank of theologians in the history of the church. It is widely recognised that he excelled in a kind of dogmatic theology that handled the thought of the ages with great agility, speaking the truth to his own age, whilst always grounding those dogmatic claims in Scriptural exegesis. And through all of this, the distinctively irenic nature of his personality also coloured his writings: Bavinck avoided straw men, for which reason his own theologising was all the more deeply compelling.

However, it is also true that Bavinck is not the only confessionally Reformed theologian in whom we can find a measured sense of gravitas, a profound commitment to the authority of Scripture, a healthy respect for the theological legacy left by the saints of ages past, or a keen sense of theology speaking into the questions of his own day. While Bavinck's account of the Christian faith is superbly fluent, it is not in essence novel. (Rather, as I have argued in an earlier work, the contours and content of the *Reformed Dogmatics* were written as a massively extended exposition of the Apostles' Creed.)⁸ Much the same could be said, for example, of John Calvin, or the great *Nadere Reformatie* theologian Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676), or the outstanding early modern Reformed theologian Francis Turretin (1623–87). For all their worth, none of these figures has found a ready international audience—both popular and scholarly—in the early twenty first century in the way that Bavinck has. The same might also be said of a number of outstanding late modern Reformed thinkers. Like Bavinck, the Old Princeton theologian B.B. Warfield died in 1921. While Warfield's influence has certainly been felt in the twentieth century legacy of the Old Princeton school, he has yet to capture the imagination of a broad sweep of Reformed and evangelical pastors and theologians—across cultures and languages—as Bavinck has in the twenty first century.

Perhaps the most curious question to arise in this Bavinck centenary year is quite simple: why Bavinck? This question might be elaborated along the following lines: why has the historical terrain of the early twenty

first century been so exceptionally fertile for his theology? Why has he been received with such enthusiasm in the present day?

Clearly, it lies far beyond the scope of a single article to aim at a grand argument encompassing the entire constellation of previous confessionally Reformed theologians, from Calvin to Cunningham, in order to explore Bavinck *vis-à-vis* the particularities of their historical reception. Accordingly, such will not be attempted here. It may well also exceed the scope of one article to aim at the same simply for Herman Bavinck. Like all historical phenomena, the reasons for his posthumous popularity are no doubt manifold and complexly interwoven. To commandeer a line from his nephew, the missiologist Johan Herman Bavinck (1895–1964), such historical phenomena “are not easily given to [facile] explanations. We can gather all sorts of material to make clear how they developed, but there always remains mystery in them.”⁹ While there are certainly many reasons for Herman Bavinck's current day influence, any effort to explain them must retain an intentional degree of modesty. It must know its limits.

Despite this caveat regarding its answer, the question itself remains pressing. As has been noted, the rich texture of the answer will certainly elude any article-length account. However, the nature of scholarship is such that important historical-theological questions often do lead to multiple articles that begin to map out the answer. This current article is a contribution to that larger effort, which has already begun—most notably—in Joseph Minich's insightful review article, “A Man for our Time.”¹⁰

Minich presents an argument for Bavinck's importance to confessionally Reformed theology today: in short, it frames Bavinck as precisely *the* theologian needed by our age. In Minich's words, Bavinck should be embraced as “the man for our time.” Of course, the particular nature of such an argument is not identical to a historical account of why Bavinck seems to have become “the man for our time.” Despite their subtle difference, however, the arguments turn on the same hinge. This is identified memorably by Minich: “Bavinck is the Reformed movement's original interpreter of modernity... that very rare guide through the morass of modernity.”¹¹

The striking holism that marked Bavinck's life is no closely-guarded secret. A recent development in Bavinck scholarship has been the growing awareness that his life and work, and personality, are best described those of a polymath. Bavinck was not simply a dogmatician. He also worked as a journalist (as a columnist, and national newspaper editor), a politician (both as a Member of

8. James Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism: Towards a New Reading of Herman Bavinck's Organic Motif* (London: T&T Clark/Bloomsbury, 2012), pp. 89–94.

9. Johan Herman Bavinck, *Persoonlijkheid en wereldbeschouwing* (Kampen: Kok, 1928), p. 73. “Trouwens, dergelijke machtige verschuivingen laten zich niet verklaren, wij kunnen wel allerlei material bijeenzoeken om het duidelijk te maken hoe het zich kon ontwikkelen, maar ook dan nog blijft er altijd iets van het mysterie in.”

10. Joseph Minich, “A Man for our Time,” *Ad Fontes* 5.2 (Winter 2020): 14–16.

11. Minich, “A Man for our Time,” pp. 15–16.

Parliament, and as a party leader), a biographer, a literary critic, a travel writer, an ethicist, a pedagogue, and a pioneer in Christian psychology.¹² While the polymath label is perhaps new, the all-of-life brand of Calvinism embodied by Bavinck has long been an attractive and well-known feature to many: Bavinck draws readers because he could connect theology to psychology, education, journalism, art, and science. In our own fragmented age, within which Christian faith is often reduced to a mere private concern, that holism has a distinctive allure. In this sense, as Minich has described, he offers Reformed readers a united Christian “guide” through a modern age marked by fragmentation and disorder.

The sense in which Bavinck does so, however, needs careful investigation. For the most part, the urgent social and scientific questions posed by Bavinck’s late modern world now appear antiquated. To highlight two examples from the final years of Bavinck’s life—one social, and the other scientific—Bavinck’s later writings acknowledge that both the domestic washing machine¹³ and Einstein’s theory of general relativity¹⁴ had the potential to change the world (albeit in quite different ways). Although Bavinck was generally a far-sighted thinker, he did not set himself up as *the* theologian to guide the peoples of the twentieth century through those particular modern uncertainties. Rather, Bavinck’s general tenor was to see his theologising as an effort to meet the needs of his own age,¹⁵ and to call for Christians in later generations to do the same in their own eras. With that in mind, the question of why his late nineteenth and early twentieth century life has nonetheless become a compelling and widely-sought guide in the morass that is the early twenty first century becomes all the more interesting.

Why choose a guide to modernity whose own energies were so heavily bound up in very Dutch debates on funding for schools, questions of whether voting rights should be granted to families or individuals, or the insights of late nineteenth century psychology? To what extent can a long dead Dutchman serve as a guide in a world now riven by issues—particularly the reimagining of society around a reimagined concept of the authentic self—that were barely imaginable to many a few short decades ago? Once again, the answer to this is found in seed form in Minich’s recognition of Bavinck not simply as a *guide to*, but more significantly as an *interpreter* of modernity.

The phenomena of modernity come and go—a fact recognised by Bavinck himself. Indeed, I have argued elsewhere that Bavinck’s own view of modernity closely resembles Shmuel Noah Eisenstad’s view of “multiple

modernities” (which is to say, rather than being monolithic, modernity is better understood as a process of negotiation within which modern people constantly reconstruct new versions of their modern cultures).¹⁶ Despite the ever-changing phenomena of modernity, its basic essence remains more or less constant. Because a skilled interpreter of modernity is able to move between these points—understanding both the rapidly changing surface conditions, and the plate tectonics slowly playing out far beneath them—the presentation of some new iteration of modernity is not itself a great problem. That interpreter will go on interpreting, for which reason Bavinck’s promise to the current day reader loses little shine despite his specific local contributions to school funding or voting rights or psychology now appearing old and foreign. Rather, these are the applications of a particular Reformed interpretation of modernity—a skill that outlasts whichever debate has flared up today, and will likely be gone tomorrow. As has been noted, Bavinck was the first great Reformed thinker to interpret modernity for those within his confessional tradition. It seems hard to deny that this contribution now plays a major role in his current day reception.

This, of course, is certainly not the only reason for Bavinck’s sudden recent popularity. Lucid expositors of the faith tend to draw a crowd—a rule to which Bavinck is no exception. It may also be that many of those drawn to Bavinck would themselves struggle to articulate the sense in which he attracts them specifically as a Reformed interpreter of modernity. However, it is also true that a need’s existence does not depend on a person’s ability to describe it with great nuance. In 2021, lucid interpreters of modernity also tend to draw a crowd: the rise of Jordan Peterson, Tom Holland, Douglas Murray, and Niall Fergusson bears witness to this fact. That these figures are not theologians or pastors, or speaking in any kind of ecclesial voice, does not seem to have dampened their appeal to a broad Christian audience. To their ranks, we might also add Carl Trueman, a figure who does write from an explicit set of Christian faith commitments, and whose recent book *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*¹⁷ has been particularly well received precisely because it provides Christians with an

12. Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, pp. xvii–xviii.

13. Herman Bavinck, *De vrouw in de hedendaagsche maatschappij* (Kampen: Kok, 1918), p. 111.

14. Herman Bavinck, *Als Bavinck nu maar eens kleur bekende*, ed. George Harinck, Cornelis van der Kooij, and Jasper Vree (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1994), p. 62.

15. Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, pp. 169–216.

16. Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, p. xxi.

17. Carl Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural*

interpretation of modernity that sets out an account of how our current iteration of modern society—divided as it is on issues around sexuality, gender, biology, psychology, and society—came to be.

Amongst the current day interpreters of modernity, Trueman's distinctive contribution has been in highlighting the seminal insights of the Jewish sociologist Philip Rieff (1922–2006)—himself perhaps the twentieth century's most insightful, but certainly underappreciated, interpreter of modernity.

In Rieff's analysis, the history of the West is the history of three worlds. The *first* of these was an earlier pre-Christian phase of Western cultural history in which the world itself was supernaturally charged and governed by the caprice of fate. That ancient world gave way to a thoroughgoing revolution brought about by Jewish and Christian thought. A new world grounded itself on faith, rather than fate. This *second* world was thoroughly theologised—which is to say, it was recast as a creation given definition and norms by its relationship to its Creator. This enabled the development of a new social order, a new thirst for knowledge of a world ordered by God (which itself gave rise to the scientific enterprise), that looked to expand its knowledge on the basis of the insights of previous generations, and that was most fundamentally oriented to an ultimate authority beyond itself: namely, God. For Rieff, this second world was marked by a "sacred order" which was itself rooted in divine transcendence. Norms within the created realm were ultimately justified by a reality outside of it. Sacred order was translated into social order. The world's status as a creation, before its Creator, deeply shapes how the inhabitants of that second world view themselves, their bodies, their social institutions, and their environment—all of which are marked by "sacred order."

Much more recently, this second world has been shaken to its roots by a *third* world. Whereas the second world was tethered to something beyond itself, the third world denies any notion of transcendence or sacred order. Rather, it only seeks to justify itself from within itself. "Every world, until our third," Rieff writes, "has been a form of address to some ultimate

authority."¹⁸ Amongst the most fascinating aspects of Rieff's analysis of this third world is his description of it as an "anti-culture": it exists purely to put to death all that existed in the second world. Everything that older world deemed sacred—physical, psychological, social, and spiritual—must be cast into that great bonfire. Crucially, in his view, this third world does not strive to live without rules. It is not pure anarchy. Different to the second world, however, is the reality that its rules are derived solely from within the world, for which reason, the third world is beholden to flux and instability. It is not that,

absolutely everything is permitted in the third culture. Of course, there are rules. But rules are not interdicts in the manner of divinely commanded and prohibitive truths, as in the second culture.... The third culture believes it can live by infinitely changeable rules.¹⁹

The striking quality of Rieff's analysis lies in its ability to make sense of the modern world in which we now live. In a certain sense, he argued, all three worlds co-exist: we interact with them all, albeit in different and complex ways.²⁰ In real terms, the first world is long gone. However, we continue to encounter it in the imaginings of third world people who fantasise about some fictional and glorious pre-Christian past. (Indeed, as Rieff shows, the third world relies on "recycled" first world tales in order to negate the weight of the second world's sacred order.) In that sense, our modern Western experience with the first world is in this rehashed presentation of the West's pagan past as somehow better than the second world that would follow. More directly, though, we experience both the second and third worlds as present, overlapping, co-existing realities: our period in modernity is starkly divided by those who wish to retain the sacred order of the second world, and those who join the third world's efforts to create an "unmastered world." Some of us cast the world in relation to an ultimate authority that transcends it, and others, in an entirely imminent way, which is to, the world is its own only norm. While—to borrow Nietzsche's term—the third world seeks to "unchain the earth from the sun," in Rieff's view it has a parasitic relationship to the second world. Like Oedipus, it is obsessed with the thing that it exists to negate. In the same way, the third world's *raison d'être* is its undoing of the world by which it was preceded.

In his distinctive idiom and almost unbearably clear logic, Rieff has laid out the mechanics of modernity. He shows that we do not simply inhabit some petty

Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020).

18. Philip Rieff, *My Life Amongst the Deathworks: Illustrations of the Aesthetics of Authority* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), p. 5.

19. Rieff, *My Life Amongst the Deathworks: Illustrations of the Aesthetics of Authority*, p. 68.

20. Rieff, *My Life Amongst the Deathworks: Illustrations of the Aesthetics of Authority*, p. 129.

“culture war.” Rather, we stand on the fault line that separates two *worlds*. The success of Trueman’s work has been to render Rieff’s interpretation of modernity (memorably described by James Davison Hunter as “difficult, intentionally so”)²¹ in an idiom, and in a historical schema, that is not “intentionally difficult.” And like all lucid interpreters of modernity, Trueman has also drawn a crowd.

What, however, does this have to do with Herman Bavinck, and his sudden popularity in the age that experiences this Rieffian “clash of worlds”? As I have shown in *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, his life (and theological development) took place as the third world was beginning to make its presence felt in Dutch culture. Indeed, this Rieffian lens is entirely appropriate in making sense of the two major periods of Bavinck’s theological maturation: the two decades spent teaching at the Theological School in Kampen, and writing the first edition of his *Dogmatics* during the 1880s–90s (which we might title the work of the “young” Bavinck); and the subsequent two decades spent teaching at the Free University of Amsterdam, and revising the *Dogmatics* considerably, from the early 1900s until his death in 1921 (which we might call the work of the “mature” Bavinck).

Why talk of “young” and “mature” phases in Bavinck’s life? Most importantly, in the “young” phase, Bavinck saw himself as inhabiting what Rieff would call the “second” world: his efforts were framed entirely in that context. In the “mature” phase, Bavinck suddenly realised that a revolution was underway: the world he had known was now challenged by something unforeseen and unknown. The mature Bavinck inhabited, wrote within, and responded to the clash of worlds so familiar to us—albeit at an earlier stage of its emergence.

In the 1880s–90s, the young Bavinck served first as a Christian Reformed pastor in Franeker, a small town in Friesland, before his appointment to teach at the Theological School in Kampen. In those decades, he prepared and then published the first edition of the *Reformed Dogmatics*,²² became deeply involved in the modern Calvinistic renewal movement led by Abraham Kuyper (later known as “neo-Calvinism”), and served as an apologist for that articulation of the Reformed faith, over against rival (and less conservative) visions of Christianity in the modern world. In Rieffian terms, his intellectual efforts in those decades were very much concerned with in-house “second world” debates. The ideas and key conversation partners from this young phase of life—liberal Protestants, fellow confessionally Reformed theologians, Roman Catholics, and nineteenth

century political liberals (whose moral imagination was steeped in Christianity)—were all drawn from this “second” world.

We might even say that in the 1880s–90s, Bavinck entirely failed to see the “third world” on the horizon. For example, in those decades, he engaged with Dutch atheists who argued that atheism meant no great change for human morality or social order.²³ Their brand of atheism was profoundly moralistic, and—God aside—was utterly, albeit naively, committed to the basic stability of Western culture (particularly with regard to its moral framework). In his interaction with them, Bavinck had little trouble in perceiving that their efforts were to maintain the structure and the norms of (what we might call) the “second world,” albeit without reference to God—and rightly, Bavinck saw that their project would soon run out of steam. The world that they wished to maintain was necessarily tethered to a transcendent ultimate authority. Given time, they would see that the order they sought to maintain was itself sacred, and could not be sustained on exclusively secularised terms.

In the 1890s, Bavinck thought such an effort was doomed to fail, following which he sincerely believed that the Dutch people’s future would soon involve a popular and widespread return to Calvinism. Only Calvinism, he believed, could safeguard the stability of life in the modern (i.e. the “second”) world. It was no surprise to him, therefore, when a number of high-profile Dutch atheists became theists (of one sort or another) as that decade drew to a close, or that Kuyper was elected as the first neo-Calvinistic Prime Minister of the Netherlands in 1901.²⁴ Until that point, we can see some evidence that Bavinck postulated something like Rieff’s “third world”—a strange and chaotic place glimpsed fleetingly in the madness of the atheist philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900)—although it seems clear that Bavinck could not imagine such upheaval gaining any kind of traction from the masses. The reality on the ground seemed to show that the various challenges posed to Western Christendom in the post-Enlightenment period had actually served to reinforce Western culture’s need of Christianity—a fact that the young Bavinck thought was being confirmed in the historical circumstances of the late 1890s and

21. James Davison Hunter, “Introduction,” in Rieff, *My Life Amongst the Deathworks*, p. xvi.

22. Herman Bavinck, *Gereformeerde dogmatiek*, 1st ed., 4 vols. (Kampen: J.H. Bos, 1898–1901).

23. Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, p. 225.

24. Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, p. 211.

early 1900s.²⁵ The fourth and final volume of the first edition of his *Reformed Dogmatics* was also completed at the close of this “young” period. Writing in *De Bazuin*, the Reformed newspaper that he served as editor, Bavinck described his finished work as “the theology needed by our age.”²⁶

However, the ink had barely dried on those words before Bavinck realised that something profound had changed in Western culture. The age (or in Rieffian terms, the “second” world) that he thought safe was suddenly subject to a new and (for Bavinck) almost entirely unanticipated challenger: a new world reimagined on the basis of Nietzsche’s novel brand of atheism. Unlike the moralistic, materialist atheists of the 1890s, whose denial of God was sheepishly intended to strengthen the moral norms of the Western world, Nietzsche’s atheism aimed at the death not only of God, but of everything grounded in theism (and above all, influenced by Christ himself). On those terms, if God has been removed, every norm must be called into question, and every value revalued. In Rieff’s analysis, Nietzsche is perhaps the purest exponent—or stated better, the “prophet”—of the “third” world.²⁷

During Nietzsche’s own lifetime, he was certainly no prophet amongst the Dutch, for whom he was an almost

entirely obscure figure.²⁸ From this period, for example, it appears that Bavinck’s knowledge of Nietzsche was limited to book titles (in particular, *The Gay Science*),²⁹ which seems to have led the young Bavinck to misunderstand Nietzsche’s atheism as fundamentally eudaemonistic, rather than as a philosophy of domination.³⁰

To Bavinck’s great surprise, though, following Nietzsche’s death in 1900, he became posthumously famous, and suddenly so, amongst the Dutch. Nietzsche’s *Übermensch* ideal—that of the ideal human as the one who dominates, rather than who is dominated—captured part of the public imagination. It quickly became more acceptable to despise Jesus, and to view his influence on the world—particularly with regard to the weak and the poor—as negative. Nietzsche’s philosophy was popularised and Dutchified by the novelist Frederik van Eeden (1860–1932).³¹ A veritable Dutch cult of Nietzsche sprang up, leading Bavinck to write (in 1902), that, “in his moral philosophy, Nietzsche has only given voice to what lived unconsciously in many hearts.”³² This particular statement marks a turning point in Bavinck’s theological development: in it, we see his recognition that the world shaped by sacred order—the world for which he had written in the 1880s–90s—was much less secure than he had previously assumed; that Western people were far more profoundly estranged from Christianity than he had thought; and that the twentieth century would be riven by hitherto unimaginable divisions.

Writing pre-Rieff, of course, Bavinck did not speak the language of “second” and “third” worlds. Conceptually, however, he saw what Rieff later would: Nietzsche and Christ now stood side by side, in direct competition, as their rival worlds also awkwardly tried to inhabit the same cultural space, one constructively and the other deconstructively. The “age of Nietzsche” had begun.³³

Early in the 1900s, Bavinck articulated clearly that a new chasm had opened up, dividing the worlds in question along the lines of theism and atheism. “In reality,” he wrote in 1904, “there are only two worldviews, the theistic and the atheistic.”³⁴ The world, its norms, and order, can only be tethered to something beyond itself—a transcendent, ultimate authority, from which it gains its basic stability—or exist as wholly untethered, serving as its own norm, and thus in constant moral flux.

From this point on, we clearly see the emergence of the “mature” Bavinck—a thinker changed by a sudden early twentieth century realisation that the nineteenth century had instantly become a far-off place indeed. The sense in which the “mature” Bavinck was a different kind of theologian to his younger self requires further elaboration than can be offered within an article on a

25. The same view that the challenge of the Enlightenment had set the stage for Christianity to emerge in a strengthened form, and save Western culture in the process, was shared by Abraham Kuyper. See James Eglinton, “The Reception of Aquinas in Kuyper’s *Encyclopaedie der heilige godgeleerdheid*,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception of Aquinas*, ed. Matthew Levering and Marcus Plested (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), p. 463.

26. Herman Bavinck, “Dogmatiek,” *De Bazuin*, April 16, 1901. “Dan is zij meteen de theologie, die ons tijd behoeft.”

27. Rieff, *My Life Amongst the Deathworks*, pp. 70–79.

28. For a survey of Nietzsche’s reception amongst Dutch theologians in the 1880s–90s, see James Eglinton, “Dominion and Vulnerability: Herman Bavinck and posthumanism in the shadow of Friedrich Nietzsche,” in *The Ethics of Generating Posthumans: Philosophical and Theological Reflections on Bringing New Persons into Existence*, ed. Calum MacKellar and Trevor Stammers (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), pp. 129–31.

29. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, tr. Thomas Common (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2006).

30. Herman Bavinck, *Gereformeerde ethiek*, ed. Dirk van Keulen (Utrecht: KokBoekencentrum, 2019), p. 941.

31. Frederik van Eeden, *De kleine Johannes*, 3 vols. (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1979).

32. Herman Bavinck, *Hedendaagsche moraal* (Kampen: Kok, 1902). “Inderdaad heeft een man als Nietzsche in zijne zedelijke wijsbegeerte slechts uiting gegeven aan wat onbewust leefde in veler harten.”

33. Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, pp. 219–54.

34. Herman Bavinck, *Christelijke wereldbeschouwing* (Kampen: J.H. Bos, 1904), p. 51. English translation: Herman Bavinck, *Christian Worldview*, ed. and trans. James Eglinton, Cory Brock, and Nathaniel Gray Sutanto (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020), p. 73.

different topic. (It might be said, however, that the goal of *Bavinck: A Critical Biography* is precisely to chart this development decade by decade.)

Briefly, the “mature” Bavinck changed in two key ways. First, he spent the best part of a decade rewriting and expanding his *Dogmatics* to meet the new needs of a new age. The first edition of the *Dogmatics*, written in the 1880s–90s, is now a largely forgotten text. While it was critically acclaimed in its own time, in its conversation partners and concerns it is very much a theological work for the nineteenth century. The revised edition—approximately 800 pages longer, and revised at many points—is a different beast: it is theology for the church that faces the aforementioned Rieffian clash of worlds. (Had Bavinck never produced a second edition, it is hard to imagine the first attracting sufficient interest to warrant multiple translations in the twenty-first century.)

Secondly, the mature Bavinck developed a general apologetic for Christianity (*contra* unbelief) in addition to his lifelong apologetic for Calvinism (*contra* other articulations of Christianity). His various early twentieth-century publications presented as *Christian* rather than specifically *Reformed* were written in this context: *Christian Worldview*,³⁵ *Christian Scholarship*,³⁶ *What is Christianity?*³⁷ This development was a change by addition, rather than subtraction. The mature Bavinck remained a Calvinist to the last, although he recognised that this new world required an apologetic that functioned at a general Christian level, as well as at a tradition-specific Reformed level. With this, we also see a different strategy in triaging potential interlocutors: whereas the “young” Bavinck busied himself in debate with rival schools of theological interpretation (in essence, fellow inhabitants of the “second” world), at various points the “mature” Bavinck seems to have treated these with less urgency than his conversation partners who had set up camp in the “third” world.³⁸

A century on from Bavinck’s death, of course, the work found in his younger phase is less well known. The bulk of his published and translated works were produced in the “mature” phase (with the recent exception of his *Reformed Ethics*, an unfinished early manuscript that has now been published.)³⁹ The revised *Reformed Dogmatics* now known and beloved by many, as well as texts like *Philosophy of Revelation* and *Christian Worldview*, are products of a phase of life profoundly marked by a vision highly similar to that of Philip Rieff.

In a certain sense, the younger Bavinck was a skilful interpreter of (late) modernity. In his critiques of liberal Protestantism, and of the sort of moralistic atheism that actually depends on Christian metaphysics,

his intuitions about the “second” world were correct. However, the “mature” Bavinck interpreted culture in a more capacious and complex way. His interpretative skills extended far further.

Writing (post-Bavinck) on the complex nature of life at the uneasy overlap of worlds that exist, respectively, to express and to exterminate sacred order, Rieff has argued that, “there are three cultures in which we live simultaneously and individually; therefore not equally. The third culture is predominant.”⁴⁰ And with that, he has summarised the complex and difficult terrain upon which Christians now stand: rival worlds long to ground our lives in transcendent firmness, or imminent flux. In its efforts to exist as an “anti-culture,” Rieff argues, the “third” world functions in a top-down, elite-led manner, and as such, it exerts dominance over the “second” world that it seeks to dismantle. If he is correct—to borrow some of Nietzsche’s own imagery—those who wish to continue to orient life *vertically* (towards a transcendent ultimate authority) rather than *horizontally* (moving “backward, sideward, forward in all directions” because there is no more “up and down”)⁴¹ should expect an exhausting existence as a minority subject to the elite majority’s relentless Oedipal attention.

Being pushed and pulled into, and by, different overlapping worlds is hard, both in understanding how such a thing works, or in articulating what exactly is happening. It is little wonder, then, that lucid interpreters of modernity draw a crowd. While they do not make the experience less jarring, they do make it more comprehensible. In the mature Bavinck, we find the Reformed tradition’s first great interpreter of modernity—a Christian whose holistic (polymathic) life, contextually-attuned theologising, and bold faith bespeak a profound skill in navigating the crosscurrents of our modern age. While this is certainly not the only reason for his significance a century on from his death, it is without doubt one of the most important. ■

35. Bavinck, *Christian Worldview*.

36. Herman Bavinck, *Christelijke wetenschap* (Kampen: Kok, 1904). English edition: *Christian Scholarship*, trans. and ed. James Eglinton, Cory Brock, Nathaniel Gray Sutanto (Wheaton: Crossway, 2023).

37. Herman Bavinck, *What is Christianity?* trans. Gregory Parker (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2022).

38. See, for example, Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, pp. 147–50.

39. For a critique of *Reformed Ethics* that pays careful attention to the relative immaturity of Bavinck’s thought in drafting the manuscript, see Bruce Pass, “Reading Bavinck’s Ethics,” *Reviews in Religion and Theology* 27.4 (2020): 452–63.

40. Rieff, *My Life Among the Deathworks*, p. 129.

41. Rieff, *My Life Among the Deathworks*, p. 79; Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, p. 181.

Hope for the Modern Self: On Bavinck's "Christian Science"

By Cory C. Brock

In 1904, and in the same year as *Christian Worldview*,¹ Herman Bavinck published a book titled *Christelijke wetenschap* (Christian Science).² He had begun teaching at the Vrije Universiteit (Kuyper's Free University), a distinctly Reformed Christian university in Amsterdam, in 1902. He opens the book both from the standpoint of his own experience but also by marking a national and European trend, a movement of late as he put it, to "build science ... on the foundation of the Christian faith."³ According to Bavinck, due to an ever-increasing dissatisfaction with the state of science in the universities, Christians across the continent had taken up the battle against "unbelieving science" (CS, p. 5). For Bavinck, this endeavor was only a move in a broader and essential Christian movement, listed alongside other critical moments like the church secession of 1834, the *Réveil*, and the more recent fight for the Christian schools. He opines that "however weak it may be, there is a revival of Christian science to behold that fills the heart with hope for the future" (CS, p. 6).

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1. Herman Bavinck, *Christelijke wereldbeschouwing: rede bij de overdracht van het Rectoraat aan de Vrije Universiteit te Amsterdam op 20 October 1904* (Kampen: J.H. Bos, 1904). See H. Bavinck, *Christian Worldview*, trans. Nathaniel Gray Sutanto, James Eglinton, Cory C. Brock (Wheaton: Crossway, 2019). Hereafter CW.

2. Nathaniel Gray Sutanto, James Eglinton, and I, Cory Brock, are translating Bavinck's Dutch text *Christelijke Wetenschap* into English in preparation for its forthcoming publication with Crossway Publishing under the title *Christian Scholarship*, expected in 2023.

3. H. Bavinck, *Christelijke Wetenschap* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1904), p. 5. Hereafter CS.

4. For an explanation of these movements, see James Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography* (Baker Academic, 2020).

In anticipation for the English edition of this text, this essay introduces this forthcoming translation in brief by asking and addressing several questions that naturally arise, not only from the reader's perspective, but in the very logic of Bavinck's own argument. First, what is the content and "hope" for the movement to which Bavinck refers at the beginning of this work (and of which the establishment of Christian science was only a part)? And so, what role does Christian science play in this movement? Naturally, what is Christian science? Can there be such a thing? We shall answer these questions under the banners of (1) the hope of Christian science; (2) the definition of Christian science; (3) and the necessity of Christian science.

1. THE HOPE OF CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

The movement that Bavinck labels "Christian science" was an alternative to positivism and the scientism it had produced in the nineteenth-century for the hope of an organic renewal of knowledge in the twentieth. Christian science, for Bavinck, was an act of judgment against modernist empiricism "in the name of religion, for the sake of Christian truth, in order to bridge the chasm between school and life, in defense of the confession of the church" (CS, p. 5). If the *Réveil* was an evangelistic movement in the name of Christ that steered the Netherlands toward the necessity of experiential religion in the face of nationalistic religion, and if the Secession was a confessional, ecclesial movement to free the church from the overreach of the State, and if the Anti-revolutionary party was a political movement that championed pre-modern ideals against the tenets of Revolution,⁴ then Christian science was a truth movement for the sake of empirical and metaphysical union in the face of radical empiricism. And, accordingly, in Bavinck's new institution, "the Free University of Amsterdam maintained itself for the purpose of the cultivation of science and the

education for a variety of relations in life in accordance with Reformed principles" (CS, p. 6).

Bavinck notes that this was in his day a European-wide movement, not just Dutch. It was not only Reformed either. Rome, under Leo XIII, had established all manner of scientific investigations under the principles of "Thomas," he remarks, in "logic and psychology, metaphysics and theology, history and literature, jurisprudence and sociology, [and these] are practiced in such a way by them that the opponent must reckon with their work" (CS, p. 7). Such a widespread revival, he thinks, fills the heart with hope.

Before defining Christian science more precisely, we must situate this movement more resolutely in the "hope" to which Bavinck referred. What is its hope (a hope which Bavinck saw as the unified goal of ecclesial, political, and scientific reform)? He hints at such in several remarks: "After the thirst for facts is initially quenched, comes the hunger after the knowledge of the origin and goal, the cause and essence of the things above" (CS, pp. 7–8). He notes that the twentieth-century person is returning to the child-like longing for things unseen, life behind the curtain, not with respect to the direction of childish immaturity, but proper wonder. One might mark the maturation timeline of the modern person in the nineteenth-century as follows: "Just as, according to sociological law, a human being is a theologian in infancy and a metaphysician in youth, and then a physicist in adulthood, so humanity has passed through these three periods in science" (CS, p. 23). But now she returns, climbing back up the ladder to the things above, which is, for Bavinck, a necessary ascent because the investigatory instinct of humanity toward facts never remains without the desire for unification by way of causation and value.

Bavinck had spelled out his hope in the same year he wrote this text, *Christian science* (CS), in his *Christian Worldview* (CW), where he first dismantles the very same problem of positivism, noting how it undermines the instinctive life of the human consciousness that not only seeks metaphysical answers, but is basically religious. And in CS, he argues that "those who praise contemporary science cannot close their eyes to the religious character of this movement" (CS, p. 5) (the movement of Christian science). Believers, Bavinck remarks, were jolted awake from their slumbers at the end of the previous century by the extent of the power of positivism, and once again, are taking their place in that which was formerly neglected. And why so? Supremely, Bavinck's concern, and his "hope," is that "the banner of the Gospel must be displayed too in the

world of science" (CS, p. 6) like had been the hope in the Secession and the political work of the free-church movements up to that point. But, if one set aside for a moment, the end of the Gospel itself, CW and CS both note the thirst of human nature for holism as a response to the fractured self, manufactured by empiricism. Again, there is a hunger after knowledge of the origin and goal, after the essence of things. The child-like desire for unity of the self in a unified existence proves inescapable and even necessary.

If Kant had undermined the confidence of the nineteenth-century mind in the existence and knowledge of God, immortality, and the soul while replacing knowledge of such with an existential label of necessary illusion, then "modern culture" and its science, wielded by minds like Renan and Darwin, abolished even the need for the illusion in the hopes of progressivism, whatever that might mean for the modern individual. In CW, Bavinck argues that while scientific materialism had a moment of dominance, the youth of Zarathustra had failed in that religion had not died and the transvaluation of values was seemingly ignored by the populace. Yet, the nineteenth-century bred confusion: "Before all else, what strikes us in the modern age is the internal discord that consumes the self" (CW, 24). He spoke of the denial, or more accurately, the suppression of the internal religious consciousness, as a sickness of soul, producing a "disharmony in between our thinking and feeling, between our willing and acting . . . between science and life" (CW, 22). Wherein "worldview" is an inductive enterprise that describes the totality of the endeavor of the human consciousness to put philosophy and science within the boundaries of a map outlined by religion (with particular focus on epistemology and ethics), *Christian Science* focuses on the relation between religion and the empirical sciences in particular, between facts and metaphysics, and issues a call for their partnership.

The most obvious hope of "Christian science" then is the existential satisfaction brought about in the unity of metaphysics and observed facts. For "the metaphysical need lies too deep in human nature, than that it could become silenced in the long run" (CS, p. 8). In the early twentieth-century, the resurgence to old and new religions was proof enough of this fact. Bavinck notes the rise in former materialists as converts to spiritism, theosophy, Buddhism, and Islam. But above all, "humanity is tired of doubt and uncertainty" and thus the return to positive Christianity is a return to dogmatics and church, history and liturgy. Christian science has arisen of late, Bavinck argues, so that the mind and heart may live together in peace, so that a foundation of truth may

be established, and so places like the university can be whole once again. He suggests that in the emergence of the Christian religion and its love for science “Christianity was the true philosophy, and the Christian was the real philosopher, who recognized the truth, who knew who God was, and who now, equipped with this knowledge, also had a different and better insight into the essence of the world, of nature and history” (CS, p. 12).

2. THE DEFINITION OF CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

Several problems arise at the moment one considers the possibility of Christian science. First, the ambiguity of the genitive in the conceptual relation between “Christian” and “science” cries out for explanation. Is Christian science the science of Christianity as one might understand the social sciences, for example, perhaps as a discipline title within the broad territory of religious studies? Or, rather, is it speaking of when scientific determination of any sort is disciplined by Christian religion in some manner? For Bavinck, the former is no unworthy endeavor but occupied by other names such as the history of Christianity. The latter is undoubtedly included in his concept of Christian science, a reference to the boundary markers Christianity draws for development of a worldview, disallowing scientific conclusion to transgress the borders. And yet, for Bavinck there is more to the idea. Christian science is a mode of operation, a habitus, which also attempts to capture how a Christian ought to be scientific. To understand his reasoning, one must first say a little more about the problem he addresses and then define science itself.

Mention has already been made of the problem: positivism. The philosophies of Victor Cousin, August Comte, and John Stuart Mill, for example, “put both feet on the empirical standpoint” where “all over the world, this conception of science was gradually being proclaimed as the only true one” (CS, pp. 22–23). Bavinck regards the most common characteristic of positivism and as the “demand for absolute presuppositionlessness” (CS, p. 23). Humanity has now matured, so the narrative goes, into the phase of science where metaphysical “knowledge” is out of the question. The realm of knowledge cannot ascend beyond the empirical investigations using the inductive approach of the scientific method. This means that God, the soul, immortality, being, ethics, and causation are all expressions of subjectivity.

Bavinck makes use of the concept science, *wetenschap*, in a similar way that the term *Wissenschaft* operates in premodern German. The old way of science is nearly the opposite of positivism, as captured in the concept

of *Wissenschaft*: “research into the being and causes of things” where one seeks to understand the relationships among all creatures and their associated final causes (CS, p. 23). This science requires ascending into the invisible domain and that means the activity of science must include metaphysical claims. The older concept of science stands opposed to positivism as does the classical relation between faith and science: So Bavinck: “Believing and unbelieving, Christian and positivistic views of science stand diametrically opposed to each other. Compromise here is not possible, but [there is] a duty to make a definite choice” (CS, p. 9). Under the reign of Comte, religion is nothing more than a private matter. But what is gained, so they say, is “certainty.” If science only occupies itself with the empirical, the argument goes, it can be certain of its determinations and “predict the future from the present with indubitable certainty” (CS, p. 24). Now, in the age of positivism, the guild will replace both State and religion with “science.”

Therefore, Bavinck’s main criticism of positivism, which is a theory of science that disregards the universal reality of faith-knowledge in all acts of knowing, is its overestimation of the possibility of presuppositionlessness. There is no regard to the “epistemology to which they are committed.” It is enough, Bavinck notes, for the modern scientist to fight against prejudices in the search for truth, which allows one to go wherever the research takes them. But prejudice and presupposition are distinct. Even prejudice is not so easy to shake because the human mind is no “purely logical machine and can never escape the influence of its affective and volitional life” (CS, p. 26). And yet distinct from this human problem, presuppositions are more like assumptions “which first make the study possible” (CS, p. 26). While one might slave off prejudices, they cannot do so with prior judgments. To suppose so is an alternative type of dogmatism to religious dogmatism, one of naïveté. We shall return to this critique in the next section, but all in all, in a second critique that Bavinck briefly offers, one can know the truth of positivism by its fruit: it has produced the same thought-world as before, where “men of science are constantly mistaken, always in conflict with one another, and constantly revising the results of their research” (CS, p. 27).

Third, Bavinck also notes the importance of understanding that positivist definitions of science are just one option among many, which is to say that one needs a capacious acknowledgement of the differences of opinion on display, a charitable disposition and understanding that positivism is unwilling to accept thereby creating its intolerant and dogmatist approach (which is the very

critique positivism often shouts at religion). This standpoint breeds the confusing militancy of positivism, where positivism officially leaves religion to be a mere subjective determination and in theory cares not for what a person believes in their own personal life but in practice produces a rabid distaste and war-like stance against religion. Again, "it is precisely the so-called 'presuppositionless' science, which bans any other view, claims for itself sole dominion and places state power and state funds in its service" (CS, p. 34). Yet, this definition of presuppositionless science is not derived from science, but philosophy. It is entirely unaware of itself.

Bavinck offers then an alternative presentation of science to that of positivism, that neither rejects the centrality of the empirical, nor makes little of the metaphysical assumptions with which all humans proceed into research. And yet, this for Bavinck ought also be an act of *Christian science*. What does the adjective Christian mean for the scientific pursuit? First, let us consider the basics of science, its essence and goal. Science begins with "normal empirical knowing" (CS, p. 44). The foundation upon which all science stands is the assumption of the unity of subject and object in normal empirical knowing (which positivism fails to reckon with). And within normal knowing, there are degrees of certainty. While we may refer to many different propositions as objects of knowledge, we also know the implicit differences in knowing, believing, and assuming, all of which for Bavinck are aspects of knowledge. For example, "believing stands beneath knowing [*weten*] not in subjective assurance, but in objective obviousness" (CS, p. 45). Believing is so important, Bavinck argues, at least because most of what we know in life is not the product of objective obviousness. Rather, we receive much of our "knowledge" by way of trusted authority. The next move in the development of science, is that when human beings arrive at a place where the daily needs are met, they desire to move beyond normal empirical knowing, into methodological knowing—a product of careful, controlled, systematic research and reflection on what is. But, again, humans are not satisfied with a systematic presentation of what is (only according to the senses) either. Such endeavors do require seeking out causes and natures, but the human also wants to know "why." Perhaps certain investigations produce some immediate, obvious answers to the questions like "for what purpose" but empirical knowing is inadequate to tie together the truth into the realm of the ideal, to posit final causes.

For this reason, science and philosophy are bound together as "physics" and "meta-physics." From such desire and necessity, institutions arise like the University.

Bavinck explains this relation in this lengthy, yet helpful, quote:

What now belongs under the rubric of scientific research, and as such, that has a right to the name "science", is not decided by us *a priori*, but is rather provided in the passage of history [*historie*] and produced by its events [*geschiedenis*]. Slowly, investigation, the remit of science, the extent of the university, stretches out. Scientific thinking began in Greece with the question of the final ground of things, and from there, all the problems that present themselves to the human mind [*geest*] were developed in good order. The universities were not set up artificially in the middle ages, according to a previously established schema, but were rather first planted as a small spring, from which they grew like a living organism. In the present day, the technical subjects gradually elevate themselves to the highest point of the university's sciences, and these are constantly subject to a powerful evolution. In one word, there has been a development of science in the events of history [*geschiedenis*] that does not happen outside of human thinking and willing, but that also cannot be explained from these, and that points back to a driving idea, to an organized thought (CS, p. 48).

There is a difference then in normal knowing and scientific knowing but they exist in the order of a continuum: "empirical knowing [*weten*] knows [*kent*] the particular, independent phenomena, but scientific knowing [*weten*] seeks the universal, the law, that masters them all, the idea that animates them all" (CS, p. 49). And if science seeks the universal, the idea, then it is quite possible to speak of "Christian science." What is Bavinck trying to accomplish by the use of this adjective? As he puts it, "the end goal of science can be no other than the knowledge [*kennis*] of the truth, of the full, pure truth" (CS, p. 58).

If one has found the full, pure truth by faith, then it is impossible and even wrong, he supposes, for this ideal to be disallowed in the laboratory. Further, in the unity of self-consciousness, the agreement and organism that is soul and body together, in which intellect, will, and feeling co-operate as the one person, the needs of the heart cannot be arbitrarily separated from the insights of the intellect. For if every person, in developing a world-and-life-view takes on philosophical and religious boundary-identifying ideas which become presuppositions, then it is not just or possible to shed such metaphysical truth-claims in the act of inductive investigation. So then, if one is a Christian and scientist,

they must allow science the freedom it needs to discover without neglecting the authority of God's speech in God's world. This is the case "because all science is the translation of the thoughts that God has laid down in his works" (CS, p. 58). While, "pseudoscience can lead away from Him, true science leads back to Him. In Him alone, who is the truth itself, do we find rest, as much for our understanding [*verstand*] as for our heart" (CS, p. 58). There are a number of ways of speaking about Christian science that follow.

First, Bavinck states that "science is determined by the Gospel through the reality of an eternal, incorruptible truth" (CS, p. 96). Truth is not a mere subjective idea but objective in God. Christianity supports science by rejecting skepticism in this regard. Further, it provides the presuppositions of both religion and science, namely, the creation of the world by the Godhead. Second, Christian science then is a *habitus* of knowing that proceeds from the faith-knowledge of special revelation. It is science that "accepts special revelation:" "if God has communicated knowledge of himself in a special way, it goes without saying that science must reckon with it, and that failing to do so is guilty of disobedience and error" (CS, p. 28). The acceptance of which is not a question of science but religion, he argues. That means that Christian science proceeds on the basis of a world-and-life-view whose boundaries are drawn by religion. Science then, for Bavinck, is either biased against God or for God, depending on its stance toward religion. And for one who believes in the revelation of God and in the creation by God's hand, it would be sinful to remove such faith from the judgments of scientific determination.

Third, science informed by Christianity understands that "religion and science ... purity of heart and clarity of head ... immoral life and ungodly doctrine are indubitably connected to one another" (CS, p. 31). The connection between religion and science is very close. For this reason, Christianity preserves both the religious and scientific personality of humanity and unifies the act of knowing. Fourth, Christianity saves the sciences from positivism. It preserves the scientific nature of "literature, history, law, religion, and morality, which together form the highest goods of humanity" (CS, p. 102). Therein, the logic of the university is also preserved as a domain of organic knowledge.

Fifth, Christian science has the power to make explicit not only the fact that science proceeds on metaphysical assumptions but to do so with precise claims about the metaphysics itself: "recall but once that all science, also that of nature, rests upon metaphysical

presuppositions, and proceeds from general, self-establishing truths ... the reliability of the senses, the objective existence of the world, the truth of the laws of thinking, and the logical, ideal content of perceptible phenomena" (CS, p. 60). Bavinck, like elsewhere, explains that for the Christian, the Logos is the ground of certainty in any act of scientific research. Sixth, "Christian science" allows one to move beyond description in the humanities, to treat them as science, with objects to know, and to be prescriptive: "Everyone expects of these sciences that they will say what should count as religion, ethics, law, for every person" (CS, pp. 67–8). Positivism is a destructive force for ethics as science, for example, necessarily reducing it to all manner of subjective constructs or a mere history without precept.

Finally, Christian science includes all the sciences, and treats theology in particular as science. "Christianity is science" (CS, p. 98), as he puts it. In a field where science is defined exclusively by the empirical method, dogmatics is disallowed its scientific character. Yet, "a God who in no sense can be known is the same as a God who does not exist" (CS, p. 77). If God cannot be known, then God cannot be served. Bavinck contends that those who have embraced the modernist definition of science and treat religion and theology as a merely historical or literary subject often assume that which they are disallowed to know, the existence of God. Further, like in his criticisms of positivism above, it is foolish for the modern scientist to suppose that theologians are dogmatic and proceed on the grounds of faith while science is scientific and proceeds on the ground of evidence. Both, rather, are dogmatic, and proceed from convictions. Bavinck makes an existential appeal on this front, that the religious man who says "who have I in heaven but you" cannot say "I will give up faith because science declares God unknowable." "None who value religion, and find their highest blessedness in fellowship with God can be neutral and objective regarding all that science is pleased to declare" (CS, p. 79). Rather, he writes, "in response to the science that is fashionable today, I call upon the science that has endured through the ages" (CS, p. 79). For Bavinck then, Christian science assumes that the religious person who believes in the knowability of God must strive to unify head and heart, "faith and science."

It is important here too to distinguish the possibility of Christian science from religious science. Christianity does not view religions as mere gradations of the same revelation, but claims to be independent from all other religions. It claims knowledge of the Triune God, of Christ as God and man, as the messianic hope of the world, of the resurrected Christ in space and time, and

so the Christian religion stands and falls on the confession of this special revelation. This particularity draws some boundaries for knowing. "If each religion brings with itself, as it does, a certain view of the world and humanity, of nature and history, then it binds the whole of human life and also undoubtedly that of science" (CS, p. 91). There can be no "double-truth" for the believer. Science and religion cannot walk side-by-side without touching. All faith, and positivism also includes faith, brings religious ideas to bear on scientific conclusions. For the Christian, it is *Christian* godliness that is profitable for all things.

3. THE NECESSITY OF CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

Finally, because faith aims toward knowledge, because faith seeks understanding, the emergence of Christian science is not a mere response to modernist positivism but a historic Christian practice, a necessity of life in a fallen world. Without sin, there need not be Christian science at all. There would be no breach in the consciousness, between religion and knowledge, apart from the rupture-induced act of denying the Word of God in the egocentricity of becoming like God in knowing good and evil. Sin damaged the self to the extent that knowledge of a fact no longer coincides with knowledge of God. For this reason Bavinck offers the reader an argument for the necessity of faith in science as well as a narrative of the emergence of Christian science in Christian history.

With regard to the emergence of Christian science in Christian history, Bavinck makes the magisterial claim that the apostles of Christ "planted the banner of truth in a world of unbelief and superstition" (CS, p. 10). He suggests that the in the first-century skepticism and mysticism had displaced the former highly ordered orientation towards systematic investigation (one would imagine he is thinking of Aristotle). But what Christianity offered the world in its unparalleled sweep of the Roman Empire was a religion of "truth." While Christianity was so highly attractive because of the grace on offer (not to mention the claim of a resurrected Messiah), he proclaims the striking point that Christianity is a religion of grace because it is first a commitment to truth. If the one God is truth, and his revelation in Jesus Christ is the unveiling of the truth, then all God does and says is truth. Christianity seeks not to merely to unveil truth but to make the first-order claim that God defines all truths, because God is truth and the author of essences. Thus, by the Spirit, "whoever takes hold of his faithful Gospel is from the truth, becomes reborn, sanctified, and freed by the truth. They are in the truth and the truth is in them" (CS, p. 11).

Bavinck then offers a narrative where the focus on truth breaks through a culture of superstition in the "world of the gentiles." The patristic fathers proved, as quoted above, that "Christianity was the true philosophy and the Christian was the real philosopher, who recognized the truth, who knew who God was, and who now, equipped with this knowledge also had a different and better insight into the essence of the world, of nature and history" (CS, p. 12). Eventually, a positive approach had to be found with respect to the knowledge produced by the schools of the time, one that stood on neither the extreme of Tertullian's denial of the good of pagan philosophy nor the Alexandrian exaltation of pagan philosophy. The temptation of Christians throughout history, he notes, has always been to one or the other, "world-worship and world-flight, cultural idolatry and cultural contempt, Enlightenment and pietism" (CS, p. 14). Yet, the emergent wisdom was clear and is that same wisdom which Bavinck promotes here and throughout his corpus: neither wholesale rejection or acceptance of pagan insight.

And so, the third thing is the Augustinian way—an unsurprising answer to one familiar with Bavinck's corpus—which is not to adopt Augustine wholesale either but to appropriate his general insight that truth is made known by the coherence of authority and reason within a framework of faith. For "science can only teach so little, and that only to a few. It does not know the way to truth, for it does not know Christ, and thus often it leads to labyrinths" (CS, p. 15). The Augustinian insight (while Bavinck does regard Augustine's pairing of authority and reason to be at time dualistic) is that faith is a "gift of God" necessary for all knowledge, for all science. This claim leads to the second point regarding the necessity of the emergence of Christian science.

Bavinck also refers to the necessity of Christian science through the logic of the necessity of faith as it relates to the possibility of knowledge. He explains the whole in this brief remark:

faith aims toward knowledge (*kennis*) and is a means for understanding (*weten*). That is already the case in the mundane sciences, which, like the whole of human society, is built on faith and thereupon must proceed from it. But this applies in particular in relation to that science which has the knowledge of God as its content. For this is the ground-rule given in the word of the prophet: If you have not believed, you will not understand. We believe the truth of God precisely because we do not understand it, but by faith we are enabled to understand. Faith and science (*Geloof en wetenschap*) thus stand next to one another in the relation of conception

and birth, as fruit and tree, as work and wage; knowledge (*het weten*) is the fruit and wages of faith (CS, p. 13).

While faith is critical to theology as science, faith is a requirement even in mundane sciences like history, whose “facts” are dependent upon belief in human testimony, which is then a domain of knowledge that positivism logically excludes. All claims of knowledge depend upon philosophical determinations of the nature of knowledge. Epistemological consciousness is necessary for thoughtful science but “it is not even possible to provide an epistemology without metaphysics and philosophy” (CS, p. 35). While positivism stands on the presupposition that all knowledge is nothing but the determinations of sense perception, it fails to provide a rationale for the reliability of the senses and “the objectivity of the perceivable world.” These assumptions, Bavinck argues, are not provable. So Bavinck, “We now merely point out that all scientific research assumes in advance and without proof the reliability of the senses and the objectivity of the perceivable world” (CS, p. 35). He even argues that the “reality of the world fixed outside of us is through faith” (CS, p. 35). Those who doubt such things cannot be refuted by any arguments. When one faces them honestly, they can either be driven toward some form of skepticism or towards a faith-position, that all knowledge is preceded by trust in that which science cannot prove: perception, objectivity, and the possibility of knowledge itself. There is a necessity, Bavinck believes, in faith that precedes science because the outside world is a given by way of consciousness, not in itself. One cannot ever take the God’s eye-view and perceive the phenomenal apart from personal consciousness.

Further, all manner of metaphysical assumptions are made in the act of scientific investigation: “concepts such as thing, property, cause, effect, law, condition, time, space, truth, falsehood, etc.” (CS, p. 37), are assumed as realities despite their invisibility. Thus, faith is required to maintain objectivity. And, this faith takes form and shape at its best in Christian reason, a claim that requires treatment elsewhere in texts such as CW. Nevertheless, the assumption of objectivity includes faith in the deepest ground of truthfulness in God.

For this reason, it is appropriate to say that theology is both queen and servant of the sciences. But, at the same time, it is necessary to protect the freedom of the other sciences from the over-intrusion of theology with some boundaries. Theology as queen offers the map of the terrain in which the sciences can move about freely. The “misuse of power” has been applied inappropriately in both directions throughout history,

Bavinck argues, wherein both theology and the other sciences overpower and attempt to give answers for which they are not qualified (CS, p. 18). At times rationality gave way to empiricism and at others the empirical to rationalism, until the late nineteenth-century surrendered thinking to radical empiricism, ignoring the basics of philosophical insight, not to mention theology. *Sed contra*, Bavinck argues that every researcher brings all manner of “religious, moral, and philosophical convictions and is controlled by them to a greater or lesser degree” (CS, p. 30). This is even true of the radical positivists, whose conviction about the impossibility of metaphysical dogma is a dogmatic religious assertion in itself. It is actually the case that each party proceeds on the implicit belief that that the other party’s prior judgments are wrong; it is not that research just carries on without such judgments.

Bavinck’s claim is that every person must honestly death with the assumed faith necessary even in the sensory and knowledge processes themselves. Facing this reality leads directly to the necessary relationship between metaphysics and science. One needs faith as a habitus, Bavinck supposes, because it is the means of disciplining reason lest it fall by way of the pride of life. “Faith is an activity of the intellect, an act of thinking with consent, a deed of submission, of humility and lowliness, and as such it stands directly over against the pride and haughtiness of reason” (CS, p. 15). So Bavinck: “on earth, we never go beyond the standpoint of faith” (CS, pp. 16–17).

CONCLUSION

In 1904, Bavinck saw the surfacing needs of the modern self, a fractured self, longing for an organic unity which, he claims, arises in the consciousness of all human beings. And so, he issued a call and set forth an argument for the developing movement of “Christian science” in the European landscape to take shape all the more. All in all, he argues that the choice between science and religion is untenable. And Christian science, which allows the metaphysics of supernatural revelation to speak to the causes and natures of things discovered as facts, seeks not to disallow the freedom of the empirical sciences but to acknowledge the unity of the self in the activity of science and to let the holistic needs of human beings inform the boundaries and goal of the sciences. Christian science provides a ground for the objectivity of sense perception, for the reality of truth, includes the claims of special revelation, and re-establishes a place for theology among the sciences, in addition to the other humanities. ■

Locating the Mystery: Bavinck and Van Til on Immutability and Anthropomorphism

By Lane G. Tipton

INTRODUCTION

This essay seeks to locate and explore the mystery regarding the way anthropomorphic language in Scripture renders the activity of the living and immutable triune God. Herman Bavinck and Cornelius Van Til enable us to grasp something of the ultimate mystery involved in how Scripture reveals the acts of the immutable triune God in terms and categories drawn from the domain of the mutable creation.

BAVINCK, IMMUTABILITY, AND ANTHROPOMORPHISM
Bavinck rightly observes that the Bible reveals the self-contained being and works of the triune God in language and concepts taken from the created order. Scripture depicts the activity of immutable and impassible trinitarian persons in anthropomorphic language borrowed from the mutable and passible creature, without ascribing the mutable and passible attributes of the creature to the personal activity of God (see Malachi 3:6 and James 1:17). By way of example, when the Scripture describes the Son of God as eternally begotten of the Father (John 1:18), the Spirit of God “hovering” over the “formless void” (Genesis 1:2), or the “sound of the Lord God walking” in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:8), it employs images taken from the created order to portray the personal activity of the self-contained triune God.

But such uses of anthropomorphic language in the Bible, uses that portray the activity of the immutable triune God in the idiom of the mutable creature, risk being interpreted in a way that ascribes mutability and passibility to the trinitarian persons of the Godhead in their terminal acts that fall in space and time.

Bavinck, representative of classical Augustinian and Reformed theology on the matter, avoids any such inference. The Bible’s use of anthropomorphic language forbids ascribing change to God in his relation to creation, even though on the surface it might appear to

imply such change in God. He says, “Scripture necessarily speaks of God in anthropomorphic language. Yet, however anthropomorphic its language, it at the same time prohibits us from positing any change in God himself.”¹ The immutability of God supplies the interior theological rationale for all of the anthropomorphic language contained in the Scriptures. Scripture’s teaching as a whole, including its theology of anthropomorphism, proscribes attributing change to God in his freely determined relation to creatures. Thus, according to Bavinck and the classical Reformed tradition, the anthropomorphic language of the Bible preserves the immutability of the triune Creator even as it depicts his actions in terms and concepts of mutability.

If the Scripture’s use of anthropomorphism “prohibits” ascribing any change to God, and the immutable triune God sovereignly relates to creatures, then “immutability ... should not be confused with monotonous sameness or rigid immobility. Scripture itself leads us in describing God in the most manifold relations to all his creatures.”² The immutable persons of the Trinity are also living persons who enter freely into “manifold relations” to mutable creatures in time. Bavinck accordingly reasons that in relation to creatures, “There is change around, about, and outside of him, and there is change in people’s relations to him, but there is no change in God himself.”³ Not only is God immutable apart from his relation to creatures, but he also remains immutable *in* his freely determined relation to creatures.

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1. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2, *God and Creation*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), p. 158.

2. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2.158.

3. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2.158.

Bavinck, as a true theologian of the Trinity, observes that while the acts of God outside of himself are the acts of the one simple God, there is an order of personal operations within the Godhead. Bavinck affirms both that God's works *ad extra* are "indivisible" and that those same works manifest an intrinsic "order and distinction of the persons."⁴ This entails that while we ascribe numerical unity to the undivided works of the one triune God, we also ascribe distinct terminal acts to the trinitarian persons (e.g., the hovering to the Spirit in Genesis 1:2 and incarnation to the Son in John 1:14). The one living and true God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—relates to creation in various ways without change or limitation in the fullness of impassible and immutable life.

Bavinck, unlike traditional Modernist and contemporary Biblicist Evangelicals, does not reason in terms of a dialectic that ascribes immutability to God apart from his relation to creation, but then ascribes mutability to God as he relates to creatures. Bavinck has no place for an internal-external, immanent-economic, essence-person dialectic that attributes no change to God in the former (internal, immanent, essential) yet attributes all manner of change to God in the latter (extrinsic, economic, personal). There is no warrant for assigning immutability to God in one sense and mutability to God in another sense—a hallmark of all species of correlativism or mutualism. Bavinck's absolute and unqualified affirmation of the Creator's immutability supplies the internal theological rationale for a proper understanding of the Bible's anthropomorphic language.

This doctrinal commitment to a living and immutable triune God, who sovereignly relates to creation as such, decisively shapes Bavinck's conception of condescension. He observes, "It is a mark of God's greatness that he can condescend to the level of his creatures and that, though transcendent, he can dwell immanently in all created beings. Without losing himself, God can give himself, and, while absolutely maintaining his immutability, he can enter into an infinite number of relations to his creatures."⁵ Bavinck affirms that God remains immutable as he condescends and dwells immanently in manifold relations to his creatures.

The triune God sovereignly enters into the movements of time and occupies all space without being conditioned by time or limited by space. Bavinck is worth citing extensively as he expands on the way that the immutable triune God relates to time and space

without being determined or changed in that relation. He observes,

In fact, God's incomprehensible greatness and, by implication, the glory of the Christian confession are precisely that God, though immutable in himself, can call mutable creatures into being. Though eternal in himself, God can nevertheless enter into time and, though immeasurable in himself, he can fill every cubic inch of space with his presence. In other words, though he himself is absolute being, God can give to transient beings a distinct existence of their own. In God's eternity there exists not a moment of time; in his immensity there is not a speck of space; in his being there is no sign of becoming. Conversely, it is God who posits the creature, eternity which posits time, immensity which posits space, being which posits becoming, immutability which posits change. There is nothing intermediate between these two classes of categories: a deep chasm separates God's being from that of all creatures.⁶

God enters into time as eternal without himself becoming temporal, fills every cubic inch of space as immense without himself becoming spatial, relates to mutable creatures without himself becoming mutable, and although himself "absolute being," he "can give to transient beings a distinct existence of their own." In all of this, there is "not a moment of time" nor a "speck of space" and "no sign of becoming" in God as he relates to the creature. The triune God is not determined in any way as he relates to the creature (impassibility) and he is not changed in any way as he relates to the creature (immutability), yet he has freely determined authentically to relate to the creature (condescension).

Probing the mystery a step further, Bavinck insists there is nothing intermediate between God and the creature in God's freely determined relation to the creature. God, as God, relates to man, as man, and the relational activity of the former is rendered in terms and concepts borrowed from the relational activity of the latter. This means, among other things, that God does not take to himself intermediate properties of a mutable and composite character that somehow enable him to relate to creatures in time. God does not engage in voluntary self-limitation or self-modification in his relation to the creature. There are no such intermediate properties in the Creator-creature relation. The self-contained God mysteriously relates to the creature without voluntary addition or subtraction to his being.

When we grasp Bavinck's doctrine of divine condescension—in which living and immutable trinitarian

4. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2.318.

5. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2.159.

6. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2.158–59.

persons enter into every lock-step movement in time and indwell every cubic inch of space without change or limitation—we come to the heart of the specific mystery enshrined within God’s relation to creation. The triune God enters into the interiority of time and inhabits every crevice of space without being conditioned by time or limited by space. Living and immutable trinitarian persons entirely transcend and exhaustively indwell the temporal process, determining “the Moment” at every point without being determined by it at any point. Thus, the mystery of God’s relation to creation hinges on the way that God determines and indwells all space and time, without at any point being determined by it.

Bavinck then offers clarification regarding the phenomenon of anthropomorphic language in the Bible to depict this mysterious reality. Bavinck says, “While immutable in himself, he nevertheless, as it were, lives the life of his creatures and participates in all their changing states.”⁷ When Bavinck says that God “as it were . . . participates in all their changing states,” he is speaking anthropomorphically. God is not ontologically temporal, yet anthropomorphic language portrays his acts in temporal phenomenological terms. God is not ontologically spatial, yet anthropomorphic language describes his acts in spatial phenomenological terms. God is not ontologically mutable, yet anthropomorphic language depicts his acts in mutable phenomenological terms. Yet, the phenomenological terms of space, time, and change in no way suggest that the ontological qualities of space, time, and change are attributes of God. Anthropomorphic language deploys images from the “changing states of the creature” to render the acts of the “immutable” triune God in such a way that “as it were” he participates in their changing states.

The mutable created phenomena deployed in anthropomorphic language ought never to be ascribed to God as “attributes” or “properties” generated or taken on by God in his relation to creation. As Bavinck says when speaking about God in his relation to creation, “There is nothing intermediate between these two classes of categories: a deep chasm separates God’s being from that of all creatures.”⁸ God does not assume intermediate, created, mutable properties in his work of creation or in his providential act of voluntary condescension in covenant. He does not need such properties in order to become relatable to creatures. Rather, as we have seen, “Without losing himself, God can give himself, and, while absolutely maintaining his immutability, he can enter into an infinite number of relations to his creatures.”⁹ God’s condescension to relate to the creature, and the acts that proceed from it, introduce no loss nor

gain in the triune God. The triune God remains pure act in his tripersonal relation to creation, even though that relation is rendered through anthropomorphic language in the forms of potentiality borrowed from the created order.

Bavinck supplies a concrete example of anthropomorphic language from Genesis 3:9, situating his formulation in light of texts such as Psalm 139:4 and 147:5 that teach God’s exhaustive and definite foreknowledge of all the free actions of rational creatures. Bavinck cites God calling out “Where are you?” to our first parents in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:9). How does an inquiry regarding the location of Adam and Eve cohere with divine omniscience? Bavinck expounds as follows:

In addition God is conscious of and knows all that exists outside his being. Scripture nowhere even hints that anything could be unknown to him. True, the manner in which he obtains knowledge is sometimes stated in striking anthropomorphic language (Gen. 3:9ff.; 11:5; 18:21; etc.), but he nevertheless knows everything. The notion that something should be unknown to him is dismissed as absurd.¹⁰

Thus, while Scripture portrays God inquiring of the location of our first parents immediately after Adam’s original sin in Genesis 3:9, the Scripture, including Genesis 3:9, “nowhere even hints” that anything could be hidden from his knowledge. While Scripture deploys “striking anthropomorphic language” in Genesis 3:9 regarding God’s “manner” of obtaining knowledge, it would be “absurd” to take that anthropomorphic language to imply any form of divine ignorance. Genesis 3:9 does not supply biblical evidence that God has voluntarily limited his knowledge so that he does not know Adam’s location in Eden. Bavinck labels such views an “absurd” misunderstanding of the nature of anthropomorphic language. Bavinck insists that Genesis 3:9 cannot in any sense be leveraged to teach the doctrine of divine ignorance in God’s covenantal relation to creatures, because God knows all things:

The most minor and insignificant details (Matt. 6:8, 32; 10:30); the most deeply concealed things: the human heart and mind (Jer. 11:20; 17:9–10; 20:12; Ps. 7:10; 1 Kings 8:39; Luke 16:15; Acts 1:24; Rom. 8:27); thoughts and reflections (Ps. 139:2; Ezek. 11:5; 1 Cor. 3:20; 1 Thess.

7. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2.158.

8. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2.158.

9. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2.158.

10. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2.192.

2:4; Rev. 2:23); human origin, nature, and all human action (Ps. 139); night and darkness (Ps. 139:11–12); hell and perdition (Prov. 15:11); wickedness and sin (Ps. 69:5; Jer. 16:17; 18:23; 32:19); the conditional (1 Sam. 23:10–13; 2 Sam. 12:8; 2 Kings 13:19; Ps. 81:14–15; Jer. 26:2–3; 38:17–20; Ezek. 3:6; Matt. 11:21); and the things of the future (Isa. 41:22f.; 42:9; 43:9–12; 44:7; 46:10), particularly the end of a person's life (Ps. 31:16; 39:6; 139:6, 16; Job 14:5; Acts 17:26; etc.)—all are known to God.¹¹

The anthropomorphic language of Genesis 3:9 depicts the authentic relation of the all-knowing and all-determining covenant Lord to fallen Adam in categories borrowed from the created order. Stated another way, while the anthropomorphic language of Genesis 3:9 describes the relation of the immutable and omniscient triune God to Adam in accommodated terms borrowed from the mutable created realm, when understood within the broader context of biblical revelation, such language prohibits ascribing change to God's knowledge.

The triune God in his condescension to the creature is at no point determined by the creature and undergoes no reciprocal change with the creature. Yet the Scripture presents his condescension, and the acts that proceed from it, in the language and concepts derived from the changing creature. Therefore, the precise point of mystery in the employment of anthropomorphic language resides in the rendering of the acts of immutable trinitarian persons in a conceptual framework borrowed from the mutable order of creation. Cornelius Van Til, following Bavinck's lead, embraced and developed the implications of this mystery.

VAN TIL, IMMUTABILITY, AND FEARLESS ANTHROPOMORPHISM

Van Til, following Bavinck's guideline that the Bible's teaching as a whole, including its theology of anthropomorphism, prohibits ascribing change to God, advocated for what he termed "fearless anthropomorphism" and set that doctrine directly over against all forms of

correlativism. He says, "We shall not fear to be boldly anthropomorphic because, to begin with, we have, in our doctrines of the ontological trinity and temporal creation, cut ourselves loose once and for all from correlativism between God and man."¹² Again, "A fearless anthropomorphism based on the doctrine of the ontological trinity, rather than abstract reasoning on the basis of a metaphysical and epistemological correlativism, should control our concepts all along the line."¹³ Therefore, he reasons, "We need at this point to be fearlessly anthropomorphic."¹⁴ Fearless anthropomorphism, as Van Til understood it, involves rejecting every form of correlativism in God's relation to creation.

In his 1955 work, *The Defense of the Faith*, Van Til makes explicit what he means by correlativism. He argued that his "doctrine of God" has been "self-consciously set in opposition to all forms of non-Christian thought which compromise or deny the self-contained character [of God] by thinking of him (or it) as correlative to the universe."¹⁵ Correlativism teaches either that God changes in his relation to creation or that he is in some way determined by his relation to creation. Van Til maintained, against all forms of correlativism, that "we speak of the immutability of God. Naturally God does not and cannot change since there is nothing besides his own eternal Being on which he depends (Mal. 3:6; James 1:17)."¹⁶ Van Til therefore insisted that "the attributes of God are not to be thought of otherwise than as aspects of the one simple original being; the attributes of God are not characteristics that God has developed gradually; they are fundamental to his being."¹⁷ Van Til adds that "no one of the persons of the trinity can be said to be correlative in its being to anything that exists beyond the Godhead."¹⁸ The self-contained triune Creator does not exist in a correlative relation to the universe, with each side of the relation characterized by mutual change. In Van Til's theology of God's relation to the world, there is no correlativism between the Creator and the creature at any point.

As Bavinck insisted that there is no "intermediate category" between the immutable triune Creator and the mutable creature, Van Til insisted there are only two categories in the Creator-creature relation: (a) the ontological Trinity and (b) the temporal creation. It is the ontological Trinity, the self-contained triune God, who relates to the temporal creature. So, when Van Til makes the traditional distinction between the "ontological" and the "economic" aspects of the Trinity,¹⁹ his point is that the economic Trinity is not something or someone other than the ontological Trinity. It is the same Trinity in a

11. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, p. 192.

12. Cornelius Van Til, *Common Grace and the Gospel* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1972), p. 94.

13. Van Til, *Common Grace and the Gospel*, p. 93.

14. Van Til, *Common Grace and the Gospel*, p. 73.

15. Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1955), pp. 37, 38.

16. Van Til, *Defense of the Faith*, p. 25.

17. Van Til, *Defense of the Faith*, p. 26.

18. Van Til, *Defense of the Faith*, p. 69.

19. Cornelius Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1974), p. 32.

new relation. The economic Trinity is the immutable triune God in his freely determined relation to creation.

However, the economic works of the “ontological Trinity” are rendered in the idiom of the “temporal creation.” That is Van Til’s way of crisply summarizing the phenomenon of anthropomorphic language. As Bavinck insisted that anthropomorphic language “prohibits ascribing change to God,” Van Til correspondingly urges that anthropomorphic language prohibits any form of “correlativism between God and man.” The theological concerns expressed by Bavinck and Van Til are identical.

Van Til in his *Introduction to Systematic Theology* also cites directly from Bavinck’s discussion in the *Reformed Dogmatics* regarding God’s immutability in his freely determined relation to creation and Scripture’s use of anthropomorphism. He says,

Bavinck points out that the immutability of God has had its enemies. These enemies have been found among those whose thinking has been informed by pagan philosophy such as that of Heraclitus. Dorner, for instance, sought to harmonize the unchangeability of God with the fact of his active concern for the things of the universe by saying that God is immutable merely in the ethical aspect of his being. God is always love and is always holy. On the other hand, God changed when he actually created the world and when, in the person of the Son, he became flesh. Bavinck insists, and rightly so, that all these efforts are foredoomed to failure. The Scriptures speak anthropomorphically of God, and could not do otherwise, but for all that, God, in himself, is immutable. “There is change round about him; there is change in the relation of things to him; but there is no change in God himself.”²⁰

Dorner’s view, advocated in varying forms by classical Modernists and contemporary Evangelicals, insists that “God changed when he actually created the world” and when in the person of the Son “he became flesh.” Bavinck insists that such views are foredoomed to failure precisely because of a fundamental misunderstanding of anthropomorphic language. When God relates to the creature, the relation changes and the creature in the relation changes, but “there is no change in God himself.” But God becomes correlative to man if and when he undergoes change as he relates to the creature. When you put together the quotes, Van Til is saying God does not change in the new relation to creation and anthropomorphic language cannot be leveraged to suggest any form of correlativism. The creature changes in the relation and the relation changes, but God does not change.

Yet anthropomorphic language renders his actions in the changing categories that it borrows from the creature. Therein lies the precise locus of the mystery imbedded in Scripture’s use of anthropomorphic language.

Van Til, seeking to demonstrate the apparent contradiction between affirming that God is immutable in his relation to creation and Scripture’s rendering of his acts in language borrowed from the mutable order of creation, observes that “we are entitled and compelled to use anthropomorphism not apologetically but fearlessly. We need not fear to say that God’s attitude has changed with respect to mankind. We know well enough that God in himself is changeless. But we hold that we are able to affirm that our words have meaning for no other reason than that we use them analogically.”²¹ It is not an analogical understanding of anthropomorphic language to ascribe change to God. That would be univocal language; it would be to ascribe to God’s acts the creature’s qualitatively different attribute of mutability.

But what precisely does Van Til have in view with regard to the fact that “God’s attitude has changed with respect to mankind”? The answer lies in a lock-step transition in history that occurred upon Adam’s covenant-breaking—a transition from God’s favor to prefall Adam to the revelation of God’s wrath against post-fall Adam. The wrath of God emerged in history by way of general and special revelation given Adam’s original sin (see Genesis 3:8–9; Romans 1:18–21; 5:12–19). Adam’s original sin under the covenant of works occasioned an historical transition from favor to wrath. In Adam’s prefall estate of innocence, God did not relate to him in wrath but in favor. Thus, in terms of the history of special revelation, God’s relation to Adam changed from covenantal favor to covenantal wrath.

For Bavinck and for Van Til, however, the wrath of God is not the metaphysical emergence of new properties in God—properties he did not have prior to the fall. Van Til is explicit that God does not take on new properties in relating to the creature, and Bavinck is emphatic that there is “nothing intermediate” between the Creator and the creature. Therefore, the wrath of God is a revelation in history that does not involve a metaphysical change in God by way of subtraction or addition. The relation changes. The creature in the relation changes. But God does not change in his relation to Adam after the fall. God no more changes given sin than he changes given creation.

Bavinck is helpful at relating the absolute attribute

20. Van Til, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, p. 211.

21. Van Til, *Common Grace and the Gospel*, p. 73.

of God's goodness to the changing relations sustained to creatures. He says,

According to Scripture God is the sum total of all perfections (metaphysical goodness). . . . This goodness of God manifests itself in various forms depending on the objects toward which it is directed. . . . The goodness of God, when shown to those in misery, is called mercy. . . . The goodness of God, which spares those who are deserving of punishment, is called forbearance or patience. . . . God's goodness is much more glorious when it is shown to those who only deserve evil. It then bears the name grace. . . . In addition, the goodness of God appears as love when it not only conveys certain benefits but God himself. . . . for all the attributes are equally God's being. In him there is no higher and lower, no greater and smaller.²²

God's wrath does not require nor entail any metaphysical change in God. The wrath of God is the immutably simple and good triune God in a relation to sinners. Neither God as "good" Creator nor "wrathful" Judge entails any kind of property that emerges as new in God in his pluriform relations to creatures. As Van Til says, quoting in part Bavinck, "The Scriptures speak anthropomorphically of God, and could not do otherwise, but for all that, God, in himself, is immutable. "There is change round about him; there is change in the relation of things to him; but there is no change in God himself."²³

Van Til also says that we *must* speak analogically and in "fearless anthropomorphism" in terms of God's relation to creation, since the self-contained ontological Trinity alone gives our language in the "Moment" of history its "meaning." What does he mean by this? Two quotations clarify this language.

Thus we have, as Christians, a distinct philosophy of history. All that has happened in the past, all that happens in the present, and all that will happen in the future, rests for its presupposition upon the self-sufficient internal activity of the self-predicating and therefore non-delimited being. The movements of history are not determinative of the self-sufficient activity of God; when God created the world by the determination of his will there was no change in himself. When the second person of the Trinity became incarnate there was no change in God. God gave the world existence alongside

of himself. He could do so just because he is the self-contained infinite being. Thus the doctrine of the infinity of God, so far from leading us into pantheism, is the best possible safeguard against it. Any attempt to safeguard the doctrine of God against pantheism by subtracting from the self-contained internal activity of God is foredoomed to failure.²⁴

The significance of our discussion on fact, law and reason for the construction of a Christian philosophy of history may now be pointed out explicitly. The philosophy of history inquires into the meaning of history. To use a phrase of Kierkegaard, we ask how the Moment is to have significance. Our claim as believers is that the Moment cannot intelligently be shown to have any significance except upon the presupposition of the biblical doctrine of the ontological trinity.²⁵

Unless God continues to have "non-delimited being" in his freely determined relation to creation, so that the "movements of history are not determinative of the self-sufficient activity of God," and so that "when God created the world by the determination of his will there was no change in him," we cannot find any significance in the Moment of our experience in history.

IMMUTABILITY, ANTHROPOMORPHISM, AND TRUE RELIGION

The point before us is not a reified academic issue. Bavinck and Van Til's theological formulations on immutability and anthropomorphism set forth the God the church worships and serves. Believers worship a self-contained, living, and immutable triune God in union and communion with Christ, who "is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). The sheep hear no other voice speaking in Scripture but the voice of the absolute triune God in Christ. To worship a deity becoming in time and restricted in knowledge is to worship an idol. An idol cannot save himself or others. If God changed in his covenantal relation to creatures, so that he did not know where Adam and Eve were hiding in the Garden (Genesis 3:9) or learned that Abraham trusted him (Genesis 22:12), then both his being and knowledge are in development. If God, like the creature, undergoes development in being and growth in knowledge, then Christian hope cannot abide (see Malachi 3:6). A god who does not know the future cannot control the future; and a god who cannot control the future cannot guarantee anything to his people about the future. True religion shuns as poison a mutable and ignorant God.

Continued on Page 241.

22. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2.211–15.

23. Van Til, *Introduction*, p. 211.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 212–13.

25. Van Til, *Common Grace and the Gospel*, p. 7.

Herman Bavinck's "The Leading Ideas of Calvin's *Institutes*"

By Gregory Parker Jr.

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

Throughout Herman Bavinck's theological and ethical thought Calvin is one of his primary interlocutors. It should come as some surprise that there has yet to be a monograph length work on Neo-Calvinism's relationship to Calvinism, or more particularly Herman Bavinck's harmony and dissonance with John Calvin.¹ He engages him nearly 400 times in the *Reformed Dogmatics* and over 100 times in his *Reformed Ethics*. Beyond his dogmatics he reflects on Calvin often, including his teaching on common grace,² the Lord's Supper,³ his doctrine of sin,⁴ he also penned a foreword to a Dutch translation of a book by Calvin,⁵ and wrote a foreword for B. B. Warfield's book on the Swiss Reformer.⁶ On top of this, he reflected on Calvinism

as a whole and its implication both in the Netherlands and abroad.⁷

This article provides a historical introduction to and a manuscript of Herman Bavinck's (1854–1921) 1909 speech at the Marylebone Presbyterian Church in London, "The Leading Articles of Calvin's *Institutes*."⁸ This speech was part of a larger international celebration of John Calvin's birth. The nature of Bavinck's "Leading Articles of Calvin's *Institutes*" reflects his positive relationship with John Calvin and Calvinism.⁹ The piece is largely similar to Bavinck's Dutch speech at the 400th anniversary of John Calvin's birth, which was published subsequently as a short book titled: *Johannes Calvijn*,¹⁰ though "The Leading Ideas of Calvin's *Institutes*" is distinct in its own right. The article advocates for a broader

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1. James Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism: Towards a New Reading of Herman Bavinck's Organic Motif* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 17, 20–23, 25, 36, 74–79, 85–87, 90, 93–94, 106, 112, 120, 143–149, 152, 154, 167, 185–189, 191, 202; Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020). In the gold standard Bavinck biography, Eglinton notes Bavinck's relation to Calvinism in multiple places: 4–5, 65, 80, 118, 141, 144, 157, 184–197, 206–207, 211, 215, 225–227, 232–234, 244–246, 249–252, 260–261, 268, 273, 280, 284, 287, 291; Valentijn Hepp, *Dr Herman Bavinck* (Amsterdam: W. Ten Have, 1921), 72, 78–81, 149, 163–164, 190, 217, 236–237.

2. Herman Bavinck, "Calvin and Common Grace," *The Princeton Theological Review* VII (1909): 437–465.

3. Bavinck, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper," trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman, in *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 19 (2008): 127–142.

4. See Gregory Parker Jr., "Herman Bavinck's Notebook on Calvin's Doctrine of Sin," in *The Bavinck Review* 10 (2019): 101–108.

5. Bavinck, "Voorrede," in Johannes Calvijn, *Genesis: uitlegging van Johannes Calvijn*, trans. Johann Baum, Edouard Cunitz, and Eduard Reuss (Middelburg: Le Cointre, 1900), iii–v.

6. Bavinck, "Woord Vooraf," in B.B Warfield, *Calvin als theoloog en de stand van het Calvinisme onzen tijd* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1919), 5–6.

7. Bavinck, "The Future of Calvinism, Calvinism and Reformed Theology," *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 5 (1894): 1–24; Bavinck, "Het Calvinisme in Nederland en zijne toekomst," *Tijdschrift voor Gerformeerde Theologie* 3 (1895–1896): 129–163; Bavinck, "Calvinistisch en Gereformeerd," *De Vrije Kerk* 19, no. 2 (1893): 249–71; Hepp, *Dr Herman Bavinck*, 215. Hepp suggests Bavinck's piece "The influence of the Protestant Reformation on the moral and religious condition of society (societies) and people" could have easily been called "the excellence of Calvinism."

8. "Manuscript: 'De hoofdgedachten van Calvijn's Institutie,'" "The Leading Articles of Calvin's *Institutes*," "The Leading Ideas in Calvin's *Institutes*" (1909), Box 346, Folder 178, Archive of Herman Bavinck, Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands, hereafter [Archive of Herman Bavinck].

9. Cornelis van der Kooi and Martien E. Brinkman, *Het calvinisme van Kuyper en Bavinck* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 1997). Kooi and Brinkman focus more on Kuyper than Bavinck in their monograph.

10. Bavinck lengthened the speech for print in Dutch (See Bavinck, *Johannes Calvijn: eene lezing ter gelegenheid van den vierhondersten gedenkdag zijner geboorte. 10 Juli 1509–1909* (Kampen 1909). This is available in English See Herman Bavinck, "John Calvin: A Lecture on the Occasion of his 400th Birthday, July 10, 1509–1909," translated by John Bolt, *The Bavinck Review* 1 (2010): 57–85.

reading of Bavinck's global contacts, teases out the primary themes of Bavinck's address on Calvin, and closes considering its reception. Put differently, the article explores the historical proclivities which lead up to the address, provides the address itself, and reflects on its reception. This historical framing allows us to consider Bavinck's relation to Calvin. Overall, the article contributes further depth to the biographical knowledge of Bavinck and makes available Bavinck's speech.

ANSWERING AN ARCHIVAL MYSTERY

In the Historical Documentation Centre for Dutch Protestantism in Amsterdam there are three English manuscripts of Herman Bavinck's essay, "De hoofdgedachten van Calvijns *Institutie*." Two are in folder 178 and a third is in folder 371.¹¹ The first is titled "The Leading Articles of Calvin's *Institutes*," the second "The Leading Ideas in Calvin's *Institutes*," and the third, "The Leading Ideas of Calvin's *Institutes*." The first and third manuscript, given the handwriting, are most certainly Bavinck's. The writer of the second manuscript was unknown, until now. This was written by a Ms. Ada M. Corah of Birmingham, England.¹² There is no reason to doubt that Corah is the translator of the archival piece found in folder 178. The handwriting matches a letter of hers, dated April 14, 1909 addressed to Bavinck. She wrote this letter just a few weeks before Bavinck delivered the address on Calvin in English at Marylebone Presbyterian Church in London on May 7, 1909. One of the remarkable features then of this speech is that it is Bavinck's own English lightly edited by Corah. Here is a transcript of the letter to Bavinck:

11. "Manuscript and News clippings on Calvinism and *Johannes Calvijns: eene lezing ter gelegenheid van den vierhondersten gedenkdag zijner geboorte. 10 Juli 1509–1909* (Kampen 1909)," (1909) Box 346, Folder 371, Archive of Herman Bavinck. This archive folder has several manuscripts and outlines of *Johannes Calvijns*, including an additional English manuscript, "The Leading Ideas of Calvin's *Institutes*."

12. "Correspondence from Ada M. Corah" (14 April 1909), Box 346, Folder 9, Archive of Herman Bavinck.

13. *Mevrouw* is Dutch for Mrs., referring to Bavinck's wife Johanna.

14. Idzerd van Dellen, *In God's Crucible: An Autobiography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1950), 41. Van Dellen, a student of Bavinck's in Kampen refers here to Bavinck's father as "old *Dominee*."

15. A nickname for Bavinck's daughter Johanna Geziena Bavinck (1894–1971).

16. Hepp, *Dr Herman Bavinck*, 301; *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, 251. Eglinton notes that Ada Corah stayed with the Bavinck family for three months.

17. Hepp, *Dr Herman Bavinck*, 301. [Dutch: "Juist heb ik een brief aan Miss Corah geëindigd. Zij zal zonder twijfel belangstellend zijn, hoe vader het met zijne Engelsche lezingen gemaakt heeft. Wat heeft ze dikwijls opletend naar fouten zitten luisteren. Het is prettig voor haar, dat het zoo goed is gegaan."]

Birmingham

April 14/1909

Dear Professor,

I am sending herewith your manuscript on Calvin, also my English version of it. I hope it may prove satisfactory to you – it has been a great pleasure to me to do it, and I have not found any great difficulty, although handicapped with a rather small dictionary, yet I missed not having you to turn to when I was doubtful, and there may be misconstructions. I am returning it in the same way as you sent it, but you will see they crushed your manuscript a little in the post.

We are disappointed we shall not have the pleasure of seeing you & dear *Mevrouw*¹³ when you come to England in May, it is tantalizing to think of you being such a short distance away & not being able to see you, but we shall look forward the more to having your visit in the summer vacation and I hope Hanni too.

I was sorry to hear of Dominé's illness, but trust now he is better again – please give my love and respect to him, if he remembers me.

I wrote your message to Dr. Rendel Harris.

Now I must hurry for post, Mother joins me in kindest regards to your family & yourself.

Yours very sincerely

Ada M. Corah

Who was Ada M. Corah? She was familiar with the Bavinck family, and knew Bavinck's father, Jan Bavinck, referred to in the letter as *Domin*, which is close to the Dutch word for minister (*dominee*) and a common way of referring to Bavinck's father.¹⁴ Jan Bavinck was sick at this time and died later in 1909. Moreover, she was familiar enough with the family to know that Herman and Johanna's teenage daughter, Johanna, went by Hanni.¹⁵ According to Valentine Hepp, an "Ada M. Corah" stayed with the Bavinck family in the fall of 1906, to help Herman with translating his lectures for America into English.¹⁶ It was common for Dutch professors to employ native speakers to teach the family a foreign language. In addition, Herman's father moved in with the Bavinck family in 1907, due to poor health, so depending on the length of Corah's stay she may have overlapped with him. Hepp also reports, that while in America Johanna, writing to Hanni, said, "I just finished a letter to Miss Corah. She will undoubtedly be interested in how Father made it with his English lectures. How she often listened attentively for mistakes. It is pleasant for her that it went so well."¹⁷

This acquaintance with Corah hints at the complexity

of Bavinck's social life and network.¹⁸ Scholars have noted Bavinck's global contacts with other Reformed thinkers such as B. B. Warfield,¹⁹ Henry Dosker²⁰ and Geerhardus Vos.²¹ However, little attention has been paid to Bavinck's correspondence with those who are less well-known or outside of his theological circles. Ada Corah from Birmingham adds a shade of complexity to this network of contacts. One may conclude from Herman and Johanna's correspondence with Ada that the Bavinck family had a rich network of relationships, many of which remain unknown to us, but were valued by them. The letter linking Corah and Bavinck has then two points of significance. First, it connects two archival pieces in the Herman Bavinck archive that were previously unconnected. Second, it allows for a greater appreciation for Bavinck's global network and the global integration of Bavinck's second-generation seceder family. Now that we have solved the question of the author of the third speech, Corah, we may now turn to consider the event of the speech and its reception.

THE RECEPTION OF BAVINCK'S SPEECH ON CALVIN

The 400th anniversary of John Calvin's birth was celebrated by the Presbyterian Church of England with a two-day meeting at Marylebone Church in conjunction with their general assembly.²² The London speech by Bavinck, though unconnected, was part of a larger historical recognition of the 400th anniversary of Calvin's birth (Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, 250–252). Rev. Dr. J. C. Gibson, Moderator of the Assembly and author of *John Calvin, The Man and His Work* hoped the celebration would correct the vision of Calvin as "a somewhat unlettered and bigoted Scotsman" to that which he truly was, "a brilliant Frenchman, with all the graces and beauty of the typical French character, especially when elevated by hearty reception of Christ's Gospel."²³ Alongside Bavinck's address on the *Institutes* was Rev. Dr. Oswald Dykes's speech on "Calvinism as a Providential Preparation for an Age of Persecution" (*Northern Whig*, 8), and Mr. Horne's on Calvin's influence on English puritanism.²⁴ *The British Weekly* reported on the two speeches:

The speeches of Prof. Bavinck of Amsterdam, and of Dr. Dykes, afforded a fine contrast. Affection for Calvin, we suspected, is more deeply rooted in the heart of the Dutch professor than in that of the learned ex-Principal. Prof. Bavinck speaks English admirably and his paper on the chief ideas of Calvin's *Institutes* was followed with sympathetic attention.²⁵

After returning to the Netherlands, Bavinck received several letters, including one from Rev. W.M. Macphail, who had invited Bavinck to speak, writing:

I trust the enthusiastic manner in which your masterly paper on Calvin's *Institutes* was received on Friday night was some reward for the trouble you took in preparing it and in coming across the sea to deliver it. Everyone was full of admiration for your treatment of the subject. We are greatly indebted to you for your presence, and for your admirable contribution to the programme. I trust both you and Mrs. Bavinck enjoyed your brief visit to London.²⁶

18. Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, 251. Eglinton likewise argues for a large international network with which Bavinck interacted.

19. Eglinton, "Herman Bavinck's 'My Journey to America,'" *Dutch Crossing: Journal of Low Country Studies* 41, no. 2 (2017): 180–193.

20. Henry Dosker, 'Men Wil Toch Niet Gaarne een Masker Dragen': *Brieven van Henry Dosker aan Herman Bavinck, 1873–1921*, ed. George Harinck and Wouter Kroese (Amsterdam: Donum Reeks, 2018).

21. George Harinck, "Herman Bavinck and Geerhardus Vos," *Calvin Theological Journal* 45 (2010): 18–31; Geerhardus Vos, *Letters of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. James T. Dennison Jr. (Philipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2006); "Wedding Announcement," (1894), Box 346, Folder 3, Archive of Herman Bavinck. Vos and Bavinck were close enough that Herman and Johanna received a wedding announcement in 1894. Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, 186. Bavinck dined with the Warfields during his visit to Princeton.

22. Hepp, *Dr Herman Bavinck*, 311–312. Hepp indicates that in 1909 Bavinck gave public lectures frequently on America, John Calvin, the Secession, the soul, and the life of the soul, among other issues of the twentieth century. Eric Bristley, *Guide to the Writings of Herman Bavinck* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008), 96. Bristley suggests the "Leading Ideas in Calvin's *Institutes*" as the speech delivered at Marylebone Presbyterian Church, London on Friday 7th May, 1909. "Correspondence from Rev. W.M. Macphail" (6 March, 1909), Box 346, Folder 9, Archive of Herman Bavinck. Letter from W.M. Macphail confirms an invitation from Marylebone Presbyterian Church to come speak on John Calvin at the 400th celebration of his birth. James Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, 251. Eglinton notes the mixed international reaction to "Calvin" speeches. Bavinck's friend Snouck Hurgronje received the Dutch edition warmly, while others thought that it had "not produced anything new."

23. "The Calvin Celebrations," *Northern Whig*, May 12, 1909, 8.

24. "Mr. Horne's Address," *The British Weekly*, May 13, 1909; "Presbyterian Synod," *Dartmouth & South Hams Chronicle*, April 02, 1909, 7. "The 400th anniversary of the birth of John Calvin is to be commemorated on the Friday. Professor H. Bavinck of Amsterdam, and the Very Rev. Dr Alex Stewart of St. Andrews University, have accepted to take part." "Friday Evening Speeches," *The British Weekly*, May 13, 1909, notes that Rev. Dr Alex Stewart fell ill and was unable to make it and was replaced by Mr. Horne.

25. *The British Weekly*, May 13, 1909. See "News clippings" (13 May 1909), Box 346, Folder 371, Archive of Herman Bavinck.

26. "Correspondence from Rev. W.M. Macphail" (11 May, 1909), Box 346, Folder 9, Archive of Herman Bavinck; Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, 252. Eglinton notes Herman and Johanna's fondness for London.

Bavinck's speech on Calvin was well-received. Notably, Bavinck's piety, deftness with English, and theological acumen were all on display. One member of the audience is reported as having murmured "Calvin forever!" after his speech;²⁷ an indelibly stirring speech. Having considered the reception of the speech, we now turn to the content of the speech itself. Attention will be paid not only to the formal argument of the speech, but also how this speech sheds light on Bavinck's relationship to Calvin and Calvinism.

INSIGHT ON BAVINCK AND CALVIN FROM "LEADING ARTICLES OF CALVIN'S *INSTITUTES*"

In the "Leading Articles of Calvin's *Institutes*," Bavinck's argument has one central idea the supremacy of Calvin's system for doctrine and life. He argues this across three areas: (1) Calvin the person, a greater reformer; (2) Calvin's theological system, a greater unity between life and doctrine; and (3) Calvin and philosophy, a theology that can converse with the ideologies of the day. Together the three allow insight into how Bavinck perceived Calvin contra Kuyper and provide fodder for reflecting on reading Calvin into Bavinck.

First, Calvin the person. Bavinck situates Calvin among the other reformers as the great systematic mind and organizer of the doctrines of the Reformed faith. In the expanded and published Dutch version, Eglinton acknowledges the sour mood in the Netherlands regarding Calvin at the time. Eglinton writes, "In a setting in which Servetus had become the hero and

Calvin the heretic, it became important to Bavinck that Calvin's image be defended.... This particular publication was modest in tone – perhaps intentionally so" (Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, 251–252). We may acknowledge alongside Eglinton, that Bavinck's speech was less hagiographical than others. Calvin's conversion was accompanied by a great certainty. This certainty enabled him to retrieve true doctrine from theologians of the past and bring unity to the confession of faith in his own time. Nonetheless, he was not just an intellectual but was wholly given over in service to God and friends. Calvin's life intermittently comes up throughout the rest of the piece, as Bavinck transitions into his theology. The most defining feature of Calvin as a person to Bavinck is that he is the "systematizer" of the Reformed faith and that his theology is accompanied by certainty.

An interesting historical difference between Bavinck and Abraham Kuyper and their thoughts on John Calvin may then be posited here. As detailed in James Eglinton's essay, "Thomas in Abraham's bosom: The reception of Aquinas in Kuyper's *Encyclopedie der Heilige Godgeleerheid*," Kuyper places Thomas Aquinas above Calvin.²⁸ He even perceives Calvin's *Institutes* as of a lower historical order than Thomas' *Summa*. Calvin is no doctor, but merely a *pater ecclesiae* for Kuyper.²⁹ On the contrary, Bavinck states, "Calvin was not the Plato or Augustine, but the Aristotle and the Thomas Aquinas among the Reformers (Bavinck, "Leading Ideas," [5])." This brief statement suggests that for Bavinck Calvin and Aquinas are of the same historical significance as theologians. It may be suggested then, that Bavinck possessed a higher view of Calvin than Kuyper.

In turning his attention to the *Institutes*, Bavinck regards Calvin as having "religious-ethical" certainty (Bavinck, "Leading Ideas," [1,3,15,17]). Bavinck perceives him as intimately connecting religion and morality, doctrine and life, faith and works. "The core and the kernel" of the *Institutes*, however, is the "grace of God in Christ" (Bavinck, "Leading Ideas," [11]), which is the "essence of Christianity" (Bavinck, "Leading Ideas," [6]). As noted by Eglinton, at the time of this speech Bavinck's approach to his theological writings was broadening in focus. He spent more time writing about "Christian" theology rather than "Reformed" theology. Nonetheless, this was not a movement away from Reformed theology, but rather a varied approach to the philosophical issues of the day.³⁰ In Bavinck's pamphlet *Het Christendom* (*Christianity*), he writes of the essence of Christianity as identical with the person and work of Christ.³¹

27. See "Honouring John Calvin," *The British Weekly*, May 13, 1909. See "News clippings" (13 May 1909), Box 346, Folder 371, Archive of Herman Bavinck.

28. James Eglinton, "Thomas in Abraham's bosom: The reception of Aquinas in Kuyper's *Encyclopedie der Heilige Godgeleerheid*" in *Oxford Handbook of the Reception of Aquinas*, ed. Matthew Levering and Marcus Plested (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 453–467 (shortened hereafter "Thomas in Abraham's bosom"); Abraham Kuyper, *Encyclopedie der heilige godgeleerdheid*, 3 vols. (Amsterdam: J.A. Wormser, 1894).

29. Eglinton, "Thomas in Abraham's bosom", 464. Eglinton's translation of Kuyper: "Even Calvin's *Institutio* disappoints with regard to sharp lines [of argumentation] and completeness; and whoever compares Calvin's *Institutio* with Thomas' *Summa* by that standard must give the palm of honour to Thomas. But this comparison is spurious. Thomas was a *doctor*, Calvin a *pater ecclesiae*, which thus prevents their correlation." See Kuyper, *Encyclopedie der heilige godgeleerdheid*, Vol. 3, 389–90.

30. See Bruce Pass, "Introduction," in *On Theology: Herman Bavinck's Academic Orations*, 1–29 (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

31. Bavinck, *Het Christendom: Groote Godsdiensten*. Serie II, No. 7 (Amsterdam. Baarn: Hollandia-Drukkerij, 1912), 11; Bavinck, *What is Christianity?* translated and edited by Gregory Parker Jr. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson 2022).

Bavinck's reformed-ness was not in competition with his ecumenical endeavors, yet remained the purest stream of theology. Indeed, a multiplicity of doctrines in Reformed Dogmatics are summarized simply as "Christian theology".

In this speech, the theme of the "grace of God in Christ" intersects with certainty as Calvin traces the grace of God in Christ to certainty in salvation, and certainty of the heart through the testimony of the Spirit. Bavinck also focuses on Calvin's conception of the divine will. This too flows from the grace of God in Christ. Election and grace are not opposed to one another but are in harmony. Election, the grace of the gospel, does not lead to spiritual malaise but rather "it awakes self-consciousness" (Bavinck, "Leading Ideas," [15]) and spurs the heart and the moral life to attain its greatest value as penetrates into eternity. Thus, there is harmony in both doctrine and life through the grace given in Christ. The center of Calvin's system according to Bavinck then, is the work of redemption wrought in Christ and this is the essence of Christianity.³²

Finally, in the speech Bavinck draws Calvin into discussion with the "new" philosophy of his day. This section of the speech might be read in light of a small section of his Reformed Dogmatics (Vol. III, 177-179). There he explicitly mentions Friedrich Schelling, Arthur Schopenhauer, and Eduard von Hartmann.³³ We might draw attention to his engagement with Arthur Schopenhauer.³⁴ Bavinck writes of both Kant and Schopenhauer in his *Reformed Dogmatics* as reacting against rationalism.³⁵ Bavinck writes of philosophy as interpreting "the essence of the world as will, energy, and power." At least the first of these three is intimately connected with Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer's work *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (*The World as Will and Representation*) was one of the most widely read works of philosophy in the second half of the nineteenth century.³⁶ Bavinck brings Calvin into conversation with the misery and pain of reality, an idea that Schopenhauer and Schelling both championed.

The final section of the work strives to capture the enduring legacy of Calvin. It is not only Calvin's teaching, but his person, not only his doctrine, but his life that is placed before us. Thus Bavinck beckons all those who follow in the footsteps of Calvin to confess with their mouth the great truth of Romans 11:36.

We may note two things from this speech in relating Calvin and Bavinck. First, Bavinck perceived Calvin to be of a higher order theologian than Kuyper. At minimum, Bavinck placed Calvin and Aquinas on the same theological pedestal. The second is that what Bavinck

admired most in Calvin's *Institutes* was exactly what he himself strove to achieve in his own *Reformed Dogmatics*. Bavinck perceived Calvin's theology to be both attuned to the consciousness of the church (given by its consistent reference to both the religious affections and Christian confessions). Moreover, he perceived Calvin's theology to possess a systematic character (given by the clarity and mutual coherence of its concepts). These are two features of Bavinck's own dogmatics that are unmistakable. Bavinck engages with the theology of his day; even the language of "consciousness" is a veiled reference to Schleiermacher.³⁷ And then, contra Kuyper, who is more of a Luther figure, Bavinck is the great systematiser of Neo-Calvinism.

CONCLUSION

In this introduction we explored various features related to Bavinck's 1909 speech in London. First, a previously unknown connection was unveiled between folder 9, folder 178, and folder 371 of the Herman Bavinck Archive. Simply put, Bavinck corresponded with an Ada Corah of Birmingham to provide editorial assistance to his London Speech. Her handwriting is found in both folder 9 and 178. This small detail

32. See also Bavinck, "The Essence of Christianity," in *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*, ed. John Bolt, trans. Harry Boonstra & Gerrit Sheeres (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 33-48. See also Bavinck, *What is Christianity?*

33. For treatments of Bavinck and Schelling see Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics: Christology and Christocentrism in Herman Bavinck* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020), 28-31, 81-83, 121-124. For a treatment of Bavinck and Hartmann, see Nathaniel Sutanto, *God and Knowledge: Herman Bavinck's Theological Epistemology* (London: T&T Clark, 2020), 123-145.

34. Pass, "Herman Bavinck's *Modernisme en Orthodoxie*: A Translation," *The Bavinck Review* 7 (2016): 63-114, 87. "...but above all what is remarkable is that in recent years under all manner of influences—the pessimism of Schopenhauer..." See also "Manuscript 'Geschiedenis der nieuwe filosofie' (unknown), Box 346, Folder 199, Archive of Herman Bavinck. The final section of this manuscript ends with Arthur Schopenhauer. This reading concurs with Beiser who suggests that Schopenhauer set the intellectual agenda for philosophy after 1860. See Frederick Beiser, "The Schopenhauer Legacy," in *Weltschmerz: Pessimism in German Philosophy, 1860-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016): 13-24.

35. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4 vols. ed. J. Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003-8), III, 544.

36. Beiser, *After Hegel: German Philosophy 1840-1900* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 29. See also "Notebook 'Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung,'" (1882), Box 346, Folder 279, Archive of Herman Bavinck. This folder contains Bavinck's notes on this work of Schopenhauer. Bavinck writes summarizing the book: "The world is thus will" [Dutch: De wereld is dus wil.]

37. See Cory Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern: Herman Bavinck's Use of Friedrich Schleiermacher* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019).

exposes the richness of the network of relationships the Bavinck family possessed globally. Second, the reception of the 1909 speech was detailed. This provided insight into the quality of Bavinck's English and the reception of him as a theologian beyond the Netherlands. Finally, we considered the contents of Bavinck's speech attending to how we might understand the relationship between Calvin and Bavinck. We discovered against the background of Kuyper that Bavinck elevates Calvin alongside of Aquinas. Moreover, we posited the potential of reading Bavinck as "Calvin" amongst the Neo-Calvinists.

Before providing the speech, it is necessary to provide some editorial guidance. In the archives there is one Dutch version ("De hoofdgedachten van Calvijn's *Institutie*") and three English versions: "The Leading Articles of Calvin's Institutes" [folder 178: Bavinck Manuscript A], "The Leading Ideas in Calvin's Institutes" [folder 178: Bavinck Manuscript B], and "The Leading Ideas of Calvin's Institutes" [folder 371: Corah Manuscript]. Below is the manuscript of Bavinck Manuscript B. In the endnotes I have noted redactions and expansions made from "Bavinck Manuscript A" to the final product of "Bavinck Manuscript B". The endnotes also note locations where Ada Corah influenced the translation.³⁸ What follows is Bavinck's own English writing. The footnotes tell the primary story of the relationship between the various translations.

38. In "Corah's Manuscript" the right sides of the pages have received a number, but not the left. Here, they will be numbered 1 recto, 1 verso, etc..]

39. The bracketed numbers (i.e. [1]) are the original pagination.

40. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 1. Reads as "according to the apostolic principles (precepts)."

41. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 1. "~~thoughts~~" is followed by "ideas."

42. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 1. Reads as "and ~~the~~ subordinated"

43. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 1. Inserted: "in the year."

44. "Corah's Manuscript," 1 recto. "on a higher place of operations – construction?"

45. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 2. With some shifting in word order he has crossed out "mankind" in his manuscript and replaced it with "modern."

46. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 2. Includes "harmony."

47. "Bavinck Manuscript B," 2. "opportunities of intercourse."

48. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 2. "in his fourteenth year"

49. "De hoofdgedachten van Calvijn's *Institutie*," 2. The word rendered "inward life" is *zieleleven*, which could perhaps be rendered better as "soul's life." "Bavinck Manuscript A," 2. Interestingly, only "Bavinck Manuscript B" splits this paragraph here.

50. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 3. An example of the influence of Corah on his English writing. In "Bavinck Manuscript A" the word used is "wholly," in "Corah's Manuscript," "obstinately," which is the word utilized in "Bavinck Manuscript B" (see "Corah's Manuscript," 3).

51. "Manuscript A," 3. "embraced" is written above "accepted."

52. "Manuscript A," 3. "it was" is clearly edited into his writing.

"THE LEADING IDEA OF CALVIN'S *INSTITUTES*" BY HERMAN BAVINCK

[1]³⁹ Among the movements and events which introduced the new era, the Reformation occupies a singular independent place. It arose out of the soul's need of certainty of salvation, bore a religious-ethical character, and aimed at the renovation of the church of Christ according to the apostolic principles.⁴⁰

Luther was its inspired prophet. It was he who first gave expression to the main ideas⁴¹ of the Reformation, in a such a manner, that they penetrated to the heart, and in a language all the people understood. Next to him the honour belongs to Zwingli, of bringing about an independent Reformation in Switzerland, which, although closely related to the German, nevertheless had its own type, and subordinated⁴² justification by faith to the honour of God's name.

Calvin was twenty five years younger than Luther and Zwingli. He was born on the tenth of July in the year⁴³ 1509, at Noyon, in the North of France, and formed therefore the link between the first and second generations of the Reformation. But yet he deserves a place alongside the above-named Reformers, because he united both in a higher synthesis,⁴⁴ systematized the ideas of the Reformation and organized and fertilized its labours. Calvin prevented the stream of the Reformation from [2] becoming shallow and broadened its life into the history of modern⁴⁵ humanity.

There exists a remarkable agreement⁴⁶ between the education, which Calvin enjoyed, and the task, to which he was later called. He saw the light in a middle-class family, which had reached at Noyon some degree of prosperity and importance; and as a boy and lad availed himself of the opportunity to intercourse with young people of a higher class.⁴⁷ When he went to Paris in 1523, at the age of fourteen years,⁴⁸ and some years afterwards to Orléans and Bourges, he received a splendid literary and juridical education, which was of the highest service to him in his later, many-sided, reformatory activities. But all this preparation, however excellent, was not fitted, to make Calvin a Reformer. For this something else was needed,—a decided change in his own inward life.⁴⁹

Where this exactly took place and how it came about, we do not know. Calvin seldom made any mention of this; he did not care to speak about his inner life. All that he says about it later, is, that he was obstinately⁵⁰ given over to the superstitions of popery, and that God by a [3] "sudden conversion" bridled his heart and brought it to subjection. Calvin embraced⁵¹ the Reformation in the same way as Luther and Zwingli; it was⁵²

a religious-ethical experience, that brought him also to decision. But yet there is a difference in their common experiences.⁵³ In the case of Luther⁵⁴ conversion consisted especially in a transition⁵⁵ from a deep sense of guilt⁵⁶ to the glad⁵⁷ realization of God's forgiving grace in Christ. Zwingli felt it as a change from legal servitude to the freedom of the life of faith. Calvin experienced it chiefly as a deliverance from error to truth, from doubt to certainty.

His *Institutes in the Christian Religion* are the strongest evidence of this. What strikes one above everything in this book is the absolute certainty, the unshakable conviction, which finds expression on every page. There is everywhere the evidence of one, who knows that he is in possession of the truth, who has made the things of God his own and who is above all doubt. Calvin had indeed formerly known all kinds of doubt. But since his conversion he is absolutely sure, and regards doubt as the most godless thing, [4] that can befall a Christian. He discovered as in a flash of lightning the abyss of error in which he was engulfed; and equally suddenly he saw clearly and distinctly, what he had to confess as truth according to the Word of God.⁵⁸

The publication of the *Institutes*, which first saw the light in Basel in March 1536, was the first, great, reformatory deed of Calvin, and at the same time an event in the history of the Christian church. It contained in germ the whole contents of his faith and the complete program of his labours.⁵⁹ There is not the least question about any change in his conviction later on. The book, that he published, was small in extent and was several times supplemented and enlarged by him. But he made no essential change.⁶⁰ The fundamental ideas of the last edition are the same as those of the first, and he confessed to the end the convictions, from⁶¹ which he started.

Calvin of course based his *Institutes* on the work of his [5] predecessors Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, Bucer, Farel. Although his conversion was sudden, it was yet prepared for by his intercourse with men like Olivetanus, Wolmar, de la Forge and others. Calvin was not the Plato or Augustine, but the Aristotle and the Thomas Aquinas amongst the Reformers. But still he did much more than merely repeat the sayings of his predecessors. He collected and united the scattered stones, he rounded off the ideas of the Reformation, he filled up the gaps, avoided one-sidedness, curtailed exaggerations, and with French sagacity and clearness brought unity into the confession of truth.

The certainty, wherewith Calvin speaks in his book, is however not of a scientific, but of a religious-ethical

nature. It is the certainty of faith regarding the salvation, which is in Christ Jesus. And in Calvin's mind that faith has just the peculiarity of being the absolute certainty; the strong, immovable conviction, wrought by God in the heart, a witness of the Holy Spirit with our [6] spirit. Nothing in the whole world assures us of the grace of God, except the person of Christ, who appears to us in the Scriptures. But there it shines out for us in all its truth and fulness.

The grace of God in Christ is the core⁶² and essence of Calvin's *Institutes*, which does not unfold as a philosophical system and does not even claim the name of dogmatics in the fullest sense, but, especially in its first edition, simply gives a short explanation of the doctrine of salvation. With Calvin this was and continued to be the essence of Christianity, that God tells us therein, how much he loves us. The contents of the special revelation is God's mercy towards us and the assurance⁶³ of that, awakened in our hearts. Objective truth and subjective certainty, unchangeable conviction respecting reality of revelation and unwavering surety regarding our own salvation, are with Calvin closely connected; faith embraces both, in one and the same act.

[7] But Calvin does not rest in this certainty.⁶⁴ He

53. "De hoofdgedachten van Calvijn's *Institutie*," 3. *ziels-ervaring* could be translated perhaps better as "soul's-experience."

54. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 3. "~~With Luther~~" is followed by "In the case of Luther."

55. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 3. "Change" is scratched out and replaced by "transition."

56. "De hoofdgedachten van Calvijn's *Institutie*," 3. "*Schuldgevoel*" could be translated as the "feeling of guilt."

57. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 3. "Joyful" is replaced with "glad," which is reflected in "Bavinck Manuscript B."

58. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 4. A clear example of the edits between manuscript A and B, brackets inserted where ^ is, formerly where they are in this sentence: "He discovered ^ the pool of error, into which he was enveloped [as in a flash of lightning], and equally suddenly he saw ~~clear and distinctly and clearly~~ clearly and distinctly, what he had to confess as truth according to the Word of God." The paragraph is not split in "Bavinck Manuscript A."

59. "Bavinck Manuscript B," 4. "It contained (~~comprised~~) in germ the whole contents (~~tenor~~) of his belief (faith) and the whole complete programme of his labours (~~work~~)."

60. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 4. The translator crosses out "essential" moving it from the beginning to the penultimate word in the sentence, which is reflected in "Bavinck Manuscript B."

61. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 4. "Of" is crossed out and replaced with "from," which is reflected in Bavinck's Manuscript B."

62. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 5. "Heart" is replaced with "core," which is reflected in "Bavinck's Manuscript B."

63. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 6. "Certainty" is scratched out and replaced with "assurance," which is reflected in "Bavinck's Manuscript B."

64. "Bavinck Manuscript B," 7. He has written above "certainty," "security."

does not delight in the experiences of his own soul, but he goes back from the certainty of God's grace in Christ to its source and origin. He rises from the creature to the Creator, from the temporal to the Eternal, from the seen to the Unseen, from the fleeting (transitoriness of) history to the unchangeable counsel of the Lord.

He does not do this, because he feels⁶⁵ compelled by logical reasoning or systematic unity, but because he has been so instructed by the Scripture and so led by his own inner experience. The⁶⁶ grace of God being a grace that is full and true, and the certainty of belief, bearing an absolute character, point immediately and directly to a Divine energy, which lies behind them and manifests itself in both. The almighty and merciful will of God is revealed in the grace of Christ and in the certainty of salvation, which is implanted in the heart by the witness of [8] the Holy Spirit.⁶⁷ According to Calvin, grace and election, the Gospel of Christ, and the Absolute sovereignty of God, are not in antagonistic to each other, and do not exclude each other; but grace is, as grace⁶⁸ in its fullest and truest sense, elective in nature and the Gospel is not only the declaration, but also the realization of the divine will unto salvation; the source of our knowledge of God, and also the means of grace.

As a reaction against rationalism, the newest philosophy frequently⁶⁹ interprets the essence of the world as will, energy, and power. And this was also the conviction

of Calvin, although in a very modified sense. He did not look upon God as a guardian of his creation, nor as a deistic being, that in the beginning called matter with its inherent power and law into existence, and afterwards left the whole development of things to itself. But he conceived God as an almighty, sovereign, incomprehensible will. That will is revealed in everything, in all the diversity and inequality of the creature, [9] and also in the sin and misery of life. There is an almighty and supreme will that withholds privileges, recalls blessings, disposes of disasters and calamities and even dooms to perdition through sins and iniquities. It is of no avail, says Calvin, to close one's eyes to this. Reality preaches it, Holy Scripture bears witness to it. It is a sovereign will, which gives no account of its deeds;⁷⁰ it is an "awful decree,"⁷¹ which lies at the foundation of this mysterious world of misery and pain.⁷²

But while many in our day draw the conclusion from these sad realities, that that almighty and incomprehensible will must be blind, unreasonable and miserable, and that consequently the whole world is a work of darkness, which only for a short time comes to light in the consciousness of man; while in this as in all kindred world-systems⁷³ man betrays the inclination of his heart, to justify himself and to accuse God of unrighteousness; Calvin takes [10] his stand along with Paul and Augustine on God's side, throws man in the dust, and exclaims to him: "Who are thou O man, that repliest against God and callest Him before thy judgment-seat?"

And he at once addresses two considerations: in the first place, there is nowhere a will of God at work, that brings nothing but misery. For the earth is full of his goodness. There is no original, eternal, independent power of darkness. The whole world of seen and unseen things, of angel and man, of spirit and matter, of heaven and earth, has its origin and unity in the supreme, but also holy and merciful will of God. Sin is no substance,⁷⁴ but a deformity,⁷⁵ which may again be eradicated and annihilated. There is therefore no small portion, or tiniest particle in the world, where the glory of God does not shine forth. There is no single creature and no single man, who in an absolute sense is deprived of all grace. There is a common grace, which extends over the whole world, which leaves no one without a witness, which does good from heaven and [11] fills our hearts with food and goodness, which makes God's sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and the unjust.⁷⁶

And the second is specially important: that this will of God, so endlessly varied in its manifestations and operations, yet in its kernel and essence is a saving grace,

65. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 6. "Was himself" is crossed out and replaced with "feels," which is reflected in "Bavinck Manuscript B."

66. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 6. "If" is crossed out and replaced with "The," which is reflected in "Bavinck Manuscript B."

67. "Bavinck Manuscript B," 7-8. He writes "Holy Spirit" twice. The duplicate is removed for smoother reading. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 7. He notes to swap the ordering of "through his witness in the heart" to "in the heart by through his witness," which is reflected in "Bavinck Manuscript B."

68. "Bavinck Manuscript B," 8. This phrase is circled in the manuscript, and underlined here to reflect that.

69. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 7. "frequently," reflected in "Bavinck Manuscript B."

70. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 8. "Does not give any" is scratched out replaced with "gives no account of." This change is reflected in "Bavinck Manuscript B."

71. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 8. "Horrible decree"

72. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, trans. John T McNeill (London, UK: S.C.M Press, Ltd., 1961), III, xxiii, 7. "I confess the decree is dreadful"

73. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 8. "view" is crossed out and replaced with "systems," which is reflected in "Bavinck Manuscript B."

74. "De hoofgedachten van Calvin's *Institutie*," 9. "zelfstandigheid" may be rendered independent, matter, substance, stuff.

75. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 8. It reads "deformation deformity."

76. "Bavinck Manuscript B," 10. Underline original; Matthew 5:45b—"For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."

and leads world and humanity through darkness to light and through death to life eternal—this we are absolutely sure of, through the Person of Christ, who is the only Son of the Father, and through the witness of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Unsearchable are the judgments of God his ways past finding out;⁷⁷ yet we understand by faith, that it is no blind fate nor irrational chance, but the will of an almighty God and a faithful Father, that rules the world.⁷⁸

And just as Calvin ascends from the certainty of the divine grace to God's sovereign, discriminating will; so he also advances through the diversity of creation to [12] the final end of all things. At every turn in Calvin's writings the expression occurs—*coram deo*, in the presence of God. He brings the whole world, all creatures especially man into direct relationship with God and sets them before His face. He views everything in the light of eternity and throws over all things the splendor of the divine glory. The whole world in its length and breadth comes to lie, as an organic and harmonious whole, between the purpose of God and the end, He has in view in his creation.⁷⁹ It is an instrument, an organ, a plaything in the hand of his will for the honour of His name.

In this universe every creature and each circle of being⁸⁰ occupies its own place, heaven and earth, plant and animal, man and angel, family, state and society, vocation, science and art. They are all distinguished according to the wise and freely operating will of God. They have all their own [13] nature and law; social equality has no place in Calvin's system. But yet amidst all their diversity there is unity, for they have all their origin in the same divine will, and are all, consciously or unconsciously, willingly or unwillingly, serviceable to the glorifying of all God's virtues. Of God, through God, and to God are all things.⁸¹

It is the privilege and also the calling of the church of Christ, consciously and willingly to live to the honor of God's name.⁸² Calvin himself did this. God was not to him far off only, but also very near. He felt his presence. He walked before His face. He consecrated his whole soul and body as a burnt offering unto God. Oftentimes he used the figure⁸³ of a dog, that barks when his master is attacked; and just as faithfully indeed did Calvin serve His Lord and Saviour. According to the testimony of Pope Pius the Second, money had never any attraction to him. Like his disciple Knox [14] he never feared the face of man, and there was no respect of persons with him. Few men have lived, who have been so permanently impressed by the fear of the God as Calvin, and who have so wholly dedicated their whole life to

His service. To him doctrine and life were one. He was eaten up by the zeal of God's house.

Now, he wished every Christian to live in this way. Word should in him become deed, doctrine life, faith works. The divine will, which revealed itself as grace in Christ and permeates the conscience and heart of man by the witness of the Holy Spirit, must be continued in the energy and activity of the believer. He must not be absorbed within himself and he must not feast on the delight of his own feelings⁸⁴; but just as he lives by and through the will of God, so he ought also to press towards the mark of all God's way, namely the glorification of his name. We are never indeed⁸⁵ our own, we are God's property. Genuineness of faith is [15] revealed by good works; they are necessary as tokens of His election and are proofs of His grace.

The confession of His elective grace therefore does not make careless and godless men; much rather does it strengthen their self-consciousness, creates in the heart the indispensable comfort of salvation, and by this means stirs up to renewed exertion all the powers of the will. Moral life, in its widest extent, does therefore attain with Calvin the highest conceivable value; it receives religious meaning, it acts on to eternity.⁸⁶ The

77. Romans 11:33 – "Oh, the depths of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!"

78. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 9. The manuscript reads: "nevertheless ~~we understand by~~ faith teaches us, that it is no blind fate nor ~~inecalculable~~ chance ~~fortune accident~~, but the will of an almighty God and a faithful Father that ~~governs~~ rules the world." A few of these changes are reflected in "Bavinck Manuscript B."

79. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 9. The clause reads: "He ~~sets before~~ has in view ~~with~~ in his creation." These changes are reflected in "Bavinck Manuscript B."

80. "Bavinck Manuscript B," 12. Life is crossed out and replaced by being.

81. Romans 11:36 – "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen."

82. "Bavinck Manuscript B," 13. Underline original.

83. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 10. "image" is replaced by "figure," which is reflected in "Bavinck Manuscript B."

84. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 11. "soul" is crossed out and replaced by "inner life," this change is reflected in "Bavinck's Manuscript B."

85. "Bavinck Manuscript B," 14. This word is circled in the manuscript and underlined here to reflect that.

86. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 11. "The confession of this elective grace does not make careless and godless men, on the contrary, it awakes self-consciousness, creates in the heart the indispensable comfort of salvation and ~~in~~ thus incites the will to the exercise of all its powers. Moral life, in its ~~broadest~~ widest extent, does therefore ~~with~~ obtain with Calvin the highest ~~imaginable~~ (possible) value it receives religious ~~significance~~ meaning; it acts on to eternity." These few sentences show the original version and the influence of the "Corah's Manuscript" (p. 17).

good works, which every Christian achieves in his own special vocation, are not disconnected, but they are the expression and manifestation of one harmonious moral life, which originates from one principle, is modelled after one law, and is serviceable to one end. This life may assume a puritan, or even a rigorous character, it is in principle opposed to [16] every kind of asceticism. The Christian is a man of God, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. And the church is the organized fellowship of believers, who make themselves known everywhere and at all times by their holy conversation as the people of God.

This was the lofty ideal, that stood before the mind of Calvin and that he sketched out in his *Institutes*. But he did not stop there; he also tried to realize it, first of all in his own person, and afterwards in any circle, to which his influence extended. Calvin was endowed with a keen, penetrating intelligence, but also with a burning passion and a firm, energetic, and decisive will. In Geneva the opportunity was offered him unsought, of bringing his ideal into reality. In this endeavor he was met with strong opposition and had to encounter much resistance. But after a long and passionate struggle he succeeded in overcoming all enemies, and made of frivolous Geneva [17] a model city of the Reformation, whose piety and moral purity were everywhere honoured.

That was not all, but under the influence of Calvin, Geneva became a watch-tower, from which he surveyed the whole religious and political movements of his day. By word and writing, by preaching and teaching, by conversation and correspondence, by translation and exposition of nearly the whole of Scripture, he became the spiritual advisor and leader of the Reformation in almost the whole of Europe. Wherever Calvin was able to exercise his influence, he awakened among all ranks and classes of people self-consciousness in a wonderful

way; and by bringing back confidence in God, he revived their own self-confidence. At a time of doubt and uncertainty he re-infused faith and enthusiasm in the heart, established conviction concerning eternal things, and made life, even for the humblest man, again worth living. [18] For by the consciousness of being the object of Gods eternal, immutable election, and by the assurance given thereof by the witness of the Holy Spirit in the heart, people were raised out of their dejection and despair, incorporated into the fellowship of the saints and enabled to perform mighty deeds, of self-abnegation as well as of conquest of the world.⁸⁷ Calvin was himself a marked, decided character, and he formed characters by means of his doctrine and life.⁸⁸

We are indebted to him for the independence of the church and the free exercise of its discipline; the emancipation of the congregation⁸⁹ and its presbyterial government; the limitation of the power of the state and the people's consciousness of liberty; the budding of home virtues and the faithfulness in earthly calling; the restoration to honour of the natural life, and the increase of popular prosperity; the close connection between the earthly and heavenly callings, and the opening of the eyes [19] to the divine glory, which is spread forth over the whole creation.

Whatever praise may be offered Calvin on his memorial-day and whatever tablets⁹⁰ may be erected to his honour, his fairest monument⁹¹ has been built up by himself, in the heart and lives of his numerous, spiritual descendants. And these can do their predecessor and leader no great honour than by confessing with heart and mouth: "Of and through and to God are all things, to him be honor and glory!" ■

87. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 13. "For by the consciousness of being ~~an~~ object of Gods eternal, immutable election and by the assurance given, thereof by the witness of the holy Spirit in the heart, ~~they~~ people ~~raised out people~~ were raised out of their dejection and despair, incorporated into the ~~comm~~-fellowship of the saints and enabled to ~~mighty~~ perform mighty deeds, of abnegation as well as of conquest of the world."

88. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 13. "Calvin ~~himself~~ was a ~~character~~ himself a strong and decided character and formed characters by means of his doctrine and life."

89. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 13. "church" is crossed out for "congregation," which is reflected in "Bavinck's Manuscript B."

90. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 14. "tablets" is written above "monuments."

91. "Bavinck Manuscript A," 14. "Tablet" is crossed out and replaced by "monument."

Herman Bavinck, the Two Kingdoms, and Reformed Social Ethics

By Ron Gleason

One might wonder, rightly so I might add, why an article on Bavinck's view of the Two Kingdoms (*Zwei Reiche Lehre*) is germane to our time. That is a good and legitimate question that I hope to answer in the course of this article. It might seem to some who follow theological developments closely that the theological doctrine of the "Two Kingdoms" has faded somewhat to the background, but is that really the case? Simply because no one is dialoguing about the issue as frequently and as vociferously as was the case a couple of years ago, is no indication that the essence of the matter has passed out of existence. For instance, some argue today that post-modernism is no longer the "hot-button-topic" it was when Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard were getting traction in the 1960s, but that is incorrect. Quite possibly it can be reasonably argued that it is not explicitly discussed and debated as much as it was not that long ago, but that does not mean that it has disappeared. Something very similar is true of the theological doctrine of the Two Kingdoms.

IS THE TWO KINGDOMS DOCTRINE STILL RELEVANT?

One might argue that the issue of the Two Kingdoms is simply reappearing in different guises and has rather easily found a new home in what has been termed "Our Increasingly Unrecognizable Civilization." That is, given the way in which Roman Catholic theology, Lutheran theology, and what John Frame called "The Escondido Theology," referring, of course, to Westminster Theological Seminary located in Escondido, California think, teach, and speak about the "Two Kingdoms," it might still be on the theological radar, although flying in somewhat of a "stealth" mode.¹

In his Introduction to Frame's book, George Grant opines that the possession of the biblical worldview is

non-negotiable for modern Christians and that Frame has been "invariably helpful to modern Christians in working out the practical implications of a fully orb'd Christian worldview."² Grant proceeds to declare that a genuinely integrated Christian worldview "must be engaged in the world. It must be unengaged in worldliness. It must somehow correlate spiritual concerns with temporal concerns. It must coalesce heavenly hope and landed life. It must coordinate heart-felt faith and down-to-earth practice."³ That is, a Christian worldview must be exercised in the world without becoming itself worldly. This involves a great deal of biblical discernment and maturity. It also inextricably ties or links a Christian worldview and Christian ethics together.

Grant touches on an essential element for contemporary theology as well as an indispensable aspect of Bavinck's theology, namely the possession and continuous development of a biblical worldview by the serious Christian. The concept of biblical worldview was of such importance for Bavinck that he wrote his doctoral

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1. John Frame, *The Escondido Theology. A Reformed Response to Two Kingdoms Theology* (Lakeland, FL: Whitefield Media Productions, 2001).

2. George Grant, "Introduction," in Frame, *The Escondido Theology*, p. vii. Grant appends these words from Richard Weaver, "Worldview is the most important thing that we can know about a man. Ideas have consequences. And those consequences affect everything in the practical realm as well as in the theoretical realm. Discernment of worldview is therefore the most necessary of all the tasks of wisdom." In his book, *Ideas Have Consequences*, written in 1948, Weaver instructs his readers that his work "is another book about the dissolution of the West" and "There is ground for declaring that modern man has become a moral idiot" (p. 1).

3. George Grant, "Introduction," in Frame, *The Escondido Theology*, p. x.

thesis at Leiden University in the Netherlands on it.⁴ In that dissertation, Bavinck devotes a lengthy chapter on how a Christian and his or her worldview ought to function in the society in which the Christian lives.⁵

In my biography,⁶ I chronicle how Bavinck, Abraham Kuyper, and others in Holland strove to incorporate a biblical worldview among the citizens of the tiny country of the Netherlands. Bavinck went so far as to pen a booklet on the subject that went through three Dutch editions. Crossway published an English edition in 2019.⁷ The centrality, importance, and indispensable nature of possessing a biblical life and worldview has been emphasized and re-emphasized by seminal thinkers. An immediate example is the late-Francis Schaeffer, who, in his *Christian Manifesto*, reiterated the vital nature of worldview in the opening words of that book. He wrote, “The basic problem of the Christians in this country in the last eighty years or so, in regard to society and in regard to government, is that they have seen things in bits and pieces instead of totals.”⁸ What is important for our purposes is the statement by Schaeffer, which would certainly be endorsed by Bavinck that the Christian and secular worldviews are on a “collision course” and are diametrically opposed to one another. In his words, “These two world views stand as totals in complete antithesis to each other in content and also in their natural results—including sociological and governmental results, and specifically including law.”⁹ That truth still holds today.

The Foreword of Frame’s book was penned by Gary DeMar, who emphasizes many of the same things that Grant does, without being repetitious. DeMar rightly argues that when it comes to the notion of the Two Kingdoms “it’s important to understand that there is a legacy of Reformed thinking on this subject.”¹⁰ That is most certainly the case as I hope to delineate in this

article. For DeMar’s part, he offers a very helpful excursion through some of those very helpful Presbyterian and Reformed individuals and their writings.

HOW DOES THE DOCTRINE OF THE TWO KINGDOMS APPLY TO SOCIAL ETHICS?

In the “Author’s Preface,” to his work on the Escondido theology, Frame offers, if I have counted accurately, no less than thirty-two bullet points that comprise what he terms “controversial” teaching by some, but not all, of the faculty members at Westminster Theological Seminary in Escondido, CA. This is not an article about Drs. Frame, Grant, and DeMar, but they are helpful in setting the table for what Herman Bavinck taught on the subject of the Two Kingdoms.

How one distinguishes those kingdoms and describes how the committed Christian is to function in them is very important at any time in history, but especially in our time, and I am not merely referring to our recent “lockdowns” caused by the Covid virus. For instance, do Christians look to have sentient discourse about the myriad social issues facing us today with those who have a very different worldview, *or* do they check their Christian values and virtues at the door of the public arena? Do they offer a full-throated defense of those social issues, or do they, while wearing their “secular” mindset, find nothing wrong with sexual perversion, abortion, euthanasia, and the blatant teaching of Critical Race Theory in government schools?

Do convinced Christians not merely function as the “conscience of morality” for the social issues facing the United States, but also offer some well-grounded push-back? I am convinced—and so was Bavinck—that it is the latter, as, I hope, will become increasingly evident in the course of this article. Allow me a few examples of what I mean. One sometimes hears a secularist unequivocally state, “Well, you don’t want to end up on the wrong side of history, do you?” That’s an amusing statement taken at face value. I wonder if anyone ever asked that question of Josef Stalin, Mao Zedong, or Che Guevara? How does anyone absolutely know in advance how history will play out? Stalinist Russia certainly didn’t, nor did Communist China.

Are we equally concerned about being on the wrong side of biology? What do I mean by that? If a male human being were to say to me, “I identify as a woman,” what ought my response be? I have given that some thought and my reply would be this: “Do you mean that as a clearly adult male you are *pretending* to be a woman because that is the reality of what we’re discussing?”

4. Herman Bavinck, *De Ethiek of Ulrich Zwingli* (Kampen: G. Ph. Zalsman, 1880).

5. Bavinck, *De Ethiek of Ulrich Zwingli*, “Het Christelijk leven in de maatschappij,” pp. 134–171.

6. Ron Gleason, *Herman Bavinck, Pastor, Churchman, Statesman, and Theologian* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2010).

7. Herman Bavinck, *Christelijke wereldbeschouwing* (Kampen: Bos, 1904; Kok, 1913; & Kok, 1929). See Herman Bavinck, *Christian Worldview*, trans. and ed. Cory Brock, James Eglinton, and Nathaniel Sutanto (Wheaton: Crossway, 2019).

8. Francis Schaeffer, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer*, Vol. 5, “A Christian View of the West” (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), p. 423.

9. Schaeffer, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer*, 5:424.

10. Gary DeMar, “Foreword,” in Frame, *The Escondido Theology*, p. xvii.

Then I would hasten to add, “You don’t want to be on the wrong side of millennia of biology, do you?” I would point out from my Christian life and worldview that God states that there are not genders, which is a radical feminist construct, but rather there are two sexes. Moreover, discoveries of mass graves dating back millennium have discovered the remains of only two sexes: male and female.

In the face of myriad ethical and worldview issues—such as Critical Race Theory, identity politics, intersectionality, BLM, Antifa, LGBTQIA+, The 1619 Project, climate change/global warming, a faltering economy that threatens massive inflation, an elitist, billionaire group that wants to rule everything Americans do and think, and one of the most startling anti-biological manifestations of wokeness: transgender fanaticism, where people of all stripes are being force-fed the abolition of biological sex—how ought a Christian to respond to such things? Does a Christian have *anything* at all to say to a world that is certifiably insane, or should the Christian community that at one point in time functioned as the moral consciousness of society, simply remain silent or even state that those issues do not belong to the realm into which they should speak or have an opinion?

It is well known that Bavinck was promoted at Leiden University in 1880. What is possibly less well known is that his dissertation was on the Swiss Reformer, Huldrych Zwingli, and specifically on Zwingli’s ethics.¹¹ The last two chapters of that doctoral dissertation (chapters 9 and 10), treat the Christian and civic life and the Christian life in society, respectively.¹² Moreover, in addition to his duties teaching Systematic (or Dogmatic) Theology, Bavinck also taught Ethics in Kampen. He abandoned that particular discipline until 1902 when he accepted the vacancy left by Abraham Kuyper in Dogmatics at the Free University of Amsterdam.¹³ In 1902, the Free University already had an ethics professor: Gerhard Geesink, so Bavinck left off teaching that discipline.

In order to address the controversial matter that faces us today regarding the place of the Christian in society and to what extent the Christian voice needs to be heard in the “Two Kingdoms,” I have chosen to discuss two of Bavinck’s speeches that he gave in Kampen at the Theological Seminary while he served a year’s term as “Rector” of that institution. I will take them in chronological order, which will have the added advantage of illustrating how Bavinck’s theological thoughts developed, and if, in fact, there were significant changes in his thinking, since both of these addresses deal, in

part, with how the Roman Catholics, the Lutherans, and the Reformed construe the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms.

I will submit one disclaimer for this article: I learned from the Brit, Herbert Butterfield, that a historian ought to function more as a *recording angel* than as a *hanging judge*. Therefore, my attempts in writing this article about Bavinck’s particular view on a particular theological issue are neither to praise him unduly nor to excoriate him. Rather, my aims are less ambitious. I want to represent his thoughts to you with the best of intentions and using the best of my (fallible) abilities. I also want to make what I consider to be exceedingly important points about writing history, articles, or biographies and more.

It is noteworthy, I think, how various historians, reading the identical documents, diaries, letters, tracts, and books, can arrive at very divergent, if not contradictory, conclusions. Academicians generally love to excoriate any and all who do not write for a narrow, tenured, and academic audience. I want to clarify from the outset that I am *not* writing this article for the academy, but rather for a popular audience. It is my desire that modern Christians come to comprehend what one Reformer, Herman Bavinck, thought and taught about the issue of the Two Kingdoms.

As I mentioned earlier, I will take Bavinck’s two addresses in chronological order. The first article was delivered as a speech in 1888.¹⁴ The second address was delivered in 1894 and dealt with the notion of common grace, which, in fact, is its concise title.¹⁵ Both talks/writings address how the Christian ought to relate to the society in which he or she lives as well as the concept of social ethics in light of the disparate worldviews represented by the Christian and a secular humanist.

11. Herman Bavinck, *De Ethiek van Ulrich Zwingli* (Kampen: G. Ph. Zalsman, 1880).

12. Bavinck, *De Ethiek van Ulrich Zwingli*, pp. 122–133 & 134–171.

13. See Ron Gleason, *Herman Bavinck: Pastor, Churchman, Statesman, and Theologian* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2010), p. 316ff.

14. Herman Bavinck, *De katholiciteit van Christendom en kerk, rede bij de overdracht van het rectoraat aan de Theol. School te Kampen op 18 december 1888* (Kampen: Zalsman, 1888). The reader can access an English pdf of this speech online by searching for “The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church.”

15. Herman Bavinck, *De algemeene genade, rede bij de overdracht van het rectoraat aan de Theologische School te Kampen op 6 december 1894* (Kampen: Zalsman, 1894). This article can also be accessed online by searching for a pdf of Bavinck’s “Common Grace.” As an interesting—or not so interesting—aside, 1894 was the same year Bavinck’s good friend, Geerhardus Vos, gave his acceptance address as professor of Biblical Theology at Princeton.

THE CATHOLICITY OF CHRISTIANITY AND THE CHURCH

By the time Bavinck gave this speech he had been a professor in Kampen for five years. Of course, there was a history or “back story” to what he chose as his address as Rector of the school for his one-year term. This is not the place to go into that history, but you can read about it in my biography.¹⁶ Suffice it to say that there were some in his ecclesiastical affiliation that held to very narrow views regarding the Church of Jesus Christ.

Following a brief introduction to the subject of his address, Bavinck continued and divided this treatise into the following separate sections: “The Scriptural Teaching on Catholicity,” “The Idea of Catholicity in the History of the Church” (which is a much longer section than the first), and he ends with “The Obligation Catholicity Place Upon Us Today.” The second section of Bavinck’s speech will occupy the lion’s share of our time, but I will choose relevant quotations from the other two sections to augment and explicate what Bavinck intends in the second section.

It should be mentioned, as I alluded to, that there were some ecclesiastical issues that needed to be briefly addressed in Bavinck’s speech, not least of which was the suspicious nature of some of the members of the church affiliation that had established the Theological Seminary in Kampen. The *Afgescheidenen* (Separatists) as they were called tended to be hesitant fully to embrace other Reformed camps that were not in full agreement with them, including Abraham Kuyper’s *Doleantie* group. Bavinck was acutely aware of those suspicions and had experienced them first-hand when he attended Leiden

University for his theological studies. Simultaneously, Bavinck also was well aware that the movement that Abraham Kuyper led within the state church (*Hervormde Kerk*) aligned theologically with the *Afgescheidenen* and that the two groups should unify.

How does Bavinck define the term “catholicity”? He provides us with three simple meanings for the word “catholicity” in the Church’s use of that term in history. First, it was employed “to refer to the church as a unified whole in contrast to the dispersed local congregations that make up the whole and are included in it. The local church can, however, legitimately call itself catholic because it attaches itself to the universal church.”¹⁷

In the second place, Bavinck asserts that “the term expresses the unity of the church as inclusive of all believers from every nation, in all times and places” (“Catholicity,” 221).

Finally, “the church is sometimes referred to as catholic because it embraces the *whole* of human experience. It possesses perfectly all doctrine concerning either invisible and visible things that human beings need to know; it provides a cure for all kinds of sin, either of body or soul; it produces all virtues and good works, and partakes of all spiritual gifts.”¹⁸

All of these taken together make it clear that the confession of the catholicity “is based on the conviction that Christianity is a world religion that should govern all people and sanctify all creatures irrespective of geography, nationality, place, and time.” In 1888, Bavinck was convinced Christianity was the only world religion that was fully universal and capable of permeating and sanctifying all others. In spite of the fact that the Christian faith was precisely what was required in his time that he describes as “rife with errors and schisms” (“Catholicity,” 221). In order to solidify his assertion, Bavinck moves to his first point regarding what the Word of God teaches about the notion of catholicity.

THE SCRIPTURAL TEACHING ON CATHOLICITY

Bavinck begins this section of his address with a succinct, general description of creation followed closely by a brief summary of redemptive-history where Bavinck asserts that in Israel, revelation dominates everything.” He continues, “A separation between the cult (*godsdiens*) and the rest of life is altogether impossible.” Note the strong language he employs to drive home his point: “dominates,” “everything,” and “impossible.” Moreover, in this arrangement, “The law of YHWH regulates everything even to the smallest minutiae” (“Catholicity,” 222). In the same section, Bavinck suggests what

16. See Gleason, *Herman Bavinck: Pastor, Churchman, Statesman, and Theologian*, pp. 45–68.

17. Herman Bavinck, “The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church,” trans. John Bolt, *Calvin Theological Journal* 27 (1992): 221. Hereafter, “Catholicity.”

18. Bavinck, “Catholicity,” 221. There is a significant translator’s note appended to this third and final descriptor of the term “catholicity.” The note reads: “This last dimension of catholicity is freely borrowed by Bavinck from Cyril of Jerusalem’s ‘Catechetical Lectures’ (XVIII, 23). The paragraph reads as follows: ‘The Church, then is called Catholic because it is spread through the whole world, from one end of the earth to the other, and because it never stops teaching in all its fullness every doctrine that men ought to be brought to know; and that regarding things visible and invisible, in heaven and on earth. It is called Catholic also because it brings into religious obedience every sort of men, rulers and ruled, learned and simple, and because it is a universal treatment and cure for every kind of sin whether perpetrated by soul or body, and possesses within it every form of virtue that is named, whether it expresses itself in deeds or works or in spiritual graces of every description.’” (Emphasis added.)

the Swiss Reformer, Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575) explicitly states, namely that Christ and the apostles did not say or teach anything the Old Testament prophets did not say and teach, and the Old Testament prophets did not say or teach anything that Moses had not said or taught.

He cites the prophets in particular as the ones pulling back the curtain somewhat and hinting at the eventual inclusion of the Gentiles. In that entire process, there would be opposition from the world. Why? Because “This ‘world’ lies in wickedness [KJV] (1 John 5:19), has ‘the devil as its prince’ (John 14:30; 16:11), who is ‘the god of this age’ (II Cor. 4:4).” He raises that point in order to emphasize and raise the consciousness of his audience to the reality that the world neither knows God nor his children. In addition, the world “hates the followers of Jesus as it hated him (John 15:18, 19; 17:14)” (“Catholicity,” 223). All of this might seem to indicate that Bavinck will eventually remind his hearers that Christians should therefore avoid any contact with the world and the people of the world, or take a Lutheran approach and declare that Christians can be involved in society, but they must check their Christian principles at the door if they get involved with the culture. Neither is the case.

The cross is central according to God’s revelation and “Christianity is the religion of the cross” (“Catholicity,” 223). Nevertheless, and simultaneously, Bavinck proffers that “the Cross casts its shadow over all creation but so does the light of the Resurrection. On the one hand, the kingdom of heaven is a treasure in a field and a pearl of great price for which a man sells everything he has in order to buy it; at the same time it is also a mustard seed that grows into a tree in which the birds of the air build nests and a yeast that a woman takes hides in three measures of flour until it is all leavened” (“Catholicity,” 223–4). While it is true that the world is corrupted in sin, it is precisely “this sinful world that is the object of God’s love.” More than that, “The kingdoms of this world shall eventually become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ (Rev. 11:15)” (“Catholicity,” 224).

What Bavinck is leading up to is one of his famous, regular dicta, namely that grace does not *destroy* nature but rather *restores* it. That is, the shadow that the cross of the Lord Jesus casts is over God’s entire creation, not in the sense of universal salvation, but rather in the sense that in Christ God intends the restoration of all things. After some germane comments pertaining to Christians avoiding being both narrow-minded and narrow-hearted, but remaining pure and orthodox in their church membership, orthodox, and church

discipline (p. 227), Bavinck moves to his second point: “The Idea of Catholicity in the History of the Church.”

THE IDEA OF CATHOLICITY IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

Bavinck contends that Scripture defines “two lines” concerning the world, which were not adhered to or equally developed in the post-apostolic period. There were reasons for that, one of which was that “The small Christian church, powerless and despised in the midst of a hostile world, had first of all to experience deeply the antithesis with the world.” Thus, in the course of time and over centuries, the church became more and more “worldly” particularly by and after Constantine. Voices were raised and protests against the secularization (*verwereldlijking*) of the Church occurred, but on balance they were either not heard or they were rejected. (“Catholicity,” 228). The upshot of this history was that “The original antithesis between holy and unholy became a contrast between good and better, between moral precepts and evangelical counsels” (Ibid., 229).

While it would be improper and incorrect to place all the blame on Thomas Aquinas and his attempt to consolidate Christian theology with Aristotelian philosophy, it would be equally incorrect to absolve him completely.¹⁹ Bavinck asserts that Roman Catholicism is fallacious because “According to Rome the ‘world’ increasingly loses the ethical significance it has in Scripture. The natural is not that which is sinful but that which by its very nature is incapable of reaching the supernatural level. The supernatural is a *donum superadditum*. Consistent Roman Catholic theologians deny that original sin is something positive; it is only negative consisting of a loss of the *donum superadditum*” (“Catholicity,” 229).

Not only does Bavinck employ this criticism of Roman Catholic theology in this early address in Kampen, but it is woven into the fabric of his *Reformed Dogmatics*. The significance of this accusation is to be located in the faulty view of the Roman Catholic Church that “The future of the world before or apart from Christianity is thus actually the same.... Nature, the world, is good, not corrupt; it is only missing that which in its

19. See Alfred Adam, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, Bd. 2 (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1981), pp. 101–115; Carl Andresen (hrsg.), *Handbuch der Dogmen- und Theologiegeschichte*, Bd. 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), pp. 650–682; Friedrich Loofs, *Leitfaden zum Studium der Dogmengeschichte* (Kurt Aland [hrsg.]) (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1968), pp. 417–483; Reinhold Seeberg, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, Bd. 3 (Leipzig: A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1930), pp. 325–337.

own strength it could never reach. The Christian faith, grace, enters the world in order to make possible the attainment of the supernatural, the *visio Dei*.²⁰ That is, Christianity does not “reform and renew that which exists, it only completes and perfects Creation. Christianity is that which transcends and approaches the natural, but it does not penetrate it and sanctify it” (“Catholicity,” 221). Theologically, this construct leaves Creation (*scheping*) and Re-Creation (*herscheping*) two entities or realities where never the twain shall meet.

All that one is left with is a “compromise” between the natural and the supernatural, “between God and humanity, faith and knowledge, church and world, soul and body, religion and morality, quietism and activity.” Serious consideration of Bavinck’s critique of this Roman construct lands one squarely in Pelagianism. To use Bavinck’s words, “The Roman principle, at bottom Pelagian, is an ‘add-on’ or supplementary system (*aanvullingssysteem*)” (“Catholicity,” 229). I realize that we are reaching back in history and that fewer and fewer in our time appreciate the value of history, but cloaked within Bavinck’s assessment of Rome being a “supplementary system” is a world of truth that demands serious reflection and answers in our current discussion not only surrounding the doctrine of the “Two Kingdoms” but also the discussions and debates that are concentrated around many of the “woke” issues of our time.

For instance, in Rome’s scheme of things, the “natural order” after the Fall is still “good” but it is of a *lower* order. How does that apply to our current situation? In our time, we frequently hear Christian friends and pastors (not that pastors are not friends, of course) that we are to follow “the science,” as if such a thing as “the science” actually exists. Again, I will put this in Bavinck’s words: “Reason and science are good and uncorrupted and are able on their own to achieve much. During the Middle Ages, Aristotle had an authority in his sphere equivalent to that of Scripture in its sphere. Only Scripture’s authority was of a higher order” (“Catholicity,” 230).

Concretely, how many Christian congregations have serious disagreements and arguments with each other over matters surrounding masks or no masks, Covid vaccinations or no Covid vaccinations, no singing in church or singing in church, and a host of other quite divisive issues? *Fallen* reason is alive and well among scientists of all stripes. There is no neutrality among scientists. A white lab coat does not confer infallibility.

As we will observe in the next section of Bavinck’s address, as is often the case, Lutheranism can frequently be a stepchild of Roman Catholicism. What do I mean by that? One example will suffice. The difference between Transubstantiation and consubstantiation is almost negligible. Both teach a form of “infused grace.” While Rome does not abolish the natural order of things, it does leave “marriage, family, possessions, earthly vocation, the state, science, and art intact and even permits them, *in their own place*, a greater space and freedom than Protestantism tends to do.”²⁰ The view that the Roman Catholic Church settled into was that it sought “to bring the entire world under the submission of the church.” Moreover, Rome “denies catholicity in the sense that the Christian faith itself must be a leavening agent in everything” (“Catholicity,” 231). The notion of the Christian faith functioning as “a leavening agent” will be a concept to which Bavinck would return in his address. It will be a kind of lynchpin for what he will say in favor of the Reformed position as well as how he will formulate his criticism against Martin Luther and the Lutherans in general.

Moving ahead, Bavinck reminded his audience that Rome and the Reformation were on a collision course not merely tangentially, but “on almost every point.” He also desired that his audience be cognizant of the fact that the Reformation be seen as more than *exclusively* a reformation of the Church. How cognizant did he want his audience to be? While conceding the point that the Reformation most certainly *was* a much-needed and long-overdue reformation of ecclesiastical matters, “it was *much more* than that; it was a *radically* new way of conceiving Christianity itself” (“Catholicity,” 221; emphasis added).

The differences between Rome and the Reformation were huge vis-à-vis life and worldview. He summarizes those differences this way: “Rome’s world-and-life view was dualistic; her disjunction between the natural and supernatural was a *quantitative* one. By returning to the New Testament, the Reformers replaced this with a truly theistic worldview that made the distinction a *qualitative* one.” Bavinck also cedes the point that on the matter of the distinction just mentioned, Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin were all on the same page. “All attempted to free the entire terrain of the natural from the hegemony of the church” (Ibid., 235). What deserves another look is the actuality that in spite of their *formal* agreement there were ineluctable differences among Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin, not to mention other Reformers.

Bavinck then moves back to a comparison between Rome and Protestantism. He states,

20. “Catholicity,” 230. Emphasis added. Hold on to those italicized words because they are going to play a dominant role in Bavinck’s criticisms of both Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism.

The Protestant . . . believes that sin corrupts and profanes everything, confessing that the entire world 'lies in wickedness' and is full of temptation. At the same time, the Protestant acknowledges that the natural order is not unholy in itself and is thus capable of being purified but must not be despised or repudiated. Precisely because Protestants combat sin more seriously than Rome does, they are also able to appreciate the proper worth of the natural order. In Protestantism, the mechanical relation of nature and grace gives way to an ethical relation. The Christian faith is not a quantitative reality that spreads itself in a transcendent fashion over the natural but a religious and ethical power that enters the natural in an immanent fashion and eliminates only that which is unholy. *The kingdom of heaven may be a treasure and a pearl of great price, but it is also a mustard seed and a leaven.* ("Catholicity," 236; italics added).

DIFFERENCES AMONG LUTHER, ZWINGLI, AND CALVIN

Once Bavinck has compared Rome to the Protestants, he then turns his attention to the Protestants themselves because while general unity existed, there was neither uniformity nor identity among them. We can and should appreciate many similarities between the Reformers and the Lutherans, but we should also be on our guard for the differences—sometimes glaring—that exist between the two groups. Bavinck begins his explanation with Martin Luther, who once remarked, "Christ did not come to change things outwardly but to change persons inwardly in their hearts. The Gospel has *nothing* to do with worldly matters" ("Catholicity," 237).

It is imperative that we understand such statements against the backdrop of Luther's debates and confrontations with the Anabaptists. While the latter demanded that Christians not participate in the secular realm, Luther was of a different spirit, with a caveat. He believed that Christians could, for example, serve in the military, as a constable, as a civil magistrate, or even as a monarch. Citing Luther, Bavinck continues, "A Prince can be a Christian but he must not rule as a Christian and as a ruler he is not called a Christian but a Prince. The person is a Christian but the office and princely dignity has *nothing* to do with Christianity. In sum, Christ wants everyone to stay in their station. All he asks is that whoever had formerly been serving the Devil should henceforth serve him" ("Catholicity," 237; emphasis added).

The previous citation provides an excellent summary of Luther's and Lutheranism's concept of the relationship between the "Two Kingdoms." Granted, there is some "overlap." Luther does not deviate from Zwingli

and Calvin when it comes to freeing the "earthly realm" from the ecclesiastical. There is, however, a caveat: Luther leaves the earthly realm "standing without connection next to the spiritual realm and sometimes speaks as though the external is a matter of *complete indifference* and not capable of ethical renewal" ("Catholicity," 237; emphasis added). To Bavinck's mind and following the Reformed tradition, "Luther's mistake here is that he restricts the Gospel and limits the grace of God. The Gospel only changes the inward man, the conscience, the heart; the remainder stays the same until the final judgment. As a result, dualism is not completely overcome; a true and full catholicity is not achieved. Recreation (*herscheping*) continues to stand alongside creation (*schepping*)" ("Catholicity," 237).

Similarly, Zwingli, whom Bavinck had studied assiduously and even written his doctoral dissertation on, did not completely and fully extricate himself from the looming dualism. It is apparent, he told his audience, that Zwingli's life and worldview was quite different from Luther's in many significant regards. Nevertheless, Bavinck asserts that even Zwingli (and his works have been sorely neglected and often misunderstood. Fully to appreciate the significance of Zwingli's labors as a Reformer, one needs to read the original sources of his works and listen to Heinrich Bullinger, his successor in Zürich, and his praise for Zwingli) was not fully able to extricate himself from the tentacles of dualism.

There were two specific areas of reform for which Bavinck praises Zwingli's efforts. First, the ideal toward which he strove was with unshakable confidence in the truth "was to renew human beings first but then by means of the Gospel also the whole of life, state, society, and the world" ("Catholicity," 237). That is, his efforts extended beyond the walls of the Church. Surely, his primary focus was on the saving and nurture of souls, but Zwingli desired to move beyond that.

Second, and closely related to the first, Zwingli "also demonstrated in his practice of reform that he wanted to realize the Gospel's reforming and renewing power in *all* areas of life." What differentiates the first and second endeavors? It certainly was not because he did not try to actualize those two reforms, but rather "when he attempted theoretically to give an account of this, he failed. For him, too, flesh and spirit, human and divine justice continue to stand, in dualistic fashion, next to each other" ("Catholicity," 237; emphasis added).

To Bavinck's mind, the Reformer who truly overcame the dualism was John Calvin. Bavinck's appreciation for Calvin is well documented. In 1895, when the first volume of his *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* was published, he

wrote this in his Preface (*Voorbericht*), without mentioning Calvin by name, “This Dogmatics is connected most closely to the Christian religion and theology from the sixteenth century by the Reformation, and especially that which was received from Switzerland.”²¹ He hastened to add that “To love the old simply because it is old is neither Reformed nor Christian. A Dogmatics does not describe what was applied/valued (in the past), but what *must* be applied/valued. It has its roots in the past, but it labors for the future.”²²

From this, it is clear that Bavinck possessed a long-standing appreciation for Calvin’s theology and the notion of the catholicity of the Church was no exception. As I will mention in my concluding remarks, being a historian and/or theologian means that when you read, write, or speak about one of your favorites Reformers, your aim ought to be a recording angel and not a hanging judge. That does not mean that you do not point out the very human fallacies, warts, foibles, and discrepancies of your subject. You may and you should. Bavinck is of a similar viewpoint when he says, “Nor do I want to give unqualified praise to Calvin’s work of reformation in Geneva, and the means by which he accomplished it. *Nonetheless*, it is Calvin whose labors completed the Reformation and saved Protestantism” (“Catholicity,” 237; emphasis added). The difference maker is the “*Nonetheless*” in Bavinck’s statement.

Of course, this naturally begs the question: *How* did Calvin overcome the dualism about which Bavinck is speaking? The short answer is that “He traced the operation of sin to a greater *extent* than did Luther, and to a greater *depth* than did Zwingli” (“Catholicity,” 237; emphasis added). What stands out in how Calvin bridged the gap between Luther and Zwingli is the graciousness of God’s grace. There is a particular emphasis on God’s redeeming and sustaining grace in salvation, but there is also a gracious disposition of God toward his creation in general—call it “common grace” if you wish. He writes that in the mind of the French Reformer, “re-creation is not a system that supplements Creation, as in Catholicism, not a religious reformation that leaves Creation intact, as in Luther, much less a radically new creation as in Anabaptism, but a joyful tiding of the renewal of all creatures” (“Catholicity,” 238).

In Bavinck’s estimation, it is Calvin’s articulation of the relationship between nature and grace that permits the gospel to be the gospel and to come into its own—fully. Simultaneously, Bavinck explains to his audience

that “There is nothing that cannot or ought not to be evangelized. Not only the church but also home, school, society, and state are placed under the dominion of the principle of Christianity” (“Catholicity,” 238). That is, while it is patently true that Christians cannot and must not coerce the state, it can and should operate as the “voice of conscience” (my term) of the state. Quite possibly politicians, elitists, Marxists, progressives, and others will scoff and ridicule the Church for such statements, but that is the least of the Church’s problems. The “restraining” function of the Word of God does not occur in a dark corner of the world or in a vacuum, but rather in the public arena.

Here is how Bavinck summarizes the difference between the Lutherans and the Reformed: “The German reformation, therefore, was a reformation of worship and preaching while the Swiss reformation included a renewal of state and society. The former was exclusively ecclesiastical (*godsdienslig*) in character, the latter also displayed a social and political character.” Furthermore, “All this results from the fact that the Bible is, for Luther, only a source of salvation truth, whereas for Calvin it is the norm for *all* of life” (“Catholicity,” 238; emphasis added). It must be kept in mind that Bavinck was not only the professor of Systematic Theology in Kampen for twenty years, but he also taught Reformed Ethics at the Theological Seminary in that town as well. Therefore, he strove to inculcate a solid *individual* ethic in the lives of believers, but he was also convinced that the Reformed world also needed to expend its energy dealing with the *social* issues that confronted the Dutch in the nineteenth century and how the Word of God can and must have a voice in the political and social realms of life. A representatively large number of people in the United States struggle with the social aspect of the gospel and, quite often, for good reasons.

Many are aware of the disastrous results of the so-called “Social Gospel” movement from yesteryear and the “Social Justice Warrior” movement in our time. Both have *serious* errors in theology and the application of theology. Both deal in vagaries and generalities, never clearly and precisely defining what is meant by “social” and “justice.” Bavinck would have insisted that full and complete definitions of those words be derived from Scripture after serious exegesis. There is most definitely a drastic and crying need for Reformed professors and pastors to begin serious labors in setting forth in clear, plain, and easily understood language what constitutes “social justice.”

21. Herman Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, Deel 1 (Kampen: J.H. Bos, 1895), p. iv.

22. Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, p. iv.

THE OBLIGATION CATHOLICITY PLACES
UPON US TODAY

The final section of Bavinck's address is a historical odyssey and comparison of what occurred in Catholicism and Protestantism in the aftermath of the Reformation. He opines that "The history of Catholicism and Protestantism after the Reformation did not live up to expectations. In the sixteenth century, Rome did experience very significant and irrecoverable losses, but she not only continued to exist alongside the Reformed churches, she also got back on her feet and strengthened herself internally at the Council of Trent." Both movements seemed to settle into a disposition of co-belligerence dashing all hopes of rapprochement. Roman Catholicism, however, received added assistance from the Jesuit order, so much so that "One could say that Catholicism and Jesuitism were increasingly synonymous" ("Catholicity," 242). In fact, it would not be saying too much to assert that the Jesuit order made itself *indispensable* to Rome.

Conversely, "The Reformation in its turn soon lost her youthful courage and freshness. After barely one century, this powerful movement had already come to a standstill and a decline soon followed" ("Catholicity," 243). While it is possible that Bavinck slightly overstated the case, it is true that the influence of the Reformation did wane rather quickly and significantly. Similarly, Ahlstrom asserts that regarding the Protestant influence in America, "It is safe to assume that the influence of puritanism, in the broad Calvinistic sense, was a major force in the late colonial period, and that it contributed uniquely and profoundly to the making of the American mind when the American mind was in the making."²³

Former-Harvard professor, Samuel Huntington, declares something quite similar concerning what was on the individual and collective mind of the American colonists when he writes, "Key elements of that culture include: the English language; Christianity; religious commitment; English concepts of the rule of law, the responsibility of rulers, and the rights of individuals; and dissenting Protestant values of individualism, the work ethic, and the belief that humans have the ability and the duty to try to create a heaven on earth, a 'city on a hill.'"²⁴ This being the case, what was Bavinck conveying to his Dutch audience, and, by extension, what are the "take-aways" for twenty-first-century Americans?

Bavinck contends that Christianity has often been little more than "a thin veneer covering the natural life of the people." In addition, "the Reformation, no

matter how universal in its conception, was even less successful in Christianizing life. Art, science, philosophy, political and social life never fully incorporated the principles of the Reformation. Although dualism was *theoretically* overcome, it remained a *practical* reality in many areas of life" ("Catholicity," 243). In a significant sense, this still holds true today when and where Christians want to keep the gospel limited to ecclesiastical matters and balk when some suggest that it has a broader application.

He fully realizes that history has played a role and one of the "actors" in that historical development has been the advent of "Pietism."²⁵ The tendency has been to withdraw from society and to develop "the other worldly pietism of Protestant" ("Catholicity," 244). The upshot, even in Bavinck's day, was that "A new worldview has arisen that does, to be sure, grant freedom of religion to all that is itself unconnected with Christianity and the church and seeks to eliminate the latter from public life in order to relegate them to private life and thus reduce them to sectarian phenomena. *For the most part, our contemporary culture takes place without reference to Christianity and church*" ("Catholicity," 244; italics added). If this does not sound familiar to us, it should. Remember that Bavinck addressed his audience with these words in 1888!

As a slight aside, I have often wondered why it is, since the Presbyterian and Reformed communities have such a biblical, covenantal worldview, that they allow the Roman Catholics to outstrip us in almost every aspect and facet of social ethics. Many today in America that adhere to "Big Eva" cannot tell you where to find the Ten Words of the Covenant (Ex. 34:28), a.k.a. the Ten Commandments, let alone recite those words. Presbyterians and Reformed Christians tend to be able to locate the Ten Commandments and tell you what they are, but that same group of people seems hopelessly divided on where, how, or even if the Ten Commandments have any social relevance. Bavinck extols the worldview that was handed down to us by the Reformation. "Public life is

23. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 349.

24. Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We?* (NY: Simon & Schuster, 2004), p. xvi.

25. On p. 243, Bavinck explains that "When this duality after a period of time became an antagonism, the Reformation, in the circles where it still had the strongest influence, became disillusioned and disheartened, and retreated into itself. Thus, that peculiar conception of the Christian life came into being that I will, for brevity's sake, designate as 'Pietism.'" He includes under this designation Baptist groups, Quakers, Moravians, Pietists, Methodists, revivalist movements, and Darbyism.

ignored and rejected—often as intrinsically ‘worldly’—while no effort is made to reform it according to the demands of God’s Word. Satisfied with the ability to worship God in their own houses of worship, or to engage in evangelism, many left nation, state and society, art and science to their own devices” (“Catholicity,” 246).

Bavinck’s solution is not to go the route of renouncing the world, not bringing Christian values and virtues into the world, and not isolating oneself, as a Christian, from the world. What is it then? It is merely to follow the lead of a lion’s share of the Reformers who lived and taught that our involvement in the world is not something extraordinary, but rather it “is the faith of the person who while keeping the kingdom of heaven as a *treasure*, at the same time brings it out into the world as a *leaven*, certain that He who is for us is greater than he who is against us and that He is able to preserve us from evil even in the midst of the world” (“Catholicity,” 248).

True catholicity, Bavinck explains, is accompanied by responsible, covenantal conduct. “The Gospel is not content to be one opinion among others of the lie but claims to be *the truth*, the truth that by its very nature is exclusive in every area” (“Catholicity,” 246; emphasis added). He also realized that “The world would gladly banish Christianity and the church from its turf and force it to a private inner chamber. We could give the world no greater satisfaction than to withdraw into solitude and leave the world peacefully to its own devices.” In large measure, that has been the result of Pietism in general, consistent Lutheranism and of a large segment of contemporary evangelism—and also some in Presbyterian and Reformed circles. Bavinck concedes the point that the Kingdom of Heaven is not of this world, but adds this: “The kingdom of heaven may not be of this world, but it does demand that everything in the world be subservient to it. It is exclusivist and refuses to accept an independent or neutral kingdom alongside it. Undoubtedly it would be much easier to leave this entire age to its own devices and to seek our strength in quietness” (“Catholicity,” 248).

But the battle lines have been drawn and the enemies are sin and Satan and his host. That being the case, a true Christian with true faith is “not restricted to any time, place, nation, or people.” That faith “can enter into all situations, can connect with all forms of natural life, is

suitable to every time, and beneficial for all things, and is relevant in all circumstances. It is free and independent because it is in conflict only with sin and in the blood of the Cross that there is purification for every sin” (“Catholicity,” 249). Following some general comments about Christ’s Church and the confessions of the Church, Bavinck concluded his address. Let’s now turn our attention to Bavinck’s 1894 address that deals with, among other things, the concept of common grace.

BAVINCK ON COMMON GRACE

In 1894, Bavinck found himself once again serving as the rector of the Theological Seminary in Kampen. This time he chose to tackle the notion of common grace. From 1902–1904, Bavinck’s senior friend, Abraham Kuyper, produced a rather massive three-volume work titled *De Gemeene Gratie*. Those who desire to delve more deeply into the subject of common grace can consult Susan Schreiner’s *The Theater of His Glory. Nature & the Natural Order in the Thought of John Calvin*, and Jochem Douma’s work *Algemene Genade*.²⁶

My intention is to walk us through the most salient aspects of this address. For our purposes, we should take a few truths into account. First, I have to provide you with some insights into how I think theologians should generally write about historical figures. I am currently engaged in writing a two-volume work on the person and theology of Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575), who was Zwingli’s successor in Zürich. He was the pastor for almost forty-five years. He was an accomplished scholar and his work on the covenant as well as his *Decades* are a must-read. I believe that when we write about those who have had illustrious callings in the Church and in theology, we should act as “recording angels” and not as “hanging judges.” I took that tack when I wrote the Bavinck biography and I am taking it in this article.

That does not mean, by any stretch of the imagination, that we ought to be blind to their foibles? No. Does it mean that we ought to attempt to deify them? No. Does it mean that we should strive to give them the benefit of the doubt, as we would hope others would give us the benefit of the doubt? Yes.

Second, we will encounter a more “mature” Bavinck in this address. Bavinck has had more than five years to read, study, teach, interact, and converse with colleagues, students, and God’s people in the congregation in Kampen, which plays a significant role in his development as a theologian.

Third, we will also note, with thanks I might add, that there have not been exponential changes in his

26. Jochem Douma, *Algemene Genade. Uiteenzetting, vergelijking en beoordeling van de opvattingen van A. Kuyper, K. Schilder, en Joh. Calvijn over “algemene genade”* (Goes, Holland: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre B.V., 1976); Susan E. Schreiner, *The Theater of His Glory. Nature & the Natural Order in the Thought of John Calvin* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1991).

theological mind in that more than half-a-decade. We ought to laud that and appreciate it. With these thoughts in mind, let's proceed to what Bavinck had to say regarding the notion of common grace.

As I mentioned in the description of Bavinck's 1888 address in Kampen, he was very appreciative of the work of Calvin and cited him approvingly on a frequent basis. He was not, however, averse to being realistic when dealing with this Reformation Father. In fact, at the outset of his address, he describes Calvin's character with these words: "The reproach is common that Calvin had no taste or stomach for things outside his particular calling. For him social pleasures were nonexistent. He never mentions domestic joys or woes in his letters. The beauties of nature left him cold. Art, poetry, and music seemed not to rouse his interest. Even innocent pleasures were somewhat suspect in his eyes, in a word, he was 'a melancholy soul, a somber spirit' (*Un esprit chagrin, un genie triste*)."²⁷ Calvin sounds like he had been baptized with vinegar.

But it was not only the Reformer from Geneva that came under such reproach, but Bavinck attests to the fact that similar charges were leveled against other followers of the Reformed faith, such as the Huguenots in France, the Calvinists in Holland, the Puritans in England, and the Presbyterians in Scotland, just to mention a few ("Common Grace," 38). While the Reformed are still considered unyielding, inflexible, intractable, strict, and dour—and that is on good days—it is striking in someone of the stature of Calvin, who "in his system accorded a place and worth to the natural life that find no counterparts in other conceptions of the Christian religion" ("Common Grace," 38).

In wording similar to his 1888 address, Bavinck praises Calvin's theology because "the relation of nature and grace is conceived of far more correctly and profoundly than in the theologies of Luther or Zwingli." Moreover, "In his teaching on common grace, Calvin has expressed a principle which is *uncommonly* fruitful, yet was subsequently misconceived and denigrated all too often." ("Common Grace," 39; emphasis added). Thus, his intent was to more fully elaborate on that uncommon feature in Calvin in four points: "Permit me then, to present to you the Reformed doctrine of *common grace*. I would like to show (1) how it is based upon the Scriptures, (2) that the Roman Catholic system has no place for it, (3) that this principle was discovered in the Reformation, notably by Calvin, and finally (4) that it remains of the greatest significance for us today" ("Common Grace," 39).

HOW COMMON GRACE IS BASED UPON THE SCRIPTURES

In his first point, Bavinck harkens back to Creation and the distinction between the *foedus operum* (covenant of works) and the *foedus gratiae* (covenant of grace). It is imperative, according to Bavinck, that we grasp the concept that the difference between those two "lies not in the concept of revelation but in that of grace" ("Common Grace," 39). His main point here is that "Revelation existed *before* the fall," and "Creation itself is the first, rich revelation of God, the *foundation* and *beginning* of every subsequent revelation" ("Common Grace," 39; emphasis added).

Even though the Reformer, Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575), is not explicitly cited in this address, Bullinger emphasizes the unity of the scriptures with the thesis that Christ and the apostles did not teach or say anything that the Old Testament prophets did not teach or say *and* the prophets did not teach or say anything that Moses did not record in the Pentateuch. Keeping that thought in mind, Bavinck asserts that "those attributes of God that appear in creation—his omnipotence and omniscience, his eternity and omnipresence are more prominent in the Old than in the New Testament" ("Common Grace," 42). In fact, God's works in nature are more prevalent in the Old Testament. Hold on to that thought because Bavinck is going to return to it.

In the early stages of his first point, it is Bavinck's intention to demonstrate that "the *foedus operum* rests upon revelation. This covenant is simply the form of religion possessed by man who, while created in the image of God, has not yet received the highest form of religion" ("Common Grace," 39–40). The Fall of Adam and Eve into sin (Bavinck believed in a historical, biblical Adam and Eve) brought a significant change in everything. As significant as the change was, "this change does not consist in God's beginning or ceasing to reveal himself. Revelation continues and God does not withdraw himself. He again seeks man out" ("Common Grace," 40).

What does that "difference" look like? There are two "new" components: First, while God's revelation continues, "it changes its character and receives a different content." Second, this continued and continuing

27. Herman Bavinck, *De algemeene genade, rede bij de overdracht van het rectoraat aan de Theologische School te Kampen op 6 december 1894* (Kampen: Zalsman, 1894), 1. Moving forward, all citations from this address will be taken from R.C. van Leeuwen's translation and the pagination will follow that article. Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, "Herman Bavinck's 'Common Grace,' (A Translation)," *Calvin Theological Journal* 24, No. 1 (1989): 35–65. Hereafter, "Common Grace."

revelation “comes to guilty man, who merits death, as a revelation of *grace*.” When God seeks out and calls to sinful man, in spite of man’s transgression, a totally new aspect appears in his revelation, namely God’s compassion and mercy. That is, “Life, work, food, clothing come to him no longer on the basis of any agreement or right granted in the covenant of works but *through grace alone*. Grace has become the source and fountainhead of all life and every blessing for *mankind*” (“Common Grace,” 40. Emphasis added.). Note Bavinck’s emphasis on how God’s grace is meant for mankind, although not always savingly so.

With Cain, even though he is driven from God’s presence because he murdered his brother, yet “he continues to live; grace is thus given to him in place of strict justice. Cain indeed becomes the father of a tribe which sets its mind to the task of subduing the earth and begins the development of human culture (Gen. 4:15–24)” (“Common Grace,” 40). In the course of redemptive history, we read of how the people of God and the people of the earth intermingle and how the earth is filled with evil and violence. This is Noah’s story. The world is ripe for God’s judgment and it comes in the form of the Flood. The upshot of the narrative concerning Noah is that “From Noah a *new* mankind is born, milder in nature, less in might, and of shorter life. The new mankind also exists and lives *only* by the grace of God, which now takes the form of a covenant.... God now, as it were, firmly grounds the being and life of the creation in a covenant with all of nature and with *every* living being” (“Common Grace,” 40; emphasis added).

Then Bavinck makes a rather cryptic statement: “Common and special grace each flow on in their own channels” (“Common Grace,” 40–41). What does he mean by those enigmatic words? To understand his thinking properly, we will need to revert to his notion of Creation. Bavinck was actually a very accomplished Old Testament scholar. He read through the Old Testament in the original language several times. Knowing that Old Testament names were significant, he differentiated between *Elohim*, whom he viewed as “the God of creation and nature” and *Yahweh*, who is the God of the covenant (“Common Grace,” 41). What is essential to comprehend at this juncture is that for Bavinck “This revelation...attaches to previous history and to the revelation of God already in existence” (“Common Grace,” 41–42).

Bavinck possessed a great disdain for dualism, which means that we should neither subscribe nor attribute dualistic thinking to him. What he *does* mean is that we ought to view all of God’s works as a unity and that

even though common and special grace flow in their own channels, they are not exclusive of one another. For example, he points to “The economy of the divine forbearance and long-suffering” that is described in Romans 3:25. In addition, “The times of ignorance commence (Acts 17:30). God allows the nations to walk in their own ways (Acts 14:16), yet does not leave himself without witness (Acts 14:17).” While the nations are walking in their own ways, his Church continues to be his witness for God’s truth. Every human being moves and has his or her being in him and he is not far from each one of them (cf. Acts 17:27–28). Generously and graciously, God reveals himself to mankind in the works of nature (cf. Rom. 1:19). Not only does God continue to reveal himself to mankind, but according to Bavinck “There is thus a *rich* revelation of God even among the heathen—not only in nature but also in their heart and conscience, in their life and history, among their statesmen and artists, their philosophers and reformers” (“Common Grace,” 41). More specifically,

The traditions of paradise, the life of Cain and his descendants, and the covenant with Noah have a special, supernatural origin. The working of supernatural forces in the world of the heathen is neither impossible nor improbably. Furthermore, the revelation of God in nature and history is never a mere passive pouring forth of God’s virtues but is always a positive act on the part of God. The Father of Jesus works always (John 5:17). His providence is a divine, eternal, omnipresent *power* (“Common Grace,” 41; emphasis in original).

It is indisputably true that God’s special grace is virtually unknown to the heathen. Religions in general are the products of the human will and are developed “from below.” Nevertheless, “These religions are *all* by-products of and degenerations from the broken *foedus operum*. As such, man is left to his own devices to save himself. Israel’s faith is of another order, but is closely related both to *Elohim* as well as to *Yahweh*. Concretely, Bavinck insists that “God who is Creator of heaven and earth is also the God of Israel, of a particular people, freely chosen by him out of his goodwill for an inheritance” (“Common Grace,” 42). That comprises the marvelous and unique center of Israel’s faith. Therefore, believers must understand the true and living God as both Creator and covenantal God. “In the course of history, the essence of Israel’s faith becomes more manifest as it finds its goal and fulfillment in Christ. He is the ultimate content of the *foedus gratiae*” (“Common Grace,” 43).

The Person and Work of Christ are central to

scriptural teaching. They portray the suffering and death of Christ as “perfectly natural events, showing no deviation from the laws of nature.” Indeed, God’s special grace is incomprehensible and only fully appreciated “when it is viewed in connection with its prevenient preparation from the time of the earliest man onward.” More than that, “It is God himself, the Creator of heaven and earth, who in Christ fully reveals and gives himself to his people. But this grace, having fully appeared in Christ, is now intended for all men. Israel was chosen for the sake of all mankind” (“Common Grace,” 44). There are reminders in Bavinck’s words of the promise God gave to then-Abram in Genesis 12:1–3: “Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, *and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*’”

In terms of God’s redemptive-historical dealings with mankind not only was Israel chosen for the sake of mankind, but also “Israel’s election existed only to bring Christ into the world. . . . This was the mystery of which Paul so often spoke with wonder and adoration, that the heathen are also fellow-heirs and members of the household of God (Eph. 3:6).” Precisely in Paul’s explanation we observe how “The two, special and common grace, separated for ages, once again combine. *And thus united, they henceforth make their way together among the Christian peoples of the world.* The wild olive tree is engrafted into the good olive tree. And in Abraham’s seed all the families of the earth are blessed (Gen. 12:3)” (“Common Grace,” 44).

We move now to Bavinck’s criticism of Roman Catholicism’s rejection of the notion of common grace and why they reject it.

THAT THE ROMAN CATHOLIC SYSTEM HAS NO PLACE FOR COMMON GRACE

In the second point of his speech/address, Bavinck begins with a brief historical overview of early Christianity. His rationale for such an approach was to indicate that when the gospel message began to be preached there were some misconceptions, and many in the world perceived the good news as merely one new philosophy among many competing views (“Common Grace,” 44). But Bavinck had more in mind than a mere description of the events. Part of the reason Christianity met with such resistance was not only the spiritual nature

of the “new philosophy” but also once people began to become more familiar with its message there quickly arose a desire “to conquer Christianity with its strange and novel content, and to take it up in the service of the philosophically cultured consciousness” (“Common Grace,” 45).

As a case in point, Bavinck introduces Gnosticism into the equation. Coming to prominence in the second century, it was “an audacious attempt to introduce Christianity into the great world-process and to melt it down into a great system embracing all religions and philosophies. What followed that attempt by Gnosticism was that “In the midst of proud speculation, the gospel of grace was lost” (“Common Grace,” 45). Interestingly, Bavinck does not insist that the gospel was completely vitiated, but it was denuded of its power because of the absence of salvation by grace alone.

The history of the Church continued to unfold and during that time “men still continued to strain their powers of thought in an effort to lift faith up to the plane of *gnosis* and to prove or clarify the dogmas of Trinity, incarnation, and atonement with the light of reason.” This approach continued into the Middle Ages. Philosophers began to make a distinction between what they termed *articula mixti* (matters known by faith and reason) and *articula puri* (matters known by faith alone). That distinction also gave rise to a further distinction “between *theologia naturalis* (natural theology) and *revelata* (revealed theology).” In the course of time, especially during Roman Catholic scholasticism, but also before and after the Reformation “this distinction developed and acquired an entirely different meaning. Rome replaced the antithetical relation of sin and grace with the contrast between natural and supernatural religion” (“Common Grace,” 45).

This notion was present in Bavinck’s 1888 address, albeit in seminal form and with less explanation and clarification. We are going to observe the same phenomenon in just a moment, but the upshot of this development (or regress) is that “According to the viewpoint of Rome, there exist [*sic*] in the divine mind two conceptions of man and thus also a double moral law, two sorts of love, and a twofold destination or goal.” Here we observe a more descriptive notion of the development of dualism in Roman Catholic theology. Once again, we will find traces of Bavinck’s 1888 address in the following statements, but with more complete elaboration. Recall that in 1888 Bavinck spoke about the nature of the *donum superadditum* in Roman Catholic theology. Here, he takes up the cudgels again to remind his audience that according to Rome “God first created man

as an earthly, sensuous, rational, and moral being *in puris naturalibus* (in a purely natural state). To be sure, to this he added the divine image, the *donum superadditum* (superadded gift); but this was soon lost through sin” (“Common Grace,” 45).

This is precisely where we get a very skewed view of original sin in Rome and among the Reformers. For Rome, all that was lost in the Fall of Adam and Eve was the superadded gift. Specifically, that means that with the loss of the “gift,” man simply reverted to his purely natural state prior to the Fall. Thus, “Apart from the harmful influence of his social environment, man is still born in a condition like that of Adam before the fall, and lacking the *donum superadditum*. For even concupiscence is not in itself sin but only becomes such when desire escapes the hegemony of reason.” (“Common Grace,” 45–46). That is, the essence of this theology is that what Scripture calls “the natural man” is basically good. He can follow logic leading to the acceptance of religion via natural religion, he can have an acceptable set of ethical principles and practices, and he can practice genuine virtue, all apart from God and God’s revelation.

Here is the way Bavinck describes what I just wrote: “He is capable of an earthly life that is in all respects sinless and can dedicate himself to art and science, to business and industry, as well as accomplish his domestic, social, and political duties faithfully.” If you are thinking that this sounds like Pelagianism, go to the head of the class. Simultaneously, Rome asserts that this natural man “has no claim to a heavenly blessedness in the immediate presence of God.” For that, he needs the Roman Catholic Church. What this approach manifests is a “tiered” or “dualistic” system of Rome. In Rome’s view, 1 Corinthians 2:6–16 presents the Christian reader with “another order of things that are supernatural in the strict, absolute sense of the term” (“Common Grace,” 46).

If you are tracking closely with what Bavinck is saying, it should be apparent that there is a sense in which Rome conceives of “natural man” as sinless. Bavinck says as much.²⁸ In Rome’s anthropology, man’s natural gifts were not sufficient to reach the highest goal God intended for him. Therefore, in addition to his natural gifts, man needed the indwelling of the Spirit, supernatural grace and prior to the Fall, this had been given to him in the *donum superadditum* (“Common Grace,” 47).

28. “Common Grace,” 46: “These things not only transcend the ken of fallen humanity but also that of the *sinless* natural man.” Emphasis added.

The reception of this much-needed and requisite supernatural grace on earth was “entrusted to the church” of Rome. It should be increasingly clear from where Rome derives its notions of sacerdotalism and the notion of infused grace working *ex opera operato*. Through the ministry of the Church, through priest and sacrament the church causes supernatural grace to be infused into a person, now allowing them to do good works. Ultimately, then, “These good works make him worthy of the blessedness of heaven on the principle of *meritum ex condigno* (condign merit)” (“Common Grace,” 47).

Bavinck summarizes this exposition and description of Rome’s theology with these words: “Rome has always reared two types of children and has tailored Christianity more or less to suit all men without exception. If we for a moment think away from the supernatural order that Rome has built up over the natural, we find not much left besides pure rationalism, genuine Pelagianism, and unmitigated deism. *The root of the Catholic system lies in Pelagianism.*” (“Common Grace,” 47; italics added). What this amounts to in terms of practical Christian living is this: “[T]here is an indulgence of the weaknesses of human nature that constitutes a slap in the face of Christian morality” (“Common Grace,” 49). I would hasten to add that something very similar, if not identical, can be said of the Lutheran view of the two kingdoms as well. What Bavinck is alluding to is a life and worldview where Christian morality is explicit, whether within the confines of the walls of Christianity or in the world at large. We will return to this concept in due time.

COMMON GRACE IN THE REFORMATION AND IN CALVIN

The Reformation experienced Rome’s theology, generally, as un- or anti-scriptural or both. While the “reverse genius” (my term) of Roman Catholicism was presenting a “tangible” religion, the Reformers, emerging primarily from Roman Catholicism themselves, viewed Rome’s theological system as a hindrance to salvation. While the Reformation was not a political, social, or scientific movement in the first place, its theology brought it into direct contact with those spheres of life. The truth of God’s grace stood at the forefront of their various teachings. Forgiveness, adoption, justification by faith, sanctification, and God’s blessings come to fallen man “only if God grants them in his grace” (“Common Grace,” 49). Indeed those saving events are assured by the gift of God’s grace to sinners in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

What was also “new” during the Reformation—and

is often overlooked—is the truth that “the Reformation based her position not on the *religio supernaturalis* but on the covenant of grace.” That theological construction brought with it the question of how one relates nature and grace. Among the problems raised was that there could be “no talk of good works without faith.” (“Common Grace,” 50). That was clearly an endeavor to eliminate the previously-held dualism of both Rome and the Anabaptists. Eventually, it would present a problem between the Reformed and the Lutherans as well. Of course, this also impacted the *imago Dei* too. It was conceded that the image of God in man did, in fact, belong to man’s being, “but it had been lost through sin.” That, in turn, led to a different understanding of original sin among the Reformers. The Reformers were virtually unanimous in insisting on the noetic effects of sin upon man, which entailed teaching that “all his thoughts, words, and deeds were polluted by sin” (“Common Grace,” 50; emphasis added).

It is well known that Martin Luther railed and raged against “reason,” applying all kinds of suggestive and colorful names to it. Among the “family-friendly” words he employed were “it resisted God’s laws” and it was a “dark lantern.” He affectionately referred to Aristotle as “that dead heathen.” The Formula of Concord “agreed when it judged man’s understanding, heart, and will as ‘utterly corrupt and dead’ (*prorsus corruptus atque mortuus*) in *spiritual* matters, capable of no more ‘than a stone, a tree trunk, or slime’ (*quam lapis, truncus, aut limus*).” The italicized word is intentional. While the Reformation generally found it difficult to deny any and all “good” from the unregenerate, “The Lutherans could find no other way of dealing with this difficulty than by making a strict separation of the heavenly and the earthly, of the *spiritual* and the sensible, of ‘two hemispheres’ (*duo hemisphaeria*), of which one is lower, the other higher” (“Common Grace,” 50; emphasis added).

It is easy to discern here the development of the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms and how Bavinck’s criticism of dualism is well-taken. For Luther and the Lutherans, “In the affairs of the natural life, man’s reason and will remain free and capable of some good, but in *spiritual* matters, they are utterly blind and powerless. The Roman Catholic dualism is here not really overcome, even though the opposition of natural and supernatural has been modified in an ethical direction” (“Common Grace,” 50).

As Bavinck outlined in his 1888 address, it was John Calvin who (with help, no doubt) put the existing dualism to rest. He rejected Zwingli’s far-fetched notion who “extended the sway of the *gratia specialis* far beyond the

borders of historic Christianity and allowed that it was working even in the world of the heathen” (“Common Grace,” 50–51). Conversely, Calvin “considered man’s sin to be so serious and profound as to render human nature incapable of good, in *whatever sphere*”. Appealing to Scripture, Calvin came to distinguish between general and special grace or, “between the working of the Spirit in all creation and the work of sanctification that belongs only to those who believe” (“Common Grace,” 50; emphasis added). This is an essential distinction that harkens back to Bavinck’s concept of *Elohim* as the Creator and *Yahweh* as the God of the covenant of grace.

God continued to have a purpose for mankind subsequent to the Fall and did not leave man alone to cope as best he could with the baneful effects of sin and depravity. That is, God continued to have a purpose for his creation. Therefore, “he interposed common grace between sin and the creation—a grace that, while it does not inwardly renew, nevertheless *restrains and compels*” (“Common Grace,” 51; emphasis added). Many today seem to have lost sight of these aspects of common grace. The Christian voice needs to be heard in our respective communities and in the political arena as a restraint, a witness, and a compelling voice in and to the non-Christian world. That does not mean, of course, that the world will be grateful for that voice or that it will embrace and adopt what the Christian worldview puts forth because the world tends toward totalitarianism in one form or another and autonomy. Nevertheless, the world *needs* to hear the Christian voice and to receive Christian input—desperately.

Even though Calvin described the image of God in man as “vitiating,” there are still traces of that image that can be observed in him. Here is how Bavinck more fully describes what he means:

Understanding and reason remain, and he possesses all sorts of natural gifts. In him dwells a feeling, a notion of the Godhead, a seed of religion. Reason is a precious gift of God and philosophy [is] a *praeclarum Dei donum* (splendid gifts of God). Music too is God’s gift. The arts and sciences are good, useful, and of great value. The state is an institution of God. The goods of life do not just serve to provide for man’s needs in the strict sense; they also serve to make life pleasant. They are not purely *ad necessitate* (for necessity); they are also *ad oblectamentum* (for delight). Men still have a sense of the truth and of right and wrong; we see the natural love that binds parents and children together. In the things which appertain to this earthly life, man can still accomplish much good (“Common Grace,” 51).

This is a clear explanation of how the Reformed have historically assessed the things of the world. There is a powerful element of appreciation for the gifts that the Lord God has bestowed and continues to lavish on the world in the realm of “common grace.” Bavinck continues and explains that the previous quotation has typically been “the sound position of all true Reformed people as well” (“Common Grace,” 51). In addition, by taking such a tack, the Reformed community was kept both from Pelagianism and Pietism (“Common Grace,” 52). At least, that is how it looked on paper. In practice, however, there was a spiritual battle to be fought and that battle rages still today. In Calvin’s time, the primary adversaries were Anabaptism and Socinianism. Bavinck reserved the right to ponder whether both of these movements (his word) are entitled to claim the name of Protestant or Reformed. In both cases, they seem especially akin to Roman Catholicism.²⁹

It seems clear to anyone who bothers to ponder whether Anabaptism and its historical step-children are truly Protestant in the strict sense of the term. For instance, if one removes the theological language of *donum superadditum* and discusses soteriology; if one strips away all the incense, miters, crosiers, vestments, and other accoutrements and probes deeply into how man is saved, there is barely a hair’s breathed difference between Roman Catholicism and a large segment of contemporary professing Christians. Socinianism, like Pelagianism, is heresy. Socinianism does not believe that original sin exists, mankind possesses the *imago Dei* which consists of lordship, man did not lose the image in the Fall, when Christ came, he did not add anything essentially new, and those who keep God’s commandments earn immortality as their reward (“Common Grace,” 53).

In a similar vein, Anabaptists scorn the creation, the natural order is unimportant and unclean, the coming of Christ infused a new, spiritual, and divine substance into man at his rebirth, which means that he is now to have no contact with unbelievers, oaths are to be rejected, as is war, the magistracy, the death penalty, and infant baptism. In short, “the supernatural order thrusts aside the entire natural order” (“Common Grace,” 53). The dualism still exists, each in its own way. For the Socinians, it manifests itself in conformity to the world and antinomianism, while to the Anabaptists it is demonstrated in their rather absolute flight from the world and the things pertaining to the world. The

Reformers were caught in the middle. The Socinians got their knickers in a knot because the Reformers did not criticize Roman Catholic *doctrine* severely enough to their liking, and the Anabaptists, who did not wear knickers, still got upset because the Reformers did not criticize Roman Catholic *practice* enough. Amazingly, but not totally surprisingly “These two streams not only won a place for themselves beside the churches of the Reformation but also exercised a tremendous influence within the Reformed churches themselves” (“Common Grace,” 53). I would add that even though the names Anabaptism and Socinianism do not roll easily off the lips of some contemporary Christians today and given some of our recent discussions/debates surrounding how we view the two kingdoms, it is evident that some of the Reformed most definitely do not follow either Calvin or Bavinck in this regard.

As Bavinck winds down his remarks in this third section of his address, he is concerned that his audience understands that in all the various movements the concept of common grace has either been misconstrued or rejected altogether. More than that, “Even in the Reformed churches themselves the original, Reformed principle was frequently weakened on the one or the other side, or simply adulterated.” I am convinced that this remains the case in our time as well. How did this manifest itself in 1894? Bavinck explains, “The scorning of the letter of Scripture and the elevation of the inner light of the Holy Spirit; the preference for impromptu edifying discourses along with a denigration of the office of minister of the Word; the belittling of the objective ordinances of God for church and covenant, for the sacraments and offices; the preference for closed societies; the rejection of art, scholarship, science, culture, and all the goods of earthly life, and the spurning of the vocation that rests upon us in family, business, and state—all these are fruits not of healthy Reformation but of the unsound Anabaptist tradition” (“Common Grace,” 54). That is from the perspective of the Church.

What about the world itself? It ought to be self-evident, Bavinck contends, that “trends” and “fads” are neither unique nor limited to Christian circles. Those who have broken with Christianity do not escape unscathed. In fact, in their separation from and disdain for Christianity, “among those who broke radically with Christianity we see essentially the same patterns and tendencies.” In a sentence that ought to be taped to our refrigerators and bathroom mirrors, Bavinck states, “Mankind *never* escapes unpunished when it rejects its destination in this life or the next” (“Common Grace,” 54; emphasis added).

29. “Common Grace,” 51, writes, “Their dualism places them much closer to Rome than to the Reformers.”

Secularization has its own peculiar and particular pitfalls. Its intent was to disconnect man from the notion of eternity, while it aimed at establishing paradise on earth. God and religion were to be viewed as the enemies of the human race. "Nature was God. Art, scholarship, science, and industry were deities to be worshiped and served. Culture made cultus superfluous. Humanity replaced Christianity, and hygiene abolished morality" ("Common Grace," 54; emphasis added). No longer was the doctrine of the Incarnation of weight; it was supplanted by the deification of man ("Common Grace," 55).

While when Bavinck gave this address the nineteenth century had not quite come to a close, there were observable cracks in the edifice of that utopia secularization was attempting to build. Did it materialize? No, it did not. It could not because life without God can never make good on what it promises. Bavinck declares, "The Century has not yet come to an end. Everywhere one already finds contrasts. On the one hand we see distress and misery, and on the other satiety and surfeit³⁰ of culture. The great expectation that men held for this culture has collapsed. Hope has turned to despair and doubt. Optimism has capitulated to pessimism.... Nature, formerly praised for her beauty and revered as a temple, is now a somber stage filled with confusion and conflict; her raging elements and threatening powers place man's very life in danger. The world could not be worse..." ("Common Grace," 55).

Of course, this sounds very much like our relativistic, narcissistic, nihilistic, woke, and stage-three or stage-four postmodern twenty-first-century culture, especially when Bavinck reiterates that at the end of the nineteenth century "Feeling is all, intellect is nothing.... Day by day pagan superstitions increase their sway among nonbelievers.... All balance has gone awry, the harmony of life is broken" ("Common Grace," 55). On these pessimistic and discordant words, Bavinck completes his third point. The words form a transition for what he intends to say in his final point, namely, that there a definite, positive significance for his time (and ours) needs explication.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF COMMON GRACE FOR BAVINCK'S TIME AND OURS

The final section of Bavinck's address moved to the significance of the doctrine of common grace for his time. For our purposes, we want to extend what he says and perhaps add some proposed applications for our time. It was Bavinck's conviction that at the bottom of every

serious question, a similar, if not identical, problem is roiling beneath the surface. One way to state his case is to say that it is all a question of one's worldview, which, of course, is true. Bavinck does not employ the term "worldview," although that is always in the back of his mind, but rather he couches the dilemma this way: "The relation of faith and knowledge, of theology and philosophy, of authority and reason, of head and heart, of Christianity and humanity, of religion and culture, of heavenly and earthly vocation, of religion and morality, of the contemplative and the active life, of sabbath and workday, of church and state—all these and many other questions are determined by the problem of the relation between creation and re-creation, between the work of the Father and the work of the Son" ("Common Grace," 56).

When it comes to a discussion of common grace the dichotomy is typically between worldliness and world-flight. Or, "Head and heart painfully wrestle for supremacy" ("Common Grace," 56). To that end, it is understandable that there is something attractive—powerfully attractive—about antinomianism even or especially for a redeemed sinner. People of all stripes frequently chafe at the forbidding of particular sins. We can even complain that our lifestyle is cramped or hobbled by the law. Nevertheless, the various commands concerning how believers ought to live were given to Adam and were known to him prior to the Fall.

By couching the argument in these terms, Bavinck is pointing the Church to the necessity of a sound metaphysics, as Bavinck would explain further in the 1904 edition of his work on the Christian worldview. Reformed theologians demonstrated that supernatural truths "were in essence known to Adam before the fall, that they were part of the content of the image of God, and consequently were 'natural' in that they belong to the being of man" ("Common Grace," 56). It ought to be clear that what this statement leads to theologically is the rejection of any and all *theologia naturalis*, or natural theology.

Citing Romans 1:18ff., Bavinck asserts that even sinful man, man without God knows God. Thus, when Paul writes about man suppressing the truth in unrighteousness, he asserts that man is without excuse when it comes to the knowledge of God because God has, as it were, taken man by the hand and revealed himself so that man is without excuse. As he had reiterated in his 1888 address, "He who was Elohim reveals himself and

30. An excessive amount of something or an illness caused by excessive eating and drinking. Both definitions are apt and applicable.

lets himself be known as Yahweh” (“Common Grace,” 58). Moreover, “The Christian religion is temporal; as an *Erlösungsreligion* (religion of salvation) it will someday have completed its task. When the kingdom has fully come, Christ will hand it over the God the Father. The original order will be restored” (“Common Grace,” 59).

Yet, there is an “interim” period. Bavinck lived in it and we are living in it now. What is to be done during this time is not to sit back and await the Second Coming, although we certainly anticipate our Savior’s return. Rather, we are to be actively involved in spreading the “restraining” and “compelling” power of the gospel to a nihilistic, self-absorbed culture that is perverted/confused. The upshot of this activity is the realization that “grace does not remain outside or above or beside nature but rather permeates and wholly renews it” (“Common Grace,” 59). Those actions do not occur automatically but are brought into society by Christians equipped by their local congregations for the ministry of the gospel in its narrower focus of salvation and its broader concentration of speaking as the voice of conscience to the society in which we live. Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, but “more than that, he came to restore the works of the Father and so to renew man according to the image of him who first created man” (“Common Grace,” 60).

The purpose of Christianity, then, is not to institute a totally new, heavenly kingdom as Rome intends. Rather, “It creates no new cosmos but rather makes the cosmos new.” It does this by its involvement in the world and through various means manifesting what God intends for humanity. Christians do not become worldly or withdraw from the world; they engage the world from a Christian perspective making use of their biblical worldview. To use Bavinck’s words, “Christ did not come just to restore the religio-ethical life of man and to leave all the rest of life undisturbed, as if the rest of life had not been corrupted by sin and had no need of restoration.... Everything that is sinful, guilty, unclean, and full of woe is, as such and for that very reason, the object of the evangel of grace that is to be preached to every creature” (“Common Grace,” 60–61).

He reiterates, “If the kingdom is not of, it is certainly in this world, and is intended for it.” Bavinck’s clarion call is for Christians to practice Christian virtues, which means biblical virtues. If they are willing to do that, their actions will look quite different from their secular counterparts and from their antinomian Christian counterparts. Those virtues are requisite for a sinful society because they are its cement (“Common Grace,” 61). In short, in what Bavinck outlined one sees “how

Christianity is to relate itself to home and society and how the church is to relate to the state.... Subjugation of the church by the state or of the state by the church are thus both condemned” (“Common Grace,” 63). Is it improper for Christians to long for the government of the land to be directed by Christian principles? Bavinck’s answer is No. The reality is, however, that that was not where Dutch culture was in 1894 and it is most definitely not where American culture is in 2021.

As Bavinck comes to the conclusion of his address, he leaves his audience then and us today with these words:

The church may indeed desire that the government of the land be directed by Christian principles and profit from the revelation of God’s grace, for state and society have also been damaged by sin and need God’s word to guide and direct, but here too grace does not nullify nature. Home, society, and state may well be reborn by the Spirit of Christ, but they exist and live by virtue of God’s ordering of nature; they possess alongside the church their own independence. Christ came not to do away with the world and the various spheres of life but to restore and preserve them (“Common Grace,” 63–64).

The gospel is meant to be a word of health and blessing in, to, and for the powerful aspects of culture, but the gospel does not come to any society in a vacuum. It is brought into the culture by committed Christians who comprehend the relationship of nature and grace and take God’s message into the fallen world where God has sovereignly placed them.■

“A Pillar and Buttress of the Truth”

Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

Inaugural Address March 11, 2021

By Jonathan L. Master

Members of the Board of Trustees, esteemed delegates, fellow-faculty members, students, and friends: It is a great privilege to speak to you today on this occasion, and I need to begin by conveying to you the gratitude I feel in delivering this address. A few years ago, I would never have envisioned this privilege. I had known of Greenville Seminary for over twenty years. I believed in what it stood for, and I had the privilege of meeting and befriending several members of the faculty. But there remained a sense in which I was, to quote an alumnus of the seminary with whom I just had lunch, somewhat out of the orbit.

Because of this, I owe a deep debt to a friend of mine and a trustee of the seminary who could not be with us today. Ian Hamilton persuaded me to enter the orbit of Greenville Seminary in a more concrete way as the presidential search process was just getting started.

As the search process moved forward, it did not take me long to realize that the key historical commitments of the seminary were ones that I shared. Even more remarkably, the educational philosophy, so carefully cultivated for over thirty years, was exactly in keeping with my own. The historical models to which the seminary's founders looked were largely the models from which I drew the most inspiration. I learned that our founding documents were modeled directly on those of Old Princeton. And the type of men we looked to as our models in seminary education were men like Archibald Alexander and Samuel Miller at Old Princeton, and those men just south of here at Ainsley Hall, the founding generation of the seminary David Calhoun calls, *Our Southern Zion*.¹

When looking at these institutions and the great men who served them, we can see key threads: a deep commitment to the inerrancy and authority of scripture, a joyful agreement with the Westminster Standards, and a commitment to serve the people of God. These

institutions were, at their core, guided by biblical doctrine and aiming at service to the church.

We revere the legacy of these places and of the greater and godlier men who have come before us (their portraits quite literally cover the walls of our institution), and we share that same approach in our own day: looking to the Bible and serving the church. This extends not just to the content of our instruction, but to our entire philosophy of pastoral preparation. When designing the curriculum and planning the schedule, the question before us always is and always must be: What does God's Word say about pastoral ministry? What are pastors supposed to be doing?

When we look to the New Testament, the work of the elder—both teaching elder and ruling elder—is clear, and our philosophy of seminary education is nothing more than a formalized attempt at working back from these unwavering principles in order to best serve the church, preparing men to be “approved workmen” who “rightly handle the Word of truth.”²

But today I would draw your attention not just to the description of godly pastoral ministry, but rather to a description Paul gives of the church. After explaining the purpose of his letter—“that you might know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church”—Paul then goes on to describe the church in this way: “the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15).

What does it mean to call the church “a pillar and buttress of the truth”? These words themselves are architectural metaphors, and they indicate that the church is meant to support and bolster—we might say, to

THE AUTHOR: In 2020 Dr. Jonathan L. Master succeeded Dr. Joseph A. Pipa, Jr. as president of Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

1. David Calhoun, *Our Southern Zion: Old Columbia Seminary (1828-1927)* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2012).

2. Both of these phrase are taken from 2 Timothy 2:15.

stiffen—the truth. Like a great set of classical columns on an ancient building, the true church acts a support of true teaching, of true ideas. The church is called to teach the truth of scripture, of course; but the church is also called to support the truth in general. In the midst of prevailing lies, the church, her officers, and any institution that serves her, must always stand on the side of the truth.

This is no small thing, because the fallen human project—what Augustine called, “the City of Man”—is always engaged in an assault on the truth. This assault manifests itself in different ways throughout different eras of history, but it is always with us.

In the Garden of Eden, Satan, whom the Bible calls “The father of lies” brazenly questions the clarity and authority of God’s Word to Adam with his question, so pregnant with deceptive implications, “Did God actually say?”. He follows up with direct lies about God’s command and God’s purposes and about the consequences of sin. Underneath it all is what we might call, The Big Lie. It is the lie that says that our desires, our name, our goals, our conclusions, ought really to be elevated above the Word of God. It is a familiar refrain: man is in charge, the captain of his own soul; man’s will and word is above the will and word of the Creator.

The story continues: Cain, whom the New Testament tells us, “belonged to the evil one” offers improper worship, murders his own brother, and founds a city the very name of which mocks God.

Lamech takes two wives in contradiction of the God-designed pattern in the garden and boasts about his many murders, telling his wives to “Listen to my voice;” and “Give heed to my speech.” This is all set against a background of great technological and artistic development—music, animal husbandry, and bronze- and iron-working. But as one commentator puts it, [This is] “Humanistic culture without God. It is egotism and pride centered in man.”³ And as we see, this man-centered culture, based ultimately on boastful lies, is also cruel and unyielding in its hatred of other men.

After the flood, men gather together to “make a name for themselves” and to “build a tower to the heavens.”⁴ As the great kingdoms of man rise and fall in the scriptures, they always seek to exalt themselves in some fashion—to make a name; to gain supremacy; to overthrow or sideline God. This Big Lie necessitates a series of supporting lies.

3. Francis A. Shaeffer, *Genesis in Space and Time: The Flow of Biblical History*. Quoted from James Montgomery Boice, *Two Cities, Two Loves* (Downer’s Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1996), p. 46.

4. This is recorded in Genesis 11.

As an example of this, we might think of Nebuchadnezzar, that great ancient king, who declares: “Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?” (Dan. 4:30). He was responsible for his creation and success; his identity, name, glory and majesty was the most important thing in the world.

Psalms 2 diagnoses it this way: “The peoples are devising a vain thing. The Kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and his Anointed, saying, ‘Let us tear their fetters apart, and cast away their cords from us!’” (Ps. 2:2-3). The Big Lie followed by the overthrow of God’s Word, God’s Law, and God’s Anointed.

Where does the church stand in the midst of the City of Man, this city of lies? *As a pillar and buttress of the truth.*

As the City of Man builds and rebuilds based on lies, the true prophets always oppose it. We might remember, for instance, Micaiah ben Imlah. In the face of two kings, four hundred false prophets who functioned as the religious establishment, and one particularly assertive prophet waiving around a set of iron horns in a strange parody of a Deuteronomic promise, Micaiah nonetheless speaks the truth, unwelcome though it was. We might say that the fellow ministers in his denomination were against him; a prominent minister was making specious biblical arguments, and two kings held his earthly freedom in their hands. Undaunted even when being dragged into prison, Micaiah’s posture toward the truth can best be summarized by his first words as recorded in 2 Chronicles 18: “As the LORD lives, what my God says, that I will speak” (2 Chron. 18:13).

This bold commitment to proclaim only the truth of God’s Word must be coupled with the refusal to compromise the truth for the sake of cultural gain. When the godly king Jehoshaphat is confronted by Jehu son of Hanani this is the point of contention. In trying to find a way to advance the cause of God’s people, Jehoshaphat had allied himself with the deceitful king, Ahab. Jehu rebukes him: “Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD?” (2 Chron. 19:2).

That posture of unintimidated commitment to speak the truth of God’s Word and to refuse compromise with lies is echoed in the New Testament accounts of the apostles, especially in that of the apostle Paul. In 2 Corinthians, Paul describes his ministry this way: “We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5).

We see this same kind of work on display in the book

of Acts, when Paul is described alternately as "reasoning" "persuading" and "speaking out boldly" (Cf. Acts 19:8). And it is no surprise that Paul describes the pastoral office as consisting of these same types of activities—proclamation of the truth, correction of error, and adherence to sound doctrine in season and out of season.

Let us consider for a moment what this means for pastors today. Those entrusted with the leadership and care of Christ's church, ordained as under-shepherds, must endeavor to teach and lead in such a way that the truth is elevated, promoted, and freely taught. Pastors do not have liberty to lie, nor are they justified in shaving off the hard edges of the Word of Truth, the Bible. Without question this requires courage. This is why the apostle Paul, in saying farewell to the Ephesian elders among whom he had spent so much time and with whom he had exerted such effort for the truth, reminds them that he did not "shrink back." Shrink back from what? "From declaring to you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

We are tempted to shrink back from the Bible today because there is always pressure. At a personal level, we instinctively know what topics rub people in our own generation the wrong way, so we often tend to avoid them. We know that teaching about eternal conscious punishment in Hell is unpalatable to many in our corner of the world and moment in time; we understand that biblical teaching about marriage and sexuality cuts against the grain of our culture today, making us, in many cases, nothing short of pariahs.

The pressure points—the little lies—differ depending on the time and location. In the Jewish world of the first century—the days of the Lord Jesus Christ's earthly ministry—the Sadducees, amongst all the Jewish groups—achieved the most success in Roman society. Why? Because they shaved off the most offensive aspects of biblical truth. In their case, they denied the bodily resurrection as well as angels. After all, those were two truths that trumped anything Rome could threaten. Anyone believing in bodily resurrection could not be intimidated by the threat of Roman execution. And having a conviction about angels meant that even the most secure prison could, if God so chose, be opened by one angelic visitation.

Accepting the lies of the prevailing culture did win the Sadducees wealth, ease, and superficial influence over the Roman rulers of Judea. But our Lord Jesus Christ harshly condemned them. "Woe unto you..." And, "You know neither the scriptures nor the power of God" (Matt. 22:29).

In our own day, Edward Feser, the eminent philosopher, has identified the animating intellectual lies as being a kind of new Gnosticism. Gnosticism, both in the first centuries of the church and today, begins with a lie about creation. He writes, "The Gnostic mentality is... one of *radical alienation* from the created order. It sees that order as something to be destroyed or escaped from rather than redeemed."⁵

But the goodness of creation is affirmed repeatedly in the Bible. When Paul refutes false teaching, he explicitly says that it is based a misapprehension of creation: "For everything created by God is good and is to be received with thanksgiving" (1 Tim. 4:4). This is true of food, of marriage, of the creation of male and female in God's image.

Gnosticism does not stop with a rejection of creation. It also creates an alternate understanding of revelation. Again quoting from Feser: "It holds that the truth *cannot* be known from the appearance of things or from any official sources, but has been passed along 'under the radar' and is accessible only to the initiated. The Gnostic epistemology is what today would be called a 'hermeneutics of suspicion.'" Feser goes on to state therefore that, "The Gnostic mindset [new and old] sees reality in starkly Manichean terms, as a twilight struggle between the sinister forces that rule this evil world and those who have been 'purified' of it and armed with gnos̄is." He goes on to liken this to a word which is used to describe the enlightened today: "woke" (Feser, *ibid.*).

Because of the stark differences between the enlightened and everyone else, there is no place for dialogue or humility when dealing with others. "The Gnostic mindset is not interested in such common ground or tolerant of such differences" (Feser, *ibid.*).

Feser writes: "As Voegelin famously put it, modern forms of Gnosticism 'immanentize the eschaton'... they relocate the final victory of the righteous in *this* world rather than the next, and look forward to heaven on earth" (Feser, *ibid.*).

You can no doubt connect the dots yourselves in following their analysis. Feser identifies new modern gnosticisms: Marxism, National Socialism, and even Critical Race Theory as fitting these criteria (Feser, *ibid.*). These totalizing and corrosive philosophies reject creation, reject revelation, and have an alternate, this-world eschatology. The Big underlying Lie, coupled with a rejection of God and His Anointed. The script of the City of Man hardly changes.

5. Edward Feser, "The Gnostic heresy's political successors," Friday, January 8, 2021 <http://edwardfeser.blogspot.com/2021/01/the-gnostic-heresys-political-successors.html>.

The appeal of abandoning the Bible in the face of the prevailing City of Man is always strong, but Jesus has harsh words for those who compromise on the truth, for modern day Sadducees within the church. He unequivocally states: “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.” (Luke 9:26).

The world of our day, like the world of Jesus’ day, the world of yesterday and tomorrow, has no sympathy for the fullness of God’s Word. Our culture today wants to stand in judgment over the truth of God’s Word and over anyone who seeks to follow it. As Martin Luther’s hymn reminds us, “For still our ancient foe, doth seek to work us woe.”

By obediently tethering our minds to the Word of God we are setting ourselves up for persecution and derision. This is no surprise. Jesus Christ said to his disciples: “If they hated me, they will hate you also” (John 15:18). And the apostle Paul writes: “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim. 3:12). Yet the church must stand for truth. It is her calling, her identity, and that can never be negotiated.

What does this mean for the seminary? How would the assertion that the church is a pillar and buttress of the truth shape our formal and organized efforts to prepare the next generation of pastors? I would suggest two obvious implications, though many more could no doubt be given.

First, such a seminary would have to *transparently* stand for the truth. In recent history it has frequently been the case that the seminaries led the assault on the truths and truthfulness of scripture. We can even see this trend continuing right before our eyes today as institutions abandon or, in many cases, obfuscate their doctrinal commitments. This is not the time to duck and find cover. If we perish, we perish, but we stand on the Word of God.

We are people of the Bible, committed to the open presentation of the truths of the Word of God. This devotion to biblical teaching leads us to transparent doctrinal commitment. We hold to the teaching of our Westminster Standards, and these doctrinal convictions are clearly presented, and are shared by all who teach here, and all who serve on the Board.

Since these convictions are publicly shared and tightly held, we are restricted in a certain sense; but there is great liberty in transparency and in the unity and cohesion that only doctrinal commitment can provide.

In this seminary, we must never seek clever strategies

for doing an end-run around the convictions we publicly hold. As the apostle Paul says of his own ministry, we are: “not walking in craftiness or adulterating the Word of God, but by the manifestation of truth, commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” (2 Cor. 4:12).

Along with transparent commitment to the teaching of scripture and to a confession which summarizes that teaching, we must never be caught up in mere self-promotion or self-perpetuation. Something bigger is at stake. We stand for truth, always on guard against doctrinal error, but also on guard against the siren song of spin, of cover-ups, and of minimizing doctrinal decline. Transparency about the truth must be our governing approach as we serve that pillar and buttress of the truth.

And this goes hand in hand with accountability. Since we serve the church, those who serve here must have the church as their first source of accountability. The seminary classroom is no place for a man who seeks an independent audience, or who occupies his role because of broad celebrity status. It is not for a man who wants to build a brand or to escape the messy realities of church accountability. Our lives as Christians should always be centered around a faithful local church. This is a place for those who are ordained by and thus subject to the oversight of a local congregation and a regional church. We believe that church structure matters—it’s in our name and it must be embedded into our culture.

The churches to which we are accountable must themselves be confessionally transparent and committed to the inspired and inerrant Word of God as their authority. They ought to be structured around the rule of elders at a local and regional level—men who themselves are accountable to one another and to the doctrinal standards to which we hold fast.

We do not have to look far to see that much of what passes as Christian leadership within evangelicalism is unbounded, untethered, and unaccountable. But a seminary serving the church and thus serving the truth must never become that way, and individual professors must never become that way. We are servants of Christ and His Church. The seminary is not bigger or more necessary than the church it serves. Our men must be those who have served the church with joy and distinction and whose seminary instruction is the overflow of their commitment to Christ and to His church, a pillar and ground of the truth. This accountability is part of what it means to stand for the truth.

Alongside these basic commitments, we dare not miss the fact that the majority of requirements for service as an officer in Christ’s church are requirements of

character. These can be hard to measure, but must always remain preeminent in our thinking. As Dr. Pipa so frequently said, "We are a seminary, not just a graduate school of theology."

I want to state clearly that we are not here to grant credentials to a professional class of pulpiteers and counselors. Our aim is to cultivate, shape, and prepare men for the ministry of the gospel. All of our literature begins with an emphasis on "personal piety" and is designed to lead to a ministry of "prayer-filled Christ-likeness" and "experimental preaching." These may be antiquated terms to some, but they are biblical, and thus timeless, ideas.

It isn't enough to refute false doctrine and to "reprove, rebuke, and exhort" if this is not accompanied by "great patience and instruction." In the midst of what Paul knew would be difficult times—times of error and apostasy and cultural opposition and Gnosticism old and new—he wrote, "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all" (2 Tim. 2:24a). He goes on to describe the godly minister as, "able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those in opposition" (2 Tim. 2:24b).

Personal piety, rightly understood, expresses itself in this type of kindness, patience, and humility, trusting that "the sacred writings" themselves "give the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 3:15b).

We aim to cultivate preachers who model this kind of humble confidence in God's Word, and whose hearers—the sheep under their care—bear this kind of fruit in love.

To truly serve the church we must be people of the truth. In a world of new Gnosticism at the academic level, and cultural therapeutic deism at the popular level, the church and the seminary which serves her, must represent A Place for Truth. We must cultivate men who, to use Solzineitzin's noble phrase "live not by lies."⁶

As most of you know, this ceremony was initially scheduled for last fall. The delay and the travel restrictions which still persist have meant that many friends who wanted to be here were not able to attend. None of this seems ideal, but, as I reflected on the timing, I concluded that I am glad to be speaking to you nine months into my new role instead of three months into it. This extra time has afforded me the opportunity to take stock of the work of Greenville Seminary in a way that three months of experience would not have. What I have witnessed brings me great encouragement.

By God's grace, this is a place, like the faithful seminaries of the past, which has dedicated herself to serving

the church by holding fast to God's Word. This is a place committed to the truth—the truth of the Bible, and to the One who is Truth Incarnate, the Lord Jesus Christ.

This commitment has led us to intentional confessional transparency and ecclesiastical accountability at every level.

At Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary we aim to serve faithfully and joyfully, confessing our hope in the face of the lies of the City of Man. We do this with confidence, knowing that the one who has begun a good work in His church will carry it to completion in the Day of Christ Jesus. We are acutely aware that, in the midst of the City of Man, the church glorifies God as a pillar and buttress of the truth.

Today, if nothing else, I want to publicly express to both God and to all of you the immense privilege I feel in having your support in *this* role for *this* endeavor.

In the words of the psalmist, may this be a place, where "One generation commends God's work to another" (Ps. 145:4); a place where we act in courage, as we make disciples of the One to whom, "all authority in heaven and on earth is given." May this be a place where we serve that pillar and buttress of the truth, the church of the living God.■

6. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, "Live Not By Lies." The entirety of this Solzineitzin address can be accessed at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03064220408537357>.

In Brief: Death of the Rev. Dr. M'Crie. The following appeared in *The Edinburgh Christian Instructor*, new series, No. XLIV, Vol. IV, No. VIII (August, 1835), pp. 572–576. It has been edited for spelling and editorial notes. While a biography was later published, it is of interest as a period notice of the death of M'Crie. Thomas M'Crie (1772–1835) was a minister of what became the Original Secession Church, writer and historian, most famous perhaps for his *Life of John Knox* (1811). M'Crie's anonymous contribution to the *Instructor* on the Marrow Controversy appeared in the previous issue of *The Confessional Presbyterian*.

DEATH OF THE REV. DR. M'CRIE

This deeply-lamented event took place at his own house, Salisbury Place, Newington, on Wednesday the 5th instant, about half-past twelve o'clock; and we most cordially concur in the sentiments of the Editor of the Scottish Guardian on the occasion, that by means of it "the church has sustained a loss similar to that which is suffered in the sudden and unlooked-for death of Dr. Thomson; and that as there was none upon whom the mantle of the one fell, there is but little hope of a successor to the spirit of the other. His spirit was one of deep discernment, of wisdom, and of counsel. His mind was not of this superficial and agitating age, but had the riches and repose of the olden and studious times. How delightful it would have been, how to instructive the church and the world, to have received a full record of the dying thoughts of so great and good a man! They might have been a lesson and comfort

1. "He was taken ill about five o'clock in the afternoon of that day; between ten and eleven he fell into a stupor, from which he never revived, and expired on Wednesday, about half-past twelve o'clock, in the 64th year of his age and 40th of his ministry." *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, part third (1835): 132. "On Tuesday, the 4th of August, after having returned home from visiting some of his people, he was seized in the afternoon with a sudden and severe attack of pain in the bowels. Medical advice having been procured, he obtained some relief; and to the anxious inquiries of his friends, he said he was better, and had no fears of any immediate danger. Shortly afterwards, he fell into a slumber, which soon assumed a very alarming character. He had gradually and insensibly sunk into a stupor, out of which it was found impossible to awaken him. Dr. Abercromby, on being sent for, pronounced his recovery hopeless. The disease had all the symptoms of apoplexy; and during the whole of the trying night which followed, he neither spoke, nor gave signs of being sensible of what was addressed to him. In this state he continued till next day, Wednesday the 5th of August 1835, when, about half-past twelve at noon, surrounded by his friends and many of his beloved flock, who had collected to witness his last moments, without a groan or a struggle, his spirit entered into rest. At his death, he was in the sixty-third year of his age, and the fortieth of his ministry." *Life of Thomas M'Crie* by his son the Rev. Thomas M'Crie (1840; Philadelphia: Young, 1842), p. 339.

to many. But God's thoughts are not as man's thoughts. It has pleased Him to give us a lesson in a different way." He had, we understand, been complaining for some days; but was so far from being seriously indisposed that he not only preached the whole of the preceding Sabbath, but went out on Tuesday and took his usual forenoon's walk. That afternoon, however, about five o'clock, he was taken alarmingly ill; and between ten and eleven, fell into a stupor, from which no medical means had any effect in recovering him.¹ He was a native of Dunse in Berwickshire, being born there in 1772; and was ordained in Edinburgh,—which was ever afterwards the scene of his stated labors—in 1795; so that he was in the sixty-fourth year of his age, and the fortieth of his ministry.

CHARACTER AND WRITINGS

We gladly avail ourselves of two articles that have appeared, the one in the *Edinburgh Courant*, evidently written by a discriminating as well as an attached friend; and the other in the *Scottish Guardian*, by the Rev. C. J. Brown of Anderston Church, Glasgow, who knew well how to appreciate both his talents and his worth.

"Christianity and Europe," says the latter, "have lost, in the death of a Scotchman and fellow-citizen, one of the noblest defenders of the one, and of the other's most illustrious ornaments. It is not easy, indeed, for those who knows [*sic* knew] him familiarly in Edinburgh, all at once to grasp the extent of their loss, or the probable duration of his fame. In the easy intercourse of life, his homely wisdom, his calm piety, the humorous cheerfulness of his temper and conversation, which neither bodily pain nor mental vexation seemed capable for a moment of disturbing; his unaffected kindness to others, almost in the proportion of their having nothing about them which could gratify ambition or vanity in return; the cautious, and prudent, and painstaking adaptation of his finer sympathies to all the varieties of distress that came under his eye—we think but of these, for we were privileged to be the daily witnesses of them, and they were points of character which won at once and irresistibly on every heart amongst us that now deplores in him a departed friend. But what will Europe—what will America feel, when they hear that he who kindled the torch of his mighty genius at the light of the first Reformation, and who had sent round from country to country, and from church to church, a call for the general rekindling of that light, in the very midst of his last and most resolved effort, has had that torch for ever quenched by a premature and sudden death? The fame of other writers must be content to hang on the taste they bred or the taste they followed, but that of the historian of the Reformers of Scotland, of the martyrs of Italy and Spain, and of Calvin, must brighten with every fresh triumph of a cause destined in the course of time to embrace the whole earth."

"It were idle to attempt enumerating all the labors of his capacious mind and indefatigable industry—the wonder is that any physical powers could have held out so long under such an incessant pressure. Times past and times present—interests the most remote and interests close at hand—counsels to churches and nations, and counsels to the humblest members of a humble flock—correspondence with the living, and fatiguing researches into the cross lights and casual glances at forgotten facts, in the letters of the long departed dead—languages dead and living—opinions old and new; parties, schools and sects of all times and descriptions—well may we stand aghast at the contemplation of demands so manifold and various on the time and thoughts of this withal thoroughly domestic man and faithful Christian minister. But he had been early consecrated for his work, and was trained for it in a severe but most efficient school. When first setting out from his home in Berwickshire, as we have heard him tell, his pious mother accompanied him, took him into a field off the road, knelt down with him by the hedge-side, and solemnly devoted her son to God.² And the Lord heard and accepted her gift. In his wise Providence, He placed him early and kept him long in that school of obscurity and perplexity and trial in which so many of the Church's most faithful defenders have been nurtured. His Roman mind was, perhaps, constitutionally strung against yielding to obloquy, or meanly purchasing ease by trimming to popular errors—errors then very latent, but not so latent as to escape his sagacious ken, and now, as he predicted, full-grown and palpable. Perhaps no man with so unblemished a character, ever fell so low in general contempt as our townsman did when excommunicated from the religious body to which he belonged,³ and set adrift on the wide world, with a wife and family, because his judgment was too acute not to see the whole mischief involved in the *new light* doctrines of the body that expelled him, and his honesty too downright for a moment to conceal the convictions of that judgment. He was actually the only evangelical minister in Edinburgh who was not asked to join the Committee of the Bible Society when first instituted here, so blind were we all to his true character, and to the sterling value of his opinions. But more than Roman courage was required for the result. Christian faith led him boldly to take his own course, heedless alike of the smiles and frowns of the world around him. Upheld and led by that unerring principle, his fame has, in the course of less than thirty years, so grown with his usefulness, that, in both respects, he has left all his former despisers infinitely behind."

"Viewing Dr. M'Crie," says Mr. Brown, "as a Christian man, we look back on one the whole tenor of whose life gave evidence of deep, and elevated, and humble piety. His personal character was not only irreproachable, but eminently exemplary. If his profession was high and peculiar, it was borne

out by his life. What he taught so ably and eloquently from the press and the pulpit, his conduct exemplified. He was often brought into circumstances fitted to put the strength of his Christian principles to the test; and he as often showed, that neither personal ease, nor reputation among men, was so dear to him as the service of Christ and a good conscience. We should add here, what could not fail to make his character and example the more influential, that he was a person of the most amiable, and every way winning manners in the intercourse of private life. [In private life, indeed, Dr. M'Crie was far more bland and amiable than strangers might have been led to infer from the sternness of his principles on controverted points of ecclesiastical polity. In the family circle, and in all the relationships of social life, none displayed more than he did of the milk of human kindness. None could behold without esteeming the unaffected simplicity of his character, his benevolence, his unostentatious piety, his homely wisdom, the uniform cheerfulness of his temper and conversation, which neither bodily pain nor mental vexation seemed capable for a moment of disturbing.]

"As a Minister of the Gospel, Dr. M'Crie was of no common eminence. If his preaching was not distinguished for that particular kind of eloquence which has of late years become fashionable in Scotland, yet was he, in our judgment, one of the best preachers in the country. A rich and exalted tone of doctrine, deep seriousness, and affectionate, though calm earnestness, copiousness of scriptural illustration, an elegant and chaste simplicity of diction, together with fullness of practical application to the hearts and consciences of his hearers,—these were qualities which appeared prominently in his discourses. In lecturing on the historical Scriptures he was peculiarly happy, bringing to bear on the lives of Jewish patriarchs and kings, the same acuteness of perception, knowledge of the heart, and accurate discrimination of character, which shine in his biographies. If in other departments of preaching he excelled most men, in this he seemed to excel himself. How he acted in the important situation of Theological Professor, which he long filled in the excellent body of Seceders with which he was connected, we have no particular means of knowing; yet the superior character of the younger ministers generally of his connection, bears ample witness to his eminence and success in conducting their studies. [His sterling

2. See *Life of Thomas M'Crie*, p. 16.

3. M'Crie was raised in the Anti-Burgher fragment of the original Associate Presbytery, the Secession Church founded as a result of the Marrow Controversy, which had splintered over several controversies. By the end of that century a movement to reject the Establishment Principle had taken hold a majority of this denomination. M'Crie and three others were disciplined for maintaining the original principle. On the controversy that produced M'Crie's *Statement of the Difference* and his subsequent deposition and suspension from receiving the Lord's Supper, see *ibid.*, pp. 88ff.

worth, too, and the faithful discharge of his various pastoral duties, endeared him to his flock, and kept them from falling into temptation too common with sectarians, of running after more fashionable teachers, and being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. Among them his loss will be deeply deplored, and they will not find it easy to supply the blank which his sudden demise has occasioned.]

"But worthy of high respect and esteem as Dr. M'Crie was, both as a Christian man and minister, he was remarkable chiefly as a writer, in which character, as his fame had extended beyond the limits of this country, so his loss will be felt, not in Scotland only, but in Europe and America. In a very high degree his lives of Knox and Melville unite the peculiar excellences of both history and biography. The history is marked by profound research, by extensive erudition, by unwearied care in the unraveling of controverted facts, by a generous candor, and by enlarged and truly philosophic reflection, pointing the mind of the reader to the great practical uses of the events narrated. The biography is characterized, not only by the same successful care in clearing up the events in the individual's life, but by an admirable tact in laying open the springs and motives of his actions, showing their bearing on the history of the period, and, generally, portraying his character with vigor, minuteness, and accuracy. But principally are these works important for the mighty service they have done to the cause of the Reformation in Scotland. They have rescued from unmerited obloquy the character and actions of our leading Reformers: they have shown what a debt of gratitude is owing to them, under God, not only to the cause of religion, but of liberty also, and learning: they have exposed the erroneous and partial character of those statements, by means of which Hume and other historians had occupied the minds of the English, and multitudes of the Scotch also, with the idea that Knox and his coadjutors were little better than a set of rude barbarians and ignorant zealots: they have left on record, for the use of posterity, many of the noblest models of

all that is great in solid learning, ardent piety, attachment to sound doctrine, love of genuine liberty, and historic Christian fortitude: and, in a word, they have drawn a flood of light on the transactions of one of the most important periods of our history, bringing the whole also to bear on the interests of vital godliness, the spirit of which runs through every chapter of these works, commending them to the love of the Christian mind; while the elegance of the style, the extent of erudition, and the vigor of thought, cannot fail to command the attention and respect even of the mere man of the world.

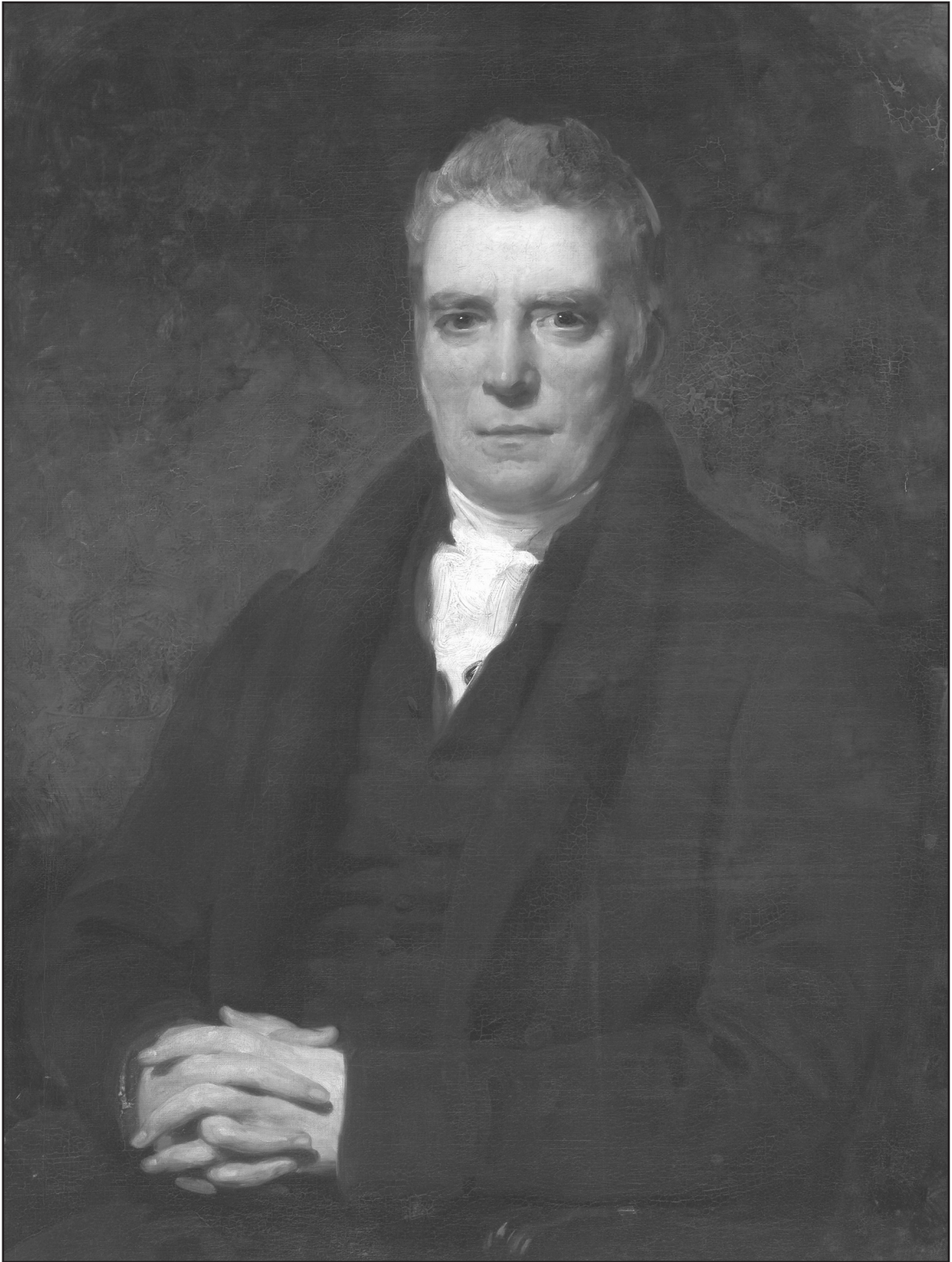
"It was long hoped that Dr. M'Crie would have continued his series of biographies in the life of the famous Alex. Henderson, who so much distinguished himself in the Assembly 1638, and was one of the Scottish Commissioners to the Westminster Assembly. That this work has never appeared, is certainly much to be lamented. Those, however, who can lay their hands on a periodical long carried on under the name of the *Christian Magazine*, (we cannot refer to the particular number,) will find there a memoir of Henderson, which is known to have come from the pen of the biographer of Knox.⁴ In connection with these works, we must not omit to remind the reader, that, as much evil was done to the cause of religion in Scotland, by an eminent novelist in his caricatures, (for they deserve no better name,) of our reformers and covenanters of a later period; so Dr. M'Crie provided an admirable antidote, in an able, learned, and beautifully written review of *Tales of my Landlord*, which appeared soon after their publication, in the *Christian Instructor* for 1817, and which is well worthy the perusal of every man who would form a right judgment of the character of these times. [The lives of Veitch and Brysson, also, which he drew up from original documents, form an interesting epistle in the history of the Covenanters.]

Dr. M'Crie, however, was not the historian of the Scottish Reformation alone. He produced two admirable volumes, the one in 1827, on the rise, progress, and final suppression of the Reformation in Italy, and the other soon after on the same subject with reference to Spain,—certainly not so important as his two principal works, yet exhibiting the same great qualities of mind, and laying open many interesting facts which were very difficult of access, and so, of course, are the more valuable. For the few last years of his life he was engaged in a work which promises to be of much importance,—the life of the illustrious Calvin, of whose character and actions we possess no account of merit, connected though these were very closely with the progress of the Reformation, not in a portion of Switzerland only, but in a great part of Europe, and especially in Scotland. It will be a ground of fervent thankfulness if, as there seems reason to hope, this work has been left by its author in a state of sufficient forwardness to admit of its publication.⁵

"But there is another department of Dr. M'Crie's writings

4. This was republished in *Miscellaneous Writings, Chiefly Historical, of the Late Thomas M'Crie, D.D.* (Edinburgh: Johnstone, 1841), and in *Lives of Alexander Henderson and James Guthrie: With Specimens of Their Writings*, by Thomas M'Crie and Thomas Thomson (Edinburgh: Printed for the Assembly's Committee [Free Church of Scotland], 1846).

5. His son described what he perceived the public would find to be the disappointing state of the manuscript *Life of Calvin* left by his father. *Life of M'Crie*, pp. 342ff. "The interest which the public has shown with regard to the manuscripts of Dr M'Crie, and especially his unfinished *Life of Calvin*, demands a particular account of the state in which they have been left. Few of these manuscripts, I regret to say, are in such a state of preparation as would render it proper to publish them. The manuscript of Calvin's *Life* extends no farther than the commencement of a fourth chapter. Of the three chapters which have been fairly written out, and which may be considered fit for the press, the first contains an account of the early life of the Reformer,



Thomas M'Crie (1772–1835) by Sir John Watson Gordon (1788–1864).

which it would be unpardonable to pass by without special remark, even in this slight notice, where several things must be wholly omitted. Every one knows that this great and good man was a Seceder from the Church of Scotland. To her doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, in all its parts, he was warmly attached; and he retained his attachment undiminished to the day of his death. But he not only believed that certain serious evils had entered in and corrupted the church's administration, but deemed these sufficient to justify, nay require, his remaining in a state of separation from her communion. When that controversy arose in the Secession, which, under a peculiar name, turned upon the very question respecting the connection of Church and State, that now threatens to convulse these kingdoms, Dr. M'Crie warmly espoused what, among his brethren, rapidly became the unfashionable side, maintaining the same doctrine for which we contend at this day. He had, on this account, to bear the scorn of many, as one supposed to be suffering for a mere trifle; for the question of the magistrate's power had not then assumed the shape of an attack on existing institutions, but merely that of a difference in abstract principle. The importance of this difference was not perceived even by most in the established church. But his acute and penetrating mind saw the important practical bearings of that theory. He opened these up, together with a full defense of his own principles on the subject, in a very able paper, partly written and wholly revised by him, which appeared as far back as the year 1806. For a long time however the difference still appeared to many to be one of little importance; but in due time, what Dr. M'Crie had foreseen as not unlikely, came to pass in fact. The New Light opinions, from a variety of causes, continued to gain ground; and were at length in circumstances for ex-

bringing it down to the close of his academical career. The second commences with a somewhat detailed history of the introduction of the Reformation into France, and the sufferings of its early martyrs; and resuming the biography of Calvin at 1533, when he embraced the reformed opinions, prosecutes it to 1535, giving an account of the Preface to his "Institution of the Christian Religion," but "reserving to a future stage a more particular account of the work." The third chapter is wholly occupied with a minute account of the city of Geneva, "its external relations and internal government, and the leading facts connected with the introduction of the Reformation into the city and its territories." The fourth chapter recommences the Life of Calvin at the period when he took up his residence in Geneva, but contains only two or three pages which are occupied with an account of the Anabaptists. The whole manuscript extends to no more than 105 quarto pages." It was forty years before it appeared in print. The work was eventually published as volume 12 of M'Crie's works. *The Early Years of John Calvin: A Fragment, 1509–1536*, edited by William Ferguson (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1880). The editor prefaces the work: "No apology is necessary for offering the public this fragment. So far as it goes, it is complete; and with its three hundred notes and references to more than sixty authors, it is a valuable literary treasure."

hibiting their true character in an open and avowed attack, no longer on the principle merely, but on the very existence of the Established Church, together with all those fences and safeguards which public law has hitherto thrown around the institutions of religion.

But it was not by the force of his argument alone that Dr. M'Crie formed a powerful friend of the cause of our Establishment in this its time of need. The very testimony of such a man, living as he did in a state of separation from the Church,—his having suffered for adherence to these very principles,—his having done so at a period when the Church was so generally corrupt as to furnish a plausible argument for the essential inexpediency and unlawfulness of Established Church,—and, in a word, his continuing to adhere to the same sentiments after all that had been spoken and written against them, and though he openly said to the last, that he saw no immediate prospect of being able conscientiously to join the Church,—all these facts independently of the arguments by which in his writings he so ably defended the principle of Establishments, form a very powerful argument in its favour, and one to which, on various accounts, we are able to appeal with a peculiarly good grace.

"On the whole, in whatever light we view this eminent man—whether we look to his personal character, to his ministerial gifts and usefulness, or to his writings,—whether we connect him with the cause of the Reformation in Europe at large, with the history of the Church of Scotland in its most interesting periods, or with the present and peculiar difficulties by which she is beset, it is impossible not to regard his unexpected removal from the midst of us, at the age of sixty-four, in the full vigor of his faculties, and in the midst of his varied labors, as affording ground of deep regret, not only to his family, his congregation, his brethren in the ministry, and the whole religious connection of which he was so distinguished an ornament, but to the Church of Scotland generally, and to the interests of religion and literature at large. No longer shall the pen of this ready and heaven-taught writer be employed in removing the reproach of Martyrs and Christian heroes, showing how true religion has ever gone hand in hand with solid learning and genuine liberty, and drawing lessons of wisdom for the world's use from history sacred and profane. No longer shall we catch the inspiration of that eye which, lighted up from a brighter within, was wont to communicate to many an anxious auditor a portion of its own sacred fire. That eye is now closed in the sleep of death; and those lips, which, from Sabbath to Sabbath, dropped wisdom, and faithful reproof, and heavenly consolation, are sealed 'till the heavens be no more.' 'Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?' 'How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!'"■

Judges 6–8:32: Gideon

By Thomas G. Reid Jr.

INTRODUCTION

The intention of the Holy Spirit in causing God's word to be recorded and preserved is of critical importance to understanding any portion of it. For some Biblical books, that intention is clear. The Gospel of John was written "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31). "The main point" of the Epistle to the Hebrews was that "we have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man" (Heb. 8:1–2). And so it is with the Book of Judges; twice we read, including the final verse of the book, "In those days *there was no king in Israel*; everyone did *what was right* in his own eyes" (17:6; 21:25; cf. 18:1; 19:1). From beginning to ending, this Book records how the people of God, both nation and church, did what they thought was right; they embraced the libertarian option with a vengeance, eschewing stable government and idolizing personal whim. But Judges also shows how God did what He thought was right, to encourage His people to recognize that, ultimately, it was the recognition of God's kingship other than that was lacking. A human king what help in many ways—political stability is a certain benefit, no matter how tyrannical—but it was the divine rule that was most needed. The recurring phrase "there was no king in Israel" implies that the Book of Judges was written after kings had been raised up by God for Israel with King Saul. Looking back, our unidentified author describes a period in the life of Israel that compared unfavorably with the period of monarchy.

OUT OF THE WINEPRESS JUDGES 6:1–24.

The world places great importance upon certain people

for their prowess in sports or talent for acting or machinations in politics. But the church and the nation should have different standards. The apostle Paul wrote to the church members in ancient Corinth about themselves: For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence (1 Cor. 1:26–29).

In God's choice of the next judge, Gideon, the same principle is applied to the leadership of the church and the nation that God has brought to the choice of His precious elect people.

I. The Crisis Before Gideon (1–10).

1. Perverse Rebellion (1–2).

1 Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD. So the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years, 2 and the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel. Because of the Midianites, the children of Israel made for themselves the dens, the caves, and the strongholds which *are* in the mountains.

The words are becoming distressing familiar (cf. 3:12; 4:1a): **the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD**, no doubt toward the end of the forty years of peace established by the Lord through Deborah and

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Barak (5:31b). The Israelites had forgotten the Lord's work for them, both in the long-term and the short-term, turning to other gods, including the Baals (see 6:25). The divine response was just as familiar: **the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years**, although the oppressor was different. The Midianites were descendents of Abraham through his concubine Keturah, sent away to the East, becoming semi-nomads dwelling in the northwestern portion of the Sinai Desert (Gen. 25:1–6). The connection between Israel and Midian was strengthened centuries later when Moses married a Midianite, Zipporah (Ex. 2:15–22). The current oppression of the Israelites thus came from the southeast, rather than from other directions, as in the times of the earlier judges Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, and Deborah and Barak.¹ The current persecution lasted seven years, a timeframe redolent of perfection. And so, **the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel**.

This difficult period differed from the others in that it is recorded that **the children of Israel made for themselves the dens, the caves, and the strongholds which are in the mountains**. As the Scottish Covenanters on the moors in the seventeenth century and the French Huguenots in the Cevennes Mountains in the eighteenth century, the people of God were forced to hide away from their persecutors. The three words used to describe these places of safety are difficult to translate, but the general sense of their meaning is clear enough; they were adapted by the Israelites as dwelling places. While today the open landscape of the highlands in Israel would offer few such hiding places, in those days it was forested and so provided better protection.

2. Periodic Raids (3–6).

3 So it was, whenever Israel had sown, Midianites would come up; also Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them. 4 Then they would encamp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep nor ox nor donkey. 5 For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, coming in as numerous as locusts; both they and their camels were without number; and they would enter

the land to destroy it. 6 So Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites, and the children of Israel cried out to the LORD.

But the upland regions did not provide much arable land, so the Israelites continued to plant their crops in the more exposed valleys. However, **whenever Israel had sown, Midianites would come up ... they would encamp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza**, far to the southwest. In this evil endeavor, the Midianites were joined by the **Amalekites and the people of the East**. The Amalekites, descendents of Esau, participated in the oppression of Israel in the time of the judge Ehud, along with the more prominent Moabites (3:13). “The people of the East” could be a reference to these two peoples together or to other tribes living east of the Promised Land who joined with them to profit from the weakness of Israel. The economy of God's people was devastated, for the marauders left **no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep nor ox nor donkey**. These farming animals were key to their agriculture: sheep were raised for meat, milk, and wool; the ox for heavy pulling and lifting; and the donkey for lighter pulling. And the livestock were hungry like their masters.

The purpose of the united oppressors was not to conquer Israel but to devastate it. The invaders **would come up with their livestock**, which ate the Israelite crops. The Midianites brought **their tents**, to provide shelter for longer or shorter periods of time in each location during the devastation, **coming in as numerous as locusts**, a very strong expression describing their horrific effects on the crops. **Both they and their camels were without number**, or so it seemed to the shocked Israelites. **They would enter the land to destroy it**, employing the infamous ‘scorched earth’ techniques used by later invaders like General William Tecumseh Sherman, “marching through Georgia” in 1864 during the American Civil War. The end result was inevitable: **so Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites**.² More surprising in light of the Israelite abandonment of the Lord's worship was that **the children of Israel cried out to the LORD**, seeking a relaxation of His judgment upon them.

3. Prophetical Rebuke (7–10).

7 And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried out to the LORD because of the Midianites, 8 that the LORD sent a prophet to the children of Israel, who said to them, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘I brought

1. In order, they came from the northeast (Mesopotamia), east (Moab), southwest (Philistia), and north (Canaan).

2. “It may be stated as a maxim, that whenever the nomade [*sic*] is the master of the cultivator, the impoverishment and ultimate ruin of the latter are inevitable.” George Bush, *Notes on Judges* (Minneapolis: James & Klock, 1976), p. 80. Bush indicates that in the mid-nineteenth century when he was writing, the Arab Bedouin nomads continued to threaten settled peoples as the Midianites did in the time of Gideon.

you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of bondage; 9 and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you and gave you their land. 10 Also I said to you, “*I am the LORD your God; do not fear the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell.*” But you have not obeyed My voice.”

Verse 7 repackages verse 6: **And it came to pass ... the children of Israel cried out to the LORD because of the Midianites.** The Lord heard the cries of His people and sent a prophet to the children of Israel, a disappointment no doubt to them when they were hoping for a military commander to drive off the invaders. This unnamed prophet said to them, “**Thus says the LORD God of Israel,**” using a well-known phrase that punctuates the Old Testament numerous times. Their God reminds them that **I brought you up from Egypt and brought your out of the house of bondage**, literally, the “slave quarters”, and for emphasis reminds them again that **I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of all who oppressed you.** Furthermore, in the conquest of the Promised Land inhabited by the Canaanites, God **drove them out before you and gave you their land.**

These two great victories which God accomplished for the Israelites should have prompted them to love and obedience, especially in light of the Lord’s command, **I am the Lord your God; do not fear the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell**, which is not a citation of a specific verse but a summary of God’s teaching, using Amorites as a part for the whole. With the ancient gods being tied to specific locales, the Israelites were sorely tempted to add the local Canaanite gods to the Lord in a sort of pantheon, just to be on the side of safety. The Amorite gods may have been willing to share a spot in the hearts and worship of people with other gods, but it was not so with the Lord. At this point in the presentation by the prophet, the Israelites might have expected a recounting of God’s labors through the judges in recent centuries rather than these more remote actions, but the age of judges is not one to be generally praised, despite the Lord’s periodic activity on the behalf of His people; the clear-cut lines of the Exodus are more easily marshalled in favour of the divine argument. The prophet concludes his account of God’s revelation, **But you have not obeyed My voice.** The reader can justly wonder what the Lord’s reaction will be in light of the severity of this prophetic message.

Application

God’s people were happy to take the blessings of God without shouldering the resulting responsibilities of love and obedience which He imposed on them as part of the covenant of grace. God at least responded to their cry for help, although we do not read that the people repented of their sins. God always deals in mercy with His covenant people; perfect love and obedience being impossible to us this side of heaven (Jesus excepted), God’s mercy always is greater than His people’s sins.

II. The Calling of Gideon (11–24).

11 Now the Angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth tree which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide it from the Midianites. 12 And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, “The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!”

God’s response to the cries of His people, beyond the verbal revelation of verses 8–10, requires some time to take form. **The Angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth tree which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite.** Joash was a prominent citizen of the town of Ophrah, located somewhere in Manasseh (Josh. 17:2; 1 Chr. 7:14–18), probably close to Sichem (8:31). Joash had a terebinth or turpentine tree on his lands, a kind of tree common in highland areas and often used as a place for sacrifice and offerings, “because their shade is good” (Hos. 4:13). **The Angel of the LORD came and sat under that tree**, the second time this divine angel has appeared in the time of the judges (2:1–4).³

The next judge of Israel is then introduced, **his son Gideon**, which means “hewer” or “hacker”, an appropriate name for one who will later destroy the altar of Baal (6:28–32). Gideon **threshed wheat in the winepress.** Wheat was normally threshed in large quantities by oxen in open areas, but Gideon is threshing a small amount of wheat in the winepress, a depression in the ground, **in order to hide it from the Midianites.** Such were the times! **The Angel of the LORD appeared to him**, another pre-incarnational appearance of Jesus Christ. The Angel said to him, “**The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!**” There is a great

3. The Angel of the LORD is mentioned in Deborah’s Song in 5:23, and will later appear first to the mother of Samson in 13:3f. and then to her husband in 13:11f.

measure of humor in the Angel's approach to Gideon, who is hardly a valiant man, hiding his threshing in the depression in the ground, stripped down to his underpants for the hard work in which he was engaged, covered in sweat, with chaff stuck to his torso. God seems to prefer the weak things of the world to accomplish His purposes, and so it was with Gideon. Yes, Gideon would need the Lord's presence to become a valiant leader of God's people.

13 Gideon said to Him, "O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where *are* all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites." 14 Then the LORD turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?"

Gideon keeps his wits about him, indeed, does not directly respond to the greeting of the Angel, but asked him, **O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us?** The perennial question of God's people when they are suffering was on Gideon's lips—here was his chance to ask someone who would know better than a mere mortal why we suffer so in service to the Almighty. Gideon was probably thinking back to the Midianites' murder of his brothers at Tabor (8:18–19). Perhaps Gideon had heard the Lord's prophet, for he went on to ask a question using similar language to him: **where *are* all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, "Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?"** The whole cluster of miracles—the ten plagues, change of Pharaoh's heart, parting of the Red Sea, and so forth—were but distant memories of a better time (and a better deity?) in Gideon's mind, for **the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.** Gideon was not yet ready to lead God's people, for he blamed the Lord for their difficulties, rather than the people's sins; his own family had an altar to Baal on its land (6:25) where Gideon most likely had bowed down to a false god while still expecting his ancestral God to shower him and his family with blessings.

Then the LORD turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours." The eloquence of the young man was greater than his understanding of the situation facing

his people; if he remained in his current frame of mind, his strength would only be weakness. **You shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites.** God did not turn away from him in disappointment at this outburst, but continued to recognize qualities in Gideon which would be useful for leading the people of Israel to victory over the Midianites: **have I not sent you** to do so? At this point, Gideon began to realize with whom he was speaking, that He was not only an angel but God Himself; certainly the narrator wants his readers to understand that, now recording the words of "the Lord" rather than of "the Angel".

15 So he said to Him, "O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan *is* the weakest in Manasseh, and I *am* the least in my father's house." 16 And the LORD said to him, "surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man." 17 Then he said to Him, "If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who talk with me. 18 Do not depart from here, I pray, until I come to You and bring out my offering and set *it* before You." And He said, "I will wait until you come back."

Gideon now seemed chastened, asking, **"O my Lord, how can I save Israel?"** The dialogue has become reminiscent of Moses interacting with God at the burning bush (Ex. 3:11–14 and 4:1–17). Gideon, like Moses before him, did not sense the capabilities in himself necessary to lead a nation before the Lord and against its enemies. **Indeed my clan *is* the weakest in Manasseh,** using a military word referring to a thousand soldiers; Gideon did not have enough soldiers at his disposal to engage the Midianites. Joash led a small, insignificant family within the tribe, although it had at least ten servants (6:27) and at least two bulls (6:25), suggesting a false sense of modesty on Gideon's part. As well, **I *am* the least in my father's house.** Gideon was the youngest son, in that society a particularly lowly position which nobody would respect.⁴ **The LORD said to him, "surely I will be with you."** Are there more beautiful words than these coming from God, words of covenantal loyalty despite man's inadequacy and sin? **And you shall defeat the Midianites as one man.** God promised victory over the Midianites; the language could mean that the Midianites will be like a single soldier to defeat, or that the Israelites will work together to defeat them, united into a single person. Both understandings are valid.

The dialogue has reached a turning point. Gideon said to Him, **"If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who talk with me."**

4. As was David, who later served as a distinguished king of Israel (1 Sam. 16:11–13).

It was now clear that Gideon suspected that the Angel was the Lord Himself. Like Moses (Ex. 4:1–9), Gideon asked for a sign to confirm the identity of the One with whom he was conversing. Unlike later (6:36–40), Gideon himself did not choose the kind of sign he was seeking, but let the Lord do so. Gideon did not wait for a response to his request, but urged the Angel, **do not depart from here, I pray, until I come to You and bring out my offering and set it before you.** This respectful urging allowed Gideon to offer the hospitality necessary for an exalted guest; in replying as he did, he was possibly remembering Abraham's offering to the Lord in Gen. 18:1–8. The Angel agreed, **"I will wait until you come back."**

19 So Gideon went in and prepared a young goat, and unleavened bread from an ephah of flour. The meat he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot; and he brought *them* out to Him under the terebinth tree and presented *them*. 20 The Angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay *them* on this rock, and pour out the broth." And he did so. 21 Then the Angel of the LORD put out the end of the staff that *was* in His hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire rose out of the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. And the Angel of the LORD departed out of his sight.

The meal took shape. **Gideon went in to his home, where he prepared a young goat, and, to gain some valuable time by not waiting for bread to bake, unleavened bread from an ephah of flour. Then, the meat he put in a basket.** Gideon added a third item to the menu: **he put the broth in a pot. With the bread, he brought them out to Him under the terebinth tree and presented them.** But the Angel did not eat the meal prepared for him by Gideon. **The Angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth"** on top of the young goat and the unleavened bread. **And he did so.** It should have been obvious to Gideon that the Angel was preparing for a burnt offering. **Then the Angel of the LORD put out the end of the staff that was in His hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened bread.** This gesture, reminiscent of several events connected to the Exodus from Egypt (Ex. 4:2–4; 7:19–20; 8:5,6;16; 9:22–23; 10:12–13; Num. 20:7–11; cf. Ex. 10:21; 14:21,26), led to a miraculous intervention by God: **fire arose out of the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread.** "While the narrative offers no interpretation of the act, its significance is clear: when a

deity consumes the meal a worshiper has brought, this is a sign the latter has found favor in the deity's sight."⁵ **And the Angel of the LORD departed out of his sight**—the method is not indicated—leaving behind an astonished young man.

22 Now Gideon perceived that He *was* the Angel of the LORD. So Gideon said, "Alas, O Lord GOD! For I have seen the Angel of the LORD face to face." 23 Then the LORD said to him, "Peace *be* with you; do not fear, you shall not die." 24 So Gideon built an altar there to the LORD, and called it The LORD-*Is*-Peace. To this day it *is* still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

Gideon's lunch had been confirmed, as he **perceived that He was the Angel of the LORD.** But instead of focusing his mind on the divine acceptance of his sacrificial meal, Gideon panicked. **Alas, O Lord GOD! For I have seen the Angel of the LORD face to face.** While not expressed in the passage, Gideon was well-enough trained in the Scriptures to know the danger he faced, for God had told Moses, "No man shall see Me, and live" (Ex. 33:20; cf. Judges 13:22). To calm his fears, **the LORD said to him**—how is not specified—"Peace *be* with you; do not fear, you shall not die." After all, like Jacob wrestling at Peniel (Gen. 32:25–31), Gideon had not seen the Lord Himself but His Angel in human form. Centuries later, people would see Jesus of Nazareth, but not be struck dead before the Godhead in human form.

So Gideon built an altar there to the LORD. It was a common practice in ancient times to build such a shrine either in a place of a theophany (Noah in Gen. 8:20; Abram in Gen. 12:7; Jacob in Gen. 35:1,7) or of a major divine act (Moses in Ex. 17:15), although these were not the only reasons to do so (Abram in Gen. 13:18 and 22:9; Isaac in Gen. 26:25; Jacob in Gen. 33:20; Joshua in Josh. 8:30). Gideon named the altar **The LORD-Is-Peace**, appropriating the word that the Lord Himself had pronounced concerning his relationship with His servant Gideon. God had reestablished peace with one Israelite and would soon do so with the rest of His covenant people, and He would bring peace on earth to his beleaguered people. **To this day when the narrator is writing many years later (or why else mention the fact?), the altar is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites, Gideon's hometown.**

5. Daniel I. Block, *Judges, Ruth* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), p. 263.

Application

God's call to special office in the church or nation is often given to those least likely to have been chosen by their fellows, whether it is Moses or Gideon or many others of whom we read in the Scriptures. Many are called even in their sin and misery (Saul of Tarsus) or before their birth (John the Baptist). Many have serious impediments: the judge Samson was lustful; King Saul was mentally unstable; the disciple Matthew was a traitor and a thief. In each case, God was pleased to use the imperfections in men for His purposes; in many cases, like Gideon, He acted in a special way to equip the man for his calling, making him into a valiant warrior for the benefit of God's people. And so Gideon began to become the leader God meant that country bumpkin to be. When God calls nothings, He is reserving to Himself all the glory which would otherwise be shared with mere mortals.

How similar to Gideon is our Lord Jesus Christ, destined from all eternity to accomplish great things in this world! But He was born in a lowly state among the animals, apparently a bastard; He grew up in a backwater of a despised people; He learned the simple skills of the carpenter; He defied the social expectations of the time in a myriad of ways; He drew a motley crew of misfits around him; He was abandoned by almost everybody near the end; and He was finally executed in the most cruel fashion that governments have ever legally sanctioned. And yet God was pleased to raise Him to His right hand, above all principalities and powers, to rule the heavens and the earth, men and nations, now and forevermore.

O YOU OF LITTLE FAITH. 6:25–40.

When a group of Presbyterian elders decided that a critical need had developed for a conservative theological seminary to serve Southern Presbyterians, one of them approached Erskine Wells, an elder in the First Presbyterian Church of Jackson, Mississippi. Wells protested that none of these laymen knew anything about theological education, that no money or professors or library were available, that they were certain to fail. His interlocutor looked him in the eye and said, "Erskine, how big is your God?" Wells gulped and replied, "When do we start?" The result is Reformed Theological Seminary, with many hundreds of students on five major campuses spread throughout the southern United States of America.

6. James B. Jordan, *Judges: God's War against Humanism* (Tyler, TX: Geneva Ministries, c1985), p. 123.

Our faith is often small compared to the God who engenders it in our hearts through the working of His Spirit. It was so in the case of the judge Gideon.

I. The Conduct of Gideon (25–32).

1. A Night's Work (25–27).

25 Now it came to pass the same night that the LORD said to him, "Take your father's young bull, the second bull of seven years old, and tear down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the wooden image that is beside it, 26 and build an altar to the LORD your God on top of this rock in the proper arrangement, and take the second bull and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the image which you shall cut down." 27 So Gideon took ten men from among his servants and did as the LORD had said to him. But because he feared his father's household and the men of the city too much to do it by day, he did it by night.

Gideon's call to leadership in Israel began **the same night** (literally, and ambiguously, "the next night"), before the effects of the Angel of the Lord's appearance to him could begin to wane. The God of Israel had reiterated His interest in His people by appearing to their next judge as an angel; now it was the time for that judge to express his concomitant commitment to the God of Israel by his own actions. **The LORD said to him, ... "Tear down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the wooden image that is beside it.** The reader is caught by surprise by the realization that Gideon was living in a household with two pagan images in the garden, but the Canaanization of the people of God had borne its ugly fruit even in isolated Ophrah. The altar of Baal would have been used to present sacrifices to appease the nature god; the wooden image, literally "the Asherah", was a carved figure with exaggerated sexual organs, whose uses are best left unexpressed, as in the text itself. Gideon was commanded to tear down the one and to cut down the other. Only by separating himself from such pagan worship would Gideon be truly ready for the work to which God has called him, and only then would the people of Israel enjoy the blessings of the Promised Land: "Joash and his people had sought fertility and prosperity for their land by worshipping fertility gods and goddesses. The result had been virtual starvation. If they return to the Lord, the true Giver of life, fertility, and prosperity, things will change."⁶

To this negative command a positive command was added; Gideon was to **build an altar to the LORD your**

God on top of this rock in the proper arrangement. Once the offending pagan images had been eliminated, Gideon must construct a religious center for the true worship of the God of Israel to take place; indeed, doing so in the same location, obviously a prominent location, where Baal had been worshipped hitherto, would express Yahweh's superiority over the Canaanite deity. Emphasis is placed on offering the sacrifice in the way that God had commanded,⁷ for God is always to be worshipped as He has commanded and in no other way, as Jesus Himself emphasized in His great commission to His church: they were to be "observing all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). As the Puritan Richard Rogers has written on this passage, "Nothing goes forward happily in the commonwealth, except good order be taken first for the welfare of the Church, namely, by rooting out and casting down idolatry and superstitious worship of God, and ignorance, and a planting and establishing of the true preaching of the gospel."⁸

But what would serve as the sacrifice on the altar? **Take your father's young bull, the second bull of seven years old ... take the second bull.** This mature bull would have the strength to help topple the false deities and then would serve as the offering upon the new altar; it is quite possible that this bull was being raised to be offered in worship to Baal, thus creating a delicious irony in the new context in which it would be sacrificed. And who would offer the sacrifice? Gideon himself: **offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the image which you shall cut down.** Although Gideon was not a descendent of the priestly line of Levi, God commanded what is otherwise forbidden: someone not of the priestly race must offer a bloody sacrifice in God's honor (Ex. 28:1; Heb. 5:4). In extraordinary times, it is sometimes necessary for God to effect such changes. In serving as a priest, Gideon foreshadowed Jesus of Nazareth, who offered Himself as a perfect substitute for the sins of the elect, although Jesus was a descendent of King David, not of Aaron or Levi.

Gideon took ten men from among his servants, suggesting that the work of toppling the pagan gods was physically demanding, **and did as the LORD had said to him,** surely no more than the Lord could have expected of him. **But because he feared his father's household,** apparently devoted to the worship of Baal despite their Israelite roots, **and the men of the city,** who could be expected to be very annoyed by treating their gods in such a way, **too much to do it by day, he did it by night.** "Some may blame Gideon for demolishing Baal's altar by night, fearing relatives and city fathers. I doubt it matters. Did God tell him to do it by day? Did

God tell him he couldn't be afraid? Or did God simply tell him to do it? Evidently, obedience was essential and heroism optional."⁹

2. A Morning's Discovery (28–30).

28 And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, there was the altar of Baal, torn down; and the wooden image that *was* beside it was cut down, and the second bull was being offered on the altar *which had been* built. 29 So they said to one another, "Who has done this thing?" And when they inquired and asked, they said, "Gideon the son of Joash has done this thing." 30 Then the men of the city said to Joash, "Bring out your son, that he may die, because he has torn down the altar of Baal, and because he has cut down the wooden image that *was* beside it."

The activities of the eleven men were soon enough found out. **And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, there was the altar of Baal, torn down; and the wooden image that *was* beside it was cut down, and the second bull was being offered on the altar *which had been* built.** In a small town where nothing much happened, this event was big news! **So they said to one another,** naturally enough, "**Who has done this thing?**" The people of Ophrah indicate no surprise that their cultic highpoint lay in ruins. With eleven men involved, it was not too difficult to find someone willing to identify the culprit. **And when they inquired and asked, they said, "Gideon the son of Joash has done this thing."** Who exposed the crime is not identified. But now the pagans in Ophrah had an object for their wrath. They angrily confronted Gideon's father: "**Bring out your son, that he may die, because he has torn down the altar of Baal, and because he has cut down the wooden image that *was* beside it.**" Religion was taken seriously in those days! Nothing short of death was the penalty for such blasphemous disrespect for the Canaanite deities; Gideon had been right in his assessment of his neighbors' likely attitude toward the sacrilege he perpetrated. Notice how these pagans easily slid over the fact that an altar to the God of Israel

7. The word translated "proper arrangement" is used of the battle line in warfare (1 Sam. 4:2,12,16) and for the setting out of the lamps in the sanctuary (Ex. 39:37), both senses being appropriate in the present context.

8. Richard Rogers, *A Commentary on Judges* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1983), p. 322.

9. Dale Ralph Davis, *Judges: Such a Great Salvation* (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2000), p. 98.

now proudly stood atop the remains of their pagan cult installation.

3. A Father's Defense (31–32).

³¹ But Joash said to all who stood against him, "Would you plead for Baal? Would you save him? Let the one who would plead for him be put to death by morning! If he *is* a god, let him plead for himself, because his altar has been torn down!" ³² Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, "Let Baal plead against him, because he has torn down his altar."

While Gideon's father Joash had permitted a pagan worship site to be erected on his property, probably even joining in its veneration, he displayed a more noble character in confronting the lynch mob before him, in order to defend his son. **Joash said to all who stood against him, "Would you plead for Baal? Would you save him?"** These rhetorical questions have nuances which are lost in English translation. The first often has a legal caste to it, so the meaning becomes: Are you going to stand up in defense of Baal? The second question contains the verb used by the narrator to define the activities of the judges in Israel, so its meaning is: Will you deliver Baal from disaster? The implication in Joash's words should have been clear to them: why would you defend such a weak deity that he cannot resist his images being overturned?

Then, Joash threw down the gauntlet to the mob: **Let the one who would plead for him be put to death by morning!** If one of them were to kill his son Gideon, then, as his father, he would make sure that Gideon's death were quickly avenged (Gen. 9:6). No, Baal needed to be called to account, not Gideon. **If he *is* a god, let him plead for himself, because his altar has been torn down!** Notice that Joash carefully refrained from admitting the guilt of his son, and thus of Joash's household, in the matter. The mob's anger seemed to have been satisfied with the logic of Joash's argument and the immediate danger passed. But Gideon could not escape, even if he had wanted to, an association with his first act as judge in Israel. **Therefore on that day Joash called him Jerubbaal**, an ambiguous name which could mean positively, "Let Baal contend" ("if he could" being understood), or negatively, "Baal contends", implying that he can. Since the heart disposition of Joash was unclear at the time he created this nickname, either meaning could have been meant. Even the following sentence left the meaning of the name ambiguous: **"Let Baal plead against him, because he has torn down his altar"** can

be understood in two very different ways, since "plead" can be either negative or positive. As so often in the Book of Judges, the narrator wants his readers to think through the issues involved.

Application

God's people must break decisively with the gods of this world, for Yahweh will be worshiped and served alone. We must be absolutists, not rendering ourselves impotent before the cacophony of religious voices among the nations. We must root out false worship in all its forms, from the worship of the state in left-wing politics to the glorification of mere humans in the popular press. Enthusiasm for the unique claims of Jesus Christ to world hegemony will often prompt savage reprisals from those not yet convinced of His identity and work. "The servant is not greater than his master," Jesus Himself warned us of what to expect in this life (John 15:20).

As Gideon's father defended him against violent enemies desiring to kill him, so our Father protects us against our enemies, whatever form they take and whatever danger they present to us. Sometimes, however, our Father permits us to be slaughtered for the sake of the gospel, promising us everlasting life in a place without suffering and death. The martyr's crown is nothing we should seek, but there are some who must accept it.

II. The Confirmations to Gideon (33–40).

The judge Gideon was still finding his way forward in leading God's people against His and their enemies. God was pleased to send four confirmations to Him of the divine support for Gideon's efforts, beyond the first confirmation in the fire which consumed his offering (6:17–21). Another confirmation will come later (7:9–15).

1. The Spirit of the Lord (33–34a).

³³ Then all the Midianites and Amalekites, the people of the East, gathered together; and they crossed over and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel. ³⁴ But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon;

For the eighth year in succession (6:1), **all the Midianites and Amalekites, the people of the East, gathered together.** Here, these two peoples together appear to make up the people of the East, unlike 3:3, where three groups seem to be indicated. United, they were stronger in pursuing their destructive ways. **They crossed over the Jordan River and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel**, a fertile valley giving easy access in several directions

to additional lands to plunder. The people of God were once again facing the destruction of their crops and thus of their livelihoods and even lives, huddled in their mountainous retreats.

But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon. As with Othniel earlier (3:10) and Jephthah (11:29) and Samson (13:25; 14:6,19; 15:14) later, God's Spirit came upon one of the judges. The verb used here means "to clothe with" and implies that Gideon was completely possessed by the Spirit for the work at hand.

Whom God appoints to office in his kingdom he also qualifies. The qualification is the Spirit of Jehovah ... as the angel of Jehovah who calls Gideon is the Second Person of the Trinity revealing himself as the preincarnate Messiah, so the Spirit of Jehovah is the third Person of the Trinity revealing himself as the Spirit of the preincarnate Messiah. This Spirit is the power and wisdom of God in the judge, by which the covenant people are saved.¹⁰

Gideon must have sensed the divine equipping that the Spirit's possession of his being involved, confirming his sense of call to lead Israel against its invading enemies.

2. The Gathering of the Tribes (34b–35).

34 (continued) then he blew the trumpet, and the Abiezrites gathered behind him. 35 And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, who also gathered behind him. He also sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali; and they came up to meet them.

Gideon moved to gather together an army sufficiently large to successfully confront the pagan invaders. He blew the trumpet, an effective form of local communication in the mountains and valleys of northern Israel. His own clan in the tribe of Manasseh was the first to respond, as the Abiezrites gathered behind him. But they were hardly sufficient against a large enemy which, after repeated incursions, had become reasonably familiar with the territory in which they would have to fight. Gideon sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, who also gathered behind him. The trumpets worked only so far, thus personal representatives were sent throughout his tribe, and the response was equally positive. **He also sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali; and they came up to meet him.** As representatives from three additional northern tribes had joined his forces, recognizing him as a judge in Israel, Gideon now knew that God had indeed called him to deliver His people from their enemies. With his own tribe coming from

the south of the Valley of Jezreel and the other three tribes from coming north of it, Gideon was in a position to attack the people of the East from two fronts, which is usually more effective than a one-front attack. Noticeably lacking from the list of tribes was the fifth northern tribe, Issachar, which had earlier worked with Deborah and Barak (5:15) and would later produce one of the minor judges, Tola (10:1).

But although the Lord had provided these two confirmations without Gideon even seeking them, they were not enough for him to proceed.

3. The Wetness of the Fleece (36–38).

36 So Gideon said to God, "If you will save Israel by my hand as You have said—37 look, I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only, and *it is dry* on all the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said."

38 And it was so. When he rose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece together, he wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowlful of water.

The third and fourth confirmations to Gideon of his calling recorded in the latter portion of chapter 6 are like the one found earlier in the same chapter, in that Gideon requested them. **Gideon said to God**, in personal prayer, that he wanted to test "**if You will save Israel by my hand as You have said**," since Gideon was still uncertain in face of the many obstacles before him. **I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor**, presumably the same winepress that he was using when the Angel of the Lord approached him (6:11). **If there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground around it, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand as You have said.**" Gideon's faith was weak, and so he sought a sign that required God to suspend a law of the universe which He had created. This particular request was highly relevant to the question at hand, since the Baals were nature gods, and so Gideon will be able to compare the relative power of Yahweh against the ones who were unable to stop him from toppling their images and building an altar to the Lord in their places (6:25–27); but should that earlier confirmation not been sufficient on this point? Gideon's request was also an appropriate one in a rural area known for its dews. **And it was so.** God does not condemn Gideon for his lack of faith by this point. **When he rose early**

10. David J. Engelsma, *Unfolding Covenant History: An Exposition of the Old Testament*, volume 5, Judges and Ruth (Grandville, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, c2005), p. 58.

the next morning and squeezed the fleece together, he wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowlful of water, while the ground around the fleece was bone dry. But could this confirmation have been an unexpected but not miraculous natural occurrence? When humans make such demands of God, it is hard to create a test in which all other possibilities have been eliminated, as a research scientist would.

4. The Dryness of the Fleece (39–40).

39 Then Gideon said to God, “Do not be angry with me, but let me speak just once more: Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece; let it now be dry on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew.” 40 And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground.

The Lord had passed the test, but Gideon was not through demanding confirmation from Him. Gideon said to God, “Do not be angry with me, but let me speak just once more.” The judge was obviously aware that God had reason to be angry with such lack of faith in him. But even small faith can be bold before a gracious God like Israel’s. Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece; Gideon recognized that he was testing God. Let it now be dry on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew. The reverse request was again answered positively, as **God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground.** Gideon had received the two confirmations which he had sought and asked for no more, as he had said.

Application

God’s positive responses to Gideon’s tests, asking for signs to confirm God’s calling and promises, show His patience with those of weak faith in Old Covenant era. But the time has long since come when such tests are no longer acceptable in God’s sight: “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah” (Mt. 12:39). Now that Jesus of Nazareth has died and come back to life through resurrection from the dead, no human being needs an additional sign to believe and obey.

Ultimately, the size of our faith is related to the size of the God towards whom it is exercised. With a whole-Bible understanding of the true and living God, nobody need test God anymore. We know all that we need to know to trust Him with our lives.

THE SWORD OF THE LORD 7:1–22.

We thrill to the story of battle, anticipating victory, dreading defeat, rejoicing with the victorious, commiserating with the vanquished. Few military victories of the nation of Israel were more decisive and amazing than that which Gideon accomplished “by the sword of the Lord” against the Midianites. However, that victory began in a paradoxical way.

I. THE LORD REDUCED AN ARMY IN SIZE (1–8).

1 Then Jerubbaal (that *is*, Gideon) and all the people who *were* with him rose early and encamped beside the well of Harod, so that the camp of the Midianites was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley.

Nomadic Midianites entering the Promised Land from the southeast, where they had dwelt in the desert beyond Edom for some centuries, had overwhelmed the Israelites for seven long years (6:1). The invaders were related to Abraham through his son Midian, born to him by the concubine Keturah (Gen. 25:1–2). The main camp of the Midianites was now located by the hill of Moreh in the valley, that is, the valley of Jezreel, south of Mount Tabor and about thirteen kilometers northwest of Mount Gilboa. Gideon gathered together a small army and encamped to the south of the Midianites, **beside the well of Harod.**

2 And the LORD said to Gideon, “The people who *are* with you *are* too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’”

Gideon’s force consisted of 32,000 soldiers (7:3), who faced 135,000 Midianite soldiers (8:10). In modern warfare, the attacking army is expected to have from two to four times more soldiers than the opposition, in order to hope to be successful in overwhelming a dug-in force. Gideon had just the reverse: the Israelites had fewer than one man for each four Midianites. Therefore, he might have expected that the LORD would advise caution in attacking so numerous an opponent with so few. Jesus certainly did (Luke 14:31): “What king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?” However, the message received from **the LORD**, the covenant God of Israel, was that **the people who are with you are too many** for Him to accomplish His

purpose through Israel! It was not merely, as Seutonius put it long ago, that “even with many legions, it is always the few who win the battle.”¹¹ Rather, the danger existed that, when its victory would be secured, **Israel claim glory against Me**. They might even go so far as to advance the idea that, “**My own hand has saved me.**”

Application

Our hearts are such that we are always prone to claim glory for ourselves, rather than to give all the glory to God. Whether Israel is viewed as a Church or as a Nation—for it was both—the LORD knew that Israel could attribute the victory to itself and not to the true Victor, unless the odds were totally hopeless. So it is today. God will have the glory that is rightfully His, which is why He chooses to do so much through small, despised churches rather than through the widely-respected mega-churches. And in the spiritual victory over our enemies typified by Gideon’s, God claims all the credit, despite what so many professing Christians believe about their contribution, however slight, to their salvation.

3 [“]Now, therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, ‘Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.’” And twenty-two thousand of the people returned, and ten thousand remained.

As the battle nears, even the most valiant warrior can become **fearful and afraid**. Such soldiers can become not only a weakness in themselves, but they can easily sway others to adopt the same dangerous attitude. In the principles of warfare provided in Deuteronomy 20, we read in verse 8, “The officers shall speak further to the people, and say, “What man is *there who is* fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house, lest the heart of his brethren faint like his heart.”“ The LORD told Gideon to offer, **in the hearing of the people**, just that opportunity to leave for home to any who had become fearful. No fewer than **twenty-two thousand returned**, so only **ten thousand [soldiers] remained** at Gideon’s disposal. The ratio was now more than thirteen to one against Israel, already impossible odds!

4 But the Lord said to Gideon, “The people *are still too* many; bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. Then it will be, *that* of whom I say to you, “This one shall go with you,’ the same shall go with you; and of whomever I say to you, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ the same shall not go.” 5 So he brought the

people down to the water. And the Lord said to Gideon, “Everyone who laps from the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set apart by himself; likewise everyone who gets down on his knees to drink.”

But **the Lord** maintains that the ten thousand are still too many. So, He proposes to Himself test them on Gideon’s behalf, in a manner that does not make immediate sense to us. Why should it matter how a soldier drinks **the water** from the brook flowing from the spring (or well) of Harod? Because one of the positions “placed a premium upon alertness and the display of a soldierly spirit,”¹² and the other did not. Just as an American cowboy of the nineteenth century was rarely found without his boots on—even in bed!—the Israelite soldiers were not to get down in a vulnerable position, but were to be ready to act on a moment’s notice. Staying on their feet would permit them to spring into action against the enemy without a second being lost.

6 And the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water. 7 Then the LORD said to Gideon, “By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let all the other people go, every man to his place.” 8 So the people took provisions and their trumpets in their hands. And he sent away all the rest of Israel, every man to his tent, and retained those three hundred men. Now the camp of Midian was below them in the valley.

To the dismay of Gideon, no doubt, only **three hundred men** were left to him when this second stage of divinely-mandated elimination had been completed, for **all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water**, and were then dismissed, **each man to his tent**. But the LORD is perfectly clear in the promise He makes to Gideon: **By the three hundred men who lapped like a dog I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand**. Gideon sent the other soldiers home, with their **provisions and their trumpets**, both of which he might have thought could prove useful later in the fight against the Midianites. As Gideon watched them leave, he had a choice to make: to believe the LORD or to follow the departing men,

11. Quoted in J. P. Lange, *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, n.d.), p. 122.

12. Arthur E. Cundall, *Judges: An Introduction and Commentary* (London: Tyndale Press, 1968), p. 110.

leaving the Midianites triumphant over the people of God. Gideon stayed, trusting that God would provide a most improbable victory, His forces being now outnumbered by 450 to 1. Gideon had to believe that the few who really counted had been left for the battle.

Application

Church and nation can always do more with few than with many. It is the dedicated few who do almost all that is good. In a day of small things, when the great events and movements of the past seem far away and of little influence, it is not defeatism to admit as much. But it requires better leadership to use the few who are available. For over seventy years, the members of the Soviet Communist Party completely dominated their nation and widely influenced the rest of the world, but never counted more than eight percent of Soviet adults among its members. Surely for the sake of the King and Redeemer we few can do as much, and all for the benefit of others, not ourselves! Indeed, it was an army of one Who accomplished the victory over all our enemies we want others to come to enjoy.

But we have no specific promise nor spectacular revelation to encourage our faith in times of small efforts, as did Gideon. Truly, “faith is the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1)—more today than it was even in Gideon’s time. For we must believe the Word of God as it comes to us, in the pages of Holy Scripture, for “faith comes from hearing and hearing from the word of God” (Romans 10:17). In that way, we are called to an even greater faith than that displayed by Gideon, one of the great examples of faith (Hebrews 11:32).

II. THE LORD SENT A DREAM OF CONFIRMATION (9–15a).

The Lord is now pleased to develop the faith of Gideon further.

9 It happened on the same night that the LORD said to him, “Arise, go down against the camp, for I have delivered it into your hand. 10 But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant, 11 and you shall hear what they say; and afterward your hands shall be strengthened to go down against the camp.” Then he went down with Purah his servant to the outpost of the armed men who *were* in the camp. 12 Now the Midianites and the Amalekites, all the people of the East, were lying in the valley as numerous as

locusts; and their camels *were* without number, as the sand by seashore in multitude.

Gideon may have found it hard to sleep that **same night**, realizing that it was his responsibility to develop the means whereby the LORD would use three hundred men to defeat 135,000 (8:10). The LORD was, as so often, going to use human means to accomplish His goals in this world. During the night, the Lord told Gideon that He had already delivered the Midianite camp into his hand. But first, Gideon needed to reconnoiter the camp. Knowing the fear that must have welled up in his heart, the LORD encouraged Gideon to take **Purah his servant** with him for company. The purpose of this dangerous endeavour was not to test the defenses nor to plan for the fight, but rather to listen, to listen to **what they say** in the camp.

Gideon and Purah must have wondered what they needed to hear as they approached **the outpost of the armed men of the** thousands of Midianites, encamped with **the Amalekites**. The latter people had allied themselves with the Midianites, in order to benefit from the sin-induced weakness of Israel. So, **all the people of the East** were now ranged against them! The Amalekites had first confronted the people of God at Rephidim in the wilderness of Sinai (Ex. 17:8–13). As a result, God had promised that “I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven” (Ex. 17:14). Responsibility for meting out that terrible punishment is given later to Israel: “You will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. You shall not forget” (Deut. 25:19). The reason? “Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you were tired and weary; and he did not fear God” (Deut. 25:17–18). Now, Gideon has the opportunity to work out this command.

Application

Faith develops by exercising it, like a muscle in the body. Faith is not passive, it is active. Faith is never apart from good works, or else it is dead (James 2:17). The faith of Gideon and Purah is particularly striking, as the odds against them were so great.

Not only were the invading soldiers **as numerous as locusts**, but **their camels were without number**, as **sand by the seashore in multitude**. Camels had been domesticated for the first time not long before this time, and

“the first known razzia of camel nomads is the Midianite invasion.”¹³ These impressive and hardy beasts gave the invaders a significant advantage over the Israelites on the battlefield, or, so everyone on both sides of the battle line must have thought.

13 And when Gideon had come, there was a man telling a dream to his companion. He said, “I have had a dream: *To my surprise*, a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian; it came to a tent and struck it so that it fell and overturned, and the tent collapsed.”

14 Then his companion answered and said, “This is nothing else but the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel! Into his hand God has delivered Midian and the whole camp.”

As Gideon approached the outpost of the Midianite camp, he overheard a soldier **telling a dream to his companion**. This surprising dream involved a barley loaf that **tumbled into the camp of Midian** and caused a **tent** there to collapse. Dreams were used by God to communicate with his people in the Old Covenant, perhaps most notably when the butler and baker were imprisoned with Joseph in Egypt (Gen. 40). But throughout the Middle East, dreams were considered as giving unusual insight into the future. And so it was with this dream.

The soldier’s companion interpreted the dream accurately, as later events proved. A **loaf of barley bread** symbolized something poor, weak, and defenseless, as wheat bread would have been eaten by wealthier people. To Gideon and Purah, Israel certainly now seemed poor, weak, and defenseless, and it would have been the same with its enemies. A **tent** was an appropriate symbol of a nomadic tribe like the Midianites, which lived in such housing as they followed their flocks to find water and pastures. Therefore, the interpreter concluded that God had **delivered Midian and the whole camp** to be defeated by their opponents. God had already promised Gideon as much—“You shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you? ... Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man” (6:14,16)—and the dream and its interpretation confirmed that earlier comment. But what was truly extraordinary was the soldier’s initial statement: **This is nothing else but the sword of Gideon!** Gideon was expecting to wield the sword for the Lord, but these words tempted him to think of himself as the principal actor in the violent struggle ahead. But even a pagan knew better: it is God who will have **delivered Midian and the whole camp**. Gideon was continuing to learn

to understand God’s active involvement in His people’s life, in order both to bring victory and maintain faith.

15a And so it was, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, that he worshiped.

We might have expected Gideon to rush back to the Israelite camp to organize a quick assault on the enemy, as the debilitating news spread quickly among the Midianites and the Amalekites that a dream had been interpreted to indicate that they were about to lose in warfare to the handful of Israelites camped before them. Instead, Gideon takes the time to worship the LORD.

Application

Undoubtedly, some believers today would like to receive dreams and their interpretations from the LORD. But that is to forget that the redemption of the elect has made undoubted progress since the time of Gideon. We have ‘a more sure word of prophecy’ (2 Peter 1:19), for it is a reality, not a dream, that Jesus has come into this world, vanquishing all His, and our, enemies. We already know what Gideon had to learn in his unique circumstances. Should that not encourage us to worship Gideon’s God? The accomplishment of the promised victory is not long in coming.

III. THE LORD GAVE A VICTORY OVER MIDIAN (15b-25).

15b He returned to the camp of Israel, and said, “Arise, for the LORD has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand.” 16 Then he divided the three hundred men *into* three companies, and he put a trumpet into every man’s hand, with empty pitchers, and torches inside the pitchers. 17 And he said to them, “Look at me and do likewise; watch, and when I come to the edge of the camp you shall do as I do: 18 When I blow the trumpet, I and all who *are* with me, then you also blow the trumpets on every side of the whole camp, and say, ‘*The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!*’”

Preparations for the defeat of the Midianites moved forward quickly. Gideon **returned to the camp of Israel**, where he delivered a brief pep-talk: **Arise, for the LORD has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand**. The men knew that it was impossible for them to defeat the enormous throng spread before them. But they acquiesced

13. William Foxwell Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956), p. 132.

to the command of their leader—who must have been perceived as the most extraordinary of leaders by his men—depending on the promise of the LORD to bring them victory. **The three hundred men** were divided into **three companies**, which has been a traditional military practice throughout the millennia, in order to increase the effectiveness of the attack and to decrease the danger if part of the army fades during the battle. Each man was given three items: a trumpet, an empty pitcher, and a burning torch inside the pitcher. Their hands are now full, with no fighting instruments in either of them. They must have wondered, what could Gideon hope to accomplish in fighting this way, except our annihilation?

Although Gideon was instructing them to fight in a most unorthodox way, he was not expecting more of his men than he expected of himself. **Look at me and do likewise.** The decisive moment for attack would be announced **when I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me.** The noise of all the men trumpeting at once would be impressive, as would their shout, “**The sword of the LORD and of Gideon.**” In the United States, there is an upscale department store called Lord & Taylor. It was not founded by a Mr. Lord and a Mr. Taylor, as one might suppose, but by Mr. Taylor, who was a Christian and wanted his business to put God first. Hence, the name of the store. So, too, the Israelites gave the LORD top-billing, even as they recognized in their slogan the reality that General Gideon was crucial to their success in battle.

Application

The best leader leads from the front, as did Gideon. He convinced his men to fight in a most unexpected and intriguing way. Perhaps by the time they inched up to the Midianite camp, they had some idea of the battle plan and could appreciate its wisdom as much as its creator did. But the three hundred, like Gideon, showed faith in the LORD, just as they expressed confidence in their general. The best leader leads by humbling recognizing his dependence upon God, as Gideon did, and even as Jesus did, who was no less a personage than the Son of God! The church and the nation need leaders like Gideon, and followers like his soldiers.

19 So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outpost of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just as they had posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers that were in their hands. 20 Then the three companies blew the

trumpets and broke the pitchers—they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing—and they cried, “The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!” 21 And every man stood in his place all around the camp; and the whole army ran and cried out and fled. 22 When the three hundred blew the trumpets, the LORD set every man’s sword against his companion throughout the whole camp, and the army fled to Beth Acacia, toward Zererah, as far as the border of the Abel Meholah, by Tabbah.

Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outpost of the camp, poised to commence the attack. They arrived **at the beginning of the middle watch, just as they had posted the watch.** Such a time—at the darkness of midnight—was a bad time to attack if the opposition were alert, an excellent time if they were skittish. One third of the Israelites **blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers**, and the other two companies of one hundred men each joined them in doing so. Altogether, the three hundred shouted, “**The sword of the LORD and of Gideon.**” Most soldiers would have fled in panic at the employment of such a ridiculous attack tactic, but **every man stood in his place all around the camp.**

It was, in fact, the Midianites who panicked, with the sudden noises and lights creating the impression of a much, much larger force surrounding them.¹⁴ And so **the whole [Midianite] army ran and cried out and fled.** Three reactions are described: running, yelling, and fleeing, each of them appropriate to an army being suddenly routed in the dead of night. Moreover, **the LORD set every man’s sword against his companion throughout the camp**, making clear through editorial comment about which sword was really being wielded in this battle! Undoubtedly, the Midianites’ camels joined in the confused flight, although they are not mentioned in the text. The Midianites naturally moved in the direction from which they had come, toward the Jordan River, but the precise locations of the places mentioned in verse 22, **Beth Acacia, toward Zererah, as far as the border of the Abel Meholah, by Tabbah**, are unknown.

Application

The high point of Gideon’s and Israel’s faith in that time period had been reached. The Midianites and the Amalekites had been routed from their camp, driven away towards the edges of Israelite territory. The sword of the LORD (and of Gideon) has been exercised well. God and His people have worked together to accomplish His

14. Daniel I. Block, *Judges, Ruth* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, c1999), p. 283.

purposes in His covenant people. Faith in action is a powerful sword in the hands of the Almighty God and no more so than in the life of our blessed Redeemer.

DOWN FROM THE MOUNTAIN TOP, 7:23–8:32.

The ascent to Ben Nevis, Mount Washington, or the Matterhorn can be difficult, even life-threatening, but the descent is often even more treacherous. What is true in mountain-climbing is also true in our spiritual lives. Gideon had led the people of Israel through various difficulties and surprising providences to a most unexpected and wonderful victory over their enemies, the Midianites and their allies, the Amalekites. But no sooner had the sword of the LORD and of Gideon won that battle than Gideon and the Israelites began to come tumbling down the mountainside in a series of disasters for their faith.

I. FIGHTERS RECRUITED (7:23–8:3).

23 And the men of Israel gathered together from Naphtali, Asher, and all Manasseh, and pursued the Midianites.

The battle was not over. The danger remained very real that the Midianite commanders could regroup their troops after the initial panic subsided and turn on the Israelites; the Midianites still had a numerical superiority, although they may not have known that. But how would Israel continue to fight against their enemies? Would it be through continuing faith in the sword of the LORD? No, they turned instead to their own swords. Their forces were augmented by the return of many of the men dismissed earlier, **gathered together from Naphtali, Asher, and all Manasseh**, northern tribes whose soldiers could arrive promptly to enter the battle. And worse compromise with human self-sufficiency was to come quickly.

24 Then Gideon sent messengers throughout all the mountains of Ephraim, saying, “Come down against the Midianites, and seize from them the watering places as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan.” Then all the men of Ephraim gathered together and seized the watering places as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan. 25 And they captured two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb they killed at the winepress of Zeeb. They pursued Midian and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side of the Jordan.

It is possible to read verse 23 as an enthusiastic, unthinking desire on the part of three tribes to get involved in the rout of the enemy, leaving Gideon and his men as untouched by lack of faith. However, the next verse makes clear that Gideon himself sent messengers throughout all the mountains of Ephraim seeking recruits. Ephraim had not originally been invited to attack the Midianites (6:33–35), so the appeal shows Gideon breaking away from the successful formula God had developed and used. The message that the heralds brought to the Ephraimites was simple: join us and seize the Jordan River crossing as far as Beth Barah (its location unknown), in order to stop the Midianite retreat and bottle them up for final annihilation. The men of Ephraim responded positively to the appeal and did as they were requested. The Ephraimites captured two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb—bearers of appropriate names for military leaders, “Raven” and “Wolf” respectively—who were then executed at locations which came to bear their names, the rock of Oreb and the winepress of Zeeb, places of remembrance for a victory of God’s people over their enemies.

8:1 Now the men of Ephraim said to him, “Why have you done this to us by not calling us when you went to fight with the Midianites?” And they reprimanded him sharply.

The men of Ephraim were happy to have been able to join the fight—with its implicit promise of booty to come—but they were cross with Gideon. What he had done to the Midianites was not their concern; what he had done to them was. If they had been so zealous when all seemed headed towards disaster for the people of God, why did the Ephraimites volunteer to battle the enemy now? Instead of rejoicing in the great victory Israel had experienced by the sword of the Lord, they were grumpy and accusatory.

2 So he said to them, “What have I done now in comparison with you? Is not the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? 3 God has delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb. And what was I able to do in comparison with you?” Then their anger toward him subsided when he said that.

Instead of defending the LORD’s way of defeating the Midianites, Gideon answered the Ephraimite complaints with a beguiling compliment, stated in four ways,

including three questions. He asked first, **What have I done in comparison with you?** Obviously much more, but phrasing it in this way flatters the men of Ephraim into thinking that they had, in fact, done more than, or at least as much as, Gideon. Then Gideon uses what may have been a proverb, querying, *Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?* Gideon came from Abiezer (6:11), and this clan was nothing compared with the important tribe of Ephraim; the size and quality of their respective grape harvests proved it. Third, Gideon observed to the Ephraimites that God had **delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb**. The Ephraimites had the real trophies, the Midianite princes **Oreb and Zeeb**, given them not by Gideon but by God Himself, which may have struck the Israelites more as a religious pleasantry than a firm affirmation. And finally, Gideon virtually repeated the first query, **What was I able to do in comparison with you?** This approach may be praised as diplomatic (“A soft answer turns away wrath,” Prov. 15:1) but it was disingenuous as well in this case.

Application

Gideon is stumbling down the proverbial mountainside, as are several other tribes of the people of God. We always face the danger of zealous activity without thoughtful reflection. Especially in times of danger or excitement or confusion, we can follow our hearts without listening to our heads. Israel could not bring itself to continue to fight by faith. We face the same temptation, even if we have begun well. Moreover, our Saviour shows how to speak winsomely to others without falling into falsehood at several points during His earthly ministry.

II. REQUESTS REBUFFED (4–9).

4 When Gideon came to the Jordan, he and the three hundred men who *were* with him crossed over, exhausted but still in pursuit. 5 Then he said to the men

of Succoth, “Please give loaves of bread to the people who follow me, for they are exhausted, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian.”

Free from the distraction posed by the now-satisfied Ephraimites, Gideon and the three hundred men who *were* with him crossed over the Jordan River. They were exhausted, as was to be expected, but still in pursuit of their enemies. However, the Israelites were entering into increasingly hostile territory, with their supply lines (if any) stretched thin. Gideon hoped for help from the Israelites who lived scattered in certain parts of the Transjordan region, such as Succoth, a town of the tribe of Gad. His request was simple: **loaves of bread**. It appeared that Gideon thought that he was just about to catch up with **Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian**, which proved later to be true. If only his men’s strength could be restored through the generosity of their fellow Israelites!

6 And the leaders of Succoth said, “Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hand, that we should give bread to your army?” 7 So Gideon said, “For this cause, when the LORD has delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers!”

The leaders of Succoth knew that the Israelite victory was partial and, exposed as their town was to marauders from various directions, refused to help Gideon and his men until the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna had been chopped off and the Midianite threat eliminated.¹⁵ Gideon responds to their refusal with petulance: **When the LORD has delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, then I will tear your flesh**. Gideon’s response was understandable, but not excusable. No useful purpose was served by turning on his fellow Israelites, when there remained so much of the Promised Land to be possessed. Gideon is acting now more like a pagan warlord than a godly judge.

8 Then he went up from there to Penuel and spoke to them in the same way. And the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered. 9 So he also spoke to the men of Penuel, saying, “When I come back in peace, I will tear down this tower!”

Going on a little further, Gideon and his men came to Penuel (or Peniel), another Gadite settlement.¹⁶ A similar request to the one made in Succoth resulted in a similar rebuff. Gideon promised to bring calamity on

15. The hand was considered a symbol of power and might (in Joshua 8:20, “hand” is even translated “power”), and so it was considered appropriate to cut off the hands of conquered kings as a sign of their defeat. In this context, the unique finger rings of royalty would have identified the severed extremity and thus confirmed the accuracy of the claim to victory.

16. S. Merrill identifies Penuel with a site six kilometers east of Succoth on two hills named Tulul ed-Dahab. *East of the Jordan: a record of travel and observation in the countries of Moab, Gilead and Bashan during the years 1875–1877* (New-York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1881), pp. 390–392. It was where Jacob earlier had wrestled with the angel (Genesis 32:30,31).

this town as well: When I come back in peace, I will tear down this tower!

Application

The men of Ephraim, Succoth, and Penuel are pragmatic men, rather than men of principle, unwilling to do the right no matter at what cost to themselves. But Gideon is no better, angrily promising revenge on those who do not immediately do what he requests. A godly leader would have behaved differently ... like Jesus Christ did when humans disappointed Him in His times of need.

III. VICTORY REACHED (10–12).

10 Now Zebah and Zalmunna were at Karkor, and their armies with them, about fifteen thousand, all who were left of all the army of the people of the East; for one hundred and twenty thousand men who drew the sword had fallen. 11 Then Gideon went up by the road of those who dwell in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah; and he attacked the army while the camp felt secure. 12 When Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued them; and he took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and routed the whole army.

No doubt some days had passed since the original rout of the Midianites related in chapter 7. Their two kings, **Zebah and Zalmunna**, had stopped their demoralized troops at **Karkor**; all that were left after the hasty retreat from Israelite territory were **fifteen thousand** soldiers. Perhaps they just could not go any further; we are told that they thought that they were far enough east to be beyond the reach of Gideon and his now-expanded forces. Gideon led his men on a caravan route beyond **Nobah and Jogbehah**, the latter a town of the tribe of Gad (Numb. 32:35), located above one thousand meters in altitude and today known as Jubeihāt, ten kilometers northwest of Amman. Both armies had descended into the Jordan River valley and climbed over a kilometer in altitude and were no doubt truly exhausted by this point.

Gideon attacked the army and **Zebah and Zalmunna fled**. Gideon pursued them ... **took the two kings ... and routed the whole army**. Now Gideon's victory was complete. He had not permitted himself to be deflected by criticism or opposition from fellow Israelites, but had doggedly pursued his mandate to defeat the Midianites and Amalekites. For the last time in the Book of Judges, Gideon appears in a favorable light.

Application

The Midianites had expected victory over the people of God, because they saw them as mere people, not as those favoured by the help of the Almighty God. Even after the enormous, initial Israelite victory, they came to the place where they felt secure. 'Let him who thinks he stands, take care lest he falls!' (1 Cor. 10:12) Satan saw the cross as his greatest victory, but it became the crux of his defeat.

IV. REVENGE REALIZED (13–17).

13 Then Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle, from the Ascent of Heres. 14 And he caught a young man of the men of Succoth and interrogated him; and he wrote down for him the leaders of Succoth and its elders, seventy-seven men. 15 Then he came to the men of Succoth and said, "Here are Zebah and Zalmunna, about whom you ridiculed me, saying, 'Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hand, that we should give bread to your weary men?'" 16 And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth. 17 Then he tore down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city.

Having defeated the enemy and chased him from Israelite territory, Gideon and his men begin the long trek home. They captured a young man of the town of Succoth, and, finding him to be literate at a time when reading and writing were not commonly-possessed skills, induced him to write down the names of the **seventy-seven men** who ruled it.¹⁷ Gideon convened this group and presented before them, not the hands of **Zebah and Zalmunna**, but the kings themselves. The moment must have been as delicious for Gideon as it was embarrassing to the elders. In an act of rough justice, they were whipped using **thorns of the wilderness and briers**, as promised in verse 7, but not, apparently, executed.¹⁸ **He taught they men of Succoth** quite a lesson!

Even worse awaited **the men of the town of Penuel**. They were killed—the method is not specified—and

17. We are not told the details of this writing, but it could have been accomplished using "a sharp-pointed instrument to scratch the words upon a fragment of pottery or a piece of shale, a method frequently employed for much of the Old Testament period" Arthur E. Cundall, *Judges: An Introduction and Commentary* (London: Tyndale Press, 1968), p. 118.

18. Some commentators have argued, from a perceived parallel to the sort of the men of Penuel, that the elders of Succoth were tortured and executed. See, for instance, George Bush, *Notes on Judges* (Minneapolis: James & Klock, 1976), pp. 110, 112.

Gideon **tore down the tower**, leaving Penuel very open to attack, without men to defend it or a tower to which to flee when attacked.¹⁹

Application

Gideon demonstrates a certain grim follow-through, meting out a form of justice in faithfulness to earlier promises. But as difficult as the situation was that the leaders of Succoth and Penuel exacerbated for Gideon, did the punishment fit the crime? Is Gideon not acting more like the leaders of the pagan nations than the leader of the people of God? It is not enough to win for the Lord; the means used to do so must be consistent with the ends. Our Lord could have responded in a similar way to those who crossed Him, but never did.

V. KINGS RUN THROUGH (18–21).

18 And he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, “What kind of men *were they* whom you killed at Tabor?” So they answered, “As you *are*, so *were* they; each one resembled the son of a king.” 19 Then he said, “They *were* my brothers, the sons of my mother. As the Lord lives, if you had let them live, I would not kill you.” 20 And he said to Jether his firstborn, “Rise, kill them!” But the youth would not draw his sword; for he was afraid, because he *was* still a youth. 21 So Zebah and Zalmunna said, “Rise yourself, and kill us; for as a man *is*, so *is* his strength.” So Gideon arose and killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and took the crescent ornaments that *were* on their camels’ necks.

The bloodletting continued, although no longer directed toward the people of God. Gideon confronted the Midianite kings **Zebah and Zalmunna** with a multiple killing **at Tabor** in which they had been implicated. Their frank response indicated to Gideon that they had killed his own **brothers**. If the kings had not done so, Gideon claimed that he would not execute them, even though they no doubt must have killed others in the course of the series of battles between the Midianites and the Israelites. He confirms his promise with an oath, **as the Lord lives**, whose sincerity can be questioned.

Gideon gave Jether his firstborn the opportunity to prove his manliness, but the young man could not steel himself sufficiently to thrust through the two Midianite royals. In a moment of surprising swagger, they urged

Gideon: Rise yourself, and kill us. Gideon was not the type to need much encouragement to act the role of military tough-guy, and executed the two with his sword. As a final symbol of his victory over them and all that they represented, Gideon **took the crescent ornaments that were on their camels’ backs**.

Application

Gideon seems to be zigging and zagging between mercy and judgement, with no great consistency nor bringing any moral clarity to the situation. Moreover, the mingling of the personal and the corporate does not help. A more deliberative process, with checks and balances on the exercise of the power of the sword, would have no doubt led to a more satisfactory course of events. Without an established government implementing a well-defined set of civil laws, Israel continued its sad experience of lawlessness and anarchy. Israel needs to recognize a king ...the LORD, and His anointed king. Similarly, all the nations today need to recognize this Messiah in Jesus of Nazareth, into whose hands ‘all authority in heaven and on earth has been given’ (Matthew 28:18).

VI. GREED REVEALED (22–32).

22 Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, “Rule over us, both you and your son, and your grandson also; for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian.” 23 But Gideon said to them, “I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD shall rule over you.” 24 Then Gideon said to them, “I would like to make a request of you, that each of you would give me the earrings from his plunder.” For they had golden earrings, because they *were* Ishmaelites. 25 So they answered, “We will gladly give *them*.” And they spread out a garment, and each man threw into it the earrings from his plunder. 26 Now the weight of the gold earrings that he requested was one thousand seven hundred *shekels* of gold, besides the crescent ornaments, pendants, and purple robes, which *were* on the kings of Midian, and besides the chains that *were* around their camel’s necks.

It was almost inevitable: after Gideon had led the Israelites to such a great victory over their enemies, the people of God asked him to rule over them as the beginning of a dynasty: **Rule over us, both you and your son, and your grandson also**. Gideon refused the offer, for **the LORD shall rule over you**. This pious phrase—true as far as it goes—actually hid a serious misunderstanding

19. Because Penuel controlled an important pass, Jeroboam rebuilt the town in the 10th century BC (1 Kings 12:25).

on Gideon's part. He had forgotten that the LORD usually uses means to exercise His authority, specifically, men in positions of authority in family, church, and state, the three institutions which He has established as universally-necessary for the good of human society. Perhaps Gideon's refusal was more mundane: were those offering him the kingship truly in the position to do so? Only some of the tribes were involved in the battles against the Midianites and so it is unlikely. Perhaps Gideon did not wish to create a situation which would have significantly divided the Israelites, perhaps even provoked a civil war. It is fascinating to read later in verse 31 that he named one of his sons Abimelech, which means "my father a king", suggesting that Gideon may have eventually rued the day he turned down the offer of royalty.

But Gideon was not above trying to benefit from the success of his leadership in another way. He did not need a kingship, but cold cash would do very well instead, so he requested each victorious soldier to give me the earrings from his plunder. It seems that the Ishmaelites, an alternative way of describing the Midianites, had golden earrings. And so some of the plunder of the battles was these earrings. The soldiers spread out a garment, and each man threw into it the earrings from his plunder. So extensive had been the victory that they weighed one thousand seven hundred shekels of gold, a very considerable sum. And that was not counting the crescent ornaments, pendants, and ... chains which also were of value, and the purple robes, which were on the kings of Midian.

Application

Gideon may have been modest, but he was certainly greedy. He was more than willing to take advantage of the victory the LORD had given as if it were his own. And the Israelites' attitude toward him was just as false and dangerous. Gideon's faith was real, but shallow and uninformed, a potentially dangerous combination which the LORD nonetheless is pleased to overlook in sending peace for a time to His people. But the seeds of later disaster have been sown in this unstable environment. What a contrast Gideon has become to the Judge Who gave up everything for the sake of His people: all the pleasures of heaven, the praise of the crowds of angels and glorified saints, and the freedom from temptation, suffering, and death.

VII. WORSHIP REPLACED (27–32).

27 Then Gideon made it into an ephod and set it up in his city, Ophrah. And all Israel played the harlot with it there. It became a snare to Gideon and to his house.

The quality of Gideon's leadership continued to decline, as he fabricated **an ephod and set it up in his city, Ophrah**. The ephod had an important place in the religious ceremonies of the ancient Jews, being worn by the priests over their clothes when in the service of the house of God (Exodus 39:2–7). But Gideon had no good reason for making and wearing such a garment; the LORD had specifically forbidden any form of worship of Himself apart from His express command (Ex. 20:4–6).²⁰ Such worship always has a downward tendency, and so we are not surprised to read that the ephod **became a snare to Gideon and his house**.

28 Thus Midian was subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted their heads no more. And the country was quiet for forty years in the days of Gideon. 29 Then Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house. 30 Gideon had seventy sons who were his own offspring, for he had many wives. 31 And his concubine who was in Shechem also bore him a son, whose name he called Abimelech. 32 Now Gideon the son of Joash died at a good old age, and was buried in the tomb of Joash his father, in Ephrah of the Abiezrites.

The Midianites were not destroyed, of course, but they were **subdued before the children of Israel**. They did not again attack Israel, but they were certainly known to the people of God centuries later (see Is. 60:6 in the late eighth century and Hab. 3:7 about a century later). And so **the country was quiet for forty years in the days of Gideon**.

Victory over enemies accomplished, the elder statesman returned to his home, where he acted like an ancient potentate, **for he had many wives** and, inevitably in such a household, **seventy sons who were his own offspring**. But it was the son of a **concubine who was in Shechem** who is alone mentioned; why that was will become obvious in the next chapter. It is sometimes

20. It is often argued that, as long as there is no command against a certain form of worship in the Scriptures, it is permitted. But there is no command against making an ephod for use in worship by any believer and yet such an activity is obviously being condemned here. Only a blanket command not to worship in any way not commanded by God in His Word is a sufficient explanation of what we find here.

argued that polygamy was permitted in the Old Testament, since so many of Israel's leaders had multiple wives. However, God had created one man and one woman for each other (Genesis 2:21–25), a pattern to be followed throughout all generations as a creation ordinance. The Old Testament laws about marriage were solely concerned with such exclusive marriage relationships. Polygamy was expressly forbidden even (especially?) to kings in Deut. 17:14–17.

Then Gideon the son of Joash died at a good old age. Out of respect for his body, it was buried in the tomb of Joash his father, in Ephrah of the Abiezrites.

Application

Worship that God has not commanded always has a downward tendency, no matter how movingly it is advocated by its supporters, as what is still forbidden today becomes acceptable tomorrow. Jesus told us in our own age to observe all that He had commanded us (Matthew

28:20), which means nothing if is not understood to forbid observing anything He has not commanded us.

And once believers feel free to worship in ways God has not commanded in His Word, they become more ready to accept immoral practices in other aspects of life, as the narrative seeks to demonstrate by mentioning Gideon's polygamy for the first time at this point. And no wonder, for the social implications of polygamy are great: a scarcity of marriageable women, leading to an increase in crime and prostitution; and the glorifying of sensuality.

Gideon had found it easier to serve God in a crisis than in day-to-day life. Only the Word of God would be honest enough to describe a hero of faith in the way that the Book of Judges does here. Gideon began well but finished poorly. And, as a later king was to say, "Après moi, le déluge!" So it was with Gideon, but it could have been so much different, if his faith had informed all of his life rather than just his desire to protect the people of God from their enemies.■

In Brief: The following appeared in *The Edinburgh Christian Instructor*, New Series, No. XLVII, Vol. IV, No. XI (Nov. 1835), pp. 758–759. Thomas M'Crie (1772–1835) was a minister of what became the Original Secession Church. See the previous obituary in this issue. This, the obituary, and the material by M'Crie on the Marrow Controversy all come from rare and still generally unavailable issues of *The Edinburgh Christian Instructor*.

For *The Christian Instructor*
Lines on the Death of Dr. McCrie

Weep Zion, weep, a faithful watchman falls,
Skilful, in troublous times, to build they walls,
And tell they tow'rs, repelling every foe,
Within, without, that seeks thine overthrow.
Learned in sacred, and in classic lore,
McCrie the great, and good, is now no more.
With his own Knox, and Melville shall his name,
Be ever dear to Scotia, and to fame.
Foremost in battle, 'gainst the insidious foe,
He stood with Thomson, now alas! laid low.
O tell it not in Gath, nor Ashkelon,
Lest haughty foes should boast of vict'ry won.

That hand that guided oft the classic pen,
In cold in death, nor e'er shall write again;
That tongue so eloquent of late to tell
The Church's triumphs o'er the pow'rs of Hell,
Is mute for ever,—that benignant eye
Has felt the sentence, "Thou shalt surely die."
But he shall live in each illustrious page,
Proclaiming heavenly truth, to every age

Of man, from worse than Egypt's bondage free,
The Reformation's glorious light and liberty.
And what fell mortal, shall immortal rise,
To live in yonder realms above the skies,
To tell of wisdom manifold, divine,
Th' incarnate God, in whom all glories shine;
While principalities within the vail,
In deep amazement listen to the tale,
And all the heavenly hosts, with loud acclaim,
Sing Hallelujahs to His honoured name.

Weep then, O Zion weep, with downcast eye,
And hear, with contrite heart, the deep drawn sigh,
Iniquity abounds, love waxes cold,
The faithful fails, the enemy is bold.
But He who holds the stars in His right hand,
Has sworn that all his purposes shall stand;
And while he calls from earth each chosen one,
A Hamilton, M'Gillivray, and Patterson,
Ay, and McCrie, He'll other shepherds raise,
To feed his flock, and sing their Maker's praise.■

University Studies and Ordination to the Ministry of George Gillespie (1613–1648)

By Chris Coldwell

History and accounts of Second Reformation divine George Gillespie portray him as somewhat of a child prodigy.¹ He came by this naturally judging from his Simson ancestry on his mother's side. However, since he was so young (not yet 17), some have questioned that he could have received his M.A. at St. Andrews in 1629, but rather must have entered his studies at that time.² If one compares Gillespie to other contemporaries slightly younger, it does not seem so unusual. The well-known and clearly gifted John Owen (1616–1683), took his B.A. in 1632 at about age 16 and took his M.A. in 1635 at about 19 years of age.³ Andrew Gray (died. 1653) graduated M.A. at age 19 as well.⁴ And it was not unusual to advance students at young ages and quickly at this period. “The students were mere boys, for it was customary to enter college at the age of 13, 14, or 15. Gilbert Burnet—rather a precocious child—graduated at 14.”⁵

However, in this case, one does not have to rely on generalities and comparisons. In 2012, a collation of

manuscript data on graduates of Saint Andrews University was published. In it, there is a record for George Gillespie, which states that he matriculated from an unspecified college in 1625/26 (age 12 or 13) to begin his M.A. studies, and received the degree in August 1629: “minus potens” (thesis). Divinity student 1630/31.⁶ This record of his studies at St. Andrews proves the reports that George was somewhat of a wunderkind.

As for the course of his education, while it was not until 1636 that schools under the control of the parish churches in Kirkcaldy Presbytery were founded, George probably would have attended the grammar school at Kirkcaldy started by the burgh in 1582. By 1588 “the burgh had begun to build a school ‘on the common expensis’ and had provided its schoolmaster with a salary.”⁷ The burgh schools beyond the university towns functioned more like the parish schools, which sent students directly to the university.⁸ Unfortunately, there are gaps in the record as to who would

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1. This material in slightly different form first appeared in *The Shorter Writings of George Gillespie*, volume 1, Naphtali Press Special Editions V (Naphtali Press and Reformation Heritage Books, 2021). New and less known information is presented in this first extensive gathering of facts about George Gillespie's education and ordination to the ministry at the commencement of the Second Reformation in Scotland. See Gillespie's portrait on the inside front cover.

2. See George Gillespie, *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 7 (1908), p. 1238, and Kyle D. Holfelder's article in the new *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Both appear to rely on Hew Scott, *Faṣti Ecclesiae Scoticanæ*, new edition, vol. 1 (1915), p. 58.

3. DNB, vol. 14 (1909), p. 1318.

4. *Faṣti Ecclesiae Scoticanæ*, vol. 3 (1920), p. 465.

5. G. D. Henderson, *Religious Life in Seventeenth-Century Scotland* (Cambridge University Press, 1937, repr., 2011), p. 120.

6. Robert N. Smart, *Alphabetical Register of the Students, Graduates and Officials of the University of St Andrews 1579–1747* (St. Andrews: University of St. Andrews Library, 2012), p. 218. “Note that the B.A.

is simply a step on the way to the M.A. and was not regarded as a degree in its own right.” There were “two rates of payment—the ‘potentes’ and the ‘minus potentes.’” This was based on the ability to pay, with the higher classes and nobility in the first category. Most ministers' sons were classed “minus potentes.” “The fact of graduation as master of arts may come from the graduation roll, the bursar's book or the presence of the name in the printed graduation theses or a combination of all three.” “Printed graduation theses in arts survive between 1603 and 1703, but whether they were issued every session is unknown.” Smart, pp. viii, x.

7. James M. Beale, *A History of the Burgh and Parochial Schools of Fife* (Scottish Council for Research in Education, 1983), p. 5. “1582.—The Bailies and Council of Kirkcaldy arrange with the minister, Mr. David Spens, to open a day school in Kirkcaldy.” Lachlan Macbean, *The Kirkcaldy Burgh Records: with the annals of Kirkcaldy, the town's charter, extracts from original documents, and a description of the ancient burgh* (1908), p. 36. George's father John replaced the aged Spens in first charge in 1625. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

8. John Strong, *A History of Secondary Education in Scotland: an Account of Scottish Secondary Education from Early Times to the Education Act of 1908* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), pp. 106, 141.

have been schoolmaster during Gillespie's school-age years. Thomas Melville held the position from 1607 to January 20, 1613. Then the record is blank for all of Gillespie's early years until 1619 or 1620 when he would have been seven. John Row, second son of the minister of Carnock and historian of the same name, "was elected schoolmaster of that burgh by the Kirk Session, and his appointment was confirmed by the Town Council, 3rd November, 1619."⁹ He had been the Doctor of Latin previously at the famous grammar school of Stirling (1617–1619), where John Livingstone had attended when William Wallace was the schoolmaster (1612–1617).¹⁰ Row was at Kirkcaldy at least till July 8, 1622. After that, there is a gap in the record for who taught the school. He may have had Gillespie in his classes for at least eighteen months, and then it is unclear who taught the school

till George entered St. Andrews in 1625 at age 12 or 13.¹¹ In *Religious Life in Seventeenth-Century Scotland*, G. D. Henderson indicates that the general type of studies in these schools was similar to that described in 1644 of the High School of Edinburgh.

During a five years' course instruction was given, beginning with the rudiments from Despanter (interpolated), then the Syntax of Erasmus and some Corderius and Cicero, then more Cicero and some Terence and Ovid. There followed Buchanan's Psalms and Virgil and Horace, while in the final year study concentrated upon Rhetoric, Facility of expression in Latin prose and verse was expected.¹²

After grammar school, Gillespie entered an unspecified college at St. Andrews, from which he graduated as noted in 1625/26 at age 12 or 13. This means that he would have accomplished the four or five years of grammar school and the normal four years of university studies at a greatly accelerated rate, and probably beginning from a very early age, before the age of eight or nine prescribed by a 1496 statute regarding the eldest sons of landowners and Scottish barons in 1496.¹³ As to his university studies, Henderson writes:

The school course prepared directly for the university where Latin was taken for granted, and Greek formed the basis of the philosophical studies. Hebrew was also sometimes studied.... Rhetoric and logic and the art of disputation and a little mathematics soon called for attention, to be followed by more Aristotle—metaphysics, ethics, politics, pneumatics, perhaps even some anatomy such as could be learned from mere lectures, and in the fourth and final year physics and geography and astronomy as these were then understood.

The students were much occupied in taking down and copying out and closely studying the Latin lectures. Divinity students had to submit to the Presbyteries their versions of the professors' dictates and sustain examination upon them.¹⁴ There were further the disputations, private and public—the elaborate logical defence of theses after the method of all mediaeval academic discussions. As a mental discipline this practice certainly had some justification, for it tended to develop orderly thinking, logical accuracy, quick judgment, clear expression, fluent utterance, clever criticism, ingenious argument.¹⁵

Gillespie's student record as noted has "thesis" recorded

9. Andrew Fleming Hutchison, *History of the High School of Stirling* (Stirling, 1904), 50n1, 51n1. It is noted in the Wodrow Society edition of the history by John's father, John Row, that his son was then schoolmaster in the winter of 1619. See John Row, minister at Carnock, *The History of the Kirk of Scotland from the year 1588 to August 1637* (Edinburgh: Printed for the Wodrow Society, [1842]), p. xiii. Some apparent beginning and end dates of June 26, 1620, and July 20, 1622, are given in John Duncan, edited and revised by Jamie Reid-Baxter, *Scottish Schools and Schoolmasters 1560–1633* (Scottish History Society, The Boydell Press, 2006), p. 325.

10. Hutchison, *ibid.*

11. "It is not known how long he remained in Kirkcaldy, but for some years prior to his appointment to the Grammar School of Perth [1632] he was tutor to George, son of the first Earl of Kinnoul, Chancellor of the Kingdom." *Ibid.*, p. 51. Duncan et al. seem to preclude Row's being in Kirkcaldy after July 1622.

12. Henderson, pp. 119–120. Henderson cites: W. Steven, *The History of the High School of Edinburgh* (1849), p. 130. *English Popish Ceremonies* has many classical references (see p. xlii).

13. See the old Scots rendering of the statute in Strong, pp. 30–31. One modernized rendering reads that, "all barons and freeholders who are of substance should put their eldest sons and heirs to schools from the age of eight or nine; they should remain in grammar schools till they are competently educated and have a perfect knowledge of Latin, and thereafter remain at schools of arts and law so that they may have the knowledge and understanding of the laws." Joanna Kopaczky, *The Legal Language of Scottish Burghs, Standardization and Lexical Bundles 1300–1560* (Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 281.

14. No records of this appear in the Kirkcaldy minutes for George Gillespie. It may be that Gillespie's examinations were done in the Presbytery of St. Andrews since he was a divinity student at St. Mary's. Jack C. Whytock, "An Educated Clergy," *Scottish Theological Education and Training in the Kirk and Secession, 1560–1850*, Studies in Christian History and Thought (Paternoster/Wipf & Stock, 2007), p. 47. The Minutes for St. Andrews Presbytery are not extant from 1606 to 1640. University of St Andrews Special Collections, GB 227 CH2/1132, Minutes, 1585–1605, 1641–1687 and 1693–1907; Scroll minutes, 1765–1774; Separate register, 1745–1932; Register of parochial benefices, 1801.

15. Henderson goes on to criticize this manner of education for creating intellectual duellists and the kind of literature and preaching of the period. Henderson, *ibid.*, pp. 120–121.

after his name. These theses or oral exams where one student argued for and one against the thesis took place at the end of the final year of studies for the M.A. Many were often published and contain the students' names. They also give an idea of what the students were expected to know at the end of their studies.¹⁶ "These theses were part of the curriculum in all Scottish universities. At the end of the academic year, final year students took part in public disputations presided over by their regent. The theses that were discussed were eventually published under the name of the regent and included the students' names."

In general, these sets of theses contain three philosophical sections, respectively logical, ethical, and physical theses, with sometimes an astronomical section added. Sometimes the physical section comes before the ethical section. Following the scholastic practice of teaching, the topics are mainly drawn from the Aristotelian corpus, although the ethical sections are sometimes closer to humanistic topics. Thus the logical sections discuss mainly themes from the *Categories* and, less frequently, from the *De interpretatione* and the *Posterior Analytics*. More importantly, after 1620, a number of theses include a section on metaphysics.... Although the printed theses very seldom contain the complete arguments supporting the various theses, these graduation theses provide a detailed picture of the doctrinal landscape in the different universities [in Scotland].¹⁷

The divinity course was also normally a four-year course of study like the Master of Arts. However, this was fairly flexible at St. Andrews. "Divinity students did not undertake a fixed period of study at the college, but appear to have spent as many years as they either deemed necessary or could pay for, with students staying from one to six years...."¹⁸ At the new foundation of St. Mary's in 1579 under Andrew Melville,¹⁹ five professors of theology were instituted, which despite rejections under Episcopal domination of some of what he instituted, the basic foundation remained intact. There was a professor of Hebrew, two of the New Testament, another of Systematic Theology, and the principal held the chair of Systematic Theology.²⁰ It is unknown what specific courses George Gillespie took,²¹ but it would likely have been what was thought necessary by the Presbytery of Kirkcaldy, which elected him bursar of theology.

From the Reformation forward, through, and after George Gillespie's lifetime, it was the custom to maintain one bursar of theology per presbytery.²² The minutes for Kirkcaldy Presbytery do not survive for the period

before April 15, 1630, and the earliest notice of his being bursar is dated May 6, 1630. It would appear that he must have been appointed shortly after taking his M.A. in August 1629, because, as Hetherington noted from the unpublished Kirkcaldy Kirk-Session Records, "The Session are content that Mr. George Gillespie shall have as much money of our Session, for his interteynment [maintenance], as Dysart gives, viz., 20 merks, being our Presbytery Bursar."

There are additional notices regarding "Georg

16. Neither of the two examples of theses for St. Andrews in 1629 that are given in the English Short Title Catalog list Gillespie's name in the short list of students. Both of them do list an exam in metaphysics. *Decermina quaedam philosophica sive Theses problemata, & disputationes logicae, ethicae, physicae, astronomicae, & metaphysicae, de quibus V.F.D.O.M. In publico philosophantium confessu, in scholis Marianae Academiae Andreae.... Praeside Ioanne Ramisæo* (Edinburgi: Excudebat Ioannes Wreittoun, 1629). *Theses philosophicae, quas propitio numine, Adolescentes celeberrimi Collegii Divi Leonardi alumni, ad Lauream Magisterialem aspirantes, in publica Philosophantium diatriba propugnabunt Andreaepoli Kalendas Augusti. Anno. 1629. Horis & loco solitis. Praeside Ioanne Wedderburno* (Edinburgi: Excudebat Ioannes Wreittoun, 1629). The only student notebook with full papers showcasing what studies of the period were like is one compiled by George Palfrey circa 1623 while at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, which among other things, indicates many of the printed books students studied at the time for their M.A. degree. The notebook with commentary and analysis is an 802-page work. See C. J. Cook, *The Palfrey Notebook: records of study in seventeenth-century Cambridge*, History of the University of Cambridge, Texts and Studies, v. 7 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011).

17. Studies in seventeenth-century Scottish philosophers and their philosophy, *History of Universities*, Volume XXIX/2, edited by Mordechai Feingold et al. (Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 97, 98. See also a discussion of these theses in Steven J. Reid, *Humanism and Calvinism: Andrew Melville and the Universities of Scotland, 1560–1625* (St Andrews Studies in Reformation History) (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011; repr., Routledge, 2016), chapter six.

18. Reid, p. 274.

19. For a detailing of Melville's *Nova Erectio*, what was embraced, what not, and the changes under Episcopal domination, see Reid and chapter 3 in Whytock.

20. "Under the new plan for St Mary's, theological instruction was to be divided among five specialist professors. While the first professor was responsible to provide instruction in Hebrew and Syriac, the second and third were to expound the Old Testament. The fourth and fifth professors were to lecture on the New Testament and Systematic Theology respectively with the principal occupying the latter position." Ernest R. Holloway III, *Andrew Melville and Humanism in Renaissance Scotland 1545–1622* (Brill, 2011), p. 187. Holloway references Ronald G. Cant, *The New Foundation of 1579 in Historical Perspective* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1979), p. 7.

21. See Rutherford's studies for comparison. John Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions, The Mind of Samuel Rutherford* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 62–70.

22. It was codified in 1641 that each presbytery maintain one bursar of theology. Walter Steuart of Pardovan, *Collections and Observations Methodized* (1709), p. 34.

Gillespie, burser,” in *The Presbytrie Booke of Kirkcaldie*,²³ but overt references to Gillespie as bursar cease after September 1631, which aligns with his ending his theological studies at St Andrews at that time. The next named bursar is his brother Patrick in 1635. The following are the entries through the appointment of Patrick (spelling and Scots modernized).

“Kirkcaldy, May 6, 1630. Desires the brethren to be careful to bring their moneys for entertaining [i.e., maintaining] the bursar of Theology, Mr. George Gillespie.” Page 8. Gillespie was seventeen at this point and his father had died three years earlier in 1627.

“Kirkcaldy, June 3, 1630. “Diligence used for the maintenance of the Bursar of Theology.” Page 8.

“Dysert, November 4, 1630. Mr Robert Cranstown delivered 10 merks²⁴ to Mr Georg Gillespie the Presbytery’s bursar of Theology.” Page 20.

“Kirkcaldy, March 17 [1631]. The Moderator delivered eight pounds²⁵ for the Kirk of Burntiland to the Bursar of Theology: received by Mr Georg Gillespie, present bursar.” Page 24.

“Dysert, September 22, 1631. Delivered by Mr. John Tullus minister at Wemyss, eight pounds for Mr George Gillespie their Bursar of Theology.” Page 31.

“Kirkcaldy, November 3, 1631. Kirkcaldy and Scoonie paid their contribution to the Bursar of Theology.” Page 32.

23. *The Presbytrie Booke of Kirkcaldie, being the record of the proceedings of that Presbytery from the 15th day of April 1630 to the 14th Day of September 1653*, edited, with introduction, notes, and index by William Stevenson, M.A., F.S.A.Scot. Minister of Auchtertool (Kirkcaldy: Published by James Burt, MDCCCC). This is a striking large folio volume of 420 pages, red ink titling, with the printing limited to 150 numbered copies. This writer’s copy is hand-numbered in blue ink as copy 74 and initialed W.S.

24. At this time, a merk was equal in coinage to 13 shillings and 4 pennies, or 120 pennies (DSL). One Scottish shilling equaled one English penny. By the 1630s, skilled workers earned one merk a day. Adam Fox, *The Press and the People: Cheap Print and Society in Scotland, 1500–1785* (Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 36. At this period, a loaf of bread cost roughly 16 pennies to the pound. A. J. S. Gibson, T. C. Smout, *Prices, Food and Wages in Scotland, 1550–1780* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 164.

25. Twenty shillings equaled 1£ Scots. James Maclaren Cobban, *The Angel of the Covenant: Memoirs of the Early Career of James Graham* (New York: R. F. Fenno & Co., 1898), p. 179.

26. Reid, p. 248. The degrees were restored “between 1606 and 1616” by Robert Howie. Ibid., p. 274.

27. David Calderwood, *The History of the Kirk of Scotland*, vol. 7 (Edinburgh: Wodrow Society, 1842), p. 222; see also vol. 8 (1842), p. 95.

“Kirkcaldy, May 10, [1632]. The Parson of Dysart and the Moderator paid the Bursar of Theology for Dysert and Burntiland.” Page 38.

“Kirkcaldy, October 18 [1632]. Mr David Anderson paid the Bursar of Theology. All the brethren paid the Bursar of Theology except Kingorn and Wemyss who promises to pay shortly.” Page 57.

“Kirkcaldy, November 29 [1632]. Mr. John Tullus paid the Bursar of Theology.” Page 58.

“Dysert, November 19 [1635]. Mr Patrick Gillespie is nominated and chosen to be Buser of Theology for this Presbytery.” Page 88.

There is no mention of the bursar of theology and payments made after October 18, 1632, and the next mention is the appointment of George’s brother Patrick as the new bursar. It would appear George continued to be paid through October of 1632. The record of his studies at St. Andrews indicates he was not enrolled to study theology after 1631. It may be the year 1632 was a period of transition or perhaps indecision on the presbytery’s part about what to do with George and what George would do with himself.

The choices that one in George’s position faced were to continue theological studies for the D.D. or go through examination and licensing and ordination by Kirkcaldy Presbytery to enter the ministry. Given what we know about Gillespie, the first course would not have been a consideration. Degrees had been banished out of the course of study by Andrew Melville, who saw “all such qualifications” as having “Catholic overtones.”²⁶ After Melville’s removal from St. Andrews in 1606, degrees were eventually brought back, and with religious trappings. Slightly preceding the Perth articles to reshape the church in 1618, James sent reforms for St. Andrews in 1616 to make St. Mary’s (the theological school) a tool for his plans for the Kirk of Scotland. Specifically for the reinstituted D.D. degree, there would be required conformity to the rites and ceremonies used in England. Indeed, in July 1616, when all but three professors at St. Andrews took the degree in the new ceremony, David Calderwood complained the “noveltie was brought in amongst us without advise or consent of the kirk.”²⁷ Along with the degrees, the holy days of Christmas, Easter, Ascension Day, and Whitsunday were forced on the university, “with the masters of St. Mary’s leading the university in services of prayer on each day.” These services had

to be a constant reminder to George about the ceremonies forced upon Scotland.²⁸

George Gillespie's intended path, therefore, must have been for the ministry, and in fact, the presbytery appointment as bursar of theology would seem to make it conclusive that this was his intent.²⁹ However, here also, his pathway was blocked by the fact that he would not submit to the required ordination by the hands of a bishop. It may be that in embarking on his studies that he believed that the Lord would clear the way for him in time. He likely knew of the few cases that received some accommodation, such as Samuel Rutherford, who entered the ministry "without giving any engagement to the bishop."³⁰ When exactly it was clear to Gillespie that he could not pursue the ministry is not possible to pinpoint exactly because he was between 18 years seven months, and 18 years 11 months of age when he finished his theological studies. It would have been highly unusual to have been ordained before reaching the age of majority of 21 years.³¹ It may well be the case that the common path of tutoring for a couple of years was not the alternate course but the usual next step to take, even for a prodigy.³² Therefore, it is likely sometime while tutoring, as conditions grew far worse, that he realized that any former leeway or willingness to accommodate had vanished under King Charles's drive to bend the Scottish Kirk to his will. It may be at that point he simply continued tutoring and determined and/or was encouraged to put his talents to use writing his *Dispute* against the ceremonies.

Thus at some point before or after the bursarship funding ceased, a place was found for Gillespie as tutor to the children of Viscount Kenmure, who though not well-reputed, yet with a desire to have regular services in keeping with "puritan presbyterianism," had set up the parish of Anwoth out of two parishes around his residence, "to which he secured the appointment of

Samuel Rutherford as Minister" by June 1627.³³ This employment may have commenced sometime in 1633 because Rutherford mentions Gillespie in a letter dated January 23, 1634, to Lady Kenmure. In it, he says he had communication from the "worthiest of the ministry of the kingdom" calling for prayer and fasting, desiring him to communicate this call to like-minded who "are afflicted to see the Lord's vineyard trodden under foot." He asked her to impart the information to Viscount Kenmure, and if she thought it needful, he would write to him "as Mr. G[eorge] G[illespie] advertise me."³⁴

In 1634 at Viscount Kenmure's death, Gillespie found employment as a tutor "to the great Presbyterian

31. Patrick Simson began ministry at age 21 (see p. 58). In Scotland from 1560 and 1660, there were 197 ministers, and the average age between graduation and their first appointment to the ministry was about nine years ([www.http://maps.mappingthescottishreformation.org/](http://maps.mappingthescottishreformation.org/)). Even Hugh Binning, another example of "an extraordinary instance of precocious learning and genius," was 24 when ordained. The singular exception is Andrew Gray, who was ordained at 20, but this was during the Protester-Resolutioner schism, and other factors undoubtedly influenced this. See the entry for Binning in Robert Chambers, *A Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen*, volume 1 (1835), p. 208; and see Andrew Gray's entry in *Faeti Ecclesiae Scoticae*, vol. 3 (1920), p. 465. While he does not state it in terms of majority age, Campbell opines that "a lad of 18 or 19 years, however precocious, could hardly have exercised an active pastoral ministry with profit to himself and his hearers." Campbell, p. 108.

32. "Other future ministers were privately educated by tutors who acted as secretaries and chaplains in their homes, for a considerable number of those who gave themselves to the ministry in the seventeenth century were sons of lairds, and had in the house a constant companion one who was interested in theology." Henderson, 119.

33. Roy Middleton, Historical Introduction, *English Popish Ceremonies* (1993; revised ed., Naphtali, 2013), pp. xxvii–xix. Campbell suggests Rutherford secured the appointment but adduces no authority for this (Campbell, p. 108). It may be other connections put Gillespie with Kenmore, and it was then that he met Rutherford, who would only minister at Anwoth a few more years before the persecuting bishops removed him to sequester in Aberdeen. On the other hand, Rutherford had commenced his letter-writing from Anwoth in 1627, and he may have sent queries out for a tutor at the Kenmure's request.

34. *Letters of Samuel Rutherford*, ed. Andrew A. Bonar, fourth edition (Edinburgh: Oliphant Anderson & Ferrier, 1891), p. 92. Rutherford wrote three known letters to George Gillespie, one upon George's approaching death in 1648 and two in 1637, when he was then with Cassillis, one before and one after the publication of *English Popish Ceremonies* (respectively, March 13, 1637, and September 9, 1637). Unfortunately, we do not have Gillespie's letters to Rutherford which may have helped fill some information gaps. While Rutherford does not mention Gillespie's writing project, it is interesting in the first letter he mentions his disputes with the Aberdeen doctors over Arminianism and the ceremonies. In the latter letter, he clearly is aware of the petitioner movement afoot and advises, "Let us be ballasted with grace, that we be not blown over, and that we stagger not. Yet a little while, and Christ and His redeemed ones shall fill the field, and come out

28. Reid, p. 177.

29. William M. Campbell, "George Gillespie," in *Records of Scottish Church History Society*, volume 10 (Edinburgh, 1949): 108.

30. "Although this was unusual in the late 1620s, a number of militant young ministers, including Rutherford's friends Blair and Livingstone, seem to have been presbyterially ordained, perhaps with the bishop taking his place among the other presbyters. In Rutherford's case this was made possible by his bishop, Lamb, who had himself been ordained in the Presbyterian manner and was a moderate Episcopalian, and by his patron Gordon [Viscount Kennedy, who hired Gillespie], who on his deathbed later exhorted the bishop 'most earnestly not to molest or remove the Lord's servants, and not to enforce or enthrall their consciences to receive the Five Articles of Perth....' Coffey, p. 39. Lamb died in 1634, and things then became very difficult for Rutherford under Lamb's replacement, Thomas Sydserv, which Gillespie would have witnessed at that point.

nobleman of the south west,³⁵ John Kennedy (1595–1668), the sixth Earl of Cassilis, where he acted as tutor to his eldest son.”³⁶ It is at this time he likely wrote *A Dispute Against the English Popish Ceremonies*, and it is likely Kennedy helped with the expense of publication.³⁷ The book appeared very shortly after the uproar in St. Giles at the attempted reading of Laud’s service book on July 23, 1637.

There had been plenty of warning and alarm prior to the incident at St. Giles, with the king’s falsification of the vote in the 1633 parliament declaring the passing of the 1619 Perth Articles, with a threat from the king that questioning the tally was treasonous, as well as the imposition of a new book of Canons in 1635³⁸ (published in 1636) that threatened the same charge for any who would question his authority in church matters. So with the date so prominently posted for

victorious. Christ’s glory of triumphing in Scotland is yet in the bud, and in the birth; but the birth cannot prove an abortion. He shall not faint nor be discouraged, till He hath brought forth judgment unto victory.” In both letters, he closes in saying to remember the covenant the two had made. *Ibid.*, pp. 274, 497. According to Whyte, in a fanciful and sentimental telling of what this may have been, it was a covenant of friendship to pray for one another. Alexander Whyte, *Samuel Rutherford and Some of His Correspondents* (Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier, 1893), p. 152.

35. Gillespie is mentioned in Rutherford’s *The Last and Heavenly Speeches, and Glorious Departure of John Viscount Kenmure* (1649). Later writers say, when Kenmure withdrew from the 1633 parliament instead of standing for the Presbyterian cause in the face of the tyranny of Charles I, that he then took Gillespie with him as chaplain at Kenmure Castle. Earlier writers, such as Howie, do not tie the two events immediately together. It is certainly possible that Gillespie went to Edinburgh for the king’s long delayed Scottish coronation in June of 1633, when right after there was the meeting of Parliament when Kenmure forsook the Presbyterian cause and was not present to vote. The vote was majority not to pass the innovations, but the king overruled the vote and claimed they were passed. It may be Gillespie accepted the arrangement before Kenmure’s actions, but it does not seem likely that Gillespie would have “signed up” to be Kenmure’s tutor right after that display of self-interest. This may argue that Gillespie was already a tutor for Kenmure before June of 1633. Cf. *The Last and Heavenly Speeches and Glorious Departure of James Viscount Kenmure* (1827), introductory memoir by Thomas Murray, pp. 27–28. *The Scottish Christian Herald*, Volume 2 (Edinburgh: John Johnstone, 1837), p. 819. James Balfour Paul, *The Scots Peerage: Founded on Wood’s Edition of Sir Robert Douglas*, volume 5 (1908), p. 119. John Howie, *Biographica Scotica* [Scots Worthies] (1775); repr. (1781), pp. 174, 196; repr., ed. William McGavin (1858, repr., A Press, 1981), pp. 161, 189.

36. Middleton, *ibid.*, p. xxviii. As to how Gillespie was introduced to Cassillis for this position, it was most likely through Rutherford’s connections, who through his letters turned “his small parish into the local centre of opposition to episcopacy.” See his activities and high placed connections described in Coffey, pp. 41–42.

37. One may also speculate that Cassillis helped obtain books if he did not have them in the family library. “The family still retains

the first reading of the service book, there were protests such as the incident at St. Giles planned, though the riotous aspects of it were not likely endorsed by those opposed to Charles’s plans. These opposers of Charles’s tyranny next organized petitions to the Privy Council, being careful to follow custom for the allowed act of petitioning, and rather than lay the fault on the king directly, they chose to lay it on the bishops for misleading him.³⁹ “By going through the council, the supplicants observed the acknowledged practice of seeking intercessors from amongst the king’s leading subjects rather than importuning the king directly.” The petitioners “hoped that this would give the government time and space to find a face-saving formula for abandoning the Book.”⁴⁰ Private non-circulating petitions were prepared and presented in August, but not waiting for the results of these, the opposers of the service book gathered in September to craft additional petitions. This group contained “about twenty nobles, with a ‘great many barrons’ and ‘above 80 or neer 100

at Cassillis House ... fragments of the library of the 5th Earl...” Michael S. Moss, *The ‘Magnificent Castle’ of Culzean and the Kennedy Family* (Edinburgh University Press, 2002), p. 271fn. Cassillis may have added to the library of his father. The Kennedy family owned the house until 2009, when it was sold and significantly updated for millions of dollars more than the property could fetch on reselling. The tenth Earl built Culzean Castle in the late 18th century, which is now owned by the National Trust for Scotland.

38. The Book of Canons, which was approved on May 23, 1635, and published in the early part of 1636, omitted any reference to the authority of sessions, presbyteries, and general assemblies. *Canons and constitutions ecclesiastical gathered and put in for me, for the government of the Church of Scotland: ratified and approved by His Majestie’s Royall Warrant, and ordained to be observed by the clergie, and all others whom they concerne* (Aberdeen: Raban, 1636). See also, William Laud, *Works*, 7 vols. (Oxford: Parker, 1853), v, part II, pp. 583–606.

39. Laura A. Stewart, *Rethinking the Scottish Revolution, Covenanted Scotland, 1637–1651* (Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 62, 280. A prior incident also warned the petitioners not to charge the royal authority directly. In 1634, there was the trumped-up case against Lord Balmerino for mere “possession of an unsuccessful petition,” that challenged the king’s policy directly, which the government made a capital case because they claimed he simply showed it to “others of the king’s lieges.” He was found guilty, sentenced to death, and that sentence immediately commuted. A supportive crowd had welcomed Balmerino on the first day of the trial, clearly indicating the unpopularity of the proceedings. See Stewart, pp. 62–63.

40. Stewart, p. 65. All these actions were highly unpopular in Scotland, which is why “King James never ventured to attempt the introduction of a liturgy into Scotland, nor even the enforcement of the vestments and rites of the English church. The people could not be induced to a conformity with the articles of Perth.” William Muss-Arnolt, “The Scottish Service Book of 1637 and Its Successors: A Bio-Bibliographical Study,” *The American Journal of Theology*, 24, No. 3 (July 1920): 388. Charles on the other hand, was intent on forcing it all on the Scottish people by his personal edict.

ministers.”⁴¹ They merged and refined the petitions into one to present to the Privy Council on September 20, 1637. The Earls of Cassilis and Wemyss, both zealous for the cause against the service book, were at this meeting in September and signed, and the latter was one of two that presented it before the council.⁴² That night the ministers who had come to help draft petitions met for dinner, where “they drew up considerations concerning the manner of their public procedure, the causes of a fast, or motives to humiliation, motives for encouraging their faith and hope in God, and overtures for remedying the impending and felt evils.”⁴³

While it would have taken him away from his tutoring duties, given the significance of the event, Cassilis may have brought George Gillespie with him to Edinburgh in September. And since it has been said Gillespie’s book arrived within weeks after the uprising against the service book in St. Giles, it is also possible the book was coming or had arrived that month while people were gathering and may have begun seeing it while Gillespie may have been there. Gillespie likely finished the manuscript in late spring or early summer to have time to get it into the network of clandestine printers and smugglers that had developed over the decades of Stewart rule.⁴⁴ The printer was likely Willem Christiaens,⁴⁵ and the books may have followed a similar path and tactic as did Calderwood’s *Perth Assembly* in 1619, which was packed unbound in vats as though it were wine or brandy and smuggled to Burntisland in Fife south of Kirkcaldy, and then over to the

port of Leith in Edinburgh.⁴⁶ So, as people began to marvel at the work, it may have begun to leak out, at least among friends, that Gillespie was the author of *English Popish Ceremonies*. However, the need to keep this information between just the circle of petitioners would prove out in the reply the petitioners received from the Privy Council.

The council delivered its reply on October 18, declaring that all noncitizens of Edinburgh should vacate in twenty-four hours, stating that the Privy Council would move and sit for the next meeting at Linlithgow (presumably out of reach of troublesome petitioners), and ordered all copies of *English Popish Ceremonies* to be turned in and to be burned by the hangman. Those who had not turned in the book by a date specified (left blank in the record) were to face the same censure and punishment as the author.⁴⁷ The petitioners continued to press their case, but in the meantime, it is possible that key connections were made that led to George Gillespie’s ordination.

The minister of Wemyss at this time was Robert Mearnis. He may very well have come up to the same meeting in September. He was a servant of the Earl of Wemyss. The earl had asked the Edinburgh council that he fill the vacancy left on the prior minister’s death.⁴⁸ Mearnis died young and unmarried at about 35 years of age in December 1637.⁴⁹ The question may be asked, why were the town council of Edinburgh and the earl involved in the choice of minister for this church? The medieval hospital of Soutra, part of a complex including a church and friary founded in 1164, held “the kirk and

41. Stewart, p. 65.

42. Andrew Stevenson, *The History of the Church and State of Scotland* (1754); repr., complete in one volume (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1840), 175, 176.

43. See the text of these in Stevenson, pp. 177–179. If he was in the city with Cassilis and assuming the nobility would have their own gathering, Gillespie may have attended this dinner meeting of ministers.

44. See a description of the elaborate network of those supporting clandestine printing and smuggling of puritan books back into England and Scotland in Keith L. Sprunger, *Trumpets from the Tower: English Puritan Printing in the Netherlands, 1600–1640* (Brill, 1993), pages 34–35.

45. English Short-Title Catalogue notes evidence of a second printer or compositor at Quires KKK, NNN, and PPP, but the differences must be small or at least invisible to the untrained eye, as this writer could see no significant difference in the typesetting in those sections in his example of the 1637 printing. However, I do note that the same headpiece used at the top of the first page of each of the four parts of *English Popish Ceremonies* appears in *Exuviae Davidicae, id est Svspiria Davidis vltima prophylactica* published by Willem Christiaens in 1637. This type of evidence may be why STC credits Christiaens with the printing of *English Popish Ceremonies*.

This headpiece is reproduced at the end of this article. Both Christiaens and John Canne were charged and fined with printing Gillespie’s and other books, but since, apparently, the case was deemed questionable, *English Popish Ceremonies* was dropped from the final judgment. Sprunger, page 99.

46. Sprunger, p. 160. Calderwood, *The History of the Kirk of Scotland*, volume 8 (Wodrow Society, 1849), p. xxii. Edward Arber, *The Story of the Pilgrim Fathers, 1606–1623 A. D.: As Told by Themselves* (Ward and Downey, 1897), pp. 239–242.

47. *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, 2nd series, v. 6, 1635/1637, ed. P. Hume Brown (Edinburgh: H. M. General Register House, 1905), p. 537.

48. Prior to this, the church of Wemyss had a long-time “weak” minister in John Tullus from 1585 till June 1636. *Rambles in the Parishes of Scoonie and Wemyss* (Leven: Purves & Cunningham, 1905), p. 217. February 5, 1636. “The council promise the next vacancy at the Church of Wemyss to Mr. Patrick Mairnis, at the request of the Earl of Wemyss.” June 15, 1638. “Mr. Robert Mearnis, servant to the Earl of Wemyss, is presented to the vacant place of minister at the Kirk of Wemyss.” Marguerite Wood, editor, *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Edinburgh, 1626–1641* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1936), pp. 174, 178.

49. *Faſti Eccleſiæ Scoticanæ*, volume 5 (1925), p. 120.

kirk-lands of Wemyss.” In 1462 “the Queen of James II” annexed the hospital to Trinity College Church in Edinburgh, which after 1560 “was bestowed on the city of Edinburgh.” Thus “the Lord Provost, Magistrates, and other representatives became the patrons and titulars of the teinds” for Wemyss’ lands.⁵⁰ On July 24, 1635, the Earl of Wemyss obtained the lands and teinds of Wemyss for annual payments to the town council. On July 23, 1635, the town council had reached an agreement with the minister of Wemyss (John Tullus) on “the amount of his stipend, and on the following day, that agreement was ratified by the Commissioners of Parliament for Surrenders and Teinds.”⁵¹ Thus it was key for a prospective minister for the church to have the earl’s backing, as well as the council’s approval, since they paid the stipend.

It would seem reasonable to assume that the Earl of Wemyss had prior knowledge of Gillespie and/or

gained it or more facts about him from Cassilis and possibly met Gillespie if he had indeed come to Edinburgh. For it did not take the earl long (not more than a month, perhaps far less) to fix on the next person he desired to fill the Kirk of Wemyss. While there is not the same request of the council from the earl noted in the council minutes as for Mearnis, it does note that on January 5, 1638, “Mr George Gillaſpie, miniſter at Kirkcaldy, is preſented to the church of Wemyss, vacant by the death of Mr Patrick Mernis.”⁵² The earl also was speedy in contacting the archbishop because the latter wrote the moderator of Kirkcaldy Presbytery who wrote to the presbyters. This is noted in the minutes for January 11, 1638.

Dysert, January 11. The Moderator sent a letter to the brethren showing that the Archbishop had written to him to try Mr. George Gillespie for the Kirk of Wemyss but because he would do nothing in that kind by himself without their knowledge and concurrence, he advised the brethren to prescribe a test to him to teach the next Thursday in Kirkcaldy and he should be present, God willing, to hear him, whereupon they prescribed to him a text, viz., 2 Thess. 2:13, to handle the next Thursday because his edict could suffer no longer delay.

On the ordered day, the entry appears in the minutes,

Kirkcaldy, January 18. The which Mr. George Gillespie preached upon the text prescribed to him viz. 2 Thess. 2:13, wherein he gave the brethren full contentment so that they were content to signify their approbation of him by their testimonial which they appointed the Clerk to write to him and subscribe in their names and to write back answer to the Moderator...⁵³

Like other aspects of his life, Gillespie’s trial for ordination was rather unusual, if not singular. While he was noted as bursar of theology, Gillespie is never noted as an expectant for the ministry or allowed to preach (as expectant or licensed)⁵⁴ prior to his call to Wemyss, and there are no recorded exercises assigned to him by the Presbytery as there were to other expectants later noted, such as his brother Patrick, or Joshua Meldrom, later minister of Auchtertule.⁵⁵ Nor is there any discussion recorded of his case of conscience about ordination by the archbishop, though given the circumstances or simply the nature of the minutes, that may not have been something recorded. There may be multiple reasons for this, including that he had been away tutoring and that by the time the call from Wemyss occurred in

50. *Parish of Wemyss*, p. 215.

51. See James D. Marwick, *The History of the Collegiate Church and Hospital of the Holy Trinity and the Trinity Hospital, Edinburgh, 1460–1661* (Edinburgh: Reprinted for the Scottish Burgh Records Society, [1910]), p. 165 and n2.

52. Marguerite Wood, p. 199. Gillespie was not ordained yet, so it is unclear why the council uses the term minister, though it may simply be a customary reference with no intent to represent all the facts of his status.

53. *The Presbyterie Booke of Kirkcaldie*, p. 122. This and the following passages have been modernized in the spelling.

54. Howie writes that Gillespie was licensed to preach sometime before 1638 but on no authority. Howie, *Lives of the Scottish Covenanters* [i.e., *Scots Worthies*, i.e., *Biographica Scoticana*] (1981), p. 189.

55. The case of Patrick is complicated by an apparent intention to transfer to Glasgow, perhaps to look for a call there, and a controversy when he received a call to the second charge in Kirkcaldy just a month later and transferred back (*Presbytrie Booke of Kirkcaldie*, pp. 218, 221). The trials of Josua Meldrom are more straightforward. He received permission to preach as an expectant at Auchtertule (pp. 206, 207), is entered into his trials after some delay over confusion about the vacancy (215, 216), is assigned the exercise on Hosea 5:14 (218), assigned and approved for the common head of theology, “*De Naturali Fidei* in Latin to give in *Theses* for disputations thereupon” (220, 221), “appointed to give his trials of his Hebrew the next day viz. the 6 chapter of Hose and of his Greek, and to answer to the catechetique questions” which were sustained (221), next appointed to preach “popular doctrine the next day in Dysert for his further trial” on Timothy 3:16 (221), that preaching approved and appointed to “handle his Hebrew and Greek the next day (221), and approved giving “grave contentment to his hearers, and was approven in his last point of his trials, and the clerk appointed to give him his edict as it was appointed the last day to be served upon the Sabbath next for charging all that has anything to object against him, to compare before the Presbytery upon Thursday next where they shall be heard, and if none compare the said Josua to be received, minister at the kirk of Auchtertule, upon the next ensuing Thursday the 17 of this instant” (223). Spelling updated.

1638, between five and seven years had passed since finishing his studies. The word may also have been noised around, and he was becoming famous for *A Dispute Against the English Popish Ceremonies*. With what the presbytery would have already known about Gillespie, the display of learning in that work may have amazed them as much as it did Robert Baillie⁵⁶ and thus shortened the trials to a single sermon.

It is unknown if the archbishop made his way to Kirkcaldy to hear Gillespie preach, but whether he did or did not, he clearly had some objection since after many weeks he had still not written to the Presbytery with his blessing to continue. On March 15, the presbytery renewed the covenant, and on March 29, 1638, they make note of the churches who had not yet renewed the covenant, including “the Kirk of Wemyss whose Minister is not yet placed.”⁵⁷ Then on April 12, 1638, a commission from the church appeared before the presbytery “humbly supplicating the Presbytery to ordain and admit Mr. George Gillespie for their Minister who having abided his trials was approven, etc.” The presbytery put off an answer till the next meeting.

Apparently some presbyters were in doubt whether they could lawfully proceed with the ordination without involving the archbishop, and apparently this was not a secret to the church or to Gillespie. On the same day, April 12, 1638, Archibald Johnston, Lord Wariston, received a letter from George Gillespie asking for his help. Wariston was already involved in the “next step” after the renewal of the covenant, which “was the ordination and admission of ministers by the imposition of the hands of the brethren of presbyteries without the knowledge or consent of the bishops.”⁵⁸ He had just aided the first instance of this which occurred not a “fortnight before” Gillespie’s eventual ordination, when “the Presbytery of Haddington had met at Prestonpans, and ordained Mr. Robert Ker to be ‘conjunct Minister with his father.’”⁵⁹ The king considered this rejection of his governing of the church through bishops to be nothing short of rebellion. Wariston records that Gillespie asked him to provide the justification needed to convince the presbytery to proceed. “[12 April, Thursday] Afternoon I got a letter from Mr. George Gillespie to clear the Presbytery of Kirkcaldy of their legal doubts anent the admission of ministers against Tuesday next.”⁶⁰ He obliged Gillespie and after much work on the drafts, he records “On Tuesday, 17 April, I wrote over two treatises,—the one dogmatic to be read to the Presbytery,—the other dialectic anent the admission of ministers by Presbyteries...”⁶¹

Wariston’s work was apparently a success, convincing

all but one objector. The presbytery met again on April 19, and at that time determined,

About the supplication of the commissioners from the Erie and parochine of Wemyss the whole brethren all in one voice (except Doctor Lawmouth) thought their suit both lawful and expedient and therefore his ordination and admission to be this day eight days the 26 of this instant and appoint Mr. Robert Douglas to preach there the said day instead of his exercise.⁶²

The appointed day came, and the minutes note the important occasion:

Kirktown of Wemyss, April 26. The which day Mr Robert Douglas preached upon the 1 Epistle of Peter v. 2, 3, 4, whereafter the consent of the parishioners being required and Master George Gillespie demanded of certain questions proponed to him by the moderator and his oath of allegiance to the King’s Majesty being taken,⁶³ the said Mr. George was admitted and ordained

56. See the quotation at the end of this essay on page 91.

57. Ibid., p. 125, 126.

58. *Diary of Sir Archibald Johnston of Wariston 1632–1639*, ed. David Hay Fleming (Scottish History Society, 1919), p. xxxvii.

59. William McMillan, *The Worship of the Scottish Reformed Church, 1550–1638* (London, [1931]), p. 354. Wariston convinced the noblemen in a discourse and they sent him to the Presbytery to convince them to proceed on April 5–6. See Wariston, *ibid.*, pp. 332–333. Before Gillespie’s request, it appears he had not yet formalized the case on paper.

60. Wariston, *ibid.*, p. 338. Spelling modernized.

61. Wariston, *ibid.*, pp. 339–340.

62. Ibid., p. 126.

63. The Oath of Allegiance pledged loyalty to the king and disclaimed the authority of the Pope. It was taken by all civil and ecclesiastical office holders under James I and Charles II. “I A. B. do truly and sincerely acknowledge, profess, testify and declare in my conscience before God and the world, That our Sovereign Lord King CHARLES, is lawful King of this Realm, and of all other His Majesties Dominions and Countries: And that the Pope neither of himself, nor by any Authority of the Church or See of Rome, or by another means with any other, have any power or Authority to depose the king, or to dispose of any of his Majesties Kingdoms or Dominions, or to Authorize any Foreign Prince, to invade or annoy Him or His Countries, or to discharge any of his Subjects of their Allegiance and Obedience to His Majesty, or to give License or leave to any of them to bear Arms, raise Tumults, or to offer any violence or hurt to His Majesties Royall person, State or Government, or to any of His Majesties Subjects within His Majesties Dominions. Also I do swear from my heart, that, notwithstanding any Declaration or Sentence of Excommunication or Deprivation made or granted, or to be made or granted, by the Pope or his Successors, or by any Authority derived, or pretended to be derived from him or his Sea, against the said King, His Heirs or Successors, or any Absolution of the said Subjects from their Obedience; I will bear faith and true allegiance to His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, and Him and Them will defend to the

minister of the Kirk of Wemyss by imposition of hands with prayer to God and singing of psalms and received by the elders and parishioners who both promised mutual duties to others [to each other].⁶⁴

The next month, on May 17, 1638, the Presbytery of Kirkcaldy felt compelled to justify this action officially, and perhaps drew heavily from Warisston's paper.

Follows the act about Mr. George Gillespie at Easter. Wemyss, April 26, 1638.

The which day, the Presbytery being met in the Kirk of Wemyss upon occasion of a supplication presented to them by the parishioners of the said kirk, wherein they desired that for as much as Mr. George Gillespie had been presented by the provost, baillies, and town council of Edinburgh to the said Kirk of Wemyss and local stipend thereof, had been recommended by the Archbishop of St. Andrews to be tried by the Presbytery

utmost of my power, against all Conspiracies and Attempts whatsoever, which shall be made against His or their Persons, their Crown and Dignity, by reason or color of any such Sentence, or Declaration or otherwise, and will do my best endeavor to disclose and make known unto his Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, all Treasons and Traitorous Conspiracies which I shall know or hear of to be against Him, or any of them. And I do further swear, That I do from my heart abhor, detest and abjure as impious and Heretical this damnable Doctrine and Position, That Princes which be Excommunicated or deprived by the Pope, may be Deposed or Murdered by their Subjects, or any other whatsoever. And I do believe, and in conscience am resolved, that neither the Pope, nor any person whatsoever have power to absolve me of this Oath, or any part thereof; which I acknowledge by good and full Authority to be lawfully ministered unto me, and do renounce all Pardons and Dispensations to the contrary. And all these things I do plainly and sincerely acknowledge and swear, according to these express words by me spoken, and according to the plain and common sense and understanding of the same words, without any Equivocation, or mental evasion or secret reservation whatsoever. And I do make this Recognition and acknowledgment heartily, willingly, and truly, upon the true Faith of a Christian. So help me God." William Ingoldsby, *Englands Oaths: Taken by All Men of Quality in the Church and Common-wealth* (1642), pp. 2–4. Spelling modernized.

64. Ibid., p. 127.

65. This appears to refer to, and the Presbytery seems to have applied the form used in the ordination of John Spottiswoode (the father) to Superintendent in 1560. The oath of allegiance noted previously, which was a declaration of fidelity to the king and renouncing the pope, does not form a part of the form. The oath was introduced in 1563 by James and revised in 1609 after the gun powder plot (1605). Cf. *The Psalmes of David in Prose and Meeter* (Heires of Andrew Hart, 1635), after the confession of faith and of the weekly assembly, through C4.

66. Ibid., pp. 129–130.

67. Stevenson, p. 199.

68. Stevenson, pp. 202, 205.

and after trial approved by the Presbytery as qualified for the ministry, an edict also being granted by the said Archbishop which was duly served and returned again endorsed, notwithstanding the Archbishop had refused both by word and writ ever to admit the said George unless he gave an oath and subscription which was not warrantable by any law of this kirk or kingdom and withal forasmuch as the parish has sustained great prejudice by wanting an actual ministry so long, the Presbytery would therefore be pleased to admit the said Mr. George to the ministry of the said kirk.

Which supplication being considered and the premises found all true and evident, the Presbytery having the power of ordination and admission *jure divino*, being also after the Reformation invested therewith *jure nostro parlamentario*, and never deprived of the same by any posterior act either of parliament or general assembly, hath admitted and ordained the said Mr. George Gillespie into the ministry of the said kirk according to the form of admission set down before the Psalm Book,⁶⁵ by taking his oath of allegiance to his majesty, and giving to him imposition of hands with full powers to preach the word, minister the sacraments, exercise kirk discipline, and do all the other offices of a complete minister there, all which to be of verity we testify by these presents written by our clerk of Presbytery at our command and subscribe with our hands.⁶⁶

As to why Archbishop John Spottiswoode first approved the earl's request and then did an about-face, it may be he was not aware of who was the author of *A Dispute Against the English Popish Ceremonies*. Spottiswoode was a member of the Privy Council and had ensured its sanction to the Articles of Perth. It may be that after he wrote the moderator of Kirkcaldy Presbytery in late December or early January, he subsequently heard rumors that Gillespie was the author of the book the Privy council had by the king's order just a few months earlier, ordered all known copies confiscated and burned by the public hangman. Or, if the authorship of the book remained unknown to him, it may have been due to the fact things had come to a head in February 1638. While the petitioners of the Privy Council had made the issue the bishops to try to forestall any direct challenge to the king, Charles, on the archbishop's advice to crush the movement,⁶⁷ declared distinctly in February that these were his policies and they were to obey them.⁶⁸ This was a significant miscalculation. The presenters of the supplications met and determined to renew the National Covenant and officially became the



Covenanters. By the time the matter came to a head in April, the events in Scotland were spiraling out of the government's control, and the covenant had been signed by Kirkcaldy Presbytery and across the kingdom, and the archbishop, after simply not responding, could hardly have gone against his own advice to the king or the king's wishes to stop the movement. And so he insisted that Gillespie must subscribe to the articles before he would endorse the ordination.

Having settled into the manse designated by the presbytery by May 31,⁶⁹ George Gillespie entered into his short ministry in the Church of Scotland. However, his would not be a quiet life as a pastor of a parish church. Gillespie was already being called to wider service. The manner of the king's dealing with the petitioners, now Covenanters, had led, as Baillie writes, to consider what had been the view of only a few heretofore, "to keep a Generall Assemblie." Reasons for keeping an assembly were drawn up by "three or foure of the best witts."⁷⁰ It appeared in print along with the text of the renewed Covenant and at the same time with a tract against the service book, which the new minister of Wemyss had been called upon to write. Gillespie's second publication against the popish ceremonies is a far shorter endeavor, a tract called *Reasons for Which the Service Book Urged upon Scotland Should Be Rejected*.⁷¹ In a letter of July 22, 1638, Baillie notes that this was by then in print, commenting on both of Gillespie's publications.

We have some reasons against the service in print. Our press at Edinburgh is now patent: we hope not to trouble you so much there as we were wont. I took the author to be Mr. Henderson, but I am informed since, they came from Mr. George Gillespie, a youth who waited on my Lord Kennedy, and is now admitted to the kirk of Wemyss maugre St. Andrews beard, by the presbytery. The same youth is now given out by those who should know, for the author of the *English Popish Ceremonies*: whereof we all do marvel; for though he had gotten the papers, and help of the chief of that side,⁷² yet the very composition would seem to be far above such an age: but if that book be truly his making, I admire the man, though I mislike of his matter; yea, I think, he may prove amongst the best wits of this Isle.⁷³ ■



Headpiece (and detail) from *A Dispute Against the English Popish Ceremonies obruded vpon the Church of Scotland* (1637), which was printed in the Netherlands and smuggled into Scotland. Publication at least in part has been attributed to Willem Christiaens (Leiden), who used this same headpiece in other publications. See footnote 45.

69. Ibid., p. 130.

70. Robert Baillie, *The Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie, 1637–1662*. 3 vols. (Edinburgh: [For the Bannatyne Club], Robert Ogle, 1841–1842), 1.92.

71. Gillespie's tract is bound with editions of *The Confession of Faith of the Kirk of Scotland, subscribed by the Kings majesty ... 1580 With a designation of such acts of parliament, as are expedient, for justifying the union, after mentioned And subscribed by the nobles, 1638* (Edinburgh: G. Anderson, 1638). These were also printed with the Latin edition of the Confession, and with *Reasons for a General Assembly* (1638).

72. While it may refer to Rutherford, this probably refers to David Calderwood, who was the leading writer against the Articles of Perth.

73. Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, 1.90.

Samuel Rutherford

And the Theology and Practice of Preaching

By Matthew A. Vogan

A familiar anecdote about Rutherford recorded by Robert Wodrow reveals an intriguing snapshot of the preacher fully engaged in the pulpit. “One day when preaching in Edinburgh, after dwelling for some time on the differences of the day, he broke out with—“Woe is unto us for these sad divisions, that make us lose the fair scent of the Rose of Sharon,” and then he went on commending Christ, going over all his precious styles and titles about a quarter of an hour; upon which the laird of Glanderston said, “Ay, now you are right; hold you there.”¹ For many, especially A. Taylor Innes, this

incident demonstrates signally that there was an “inward schism’ both “strong and startling’ within Samuel Rutherford. “It looks sometimes as if there were two men in him. One was the man whom all know in his letters—ardent, aspiring, and unworldly ... rapt into the continual contemplation of one unseen Face.... The other man was the intellectual gladiator, the rejoicing and remorseless logician, the divider of words ... the incessant and determined disputant.”² This assessment, however, manifests a modern difficulty in reconciling earnest disputation with passionate devotion. Post-Reformation Reformed orthodoxy believed that the work of thorough scholastic theology was the necessary basis for practical divinity. Piety and scholarship could be mutually supportive rather than opposed to one another.³

This alleged duality of scholasticism and spirituality reveals itself in attitudes to Rutherford’s preaching. It is supposed that Rutherford leaps from deep to deep in his sermons, combining the scholastic with the ecstatic in unmitigated measures. Critics believe that he is always apt to soar away from the congregation in a scholastic disputation upon a controversial point. This assumption depends upon identifying *The Tryal and Triumph of Faith* and *Christ Dying and Drawing Sinners to Himself* as representative and authentic examples of Rutherford’s preaching.⁴ Although these treatises originated in serialised sermons, they are not a verbatim record of what was delivered in the pulpit but were subsequently much expanded and annotated in the process of publication. Rutherford responds at length to Antinomian claims in these treatises in what the title page to *Christ Dying* calls “necessary digressions for the times, touching divers errors.”⁵ Rutherford references large quotations from various writers such as John Saltmarsh, Tobias Crisp and Robert Towne and interacts with them in a way that patently digresses from the nature of preaching. These treatises were published in London while

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1. Robert Wodrow, *Analecta*, MS iv, quoted by Thomas McCrie, *The Story of the Scottish Church* (1875; repr. Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, [1988]), p. 250.

2. A. T. Innes, “Samuel Rutherford,” in *Studies in Scottish History, chiefly Ecclesiastical* (London, 1892), pp. 15–16 and p. 48.

3. Compare for instance Gisbertus Voetius, professor at the Academy of Utrecht where Rutherford was offered a post. The breadth of the theological contribution made by Voetius is comparable with that of Rutherford: cf. Joel R. Beeke, “Gisbertus Voetius: Toward a Reformed marriage of Knowledge and Piety,” in *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment*, ed. Carl R. Trueman and R. S. Clark (Carlisle: Paternoster 1999), pp. 227–43; esp. p. 231 and p. 235.

4. *The Tryal & Triumph of Faith: or, An exposition of the history of Christs dispossessing of the daughter of the woman of Canaan* (London: John Field, 1645). *Christ Dying and Drawing Sinners to Himself. Or A survey of our Saviour in his soule-suffering, his lovelynesse in his death, and the efficacie thereof* (London: J.D. [John Dawson.] 1647).

5. Philip G. Ryken, “Scottish Reformed Scholasticism,” in *Protestant Scholasticism*, pp. 196–210, p. 208.

Rutherford was battling with the flood of sectarian opinion then engulfing the press, and the sermons in these books were evidently prepared for publication with a particular polemical purpose in view. James Walker correctly groups these works with *Covenant of Life Opened* and *Influences of the Life of Grace* as “partly scholastic, partly practical.”⁶ Taylor Innes observes that “the contrast between Rutherford in his letters and Rutherford in his other books was not nearly so visible to the men of his own time—it was bridged over by the Rutherford of his sermons.”⁷ In Rutherford’s sermons proper, however, polemic is generally no more than a mere aside.⁸ Philip G. Ryken asks “Did Reformed preachers feed scholasticism to their congregations undigested, bones and all?” He proceeds to demonstrate that they did not and Rutherford was clearly no exception to this.⁹

No assessment of Rutherford’s life, work and influence can ignore the importance that he placed upon preaching. His frequent laments concerning his removal from the pulpit of Anwoth, together with his resistance to taking up the chair of Divinity at St. Andrews, make it clear that Rutherford regarded preaching as the very centre of his vocation. This essay seeks to outline the developments in homiletics during the seventeenth century as the context within which the theology and practice of Rutherford’s preaching must be understood. In connection with this, it is also asserted that Reformed orthodoxy and Puritanism primarily regarded preaching as necessarily popular and plain. After touching upon controversies relating to preaching method amongst Covenanters in the mid-seventeenth century, the essay proceeds to demonstrate the way in which Rutherford’s sermons employ particular domestic metaphors in a homely and plain but also highly affective manner.

Rutherford’s sermons were, as William G. Blaikie notes, “by no means rhapsodical. They are mostly conversational in tone, familiar, easy to understand, easy to follow; using the most common similitudes, they are homely, sometimes even to the verge of vulgarity.”¹⁰ Unfettered by these Victorian literary tastes, the editor of some of Rutherford’s sermons published in 1713 gives his estimate that “[h]e is plain and easy, especially in this discourse. In his controversial writings, he is sometimes more obscure to ordinary readers. Yet, when he falls on a practical head [section of the discourse], he is often within the reach of the lowest form of Christians, and in one sentence he will make a truth more clear than others—and those great writers too—can do in some pages.” The same writer continues: “His style is savoury to a spiritual taste, and also moving. As he

was pious and devote [devout], without affectation, he had a particular talent of handling divine things so as to fix the attentions and affect the heart. This *gustus pietatis* [taste of piety] that is so discernible in his writings, and for which he was so famous, is a clear evidence of a rich stock of grace and a large unction from the Holy One.”¹¹ Rutherford’s plainness is commended to the reader: “Our author is more intent upon the matter than the style.” Wodrow (who appears to have known some of Rutherford’s contemporaries) expresses this combination of scholasticism and affective preaching ability more accurately than Taylor Innes when he states: “Such who knew him best were in a strait whether to admire him for his sublime genius in the school, and peculiar exactness in matters of dispute and controversy, or his familiar condescension in the pulpit, where he was one of the most moving and affectionate preachers in his time.”¹²

Rutherford’s language was, to some extent, a contemporary point of interest and even perplexity. In bringing the *Letters* forth, Robert McWard was uneasily aware that in a “carping, criticizing, profane, & prejudicat

6. James Walker, *Theology and Theologians of Scotland 1560–1750*, second edition (1888; repr. Edinburgh, Knox Press, 1982), p. 12. *The Covenant of Life Opened, or, A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace: Containing Something of the Nature of the Covenant of Works* (Edinburgh: Andro Anderson, 1655). *Influences of the Life of Grace. Or, A Practical Treatise Concerning the way, manner, and means of having and improving of spiritual dispositions and quickening influences from Christ* (London: T.C. for Andrew Crook, 1659).

7. Quoted in Robert Gilmour, *Samuel Rutherford: A Study Biographical and Somewhat Critical in the History of the Scottish Covenant* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1904), p. 21.

8. By Rutherford’s sermons I refer almost exclusively to *Quaint Sermons of Samuel Rutherford Hitherto Unpublished* (ed. Andrew A. Bonar, [London: Hodder and Stroughton, {1885}]) and *Communion Sermons* (*Fourteen Communion Sermons*, second enlarged edition, 1877; repr. James A. Dickson Books, 1986), since these appear to be the most accurate record of what was preached. J. H. Thomson speaks of the “apparent correctness” of these sermons. “There is no sign of abridgement throughout,” he says, and the “student of Rutherford’s letters and his other works will recognize in them a full transcript of what he must have said.” *Quaint Sermons*, pp. v–vi.

9. Ryken, p. 205.

10. W. G. Blaikie, *The Preachers of Scotland, From the Sixth to the Nineteenth Century* (1888; repr. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2001), p. 115.

11. *The Power and Prevalency of Faith and Prayer evidenced in a practical discourse upon Matth. 9. 27–31* (1713; repr. as *The Power of Faith and Prayer*, [Stornoway: Reformation Press, 1991]), p. xi–xii.

12. Robert Wodrow, *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland from the Restoration to the Revolution*, 4 vols. (Glasgow, 1828), 1.205; Quoted in John Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions: The Mind of Samuel Rutherford*, Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1997), p. 113.

age” not everyone would respond enthusiastically to the way that Rutherford expressed himself. “[M]alicious mutterers ... against the apparent courseness of some phrases, and commonness of some words made use of by the Author’ could be anticipated since Rutherford “all along sets himself, to make use of the most ordinary expressions, which are in use among the common sort of people.”¹³ Surprisingly perhaps, there immediately follows a defence of this kind of language in the terms of Renaissance humanism. The critics are referred to the classical orator Plautus “who made use of the most common words that were in use, amongst the most common sort of people in Rome.” McWard proceeds to take up the maxim that he is “the best preacher to a people (and consequently writer too)” who teaches most popularly “as to words, & phrases.” Continuing to correlate the preacher and the orator, McWard asserts “that the most common words & ordinary phrases, in use amongst a people, may, by the greatest Oratour, be very pertinently used, for illustrating & pressing his purpose,” “they are so far from being a blemish to a discourse, that they seem to give a kinde of life, & adde a certain lustre to the whole frame.” The best “Oratour” “can with the least noise, cast fire into the affections of these to whom he speaks or writs, & bring down the highest mysteries in religion, to the capacity of the meanest hearer and reader.” In any case many of the letters were not written

to scholars and McWard informs us that Rutherford’s “designe being to make affection, or to move it in the hearts of these to whom he wrote, there was a necessity to suit his stile to their capacity.”¹⁴ This crucial passage from the pen of Rutherford’s secretary permits valuable insight into the mainsprings of Rutherford’s preaching since McWard is clearly borrowing his arguments from the field of oratory as articulated within the Scottish rhetorical tradition that David Allan has identified as “Calvinist humanism.”¹⁵

1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF REFORMED HOMILETICS

There is nothing unusual, in fact, about the terms in which this defence is made: the Reformation theology of preaching had been expressed in the language and principles of Renaissance humanism. Calvin stressed usage, purpose, and living efficacy rather than bare intellectual knowledge in his views on preaching: it was “not enough for a man to be eminent in profound learning if he has no talent for teaching.”¹⁶ As William J. Bouwsma notes in his biography of Calvin, the Renaissance humanist “preference for persuasion over rational conviction was associated with a view of human being as passionate, active, and social rather than intellectual.”¹⁷ Erasmus stated this preference rather definitively in his influential *Paraclesis* (which means exhortation):

To me he is truly a theologian who teaches not by skill with intricate syllogisms but by a disposition of mind, by the very expression and eyes ... life means more than debate, inspiration is preferable to erudition, transformation is a more important matter than intellectual comprehension.¹⁸

The Covenanter minister James Durham restates the Renaissance position in his commentary on the book of Revelation in a way that compares well with the Preface to Rutherford’s *Letters*. McWard’s continual emphasis upon what he calls Rutherford’s “dexterity” in phrasing, is particularly interesting in comparison with Durham’s assertion that the truly learned minister is versatile and fully rounded in character, he has an intellectual and verbal agility towards persuasion. In short he is defined as “he who can inform, convince; or edifie others with most dexteritie ... though, it may be, the lesse knowing man.”¹⁹

This emphasis also, however, married closely with the Scholastic distinction between popular and academic or scholastic preaching prevalent in the first expressions of Reformation homiletics.²⁰ Two of the most influential

13. *Joshua redivivus or Mr Rutherford’s Letters divided into two parts* (Rotterdam, 1664), p. c2v-c3.

14. *Joshua redivivus*, p. c3v.

15. David Allan, *Virtue, Learning, and the Scottish Enlightenment: Ideas of Scholarship in Early Modern History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), p. 177. [Editor: “When Rutherford went to London as a Commissioner to the Westminster Assembly, MacWard accompanied him as an amanuensis.... In Rotterdam MacWard collected and edited Rutherford’s letters.... Moving to Utrecht, he helped with the editing and publication of Rutherford’s *Examen Arminianismi* (Utrecht, 1668).” *Dictionary of Scottish Church History & Theology* (IVP, 1993), pp. 537–8.]

16. Calvin, Commentary on 1 Timothy 3:2, quoted in William J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 127. See also T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin’s Preaching* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1992), pp. 114–28.

17. Bouwsma, p. 114.

18. Quoted in Patrick Collinson, *Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism* (London: Hambledon, 1983), p. 499.

19. *Joshua redivivus*, p. c3. James Durham, *A Commentarie Upon the Book of Revelation* (1658; Glasgow, 1680), p. 173. [Editor: See “Exkursus 9: Concerning Ministerial Qualifications,” in *A Commentary upon the Book of the Revelation*, volume 1 (Naphtali Press and Reformation Heritage Books, 2020), p. 350.]

20. The distinction was not new; medieval homiletical manuals divided parish preaching as “popular interpretation” from university preaching that required “scholastic interpretation.” Cf. Edward Cecil Meyer, “The First Protestant Handbook on Preaching: An Analysis of

treatises, in the English context especially, were *The Preacher or Methode of Preaching* by Niel Hemmingsen and *The Practis of Preaching* by Andreas Gerardus or Hyperius of Marburg. The English translations of both texts appeared in the 1570s.²¹ Niel Hemmingsen (or Nicholas Hemminge as he appeared in English) was a Dane who had studied under the Lutheran Reformer Melancthon and Hyperius was a Flemish Protestant. Both works distinguished between two types of sermon depending upon the type of “hearers”: didactic or persuasive. The first was scholastic, following the traditional divisions of a classical oration together with heaped logical proofs. The other was popular and affective in which the preacher could use all kinds of rhetorical devices in order to move the hearer. According to Hemminge, the best and most appropriate option was proverbial or metaphorical speech, parables and sentences. This “dothe not onelye serue the affections, but also (yf I may so tearme yt, maketh the oration more sharpe and wyttie, to the ende it may altogether pearce into the myndes of the hearers; and so possesse the whole harte it selfe.”²² Hemminge appends a continuous discourse devoid of explicit divisions but full of exclamations, questions, and analogies which is intended to serve as an example of the “perswasible sermon.”

Andreas Hyperius likewise emphasised the way in which the scholastic style picks up every detail of the text in an unemotive and nonrhetorical manner, whereas the popular sermon “selects only certain commonplaces from the proposed argument, those that he perceives to be more suited than others to the time, place and persons.” “In sum, he [the preacher] omits nothing that in any way has the power to persuade and impress the mind. Since this is his intention, his whole effort aims to entice all people to acknowledge their sins, believe, devoutly call upon God and correct their lives, and if possible, to transform them into entirely new people.”²³ Although Hyperius spoke of first explaining the meaning of the text in a few words, he emphasised that the commonplaces drawn from the text should be applied as well as explained. Application was not a part of the sermon distinct from the exegetical, but was characteristic of the whole sermon.²⁴

The distinction made between the two types of teaching derives from certain Renaissance principles to which Hemminge’s teacher Philip Melancthon gave particular emphasis. Melancthon distinguished between theology in its academic aspect (what the text meant in its historical context), and in its kerygmatic aspect (what it means for the contemporary Church).²⁵ It is clear that Renaissance principles and preferences in

communication could marry well with the scholastic-popular distinction which was able to make room for the Renaissance emphasis upon rhetorical eloquence.²⁶ Hemminge distinguished between logical, grammatical, and oratorical interpretations of the Scriptures. In this he was followed by Richard Bernard in *The Faithful Shepherd* (1607) who especially emphasised the concealment of erudition such as scholarly interpretations, e.g. “logicall, gramaticall, and rhetoricall.” Hemminge also defined a “mixt kinde of interpreting” exemplified by the “oratur,” which is profitable for both “churches” and “scholes.”²⁷ The structure outlined for this type of discourse was simply that of the classical oration.

The most influential model during the seventeenth century for preaching in the English language was, however, proposed by William Perkins in his treatise *The Arte of Prophesying, or a Treatise Concerning the Sacred and Only True Manner and Method of Preaching* (Latin, 1592; English, 1606).²⁸ After opening the text by explaining it in its context, the preacher was to state the doctrine that was to be extracted from the text and support the truthfulness of the doctrine with a list of reasons. After this, the doctrine could be applied by means of various “uses.” Perkins seems to have retained the medieval scholastic structure of the sermon with its opening of the text, followed by a statement of the doctrine, supported by heaped proofs or “reasons,” concluding with the “uses” of the doctrines. The medieval scholastic structure may be witnessed in the classic 13th and 14th century preaching manuals that were designed to support the Latin preaching of the universities. These textbooks liked to think of the sermon as a tree with its root in the text, its theme as the trunk, its divisions and

the De formandis concionibus sacris seu de interpretatione scripturarum populari libri II of Andreas Hyperius in *Relation to Medieval Homiletical Manuals* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Boston University, 1967).

21. Andreas Gerardus, *The Practis of Preaching*, trans. I. Ludham (London, 1577). On Hyperius see D. Sinnema, “The Distinction between Scholastic and Popular: Andreas Hyperius and Reformed Scholasticism,” in *Protestant Scholasticism*, pp. 127–44 and Meyer, “The First Protestant Handbook on Preaching.”

22. Niels Hemmingsen, *The Preacher or Methode of Preaching*, trans. I. H. (1574; repr. Menston, England, The Scholar Press, 1972), p. 54v.

23. Quoted in Sinnema, pp. 131–3.

24. Cf. Sinnema, p. 131.

25. Cf. Robert P. Scharlemann, *Thomas Aquinas and John Gerhard*, Yale Publications in Religion 7 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), pp. 23–27.

26. Sinnema, p. 142.

27. Hemminge, p. C6.

28. [Editor. See also *The Works of William Perkins*, volume 10 (Reformation Heritage Books, 2020).]

subdivisions the branches and twigs, and finally the fruit of practical application. Divisions had to be buttressed by heaped proofs from Patristic and biblical sources.²⁹ It is also possible, however, that Perkins was simply tidying up Hemminge's recommended oration with its classical rhetorical structure, in which the exordium opens the sermon and the treatise gives the topic or doctrine and its reasons. The digression proceeds to apply this doctrine and the conclusion provides the peroration in rehearsing "the summe of the thinges handled" together with the "use" of the doctrine.³⁰

Like Hemminge and Hyperius, Perkins placed emphasis upon suppressing unnecessary learned discourse from the sermon in the interests of simplicity and clarity. Although useful in preparation: "Humane wisdom must be concealed, whether it be in the matter of the sermon, or in the setting forth of the words: because the preaching of the word is the Testimonie of God, and the profession of the knowledge of Christ, and not of humane skill;" a preacher therefore must therefore "observe an admirable plainesse and an admirable powerfulness" and employ speech that is "simple and perspicuous" suited to "the peoples understanding."³¹

29. Cf. Thomas-Marie Charland, *Artes Praedicandi: contribution à l'histoire de la rhétorique au moyen âge* (Ottawa: Inst. d'études médiévales, 1936), p. 136, cited in Edmond Clowney, "The preacher as pastor: The Shepherd's care," in *When God's Voice is heard: Essays on preaching presented to Dick Lucas*, eds. Christopher Green and David Jackman (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995), pp. 107–20, p. 100 [Ed. p. 108 in Samuel Rutherford, *An Introduction to his Theology*, p. 57].

30. Hemminge, p. C7v-D.

31. Quoted in Owen C. Watkins, *The Puritan Experience* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 7. Gerardus, p. 15; Hemminge, p. 18.

32. Quoted in R. Pooley, "Plain and Simple: Bunyan and Style," in *John Bunyan: Conventicle and Parnassus: Tercentenary Essays*, ed. N. H. Keeble (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), pp. 91–110, p. 92.

33. Quoted in Paul R. Schaefer, "Protestant 'Scholasticism' at Elizabethan Cambridge: William Perkins and a Reformed Theology of the Heart," in *Protestant Scholasticism*, pp. 147–64, p. 150.

34. Quoted in Samuel Clarke, *A Collection of the Lives of Ten Eminent Divines* (London: 1662), pp. 312–3.

35. Alexander Peterkin, *The Booke of the Universall Kirk of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1839), p. 427.

36. Quoted in *Selected Sermons of Zachary Boyd*, ed. David W. Atkinson (Aberdeen: Scottish Text Society, 1989), p. xxxiii.

37. James Melville provides several well-known descriptions of John Knox's affective preaching. "In the opening vpe of his text he was moderat the space of an halff houre; bot when he enterit to application, he maid me sa to grew and tremble, that I could nocht hald a pen to wryt." Even in his weakened condition towards the end of his days, Melville heard him and "or he haid done with his sermont, he was sa active and vigorus, that he was lyk to ding that pulpit in blads and flie out of it." *The Diary of Mr. James Melvill, 1556–1601*, ed. George Ritchie Kinloch (Edinburgh, 1829), pp. 21 and 26.

Perkins substantially weighted the structure of the sermon to explanation and teaching as opposed to application. He considered the latter to be important but apparently not of the essence of preaching: a preacher should "apply (if he have the gift) [note the qualification] the doctrines rightly collected, to the life and manners of men in a simple and plaine speech."³² Thomas Fuller, the seventeenth-century historian, supports the perception that Perkins had a strongly didactic goal in preaching: "our Perkins brought the schools into the pulpit, and unshelling their controversies out of their hard school terms, made thereof plain and wholesome meat for his people."³³ No doubt Perkins had higher goals than mere instruction as his writings testify. It appears, however, that his emphasis was more upon didactic explication than affective application. Perhaps it is this influence that partly explains Robert Harris' later complaint that in the cities and university towns, preachers were prone to "too large insisting upon the Doctrinal parts of their Point, whereby they left little or no room for Application."³⁴

2. RUTHERFORD AND AFFECTIVE PREACHING

In 1596 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland outlined what they expected from ministers, emphasising a zealous and popular yet studious manner of preaching while carefully maintaining the distinction between the scholastic and the popular. Discipline was to be applied to "such as shall be found not given to their book and studie of Scriptures—not carefull to have bookes—not given to sanctification and prayer—that study not to be powerfull and spirituall—not applying the doctrine to his corruptions, qwhilk [which] is the pastorall gift—obscure and too scholastick before the people—cauld and wanting zeall."³⁵ Judging from published sermons, Scottish preaching may well have been plainer than the English Puritan plain style that took its cue from Perkins. In *The Last Battell of the Sovle in Death* (1628) for instance, Zachary Boyd refuses to build upon the stubble, hay and wood "of humane words or worldlie eloquence."³⁶ Noted preachers of the generation after John Knox, such as John Welsh and Robert Bruce, manifest a popular and affective mode of preaching.³⁷ These popular sermons usually involved numbered divisions in a continuous discourse, arguably a less restrictive structure than that which Perkins advanced. Samuel Rutherford's contemporary and friend, John Livingstone, reveals the importance that he placed upon procuring the printed sermons of men such as Bruce, Welsh, and Robert Rollock. If Rollock

(Professor of Divinity at University of Edinburgh) may have been regarded as something of a role model, it is significant that his publisher invokes the epithet “halie [holy] simplicitie” upon his printed sermons which obviously eschew scholastic complexity. This preface to the 1599 edition of the sermons on the epistles of Paul continues, “And suppois [suppose] art had taucht [taught] him weil aneuch [well enough] to go heich [high] in his style, and be exquisite in his termis, zit [yet] in this cace of preiching ze sall [case of preaching you shall] see him set all that kind of art aside.”³⁸

John Livingstone records that the preaching of Robert Bruce “made always an earthquake upon his hearers and rarely preached but to a weeping auditory.”³⁹ Livingstone states that he heard Bruce several times, and in speaking of the effectual force of such affective preaching he gives his opinion that “never man spake with greater power since the Apostles dayes.”⁴⁰ Welsh’s preaching was equally affective according to Livingstone and indeed the remains of his sermons corroborate this opinion, as in the following appeal:

O that the Lord would fill my heart, with this truth, that I might eat it and drink it, and feed upon it continually, and that he would fill me with the spirit of exhortation, that I might exhort you to meditate on this truth day and night, that the remembrance of that Day (the day of judgment) might never go out of your hearts! O that you would do it, even for his sake, that left you His heart’s blood to slocken that fire that will burn both the heavens and the earth! O hear, hear!⁴¹

When it came to discussion on the nature of preaching at the Westminster Assembly, Rutherford made a strong defence of keeping erudition out of the content of the sermon. His remarks are in characteristic language: “the pot may be used in the bilyng but not brought in with the porridge.”⁴² Although of course this communicates much the same thing as William Perkins’ maxim “*Ars est celare artem*” [It is the essence of art to conceal art], the difference in form between such a homely image and a sententious Latin pun reveals much concerning a disparity in approach in respect of the art of preaching. Inadvertently perhaps, the porridge pot actually reflects the homely language and metaphors of Rutherford’s own sermons.

From general considerations, the Perkinsian model manifestly prevailed as the established sermon type in both England and Scotland. This can be demonstrated from a wide selection of sermons as well as in later homiletic textbooks such as John Wilkins’ *Ecclesiastes*

(1646), the *Officium Concionatoris* (Cambridge, 1676), or *The Art and Method of Preaching*, authored by William Chappell in 1656. It was the “unquestioned” model, and “only legitimate order of the sermon.”⁴³ The Westminster Assembly demonstrated this consensus in approving it amongst the guidelines of the *Directory for the Publick Worship of God*. The recommendation was qualified, however, with implicit recognition of competitors, since it was offered with the reservation that the “method is not prescribed as necessary for every man, or upon every Text; but only recommended, as being found by experience to be very much blessed of God, and very helpfull for the peoples understanding and memories.”⁴⁴

Approximately a decade later, Robert Baillie complained of the new style of preaching that marked some of the Protester party. Speaking of Andrew Gray he says “He hes the new guyse of preaching which Mr Hew Binning and Mr Robert Leighton began, contemning the ordinary way of exponing [expounding] and dividing a text, of raising doctrines and uses; bot runs out in a discourse on some common head, in a high romancing, unscripturall style, tickling the ear for the present, and moving the affections in some, bot leaving as he

38. Robert Rollock, *Select Works*, ed. William M. Gunn (Edinburgh: Wodrow Society, 1844–49), Vol. 1, p. 294.

39. Quoted in Patrick Collinson, “Puritanism as popular culture,” in *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560–1700*, ed. Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales, Themes in focus (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), p. 55.

40. *John Livingstone’s Diary, The Diary of a Covenanting Minister, 1626–1667* (Wigtown: Wigtown District Museum Service, 1993), pp. 5–6.

41. John Welsh, Sermon on Revelation 20:11, in *Sermons* (1605) p. 8, quoted in Blaikie, *The Preachers of Scotland*, p. 87.

42. Quoted in Robert S. Paul, *The Assembly of the Lord* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1985), p. 365.

43. [Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (1939; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 335. “Furthermore, [Alexander] Richardson and William Ames wrote always upon the unquestioned assumption that this way was the only legitimate order of the sermon, and for three or four decades before the settlement of New England all the divines who influenced the thought of the colonies, most of the great Puritans of the early seventeenth century, John Preston, Richard Sibbes, and John Ball in particular, followed the plan unswervingly.” The original edition of this article referenced Turnbull, who appears to conflate Perry’s uncredited words with Chappell. “William Chappell, *The Preacher and The Art and Method of Preaching* (1656) found that his book was used for several decades before the settlement in New England by the leaders of thought. He stressed ‘the only legitimate order of the sermon’ and gave impetus to the plain style.” Ralph C. Turnbull, *Baker’s Dictionary of Practical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967), p. 36.]

44. *Directory for the Publique Worship of God Throughout the three Kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland* (London, 1645), pp. 29–34.

confesses, little or nought to the memorie and the understanding.”⁴⁵ The same arguments that the Directory offers in defence of the Perkinsian model are revived, but it is perhaps more significant to note that Baillie appears to distinguish between the didactic and the affective in the midst of this, albeit that the latter in his scathing representation is almost frivolously popular or “romancing.” Baillie’s remarks appear to disregard the older affective tradition of Bruce and Welsh, to which Rutherford may well have belonged. This tradition had generally taken a sizeable portion of Scripture and given a running exposition without stating doctrines and uses. Gray appears to have abandoned the Perkinsian method for the general practice of developing a topical theme upon a particular verse with only various enumerated divisions, practically the same method as Binning and Leighton.⁴⁶ David Dickson, a friend of Rutherford, although he was firmly of the Resolutioner side, also referred disparagingly to Binning’s “new-fangled conceit in preaching” commenting that “tricks of rhetoric did not save many souls.”⁴⁷

45. *The Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, ed. David Laing, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Printed for Robert Ogle, 1841–2), 3:258–59.

46. *The Works of Andrew Gray* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1992); *The Works of the Rev Hugh Binning* (Morgan, PA, Soli Deo Gloria Publications 1992).

47. Blaikie, p. 106 and p. 134.

48. *Sermons, Prayers and Pulpit Addresses by Alex. Henderson 1638*, ed. R. Thomson Martin (Edinburgh, 1867).

49. Alexander Henderson, *Government and Order of the Chvrch of Scotland* (London, 1641), p. 16.

50. Rutherford, *A Sermon Preached to the Honourable House of Commons* [on Daniel 6:26] (London, 1644), p. 1. [Editor: The preceding paragraph was changed and the quotation added from this sermon in the version of this article in *Samuel Rutherford, An Introduction to His Theology*, p. 63.

51. [Editor: The text in *SRS Historical Journal* reads “The same can be said of George Gillespie’s sermons to Parliament.” The original attending footnote in both cases lists three sermons without attribution as seemingly belonging to Gillespie; however, two are by Henderson, and only the third is by Gillespie (the Commons Sermon on Ezekiel 43:11). See the three sermons by Henderson and two each by Rutherford, Gillespie and Baillie, in *Sermons preached before the English Houses of Parliament by the Scottish Commissioners to the Westminster Assembly of Divines, 1643–1645* (Naphtali Press, 2011).]

52. *Selected Sermons of Zachary Boyd*, pp. 87–106.

53. Dickson, “Communion Sermons Preached at a Communion in Irvine,” in *An Anthology of Presbyterian & Reformed Literature*, ed. Chris Coldwell (Dallas TX: Naphtali Press, 1992), Vol. 5, pp. 294–328.

54. Robert Wodrow, *Analecta or Materials for a History of Remarkable Providences Mostly Relating to Scotch Ministers and Christians*, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: Maitland Club, 1842–3), 1:166.

55. David Stevenson, “The Radical Party in the Kirk, 1637–45,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 25 (1974): 135–65; Stevenson, “The General Assembly and the Commission of the Kirk, 1638–51,” *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* 19 (1975): 59–79.

The whole controversy is not easy to understand, particularly since men such as Alexander Henderson did not appear to use the doctrines, reasons, and uses method in a rigid or consistent way.⁴⁸ Henderson’s record of the mode of preaching generally employed in the Church of Scotland does, however, support the Perkinsian model. “The Doctrine deduced, is explained and confirmed by Scripture, and fitly, and faithfully applyed, all in such methode, manner, and expression as may most edifie the hearers.”⁴⁹

There is no real evidence that Rutherford was strongly wedded to structuring his sermons according to the Perkins model. In the two main sermons that were published during his lifetime, multiple doctrines and uses are announced. Rutherford calls attention to structured method in arranging sermons at the beginning of his sermon to the House of Commons in a way that it is similar if not identical to the traditional model:

Method requireth that, first, the words bee expounded; secondly, that they bee taken up in a right order; thirdly, that such observations bee hence deduced as serve most for the present condition of the times.⁵⁰

Some of George Gillespie’s sermons to Parliament do not appear to follow this model closely at all, however.⁵¹ Furthermore, a preacher like Zachary Boyd, who almost always followed the well worn path of doctrines, reasons and uses, can also at times turn aside to a topical discourse such as “Zions Teares.”⁵² Most strange of all is the fact that sermons recorded by David Dickson (so keenly opposed to deviations from this methodology) in “Communion Sermons Preached at a Communion in Irvine” have no explicit mark of this mode of sermon structure.⁵³ The party differences were also more apparent than real since Resolutioners such as Robert Leighton and most notably Robert Douglas also abandoned the methodology of doctrines, reasons and uses. According to Wodrow, Douglas was in this habit that some referred to as “skimming the text,” implying that it was topical rather than fully expository.⁵⁴

Innovations in preaching style may have been linked to the controversies concerning some of the liturgical practices that had characterised what David Stevenson calls “the radical Kirk party,” to which Rutherford belonged. Stevenson has highlighted these as a rejection of set forms of public prayer in favour of ex tempore prayer, neglect of the minister’s bowing or private prayer in the pulpit before preaching, and omission of the Gloria at the conclusion of singing a psalm.⁵⁵ The abandonment of the Perkinsian model may have been regarded

as an equally subversive practice that had popular appeal. Baillie's remarks, which are really a sideswipe at his Protester opponents (predominantly the continuation of the so-called "radical Kirk party") seem to suggest this possibility. The difference of approach and outlook was summed up in the fact that Baillie could dismiss his opponents as a "few headie men."

Baillie had a certain anxiety that transgression of order could develop towards separatism: this may be best seen in his vehement attack upon the London sectarians, *A Disswasive from the Errours of the Time* (1645). Any digression from the forms of the status quo was undoubtedly the thin end of the wedge as far as Baillie was concerned. He admits that he opposed passionately the small alterations that the Westminster *Directory* would mean for the Scottish Kirk, but to his amazement the 1645 General Assembly received it entirely with no real resistance. Baillie also records a confrontation between himself and "thrie or four yeomen of my flock who refused to sing the conclusion," that is the Gloria. Baillie records his stern rebuke, "I forewarne yow the rejectting of the conclusion is on of the first links of the whole chain of Brunisme." It would lead them to reject metrical psalms "and then to refuse our prayers, then our sacraments, then our preaching, ye at last our church, our covenant and all."⁵⁶

Perhaps it was the affective dimension as much as the supposed novelty that was deemed subversive because it was reckoned to lead to fanaticism. Baillie seems to complain at the idea of simply "moving the affections" or at least doing so without apparently impacting the intellect. Baillie reckoned that in their public praying and preaching the Protesters affected "a strange kind of sighing, the like whereof I had never heard, as a pythonising out of the belly of a second person."⁵⁷ Rutherford was more noted for a kind of shrill voice in his preaching. One of Rutherford's students told Robert Wodrow that he "had a strange utterance when preaching, a kind of screech which he had never heard the like."⁵⁸ Perhaps Baillie would have identified both phenomena closely together. It was also maintained at the time that Andrew Gray's preaching could make men's hair stand on end.⁵⁹

Rutherford stressed the primacy of the affections: in "natural" ineffectual conviction the "conscience of the natural man may convict him of sin, but for his will and his affections they are mere patients and join not at all in the work."⁶⁰ "The conscience is slow, the heart is quick and swift. The affections are like dry timber, any spark of fire casten in upon them makes them soon to burn; the conscience is like green wood that burns not soon, yet keeps the fire durable."⁶¹ Rutherford himself

makes much of the necessity of spiritual heartburnings: "heavenly heart-burning goes along with the Scriptures. ... With the Scriptures so opened and applied by the spirit of Jesus as by a strong power, burning coals are cast into the heart."⁶² McWard similarly comments on Rutherford, "if thou wilt but converse with him a little, it may be thou find thy heart burn within thee while thou talkest with this warm soul, whose words seem, as they drop, to cast fire into the affections, and set the heart in a flame."⁶³

The excellence of the affections in Rutherford's conception consists in their being

... like the needle, the rest of the soul like the thread; and as the needle makes way and draws the thread, so holy affections pull forward and draw all to Jesus. The affections are the lower part of the soul, and when they are filled they set all the soul on work; when there is any love in the affections, it sets all the rest of the faculties of the soul on work to duty, and when there is any corruption in the affections, it stagnates the soul, will, mind, and conscience. Affections are the feet of the soul, and the wheels whereupon the conscience runs. When a man is off his feet he cannot run or walk; so when the affections are lame, the soul moves on crutches.⁶⁴

Characteristically, Rutherford tells us that it is the voice of Christ alone that stirs the affections and in the sermon on Mary weeping at the Tomb of Christ, Christ himself is spoken of as the master-preacher, preaching

56. Quoted in Stevenson, "The Radical Party in the Kirk, 1637–45," p. 142.

57. Baillie, 3.245.

58. Wodrow, *Analecta*, 3.88–9.

59. Quoted in Blaikie, p. 135.

60. *Quaint Sermons*, p. 49.

61. *Fourteen Communion Sermons*, p. 316. Rutherford qualified this emphasis on the affections by warning that affections such as sorrow and visible signs of conviction such as weeping should not be depended upon. While "in true repentance there is meikle [much] sorrow," there is also a false sorrow which was "without love toward the Him whom you have offended." "Do not think to but God's kindness with tears, as if sorrow were a fat feast to God." "When many tears go out, a windy conceit comes in: 'I am sure God cannot but be pleased now. He is in my debt now.'" *Quaint Sermons*, pp. 94–97.

62. Rutherford, *The Influences of the Life of Grace*, p. 248.

63. *Letters of Samuel Rutherford*, ed. A. Bonar (Edinburgh, 1891), p. 22.

64. *Communion Sermons*, p. 316; cf. Archbishop Ussher, "Now faith is the legs of the soul, the feet that carry us to Christ." *The Whole Works of ... James Ussher ... With a Life of the Author*, by C. R. Elrington, 17 vols. (London, 1847–1864), 13.217; quoted in H. Davies, *Like Angels from a Cloud: The English Metaphysical Preachers 1588–1645* (San Marino, 1986), p. 17.

with but one word. "Christ may learn us all to preach; for one of his preachings is worth a horse-load of our preachings; he has the tongue of the learned indeed. With his mouth he can blow up iron doors. Well kens he all the back-springes and double locks of the soul ... Christ has the way of it, and can draw the bolt with his voice."⁶⁵ Rutherford compares the sinner in conversion to a fish hooked by the angler.

As when a fish is taken there are two actions, the bait alluring and beguiling the fish with hope of meat. This is like the working of the word which is Christ's bait; but when He wins us to dry land, then, when the fish is hooked, there is a real action of the fisher, drawing and hauling the fish to land; it leapeth and flighting [fluttering] and wrestling while it bleeds with the hook. And this answereth to the Holy Spirit's powerful hauling and drawing of the soul in all the affections, that the soul feelth joy, comfort, delight, desire, longing, believing, nibbling and biting Christ's bait.⁶⁶

3. RESTORATION CONTROVERSY

In later decades, the popular, affective type of language used by preachers such as Rutherford and others was still being disparaged as subversive in a tract such as *The Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence*. The author, going under the name Jacob Curate, reproduced fifty-nine quotations from Rutherford's *Letters* for ridicule and complains of Covenanting preachers, that "when they speak of Christ, they represent him as a Gallant, Courting, and kissing, by their Fulsome, Amorous Discourses on the mysterious Parables of the *Canticles*."⁶⁷ The question of such language was also a controversial topic in England during the Restoration where homespun metaphor was seen as part of an essentially dangerous nonconformist mode of language, in contrast to a plain, rational and "scientific" use of words. These issues were rising to the

surface in the 1660s during the time that Rutherford's *Letters* were published (1664).

The end of the decade witnessed the publication of one of the most notable attacks on nonconformist style: Samuel Parker's *Discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie* (1671). Parker dismissed the "melting Tones, pretty Similitudes, riming Sentences" of the nonconformist preachers as mere "Puppet-play" designed to move the "Senses and Imaginations" of the audience rather than their "Reason and Judgement." The requirements of oratory had shifted ostensibly towards logic away from rhetoric. The roots of this affective discourse were identified as irretrievably populist and historically located in the attempts of pre-Civil War Puritans to appeal to "the rude and undiscerning multitude."⁶⁸ Parker went so far as to recommend "an Act of Parliament to abridge Preachers of the fulsome and lushious Metaphors" which "might perhaps be an effectual cure of all our present distempers ... were Men obliged to speak Sense as well as Truth, all the swelling Mysteries of Fanaticism would immediately sink into flat and empty Nonsense; and they would be ashamed of such ... when they want the varnish of fine Metaphors and glittering Allusions."⁶⁹

Ironically, some of these Puritans seem largely to have placed primacy on persuasion by means of reason, albeit engaging occasional illustrations. Thomas Goodwin counselled: "the more rationally the preacher discourseth out of the word, and lays open the meaning thereof in a rational way, so much the better, because it is suited to the minds of men." Richard Sibbes regarded imagery or illustration as about the least useful means of instruction, but preferred to stir the affections as well as persuade logically: "there are four ways of teaching," he said, "rule, reason, similitudes and examples. The two former enjoins, but works not upon the affections. Similitudes are but slight; only examples conform us in a most sweet and alluring manner."⁷⁰

A Scottish minister in London, Robert Ferguson, who was an assistant minister to John Owen, undertook to respond to Parker, in *The interest of Reason in Religion, with the Import & Use of Scripture-Metaphors*. Ferguson notes the accusations of "turning Religion into unaccountable Phantasies and Enthusiasms, drest up with empty Schemes of speech; and for embracing a few gawdy Metaphors & Allegories." He responds by pointing to biblical precedent and emphasising the plain didactic purpose of metaphorical language: "Metaphors are not used to impregnate our Minds with gawdy Phantasms, but to adjust the Mysteries of Religion to the weakness of our Capacities."⁷¹ The theological aspect to

65. *Communion Sermons*, p. 189.

66. *Quaint Sermons*, pp. 92–3.

67. *The Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence, and the foolishness of their teaching discovered* (London, 1692), p. 23.

68. Parker, *Discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie* (London, 1671), pp. 307–9.

69. Quoted in Keeble, p. 249. John Owen acutely countered this: "what if the things condemned as 'fulsome metaphors' prove to be scriptural expressions of gospel mysteries?" Keeble, p. 250.

70. Thomas Goodwin, "Of the Objects and Acts of Justifying Faith," in *Works of Thomas Goodwin*, volume 8 (Edinburgh, 1863), p. 264. Richard Sibbes, "The Christian's Work," *The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes, D.D.*, 7 vols., ed. A. Grosart (Edinburgh, 1862–4), 5:122–3.

71. *The interest of Reason in Religion, with the Import & Use of Scripture-Metaphors* (London, 1675), p. 278.

the preaching style that certain 'radical' Covenanters⁷² adopted is likewise clear in Hugh Binning's implicit quotation of Calvin's doctrine of the accommodation of divine revelation to the human understanding, when he states that God "speaks in our terms, and like nurses with their children, uses our own dialect."⁷³ The motivation behind the use of⁷⁴ metaphorical language by such preachers was towards transparent doctrine rather than opaque mysticism. Thus Frank Gatter finds a "theology of the people" in the "simplicity and transparency of their idiom."⁷⁵

4. HOMELY IMAGERY IN RUTHERFORD'S SERMONS

In his preface to Rutherford's *Letters* McWard vehemently reproaches anyone that cavils contemptuously at the language of the *Letters*: "thou mayest eat grass; and let alone this bread, which is only designed for children."⁷⁶ It is an appropriate retort since Rutherford makes continual use of metaphorical language relating to children or bairns in his sermons. Another favourite source of imagery and illustration is found in the marriage relationship.⁷⁷ Rutherford's seven sermons on the Forlorn (or Prodigal) Son, which interpret the father of the parable as Christ, naturally abound in familial references but they are scattered throughout the recorded sermons. It is a significant type of imagery given the nature of popular preaching and its conventional justifications (see Binning above). At the beginning of the Forlorn Son series of sermons he outlines the appropriateness of this type of imagery. "Ye know it is ordinary for the Lord in his word to resemble His Kirk or the kingdom of grace to a house or a family; for Christ our Lord He holds a house wherein all the bairns of the house are free to the table, for there is a difference even here between the bairns of the house, and those who are only servants, and goers and comers as it were."⁷⁸

Rutherford made much of distinguishing the covenant in its external or visible and internal or invisible aspects. This allowed for two corresponding types of membership: those who had merely partaken of the outward benefits of being part of the church in the Word and Sacrament and those that had received the inward grace that was communicated by means of such elements. In this sense God might be said to have two types of children. Rutherford speaks of the visible church as "the office-house of grace," "where the word is preached to children, who are to be taught, and the Lord reckons it among the favors that he bestows not on every nation, but only on his own covenanted Israel, that the word of the gospel to gather them and their children."⁷⁹

This use of metaphors relating to children contrasts with Rutherford's anti-Episcopal rhetoric. In this, Episcopal forms were characterised as "bastard," literally fatherless, being without authority from God himself through the Scriptures. It was a term that had been used in Ane shorte and generall confession published in 1581 (commonly referred to as the King's Confession or the Negative Confession). Whereas the Confession of 1560 had set out a positive statement of belief this declaration aimed at complementing that document by asserting that "wee abhorre and detest al contrarie Religion and doctrine," explicitly denouncing Roman Catholic teachings and protesting against the Roman Church's "fyve bastard Sacraments, with all his rytis, ceremonies, and fals doctrine added to the ministration of the trew Sacraments without the word of God." David Calderwood and Johnston of Wariston made much of this confession in opposing Episcopal innovations in the 1620s and 1630s.⁸⁰

Rutherford referred to the bishops in such terms: "the Lord take the keys of his house from these bastard porters": although he speaks of them as the "sons of my mother, that were angry at me and have thrust me out of the vineyard," they have no father. The mother church is proportionately in fact, a "harlot mother" and a "whorish mother." In a letter of 1637 from exile in Aberdeen, Rutherford counsels his congregation at Anwoth against cooperating with Episcopal innovations. "Forbear in any case to hear the reading of the new fatherless Service-Book, full of gross heresies, popish and superstitious errors, without any warrant of Christ. ... You owe no obedience to the bastard canons; they are unlawful, blasphemous, and superstitious." Rutherford argued in

72. [SRS HJ] reads "the radical," which was changed to "certain" in *Samuel Rutherford, An Introduction to his Theology*.]

73. *The Works of the Rev Hugh Binning*, p. 74; cf. Calvin, *Institutes*, I.13.1

74. [Ed. The "of" was omitted from *Rutherford, An Introduction*.]

75. F. T. Gatter, "On the literary value of some Scottish Presbyterian writings in the context of the Scottish Enlightenment," in *Scottish Language and Literature, Medieval and Renaissance*, ed. D. Strauss and H. W. Drescher (Frankfurt, 1986), pp. 175–92; quoted Coffey, p. 110.

76. *Joshua redivivus*, p. c4v.

77. According to Hans Meier's study of Rutherford's *Letters*, the predominant metaphors are love, law and money or financial transactions. H. H. Meier, "Love, Law and Lucre: Imagery in Rutherford's *Letters*," in *Historical and Editorial Studies in Medieval and Early Modern English*, ed. M. J. Arn et al. (Gröningen, 1985). In his sermons imagery related to love and childhood clearly predominates.

78. *Quaint Sermons*, p. 198.

79. *The Covenant of Life Opened* (Edinburgh, 1655), pp. 77–8.

80. W. R. Foster, *The Church Before the Covenants* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1975), p. 156.

these terms that the bishops as illegitimate were driving away Christ who was not their father [prodigal son]. "When Christ will not marry a Church, and beget sons and daughters, it is a token that he is going away. ... The power and life of preaching is away, His servants banished to other lands; our bishops complain that there are so many in the land that have Bibles."⁸¹

When Rutherford describes his congregation as children, he is necessarily relegating them to a radically humble position. It is, however, also a more simplified position where experience and spiritual realities may be categorised with far less attendant complexity. The imagery that Rutherford combines focuses upon the emotional volatility of children, a factor that may connect with the affective goal of his preaching. Rutherford is also very touching and tender in his descriptions of children and childhood and one wonders whether this has any relation to his own family life and experience. It is doubtful that any of Rutherford's own children, which could be estimated at about six in total, lived beyond childhood.⁸² The significance of a sermon such as *Christ's Napkin* (preached in 1633), is that the child metaphor is introduced immediately at the sermon's opening as the crucial image that explains the text.

... we see that the sufferings and tears of the saints shall be wiped away and removed, but not fully, until the world to come; for then is Christ's welcome-home to poor sinners. They come all to him with wet faces, and bleared with tears for sin and the manifold troubles of this life; and Christ meets them in the door, with a fair soft napkin in his hand, and puts up his hand to their faces, and says, "Hold your tongues, my dear bairns; ye shall never weep again." And indeed, in my judgement, it is a speech borrowed from a mother that has a bairn with a broken face, all bloody and all bleared with tears, and it comes to her (and woe's her heart to see him so), and she sits him down and wipes the tears from his eyes, and lays her hand softly on the wound, and his head in her breast, and dights away the blood, and lays her two arms about him and there is no end of fair words.⁸³

Elsewhere, Rutherford used the same image to depict the relationship between Christ and believers. "God's bairns that can now mourn for their own sins, and the sins of the land, rejoice in heaven; there are never seen greeting bairns there; God has a napkin to dight their faces,"⁸⁴ "O strange! we long not to be in heaven, to see this comely glorious one (if I may so speak), a darling indeed, and to play God's bairns in heaven."⁸⁵ "I think the saints, in their way to heaven are like rash children, who get many a fall, and break their face twice a day."⁸⁶

The metaphor could even be used in the way of reproof: "Dauted [caressed] bairns, you must learn to go your alone, howbeit your mild nurse Jesus be not at the bairn's back to hold you by the two shoulders."⁸⁷ The imagery has a touching homeliness and highlights the emotional expressiveness and vulnerability of children in connection with Christian experience. Rutherford is able, as with almost all of the word pictures that he reuses, to draw the picture in a slightly different but similarly affective way. In order to illustrate the covenantal union between Christ and his people he depicts a father carrying his children. "Think now (if we may make the supposition) ye see a poor man with one or two bairns on his back, wading a deep water; he is like to drown, and the bairns crying for fear, and he cries to them, Hold your tongue, my bairns, and I shall warrant you; and then when he comes out, he wipes all their faces. So Christ in the grave had all the children that His Father gave Him legally hanging about His neck, and in His arms. Our heaven, and all our writs and charters, all our salvation, was in the grave with Him."⁸⁸

Rutherford places great emphasis upon the Christian's affections, which are a spiritual mark of a healthy child and relationship: "God has not a pleasanter sight in the world than the face of a child of God. No music delights Him more nor [than] the sighs and tears, complaints and prayers of His children."⁸⁹ Believers are also like children that are emotionally expressive of their dependence upon their parent and full of demanding cries. "The bairn in Christ's house that is most cumbersome, and makes most din for his meat is the best bairn that Christ has. ... Na, he loveth the bairns best that have no shame, and are aye crying, 'Alas! Black hunger, dear Lord Jesus; I am burnt with thirst.' ... Oh, it is a sweet thing aye to be whinging, and crying, and seeking about Christ's pantry doors, and to hold aye an eye upon Christ when he goes into the house of wine ... and bout in at Christ's back."⁹⁰ "It is Christ's will that His bairns get their fill and that they grow. Christ never had an hungry house, nor His Father before Him."⁹¹

81. *Communion Sermons*, p. 318.

82. Cf. Coffey, pp. 40 and 53.

83. *Communion Sermons*, p. 177.

84. *Communion Sermons*, p. 227.

85. *Communion Sermons*, pp. 18–9.

86. *Communion Sermons*, p. 37.

87. *Quaint Sermons*, pp. 135–6.

88. *Communion Sermons*, p. 177.

89. *Communion Sermons*, p. 259.

90. *Communion Sermons*, p. 8.

91. *Communion Sermons*, p. 278.

Rutherford also compares Christians to “the bairn when his father gives him a hearty handful of sweetmeats, his little hand and short fingers let the half of them slip from him and skail [scatter] upon the ground.”⁹²

Children can be emotionally and behaviourally fickle, however, and this is not without its parallel in the experience of the child of God. “There is this in God’s children, after they seem to have taken their leave of Christ, they look eagerly after Him.”⁹³ “He is not a Christ to play bairns with. So after we would have joy and comfort in Christ for our pleasure, is often as bairns that would have a painted hat to play with.”⁹⁴ In our spiritual problems: “We are like fools and spoilt [spoilt] bairns, taking offence at our Lord, and like Jacob [Gen. 37:35], will not be comforted.”⁹⁵ Like children who have a limited idea of what is best for them, the believer that longs for the unbroken peace and presence of God fails to understand that “presence and comfort is sweet meat, and not for Christ’s bairns ordinary food.”⁹⁶

Unbelievers on the other hand are more than fickle; they are like disobedient and insolent children. Rutherford draws upon the Old Testament history of Israel in which the Jews rejected the covenant provisions of God which were like a prepared meal. “There was a fair, and rich table covered for the Jews, God’s fair high board, and He called them to the first mess: but they like daft bairns, ran to the play, and had more mind of their play than of their meat.”⁹⁷ God therefore “shut out the mislearned [rude, unmannerly] bairns.” “Learn a lesson of the Jews,” Rutherford warns, “and be not spoilt bairns. Eat your meat and grow thereby;” they “like daft bairns, ran to the play and had more mind of their play than their meat.”⁹⁸ There is a childish folly and absurdity in the attitudes and behaviour of the unbelieving. They are like “bairns holding the water at a river side with their hands. They think (daft things) they hold the water, while in the meantime it runs through their fingers.”⁹⁹ Unbelievers are wholly reluctant in their dealings with God and eternal matters, concentrating on the immediate here and now, “while the bairn eateth an apple the book is laid by;” they “seek truth as a wanton child doth his book, wishing he may not find it, and fearing the finding of his book cost him the loss of his pastime.”¹⁰⁰

Rutherford’s use of childhood imagery reveals the popular, homely and affective character of his preaching and demonstrates the contention of this essay that it was popular rather than scholastic and polemical. Rutherford’s intimate observations confirm Blaikie’s opinion of his sermons that they are “conversational in tone, familiar, easy to understand, easy to follow; using the most common similitudes, they are homely.”¹⁰¹ Wodrow’s evaluation

of David Dickson’s sermons is equally fitting in relation to Rutherford’s preaching: they are “in a very familiar style, not low, but exceedingly strong, plain and affecting.” “It is somewhat akin to Mr Rutherford’s in his admirable letters,” he adds significantly.¹⁰² The theology and practice of Rutherford’s preaching are very much in the Covenanting tradition of popular and affective sermons. John Livingstone is the only Covenanter who has left anything significantly in addition to the guide to preaching included within the Westminster *Directory for Publick Worship*. The ideal for Livingstone is preaching that results in a powerful influence upon the affections. “There is sometimes somewhat in preaching that cannot be ascribed either to the matter or expression, and cannot be described as to what it is or whence it cometh, but with a sweet violence it pierceth into the heart and affections and comes immediately from the Lord.” Livingstone goes on to commend a golden mean in terms of the content of sermons: “The matter should not be too exquisite and fine, with abstruse learning and quaint notions which go beyond the capacity of ordinary people, and also savours of ostentation, nor yet too common and such as most of the auditory might themselves devise.” There was also a balance to be struck in illustrating a sermon: “Neither too many similitudes, nor none at all.”¹⁰³ While Rutherford acknowledged himself to be a man of extremes, and did not always adhere to Livingstone’s ideal balance, his preaching was both highly accessible and greatly valued; a fact that has not always been fully appreciated by his commentators and critics. ■

92. *Quaint Sermons*, pp. 93–4.

93. *Communion Sermons*, p. 40.

94. *Communion Sermons*, p. 192.

95. *Communion Sermons*, p. 292.

96. *Communion Sermons*, p. 182. [Ed. This is part of a question in Rutherford’s sermon and ends with a question mark.]

97. *Communion Sermons*, pp. 133–4.

98. *Communion Sermons*, pp. 133–4.

99. *Communion Sermons*, p. 234.

100. *Quaint Sermons*, pp. 98 and 120.

101. There are, of course, many biblical instances of the use of metaphors relating to children. The model of a father giving good gifts to his children is applied to the relationship between the child of God and their Heavenly Father (Matt. 7:11). In 1 Peter 1:14 Christian behaviour is described in terms of obedient children. The Psalmist uses the weaned child as a metaphor for humility (Ps. 131:2). Similarly, conversion requires us to become as children (Matt. 18:2–4). There are also warnings, however, such as ‘be not children in understanding’ (1 Cor. 14:20) and against manifesting a fickleness such as that of children at play (Luke 6:35).

102. Blaikie, p. 105.

103. *Select Biographies*, 2 vols., ed. W. K. Tweedie (Edinburgh: Wodrow Society, 1845), 1.287–9.

In Pursuit of an Owenian Pastoral Theology II: The Pastor and his Work according to John Owen

By Angelo O. Valle

INTRODUCTION

The driving force behind John Owen's writing on pastoral theology is a yearning for fidelity, both in its source and its application. Owen was able to see beyond his own historical moment by engaging in a critical appropriation of what pastors and theologians had considered before him. By these means he was able to avoid limiting his concept of pastoral ministry according to the norms of his time and place.

In *True Nature of a Gospel Church*, Owen concerned himself with positively defining how a gospel church ought to function. The book itself was written as a response against Edward Stillingfleet's, *The Unreasonableness of Separation* (1681) and was released posthumously in 1689. Owen's goal in *True Nature of a Gospel Church* was not merely to positively define pastoral ministry according to his exegetical findings. He hoped to sufficiently answer every objection that would attempt to contradict his conclusions. As is typical of Owen's style, his aim is to ground his every argument from the fruit of his exegesis. But in addition to his presentation of the biblical data, he sought to buttress his arguments on the nature of a gospel church with extra-biblical data, such as the writings of the early church.

As he engaged in polemic theology against

Stillingfleet, Owen viewed himself as a faithful arbiter of the Western catholic tradition. In his chapter on "The Especial Duty of Pastors of Churches" in *The True Nature of a Gospel Church*, Owen placed his rigorous catholicity on full display. There one can find references such as Gregory Nazianzen, the canons of the councils of Nicea and Chalcedon, the synod of Ephesus concerning Eustathius, Clement's first epistle to the Corinthians, Photius, and the synod of Constantinople.¹ Owen's goal was to convince his readership that the pastoral ministry he was presenting in his work was the most faithful budding of the Western catholic tradition, as handed down by the Apostles, and echoed amongst the Fathers of the church, and those of the medieval era.

Nevertheless, Owen's appreciation and appropriation of church history as an authority was always balanced by his exegetical convictions. Owen wrote, "I shall ever judge that there is more safety in a strict adherence unto [the] apostolical practice and example than in a compliance with all the canons of councils or churches afterward" (*Works* 16:60). Ever the academic, Owen's critical reception of church history was also bolstered by his familiarity and use of pagan literature to help exposit key words in Greek or Latin, and parallel concepts in order to better gird his theses (e.g., 16:62, 120).

When reading Owen, his exhaustive nature can often function as a hurdle even in his more practical writings. To help navigate through his writings, this study will limit itself to the Restoration era, that is, from 1662 to the year of his death, 1683. What may be fruitful for in such a study is that Owen's understanding of pastoral ministry is emerging from a historical moment where pastoral work according to his unique convictions becomes costly, difficult, and simply dangerous.

Though a wide range of sources will be considered, Owen's *True Nature of a Gospel Church* most explicitly provides a starting point in seeing his most mature

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1. *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (1850–1853; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965–2008), 16:94–96. Hereafter *Works*. Repeated references will be given parenthetically by volume and page number.

thought on pastoral ministry, as it was written in the last few years of his life. Other notable texts such as *A Brief Instruction* and *A Discourse of Spiritual Gifts* will also function as markers of development to aid towards seeking to establish his own pastoral theological trajectories.

During his explanation of pastoral ministry in *A True Nature of a Gospel Church*, Owen noted his own limited scope in the present work. Owen made clear that the data presented was *sufficient*, though *not exhaustive*. In turn, modern readership should come to terms with the limited sketch that is provided. A helpful reminder then is to see Owen's *True Nature of a Gospel Church* primarily within the constraints of its historical moment. *True Nature of a Gospel Church* is first and foremost a response to Stillingfleet's *The Unreasonableness of Separation*. As such, it is inherently bound to have its scope controlled by an outside source. Owen wrote, "It is not my present design or work to give a full account of the qualifications required in persons to be called unto this [pastoral] office, nor of their duty and work, with the qualities or virtues to be exercised therein."² Owen made the scope of his work explicit, but also pointed his readers towards other subsequent manuals on pastoral ministry that were already available at the time. Much to the researcher's chagrin he doesn't list any. Another vein of fruitful research would be to identify the unnamed pastoral manuals Owen highlighted for his readership.

Considering Owen's limited scope in *True Nature of a Gospel Church*, his readers are drawn to consider his work as a gateway to what he has written elsewhere in order to distill a fuller definition of the duties of pastoral ministry. As Owen admitted, *True Nature of a Gospel Church* cannot provide an exhaustive explanation of his pastoral theology. Therefore, in order to circumvent this inherent limitation, a guided study through Owen's other writings of the Restoration era needs to be examined to help fill in the gaps. The difficulty comes from the common feature of Owen's style: his prolixity. Owen himself provided a compass through the biblical passages which he attached to the nature and duties of pastoral ministry in *True Nature of a Gospel Church*. Such scriptural references assist the reader in helping to find relevant comments on pastoral ministry throughout his other writings. *True Nature of a Gospel Church* functions then as a useful starting point because of its self-conscious desire to define pastoral ministry, and attach the relevant scripture proofs. Owen wrote, "The first officer or elder of the church is the *pastor*. A pastor is the elder that feeds and rules the flock, 1 Pet. v. 2; that is, who is its teacher and its bishop: Ποιμάνετε, ἐπισκοποῦντες, 'Feed, taking the oversight'" (16:47).

Owen's explicit definition of pastoral ministry, alongside a single biblical reference, showcased the trajectory Owen would go on to follow as he elaborated on the duties of pastoral ministry.

Owen expanded his former definition, and later presented eleven duties for pastoral ministry in *The True Nature of a Gospel Church*. The eleven duties of pastoral ministry include:

1. Feeding the Flock by the Word of God
2. Fervently Praying for the Flock
3. Administering the Sacraments
4. Faithfully Preserving Christian Teaching
5. Making Converts
6. Strengthening the Saints
7. Suffering with those who Suffer
8. Caring for the Sick and Poor
9. Ruling the Church Well
10. Seeking Godly Fellowship with Like-Minded Churches
11. Living an Exemplary Christian life (16:74–88).

Again, what must be emphasized is Owen's limitation in the aforementioned duties. One cannot presume that Owen is being exhaustive concerning these matters. As he clarified earlier in his work, speaking of these eleven requirements in this manner, "They are but *some*" of the duties required, for a more exhaustive route "would require a large discourse" (16:89). Sadly, he never chose to write a large discourse on the matter. Consequently, any historical theologian seeking to understand Owen's theology of pastoral ministry must assemble the various strands left behind throughout his numerous writings in order to present a faithful tapestry. An examination of each duty will help to present Owen's thinking.

DUTY #1: FEEDING THE FLOCK BY THE WORD OF GOD

Owen was not chiefly concerned with the literal or physical feeding of the people of God in this chief duty. He exhorted his readers to consider the words of the prophet Jeremiah to elucidate this task of feeding, "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jer. 3:15; *Works*, 16:74). The task of feeding is inherently tied with dispensing the Word of God. The pastor or shepherd is tasked by God to impart God's divine revelation

2. *Works*, 16:47. Owen will echo this in the subsequent chapter "The especial duty of pastors of churches where he admits his limited scope, 'I shall therefore only touch on some things that are of most necessary consideration....' " *Works*, 16:74.

to His people by means of proclamation, discipleship, and catechesis. In addition to exhortation, application must be brought forth for the good of each particular congregation (16:53–54). Owen considered this task of feeding as a constant throughout redemptive history, whereby God established His ministers for the good of His people. In considering the new covenant administration of this duty, Owen wrote, “The care of preaching the gospel was committed to Peter, and in him unto all true pastors of the church, under the name of ‘feeding,’ John xxi. 15–17” (16:75).

Certainly the care of Christ’s sheep is a crucial duty, as Owen presented it. The continuous labor of feeding the sheep with the Word of God is important and necessary. However, it is not a bare or mechanical duty, but one rooted in love, as Owen himself articulated in one of his latter works, *XPICTOLOGIA* (1679). It is there that he wrote, “It is a great and blessed duty to feed the sheep and lambs of Christ; yet will not he accept of it unless it proceeds out of love unto his person.... Without this love unto [Christ], he requires of none to feed his sheep, nor will accept of what they pretend to do therein” (1:149). In other words, for any pastor to faithfully accomplish this duty of feeding, it must originate from a heart that loves Christ. The exhortation of a Christ-less pastor can feed Christ’s flock as much as an image of a fruit can feed the stomach.

The task of feeding is *the work* of pastoral ministry for John Owen. He wrote, “This work and duty ... is essential unto the office of a pastor. A man is a pastor unto them whom he feeds by pastoral teaching, and to no more” (16:75). This task is so important in Owen’s mind that a man cannot half-heartedly commit to it. Instead, he must give himself completely over to this task because of how indispensable it is for the vitality of the congregation of Christ. Following the Apostolic model, whereby they committed themselves wholly to the ministry of the Word in Acts 6:1–4, Owen articulated that a minister of the Word must “lay aside all other employments, though lawful ... as would divert him from this work, that he give himself ... [to labour] to the utmost of his ability” (16:75). Nothing can be allowed to distract a pastor from his central work of feeding Christ’s sheep with His Word.

Owen’s historical context must be considered as well in all discussions concerning pastoral ministry. One of the central polemical targets of Owen’s writings is the Church of England. One clear presentation of this polemical aspect comes forward in his elaboration of

“feeding” when he wrote, “some have proceeded so far as to declare that the work of preaching is unnecessary in the church, so to reduce all religion to the reading and rule of the liturgy” (16:75). The historical moment helps to elucidate Owen’s framework in making this duty of feeding as the chief duty amongst the others.

Owen’s great warning for the Church of England is that their rejection of the central pillar of pastoral theology will lead to them rejecting the central object of theology itself: the Lord Jesus Christ. Owen warned, “The next attempt, so far as I know, may be to exclude Christ himself out of their religion; which the denial of a necessity of preaching the gospel makes an entrance into, yea, a good progress towards” (16:75). For Owen the two destructive ends are intimately combined, because they are both expressions of a theological system that inherently rejects the sufficiency of Scripture “to be the rule of faith and life.”³ Thus far, love for Christ has been understood as a necessary feature for the pastor to properly feed the flock, but far more is still required of him.

Owen listed five additional features expected from any man desiring to commit himself to this work of “feeding” the flock of Christ. The first is that such a man must be knowledgeable, and thoroughly acquainted with the Scriptures. Owen explained this requisite skill in this manner, “[Such a man needs] *Spiritual wisdom* and understanding in the mysteries of the gospel, that they may declare unto the church ‘all the counsel of God’ ... see Acts xx. 27; 1 Cor. ii. 4–7; Eph. iii. 8–11” (16:76). If the task of feeding the sheep with the Word of God is so central to pastoral ministry in the mind of Owen, then it is only a man thoroughly acquainted with the Word of God who can hope to execute this task. Owen himself added that a Biblically ignorant pastor “cannot be useful to lead [believers] on to perfection” (16:76). In Owen’s estimation, the cause behind England’s spiritual darkness was directly tied to the lack of faithful and biblical proclamation amongst the churches of his day. For Owen wrote, “And the little care hereof or concernment herein is that which in our days hath rendered the ministry of many fruitless and useless” (16:76). Owen redirected his readers’ attention though from one’s cognitive needs to one’s experiential needs.

The second skill requisite for a gospel preacher to faithfully feed Christ’s flock is “*Experience of the power of the truth* which they preach in and upon their own souls” (16:76). The evidence of the Pharisees, and sadly for ministers in Owen’s own day, made plain that theological information is not directly proportional to one’s love for Christ. Theological education is not equivalent

3. Savoy Declaration 1.3.

to devotion. Owen did not commit himself to an idealistic or merely theoretical conception of pastoral ministry; he had particular ministers in mind. Therefore, what he was writing against were pastors, whose comprehension of Christ and His mysteries had never transformed their hearts. This was exemplified by their daily living. “Without this” Owen wrote, “they will themselves be lifeless and heartless in their own work, and their labour for the most part will be unprofitable towards others” (16:76). For Owen, it is an impossibility that someone can faithfully execute the ministry of feeding the flock with the pure milk of the Gospel, if they are not drinking it in themselves. He believed that the inevitable end of such a minister or ministry was barren and fruitless. Owen used experiential language to help prove his point, “he that doth not feed on ... the food which he provides for others ... knows not but the food he hath provided may be poison” (16:76).

With the very same breath which Owen used to denounce false ministers, he provided godly parameters for those pastors who truly desire to follow Christ’s words. In one of his most epigrammatic moments Owen wrote, “a man preacheth that sermon only well unto others which preacheth itself in his own soul” (16:76). Pastoral ministry cannot be understood as a means for gain, or reputation, as Owen warned against. Fruitful pastoral ministry is the outworking of a heart thoroughly acquainted with the grace of God as given in the Lord Jesus Christ. Consequently, it is only unto those who have experienced the delight of feeding upon Christ’s words that are able to share it with others.

The third and fourth requisite skills required of those who might faithfully dispense the Word are so intertwined that they will here be presented together. The third skill is the “*Skill to divide the word aright*” and the fourth is a “*prudent and diligent consideration of the state of the flock*” (16:76). In *True Nature of a Gospel Church*, Owen wrote briefly about the third skill. However, it is his Hebrews commentary which supplements Owen’s own terse comments by further demonstrating what God demands of a minister of the Word, and his ability to “divide the word aright” (2 Tim. 2:15).

In considering Hebrews 6:1 Owen observed that, “It is the duty of ministers of the gospel to take care, not only that the doctrine they preach be true, but also that it be seasonable with respect unto the state and condition of their hearers” (21:7). When the third and fourth skills are combined, what is presented is a call for wisdom that is two-fold, which reflects the two skills. Owen wrote that to divide God’s Word rightly, “wisdom ... is required” (21:7). However, that proper division of the Word is not

accomplished in a vacuum, but in light of the particular congregation to which one is called.

Owen himself combined both the third and fourth skills in his explication of Hebrews 6:1. Just as Owen utilized 2 Timothy 2:15 in a *True Nature of a Gospel Church* to prove the third skill, he again referred to that same Scriptural reference in his discourse in Hebrews 6:1 to illuminate for his readership what is the task of the pastor. Owen wrote, “It is, therefore, the duty of stewards in the house of God to give unto his household their proper portion. This is the blessed advice our apostle gives to Timothy, 2 Tim. ii.15” (21:7). The combination of both duties is illustrated for Owen’s readers again in his Hebrews discourse by means of looking at the priestly work. Owen wrote, “the priest ... [dispensed the sacrifice] unto the altar, himself, and them that brought them ... so he give out a due and proper part unto his hearers” (21:7).

Wisdom is necessary both in division of the Word and the application of the Word. Owen warned that should a pastor engage in feeding the mature in Christ as if they were spiritual babes, or treating spiritual infants as if they were mature, the end would be the same, “[it would] at length make them weary of the ordinance itself” (21:7). According to Owen, pastoral ministry requires spiritual finesse, so that dexterity and wisdom are so wed that Christ’s church may be well fed.

Returning to *True Nature of a Gospel Church*, the fifth requisite skill of feeding the flock of Christ is “*zeal for the glory of God and compassion for the souls of men*” (16:77). Everything Owen has provided thus far concerning the skills tied to faithfully feeding the flock of Christ has been to some degree or another a manifestation of one’s interaction with the Scriptures. For example, if the four preceding skills are reworded according to their function, they would proceed as follows:

1. Know the Word.
2. Experience the Word.
3. Properly Divide the Word.
4. Carefully Administer the Word.

With Owen’s final recommendation, the last skill evidences a shift of focus, from the Word itself to one’s own heart. Owen himself paused in his deviation to highlight that this fifth skill is the very “life and soul of preaching” (16:77).

The fifth skill is “*zeal for the glory of God and compassion for the souls of men*” (16:77). In other words, if a pastor does not exemplify zeal for God, or compassion for sinners, whatever follows from their life—whether

it be preaching, or teaching, or catechesis—none of it is truly alive or better said, life-giving. He may be able to bring forth the visible realities of pastoral ministry, however, that which is presented is lifeless, and likely to cause decay.

When Owen concluded his section on the five requisite skills for feeding the flock, he considered his formulations apparent and obvious. Nevertheless, it is these apparent and obvious ideas which had been lacking in the ministry of some in his own estimation. Owen wrote “the ruin of the ministry of the most for the want of [these skills], or from notable defects in them, is or may be no less evidently known” (16:77). Owen’s writing concerning these five skills is not exhaustive, nor should it be viewed as such. He concluded his section by reminding his readers of the limited scope of his present work: “the very naming of them (which is all at present which I design)” (16:77). However, what is not limited for Owen is that the previously mentioned “naming” makes plain that the task of pastoral ministry is both costly and demanding, something Owen knew experientially himself.

Looking to the Apostle Paul, Owen admitted that a due consideration of the skills and tasks ought to cause every minister to tremble and cry aloud [2 Cor. 2:16]. Nevertheless, Owen did not leave his readers with merely a list of duties, or with the overwhelming reality of the task. He pastored the pastors and commended them when he said, “the consideration of [these skills and duties] is sufficient to stir up all ministers unto fervent prayer for supplies of divine aid and assistance for that work which in their own strength they can no way answer” (16:77). What ministers need is divine help. Anything short of that, Owen said, will fail to enable them to accomplish their divine mission.

DUTY #2: FERVENTLY PRAYING FOR THE FLOCK

Returning the Apostolic model for pastoral ministry, Owen pointed his readers back to Acts 6:4. There Luke wrote these words of the Apostles, “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer.” With his closing comments on the first duty of pastoral ministry, a natural bridge is found for the second duty, when he highlighted the centrality of prayer. Echoing his comments from before, Owen wrote, “Without [prayer], no man can or doth preach to them as he ought, nor perform any other duty of his pastoral office” (16:77). Prayer was the vital link for Owen between the minister and the Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. Without this necessary communion with God everything that

flows from a minister’s efforts must be seen as futile or profitless. For prayerless ministry is rooted in self-sufficiency, and not upon Christ. Owen warned his readers, “whatever is done without ... constant prayer for the church ... is of no esteem in the sight of Jesus Christ” (16:78). In Owen’s structure, preaching without prayer is profitless.

Owen’s call to fervent prayer found at least five goals to spur the minister into carefully committing himself unto the duty. In a word, Owen provided what he believed to be a broad guide in how ministers ought to pray for their congregations. Again, the limited scope of this project must be pointed out continually. The minister’s guide for prayer is as follows:

1. Pray for “*the success of the word.*”
2. Pray for “*the temptations that the church is generally exposed unto.*”
3. Pray for “*the especial state and condition of all the members.*”
4. Pray for “*the presence of Christ in the assemblies of the church.*”
5. Pray for “*[the church’s] preservation in faith, love, and fruitfulness*” (16:78).

Prayer is the very lifeblood of pastoral ministry for John Owen. Just as the ministers of the Word must execute wisdom, and constant diligence in their considerations of the Word of God, so their prayers must be fervent and widespread for the good of their congregation. Owen noted that these prayers for Christ’s church must not be occasional or seasonal but be considered “in their daily pastoral supplications” (16:78). Owen’s concern for prayer in pastoral ministry may equal his concern for a proper place of dividing the Word of God. Prayer is the means by which a minister is “more filled with love” for their congregations (16:79). Owen has given his readers much to consider already, but he showed his pastoral heart most clearly when he invited ministers to pray chiefly to be a blessing to their people. Prayer is, according to Owen, “the only instituted way whereby [pastors] may, by virtue of their office, bless their congregations” (16:78–79). Rather than being solely a means towards enabling a minister to accomplish his tasks, prayer becomes a chief means of constantly caring for the flock of Christ which has been committed to the minister’s care. In a very real sense, prayer is a chief means of shepherding the flock of Christ.

DUTY #3: ADMINISTERING THE SACRAMENTS

Owen's sacramental theology bursts forth in this third duty. He provided what he believed to be a succinct definition for the function of these signs and "seals of the covenant" (16:79). Owen wrote, "their principal end is the peculiar confirmation and application of the word preached." The sacraments are unable to birth faith in the hearts of those members of the flock, but its function, as is typical of Reformed confessional theology, provides a strengthening or confirmatory component for the believer.⁴ Owen's own sacramental theology sought a weekly participation of the Lord's Supper, but his desire to honor the liberty of each congregation did not allow him to make his desires the standard. Instead, he pointed his readers to consider that, "It is the duty of pastors to consider all the necessary circumstances of their administration, as unto time, place, frequency, order, and decency" (16:79).

Owen highlighted the importance of the sacraments in terms of a congregation's freedom in establishing circumstantial parameters. He was also guarding against what he considered the "uninstituted rites and ceremonies" of both the Church of England the Church of Rome (16:79). For Owen, pastors are not to find the beauty of the sacramental participation in the outward garb, or religious genuflections, but in the purposeful submission to what Christ demanded of His churches. For Owen, any deviation from the simplicity of Christ's institution will inevitably lead to idolatry. Instead, what Owen posited as a faithful alternative is that pastors ought to demonstrate "express obedience unto his authority" by means of honoring Christ's explicit commands from Scripture (16:79). Nevertheless, more is required of Christ's under-shepherds in order to honor Christ. The sacraments must not be dispensed without consideration of the recipient. The Lord's Table and Holy Baptism are not universal gifts without requirements. Instead, there are parameters that must be met in order for their proper utilization amongst the people of God. Consequently, it is the pastor's duty to determine, "according unto the rule of the gospel" whether such individuals are "meet and worthy" of taking "these holy things" (16:79).

Though this section is chiefly concerned with a proper administration of the sacraments, Owen's own ecclesiological considerations concerning polity do come forward. They do so because of how they impact the outworking of the gospel ordinances, which he listed as preaching, and the administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper (16:80). He limited these ordinances to the teaching officers of the church. Owen considered the

officers of the church, and particularly in this instance, the teaching officers, as those alone whom Christ has gifted as His authoritative stewards bearing the right to represent Him to the congregation. By means of these gospel ordinances, Christ feeds His flock. Owen concluded this matter by alluding to some of his favorite texts in demonstrating the work of a pastor: Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:2. Both passages of Scripture regularly undergird Owen's pastoral formulations. Following a short excursus on ordination, Owen progressed forward to his fourth duty.

DUTY #4: FAITHFULLY PRESERVING CHRISTIAN TEACHING

The pastors are etched as sentinels of the Word of God and the doctrines which pour forth from the Scriptures. Here Owen looked chiefly at the wisdom of the Apostle Paul, who exhorted Timothy towards this "one principal end of the ministry," which has now been conveyed unto all pastors (16:81). Owen highlighted this when he wrote, "What [Paul] says of [Timothy] ... is true of all pastors of churches, according to their measure and call" (16:81). Though elsewhere, Owen alluded to Timothy's office as extraordinary, namely that of an evangelist, he finds a paradigmatic call to duty in Timothy which must be taken up throughout the ages by every subsequent pastor.

The absence of this duty in preserving Christian doctrine, in Owen's estimation, has been the greatest cause of heresy and schism. Where God's Word is given little estimation, where it is considered inconsequential, where the deposit of truth is forgotten—how can aberrations not come forward? All of this is very clear in Owen's mind. Amid Owen's warnings against any laxity towards this particular duty, he provided a piece of social commentary into his own world. Owen welcomed his readers to consider the present socio-religious landscape (c. 1681) to prove his point. "Wherefore this duty," Owen wrote "*especially at this time*, when the fundamental truths of the gospel are on all sides impugned ... is in an especial manner to be attended unto" (16:82; emphasis added). If true, then it is the constant consideration of these heretical movements and the duty of a minister to contend for the truth that fueled Owen's own writing, even as he was riddled with sickness in his last days. The question of method inevitably comes forward for consideration in preserving the truth of the Gospel.

4. For examples please see: Belgic Confession Art. 33; Heidelberg Catechism Q. & A. 65, 66; Westminster Confession of Faith Ch. 27.

A minister is called and duty-bound to preserve the doctrines of the church. Owen provided seven ways in which this mission was to be accomplished. Firstly, a pastor must know what he is talking about; Owen never presumes the obvious. He wrote, “Men cannot preserve that for others which they are ignorant of themselves” (16:82). Pastors must know what they are preserving if they are to preserve it. Owen instructed ministers that the key step towards preservation is knowledge, for he warned that the Scylla and Charybdis of this duty is weakness and wickedness, both being catastrophic to the preservation of the truth.

The second manner of preservation comes in by means of the heart. Owen reminded his readers that it is not difficult to guard what you love. Owen wrote, “Unless we look on truth as a pearl, as that which is valued at any rate ... which is better than all the world, we shall not endeavour its preservation” (16:82). Again, readers are drawn to consider Owen’s historical moment. Owen did not write these words without a point of reference. He had endured the Great Ejection of August 24, 1662, though he himself was not ejected. In his world, he faithfully contended for the truth and preserved it, even at great cost to himself in terms of positions, and even the joy of living peaceably with his family. His family was separated for the sake of protection at various times and for diverse periods. He provided this rare glimpse into his world when he wrote, “Some are ready to part with truth at an easy rate, or to grow indifferent about it; whereof we have multitudes of examples *in the days wherein we live*” (16:82; emphasis added). Beyond these individuals, Owen implicitly hearkened his readers to consider England’s own Oxford Martyrs: Thomas Cranmer, Nicholas Ridley, and Hugh Latimer. Owen made clear that these men were in view as he concluded his note by commenting on how their heirs have shamed their forefathers and “*pretend to succeed them in their profession*” (16:82; emphasis added). In effect, with Owen’s own comments his readership is provided with a glimpse into what drove him in these moments; namely, a love for the truth.

The third manner of preservation comes in by means of wisdom: don’t entertain foolish opinions. Owen’s terseness may be viewed stylistically as a model of applying this particular manner. In other words, be short and to the point with foolish opinions which “have caused no small trouble and damage unto the church” (16:82).

The fourth manner of preservation is also an outworking of wisdom from the mind of the pastor. To maintain the truth, a minister must have sufficient “*Learning and ability of mind to discern and disprove*

the oppositions of the adversaries of the truth” (16:82). Knowing the truth is not the same as refuting error. Owen was calling pastors to actively engage in polemical contexts to push back against the delusions of heretics and schismatics. He found two appropriate ends of such actions: 1. To silence the mouths of liars; 2. To convince others of the truth. A pastor is not allowed to simply draw in the vast libraries of theology, but must unleash them rigorously against turbulent deceptions as they bombard the churches.

Owen progressively shortened his expansions concerning the last three manners of preservation. He listed them rather succinctly. The fifth manner of preservation required a consistent confirming of “the most important truths of the gospel” (16:82). The sixth manner of preservation is a steady watch of the shepherds over their flocks from dangers within or without. Lastly, the seventh manner of preservation is a rigorously connectional congregationalism, “*A concurrent assistance with the elders and messengers of other churches with whom they are in communion, in the declaration of the faith which they all profess*” (16:82). The work of preserving God’s people is bigger than any single congregation can handle, and is reflective of the need for pastors to walk alongside other like-minded godly elders in ministry. This last note does well to highlight the connectional dynamic even within Congregationalism. Things are not so Independent after all.

DUTY #5: MAKING CONVERTS

Owen continued his examination of the nature of pastoral ministry in talking about the necessity of pursuing converts to the Gospel. He expressed this most central task in this way, “one of the principal ends of the institution [of the church] and preservation of churches is the conversion of souls” (16:83). Pastors do require sheep to feed in order to exercise their duty. Whether Owen allowed his eschatological viewpoint to bleed through in the next exchange, or was merely speaking in rhetorical superlatives, he concluded that central thesis with these words, “when there are no more to be converted, there shall be no more church on the earth” (16:83). Regardless of the angle, what Owen wished to communicate was clear: a pastor must always busy himself with seeking out the unconverted, that they might be united to Christ the Lord.

Owen provided the functional dynamic of the church “that God designs” for his readers under these three heads:

1. The church exists “to enlarge the kingdom of Christ.”
2. The church exists “to diffuse the light and savour of the gospel.”
3. The church exists “to be subservient unto the calling ... [and] gathering all the sheep of Christ into his fold” (16:83).

The three heads combine as one in function, much like the distinct points of a triquetras, depicting altogether the single pastoral duty of conversion.

Just as Owen had a clear destination in matters of conversion, he likewise had a clear path in ascertaining that goal: conversion is effected by means of preaching. Owen wrote, “the principal instrumental cause of all these is the preaching of the word; and this is committed unto the pastors of the churches” (16:82). The initial duty of “feeding the sheep” indeed shows itself again to be the chief duty under which each successive aspect comes forth. However, it is a feeding of the sheep towards a particular end.

Preaching for Owen is the key to pastoral ministry, which cannot be relegated to a secondary position, nor can it be performed by any person indiscriminately. As Owen will subsequently write in his Hebrews commentary, “God graciously ordered that the word of the gospel shall be preached unto men; whereon depends their welfare or their ruin” (20:245). Nevertheless, Owen recognized that there are anomalies within the realm of redemptive history. Though he treasures the uniqueness of the ordinary office of pastor, he still allows for those outside of ordained ministry to play an instrumental role in conversion, including “the necessary occasional teaching of women” (16:83). Rather, than being a call for some anachronistic proto-feminism amongst the Oxford giant, it seems that Owen was merely willing to note what has occurred in history descriptively, and is not speaking prescriptively.

Preaching, for Owen, must have a definitive target, and his first is the unconverted world. Owen’s aim is in following the apostolic example, whilst simultaneously eschewing from commingling the extraordinary and ordinary offices together. However, it is from the work of the apostles that Owen gathers his pastoral paradigm for conversion. The apostolic work is principally about the conversion of lost men and women unto the cause of Christ. Owen wrote, “this was their principal work, as Paul testifieth, 1 Cor. i. 17” (16:83). Around the same time *True Nature of a Gospel Work* was penned, Owen again would take up this very same passage towards this same end in an ordination sermon delivered on September 8,

1682. There he wrote, “*The first work* committed to the apostles was the convincing and converting sinners to Christ among Jews and Gentiles,—to preach the gospel, to convert infidels;—this they accounted their chief work” (9:460–461). Though Owen argued in that same sermon for a methodological discontinuity between pastors and apostles, their work nevertheless remained the same for “preaching was their chief work” (9:461).

After concerning themselves with preaching to the unconverted, preachers found their second target amongst the converted. To those individuals who had already been procured to the cause of Christ, Owen understood the role of preaching to function towards their growth in sanctification. The method of accomplishing this goal was to utilize the structure of corporate worship whereby pastors and teachers would instruct the converted “to do and observe all things appointed by [the Lord Jesus Christ]” (16:84). For it is within corporate worship, that Owen identifies a constant platform for the unconverted to be present and subsequently converted. In addition, Owen granted that there may be other instances whereby a minister may preach in settings outside of his own pulpit to the edification of “the church catholic” (16:84–85). Owen made allowance in pastoral ministry for a minister to both care for their congregations, while allowing for preaching in different settings as providence guided. He felt so strongly about this matter that he again provided an accidental glimmer of himself as he wrote, “if I did not think myself bound to preach ... as a minister authorized in all places and on all occasions, when I am called ... I think I should never preach much more in this world” (16:85). Owen was compelled to preach, following his own internal sense of calling as a minister of the Word, and the freedom Christ has allowed for his ministers to preach beyond their own pulpits.

DUTY #6: STRENGTHENING THE SAINTS

In short, this pastoral duty may best be summarized under the broad heading of soul-care. Owen elaborated, “[It belongs unto pastors] to be *ready, willing, and able, to comfort, relieve, and refresh, those that are tempted, tossed, wearied with fears and grounds of disconsolation, in times of trial and desertion*” (16:85). One need only think about the context of Owen’s last twenty years of ministry to see this would have been one of his central duties as he labored as a pastor.

Owen, however, was unabashedly unoriginal in establishing this duty, for he found his paragon in the Lord Jesus Christ. Owen alluded to Christ in his comments

on Hebrews 4:15. There it is written, “For we have not an high priest which cannot be *touched* with the feelings of our infirmities.” (Heb 4:15) For Owen, the way this verse evidenced itself in the life of Christ is most remarkable. Owen’s comments, “[Jesus] is deeply concerned in all our infirmities, sorrows, and sufferings” (20:420). When a reader begins to contemplate the tragedy of Owen’s life, as a minister, and especially as a family man, his sentence about Christ’s priestly concern takes on a new dimension. The loss of Owen’s children and wife are not static memories, but bear a substantial weight as he elaborated on the deep pastoral soul-care of Christ, and his extension into the present by means of pastors. To be a pastor then, in Owen’s scheme, is to participate in the suffering of Christ for His people. By necessity the inverse would also be correct, that a pastor who remained unmoved, unconcerned, and indifferent about the suffering of his sheep was a pastor in name alone.

Returning to Hebrews, it was in Owen’s elaboration of Christ’s being “touched” by His people’s weaknesses which led to action. Owen continued, “This [deep concern] is attended with an inclination and propensity to relieve us ... he hath a real motion of affections in his holy nature” (20:420–421). Building on Christ the archetype, Owen pointed subsequent ministers to follow suit. Owen wrote, “those who have the charge of his flock under him ought to have a sense of their infirmities, and endeavour in an especial manner to succor them that are tempted” (16:85). All of these threads come together to form the mantle of pastoral ministry with the union of each subsequent duty.

Owen does not leave this task under broad sensibilities, but placed them under three heads to represent the way soul-care is to be accomplished. The first is that a minister needs “To be able *rightly to understand the various cases that will occur of this kind*” (16:86). The first manner of soul-care may come across generically, but the concept is simple: know what to say, and when to say it. In short, Owen was recommending that ministers must be willing to counsel their people. Ministers must labor to diligently care for each sheep, and not presume that every case requires the same remedy. Instead, soul-care requires diligence and patience to both discern the evil at work and “with wisdom to make application ... [and offer] fit medicines and remedies unto every sore and distemper” (16:86). As expected, the sort of pastoral work Owen is commending unto his readers required time, skill, and a willingness to pursue Christ’s lost sheep. Owen recognized that ministers have not unanimously celebrated this expectation of pastoral

duty. Owen wrote, “These things are by some despised, by some neglected, by some looked after only in stated cases of conscience” (16:86). Beyond this brief note on the estate of ministers in Owen’s day, what is provided are Owen’s five recommendations in how ministers who desire to grow in soul-care may accomplish their goals. The following skills are so necessary for pastoral ministry that Owen warned, “without these things, all pretences unto this ability and duty ... are vain” (16:86). The five recommendations are as follows:

1. “By diligent study of the Scriptures.”
2. By “meditation” upon the Scriptures.
3. By “fervent prayer.”
4. “[B]y experience of spiritual things.”
5. By “temptations in their own souls” (16:86).

The common thread amongst the five recommendations requires a fervent and diligent exercise of communion with God, and the examination of one’s own soul. Apart from these things a minister is unable to help the needs of his congregation. Though brief, Owen provided another quick comment which highlighted his own succinct social commentary on the laziness of those pastors of his own day. After listing the danger of attempting soul-care without these five elements Owen commented, “whence it is that the whole work of it is much neglected” (16:86). How can a minister expect to succeed in rightly understanding the hearts of those distressed members, if such a minister is wholly unacquainted with the Word of God? How can he hope to guide his members from the distress of their sins if the minister himself is abiding in his own strength rather than God’s as expressed by his prayerlessness? How can he hope to lead his members into victory over their battles with temptations if the minister himself has given no thought to conquering his own? The necessity of the experiential reality for pastoral ministry cannot be understated in Owen’s practical divinity.

The second manner by which soul-care must be accomplished in Owen’s scheme requires ministers, “To be ready and willing to *attend unto the especial cases that may be brought unto them*, and not to look on them as unnecessary diversions” (16:87). Christ’s archetypal function cannot be overplayed in this manner of soul-care. The question Owen implicitly raised to his readers is this: How can anyone claim to be a minister of Christ who is unwilling to minister *as* Christ did? Again, the methodological distinctions between Christ and the Apostles cannot be pursued by the ordinary office of pastor. However, the continuity of manner in soul-care

does exist between the two orders. Owen turns to the prophet Isaiah, where again, what is presented under the one duty of pastoral ministry is absorbed again under the broad head of “feeding” Christ’s sheep. “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd” Isaiah wrote, “he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry *them* in his bosom, *and* shall gently lead those that are with young.” (Isa 40:11) A pastor provides soul-care to Christ’s flock by carefully attending to those sheep whose consciences are brought down by sin, or are pursuing satanic ends. To follow the ministry of Christ, an end for which every pastor ought to pursue, necessitates a minister “to seek them out, and to give them their counsel and direction on all occasions” (16:87). In doing so, ministers are reflecting the ministry of Christ who came “to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10)

The third and last manner by which soul-care is to be accomplished according to Owen is by the pastors of Christ’s church learning “*To bear patiently and tenderly with the weakness, ignorance, dullness, slowness to believe and receive satisfaction ... in them that are so tempted*” (16:87). Again Christ’s priestly character comes forward as the archetype for this skill, as it has been for the former two. Owen’s writings on soul-care reveal that Christ must be the chief end, and goal for those who minister, and those unto whom a minister ministers. Owen was concerned with the way a pastor cares for the flock, and provided a serious warning towards this aspect of soul-care. Owen warned, “if much patience, meekness, and condescension, be not exercised towards them, they are quickly turned out of the way [of Christ]” (16:87). Pastoral sensitivity is not optional for the minister of Christ’s church. Unless a pastor commit himself to patience, gentleness, and meeting people where they are, his ministry will be short-lived, for he will turn many away from the congregation. For the model is Christ, and in Owen’s estimation this may reflect one of the most important aspects of all pastoral ministry. For Owen wrote, “In the discharge of the whole pastoral office, there is not any thing or duty that is of more importance, nor wherein the Lord Jesus Christ is more concerned ... than this is” (16:87). To abide in caring patiently and meekly for the souls of the congregation, is to abide in the shadow of the chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus. After a terse comment against the Roman Catholic practice of private or “auricular confession” as a cheap and vain outworking of soul-care which leads to “the promotion of their own ease, wealth, [and] authority,” Owen led his readers to the seventh duty of pastoral ministry in practice (16:87).

DUTY #7: SUFFERING WITH THOSE WHO SUFFER

A natural way to follow the former duty of soul-care for a minister is to enter into the suffering of those in his congregation. Owen identified his seventh duty as “*A compassionate suffering with all the members of the church in all their trials and troubles, whether internal or external*” (16:87). Pastors who are unwilling to suffer with their people, are failing to exercise their office well. As Owen’s duties continued to unfold, the underlying foundation of Christ as archetypal in every aspect of ministry comes forward again. Owen highlighted the archetypal/ectypal relationship between Christ and minister when he wrote, “nor is there any thing that renders them more like unto Jesus Christ, whom to represent unto the church is their principal duty” (16:87). If it is true that a minister’s chief aim is to reflect Christ unto the congregation, what could be more Christ-like than to “be touched with the feeling of [the church’s] infirmities”? (Heb 4:15)

The importance of this empathetic reality is that it is inherently a fountain of consolation and comfort to the people of God. Owen also considered the words of the Apostle Paul from 2 Corinthians 11: 29 as a guide, “Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?” These words of the Apostle appear only in one other place in Owen’s writings, *Eschol; A Cluster of the Fruit of Canaan* (1647). Under the eighth rule of fellowship, Owen marked 2 Corinthians 11:29 to highlight the interpenetration of the lives of the saints in Christ’s congregation. He warned the people of Coggeshall in Essex, to whom he originally penned these words, “It is a rotten member which is not affected with the anguish of its companions” (13:73). If such a thing can rightly be said of the relationship between member and member, how much more must it be the case for a pastor and his members? Owen’s warnings there unto members comes doubly upon ministers, “They are marked particularly for destruction who, in the midst of plentiful enjoyments, forget the miseries of their brethren” (13:73). Indifference has no place in the church of Christ, not amongst the laity, especially not amongst its clergy. Over thirty years later, Owen’s opinions did not change on the matter. Instead, a line of continuity pushed itself forward as he wrote, “unless this compassion and goodness do run through the discharge of their whole office, men cannot be said to be evangelical shepherds, nor the sheep said in any sense to be their own.” (16:87–88). A relationship may exist between minister and people if the shepherd remains emotionally removed from the needs of his flock,

however such a relationship is anything but pastoral, and least of all Christ-like.

DUTY #8: CARING FOR THE SICK AND THE POOR

Thus far in the examination of the pastoral theology of John Owen, a lengthy explication has subsequently followed each declaration of pastoral duties. However, Duty #8 contains only one comment from Pastor Owen and so it shall be quoted in full, “*Care of the poor and visitation of the sick* are parts of this duty, commonly known, though commonly neglected” (16:88). Perhaps Owen treated this duty so succinctly because it was chiefly under the auspices of the work of the diaconate. As Owen later wrote, “deacons [were] ordained to *take care of the poor*” (16:104; emphasis added). Elsewhere Owen wrote, “The *care of the poor of the flock* belongs also the pastoral office, yet is there another officer appointed to attend unto it” (16:128). Owen’s brevity in this pastoral duty may be because this responsibility does not chiefly fall on the pastor, though he is indeed taken up in it. As Owen even expressed in an ordination sermon, “a ‘deacon,’ ... signifies any minister or servant: and it hath a special signification, when it denotes that *peculiar officer* which was instituted in the church to *take care of the poor*” (9:452). In short, the minister of Christ’s church is called in conjunction with the deacons to care for those impoverished individuals who struggle to care for themselves and their families.

The visitation of the sick is not as well attested to as the care for the poor in the writings of Owen. In Owen’s *The Doctrine of Justification By Faith* (1677) one finds another comment by Owen on the visitation of the sick. In seeing himself as a faithful arbiter of the Western catholic tradition, Owen has no issue in this portion of his writing in utilizing Jerome, Ambrose, and Anselm of Canterbury to prove the nature of Christ’s sufficiency as the perfect substitute for the atonement of Christ’s people. However, in the midst of arguing for justification by faith alone in Christ alone, Owen appropriated Anselm’s historic guide in caring for the sick, which included a penetrating examination of the soul of the ill. Owen echoed these words of Anselm which is quoted at length for the reader’s benefit:

Does thou believe that thou canst not be saved but by the death of Christ? The sick man answereth, ‘Yes;’ then let it be said unto him, Go to, then, and whilst thy soul abideth in thee, put all thy confidence in this death alone, place thy trust in no other thing; commit thyself wholly to this death, cover thyself wholly with this

alone, cast thyself wholly on this death, wrap thyself wholly in this death. And if God would judge thee, say, ‘Lord, I place the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and thy judgement (*Works*, 5:17).

Owen’s appropriation of this historical glimpse into medieval pastoral practice provided in brief what visitation with the sick ought to look like descriptively. By virtue of his office, a minister examines the spiritual estate of the sick, and guides them to consider no other comfort than the substitutionary work of the Lord Jesus Christ on their behalf. In other words, the visitation of the sick necessarily involves a pastoral imploring of the sick to be made right with Christ and in finding one’s deepest consolation only in Him. This is a pastor’s solemn duty in preparing a soul to meet Christ.

DUTY #9: RULING THE CHURCH WELL

The sacred duty of ruling Christ’s sheep comes under the auspices of both teaching and ruling elders. Owen’s succinct comments in chapter 5 of *True Nature of a Gospel Church* are not meant to diminish the task, as much as to highlight that this a shared task for the pastor. Much like the duty of caring for the sick and the poor is a task upheld by the deacons primarily, though assisted by the pastor, so in the same way the exercise of ruling the church is shared by an additional officer: the ruling elder. Owen redirected his readers towards his subsequent chapters of *True Nature of a Gospel Church* on the office of a ruling elder, and the nature of that elder’s work to help clarify his thoughts.

The simplest expression of his understanding of church rule can be condensed to one of his initial sentences in chapter 7 “Of the rule of the church, or of ruling elders.” There Owen wrote, “The rule and government of the church, or *the execution of the authority of Christ* therein, is in the hand of the elders ... none have rule in the church but elders” (16:106). What Owen was trying to demonstrate to his readers was a lucid presentation of that apostolic tradition codified in the Scriptures, which allows church authority only amongst the elders. Again, Owen placed both pastors and elders under the single umbrella of elders. The former category is a teaching elder, the latter a ruling elder. He looked to the apostles, as a guide for his structures, considering chiefly the fact that they “were elders also, 1 Pet. v. 1; 2 John 1; 3 John 1. See Acts xxi. 18; 1 Tim. v. 17” (16:106). In sum, for Owen every portion of church power which governs the people of God, comes by means of the elders alone.

Owen's division of the use of church rule is divided by what he calls the "key of order" and the key of "jurisdiction" (16:106). The former is a valid exercise of the rule and authority which Christ Himself has imparted for the benefit of His church. Owen described the "key of order" as "the *spiritual right, power, and authority of bishops or pastors to preach the word, to administer the sacraments, and doctrinally to bind and loose the consciences of men*" (16:106). However, this positive presentation stood opposed to the latter, the "key of jurisdiction." Owen revealed his opinion on the matter without hesitation when he wrote "By 'jurisdiction,' *the rule, government, or discipline of the church is designed; though it was never so called or esteemed in the Scripture, or the primitive church*" (16:106). The central complaint was simply that the ecclesiological structures at work in Owen's day appeared to him as a radical departure from the Apostolic model, and the ancient church. For Owen, there was no argument from Scripture, or the ancient church, for anyone to have the right to preach and administer the sacraments, but not bear the power to rule over the church. Such a false bifurcation of the work of the elder is tantamount to rejecting the authority of Christ in Owen's theological scheme.

Owen's historical moment, as he penned *True Nature of a Gospel Church* during the Restoration era of England, allowed him to juxtapose his understanding of the apostolic model for ecclesiology in comparison with what has been proposed by both the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England. Remembering again, that *True Nature of a Gospel Church* was written as a response against Edward Stillingfleet's, *The Unreasonableness of Separation* (1681) helps to position these comments appropriately against the Church of England in particular, and hierarchical polity at large. What adds to the insult is of course his positioning of England alongside Rome in his barrage against what he deemed as a false usurpation of church power and rule. The rhetorical connections cannot be missed without bypassing some of the implications of Owen's assessment of England's trajectory. Owen himself as a younger man saw how easy it was for the Romanization of the Church of England under Archbishop William Laud. Those memories likely resounded within him, as he considered the abuse and overstepping of church authority, in addition to all that he had observed and experienced himself following the Great Ejection on Black Bartholomew's Day.

In contemplating the work of rule in the church itself, Owen highlighted the complementary nature of governing Christ's church. The tightrope that Owen walked was

simultaneously presenting the necessity and uniqueness of ruling elders, whilst not divesting teaching elders of their call to rule as well. Owen's recognition of his historical moment guided the nuanced layers of his language. He must emphasize the necessity of ruling elders, because of their purposeful absence in the Church of England and of Rome. He found their absence not only as a rejection of the church order instituted by Christ Himself, but inevitably leading towards a deficiency for the life of the church. No single man has all the requisite gifts for caring for Christ's flock. Owen illustrated this point when he wrote, "Some men are fitted by gifts for the dispensation of the word ... who have no useful ability for the work of rule ... it is very seldom that both ... gifts ... concur ... in the same person" (16:109). The reality of gifting is always at the forefront of Owen's conversations of church officers. Officers are not made *de facto* from their ordination. Officers are made by the especial gifting of the Holy Spirit for that task, and are identified and set apart for that work in ordination. Owen's remarks on gifts therefore are simply a recognition for what is obvious to him, and which he assumed was obvious to others: no one has all the necessary gifts to care for Christ's congregation. Even pastors need help.

Ruling elders provide the assistance which pastors need. In addition, as Owen defined the unique work of the ruling elder, he simultaneously displayed what he believed to be the prescribed overseeing work required for pastors. Owen elaborated that a teaching and ruling elder must accomplish together the task of overseeing Christ's church. Owen wrote, "The work of rule [is] ... to watch over the walking or conversation of the members of the church *with authority*, exhorting, comforting, admonishing, reproving, encouraging, direction of them" (16:109; emphasis added). Elsewhere, Owen added, "elders are to take care of the walk or conversation of all the members of the church, that it be according unto the rule of the gospel" (16:114). For all intents and purposes the work of the ruling elder echoed much of the shepherding task of teaching elders. It involved the careful observation, examination, and care of the flock of Christ. Both men are simultaneously called to this work. Therefore, Owen's definition for the overseeing work of the ruling elder serves as a definition for the overseeing work of the pastor: the teaching elder.

As mentioned, Owen's presentation of the necessity of the ruling elder, and even elaborating the unique gifting for its accomplishment, does not preclude the rule of a teaching elder. A pastor is still required by God, according to Owen, to oversee the flock and accomplish these same ends. Owen guarded this aspect of pastoral

ministry as he wrote, “It doth not hence follow that ... pastors and teachers, who are elders also, are *divested of the right of rule in the church, or discharged from the exercise of it*” (16:111). Ruling elders are set apart by the Holy Spirit for the great benefit of the pastor in helping him to care for Christ’s flock. Nevertheless, a pastor never ceases to bear the weighty responsibility of overseeing Christ’s flock, nor is their authority at any point hindered by the addition of the ruling elder. Both men are presbyters and “the right and duty of rule is inseparable from the office of elders, which all bishops or pastors are” (16:111). Owen brandished the parity of these offices. Both men work simultaneously together for the good of the congregation. In Owen’s ecclesiology, pastors are not called to function as a diocesan bishop over the elders. Equally true is the fact that the ruling elders, in turn, may not function in such a manner over the pastor.

Shifting from Owen’s ideal to Owen’s context, it was his consideration of the pastoral duty of ruling Christ’s church well which undergirded Owen’s ecclesiological critiques of the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England. Owen did not limit his sights there however, but even critiqued other Independent congregations who improperly placed the power of the keys in the congregants at large. Owen has already articulated the parity of the elder, and that any claim of usurping authority above the presbytery (in a congregational sense) has no bearing. Owen’s congregationalism, however, was not a bare democratic rule. Rather than claim that the keys of the kingdom were granted unto all the members indistinguishably, he assigned them to the teaching and ruling elders *alone*. Concerning those Independent bodies which are “absolutely *democratical or popular*,” Owen found a rejection of Christ’s order in practice, by virtue of removing the need for elders at all (16:112). In such a scheme, both pastor and elders rule solely by the consent of the congregation at large. They are not truly vested with the authority which would allow them to lead the congregation. Owen’s conclusion on the pragmatic ends of this form of congregationalism led by necessity to his conclusion, “On this principle and supposition, I see no necessity for any elders at all” (16:112). One’s ecclesiological commitments have pragmatic ramifications for the well-being of the church. For Owen, ruling elders are unable to accomplish their God-ordained roles properly in every ecclesiological mold, and in turn the pastors may become hindered as well.

Owen is unabashedly committed to the plurality of elders guiding and ruling the local church. According

to Owen, single-elder congregations which have the pastor as the sole elder held to a “novel opinion, contradictory to the sense and practice of the church in all ages” (16:113). The ground to his objections was rooted in his exegetical conclusions as well as his pragmatic observations.

Firstly, Owen’s reading of Acts always found the Apostles establishing congregations under the oversight of a plurality of elders. Owen’s consistent commitment was to follow in the footsteps of the Apostles as revealed in the Bible. Owen echoed his guiding principle when he wrote, “it is our duty to imitate and follow [the apostles] as our rule” (16:113).

Secondly, Owen was concerned that each particular congregation have a presbytery. Again, in this instance a presbytery is that council which is comprised of pastor(s) and ruling elders of a particular congregation.

Thirdly, pragmatic concerns arose when only one elder existed in a congregation. For example, what should a congregation do if the sole elder should die or vacate the pulpit? Owen’s regular abiding concern in matters of congregational care was to avoid that which was “irregular” and “defective” in matters of “church-order” (16:114).

Fourthly, with a single-elder model there are two dangers which inevitably arise: 1) The elder may function as a miniature diocesan bishop or pope; 2) The elder may lose all rightful authority to the popular vote of the congregation (16:114).

Lastly, Owen’s contention against a single-elder model in caring for the sheep of Christ’s congregation came from the Old Testament. Rather than finding the ruling elder as an office originated in the New Testament era, like that of the deacon, Owen found the plurality of elders over God’s people to be a legacy rooted in Deuteronomy 1:15 (cf. Exod. 18:13–27; *Works*, 16:130).

In his subsequent chapter, “Church Polity or Rule, with the Duty of Elders,” Owen in many ways restated what had been said in his former chapter “Of the Rule of the Church, Or of Ruling Elders.” However, it was his aim in this latter chapter to further express his understanding of the task and duty of the elder in ruling over Christ’s sheep. In one such expansion on the work of the elder, Owen provided a most pastoral image in the importance and goal of ruling Christ’s sheep. Owen wrote, “The especial design of the rule of the church ... is, to represent the holiness, love, compassion, care, and authority of Christ towards his church. This is the great end of rule in the church” (16:135). What Owen said here can be viewed as an architectonic dimension of his pastoral theology at large, and reverberates especially under this specific duty.

Part of the pastor's role in caring for Christ's flock was to reflect Christ to the congregation. Though such a statement may appear most obvious to some, its simplicity and matter-of-factness does not remove the pastoral wisdom being unveiled by Owen in these moments. Rule is not simply about control, or broad organizational leadership structures. Rule is chiefly about reflecting the chief ruler, Christ the great Shepherd of the sheep. Transversely, when pastors and ruling elders fail to accomplish this Christ-reflective task, they "reflect the highest dishonor imaginable upon Christ himself" (16:135).

Though much more can be said, it is best to limit subsequent discussions on the nature of ruling Christ's church to the twelve heads which Owen provided as his conclusion on the duty of elders. Elders should:

1. Carefully watch over their particular congregation.
2. Seek out divisions within the church which may arise.
3. Exhort members of the duties of church membership.
4. Look for schismatic decay which may rend Christ's church.
5. Attend to the sick and the imprisoned.
6. Oversee and prudently guide the diaconal ministry.
7. Manage monies from other churches for their distribution.
8. Help inform the pastor on the condition of the church.
9. Assemble together, both ruling and teaching elders.
10. Honor the liberty of Christ's Church.
11. Be conversant with the elders of other congregations.
12. Maintain the congregation in times of pastoral transition (16:138–141).

Though extensive, Owen, as typical of *True Nature of a Gospel Church*, reminded his readers of the scope of this work, and its limited focus. Owen wrote, "[They] deserve a greater enlargement in their declaration and confirmation than I can here afford unto them ... but what hath been spoken is sufficient unto my present purpose" (16:141–142). The reflections and considerations that have been provided are ample enough to help portray the centrality of rule in Christ's church within Owen's theological system. For Owen, every practical element of pastoral rule needed to have its origin rooted in Scripture and the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing else would do for Owen.

DUTY #10: SEEKING GODLY FELLOWSHIP WITH LIKE-MINDED CHURCHES

Though Owen's Congregationalism is properly described as Independency, it is anything but independent. Godly adherence to the Scriptures, even amongst Congregationalists, did not lead to a rejection or willful ignoring of other like-minded gospel congregations. Rather it was the opposite! Owen did mark that he would subsequently provide his remarks on this duty later in *True Nature of a Gospel Work*. However, in his condensed explanation what he revealed was that this means of fellowship was a path towards the "edification of the churches" (16:88). In many ways, the Congregationalist's pursuit of communion with other like-minded congregations represents an advisory version of a presbytery, whereby churches may pursue advice, celebrate together, mourn together, and seek out theological wisdom in the form of synods or assemblies.

DUTY #11: LIVING AN EXEMPLARY CHRISTIAN LIFE

With all that has been thus far, Owen now pointed each minister to consider their own hearts. The last duty Owen wished to provide in this section was the foundation to every subsequent duty; namely, the moral character of the preacher himself. The spiritual vitality of the minister is so crucial that Owen considered it a non-negotiable requirement for every pastor. According to Owen, a pastor must be "humble, holy, exemplary [in] conversation, in all godliness and honesty ... without which all the rest [of the pastoral duties] will neither be useful unto men nor be accepted [by Christ]" (16:88). Simply put, if a pastor is impious, faithless, wicked, cruel, unloving, uncaring, sensual, and corrupt—his ministry will reflect his character before God. In short, it will be spiritually dead according to Owen.

Owen marked that he had no lack of Scriptural and historical evidence to prove this point, and does not bother to list out the materials, for it would be "an easy thing to fill up a volume with ancient examples unto this purpose" (16:88). Owen warned his readers that if such spiritually diabolical characters are allowed to continue in their ministry, the inevitable end will be that "we may take our leave of all the glory and power of religion among the people committed unto their charge" (16:89). With such situations, all the externals of religion may persist, and may even procure more members, however, whatever may follow will not be of the Lord, and certainly not be to the edification of the Name of Christ, or of His bride, the Church. For

Owen, a minister of Christ must seek to reflect Christ, not merely in word, but most especially in thought and deed.

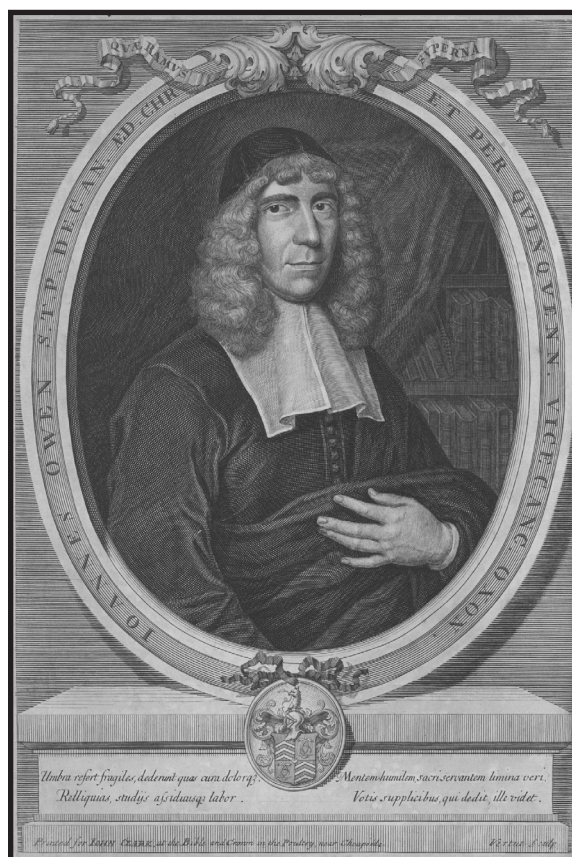
CONCLUSION

With all that has been mentioned, the pursuit of a distilled understanding of Owen's pastoral theology is indeed attainable. In returning to Owen's initial definition of a pastor, he shared what he believed to be the summary of pastoral ministry under a single word: *Feeding*. The heart of pastoral ministry according to Owen existed in the pastor's duty to feed the flock with the Word of God. What Owen made explicit was that he tied every subsequent duty under the heading of pastoral ministry under that very word. "The first and principal duty of a pastor" Owen wrote, "is to *feed the flock* by diligent preaching of the word" (16:74). Feeding the flock was not allowed to take a secondary, or even tertiary role. Owen continued, "This feeding is of the essence of the office of a pastor ... he who doth not, or can not, or will not feed the flock is no pastor, whatever the outward call or work he may have in the church" (16:76). In Owen's eyes, this is a non-negotiable reality for anyone who would dare to call themselves pastors, or bishops, which for Owen were synonymous terms. But this single task of "feeding the flock" in practice is divided under two heads: 1. "Teaching or instruction"; 2. "Rule or discipline" (16:48). The centrality of Owen's pastoral theology was therefore bound under these two expressions which define for him the task of "feeding the flock." He verified this as he wrote, "Unto these two heads may all the acts and duties of a shepherd toward his flock be reduced; and both are intended in the term of 'feeding'" (16:48).

Owen had no limit of words available to him. In fact, as one considers the eleven duties provided by him, there were many options accessible to him to help articulate the mission of a pastor. Owen was drawn uniquely to several Scriptural texts when discussing pastoral ministry. He provided two sizable lists of Scripture references that he believed to codify the Christ-authorized duties of pastoral ministry. But the second list which is principally concerned with the task of feeding the flock is as follows: 1 Chronicles 11:2; 17:6; Jeremiah 23:2; Micah 5:4; 7:14; Zechariah 11:7; Acts 20:28; John 21:15–17; 1 Peter 5:2 (*Works*, 16:48).

If his definition of pastoral ministry is best summarized in the language of "feeding," then his key text in distilling pastoral ministry comes from 1 Peter 5:1–4. Returning to Owen's succinct definition of pastoral

ministry, one finds only one text in view: 1 Peter 5:2. He considered the Petrine language as the backbone of his enterprise in establishing a biblically-defined pastoral theology, taking up its very words as the core of shepherding. 1 Peter 5:2 reads, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind" (KJV). Both "feeding" and "taking oversight" are for Owen the key features of pastoral ministry, "A pastor is the elder that feeds and rules the flock, 1 Pet. v. 2; that is, who is its teacher and its bishop: Ποιμάνετε, ἐπισκοποῦντες, 'Feed, taking the oversight'" (*Works*, 16:47).■



John Owen (1616–1683) by George Virtue (1684–1756), line engraving published by John Clark (1721). *Umbra refert fragiles dederunt quas cura dolorque. Reliquias, studiis assiduusque labor. Mentem humilem, sacri servanem limina veri. Votis supplicibus, qui dedit, ille videt.* "This shadow shows the frail remains; Of sickness, cares and studious pains. The mind in humble posture waits; At sacred truth's celestial gates, And keeps those bounds with holy fear, While he that gave it sees it there" (translation by Isaac Watts, *The Works* (London, 1753), volume 4, p. 574.

“Creeding” Between the Lines

Animus Imponentis & Confessional Integrity in the OPC’s Creation Report

By Lowell A. Ivey

INTRODUCTION

The kudzu vine has been facetiously called “the vine that ate the South.” My wife and I fought a running battle with kudzu during my time in seminary in South Carolina. When we arrived, our backyard was completely covered with kudzu. The fence, in some places, could no longer be seen. We mowed over it and cut the vines from our fence line. But the kudzu promptly grew back. We had no way of knowing at the time what we were up against. Native to Japan, this invasive weed was first introduced to America at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition. Its promoters advertised it as a hardy, fast-growing vine that would prevent soil erosion. In the 1930’s the federal government employed hundreds of men to plant kudzu as part of various public works projects. It now consumes 150,000 acres a year! The problem, particularly in the South, is that kudzu grows too well.

Often, like kudzu, theological principles find their way into the life of the church with far-ranging consequences no one could have foreseen. In 2004, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) released its “Report of the Committee to Study the Views of Creation.”¹ The report was sent to the sessions of local congregations of the OPC with the acknowledgement that a key principle undergirding the Committee’s conclusions would not be familiar to many in the OPC. In his summary of the actions taken at the 71st General Assembly of the OPC, Donald Duff, the Stated Clerk writes, “The General Assembly recognizes that the concept of the *animus imponentis* (the intention of the imposing body) is new to many people in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.”² What is the “concept of the *animus imponentis*”? Why is a principle unknown to many in the OPC employed as the basis for the conclusions of a study committee of the church? What are the long-term consequences for the OPC if it adopts this as part of its institutional

hermeneutic? In this paper, I will seek to answer these questions in light of their impact on the OPC’s view of confessional integrity.

ANIMUS IMPOONENTIS

On February 6–7, 2009, the OPC’s Presbytery of Northern California and Nevada sponsored a conference on the topic of *animus imponentis* (AI).³ The speakers were Rev. Alan Strange,⁴ Dr. John Fesko, Dr. George Knight III, and John Muether. According to Strange, AI is an “old legal term” meaning, “the intention of the imposing body.”⁵ How “old” is the term? Strange offers no certainty in this regard, saying only that in ecclesiastical usage, the term dates to the 19th century. The term itself is so obscure that it does not appear in its compound form in *Black’s Law Dictionary*. While Strange cites *Black’s* in his lecture notes, it is only to define the

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1. Seventy-First General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, “Report of the Committee to Study the Views of Creation,” (Willow Grove, PA: Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 2004). Alan D. Strange (Chairman), Alan R. Pontier (Vice-Chairman), Bryan D. Estelle (Secretary), Leonard J. Coppes, John R. Muether, and Peter J. Wallace. C. Lee Irons served as secretary until he resigned from the committee in October 2003.

2. Ibid. (This statement appears on the first page of the cover letter included with the Report.)

3. Animus Imponentis Conference, hosted by the Presbytery of Northern California and Nevada, held at Covenant OPC in San Jose, California, February 6–7, 2009. The audio and unpaginated transcripts in Word document format are available at <https://www.pncnopc.org/audio/audio-presbytery/2009-animus-imponentis-conference/> (accessed September 27, 2021).

4. Now Dr. Alan Strange. This paper is a slight revision of the original written in 2013.

5. Alan Strange, conference lecture notes, p. 1.

constituent parts of the term—*animus* and *imponentis*. It is unclear, therefore, how the term *as such* has (or has not) been used in civil jurisprudence, much less how the term may (or may not) have been used in subsequent ecclesiastical parlance.

What then is meant by the term as employed by Strange? “We employ the term *animus imponentis* in ecclesiastical law then as a way of highlighting that in church law, as in civil law, attention must be paid not only to the actual words of the constitution itself but also to the intention of the body that would interpret that constitution.”⁶ This means that, in interpreting an ecclesiastical document, such as the Westminster Confession, “the most careful attention” ought to be paid to the actual words of the document itself.⁷ It is the words, in Strange’s view, that bind the adherents of such a document together in confessional unity. The words of the document are of primary importance for its interpretation.⁸

But while the words of a confessional document are of primary significance, they are not the *sole* basis for its interpretation. This may be illustrated from U.S. constitutional law. It is not merely the words of the Constitution that help us ascertain its meaning, but also the *original intent* of its framers. Strange explains,

The *animus* of the church, however, is shaped not only by the words of the constitution itself but also by the church studying and giving heed to what the original intent of those who framed the confession or its amendments was (among other things). Original intent, like *animus imponentis*, is also a technical term and refers to what the framers of a document, whether it is a civil or ecclesiastical constitution, had in mind when they wrote and adopted the constitution. Relevant to this task of ascertaining original intent, then, is a survey of the writings, public and private, of the framers, as well as any record of the debate that occurred in the process of drafting and adopting the constitution. So thus far we have the words of the Standards themselves, interpreting the words of Scripture itself, together with the original intent (as best we can ascertain that, often no small feat), all going to make up this thing we are calling the *animus imponentis*.⁹

In addition to the words of the document and the original intent of its framers, Strange adds a third element: the biblical-theological development of the church as she interacts with and receives “additional light” from Scripture and the confessional documents. Such development “permits the church to hold something more clearly or firmly than is suggested by what we know of the original intent, but never in a way that it at variance with any of the words of the Standards but interprets those Standards in a particular way.”¹⁰ Some have argued, for example, that the Westminster Assembly intended exclusive psalmody as *the* confessional stance on music in corporate worship. Historically, Presbyterians have moved away from that position; the OPC’s “Report of the Committee on Song in the Public Worship of God” is a recent (1946) example of such biblical-theological maturation. But Strange admits that exclusive psalmody is not an example of theological development that contradicts either the words or the intent of the Westminster Standards.

As Strange uses the term, AI is not strictly tethered to the actual words of the OPC’s constitutional documents or even to the original intent of the Westminster divines. For one thing, he notes that the Westminster Assembly was not an ecclesiastical assembly *per se*. The Confession of Faith and Catechisms adopted by the OPC in 1936 “were instead the product of a body that was advisory to the English Parliament.”¹¹ In other words, the Westminster Standards bore no ecclesiastical significance whatsoever until they were adopted (with some minor qualifications) by the Presbyterian Church in Scotland in 1649. Thus, AI has more to do with the intent of a particular “imposing body”—such as the colonial Presbyterian Church when it passed the Adopting Act in 1729 or the OPC when it adopted the Westminster Standards in 1936—than with the *original* intent of the framers of those documents. “Some might even regard such adopting acts by ecclesiastical judicatories as savoring more of an original intent situation than an *animus imponentis* one.”¹²

The AI, then, is not to be regarded as ultimately rooted in the words of the confessional documents, but in the *intent* of the ecclesiastical body that has adopted those documents. Strange is careful not to take this assertion too far, however. Like the Scriptures, our confessions must also be interpreted. Such interpretation is the work of the church as a whole, not merely of individuals. The purpose of the AI, in Strange’s view, is to maintain confessional unity in the church. In fact, the church has a duty to interpret the Standards in a manner consistent with the meaning intended at its

6. Strange, *ibid.*, p. 2.

7. Strange, conference lecture notes, p. 2.

8. Strange, conference lecture notes, p. 2.

9. Strange, conference lecture notes, p. 2.

10. Strange, conference lecture notes, pp. 2–3.

11. Strange, conference lecture notes, p. 3.

12. Strange, conference lecture notes, p. 3.

adoption: “It is inimical to constitutional government for the church to interpret her constitution in any way that is clearly at variance with its own words and the original intention of the framers/adopters. To disregard the Standards’ clear statement about a particular doctrine and to believe otherwise in spite of what is confessed is the mark of a declining, if not to say, [an] apostatizing church.”¹³

The nature of a confession is not to obscure what the church believes, but to *clarify* it. A confession is not a cloak for equivocation. Strange writes,

When the church comes to believe that the Scriptures teach something other than what she has confessed the Scriptures to teach, integrity demands she amend her constitution in the manner that the constitution itself prescribes for its own amendment. For the church to refuse to amend her constitution to reflect her current understanding but instead to read it clearly at variance with its plain meaning is to render the concept of the church as a confessing church meaningless. All this is to say that the concept of *animus imponentis* may not be employed so as to make a wax nose of the Standards and to pit the church’s interpretation of the Standards against the plain words of the Standards itself, particularly inasmuch as the Standards generally are thought to contain but few obscurities. Rather, *animus imponentis*, rightly understood and employed, means simply that the church as a whole in its integrity interprets its own constitution and that such interpretation, and not those of private individuals or lesser judicatories, is decisive.¹⁴

This has implications, then, for the church’s view of confessional subscription. Indeed, the question of subscription is at the heart of the entire AI debate. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the OPC’s Creation Report.

APPLYING THE *ANIMUS*: THE OPC’S CREATION REPORT
In 2001, the OPC’s 68th General Assembly established the Committee to Study the Views of Creation. Its stated purpose was “to examine the Scriptures and our Confession of Faith and Catechisms, to assist the church in its understanding of the biblical doctrine of creation with respect to the various views of the days of creation ... thereby assisting sessions and presbyteries in their dealing with officers and candidates who hold differing views.”¹⁵ Its work followed a similar report issued by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), which contained similar conclusions. The one significant difference between the two reports was the OPC’s reliance upon the principle of AI.

In a section entitled, “The Days of Creation and Confessional Subscription,” the report addresses the original intent of the Westminster Assembly and the place of AI in confessional subscription. The authors of the report admit that, of those Westminster divines who committed their views to writing, there is no reason to doubt that the majority (if not all) favored a “days of ordinary length” view of the creation days. But does this mean the divines meant to specify the length of the days? The answer, according to the report’s authors, is clear:

To assume such, we believe, is to mistake the nature of constitutionalism more broadly and of the Westminster Assembly more narrowly. The nature of confession-making is such that on any number of points a significant majority may believe something together and yet choose not to make that common belief an explicit point of doctrine in the confession, prescribing the majority view and proscribing all others. It is not sufficient in seeking to ascertain the original intent of the framers of a constitutional document simply to survey their writings and discover how most of them viewed a particular subject. Rather, it is necessary that one demonstrate that not only did the framers have this or that particular view but that they sought to impose this view exclusively on the body politic and ecclesiastical. There is no known evidence that the framers of the Westminster Standards intended to prescribe that the duration of the creation days must be confessed to be days of twenty-four hours in length.¹⁶

It is at this point in the Committee’s report that alarm bells should be ringing. The authors argue on the basis of what is *not* in the Westminster Standards. They argue that because the divines did not *specify* twenty-four hours days, we, therefore, cannot assume they meant as much. This is an argument from silence. It is not incumbent on the proponents of the “days of ordinary length” view to prove that the days intended by the divines were twenty-four hour days. Rather, the burden of proof is on those with non-literal views to prove they were *not*. The authors of the report have given the impression that the divines were deeply divided on the question of the length of the creation days. David Hall has demonstrated conclusively that this was not the case.¹⁷ According to Hall,

13. Strange, conference lecture notes, p. 5.

14. Strange, conference lecture notes, p. 5.

15. Creation Report, 1601: 3–8.

16. Creation Report, 1657: 2624–2634.

17. David Hall, “What Was the View of the Westminster Assembly

...until written citations can be produced that fairly indicate some Westminster divine held to a long-age view, it is only fair that adherents to that position admit that they do so without earlier company and contrary to the earlier Westminster position. Later company may arrive, but we are still searching for *any* of the divines, *much less more than we have cited*...who held to a long geologic age for creation. That view still looks like a relatively recent modern invention, regardless of numerous adherents in our own century. Whether our studies have amassed five, eight, or nine incontrovertible witnesses to original intent, or 19 or 21, the amazing fact is that historians must finally agree on the original intent of the Westminster divines regarding the nature of the creation days, until they present primary and incontrovertible testimony from other divines to the contrary. Mere speculation and assertion without evidence will not be credible without primary documentation. Lacking that, an unbiased person would recognize any attempt to espouse the view that the divines held to a long day or framework hypothesis as little more than an unsubstantiated prejudice, anachronism, or dependence on faulty secondary and tertiary materials.¹⁸

Furthermore, the genesis of the phrase “in six days” in the Westminster Standards is James Ussher’s usage in the Irish Articles of 1615.¹⁹ It cannot be credibly maintained that Ussher intended anything other than six days of ordinary length. The Assembly’s choice of

Divines on Creation Days?” in *Did God Create in Six Days?* ed. Joseph A. Pipa and David W. Hall (White Hall, WV: Tolle Lege Press, 2005), pp. 43–54.

18. Hall, *ibid.*, p. 48. See also, William VanDoodewaard, *The Quest for the Historical Adam: Genesis, Hermeneutics, and Human Origins* (Reformation Heritage Books, 2015). VanDoodewaard surveys the whole scope of church history, from the patristic era to the present, and concludes that the modern interpretations of Genesis regarding the length of the creation days are historically without support until the arrival of the Darwinian theory of evolution.

19. *Articles of Religion Agreed upon by the Archbishops and Bishops, and the rest of the Clergy of Ireland in the Convocation holden at Dublin in the year of our Lord God 1615, for the avoiding of Diversities of Opinions, and the establishing of Consent touching true Religion.* “4. Of the Creation and Government of all things. (18.) In the beginning of time, when no creature had any being, God, by his word alone, in the space of six days, created all things, and afterwards by his providence doth continue, propagate, and order them according to his own will.” Cf. Jean François Salvard, *The Harmony of Protestant Confessions: Exhibiting the Faith of the Churches*, a new edition enlarged by Peter Hall (London: John F. Shaw, [1842]), p. 525.

20. Creation Report, 1661: 2769–2772.

21. Creation Report, 1661: 2777–2781.

22. Creation Report, 1661: 2783–2784.

23. Creation Report, 1662.

24. Creation Report, 1665: 2927–2928.

Ussher’s exact words clearly implies that they intended what Ussher meant by them.

For the purposes of the Committee, however, the exact wording of the Westminster Standards is less important than the “intent” of the OPC in adopting them in 1936. “Thus we must inquire as to whether the OPC in adopting the modified Westminster Standards did so in a way that sheds any light on the question that now concerns us of creation and especially the length of the creation days.”²⁰ The phrase “in the space of six days” was not debated by the OPC’s adopting Assembly. The Committee could find no record of any public discussion over the meaning of the phrase, and thus concluded “that even as we have found no evidence that the original intent of the framers at Westminster was to prescribe a particular length of creation day, we have found no intent on the part of the adopters of the Standards in 1936 to impose a particular view of the length of the days on those who would subscribe the Standards as officers in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.”²¹ Again, the Committee resorts here to an argument from silence.

Turning away from the actual language of the Confession the OPC adopted in 1936, the authors of the report draw attention to “an apparent allowance of flexibility with respect to the specific question of the length of the creation days.”²² By the time the OPC was founded, there was a long history, particularly among northern Presbyterians like Charles and A.A. Hodge, B.B. Warfield, and W.G.T. Shedd, of accepting nontraditional views. J. Gresham Machen and E. J. Young, for example, did not consider the length of the days to be a test of confessional orthodoxy.²³ But is the toleration of divergent views by some of the leading men in the OPC evidence of an *animus* of the church requiring such toleration? And even if such an *animus* has prevailed (for whatever reason), are officers in the church bound in any way by AI?

With these questions, we arrive at the heart of the issue in terms of AI’s practical application by the authors of the OPC’s Creation Report. In a section entitled “Creation, Credentialing, and Corporate Culture: This Present Question and the Licensing and Ordaining of Candidates,” the Committee notes that “there is no current constitutional mechanism for taking exception to the Standards or for expressing scruples.”²⁴ In my judgment, this is the section of the report calculated to have the farthest-reaching consequences within the OPC. At present, there are only two ways to deal with exceptions and scruples. The first way is the careful examination of candidates at the time of licensure and ordination. The

second is the judicial process. The problem is stated in the report as follows:

As our system currently operates, then, a judicatory, having heard any differences that a candidate may have with the Standards, decides, in the face of such differences, whether or not to proceed to licensure/ordination. It must be understood that if the candidate is licensed or ordained he enjoys all the rights and privileges of every other member of the body. We, as confessing Presbyterians, do not regard any members among us as 'second class,' on account of any scruples they might have expressed or exceptions they might have taken. There is no official mechanism outside of judicial process for a judicatory to license or ordain a candidate, and at the same time, prohibit him from teaching any particular doctrine. To be sure, a candidate should, out of integrity, refrain from teaching contrary to the Standards since to do so is inherently inimical to the concept of a confessional church. Likewise, judicatories ought always to exercise due caution and good discretion in licensing and ordaining candidates who take exceptions. It will be difficult for our church to maintain her confessional stance if we admit candidates whose non-confessional views undermine the very foundation which supports our ability to say the same thing together.²⁵

But who determines *the* confessional stance of the OPC? This, the Committee suggests, is the role of AI. Individual presbyters have the ultimate responsibility to vote according to their consciences in the church's judicatory assemblies, but what should guide them in determining whether a particular exception or scruple ought to be allowed? The Committee's answer is alarming:

First of all, a commissioner should vote as he in good conscience believes that he must before God. The oaths and vows that the commissioner has taken are an important part of what must inform his conscience, especially his vows of subscription to the Standards, his approving of the Church Order and his vow to submit to his brethren in the Lord. Secondly, then, the commissioner should vote *coram Deo* with an eye to the actual words contained in the Standards themselves as well as his understanding of the *animus imponentis*. This reminds us that conscience is not merely an individual matter. Even as the individual conscience is to be informed and formed by the Scripture, so there is a corporate conscience that is to be informed and formed by Scripture... The heart of confessionalism is that the church as a corporate entity reads the Bible together ...

The function of the *animus imponentis* reminds us that the church also has a corporate conscience which guides the exercise of individual conscience.²⁶

This reasoning seems to be at odds with the church's confession that the Holy Spirit speaking in Scripture is the supreme Judge in all controversies of religion.²⁷ Ultimately, it places Scripture alongside tradition (in the form of AI). This may not seem apparent on the surface. The Committee certainly acknowledges that the AI is nothing other than the church's "corporate conscience" informed by its reading of Scripture and the Standards. But how are the Standards to be interpreted? The Committee's answer appears to be: "with one eye on the actual words and the other eye on the *animus* of the church."

But this begs the question: what are the words of the Standards if not an objective declaration of the *animus* of the church? The Standards, of course, are subject to revision. The church may certainly reevaluate its public confession at any time. As Ian Hamilton has noted, confessional documents are by nature *provisional*—they simply set forth what the church at a particular moment in history confesses to be the teaching of God's Word.²⁸ Only the Bible has normative, or intrinsic, authority in the church. Confessional documents have, at most, a *derived* authority. Nevertheless, AI is not a legitimate mechanism for revising the confessional standards.

This point needs to be underscored in light of the Committee's recommendations. While acknowledging a commissioner's right to vote according to his own conscience—even to do so against prevailing opinions in the church—the report suggests that those who look only to the actual words of the Standards and reject the AI are motivated by a desire to impose their own idiosyncratic views on the entire church. "For individual presbyters to oppose candidates whom they might regard as confessionally unacceptable when the rest of the church does not so regard them potentially is vexing for the church. Especially troubling is the practice of voting against a candidate who holds views which are already widely held in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church."²⁹ Not only does the Committee question the motives of those who adhere only to the actual words of the Standards as "potentially vexing" the church, it subtly accuses such men of desiring to change the constitution.

25. Creation Report, 1665: 2948–2960.

26. Creation Report, 1665–1666: 2974–2990.

27. Westminster Confession of Faith 1.10.

28. Ian Hamilton, *The Erosion of Calvinist Orthodoxy: Drifting from the Truth in Confessional Scottish Churches* (Fearn: Mentor, 2010), p. 10.

29. Creation Report, 1666: 3003–3006.

“Presbyters who wish to change the constitution ought to seek some orderly process, apart from simply voting ‘no’ on candidates, to press their concerns upon the church, up to but not limited to proposing constitutional amendments.”³⁰

It is a sad irony that those who seek to adhere to the plain meaning of the actual words of the Westminster Standards are portrayed in this report as wanting to *change* the Standards. The careful examination of candidates in regard to their understanding of Scripture and the Westminster Standards is essential to the wellbeing of the church. It is not incumbent upon those who vote to consider *anything* other than the Scriptures and the Confessions in making their decision. No minister or elder in the OPC has sworn an oath to uphold the AI. In fact, the very idea is diametrically opposed to the spirit of Presbyterianism. While we esteem our fathers and brethren highly, and stand ever ready, by the grace of God working in us, to submit to the decisions of church councils, we reject the Roman Catholic notion of canon law. It is the mind of *Christ*, not the traditions of men, that presbyters must prayerfully conform themselves to in ecclesiastical deliberations.

THE ANIMUS AND CONFESSIONAL INTEGRITY

The OPC’s historian John Muether has written that, despite the presence of a “definite creedal sensibility” in the OPC this sensibility “is not the product of careful reflection on the part of the denomination, but rather the result of an unarticulated corporate culture.”³¹ He notes that the OPC has not had the same debates over “strict” or “full” subscription versus “system” subscription that other Presbyterian denominations (particularly the PCA) have had. While this is good, it may also be problematic in the long-term. Not having had these

debates, the OPC may be unprepared for an unbridled application of AI.

The proponents of AI depend almost exclusively on Charles Hodge for historical support. In doing so, they fail to articulate what Hodge actually meant by the term. In his *Discussions in Church Polity*, Hodge employs the term *animus imponentis* with reference to the subscription vows taken by officers in the church, *not* to the will of the church in regard to particular expressions in the confessional standards. Thus, the OPC’s Creation Report extends the meaning of AI beyond its historical usage by Hodge.³² Gregory Reynolds summarizes Hodge’s position with respect to AI:

Hodge distinguishes among three views of what the subscription vow commits a minister to when he declares that the Confession and Catechisms contain ‘the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures.’ He subscribes to: 1) the substance of doctrine 2) every proposition 3) the system of doctrine....

Hodge explores the implications of the criteria for vows and oaths: 1) the historical meaning of the words 2) the *animus imponentis* (‘the intention of the party imposing the oath’). He concludes: “The Confession must be adopted in the sense of the Church, into the service of which the minister, in virtue of that adoption, is received.” Thus the intention of the church in its adoption of the confession, along with the history of its deliberations on exceptions must be taken into account.

Thus, Hodge concludes regarding view 1): “From the beginning, therefore, the mind of our Church has been that the ‘system of doctrine’ in its integrity, not the substance of those doctrines, was the term of ministerial communion...the phrase ‘substance of doctrine’ has no assignable meaning.” On the other end of the spectrum view 2) “is contrary to the *animus imponentis*, or the mind of the Church.” The “words ‘system of doctrine,’ have a definite meaning, and serve to define and limit the extent to which the Confession is adopted.” To require the adoption of every proposition or teaching is to invite hypocrisy and foster disunity...³³

At first glance, it might appear that Hodge’s view of AI is indistinguishable from that of the authors of the OPC’s Creation Report. But Hodge only employs the term as it relates to subscription vows. The ministerial candidate at his ordination is required to subscribe to the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of the church “as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures.”³⁴ It is

30. Creation Report, 1666: 3008–3010.

31. John R. Muether, “Confidence in Our Brethren: Creedal Subscription in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church,” in *The Practice of Confessional Subscription*, ed. David W. Hall. 2nd ed. (Oak Ridge, TN: The Covenant Foundation, 1997), p. 302.

32. I owe this observation to Rev. Stuart Jones from personal correspondence with him on the subject of AI. Jones shares the conclusions reached by the Committee in the OPC’s Creation Report, but is skeptical with their use of AI as the basis for them.

33. Gregory E. Reynolds, “The Nature, Limits, and Place of Exceptions and Scruples in Subscription to the Doctrinal Standards of the Presbyterian Church.” Available from: <http://www.amoskeagchurchof.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/The-Nature-of-Subscription2.pdf>. Reynolds’ quotations are all from Hodge, *Discussions in Church Polity*, pp. 319–335.

34. Orthodox Presbyterian Church, *The Book of Church Order of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (Willow Grove, PA: The Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church), p. 47.

the Confession of Faith and Catechisms that ministers in the OPC receive and adopt, *not* the system of doctrine. These are adopted *as containing* the system of doctrine taught in the Bible. Morton Smith observes: "the system of doctrine is not stated to be that contained in the Confession (though this is true in itself and is implied); it is identified as the system of doctrine contained in the *holy Scriptures*."³⁵ Hodge understood this. In *The Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church*, he writes (regarding the Adopting Act of 1729), "There can be no doubt, therefore, that the adopting act, as understood and intended by its authors, bound every new member to receive the Confession of Faith and Catechisms, *in all their parts*, except certain specified clauses..."³⁶

What Hodge intends by AI is not the mind of the church regarding any particular doctrine contained in the Westminster Standards—but what is required for a man to honestly receive them in his subscription vows. S. Donald Fortson III writes, "The *Constitutional History* was an attempt to establish by documentary evidence that the first generations of American Presbyterians practiced full subscription to the Confession of Faith. Repeatedly, Hodge highlighted this issue. His contention was that the original Adopting Act affirmed a strict subscriptionist stance and subsequent synodical statements in 1730 and 1736 unequivocally strengthen this position."³⁷ It is true that Hodge allowed for some diversity of opinion within the church in regard to the *propositions* contained in the Standards. He was not alone in so doing. Samuel Miller argues in the same vein.³⁸ There is room in the subscription vow for exceptions and scruples.³⁹ Such exceptions or scruples must not, however, impinge on the system of doctrine contained within the Standards. Furthermore, only the church, operating through her judicatory bodies, determines whether or not a particular exception or scruple affects the confessional system.⁴⁰ For this reason, officers in the church must clearly articulate their exceptions and/or scruples so that the church may determine whether to allow them or not.⁴¹

According to J. V. Fesko, the "Old School" view of ordination vows was that of "system subscription." He contrasts this with "loose subscription" on the one hand, and "full" or "strict subscription" on the other.⁴² Fesko claims that Hodge sought a mediating position between the *quia* and the *quatenus* views of subscription.⁴³ System subscription allows for doctrinal differences among ordained officers holding to the same confessional standards but requires adherence to the system contained within those standards. Fesko writes,

Who determines when a substantive propositional exception is unacceptable? According to Hodge and Warfield it is the Church. This, then, is Old School subscription: it is conservative, in that it requires the adoption of every article and doctrine, yet it is liberal in that it does not require the adoption of every proposition. Moreover...these men advocated their teachings even though one might be able to make a case that they contradict the *ipsissima verba* of the Confession. Now, it is this truly liberal but conservative formula that embodies Old School Presbyterianism that has been carried forward in the OPC.⁴⁴

35. Morton H. Smith, *The Case for Full Subscription to the Westminster Standards in the Presbyterian Church in America* (Greenville, SC: GPTS Press, 1992), p. 96.

36. Charles Hodge, *The Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church* (Philadelphia: William S. Martien, 1839), 159ff. The "specified clauses" had to do with the American revisions to the Westminster Standards, particularly in regard to the chapters dealing with Christian liberty and the civil magistrate. For a detailed treatment of the Adopting Act and early attitudes about subscription in American Presbyterianism, see D.G. Hart and John R. Muether, *Seeking a Better Country: 300 Years of American Presbyterianism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007), pp. 44–49.

37. S. Donald Fortson III, *The Presbyterian Creed: A Confessional Tradition in America, 1729–1870* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008), p. 154.

38. Samuel Miller, *Doctrinal Integrity* (Dallas, TX: Presbyterian Heritage Publications, 1989), 77ff. This work contains Miller's Letters VI–VIII of *Letters to Presbyterians on the Present Crisis in the Presbyterian Church in the United States* (1833) and *The Utility and Importance of Creeds and Confessions* (1824, 1839 [1841 printing]).

39. Legitimate exceptions and scruples have to do with the *manner of expression* of the various doctrines in the confessional documents. A candidate or officer may wish that a particular doctrine were expressed differently, and, for the sake of conscience, choose not to subscribe to a particular proposition. But every *doctrine* must be received.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 166.

41. "The Standards were intended to govern who could be admitted to the church's ministry. No candidate could be admitted unless he 'declares his agreement with all the essential and necessary articles of said confession.' Any candidate who found himself with 'any scruple' with respect to *any article* of the Standards must (as with the Dort formula of subscription) 'declare his sentiments to the Presbytery or Synod.' The judicatory may admit a candidate with a scruple about the Standards only if it judges that 'scruple or mistake to be only about articles not essential and necessary in doctrine, worship or government.'" R. Scott Clark, *Recovering the Reformed Confession: Our Theology, Piety, and Practice* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), p. 164.

42. Presbytery of Northern California 2009 Animus Imponentis Conference, Dr. John Fesko, Lecture 2, System Subscription.

43. The *quia* view of subscription corresponds to full subscription. It is subscribing *because* a confession is biblical. *Quatenus* is subscribing *insofar* as a confession is biblical.

44. J.V. Fesko, "The Legacy of Old School Confession Subscription in the OPC," *JETS* 46/4 (December 2003): 673–698.

In his conference lecture, Fesko offers three examples of how this view of subscription has worked itself out in the OPC. First, Q. 88 of the Larger Catechism seems to rule out premillennialism, but this view is allowed. Second, the phrase “in the space of six days” has never been regarded as requiring an exception. Third, WCF 19:4 is not consistent with theonomy, but theonomy is accepted. In all three examples, the AI of the church is not in harmony with the plain meaning of the Westminster Standards.⁴⁵

George Knight, however, places the meaning of the phrase “system of doctrine” in its proper historical perspective. The system of doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith and Catechisms is an integrated whole. The Southern Presbyterian Church acknowledged this in 1898. Summarizing that body’s decision, Knight writes, “The ‘system of doctrine’ is not part of the truth, that is, either the basic gospel message or even Calvinism; it is rather ‘the *whole body* of truth contained in the Confession of Faith.’”⁴⁶ In this light, some statements of Hodge and others which are often advanced in favor of the more recent “system of doctrine” view seem to be taken out of context. “Hodge was saying simply that officers were not bound to every proposition in the confessional standards, and his emphasis is constantly on the necessity of embracing all the doctrines of the confessional standards.”⁴⁷ In other words, Hodge was not advocating a *media via* between loose and full subscription. He was *defining* system subscription as full adherence to the doctrinal content of the Standards.

Ultimately, the question is not what the OPC (or any other ecclesiastical body) has in practice allowed. The purpose of the Standards is to unify the church in its confession of the system of doctrine contained in the *Scriptures*. The Standards preclude premillennialism and theonomy because these views contradict the teaching of Scripture.⁴⁸ The fact that the church allows these views on the basis of AI is no proof that it has a *warrant* for allowing them. Likewise, the phrase “in the space of six days” is not only biblical, but has historically been regarded by Presbyterians as part of the system of doctrine they confess. The OPC, in adopting

the Confession and Catechisms, received those documents *in their historical sense* except where, by revision and amendment, they gave them a new sense. The church did adopt some of the earlier revisions to the Standards at that time.⁴⁹ Thus, we have an objective basis for determining the will of the imposing body in 1936. The expansion of the principle of AI in the OPC’s Creation Report sets a dangerous precedent. It undermines the practice of confessional subscription in the church by defining AI in terms of what the church has *allowed*, rather than in terms of what she has actually *said*.

CONCLUSION

It is too early to predict how far the tentacles of AI will reach. As with the kudzu vine, much of its development in the life of the church has already taken place beneath the surface—out of public view. Its roots are deep, even extending to the founding days of the OPC. The greatest danger of all is that many in the denomination continue to see AI as benign. It is not regarded as an invasive principle foreign to the spirit of the Reformed Faith. But what will happen to the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* if it is allowed to be crowded out by AI? Unless AI is attacked at the roots, it will continue to choke out historic confessional truth. Men like Luther, Calvin, and Knox boldly resisted the *animus* of the church when it contradicted the clear teachings of God’s Word. The Committee to Study the Views of Creation had the opportunity in their report to rearticulate the biblical doctrine of creation, which is the cornerstone of every other doctrine in the Bible. It had the opportunity to advise the church that the plain meaning of the words of our confessional documents is the basis of ministerial communion in the OPC. It did not. Its failure means that there is still no *animus* of the church in regard to the length of the creation days. More importantly, there is no *animus* in regard to confessional subscription. As AI advances in the OPC, it will continue to consume everything in its path. No doctrine will be beyond its creeping reach. Perhaps Machen was correct in saying that ours is not a confession-making age. If so, let us nevertheless hold fast the confession of our faith, relying on Christ to rule and defend His Church until He returns in glory to receive her to Himself. ■

45. Fesko, lecture notes.

46. George W. Knight III, “Subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms,” in Hall, *Practice of Confessional Subscription*, p. 131.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 134.

48. An amendment designed to specifically include premillennialism as a legitimate view was rejected by the 1936 Assembly.

49. It retained, for example, the PCUSA’s elimination of the reference to the pope as “Antichrist.”

Winnowing Fork or Harvest? A Paedobaptist Assessment of the Credobaptist Interpretation of Jeremiah 31 as seen in Stephen Wellum's "Baptism and the Relationship Between Covenants"

By Robert D. Golding

ABSTRACT

Stephen Wellum's chapter in *Believer's Baptism* argues that a proper interpretation of Jeremiah 31 sees God's new covenant as more exclusive than the old covenant. In this paper, I argue that this interpretation of Jeremiah 31 is faulty on numerous grounds—it does not comport with Jeremiah's prophecy, it does not comport with the New Testament, and it does not comport with current ecclesiastical reality. Foundational to my argument is that Jeremiah's prophecy is one of expansion, not of exclusion as Wellum's exegesis and sacramentology require. In other words, Jeremiah promises a harvest, not a winnowing fork.

1. WELLUM'S ARGUMENT

This paper will examine and critique what I find to be a central argument in Stephen Wellum's chapter entitled "Baptism and the Relationship Between Covenants" in *Believers Baptism*. I will argue for paedobaptism against Wellum's credobaptist position. Wellum argues that the paradigm imposed by Scripture clearly indicates a sharp discontinuity (though an analogy remains) between Old Testament circumcision and New Testament baptism. Though Wellum makes multiple arguments, central to his thesis is the relationship between the OT and the NT. He rightly notes that "the baptismal question is a major test-case for one's entire theological system since it tells much about how one puts the entire canon together."¹ That is, if one sees a degree of discontinuity from one OT covenant to another, eventually culminating in the new NT covenant, one is much more likely (indeed, almost guaranteed) to see baptism as a *new* sign, distinct from the generational sign of circumcision. On the other hand, if one sees the OT as one covenant with different administrative heads (i.e., the single covenant of grace administered by Noah, Abraham, David, et. al.) he is more

likely to see baptism in continuity with circumcision (albeit with important differences).

For Wellum, the former is the case—the OT is comprised of a distinct redemptive-historical era in which physical promises to national Israel are to be distinguished from the almost completely spiritual promises of the NT. As such, we should expect to see a distinction in the introductory sacrament of baptism. When people enter the new Israel through the new covenant, they enter not through physical promises, but through spiritual ones. They are not brought in by first birth, but by the second from above. Baptism, then, is only applied to those who have been spiritually born again, not those who have been physically born once. This underscores the uniqueness of the new covenant. The *old* covenant was applied to all, regardless of spiritual status. The *new* covenant is much better, in that it only applies to those who are regenerated.

Principal to this thesis is his interpretation of Jeremiah 31. Wellum seeks to show that Jeremiah 31 is not promising a mere expansion of what was already happening in the OT. That is to "flatten" what Jeremiah is saying. He says that paedobaptists "do not acknowledge the 'newness' of the new covenant. Their emphasis on the continuity of the covenant of grace has led them to flatten the covenantal differences and thus to misconstrue the nature of the new covenant community."² Paedobaptists all but erase the distinctions between the OT

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1. Stephen J. Wellum, "Baptism and the Relationship Between Covenants," in *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*, New American Commentary Studies in Bible & Theology, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn Wright (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007), pp. 168–69. Hereafter, simple references to this work are cited parenthetically by author and page number.

2. Wellum, "Believer's Baptism," p. 145 (see also 135–36).

covenants in their attempt to see the unified covenant of grace and in so doing, they “fail to grasp” OT covenantal distinctions (Wellum, p. 146). Jeremiah is not just telling Israel that YHWH will one day do what he is already doing but in an increased way. Rather, YHWH is promising that one day a radically new covenant will be given—Israel will not be partially comprised of those who receive physical marks of inclusion but are actually spiritually excluded. Rather, Israel will be comprised of *only* the regenerate (Rom. 9:6; Wellum, p. 144). This, for Wellum, marks the distinction between the OT and the NT. Jeremiah is saying that the new covenant will be categorically distinct from the old since the old included unregenerate and the new includes the regenerate only. This is why the new covenant is better and it is also its distinction when compared to the old.

2. A REVERENT CRITIQUE

Though there is much to be lauded in Wellum’s presentation of credobaptism (most prominent, probably, being his emphasis on the success that God has in forming his church), there is some faulty reasoning in his proposal. It is an honor to grapple with the work of such an eminent theologian and I pray that the following is used by God to refine good work into something even better.

2.1 WINNOWING FORK OR HARVEST?

The line of reasoning I want to pick up and examine was intimated above. It has to do with the way Wellum sees the OT and the NT connected. Specifically, my critique is that Wellum’s interpretation of Jeremiah 31 (most specifically, Jeremiah 31:34a: “And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD”) defeats his stated goal. His goal is to avoid a “flattening” of the OT covenants. But his reading of Jeremiah entails, in my view, a reductionistic or flattened view of God’s promise. Principally, Jeremiah’s prophecy is one of *increase*. Wellum’s interpretation, on the other hand, reads it primarily as one of *decrease*. Rather than seeing this as a promise of God’s new work of spiritual revival, Wellum’s view sees this as a promise of God’s removal of the unregenerate. If we read Jeremiah the way Wellum does, what results is not an increase, or a better covenant, but

rather, merely a more exclusive one. It is to see a winnowing fork when Jeremiah promises a harvest.

Jeremiah 31 is an important OT prophecy that is indicative of much OT theology. All of Israel was looking forward to the day when YHWH would expand the borders of Israel so greatly that all people would be under his lordship (Ps. 2). That is what Jeremiah 31 is about (which will be examined in brief below). Wellum’s interpretation of the text, on the other hand, has Jeremiah not primarily promising an increase, but a filtration. Central to Wellum’s thesis is that the change from the old covenant to the new covenant must be significant. Indeed, it must be structural. He says, “one cannot understand the *new* covenant without acknowledging the massive *structural* changes that have taken place. It is simply *not* correct to think of the new covenant as merely a ‘renewed’ version of the old; it brings with it significant change.”³ The significant change, for Wellum, is this: “the change is found in the shift from a *mixed* community to that of a *regenerate* community with the crucial implication that under the new covenant, the covenant sign must only be applied to those who are in that covenant, namely, believers.”⁴ This “significant change,” I argue, pales in comparison to what is intended by Jeremiah.

The logical implication of what Wellum is saying, is that the great change from the OT to the NT, in terms of the covenant prophesied in Jeremiah 31, is that unbelievers will be purged from our midst. Wellum affirms (along with paedobaptists) the goodness of a fully regenerate church. That is his goal. But, in doing this in a credobaptist way he is downplaying Jeremiah’s promise of expansion. This type of understanding of Jeremiah necessitates that the means by which God is actualizing this prophecy, according to Wellum, is not growth but filtration. This is because the difference between the old covenant and the new is not that God will make *more* spiritually dead people live, but that he will *distinguish* between the dead and the alive. The unbelievers are filtered from the covenant community and baptism is a sacramental mechanism to that end. *Only* believers receive the sacrament. What is the benefit of this? It is that unbelievers are not identified with the body of Christ. This is a fair interpretation of Jeremiah 31. It reads the passage as a promise of purging. That is very well possible (cf. Deut. 19:19; 1 Cor. 5:13).⁵ However, I contend that this reading, though possible, is a flattening of a beautiful promise. God is not promising a filtration of the church in which unbelievers will be purged. The promise is actually the opposite—God is promising the growth of the church, through the outpouring of the Spirit of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–11), such that his indwelling produces Christians who have the word

3. Wellum, “Believer’s Baptism,” 152. Emphasis is original unless otherwise noted.

4. Wellum, “Believer’s Baptism,” 146. Cf. Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *God’s Kingdom through God’s Covenants: A Concise Biblical Theology* (Crossway, 2015), 270.

5. These are my references.

of God written on their hearts (Jer. 31:33). The promise is not a regenerate church by means of cleansing, but a regenerate church by means of blessing.

To be sure, Wellum would see Jeremiah 31 as a promise of expansion as well. He is not saying the promise is *only* filtration. My point above is that the exclusive baptism which he is arguing for is actually opposed to his understanding of the promise. He wants to read Jeremiah 31 as a promise of a massive regenerate church, we all do. But, if that promise is exemplified by means of baptismal filtration, it subverts the true power of the promise. The newness of baptism should exemplify the fact that God intends to regenerate *all* his people. This is what Jeremiah said to the people of Israel (more on this below). His promise was for all Israel and circumcision was the sacramental means of anticipating that promise. The “newness” of baptism, for Wellum, is that it is *not* applied to all those in the church: “the covenant sign of baptism must only be applied to those who have come to faith in Christ. It is at this point that we see the crucial discontinuity between the old and new covenant communities, a point the paedobaptist fails to grasp” (Wellum, p. 146). Though paedobaptists might “fail to grasp” his version of discontinuity, it is by no means true that paedobaptists do not have their own version of discontinuity between old and new covenants. Wellum’s version of discontinuity, it should be clear, is that the old covenant sacrament was broadly applied and the new is more stringently applied because now the church is to be pure. The paedobaptist version of discontinuity is that the new covenant sacrament is applied with new effectiveness.

For the paedobaptist, the discontinuity between the old covenant and the new covenant promised by Jeremiah can be largely seen in the incomprehensible work of the Spirit of Pentecost. The Spirit which was—for thousands of years—hidden behind thick curtain and threat of death, now dwells in the bosom of each Christian. *This* is the means by which Jeremiah 31 is fulfilled. The church will grow and be regenerate because of the outpouring of the Spirit, which had not yet occurred in Jeremiah’s time. The discontinuity is not to be found in reserving entrance to those with faith only. Rather, the discontinuity is to be found in the fact that something unprecedented has happened. This is God’s promise: “no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me” (Jer. 31:34a). Does it make most sense of this passage to read it in terms of God *removing* unbelievers, or *adding* believers? Since the former would require the removal of beloved family members from the tents of Israelites, to be seen as a positive promise the latter is

required. Paedobaptism, then, is a perfect expression of this promise—all will know God, including (not excluding!) your children. What a promise, indeed.⁶

It is important here to consider the implications of these two versions of discontinuity. One sees God’s promise as moving from expansive to selective, while the other sees it moving from relatively ineffective to effective. When one considers the difference in scope between OT Israel and the church today, the latter is *exactly* what we see. The difference between infinitesimal OT Israel and the global Church today is not that unbelievers have been excluded (indeed, there are more unbelievers in the Church now than then) but that the law is now written on the hearts of those who believe. The tendency toward legalism in the old covenant (e.g., Pharisaism) has been replaced with liberty in the new (Gal. 4:4–5). *This* is the means by which God’s new covenant church has grown so much, no exclusion.

Wellum does not like this paedobaptist version of discontinuity because it does not seem to be new. Since God has already made some Israelites alive, making more alive sounds like more of the same. We will see below that this is not what Jeremiah is saying. For now, suffice it to say Jeremiah is painting a picture of dead Israel being resurrected—a significant change. Furthermore, Wellum’s assumption that “more of the same” intimates something *not* new, is to fail to understand the Old Testament’s portrayal of God’s work. A new work of YHWH does not necessitate something that is in a completely different category than everything he has done before. If this were true, no work of salvation after Abraham (or Adam?)

6. An important attendant question is outside the scope of this paper. However, it will be addressed in brief. The question is this: How does this promise comport with reality? Baptized infants often prove to be *not* saved. The short answer is the Bible’s teaching on apostasy coupled with the distinction between the visible and invisible aspects of the church. Wellum misses the mark at this juncture. He says paedobaptist interpretation of the warning passages in Hebrews fails to “... do justice to *all* the biblical data ...” as if there is some part of the warning passages that they ignore (p. 161). The opposite is the case. Only in terms of a paedobaptist position can one truly understand the blessing language of Hebrews 6:4–6. Those who have “tasted the heavenly gift” and who have “shared in the Holy Spirit” (Heb 6:4) yet are unregenerate are best understood as unregenerate members of the covenant. This interpretation fits nicely with “*all* the biblical data.” To address the issue of apostasy, Wellum, on the other hand, appeals to Thomas R. Schreiner and Ardel B. Caneday, *The Race Set before Us: A Biblical Theology of Perseverance & Assurance* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2001). This book has a serious issue not addressed by Wellum. Namely, the apparent rejection of unconditional election: “the promise of eternal life is conditional” (p. 166); “God’s promise of salvation is conditional” (p. 167). *Contra*, Roy B Zuck, “The Race Set before Us: A Biblical Theology of Perseverance and Assurance,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 160.638 (2003): 241–43.

would be “new” since they are all salvific works. In the Psalms, it is well known that the term “new song” often refers to one that is written to commemorate a new victory God has given his people. Whether these are military victories⁷ or “the new acts of redemption and deliverance which Yahweh is about to perform,”⁸ they are all victorious works of God. And the most *recent* is the *newest*. In a similar way, Jeremiah is showing that “the barrier of willful disobedience will be overcome by a *new* inclination to follow the Lord wholeheartedly.”⁹ The newness of Jeremiah’s prophecy is that dead Israel will be alive, not that those who are dead will be excluded.

A consistent paedobaptist position, as we have just seen, does indeed provide a discontinuity from the old to the new covenant (the difference being spiritual death and spiritual life). At the same time, Wellum’s position is prone to suffer under his own criticism. Since “more” spiritual regeneration is not “new,” it stands to reason that “exclusive” regeneration is not either. The mere removal of the unregenerate does not adequately indicate a new covenant under Wellum’s rubric. This is because he wants to see God doing something categorically distinct in the new covenant. However, in his interpretation, God is *not* doing something new. God has been and always will regenerate the elect-dead. He is not, in Wellum’s system, *doing* anything new. Rather, God is merely continuing to do what he always did, without applying secondary benefits to those who are not elect. If anything, God is doing *less* under Wellum’s interpretation. But if Wellum’s peculiar view were correct, such a covenant, while theoretically qualifying as a new covenant, would definitely not be an improvement, especially in the eyes of Israel (more on this below).

7. Tremper Longman, “Psalm 98: A Divine Warrior Hymn,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 27 (1984): 269; Tremper Longman, “The Divine Warrior: The New Testament Use of an Old Testament Motif,” *Westminster Theological Seminary* 44 (1982): 290–307.

8. Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, vol. 20 of *Word Biblical Commentary* (Word, Incorporated, 1998), p. 513.

9. Hetty Lalleman, *Jeremiah and Lamentations: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 21 of *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*, ed. David G. Firth (Inter-Varsity Press, 2013), p. 60 (emphasis mine).

10. William Lee Holladay, *Jeremiah*, ed. Paul D. Hanson, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), p. 197.

11. This is a classic point made as long ago as 1649 which Wellum does not address. See George Gillespie, *A Treatise of Miscellany Questions Wherein Many Usefull Questions and Cases of Conscience Are Discussed and Resolved* (Edinburgh: Printed by Gedeon Lithgow, Published by Patrik Gillespie, 1649), pp. 4–5.

12. I am not accusing Wellum of being literalistic. I am saying that his interpretation moves too close to that extreme. A more balanced approach would allow the language more freedom to express spiritual realities without going against the grain of other passages (see quote from Mark Herzer below).

Another unwanted implication of Wellum’s interpretation is that God is to be seen, in the words of Holladay, as drawing “up a fresh contract without the defects of the old, implying in turn that he could improve on the old one, that he had learned something from the failure of the old.”¹⁰ Wellum’s insistence that God’s new covenant must be distinct in the terms he stipulates, tends to see the old as “bad” rather than a not yet completely unfolded good. The type of distinction he requires, while trying to do justice to NT teaching on the new covenant, implicitly denigrates the old. Paedobaptist continuity, on the other hand, can full well recognize that God’s old covenant was perfectly gracious, and also that it is more fully realized (and therefore realized in a *new* way; see above) in the new covenant.

Yet another problem in Wellum’s interpretation is seen in its tendency to press the image of the passage beyond what the text may bear.¹¹ No interpretation of this text can be mechanically literal. Jeremiah says that no one will “teach his neighbor” about the Lord because “they all shall know me” (Jer. 31:34). This does not mean, as a literalist might imagine, that there will no longer be teachers of the Word, or that one day all people will wake up and know God without ever hearing about him from another human. That would be to press the passage beyond its scope. The implication of Wellum’s interpretation is that there will not be *any* unregenerate people in the church. Though possible, this interpretation is too literal. Jeremiah is not saying that there will be zero unregenerate people in the church any more than he is saying there will be zero teachers.¹² Rather, Jeremiah is indicating a time of future renewal in which God’s people will be radically regenerated by his sovereign power. This radical regeneration warrants language of newness because it entails the sprouting of spiritual life from spiritual death.

2.2 JEREMIAH 31

With this appraisal of Wellum’s interpretation of Jeremiah 31 in place, we will now briefly present an alternate interpretation. Jeremiah 31:34 is relatively straightforward if one does not press the language too far: “And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD” (Jer. 31:34a). Clearly, an *increase* in those who are resolutely dedicated to YHWH is indicated here. “From the least of them to the greatest” is a common Hebraic phrase indicating the vast majority of a certain group. Jonah, for example, is clearly indicating a wholesale repentance when the author writes

“And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from *the greatest of them to the least of them* [מִגְדֹּלֵם וְעַד־קִטְנֵם]” (Jonah 3:5). Jeremiah uses the same phrase in our passage (31:34) with the words flipped and a *lamed* added (לְמִקְטָנָם וְעַד־גְּדֹלָם). Jeremiah also repeats this phrase in multiple places (Jer. 6:13; 8:10; 42:1, 8; 44:12). Most instructive is his use in Jeremiah 6:13: “For *from the least to the greatest of them* [מִקְטָנָם וְעַד־גְּדֹלָם] everyone [כָּל־] is greedy for unjust gain; and from prophet to priest, everyone [כָּל־] deals falsely” (Jer. 6:13). Jeremiah is making the same point as Jonah using the same words—*everyone* falls into the category of “the least and the greatest.” When “least” (קָטָן) is combined with “greatest” (גָּדוֹל) the result is often “a polarising expression to include everything (meaning all).”¹³ Without a doubt, that is emphatically the case in Jeremiah’s prophecy.¹⁴

Jeremiah 6:13, then, should inform the way we read Jeremiah 31:34. Jeremiah’s strikingly *new* presentation of the covenant requires no filtration or exclusion. In 6:13, he makes it explicitly clear that *everyone* in Israel is steeped in sin (see previous paragraph). The words he uses to indicate that all Israel is sinful in 6:13 are the same as the ones he uses to indicate that all Israel will be saved by God in 31:34 (לְמִקְטָנָם וְעַד־גְּדֹלָם) in both cases, but with a ל preposition added in the latter passage). Despite this reality of Israelite sin, God is going to make it so that *everyone* believes him. It simply does damage to the beauty of Jeremiah’s prophecy to see this promise as the *removal* of those who disbelieve. Indeed, if that were the case, says Jeremiah, none would be left!

At this point we must pay careful attention to the crux of the passage. Jeremiah introduces the mechanism for realizing the promise that all people will know God. Will God make “all” know him by excluding some, or some other way? Jeremiah introduces the answer with a causal כִּי: “For [כִּי] I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer. 31:34b).¹⁵ The means by which God will actualize his promise to Israel, then, is atonement. He will, somehow, forget their sins. The picture that Jeremiah is painting is one analogous to Ezekiel 37—dead people will be made alive. Indeed, this is a recurring biblical image (John 5:24–25; Rom. 5:15–16; Eph. 2:1–10; Col. 2:13; Heb. 9:14). The dead man of corporate Israel will be made alive by the sovereign grace of God. It is not the case that Israel will be made half-alive and the remaining dead parts will be removed. Salvation is not the means of purging, but the means by which all will be made alive.

Wellum sees this passage as indicating that Israel will be purified and no longer mixed because God’s living

work will be distinguished from the counterfeit work of Satan. God will indeed make the dead alive. That much we agree on. However, contra Wellum, Jeremiah prophesies something new *not* because it can be distinguished from the counterfeit; this is clearly not our experience and the reason Hebrews 6:4–6 was written (to explain apostasy). Rather, God’s work will be new because his people will be radically regenerated. When compared to the dismal reality of Jeremiah 6:14, the promise of 31:34 is groundbreakingly new. Israel was spiritually dead. Now, God says, they will be spiritually alive. This is a corporate promise. God is not promising something to a select few. His promise is for *all* Israel; Jeremiah is emphatic on this point. The picture, then, is one of a dead man coming alive. This is as new and distinct as possible. Jeremiah could not paint a more distinct picture between the old covenant and the new—it is the difference between death and life.

When we put ourselves in Israel’s sandals and imagine what it would be like to receive this promise, it is literally incomprehensible that God would be speaking about excluding children who do not believe. That would be more of a threat than a promise. Familial integrity was of utmost importance to Israel.¹⁶ For this promise to be a promise, it must mean what it says: “They shall *all* know me, from the *least* of them to the *greatest*.” Surely, this word “least” (לְמִקְטָנָם) would conjure thoughts of children for the Israelites. Indeed, this word is often used to refer to small children.¹⁷ One could translate this passage this way: “all shall know me, from the youngest to the oldest.” The new covenant, then, is one in which even children will know the Lord. According to Jeremiah, the proper posture of a new covenant believer is not one in which we scrutinize our children’s faith in order to determine if

13. Ludwig Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), p. 1093.

14. Gerald L. Keown, *Jeremiah 26–52*, vol. 27 of *Word Biblical Commentary* (Word, Incorporated, 1995), 135; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 2.198–99.

15. This is the same use earlier in Jeremiah 31:18. For the causal use of כִּי see, Ronald J. Williams and John C. Beckman, *Williams’ Hebrew Syntax*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), pp. 156–58; Bruce K. Waltke and Michael Patrick O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 1990), p. 665; Friedrich Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch and Sir Arthur Ernest Cowley, 2d English ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), p. 492.

16. Carol Meyers, “The Family in Early Israel,” in *Families in Ancient Israel, Family, Religion, and Culture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), pp. 50–51; Joseph Blenkinsopp, “The Family in First Temple Israel,” in *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches. Family, Religion, and Culture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), pp. 48–103.

17. Koehler et al., *HALOT*, pp. 1092–93.

it is genuine, withholding the sacrament of baptism until it can be proven. Rather, the posture should be a believing one where we assume, until proven otherwise, that God has kept his promise to save them. God is promising a lavishing of redemptive work *for all*, not a selective work for some.

2.3 NEW TESTAMENT

With these contrasting interpretations of Jeremiah 31 in place, we are now in a position to see which fits best with the rest of Scripture and current ecclesiastical reality. Wellum's desire to see a fully regenerate church is not just contradicted by our experience of the church today and in church history (see next section). It also goes against the grain of Scripture's presentation of the church. In his paper entitled "The Church: The Covenant Community" Mark Herzer articulates the radically *impure* nature of the early church:

We read of the schism in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:10ff.), the growing heresy in Galatia (Gal. 1:7), the influence of Hymenaeus and Philetus in Ephesus under Timothy's ministry (2 Tim. 2:17), the strife in Philippi (Phil. 1:2ff.), the weird heresies in Colossae (Col 2.16ff.), the growing defection among Hebrew Christians the writer of Hebrews mentions (Heb. 3:12; 4:1; 6:6ff.; 10:39, etc.), the "Gnostic" type of influence in the church to whom John writes (1 John 4:2–3), false teachers against whom Jude and Peter warn (Jude 12; 2 Pet. 2:1ff.), etc. All these churches had problems, lots of them. To top it off, very few churches (only Smyrna and Philadelphia) escaped strong rebukes from the Lord of the Church Himself when He addressed the seven churches in Asia Minor. The phenomena, the sheer existence of these problems, teach us something of the nature of the early church. She was never pure and this mixed body was always weak and fraught with problems, from within and from without.¹⁸

Wellum's desire to read Jeremiah as the promise of a purified church simply does not accord with what the NT describes.

18. Mark Herzer, unpublished paper. This paper was presented at Greenville Seminary's 2005 Spring Conference. The PDF from which this quote was taken can be found at https://web.archive.org/web/20131114031040/http://www.gpts.edu/resources/Covenant_Community.pdf

19. For a survey of these interpretations from the early church to today, see Michael James McClymond, *The Devil's Redemption: A New History and Interpretation of Christian Universalism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2018).

20. For an argument against universalism, see: Robert D. Golding, "Making Sense of Hell," *Themelios* 46.1 (2021): 145–62.

On the other hand, the positive biblical presentation of the church is one in which God's promises are consistently for "all" people (ostensibly including children) and this is to be done through expansive—rather than filtrating—means. When we read of Peter's sermon interpretation of Joel 2, we see the promise fulfilled not in the sense of God separating those filled with the Spirit from those who have not been similarly filled. Rather, God says "I will pour out my Spirit upon *all* flesh" (Joel 2:28b, Acts 2:17b, emphasis mine). The biblical-theological arc of God's promises are always expansive. This is why so many—since the ancient church until today—have struggled to read Paul as a non-universalist.¹⁹ So much in his corpus sounds like God's promises are for every individual (Rom. 5:18–19; 11:32; 1 Cor. 3:11–15, 15:22–24, 28; 2 Cor. 5:14, 19; Eph. 1:9–10; Phil. 2:9; Col. 1:19–20, 27–28; 1 Tim. 2:3–6; 4:10 Tit. 2:11). This is not limited to Paul. Much in the NT sounds this way (Matt. 18:14; Luke 16:16; John 3:16–17; 4:42; 12:32, 47; 17:2; Heb. 2:9; 1 John 2:2; 4:14; 2 Pet. 3:9). I am not arguing for universalism.²⁰ The point I am trying to make is that the fact that there have been universalist exegetes for millennia is an indication that the promises in the Bible are often sweeping. When God says that he will pour out his Spirit on *all* flesh, almost all exegetes understand this to be a promise of radical increase—hence the hope of the promise. To read these passages as if God were promising to exclude those who have not been blessed by his Spirit, is to misread the promise as a threat.

Again, Wellum sees an increase in Jeremiah 31 too. The point is that his sacramentology does not best comport with this aspect (i.e., the expansive aspect) of his exegesis. If his exegesis demands radical increase, his sacramentology should follow. His interpretation essentially requires him to pick one or the other—do I practice baptism with an eye toward the purity of the church, or its expansion? Pedobaptism, on the other hand, is capable of anticipating God's expansive work by baptizing *all* who are born into the covenant while *also* vying for a pure church by means of delaying communion until a profession is made, as well as practicing church discipline. A paedobaptist church can just as readily strive for church purity by excommunicating those who fail to maintain their confession. Though entailing the oft-painful process of church discipline, a faithful exercising of the keys of the kingdom best comports with the NT reality of an impure church (in terms of the visible aspect of the church; see Herzer's quote above). Further, it helps us (rather easily) understand the otherwise enigmatic warning passages of Hebrews, to which we briefly turn next.

2.3.1 HEBREWS 8–10

Wellum's desire to read Hebrews 8–10 as an indication that Jeremiah 31 has been fully realized leads to another problem. He says, "Hebrews establishes the reality of the new covenant in the church without any hint that the full establishment of a regenerate community is yet future." (Wellum, p. 154). If that is the case, an explanation for the reality of unbelievers in essentially every local church (something Wellum would presumably acknowledge) makes it difficult to square Hebrews with our current experience. If there is no significant sense in which Jeremiah 31 is to be realized in the future (i.e., inaugurated eschatology), why then is the church *not* regenerate as Wellum says it should be? Any mention of the incongruity between reality and his interpretation of Hebrews 8–10 and Jeremiah 31 is missing in his chapter. To be sure, Wellum would not agree that the church is not fully regenerate today. He would say that the unregenerate are simply not in the church. The point is that this is unrealistic. The sad fact of the matter is that there *are* baptized and confessing people in church every Sunday, who are nevertheless unregenerate. To be a baptized confessor of Christ is as "in the church" as one can get in human estimation. To say otherwise is to divorce oneself from the reality of the church. That is, Wellum's refusal to include unregenerate, baptized, professors in the church is to say that what we experience in church (i.e., worshipping alongside unregenerate professors of faith) is not the *true* experience of the church since the true church only comprises the regenerate. In this way, our perception of life in the church is *always* flawed (if we presume someone is saved who is not) and we are, perhaps ironically, perennially distant from the reality of Jeremiah 31. If the true church is only regenerate, yet our experience of the church always contains the unregenerate, then we never participate fully in the true church, since she is perennially deceived. Of course, we can distinguish between the visible and invisible church at this point, but this is a "paedobaptist" distinction for Wellum, one he largely rejects, despite its potential to help him here (Wellum, pp. 156–57).

Just like Israel in the OT, the membership rolls of the church today are comprised of those who are saved and those who are not. There is no escaping this present reality. The church today is mixed because Jeremiah has not yet been *fully* fulfilled. The Spirit of Pentecost surely inaugurated this fulfillment by writing the law of God on the heart of every Christian, but his work is not yet complete. To say otherwise not only flattens the promise of Jeremiah but it flattens our hope. The church is mixed, but one day *will be* fully regenerate.

The fact that this has not yet happened helps us make sense, among other things, of the continual apostasy and infamous failure of so many prominent Christian leaders today. They do (or did) have legitimate spiritual blessings but they are merely members of the external covenant, which is the means by which they are blessed like, in the words of Phillip Henry, "warts and moles" which are fed by the same body and "covered over by the same skin" as "true parts or members of the body" which are the "hands, arms, [and] legs."²¹ But the reality of apostasy does not dash our hope. We can turn to Jeremiah 31 and pray for the day when those who are in the church, yet are unregenerate, will have the law of God written on their hearts. To see Jeremiah 31 as already completely fulfilled is to see those unregenerate people in the pews as relatively spiritually static and, therefore, lost. This is not the hope of Jeremiah 31. To see Jeremiah 31 as already completely fulfilled is to sell the prophet short and to hope for less than is our inheritance as the people of God. To the contrary, the prophet promises more—much more. It is the hope of Jeremiah to say that God will one day make warts and moles into hands and feet, for this was our story too.

3. CONCLUSION

Whether credobaptist or paedobaptist, we all wait for the day when the church will consist solely of the regenerate. Until that time, we should all look to God's mighty right arm to make it happen. Jeremiah tells us that the same hand of God that wrote the Ten Commandments will write his law on all his people's hearts. The picture is one of God's hand renewing dead hearts, not excluding them. To hope in the promise of Jeremiah is to hope that *all* of our children will be saved. We should see them as part of the harvest, not as part of the work of the winnowing fork. The sacrament of baptism should embody that *hope*. In the words of B.B. Warfield, "no one, however rich his manifestation of Christian graces, is baptized on the basis of infallible knowledge of his relation to Christ. All baptism is inevitably administered on the basis, not of knowledge, but of presumption."²² To presume upon the reality of Jeremiah's prophecy is to baptize our children into the covenant in the expectant hope that they shall know God, "from the least of them to the greatest" (Jer. 31:34b).■

21. Philip Henry, *Christ All in All: What Christ Is Made to Believers* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Reformation Heritage Books, 2016), p. 42.

22. B.B. Warfield, "The Polemics of Infant Baptism," in *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1930–1932), vol. IX, p. 390.

In 'Brief: Extract: Thomas M'Crie's Statement of the Difference, Brief View of the Evidence for the Exercise of Civil Authority about Religion (1871), pp. 123–126.

It was formerly stated that one way in which a divine right, or the warrant of any duty is established, is by approved examples in Scripture. The word of God contains examples to persons in every character and station of life. In particular, it exhibits examples of godly magistrates. *But where do we read, in all the book of God, of approved magistrates who confined themselves, in their official capacity, to civil matters, and the secular interests of mankind, and who did not employ their authority for the advancement of religion?* We have a large account of the conduct of Moses and Joshua, David and Solomon, Asa and Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah. Who will deny that their actions are recorded as an example to rulers? But they are commended chiefly for the warm zeal and activity, which they displayed in their station, in settling or reforming religion, providing for the instruction of their subjects, and the due administration of divine ordinances. No magistrate, who consults the Bible, will ever imagine that religious matters are excluded from his province. This notion must have been imbibed from some very different source.

At those times in which God was about to effect an establishment of religion, or a general reformation of its interests, among his ancient people, he raised up and employed magistrates, to cooperate in this work with those to whom the immediate charge of religious administrations was committed. When he first established his ordinances among Israel as a nation, he not only employed Aaron the priest, but Moses the King in Jeshurun; and afterwards Joshua and Eleazer, David and Abiathar, Solomon and Zadok, Hezekiah and Azariah, Zerubbabel and Joshua. When deprived of their native princes, and under the dominion of a foreign power, the Lord stirred up the Persian monarchs to favor the cause of his people, and not merely to tolerate, but to encourage them by public edicts, and by granting them positive assistance for building the house of God, and maintaining his worship. And although, for special and wise reasons (which we may afterwards notice), he was pleased at first to spread the gospel among the nations, not only without the assistance of civil rulers, but in the face of their most determined opposition; yet, among the blessings promised to the church in the New Testament times, as a testimony of his distinguished favor, are the countenance and aid of earthly powers, expressed with evident allusion to what had formerly taken place. *The sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings* (Isa. 60:10–16).

It is not pleaded, that all the actions of rulers among the Jews are imitable by Christian magistrates, or that the latter

have exactly the same power which was allotted to and exercised by the former. Even in ascertaining the power which belonged to Jewish magistrates as such, we must distinguish what they did in the proper exercise of their magisterial office, from those things which they performed in a different character. For example, Moses acted not only as an ordinary magistrate, but also as a prophet, and extraordinary messenger, in the establishment of religion in the wilderness. David, too, sustained the character, and discharged the office not only of a king, but also of a prophet and inspired penman, in the composition of the psalms, and in the arrangement of the public worship of God in the sanctuary.

The power which was exercised by Jewish rulers was also warranted, in many cases, by judicial laws, which were peculiar to the nation of Israel; founded upon that singular constitution given unto them by God, and bearing a necessary reference to the system of ceremonial and sacrificial worship which was erected among them, but, now abolished. Presbyterians, who have defended the power of Christian magistrates from these examples, have not pleaded an absolute parity, and have made more accurate distinctions on this head than are to be found in the writings of the advocates of the modern scheme, who usually confound the characters in which Jewish rulers acted, represent their power as wholly ecclesiastical, and extending to almost every thing, with the view of making it appear totally inapplicable to the Christian dispensation.

But it will not follow from this, that we can draw no argument from the conduct of Jewish rulers, to establish the warrantableness and duty of the Christian magistrates employing their power in support of religion. Some are ready to conclude that the argument is entirely set aside, when it is allowed that there is not an absolute sameness between the two cases. Nothing can, however, be more unfounded than this conclusion. Such a mode of reasoning is of the most dangerous tendency, and, if applied in all the extent to which it will lead, it would cut off the practical use of the greater part of the Old Testament. According to it, no argument could be drawn from the approved examples which it records, of persons of any rank, or in any station, of parents or children, husbands or wives, masters or servants, because many of their actions were peculiar, or clothed with extraordinary circumstances. Upon the same principle, a great part of the New Testament may also be set aside, as to any ordinary or current application. For many things recorded in it were peculiar, and in some respects extraordinary. Persons possessed of apostolical powers, and extraordinary gifts, were employed in all important ecclesiastical transactions—in founding churches, ordaining office-bearers, inflicting censures, pronouncing decrees, and administering all ordinances. It is sometimes difficult to discriminate between what was extraordinary and peculiar to that period, and what belongs to the ordinary power of office-bearers.

Besides those actions of Old Testament rulers, which proceeded upon moral grounds, and which had for their object things which are substantially immutable, such as the support of public worship, and the prevention of blasphemy, profanation of the name of God, and Sabbath-breaking; there is an application of their example in the way of *analogy*, which, while it makes all allowances for the diversity of circumstances, and change of dispensation, proceeds upon a general resemblance in certain common principles and ends. Although there is a great difference between the government of the church under the Old and the New Testament, yet the writers in defense of Presbyterian government do argue from the Old Testament in behalf of courts of judicature, with their subordination. Even as to positive institutions of worship, this mode of reasoning must be admitted, unless we become wholly Anabaptistical. There is a difference in various respects between circumcision and baptism; yet we reason from the circumcision of infants under the Old Testament to the baptism of them under the New, although we have no explicit command or example for the practice in the New Testament.

The apostle argues for the support of a gospel ministry from that which was given to the Levitical priesthood; but his argument did not imply that they should be supported exactly in the same way (1 Cor. 9:13–14). The priestly and prophetic offices were extraordinary and typical, in a sense in which the regal among the Jews was not; yet we do not scruple to illustrate the office, and enforce the duties of ministers of the gospel, from those of the priests and prophets, especially in their actions with reference to the public state of religion, and in advancing reformation. The judgments inflicted upon the Israelites in the wilderness were in many respects peculiar, yet the apostle holds them out as monitory ensamples to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 10). The prayer of Elijah was extraordinary, yet the apostle James urges it as exemplary to Christians (chap. 5:16–18). And shall we suppose that the actions of Jewish magistrates form a single exception, and that they were so peculiar, that we cannot reason from them in the way of example or analogy?

We cannot propose here to enter particularly upon the consideration of the Jewish constitution. Extremes on both hands are to be guarded against. Those who maintain that it was altogether peculiar and inimitable do err, as well as those who hold that it is in all respects a model for Christian nations. The golden mean is to be studied on this, as in many other subjects, although the discovery of it may cost more trouble than the readier expedient of an extreme.

It was a constitution immediately framed by God, adapted to the state of that nation, to the system of religious ordinances established among them, and to the designs of providence in preserving them as a separate people. But, although taken as a whole, it was certainly singular, and not to be paralleled or

exemplified in any other nation, several of the consideration mentioned serve to show, that it is entitled to the particular regard of all nations who are favored with divine revelation. In it we have the example of a system of legislation, adapted to the state of a people who were favored with the true religion. Every thing in it was subordinated to this important concern. The laws expressly recognized religion, provided for the maintenance of its ordinances, and the rulers were taken solemnly bound to support them in their station. Thus, those principles which are founded in the light of nature, and by which all nations are obligated to regulate themselves, in framing their constitution and conducting their administrations—so as to promote the honor of God, and to accord with, secure, and advance religion, the highest of all interests—were recognized and sanctioned by Jehovah himself, and applied to the true religion revealed from heaven. In this respect the Jewish constitution is exemplary to Christian nations.¹

With respect to the particular laws by which the Jews were governed, the common sentiment of sound divines, and the best writers on the laws of nations, is, that although the judicial law is not binding as such upon Christian nations, so that they should be bound to regulate all their laws according unto it, yet it demands distinguished attention, and is to be regarded as a pattern, in those laws which proceeded upon moral grounds. In it there was nothing inconsistent with the principles of equity and religion.

God gave unto Israel “right judgments and true laws, good statutes and commandments.” All just laws among men are deductions from the moral law, applied to human affairs. But in the judicial law, the conclusions were deduced and ap-

1. “As it was once a peculiar duty of the Jewish nation, so it is peculiarly incumbent upon every civil state whereinto Christianity is introduced, to study and bring to pass—that civil government among them, in all the appurtenances of its constitution and administration, run in an agreeableness to the *word of God*; be subservient unto the spiritual kingdom of *Jesus Christ*, and to the interests of the true religion and reformation of the Church: As otherwise they cannot truly prosper in their civil concerns, nor be enriched by the blessings of the gospel.

This duty, so incumbent upon the civil state, doth generally fall under these two heads: *First*, the whole people, adjoining themselves to the true Church, should approve themselves to be true members thereof; by serious, several and mutual endeavors to promote the true religion and reformation of the Church—privately, publicly, and universally, in their several places and callings. *Secondly*, this people, considered in their conjunct and *politic* capacity (as thus only the matter is competent unto them) should, by their deed of civil constitution, provide, that their Magistrates be obliged to concur in the same true religion and reformation; and to rule them by laws no way prejudicial, but serviceable thereunto: As, moreover, they ought to obey, encourage and support their Magistrates in that way; and effectually to endeavor their information and reformation, where deficient or corrupt.” Display [*The Present Truth: A Display of the Secession Testimony in the three periods of the rise, state, and maintenance of the Testimony*, 2 vols. (1774)], vol. 1, p. 280.

plied, not only by the fallible and corrupt reason of man (as in ordinary laws), but by unerring wisdom. These respected either the first or second table of the moral law, duties which immediately related to God or man. It is a radical mistake, on this subject, to suppose that the peculiarity of the judicial law did lie solely and properly in its reference to matters of religion, or the first table. It is to be observed also in those laws which related to things civil, or the duties of the second table. There is no more propriety in representing all the judicial laws respecting the first table as peculiar, than there is in representing all those which related to the second table as peculiar. Peculiarities there were in both; but after allowances are made for these, there remain moral grounds for both; and whatever proceeded upon moral grounds in the judicial law, whether it respected things immediately connected with religion, or with justice and civil order, is exemplary, and must be obligatory.²

If this consideration be attended to, it will set aside the force of those arguments which are usually adduced, to prove that Jewish rulers can be no example to Christian magistrates in the exercise of their power about religion. Is it urged that the office of Jewish rulers was *sacred*? This sanctity must have extended to all their official conduct; and if it proves that their acts about religion are in no respect exemplary, it must prove the same as to their acts about civil matters. Is it urged that the office was *typical*? A similar answer may be returned. The Jewish rulers were types of Christ in acts which respected civil matters as well as religious. Is it pleaded that the laws respecting religion, which the Jewish rulers executed, were immediately given by God? This was the

case also with those which respected the administration of common justice.

In fine, is it pleaded that the punishments inflicted by the Jewish law, on account of offenses against the first table of the law, were severe, and enacted on some grounds which were peculiar to the Jewish people? The same thing is true with respect to offenses against the second table. If he that blasphemed God, or profaned the Sabbath was to be stoned to death; the person who smote, or cursed his father or mother, or who proved a stubborn or rebellious son, was to be put to death (Ex. 21:15–17, Deut. 21:18–21). Christian nations are not bound in all cases to inflict the same penalties which were appointed by the judicial law, for offenses against the second table, any more than for such as were committed against the first table. But this does not say that persons guilty of offenses of both kinds are not still proper objects of punishment, to a certain degree, by human laws, or even that they may not, in certain circumstances, become justly obnoxious to the same punishments.

Persons may affect to talk of the difficulty of ascertaining what is moral and exemplary in this matter, from what was peculiar; and, by dwelling on the more intricate cases, may endeavor to lead away the attention of the subject altogether. But why should it be magnified, and represented as insurmountable, any more than others of a similar kind? The peculiarity of the divine government of Israel, or, as it is commonly called the *Theocracy*, consisted in general in two things: in a system of laws which was immediately given unto that people from heaven; and in the exercise of a peculiar providence in supporting and sanctioning that system, by conferring national mercies and inflicting national judgments, often in an immediate and extraordinary way. Now, why are not the difficulties which are started, as to the application of the first of these, urged also as to the application of the last? If we cannot apply what is said in the Old Testament, concerning the duty of the rulers and nation of Israel respecting religion, unto Christian nations and rulers, because the former were under a peculiar law; then we cannot apply what is said in the Old Testament, respecting the judgments denounced against the nation and rulers of Israel, unto Christian nations and their rulers, because the Israelites, as a people, were under a peculiar providence, which constituted a part of their Theocracy. The same distinctions will remove the difficulty in both cases.■

2. "Although" (says Dr Owen) "the institutions and examples of the Old Testament of the duty of magistrates, in the things and about the worship of God—are not in their whole latitude and extent to be drawn into rules, that should be obligatory on all magistrates, now under the administration of the gospel; and that because the magistrates, were then *custos vindez and administrator legis Judicialis and politæ Mosaicæ*, from which, as most think, we are freed; yet doubtless there is something in those institutions, which being unclothed of their Judaical form, is still binding to all in the like kind, as to some analogy and proportion. Substract [sic subduct] from those administrations what was proper to, and lies upon the account of the *nation and church* of the Jews; and what remains upon the general notion of a church and nation must be everlastingly binding; and this amounts thus far *at least*, That Judges, Rulers, and Magistrates, which are promised under the New Testament to be given in mercy, and to be singular in usefulness, as the Judges were under the Old, are to take care that the gospel church may, in all its concerns as such, be *supported* and promoted, and the truth propagated, wherewith they are intrusted. . . ." Owen's Sermon on Dan. 7:15, 16. P. 52, 53. [John Owen, *A Sermon Preached To The Parliament, Octob. 13. 1652. A Day of Solemne Humiliation. Concerning the Kingdome of Christ, and The Power of the Civile Magistrate about the things of the Worship of God* (Oxford: Printed by Leonard Lichfield Printer to the University, for Thomas Robinson. Anno Dom. 1652). See *Works*, vol. 8, p. 394].

Soundly Converted: Enchurchment as a Feature of Christian Conversion in Evangelistic Practice

By Zachary Groff

When Joyce stood up and approached the stage at the opposite end of the arena, she knew that her life would never be the same. The evangelist's rousing presentation of God's free gift of salvation in Jesus Christ spoke directly into the hurt, pain, and shame she felt on a daily basis. She wanted to give her life to Christ, and this Thursday night revival meeting was the night. She felt a sense of freedom as she nearly ran to the platform to pray with one of the many men and women wearing dark blue t-shirts emblazoned with the word COUNSELOR across the front and back. Unbeknownst to her, there were other staff workers tallying her as one of that evening's new professions of faith, to be published along with thousands of others as part of the next day's triumphalist "Revival Report." Nevertheless, when anxiety reared its ugly head on the following Lord's Day morning and kept her from attending corporate worship, her contribution to the revivalist's statistics remained unchanged.

Across town, Evan had no idea of what he was getting into when he muted the basketball game on his television to answer the unexpected knock on his front door. A man named Joe from the church around the corner asked him to participate in a survey of the neighborhood's spiritual thinking, and Evan was happy to oblige. After all, Joe seemed nice. He even assured Evan that the survey would take only four minutes, and he stayed true to his word. The questions were so interesting that Evan was interested to hear how Joe would answer the same questions. When Joe finished explaining his convictions and "hope in Christ," Evan knew that he wanted to give this Christ a try. Joe asked him if he would like to receive the gift of eternal life, and Evan eagerly closed his eyes to pray. Afterwards, Joe returned to the church to report back to the rest of the door-to-door team. The evangelists celebrated Evan's profession of faith along with two others in the neighborhood. Meanwhile, Evan

returned to watching the basketball game as he placed the literature from Joe's church on a pile of junk mail on his coffee table. By the end of the week, the brochure was buried under a fresh pile of catalogs and loan refinancing offers.

These two admittedly contrived and overly stereotyped situations illustrate a common problem in today's evangelical church: the conundrum of churchless believers. Well-meaning Christians eager to do the work of evangelism often regard as converted those who are yet to be united to Christ in any visible and consequential manner. One problem in such situations is a conflation of regeneration with conversion. Regeneration is an instantaneous and invisible act, but conversion is an outwardly visible process. Whereas it is impossible for men to detect the act of regeneration itself, conversion necessarily involves outwardly identifiable markers, such as the enchurchment of the converted.

My purpose in this article is to offer a corrective to the common error of regarding churchless believers as sound converts. In the first section, I draw on Scripture to present enchurchment as a feature of Christian conversion. In the second section, I describe theological and historical approaches to evangelism and enchurchment, with a particular focus on the history of American Presbyterianism. In the third section, I propose guidelines for church officers in directing professed believers to pursue membership in the visible church as a necessary feature of conversion. Before progressing into the first section, it is necessary to define three key words in confessional terms as I will be using them in this article.

First, the word "church" used as a technical theological

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term encompasses a spectrum of complementary meanings. In its most general sense, it is to be understood to refer in Thomas Witherow's words to "any society of Christians, however great, or however small."¹ John Murray likewise has described the church as, "the company or society or assembly or congregation or communion of the faithful."² Drawing on Thomas Peck, Ryan McGraw has developed the definition, writing, "The church is, in its basic form, a group of people called out by God from the world to be His people with God dwelling in their midst."³ Each of these definitions describes the church in the most general sense as spiritual and therefore invisible. However, there is an undeniable visible aspect of any society of people. Distinguishing between the invisible and visible church, John Mitchell Mason has explained, "The expression 'church of God,' used without qualification, means an external society comprehending all those who profess the true religion."⁴ In this article, the word "church" primarily refers to the church in its visible aspect, which is described in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (WCF) 25.2:

The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.⁵

The use of "church" to refer primarily to the visible church described in WCF 25.2 serves the purpose of presenting enchurchment as a feature of Christian conversion.

The term "enchurchment" quite literally refers to the ingathering of individuals or societies (families, tribes, communities, nations) into the visible church. To undergo enchurchment is to be brought into the church. In relation to the visible church, enchurchment refers specifically to the condition of being brought

into the visible church. *Westminster Confession of Faith* 25.2 stresses the importance of enchurchment in its last clause in reference to the visible church, "out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation." The concept of conversion lies immediately behind the words of WCF 25.2.

The term "conversion" in relation to the visible church and enchurchment refers to a change of spiritual condition and standing with observable—or visible—features. Such features are visible by merit of being public and social. They have to do with human society, even though said society is ultimately spiritual in substance, matter, and concern. The *Belgic Confession* captures the social aspect of Christian salvation and conversion in Article 28:

We believe that since this holy assembly and congregation is the gathering of those who are saved and there is no salvation apart from it, no one ought to withdraw from it, content to be by himself, regardless of his status or condition.

Under the Third and Fourth Head of the *Canons of Dort*, "The Corruption of Man, His Conversion to God, and the Manner Thereof," conversion is more extensively treated as an inward spiritual reality, but the importance of membership in the visible church is assumed throughout. Article 17 concludes this portion of the *Canons* with a clear statement of the relationship between the outward means tending toward inward change of heart (regeneration) and conversion:

Wherefore, as the apostles and the teachers who succeeded them piously instructed the people concerning this grace of God, to His glory and to the abasement of all pride, and in the meantime, however, neglected not to keep them, by the holy admonitions of the gospel, under the influence of the Word, the sacraments, and ecclesiastical discipline; so even now it should be far from those who give or receive instruction in the Church to presume to tempt God by separating what He of His good pleasure has most intimately joined together.

In what follows, the word "conversion" relates specifically to outward realities that are necessary—though not sufficient—features and evidences of inward spiritual change. Spiritual change which deserves to be denominated conversion necessarily involves enchurchment in the visible church, "out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation" (WCF 25.2).

1. Thomas Witherow, *The Apostolic Church - Which Is It?* Second FPP Edition (Glasgow, Scotland: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1856/1990), p. 13.

2. John Murray, *Christian Baptism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1980), p. 33.

3. Ryan McGraw, *The Ark of Safety: Is There Salvation Outside of the Church?* Explorations in Reformed Confessional Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2018), p. 56.

4. John Mitchell Mason, *Essays on the Church of God* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1843), p. 13.

5. See also the *Westminster Larger Catechism* (WLC) questions and answers 61–64.

ENCHURMENT AS A FEATURE OF CHRISTIAN CONVERSION

The Bible both explicitly and implicitly presents enchurment as a necessary feature of conversion. The explicit biblical basis for regarding enchurment as a necessary feature of conversion includes passages concerning baptism (both commanded and modeled), conversion of masses and individuals, and the thief converted on the cross. Without fail, the New Testament presents baptism as at the heart of the church's evangelistic mission. In Matthew 28:19, Christ explicitly commanded the nascent church made up of His remaining disciples, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."⁶ Baptism in this case is a mark of Christian discipleship, which elsewhere in the New Testament is presented as a necessary feature of church membership. Christ commanded the church to make disciples by means of baptism and teaching—that is, enchurment—in Matthew 28:19–20.

One possible objection to this reading is that taking "baptizing" and "teaching" as descriptive of the means of making disciples makes one vulnerable to accusations of sacerdotalism in sacramentology and soteriology. On the contrary, being marked and sealed as a member of the visible church by means of baptism is a biblical priority for discipleship, as it is an ordinary means of God's grace for the believer. Baptism need not be the first means introduced to the professing convert. As will be discussed later in this essay, it is wise to test adult claimants to the privileges of divine adoption with a period of catechetical instruction before publicly sealing their membership in the covenant community by means of baptism. However, it is wholly appropriate to signify the visible church membership of believers' children by baptism, thereby publicly inducting them into a lifetime of discipleship by ordinary means. As problematic as sacerdotalism is, such errors are less a danger to sound exegesis on this point than is the too low sacramentology of modern Evangelicalism in which baptism is merely an individual declaration of solidarity with Christ. In fact, baptism signifies the Christian's divinely orchestrated identification and union with Christ through His visible church.

In conversion accounts found in Acts, visible enchurment by baptism accompanies the preaching of the Word in the ingathering of the Elect. After Peter's Pentecost sermon, the account continues, "So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). To what were these three thousand souls

added? They were added to the visible church that was expanding under the Apostles' ministry in Jerusalem. Whereas the "three thousand souls" in Jerusalem were exclusively Jews, salvation subsequently came to the Gentiles in the account of the conversion of Cornelius and his household in Acts 10. The Holy Spirit having "fell upon all those who were listening to the message" in 10:44, Peter "ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" in 10:48. Two accounts of household baptism upon the profession of faith of a head of household—Lydia in 16:14–15 and the Philippian jailer in 16:27–34—likewise illustrate the importance of visible enchurment by baptism as part of Christian conversion. At a more intimate level in the account of the Ethiopian eunuch's conversion found in Acts 8:25–40, the evangelist Philip baptized him (v. 38) before being himself miraculously transported to Azotus (vv. 39–40). Similarly in the account of Saul's conversion to Christ, the scene which opens with Christ's direct auricular and visual revelation ends with Saul regaining his sight, getting up, and receiving baptism as the mark of his membership in the visible church (Acts 9:18). At both the crowd and individual levels, water baptism marking enchurment is included as a necessary feature of Christian conversion as recorded in the New Testament.⁷

Luke's account of the conversion of the thief on the cross is an apparent exception that proves the rule that visible enchurment is a necessary feature of Christian conversion. What at first appears to challenge the necessity of visible enchurment actually serves upon further inspection to strengthen the case for visible enchurment as a necessary feature of Christian conversion. In Luke 23:39–43, the penitent thief confesses his belief in Christ's sinlessness and calls upon the Name of the Lord in faith. Christ then explicitly receives the thief into the church by the words of His glorious promise in verse 43, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with

6. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture citations are from the 1995 edition of the New American Standard Bible (NASB).

7. For general support of this reading of the New Testament data concerning baptism and church membership, see D. Douglas Bannerman, *The Scripture Doctrine of the Church, Historically and Exegetically Considered* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1887), pp. 229–41, 319–27, 364–78; Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church Volume 1: Apostolic Christianity, A.D. 1–100* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), pp. 466ff; Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1975), p. 193; Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity, Volume I: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*, Second Edition (New York: HarperOne, 2010), p. 112; for a different interpretation, cf. Johannes Weiss, *Earliest Christianity: A History of the Period AD 30–150*, trans. Frederick C. Grant, vol. 1 (New York City: Harper & Brothers, 1959), p. 50.

Me in Paradise.” Though baptism is conspicuously absent in this case, Christ’s words function as an auricular enchurchment of the man as a necessary feature of his conversion. No sacrament was performed, but the spiritual reality which is normally attached to the sacrament is attested to by none other than the Head of the church Himself. The converted thief was brought into the church by as sure a declaration of enchurchment as has ever accompanied the sacrament of baptism.

Though explicit testimony of Scripture suffices to show the necessity of visible enchurchment as a feature of conversion, the Bible implicitly teaches the same truth. The church’s identity and the church’s ultimate aim necessitate visible enchurchment as a feature of genuine Christian conversion. In Paul’s exhortation to the church in Corinth, he repeatedly emphasized the church’s union with and identity in Christ. Minimizing worldly distinctions, Paul wrote, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.... But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.” (1 Corinthians 12:13, 18). Paul’s relation of baptism to the church’s union with and identity in Christ in the context of a protracted discussion of the operation of the visible community of the saints unavoidably implies that visible enchurchment is a necessary feature of conversion. The Corinthian Christians “were all baptized,” “were all made to drink of one Spirit,” and were placed “each one of them, in the body.” In other words, Paul was reminding his readers that they were made members of the visible church as a necessary feature of their conversion to Christ.

Scripture’s teaching on the church’s ultimate aim of glorifying God likewise suggests the necessity of enchurchment. Proverbs 14:28 asserts, “In a multitude of people is a king’s glory, but in the dearth of people is a prince’s ruin.” This basic principle is applied to God’s kingdom and expanded in New Testament descriptions of God’s glory in the congregation of His redeemed

ones. John’s vision in Revelation 7:9–10 contains powerful imagery of God’s glory in the vastness of His people:

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

In this passage, John visually observes the vast multitude made up of redeemed members of the church triumphant. They are those who have been converted “from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God” (Acts 26:18), having first been called by Christ’s servants into Christ’s church (Romans 10:14–15). The upbuilding of the multitudes of heaven unto the glory of God is the ultimate aim of all evangelism and missions. As John Piper has famously declared, “Missions exists because worship doesn’t.”⁸ The building up of these multitudes is visible on earth in the enchurchment aspect of the conversion of sinners.

ENCHURCHMENT IN HISTORICAL & THEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

The history of the church and her theological developments applies the biblical case for enchurchment as a necessary feature of conversion. Following the apostolic period, the fledgling Christian community expanded rapidly across the ancient Mediterranean world, bringing thousands of converts out of paganism and into the church through baptism. Philip Schaff observed that ancient Christians regarded baptism “as the sacrament of the new birth or regeneration, and as the solemn rite of initiation into the Christian Church, admitting to all her benefits and committing to all her obligations.”⁹ However, leaders in the church began to recognize a serious pastoral difficulty in this period of extension beyond the predominantly Jewish-background culture of the earliest converts. Justo González rightly notes that “as the church became increasingly Gentile, it was necessary to require a period of preparation, trial, and instruction prior to baptism.”¹⁰ G. R. Evans describes the situation of early converts who pursued church membership, “The would-be Christian first had to become a catechumen and take instruction.... [Catechumens] were conceived as part of the local church community but not yet really as members, and the preparation for baptism was recognized to be a preparation for the full membership of the church.”¹¹ Ancient church sources

8. John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad!: The Supremacy of God in Missions*, Third Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), p. 15.

9. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church Volume 2: Antel-Nicene Christianity, A.D. 100–325* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1910), p. 253.

10. González, *Story of Christianity I*, 112; see also, Henri Daniel-Rops, *The Church of Apostles and Martyrs*, trans. Audrey Butler, vol. 1 (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1962), pp. 269, 271f.

11. G. R. Evans, “The Church in the Early Christian Centuries: Ecclesiological Consolidation,” in *The Routledge Companion to the Christian Church* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 31.

such as the *Didache*, *The Apostolic Tradition*, and various ante-Nicene treatises describe a rigorous catechetical period of instruction and trial of Christian conduct, lasting up to three years in some cases.¹² The catechumenate system remained in place well into and through the medieval church period.¹³ At the end of the probationary period, the catechumen entered the visible church through baptism. In relation to early Christians' understanding of membership in the church, Wayne Meeks specifies, "baptism was not a preparation for initiation; it *was* the initiation."¹⁴ Through baptism, adult converts with a credible profession of faith in Christ visibly abandoned their outward solidarity and identification with the world and entered the church. Such remains the case today in all manner of Christian (and even pseudo-Christian) churches, including those in the Reformed tradition.

The enchurchment feature of Christian conversion occupies an important place in Reformed treatments of ecclesiology. Not only does church membership render certain practical benefits to congregations and individual Christians, but enchurchment carries great theological significance in the building up of Christ's Kingdom.¹⁵ In the remainder of this section, I give attention to the writings of select Reformed theologians and to certain evangelistic practices of the church over the course of its history. Space limitations disallow anything approaching a comprehensive presentation of Reformed ecclesiology or missiology. Rather, a digest of pertinent Reformed treatments of ecclesiology and soteriology as they pertain to church membership precedes a brief narrative account of the declension of the importance of church membership in modern American Evangelicalism and Presbyterianism. The theological importance of enchurchment lies especially at the nexus of ecclesiology and soteriology. However, emphasis on the enchurchment feature of Christian conversion has demonstrably shaped even certain Reformed interpretations of prophecy regarding the growth and make-up of the church over time. Thus, the place of enchurchment has theological significance for Reformed treatments of eschatology as well. An exploration of the importance of enchurchment in each of these heads of doctrine—soteriology, ecclesiology, and eschatology—follows below.

The faithful application of Reformed soteriology stresses the importance of individual believers' membership in the visible church. It must be remarked at the outset of a discussion of visible church membership that salvation is by God's grace alone, in Christ Jesus alone. As Thomas Witherow has remarked, "Few would go so

far as to assert that correct views on Church government are essential to salvation."¹⁶ However, Witherow goes on to explain, "the views we adopt upon this subject go far to colour our opinions on matters of Christian faith and practice."¹⁷ At this point, Witherow has struck upon an important insight. Particular enchurchment as expressed in denominational affiliation is important to the content of an individual's faith. Consider the words of nineteenth century Presbyterian pastor T.D. Witherspoon, who exhorted Presbyterian children, "But while you cherish a kindly spirit towards all other branches of the church. . . . [be] decidedly frank in your attachment to Presbyterianism. . . . Let others see that you love the faith and order of the Presbyterian Church, that its doctrines and polity, its history and memories are all dear to your heart."¹⁸ Though a man's membership in one Christian denomination as opposed to another has no bearing on his justification before God, the church of which he is a member certainly influences his theology and in what manner he is being sanctified on the way to glorification through the outworking of God's grace in his life.

The influence of a particular church on an individual believer's theological development reflects the spiritual mission of the church to draw men to Christ even as the church itself is saved by Christ. In his treatment of WCF 25.2's statement concerning the church, "out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation," Ryan McGraw has shown in what ways the Protestant Reformation echoed the teachings of the early Church Father Cyprian (d. A.D. 258) in recognizing the necessity of membership in the visible church for true Christian living. In order to highlight but one important theme from a wide-ranging discussion covering the thought of several Reformers, consider McGraw's observation,

In [Calvin's] view, membership in the church visible was necessary for salvation because preaching, which was

12. Everett Ferguson, *Church History Volume 1: From Christ to Pre-Reformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), p. 148.

13. Daniel-Rops, *The Church of Apostles and Martyrs*, 1.269.

14. Wayne A. Meeks, "Social and Ecclesial Life of the Earliest Christians," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity Volume 1: Origins to Constantine* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 161.

15. See, for example, Ryan M. McGraw and Ryan Speck, *Is Church Membership Biblical?*, Cultivating Biblical Godliness (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2015).

16. Witherow, *The Apostolic Church*, p. 9.

17. Witherow, *ibid.*

18. T.D. Witherspoon, *Children of the Covenant* (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1873), 143, as quoted in C.N. Willborn, "A Children's Book about God's *Hesed*: T.D. Witherspoon's *Children of the Covenant*," *The Confessional Presbyterian Journal* 14 (2018): 25.

both the primary means of salvation and the primary mark of the church, was attached to the church inseparably.... Like Calvin, Ursinus made membership in both aspects of the church absolute. He also rooted the necessity of membership in the church visible in the inseparable presence of the ministry of the word there.¹⁹

Membership in the church is important because there is no other way to benefit from regular attendance upon the ordinary (visible) means of (invisible) grace—and especially preaching—except through membership and active participation in the visible church. Thus, “since there is one church with visible and invisible aspects, we cannot undermine one without losing the other.”²⁰ It bears repeating at this juncture that the necessity of visible church membership for salvation does not imply sufficiency of such membership for saving union with Christ. “We must neither be content with membership in the visible church without saving union with Christ nor profess that we are members of the invisible church and have no need for the visible church. We must be partakers of the whole Christ and, if at all possible, be so in the context of the whole church.”²¹ In this way only will true believers associate together for the purpose of worship in Spirit and in truth.

Reformed missiologists and theologians concerned with evangelism have noted the importance of the visible church itself for the promotion of God’s glory among men. In so doing, they have highlighted church membership as the instrumental means of the church’s concrete existence as a worshipping community bringing glory to God. In a chapter entitled “God and the Aim of Evangelism,” R.B. Kuiper has delineated four goals for biblical gospel witness, presented in logical order, ascending in scope from immediate to ultimate: the salvation of souls, the growth of Christ’s church, the coming of Christ’s Kingdom, and the glory of God.²² Under the second goal—the growth of Christ’s church—Kuiper

noted, “The Bible puts much stress on the truth that all who receive Christ in faith by that very act become members of Christ’s body, the church.”²³ As the section proceeds, Kuiper explained further what exactly he meant by “receive Christ in faith.”

The fact remains that in the early church converts were invariably and, on their profession of faith, forthwith received by baptism into the fellowship of believers.... The Head of the church not only required of them to unite with the church, He Himself joined them to the church.... The truth of the matter is that church membership is a normal and necessary consequence of salvation.... What, more than aught else, makes the growth of the church meaningful is the fact that it enhances the glory of Christ Jesus, the church’s Head and King.²⁴

Kuiper’s formulation of the Reformed missiological/evangelistic concern for church membership did not appear in a theological vacuum.

In emphasizing the instrumental importance of the growth of the church for the increase of the glory of God in the world, Kuiper was building on a theological foundation laid for him by the great missiologist and theologian of the Dutch Second Reformation (*Nadere Reformatie*), Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676). Summarizing Voetius, twentieth-century missiologist J.H. Bavinck wrote of missionaries, “Why must they be sent? Here Voetius treats the goal of missions, the conversion of the heathen, a goal which is subordinate to the planting of the church (*plantatio ecclesiae*), which is in turn subordinate to the highest aim, the glory of God.”²⁵ Jan Jongeneel has elaborated further on the logic of Voetius’s missiology as situating conversion “as a means to salvation (*salutaris conversio*) in that those who come to faith enter into fellowship with God in Christ and, on the other hand, as a preparation for the more proper work of missions, namely church planting in accordance with the example of the apostles.”²⁶ Both of these independent missiological aims (conversion and church-planting) serve to glorify God, which is the ultimate goal of missions. On Jongeneel’s reading, Voetius argued further that his presentation of biblical missiology was at odds with Roman Catholic thinking on missions, “since Rome does not consider conversion as an independent goal of missions but as a means to the larger purpose of church planting... [which begins] when priests are sent by the universal church to the pagan world,” as opposed to when non-Christians are converted to Christ.²⁷ Though Voetius clearly distinguished between the missiological (and evangelistic) goals of the

19. McGraw, *Ark of Safety*, p. 22ff.

20. McGraw, *ibid.*, pp. 82ff.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

22. R.B. Kuiper, *God-Centred Evangelism: A Presentation of the Scriptural Theology of Evangelism* (Edinburgh; Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1966), pp. 106–17.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

25. J.H. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions*, trans. David Hugh Freeman (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1960), p. 6.

26. J.A.B. Jongeneel, “The Missiology of Gisbertus Voetius: The First Comprehensive Protestant Theology of Missions,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 26, no. 1 (April 1991): pp. 64ff.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

conversion of the nations (*conversio gentium*) and the planting of the church (*plantatio ecclesiae*), the latter is an undeniably necessary consequence of the former. In other words, missions is not missions if it does not involve evangelism resulting in conversions to the glory of God, leading to church planting producing an increase of the worship of God to the glory of God. Thus, the concrete aims of evangelism and missions as they fit into the mission of the church as a whole (to render true worship to the Triune God) ultimately terminate on the glory of God. Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert have articulated this very same idea from a different angle in writing, “If you want to be included in the kingdom of God, you must respond rightly to the King of the kingdom.... The apostles, too, consistently teach that salvation—inclusion in the kingdom of God—is to be had by responding rightly to the King.”²⁸ A necessary component of that right response is membership in the visible church through baptism, resulting in the growth of the visible church to the glory of God. The linkages between evangelism, individual conversion, church membership, church planting, and the increase of God’s glory in the world have eschatological implications which were developed in significant ways in other streams of Reformed theology.

Within the Scottish Presbyterian tradition, the enchurchment feature of Christian conversion has shaped certain biblical commentators’ interpretations of prophecy relating to the ethnic constitution and expansion of the church over time. In commentary material on Paul’s Epistle to the Church in Rome, Scottish Presbyterians such as Charles Ferme (1565–1617),²⁹ David Dickson (1583–1663),³⁰ and John Brown of Wamphray (1610–1679),³¹ shared a common concern for the doctrine of the church which greatly influenced their interpretation of prophecy. This influence is most evident in their comments on the meaning of “all Israel” in Romans 11:26. Brown’s comments are the most developed and worthy of focused consideration here. Commenting on Romans 11:26–27, Brown defined “all Israel” as “the whole body of the nation of the Jews.”³² He qualified this definition by writing, “tho’ there shall be many hypocrites and hollow-hearted professors among them (Ezekiel 20:38), yet all of them are said here to be saved, as being in a fair way for salvation.”³³ Brown built on his inferential reading of Romans 11:11 as indicating that “God had a mind to enchurch [the Jews] again”³⁴ in coming to his conclusion that “shall be saved” in its immediate context means “being in a fair way for salvation.” What does it mean to be “in a fair way for salvation,” and how does this relate to enchurchment? Brown employed two

arguments—one negative and one positive—which together answer these questions. First, Brown had earlier argued that “such as are without the visible church, can have no hope of any of these promises” delivered in Romans 11:4.³⁵ Brown here emphasized the necessity of membership in the visible church for salvation. Second, Brown argued positively in his comments on Romans 11:26–27, “a people under lively and powerful ordinances are in a happier condition than others who live without God and Christ in the world, and so in respect of them may be said to be *saved*.”³⁶ Thus, Brown reads “shall be saved” in the context of Romans 11:26 as meaning “shall be on a fair way for salvation through the instrumental means of enchurchment.” Brown seems to have expected that the Jewish people would form a national Christian church, and in that sense be saved. In his application of Reformed soteriology to his interpretation of Romans 11:26, John Brown of Wamphray has demonstrated the Reformed emphasis on enchurchment as a necessary feature of Christian conversion. What follows next is a brief exploration of American Evangelical and Presbyterian Churches’ progressive abandonment of the conviction that church membership is an integral feature of what can be regarded rightly as Christian conversion.

As described in this section’s opening paragraph, the practice of the apostolic church emphasized the importance of baptism as the rite of initiation into the church. Adult converts with little-to-no background in the Christian faith underwent a period of instruction and testing to determine the credibility of their profession of faith. Thus, the evangelistic practice of the ancient church reflected church leaders’ keen sense of the importance of church membership in the lives of believers. Not only were church leaders committed to guarding as diligently as possible the membership of the

28. Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), p. 135.

29. Charles Ferme, *A Logical Analysis of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, trans. William Skae (Edinburgh: Wodrow Society, 1850).

30. David Dickson, *An Exposition of All St. Pauls Epistles, Together with an Explanation of Those Other Epistles of the Apostles, St. James, Peter, John & Jude: Wherein the Sense of Every Chapter and Verse Is Analytically Unfolded, and the Text Enlightened*. (London: R.I. for Francis Eglesfield, 1659).

31. John Brown, *An Exposition of the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans, with Large Practical Observations; Delivered in Several Lectures* (Edinburgh: David Paterson, 1766).

32. Brown, p. 462.

33. Brown, p. 464.

34. Brown, p. 439.

35. Brown, p. 347.

36. Brown, p. 464.

church, but they were equally committed to thoroughly instructing new professors of the Faith unto entrance into the visible church as the consummative sign of their conversion. Over time, medieval church authorities appropriated and transformed the catechumenate system (including baptism) into an instrument of sacerdotalism. Schaff's description of medieval Christianity as "intensely sacramental, sacerdotal, and hierarchical"³⁷ is apt when thinking about the catechumenate during that period. However, as made plain in the Protestant writings and authors cited above, Reformed churches and their ministers have emphasized the biblical mandate of visible church membership as a necessary feature of Christian conversion, and not as a sacerdotal tradition. And yet, this emphasis on membership in the visible church has not gone unchallenged in the history of American Evangelicalism and Presbyterianism.

During the Great Awakening of the early-to-mid eighteenth century, the Spirit of God worked through heart-searching preaching from the likes of George Whitefield (1714–1770) and Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) to ignite an unprecedented religious movement throughout the American colonies. This Great Awakening heralded the emergence of American Evangelicalism with its "reliance on a decisive, perceptible experience of conversion."³⁸ Within the nascent Presbyterian Church in the colonies, Gilbert Tennent (1703–1764) rose to prominence as a leader among Presbyterians sympathetic to the ministry of itinerant preachers who were earnest about revival. Tennent inspired controversy within the Presbyterian Church during the Great Awakening, leading to a schism between so-called Old Side and New Side Presbyterians in 1741.

Before the Great Awakening and its attendant controversies, the Presbyterian Church in the American Colonies followed much of European Protestantism in welcoming into the communicant membership of the church two classes of professing Christians: adult

converts upon profession of faith; and, baptized children of believers upon reaching a certain age, learning the doctrinal standards of the Church, and conducting their lives free of any scandal considered worthy of excommunication. Writing in the late nineteenth century, Thomas Murphy described the situation, "It had become customary, as a matter of course, that at a certain age nearly all who had been baptized should be received to the Lord's Supper without giving any evidence of a change of heart. The matter of personal acceptance with God received but little attention. It was considered as almost too sacred a subject to be conversed about."³⁹ Gilbert Tennent called for a reevaluation of the standards for communicant membership, demanding that ministers require candidates for the Lord's Supper to produce an account of their experienced conversion as a proof of their spiritual regeneration. D. G. Hart writes that Tennent purposed "to eliminate nominal Christianity, that is, church goers who simply went through the motions or only had an external awareness of the gospel."⁴⁰ Those who supported Tennent's suggestion came to be known as New Side Presbyterians, with those who rejected Tennent's suggestion being Old Side Presbyterians. Joseph Tracy's description of the two parties to the debate is worth quoting at length.

The Presbyterian Church in America, from its very commencement, contained two classes of men, whose views, on some important points, were in direct conflict with each other. The strict Presbyterians, from Scotland and Ireland, with few exceptions... insisted that all baptized persons, not convicted of heresy or immorality, should be communicants; and that such persons, regularly educated for that purpose, and possessing sufficient learning, should be regarded as qualified for the ministry. Regeneration, they held to be necessary in order to acceptance with God, both in partaking of the Lord's Supper and in performing the duties of the ministry; but a qualification not ascertainable by examination, and not requisite in order to a regular standing in the church, or in a sacred office. In short, they insisted that all should be regarded and treated as regenerate, who did not give evidence to the contrary by manifest heresy or immorality. The other party was composed of men from New England, England, and Wales, with a few from Scotland and Ireland. They held that regeneration is a change of which evidence may ordinarily be found by examination; that those in whom no evidence of regeneration can be found, should be regarded and treated as unregenerate; and that all such persons should be excluded from the Lord's Table, and from the ministry.⁴¹

37. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church Volume 4: Mediaeval Christianity, from A.D. 590–1517* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), p. 436.

38. Baird Tipson, *Inward Baptism: The Theological Origins of Evangelicalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 172.

39. Thomas Murphy, *The Presbytery of the Log College; or, The Cradle of the Presbyterian Church in America* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath-School Work, 1889), pp. 163ff.

40. D. G. Hart, "Old Side / New Side Schism and Reunion," in *Colonial Presbyterianism: Old Faith in a New Land* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2007), p. 164.

41. Joseph Tracy, *The Great Awakening: A History of the Revival of Religion in the Time of Edwards and Whitefield*, Reprint (Edinburgh; Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2019), p. 63.

Old Side and New Side Presbyterians divided along synodical lines in 1741, with the former ministering under the auspices of the Synod of Philadelphia and the latter ministering under the auspices of the Conjoint Presbyteries of New Brunswick and Londonderry. In 1746, the Presbytery of New York left the Synod of Philadelphia and joined the Presbyteries of New Brunswick and Londonderry, thus forming the Synod of New York. The two synods labored long to restore unity, and they formally merged in 1758.⁴² The resulting Synod of New York and Philadelphia had settled on the conditions of admittance to the Table and communicant membership: “namely, credible evidence of a change of heart and personal faith in Christ.”⁴³

Throughout this eighteenth century American Presbyterian controversy, ministers on all sides were committed to the idea that membership in the visible church is a necessary feature of Christian conversion. However, the apparent victory of the New Side in the matter of requirements for communicant membership introduced⁴⁴ a criterion for membership in the visible church that would later eclipse the importance of church membership itself for making any judgment as to the spiritual condition of an individual. Whereas this early controversy did not serve as an occasion to weaken American Presbyterians’ commitment to church membership, the causes of the next major controversy in American Presbyterian history included examples of the abuse of visible church membership for the sake of supposed church growth. Such abuse would intractably diminish the seriousness with which individuals regarded church membership.

In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, America experienced the Second Great Awakening. During this movement, churches of many different denominations grew rapidly as interest in spiritual matters swelled around the young country. Iain Murray describes the ministry of five especially important evangelistic preachers of the Second Great Awakening—Edward Dorr Griffin (1770–1837), Asahel Nettleton (1783–1844), Lyman Beecher (1775–1863), Edward Payson (1783–1827), and Gardiner Spring (1785–1873)⁴⁵—as holding in common a high standard for determining Christian conversion in line with the New Side Presbyterians of the First Great Awakening. He writes in connection to how these men evaluated the sincerity of new converts’ professions of faith, “true conversion involves a radical break with the principle of sin and self-interest which controls the natural man. To be born of the Spirit is to become ‘spiritual’; to possess a new nature which loves holiness and conformity to God.... the test is the evidence of moral

transformation.”⁴⁶ Late in the Second Great Awakening, however, certain preachers introduced so-called “New Measures” that sought to guide their hearers to a decision in favor of following Christ and joining the church. Under the ministry of Charles Grandison Finney (1792–1875) and others, such measures included the “anxious bench” as the most notorious, but also involved “praying for [unconverted] people by name, visiting towns without invitations from the local preachers, the immediate admission of converts to church membership, protracted nightly meetings, and exhortations by female preachers.”⁴⁷ Such innovative revivalism contributed to a new split in American Presbyterianism, this time between Old School and New School factions, which would last from 1838 to 1869.⁴⁸ The Old School was opposed to the “New Measures,” whereas the New School embraced them for use within the Presbyterian Church. Revivalists who eschewed the circumspection of men such as Griffin, Nettleton, Beecher, Payson, and Spring brought droves of false converts into the visible church by recklessly incorporating the extension of church membership into their revivalism programming. Resistance to these new measures waned as superficial revivalism mixed with instances of true revival through the course of the nineteenth century. Persisting hastiness in bringing individuals into church membership was one of two aftershocks of the Second Great Awakening that weakened the strength of the American Presbyterian Church’s lived doctrine of the church.

As Murray pointedly observes, a second effect of the revivals of the nineteenth century was to inspire “a new readiness among Christians to support wider,

42. For an historical summary of this controversy sympathetic to the Old Side position, see D. G. Hart and John R. Muether, *Seeking a Better Country: 300 Years of American Presbyterianism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2007), pp. 60–69.

43. Murphy, *The Presbytery of the Log College; or, The Cradle of the Presbyterian Church in America*, p. 180.

44. Some writers specify that the vindication of the New Side position resulted in a reintroduction of an ancient criterion for membership in the visible church; see Tracy, *The Great Awakening*, 427, 431; Iain H. Murray, *Revival & Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism, 1750–1858* (Edinburgh; Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1994), p. 106.

45. Murray, *Revival & Revivalism*, pp. 191–222.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 216.

47. Hart and Muether, *Seeking a Better Country*, 112; for a vivid description of the Second Great Awakening’s contribution to American Evangelicalism’s “born-again” character, see Will Hoyt, *The Seven Ranges: Ground Zero for the Staging of America* (Eugene, OR: Front Porch Republic Books, 2021), pp. 56–62.

48. Hart and Muether, *Seeking a Better Country*, 125–27, 164f; cf. Murray, *Revival & Revivalism*, p. 362, which gives 1837–1871 as the range of dates for the Old School–New School division.

non-denominational interests.”⁴⁹ With the concurrent rises of nominal church membership and interest in non-denominational ventures in the latter half of the nineteenth century, further compromise was not far off. Not long after the reunion of the Old School and New School Churches, American Presbyterians would face off against a series of disruptive movements that crossed denominational lines, including the rise of Dispensationalism, the Ecumenical movement, Modernism, Liberalism, Fundamentalism, and Pentecostalism.⁵⁰ Non-denominational, inter-denominational, and independent conferences, meetings, and publications—the precursors to formalized para-church organizations—played important roles in each of these movements and the controversies related to them. However, the full flower of para-church ministry was yet to bloom.

By the middle of the twentieth century, para-church ministry was well-positioned to make inroads into the hearts, minds, schedules, and purses of American Christians. New media technologies, celebrity culture, and the proliferation of the automobile resulted in a waning of the social and cultural importance of local church ministry. In place of local denominational ministries emerged para-church organizations (including for-profit publishing houses), televised megachurches, and annual conferences that captured the hearts, minds, and attentions of believers around the country. Though the particular references are now a bit dated, Hart and Muether’s snapshot description of para-church organizations vividly illustrates the competition such groups pose to the church.

When the average American Protestant can listen to James Dobson nightly on the radio, follow the advance of Billy Graham’s crusades through *Decision* magazine, meet with local Christians to study a book of the Bible organized around a study published by Zondervan, and listen to any number of Christian recording artists

during his or her commute to and from work, it is easy to see how the efforts of a Presbyterian denomination, let alone the meager resources of the average Presbyterian congregation, can hardly keep up.⁵¹

How has the pivot to para-church ministries affected American Christianity as it relates to visible church membership? There are three trends worth considering here that relate to conversion and church membership.

In the first place, the increased popularity of para-church ministries and organizations correlates to a change in the way American Evangelicals—including Bible-believing Presbyterians—share the gospel with their neighbors, friends, coworkers, family members, and acquaintances. Most evangelism techniques employed by para-church groups are concerned with producing a “decision for Christ” either immediately in the context of an on-the-spot conversation or over time in the context of a long-term relationship cultivated between the evangelist and the unbelieving conversation partner. While there is not anything inherently sinful in deciding to follow Jesus, the counsel that follows such a decision may or may not involve either the convert’s trial of his profession or his subsequent enchurchment. In other words, the evangelistic conversation or relationship leading to a decision has functionally replaced the catechetical process of instruction and trial leading to enchurchment. In its worst forms, such evangelism simultaneously downplays the importance of membership in the visible church and lends legitimacy to the false theology of decisional regeneration. Even at its best, such an approach to evangelism has promoted both individualism and methodophilia (i.e., love of particular methods or techniques) in American Evangelicalism. Both tendencies—individualism and methodophilia—are disastrous for Christian living. Sinclair Ferguson writes, “Being a Christian involves *believing*. . . . But being a Christian is not an individualistic or isolationist activity. *Believing* also involves *belonging*. . . . Being a Christian, by definition, involves belonging to the church—that, in turn, means belonging to a particular church.”⁵² Os Guinness strongly warns against attachment to particular techniques in matters of evangelism and Christian persuasion, “Technique is the devil’s bait for the Christian persuader today, and at point after point we must turn down its seductions point blank, just as Jesus refused the tempter in the desert.”⁵³ The Christian evangelist’s abandonment of biblical instruction leading to enchurchment in favor of presentational techniques leading to an individual “decision

49. Murray, *Revival & Revivalism*, 360; see also Hart and Muether, *Seeking a Better Country*, pp. 172–78.

50. For a masterful historical treatment of the development of American Evangelicalism and Presbyterianism in the period following the Old School–New School controversy, see George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture, The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism: 1870–1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

51. Hart and Muether, *Seeking a Better Country*, p. 260.

52. Sinclair Ferguson, *Devoted to God’s Church: Core Values for Christian Fellowship* (Edinburgh; Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2020), p. 1.

53. Os Guinness, *Fool’s Talk: Recovering the Art of Christian Persuasion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), p. 30.

for Christ” dovetails into a second effect on American Christians’ beliefs and attitudes toward formal membership in the visible church.

Concurrent to the rise of the popularity of para-church organizations committed to evangelism and discipleship (functions historically belonging to the church alone), ecclesiastical innovations have included the creation of new denominations and church networks that eschew or otherwise reimagine church membership. The proliferation of non-denominational churches, groups, and networks that resemble para-church organizations while purporting to bring new approaches to “doing church” characterizes American Evangelicalism today. Some groups—such as Calvary Chapel⁵⁴—entirely forsake visible church membership. Christianity Today recently reported, “For a growing number of churches, membership has been deemphasized (if not eliminated altogether) as they try to become more relevant to a younger generation that places less emphasis on attachment to institutions.”⁵⁵ Other inter-denominational networks—such as the global Acts29 Network,⁵⁶ the Redeemer City to City Network⁵⁷ in major metropolitan areas around the world, and the Liberti network of churches in southeast Pennsylvania⁵⁸—bring together churches from a variety of otherwise unaffiliated associations and denominations for the purpose of cooperative church-planting, outreach, and branding/marketing efforts within their geographical footprint. In both cases, some feature of church life other than visible membership in a particular congregation or denomination (i.e., church) is presented as the instrument of the community’s unified witness to and mission in the world. Ostensibly, a spiritual commitment to Jesus Christ is that which unites individual believers in churches such as Calvary Chapel. However, the detachment of a spiritual commitment to Christ from a visible association with a particular expression of His church is at odds with the biblically reasoned practice of the church throughout history. In the case of inter-denominational or non-denominational church networks and groups, individuals retain visible church membership in congregations that put extra-ecclesiastical (rather than denominational) associations in the foreground. The de-emphasis on membership in a particular visible expression of the church may be less direct in this case, but the result is nonetheless a reimagining of what it means to be a member of a particular denomination. Insofar as such networks engage with Presbyterian congregations, they have introduced a new manner of being a member in a Presbyterian church. A third trend

in American Evangelicalism has to do with matters of Christian identity and church membership in hostile or otherwise sensitive cultural contexts.

In Presbyterian circles, advocates for so-called Insider Movements and Side B Gay Christianity have misunderstood and confused the radical change that takes place in conversion. Proponents of Insider Movements and Side B Gay Christianity have reimagined the place and function of conversion in the Christian life for the sake of reaching closed social groups. Those who encourage Insider Movements advise converts to Christianity to remain in their native-born socioreligious communities as full members (whatever that looks like in each particular case) while seeking to ‘live faithfully’ as followers of Christ in those communities.⁵⁹ This approach necessarily restricts such converts from outwardly expressing their membership in the body of Christ, thus removing them from full participation in the life of the church (e.g., ordinary means of grace, church discipline, sacraments). In other words, proponents of Insider Movements have redefined what it means to convert to Christianity—to be a Christian—having removed membership in a particular expression of Christ’s body (i.e., the church) from the definition. On the other hand, some proponents of Side B Gay Christianity adopt labels such as “gay,” “Side B,” or “LGBTQ+”

54. For an example of one Calvary Chapel affiliate pastor’s understanding of church membership, see David Guzik, “Is Church Membership Biblical?,” *Enduring Word*, accessed August 19, 2021, <https://enduringword.com/is-church-membership-biblical-live-with-pastor-david/>.

55. Ryan P. Burge, “1 in 10 Non-Church Members Still Show Up Every Sunday,” *Christianity Today*, August 24, 2021, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2021/august/church-membership-gallup-survey-attendance-christians.html>.

56. “Home,” *Acts 29*, accessed August 20, 2021, <https://acts29.com>.

57. “About,” *Redeemer City to City*, accessed August 20, 2021, <https://redeemercitytocity.com>.

58. See the response to the seventh Frequently Asked Question here: “Who We Are,” *Liberti*, accessed August 19, 2021, <https://liberti.org/who-we-are.2021>, <https://liberti.org/who-we-are>. “plainCitation”: “See the response to the seventh Frequently Asked Question here: “Who We Are,” *Liberti*, accessed August 19, 2021, <https://liberti.org/who-we-are>.”noteIndex”: 57, “citationItems”: [{"id”: 615, “uris”: “[“http://zotero.org/users/2589365/items/626QV2U9”], “uri”: “[“http://zotero.org/users/2589365/items/626QV2U9”], “itemData”: {“id”: 615, “type”: “webpage”, “container-title”: “Liberti”, “language”: “English”, “title”: “Who We Are”, “URL”: “https://liberti.org/who-we-are”, “accessed”: “[“date-parts”]: [[“2021”, 8, 19”]] }, “prefix”: “See the response to the seventh Frequently Asked Question here:”}], “schema”: “https://github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json”}

59. PCA Ad Interim Study Committee on Insider Movements (SCIM), “A Call to Faithful Witness, Part Two: Theology, Gospel Missions, and Insider Movements” (Lawrenceville, GA: Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), March 19, 2014), pp. 2213–33.

when describing their experienced Christian identity.⁶⁰ They regard their sinful desires, affections, and inclinations as neutral social or cultural markers that can be brought together with their Christian commitment and identity. In so doing, they aim to accomplish two things. They hope to express themselves and their shared experiences as Christians who harbor deviant sexual desires of a homosexual nature, and they hope to retain their access to dearly beloved friends who continue to live under the life-dominating sin of deviant sexual lusts and affections. Like those who build Insider Movements, so-called “Side B Gay Christians” have nurtured a community within—and in some ways, apart from—the visible church as expressed in local congregations. By employing words such as “gay” or “homosexual” to modify their Christian identity, they evacuate the terms of their moral weight, redefining them as categories comparable to ethnic, social, or cultural markers that are not inappropriate to append to “Christian.” Like the development of Insider Movements, this too confuses the nature and extent of conversion. In contrast to the message of Insider Movements and Side B Gay Christianity, converts must renounce all sinful features of their previous life (e.g., inborn sin nature, sinful affections, thoughts, words, deeds, customs, or commitments) upon being born again from above to live in submission

and reliance upon Christ as members of His glorious body, the church. Both Insider Movements and Side B Gay Christianity have emerged as major theological crises within Evangelical and Presbyterian circles in the opening two decades of the 21st Century, either instigated or aggravated by over 150 years of assaults on biblical ecclesiology and the place of conversion and enchurchment in the extension of the church. Having canvassed recent developments in church history, it is appropriate to consider ways to address the problems highlighted above.

ENCHURCHMENT GUIDELINES FOR CHURCH OFFICERS
Recent popular manuals for evangelism and church vitality have detached discussions of enchurchment and church membership from directions for evangelism, where the former is discussed at all. As Mark Dever has remarked, “Any church growth specialist would tell me that inviting people to join a church is exactly the wrong thing to do today.”⁶¹ Yet as Dever points out, “Church membership does not save, but it is a reflection of salvation. And if there is no reflection of our salvation, how can we be sure that we are truly saved?”⁶² In other words, enchurchment is a necessary feature of conversion. The present lacuna of literature explicitly handling enchurchment as a necessary feature of conversion is as prevalent in self-consciously Reformed publications as it is in more broadly Evangelical literature of the latter half of the twentieth century and opening decades of the twenty-first century.⁶³ This is a problem because, as Scripture makes clear, the enchurchment of multitudes of the peoples of the earth for the worship of God is part and parcel of the church’s “mission.”⁶⁴

The church’s approach to enchurchment must be neither careless nor uniform. The most heinous example of recent carelessness in extending church membership to those who made hasty professions of faith comes from the Second Great Awakening, mentioned in the previous section of this article. A less obviously condemnable practice is the well-intentioned normalization of programmatic new members’ classes for each and every person that expresses interest in church membership in a particular local congregation. To avoid sterile and lazy uniformity in the practice of bringing individuals and families into the membership of the local congregation, church officers should work with newly professed believers according to their prior relationships with church members and leaders. Whether new believers are known or unknown to the church should have a bearing on how they are brought into the communion of the saints.

60. See Colin Smothers, “Challenging ‘Gay Christian’ Identity,” CBMW, August 23, 2019, <https://cbmw.org/2019/08/23/challenging-gay-christian-identity/>; see also, Christopher Yuan, *Holy Sexuality and the Gospel: Sex, Desire, and Relationships Shaped by God’s Grand Story* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 2018), pp. 7–72, 185–95; PCA Ad Interim Committee on Human Sexuality, “Report of the Ad Interim Committee on Human Sexuality to the Forty-Eighth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (2019–2020)” (Lawrenceville, GA: Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), May 2020).

61. Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, Third Edition (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), p. 158.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 164.

63. Take for example Roger S. Greenway’s edited volume, *The Pastor-Evangelist* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publications, 1987), which contains passing references to enchurchment of new converts in only two places: pages 119 and 136. Likewise, longtime InterVarsity Christian Fellowship campus minister Will Metzger’s popular and helpful manual for evangelism, *Tell the Truth*, Fourth Edition (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), contains merely two statements (within one passage) of how evangelistic workers must encourage new Christians to be involved in a local church on pages 230 and 231. The author does not give an extended treatment of the subject of enchurchment in earlier sections of the book where it would have been extremely useful, including those detailing “Genuine Conversion” and “Worship: The Whole-Souled Response to Grace.”

64. DeYoung and Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church?*, p. 62. see also earlier discussion under the section headed, *Enchurchment in Historical and Theological Development*.

Church officers can consider new believers to be “known” if they have been attending to the means of grace (namely, the reading and preaching of the Word of God in stated worship services) for a period of time, and if they possess established friendships or family relationships with mature Christians, and particularly with members of the congregation into which the new believers are to be received. In this situation, there may not be a need to require enrollment in a visitors’ or new members’ class. An interview with the church’s elders may be sufficient (it is certainly necessary) to confirm a sound profession of faith. Having been brought into the church’s membership, the “known” new believer should be integrated into the full-orbed life of the church, and particularly into its corporate worship gatherings, regular prayer meetings, and regimen for pastoral visitation. At this point, the church’s new members’ class may be helpful for strengthening the familiarity and understanding of the church and its doctrine that the “known” new believer already possesses (as tested by the elders). The benefit to following these general guidelines is twofold. First, the sincere new believer is not unnecessarily kept out of the visible church, and deprived of its unique benefits (most obviously, the sacraments and church discipline). This follows apostolic practice as reflected in Acts 2:41 and elsewhere, as detailed in the first section of this article. Second, the pastors and elders of the church can safely regard the new believer as a candidate for leadership training or—less felicitously—can appropriately employ church discipline in their oversight and care.

Church officers should consider new believers to be “unknown” if they express interest in church membership soon after being presented with the gospel through contact evangelism, a door-to-door campaign, street ministry, open-air preaching, or other such confrontational—though warranted and useful—forms of gospel witness. When such earnest “unknown” new believers approach the church, there must be a clear and rigorously guarded path to church membership laid out before them. The most important element of their journey to membership in the visible church is thorough catechetical instruction designed to impress a broad outline of biblical truth upon their hearts. Possible components of such catechetical instruction might include systematic Bible reading plans, interactive study guides through particular books of the Bible and historic creeds of the Christian faith, catechism memorization, and consistent church attendance, and one-on-one discipleship. Church elders should determine the exact

parameters of required catechetical instruction to accomplish more than the mere transmission of information over a span of a few weeks. As noted above, early church practice involved rigorous instruction and testing of new Gentile (“unknown”) believers before admitting them into church membership through baptism. Reformed churches today would do well to take note of the due diligence reflected in such a process.

Scripture makes clear that church officers are responsible to protect the table from unworthy partakers of the Lord’s Supper. Consider Paul’s words to unworthy partakers in 1 Corinthians 11:27–28, where he warned, “Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup.” It is incumbent upon elders in Christ’s church to issue this solemn warning by fencing the table and diligently instructing new believers. A sincere believer will be eager to partake, but will patiently acquiesce to every biblical measure which his prospective elders take to ensure his good and God’s glory in the proper administration of the Lord’s Supper.

CONCLUSION

Three years, two jobs, and four failed attempts at dating after she gave her life to Christ at that Thursday night revival meeting, Joyce finally made her way to a Sunday morning church service not too far from her house. Grace Presbyterian Church sounded nice to her ears. She definitely felt like she needed grace, if nothing else. The pews were not particularly comfortable, the carpets must have been at least thirty years old, and the preacher was kind of pudgy. He was preaching on King Jesus’s discipleship mandate from Matthew 28:16–20, and the emphasis he put on the abiding presence of Christ in and with His disciples-as-the-church-called-to-build-the-church captured Joyce’s attention. After the service, she approached an older woman in the congregation and asked her what membership “looked like,” because she “really wanted to try it out.” The wise elder sister in the faith smiled and invited her to come with her to talk it over with the pastor, which Joyce was glad to do.

Two pews behind Joyce, Evan was greeting another visitor to the church. He had begun attending two weeks after Joe - one of the elders at Grace - shared the gospel with him three years ago. Joe was not content with a mere profession of faith. He returned to Evan’s house that following Sunday afternoon after missing him in

worship, and gently encouraged him to test his newly professed faith by pursuing gospel instruction in a faithful local church. Evan had not missed a Sunday since Joe made clear to him that communion with the saints is an aspect of genuine conversion to Christ. He has been an active member in the church for over two years, and has even accompanied Joe on door-to-door campaigns in the neighborhood.

As made clear in these two stories, church officers and evangelistic workers must not count as converts those who instantly profess faith in response to some prompt, be it a revivalist's message or one-on-one gospel presentation. Though regeneration is a mysterious, invisible, and instantaneous work of the Spirit of God, conversion is an outwardly visible process ordained by the Father, modeled by the Son, and superintended today by the Spirit working in concert with the Word preached, read, and taught in the church. Ministers and lay evangelists must intentionally aim at enchurchment in their labors as "fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19; Mark 1:17). Not only does God in Christ mandate it by precept and example, but it is woven into the warp and woof of biblical teaching on faith, repentance, the church, and its sacraments.

A holistic strategy for enchurchment of both "known" and "unknown" new believers is biblical, wise, and useful. Such a strategy is especially important when ministering to men, women, and families in communities of life-dominating idolatry such as Islam, Hinduism, materialistic communalism, a cult, and homosexuality. If biblical modes of evangelizing people from such totalitarian competitors of Christianity are not worked out and defined, the church is likely to make the mistake of adopting aberrant approaches such as the promotion of Insider Movements and Side B Gay Christianity. Even when the field of view is restricted to nominal Christians from other recognizably Christian church bodies, American Presbyterian categories for receiving members (by transfer, profession of faith, or reaffirmation of faith) reflect the need for and usefulness of different approaches to engrafting believers into the church, sensitive to different situations. As part of the nurture of spiritual babes in Christ, elders must frame plans for enchurchment and catechesis of professing believers who are more or less known by the church. Not to do so is to ensure the production of half-baked "converts" who possess only a vain hope in a Christ they have yet to encounter in His fullness.■



W. H. Davenport, American, 19th century, *The Country Church—Before Service, Sunday Morning*, From *Harper's Weekly*, 1868.

REVIEWS & RESPONSES

Review: John Bower, *The Confession of Faith: A Critical Text and Introduction (Principal Documents of the Westminster Assembly)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2020). Hardback. xx + 415 pages. ISBN 978-1-601-78243-4. \$40.00. Reviewed by Alan D. Strange.

This important series, in which Bower's *Confession of Faith* is the latest volume, contains the six primary works produced by the Westminster Assembly of Divines, in its most active years (1643–1648), as part of the Westminster Assembly Project, currently in production by Reformation Heritage Books: The Confession of Faith, the Larger Catechism, the Shorter Catechism, the Directory for Public Worship, the Directory for Church Government and the Psalter. Each of the volumes, as noted in the series preface, “will include a historical introduction, the critical text, and parallel columns comparing original manuscripts and authoritative editions, retaining both the original spelling and punctuation. All texts are collated from original manuscripts and printed sources, rather than copies” (xii).

Of the six works to be produced in this series, we now have the first two, both by the meticulous labors of John Bower: *The Larger Catechism*, brought forth a decade ago (and reviewed by Lane Keister in an earlier issue of *Confessional Presbyterian*), and *The Confession of Faith*, recently produced, and reviewed here (hereafter WCF). One might think that sufficiently established and reliable texts of these documents must exist in abundance. This is not the case, and because different Presbyterian churches have versions that often diverge in some measure from what was originally adopted, especially among the American Presbyterian churches, there is manifest benefit in having a reliable critical edition of the original documents that were produced by the Westminster Assembly.¹

Also, the recent discoveries, begun largely by Chad van Dixhoorn in the archival work that he did in writing his dissertation at Cambridge, highlight the need for new critical editions of the products of the Westminster Assembly of Divines. Bower gives us his critical text, and then, by way of comparison, offers four parallel columns, permitting us to see how he arrived at his critical text (with the last chapter of the “Introduction,” chapter 9, detailing his method of ascertaining such, of real interest to historians and critical redactors). We are happy to have here this excellent critical edition of the WCF.

These are the first critical editions published since S.W. Carruthers published his critical edition of the WCF in 1946 on the tercentenary of the Confession. Carruthers used the recently discovered manuscript of Cornelius Burges, about whom it might be said that he liberally used the comma. Carruthers certainly thought so and admitted that such frequent usage of “commas [as Burges employed] are frequently omitted by me” (Carruthers, *WCF: A Critical Text*, p. 87). A comparison of Carruthers's work to what is shown in this volume discovers that, indeed, Carruthers omitted a number of these commas. It is good to have Bower work through this and see whether the commas omitted by Carruthers were useful or not.

A good example of the need for critical editions as faithful to the original documents as possible manifests itself, among other places, in Westminster Confession of Faith 11.3. And here the question of the comma is at play, and this thus serves as a good case study of the comma question. As J.V. Fesko points out in his book on *The Theology of the Westminster Standards*, WCF 11.3 in the Carruthers edition reads, “Christ, by his obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified.” This contrasts with what Fesko takes to be the original 1647 reading: “Christ by his obedience, and death, did fully discharge....” Fesko argues that this comma is significant, because “in the original, two separate aspects of Christ's work [the active and passive obedience] are distinguished by a comma, which in later editions has been removed” (Fesko, p. 225).

In the critical text Bower furnishes us (and in the four major underlying texts/MSS), the text does appear with the comma—“by his obedience, and death, did fully” (Bower, 209; 278–279)—and supports, at least arguably, the point made by Fesko in his book and this reviewer in his book on *The Active Obedience of Christ at the Westminster Assembly of Divines*. The comma strengthens the argument that the divines intended to affirm both the active and passive obedience of Christ, a point of some contention, especially in recent years in the Federal Vision controversy.

RESPONSES critical of articles and reviews may be submitted for consideration for publication by sending drafts to the editorial address. Please contact the editor at editor@cpjournal.com, beforehand to obtain submission requirements and preferences. When possible, the subject of a negative or possibly controversial review may be contacted beforehand for any appropriate response for publication along with the review, and the reviewer will be given an opportunity for a response. If required, responses and replies may continue in subsequent issues.

1. Since some churches, such as the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, are engaging in the work of updating the language of their adopted versions of the Westminster Standards, it is particularly important to have these primary documents of the Westminster Assembly in critical, definitive editions.

It should be noted that even before getting to the actual critical text proper, which does not begin until page 195, Bower favors us with a mammoth “introduction,” running for nine chapters, taking us through the necessary background and controversies that marked the Westminster Assembly of Divines, serving as a sort of “history of the writing of the Confession’s theology” (xv). The Assembly convened in July 1643, at the behest of the English parliament and in defiance of the king’s wishes. This lack of royal approbation caused the Assembly to lack royalist supporters in attendance, like Archbishop Ussher, who was appointed, and the strength of Puritanism (predominately Presbyterian) present among the divines diminished the influence of Erastianism there, stronger not only among the Royalists, but also among the members of Parliament itself.

The work that began in earnest that summer was to revise the Thirty-Nine articles in a more distinctly Puritan/Calvinist direction, all of which changed in September/October of that same year with the conclusion of the Solemn League and Covenant with Scotland. Focus now came to bear on matters governmental and liturgical with the intent of a more thoroughgoing Reformation of the Church. Work focused on polity and worship and the focus stayed there for some time, in the drafting of the Directories for Church Government and of Public Worship. Along with this new arrangement with the Scottish Church came the conviction and agreement that a revision of the Thirty-Nine Articles would not do and that wholly new doctrinal standards needed drafting and adopting. Work began finally on the Westminster Confession of Faith proper in July 1645, more than two years after the commencement of the Assembly, in the Three Standing Committees long active in the Assembly and with a committee to perfect the wording of the in-process Confession of Faith.

Bower proceeds to describe how the work of the Assembly proceeded, moving from the plan of redemption (WCF 1–8) to the application of redemption (WCF 9–19). These nineteen chapters of the WCF comprised the first edition, sufficient to create a stand-alone “body of divinity.” This edition was printed in October 1646. Eight weeks later in December 1646, the second edition appeared, completing the “what we are to believe concerning God” section with “the duty that God requires of man” chapters. These remaining fourteen chapters dealt with “godly society” that might be seen in those dealing with “parameters of service” (WCF 20–24) and “service to the church” (WCF 25–33; p. 49). A third edition came out at the end of April 1647, which contained the Scripture proof texts, in conformity to Parliament’s order to include them. Bower uses chapters three to six of his book to discuss this and then chapter 7 to describe bringing the Assembly’s work from manuscript to print, with chapter 8 detailing the bibliography of the first three editions.

Then the chapter, already described (chapter 9) on Bower’s method, appears, followed by the single-columned critical text of Bower (195–239) and the four-columned comparison of the four authoritative texts (242–341): column 1, edition 1; column 2, Braye MS; column 3, edition 2; and column 4, edition 3. Following this, there is a number-referenced comparison of the WCF and the Irish Articles and a critical edition of the Revised Thirty-Nine Articles. The Assembly worked through Article 15 of the Thirty-Nine Articles before that work stopped after the conclusion of the Solemn League and Covenant with the Scots. The rest of Bower’s work is a selected bibliography, glossary, and indices.

To place Bower’s work in establishing a critical, definitive text of the WCF in a broader historical context, the WCF and those derivative of it, among the Congregationalists and Baptists (Savoy, London, etc.), particularly, together with other confessions of the Reformation, are a testament to several things that scholars have noted in recent years concerning the Reformation. First, it has been customary more recently for scholars to argue that the Reformation ought properly not to be thought of as singular but as plural (there were a number of “Reformations” not simply a monolithic “Reformation,” noted by someone like Carter Lindberg in his recent book, *European Reformations*). And secondly, the plethora of confessions spawned by these Reformations, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, does not mean that these Reformations lacked unity or promoted an unhappy sectarianism.

These many confessions have some remarkably unified themes, particularly those having to do with soteriology and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit (think, justification by faith alone), thus exhibiting a wonderful unity within the diversity. Though these confessions are many, they reflect also an essential harmony between Calvin (seen in the Gallican and Belgic Confessions, among others) and the Calvinists of the seventeenth century (seen at Dort and then, perhaps supremely, in the Westminster Standards, and other off-shoot “Puritan Confessions”). But harmony or unity does not mean uniformity. These confessions show the development in Reformed theology, from those in Zurich and Geneva in the sixteenth century, for example, which contain the earlier expressions of the Reformed faith, to those confessions of the seventeenth century that contain the full-blown federalism of the later period that comes to dominate, even in Geneva (think Turretin and the Formula Consensus Helvetica).

Perhaps more than anything, the publication of all these rich, diverse, yet unified documents testify to what Scott Hendrix, emeritus professor of history at Princeton Theological Seminary, has called “Rerooting the Faith: The Reformation as Re-Christianization” (in *Church History* 69:3, 558–577). Hendrix argues that, in spite of all the diversity that has prompted so many to speak only of “Reformations” in the plural, the

movement enjoyed an underlying unity, manifested in its impulse to re-Christianize a late medieval Europe that was Christian in name but frequently not very Christian in belief or conduct. Hendrix noted: "Surely this diverse confessional outcome challenges the position that the Reformation was a coherent sixteenth century movement to rechristianize Europe. The rise of different confessions, however, does not have to be construed as a decline from the original vision of the Reformation as if that vision projected a unified ecclesiastical or cultural embodiment of the early evangelical movement" (CH, 573).

In other words, the proliferation of confessions at the time of the Reformation does not reflect theological confusion, uncertainty, or diversity-without-unity. Rather, the movement of re-Christianizing so many of the nations of Europe saw the blooming of many different flowers, all testifying to the rich consequences of such a work of the Spirit. Hendrix argued: "The rise of [so many] confessions can be seen as the structural outcome of the Reformation agenda, which anchored new ways of being Christian in the culture. The faith could only be rerooted, it turned out, in diverse patterns of theology and piety and in different sociopolitical contexts, which we call the confessional groupings of early modern Europe. They become the forms in which that rerooting of the faith was preserved for generations and even centuries to come" (CH, 573).

That age was a confession-writing age because it was so gripped by the new light brought to the church—salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone as taught in the Bible alone all to the glory of God alone—that it had to give testimony to the faith once for all delivered to the saints in the many expressions that are reflected in the multiple confessions, all coming to full flowering, arguably, at the Westminster Assembly of Divines, receiving its supreme expression in the Westminster Confession of Faith. That Assembly began, after all, with a stated desire to complete the Reformation begun under Henry VIII in the 1530s in the break with Rome and given further definition in the Book of Common Prayer and like instruments. The Assembly said that it wanted its documents to reflect the theology and practice of the "best Reformed churches" and heightened that commitment by the Solemn League and Covenant with the Scottish church and nation in September 1643, after its start in July 1643.

This re-Christianization of which Hendrix writes was, for Britain, quite imperfectly begun under Henry, vastly improved under his son, Edward VI, threatened to come to nothing under "Bloody" Mary, achieved some stability under Elizabeth, though again, only partially, had set-backs under the collateral Stuart line (though it was always uneven under the Tudors), and finally, came to a full-orbed expression at the Westminster

Assembly and in the Scottish Church. The Westminster Confession of Faith represents this theological high-water mark in the British context, going beyond the Scottish Confession of 1560 and the Irish Articles of 1615 (and certainly the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican Church), for which it served as a kind of *summum*. Thus, Reformed Christians and particularly Presbyterians, should all be thankful for John Bower's work and the appearance of this new critical text of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

Review: Robert C. Bishop, Larry L. Funck, Raymond J. Lewis, Stephen O. Mosher, John H. Walton, *Understanding Scientific Theories of Origins: Cosmology, Geology, and Biology in Christian Perspective* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2018). Hardback. 659 pages. ISBN 978-083-089164-1. \$89.99. Reviewed by Wes Bredenhof, Pastor at Launceston Free Reformed Church, Launceston, Tasmania.

This massive volume attempts to make a theological and scientific case for theistic evolution. It might be appropriate to describe it as the theistic evolution "Bible." All the authors are Wheaton College faculty and the material in the book is drawn from a Wheaton general-education science course, SCI 311, Theories of Origins. Of the five authors, only one (John Walton) is a theologian; the others are scientists.

I am not a scientist and therefore not really qualified to interact meaningfully with many of the scientific claims made in *Understanding Scientific Theories of Origins* (USTO). I am going to limit myself to evaluating and interacting with the biblical and theological claims. While reading, I did occasionally research certain claims made by the authors—for example, that Intelligent Design (ID) is not a scientific theory, but a philosophical view of reality (625). ID advocates have a different view worth considering. Similarly, USTO makes numerous historical claims. While I am better qualified to evaluate those, I will leave those claims to the side in my review as well. Let me just say that the claims made are not always supported by the evidence.

My focus will be on the biblical and theological side of things. There is plenty here with which to be concerned. I am going to argue that not only is USTO a repudiation of the Reformation view of Scripture, and not only is it a perversion of what Scripture teaches about creation, but it also has other serious theological problems. Some of these problems approach the edges of heresy.

SOLA SCRIPTURA

From the beginning, USTO affirms the authority of the Bible: "We believe that the Bible is the authoritative Word of God for faith and practice as believers" (1). The medieval Catholic Church prior to the Reformation taught the same thing.

However, the Reformation was a return to what the Bible says about itself—namely that the Bible *alone* is to be our authority for what we believe and how we live. The word “alone” is crucial. That word is missing not merely from USTO’s opening affirmation, but also in the theologizing that follows.

USTO frequently disparages what the authors term a “Bible-first” approach to the relationship between science and Scripture. They describe this approach thus: “In a Bible-first approach, Scripture is privileged over scientific inquiry, so scientific views must be derived from biblical texts to be relevant” (86). No references are supplied to back up this assertion—one which sounds like a straw man. Instead of this approach, USTO posits a “partial-views model.” Science and theology “can learn about and from each other, contributing to each other’s growth” (91). Different insights come from each of these disciplines and they complement one another.

While USTO claims that “biblical claims will receive priority” (13), in reality, the Bible and science are equal partners in the pursuit of truth regarding cosmological, geological, and biological origins.

Confessional Reformed theology has always acknowledged the special revelation of God in Scripture and the general revelation of God in nature. However, this is carefully qualified in three important ways. First, the scope/content of general revelation is narrowly limited to God’s eternal power and divine nature. Second, the proper interpretation of general revelation requires special revelation. John Calvin famously wrote of Scripture as the spectacles through which we come to see the true God revealed in nature (*Institutes* 1.6.1). Third, special revelation in Scripture not only reveals God’s person, but also his mighty deeds of creation, redemption, and renewal. In short, confessional Reformed theology privileges special revelation. Not only that, but we also believe that the Bible is sufficient for teaching us all we need to know about God’s person and deeds.

USTO speaks about special revelation and general revelation as well. However, it differs from Reformed theology. First, the scope/content of general revelation is vast. Second, each form of revelation requires the other for proper interpretation—and especially the Bible needs general revelation in order to be understood properly. Third, general revelation reveals a myriad of truths besides God’s eternal power and divine nature. USTO speaks of “creation revelation” as a subcategory of general revelation: “This is specific detailed knowledge about the creation through nature” (64). In fact, according to USTO, scientific inquiry is a distinctive form of revelation: “...creation revelation is the knowledge discovered by scientists” (65). This knowledge is needed to complement that found in Scripture. Scripture is not sufficient. How is this knowledge attained from creation revelation? Just like we need the Holy Spirit to understand the Bible, scientists

need the Holy Spirit to understand the creation revelation. The Holy Spirit “enables scientists to recognize and grasp knowledge about creation by coming under a form of provisional authority when conforming their thinking to nature” (67). In USTO, scientific conclusions parallel Scripture and have the same authority.

It is important to note that in both cases it is a *provisional* authority. When it comes to each form of revelation, there is rarely a “singularly correct, complete interpretation” (69). The Bible holds authority, but Christian interpretations of the Bible do not (66). Similarly, when it comes to nature, creation revelation is authoritative, but scientific interpretations aren’t. They can be mistaken. Therefore, USTO says, they only hold a provisional authority.

There are several problems tangled together here. But just take the issue of authority. Is it true that Christian interpretations of the Bible have no authority? Reformed theology has made a helpful distinction between magisterial and ministerial authority. The Bible has magisterial authority—it is our master, our teacher. As we will see shortly, the Bible is clear on its essential teachings. Ministerial authority relates to the church. The church makes creeds and confessions which serve by summarizing the teaching of Scripture. So long as they are faithful to the Bible, these creeds and confessions have an authoritative place amongst the churches holding them. For Reformed churches, we regard the Three Forms of Unity as a faithful expression of biblical doctrine, and so they do carry authority among us. To say that Christian interpretations of the Bible are not authoritative is, at best, imprecise.

SCRIPTURAL PERSPICUITY

According to USTO, understanding the Bible on origins requires an understanding of the broader Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) thought-context. This method has been championed at length by one of the contributors, John Walton, in his other writings. This method is related to his view of authority in the Bible. In USTO, Walton and his colleagues write that, in the Bible, God has vested authority in the human authors. Consequently, “the message of the author carries the authority of God.” But also: “our only access to the message is through the human author” (10).

But where does the Bible teach this about itself? Shouldn’t the Bible be our starting point for how we read and understand the Bible? This misstep has massive implications. The opening chapters of Genesis are treated as if they are any other ANE text. They are treated as human writings bearing a divine message, rather than as writings inspired by the same Holy Spirit who inspired the rest of the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 1:21). As a consequence, instead of going to the rest of Scripture for illumination on points requiring explanation, USTO goes to the ANE context.

This approach compromises on what we call the perspicuity (or clarity) of Scripture. Scripture is a lamp for our feet—it sheds light (Ps. 119:105,130). The meaning of Scripture is accessible, even to those without a background in ANE studies or the Hebrew language. In referring to the Pentateuch, the apostle Paul wrote that the stories of Israel's failings in the wilderness "were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come" (1 Cor. 10:11). Those Spirit-inspired words were written to the Corinthian Christians, some of whom may have been Jews, but many of whom were not. Paul expected that the Word would be clear and he understood that the book of Exodus, though written hundreds of years before, was intended by God to speak clearly also to the Corinthian Christians.

If we heed USTO, Christians today need background in ANE studies before they can properly understand the message of Genesis 1. In fact, with this approach, the church has been in the dark for centuries until these ANE studies were conducted and brought to light what had previously been dark. To the contrary, there is a simple and clear message in Genesis 1 and we should not allow academics to propose darkness where God has given light. Yes, there are difficult passages in Scripture and the doctrine of perspicuity does not deny that given what Scripture itself says in 2 Peter 3:16. However, historically, Genesis 1 was not regarded as a difficult passage. Taken in the context of the entire Bible (letting Scripture interpret Scripture), what it is saying is so clear that a child can understand it. It only became a difficult passage because of the challenges posed by unbelieving scientists.¹

USTO'S INTERPRETATION OF GENESIS

This brings us into a more detailed consideration of the arguments for how to understand the Genesis account of origins. USTO argues that Genesis 1 is speaking in terms of a functional ontology. In the ANE thought-context, things come into existence by reason of their function. Genesis 1 is therefore not describing the creation of material, but the taking of that material and ordering it and putting it into use (102).

We should note the false dilemma presented between material and functional. Genesis could be working with both categories. In fact, if we maintain the approach of letting Scripture interpret Scripture, this might well be our conclusion. Recognizing the functionality of what is described in Genesis 1 does not rule out its material nature or its historicity as an account of what really happened in those six days. Interestingly, this "both ... and" approach is what we find in article 12 of the Belgic Confession. God created heaven and earth and all creatures out of nothing (non-material to material), and he also gave every creature not only its "being, shape, and form," but also to each "its specific task and function to serve its Creator."

Related to the foregoing false dilemma, USTO overstates its case in regard to the Hebrew verb *bara'*. The authors argue that the verb is always used in Scripture to refer to things not material in nature: "The verb *bara'* does not intrinsically refer to materiality..." (106). However, readers should know this is a disputed claim. The following statement comes from one of the leading Old Testament dictionaries:

Though *br'* does not appear with mention of material out of which something is created, it is regularly collocated with verbs that do (e.g. Gen. 1:26–27; 2:7,19; Isa. 45:18; Amos 4:13). More significantly, *br'* is used of entities that come out of pre-existing material: e.g. a new generation of animals or humans, or a 'pure heart' (Ps. 104:29–30; 102:18[19]; 51:10[12]; cf. 1 Cor. 4:6).²

In fact, NIDOTTE states that John Walton's view (which is what we encounter in USTO) is "somewhat misleading."

GOD, EVOLUTION, AND DEATH

Any model of origins which incorporates the idea of macro-evolutionary history over billions of years is going to have to involve death. USTO discusses death in numerous places, oftentimes in a positive way. One of these discussions is early in the second chapter.

USTO aims to maintain the sovereignty of God over creation. However, it quickly turns out that, because of his love, God has actually relinquished control over his creation:

Parents practice freeing love toward their children when giving them relative freedom to develop and grow. Similarly, God in freeing love gives creation relative freedom to develop and grow into what it is called in the Son and enabled by the Spirit to be. God's covenantal faithfulness to nature is what makes its relative freedom as a gift possible (20).

It ought to be noted that USTO provides no biblical support for these statements here. The case is made on the basis of an analogy to parents—as if creation is like a child of God.

1. Creation Without Compromise has previously featured work done by the late Dr. Noel Weeks on John Walton's views of biblical background. See Noel Weeks, Critique of John Walton (<https://creationwithoutcompromise.com/2018/10/15/critique-of-john-walton-noel-weeks/>) and Noel Weeks, The Ambiguity of Biblical "Background" (<https://creationwithoutcompromise.com/2018/10/08/noel-weeks-the-ambiguity-of-biblical-background/>). The work of Dr. Weeks goes into much more detail and I commend it to you for your further study.

2. *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997; Zondervan, 2012), 1.731.

This personalizing of creation continues when USTO attempts to account for the processes necessary for the evolutionary scientific narrative:

Similar to how in freedom humans stumble and struggle as we grow and develop, the creation's freedom in development is marked by its incompleteness. Disease, earthquakes, pain, and death emerge in God's good cosmos due to the relative freedom God gives an incomplete creation to become what it is called to be in the Son as finite, created, being (21).

In other words, creation was not finished at the beginning, but is an ongoing work. Moreover, it is something creation is working out from itself, using the relative freedom given to it by God.

In the midst of this ongoing creation over billions of years, disease, pain and death emerge:

Plants, animals, and insects all participate in their own becoming. In this relative freedom that God graciously gives to the creation to participate in its own becoming, disease, earthquakes, pain, and death emerge in an incomplete creation (21).

This is a thematic thread through all of USTO. Creation ministers to creation and so it participates in its own development. Crucially, death is part of this process. Life and death depend on one another in a sort of "ministerial dance," troubling as that might be to us (340). Because of its commitment to scientific "evidence" as revelation, they cannot escape the troubling notion that death is necessary for ongoing creation—including for the evolutionary development of human beings.

Behind all this is a quasi-deist understanding of how God relates to creation. God created the raw material at the beginning, his child, and then let that child go and develop in relative freedom, on its own from out of its own resources—"creation ministering to creation." As already indicated, no direct biblical support is given for this notion. An attempt is made to appeal to Psalm 104 as evidence of creation ministering to creation. However, that Psalm speaks at length of what God is actively doing to uphold the creation he has already made—not a creation undergoing evolutionary development. No, Scripture teaches that God, in his providence, is actively involved with every aspect of his creation. The hairs of our head are all numbered, and even sparrows do not fall to the ground apart from our Father (Matt. 10:29–30). He is directly in control.

Moreover, the idea of death becoming an intrinsic part of creation is reprehensible. Death is an enemy to be destroyed (1 Cor. 15:26). Death has a sting (1 Cor. 15:55). Death came

into the world through sin (Romans 5:12). Death is not a good thing. Of course, some will say that all these passages just referenced are speaking about human death. But if you take an evolutionary perspective, it makes no difference. Death is then part of human evolutionary history and there is nothing disagreeable about that. However, if death is (or has become) an intrinsic part of creation, then why not have it remain so? Revelation 21:4 says "death will be no more." According to the Bible, death is not normal, not normal for humans, and not normal for the other creatures either.

DEEP TIME AND THE FUTURE OF EVOLUTION

USTO says the scientific evidence points towards the existence of deep time—in other words, "the best contemporary value for the age of our universe is almost 13.8 billion years old" (158). Furthermore, the evidence supposedly says that the origins of human beings (*Homo sapiens*) are out there in deep time as well. The fossil evidence indicates that humans originated in Africa by 200,000 years ago, but with an evolutionary history going back millions of years and potentially involving *Homo erectus*, *Homo heidelbergensis*, *Homo antecessor* and others (594). Ultimately, evolutionary theory argues that, because of their evolutionary history, "humans appear to share the most common ancestor with chimpanzees/bonobos, and next-most recent with gorillas..." (586). So, according to the scientific evidence USTO presents as credible, human beings have a deep-time evolutionary history.

The theological implications of this are not insignificant. If deep time exists, we must allow for the possibility that it exists into the future. In other words, we have to allow for the possibility that this present creation could continue for millions or even billions of years. When it comes to human beings, if human beings have a deep-time evolutionary history, we have to allow for the possibility that they have a deep-time evolutionary future. In other words, if the evidence presented by USTO is correct, we must allow for the possibility that *Homo sapiens* will evolve further into other species. Perhaps just as with *Homo erectus* and the common primate ancestors, *Homo sapiens* will not exist as the species we know them today two million years from now. Human beings will have evolved into some other species.

For the non-Christian scientist who does not believe in the Bible in any way, this is not a problem. An unbeliever can easily rest with the idea that humanity is not done evolving. But, for a Bible-believing Christian, there is a major theological obstacle to continuing human evolution over deep time: the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The incarnation is foundational to biblical, Christian faith. The same nature which has sinned is required to pay for sin. Human beings have sinned and therefore the Son of God had to take on a human nature in order to pay for sin. Fast forward two

million years from now and there are still sinful creatures, but they are no longer human beings, having evolved from their primitive ancestors. Must the Son of God re-do his redemptive work for these new beings? Hebrews 9:28 tells us his sacrifice was a one-off. The next time he appears it will not be to bear the curse of sinners.

Theologically, there is a knotty problem with USTO here. The only way out would be to argue that human beings will not have a deep-time evolutionary future—that Christ will return before the human race has the opportunity to evolve further. But how do we know that? The Bible certainly does not say that. The Bible says no one knows when the time of Christ's return will be except God (Matt. 24:36). From my perspective, it could be two million years from now and I have no problem with that because I do not believe the human race will evolve into other species.

USTO ends up in these theological quagmires because it does not take God's Word seriously. For example, they completely ignore Luke 3:38 which affirms Adam as "the son of God." Adam did not have *any* biological ancestry. He came directly from God. Similarly, USTO ignores Mark 10:6, "But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female." Male and female human beings were made by God at the **beginning** of creation—not several billion years into a fabled deep-time history.

FUNCTIONAL KENOTIC CHRISTOLOGY

Another major theme running through USTO is the theological significance of the incarnation. According to USTO, the Holy Spirit's work in the incarnation and in the life of Jesus is a parallel or analogy for how he continues to work in ongoing creation. As the Nicene Creed says, the Holy Spirit is "the Lord and giver of life."

A Bible-believing Reformed Christian will have no trouble with the Nicene Creed's confession of the Holy Spirit. He is the giver of life. The Bible teaches that this is true for spiritual life (1 Cor. 12:3) as well as for physical life (Ps. 104:30).

However, USTO works that out in ways that are not only wrong, but verging on heretical. The error is subtle and not easily discerned. Here are some quotes to illustrate the concern:

Jesus was fully and authentically human because of the energizing and enabling work of the Spirit. (25)

Jesus lived a perfect life of obedience to the Father because he was enabled to freely and perfectly rely on the Spirit is power to lead a humble, obedient life.... In short, Jesus was sustained by the Spirit, perfected by the Spirit, served the Father's purposes by the Spirit, lived, died, and lived again through the Spirit. (26)

Instead, what is most remarkable about Jesus is that he lived as an embodied person in perfect relationship with the Father, always enabled by the Spirit. Moreover, he was sustained by the Spirit in his relationships with other persons and all of creation. (600–601)

All Jesus' miracles were performed through the power of the Spirit. (601)

And Jesus' humanity is the ultimate model from which we can learn by the Spirit is power to exercise our capacities as means through which God is restoring all of creation. (605)

There are many more such quotes from the book—as I said, it is an important theme strung from start to finish.

The emphasis is on Jesus as a human being empowered by the Holy Spirit to do amazing things, including obeying God fully. This parallels what creation can do in cooperation with the Holy Spirit—continue its evolutionary development. It also illustrates what it means to bear the image of God as human beings.

This teaching has a name: functional kenotic Christology (FKC). In God's providence, while I was reading USTO, I was also reading Stephen J. Wellum's *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ* (Crossway Books, 2016). Wellum identifies FKC as a contemporary challenge to orthodox Christology. FKC is entrenched in "evangelical" theology; some of its advocates include well-known names like William Craig, J. P. Moreland, and Millard Erickson. According to Wellum, FKC is sometimes associated with "Spirit-Christology" and it is here that you find mention of Colin Gunton. Gunton was a British theologian whose work is cited extensively in USTO, including in the portions speaking about Jesus' reliance upon the Holy Spirit.

FKC does not deny the divinity of the Son of God. It teaches that when the Son of God took on a human nature, his divine attributes became latent. They were fully there, but not being used. The Son of God chose to live his incarnate life within the bounds of his human nature, including all of its limitations. This is the "kenotic" element of FKC. "Kenosis" is the theological term derived from the Greek used in Philippians 2:7 to refer to Christ emptying himself. Wellum explains further:

Thus when it comes to how Jesus has supernatural knowledge and exercises supernatural power in his miracles, FKC insists that Jesus does so, *not* by the use of his divine attributes, but by the power of the Spirit. Thus, in all of the incarnate Son's actions, even actions traditionally viewed as divine actions (such as his miracles), Jesus performs them by the Spirit, in a way sim-

ilar to other Spirit-empowered men and parallel to the Spirit is work in us. This is why Jesus can serve as our example, as he shows us how to live our lives in dependence on the Spirit—although he is the paradigm, interpreted more quantitatively than qualitatively. (*God the Son Incarnate*, 383).

The “functional” element of FKC comes from the manner in which this teaching addresses the work that Jesus did.

Debates about the doctrine of the person of Christ raged on through the early church. However, eventually the church adopted what’s known as the Chalcedonian Definition. Chalcedon is not officially part of our Reformed creeds and confessions, but the content of Chalcedon is found in both the Athanasian Creed (articles 29–37) and the Belgic Confession (articles 18 and 19). Advocates of FKC affirm Chalcedon formally, but as Wellum points out, “they depart from it at significant points” (Wellum, 396). This is particularly in regard to how they define “person,” their equating “person” with “soul,” and in their endorsement of the idea that the incarnate Son of God has only one will (monothelitism).

Wellum offers an extensive critique of FKC. I will just briefly summarize it—interested readers should go and check it out for themselves. He notes two main problems.

First, FKC does not readily account for what the Bible says about the divinity of Christ in his earthly life and ministry. The works Jesus does are “ultimately acts identified with Yahweh” (Wellum, 406). If you survey texts like John 5:16–30, Colossians 1:17, and Hebrews 1:3, it is clear that “in his state of humiliation, the Son *continues to exercise* his divine attributes *as the Son* in relation to and united with the Father and the Spirit” (Wellum 406).

Second, FKC sounds Trinitarian enough (and so does USTO), but in reality it fails to do justice to the Trinity, especially in developing Father-Son-Spirit relations. If the incarnate Son never uses his divine attributes, then his actions on earth were either purely human, or they are the actions of the Holy Spirit. Where there are actions surpassing what normal humans can do, the Son of God appears to be merely passive in his own actions. Moreover, the work of the Father in all of this is ignored. Wellum writes, “...it is not enough to focus simply on the Son-Spirit relations; we must also account for John’s Gospel, for example, which stresses predominantly the Father-Son relations” (408).

FKC is not a theological peccadillo. This is a major concern. Most readers of USTO are not going to have enough theological training to discern it. USTO makes it sound plausible—and they have some Bible texts that superficially support their claims. Moreover, it is a central part of their effort to integrate evolution with biblical teaching. It has sometimes been said that acceptance of evolutionary theory requires an overhaul

of every area of theology. The presence of FKC in USTO illustrates that this overhaul is underway.

THE EXTENT OF THE FLOOD

As already mentioned, USTO disparages a “Bible-first” approach. Instead, the Bible has to be understood, not only on its own terms, but also in terms of what God is revealing in the “second book” of scientific evidence. Not surprisingly, this leads USTO to reject the notion of a global flood in the days of Noah. They grant that the Bible describes some cataclysmic event of massive proportions; however, USTO insists that it was not global. Moreover, “the event is described with a specific theological and literary goal in mind” (241). It is not meant to provide us with a “hydro-geological” explanation.

Once again we are presented with a false dilemma: a global flood versus a “specific theological and literary goal.” This dilemma is false because if we understand the text to be referring to a global flood, that certainly does not rule out a theological and literary goal. Creationists understand that God reveals what he does in Genesis 6–9 for a theological purpose, but that by no means rules out the historical fact of what it describes.

In Genesis 6–9, one of the key issues is how we understand the Hebrew word *kol* (all). USTO concludes that the Hebrew word *kol* in the Flood story is used rhetorically—it simply means that a large area was inundated and large numbers of people were affected. *Kol* can be used rhetorically—no one questions that. However, Scripture must interpret Scripture. USTO ignores the key section in Genesis 6. In Genesis 6:5–7, God observes the wickedness of human beings “in the earth.” USTO would translate that as “in the land,” and yes, the Hebrew word for ‘earth’ can also be translated ‘land.’ But verse 6 militates against that, because it speaks of God’s creation of human beings “on the earth.” God did not create human beings “in the land,” i.e., in some region now under his scrutiny. This is universal language. That becomes further evident when Genesis 6:7 refers to the animals. God plans not only to destroy humanity, but also the “animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens” which he created at the beginning (cf. Gen. 7:4). This too favours a global understanding. Later in chapter 6, God speaks of “all flesh” having corrupted its way on the earth. Are we to imagine that there were pockets of humanity which were immune to this trend? Genesis 6:17 says, “For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die.” Notice the mention of “under heaven.” All flesh “under heaven” is slated for destruction. Again, that distinctly favours a global understanding of this event.

Moreover, the building of the ark itself witnesses to a global flood. The ark was built by Noah, not only to save himself and

seven others of his family, but also to save the animals. USTO has no explanation as to why the animals had to enter the ark if the Flood was something less than global.

In a sidebar, USTO interacts briefly with the New Testament mentions of the Flood. They claim that none of the New Testament passages “make a statement about its geographical scope” (243). Luke 17:26–27 is mentioned:

Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man. They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

USTO claims that this is just speaking about “how people were living their lives day by day and were caught by surprise when judgment came” (243). But what is the nature of the judgment to come? It is **universal**. Just as the Flood destroyed all the ungodly in the days of Noah, “so will it be in the days of the Son of Man.” In case you miss the point, in the next three verses, Christ speaks about the days of Lot and the wholesale destruction of Sodom: “fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all.” No one escaped, except Lot. Clearly, Christ understood the Flood to be an event which destroyed all human beings except Noah and his family.

According to USTO, 2 Peter 2:5 “references God sparing Noah” (243). 2 Peter 2:5 says, “...if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly...” It beggars belief to argue that Peter believed the flood to be anything less than global. It was the “ancient world” which was not spared and the flood came upon “the world of the ungodly.” The natural reading is to understand these terms globally and universally.

USTO also adopts an unnatural reading of 2 Peter 3:5–6. They argue that it just speaks about the world being deluged and destroyed and the Greek word for ‘world’ (*kosmos*) is being used in its broadest sense, and therefore it is not referring to the extent of the Flood. However, when you look at these verses in context, beginning with verse 4, it becomes evident how implausible that interpretation is:

They will say, ‘Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation. For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.

Notice how Peter writes about the creation of the earth—he is quite evidently not speaking about the creation of some portion of the planet. The same entire planet that was created was deluged with water.

If God is revealing through the scientific evidence that a global flood never happened, then we need to revisit our interpretation of Genesis and somehow bring it into alignment with this newer divine revelation. That is what USTO is doing. However, it is a revisionist approach to the Bible. It simply does not honour the Bible as God’s Word. We honour God’s Word when we take it on its own terms and then evaluate what we observe in the world around us in the light of what God has said. As the Psalmist says, “... in your light do we see light” (Ps. 36:9).

CONCLUSION

There are a fair number of other concerns could be mentioned, but these I believe are the most important. I began by saying that USTO could be described as the theistic evolution “Bible.” I said that intentionally because USTO not only contains content from the written Bible as we know it, but it also presents scientific evidence as a second “book” with additional revelation from God (albeit with a “provisional authority”). Whether this is a legitimate method of approaching origins is really the key issue. Because I am a Reformed Christian, I emphatically deny that it is.

I believe the Bible alone is our inspired, infallible, inerrant source for doctrine and life. The Bible teaches that about itself. Therefore, God’s Word always has to be our starting point. It is not that the Bible is a “textbook” for science, as USTO and others allege creationists to believe. Rather, science can only honour God when it takes its starting point from what God has said in the Bible.

I tried, but I could not read this book dispassionately. In this book, I heard the whispers of Satan in the Garden of Eden: did God really say? If someone is questioning my Father or twisting his words, even if it is done with the greatest sophistication, I cannot remain dispassionate. I also think of the sad fact that this book comprises course material at Wheaton College. Scores of impressionable youth have been and are being fed this content. Because it is happening at a Christian institution, they could be led to believe that this is an acceptable Christian approach. It is not. It is **unbelief**. I pray for students at Wheaton College that God will help them through his Spirit and Word to discern the truth regarding origins.

Review: Frank J. Smith, *Race, Church and Society* (Cumming, Ga.: Presbyterian Scholars Press, 2021). Paperback, xxiii, 226 pages. ISBN 978-0-9676991-4-1. \$14.99. Volume discounts are available from the publisher. Reviewed by

Dr. R. E. Knodel, Jr. (RPCNA, author of *LifeStyle: A Biblical/Philosophical Study of Christianity and the Culture it Produces*).

How wonderful is it when a faithful professor sheds biblical light on one of culture's thorny topics? How brave is it when faith ventures into the briar-patch of current controversy? We have such a book in Frank J. Smith's *Race, Church and Society* (hereafter RCS). But it's even better than that. In this case we have the skillful theoretician/theologian who has put his money where his mouth is. He has planted a thriving church in Urban Atlanta, in the so-called inter-racial war-zone of the Bluff. Joyfully and enthusiastically, the Rev. Dr. Frank Smith and his wife Penny labor to bring the epitome of biblical joy, the Gospel of Christ, to bear on the sadness of broken America. He loves his people, and his people love him.

As the title suggests, Dr. Smith deals with modern America's ideas about Race, Church, and Society from a redemptive/biblical perspective, examining our modern pagan cultural myths in the light of God's Word. He does this in an easy-to-read luminous manner. RCS has to be one of the great books of 2021. His work is summed-up in the title of Chapter 8, *The Audacity of Cross-Cultural Mission*.

In the way of this, in thirteen chapters and an epilogue, Professor Smith deals with such subjects as Race and its definition, People-Groups and ethnic superiority/inferiority, Cultural differentiation, God's relevant Covenant of Grace to the nations, Racial Conflict, Cross-Cultural Missionology, Koinonia, Cultural analysis, Black Lives Matter, Social Justice Warriorship, Reparations ... and the Bluff. While these themes currently divide and embroil America, most people have no clear definitions or clarifying insight about them. Frank Smith clearly does, and he grounds his opinions in God's millennia-old insight. Given the heat of our moment in time, it's humbling to consider the challenge of this book, but Dr. Smith consummates courage with insight as he works his way through his topic.

One example would be his treatment of Reparations (p. 182ff.). This presents itself as an extremely complex ethical issue, involving ethics itself, situational application, time, and cultural context. Smith shows how reparations must fit into a wider ethical context (the previous chapter), and then shows how modernity's overly facile approaches are in reality impossible! Using the logic of the *reductio absurdum*, Professor Smith shows the reader how impossible it would be to successfully negotiate a righteous program of reparations. It might sound appealing using an infantile definition of love, but in the end, if an idea is unworkable, is it not also a sign that the idea is flawed?

So, reparations work neither ethically nor pragmatically. He grounds his explanation on historical occurrences and

references that are frankly surprising. He knows his history and its enlightening insights, pulling from English Saxon/Baron history, Robert Lewis Dabney, and various historical Presbyterian reports and papers. Dr. Smith is as conversant with Black Conservative Thomas Sowell as he is with Dr. Glen Loury, the first Black tenured African-American economic Professor at Harvard. He argues that while reparations might benefit our cultural mandarins (the bureaucratic class), it would actually be destructive to the kind of people to whom he ministers in the Bluff.

Coupled with the meat of this study are its other resources found in the author's index and bibliography. Dr. Smith presents a cornucopia of resources for further study, as well as a capacity to search RCS for its positions and insights. His Scripture index alone is almost worth the price of the book, as he opens up scores of pertinent verses that the average reader has probably never considered!

Race, Church and Society is a must-read from both the perspectives of our concern for people and modern progress. If we truly love people and want the best for them, then we must eschew the demonic, which presses so insidiously upon us with its tentacles of deceit and false faith, and listen to God. Professor Smith helps us precisely here, with his twin spades of biblical and historical insight. *Race, Church and Society* is both a good book and a necessary book.

About the author: The Rev. Dr. Professor Frank J. Smith is a multi-graduate-degree Ph.D. published author who currently lectures in history at Georgia Gwinnet College in Atlanta. He is married to Penelope A Wild Smith who previously enjoyed a distinguished career in the British Royal Air Force. Dr. Smith is a widely published author, editor and journalist and has received an honorary doctorate from the Methodist Episcopal Church (USA) for his work in ecclesiastical journalism and interchurch relations. Simultaneously, he labors at the Atlanta Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA) in Atlanta doing street-evangelism unto building a local church in the Bluff area of Urban Atlanta. Dr. Smith is also an editor of *The Confessional Presbyterian* journal.

Review: Cornelis Van Dam, *In the Beginning: Listening to Genesis 1 and 2* (Reformation Heritage Books, 2021). Hardback, 400 pages. ISBN 978-1601788054. \$30.00. Reviewed by Dr. Benjamin Shaw, Professor of Old Testament, Reformation Bible College.

In the October 2021 issue of *First Things* (pp. 41–48), the evangelical philosopher William Lane Craig published "The Historical Adam." In this essay, Craig asks two questions, "What historical claims does the Bible make about Adam and Eve? And is belief in a historical Adam and Eve compatible with the scientific evidence?" (41). He proposes to treat these as

two separate questions, not wanting to read modern science into the Bible. These are essential questions and a laudable goal. However, many readers will be disappointed with Craig's conclusions. As to the first question, Craig bases his answer on two things. First, on a comparison with other ancient Near Eastern (ANE) creation texts. Second, on the definition of myth as "a traditional, sacred narrative explaining how the world and man came to be in their present form" (42). Craig concludes that Genesis 1–11, including the story of Adam and Eve, "functions as Israel's foundational myth" (42).

Given the apparent interest of this myth in history, seen in the genealogies, Craig's answer to the first question is that "Genesis 1–11 functions as mytho-history" and "need not be read literally" (43). After effectively dismissing the New Testament evidence for the historical character of the presentation of Adam found in Genesis, Craig moves to his second question. In this case, he begins by asking the question, "What qualifies as human?" Relying on the work of paleoanthropologists, he adopts their definition of human. Based on that definition and the conclusions of contemporary archaeologists and paleoanthropologists, Craig proposes that God selected two out of a population of human-like animals, by renovating their brains, perhaps by a genetic mutation that took place sometime between 750,000 and 1,000,000 years ago. Thus, the answers to the two questions with which he began are both yes.

One suspects that many Christians will find this a satisfying answer. It allows them to keep their Bibles (at some level) and keep whatever "the science" says.

Craig's essay provides the context for examining Van Dam's book. Before getting into the book's substance, we should consider the subtitle: *Listening to Genesis 1 and 2*. We are not used to listening to the Scriptures. Instead, we insist that they listen to us. Instead of hearing the Scripture's questions and listening for its answers, we insist on asking Scripture our questions and demanding that Scripture answer us. That is not the route that Van Dam follows.

His first three chapters serve as the foundation on which he builds the rest of the book. In the Introduction, he lays out his presuppositions, primarily about the need for faith and the character of Scripture. He then identifies the result of current mainstream assumptions: "these chapters have been made to yield meanings compatible with the current scientific understanding of the origin of the world and the human race even if such interpretations appear to contradict the clear testimony of Scripture" (15).

In chapter 2, Van Dam directly addresses Craig's assumptions in his essay: reading Scripture in light of the ANE sources, and natural revelation, reflected in the current scientific consensus, is not inconsistent with biblical revelation. While not denying the usefulness of the ANE material,

Van Dam's point is that it should not control our reading of Scripture. It is vital to consider the relevance and the provenance of these texts. For example, *Enuma Elish*, often called the Babylonian Epic of Creation, "actually has as its main goal not to give an account of origins but to demonstrate the hegemony of Marduk" (22). The author's careful discussion demonstrates that the differences between Genesis and the ANE "creation" texts far outweigh the similarities in purpose and substance. The ANE material thus plays at most a small part in the remainder of the book.

In dealing with science, Van Dam begins by responding to the canard, "the Bible is not a scientific textbook," by saying, "Of course not!" But he then asks the appropriate follow-up question, "Then what is it?" "It is revelation accommodated to common human understanding" (29). But as God's revelation, it is accurate and factual. He also recognizes that "creationist scientists" have not always made proper use of Scripture. "At the same time, the creation science movement is to be applauded for its defense of the infallibility of the Bible and taking seriously the historicity of the creation account and all that followed" (35). He then moves on to the question as to what general revelation reveals. There is a tendency to think that general revelation reveals God and scientific findings. In other words, the theory of evolution is part of general revelation. This idea appears in Craig's essay. But "general revelation reveals God's greatness and glory. Scientific discoveries are not divine revelation" (40).

Van Dam then discusses the limitations of science which is not a popular idea today. "The science" explains everything. The point is that nature provides all kinds of data. Those data are scientific facts. But what we make of those facts, the conclusions we draw from them, are influenced and guided by our presuppositions.

Modern scientific theories, such as evolution, are inherently materialistic and naturalistic. It cannot be otherwise. But we should recognize that such views do not constitute divine revelation.

The third chapter deals with the historicity of Genesis 1:1–2:3. The markers in the passage point to the genre being "historical narrative describing events that took place in the past" (65). Other passages from both Testaments are consistent with and support the idea that Genesis 1 is an account of historical events. As seen in Craig's essay, however, there is much pressure to dehistoricize the text of Genesis. Some of this pressure comes from the influence of historical-critical biblical studies. Older critical scholars distinguished between *Historie* and *Geschichte*. *Historie* is "what actually happened, as determined and reconstructed by modern scholars" (81). *Geschichte* is "what Israel believed to have happened based on their inferences from events they experienced" (81). Thus, what Israel testified to in the Old Testament may or may not

have occurred. A more recent development distinguishes between history and story. It asserts that the Old Testament narratives are stories, not history, though some actual events may be behind the account. The current hegemony of the theory of evolution in scientific studies also exerts pressure on those interpreters of Genesis who want to be scientifically respectable.

Having laid his foundation, Van Dam devotes the remainder of the book to building the house. Chapters 4 through 9 offer a detailed exegesis of the seven days of creation in Genesis 1:1–2:3. He begins with a detailed study of Genesis 1:1 and how it relates to the rest of the chapter. Next, he deals with the length of creation days, giving a fair presentation of alternative theories before concluding on behalf of ordinary days. Chapter 6 deals with what is meant by “create.” This discussion is crucial due to the assertions by John Walton in his “Lost World” series and affirmations by other scholars. In chapter 7, “the heavens and the earth,” come in for review. A key element here is the discussion of “the firmament.” Is it a solid dome as so often depicted by drawings purporting to show the view of the world held by the ancients? Chapter 8 deals in a briefer fashion with Days 1 through 6. Chapter 9 focuses on the seventh day and its nature.

In chapter 10, Van Dam discusses the historicity of Genesis 2 and the Garden of Eden. In chapter 10, he connects the work of creation to the gospel since the gospel builds on the doctrine of creation as Genesis 1–2 presents it. Further, the theory of evolution has had a corrosive effect on biblical faith and morals. It is necessary for us as Christians to intelligently defend the truth of Genesis 1–2.

When a new book appears devoted to the early chapters of Genesis, a person is tempted to roll his eyes and mutter, “Not another one!” Potential readers must not ignore this book because Van Dam has done his homework. He has a firm grasp of the relevant material. In the reviewer’s view, his first three chapters are the most important. Though, the remaining chapters are all useful in their own right. They directly address the foundations of the current debate, so clearly seen in Craig’s essay. The reader who has mastered this book is in a position to respond with a clear and articulate rejection of Craig’s proposal.

Gyeongcheol Gwon, *Christ and the Old Covenant: Francis Turretin (1623–1687) on Christ’s Suretyship under the Old Testament*, Reformed Historical Theology, v. 51 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019). Paperback, 162 pp. ISBN 978-3525516416. \$88.00. Reviewed by Thomas Haviland-Pabst, Asheville, NC.

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monograph is “a slightly revised edition” of the author’s doctoral dissertation, “submitted to Westminster Theological Seminary in 2016” (p. 12). The aim of it is to “explore” the debate between Johannes Cocceius (1603–1699) and Gisbertus Voetius (1588–1676) regarding the role the “Mosaic law” plays in the history of redemption “through the eyes of Francis Turretin (1623–1687)” (p. 11). The author’s thesis is that while Turretin sided with Voetius’s side of the debate, there is no sign that he considered “Cocceianism his archenemy.” Instead, the author suggests that Turretin can be seen “as a moderate and peaceful Voetian” (p. 12).

Gwon notes three questions that inform the debate between Cocceius and Voetius. (1) “To what extent did the Mosaic law recapitulate the covenant of works?” (2) “How were the people of God saved under the legal economy?” And (3) “How did Christ reveal himself to his people before the incarnation?” The Voetius side of the debate argues, in sum, for greater continuity between the Old and New Testaments than the Cocceius side, stating that “the benefits of Christ’s sacrificial death were the same yesterday, today, and forevermore” (p. 11).

Gwon substantiates his thesis in seven chapters, with the eighth chapter summarizing his findings and an appendix which supplies the outline of the contents of Leydekker’s *Vis Veritatis*. In the first two chapters, Gwon discusses the need for a fuller scholarly treatment of Christ’s suretyship in the Old Testament and he situates Turretin in his intellectual (i.e., Reformed Scholastic) and historical context.

In the first chapter, he helpfully argues in line with contemporary scholarship that scholasticism for the Reformed orthodox “had more to do with methodology and philosophy” (p. 19). Moreover, he contends that since Cocceius was clearly not an “anti-scholastic” (p. 23), Turretin’s scholasticism was not the deciding factor regarding his alliance with Voetius in the debate. In the second chapter, after exploring Turretin’s life and his *Institutio* (i.e., *Institutes*), Gwon concludes both that Turretin “had a profound interest in repelling the archenemy, the Roman Catholic church” and thus he was “more lenient toward non-heretical Protestant parties” and that his tolerance toward the Cocceians was likely due to his own “personal connection with the Leiden theologians” (p. 35).

In chapter three, Gwon traces historical views of Christ’s suretyship in the Old Testament. Here, he discusses the period from Roman law to early orthodoxy, which provides the historical background for the Cocceian-Voetian controversy since, he notes, the “seventeenth-century controversy over Christ’s suretyship was generally centered on two synonymous words: *fidejussio* [sponsor] and *expromissio* [promiser]” (p. 37). Due to broader hermeneutical considerations, Cocceians divorced sponsor from promiser (though not Cocceius himself; cf. p. 48), positing the notion that, during the

Old Testament, believers' sins were merely passed over and concealed, with full remission of sins not taking place until Christ's crucifixion. In contrast, Voetius rejected these "two modes of forgiveness" (p. 48).

With the fourth chapter, the author compares Turretin's *Institutes* with the anti-Cocceian polemical work *Vis veritatis*, authored by Leydekker, "an Utrecht theologian and professor," on the contested point of "Christ's suretyship under the Old Testament" (p. 53). He concludes that, while there is significant overlap in content (pro-Voetius), Turretin's tone is more irenic and therefore less polemical than Leydekker's. The fifth chapter continues the comparison between these two works, looking at the question of the status of the Old Testament Fathers. Gwon again demonstrates that Turretin and Leydekker are in essential agreement, yet it becomes clear that Turretin "took a more cautious approach ... [with] at least the possibility that he was willing to soften Leydekker's strong anti-Cocceian polemic," due perhaps in part to Turretin's "friendship with such Cocceians as Heidanus" (p. 98).

Due to Leydekker's clear dependence on Turretin's earlier work, *De satisfactione Christi*, Gwon gives attention to the content of this earlier work of Turretin, outlining its content as well as Leydekker's use of *De satisfactione*. Commenting on Leydekker's assertion that this work is clearly anti-Cocceian, Gwon argues that he is "vulnerable to the charge of anachronism" (p. 118). Despite this foible, Leydekker's engagement with this text, Gwon concludes, is still helpful as it proves some background knowledge regarding Turretin and the development of the Voetian position. Gwon, in the seventh chapter, gives attention to some of Turretin's sermons, looking "for any possible hint of the ... debate" in his later sermons. This chapter serves to confirm Gwon's contention that Turretin's greatest concern was with the Roman Catholic Church, distinguishing him from Leydekker's sustained opposition to Cocceians. The concluding chapter briefly summarizes the author's findings, presents some implications arising from his study (such as challenging the "central dogma theory" [p. 133] of Reformed Orthodoxy), and offers suggestions for further research.

By way of evaluation, this is clearly a mature work of historical theology. Especially noteworthy is the author's close and compelling reading of primary sources. Moreover, the author engaged generously with secondary literature and clearly situated Cocceius within the broader trajectory of Reformed Orthodoxy, demonstrating in turn the many ways he was building on the hermeneutical strategies and exegetical insights of those that preceded him. Gwon's greatest contributions with this work include (1) showing how the Cocceian-Voetian debate was received by the international Reformed community and (2) giving us greater insight into Turretin not only as a theologian but as a pastor concerned

for the spiritual welfare of his city, Geneva, given that, in Turretin's engagement with Cocceianism, we caught a glimpse of the major concerns and driving forces behind his mature, polemical theology. To conclude, this work is essential reading for scholarship on Francis Turretin and for students and scholars concerned with the exchanges between the various local expressions of Reformed Orthodoxy and the light this sheds on the international Reformed community as a whole.

Review: Theodore Beza, *A Learned Treatise on the Plague*, Translated by Edward Percival (1665), Modernized with an Introduction by Bennie Castle (Moscow, Idaho: Canon Press, 2020). 60pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1952410758. \$6.95. Ludwig Lavater, *Disease, Scarcity, and Famine: A Reformation Perspective on God and Plagues*, Translated and Edited by Michael Hunter (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Reformation Heritage Books, 2021). 176pp. ISBN 9781601788634. \$14.00. Matthew A. Vogan, Matthew J. Hyde (editors), *Worship and Witness in Crisis: Has the Church Failed the Covid Test?* (Brighton, UK: Ettrick Press, 2021). 296pp. ISBN 978-1-8380775-5-6. £10.95. Ernest Springer III, Joel E Yeager, Daniel O'Roark, *Coronavirus and the Leadership of the Christian Church: A Sacred Trust Broken* (Willow Street, Pennsylvania: Old Paths Publications, 2020). 257pp. Paperback. ISBN 979-1716553638. \$14.95. Reviewed by Isaac T. Overton, Teaching Elder at the Reformed Church of Box Hill, Melbourne, Australia.

"Lockdown." Over the last year or more, that term has taken on a whole new level of meaning the world over. That single word summarises a legion of social, economic, mental, emotional, and spiritual trials and sufferings. Here in Melbourne, Australia, citizens have been intermittently restricted to our homes for well over 200 days now. At the time of writing, that is expected to continue to go on for at least another month. Many, many cities around the world have experienced similar mandates from civil authorities.

For the Church, this situation has presented us with a host of problems, not least of which has been the mandate to close our doors and cease public gatherings for corporate worship. This has raised an array of difficult questions, such as: Is locking down a population a good and right response to the Covid-19 virus? Is shutting the doors of the Church a good response? Do civil authorities have the right to issue such directives to the Church and/or in society? Should the Church comply with these directives? How important is public worship? Are broadcast services an acceptable substitute for in-person gatherings? How should we handle disagreements on these questions within the Church? How ought we to exercise pastoral care of God's people as we seek to navigate the answers to these questions? With the introduction of

Vaccination Passport-type policies across the world, the situation does not appear to be getting any simpler either. Rather, it promises to confront us with new and fresh challenges on top of those we are already facing.

How ought God's people to respond in the midst of these difficult times? In answer to this question, I am thankful for the opportunity to share four books with you that I trust will prove helpful for us all as we seek to discern the will of God as the Lord has laid it out for us in scripture.

We begin with a voice from the past, with John Calvin's successor in Geneva: Theodore Beza (1519-1605). Among Beza's publications, we find a short volume entitled: *A Learned Treatise on the Plague*. Those of us not yet able to read Latin owe a debt of gratitude to Edward Percival for his 1665 translation, to Bennie Castle for his 2020 modernisation, and to the folk at Canon Press for partnering with him to re-release this work. Beza aims in his treatise to answer two questions: (i) Whether or not the plague is infectious; and (ii) whether or not Christians ought to avoid ("shun") the plague.

As to the first question, although not directly applicable in modern times, I nevertheless found Beza to be a refreshing tonic. In the midst of the Covid narrative that has dominated public discourse, it is good to consider that, like us, people in the past have faced viral sickness before. Unlike us, however, the way that many have thought about this challenge has been fundamentally theological in nature. In all the public discussions about Covid-19 in the mainstream media, Beza thus unconsciously highlights for us that God is being omitted. This may be something that a good many Christians have lost sight of in the saturation of media coverage with which the world bombards us, and yet it is something that fundamentally shapes public discourse. In light of this, Beza unwittingly teaches us that we must expect that there will be significant differences between the response of the Church, and that of society more broadly. I leave it to you to ponder whether or not we have seen that pronounced difference in ourselves or our churches.

As to Beza's second question, here we find something more directly applicable to our own situation: Is avoidance a godly response when it comes to the plague? Beza describes two responses to this question that were common in his day. The first, held by some, was that avoiding the plague was a "heinous offence" in every circumstance. On the other hand, some argued that "flying" should be pursued without exception. Beza walks a middle path, ably pointing out problems in each of them, and discerning his own way using a singular key idea: "duty."

Duty is a recurring theme in Beza's treatise. In his concluding application, Beza counsels his readers to "learn out of the Word of God what his duty is" and "commend himself unto God and continue constantly therein" (pg. 48). Whatever

unanswered questions Beza leaves us in our time, this counsel is surely both timeless and relevant. How should we respond in the midst of Covid-19? At the very least, we should begin by learning from the Word of God what our duty is, and having learned our duty we must simply continue in it (for this reason alone, the understanding of our duty, I would commend a careful reading of all four volumes in this review!).

Beyond this, Beza does talk about what this duty is to some extent (though we might have hoped for a more fulsome discussion). "First of all, I think it is to be provided that every man summon himself to the judgement seat of God, regarding the plague as a foretaste of the wrath of God" (pg. 48). He sensibly applies the sixth commandment by saying that we should put neither our own lives, "nor the lives of any belonging or depending" on us in danger of infection rashly. There is much good, sanctified common sense to be gleaned here.

There is a notable lack in Beza's application, however, and this lack is felt keenly in these modern times in which the civil magistrate has come to play such a central role in society. Touching on the duties of the "Christian magistrate," Beza says that their responsibility is to "provide that those things which either breed or nourish the plague be taken away as far as... able" (pg. 51). Beza generally demonstrates what he's saying in this treatise from scripture, but on this point he does not. For us today, with the vastly extended control of the civil magistrate, we may wish that he did. While a development of this thought would have been helpful, however, even the emergence of the question is valuable. What is the duty of the civil magistrate before God? This is a key question and one for which, in the past, Reformed Churches have had a well-developed answer (see, for example, the Belgic Confession Article 36). It is a pressing question for which the church again needs to articulate an answer.

Beza's *Treatise* is worth reading, and at a mere 60 pages it is not too demanding. Moving on, we turn to another voice from the past: the Swiss Reformer Ludwig Lavater, who preached a series of series of four sermons (now republished by Reformation Heritage Books as *Disease, Scarcity, and Famine: A Reformation Perspective on God and Plagues*) to his congregation in the midst of plague and especially famine.

Lavater's opening exhortation on plague brings two points to our attention. First, that God is sovereign; and second, that God works through and is likewise sovereign over second causes. Again, in a media marketplace resolutely committed to rejecting God, these truths are reminders that we constantly need. Nothing unfolding in the present circumstances, be it the virus or the response of nations, is beyond God's control. What a comforting and wonderful thought!

The next question Lavater considers is: Why does God send disease on men? Again, it is a question that the world does not even ask, and yet we as believers must give it careful

consideration. The major answer that Lavater gives us is that God uses disease as a punishment for the wicked deeds of the world. He takes great pains to make his case, citing numerous scriptures to support it (Exod. 5; Num. 14; Lev. 26; 1 Chron. 21; Jer. 15; 21; 29; Ezek. 5; 14; 1 Cor. 11; Rev. 6; 16). According to Lavater: “Those who carefully unfold the histories will immediately discover that God has chastised with disease and other evils all races ... because of their contempt for His Word and their dissolute and wasted lives” (pp. 15).

As Christians committed to the truth of the Word of God, these are weighty arguments that we must seriously consider. Is Covid-19 a judgment from God for our wickedness? Does God punish the wicked with such things? The answer from scripture is clearly “yes,” and yet this answer alone does not represent the full council of God. Certainly, as Lavater later says, a time of disease and affliction is always a good time for reflection and repentance (if only the nations of the earth would have such a conviction!). According to Ecclesiastes, however, discerning the divine motives behind such afflictions is not so straightforward. In Ecclesiastes 9:2 we read: “It is the same for all, since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil.... This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all” (RSV). So too in Ecclesiastes 9:11 we read “Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong... but time and chance happen to them all.” There is, then, a common curse in this fallen world afflicting the just and the righteous alike. Practically, what this means is that we may not automatically assume that an affliction of disease is a direct or specific judgment of God. A time of sickness and trouble, whether individual or communal, is certainly a time for self-examination and repentance, but (arguably) it is not God’s will that we presume we are being specifically punished for something. Lavater’s meditation could—perhaps—have done with more balance on this point.

Nevertheless, he still offers a number of other helpful and thought-provoking applications. He notes that God may use widespread disease to examine and test the faith of his people. God also uses such times to powerfully remind us that life is temporary and fleeting: “For this is certain, that we are absolutely going to depart from this world, but when, where, and how is uncertain” (pp. 25). Similarly, such times are humbling to the pride of man. Whole cities and nations may be laid low by a microbe, and that is a powerful reminder of our curse and of God’s might over and above whatever technology we have or what progress we may have made. Difficult times may be used for spiritual quickening, they may wean us from our love of the world, and they are reminders of the ultimate and coming judgment. In other words, a time of widespread disease is a time when a fertile field for spiritual meditation is laid out before God’s people, and is used of God in our hearts

and lives. We would do well to pause, reflect on our own lives, and apply these meditations for ourselves.

As Lavater goes on in his homily, he affirms that “God instituted medicine to protect, preserve, and restore man’s health” (pp. 34), but he balances this consideration by saying that our care for this life should not be greater than our anticipation of the life to come. In times of disease, as we see that life is truly temporary in a powerful way, we should be reminded of the fact that to die is gain. In Philippians 1:21, the Apostle thus says: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.” The trials of this life are therefore a constant reminder of the perfections of the next.

Similar to Beza, duty is a keynote in Lavater’s consideration of how we ought to conduct ourselves in a time of widespread disease. “We are absolutely right to use means that serve to protect and preserve life. Yet we must diligently be on guard that those means to which we flee are not opposed to the Word of God” (pp. 42-43). So then, a time of plague is a time to pour out much prayer to God; but it is also a time to serve and help those who are suffering.

One thing that Lavater says, which is a particular challenge to us today, is to point out the importance of public worship in a time of widespread disease. “We must not approve of the fact that those who have recovered from disease are kept away from sanctuaries by their fear of contagion. For from where can more efficacious comforts be drawn than from the sacred sermons?... Whatever happens, we Christians long ago learned from sacred literature what our duty is when disease arises.... Heads of households should exhort their children and, indeed, their whole family to frequent the sacred assemblies” (pp. 46-48).

In a time when many churches have closed their doors, Lavater’s comments ought to give us cause to stop and think. Is widespread disease a justifiable reason to stop worshipping together? Without undermining the gravity of Covid-19 and the death that it brings, it does not compare with the danger of plague faced by previous generations. In times past, huge proportions of populations have died by plague. As you read Lavater, you certainly get a sense of this as he counsels God’s people in light of the nearness of death. And yet, in spite of the vastly greater danger that they faced, in Lavater’s judgment, worship was not to be neglected—rather it became all the more critical.

Thinking on this brings before us a very difficult question. It is a question that is not at all comfortable, but it is also one that we cannot ignore. It is deserving of our consideration, and indeed it is one that we are duty bound to answer. The question is simply: is the cessation of worship truly a justifiable

and righteous response to Covid-19? Certainly we should responsibly care for one another, and do what we can to avoid sickness and making other people sick, but does the cessation of worship fall in to that category?

There are considerations for us today that were not an issue in Lavater's time, and in this sense we face a different set of challenges than he did. A governmental lockdown, for instance, was not an issue that he had to consider. The civil magistrate in our day has become far larger and more controlling, there can be no question about that. That is an added layer for us to consider that Lavater does not address. Nevertheless, it is a situation to which we are called to respond.

As to his sermons on scarcity and famine, Lavater essentially argues that both are sent by God as judgment (e.g. Lev 26, Deut 28, Amos 4), and that we must respond with repentance. Again, Lavater expresses a desire to specifically identify the reasons for God's judgment in these things: "In all public calamities to which the human race is subject, two things especially come to be considered: by whom and for what reason these evils befall the human race" (pp.85). As a general principle, he says, famine is a punishment for sin (pp.88), which is a claim he supports from the Law and the Prophets. He speaks of contempt for God's Word, greed, oppression of the poor, fraud, pride, and other sins as being specific targets for God's righteous judgment.

In spite of these hard words, and even his applying of this judgment to the people of God, Lavater helpfully points out that "the pious and faithful must not despair, as though God is so offended by their sins that there is no place left for help and mercy" (pp.109). He then offers a series of helpful instructions as to how we ought to live in light of these things. I would heartily commend this selection of sermons, and believe that it will furnish the reader with a rich field of biblical meditation in a day when such seems to be lacking. Our brethren at Reformation Heritage Books have done a good work in bringing these previously untranslated sermons back to the Church at large.

It is in turning now to the third volume of our review that we begin to explore answers to some of the more contemporary questions that both Beza and Lavater naturally did not address. *Worship and Witness in Crisis: Has the Church Failed the Covid Test?* is a helpful, thoughtful, and robust collection of essays from a range of pastors and other Christians based in the United Kingdom. To start with, I would thoroughly commend this book to all believers. As the title tends to suggest, these articles represent the view that the church in the UK generally has failed to respond well in the present crisis. However, while the authors certainly take this view, they express it in a way that is measured, compassionate, humble, gracious, and—ultimately—hopeful. As Vogan and Hyde put it in the introduction: "In seeking to provoke prayerful

reflection on the church's response, *Worship and Witness in Crisis* is neither complacent nor condemnatory. It does not list our woes, apportion blame, or excoriate any particular scapegoats. Yet reflection is called for" (pp. 13).

Along these lines, Douglas Somerset's essay "How may the church preserve unity in the midst of disagreement?" is vastly useful, and offers an excellent set of principles for the Church to follow as we inevitably discuss, work through, and disagree with one another in the midst of this trial. He helpfully exhorts us to be humble, to beware of division, to maintain a sense of proportion, and to continue steadfastly in ordinary Christian work. This essay may just be the most important contribution of the book, to my mind, for it lays the ground of maintaining harmony in the church, and should—if followed—enable the right context for a full and free discussion of all the other issues that are facing the church in the midst of this crisis.

The other essays in the book helpfully delve into many of the other kinds of issues we are facing. Chapter 3 by Matthew J. Hyde offers a robust answer to the question: "Should the church ever suspend public worship?" Hyde makes a clear and compelling theological and historical case against suspending worship, before thoughtfully discussing some practical considerations. This chapter helpfully presses the issues at stake here, and leaves no space for neglect. One must either agree, or offer a good counter-case, and every body of elders the world over would do well to take up the challenge. In Chapter 4, Peter C. Wilkins considers an even more focused question: "How important is it for believers to gather together physically to worship God?" In light of the rise of broadcasting technology, this is an important question. Wilkins makes the case well from scripture that physically gathering is essential for worship, and offers a range of thoughtful observations on the limitations of "gathering virtually." Again—there can be no question that every single elder in the church today needs to take these insights seriously, and the authors are to be commended for raising the issues at stake here.

From Chapter 5 onwards, the essays tend to focus more on how the Church intersects and engages with the broader civil society in the midst of these challenges. The book continues the helpful trend of using specific questions as titles for each essay, and these questions include: "How should church and state interact during a crisis?" (Chapter 5); "Exactly how much must the church render to Caesar?" (Chapter 6); "What does loving our neighbour look like in a pandemic?" (Chapter 7); "Is it ever unloving to go to church?" (Chapter 8); "How far has our culture impacted the church's response to the pandemic?" (Chapter 9); and, finally, "How can we move on from this crisis?" (Chapter 10).

Time, and my already over-blown word count, would escape me to delve deeply into the points raised in each one of these chapters. MacColl in Chapter 5 offers a convincing

theological and historical argument that the civil authorities have overstepped their bounds in telling the church to close her doors. Matthew Vogan pushes the point home further in Chapter 6: “We may not be experiencing outright hostility and ill-treatment because of the church’s beliefs. Yet if the church chooses to stand on the principle of its spiritual independence we will begin to face civil penalties. The idea that we have liberty to surrender to the state until the point that they forbid preaching the gospel is fanciful. The more we give to the state the more they are encouraged to take” (pp.190). Strong words, and yet certainly in Australia we have watched this very scenario unfold before our eyes.

Overall, to my mind, this volume does not represent any particularly new or innovative thinking, but this is by no means a weakness. It rather seems to be a fresh and powerful application of time-honoured reformed principles to the present crisis, and with that in mind I have few real criticisms to make. The title of the work poses the question: has the Church Failed the Covid Test? By the standards of reformed orthodoxy, these essays make a compelling case to suggest that, yes, she has failed. The question might then be asked: Why? In light of the twin themes of worship and the authority of the civil magistrate running through this volume, we might suggest that it is on exactly these two issues that our churches are in danger of losing their reformed distinctiveness. Certainly, it would seem that the church needs to give renewed attention to these areas, and this volume is definitely a helpful contribution to that end. I would commend it as recommended reading to anyone willing to listen to my commendation!

The fourth and final volume of our review, entitled: *Coronavirus and the Leadership of the Christian Church: A Sacred Trust Broken*, is another contemporary collection of essays, although one which—overall—takes on a more confrontational character than *Worship and Witness*. In these essays the authors pull no punches, and throw the theological gauntlet down to the church. To my mind, this approach has at least one significant advantage, but it also comes with a significant disadvantage.

The advantage is that the authors offer fulsome, challenging, and biblically credible answers to the questions and difficulties facing the church today. They will be hard answers to swallow for many, but at least they leave no significant questions unanswered. In Chapter 1, Ernest Springer asks the most significant question of all: “Why has the Church Cancelled Biblical Worship?” While his definition of worship, taking up just a single paragraph, could be more developed, the essence of his argument is clear and compelling: “One rationale put forth is that we are subject to those God has placed in authority and are to obey them in all things lawful, not contrary to the Bible. That is true, but clearly the government *has* directed us to neglect the public worship of God

and do something that is contrary to Scripture” (pp.32). For those favouring submission to government mandates to cease worship, Springer’s insight here is one demanding an answer, and one which it must be said seems to remain unanswered or unconsidered by many.

In Chapter 2, Joel E. Yeager gives his own professional analysis of the mainstream response to Covid-19 from a medical perspective. He lays out what appears to be a fairly robust body of evidence to argue that Covid-19 has a higher than reported infection rate, and lower than reported death rate; that comorbidities are a key determining factor in the majority of deaths; that masks are ineffective; and that the idea of many people being asymptomatic carriers of the disease is a myth. Whatever you may think of Yeager’s analysis, to my mind at least one thing is certain here: the mainstream narrative is not accommodating healthy, professional debate when it comes to the response of our medical profession to Covid-19. This in itself is immensely concerning, as are the sorts of very credible questions that Yeager raises.

In Chapter 3, Daniel O’Roark opens up the issue of “fear,” using the strong kind of words that are characteristic of this book: “During the Covid-19 pandemic, the broader Church often mimicked (in greater or lesser degrees) the fear of the world in their thoughts, words, and deeds” (pp.113). Does he have a point? While it may or may not be a totally fair comment to make, certainly every Christian and Church should give themselves sincerely to self-examination on this. O’Roark could have strengthened his case by considering more fully the arguments of those who might differ with him in principle, but he nonetheless poses important questions of his own, and makes his point powerfully. When others correct us, there may be errors in the way that they have approached us, but it is our duty to hear them out and search our own hearts. A careful reading of Chapter 3 with this in mind will be profitable for all believers.

In Chapter 4, Yeager raises the important question of the Biblical Limitations of Civil and Ecclesiastical Power, and it represents another useful exposition of the orthodox reformed perspective on the power of the Civil Magistrate. As Kuyperian, and seemingly theonomic, this article certainly offers clear answers: “Given the preceding discussion, it should be evident that arbitrary quarantine of the multitude of a healthy and asymptomatic populace by a central authority without due process is absolutely unbiblical and unlawful.... Able-bodied, healthy men and women have been deprived of their right and duty before God to work and take dominion of the earth.... Even if Covid-19 was the ‘plague of all plagues,’ the civil magistrates cannot in any manner interfere with the ecclesiastical authority of the church, through her lawfully ordained officers, to decide as to what she should do in that circumstance” (pp.154-6).

These and other claims are certainly weighty, and not without credibility. This book deserves a careful reading, and will be of real benefit to those willing to do so. “The writers of this work desire that it serves as a primer and guide for the future of the Christian Church. It is our prayerful hope that Church leadership will take this to heart as coming from brethren who offer respect and honor for the serious undertaking of shepherding the flock entrusted to them by God” (pp.18). Whether you agree with all their conclusions or not, in *A Sacred Trust Broken* the authors have made an important contribution to the broader discussion of Covid-19 responses in the Church at large.

The disadvantage of the book, at least in the opinion of this reader, is that it could be more effective and fulsome in engaging with and addressing the positions and opinions of those who differ in judgment, and also perhaps a gentler tone at times (Gal. 6:1; 2 Tim. 2:25) might promote a more open ear to those who might otherwise find this volume hard to receive.

In conclusion, I would heartily recommend these volumes to the Church, and especially to the officers of the Church. Careful, prayerful thought is needed in light of the challenges before us today, and these books will certainly be profitable to that end. “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another” (Pr 27:17). *Soli Deo Gloria*.

Review: Guy Prentiss Waters, J. Nicholas Reid, and John R. Muether, eds., *Covenant Theology: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Perspectives* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020). Hardback, 672 pp. ISBN 978-1-4335-6003-3. \$60.00. Reviewed by Lane Keister (OPC), Pastor of Mومence Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Mومence, IL.

Lately, there has been a very welcome resurgence in publications concerning covenant theology. While it is a bit of a puzzle as to why Reformed authors ever flagged in their writing about the subject, it must nevertheless be admitted that the new millennium has seen quite a few more treatments of this central backbone of the Bible than has been common in previous decades. The highly useful annotated bibliography which John Muether contributes to this volume (598–622) covers most of the relevant literature. I would only add a few excellent recent publications, some of which are republications of earlier works, and others are brand new treatments.¹

1. See the facsimile of William Strong’s *A Discourse of the Two Covenants in the Westminster Assembly Facsimile Series* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011, original 1678); John Colquhoun’s two volumes, *The Covenant of Works* and *The Covenant of Grace*, both edited by Don Kistler, and published by The Northampton Press (2021 and 2020 respectively); and Jon Bonker’s volume *Ruin and Redemption* (Lulu Press, 2021), which, while self-published, constitutes an excellent summary of covenant theology based on the old classics of John Ball, Francis Roberts, Thomas Boston, and many others.

What is unique about the work reviewed is that it is a compilation of articles from authors associated with one set of seminaries in America, the Reformed Theological Seminaries. Thirteen articles cover the biblical material: one on the covenant of redemption, two on the covenant of works, one each on the *protoevangelium*, the Noahic covenant, the Abrahamic covenant, the Mosaic covenant, the Davidic covenant, and five on the new covenant (one on the prophetic material, the remaining four on the New Testament books). Seven articles cover the historical understandings of covenant theology: early church, medieval church, Reformation theology, post-Reformation developments, Dutch Reformed, Barth/Torrances, and recent theology. Seven articles address parallel issues and theological studies: ancient near eastern background, second temple Judaism, New Perspective(s) on Paul, Israel and the nations, dispensationalism, new covenant theologies, and assurance/sacraments. Lastly, Kevin DeYoung answers the “why” question, which is followed by Muether’s bibliographical essay. In the big picture, there are few major issues left unaddressed. A couple of small points on the coverage: it would have been nice to include discussion of covenant theology in the Psalms (Psalms 78 and 136 are obvious texts), in the much-controverted wisdom literature (what about creation/covenant theology in Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes, not to mention Song of Songs?), and the general epistles other than the Johannine epistles. The covenants feature prominently in the Petrine literature, for example, when Peter uses Old Testament language to describe New Testament realities, or when he describes how the Old Testament prophets regarded their own work in relation to New Testament believers. However, this is but a minor quibble. The overall assessment is that this work is one of the most comprehensive and helpful treatments of covenant theology ever assembled. That it comes from many different authors should not appear to the reader as a liability, since both agreements and disagreements about covenant theology within the Reformed community are clearly on display, thus allowing the reader to discern which points are of more central importance, and which are more peripheral. In general, the authors are representative of the Reformed community, showing mostly unity and some diversity.

Theologically, the authors are confessionally Reformed, firmly non-Klinean (though, thankfully, much more courteous to republication views than some recent shriller voices), and opposed to Federal Vision and New Perspective(s) on Paul. In terms of scholarship, there do not appear to this reviewer to be any significant gaps, though there are always more sources that could be consulted. The authors are to be commended for their judicious selection of interlocutors.

It is not advisable to skip the Forward, written by Ligon Duncan. In it, he propounds a view of the theological disciplines reflected in the rest of the work: a fully interdependent

view of the disciplines, especially those of biblical theology and systematic theology. Covenant theology is equatable with Reformed theology (23), and it is also a blending of biblical and systematic theology (24).

The introduction, written by the editors, firmly places the audience of this volume in the church (32). I would add that a more preliminary volume (such as Jonty Rhodes's excellent little introduction to covenant theology) would be necessary for most church-goers to read before being able to understand this volume. The volume is most easily understood by educated pastors, though laymen who have a thorough grounding in confessional Reformed orthodoxy will also profit greatly by it.

The editors make the all-important point, reiterated often in the volume, that covenant theology is about gaining the "something more" to which Adam always looked forward, the consummated state of glory (34). Therefore, covenant theology is eschatological, as well as historical; technical, as well as practical (34–38).

Guy Richard's article on the covenant of redemption lays out the biblical arguments for understanding such an agreement to be present in eternity. Richard is particularly sensitive to the common objection that such an agreement posits three distinct wills in God (Robert Letham objects to the covenant of redemption along these lines).² Richard's answer to the objection is that if intra-Trinitarian *dialogue* is possible without threatening the union of will in the essence of God, then neither would a *covenant*, an agreement being a form of dialogue (48–50, 59–61). In fact, he warns of the opposite danger: "[W]e cannot say that the covenant of redemption is unnecessary on account of the unity of the divine mind and will. To say this is to overlook the relations of opposition within the Trinity and to lose the threeness of God in his oneness" (60). This claim might be a tad overstated, since folk like Letham have posited an intra-Trinitarian counsel as an alternative to an agreement. Nevertheless, it could be doubted whether Letham's formulation is really an improvement on the *pactum salutis*.

Richard Belcher tackles the covenant of works in its Old Testament context. He argues, rightly, that there is a covenant of works, given the identification of the parties, the conditions, the blessings and curses, a principle of representation, and the signs (64–66). Hosea 6:7, when interpreted most plausibly, refers to the covenant of works (66–67). Mixing grace and works in the pre-redemptive covenant of works is dangerous business (69). The covenant of works is foundational for the covenant of grace, and the work of Christ (70–1). Getting it wrong here will have drastically bad consequences for our theology of salvation. In this regard, the Federal Vision comes in for critique (75–77) for the first time, as the covenant of works is one area of doctrine which the FV distorts.

Guy Waters picks up the threads of the covenant of works

in the New Testament, focusing quite expectedly on 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5, offering a thoroughly Gaffinian/Vosian view of the passages (81–90). He also takes an initial stab at the controverted question of whether Paul sees the Mosaic economy as a republication of the covenant of works, a question he answers in the negative. What about Galatians 3, then, one might ask? Waters answers the objection by understanding Paul to be talking about a more narrow view of the law than as a covenantal administration (94). This is somewhat similar to Cornel Venema's view that Paul is dealing with a misunderstanding of the law, not the law itself. Whether one agrees with Waters on this point or not, he offers a coherent reading of Paul on the covenant of works.

Next, John Currid offers a brief treatment of the *proto-evangelium* of Genesis 3:15. He understands the passage to be the first promulgation of the covenant of grace, offering Adam and Eve what they should have gained, but lost, and pronouncing judgment on the serpent. Most of the treatment is non-controversial. However, I must register a small quibble about his statement that the conflict between Eve and the woman had already begun during the temptation of Genesis 3:1–7 (104). It seems better to understand the *proto-evangelium* itself as the beginning of the enmity between Eve and the serpent, and the simultaneous breaking of the alliance temporarily forged between Satan and Eve during the temptation.

Miles Van Pelt helpfully defines the Noahic covenant as "a universal, unilateral, nonredemptive administration of the covenant of grace restoring and securing the principle of common grace in this world that was suspended during the judgment ordeal of the flood" (112). Somewhat controversially, he argues that the covenant of Genesis 6 is distinct from the covenant in Genesis 9 (118). This is based on the provisions being different, as it is just Noah in view in Genesis 6 versus all of creation in Genesis 9 (118). With others, he notices and accents the de-creation/re-creation structure of the Flood, making in the process an excellent argument for a world-wide Flood (120, fn. 50). He argues against seeing the incident in the tent as an echo of Adam's fall, claiming that Noah was more sinned against than sinning (131). If this were the case, however, then why mention Noah's nakedness and Shem and Japheth's solution to it? This chapter will certainly promote clear-headed and deep thinking on the subject of this iteration of the covenant of grace.

John Scott Redd is at pains to stress the unity of the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 12–22. While he doesn't mention Paul Williamson's work, one can detect, perhaps, the invisible sparring partner, as Williamson holds to two distinct

2. See Robert Letham, *Systematic Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 431–9, though note his softening towards the doctrine on page 438.

covenants in Genesis 15 and Genesis 17.³ Redd understands Genesis 12 to be the introduction, Genesis 15 to be the ratification, Genesis 17 to be an amendment, and Genesis 22 to be a confirmation (136–44). The rest of the article places the Abrahamic covenant in the context of the next covenants with Moses and David, as well as the new covenant.

To J. Nicholas Reid falls the somewhat unenviable task of explicating the Mosaic covenant, unenviable because there are so very many difficulties attached to the concept of law in the Bible. While recognizing the exile as “one of the key entry points” (150) in the discussion of conditionality in the Mosaic covenant, Reid’s position is opposed to that of republication, though he is generous and fair in his discussion of Kline, among others. Reid is very precise in locating the relationship of conditions to blessings in the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. His assessment is worth quoting in full: “[T]he difference between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace is not the presence of conditions in the former and the absence of conditions in the latter. Rather, the distinction is the relationship of the conditions to the fundamental blessings of the covenant. In the covenant of works, the conditions must be met to receive the blessings of the covenant. In the covenant of grace, the blessings are received, and then the conditions are to flow out of gratefulness for the received blessings” (154). Reid explains the three parts of law, the three uses of the law, the summary of the law, the place of exile, and then carefully critiques Kline’s views on republication. Only one point I could wish he would have addressed is the quotation from Brian Estelle about the breakability of the Mosaic covenant (169).

Richard Belcher calls the Davidic covenant “a high point of Old Testament theology” (173). The joy of this covenant bleeds through Belcher’s treatment of it, as he connects the Davidic promises backwards to Abraham (183), and forwards to Christ (184–8). He makes an intriguing suggestion about Jeroboam’s sin: “Jeroboam disobeyed God by setting up opposing places of worship in the northern kingdom in Dan and Bethel to keep his people from worshipping in Jerusalem. This nullified God’s promises to him” (185, fn. 63).

In many ways, Michael McKelvey’s treatment of the new covenant in the major prophets functions as a hinge between the book’s treatment of the two Testaments. As a covenant promised, the new covenant is firmly situated in Old Testament revelation, and yet it also points forward to the New Testament. He argues that “the new covenant is a central concern of Prophetic Literature, as well as of the whole Old Testament” (192). The earlier covenants are foundational and

contextual for the new covenant (*ibid.*). McKelvey then expounds Jeremiah 30–33, Ezekiel 34, 36–7, and the servant of the Lord in Isaiah as representative passages that form the basis of our understanding of the new covenant. By and large, these comments are insightful, especially as geared towards Baptist interlocutors. I would register one small dissent. McKelvey argues that Ezekiel’s temple (Ezekiel 40–48) is a future temple (200). One does not measure a temple that does not exist. It is rather the heavenly, archetypal temple, measured at a time when there was no earthly temple to God existing on the earth.

Michael Kruger offers a wonderful exposition of the Gospels as covenant documents. This is a very refreshing take on the gospels that thoroughly connects them with the Old Testament writings, and “focus on the life of the covenant mediator, the deliverance of God’s covenant people, the inauguration of the covenant, and a new law delivered by the covenant mediator” (213). The covenant of grace is no longer ethnically limited, as the case of Zacchaeus proves (219, where Kruger insightfully points out that “It is Zacchaeus’s repentance and faith, not his ethnicity, that identifies him as a ‘son of Abraham’”). His synthetic statement at the end eloquently attests to the power of covenant theology in the gospels: “[T]he covenant concept provides the theological architecture of the Gospel accounts—it is the invisible foundation of the house, holding everything in its place” (226).

Guy Waters’s second entry in this book focuses on broader covenant theology in Paul, whereas his first article was on the covenant of works in the NT. Waters holds to a certain centrality of covenant theology in Paul (227–8), an architectonic principle (*ibid.*). Waters then looks at the OT iterations of the covenant of grace as Paul sees them: one covenant with various administrations, not neglecting or distorting the covenant of works, which underlines the first Adam–last Adam typology. Waters agrees with other authors in the book and with Venema that Paul corrects a misreading of the Mosaic covenant, rather than rejecting the Mosaic covenant itself (234–9).

It does not take much reading in Hebrews to see just how important covenant theology is in that book, as Robert Cara amply demonstrates, despite those who are naysayers on the topic. Cara argues that there are fully twenty-five references to covenants in the book of Hebrews (248). This represents a viewpoint of contrast within continuity (249–51). The Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and new covenants all make appearances in the book. The purpose of Hebrews in utilizing covenantal language is to connect vertical (earth–heaven) with horizontal (historical progression) to describe the priesthood of Christ squarely at the intersection of these realities (261). This is an important aspect of Christ’s high-priestly work that is often neglected.

The last biblical-theological article examines the Johannine letters and Revelation. Greg Lanier argues that the concepts

3. See Paul R. Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations: The Patriarchal Promise and Its Covenant Development in Genesis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000); and *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose* (Downer’s Grove, IL: IVP, 2007).

of covenantal theology are present in this part of the canon even if the words themselves are rare (267). The Trinitarian God makes covenants with His people, which covenants will reach a glorious conclusion and consummation in the new heavens and the new earth. In fact, Revelation ties together all the threads of Scripture (285).

The historical section of the volume proceeds in chronological order to function as a sort of history of interpretation of the covenants of Scripture. Ligon Duncan's article on covenant theology in the early church is a condensing of his unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (completed at the University of Edinburgh in 1995). His overall assessment is that "the covenants were important in early Christianity on their own grounds and were deployed for their own hermeneutical, catechetical, apologetic, and polemic purposes" (291). Some scholars believe that covenant theology played little to no role in the early church fathers. Duncan shows from Clement, Barnabas, Justin Martyr, Melito of Sardis, Irenaeus (whom he actually calls a covenant theologian, 302), and Tertullian that covenant theology was alive and well in the early church. It is important to know that Reformed treatments of covenant theology did not arise *de novo*.

Medieval theology is not exactly known for covenantal categories. What is there is more covert or implicit, without any kind of emphasis, as Douglas Kelly informs us (312–3). The way Kelly gets at the question is through the treatment of Scripture in Aquinas, Lombard, Gregory the Great; and the doctrine of God in Augustine and Aquinas. To me, it looks like there are echoes of covenant theology in the Medieval theologians, but they forgot how important it is to understanding the Bible. Kelly does not directly address the issue of why this is the case, but I would venture a guess that the Medieval quadriga might have something to do with it.

Covenant theology comes into its own in the Reformation and post-Reformation periods, as Howard Griffith and D. Blair Smith demonstrate. Griffith looks at Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin in their respective treatments of covenant theology, whereas Smith examines more topically the development of certain ideas, such as the covenant of works, the *pactum salutis*, and the federal theology of men like Cocceius. Both authors show a high respect for the developments that occurred, and the clarity of thought that resulted.

Bruce Baugus looks at the Dutch Reformed tradition, as exemplified in Junius, Gomarus, Voetius, Cloppenburg, Cocceius, Witsius, a'Brakel, and some of the later theologians more briefly, such as Bavinck, Kuyper, and Schilder. Most helpful is the treatment of the debate between Voetius and Cocceius on the nature of Old Testament forgiveness and the structure of Old Testament covenants (392–5). Also helpful is his defense of the covenant of redemption from the critique of intra-Trinitarian tri-theism: "There is just one divine

will, but there is also a manner of willing that corresponds to each divine person's distinct mode of subsistence (*modus subsistendi*) and working (*modus agendi*)" (397). It should be noted here that the word "mode" being used in this context does not imply modalism. Modalism does not acknowledge distinct persons in the Godhead, whereas orthodox theologians have often used the term "mode of subsistence" to describe the distinct persons of the Godhead.

Moving up in time to the twentieth century (it might have been nice to see how nineteenth century theologians in the Princeton tradition, as well as formidable theologians like Patrick Fairbairn handle covenant theology, but one cannot have everything). Mark McDowell looks at Karl Barth and the Torrance brothers as "the most serious challenge to an account of covenant theology as it is articulated by the federal divines and taught in the post-Reformation tradition" (401). After placing Barth's ideas on covenant theology in the context of his complete work, McDowell issues some trenchant critiques, such as the missing Adam typology (413), and the flattening out of covenant theology (414, much like FV theologians do). With regard to the Torrances, McDowell agrees with Muller's dismantling of the historical-theological problems in their theology, in addition to answering their objections to the covenant of works.

Michael Allen looks at very recent developments in John Webster and Michael Horton, treating both very fairly and thoughtfully. Allen is, in addition, mostly positive towards the contributions of both, recognizing that Webster digs deep into the essence of covenant theology by asking questions about participation in union with Christ, ontology as related to revelation, the Creator-creature distinction, and Christology itself. As for Horton, Allen notes the interdisciplinary approach Horton offers, the speech-act theory Horton espouses, and the questions of identity so important to modern man. Allen offers a very stimulating set of principles for utilizing covenant theology in the future (443–4).

The third major section of the book, giving readers various ancillary studies, starts off with J. Nicholas Reid's treatment of ancient Near Eastern (ANE) covenantal material. Since the 1950's, many studies have sought to place the Bible's covenants within a context of ANE treaties and covenants. The idea of such studies is to clarify the types of covenants in the Bible. The process is fraught with difficulty and danger, however. Dating covenants to their rightful era alone is tricky. Besides this, there is the perpetual danger of forcing biblical material to conform to ANE literary and cultural standards, when there might in fact be an apologetic against the ANE materials. Reid is well aware of these dangers, to the point where he warns scholars of all such studies in the following words: "While the decipherment of cuneiform remains a significant development in scholarship, ancient Near Eastern evidence, in its current state, remains incapable of solving our key exegetical and

theological debates about the nature of the biblical covenants. Put differently, the background, while informative, should not be made the foreground of covenant theology" (448). In his examination of the ANE material, Reid is just as quick to point out the significant differences of ANE material with the biblical material as the similarities. Perhaps most importantly, Reid challenges the received wisdom (from Moshe Weinfeld and Meredith Kline) of categorizing all covenants as either "land grants" or "suzerain-vassal treaties" (460–3).

Peter Lee's treatment of Second Temple Judaism (2TJ) in its covenantal assertions has as its direct target the category of "covenantal nomism" coined by E.P. Sanders. Lee measures Sanders against the sources and finds him wanting. As others have done before, Lee deftly points out the overly rigid structure of covenantal nomism as a way of describing 2TJ. In addition to obviously legalistic materials in 2TJ, the problem of Sanders's own lack of systematic-theological expertise is exposed: covenantal nomism is itself legalistic as Sanders describes it. Lee levels similar critiques against James D.G. Dunn and N.T. Wright. Lee's conclusion is that Paul's battle with 2TJ is very similar to the Reformers' battle against Roman Catholicism (483).

What are New Testament scholars saying about covenant theology these days? Benjamin Gladd addresses this question. A large part of this article addresses questions of the New Perspective(s) on Paul, as well as the apocalyptic proposals of those such as J. Louis Martyn and Douglas Campbell. Gladd finds all these proposals insufficient (though he agrees that we can learn from them), especially with regard to standard faith questions (500). More positively, Gladd notes the heightened attention in NT scholarship to questions of OT quotation, allusion, and echo (rightly pointing out and building on Richard Hays's seminal contributions to such studies).

The relationship of Israel and the nations is the subject of O. Palmer Robertson's article. He makes an intriguing suggestion that the genealogies of Scripture are historical and covenantal in nature (505–7). The reason this is directly relevant to his subject matter is his conclusion about genealogies: "In sum, this genealogical aspect of the covenants underscores both the reality of redemptive history and the inclusion of peoples from all nations alongside Israel in God's covenants" (507). Robertson adds then, that the genealogies of the Bible function as the concrete record of the fulfillment of the promises God made to Abraham, both in terms of the number of the blessed seed, and also the blessing Abraham was to be upon the nations (506). This is a great help to those who wonder why such long lists of genealogies are included in God's revelation. The rest of the chapter details the relationship of Jew to Gentile in the various administrations of the covenant of grace.

I was very happy to see that an entire chapter was devoted to the subject of dispensationalism, a viewpoint still

quite popular in the West, despite many competent dismantlings of its arguments, and its fundamentally discontinuous view of redemptive history. Indeed, given covenantalism's primary view of continuity among various administrations, Michael Glodo is right to say that dispensationalism is "covenant theology's primary rival system" (526). Glodo's treatment of dispensationalism is fair and insightful. He describes it (525–39) before critiquing it (539–50). Progressive dispensationalism is not forgotten either. Glodo properly rejects the language of supersession (545–6), since it does not adequately describe covenant theology's viewpoint of organic and developing, but fundamentally continuous relationship of OT Israel and the NT church. This chapter functions as an excellent introduction and refutation of dispensationalism, and will be the first port of call I will point out to people interested in the question.

Another form of discontinuity that has gained much traction in recent years is that of New Covenant Theology (NCT), advocated in various forms by such highly respected scholars as D.A. Carson, Douglas Moo, and P.T. O'Brien. Scott Swain clearly and incisively addresses these questions in the penultimate chapter. The idea here is of fundamental discontinuity between old covenant and new covenant. Implications include a rejection of the Ten Commandments as binding on Christians (see 557). A key text in the debate is Jeremiah 31:31–34, which Swain treats to a masterful exegesis (559–62).

The final full chapter is Derek Thomas's treatment of covenant, assurance, and the sacraments. This is a "so what?" chapter, in that Thomas's burden is to prove the applicability and usefulness of covenant theology in the life of the believer. The sacramental signs offer objective promises capable of appropriation by faith, and improvement by grace. The covenants were meant for sinners, as the wonderful quotation from Dr. John "Rabbi" Duncan shows, concerning the Lord's Supper as being meant for sinners (584, quoting William Barclay).

Kevin DeYoung offers an afterword concerning the why of covenant theology. In this, he sums up covenant theology as a way of helping us see the continuity of Scripture, presenting a familial structure to salvific promises, and foregrounding faith (598). Lastly, John R. Muether offers an annotated bibliography on scholarship on covenant theology. This is broken down into helpful sections of various historical periods, and includes both recent and older scholarship. This is a great place to start for anyone interested in delving deeper into certain aspects of covenant theology.

This volume has only a very few (and tiny) shortcomings. It is a heavy-weight entrant into the discussions of covenant theology, and should not be ignored, either by pastors or by scholars. Educated lay-people who have already read some of the primers mentioned above can also gain enormous benefit from the volume.

Review: Vern S. Poythress, *The Mystery of the Trinity: A Trinitarian Approach to the Attributes of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 2020). Hardback, 688 pp. ISBN 978-1629956510. \$49.99. Scott Cook is the pastor of Oconee Presbyterian Church and Instructor in Apologetics and Historical Theology at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

Westminster Seminary professor of theology Vern Poythress has written an idiosyncratic approach to the doctrine of God. *The Mystery of the Trinity: A Trinitarian Approach to the Attributes of God* draws together various themes in Poythress' thought, applying them to the attributes of God and the doctrine of the Trinity. *The Mystery of the Trinity* is an important work in at least two ways. First, Poythress is a Reformed scholar of the first rank. Poythress has garnered respect in the Reformed world for his academic credentials, contributions to a Reformed understanding of science, and his sincere defense of the inerrancy of Scripture. *The Mystery of the Trinity*, therefore, deserves careful reading by Reformed pastors and scholars. Second, *The Mystery of the Trinity* is worthy of note because of the debates surrounding Classical Theism in the American Reformed community. John Frame and Scott Oliphint have challenged the Confessional approach to the doctrine of God, commonly called Classical Theism. Classical Theism is both the historic Christian approach to the doctrine of God, as its name suggests. Classical Theism is present in the Reformed Confessions, both in the British and Continental traditions.

Where does Dr. Poythress stand on the question of Classical Theism? *The Mystery of the Trinity* shows that he, like Frame and Oliphint, rejects Classical Theism. As this review will demonstrate, Poythress rejects all forms of Classical Theism, whether the Aristotelian formulation found in Thomas Aquinas or a more Platonic form of Classical Theism as found in St. Augustine. Poythress does not appear to appropriate the "Covenantal Properties" approach to the attributes of God that Oliphint has advocated in the past. Rather, his skepticism towards Classical Theism and his constructive approach to the Trinity is closely linked to tri-perspectivalism.

This review of *The Mystery of the Trinity* will examine the basic layout and structure of the book. Particular attention will be given to key issues in the book that are contested between Classical Theists and Theistic Mutualists. Finally, the review will address what Poythress' approach to the Trinity signals for the future of Van Tillian influenced thinkers in the Reformed community.

OUTLINE AND STRUCTURE

Poythress' books are typically well organized and written with simple, lucid prose. *The Mystery of the Trinity* is no exception.

The book contains forty-eight chapters, organized in eight parts, with five appendices. The work spans some six hundred and fifty pages, excluding bibliography and indices. "Part 1: Beginning to Consider God" lays the foundation for the book. Poythress addresses the resources for knowing God and how man may know God. "Part 2: Classical Christian Theism" develops Poythress' basic understanding of the metaphysical attributes of God. As the title of the section suggests, Classical Theism is his main dialogue partner as he articulates his understanding of the nature of God. "Part 3: The Trinity—Mysteries in Diversity" deals with the basic issues of Trinitarian theology, such as perichoresis and the indivisibility of Trinitarian actions. Part 3 is surprisingly short, filling a mere 22 pages. While Poythress discusses the trinity throughout the book, it is strange that he devoted such a small section of the book to a systematic consideration of the elements of the doctrine of the Trinity.

"Part 4: The Trinity and Language" delves into the connection between God as triune creator and the creation of human language. Those familiar with Poythress' work will not be surprised that he dedicates significant time to the relationship between God and language. "Part 5: Philosophical Conundrums" grapples with the use of philosophical language in theology proper. Poythress appears to adopt a "Christ against Philosophy" stance, advocating for theologians to remove terms from Trinitarian theology that originate in pagan philosophy whenever possible (more in this later in the review). Poythress says, for example, that "substance" is not an ideal word to describe God because of its pagan Aristotelian use in philosophy (208–209).

"Part 6: Challenges in Classical Theism" is where Poythress tackles Aquinas and the Reformed Tradition concerning Classical Theism. Poythress is less than sanguine about Thomas' approach to the doctrine of God. Poythress finds Aquinas insufficiently Biblical in his thought and far too dependent upon Aristotle. The rest of Part 6 is devoted to the doctrine of God in the Reformers, Turretin, and Charnock. "Chapter 29. Attributes in the Reformers" is possibly the least satisfying chapter in the book. Poythress commends the Reformers for their commitment to Sola Scriptura and the importance of preaching. Beyond these general comments, Poythress offers no interaction with the Reformers regarding the doctrine of God. He does not examine a single doctrine in any Reformer. Had Poythress done so, this chapter would likely have been much longer since Reformers held to Classical Theism. Some Reformers, such as Luther and Calvin, did not write on the doctrine of God in detail. What they did write, however, was in complete agreement with Classical Theism. Such details prove detrimental to Poythress' attempt to separate Reformed Theology and Classical Theism. Moreover, more detail on the Reformers would have prevented Poythress from falling into

an unfortunate “Calvin versus the Calvinists” historiography where Poythress praises Calvin but criticizes Turretin and Charnock for unbiblical, philosophical formulations of the attributes of God.

“Part 7: Dealing with Challenges” charts a pathway forward for the doctrine of God without the encumbrances of Aristotelian thought. Poythress attempts to avoid both Theistic Mutualism on the one hand and a harsh form of Classical Theism on the other hand. In Poythress’ mind, Classical Theism under-distinguishes the attributes of God in its formulation of divine simplicity. This move compromises the personality of God (442) and runs contrary to the plain sense of Scripture. He seeks to affirm much of the strengths of Classical Theism without its dependence upon philosophical speculation. For instance, Poythress rejects the idea that there are no new relations in God by virtue of the act of creation. Instead, Poythress opts for a “gentler version” of the rule that God has no new relations (461–463). The relationship between God and the world is one of transcendence. This transcendence, however, is funded by the language of Scripture, not the language of Aristotelian philosophy. Classical Theism affirms the Creator-creature distinction but then, Poythress argues, smuggles autonomous human knowledge about God through the back door by using philosophy. By contrast, a revelation-based model of the God-world relationship is content to appeal to mystery and use only the language of Scripture.

Classical Theism is in desperate need of “enhancement,” according to Poythress. This enhancement comes through the introduction of mystery and the Trinity into our understanding of the attributes of God. Poythress argues for “three moves” regarding the doctrine of God: reject any idea that God is mutable or temporal, adopt the language of Classical Theism regarding God being eternal and unchanging, and enhance Classical Theism with a “Trinitarian foundation” (500). What does this model look like? God experiences change and, in some sense, has a dynamic relationship with His creation. This dynamic relationship is qualified in three ways. God is the initiator of everything that comes to pass, God is sovereign over everything that comes to pass, and God directs the goal or telos of everything that comes to pass. In other words, God is in a real relationship with His people. God experiences change in his relationships with his people. However, God remains sovereign in his relationship with His people (507–516).

Poythress’s treatment of divine simplicity demonstrates how his model of “enhancing” Classical Theism functions. In Poythress’ mind, Classical Theism has guarded against

making the attributes too distinct from each other. However, Classical Theism failed to protect against making the attributes identical to each other (553). Poythress proposes a Trinitarian (read Tri-Perspectival) reading of the unity and diversity of the attributes in God. The unity of the attributes reflects the unity, diversity, and coinherence of the persons of the Godhead (553–554). God is in the first sense identical with the attributes because God is one. However, just as the persons are one and yet distinct, so from the perspective of distinction, the “attributes are distinct from God, but in a perspectival way that also affirms unity” (554). Finally, the attributes also have a coinherent relationship with each other and with God. But Poythress argues that coinherence applies not just to the persons of the Godhead but the relationships between God and the attributes. “The perspective of coinherence,” Poythress writes, “is our present case consists in focusing on the indwelling of the attributes in God and God in the attributes. This indwelling is reflectively derivative from the indwelling of the persons of the Trinity in one another. It is coinherent. Therefore, the attributes are not separable from God” (554).

SPECIAL ISSUES

Poythress’ Theological Method: Biblicism

One of the persistent themes in *The Mystery of the Trinity* is a commitment to Biblicism.¹ Poythress expresses concern that Classical Theism draws too much from sources outside the Bible, such as Aristotle. Instead, Poythress wants to return the doctrine of God to a Biblical, Trinitarian (and Tri-Perspectival) basis. The Biblicism of Poythress’ approach manifests in many ways but is best demonstrated through his use of the resurrection.

Poythress attempt to find a basis for all of God’s attributes in the resurrection of Christ. Nearly every constructive chapter in the book ends with a reflection on how a particular aspect of the doctrine of God is expressed through the resurrection of Christ. This approach works well for some attributes, particularly the moral attributes of God, such as love or mercy. However, other attributes of God do not work well with this approach. For instance, Poythress attempts to explain divine simplicity through Christ’s resurrection.

Given that the resurrection of Christ involves the person of Christ with regard to His human nature, it is awkward to argue that the resurrection of Christ displays the simplicity of the divine nature. How can the resurrection, then, be a demonstration of the simplicity of the divine nature? The resurrection shows that Christ is divine, and, according to Poythress, the divinity of Christ in the resurrection shows forth the non-decomposability of God. It is chiefly through Thomas worshiping the risen Christ that simplicity is displayed. “God is not decomposable,” Poythress writes, “and so the worship offered by Thomas is not decomposable into

1. By Biblicism, we mean a theological method that eschews a theological or philosophical method of constructive dogmatics. Biblicism prefers unsophisticated proof-texting to a theologically or philosophically informed hermeneutic. Biblicism moves from *sola Scriptura* to *solo Scriptura* in systematic theology.

worship that he would offer to some part of God or some isolated quality of God" (75). To say that divine simplicity merits the worship of God is logically coherent. To argue that Thomas worshiped the risen Christ implies that "the resurrection of Christ display[s] the simplicity of God" is, at best, a non sequitur. Poythress' commitment drives him to similar exegetical and theological non sequiturs throughout the book.

Poythress and Classical Theism

Where does Poythress land vis-à-vis Classical Theism? Does his approach represent a rapprochement with Classical Theism, or does Poythress follow with Frame and Oliphint in expressing antipathy towards Classical Theism? Poythress is distinct from Frame and Oliphint because he shows more respect for Classical Theism than his colleagues. However, Poythress' model for the doctrine of God deviates from Classical Theism in several ways. He rejects the Classical Theist idea of divine simplicity. While arguing that the attributes of God are, in some sense, identical to one another, he also introduces real distinctions between the attributes in God. His use of perichoresis to describe the relationships between the attributes (546–548) entails a metaphysical distinction between the attributes. The same holds for his tri-perspectival understanding of God's identity with the attributes. God is, in one perspective, identical with all of His attributes. From the perspectives of distinction and perichoresis, God is distinct from His attributes yet cannot be separated from them because of His coinherent relationship with them (554). Poythress also shares concerns with Theistic Personalists that Classical Theism threatens God's personal nature. Moreover, Poythress rejects Classical Theism's tendency toward "monadic theology." He rejects divine immutability in favor of a more dynamic model where God responds to creation from a position of sovereignty (503–517). The immutability of God is, for Poythress, more about the unchanging moral nature of God rather than the metaphysical unchanging nature of God (59–62).

Van Tillian Apologetics and The Doctrine of God

While Presuppositionalism per se plays a minor role in the book, Poythress' idiosyncratic approach to the doctrine of God raises the issue of the relationship between Presuppositionalism and the doctrine of God. Cornelius Van Til famously criticized Aquinas' apologetic methodology. He argued that Aquinas capitulated to autonomous human reason by incorporating the natural theology of Aristotle into his apologetic methodology. Except for his "One Person, Three Persons" formulation, Van Til appears to have held to Classical Theism. Second and third generation Presuppositionalists debate whether it is tenable to reject a Thomistic apologetic method while accepting a (largely) Thomistic doctrine of God. Poythress argues in *The Mystery of the Trinity* that one

cannot reject autonomous reason on the one hand while accepting Classical Theism on the other hand. The influence of Aristotle is too pervasive in Classical Theism to merely accept or reprimand it without significant modification. The undercurrent, therefore, of Poythress' work appears to be that one cannot be a Presuppositionalist and a Classical Theist without some compromise of either system. While the Reformed community needs a Presuppositionalist approach that articulates a doctrine of Classical Theism as Van Til did, *The Mystery of the Trinity* is not that book.

CONCLUSION

Poythress' *The Mystery of the Trinity* is a worthwhile read for scholars within the Reformed community who wish to engage with Classical Theism. The author of this review is a committed Classical Theist and, therefore, cannot endorse the overall program of the book. Moreover, *The Mystery of the Trinity* shows the dangers of Biblicism and over-emphasis on antithesis for the Confessional view of the doctrine of God. Furthermore, Poythress' application of perichoresis to the relationship between the attributes is novel and potentially destabilizing to the traditional view of the Trinity. However, Poythress' thoughtfulness and his unique approach warrants a broad interaction with his work in the scholarly community.

Daniel I. Block, *Covenant: The Framework of God's Grand Plan of Redemption* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021). Hardback. xxiv + 680 pp. ISBN 978-0801097881. \$54.99. Reviewed by Harrison Perkins (PhD, Queen's University Belfast), who is a pastor at London City Presbyterian Church, part of the online faculty in church history at Westminster Theological Seminary, and a visiting lecturer in systematic theology at Edinburgh Theological Seminary.

Historic Reformed theology has traditionally placed such emphasis on the doctrine of the covenants that any new literature on the topic is relevant to confessional Presbyterianism. This relevance is all the more so because of the recent increased attention covenant theology has received not only in other traditions but also in biblical studies. The abundance of new literature creates a difficulty for those serving in Reformed ministries of various kinds to keep up with the new ideas and forms of expression about covenants. This review, therefore, summarizes the arguments of Daniel Block's new volume on the biblical covenants and coordinates it to traditional Reformed thinking about the covenant theology.

Block's massive overview of covenants in Scripture uses a biblico-theological focus to examine how the Bible's ongoing storyline is shaped by the continuity of the various covenants between God and his people. His main argument is that there are five "acts" to the one biblical narrative, which

are the covenants. In this thesis, God's singular goal has been for humanity to have a harmonious existence with him and the cosmos. Because of sin, which seemed to derail this purpose, God used the covenants to restore and complete that original goal.

This volume consists of four parts, each focusing on a different part of the Bible's covenantal storyline. Part 1 looks at the "cosmic" and "Adamic" covenants. Part 2 examines what Block calls the Israelite covenant, which he argues is one covenant in four stages: Abraham, Sinai, Moab, and the new covenant. Part 3 explores the Davidic covenant. Finally, part 4 looks at how the New Testament interprets and extends the covenantal idea. What then are this book's strengths and weaknesses? Block's work is marked by several strong features which interestingly all have corresponding shortcomings.

First, this volume contains a mountain of exegetical material. Its focus throughout remains upon expositing the biblical texts rather than engaging with various debates from the secondary literature. The exposition is detailed, looking closely at biblical passages and how they drive forward the covenantal storyline. As the caveat to this strength, however, the amount of detail often envelopes the main argument. Too many times, the point is lost because there is such winding discussion of various aspects of the text. This caveat is not to say that detail as such overwhelms main points but merely that Block frequently failed, namely in part 2, to tie the details of his exegesis back to any thesis statements or summary points.

Second, Block wrote with clear self-awareness of his personal theological background and how this volume relates to it. He was very clear throughout that he grew up in churches that sharply divided the storyline of Scripture as though each covenant did not contribute to one providentially orchestrated narrative. This self-awareness helps readers to understand why Block argues the way he does at many points of the book.

On the other hand, this self-awareness often makes the book very unique and overwhelms some important aspects of the discussion about how to put the covenants together into one consistent storyline. This uniqueness is clear firstly in how Block clearly formulated his own version of covenant theology without any deep interaction with how the covenants have previously been used for theological construction. This leads to several weaknesses.

Primarily, Block's presentation is one sided. His thought is set off balance by a concern to correct the theology of the covenants from his personal experience. More extensive reflection upon how theologians have understood covenant may have helped him see some of his blind spots. Block is so concerned to emphasize the unity of the covenants that he fails to do justice to their differences. Throughout the section on "the Israelite covenant" each "stage" is said to renew the same covenant. This argument means that the Abrahamic,

Mosaic, and new covenants are all identical and the same covenant. This argument goes against the Scripture's explicit teaching that the Mosaic covenant differed from the Abrahamic (Gal. 3-4) and that the new covenant is not like the Mosaic covenant (Jer. 31:31-32). Although Block's desire to affirm the Scripture's unity is highly commendable, his overstated interpretation falls short of reckoning with the biblical stated contours of redemptive history. This point relates to this book's third strength.

Third, Block does make some helpful theological points. At several junctures, Block explains how he believes that Christ relates to the various covenants of the "First Testament," as he refers to the Old Testament. His view, primarily in regard to the Mosaic covenant's animal sacrifices, is that these sacrifices never in themselves obtained the forgiveness of sin but in advance sacramentally applied the forgiveness had through Christ's death (pp. 271-72, 502-11). In other words, the types of the old covenant apply the virtue, efficacy, and benefits of Christ's work of redemption, even before he wrought it in the Incarnation, as Westminster Confession 8.6 states the issue. In this respect, Block comes very close to articulating the Reformed doctrine of the covenant of grace. His view is further commendable because it is even clearer than many explanations from recent confessional Baptist theologians, holding to the 1689 London Baptist Confession, which radically separate the Old Testament covenants from the covenant of grace, often failing to state how or even that the types and ordinances of the old economy applied Christ's benefits to believers.

Still, the corresponding weakness on this point is that Block regularly comes short of full-orbed traditional theology. Perhaps the most obvious example here is that he rejects a covenant between God and Adam, a view held by patristic theologians as well as in our Reformed confessions. After outlining good arguments for seeing a covenant between God and Adam, Block simply dismisses them as unpersuasive. This contributes to the individual uniqueness of this work, since he does not argue against the significant exegetical reasons he himself produced but simply waves them away in preference of his own idiosyncratic view. Even on this point, Block claims that a covenant creates or restores a relationship, so cannot be natural. This dismissal fails to reckon with those covenant theologians who have argued that God created Adam in covenant by nature.

There are other examples of this feature. Block waves away the law-gospel distinction as a poor Lutheran interpretation of the Old Testament (pp. 184-85). This in no way adequately reckons with the theological issues and principles involved in this issue, nor with how it pertains to other areas of theology, which is detrimental since Block never really accounts for soteriology. He then goes on to equate Reformed understandings of the law-gospel distinction with "new covenant

theology” which is a movement within Baptist circles to revise covenant theology. This move again shows Block’s idiosyncrasies. He does not reckon with classic Reformed theology but assumes that his own baptistic background is enough reason to focus on Baptist versions of covenant theology. Confessional Reformed theology, however, would agree that new covenant theology has mangled its interpretation of God’s law on several issues. Ironically, one of those issues is their rejection of natural law with which Block agrees (pp. 198–200). Block’s lack of engagement with truly theological sources has left his own theological assessment shortsighted and inadequate.

As one last point, this book’s crowning strength is its treatment of how the New Testament appropriates the Davidic covenant in application to Christ. This material is perhaps the best in print on the relationship between God’s promises to David and their fulfillment in Christ. This volume contains much to consider and develop, some helpful and some in need of correction. Still, Block’s exploration of the Scripture itself will prompt readers to look closely at the pages of the Bible and their thematic development of the covenants.

Books In Brief. Reviewed by Frank J. Smith.

Joel R. Beeke and Nick Thompson, foreword by Sinclair Ferguson, *Pastors and Their Critics: A Guide to Coping with Criticism in the Ministry* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2020). Paperback, 177 pp. ISBN 978-1629957524. \$16.00.

Written by Puritan scholar and noted churchman Dr. Joel Beeke along with a young graduate of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, this volume consists of four parts. Under Biblical Foundations for Coping with Criticism, the authors deal with Old Testament Foundations and Christological Foundations. The chapters in the lengthiest part, Practical Principles for Coping with Criticism, include “Receive Criticism Realistically,” “Receive Criticism Humbly,” “Respond with Sober Judgment,” and “Respond with Grace.” In considering Practical Principles for Constructive Criticism in the Church, the authors discuss how to give constructive critique to others and how to cultivate a church culture that is open to constructive critique. The fourth part, Theological Vision for Coping with Criticism, calls on the reader to “Reorient Your Perspective,” and offers this advice:

Brothers, in the midst of verbal opposition, let us show our people that we really believe the realities that we proclaim: the God-glorifying, church-building, judgment-day, otherworldly vision of the Scriptures is indeed our vision. That these are not “unfelt truths” that have never moved from our heads to our hearts. That

we have owned these biblical bifocals as our own. In the ministerial hostility we face, God is calling us to “exemplify the power” of these stunning doctrines (164).

An appendix addresses how to prepare “for the Fires of Criticism While in Seminary.”

Overall, the book is a useful tonic for assisting those struggling with criticism, whether deserved or undeserved. *Pastors and Their Critics* is, as one would expect from a Beeke book, thoroughly Biblical and informed by history.

Darby A. Strickland, foreword by Edward T. Welch, *Is It Abuse? A Biblical Guide to Identifying Domestic Abuse and Helping Victims* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2020). Paperback, 352 pp. ISBN 978-1629956947. \$17.99.

A 1999 graduate of Westminster Theological Seminary, Mrs. Strickland counsels and teaches at the Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation in Glenside, Pennsylvania. Her book reveals the shocking prevalence of abuse in society as a whole and in the church as well. The work, which is virtually encyclopedic in scope, has three parts: Understanding Oppression; Uncovering Oppression; and Upholding the Oppressed. Among the types of oppression dealt with are physical, sexual, emotional, spiritual, and financial abuse.

The author advises her readers that abuse “is easy to miss, but it is even easier to minimize.” Over a long period of working with abused women, she came to “understand what rules the hearts of oppressors and how they seek to control their victims—as well as to control others’ perception of reality. We must understand the dynamics of abuse in order to minister to its victims effectively. Domestic abuse can be disorienting—it can initially be hard to get a handle on what is happening in a marriage.” The book’s goal has three purposes: so that “you will learn to pick up on cues that something is wrong”; “to draw out stories so that you can get clarity on the situations you encounter and their severity”; “to provide wise and Christ-centered counsel as you navigate the complex and often dangerous dynamics of abuse” (15–16).

Two of the appendices are helpful for those contemplating marriage: “Detecting Red Flags during Dating” and “Premarital Abuse Assessment.”

However, one weakness is that the book barely, if at all, touches on the situations in which it is the wife rather than the husband who is abusive. While one might argue that spousal abuse is in most cases a result of the man dominating the woman, the opposite is not unheard of, and this book would have been strengthened by dealing with instances when the basic problems in the home are a result of a woman’s rebellious attitude.

Christopher Watkin, foreword by Peter J. Leithart, *Gilles Deleuze* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2020). Paperback, xxxii + 167 pp. ISBN 978-1629957432. \$15.99.

A volume in the Great Thinkers series from P&R, this one dissects the views of Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995). This French philosopher's views were hostile to Christianity. However, the author argues for a biblical theological perspective as well as a "problem-based approach [that] avoids the elaborate and sterile 'spot the difference' exercise that could issue from seeking to compare Deleuze and the Bible, in favor of asking how the Bible respond to, or rethinks, the problems from which Deleuze's philosophy begins." According to Dr. Watkin, "a problem-based approach will allow us to see Deleuze and the Bible not only at loggerheads, but also shoulder to shoulder in addressing common concerns. Perhaps most tellingly, we will see that Deleuze and Plato often share assumptions or positions in common that the Bible diagonalizes" (81).

This is Dr. Watkin's third offering in the Great Thinkers series, the others being *Jacques Derrida* and *Michel Foucault*. He serves as a senior lecturer in French Studies at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia.

Shao Kai Tseng, foreword by William B. Edgar, *Immanuel Kant* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2020). Paperback, xviii + 209 pp. ISBN 978-1629957012. \$15.99.

Another offering in the P&R Great Thinkers series, this is the book for those who just can't figure out the writings of a certain German philosopher. The impact of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) is hard to overestimate. At the same time, trying to discern what exactly he was saying can be very challenging indeed. This book is of great help in understanding Kantian thought. One of the strong points in assisting the reader is an extensive glossary of terms.

Another noteworthy aspect of the volume is that the author offers a fresh look at Kant from a Reformed viewpoint. An example of his observations is the following paragraph:

Modern Christian soteriology has often been tempted to choose between Kantian transcendence and post-Kantian immanence. The former regards the incarnation as beyond the bounds of knowledge; the latter identifies God the Son with historical activity. Dogmaticians such as Hodge and Bavinck are especially valuable against this milieu. Unwavering in their commitment to Chalcedonian Christology and historic Reformed soteriology, they are able to counter both Kantian positivism and post-Kantian historicism with distinctively modern rigor (150).

Dr. Tseng is research professor in the philosophy department of Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, China. This work is very dense and definitely not for the average reader.

Robert Rollock, translated and introduced by Casey B. Carmichael, *Commentary on Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2021). Hardback, xxi + 253 pp. ISBN 978-1601787699. \$40.00.

A university man who was known especially as the first Scottish covenant theologian, Robert Rollock (1555-1598) was a prolific writer whose work is "straightforward and very clearly Reformed" (xi).

This volume is part of a series on Classic Reformed Theology. A preface gives three reasons for this series of critical English translations.

First, Reformed orthodoxy forms the intellectual background of modern theology which can only be understood properly in light of its reaction to and rejection of Protestant orthodoxy. Second, Reformed orthodoxy obviously merits attention by those who identify with the Reformed confession; it is their heritage and thus shapes their theology, piety, and practice whether or not they realize it. Third, despite the disdain, disregard, and distortion which Reformed orthodoxy suffered during the Enlightenments in Europe, Britain, and North America, contemporary scholarship has shown that, whatever one's view of the theology, piety, and practice of orthodoxy, on purely historical grounds it must be regarded as a vital intellectual and spiritual movement and thus a fascinating and important subject for continued study (ix).

Apart from the historical value, this commentary is valuable for its gospel-oriented and Christ-centered approach to this important Pauline epistle. As an example, in commenting on Ephesians 1:4-6, Rollock wrote:

We are united with Christ through the Spirit and faith, hence the union itself is called the communion of the Spirit (Phil. 1:21). But the Spirit of Christ cannot be burdensome to us. But as He is holy, and Christ, whose Spirit He is, is holy, so it is necessary that He work holiness in us and make us conformed to the image of Christ (that is, pure and whole), while the apostle says, in 2 Corinthians 3:17, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." And by this office He is called the Spirit of sanctification by the apostle (Rom. 1:4) (19).

John Flavel, abridged by J. Stephen Yuille, *Christ and His Threefold Office* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2021). Paperback, xix + 151 pp. ISBN 978-1601788498. \$16.00.

John Flavel (1630-1691) was a prolific English Puritan writer known for his deep piety. Ordained when he was 23 years old, his ministry was focused in Devon, a county in southwestern England. Ejected from his pulpit in the coastal town of Dartmouth by the Act of Uniformity in 1662, he surreptitiously continued his preaching for the next 25 years when he was formally allowed to occupy a pulpit once again.

In the Preface, J. Stephen Yuille writes of Flavel's emphasis on the notion of communion with Christ, including "actual communion—'the life of our life, the joy of our hearts, a heaven upon earth.'"

This communion by means of meditation on Christ's loveliness brings us to the present work, *Christ and His Threefold Office*. Flavel sees the salvation of God's people as resting on the eternal covenant of redemption between God the Father and God the Son. In eternity, the Father and Son enter into a transaction to bring about the salvation of the elect. In time, the Son becomes a man, fulfills the covenant of works, and dies to pay the penalty incurred by His people under that covenant. Having done so, He returns to His Father, from where He sends forth the Holy Spirit to unite His people to Himself. By virtue of that union, they partake of the blessings of the covenant of grace.

In Flavel's mind, therefore, the fulfillment of the covenant of redemption is linked to two great unions. The first is the hypostatical union between the divine and human natures in Christ, whereas the second is the mystical union between Christ and believers by means of the Holy Spirit. Flavel affirms that the first is the basis for the second. In other words, Christ must become one with us hypostatically in order for us to become one with Him mystically.

Yuille concludes:

The glory of Christ's threefold mediatorial office is the theme of this volume. Flavel's treatment of the subject is informed by Scripture and faithful to the historic creeds of the church. He is polemical when necessary and painstakingly detailed when he believes the truth is at stake. That said, his work does not fall within the traditional bounds of systematic theology; rather, it is an act of adoration, constituting a series of medita-

tions on "the transcendent excellency of Jesus Christ." Above all else, Flavel wants us to "behold the beauty of the Lord," that we might enjoy communion with the living God. This, therefore, is how we ought to read his work—thoughtfully, devotionally, and affectively (xvii-xix).

There are seventeen chapters, each one based on a particular Bible verse. An example of Flavel's earnest application to us can be found in his contemplation of Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 2:2 ("For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified")—a verse which not only informs, humbles, challenges, trains, and comforts us, but which also warns us, in three ways.

First, ministers must take heed to their ministry. How?

(1) They must set Christ before their people. It is the minister's calling to woo and win souls to Christ by presenting Him in all His excellence, so that hearts are ravished with His beauty and charmed into His arms. (2) They must make certain that their knowledge of Christ is not barren or powerless. As it passes from their minds to their lips, it ought to melt, sweeten, and ravish their hearts.... (3) They must not withhold the knowledge of Christ from their people. They must remember that the Great Shepherd gave Himself for the flock, and that He gave them to the flock; therefore, their time and gifts are not their own, but God's. Christ died for the sheep. Ministers, therefore, must watch, study, preach, pray, and do whatever they can for their salvation.

Second, we must not reject or despise the knowledge of Christ. (1) We despise the knowledge of Christ when we despise the means to that knowledge.... (2) We despise the knowledge of Christ when we despise the directions and constraints of that knowledge....

Third, we must satisfy ourselves in the knowledge that we have attained. We must press on to perfection. Upon acquiring a few notions of Christ, many professing believers swell with self-conceit. This is a grave sin, especially when we see how deep the knowledge of Christ lies and what pains we must take to dig for it. To throw away the shovel of duty and claim that we do not need to dig is presumption. We must not let our candle go out. We must devote ourselves to this study. Whatever communion God maintains with us, it is by means of the knowledge of Christ. Thus, we must count all things as trash in comparison to the excellence of this knowledge (7-8).

John Flavel, abridged by J. Stephen Yuille, *Christ Humbled Yet Exalted* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2021). Paperback, xix + 151 pp. ISBN 978-1601788511. \$16.00.

As noted in the review above of Flavel's *Christ and His Three-fold Office*, this seventeenth-century English preacher suffered for his faith. In this present volume, J. Stephen Yuille explains more about the sufferings Flavel endured in his life.

His parents died of the plague, contracted while imprisoned for nonconformity. He buried his first three wives along with several children. He was ejected for nonconformity in 1662, exiled by the Five Mile Act in 1665, and generally harassed throughout his ministry. On one occasion, he managed to escape arrest by plunging his horse over a cliff into the sea and swimming to shore. Factoring in the strain of demanding pastoral duties, and wearying doctrinal disputes, coupled with the challenges of living without modern comforts and amenities, Flavel was deeply acquainted with affliction (ix-x).

Having experiential knowledge of great grief, Flavel is in a good position to counsel us as to the way by which to deal with similar circumstances.

By his own account, it was "joy" that "upheld and fortified" him throughout life's arduous journey. He defined Christian joy as "the cheerfulness of our heart in God" arising from "the sense of our interest in Him and His promises." Flavel was convinced that joy is ultimately rooted in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. "All the comforts of believers," says he, "are streams from this fountain" (x).

Through Christ's twin estate of humiliation and exaltation, He has purchased for us full and complete happiness.

And it is this knowledge of Christ that nurtures that "cheerfulness of heart" so prevalent in Flavel's writings. In the present volume, he shares his meditations on this glorious subject. He encourages us to develop a "sensible" and "practical" knowledge of Christ—that is, a knowledge that has its "seat in the heart." He explains, "A saving, though an unmethodical knowledge of Christ will bring us to heaven (John 17:2), but a regular and methodical, as well as a saving, knowledge of Him will bring heaven into us (Col. 2:2-3)" (xiv-xv).

The twenty chapters consist of the following topics: Christ's Humiliation; A Humble Life; A Prayer of Commendation; A

Commemorative Sign; Christ's Agony; The Nature of Christ's Death; A Lonely Death; A Lowly Death; A Prayer for Forgiveness; A Promise of Salvation; A Cry of Forsakenness; A Cry of Anguish; The Completion of Christ's Work; Christ's Burial; The Blessed Ends of Christ's Humiliation; Christ's Exaltation; Christ's Resurrection; Christ's Ascension; Christ's Present Session; and Christ's Triumphant Return.

In dealing with the Session of Christ, and based on Hebrews 1:3, Flavel wrote:

Christ is gloriously advanced to the highest throne. We do not need to consider ourselves dishonored when we suffer the vilest things for His sake. The very chains and sufferings of Christ have glory in them; hence, Moses esteemed "the reproach of Christ great riches than the treasures in Egypt" (Heb. 11:26). He saw an excellence in the worst of Christ's reproaches that made him forsake earthly honors and riches. He did not only endure the reproaches of Christ but counted them treasures. Surely there is a little paradise in suffering for Christ. If we consider how exceedingly kind Christ is to those who count it their glory to be abased for Him, it would make us love His reproaches (180).

Scott Christensen, *What About Evil? A Defense of God's Sovereign Glory* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2020). Hardback, xix + 544 pp. ISBN 978-1629955353. \$39.99).

This is a massive tome, featuring 315 sources in the bibliography and an extensive glossary. The author, a graduate (M.Div.) of The Master's Seminary and associate pastor of Kerrville (Tex.) Bible Church, deals right up front with various views of theodicy (that is, the justification of God, particularly moral responsibility with respect to the problem of evil). In doing so, he first briefly lays out several options. The Free-Will Defense, which is "the most prevalent response to the problem of evil," posits that evil is "regarded as a risk that God had to allow in order to grant humans significant freedom and responsibility." The Natural-Law Defense emphasizes that "God designed orderly, repeatable, predictable laws to govern the world, and good and bad consequences can result from the proper or improper use of these laws.... Therefore, it is not God's fault when we misuse such laws." The Greater-Good Theodicy states that "God has multiple good purposes for evil in the world, which lead to 'greater goods that could not otherwise come. These goods outweigh the evils that they overcome.'" The Soul-Making Theodicy maintains that humans are born in an immature state and "must experience pain and adversity in order to mature.... Just as the fiery furnace purifies gold, evil and suffering purify and strengthen the human soul." The Best-of-All-Possible-Worlds Defense argues that an

“omnibenevolent God would create only a world that was the best possible world that could exist. Yet this world is imperfect and full of undeniable evils. Therefore, those evils must be necessary for God to bring about subsequent goods that make this the best possible world.” The Divine-Judgment Defense believes God’s retributive justice brings about pain and suffering, including the experience of hell. “Good comes out of judgment in the form of rehabilitation, deterrence, societal protection, and retribution. The hope of ultimate divine justice redresses the suffering of the innocent” (5-6).

The author’s view is that the most Biblically faithful position “is a specific version of the *greater-good theodicy* with modified traces of the *best-of-all-possible-worlds defense*.” While acknowledging that his view does not solve “every problem connected to evil in this world” (which would be “presumptuous”), he offers this theodicy as one which “seeks to resolve the broader issue of why evil exists in the first place.” In his eyes, “God’s greatest glory is found in Christ’s work of redemption. This work of redemption becomes unnecessary, however, unless there is a good world that was ruined by evil—a world that then cries out for restoration” (6-7).

Here is how he summarizes his theodicy:

1. God’s ultimate purpose in freely creating the world is to supremely magnify the riches of his glory to all his creatures, especially human beings, who alone bear his image.
2. God’s glory is supremely magnified in the atoning work of Christ, which is the sole means of accomplishing redemption for human beings.
3. Redemption is unnecessary unless human beings have fallen into sin.
4. Therefore, the fall of humanity is necessary to God’s ultimate purpose in creating the world (7).

Perhaps the major motif in this book has to do with storytelling.

God has hardwired human beings to long for heroes in redemptive roles whereby evil is defeated and good prevails. Literature and other storytelling mediums reflect a *monomyth*—one universal storyline that evokes a human longing for redemption even as pagan myths and secular stories corrupt the source and true meaning that stand behind this unified storyline.

Christensen declares:

Once the source for monomythic themes in the his-

tory of storytelling can be ascertained in the Bible’s grand storyline, this [greater-glory] theodicy will begin to make greater sense. It shows how God’s ultimate end in creation is to maximize the display of his glory to his creatures through the redemptive work of Christ. But redemption is made unnecessary without the fall. Therefore, God purposed the fall to magnify his glory in a way that an unfallen world simply could not do (10).

Eschatologically, the author is a premillennialist. However, as he notes, the theodicy he presents would be compatible with any of the three major schools of eschatology (premillennialism, amillennialism, and postmillennialism).

An appendix, entitled “Sullied by Supralapsarianism?”, argues that neither infralapsarianism nor supralapsarianism has properly framed the critical issues. He proposes to view God’s decrees from another angle, using “three controlling and indisputable propositions”:

Proposition 1: God’s ultimate end is delighting in the magnificence of his own glory.

Proposition 2: God is in no way required to display his glory outside the intra-Trinitarian self-delight it elicits.

Proposition 3: God freely chose to create the world in order that he might have a theater to display and thus to share the delight of his own glory with his intelligent creatures especially human beings (466).

He concludes by saying that his view

seeks to assimilate the primary concerns of both supra- and infra-lapsarianism while discarding each of their inherent limitations. Technically, my proposal cannot be considered as either, since election and reprobation are secondary considerations. Ironically, the fall (*lapse*) figures prominently in the lapsarian debate even though its purpose is not always made clear. While the fall along with all its attendant evils is not a first-order concern of God’s decrees, neither is it a mysterious accident. It is, as it were, a necessary evil (!) purposed toward the greater end of magnifying God’s glory in the redemptive work of Christ whereby he brings about our rescue from evil’s dark domain (Col. 1:13-14). While evil figures prominently in our experience, it is overshadowed by the blood-soaked tree on which Christ hung, and the empty tomb from which he gloriously emerged three days later (470).

John D. Currid, foreword by David W. Chapman, *The Case for Biblical Archaeology: Uncovering the Historical Record of God's Old Testament People* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2020). Paperback, xviii + 263 pp. ISBN 978-1629953601. \$29.99.

Dr. Currid is the Chancellor's Professor of Old Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary. He has been working on archaeological and excavation matters for almost half a century; and his dedication to the topic shines through in this book.

But why study this subject? One primary reason for doing so is "to shed light on the historical and material contexts in which the events narrated in the Bible occurred. Archaeology helps to provide a life setting for biblical texts, that is, a *Sitz im Leben*. In that respect, archaeology can be a confirmatory tool, especially when the textual and archaeological evidence converge" (1).

At the same time, however, he is appropriately modest about this endeavor.

It is our contention that the purpose of archaeology (and related disciplines) is not to prove the Bible. The Bible doesn't need to be proved. It stands well enough on its own. As Charles Spurgeon once remarked, "Scripture is like a lion. Who ever heard of defending a lion? Just turn it loose; it will defend itself." As George Ernest Wright once commented, "Our ultimate aim must not be 'proof,' but truth." Biblical archaeology serves to confirm, illuminate, and give "earthiness" to the Scriptures. It helps to demonstrate that the events related in the biblical accounts actually took place in history (3).

Professor Currid avers that demonstrating the historicity of biblical events is important for two reasons. One is the ahistorical nature of contemporary society, in which "for many people, history is irrelevant, is meaningless, and has little application to modern existence." Instead, there is an obsession with "technological innovation and cultural change that arrives with lightning speed." That ahistorical mindset "is one consequence of post-modernism, post-Christian thinking, and deconstructionism." By way of contrast, there is a reality to history, and archaeology is one way to underscore that reality. Another significant reason for affirming the historicity of biblical events is in order to address the present generation's thinking which is "biblically and historically *uninformed*." A recent Barna survey revealed that at least 12 percent of adults believe that Joan of Arc was Noah's wife, and another survey indicated that 50 percent of graduating high school seniors thought that Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife!" (3-4).

The main part of this work is divided into three parts: Setting; A Journey Through the Land; and Aspects of Society.

Included in the first part is a chapter entitled "Geography of the Land of the Bible," which gives a basic overview of the geography and topography. The next chapter details the history of archaeology, including The Golden Age, 1918-1940 (think Indiana Jones). In another chapter, the author tells us of excavating tells, and follows with "A Short History of the Lands of the Bible."

Part 2 includes chapters on Galilee; the Jezreel Valley; the Negev; the Shephelah (Hebrew for "lowland," used as a technical term for "a strip of foothills to the west of the Judean Mountains and east of the southern coastal plain" [109]); the Jordan River Valley; the Southern Coastal Plain; and the Central Highlands.

Part 3 has chapters on Agriculture and Herding; Water; Architecture; Ceramics; The Hebrew Language in Archaeology; Burial Practices; and Small Finds (featuring various artifacts, including ancient artisanship, such as stoneworking, bone-working, woodworking, ivory working, and glassmaking).

There are three appendices, which present a basic timeline of the Ancient Near East; the kings of Israel and Judah; and extrabiblical references to the kings of Israel and Judah.

As one would expect, this volume has been praised by numerous scholars. For instance, Dr. Mark W. Chavalas (professor of history at the University of Wisconsin—La Crosse) wrote: "This book is a must of all serious Bible students, whether they plan to excavate in Israel or to work from their 'armchairs.' Dr. Currid is to be applauded for creating such a manual. It is hard to imagine anyone with more experience and knowledge of biblical archaeology."

But in addition to the obvious erudite nature of this work, Dr. Currid is also to be applauded for not succumbing to what so many of his academic colleagues have, viz., utilizing "B.C.E." and "C.E." ("Before Common Era" and "Common Era"), which terms are a direct attack on a Scriptural understanding of the calendar. Instead, he continues with the traditional abbreviations of "B.C." and "A.D." And the fact that he has refused to surrender to so-called experts is another reason why we can have confidence in this work and why we believe that it will stand the test of time.

John Shower, edited by Joel R. Beeke, *The Lord's Supper: Doctrines, Encouragements, and Duties* (Grand Rapids: Soli Deo Gloria Publications [an imprint of Reformation Heritage Books], 2021). Hardback, xvii + 381 pp. ISBN 978-1601788283. \$35.00.

A prominent nonconformist minister, John Shower (ca. 1657-1715) was forced into exile in Holland. After returning

Continued on Page 242.

PSALLO

Psalm 32:1–7

This year’s result of our labor is a metrical translation and tune for a most instructive and comforting Psalm, the thirty-second. The translation you have before you is very straightforward, with only a few departures from that which is familiar. In the first verse, in keeping with a literal use of the Hebrew, we have rendered the verb נָשָׂא as “to take away.” In the Authorized Version (AV) there are two words in that verse that are functional synonyms, עָשָׂה and חָטָא both meaning “sin.” The reason for the two different terms has more to do with poetic style than with nuance of meaning. In verse four we have rendered the Hebrew נְעֻמָּה as “youthful vigor” instead of the AV’s “moisture.” The word itself is only used twice, once here in Psalm 32 and again in Numbers 11:8, speaking of the “freshness” or lack of age or spoilage of the manna, that it tasted like “fresh” oil. In the rest we have followed both the AV and the Scottish Metrical version in the main.

The tune is a “common meter” tune, which by count is rendered 8.6.8.6., or 8 beats followed by 6 beats, 8 again, and 6 again. For those unfamiliar with this meter, it is very common, used in songs such as “Amazing Grace,” and “O! For a Thousand Tongues,” and many others. The Scottish Metrical Psalter has been translated from the Hebrew into common meter for every selection. The Psalter we use at our home church has 312 such selections, so that by singing through six selections per week, the worshipper will compass the entire “Divine Hymnal” in one year. So in theory, the tune you have before you could be used (or any other common meter tune) to sing the entire Psalter. I have named the tune לֹא יִחַשְׁבֶּה לֹא (Lo-Yachshov) or “He will not Impute,” in keeping with the teaching of this Psalm concerning the Lord’s not imputing sin to those who call upon His name, confessing their sins.

As for the Psalm, it is most instructive and comforting, as it speaks about the Lord’s forgiveness of sin. We have used the contextual boundaries noted in the Psalm itself, the Hebrew word סֶלָה (Selah) and chosen to translate only the first seven verses. While scholars are divided as to how exactly this word is to be used, there is a contextual separation or boundary normally associated with it.¹ In this section, David speaks of the man whose sins are taken away or lifted from him, covered, and not reckoned or imputed. In all of these descriptions we have the guilt of the sinner being removed

from him by the gratuitous action of God Himself, forming the final thought in our selection, “Thou art my hiding-place.” There is no other place to whom one may go for forgiveness than to the Offended Party, God. The Apostle Paul makes use of this Psalm in his master-thesis on the Gospel, Romans 1–5, especially in 4:6–8, which reads,

Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, *Saying*, Blessed *are* they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed *is* the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.²

We note not only the teaching of the Old Testament here revealing gratuitous justification by faith alone apart from works, but also that this is taught by way of logical necessity, a good and necessary consequence of Scripture itself, as Paul makes use of our Psalm under consideration. Teaching in Romans chapter four the imputation of righteousness, apart from works to the believer, Paul then quotes David who taught its opposite, that the Lord “will not impute sin.” David wrote that sin will not be reckoned to those who believe [in Christ], and Paul cites this as the necessary corollary to his own explicit teaching in the New Testament of imputed righteousness, revealing the necessary connection between these two doctrines, and the lack of any middle ground between them. If sin is not imputed, righteousness is, and if righteousness is imputed, sin is not. The doctrine of gratuitous imputation of the righteousness of Christ, received by faith alone, is an Old Testament doctrine also taught in the New Testament, where it is even more clear, and so the Old Testament saint was not delivered from the wrath to come by his works at all, but because the Lord did not impute his sin to him.

After affirming this Gospel-doctrine, David reveals the marks of true faith and its pleasant and satisfying fruit. The first is confession of sin, and the Spirit bearing witness with David’s spirit that he was indeed forgiven. This is first given in its corollary—that to neglect this evangelical duty of self-examination and confession of sin is to remain under the chastising hand of the Lord, as it pressed heavily upon David, and will also upon us, if we neglect this Gospel ordinance. Indeed as a Pastor

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1. See William S. Plumer, *Studies in the Book of Psalms: Being a Critical and Expository Commentary, with Doctrinal and Practical Remarks on the Entire Psalter* (Philadelphia, 1872), pp. 20–21, John Peter Lange et al., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Psalms* (Logos Bible Software, 2008), pp. 30–31, and Joseph Addison Alexander, *The Psalms Translated and Explained* (Edinburgh, 1864), p. 20.

2. *The Holy Bible: King James Version*, electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version (Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995), Romans 4:6–8.

I have spoken with those who have felt, palpably, this same chastisement, and wondered aloud if they were truly forgiven their sins. But we, with David have some “good news” for such sufferers—that there is a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, and while the evangelical duty of confession of sin is not a quid-pro quo with the Offended Party, it is a means of cleansing, and of knowing, by faith, what it is to be forgiven.³ Truly, the neglect of self-examination and confession of sin contributes, on the one hand, to a dangerous presumption, and on the other, to a want of the assurance of forgiveness. The remedy for both is a sincere and searching self-examination, where great pains and courage are taken to seek out those open and hidden sins, as part of our making use of gospel grace.⁴ David reveals his commitment to confession of sin in verse 5, where we not only have the record of his asking, but his decided conviction to do so. This is good practical divinity, as it exhibits to us that there are times when such verbal commitments need to be made to give greater strength in the performance of duty.

We note as well that there is a revealed end to the opportunity to make confession and seek forgiveness. This is the hedge against the presumption we spoke of earlier, warning us not to think we might “repent at leisure.” Hear the wisdom of the Rev. Thomas Manton:

Oh, could we look upon death as at our back or heels! If men did but consider that within a few days they must go to heaven or hell, that there is but the slender thread of a frail life upon which they depend, that is soon fretted asunder, they would not venture any longer to be out of a state of grace, nor dally with God. But we think we may live long, and time enough to repent by leisure; we put far off the day of our change, and so are undone by our own security.⁵

But the godly are not so (Hebrew, חַסִּידִים Chasid, faithful ones). They do call upon the Lord in that early and acceptable time, and He is found of them, and they receive the knowledge of their forgiveness, working the means of self-examination, confession, and repentance from sin. They are the ones who will be delivered in the floods of great judgment, and in the day of the great and final assize.

Our section finishes with David, who was pursued by his enemies, and convicted by his own sins, speaking of the Lord Jehovah as his “hiding place” from these threats to his eternal felicity. The Hebrew is סִתְּרוֹ secret place, or covert—a place of protection. In this is the acknowledgement that it is God

alone who saves—He is our refuge most secure and covering from the falling fiery indignation that will devour all His adversaries. Our works will not deliver, strength or prowess will not, our cleverness and mental acuity cannot, but God alone is our place of refuge and safety. David speaks not only of God’s deliverance and faithfulness, but in that deliverance, joy and gladness in song. Truly the Psalter itself is a witness to this deliverance of the people of God, and they take courage from the faithfulness of Jehovah there proclaimed and sung back to Him with the confidence that He is their secret place in the days of trouble. Truly, they are compassed about not only by songs of deliverance, but deliverance itself, in the Person of their Savior and Redeemer (Zech. 2:5).■

In Brief: David Dickson on Psalm 32:6-7. A Brief Explication of the Psalms, Volume 1 (1834), p. 168–169.

V. 6. The first use of this doctrine and of David’s experience, is to teach others how to behave themselves in their trouble. Whence learn, 1. The doctrine of justification by gracious forgiving iniquity, is the ground of all the godly’s approaches to God, and right worshipping of him; for, to show the use of this doctrine, thus tried by experience, he saith, *every godly one shall pray unto thee*. 2. There is a time when God may be found, to wit, so long as God is offering grace and sparing extremity of wrath, which time men ought to lay hold on, not knowing how short while it may last: they shall pray *in a time when thou mayest be found*. 3. It is possible, that a godly man may be in the midst of the waters of sore troubles, and yet these troubles not come near unto him, because God can furnish the man an ark in Christ, whereby he shall swim above the deluge; and when God keepeth off trouble, that it proveth not hurtful (much more when he maketh trouble a means of spiritual good to a man, and giveth the man true peace and contentment in himself, it is verified what is promised here: *surely in the floods of great waters, they shall not come near him*).

V. 7. From the second use wherein David confirmeth his own faith for time to come, learn: 1. Experience of God’s mercies bygone should fasten resolution to make use of faith hereafter in all troubles, as here. 2. The godly after one trouble, should prepare for another, after one delivery expect another, as here. 3. What God hath proved himself to be to us before, we may promise he shall be the same to us in effect hereafter, because he is that by covenant and promise to us, what in practice we have found him to be; for David reasoneth thus, *thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble*; that is, I shall have no damage by trouble, as is said. A justified soul resolving to make use of God in every condition that can come unto him, according to the covenant, may promise to himself a comfortable outgate of all his troubles, and matter of praise and joy from God on all hands; yea, he may confidently say with David, *thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance*.■

3. See 1 John 1:8–10.

4. See Psalm 38:1–8; 51:3–5; Proverbs 28:13; Isaiah 57:17; Jeremiah 31:18.

5. Thomas Manton, *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton*, vol. 7 (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1872), p. 144. See also Isaiah 49:8; 55:6; Luke 19:42–44; 2 Corinthians 6:1–2; Hebrews 4:1–9.

Psalm 32:1-7

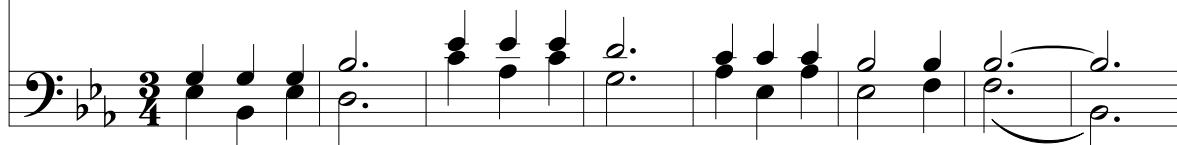
A Psalm of David, Maschil.

Lo-Yachshov

Todd L. Ruddell



¹O bless-ed is the man for whom is tak-en all a - way
²Bless'd is the man to whom the LORD doth not im - pute his sin
³When si-lence I then did re - tain t'was that my ver - y bones
⁴For day and night Thy heav-y hand did sore up - on me lie,
⁵My sin made known my 'niq - ui - ty to Thee re - veal'd I said,
⁶For this to Thee shall all th'up-right pray when thou may'st be found
⁷Thou art my sure ref - uge se - cure me from dis-tress doth keep



His trans-gres-sion; and all his sin is cov-er - ed al - way.
 And thus a - bid - ing in his soul de-ceit's not found there - in.
 Weak-end, they were as a - ged, through my roar-ing all day long.
 So that my youth - ful vig-or is turn'd like the sum - mer, dry.
 Un - to the LORD I will con - fess and my guilt Thou for - gav'st.
 And cer - tain the great wa-ters' floods shall not him com - pass round.
 And with songs of de - liv - er - ance a - bout shall com - pass me.



ANTIQUARY

The James Durham MSS IV: Lectures on the Revelation of John

INTRODUCTION

Since the last Antiquary entry on this subject, James Durham manuscript material continues to be discovered.¹ In May of 2019, as I began research and work on a new edition of Durham's lectures on the book of The Revelation of John, Matthew Vogan informed me that there was a volume of manuscript lectures on Revelation chapters 1–11, which may have been by Durham. However, the catalogue entry contained no attribution.² After some further correspondence and investigation, it was confirmed from the opening lines, that the notes were indeed a manuscript of the lectures given by James Durham, and not merely notes, but a fairly complete text of an early form of the lectures. The first lecture is dated February 6, 1653, which

1. This is the fifth in a series of articles pertaining to James Durham manuscript materials. See previous *Antiquary* instalments: "The James Durham MSS Held by Glasgow University," *The Confessional Presbyterian* v5 (2009); "The James Durham MSS Part II," v7 (2011); "A Transcription of James Durham's Sermon on Ephesians 4:11–12, taught before the Synod of Glasgow, October 5, 1652," v12 (2016); "The James Durham MS III: James Durham's 228 Sermons on Song of Solomon 2–8," v13 (2017). Since this was not conceived as an ongoing series, the reader will please pardon the inconsistent numbering of the articles.

2. Email and social media correspondence with Matthew Vogan, May 2019.

3. Durham was called to serve as minister in Glasgow Cathedral and began ministry there in October of 1652. He took up preaching on the Song of Solomon chapter 2–8, which he most likely completed late in 1655. It is clear then, that only a year into his ministry he began also to lecture on the Revelation of John, which he likely completed about May of 1655 (assuming one lecture a week and one week off every fifth week; see the biography and possible preaching schedule in *A Commentary upon the Book of the Revelation*, vol. 3 (Naphtali Press Special Editions, 2022 forthcoming). Thus, as John Carstares noted, Durham began his ministry in Glasgow by tackling two of the most "mysterious" books of Scripture at the same time. Carstares, preface, *Clavis Cantici* (1668).

4. The first volume of three planned of Durham's Lectures on Revelation appeared as the first volume inaugurating a new annually produced series of books titled Naphtali Press Special Editions.

5. My thanks to David C. Lachman for his assessment of the period and type of binding from the photograph. See also, David Pearson, *English Bookbinding Styles 1450–1800* (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2014).

meant that these lectures likely were in the early original state before Durham reworked them for publication in the closing year of his life as he declined from the effects of tuberculosis.³ In the preface to the lectures, Robert Baillie noted Durham did not have time to polish the texts for publication, which might lead one to expect little significant variation between the 1653 manuscript and the 1658 published text. This proved not to be quite the case. As one would expect, the digressions, which are plainly stated to have been added for publication, are not present. However, many of the lectures appear to be significantly reworked. So the manuscript lectures appear to be "fair copies" or more probably copied from refined or "fair copies" of Durham's remarks taken down by one or more persons who were in the congregation. Over the following two years, photographs were obtained and much of the text and many full lectures were transcribed and presented in notes and appendices in the first two volumes of a new three volume edition of Durham's lectures on Revelation.⁴

The description of the manuscript is as follows: New College Library, Edinburgh. MS Rev 2. "REVELATION, Book of. [Commentary of Revelation ch. 1–11.] 4°." Binding is a circa 1700 stationary binding in poor, but typical condition, in reverse English calf, with cover designs of two concentric frames joined at the corners made of tripled blind fillets.⁵ "No pagin. [c.400p..] Dated on p. 1: 6th Feb. 1653." Sadly, there is no history or indication of prior ownership of the volume that may have helped explain any relation to the published text.

There is a complicated mixture of two main handwriting styles with apparent evidence of gaps left and filled in by possibly different hands at points. There is at least one additional hand on one page. None of the handwriting is Durham's. The lectures on chapter one are all in Hand A (pp. 1–90). Hand B begins with the lectures on chapter 2 and run through the first lecture on chapter four (pp. 91–178). Hand A picks up and runs a long ways (pp. 179–342) with a possible brief reversion to Hand B but this is not certain (pp. 294–295). Hand C appears briefly on page 308. Hand B finishes out the volume (pp. 343–497). There are variations within the identified hands which may be due to tiredness, variation in ink, quills, etc., or just possibly additional hands doing the work. The writing is generally in one column of text per page. However, there is one interesting variation from that norm. Beginning at page 260, there are three pages where the writer switches to a double column text in some apparent effort to fill in a gap left for missing text to the point it reverts back to single column again. The inside column continues from the previous page and the text continues in the inside column to take up again on the next single column page. The outside columns have an out of sequence text, but no instruction where this text is supposed to fit in that lecture. The text is light to very faint on all three of the double column pages.

It is not certain what all this could mean other than that several individuals were helping to compile a full text for some purpose, such as personal use, or possibly for Durham's use. At this point, there is no evidence proving the use of this particular manuscript by Durham to produce his refined text for publication (e.g., clear editorial changes, text in Durham's handwriting, etc.).⁶

It is not the intent and quite impossible to present for comparison any significant amount of material from what these two volumes now in print contain (respectively 504 and 632 pages in length) and the text of MSRev2. However, to give a hint and to take an opportunity to present some content in a somewhat different manner, opportunity is taken to present several lectures from James Durham's Revelation lectures in a side by side comparison.

The first example of the types of changes James Durham made to the notes of his lectures on Revelation, is the second lecture on chapter two. This lecture is of interest because it is tied to documentation given in a life of Durham, noting that a manuscript of the lectures existed nearly 70 years after his death. In "A Collection of Some Memorable Things in the Author's Life" appended to the 1726 edition of the Revelation lectures, the biographer writes: "There is a manuscript copy of the lectures on the Revelation still preserved, which appears to be in the same words as he delivered them, and is the same in substance with that in print; only it has sundry observations, here and there, which are not in print; the most material one, it is presumed, will not be unacceptable to some readers to be here inserted."⁷ The text in the left column is the published text with the text of the observation given in the 1726 biography inserted, and on the right is the considerably different text of the same lecture in MSRev2. The reference in this lecture to "late confusions," relates to the fact that Durham ministered in Glasgow in the 1650s, which was the time of Cromwell's occupation, which brought an influx of the various ideas and sects that had been rampant in London. During the same period, the Scottish Church was rent by the Protester-Resolutioner schism, in which Durham attempted to play peacemaker and reconciler, to no avail. For information covering this period, see the introductions in *Consultations of the Ministers of Edinburgh, 1652–1657*, ed. William Stephen (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1921); *Johnston of Warriston's Diary*, vol. 2, ed. David Hay Fleming (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1919); vol. 3, ed. James D. Ogilvie (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1940); and see J. Ogilvie, "A bibliography of the Resolutioner-Protester controversy, 1650–1659," *Transactions of the Edinburgh Bibliographical Society* (1930) 14:57–86. For a recovered history from various records long overlooked, see Kyle D. Holfelder, "Factionalism in the Kirk during the Cromwellian Invasion and Occupation of Scotland, 1650 to

1660: The Protester-Resolutioner Controversy," Ph.D. Thesis, The University of Edinburgh (1998).

Lectures two and three on Revelation chapter seven present some of the usual editing by James Durham to refine the text, by rephrasing, adding, or omitting material, such as the more direct, and often quite poignant, applications and uses directed to his Glasgow congregation. Less usual, they present a case where material in one lecture (lecture three) was removed and placed in another (lecture two) of the final published form of the text. With the omission of the uses and additional material in the observations, lecture three is shorter than most, and the remaining text is not significantly different than the manuscript. The one addition of any consequence is the addition of a reference to Bellarmine's *Controversiarum de Sumo Pontifice*.

Another interesting lecture is the first lecture on chapter nine, which in MSRev2 has a short preamble that may have been the original first lecture on that chapter, but for some reason was very brief, followed by a second lecture labeled as lecture 1. The two texts were considerably revised for publication to form a single first lecture on chapter nine.

In the manuscript text, words inserted to help with the meaning are within square brackets and if italicized define the preceding word or words. A question mark [?, (?)] denotes hard to read letters or some doubt about the transcription of a word or words. Words that were underlined in the manuscript or words or phrases that ended with an unpaired closing square bracket ("]") are set in italics. A sword (†) indicates there was no underlining for emphasis in the original. All quotation marks have been added. Formatting, modernization of spelling, verb agreement, punctuation, etc., are updated without notice. Any crossed out text is that way in the original.

The published texts are the lectures as edited and presented in the first two volumes of Durham's lectures, published in the new series, Naphtali Press Special Editions: *A Commentary upon the Book of the Revelation Lectures on Chapters 1–3*, by James Durham (Naphtali Press and Reformation Heritage Books, 2020), and *A Commentary upon the Book of the Revelation, Lectures on Chapters 4–11*, by James Durham (Naphtali Press and Reformation Heritage Books, 2021).

CHRIS COLDWELL ■

6. My thanks to the assistance of hand writing expert Evelyn A. Gillies, BSc MSc PhD FSSoc Dip MCSFS, who confirmed the identification of the two main hands, and the brief third and suggested reasons for the other variations.

7. "A Collection of Some Memorable Things in the Author's Life," in *Commentary on Revelation* (Glasgow: Printed by William Duncan, and are to be sold at his Shop in the Salt-market, in Gibson's-Land, M.DCC.XXXIX [1739]). Cf. *Collected Sermons of James Durham*, v. 2, 72 Sermons on Isaiah 53 (Naphtali Press and Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), pp. 41–42.

REVELATION, CHAPTER TWO, LECTURE TWO

4. *Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.*
 5. *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*

The first example of the editorial changes made by James Durham to the notes of his lectures on Revelation, is the second lecture on chapter two. This lecture is of interest because it is tied to documentation given in a life of Durham, noting that a manuscript of the lectures existed nearly 70 years after his death.

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Our Lord Jesus is the faithful and true witness, who impartially testifies, both of what is right and what is wrong in His church. We have heard His commendation showing what was right. He began at that to make way for the other part of His testimony, which is to discover what was wrong, and it is set down in verse 4.

I. More generally by a transition from the commendation, *Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee*; that is, “though all these things be true, and you be commendable in them, and I commend you for them;” yet there is a *nevertheless* added; “that is not all, there are some things wrong which I also take notice of, and will quarrel for, though there be many things right.” This shows: 1. Our Lord Jesus’ impartiality in taking notice of all, good and ill. And 2. It shows the extent of duty which consists in a universal respect to all His commands, and failing in some things may be as a dead fly in a box of ointment, to mar the savor of the rest [Eccl. 10:1]. And 3. That it is meet for believers to know their whole estate, their ill, as well as their good. Both are useful to them to be known, and both are represented by our Lord Jesus unto them. His commending of them alters not what is justly reproveable; His reproof prejudices them not in what is commendable. This way believers ought to take in reference to themselves. 4. It shows that even believers should take a reproof, as well as a commendation, especially when it comes from our Lord Jesus’ mouth; yea, though in many things they be right, yet should a reproof, notwithstanding thereof, be digested in anything wherein they are wrong.

II. The particular reproof is set down, *thou hast fallen from thy first love*. 1. By love here is not understood the object beloved, as it is said of widows (1 Tim. 5:12), who had cast off their first faith; it was not so here. **There was no public defection in matter of doctrine**, as the commendation preceding clears. 2. Nor is it necessary here to be understood principally of a decay of love in the habit itself, but in the exercise and fruits thereof, as is clear by the opposition following, *do the first works*, which points out the fault reproofed to have

Our Lord Jesus is the faithful witness and what testimony He gives may be leve [*left aside*] in the former part. He has been speaking to what was commendable in the church, and they are things right commendable in so far as concerns their outward way of administration. In the rest of the epistle, we have these four things more. 1. The intimation of a quarrel that was betwixt Him and her, for all the commendation He had given there, yet *nevertheless I have found somewhat against thee*. 2. The particular quarrel is laid down, *Because thou hast left thy first love*. 3. A direction what to do for remedy, *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen and repent and do the first works*. 3. [*sic*] To make the direction and exhortation have the more weight, to tell them that He was serious and in sad [*serious*] earnest and that whatever they thought of their sin, He thought much of it, He adds a threatening, *else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place*, which in a word says that they should be no church. 4. And last in the threatening, [*lest*] He should be mistaken [*misconstrued*] as if He looked on their cure and delivery as [a] desperate condition, He tells them of some good things they had which He approved of, v. 6. *This thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate*.[†]

To make the words more clear, it may be ASKED, what is meant by their falling from or leaving of their first love?

ANSWER. By love here not [*sic*] understand not the object beloved. They had not altered their profession. **This was no public defection among them, as what is spoken of these widows, 1 Timothy 5:12**, who are said to have cast off their first faith; that is, the first profession of their faith and fallen away from it. That was not so with these Ephesians. They were professing the truth in purity and had discipline in exercise in thoro[e] [*throughout*]. 2. That which then is meant by falling from their first love is something inward. It is the grace of love in the heart and in so far as concerns their Christian walk that they were fallen from. And so, 1. Though they were outwardly zealous in the form of religion, yet they were fallen from the inward tender frame that once they had. 2. It is not

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consisted in the neglect of these, which is again removed by the performing of them; though we think there is a suitability between the habit and its fruits, as it is with the one, so is it with the other, and few acts and fruits do evidence the habit thereof to be cold and languishing. 3. Neither do we understand here by *falling* from their first love, a total falling from fruits, but comparatively **a falling from some former acts and degrees**, or their vigorous manner of acting from love, as they had wont formerly to do, called *first love* here, and afterwards, *first works*.

By comparing then this reproof with the commendation, we conceive it includes these three:

1. A falling from those duties wherein especially true love to God and charity to others consisted; that is, they were much in outward reformation, profession and zeal that way, but wanting [*lacking*] inwardly, heart-burning love and affection to God, and so in some measure were hypocritical in that their love within was not answerable to their profession without, but were more taken up in external fruits, than in the inward exercise of love, in so far agreeing with the Pharisees in that fault reproved, *Ye tithe mint*, etc., but *pass over judgment and the love of God* (Luke 11:42).

2. As it looks to others it may say, though there was zeal in the external worship of God, yet there was great defect of that love, sympathy, and affection of one of them, with and to another that should be; this being ordinary, that love inflamed to God-ward, and love one to another, go together. And therefore, as it imports they had fallen from their former warm impressions of love to God, so also from their kindly affection one to another, and had fallen in part to be more in sacrifice and externals of worship, than in mercy and love one to another (Hosea 6:6–7; Matt. 12:7).

3. The third is a decay of love in the manner of doing duties, so that though they continued in the practice of former duties towards God, and towards others, yet in respect of love to God, as the principle acting them in such duties or affections towards others, they had much decayed, and therefore may be charged to have fallen from their first love, though they continued in the external performances because the former native vigor and life in those duties was decayed.

Whence we may gather that there may be many things commendable in a church or in a person, and yet there may be a secret quarrel between Christ and them, as Psalm 78 verses 34–36, compared together do show; yea, that there may be many things right in a believer in respect of externals, and yet a dissatisfaction to Jesus Christ in their secret condition. That this angel and many of these written to in this church were believers, this reproof clears, which supposes them once to have had love. That they have many things commendable,

the habit, nor any part of the habit of grace that they were fallen from, much less were they fully fallen from the estate of grace, but they were fallen from the actual exercise of grace in the measure and degree that once they were at. For it is not said they are fallen from their love simply, but from their first love, and so from their love not in respect of the habit, **but in respect of the degree** of it and in the fruits of love. Therefore, in the remedy which He prosecutes, He bids them do their first works. So their falling from their first love consists in these two things whereof they were guilty.

1. In a falling from these duties that especially did bear out their love to God and other of the people of God, and they were more taken up with duties that concerned the well being of their church, and their church-state and condition, than with the inward duties of holiness. They were zealous against corruptions creeping in amongst them and in taking order with corrupt men, and yet negligent in the duties of godliness and mercy, and we have a sin like the charge on the Pharisees [in] Luke 11:42. *Ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs and pass over judgment and the love of God; these ye ought to have done and not left the other undone.*[†] And though we will not compare this church with the Pharisees, they being altogether hypocritical, yet the saints having hypocrisy in them, the heart coldrifies [*coldness; lack of zeal*] may steal on them and [regardless] what they have in external duties, they may sit up [*become careless*] in more spiritual and inward duties and in the fruits of love toward God and their neighbor, and in some sort be as the Jews, more addicted to outward sacrifices than the works of mercy.

2. It consists in an inlaid [*deficiency*] in the manner of their doing duties, that though they had an outward zeal for religion, and an indignation against corrupt men that came in to corrupt it, a patience and stoutness in suffering for it, yet some corrupt principles stealing in upon them in so doing, and some coldrifies of affection in the doing of duties called for from them, whether in the ministry to the people or in both ministry and people toward God and one another, these duties were not cleanly and spiritually carried on, and in this respect their first works are opposed in the manner of their discharge of them to their manner of performing duties now, as if He said, “Ye were sometimes wont to rebuke sin and feed my people out of love to me, but now ye are grown corrupt and fallen under a decay in that; therefore, do your first works. Remember love, warm your affection was once, and labor to regain that frame,” it being ordinary to believers at their first incoming to be warm in their love in doing duties to God and to another. In short, it is this, “nevertheless, for all that I have

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the former verse is clear; to wit, pure profession of truth, zealous exercise of discipline, diligence in doing, and laboring, patience in suffering, honesty in their end, *for Christ's name's sake*, and continuing in all these without fainting. Yet is there a *nevertheless* added, which may make hearts to tremble, and not to reckon their condition from external performances, and ought to put [*drive*] believers to it, to see how they will free themselves from this part of the challenge. 2. Our Lord Jesus especially takes notice of the love of His people, and is much swayed in His commendations and reproofs according as He finds it in exercise towards Him, and towards others. 3. Love within may be cold when folks' practices without look very hot, and upon the matter may be accepted of Christ. 4. Believers often at their first engaging to Christ, have their love more warm toward Him, and towards others, than afterward it will be; or believers ordinarily slip from that warmth of affection that accompanies their entry, and become more cold in their affections towards God and towards others; the first love continues not. 5. Backsliding and declining from what folk have been, either in profession or practice, is and will be a special article of Christ's charge. Hence is it that *hold fast* is so frequently repeated in the following epistles, not only to intimate what is our duty but also to evidence how ill the Lord takes declining when He finds it among His people—*If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him* (Heb. 10:38). 6. Every decay is a *falling* and hurts the work of grace proportionably as gross commissions do, and it is as impossible for a man to sit up [*become careless*] in the exercise of inward graces, and not to hurt them [*himself*], as for a man to fall from a height and not be wounded.

[OBSERVATION.¹ “Wonder not why God quarrels with Scotland; we need not say it is for corruption in doctrine or discipline, nor for our zealous going about it; that was not His quarrel with Ephesus. Therefore, He commends them for hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans. Neither is it his quarrel with us, but as it was **his quarrel with Ephesus**, that she was fallen from her first love, so it is with us. There has been much profession of love to God, and zeal for **him** in professors, and in the outward face of judicatories, **which we** are not to call in question, nor lay the quarrel on it. Our Lord Jesus would never

commended of in thee, there is something in thee that is not right. Though ye be zealous in externals, ye are short in the duties of mercy and in your charity to one another, neither are ye so warm in your love to Me, nor so single in doing duties as ye wont [*are accustomed*] to be.”

OBSERVE hence

That there may be many things commendable in a church or person, in a minister and people, and yet much hid peltry [*rubbish*] within, to speak so, much secret ground of quarrel for all that. It is a strong conmixion [*commingling*] that is like what will look to the commendation going before and compared with that which follows, *I know they works, and thy labor, etc., nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee.*[†] As Psalm 78: 34, 35, 36. There is a brave temper spoken of in the people, *when he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and inquired early after God. They remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer.*[†] Yet there is added as God's censure; *Nevertheless, they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right within.*[†] This was much unsound work within for as fair within as was without.

APPL. Wonder not why God quarrels with Scotland; we need not say it is for corruption in doctrine or discipline, nor for our zealous going about it; that was not His quarrel with Ephesus. Therefore, He commends them for hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans. Neither is it his quarrel with [*against*] us. But as it was **Ephesus's quarrel**,¹ that she was fallen from her first love, so it is with us. There has been much profession of love to God, and zeal for **God** in professors, and in the outward face of judicatories, **and which** we are not to call in question, nor lay the quarrel on it. Our Lord Jesus would never have quarreled Ephesus nor us for zeal and faithfulness.

1. This is the text of the Observation as given in the biography of 1726. It does not appear in the finalized lecture, but is put here to easily compare it to the version in MSRev2. In A Collection of Some Memorable Things in the Author's Life appended to the 1726 edition of the Revelation lectures, the biographer writes: “There is a manuscript copy of the lectures on the Revelation still preserved, which appears to be in the same words as he delivered them, and is the same in substance with that in print; only it has sundry observations, here and there, which are not in print; the most material one, it is presumed, will not be unacceptable to some readers to be here inserted.”

1. Here, the bolded text notes the minor differences between the version given in the 1726 biography of Durham and in MSRev2. The changes are not out of keeping with what an editor may have done, though it may also be the case that the text came from a different and perhaps more refined manuscript.

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have quarreled Ephesus nor us for zeal and faithfulness. But if we look to **his quarrel with Scotland**, it is defection—not an outward defection from the truth and purity of doctrine, nor from the external duties of religion, but an inward defection, a declining in the exercise of grace. We have not been so careful to keep up the exercise of grace before God, as to be seen of men. 2. There is a declining in love, **especially love** to God, and love to one another, which may be seen in our walking uncharitably and untenderly. 3. A defection in the manner of performing duties; our fasts have not been from a right principle, our censures not in love to the **souls of the people**; much roughness and untenderness in drawing them forth. **The duty may be commendable**, but the principle **from which it flowed** may be a ground of quarrel. Therefore, look upon this epistle as if Christ were writing a letter to Scotland; and **in His letter, saying**, “for as much purity and zeal as ye have, yet ye are fallen from your first love; much of your love, warmness, and tenderness is away; there is a declining and defection from grace in the exercise of it, or from that which seemed to be grace:” **this will be found to be** our sin before God. The state we are in looks so like Ephesus, whether we compare the outward state of our church **with that** before these late confusions came in, some things **among** us being commendable, like unto the **commendable things** here; or whether we look to our inward distemper, or whether we look to God’s threatening to remove our candlestick, which is the threatening applied to this sin of declining in love, **that should** make us all take with [own] our guilt, and make use of the warning, and would to God we could make right use of it. Certainly, we are called to look on this letter as directed to **Scotland as to Glasgow**; the sin is ours; the duty is ours; and the threatening does also belong to us. And if there **be anything commendable**, it is more in outward form **than reality**. **Believers are liable to** this declining from their first love, though not from their steadfastness, and may have a deep hand in drawing on the strokes here threatened; **therefore, let them so much** the more guard against it.”]

Verse 5. **Follows the direction** which our Lord prescribes as the duty suiting their case, and the threatening wherewith He backs it. The direction has three steps, everyone of them making way for another. The first is, *Remember from whence thou art fallen*. That is, “advert and consider how it is with you,” be it [as it] was at the beginning; that so by reflecting upon themselves, and comparing their present condition with what is past, they might be brought to take up their own condition. In sum, it implies that there had been in them an inadvertency unto and forgetfulness of their own condition for a time, which had made them without challenges slip into and continue in that backslidden condition. Unto this, *remembering*

But if we look on **Scotland’s quarrel**, it is defection—not an outward defection from the truth and purity of doctrine, nor from the external duties of religion, but an inward defection, a declining in the exercise of grace. We have not been so careful to keep up the exercise of grace before God, as to be seen of men. 2. There is a declining in love, **especially in love** to God, and love to one another, which may be seen in our walking uncharitably and untenderly. 3. A defection in the manner of performing duties; our fasts have not been from a right principle; our censures not in love to the **souls of people**; much roughness and untenderness in drawing them forth. **The duty commendable**, but the principle **it flowed from** may be a ground of quarrel. Therefore, look upon this epistle as if Christ were writing a letter to Scotland; and **which letter saying**, for as much purity and zeal as ye have, yet ye are fallen from your first love; much of your love, warmness, and tenderness is away; there is a declining and defection from grace in the exercise of it, or from that which seemed to be grace: **this will be found** our sin before God. The state we are in looks so like Ephesus, whether we compare the outward state of our church **with it** before these late confusions came in, some things **amongst** us being commendable, like unto the **things commendable** here; or whether we look to our inward distemper, or whether we look to God’s threatening to remove our candlestick, which is the threatening applied to this sin of declining in love, **that it should** make us all take with [own] our guilt, and make use of the warning; and would to God we could make right use of it. Certainly, we are called to look on this letter as directed to **Scotland and to Glasgow**; the sin is ours; the duty is ours, and the threatening does also belong to us. And if there **be anything to be commended**, it is more in outward form than in **reality**. Always professors may be, **yea believers, are capable of** this declining from their first love, though not from their steadfastness, and may have a deep hand in drawing on the strokes here threatened; **therefore much** the more guard against it.

Follows the direction He gives them, for He never gives a conviction of sin, but He gives a direction on the back of it. And the direction is to us as to them in these three steps. 1. Remember from whence² thou art fallen, which implies 1. An inadversity [*inadvertence*] and forgetfulness in their condition, wherein they were fallen. They [did]³ not observe how they were fallen under the decay. Therefore, He

2. There are some small holes in the upper left of the page affecting a few letters and words. The damage appears original since the same hand appears to have tried to write around the damage. The word “whence” is written above “thou.”

3. The missing “did,” due to the page damage, has been written interline above “not.”

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is opposed, which takes in not only a simple act of memory but a sensible exercise of the conscience and affections also, following upon their reflecting on themselves; like the word, *Thou shalt remember thy ways*, etc. (Ezek. 16:61).

The second part of the direction is *repent*. This is the fruit and end of the former, relating also to what was past, that not only they should look upon their own ways, but that their eye should affect their heart, for the upstirring of them[selves] in the exercise of repentance—which includes these two:

1. A kindly indignation against their sin and against themselves for their sin, so as in some part they avenge God of themselves in the judging and censuring of themselves in the behalf of God, as it is in 2 Corinthians 7:11.

2. It takes in an inward and outward change of their way for the time to come, which is ever a fruit of true repentance; when the party is brought not only to confess but to forsake their sin, as the words following clear in the third direction; which is, *do the first works*. This relates unto the time to come. That is, that what once they had been at in the performance of worship to God, and in duties one to another in the manner, as well as in the matter, and were now fallen from (as we hinted at in the reproof), that they should, by all means, set themselves to recover the same, this being a native fruit and companion of repentance, carefully to abstain from the evils and perform the duties which they have been most touched within the challenge. These three go well together, and notably prescribe the remedy of a soul backslidden from liveliness to deadness, and directs to the recovery of their former state, which will not be attained by lazy prayers and fainting complaints, but by serious upstirring and exercise of these three: *self-searching*, *repentance*, and *practice*, and that in the native order as they lie.

More particularly from the several directions, OBSERVE: 1. That as forgetfulness of our own condition and not reflecting on ourselves is the great cause of much declining and backsliding in heart, and of continuing therein, so upon the contrary, self examination, and remembering of our own way, and reflecting on ourselves, is a notable means to prevent decay and to entertain a good frame, as also to further the exercise of repentance and to recover a frame when it is lost. 2. Believers may fall into that neglect. 3. When believers become negligent, they decline in part, though not wholly. 4. When believers fall, they are to take the same way for their recovery. 5. Believers may be under great decay, and yet not take great notice of it, nor from whence they are fallen; yea, it implies further, that where the decay is within and the carriage fair without (as here), it is hard to get them convinced of it.

From the second step of the direction, *Repent*, etc. OBSERVE 1. That repentance is a duty incumbent even to

puts them to remember it. It is a sad thing when folks fall in defection and do not know of it, do not observe nor discern it. And yet 2. This is incident even to believers, especially when folks keep up the outward form, it is then hard to convince them of inward declining. 2. It implies a collecting of themselves to find out their own case, and this is the first step to folk's recovery and a great help to recover, and our Lord presupposes this as that without [which] He expects no amendment. Therefore, these are put together and go ordinarily together: accuracy in folk's walk and diligence in searching, and by, on the other hand, security and neglect of searching goes hand in hand. It were telling many of us to be remembering what we are fallen from and what we are like to fall in. Sober searching is the like of tenderness as the neglect of searching ^and tenderness^4 goes hand in hand. It were telling many of us to be remembering what we are fallen from and what we are like to fall in. Sober searching is the light of tenderness, and the neglect, of searching opens a door to declining. 3. It implies and imports that it will take folks a collecting of themselves, a remembering and searching and exercise of mind and judgment to find out their declining and other ills. Sin is so deceitful and steals on so subtly, especially inward sins of the kind and being [that] fairdet [*painted*] over with shows and natural fruits, formality and the like, that it is not easily discerned.

Second step of the direction is *Repent*, which is the end of their remembering. He would have them gathering their sins and putting them before them to the end they may repent them. By repentance here, we understand these two acts. 1. An inward [act] in reference to what is past, heart sober searching being made of ills, then to judge and condemn itself, viewing* these ills till it loathe them, grieving and mourning for them.*5 This is that Job has, chap. 42[:5-6], *Since I saw thee, I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes,*†

4. The words appear interline above “goes hand” in a much lighter ink. The caret ^ symbol denotes such interline text.

5. As with the recto of this page, the text appears to be written around the two small holes in the paper, with the asterisk denoting the holes that exist between the words.

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believers (1 John 1:8). 2. That it is called for wherever there is sin, even of omissions, as here. 3. But **especially where there is declining**. 4. Change of practice, where there has been sin, will not be sufficient if repentance for what is past does not accompany it.

From the **third step**, *Do the first works*, OBSERVE: 1. That believers' first works are often more commendable than these which come after. 2. There may be great difference in the same works on the matter, even of the same person in Christ's account. 3. Works, and works lively gone about, are called for from believers. Christ Jesus was no legal preacher;² yet He requires both repentance and works from these Ephesians.

The third thing in this epistle is the threatening or certification wherewith this direction is pressed (which does the more confirm the former doctrine): *or else I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent*. In which words we are to consider: 1. The thing threatened. 2. The persons threatened. 3. The certification upon which it is pronounced. 4. The person threatening. 5. And lastly, the speediness or suddenness of His performing what He threatened.

1. The thing threatened is the *removing of the candlestick out of its place*. By *candlestick* is understood the church (1:20). Therefore, by the removing thereof must be understood the unchurching of them, so that Ephesus now a church, and candlestick, should have that removed and not be continued a church. This is in effect like that in Zechariah 11 of the Lord's breaking the two staves and refusing to feed that people any more. This is a sad, though a just threatening, which may put us to inquire wherefore the Lord thus threatens this angel and church, besides *beyond* any other? Especially considering they were not the worst (as was seen in the commendation), why then is she threatened? And how usually the Lord executes this shall be spoken unto when the words are opened.

2. The person threatened is most especially and immediately the angel, as is clear by using of the singular number, *thy candlestick* and "I will come to *thee*," etc. And with him, we conceive that the threatening {most} respects those who were really believers in that church because especially the charge

setting out his weightiness for his miscarrying. 2. It implies both an outward and inward act for the time to come, not only a weightiness for what they had done amiss but a mending of faults they have been given to. But this is more fully set out in the following words.

3. The **second [sic third] step** of the direction is, *do the first works*, which is the great end of repentance. To be stirred up to reformation and steadfastness in well-doing. Remembering brings to repentance, and repentance brings to reformation.

APPL. If Christ were charging us with a sin, it would be for falling from first love, and if He were calling for a duty, it would be to remember from which what we are fallen, to repent, and do our first works. It were good we were collecting ourself, though many of us has ever had but little, yet we will find this is a declining from it, and nothing affects us. We are not only fallen from love but from that awe and dreadour [*fear, dread*] of God that should be on the heart. Remember this and other things, repent, and do our first works.

The third thing in this epistle to be spoken of is a threatening, *else I will come unto thee quickly and remove thy candlestick [out] of his place*, where we have this threatening and two or three circumstances. 1. The threatening, *I will remove thy candlestick*.[†] 2. The circumstances are the causes of the threatening and⁶ 2. The persons threatened, 3. The suddenness [*suddenness*] of His performing of the threatening, and 4. The condition on which it is made. *Except thou repent*.

For the threatening itself, it is the removal of the candlestick. 1. The candlestick is the church of Ephesus. So it was expounded [in] chapter 1, verse ult. [*last verse*], no[t] the persons of which the church was made up of simply, but the ordinances of Christ professed by persons submitting to them and walking under them some way suitable to them. 2. The removing of the candlestick is God's threatening to make them no church. It is not to transport [*exile; remove*] the persons locally, but it implies these three. 1. His transporting of His ordinances, especially the ministry from them, for the [*their*] being His church was not as they were so many men and women, as they were men and women professing his gospel. His enchurching [*making a church*] of them made them a church, and as removing the gospel and His ordinances from them made them no church. Therefore, [in] Matthew 21[:43], He tells the Jews the kingdom of God shall be taken from them. What was that? It was God's removing the gospel from them by sending His ministers from them to the Gentiles. Acts 13:46. It was the visible transferring of the kingdom of God from them to the Gentiles, and

2. Legal preacher—one that preaches justification by works, by one's own obedience to the Law of God.

6. The numbering is inconsistent with what follows. From here the outline and text differ significantly from the 1658 text on the left

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of falling from the first love and direction of doing the first works agrees to them. The threatening also of removing the candlestick would be most laid to heart by them. Thus Christ usually threatens, yea, corrects His own when He lets others slip (Amos 3:2). Neither does He here so particularly charge and threaten the heathens for refusing the gospel nor yet the false apostles or Nicolaitans for open abusing it, as He does this zealous angel. The reason is not because He loves them less, but because their sins come nearer His honor and He is more affected with them, and because He minds their good, He judges and chastens them, lest they should be condemned with the world (1 Cor. 11:32); whereas He suspends His judging of the rest, and bestows not a reproof upon them until judgment altogether surprise them.

3. The certification upon which this great judgment (which is greater than either sword, famine, or pestilence) is threatened is, *except they repent*: by which we may gather the necessity of repentance in itself, and its acceptance by Jesus Christ, not as if there were any merit in it to deserve or any moving impulsive virtue in it to persuade Him to pity (as humiliations use to [commonly] persuade men). He is not capable of such motives. Nor yet as if He had any delight in the saddening and exercising of His people; but that He may show the peremptory connection between repentance and pardon, which in the order of salvation He has laid down, thereby to make the sinner know something of the ill of sin and worth of grace: which is the reason why the preaching of the gospel ordinarily begins with this. By *repentance* here, we do not understand strictly the grace of repentance as it is contradistinguished from faith, much less any natural or worldly sorrow, which may be in a hypocrite. But we take it as it comprehends the whole work of conversion and faith in Jesus Christ (as sometimes it is taken, Matthew 4:17 compared with Mark 1:15) because it is proposed here as the way to prevent wrath which is due for sin, which cannot be done without faith.

4. The fourth thing to be considered is the person threatening. *I will come*. "I, Jesus Christ, who walks among the golden candlesticks; I, the Lord of the vineyard" (Matt. 21:40, 41). This is mentioned, first, to let us see Christ's absoluteness and sovereignty over His churches to dispose of them as He pleases, that ministers and people may learn to hold their church being of Him. Secondly, To hold forth Christ's peculiar authority in churching and unchurching, and that peculiarly, this belongs to Him. There is no man, nor enemy, nor persecution, etc., can loose the relation of a church in its being, but Christ Jesus, or they as ordered by Him.

5. The fifth is, *I will come quickly*; yea, and *unexpectedly*, as the word imports. This is added to show that Christ's threatenings are in earnest and that hearers would not dally with them.

so the removal of the candlestick there is Christ's threatening to the church and not to the town of Ephesus, and it says this: 1. That, however, the town should be inhabited with men and women, yet not under the notion and relation of a church to Him. 2. He removes the candlestick from a people when He lets loose error and corrupts the purity of the doctrine, which is an essential mark of the church of God, and the foundation on which the church is built. Ephesians 2:20. *Ye are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets*. And so when He threatens to remove the candlestick if it be not by removing the ministry, yet He may do it by suffering in His secret justice the ministry to be piece and piece [gradually] corrupted, whereby it comes to pass that these who were His people become not to be His people, and she that was the wife becomes a harlot. And if we look here, the threatening performed on Ephesus, it is long since become no church. And how? They became first heaps of error, and now that place is turned in a seat to the Mohammed. For the doctrine of the gospel in the purity of it, being the ground on which a church is built, when the doctrine in the purity of it is overturned and corrupted, that church cannot stand as a church. 3. He removes the candlestick by the in letting of confusion, or in suffering people to give themselves up unto it, so that though no public enemy should be to waste them or mar the ordinances amongst them, yet they be [by] their abusing the liberty of the gospel granted them and by their secret itching after novelties, gave themselves up to delusion, and as the Jews broke themselves off by unbelief, and when they despised the gospel were given up to follow fables, so doth the Lord deal with many here who receive not the truth in love. Hosea 2:2. *Plead with your mother, for she is not any wife, neither am I the husband*.[†] And the reason is because she has given up herself to whoredom. It was not so much God's giving her a bill of divorce or [sic? as] her now giving up herself to a way of whoring from God.

APPL. We have reason to fear God's threatening to remove our candlestick all these ways. Yea, mints⁷ are made already of it. That He will remove ordinances, let loose error and confusion come in, yea, is not error letten loose and confusion come to a great height already?

2. The circumstances accompanying the threatening are 1. That He will come and do it *quickly*. It was for some hundredths of years ere Ephesus was casten off, yet He says He will do it quickly. 1. Because when He threatens to remove, He would have a people taking the alme [Sc. allum; i.e., medicine] hot, that it may the more work upon them. 2. Because

7. *Mints*: either as in a bodily motion made when about to strike a blow or as in beginning to essay an endeavor (*DSL*).

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It shows also how easily He can overturn a church and make no church of it. He has often gathered churches quickly, and can He not dissolve them when they look to be in their prime? Who, having read the commendation of Ephesus in the former verses, would have expected such a threatening in the close?

The words now being opened, we may ENQUIRE first: *How this threatening of un-Churching a church useth to be [is commonly] executed?*

ANSWER. We conceive it does not necessarily imply the overrunning, wasting, and destroying of such a city or land that it should be no city, but that it should be no church. Sometimes indeed, God will even by such a means bring about this thing threatened. But here we take it to hold out some other thing than if He had threatened sword or pestilence upon them. It is the same upon the matter with that in Matthew 21:43. *The kingdom of God shall be taken from them*, etc., which was Christ's word to the Jews, and is especially these ways brought to pass:

The first is sinful; that is, when a church sells themselves to false doctrine which overturns the foundation: in which sense the Lord denies Ephraim to be His wife (Hosea 2), because of her spiritual whoredoms whereby she had broken her tie. Thus a people may be said to unchurch themselves by their unbelief, confusions, and errors (inconsistent with the foundation), according to that in Isaiah 50:1. And in Romans 11[:20], the Jews are said to have broken themselves off by their unbelief.

The second way is penal; that is, when the gospel has not fruits among a people, the Lord removes the light and His ordinances from them, takes down His hedge from about them, and (as it were) sends them a bill of divorce, refusing to own them afterwards as a church: not by giving them up to outward enemies' oppression (which for a time they may be free of), but by ratifying their own sentence of rejecting of the gospel, as it is in Acts 13:46. And thus, the kingdom of God was translated from the Jews, and they became no church when the gospel was taken from them and sent unto the Gentiles.

A third way may be mixed, partly sinful, partly penal—a people upon the one side not receiving the love of the truth, and therefore upon the other side God gives them up to strong delusion, whereupon they proceed from evil to worse in the believing of lies, as it is in 2 Thessalonians 2:10. However, this is certain, this flourishing Church of Ephesus has now long since been a proof of this truth; for error growing to an height, and delusion and ignorance following upon the back of despising the gospel has brought that church into the estate that it is now into.

He would have His judgments looked on as at the door, especially when people are in a sin that deserveth that they should be execute[d] against them.

2. Circumstance is the cause, implied in the word, *else*; that is, "if thou remember not from whence thou art fallen if thou do not repent and do the first works, I will do it." It is remarkable that our Lord props [*marks*] out the church and threatens her with the removal of her candlestick, which He does to none of the rest so directly. But it gives us this lesson, that when folks have a profession of religion and misken[s] [*are unconcerned with*] the power of it, our Lord will sooner remove the gospel from them, nor [*than*] He will remove it from those who have less of the form and more of the power.

3. Circumstance is the persons threatened. "I will come against *thee* and I will remove thy candlestick;" that is, "I will remove from you both ministers and people in Ephesus." OBSERVE. That it is especially the declining of professors that hazards the removal of the candlestick, when they fall from their first love with Ephesus, become dead as Sardis or lukewarm as Laodicea. It is not the Nicolaitans or false apostles the threatening goes out against, but against the minister and people. If there be anything of God in a number in church, this is much of the weight of the candlestick, with staying or removing that lays upon them. 1. Because it was for their sakes, the gospel was sent, and therefore, if they make not use of it, no wonder He remove it. 2. Because whatever welcome the gospel has of others, He expects that it should have weight with them. The Nicolaitans cared not for removal of the gospel; therefore, they are misken[t] [*ignored*] in this threatening, and He will have ministers and people taking it to them.

4. Take these three things further from this threatening. 1. In general, that believers may and should be threatened from the Word of the Lord as well as others. If they may, they may be threatened and reprov'd. Here our Lord both reprov's and threatens them. 2. They may be reprov'd for want of love and also threatened for it when they have outward zeal and diligence in duty, we had need both of humility and soberness of spirit, both to give and take warnings and there is need of it. 3. There is no greater judgment can be threatened to a church nor [*than*] removal of the candlestick. There is no more special and eminent threatening can be given to a church nor people in a church.

USE. To lay more to heart this threatening. One of two. Either God is not threatening Scotland with this judgment, with the removal of ordinances, or at least the marring of them and interrupting ministers in their duty, the contrary whereof is too palpable, or else we think it an exceeding light judgment and plague, and would to God this were not as palpable. And will our Lord threaten with that which He would not have

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For the second QUESTION, *Why the Lord peculiarly threatens the Church of Ephesus with these punishments?*

ANSWER. It is not because His discontentment was more with her than with other churches. 1. But it is likely they thought outward honesty and reformation enough for their church estate, and that there was no cause of fear of unchurching, so long as they continued pure in profession and zealous in purging, etc. And therefore, to beat down this conceit, and to show the necessity of power as well as of form [cf. 2 Tim. 3:5], for continuing of a church estate, He subjoins this threatening of unchurching, especially to this church. 2. Because these here threatened would lay more weight on this threatening, and be more affected with shoring [*threatening*] to be unchurched than with either sword or pestilence, etc. The Lord therefore applies wisely that which He thinks most conducive to this end. 3. It is likely their outward church estate was something thought of [*admired*] by them, and the external frame of ordinances in purity, and that of discipline in vigor, might be rested on, and too much esteemed of, especially by the ministers (it being too ordinary for men to think too much of external forms). The Lord, therefore, in this threatening touches the fault that might stick secretly to them, even in their zealous prosecuting of external reformation. 4. Because He would have all men knowing the respect He has to sincerity and the influence which the exercise or not exercise of grace has upon keeping or losing [*losing, forfeiting*] of external privileges. Therefore does He so threaten this church, when no outward cause of such controversy seems to be before men.

If it be ASKED further, *Why this church is called the angel's?* For *Thy* has reference to the *angel*, and by the *candlestick* is meant the church itself. Or 2. *How this becomes a threatening to the minister, it being more like a plague upon the people?* Or 3. *How the people can be plagued for a sin in their minister?*

1. We shall consider the first by itself after we have gone through this epistle [See Excursus 6, vol.1, page 197].

2. And now to the second question we say, this threatening becomes his plague. (1) Because of his interest in them and affection to them. Nothing can come on a people but it affects the minister; their stroke is his. Yea, often it is sorer which is on them than what is on himself. *Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?* was Paul's touch of the infirmities of the people (2 Cor. 11:29, 30). (2) It is the nearest stroke [there] can be on a minister, to be stricken in his charge or blasted in his ministry, etc. In this, he is smitten as a minister in things peculiar to a minister. Other strokes are common to all men. Yea, thus to be smitten in the unchurching of his flock, is striking at his crown and his joy (1 Thess. 2:20); for a faithful minister will so account it. (3) It is probable it was some contentment to him to see things go right

folks scaring at? Certainly not. And if He would have folks scaring at this judgment, shall folks be ready to welcome it as no judgment? Know if God would threaten you with any ill turn, it is the removal of your candlestick. It is more than if He threaten you with sword, famine, pestilence. And for you to say, "let Him even be doing; we will be little the worse; whether we have threatening or want it, or whatever threats to us," it is despising of the gospel and Christ's warning of such a judgment. Therefore, make use of the gospel while ye have it, and live under the gospel, hading [*holding*] not(?), take of it. Ye know not when God may take it from you and if God shall remove it in less or more. It will be the sharper challenge that there was little use made of it while ye had it, little dealing with Him for preventing the removing of it.

End of lecture in MSREV2

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in his outward ministry, censures to be weighty, discipline vigorous, the people to give him credit and countenance, etc., without reflecting on his own spiritual condition, or aiming at the inward warming of love in the hearts of his people, but thought all well, and who but he that had such a well-ordered church? The Lord, therefore, threatens to take that ground of boasting or self-pleasing from him. It is a sad thing when a minister cannot carry even[ly] when things go well, and cannot look to himself and the people also, and be humble when he is countenanced: want [*lack*] of this spills [*ruins*] many hopeful beginnings in ministers' hands. And this relation, *thy*, is particularly mentioned here to make the threatening touch him the more; it is not *the candlestick*, but *thy candlestick* which was to be removed. For there be two things that make a thing to be in esteem with men, and the loss thereof to affect them. The first is that it be in itself *το αγαπητον*; that is, a thing lovely and desirable. The second, that it be *το ιδιον*; that is, a thing which is a man's own; these two going together, that it is both an excellent thing in the self and withal a man's own when once evil befalls that thing, it does exceedingly press a man. Now both these are here: *a golden candlestick*—there is its excellency in itself; and *thy candlestick*—there is the angel's interest and propriety in it. Both are set down to affect him the more. And indeed a church being in its blossoming and rising condition, and all things seeming to go well therein, even then, to be threatened thus cannot but greatly affect the heart of a faithful minister.

3. To the third [question], *How can people be punished for minister's faults?*

ANSWER. If they were altogether innocent, it might seem hard. But when they also are guilty; yea, and it is likely here under the same guilt, there is no wrong, but it is the correcting of two by one whip, both minister and people, for their formality and resting in outward forms without power [cf. 2 Tim. 3:5]. (2) Though people in one particular be innocent, yet a minister's fault may occasion a plague on the people, who are guilty by other sins, even as the fault of a magistrate, as we may see in David's numbering the people and God's plaguing him in the people for it, though they were in much free from that particular sin, and as sheep—what had they done? So when a people's outward profession or observance to the ministry and ordinances become the ground of a minister's pride or boast, they may by some confusion be put through other [*bewildered; disoriented*],³ and so his pride and glory is stained, and their hypocrisy and formality punished. Even as on the other side, a people's vanity of their minister may have influence on the Lord's blasting of him, that it may be seen [that] all flesh is grass. Which consideration ought to make

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ministers and people walk respectively one to each other, yet soberly, lest the Lord be provoked against both.

From this threatening OBSERVE: 1. That no church or minister has a lease of a church state [*existence as a true church*] and the gospel if they abuse it. Ephesus is now no church; yea, Israel was broken off. 2. It is one of the greatest threatenings that can be, to be unchurched; sword and pestilence are not like it. 3. It may surprise a church in a very flourishing outward condition, if love be wanting. 4. Nothing has more influence in procuring of judgment than coldness in love to God and others. 5. The estate, good or ill of God's own people, has most influence on the continuing or removing of the gospel. It is not for the guilt of Nicolaitans or false prophets that this is threatened, but for their sin who once had love. 6. Repentance and diligence has great influence to prevent such a threatening. 7. Ministers and people may have much influence on one another's good or ill condition, and sometime we may read our own distemper and scourge in the distemper of one another.

End of lecture in the 1658 published text

REVELATION, CHAPTER SEVEN, LECTURE TWO

2. *And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,*

3. *Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.*

Lectures two and three on Revelation chapter seven present some of the usual editing by James Durham to refine the text, by rephrasing, adding, or omitting material, such as the more direct, and often quite poignant, applications and uses directed to his Glasgow congregation. Less usual, they present a case where material in one lecture (lecture three) was removed and placed in another (lecture two) of the final published form of the text. With the omission of the uses and additional material in the observations, lecture three is shorter than most, and the remaining text is not sig-

3. *Put through other.* "Through other": "confusedly; promiscuously" (Jamieson); "put through other": "confused" (Wright). Durham's meaning is less clear here than in other instances where he uses the term (see *Collected Sermons*: 61 Sermons [2017], pp. 89, 253). While it seems odd to say the people were confused by some confusion, Durham often pairs close synonyms, frequently pairing an English word with an archaic Scottish colloquialism. The upshot here is that through some confusion caused by the prideful pastor, the church falls from their former outwardly commendable profession.

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nificantly different than the manuscript. The one addition of any consequence is the addition of a reference to Bellarmine's *Controversiarum de Sumo Pontifice*.

We have had some little view of that sad condition which the church was to be into [*in*], by the storm of heresy from all airths [*directions*] blowing upon her. Which storm, we conceive, foretells the rising of the Arian, Macedonian, and other heresies, but especially the rise and growth of Antichrist and the church's defection under him. 1. Because these *winds* did immediately set upon the church after her freedom from open persecution, and so falls in the very same time unto which this prophecy belongs. 2. Because the event being compared with the prophecy will be found exceedingly agreeable to it; yea, the scope of this being to show the next great trial of the church after the close of open persecution, it must be understood of these foresaid errors and defection, which are the second means used by the devil to undo the church. 3. What we said in the former lecture, clearing the scope of this prophecy to be God's guarding of His people against that storm which comes by the trumpets and beast (chapters 8, 9, and 13), does also confirm this, that the storm here principally meant is that defection under Antichrist, seeing this seal is particularly to guard against it, which comes with power and lying wonders (2 Thess. 2[:11]).

II.¹ We come now to consider the consolation which the Lord gives unto His people to guard and comfort them against that storm. It has two parts, as is said. The first shows God's care of them before the storm comes; the second expresses their happy outgate [*deliverance*] from it. The first is from the second verse unto the ninth, and the second from the ninth verse² unto the close of the chapter.

The first consolation is described in these four: 1. The instrument of it. 2. His going about it according to His commission. 3. The persons whom this consolation concerns. 4. Lastly, The event is observed to be answerable to what was intended, all being sealed who were designed to be exempted by God.

1. The instrument (verse 2). He is called *another angel*, etc. He is described in three: (1) That He is an *angel*. (2) *Ascending from the east*. (3) From His office or trust, that He *had the seal of the living God*.

(1) By *angel*, we understand no created angel but Christ Jesus, the Angel of the Covenant, called *Michael* in chapter 12.

1. Division I was covered in the first lecture on chapter seven.

2. The 1658 first edition text reads, "from the third verse," which both the shorter London and longer Edinburgh errata sheets instructed to read "9. ver. for 3." All subsequent editions (who most of the time ignored both errata) made this correction, the mistake being an obvious one.

We heard in the former verse of the Lord's revealing the coming and approaching of some vehement storm on the world and on His church. The four winds were ready to blow from all airths. And the storm being great, being to be by power and wonders. 2. Thess. 2. The overspreading of error in the church especially by that strange delusion that were to be in the days of Antichrist, wherewith many thousands were to be ruined away, men might question if any should stand, if God have a church in the world, and also faint at the hearing of it. Therefore, the Lord presents a twofold consolation for confirming and strengthening His people against it. The first of them is set down in the first part of the chapter to v. 9, holding forth the Lord's care, of the Lord's exempting them from the hurt of the winds by setting His seal on them. He seals and guards them¹ and keeps them free of being seduced and led away. The second part of the consolation is from the ninth verse to the end, wherein He comforts John and others of His people from the happy outgate and comfortable days they should have when these days of confusion and error were by.

The first part of the consolation has three things in it. 1. The minister of it. *I saw another angel*,[†] etc. 2. His executing of his commission that he was sent for. He cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea. 3. These to whom it concerns and on whom it was executed or the sum(?) of its execution and charge *hurt not the earth and the sea, nor the trees till we have sealed the servants of our Lord in their foreheads*.[†] And the number that were sealed is first generally set down, v. 4, and then this general number is proportioned and distributed among to the tribes of Israel from v. 4 to v. 9.

The imminency of the hazard being represented in the first verse, the consolation has two parts. 1. The sealing and marking of the elect and setting them without the reach and hazard of these blasts, v. 2 and 3. And 2. The number of the persons sealed in the rest of the words.

1. The sealing is set out by the instrument, another angel, described. 1. Wherefrom he came. 2. His office. 3. His executing of it carefully. 4. His errand. 5. On whom or in reference to whom He had commission. 1. This angel we conceive to be Jesus Christ. 1. Because of His office. He has God's seal, the seal of the living God. He is as it were the great keeper or chancellor to Him in taking a care of the elect committed to Him. 2. Because He cries on and commands the other angels and they take orders from Him.

1. A short section of different handwriting begun at the end of the last lecture ends here.

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For {1} It is Christ who chiefly takes part with the elect and provides so that none can pluck His sheep out of His hand, and with His angels fights against the dragon and his [angels] (chapter 12). {2} Because the keeping of the seal of the living God (as great Lord-keeper or chancellor under Him) belongs only to the Mediator. {3} In the words following, He cries authoritatively and gives order to the other angels who were overseers of the judgment, by which it appears to be some eminent angel unto whom these properties do agree, which is none other but Jesus Christ, though He may have other angels employed under Him, as it is in chapter 12.

(2) He is said to *ascend from the east*, either alluding unto Christ's names of *sun, light, star, morning*, etc., showing that as all light comes from the east, so all comfort comes by Christ, who seasonably and refreshfully manifests His care of His church, as the rising of the sun after darkness—in which respect, in Matthew 24:27, Christ's coming is spoken of as lightning from the east—or it may be in allusion to that entry of the temple upon the east, by which only the prince was to ascend (Ezek. 44:2, 3), whereby may be signified who this is who thus comes into His church in a sovereign, princely way.

(3) He is said to *have the seal of the living God*, to show His immediate trust under Him (the keeper of the seal among men being next unto the king) whereby He has absolute power to exempt from trials or not; which is, upon the matter, equivalent to that of His having the keys of the house of David committed unto Him.

2. His manner of executing His office, or trust, is expressed in these three: (1) In that He is said to *cry with a loud voice unto the four angels*, etc. By which is held forth: {1} His authority in commanding. {2} The imminency of the hazard that made Him cry to have it prevented. {3} Carefulness in Him to have it for a time restrained.

(2) The second thing in the execution is the parties to whom He cries, that is, to the *four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea*. By which we may gather: {1} That the commission of these angels was not principally to restrain judgment, but to execute it. {2} That there is a power and authority derived from God, even in these judgments whereby the earth is hurt. {3} That angels are subject to our blessed Lord Jesus, not only in receiving of their commission but in the execution of it. They cannot act but by orders from Him. {4} That He cries first to them and to all of them, shows both His care of His people—when they are not minding their own hazard, He is providing for them—and also His wisdom in taking the right way in manifesting of it.

(3) There is the matter of His cry in verse 3, saying, *hurt not the earth*, etc., till we have *sealed*, etc. Which words hold forth: {1} Christ's great design in His coming and suspending

2. He is said to come from the east, either alluding to Christ's names and titles He gets, as that He is called the Sun of Righteousness, the Morning Star, etc., to show that as all light comes from the east and rises there, so all comfort comes from Him out of that air, so to speak, and He brings it as seasonably, refreshfully, and invincibly as light comes from the east. And compare this with Math. 24:27, Christ's coming is spoken of as light coming from the east or it is in allusion to the ascending and going up to the temple, where the east entrance was reserved to the king to enter in by, [and] may show who He was that came into the church by this door.

3. This office is signified in this, that He is said to have the seals of the living God (whereof see on the first verse). It points at a special authority and trust committed to Him and to rest in Him. He has all power given to Him, He quickens whom He will.

4. His errand or commission is to *seal these* who were exempted from this judgment, which seal we conceive to be not the putting of any visible or new discernible character on them, but sufficiently to take care (and to instruct He did so) for the elect's safety, it is that, 2 Tim. 2:19, a special providing for the security of the elect. And His executing of it seems to be, in effect, Christ's purpose not so much to put us to search for any particular mark, as to look upon His decree appointing and His providence and care executing, to point out that none of the elect should be led away with the spite of error and delusion that was to come. 2. That their not being led away depended not so much on themselves as on His watching over them and (as we showed the last day) seems to be an allusion to that of Exod. and Ezekiel 9. He means they shall be as free from the plague that was coming as the Israelites were when the Egyptians were smitten.

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this judgment; it is the safety of His people. {2} We may see His peremptoriness in ordering all things in reference to that end. This judgment is not simply discharged, for afterward it may hurt the earth, but it is so bounded and ordered, and that peremptorily, as not to blow or hurt till God's people be provided for it, and that they may be kept from the hurt of it. The restriction *until*, etc., bears out this.

3. The objects about which this care is taken are *the servants of our God*, so-called, not as all creatures are, nor as some special ministers are, but as such who by special compact and agreement have given up and covenanted themselves to be so, and in their conversations carry suitably to that engagement. Thus all Israel, especially true Israel, are called the Lord's servants (Lev. 25:55), in opposition to idolaters who worshipped other gods; and thus, true servants are described by this, that they desired to fear His name (Neh. 1:11), in opposition to hypocrites, who say and do not. In sum, by *servants* are understood such as adhere to God in a declining time and do not enslave themselves to Antichrist with the rest of the world, as it is in chapter 13. He says, *of our God*, because Christ, as Mediator and Head of the body, stands in a joint relation to God with His people, as it is in John 20:17, *my God*, and *your God*, etc., which is a special consolation unto them and marked here as a special privilege.

4. The effect of the execution of His commission is marked in verses 4–8, wherein His faithfulness in sealing of the elect is set down, (1) Generally in the number itself and of whom they were (v. 4). (2) More particularly, they are distributed in the verses following. The scope of all which is to show: {1} The exactness of this angel's performing of what was entrusted to Him. {2} That none [are] missed who were in His roll. {3} To show that it was the very persons designed of God, and therefore, they are marked here and there of several tribes, and not indistinctly together. That circumstance in verse 4, *and I heard the number of them that were sealed*, is added to show the certainty of John's record, he being, as it were, an ear-witness thereunto.

That we may more particularly take up the meaning of this, we are to inquire: i. What is meant by Israel, out of whom these are said to be marked? ii. What is meant by the particular distribution of them in so many tribes and so many thousands of every tribe?

i. By Israel and the tribes thereof,³ sometimes in Scripture are understood the Israelites who were come of Jacob according to the flesh. This is the most proper and usual meaning. Sometimes, again, by Israel is understood the church of God

3. This section is revised from material that is in the manuscript version of the lecture three on chapter seven in MSREV2. For easier comparison, that text is presented here within {braces} on the right.

5. The object of this care or these in reference to whom He had commission, *the servants of our God*,[†] not servants as all creatures are, nor as some special ministers are, but by compact agreeing and giving themselves up to be so and bidding by(?) the agreement, as Nehemiah was and other godly that he takes in with himself, Nehemiah 1:11. They are called *the servants of our God*[†] in opposition to idolaters and worshippers of false gods. 2. In opposition to hypocrites and formal professors who say and do not good and so gives not obedience and cannot be called servants devoted to Him.

6. His faithfulness in executing His trust appears in two things: 1. In that He prevents the letting loose of the judgment on these; it was appointed for till He had done what He came for. *He cried to the four angels to whom it was given to hurt the earth*,[†] which crying imports great danger and imminency of great danger to the elect, if these judgments should get loose before they were provided for and guarded against them. 2. It imports authority in Him that thus commands. And 3. With all carefulness in improving this authority, that they be not hurt. He is, as it were, affected with the hazard, and as in fear for them, He cries to prevent the hazard.

The second part or evidence of His care is implied in the verses following, where the number is set down, signifying it was done and was done completely, and upon the persons particularly that it should have been with that discretion was called for. There was an hundred forty and four thousand, and these not confusedly marked, but of the several tribes the due number. These, Revel. 14:3, are called such as were redeemed from the earth and we shall speak more particularly to them when we come to the following words.

{In the general account we have two things to be cleared. 1. What is meant by the tribes of Israel here. 2. What is meant by this definite number.

1. By Israel and its tribes is sometimes meant literally Jacob's posterity according to the flesh and so its often to be understood in the Old Testament, and sometimes in the New. Sometimes by it is meant the church and people of God professing Abraham's faith or the spiritual seed and posterity of Abraham and Jacob, and so it is taken frequently in the New Testament, as Gal. 3:29, and chap. 6:16, peace be upon them

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under the gospel, who profess the faith of Abraham, of whatever nation and people they be of, as in Galatians 3:29 and 6:16, etc., called Israel: 1. Because they are a spiritual seed to Abraham, who is the father of all them that believe. 2. Because they are admitted to the same essential privileges and promises which the Israelites once had (Rom. 11:17, 24), they are engrafted in the same olive tree, and now in Christ Jesus, there is neither Jew nor Gentile. 3. It is frequent to set forth the worship of the New Testament under the names of that which belongs to the Old, and to style the gospel-church by the name of Jerusalem which is above [Gal. 4:26], and therefore, it is agreeable to this, that the professors of the New Testament should pass under the title of Israel, especially in this prophecy, in which the old titles are so frequently applied unto the new state of the church. We conceive, the last, to wit, the spiritual seed of Abraham, or the gospel-church, to be meant here by the tribes of Israel, and not Jews by nature only, and that besides the former general reasons, upon these three considerations:

1. Such are understood by Israel here, as were to be kept free from Antichrist's pollution. Now, these are not only Jews but mainly Gentiles, as the event and time to which it is applicable evinces. 2. If by this sealed number of a 144,000, we are to understand all these who during Antichrist's tyranny shall be kept free of his pollutions, and if they are to be contradistinguished from the plurality of the church who wonders and goes a-whoring after the beast, then they cannot understand them to be Jews only, but the pure part of the church of whatsoever nation they be. But the former is clear, to wit, that by these are to be understood all the pure part of the church, as contradistinguished from Antichrist's followers, as will appear: (1) By comparing the end of their sealing here with 9:4 and 13:8; for they that are sealed here, are the servants of our God, to wit, all who adhere to Him. (2) The end of their sealing is to keep them from that defection whereinto all others not sealed are involved, as the effect clears. (3) These that are passed by are left open to this storm, and carried away with it; therefore, this sealing must take in all the elect during that time, of whatsoever nation they be, seeing no elect can be understood to be unsealed, and so left open to this storm, as is clear in chapter 9:4. They must therefore be understood under the name of Israel, who are thus sealed.

2. It will further appear by comparing this with chapter 14:1–4, where these 144,000 are particularly mentioned as the virgin-church, distinguished from the adulterous world, and that at the turn of Antichrist's dominion, as if it were particularly recorded, that notwithstanding of Antichrist's tyranny and the world's defection with him, yet all whom God had appointed to life were kept from that defection, and therefore, this number

that walk according to this rule of seeking to attain righteousness through faith and upon all the Israel of God. So Jerusalem above is the church of the Gentiles set out under the name of the church of the Jews and they are so called for these two reasons: 1. Because of their being admitted to these same essential privileges and to be heirs of the same essential promises that once the Jews had. Now ye are engrafted in the olive tree in their room, Rom. 11, and in Christ Jesus, Jew and Gentile, all are one. Gal. 3:28. 2. Because of Abraham's getting the title of being the father of all the faithful and he being the father of all believers, those of his faith are all children, all Israel of God.

Now, we take Israel and its tribes here not to be Israel in the letter but Abraham's spiritual seed, or the church of the Gentiles under Antichrist in the time of this storm that was to blow, called Israel according to the phrase of the prophet's under the Old Testament from wherein many things in expressions are borrowed in this book. The New Jerusalem, etc. The reasons why we take it for are three: 1. Considering the time that this relates to, to that time wherein Antichrist was to be a plague to the world, such are and must be here intended, as were to be kept free from Antichrist's pollution: and these were not Jews only, but Gentiles also and mainly the church of the Gentiles. 2. Because all the number to kept free and exempted, they are, chap. 14:1, 2, 3, reckoned to be or comprehended under this hundred forty and four thousand, alannerly [*solely*] who are then found with white garments, the redeemed kept free from pollution, who had not defiled themselves with women, that is, with spiritual fornication, and all others went a-whoring after the beast. 3. They are distinguished from the great number, v. 9, and though Jews or Israelites here be opposite to that great number of all kindreds, nations, people, and tongues, yet the opposition is not in respect of their kind or national kindred, but of the number, that is, the church of the Gentiles should be but a few number under the dominion of Antichrist in comparison of the huge number she should come to after the ruin of Antichrist, when the vials should be poured out and there should be a new calling in of the Gentiles out of all kindreds and nations, which should be as a new resurrection from the dead after this storm and strait. The church should be numerous beyond what she was under it, as the church of the Gentiles compared with the Jews, but as Israel, though as the sand of the sea, a remnant only should be saved, so here.

2. What is meant by this definite number of one hundred forty four thousand set down together here. ... For there is here a definite and a certain number for an indefinite and uncertain, and it holds out these three things. 1. That though the number should be great that should be carried away, yet

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must comprehend all such (being a definite for an indefinite) who during his tyranny should be kept free; and therefore it is not to be astricted [*limited*] unto the natural Jews.

3. The distinguishing of Jews here from that innumerable company (v. 9) of all nations, does clear this; for they are distinguished, not in respect of nation or kindred, as if by each of them were set forth some part of the gospel-church contemporary one with the other, but in respect of diverse successive states of the church, belonging to diverse times, as that, however the gospel-church immediately after the Christian religion shall obtain liberty and authority, shall be brought unto great straits and reduced to a few number (as God's church was in the days of the Old Testament), yet it shall afterward break forth and flourish among all nations, so that the church, in the latter days, shall be as far extended for number and diversity of people beyond what the church shall be under Antichrist, as the gospel-church was at its first spreading, extended beyond the church of the Jews. And therefore, the whole pure professors of the church, during this storm, being comprehended under these that are sealed out of the several tribes, it cannot be astricted unto the natural Jews.

That this comparison and opposition of Jews with Gentiles, or the smaller number with the greater, does belong to several states of the church, will appear by this: that these sealed ones are living in the time of a storm and great tribulation, and while as pure profession, and professors of Jesus Christ are exceedingly rare, as the scope here and the places formerly cited in chapter 9:13–14 clears. That innumerable company again, are remarkable for their number and are said to have come out of great tribulation (as if now the storm were passed) as victors and conquerors having palms in their hands. This innumerable company, therefore, must denote a following outgate of the former storm, and so by each of them, some condition of the whole gospel-church, and not of Jews or Gentiles severally, is typified.

ii. The second thing to be cleared is wherefore the number is so peremptorily determined and particularly distributed in several tribes? *ANSWER.* 1. By what is said, it may be seen that this definite number is indefinitely to be understood,⁴ not as if they were just so many in all or in every tribe alike. But 2. For these reasons: (1) To show that they were particularly determined by God and known to Him. (2) That though the defection was universal and great, yet there should

God had them exactly numbered, particularly determined and known that should be kept. He had such a set number in particular; so many and no more; all the rest should go a wrong gate [*way*] and these only should be kept free. 2. That though the defection was universal and great, yet there should be a considerable number reserved, 144,000, as He had 7,000 in Elias's time that did not bow the knee to the image of Baal, when he thought there was none; so should it be here; a competent and considerable number though inconsiderable in comparison of the rest of the world. 3. That though it should be a considerable number in itself, yet in comparison of the rest of the world but small and inconsiderable. What was twelve thousand of a tribe and so many out of all the tribes of Israel[?] This is to let us see how far error should prevail, that the whole world was to follow the beast and [his] story shows us the truth of this. In the days of Antichrist's dominion, the Lord had some witnesses, some to preach and some to profess His truth, yet they were few in comparison of them that worshipped the beast and received his mark and were carried away with the seduction of the time.

4. This section until the observations, is revised from material that is in the manuscript version of the next lecture (lecture three on chapter seven) in *MSREV2*. The 1658/2000 editions omit the numbering of the third point (3). The Edinburgh errata instructed to add the third point, which was only done in the 1660 and Sanders 1680 editions.

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be a considerable number reserved, as was of 7,000 in Elias' days. (3) That yet in comparison of the whole world that was to follow the beast, that number was to be very small, as it is said in Isaiah, *Though the number of Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet but a remnant shall be saved* [Cf. Isa. 10:22].

More particularly, this number is proportioned amongst the tribes to show: 1. That God not only numbers them in gross and in common together but has the very particular and individual persons, who are constituent of that number, marked and determined (to say so) both *numero numerante* & *numero numerato*. 2. To show God's sovereignty and good pleasure in choosing some of every kindred and tribe, and His care in providing for them whom He has chosen, of whatsoever tribe they be.

We come to the particular distribution or proportioning of this number among the tribes, vv. 5, 6, 7, 8. There is so many to every tribe, which is also a definite number for an indefinite. 1. To show they were numbered of God as well in respect of the individuals and particular souls that were to make up the number, as in common both (as they say) *numero numerante et numero numerato*.[†] 2. To Show God's sovereignty and care in choosing some of every kindred and His providing for them of what tribe soever, of one, as well as of another.}

OBSERVE. 1. That error oftentimes brings the church, yea, the saints, into the greatest hazards. What makes Christ cry so and make all this business? It is to mark the elect, which supposes them to be in great hazard. Yea, that *if it were possible, the very elect should be deceived* (Matt. 24:24), shows it comes near the march [*border; line*], even as near as possible; yea, often there is more fear and hazard to the elect's spiritual estate by error than there is by persecutions, yea, by gross sins and temptations to them, as murder, adultery, etc., and more are taken off their feet by the one than by the other because it comes under some pretext of holiness and piety. In which respect it is said, *the devil*, in this temptation, *transformeth*

OBSERVATIONS.

1. **OBSERVE**, in general (from Christ's care and crying, which imports the hazard was not small), that the blowing of winds of contrary doctrines is a great hazard to the church and people of God. Error has great power with it and takes many away and brings God's own often in great peril. It is implied here clearly in that Christ takes such great care to prevent it and so few are kept from it, as it is said, chap. 13, the whole world wondered after the beast. The spirit of delusion that comes with error is so strong that if it were possible the elect should be deceived, Math. 24. Many shall follow them. 1 Tim. 4:1. Partly this is from the nature of error that drives strongly. It hath a spirit and power and is accompanied with signs and

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himself in an angel of light (2 Cor. 11[:14]). Believers had need to be watchful against all evils, but in a special manner against this; it is no little difficulty in a corrupt time to stand it out.

OBSERVE. 2. The greater the danger be, Christ has the greater care. This makes Him cry and come down, whereas no such particular act of His is marked when the church was suffering (chapter 6). He had rather kept them from sin than suffering; yea, often error hurts more than suffering does.

More particularly, *OBSERVE*:

1. Christ is the great overseer of what concerns His people; none can hurt, but as He gives orders. All that execute judgment are in a dependency on Him, which is a great consolation to His people. 2. He is never so angry at an ungrate [ungrateful] world as to forget one elect; in the midst of this storm, He remembers them. So had God respect to one Noah in the old world, and to one Lot in Sodom. They could do nothing who were to execute that judgment till he were set free. 3. God has some elect and a church under the greatest defection, even seven thousand when Elias thinks there is not one, which should make us wary in censuring times and places to be altogether ungodly. 4. No elect shall be finally seduced; that is not possible (Matt. 24[:24]). 5. That impossibility of final seduction depends not on themselves, but on God's decree and care in sealing them and preserving them from it, which makes it true always, *the election hath obtained*, and none but they, *for the rest were blinded* (Rom. 11:7). 6. If it be *ASKED*, why these sealed ones, who are the elect, are called

wonders. 2. Thess. 2. And partly because it is commissioned in God's judgment to punish a light and unthankful world.

USE. To let you see it is no light trial that we are under, but a storm that blows vehemently from all quarters. Therefore, so often in Scripture it is told us that in the last times many shall make desertion and the whole world should fall from Christ and take them to Antichrist. 2. Think not light to stand against error. Christ thinks not so and experience has proven strong, able, and well qualified men have been carried away when they have not been humbled and watchful. Therefore, watch and be upon your guard.

2. *OBSERVE*, the more the danger and hazard be, Christ hath the greater care of His own and particularly in no danger more than in the danger of error and spiritual judgments. Then He cries and comes hastily and seals His own and will not have the earth hurt till they be sealed, which in prosperity, when there is not such a strait, He does not. His bowels then are most affected, for He knows this hazard endangers their spiritual condition most and His love and wisdom suits His oversight to the straits of His people, and He would have them knowing this for their consolation. Hence, though there be sad storms, chap. 6, and their blood is spilt, yet His care is not so particularly marked, because this danger hazards their precious soul more than martyrdom. This of error pollutes their garment, when that of martyrdom washes it. Besides, that He is honored by the one and dishonored by the other.

USE. 1. It serves to encourage us in this time and to teach us to lippin [trust] ourselves to Christ's care. 2. As Christ thinks much of this hazard and trial because souls are in hazard, so let us think much of it.

3. More particularly: 1. From Christ's description, *OBSERVE*, that Jesus Christ has the great oversight of that [which] concerns His people and has a hand, gives orders, even in these things that are their their [sic] sharpest and sorest trials. The government is on His shoulder and this is a part of it. All power in heaven and earth is given to Him [Isa. 9:6; Matt. 28:18]. He is the keeper of the great seal and contrare [contrary] to His orders, a puff of wind cannot blow, a notable evidence of His authority and a notable consolation to His people, considering how He uses His power and authority. We need not fear these blasts that He has the guiding of.

2. *Hurt not the earth and the sea till we have sealed,*[†] etc. *OBSERVE*, that Jesus Christ is never that angry at the most unthankful, nor never that furious in executing wrath on the world, but He is ever mindful and careful of His own, and so orders the judgment in timing it and circumstantiating it as may be most consistent with their safety. As in punishing the old world He provided for ^Noah^, when He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, He remembered Lot, and did nothing

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servants of our God? I *ANSWER*, it is a description of the elect from their holiness, a fruit and effect of their election; and to clear it, there is a two-fold seal (2 Tim. 2:19). One, known to God, *He knows who are His* by decree. The other is the fruit and evidence of the former, and in these come to age, never separated, *Let them who name the Lord depart from iniquity*.

In this last respect, they are called servants of God, for these reasons, which are so many grounds of *DOCTRINE*:

1. That wherever election is, there is, or will be, holiness and obedience as a fruit of it; holiness and obedience is a proof of election as to men, or to one's own conscience; they are of equal extent. Hence in Ephesians 1:4, we are elected to be holy. Let not these things that God conjoined be separated.

2. None but these who are servants to God in some real manner can promise to themselves any benefit of election or freedom from any plague, and especially from this plague. In Ezekiel 9, these are marked only who were mourning for the abominations of the rest and keeping themselves free. Losing a good conscience makes shipwreck of the faith (1 Tim. 1:19). Let none plead for any benefit of election whatsoever without this.

3. All that in some measure honor and obey God, are kept from evil, and may promise to themselves immunity, as far as is requisite, when others cannot. *If a man purge himself from these things, he shall be a vessel of honour, reserved for the master's use* (2 Tim. 2:21).

4. Holiness has many advantages; it is the best guard against errors, to receive the truth in love. It has often an outward protection, as in Lot, Noah, etc. Psalm 34. *The angels pitch their tents about them*.

till they were secured. Yea, Gen. 19, the angels were limited with that clause in the commission, "we can do nothing till thou be gone." And needs any then fear judgments in His hand[?] Error goes not by guess. He guides it. Fury is not in Him. Isaiah 26. He has a special eye on the safety of the meanest and hovers His judgments till they be provided for. And if we had eyes to mark it, had not God had a special hand in our spiritual and temporal plagues, they had come to a greater height ere now.

3. *OBSERVE*, that God has some elect and a church in the darkest times of corruption, even in Antichrist's prevailing, though not discernible to men, a remnant here, an hundred and forty and four thousand, in Elias's time, seven thousand [1 Kings 19:18]—an election according to grace. Still so it was ever. The gates of hell do not so far prevail against the church, but still there is and shall be one, and neither one storm nor other can undo one soul. *USE*. Though this should not foster security, yet it may and ought to strengthen the faith of God's people.

4. *OBSERVE*, that no elect can be nor shall be finally seduced, that, Math. 24, is impossible; however, they may in some things, some of them, slip; yet He guides them and they are recovered. That will ever hold true, Rom. 9 [*sic* 11:7], the election hath obtained it, though the rest were blinded.

5. *OBSERVE*, the security and steadfastness in the elect proceeds not from anything in themselves, either grace or watchfulness or worth, but from Christ's care making and keeping the difference by His seal. It is not their grace but His keeping life in their grace. It is not their own strength but His reservation. *I have reserved to myself seven thousand*.[†] Oh, the elect shall not be seduced, Math 24. The election obtains. Rom. 9 and 11. The weight of their preservation is laid on their election and His preservation that the glory may be entirely to Him and they may have no ground of boasting but of humility.

6. If it be *ASKED*, why these sealed ones who are the elect are called servants of our God[?] *ANSWER*. It is a description of the elect from their holiness, a fruit and effect of their election. And to clear it, there is a twofold seal, 2 Tim. 2:19, and known to God, He knows who are His by His decree. 2. Is the fruit and evidence of the former and in these come to age; never separate from it, one time or any; that is, let everyone that names or owns Christ as his depart from iniquity. In this last respect, they are called servants of God, for these reasons which are so many grounds of doctrines:

1. That whatever [*sic* wherever] election is, there is holiness and obedience as a fruit of it. Holiness and obedience are a proof of election as to men or to one's own conscience. They are of equal extent. Hence, Ephes. 1:4, we are elected to be holy and let not His things that God conjoins be separated.

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2. None but these who are servants to God in some real manner can promise to themselves freedom from any plague and especially from this plague, Ezek. 9. These are marked only who were mourning for the abominations of the rest and keeping themselves free. Losing a good conscience makes shipwreck of the faith. 1 Tim. [1:]19. Let none plead for any benefit of election whatsoever without this.

3. All that in some measure honor and obey God are kept from evil and may promise to themselves immunity as far as is requisite, when others are not. 2. Tim. 2:19, 20[-21]. If a man purge himself from these things, he shall be a vessel of honor reserved for the master's use.

4. Holiness has many advantages. The best guard against error is to receive the truth in love. It has often an outward protection, as in Lot, Noah, etc. Ps. 34. The angels pitch their tents about them: they may expect all the blessings in Scripture and His presence and care, preservation and providence over them in all things.

5. *Our God.*[†] *OBSERVE*, Christ and we have but one God. John 20:17. *I ascend to my father and your father and to my God and your God.*

Lastly, God has still a care of His servants.

The sum of all of Christ's care be much worth to souls and it is a vantage to have it be stirred up to holiness as we would be sure of it. As ye would be kept free from the snares and judgments of the time and have peace in yourselves, be servants of our God. Give up yourselves to Him and fear Him, as ye would have a suitable meeting, and though most part do not believe this doctrine now, yet when that day comes that is spoken of, Mal. 3, when He shall make up His jewels, it shall be known and a clear difference shall be seen between them that feared God and him that feared Him not, between them that served Him and them that served Him not, and that it shall be well with the righteousness and better take a lesson beforehand than out of defiance experience when ye cannot mend it.

OBSERVE 5. Christ and we have but one God. John 20:17. *I ascend to your Father and my Father, and to my God and your God.*

6. Lastly, God has still a care of His servants. The sum of all is this: if Christ's care be much worth to souls, and it be advantage to have it, be stirred up to holiness as ye would be sure of it; and, as ye would be kept free from the sins and judgments of the time, and have peace in yourselves, be servants of our God, and give up yourselves to Him.

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4. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

5. Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand.

6. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nepthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand.

7. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand.

8. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

As already noted, this short lecture in final form of what it contains is similar to the manuscript text, and is more notable for its omissions. Some of the text in *MSRev2* was revised and placed in the previous lecture, and the Uses and additional material in the Observations were also omitted

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The fourth verse contains the particular number of these that were sealed, a certain number in both the reckonings for an uncertain. The scope of it is the more effectually to bear out the consolation for strengthening the faith of God's people by such a particular numeration. 1. It is summed in verse 4, whereof was spoken before. 2. It is distributed amongst the tribes in verses 5–8.

The scope of the distribution, besides what is said is, by continuing the manner of speech used under the Old Testament, of Israel, tribes, Jerusalem, etc., to hold forth the Gentiles' privilege of being engrafted in the Jew's room, and that God kept the same way with them as with Israel, having admitted them to that same covenant.

{It will not be meet nor needful to inquire after mysteries in the number or names. It is likely the Lord, giving His church the title of Israel, follows the reckoning of twelve tribes and multiplies that by twelve, which comes in whole to that number one hundred forty and four thousand.}¹ ¶ We shall only touch these things as considerable: ¶

In the former part of this chapter, we heard of a sore storm that was ready to blow on the church and of Christ's care to provide for His own elect ere it came, out of His earnest carefulness, crying to have it prevented, that the winds may not be let loose to blow till they be provided for and secured, lest they should be endangered and hurt.

From the fourth verse to the ninth, we have the number of them that were sealed. 1. Generally set down, v. 4. And 2. More particularly distributed or proportioned among every tribe, vv. 5, 6, 7, 8, out of every tribe so many to make out that number.

The scope of it is the more effectually to bear out the consolation for strengthening the faith of God's people by such a particular enumeration and to comfort them against the coming storm by holding forth Christ's care of them and the scope of the distribution, besides what is said by continuing the manner of speech under the Old Testament of Israel, tribes, Jerusalem, to hold forth the Gentiles' privilege of being engrafted in the Jews' room and that God kept that same way with them, as with Israel, having admitted them to that same covenant.

{In the general accompt we have two things to be cleared.¹ 1. What is meant by the tribes of Israel here. 2. What is meant by this definite number.

1. By Israel and its tribes is sometimes meant literally Jacob's posterity according to the flesh and so its often to be

1. At this point material is skipped, now placed in the prior lecture. See point 2 in the prior lecture two. Text in the final form different from the manuscript is in ¶ lower markers, ¶ and material omitted from the text of *MSRev2* is in ¶ upper markers. ¶

1. These two points, except for the lines within braces in point two were revised and used in the prior lecture two.

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understood in the Old Testament, and sometimes in the New. Sometimes by it is meant the church and people of God professing Abraham's faith or the spiritual seed and posterity of Abraham and Jacob, and so it is taken frequently in the New Testament, as Gal. 3:29, and chap. 6:16, peace be upon them that walk according to this rule of seeking to attain righteousness through faith and upon all the Israel of God. So Jerusalem above is the church of the Gentiles set out under the name of the church of the Jews and they are so called for these two reasons: 1. Because of their being admitted to these same essential privileges and to be heirs of the same essential promises that once the Jews had. Now ye are engrafted in the olive tree in their room, Rom. 11, and in Christ Jesus, Jew and Gentile, all are one. Gal. 3:28. 2. Because of Abraham's getting the title of being the father of all the faithful and he being the father of all believers, those of his faith are all children, all Israel of God.

Now, we take Israel and its tribes here not to be Israel in the letter but Abraham's spiritual seed, or the church of the Gentiles under Antichrist in the time of this storm that was to blow, called Israel according to the phrase of the prophet's under the Old Testament from wherein many things in expressions are borrowed in this book. The New Jerusalem, etc. The reasons why we take it for are three: 1. Considering the time that this relates to, to that time wherein Antichrist was to be a plague to the world, such are and must be here intended, as were to be kept free from Antichrist's pollution: and these were not Jews only, but Gentiles also and mainly the church of the Gentiles. 2. Because all the number to kept free and exempted, they are, chap. 14:1, 2, 3, reckoned to be or comprehended under this hundred forty and four thousand, *alonerly [solely]* who are then found with white garments, the redeemed kept free from pollution, who had not defiled themselves with women, that is, with spiritual fornication, and all others went a-whoring after the beast. 3. They are distinguished from the great number, v. 9, and though Jews or Israelites here be opposite to that great number of all kindreds, nations, people, and tongues, yet the opposition is not in respect of their kind or national kindred, but of the number, that is, the church of the Gentiles should be but a few number under the dominion of Antichrist in comparison of the huge number she should come to after the ruin of Antichrist, when the vials should be poured out and there should be a new calling in of the Gentiles out of all kindreds and nations, which should be as a new resurrection from the dead after this storm and strait. The church should be numerous beyond what she was under it, as the church of the Gentiles compared with the Jews, but as Israel, though as the sand of the sea, a remnant only should be saved, so here.

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2. What is meant by this definite number of one hundred forty four thousand set down together here. {It shall not here be needful to engage after mysteries in the number or names. It is likely the Lord, giving His church the title of Israel, follows the reckoning of twelve tribes and multiplies that by twelves, which comes in whole to this number of 144,000.} For there is here a definite and a certain number for an indefinite and uncertain, and it holds out these three things. 1. That though the number should be great that should be carried away, yet God had them exactly numbered, particularly determined and known that should be kept. He had such a set number in particular; so many and no more; all the rest should go a wrong gate [way] and these only should be kept free. 2. That though the defection was universal and great, yet there should be a considerable number reserved, 144,000, as He had 7,000 in Elias's time that did not bow the knee to the image of Baal, when he thought there was none; so should it be here; a competent and considerable number though inconsiderable in comparison of the rest of the world. 3. That though it should be a considerable number in itself, yet in comparison of the rest of the world but small and inconsiderable. What was twelve thousand of a tribe and so many out of all the tribes of Israel[?] This is to let us see how far error should prevail, that the whole world was to follow the beast and [his] story shows us the truth of this. In the days of Antichrist's dominion, the Lord had some witnesses, some to preach and some to profess His truth, yet they were few in comparison of them that worshipped the beast and received his mark and were carried away with the seduction of the time.

We come to the particular distribution or proportioning of this number among the tribes, vv. 5, 6, 7, 8. There is so many to every tribe, which is also a definite number for an indefinite. 1. To show they were numbered of God as well in respect of the individuals and particular souls that were to make up the number, as in common both (as they say) *numero numerante et numero numerato*.[†] 2. To Show God's sovereignty and care in choosing some of every kindred and His providing for them of what tribe soever, of one, as well as of another.}

Now for the reckoning of the tribes and the order of them, three or four things are to be observed.² 1. That in this order the age is not kept and the children of the bond and free woman are promiscuously named to let us see that in Jesus Christ there are neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free, and that external privileges are of no value here. Gal. 3:2. Judah is preferred and first named and Ruben, though the firstborn, is passed by. 1. To show ^{^that^} the relation to Christ, who was of the tribe of Judah and of whom David was, casts the balance. 2. Because Ruben lost his birthright by defiling

2. This section, until the observations, with revisions, is what was retained in the final form of the lecture.

1. That in the order, the age is not kept and children of the bound and free woman are promiscuously named, to let us see, that in Christ Jesus, there are neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, and that external privileges are of no value (Gal. 3:28). 2. Judah is preferred and first named, and Reuben, though the firstborn, passed by: (1) To show that relation to Christ, who was of the tribe of Judah, and of whom David was, casts the balance and is the main privilege. (2) Reuben lost his birthright by defiling his father's bed, and Simeon by his killing the Shechemites, whence it is clear that guiltiness cuts men off from privileges and has a broad and long tail

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of curses for a long continuance (Gen. 49:3, 4). (3) Neither Dan nor Ephraim are mentioned, but for Ephraim, Joseph is named. Dan is also omitted in 1 Chronicles 1:3, 4 [*sic* chaps.1–9] when all the other tribes are reckoned in their genealogies, so also Ephraim and Manasseh in Deuteronomy 33. It would seem for these reasons ¹ (for that conceit of omitting Dan here, because Antichrist is to come of him, is a groundless fable, and rejected by Bellarmine, lib. 3, *de Pontif.* cap. 12,² who expounds the Scriptures ordinarily, alleged for proving that in a different sense) ²: {1} To show God's sovereignty manifesting itself especially in His passing-by of some and reckoning others in His roll, no less guilty. {2} To conform the number to the ordinary reckoning of Israel by twelve tribes and no more, wherefore still one is omitted in the former reckonings. This number had not been kept if Dan had been numbered when Levi also is mentioned. {3} Dan was soon overtaken with idolatry; so was Ephraim (Judges 1:18 [*sic* chapters 17–18]). Therefore, [they were] not meet to be mentioned among these, or as types of these who were to be kept clean from that sin. {4} Levi is mentioned here, though not in the dividing of the land of Canaan, to show that though God allows not much temporal estate on His ministers, yet will He not pre-judge them of His protection under straits either spiritual or temporal nor of the victory over them.

These are all who are sealed of the numberless multitude, and this equal number amongst the tribes is not to be understood as if all were equal in respect of the effect; but: 1. To show it is indifferent to God to take of this or that nation now, as there was to Him no difference amongst the tribes of Israel. 2. That there is need of a special and particular care, and that He conforms His care so, not in gross and common, but particularly taking notice of them to a definite sum. Hence:³

OBSERVE. 1. From the complexness of this sealing and number, and from the name that these sealed ones gets, to wit, that they are called the tribes of Israel, that believers under the New Testament are God's Israel, engrafted in their room and served heirs to all their essential privileges and promises, and heirs of Abraham, as believers were under the Old Testament; whatever typical promises were peculiar to that people, we are not to claim, yet certainly these privileges or promises that belonged to their eternal wellbeing, or were necessary to their spiritual growth and happiness here, believers under the

2. Bellarmine, "Controversiarum de Summo Pontifice, Liber Tertius," *Opera Omnia* 2 (Paris: Vives, 1870), pp. 31–33. This reference is one of the few additions of substance from the version in *MSRev2*.

3. The text omitted from these *OBSERVATIONS*, which includes the *USES*, is noted in upper markers in the manuscript text.

his father's bed and Simeon by his killing the Shechemites, guiltiness will draw on the loss of any privilege and has a broad and long tail of curses for a long continuance. Gen. 14:9 [*sic* 49:3, 4].

3. Neither Dan nor Ephraim are mentioned, but for Ephraim, Joseph is named and Dan is also omitted, 1 Chron. 3, 4, etc., when all the other tribe are referenced in the genealogies. So also is Ephraim in Deut. 33. It would seem for these reasons 1. To show God's sovereignty under the New Testament kything [*appearing*] especially in His free passing by of some and writing others in His roll, who are at least no less guilty. 2. To conform the number to the ordinary reckoning of Israel which would have been more if Dan had been numbered when Levi is also mentioned. 3. Dan was soon overtaken with idolatry and so was Ephraim, Judges 18, [and] therefore not meet to be mentioned among these who were to be kept clean from idolatry.

4. Levi is mentioned here, though not in the division of the land of Canaan. Though God allow not much temporal estate on His ministers, yet will He not prejudge them of His protection under straits either spiritual or temporal, nor of victory over them.

These are all who are sealed of, an innumerable multitude and this equal number amongst the tribes is not to be understood as if all were equal in respect of the effects, but: 1. To show it is indifferent to God to take of this nation or that now as there was to Him no difference amongst the tribes of Israel. 2. That there is need of a special and particular care of His people and that He conforms His care so, not in gross and in common, but particularly taking notice of them and providing for them.

*OBSERVATIONS.*³

1. From the complexness of this sealing and number and from the name that these sealed ones get, that they are called the tribes of Israel, *OBSERVE*, that believers under the New Testament are God's Israel, engrafted in their room, are served heir to all their essential privileges and promises, are heirs of Abraham as believers under the Old Testament were, whatever temporal promises were peculiar to that people, yet certainly these privileges or promises that belonged to their eternal wellbeing or were necessary to their spiritual growth and happiness here, that believers under the New Testament are sealed heirs unto. Gal. 3:29. *If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise,*[†] [†] That is, it is enough to prove you Abraham's seed if ye be Christ's and that all essentials wherein

3. The text in [†] upper markers, [†] which includes the *USES*, was omitted from the final form of this lecture.

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New Testament are served heirs thereunto. *If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise* (Gal. 3:29).

OBSERVE. 2. Folks may be partakers of many outward privileges, and yet these not secure them from an approaching plague if they be not partakers of spiritual privileges besides. Israel were all God's people and children; to them pertained the adoption and covenants in respect of external administration, and so it was with the church of the Gentiles which succeeded; but *They are not all Israel, who are of Israel; neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children, neither is he a Jew who is one outwardly* (Rom. 9:6[-7; Rom. 2:28]).

OBSERVE. 3. That Christ's care is very special of His elect; wherever they are, He takes notice of them. In all their difficulties, He has a special and peculiar eye over them. He does not gather them by heaps, but one by one (Isa. 27:12). Not by

they were blessed beyond other nations belongs to you. And it is on this ground that, Heb. 12:24, the church of the New Testament is called the congregation of the firstborn, all heirs the [sic? of] mount Sion. This privilege we now enjoy. The partition wall is taken down by Christ, who has made of two one. Ephes. 2. And it is a great privilege if we could think of it and should engage our hearts to Christ, who has rent the veil and given us access to the holy place and set up His tabernacle amongst us, and has given us this blessing and mercy without burdening us with ceremonies and beggarly elements with much more liberty and largeness than ever the Jews had. ⁷

2. ⁷ Though the church of the Gentiles be called Israel, yet few of every tribe are sealed, *OBSERVE*, outward privileges and interest in God's house, or a title among His people, will not keep folks on their feet in a trial of error, nor when folks are not answerable to these privileges; it will not always make them or prove them to be partakers of His special favor. Dan here is laid by, though a tribe. Or take it thus: ⁷ Folks may be partakers of many outward privileges and yet these not secure them from a coming plague, if they be not partakers of spiritual privileges besides. Israel were all God's people and children; to them pertained the adoption and the covenants in respect of external administration, and so it was with the church of the Gentiles which succeeded, but, Rom. 9:6, *they are not all Israel who are of Israel; neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children, neither is he a Jew who is one outwardly*, ⁷ *nor is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh, but he is a Jew who is one inwardly and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter, whose praise is of God and not of men.* [†] Rom. 2:28, 29. It is not baptism that makes everyone a Christian. Isaiah 10:22, 23, Rom. 9:27. *Though Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant only shall be saved.* [†] Many are called, few are chosen. One of the grounds [soil] in the parable of the sower brings out fruit only. Many are brought in to the floor of the visible church, but the chaff bears more bulk nor [than] the corn.

USE. Judgment here nor hereafter, it is but few that are here sealed for good.

USE. 2. Learn to be humble at such a time, when the wind of error blows from all airths. Who knows but if the storm of error come to a height, they will come to a few number that will stand out and walk without defiled garments. Within these few years there were few in the three kingdoms but they were polluted with Antichrist, and we have the same nature in us and are inclined to be carried away with the same spate [of error] as they were. ⁷

3. *OBSERVE*, that Christ's care is very special of His elect. Wherever they are, He takes notice of them. In all their difficulties He has a special and particular eye over them. He does not gather them by heaps but one by one. Isaiah 27:12.

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guess, but by special designation. He sees to their preservation. *He calleth His sheep by name, and leadeth them out* (John 10:3). The most inconsiderable of them are provided for and sheltered from this storm. This is much for the consolation of believers, and it is the very end why this numbering and sealing is set down here, to tell that not only Christ has a care of all believers in general, but of every one of them in particular.

OBSERVE. 4. That sealing and defending against declining or defection in error is no common privilege. They are marked, here one and there one, who are made partakers of it, a few of some tribes, and of some none, to show the singularity of this mercy, and to point, as at our Lord's care, so also at His sovereignty who pitches upon whom He will, to preserve from the trials of the time. It is not because they are better than others, but their through-bearing⁴ lies in His purpose about them and His sealing, discerning, and differencing of them from others.

Lastly, there are but very few, considering the multitude that perishes, that shall be kept free and saved in such a trial. It will be a rare thing to stand when the storm of error blows. Many shall follow the pernicious ways of false teachers (2 Pet. 2:1, etc.). If it were possible, the elect should be seduced (Rev. 13; [Matt. 24:14]). The world wonders after the beast. So that it concerns us to be humble, watchful, and on our guard, [⌞] that we be not led away with the error of the wicked. _⌋

Not by guess but by special designation. He sees to their preservation. John 10:3. He calleth His sheep by name and leadeth them out. The fecklessest [i.e., most inconsiderable] of them are provided for against this storm. This is much for the consolation of believers and it is the very end why this numbering and sealing is set down here, to tell that not only Christ has a care of all believers in general, but of every one of them in particular [⌞] and every particular believer may apply to himself Christ's care of His church in general. If thou have the testimony of a good conscience that thou art endeavoring to walk attending to the rule of the new creature, thou may apply this consolation to thyself, and say "He will seal me." O but they may have much quietness and peace in ill times who have committed themselves to Christ's care, who takes compt and inspection of the fecklessest of [^]in[^] the flock, and if one be a-missing, He leaves the ninety and nine and goes and seeks that which was lost. Math. 18:12. *I will sift the house of Israel [...] as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not one grain fall to the earth.* [†] Amos 9:9. There is no such keeper as He He [sic] is, the faithful and good shepherd. [‡]

4. *OBSERVE*, that sealing and defending against declining and defection in error is no common privilege. They are marked here one and there one, who are made partakers of it. A few of some tribe and some of none, to show the singularity of this mercy and to point as at our Lord's care, so also at His sovereignty, who chops [chooses; pitches] on who He will to preserve from the trials of the time. It is not because they are better nor [than] others, but their throughbearing lies on His purpose about them and sealing of them, [and His] discerning and differencing them from others.

[⌞] *USE.* To learn all humility. 1 Cor. 4:7. *Who makes thee to differ from another and what hast thou, O man, but what thou hast received and if thou has received it, why dost thou glory as if thou had not received it[?]* He that stands take heed lest he fall [1 Cor. 10:12]. We have little reason of boasting. If God let the weight of attention come on any of us or leave us to wrestle with it in our own strength, we will appear in our own colours [colors]⁴ and go as soon down the wind as any other. [‡]

Lastly, there are but very few considering the multitude that perishes, that shall be kept free and saved in such a trial. It will be a rare thing to stand when the storm of error blows. Many shall follow the pernicious way of false teachers. 2 Pet. 2:1. If it were possible, the elect should be seduced. Revel. 13. The world wonders after the beast. So much the more be humble, watchful, and on our guard.

4. *Through bearing*: "a means of extricating from a difficulty; or of doing some difficult work" (Jamieson).

4. *Color*: 3. *fig.* Outward show, semblance, or appearance, esp. as intended to mislead or disguise; a pretence or pretext (*DSL*).

REVELATION, CHAPTER NINE, LECTURE ONE

1. *And the fifth angle sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.*
2. *And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.*
3. *And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.*
4. *And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.*
5. *And to them was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.*
6. *And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.*
7. *And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men.*
8. *And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.*
9. *And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.*
10. *And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.*
11. *And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.*

As noted in the introduction, This is the only chapter and lecture which has an unnumbered preamble, as it were. Judging from the opening of the subsequent lecture one, this was actually the original first lecture given before the congregation of the Inner Kirk. As for its brevity, it may be Durham had limited time or preparation time for some reason. That it is not numbered but left in place in MSRev2 and that the significant divergence of the two texts begins in the lecture numbered “Lecture 1,” raises interesting speculation. Why would a mere hearer drop the numbering for instance? The 1658 form of the lecture is considerably refined, revised, and lengthened, which may indicate Durham was not happy with his performance of either the short unnumbered or the numbered text. It is estimated this lecture took place around the latter part of February of 1654. At the same time, from the little dating there is, it is known that Durham was preaching about the tenth or eleventh sermon on Song of Solomon chapter six and was preaching on Colossians chapter three in the afternoon service.

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Revel. 9:1, 2.

The fifth angel sounded here, where the first of the greatest woes is brought in. Of what dreadful nature it is, the woes that are prefaced to the sounding of it may declare. It will concern the opening of all to consider of what woe this judgment speaks particularly, and to what it relates. It is more largely described than any of the former because the temptation of it was most dangerous, and the effects thereof of more concernment to the church.

1. The object of this judgment is the same church or Christian world, whereupon the effects of the former trumpets

The fifth angel sounded here, where the first of the greatest woes is brought in. Of what nature it is, the woes that are prefaced to the sounding of it may declare. It will concern the opening of all to consider of what judgment this woe speaks particularly, and to what it relates. It is more largely described than any of the former, because the temptation of it was most dangerous, and the effects thereof of more concernment to the church. And for clearing of this we say: 1. It is not any temporal judgment by armies as the sixth trumpet holds forth, one of a mixed nature such as came by the Saracens, for that would not be so far greater than the former woes of

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did fall. For these last three do signify greater degrees of wrath upon these who had despised and abused the former lesser woes.

2. The Christian world is obscured by the trumpets, and the Antichristian brought in its place, as was said at the entry to the trumpets. For the Antichristian world is in being after the sixth trumpet, when the vials begin; it must, therefore, have attained that being under the trumpets, and especially under the immediate foregoing trumpets, seeing the seventh finds it at its height, and so consequently, the Christian world (i.e., the pure church) must be decaying under these trumpets, where the Antichristian comes to its being (seeing two of these worlds cannot consist together); yea, the church must be lowest and decline most under these trumpets, wherein Antichrist grows most, and comes to the greatest height, as under these first two great woes it must be. Whence we may gather: (1) That the church is here the object of this plague. (2) That Antichrist must grow under these trumpets, and particularly under this, it being a further step of the same kind of plague, and the sixth finding idolatry under Antichrist at a height, which it plagues, it must then grow here. (3) This first great woe brings spiritual plagues and tyranny upon this world by this king and his armies, who advance that idolatry. The sixth brings temporal judgments on the same persons for whoring from God and receiving this idolatrous worship.

For further clearing of this, we say: 1. It is not any temporal judgment by armies (such as the sixth trumpet holds forth, to wit, one of a mixed nature), such as came by the Saracens, for that would not be so far greater than the former woes of that kind, as is said. 2. These locusts are but called *as horses*, or like horses, not horses themselves (v. 7), as is expressly said of these under the sixth trumpet, thereby giving us to know that there is something of their nature signified, rather than what is literally expressed. 3. Their power is not *to kill*, as in the sixth trumpet, but *to hurt* men and torment them spiritually, and not to kill them bodily, as verse 3. 4. These are secluded and exempted from this plague that were sealed and marked, to wit, the elect, God's servants; but these were not excluded from temporal plagues (as appears in chapter 11), nor from that of the Saracens. Often they share most under these, and these marked ones are all such as were written in the Lamb's book (13:8), who yet did partake deeply of outward afflictions. 5. These troubles (chapter 11) belong expressly to this trumpet, though continuing under the sixth, and contemporary with it; yet they belong not to it, but to this. For these troubles are upon the saints by way of persecution; the sixth has judgment on ungodly professors by way of justice. 6. All the circumstances will clear this further, as the means by whom: *a star*, his *opening*

that kind, as is said. 2. These locusts are but called *as horses*, or like horses, v. 7, not horses themselves, as is expressly to be seen under the sixth trumpet, thereby letting us know that there is something of their nature signified, rather than literally expressed. 3. Their power is not *to kill*, as in the sixth trumpet, but *to hurt* men and torment them spiritually, not to kill them bodily, as v. 3. 4. These are secluded and exempted from this plague that were sealed and marked, but these were not secluded from temporal plagues, as appears, chapter 11. Often they share most under these, and these marked ones are such as were written in the Lamb's book, chap. 13:8. 5. These troubles, chap. 11, belong expressly to this trumpet, though lasting under the sixth, yet belong not to it, but to this. For these troubles are upon the saints by way of persecution. The sixth has judgment by way of justice. 6. All the circumstances will clear this further, as the means by whom, a star, his a-loosing the bottomless pit, the darkening of the sun, etc., as after will appear. For these locusts darken light and obscure truth, which shows it is an ill springing up from within the church.

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the bottomless pit, the darkening of the sun, etc., as after will appear. For these locusts do darken light and obscure truth, which shows it is a spiritual evil on religious things, springing up from within the church, which also answers the scope of these trumpets best, as is said.

2. We say further, the rising and discovering of Antichrist and the fall of the Roman bishops, from heaven to earth (though not at first at their height) is the very thing foretold here and must be so. 1. Because it is clear that the beasts mentioned in chapter 13, are to be understood of him, and speak of the rise of Antichrist particularly, as may then be made out; but this agrees to that and is the very same war, and event, though in different expressions. For {1} The very same persons are overcome by both, to wit, these that are not sealed. {2} The same persons are exempted from both, to wit, these sealed ones (9:4, 13:8, and 14:1, etc.). {3} The same mark keeps both free, the same seal of God. {4} And the number is the same, comparing chapter 7 in that number and 14:2.

(2) That the eleventh chapter and these troubles do belong to the Antichrist, it is clear, verse 7, the witnesses are to be killed by the beast, and what beast but that in chapter 13 (which ascends out of the bottomless pit, as the locusts do here) and that in chapter 11 belongs to this trumpet, appears from verse 14, where it is said, the second woe is past, and the third woe comes quickly. Then, all preceding that belongs to the first or the second woe; but not to the second, as has been said; therefore, to the first, which indeed in this event is contemporary with the second, to wit, the sixth trumpet. It may be also further cleared from the circumstances, considering the time, rise, and progress, and by comparing it with the fifth vial, which is poured out (chapter 16) on the beast's seat. And this order is observed in all: what is built of Antichrist's kingdom by the trumpets, is overturned by the vials, and in that same order. It would then appear, that seeing the fifth vial overturns his throne, that it was settled by the fifth trumpet.¹

3. A third reason is, if that storm against which the one hundred forty and four thousand in chapter 7 are sealed, be the spiritual defection of the church under Antichrist, then that which is held forth by this trumpet is so also; for both relate to the same storm. But that in chapter 7 is to be understood of Antichrist's reign, as the greatest evil the church was to meet with, after heathenish persecution; therefore, this must be so

2. We say, the rising and discovering of Antichrist and the fall of the Roman bishops, from heaven to earth, though not at first at their height, is the very thing foretold here, and must be so. 1. Because it is clear that the beasts mentioned, chap. 13, are of him, and speak of the rise of the Antichrist particularly, as may then be made out; but this agrees to that, and is the very same war. For 1. The same persons are overcome by both, to wit, these that are not sealed. 2. The same persons are exempted from both, to wit, these sealed ones, chap. 9:4, and chap. 13:8 and 14:1, etc. 3. The same mark keeps both free, the same seal of God. [4.]¹ And the number is the same, comparing chap. 7 in that number and chap. 14.

2. That the 11 chapter and these troubles do belong to the Antichrist, it is clear, v. 7, the witnesses are to be killed by the beast, and what beast but that, chap. 13, and that beast ascends out of the bottomless pit, as the locusts do here, and that, chap. 11, belongs to this trumpet, appears from v. 14, where the second woe is past, and the third cometh quickly. The second is past, that is, *is come*. Then, all preceding that belongs to the first, or the second, but not to the second, as has been said; therefore, to the first. It may be also further cleared from the circumstances, considering its time and rise and progress and by comparing it with the first vial poured out, chap. 16, on the beast's seat, v. 7, is the same that is, chap. 13:8. The kingdom is one and they support and through [push forward], and fight under one banner and persons, [with] the woman, the poor forsaken church. The reason why we mark this is because it serves to clear the series of the story and fix us upon some time for giving us some insight in that which is coming, as well as in what is past.¹

1. After this paragraph, the rest of this lecture has been significantly revised and enlarged, and though similar content as in the manuscript appears, the two texts do not tract as closely as in the several previous lectures.

1. The manuscript does not number this as point four, which is done in the 1658 text.

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also. What was said upon chapter 7, for clearing the scope of that place, will confirm both these propositions.

4. This spiritual kingdom described here must either be applied to the kingdom of Antichrist and that hierarchy, or it must be applicable to some other (seeing it is some spiritual plague arising within the church). But there can be no other thought of, to whom this description can agree, and in whom this spiritual woe (exceedingly beyond any mentioned by the former trumpets) can be fulfilled, but the kingdom of Antichrist; therefore, that must be understood here.

Again, it being clear that it is one and the same world or church which is overturned by the first six trumpets, and it being clear that the sixth trumpet following finds idolatry in the visible church (which is {the world plagued by it}). It must, therefore, follow that this defection to idolatry (which is)² a character of the Antichrist's defection) must have increased under this fifth trumpet immediately preceding, seeing it was not during the former four.

Lastly, it may be confirmed further by comparing this chapter with 2 Thessalonians 2, by which we will find that this plague mentioned here is the same spiritual Antichristian delusion prophesied of there, for in every material thing they agree. As 1. The instrument: there is one sitting in the temple of God, as having place in the church of Christ; here is a star falling from heaven, intimating the same thing. 2. There, he is called *ὁ ἀντικείμενος*, as opposite to Christ, and *ὁ ὅς τῃς ἀπωλείας*, or the son of perdition; here he is called *ἀπολλων*, or the destroyer, as opposed to Christ, who is called a Savior; as also (chapter 17 of this prophecy) he is said to go *εἰς ἀπολλων*, or to destruction, himself; for Antichrist, as Chrysostom observes in that in 2 Thessalonians [2:3] is called the son of perdition, because he shall occasion the destruction of many and shall himself be destroyed. 3. They agree in respect of these whom they plague (2 Thess. 2:10), it is only³ these that shall be damned whom that delusion carries away; here (v. 4), it is only these who are not marked, that is to say, who are not written in the Lamb's book of life (13:8) and so also it seizes only finally upon the reprobate. 4. There, they are given up to strong delusion to believe lies; here, they are carried away with fornications, idolatries, and other errors, and are so hardened therein, that although they be plagued for these by the sixth trumpet, yet they repent not. 5. That delusion in 2 Thess. 2[:11] has its rise from the devil, verse

Revel. 9:1, 2., etc. Lecture 1.

Ye remember the last day we showed that this first woe of these three great woes did especially and particularly relate to the rising and highining [*heightening*] of the kingdom of Antichrist, all the circumstances being compared with the 11 and 13 chapters of this book. We pass the two reasons we gave before and come to a third.⁷²

That this is Antichrist's kingdom and reign may be cleared by comparing this place with 2 Thess. 2 and Revel. 17 in these four. 1. It is a star, a member of the church, and an eminent one, falling from church authority to earthly pride, so exalting himself piece and piece till he come to be a great king. 2. It is clear by his name; he is called a destroyer as Christ is called a Savior, whereby he is opposed to Him and this *ἀπολλων* [*Ἀπολλύων*] is called by the apostle, 2 Thess., *υἱὸς ἀπαώλειας* [*ἀπωλείας*], filius perditionis, and Revel. 17, he goes [to] his *ἀπολλειαν* [*ἀπόλειαν*, destruction] and that singular *οαντικείμενος* [*ὁ ἀντικείμενος*] and that son of perdition can be no other so properly as this destroyer, et contra. 3. They agree in these whom they plague. Here it is these who are not marked and all of them in 2 Thess. 2:10, it is these all that shall be damned. 4. There they are given up to strong delusion to believe lies, and mighty signs are done by that Antichrist to delude the world, so here they have fornications, sorceries, idolatries, which are plagued under the sixth trumpet, yet they go on.

We take it then for granted that that Roman hierarchy or ecclesiastical monarchy is set out here, not as in one man's person more than Antichrist is, or than the beast is to be understood, nor as if it were at a full height at the first, but in a series it grew piece and piece till publicly this great king appeared in his pomp, for these three last woes comprehend the story for a longer time any of them than the former, and are distinct woes every one of them differing from another,

2. The text between braces was omitted in the 2000 edition.

3. The 1658 text reads "it is also." The errata instructed, "only for also." The 1660 mistook the instruction again, and inserted "only for" in front of "also." The eighteenth-century editions do not make the correction. Anderson, Sanders, and the 2000 have the corrected reading.

2. At this point from the beginning of the text titled lecture 1, the text diverges from the 1658 published form of the material for the first lecture on chapter nine.

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9, and is carried on with mighty signs and wonders; here, it comes from the bottomless pit and is carried on by the devil's special minister, who, therefore, is said to have the key thereof, and is not without mighty signs and lying wonders, as is clear from chapter 13, following, where the same kingdom is under another consideration described. From all which considerations we may gather:

1. That each of these trumpets does not contain the story of an equal time or number of years; for the matter contained in any of the last three trumpets, will be found to be of longer continuance than all the first four, which (added to the greatness of the matter contained in them) may be the reason why they are differenced from the former four, as the greater woes.

2. It appears also that by the fifth and sixth trumpets, we are to understand different evils and enemies; and so they cannot both be applicable either to Antichrist only or Mahometans only.

3. We may gather also that this kingdom and army, with the furniture wherewith they are provided, and the effects which follow upon their tyranny, are not properly to be understood of external battles and bodily evils, but figuratively, as representing some great spiritual hurt on the church and her ordinances. These expressions, *they are like horses, and had breastplates, as it were breastplates*, etc., whereby they are expressly differenced from the trumpet following, wherein expressions that are properly to be understood, are used, do intimate this.⁴

4. Supposing (which afterward from 11:13 and 17 will be more clear) that the Roman hierarchy, complexly taken, is the kingdom of Antichrist, and that the deluding of the world by them is the very delusion prophesied of [in] 2 Thessalonians 2, it will necessarily follow that this Romish Antichristian kingdom (whereby the visible church has been long brought in[to] bondage) is the very same set forth by this trumpet.

To come more particularly to the description of this kingdom (for a kingdom it is) as it is set down in the words, in its rise and growth, we will find it many ways insisted upon: 1. A star falls from heaven, and becomes earthly; upon that again follows corruption of doctrine, whereupon does arise a rabble of superstitious churchmen, whose work is to propagate and support the dominion of their king, as his care is to strengthen and increase them, there being such mutual concernment in the standing or falling of each to other.

which would not well be if the fifth and sixth trumpet were either both expounded of Antichrist's or the Mahometans' kingdom. The degrees of its progress is first by the star's fall and becoming earthly. From it proceeds corrupt doctrine. From that again, as its brood, a superstitious rabble of churchmen, who growing to pomp and dignity, worldly, prove exceedingly strengthening and supporting to their king and monarch, who as upon pillars is raised, advanced, and enlarged in his dominion by them and they were helped at first by him, their being such a circle between him and them in their standing and falling.

4. The 1658 text reads, "and do intimate this," which the errata instructed, "*dele* and." All editions corrected this, except that the 1799 set "do" as "to."

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Verse 1.⁵ The first particular described is the fountain and great instrument of all this spiritual plague; that is, I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth. That by star is meant some person; the words after do clear. To him; that is, to the star was given, etc. That it must be some church officer is also clear from 1:20 from our Lord Jesus His own exposition: and considering what power this star has in the world, it must hold forth some eminent church officer. By heaven is understood here (as frequently in this book) the visible church, which is the heaven wherein Christ has placed apostles, pastors, and teachers as stars to give light because the church is furnished with heavenly privileges, heavenly light of doctrine, and ought to be of heavenly conversation in respect of the rest of the world. By earth is understood earthliness, or the rest of the world, as contradistinguished from the church, which the opposition clears; and thus earth signifies worldly designs, worldly grandeur, corrupt doctrine, liker [more like] to that of heathens than that of Christ, carnalness in conversation, and such like. For this earth is something contradistinguished from, and opposed to, the heaven formerly mentioned. To fall here from heaven unto earth signifies a declining from the one to the other. And so in sum, the meaning of this part of the verse will be, "I foresaw the defection of some eminent church officer (who once had place in the visible church) from Christian simplicity, purity, and holiness in doctrine and conversation, to a religion and way of living by superstitions, idolatries, and external pomp, becoming rather the men of the world, and liker⁶ [more like] their way than a minister of Christ."

By this phrase also (*I saw a star fall*, etc.) is implied: 1. Not only a declining and defection, but such a declining as makes him that was before a star in heaven, to cease from being considered in that relation, and afterward to be accounted as but eminent amongst the men of the world, because of their worldly earthly-like religion and worship. Upon which ground, the followers of this Antichristian kingdom are called Gentiles (11:2). 2. This phrase imports a visible and palpable step of this defection: the star is not now falling, as was in the former chapter, but it is fallen. And *I saw it fallen*, says John, implying an observableness in it. 3. It imports that after the fall of this star, and defection of this eminent church officer, he continued still in the account of a star among the men of the world: he is called a *star*, even after his fall, though indeed,

[V. 1] The progress of this kingdom (such a kingdom as it is) is set out and described in these particulars. 1. The fountain of it all is a fallen star from heaven to earth; that is, a person, for he gets the key of the bottomless pit, and an eminent churchman or church bishop becoming earthly, leaving the purity of heavenly doctrine and worship and betaking him to human traditions and superstitions, borrowed from the world and external pomp, whereby he appears like one upon the earth amongst the rest of the world in their way, rather than in Christ's or the church's. So it appears who he was from whence he fell and whither to, the earth. And he is held forth in the power that is given him. The key of the bottomless pit, not as Christ has it, chap. 1:18, nor as the devil has it, but as his deputy from whom he gets his power, chap. 12, even from the dragon. He having before the keys of heaven while he stayed there, now he continues to exercise [exercise] power as yet and more than ever he did. But it is quite contrary. He mistakes his key and turns from heaven to hell, to be a minister of Satan, and, as it were, to trade for the devil and in God's secret judgment, efficacy and gifts and lying wonders are allowed him for prosecuting his point and that with success, 2. Thess. 2. The world is given up to believe lies that follow and worship and submit to him. This cannot be meant of Mahomet. He was never a star of heaven.

5. Compared to the manuscript, this lecture generally follows the same sectional outline by verse number but has been revised and expanded greatly at various places.

6. There was a hole or defect in the original from which a copy was made to use for the 2000 edition, which allowed the underlying text to show through, and "liker" was rendered "procure."

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and in John's account he be but a fallen star and earthly, as having, indeed, forfeited his former church relation.

The second thing described is the power given unto this fallen star. And to him was given the keys of the bottomless pit. Keys signify in Scripture, authority, and power. By the bottomless pit is meant hell, as is unquestionable. Christ is said to have the keys of hell and death, that does signify His supreme authority (1:18). The devil is said to have power and to give it to the beast (13:2, 4), because in God's secret wisdom and justice, the execution of His judgments in part is committed to the devil, and he is employed as supreme head of the wicked therein, and for that cause is said to have a throne and is permitted to rule over the children of disobedience. Here, this star partakes of this authority, not as Christ has it (for now, being fallen from heaven, he has lost relation to Him), nor in that same degree as the devil does, but as deputy and lieutenant to him, who in God's secret justice furnishes him with this power, as from 13:2, 4 is clear. In a word, while he was in heaven, he exercised Christ's authority, and in that respect, had the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Now, being fallen, he continues to exercise authority, and to retain a key, but of a quite contrary nature, to wit, of the bottomless pit, and to serve another master, to wit, the devil, as the exercise of his authority tending now to the advancement of ignorance, darkness, superstition, and idolatry in the church, and being assisted with the power of hell for that end. For as Christ's ministers are said to have keys from Him, and when they warrantably exercise them, it is the opening of heaven, so promoters [promoters; advancers] of heresy, being ministers of Satan (2 Cor. 11[:14–15]), though they think it not, of whom Antichrist is the chief, he has the key of the pit, that is, an authority not allowed by Christ, nor from above, and the opening of the pit with the key is the putting of that assumed power in execution; such is spreading of corrupt doctrine, called, therefore, doctrines of devils (1 Tim. 4:1), and authorizing men to propagate these without Christ's call, who are, therefore, called ministers of Satan. This key is said to be given him, which does not imply a warrantable call, but 1. The great change which followed upon his fall, and the exercise of his power in respect of what it was he gets now another key in his hand. 2. An usurpation of the person acting, and promoting the designs of hell, in a way of authority, as if that key had been entrusted to him. 3. It implies a prime ministerial office (to say so), which he has from the devil, who does account of, and acknowledge him, as primely subservient to his designs, and a subordination of this key-bearer unto him, who has given him this trust, chapter 13:2. 4. Lastly, it implies a wise and just, though a secret, overruling providence of God, ordering this subordinate authority of Antichrist for

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His wise ends, as He does the dominion of the devil, whom He permits sovereignly (as it were) in respect of the other to bear a kind of rule.

Verse 2. The exercise of this power is set down with three effects following thereupon (vv. 2, 3). And he opened the bottomless pit; that is, as he was employed by the devil and permitted by God to assume an authority for the advantage of hell, so did he instantly exercise his power for that end, and left nothing unassayed for bringing superstition and idolatry out of the bottomless pit. Where it was formerly restrained, now it is letten loose, as appears by the effects; the first whereof is, there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace. What is to be understood by this smoke, the second effect following upon this, to wit, darkening of the sun and the air, will make it appear. For by sun and air are understood here, the light and purity of the doctrine of Christ, which shined clearly and comfortably in the primitive church. The third part of this light was smitten by the fourth trumpet (8:12). Now, by this fifth trumpet, this darkness spreads, and the whole sun and also the air is darkened, which holds forth a greater degree of corruption in doctrine than was under the former. It began then, but now is at a height. This being then the meaning of darkening the sun and air, this smoke, which brings forth this effect, must be these corrupt and superstitious doctrines and increasing of human traditions and ceremonies, whereby the light of the truth of God was obscured. This is compared to a great smoke: 1. Because error and superstition, though it seems to be something sib [akin] to devotion (as smoke is to fire), yet is really not only without light and heat but also is onerous and hurtful, as smoke is. 2. Because the darkness which error and superstition infers upon the truth of God, does not corrupt it in itself, more than smoke can darken the sun; but does by ceremonies and traditions darken it to us, as great smoke does the sun to onlookers. Again, this smoke is said to be as of a great furnace from the bottomless pit, to show that the defection of Antichrist consists not in one particular error, but (as it were) an inundation of errors ascending together. 2. To show that whatever the authors pretended, yet the rise of these superstitions were from hell, as in the forecited place, 1 Timothy 4:2, 3, superstitious traditions and errors concerning meats and marriages (doctrines much esteemed of among papists) are particularly by the apostle attributed unto devils.

Verse 3. The third effect following upon these two. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth, a vermin (as it were), engendered by the former corruptions; these, as being of special concernment in the Antichristian kingdom, are largely and particularly described. That these locusts were men; yea, that they were pretended churchmen, promoters

V. 2. The second thing he is described in is in his exercising [*exercising*] his power or key, that he boasts of it; it is in opening the bottomless pit, v. 2, out of which come forth two effects, the one flowing from the other. *There arose a great smoke like a furnace.* What this smoke is we may know, first, by its darkening the light, which in part eclipsed before, is now fully obscured by a general inundation, as it were, of corruptions and errors. Both sun and air are darkened, nothing is light, and what conveyed light too is darkened. 2. By from whence it came; errors about marriage and meats specially agreeing to the Roman church are called by the apostle, 1 Tim. 4:1, 2, 3, doctrines of devils, etc.

V. 3. The third is the effect of this smoke; they are locusts, afterward so described, as we may easily conjecture them to be the many invented orders of the Roman church to propagate and uphold that hierarchy. The two similitudes of smoke and locusts holding forth: 1. The nature of error and these doctrines to be hurtful and wasting of truth and practice, as

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of errors and superstition, appears from this, that they stand in subordination to Antichrist, and in a monarchic way are governed by Abaddon (v. 11), and must, therefore, be servants suitable to such a master, and members conform[ed] to such a head. They are said to come out of the smoke, because oftentimes corruption of doctrine begets corrupt teachers to promote the same, as we see in Jeroboam (2 Chron. 11:14, 15). And the rejecting of sound doctrine and heaping up teachers after men's own lusts (2 Tim. 4:3), are put together; for a spirit of error loves to innovate in respect of officers, as well as doctrine, and by it, people are some way disposed to strange teachers; and also for promoting new tenents, they are necessitated to make use of them. However, the scope and sum of the prophecy is thus: that the beginning of Antichrist's kingdom shall be by an eminent church officer, who, falling from the right exercise of ministerial authority in subordination to Christ, to be a promover of the devil's designs, and subservient to him, he shall bring in such abundance of ceremonies, superstitions, and errors upon the church which shall obscure the clear doctrine and simplicity of the gospel, whereby numbers of false teachers and orders shall be established, which our Lord Jesus has never warranted.

They are compared to locusts: 1. Because of their number, as Antichrist shall bring in many errors, so shall he multiply teachers, who shall live and converse together in the world like swarms of locusts. 2. To set forth their nature, and that both in respect of their worthlessness, and also of their hurtfulness unto the church, this being the nature of locusts to consume and destroy where they come, so that a land pleasant like Eden before them is brought by them to a desolate wilderness (Joel 2:3, etc., compared with Joel 1:4). These orders and teachers shall even do so with the church; yea, the increasing of them is marked here, as a part of Antichrist's superstition, as a fruit of former corrupting of doctrine, and as a middis [*means*] to carry on that corruption to a height; by which we may see, that the altering or inventing of new officers in the church is of no little concernment. By these locusts, we conceive clearly to be held forth the many invented orders, and superstitious rabble of these called the clergy of the Church of Rome, who not being plants of our heavenly Father's planting, but purposely brought in to promote and support the worldly grandeur of that hierarchy, and did flow⁷ from superstitious principles brought in upon the church, and so are to be accounted as locusts, having their rise from the bottomless pit, which their description will more fully clear.

locusts make a pleasant land before them dark, Joel 2 and 3. So do they with the church. 2. Their number and great abundance of both breaking out from these orders, being not plants of our Heavenly Father's planting, but being a suitableness between their doctrine and the preachers of it, the one breeding from the other, by which what power this star had appears, to wit, fair access to invent new worship and ceremonies and to appoint propagators for it.

These locusts are in many particulars described. 1. Their noisome nature and commission that was given them to hurt and sting as scorpions, that is, in a more dangerous and oblique way than they seemed to do, scorpions hurting more dangerously and yet more subtly than locusts. Their hurt is beyond their appearance. They look despicable-like, but they hurt not so. They have a poisonous way of killing not by open death.

7. The Edinburgh errata reads, "and did flow," which was already the reading of the text. Perhaps the reader making the errata misread the "flow" as "slow" with a long "s" (f).

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The first part of their description (besides their rise already spoken of) is the power that was given them, which is these four ways set forth: 1. Generally, in verse 3, *unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power, etc.* Scorpions are a dangerous and subtle sort of serpents; these look like locusts but sting like scorpions; that is, dangerously and subtly, their hurt being beyond their appearance, by their cunning instilling poisonous doctrine. *Their having of power given them*, does not import lawful authorizing of them, but as was said of their head in verse 1, they want [lack] no commission, but that is given them by the *angel* of the bottomless pit, who does formally authorize and create these orders, and prescribes rules unto them, so that even his officers and ministers have order among them, and assume not commission and calling (although to superstitious orders) of themselves. This is fully made out in the pope's way of founding, creating, commissionating, etc., by his bulls, patents, and other writs (as they give them names) of all orders, whereof many hundreds are in that kingdom; all which have their dependence on him, owe their being to his authority, and are regulated by the laws and commissions given them from him.

Verse 4. 1. The second way how their power is described is in verse 4, where their commission is bounded and ordered in these two respects: (1) In respect of these they shall not hurt; *it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, etc.*, whereby is understood (as is clear by the opposition following) the elect or sealed ones. This command comes not from their immediate superior, to wit, the angel of the bottomless pit, but proceeds from the Lord's sovereignty, in order to the fulfilling of what was foretold in chapter 7. (2) Again, the proper objects unto whom their power reaches are set down, to wit, *but only these men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads*; that is, these who are not elected. Here the end of Christ's sealing and the advantage of it does appear, and also who they are upon whom the delusion of Antichrist has full victory.

Verse 5. 3. Their power or commission is described further in a twofold limitation. (1) *And it was given to them that they should not kill them*; that is, that their plaguing of men should not be directly by taking away the bodily life (as the horsemen under the sixth trumpet have in verse 18) but must be understood of another sort of plague as afterward. If any say that Antichrist is said to kill ([chapters] 11, 13, 17), and so, how can this be said of him? Answer. We may consider Antichrist in a twofold respect: first, in respect of the elect; second, in respect of hypocritical professors in the church. In respect of the first, Antichrist is here limited from killing them spiritually, but in these places, he is permitted to kill them bodily. On the contrary, again, in respect of the second,

2. The commission of these locusts has a threefold limitation or restriction: 1. In respect of the object that they hurt, it is only these men that are not marked, not the elected. They rage and prevail against these appointed to perdition or who are to perish. Their deceit prevails only against them. 2 These. 2, v. 10. Antichrist seduceth not the elect. Math. 24.

2. Even these they have under their power, their liberty or commission is not to kill them, as trumpet 6, but to torment them, and that with a very great torment, not from outward woundings but from inward stinging, as when a scorpion stings a man, by which appears the anxiety and comfortlessness of their doctrine. It would never quiet a conscience and all their donations,³ pilgrimages, whippings, purgatories, etc., being put in place of faith in Christ and that sun of righteousness darkened, what advantage followed to all these poor souls they prevailed with[?] They were miserably tormented with

3. Here and in the published form of this lecture, Durham uses notation [Sc. endowment] and donation, interchangeably.

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Antichrist does not take away the bodily life of these that submit to him, but he proves a spiritual plague unto them. Now, if we consider him in the first sense, as he kills⁸ the elect, Antichrist is not the plague of the world, but in the second sense, as souls are endangered by him, and therefore, this being a threatening of sending him as a plague to the hypocrites of the church, his proper commission in reference to them is only set down. 2. This limitation may be put in to show the proper work of these locusts, which should not be professedly to take away bodily lives themselves (from which, as to its act, the Romanish clergy does superstitiously pretend to abstain, although they be deep in bloody contrivances), but that their native work should be the destroying of souls. The second limitation in this verse is in respect of the time; it is not forever, but for *five months*. We understand it indefinitely for a considerable long time, yet a time that is bounded by the Lord and will have an end, as in Ezekiel 39:12, seven months are to be taken also. It is probable that particularly five months are mentioned because ordinarily, locusts continued to destroy during five months, as it is written of them, for beginning in April, they died in September. If we should aim to be more definite in applying this time, it would but prove more troublesome and uncertain than satisfying or edifying.

4. The last thing wherein their power or commission is described is in the nature of the plague itself; that is, it was not that they should kill men, but that *men should be tormented*, etc. This torment in the greatness of it is aggregated [*aggravated*] by a similitude in the end of the fifth verse, *their torment was as the torment of a scorpion*, which is a grievous, dangerous, and vexing torment.

Verse 6. The second aggravation is from the effect of this: *men shall seek death, and shall not find it, and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them*. In sum, it is this: their anxiety shall be so great as shall make them weary of their life (as we see often good men wish for death under great anxiety of spirit, not as death is considered in itself, but as usually it is accounted an end to present vexations, as Job and Jonah), and yet death shall not prove comfortable to them; but *death* (that is, a quieting death which they desire) shall flee from them, and thoughts of death shall breed a new terror to them. For

8. The 1658 text reads, "as he corrupteth," which the errata instructed, "killeth for corrupteth." The 1660, again, simply inserted the language of the instruction and reads, "as he killeth for corrupteth the Elect." Anderson made the correction, while Sanders and the eighteenth-century editions did not.

the doctrine of merit and indulgences and could never get true quietness in it, but the more disquietness, hanging heaven upon works, these conscience[s] being once wakened and all put in fear, and the commanding of so many ceremonies, holy days, works, etc., brought all in bondage. The doctrine also of uncertainty of salvation to one's sense or knowledge and uncertainty of perseverance kept still in fear, especially when they had nothing but outward multiplied forms and afflictions of the flesh in will-worship to comfort themselves with. No marvel their sorrows be multiplied that hasten after other gods, Ps. 16:2. Histories express the torments of their poor confessionists that might keep up nothing from them under pain of damnation, and the multiplying of their monasteries and donations for soul masses and purgatories is evident. One notable example is in our own story. 3. It is limited in respect of time. It is not forever, but for *five months*, which we would understand indefinitely and Ezek. 39:12, seven months shall they be in burying ^of^ them, to wit, a good time, or a long time in respect of us, though not in respect of God, yet not always[s]; there should be an end of this blasting of all by these locusts. Probably five months are mentioned because ordinarily locusts, they endured so long, for beginning in April they died in September. So these being called locusts for their hurt and number, destroying all, some resemblance also of continuance is held forth in this. Then tormenting the world has an end, though long to us, they continue as locusts and consume the best time of the year, till the winter be approaching and till harvest, so they will be when they shall be all gathered together. And if we should be definite in numbering so many years, it will be more fashious [*troublesome*] and uncertain considering the variations of stories, nor satisfying.

V. 6. This torment is aggregated, v. 6. That the terrors of conscience, the native product of popish doctrine, shall be so stinging, that death to many will be more **terrible** tolerable if by it they could eschew that vexation, but they shall not obtain it; but the bondage lies still upon them; the fear of purgatory follows.

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understanding this, two things are to be observed: 1. That it is not bodily torment which the text speaks of, but spiritual anxiety and inward vexation of spirit, and that such as natively flows from the practices and doctrine of these locusts. For (1) This torment is on the friends and native subjects of this kingdom, whom these under-officers do not pretend willingly to torment. (2) Their power is not to kill bodily, and therefore, not to torment bodily.

2. The second thing to be observed is that nothing does more natively breed anxiety and spiritual torment than the principles contained in the popish doctrine and propagated by these who are signified by these locusts. And therefore, seeing the spreaders of such doctrines as breed anxiety and vexation of spirit, and can never satisfy nor quiet a conscience, must be understood here, we can more warrantably apply it to none than to underlings of the popish clergy and other propagators of that kingdom. Where these things are clear: (1) That their doctrine is apt of itself to breed this vexation of spirit, such as the innumerableness of their ceremonies, holy days, doctrine of merit of works, and uncertainty of grace and salvation, perfection of holiness, and fulfilling of the Law of God, with the great yoke of will-worship and superstition, which cannot but bring the zealots of these traditions under much bondage. (2) This is clear, that by their principles, there is no quieting of a conscience once wakened. What can their penances, pilgrimages, satisfactions, indulgences, invocation of saints and images, and such like, do to the sprinkling of a heart from an evil conscience? There needs no more proof of this than to read the writings of some of their casuists and to consider the many dotations given for soul-masses, after death, because the conscience could never be quieted here. (3) We will find also both these made good in experience. Histories are full of instances of the heartless and comfortless life and anxious death of many members of that body, which God has blessed to some, for constraining them to flee over these things to the alone grace of God in Christ Jesus. (4) Yea, does not their doctrine pursue men till death, and after death to torment? Their peremptory exacting of auricular confession of all sins (and that under the pain of damnation), their founding of the man's confidence upon the pope's pardon, the priest's absolution, his own penance and holiness, or the virtue of some sacrament (yea, sometimes of some idolatrous invention, as the mass, etc.), according to their principles conferring grace by the working of the work (as they call it) and such like, cannot furnish the soul with solid confidence. Besides, the fear of purgatory does weaken that hope, or expectation of ease, which otherwise men might have from death; in this sense, though they seek death, yet it flees from them, and they obtain not their desire by it, and their vexation dies not.

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Verse 7. Again, in the seventh verse, he returns to the particular description of these locusts. 1. In their appearance or shape; *like horses*; that is, strong, and swift, and stout, as *prepared unto battle*. So Gregory before spoke of priests [p. 293], calling them *Sacerdotum exercitus* to usher in Antichrist. They are compared to *horses prepared unto battle* because of their courage and expediteness in undertaking and prosecuting their designs and because of the success which followed them, who, as a conquering army do prevail over the world, which is not armed against them. For which causes, these locusts are compared to horses and armies (Joel 2[:25]). 2. They are said to be *crowned with crowns like gold*, to set forth their outward grandeur and seeming stateliness and authority, which is not so indeed, though it appeared to be so, and therefore, said not to be gold, but *like gold*. In a word, they are like kings in pomp and armies in strength. This agrees well to their cardinals, bishops, and others of the clergy of the Church of Rome. 3. *They have faces as the faces of men*; that is, a pretended affableness and sociableness in their conversations, thereby to insinuate themselves by rational pretexts upon the affections of men, yet being indeed nothing less than they pretended.

4. They are said to *have womens' hair* (v. 8), which holds forth an effem-inateness and vain delicateness in their disposition and carriage, and a whorish way of decking themselves, and alluring others to their fornication, for which this kingdom is called the *great whore* (chapter 17).

5. Their teeth were as the teeth of lions; that is, cruel and ravenous, notwithstanding of the former appearances, devouring the souls of these that are subject to them, the bodies of these that oppose them, and the goods and estates of both, like those in Matthew 23[:14–]15, who devour widows' houses, and that under pretext of long prayers. The horses mentioned in verse 17 have lions' heads; here, they have only lions' teeth with the faces of men and hair of women. The reason of the difference is, although both agree in cruelty and destroying, yet the popish clergy (signified here) do more subtly and covertly destroy souls. Therefore, are they described by lions' teeth only, which are not so obvious to sight. The Turks, again (of whom the sixth trumpet speaks), do more manifestly appear what they are; therefore, are described as lions' heads.

V. 7. In the 7 verse, he returns to the description of these locusts: 1. In their appearance or shapes, *like horses*, that is, strong and swift, and stout, and as prepared unto battle. So Gregory before spoke of priests and sacerdotum exercitus to usher in Antichrist. 2. They are crowned *as with gold*, not so indeed, but in show, in great pomp, dignity, and honor, and credit. Such were their cardinals and bishops and such are these of their orders. 3. They have *men's faces*, a condescending, insinuating way of winning in upon men, upon pretext of reason, affection, piety, etc.

4. They have *women's hair*; that is, effeminate dispositions and whorish ways of decking themselves and setting out their strumperies for alluring poor men to their fornications as they are for that called the great whore, chap. 17, and said to be arrayed in purple. They teach lies in hypocrisy and are wolves in sheep's clothing, having horns like the lamb but the dragon's mouth.

5. *Their teeth is as lions'*, that is, ravenous and devouring of the souls of these that are subject to them, of their bodies and lives of these that opposes them, and of the goods and estates of both. They devour widows' houses under pretext of long prayers. See Math. 23:14.

If it be asked, how they are here said not to have power to kill and, chap. 11, they kill and, chap. 17, they are blood guilty? Answer. Godly men and elect are exeemed [*exempt*] from their hurt spiritually, but not bodily. Reprobate men and women which are their own prey, are exeemed from bodily death but not spiritual. Now as Antichrist is a plague, he is sent and has commission alone against these that submit to him, that receive not the love of the truth. He is but accidentally the godly's scourge; these he is properly commissioned against. His power is to torment not professedly to kill, as the sixth trumpet does.

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Verse 9. He proceeds to describe these locusts in their defensive and offensive arms; they are said *to have breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle*. The first part shows their security from all danger and the advantage they had in their war; there was no hurting of them more than there is of hurting horsemen well-armed with armor of iron. The second part of the verse shows the horrible noise and terror wherewith they prosecute their designs when they find opposition, so that armies with horsemen and chariots are not more horrible nor violent in their encounters than they are. In the application to the clergy of the Church of Rome, both these may be made good by the many privileges and immunities which they possess, whereby they are exempted from dependence on all monarchs but their own, by the dread of excommunications and thunderings of church censure. While they keep the keys of heaven and purgatory, they were not only free of fear or hurt from others, but also when they met with opposition from emperors and kings, did with such clamor and violence so persecute them, that no enemy or army has been for a long time so terrible as they, making the world astonished with the stupendousness of their pretended power. The effects of this have been often found, as histories do witness.

The tenth verse does continue the description of these locusts in three particulars more. The first is, *they had tails like unto scorpions*. Tails do hold forth the flattering and fawning humor of false teachers (Isa. 5:19 [*sic* 9:15?]), who insinuate themselves by flatteries and lies, as dogs (to whom they are compared) do with their tails. 2. It is said *there were stings in their tails*; that is, not only their mouth and head were hurtful, but their tails. That which seems most pleasant to others, and is most delighted in, does often prove most noisome and hurtful to them. Such fair words and pleasant speeches of corrupt men have ever a sting in them, tending to the seduction of the simple (Rom. 16:18). 3. Their continuance is described: *their power was to hurt men five months*. This was formerly spoken of in verse 5 and is again repeated here, either because it was mentioned formerly by way of limitation, that they should torment no longer than the time appointed; here it is to show their continuance, which shall be till the appointed time come; or it is doubled to confirm the faith of God's overruling providence in timing both the rise, continuance, and close of this dreadful plague. This verse, also being particularly compared with verse 19 following, will also clear the plagues threatened by these two trumpets to be of distinct and different natures.

V. 9. Again, v. 9, these locusts are well defended, not with breastplates, but as it were so, that is, safely,⁴ what by immunities from all monarchs, having their own special privileges given them, and exempted from the bondage all were under by excommunications, etc. So it appears in sundry histories, where they set on, they prevailed, but for a long time were free of all hostility, for something by all these expressions is understood: cruelty by teeth, strength by priestplates [*sic* breastplates], subtlety by men's faces, though not so indeed, but figuratively they made a great and dreadful noise when they were provoked, as in England and elsewhere.

V. 10. A further description is set down, v. 10, that they had *tails*; that is, flatteries and lies, Isaiah 9:15. The prophet that teaches lies is called the tail and with these tails they hurt and torment by their corrupt doctrine. In the sixth trumpet, v. 19, these have power in their tail. Mahomet has false doctrine to poison some, but not only hurt they with their tails, as the locusts here, nor chiefly, but they have heads also wherewith they hurt, which these locusts do not. And so there is a clear difference between these and the sixth trumpet.

4. *Safe*: Not in danger, not liable to be harmed, with an assurance of safety, secure (*DSL*).

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Lastly (v. 11), Their government is described in three, 1. Contrary to that of locusts in Proverbs 30:27, it is monarchic: *they have a king over them*; that is, although they be many and various and different among themselves, yet are they all subordinate to one supreme head, who exercises absolute and independent authority over all the rest, and who lives in royal state and majesty in the world, having uncontroverted and illimited power within that kingdom, and has all others in subordination to him. It is impossible to indigitate [*point to*] any other by this than the pope. 2. This monarch is described by his office, which is to be *the angel of the bottomless pit*, which holds forth two things: (1) That he is a servant to that kingdom of darkness, one commissioned and sent in embassy from it, for its behoof, and so is not to be understood of the devil himself, who is not properly sent, but sends from the pit. (2) It holds forth an eminent trusty and singular messenger of that kingdom, therefore, called (by way of eminency) *the angel* of the bottomless pit, and therefore, cannot be applied to ordinary false teachers. In a word, he is the same *star* that fell from heaven in verse 1 and got the key of the bottomless pit, and the same *beast* mentioned in chapter 13, to whom the dragon does especially give his power and commission as his great deputy and vicar in the backslidden church; and therefore, he is said in 2 Thessalonians 2, to come after the working of Satan, etc. 3. This king is described from his name, which is set down both in Hebrew and Greek, *Abaddon*, and *Apollyon*, a name suitable to such a king and kingdom. His name in both signifies a destroyer, or to destroy, partly because, actively, he destroys and partly because he is to be destroyed. It is set down both in Hebrew and Greek because (1) He usurps over all the church and proves a destroyer both to Jews and Greeks. (2) Because, in due time, he is to be destroyed by both, as we will see [in] chapters 16 and 19, and also because the Lord would have him known to be so, both by Jews and Greeks, as Pilate caused [to] write the title above Christ in diverse languages. Our blessed Lord Jesus had two names, one, *Jesus*, in Hebrew, and *Christ* in Greek, both which hold Him forth to be a Savior. This king will be satisfied with no less honor and extent of government, yet is described by these titles to be of a quite contrary nature. It is not to be thought that this king should assume such an odious title, or that any such should be attributed to him by his followers, but that, indeed, he shall be such, as this title describes; that is, a most horrible waster and destroyer of the church of Christ.

This, all alongst, is applicable to the papal kingdom, whereof the pope is head, unto which shortly we have hinted the application of it, which stands sure upon the preceding grounds and suppositions. For further confirming whereof we

V. 11. Lastly, v. 11, their government is described contrary to that of ordinary locusts, Prov. 30:27; it is monarchic. 2. What sort of king have they? He is called the angel or special minister of the bottomless pit; that is, the devil's vicar. He that hath his power from the dragon and comes after the working of Satan, 2 Thess. 2. 3. His name in the Hebrew and Greek in imitation of Him who is Jesus in Hebrew and Christ in Greek, is as we show before, suitable to such a king and kingdom now come to a height and to be seen as an archenemy to Christ, and a destroyer both to Jews and Greeks, this holding out the growth and height of Antichrist's tyranny, his public assuming of such universal authority is not unfitly looked on as the most special and palpable step of its founding, though it was underhand working before.

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shall: 1. In few words, resume some general properties of and considerations concerning this plague here described. 2. We shall lay down a little view of the public rise, progress, nature, etc., of the papal kingdom: from which two we shall leave the application, by way of conclusion, to be gathered.

1. The object of this plague is the visible church and hypocritical professors in it, who are not appointed and marked for eternal life. It is the same Christian world and light of ordinances, which is darkened and destroyed by it, which was weakened by the former trumpets. (2) The nature of it is spiritual, corrupting the ordinances of spiritual life and bringing with it destruction to immortal souls. (3) The extent of it is universal, over the face of the whole visible church, the actors in it are churchmen, once by their places having power and authority in the church of Christ. In time, it breaks out in a spiritual kingdom and hierarchy, and upon a pretended ecclesiastical account, assuming great power and authority, it does breed and is supported by swarms of church officers. The time of its public appearing to be a kingdom in an established form will be found to be about the year 600; for it follows immediately the fourth trumpet, which continued the story of that time, and does immediately precede the rise of the Mahometans, which from the 700th year forward is at a height, and grows, as the exposition of the following trumpet will clear. This plague carries along with it much corrupt doctrine; yea, brings again idolatry into the Christian church, as we will see in the close of this chapter, and especially such corrupt doctrine as overturns the comfortable and quieting grounds of the gospel. It brings also to the world great store of newly created orders for promoting these doctrines and supporting that kingdom, who both by covered subtlety and violence carry on their designs, and many such other particulars.

2. Now, for the second thing propounded, if we will take a view of the papal kingdom, what will we miss? That it is a kingdom under one absolute monarch with most illimited power, having dominion over the church, being begun and carried on by churchmen, having corrupted the doctrine of the gospel, and brought idolatry again into the church are all evident. I shall instance but these three particulars: (1) The nature of the doctrine and errors brought in by them, which, though exceeding agreeable to nature, yet exceeding opposite to the way of grace, and therefore, cannot but necessarily and natively be destructive to the solid consolation of souls, and beget fearful horror in the hearts and consciences of poor sinners, so that sometimes the greatest promoters of them have been forced to abandon these principles under challenges. And their greatest disputants are constrained to acknowledge this. We have one instance in Bellarmine (*de justis*. lib. 3 [*sic*

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5], cap. 7),⁹ who, after his long dispute of indulgences, merit of works, etc., seeks to sum up all in three assertions. The first whereof attributes merit unto works; the second allows men to confide in their own merits; yet as distrusting this foundation so largely contended for, he adds a third proposition, *propter incertitudinem propriae justitiae & periculum inanis gloriae, tutissimum est fiduciam totam in sola Dei misericordia & benignitate reponere*. So that in end for uncertainty of man's proper righteousness and hazard of vainglory, he accounts it most safe to place our whole confidence in the mercy and goodness of God allanerly [*only*], and gives this reason, if man has no merit (he says) he should not confide; if he has (which yet is uncertain), it is no hurt or loss to flee only to God's mercy. In which one assertion we may see: {1} The uncomfortableness of that doctrine of merit that can never comfort solidly because, at the best, it is uncertain. {2} We may see the hazard of it to foster pride and vainglory. {3} We may see the disquietness of it, by which sinners can never be secure, till they have fully renounced it. Suárez also does homologate [*speak in the same way as*] Bellarmine in this.¹⁰ And yet, this doctrine of merit is a prime fundamental tenet of that church, but has often disappointed the defenders of it when they had most need of comfort, and has made them prize the doctrine of faith in Christ Jesus in their death, who often thought it absurd in their life, as particularly is written of Charles the Fifth, after his laying by of public things in the world and his retiring of himself to a monastery.

(2) The second instance is in the abundance and variety of their religious orders, as they are called (which take up a main part of the description of this kingdom). There are at least thirty-five orders reckoned, each whereof, for the most part, will comprehend many thousands, besides their bishops and other members of their hierarchy. The number of the monasteries belonging to these orders are reckoned by some to be 225, 044, as is observed by Alsted in his *Chronology*;¹¹ all which have their origin by the pope's authority, hold their dependency on him alone, and are vigorous instruments, specially devoted to the upholding and promoting of his designs.

(3) Lastly, a more particular considering of its rise and public appearance, which was about the same time, to wit, anno 600, and its growth and manner of proceeding afterward will make out this, which was shortly thus:

9. Bellarmine, "Controversiarum de Justificatione, Liber Quintas," *Opera Omnia*, volume 6 (1870), page 359.

10. Cf. Francisco Suarez, "Commentaria ac disputationes in tertiam partem D. Thomae," disp. IV, sect. VIII, §26, in *Opera Omnia*, vol. 17 (Paris: Vivies, 1860), p. 153.

11. Johann Heinrich Alsted, *Thesaurus Chronologiae, Editio quarta limatior & auctior* (Herbornæ Nassoviorum, 1650), p. 416.

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After the three-hundredth year, when the church possessed peace, pride soon infected her officers, whereby there was ambitious desires after preeminence amongst these who should have been most free of that vice. Rome had many advantages for this end, and her bishops improved them well, as has been hinted in the exposition of the former trumpets; yet did never one of them usurp a settled superiority, or the title of Universal Bishop or headship over the church, till Boniface the Third assumed it, about the year 606. Which was upon this occasion: after the seat of the empire was translated from Rome to Constantinople by Constantine, that bishop was privileged with all the privileges which Rome enjoyed by her being formerly the seat of the Emperor's court, even as that city was named New Rome, and made fellow in all privileges unto Old Rome; from this, many contentions followed, as is before hinted [p. 292–293]. While the Emperor's court constantly continued there, the bishops of Constantinople would not be content with equality but assumed a superiority, and a title suitable to it, of Universal Bishop. This, John, Bishop of Constantinople, did a little before the year 600, while Mauritius possessed the empire, who did countenance him, it is likely, out of respect to the place where his court resided. This usurpation was generally ill taken, and written against, especially by Gregory, Bishop of Rome, who did presage the revealing of Antichrist not to be far off when men durst be so impudent to take that style, which no apostle ever usurped. Upon some occasion, the emperor's army, mutinying, did choose one Phocas (a base, vile wretch) emperor, who, having killed all Mauritius' children before him, did afterward kill himself. Unto this Phocas did Gregory of Rome make addresses, by commissioners and epistles, grossly flattering him, and abusing that place of Daniel 4, of God's changing and transferring of empires, as he had done that for the good of His church, in removing a tyrant and setting up such a religious prince as Phocas was, as may be seen in his epistles (Lib. 11 [sic 13], Epist. 36, 44, and 43).¹² By this means, Phocas came to favor the bishops of Rome, and what out of envy towards Mauritius' name, and what to ingratiate himself in the West by the Bishop of Rome's means, some few years after (while Boniface, who was at first Gregory's commissioner to Phocas, possessed the see) he passed an edict, willing and declaring Rome to be acknowledged for the supreme see, and

If we take a little view of history, it will confirm this. The growth and rise of this kingdom we take from Phocas, his beginning to reign, being a centurion, a vile, cruel, unclean, tyrannous fellow, he arose in a mutiny of the soldiers and made himself their head, and after killed the emperor, Maurice, having first killed his wife, and all his children before his eyes. Unto this treacherous villain Gregorious sent his letters beginning with Gloria in excelsis Deo, and made use of that place in Dan. 2 and 4 of God's transferring kingdoms at His pleasure, out of base flattery to ingratiate himself to him, in hatred of Maurice, who took John, Bishop of Constantinople's part against him, swayed to countenance that treachery (because conducing to his point of advancing himself and his see) as a special act of providence for the church's good in setting up such a religious prince and taking away such a tyrant, as is in his Epist. lib. ii, Epist. 36, 44 and 45. And he dying, Boniface the third, who succeeded Gregory (John only for a little space intervening), who was then commissioner to Phocas, he obtained anno 606 from that emperor an absolute command by which Rome and its bishops were declared head and universal bishop of all other churches, a little after pronounced and confirmed by the said Boniface in a counsel of 62 bishops at Rome. And although that was by many long

12. Letter 43 is given as 45 in *MSRev2* (see page 581). The three letters normally raised concerning Gregory's "tone of high compliment," are numbers 31, 38 and 39 in *NPNF2*, volume 13, pp. 99–101. See the editor's comments, *ibid.*, Prolegomena, p. xxviii. See Epistola XXXI Ad Phocam Imperatorem, XXXVIII Ad Phocam Imperatorem, and XXXIX Ad Leontiam Imperatricem, in Migne, *PL* 77, columns 1281, 1287, and 1288.

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the bishop thereof for supreme and Universal Bishop from that time forth. This decree, Boniface the Third, within short time caused ratify and pronounce in a Lateran Council of 62 or 72 bishops, and although it wanted [lacked] not much contradiction then, and was never fully acknowledged by all the East churches, yet from that time did this great Roman hierarchy receive its public rise, and that mystery which long had been working, was obstetricated and brought forth by such a midwife, as this infamous Phocas, anno 606, as is said. At this time and after (as Platina says, in *vitæ Bonifacii tertii*),¹³ this pope and others did put in their decrees, *Sic volumus & jubemus*,¹⁴ and says that the reason of preferring Rome was because the emperor was still styled *Romanorum Imperator*, wheresoever he resided.

Immediately after this, the light of the Word wonderfully decayed, traditions were obtruded, all public worship was to be performed in Latin, the Scriptures were kept up [*kept away*] from laypeople (as they called them), litanies, liturgies, and masses were brought instead of the Word and preaching, and in effect, all reformation consisted in building churches and monasteries and enriching them with great dotations. Plurality of mediators and worshipping of saints and angels were brought in (especially this was in Vitalian's time, about the year 666), heathenish superstitions and ceremonies were brought again into the church, the temple called Pantheon (formerly dedicated to all the heathen gods) was now opened and dedicated to all saints (this was in Phocas and Innocentius, their time[]); images were set up in the church, and appointed to be worshipped, which occasioned great confusion in the church. And although it was long resisted by the emperors of the East and by several councils both in the East and West, yet was it afterward established by the second Council of Nicea. This second Council of Nicea was held, anno 781 or 788. This worshipping of images was mightily opposed by Leo Isaurus, Constant. Compran. [Constantine (V) *sic* Copronymus],¹⁵ and other emperors of the East, who for that were excommunicated by the popes. At last, Irene, a superstitious cruel woman, obtaining the government after her husband's death, the foresaid Council of Nicea did conclude this image-worship. It sat first down at Constantinople, but the people, being enraged at this their design, they were forced to remove it to Nicea. It is marked by *Centuriæ Magdeburgenses*, out of old writers, that these emperors urged the removing of images, that that scandal might not lie before the Saracens, that

contradicted, and the East churches never submitted to it, yet thence he took strength and grew a king, being fully discovered according to Gregory's prediction to be Antichrist's forerunner and to be now like an earthly monarch, emitting his mandates from thence into the world. 2. At this time, all worship was to be discharged in Latin, the Scripture kept up from people, so Vitalian and Gregorious, his commissions abroad, and litanies, liturgies, and masses instead of the Word and preaching, religion and light wonderfully decayed, reformation were in building churches and abbeys, making great donations, debates for setting up idols and images in churches, excommunications against the emperors of the East for their resisting, invocation of saints, plurality of mediators found out, that heathenish church before being to all gods called Pantheon is opened and dedicated to all saints, that none may be missed, and many other such things. 3. Religious orders (as they were called) increased and the ordinary monks are made predicans to enlarge this kingdom and their number and their riches in chief [*above all*], all their dependence being on the pope and all their study to maintain him. 4. All power incorporates in that king to do what he will, send souls to hell, and there is none to say what dost thou? To dispose of bishoprics, to depose kings, and dispose of their kingdoms, and to decide all questions of whatsoever nature sovereignly and arbitrarily without erring. 5. They were fierce and cruel in their onsets, torture these are subject to them, violent in their way, thundering noises against opposers, so that often they have brought down kings, emperors, commonwealths, and made them stoop to them till they trampled on them as in [his] story is clear, which can agree in all circumstances so well to none as to the Roman clergy and their head. Here the complex kingdom is described and, chap. 13, the head thereof is insisted on. 6. This also was the remarkable change that went immediately before Mahomet's rise, who succeeds in the sixth trumpet.

Observe, what sin has brought upon the most of the world and what we are obliged to God for vindicating us from that yoke and restoring us to the liberty of the sons of God. Make right use of it and pity them that are under this tyranny.⁷

End of the manuscript version

13. Bartolomeo Platina, *Vitæ Pontificum* (1479; Colonia Agrippinæ: Petri Cholini, 1626), pp. 79–80.

14. So we will and command.

15. For his iconoclasm, Constantine V later received from opponents the derogatory name Copronymus (dung-named).

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Christians worshipped idols. This Council of Nicea was also withstood by Charles the Great and Ludovicus Pius.

At this time also, the pope grew exceedingly to a height, not only of censuring bishops and disposing of bishoprics, but also deposing kings and disposing of their kingdoms at his pleasure, supremely and sovereignly to decide all questions whatsoever, and that without all possibility of erring. In a word, in everything so absolute, as he might lead millions of souls to hell, and none might say to him, “what dost thou?” And all this with wonderful violence and terror to any who should in the least contrary the same, which things are not only practiced by the Head of this Antichristian kingdom, but also are owned and maintained by these his forementioned armies to be due to him (as from many particular instances, and their general principles might be made out). All which being put together (especially by the intelligent who are acquainted with their practices and writings), it may be confidently concluded (which was asserted in the introduction to this chapter) that the popish kingdom is the very kingdom, the pope the very king, and the angel of the bottomless pit, the popish clergy the very locusts and armies, and their doctrine the very noisome smoke of the pit, which are here somewhat darkly, but exceedingly fully and appositely [*appropriately*] described.

We shall say no more for use of all, but:¹⁶ 1. That we would bless God, who has so clearly discovered to us this abomination that makes desolate. And 2. We would bless Him further, that He has freed us from this tyranny under which a great part of the Christian world does lie and by which our own predecessors were sometimes kept in bondage. 3. It would provoke us to improve the light and liberty of truth which He has conceded to us and to welcome the soul-comforting doctrines of the free grace of the gospel. O, what great odds is there between the dispensations of the gospel which we enjoy and that which our fathers lived under! And therefore, how much more is required of us? And how much greater will the condemnation of these be, who shall ungratefully perish under this light? 4. Lastly, let it stir us up with holy indignation against this contagion of popery. Ought we to think this a light and indifferent matter, which the Lord has threatened as so great a woe to the visible church, and which he does so significantly delineate in the hellish nature and hurtful effects of it? And let us commiserate the deplorable condition of many thousands of poor souls, captivated under this tyranny, and stung with the poison of these scorpions, who yet cry not when they are bound. And let us cry mightily to God to break this covenant with death, and to bring this agreement with

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hell to an end, that the oppressed captives may be let go free, and the temple may be opened in heaven, and that He may take to Him His great power and reign, that the kingdoms of the earth may become the kingdoms of the Lord and of His Christ. Even so. Amen.

CHRIS COLDWELL ■

16. Compare these uses to the single brief closing observation in the text in *MSRev2* on page 582.

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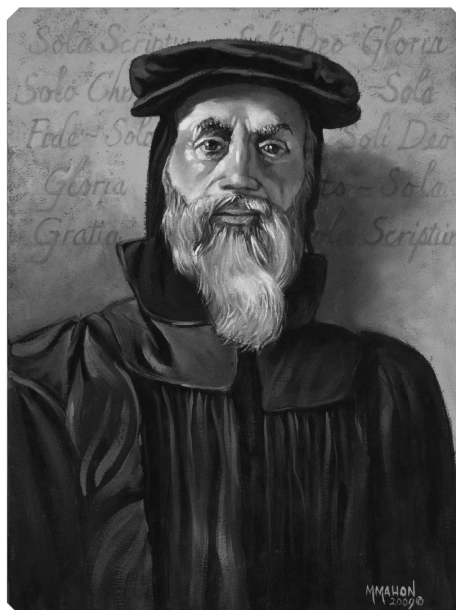
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Editorial. Continued from Page 2.

been retired for an occasional one when suitable material arises (*Opuscula Selecta*), and having none, it takes a hiatus this year. The lengthy offering for *Antiquary* affords the means to present in a different fashion, the published and manuscript versions of several lectures on the Book of the Revelation of John by James Durham (1622–1658), recently published by Naphtali Press and Reformation Heritage Books. This year the regular *In Brief* spots spread throughout the journal focus on Thomas M'Crie (whose substantial and generally hard to find work on the Marrow Controversy appeared in the 2020 issue), David Dickson and John Owen. The entry for *Et Mortuus Adhuc Per Eam Loquitur*, which we include as needed to complete an issue, also focuses on Dr. M'Crie, featuring the last sermon he preached, the Lord's Day prior to his death.

This seventeenth issue now in the reader's hand commences a new beginning of sorts. As many longtime followers of the journal know, *The Confessional Presbyterian* has been a self-funded and self-distributed hand to mouth "Little Train that thought it could" for most of its seventeen years. With one year behind, it was always, "I think I can do another year." About the fifth issue (a huge issue with a full color portrait of Calvin on it, that began the longstanding custom color portrait cover motif), it began to strike your editor that people may want the Journal to continue longer than he might have the endurance or faculties to "think I can." The growing body and quality of work, exceedingly nice and generous commendations, eagerness of enough folks to contribute articles and reviews each year to make an issue, and editors willing to work for no remuneration beyond free copies, assured it was important to find a institution to serve as publisher to ensure the Journal's continuance. But two things were nonnegotiable. The Journal was designed specifically to be a high-quality print journal and should continue to have an original print run. At the same time, it was crucial to retain the original *Raison d'être* and focus as *A Journal for Discussion of Presbyterian Doctrine and Practice* for the many denominations that truly claim the label of Confessional Presbyterian, while disagreeing on lesser issues.

At the beginning of 2021 Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary reached out to the editor with a plan that checked all these boxes. From the seminary's perspective, this is a perfect partnership, since GPTS, like the editors and contributors to the journal, shares the aim of fostering the growth of confessional presbyterian doctrine and worship. This agreement will ensure the journal's continuance and expand its reach for many years to come, and provides the means for an orderly succession of editors when Mr. Coldwell and his co-editors, most of whom have been associated with the Journal continuously or on and off over its life, retire. The editors look forward to continuing to craft the journal over the

coming years, and are optimistic and happy to see that GPTS is in a position to assure the continuance of *The Confessional Presbyterian* beyond their tenure. The Little Train has rounded the top of the hill and is ready for new challenges that do not include the question of whether to continue another year!

"GPTS is delighted to announce this publishing arrangement to ensure the regular publication of *The Confessional Presbyterian* journal. We take special joy in the fact that Chris Coldwell will stay on in his current role at the journal and work together with our staff. All of us on the faculty of GPTS have admired his editorial work for years, and we look forward to expanding the journal's reach and ensuring its stability for many years to come."—Dr. Jonathan L. Maister, PhD (President, Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary)

"I'm very thankful to GPTS for this exceedingly generous, optimistic, and exciting arrangement."—Mr. Chris Coldwell (General Editor, *The Confessional Presbyterian Journal*).

Locating the Mystery. Continued from Page 22.

The Scriptures, teaching the true religion as they do, make clear that the trinitarian persons do not change in God's sovereignly willed relation to creation. James says that, "The Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change" supplies "every good and perfect gift" in his personal condescension from heaven.²⁶ James inseparably tethers the Father's personal immutability to his acts and gifts in time. Geerhardus Vos, Bavinck's close friend and Van Til's favorite professor at Princeton Theological Seminary, reminds us of how vitally God's immutability in his self-revelation to the church bears on true religion:

Let us not forget, however, that as of all theology, so of Biblical Theology, the highest aim cannot lie in man, or in anything that serves the creature. Its most excellent practical use is surely this, that it grants us a new vision of the glory of Him who has made all things to the praise of His own wonderful name. As the Uncreated, the Unchangeable, Eternal God, He lives above the sphere of history. He is the Being and never the Becoming One. And, no doubt, when once this veil of time shall be drawn aside, when we shall see face to face, then also the necessity for viewing His knowledge in the glass of history will cease. But since on our behalf and for our salvation He has condescended to work and speak in the form of time,

26. Bavinck, following the classical Augustinian and Reformed tradition of interpretation of James 1:17, asserts that "in God there is no variation or shadow due to change (James 1:17)." RD, 2.158.

and thus to make His works and His speech partake of that peculiar glory that attaches to all organic growth, let us see to know Him as the One that is, that was, and that is to come, in order that no note may be lacking that psalm of praise to be sung by the Church into which all our Theology must issue.²⁷

Locating the mystery in God's acting and relating without undergoing change properly enables the church to worship the triune God as he has revealed himself in the history of special revelation. In his relation to creation "the Unchangeable, Eternal God" is "never the Becoming One." And though he "lives above the sphere of history" yet he "has condescended to work and speak in the form of time" so that no note may be lacking in the church's worship of the living and true God. This God, "who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy" says to his covenant people, "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite" (Isaiah 57:15). It is this living and immutable triune God who in his covenantal condescension said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14) and who, in the person of his Son, said "I am the Alpha and the Omega," ... "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (Revelation 1:8). It is this living and true God, and not a mutable idol, whom the church worships in his self-revelation in Jesus Christ, our Lord (I John 5:21; Revelation 7:11,15-17).

Reviews and Responses. Continued from Page 182.

to London, his congregation had to relocate—twice—because of its growth.

This volume consists of three parts: Discourses before and after the Lord's Supper; Questions about Salvation, Assurance, and the Lord's Supper; and Sermons Related to the Lord's Supper. An appendix contains a paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer.

Part 1 contains the following chapters: "Union to Christ, and the New Creature" (2 Corinthians 5:7); "Christ Going to Gethsemane" (John 18:1-2); "Spiritual Washing" (1 Corinthians 6:11); "The Communion of Christ's Body and Blood" (1 Corinthians 10:16); "The Sin and Danger of Unworthy Receiving" (1 Corinthians 11:29); "Christ's Last Passover and Its Accomplishment" (Luke 22:15-18); "The Feast of Christ's Love" (Song of Solomon 2:4); and "Christ's Cure of a Disciple's Weak Faith" (John 20:27-28).

Part 2 has these discourses: "How Much Assurance Is Necessary to Come to the Table?"; "Two Sacramental Questions

on Our Duty to Take Communion" (Are All Baptized Christians Bound to Partake of the Lord's Supper?; Why Do So Many Good People Live in Neglect of this Ordinance?); "Four Sacramental Questions on Those Unworthy to Take Communion" (Is the Lord's Supper a Means of Converting Souls?; Should I Partake if Unworthy Communicants Are Admitted to the Supper?; What Is an Unworthy Receiver of Communion?; What Is the Danger of Unworthy Receiving?); and "Wasn't Judas Present at the First Celebration of the Lord's Supper?"

Part 3 contains these sermons: "The Purposes of Receiving the Lord's Supper"; "The Cross of Christ, a Christian's Glory" (Galatians 6:14); "The Promise and Oath of God" (Hebrews 6:16, 18); and "Christ's Love for Us Like the Father's to Him" (John 15:9).

As one would expect from a Puritan writer, the material is not only strongly Scriptural and theologically accurate, but also warmly applicatory. Meditating on one of these chapters would be a very profitable exercise in terms of communion preparation. The book compares favorably to similar ones, such as a 1997 offering from Soli Deo Gloria Publications, *The Puritans on the Lord's Supper*, which featured a number of Puritan ministers.■

27. Geerhardus Vos, "The Idea of Biblical Theology as a Science and as a Theological Discipline," in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin Jr., (P&R Publishing Company, Phillipsburg, New Jersey: 1980), p. 24.

ET MORTUUS ADHUC PER EAM LOQUITUR

Thomas M'Crie's Last Sermon

Editor's Advertisement to the First Edition.

A considerable number of the following Sermons were transcribed by the lamented Author from his notes for the pulpit, some years before his death. Though often solicited to publish them, he was prevented, by other avocations, from completing the proposed volume. The remaining Discourses have been selected from his manuscripts, and the whole has been arranged with as much attention to order as the nature of the subjects would admit. In the task of selection the Editor has been guided chiefly by the state of preparation in which the notes were found, though in some measure also by the earnestly expressed desires of those who heard them delivered. In one or two instances, what occupied two Discourses in the delivery has been put into one. The judicious reader will be prepared to expect, in a series of Discourses on topics nearly allied to each other, and of a strain almost uniformly practical, an occasional coincidence of sentiment and phraseology; and he will understand the feelings which have restrained the Editor from attempting such alterations as might have been expected from the Author.

With regard to the reception of those Sermons which were prepared by the Author's own hand, the Editor has no right to pretend uneasiness. It is, however, with no small degree of anxiety that he presents along with these the other Discourses which fill the volume. Well knowing the extreme care which his late revered father was accustomed to bestow on all his compositions intended for the public eye, he feels as if he had presumed too far on the silence of the grave, by publishing what the Author would never have given to the world, in such an imperfect form, during his lifetime. There is some relief in the reflection, that what it might have been unworthy of the living Author to bequeath as a gift, it may be permitted us to present as a memorial; and to those, at least, who enjoyed his ministrations, the value of these relics of their departed minister may be enhanced by that very absence of finish which may be found to distinguish them from the other Sermons in the volume.

To those who have expressed a wish to see a volume of his father's Lectures printed, the Editor begs to intimate

that they have been left in such a state as might warrant the publication of a select number, and that if they should still be called for, he shall commence the preparation of them for the press as speedily as his other engagements will allow. In closing his present task, it is his humble trust that these Sermons, with all the disadvantages under which they necessarily labour, may be pronounced, as a whole, not unworthy of their Author; and that they may be blessed for leading the reader, under the solemn impression of the mournful event to which they owe their present appearance, to "consider the end of his conversation, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

Thomas M'Crie.
Clola, By Mintlaw,
January 1836.

The Fan in Christ's Hand¹

MATTHEW 3:12: Whose Fan Is In His Hand, And He Will Thoroughly Purge His Floor, And Gather His Wheat Into The Garner; But He Will Burn Up The Chaff With Unquenchable Fire.

We are accustomed to hear children speak of the Bible and the Testament; and we sometimes find this mode of speaking retained by persons who ought to have put away childish things. The Old and New Testaments form one Bible. They proceed from the same author, testify the same things, possess the same properties, and lead to the same end. In the writings of the Old Testament we have eternal life, and they testify of Christ. And the writings of the New Testament abound with quotations from those of Moses and the prophets. Upwards of four hundred years elapsed between the composing of the last book of the Old Testament, and the first of the New; and yet the current of revelation flows on in an unbroken stream. You would suppose that Matthew had taken the pen from the hand of Malachi, and proceeded immediately to relate the accomplishment of what his predecessor had predicted. *Behold, says Malachi, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me.* This Matthew relates as accomplished in John the Baptist. *This is he that was spoken of by the prophet saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple,* says Malachi. This Matthew shows to have been

1. Note: This was the last discourse delivered by the author, having been preached August 2, 1835, the Sabbath immediately preceding his decease. Sermon XXI in *The Works of Thomas M'Crie, a new edition*, edited by his son Thomas M'Crie, volume 4 (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1857), pp. 501–509.

fulfilled in the coming of Christ. And even in their accounts of the manner of this appearance, they harmonize. *But who may abide the day of his coming? exclaims the prophet; and who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap* (Mal. 3:2). *He shall baptize*, responds the evangelist, *with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Behold the day cometh*, continues the former, *that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch* (Mal. 4:1). This corresponds exactly with the words before us: *Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.*

A secure people need a severe minister; and it is a good sign that a people have been aroused from their security, when they are reconciled to the severity of the preacher. Such a preacher was John the Baptist, who warned a hypocritical nation to flee from the wrath to come, preaching the baptism of repentance. His ministry occupied a middle place, as it were, between the law and the gospel. He stood between the prophets and Christ. He was honored above the former, because he was permitted to point out the Messiah with the finger, and to say, *Behold the Lamb of God*. It was his work to testify of Christ as just about to appear, and to conduct and deliver over his disciples to his and their common master. In speaking of him, though he cheerfully admits his own inferiority, he at the same time asserts the harmony of their design, and warns his hearers against expecting to find under the administration of Him that was to come, any covert for their hypocrisy and other vices. *Now also*, says he in a preceding verse, *the axe is laid unto the root of the tree: therefore every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire*. What more calculated to awaken unprofitable members of the church than this description? The unfruitful tree is marked out by the gardener, who has long dressed and pruned it in vain; the ground is cleared around it, the axe is laid at its root, and nothing remains but for the lord of the garden, when he comes in to survey it, to give the command, *Cut it down: why cumbereth it the ground?* Similar is the description in the succeeding verse. Water will remove the external filth which cleaves to any object, but the operation of fire is severer and more effectual—it melts the hardest metals, and burns up the dross. John baptized with water; but Christ shall *baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire*.

The description is varied in our text, while the subject is still the same. The work of purifying the church, and clearing it of all that is foreign, incongruous or offensive, is likened to the operation of winnowing grain. This process, in ancient times, consisted of different operations. The corn after being

thrashed, was laid out on a floor and exposed to a gentle wind which scattered the straw and chaff. It was then beaten by the hoofs of oxen, next passed through a sieve, and lastly subjected to the hand-fan, a species of shovel, by which it was thoroughly cleansed. Similar to this is the purification of the church; and Christ, who superintends the whole process, and reserves for himself the last and crowning part of it, is here compared to the husbandman, who stood with the fan in his hand, with which he, for the last time, turned up the grain, that the wind might separate and bear away every remaining particle of chaff and refuse, and that nothing might rest behind but what was pure and substantial. It is one part of the work of Christ to purify his church; and he will not do this work superficially, or leave it unfinished. He will *thoroughly purge his floor*; he will make a complete separation, at last, between the chaff and the wheat; the latter he will deposit in his heavenly garner, and the former he will burn up with unquenchable fire. The devil has a fan of his own, which he uses for the purposes of temptation. *Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat*. But Christ will not give up his fan to Satan. He still holds it in his hand, and brings individual believers, as well as his church, under its operation, that he may thoroughly cleanse his floor.

My intention, at present, is to name some of those means which the Lord Jesus Christ employs to fan or purify his church.

It may be premised that the work is twofold. First, it includes a separation of persons. The church in this world is like a barn-floor, which contains a mixture of good grain and refuse. There are hypocrites and nominal or godless professors, as well as genuine saints; and sometimes the number of the former may become so great, that it is difficult to perceive any other. Hence the need of times of reformation, in which Christ comes into his church as a purifier, with his fan in his hand. Secondly, it implies a separation of persons from their corruptions. The husks of sin, the clay of corruption, the chaff of vanity, cleave to the best so long as they are in the body, and hence they need to be sifted and beaten and fanned, in order to cleanse them. In accomplishing these separate objects, our Lord proceeds in a manner somewhat different; but still, in general, the same means serve, in his adorable wisdom, to effect both purposes.

1. Christ accomplishes this work by means of his Word. It is compared to fire, on account of its searching and purifying tendency: to a candle or light, which discovers the hidden things of darkness; to a sharp two-edged sword, which cuts both ways, discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart, and divides between the soul and spirit—making a discrimination between states and characters, not only by

laying down infallible marks of these, but also by applying them convincingly to individuals.

The Scriptures evince their discriminating power, by touching both the consciences and the corruptions of men; and by either softening and subduing them, or by irritating and hardening them. To some the gospel proves the savor of life; to others, the savor of death; to them that are saved, it is the power of God; to them that perish, a stumbling-block and foolishness. *Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed* (Luke 2:34). So it was foretold by Simeon to the mother of our Lord; and the history of his personal ministry is a commentary on that text.

When he preached first in his native city of Nazareth, we are told that, after he had read out his text, *the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him*. This was a favorable commencement. After he had proceeded so far in his sermon, it is said, *All bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth*. This was still more flattering. When it is added, *They said, is not this Joseph's son?* the question is suspicious; but still it might only mean that they were the more struck with astonishment at his wisdom when they recollected that he was the son of one of their poor townsmen. But Jesus proceeded to address them in a style that was more plain than pleasant, telling them that a prophet was seldom accepted in his own country, and reminding them that though there were many widows in Israel during the famine in the days of Elias, that prophet was sent to relieve only a single widow who lived in Sarepta, a city of Sidon; and though there were many lepers in Israel, the only one whom Elisha cured was Naaman, a Syrian. This doctrine of the divine sovereignty instantly changed their admiration into resentment. *All they in the synagogue when they heard these things were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong* (Luke 4:20-29).

His subsequent history presents numerous examples of the same nature. After having miraculously fed the multitude on one occasion, they exclaimed, *This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world*; and they would have taken him by force to make him a king. When he withdrew from them, they eagerly followed, and sought him out. But by means of the fan of his word, he soon freed himself of these light-minded, carnal followers. *How can this man give us his flesh to eat? This is a hard saying: who can hear it? From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him* (John 6:14-66). On one occasion we are informed, *the common people heard him gladly* (Mark 12:37); but why? Because his discourse had on that occasion

been directed against the scribes and Pharisees, and they were pleased to see their superiors mortified; but when their own turn came, and he began to reprove their vices, by and by they were offended also. On another occasion, he dispersed a whole congregation, except one, by that single saying, *He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even to the last; and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst* (John 8:7, 9).

Similar instances might be mentioned of the power of Christ's word in distinguishing the characters of particular individuals. What a contrast between the effects which it produced on the Syrophenician woman, and the rich young man! The former persevered in her suit, even after being repelled, and classed with the dogs: *Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table*. The latter is blown away with a single word: *He went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions* (Mat. 15:27; 19:22). *What thou doest, do quickly*, said our Lord to Judas. And stirred by this fan, Satan carried away the unsound disciple to the conclave of the enemies of Jesus. When the word of God crosses our inclinations, discovers our idols, demands the sacrifice of our corruptions—it raises a storm within, and arms the whole soul against it. *I hate him*, said Ahab of Micaiah, *because he always prophesies evil of me*. And what else could a faithful prophet say of a wicked man, even though that man was a king?

2. Christ cleanses his house by means of the fan of church-discipline. There are persons on whom the word has no effect either one way or another: it neither converts nor convinces them—neither reclaims them from their sins, nor drives them from the society of the faithful. They are like the ancient Jews, who did steal, murder, commit adultery, and yet came and stood before the Lord in his house, saying, *We are delivered to do all these abominations* (Jer. 7:9). Are these persons to be admitted to the privileges of the kingdom of heaven, or having been admitted to them before their conduct became openly immoral and profane, must they be permitted to enjoy them without any control? No: Christ has not left his spiritual kingdom so defenceless, nor obliged his servants to give that which is holy unto the dogs. He has committed to them *the keys of the kingdom of heaven*, and among these is the key of discipline, and the power of binding and loosing by censures; and when these are exercised agreeably to the rule of his word, he approves of and ratifies them in heaven. The purity of the church's communion is to be maintained by excluding the unworthy from its pale, by admonishing and rebuking the scandalous, by suspending from sealing ordinances the irregular and disorderly, and by excommunicating the obstinate and

impenitent. Our Lord's parables of the wheat and tares, and of the net in which were enclosed good and bad fishes, teach us that we are not to expect that the church on earth will ever consist of godly persons exclusively, and that the office-bearers of the church are not to presume to judge of the states of men. But the words of Christ are not to be interpreted so as to contradict themselves; and does he not say of the person who neglects to hear the church, *Let him be unto you as an heathen man and a publican?* and has not his Spirit said by the Apostle, *Put away from among yourselves that wicked person* (1 Cor. 5:13)? Such censures have a twofold good effect: they remove contagion from the church; and they often have the effect of removing corruption from the offending individual. They are *delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus* (1 Cor. 5:5).

3. Christ purifies his church and people by the fan of affliction. I scruple not, my brethren, to call afflictions an ordinance of God; they are sent to try his people—they are trials of their faith, love, humility, patience, and submission. The heavy trial at Ziklag brought forth at once David's graces, and the people's corruptions. *David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God* (1 Sam. 30:6). Satan, well aware of the tendency of affliction, when it bereaves men of their chief enjoyments, to excite their corruptions, anticipated this effect in the case of Job: *Put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face.* And Job's wife seconded the temptation: *Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die.* But what was his exercise under all this? *What! shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil? In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.* Elisha asks the Shunamite, in her deep distress, *Is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child: And she said, It is well.* How very different is it with others, who, when they are under the rod, spurn at it, *like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke*; who, like Pharaoh, proudly ask, *Who is the Lord that I should obey him?* or as the impatient king of Israel, *Behold this evil is of the Lord: why should I wait for the Lord any longer* (2 Kings 6:33)? What, my brethren, let me ask, has been the effect of affliction upon you?

4. The Lord Jesus sometimes employs in this work the fan of persecution and public calamity. It is said of the stony-ground hearers of the word, that they *dure only for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by they are offended.* The fear of these deter some from joining the church of Christ; but others will join without counting the cost. In the prophecies of Daniel, Antiochus, that great persecutor, is said to *have intelligence*

with them that forsake the holy covenant. And some of them that have understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end (Dan. 11:30, 35). Of all the crowds that flocked to our Lord during his earthly ministry, how few continued with him during his last sufferings. Yea, even those who had continued with him in his temptations, were blown away for a time, so that he trode the wine-press alone. Peter, the boldest and most strenuous of his adherents, denied him; and the rest, in violation of their solemn engagement, forsook him and fled. And who were left to own him? The thief, who was nailed with him to the cross, and the centurion of the band which guarded the scene of his crucifixion!

When the church becomes very corrupt, public judgments become necessary to vindicate the character of God, and maintain the credit of religion. It is sometimes necessary to let in a whirlwind, *a full wind*, as it is called, on the floor, which sweeps it completely, and carries all away to a great distance. There is a fanning in wrath. *I will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land: I will bereave them of children, I will destroy my people, since they return not from their ways* (Jer. 15:7). At first view, this may appear to be ruinous, instead of purifying, to the church. Hence that expression, *A dry wind of the high places in the wilderness toward the daughter of my people, not to fan, nor to cleanse* (Jer. 4:11). The Chaldeans are there compared to that destructive wind which blows from the deserts of Arabia, burning up and destroying all before it, called the Simoom. For a time it appeared that the church of God was ruined—good as well as bad were swept away. Accordingly it follows, *Behold he shall come up as a whirlwind. Wo unto us! for we are spoiled.* But the good were preserved—they were *sown among the people*; and restored to their own land. *I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them; and they shall be as though I had not cast them off* (Zech. 10:6, 9).

5. Christ employs for this purpose the fan of temptations. Afflictions and persecutions because of the word operate as temptations, and are so denominated in Scripture, because they try the character of professed Christians, discover the unsoundness of some, and the integrity of others. But temptations are more extensive. Prosperity, as well as affliction, is a sore trial to the constancy of professors. By it, to use the language of Job, they are *lifted up to the wind* (Job 30:22). How hard is it for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven! And how hard for any man to withstand the influence even of a little breath of worldly prosperity! I refer, at present, however, to temptations strictly so called.

We know that God *tempteth no man*; he does not seduce us by persuasion, or by any operation on our hearts, into sin. But, for wise and holy ends, he permits men to be

tempted, to be exposed to the enticements of sinners, and to those circumstances which have a tendency to draw out their corrupt inclinations. Hence we are directed to pray, *Lead us not into temptation*. And there is a deep and awful dispensation of Providence in this respect, towards unprofitable and ungodly professors of religion, which, while it demands from us humble adoration, ought to fill us with holy dread. *Because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved, God also sent them strong delusions that they should believe a lie* (2 Thess. 2:10).

Satan is at the head of the sinful agents of temptation. Though he acts chiefly by means of external objects addressed to the senses, yet that he had direct access to the soul there can be little reason to doubt, from his own nature as an unembodied spirit, or the account given of his operations in Scripture. He is called *the Spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience*. And again, *Whom the god of this world hath blinded*. Christ as the purifier of his church, permits him to come into it, though he stands by him to restrain and curb him. Though he will not commit his fan into the hands of this destroyer, yet he permits him to use his own fan. Satan has his subaltern agents whom he employs as instruments in seduction. And as he spoke at first by the mouth of the serpent, which *was more subtle than any of the beasts of the field*, so he speaks still by the mouths of those who are most plausible, or who exert the greatest influence over us. He knows well how to *entice thee secretly by thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend which is as thine own soul* (Deut. 13:6). If Peter had recollected the reproof of his master, *Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of man*, he would not have been so ignorant of the devices of the Tempter, as to suppose that he could not speak to him by the mouth of a maid-servant.

The wind of error and false doctrine carries away multitudes of giddy and unsound professors, who are *tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine*. There arose of old false prophets and false christi, and under such specious appearances did they come, and such plausible language did they employ, that they drew away many disciples, and *if it had been possible would have deceived the very elect*.

6. Lastly, Christ will accomplish this work by the fan of the final judgment. This is the last part of the process; and then will Christ *thoroughly purge his floor*. All the preceding steps are preparative to this, and contribute to the end which it will accomplish. The purgation wrought by them is only partial. None of them, nor all of them together, make a complete separation between the chaff and the wheat. Hypocrites may read the word of God, and sit under the most faithful and searching ministry, and yet hold

fast their hypocrisy, and think they are something, when they are nothing. The discipline of the house of God, even when most conscientiously and scripturally administered, can only remove those whose conduct is openly offensive. There was a Ham in the ark, a Judas in the sacred college of the apostles. We have no ground to think that affliction, or persecution, or temptation, or public calamities, carry away all that are insincere from a profession of religion. Professing Christians may go down to the pit under the influence of a deceived heart, and not know that they carry a lie in their right hand. *Many will say in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? Have we not eaten and drunk in thy presence? And when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?* They may go to the judgment-seat under such delusions, indulging presumptuous hopes, but they shall not abide there, far less come from it in that state. *The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment*. In this life, Christ has his fire in Zion and his furnace in Jerusalem, and there he sits as a refiner. But at the last day, *a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him*. Alas! *who shall be able to abide the day of his coming?*

The trial shall be most strict. *We must all appear – be made manifest – before the judgment-seat of Christ*. The Judge is the Omniscient One, and on that day will make all men to know that it is He that tries the reins and searches the heart. When the Lord comes, *he shall bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts*. Hence it is compared to the severest ordeal – that by fire. Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be tried by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

The complete separation shall be made between the righteous and the wicked. Not one of the righteous shall be found on the left hand of the Judge; and not one of the wicked on his right hand.

And this separation shall be final. No confusion or mixing of the two parties shall then appear. *These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal*. *He shall gather his wheat into his garner, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.* ■

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