

# Samuel Rutherford's Contribution to Covenant Theology in Scotland

By D. Patrick Ramsey

## INTRODUCTION

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to discuss covenant theology without mentioning Reformed theology because its growth and development occurred primarily within Reformed circles.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, "covenant thinking became a fundamental part of the early Reformed and Puritan worldview and has remained a distinctive feature of the Reformed interpretation of Scripture ever since."<sup>2</sup> Within the world of Reformed covenant theology, at least in the English speaking part, one would be hard pressed not to refer to Scotland and her theologians. The idea of covenant in general and covenant theology in particular so pervades Scottish political and religious history that David Hay Fleming could refer to Scotland as "the land of the Covenant"<sup>3</sup> and James Walker could assert that "the old theology of Scotland might be emphatically described as a *covenant theology*."<sup>4</sup> Among Scotland's covenant theologians, Samuel Rutherford must be ranked near the very top. According to Thomas F. Torrance, Rutherford's breadth of learning was astonishing, enabling him to become "one of the great and most influential theologians in the Calvinist and Presbyterian tradition of the post-Reformation Kirk."<sup>5</sup> John Coffey notes that of the Scottish Covenanters Rutherford was the most distinguished theologian. Besides having an international reputation as an astute defender of Reformed orthodoxy, no other Covenanter, except Robert Baillie, approached the range of his theological writings.<sup>6</sup>

Born in 1600 in Nisbet, near Roxburgh, Samuel Rutherford rose to serve the Scottish Church in the pastorate and the academy with distinction. After nine years as a student and teacher at Edinburgh University, Rutherford left to spend the next eleven years as the pastor in Anwoth (Coffey, 41). Subsequently, he becomes a major figure in the Church of Scotland, reaching the height of

his influence in 1649 (55). In 1639, Rutherford becomes professor of divinity at the University of St. Andrews. He is sent as a Scottish commissioner to the Westminster Assembly in 1643, returning to Scotland and his teaching at St. Andrews in 1647. Rejecting invitations to teach elsewhere, including Harderwyck in 1648 and Utrecht in 1651, Rutherford stays at St. Andrews for the rest of his teaching career, becoming Rector in 1651.<sup>7</sup> With the return of the Stuart monarchy, Rutherford is cited to appear before Parliament on a charge of treason. Unable to

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1. See Peter Golding, *Covenant Theology: The Key of Theology in Reformed Thought and Tradition* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Mentor, 2004) 10; John Murray, "Covenant Theology," in *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Carlisle, Pa.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1982) 4:216.

2. Lyle D. Bierma, *German Calvinism in the Confessional Age: The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevianus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996) 11.

3. David Hay Fleming, "The Story Of The Scottish Covenants in Outline," *An Anthology of Presbyterian & Reformed Literature* (Dallas: Naphtali Press, 1992) 5:44.

4. James Walker, *The Theology and Theologians of Scotland: 1560-1750* (Edinburgh: Knox Press, 1982) 73.

5. Thomas F. Torrance, *Scottish Theology: From John Knox to John McLeod Campbell* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 1996) 93.

6. John Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions: The Mind of Samuel Rutherford* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 114. See also M. Charles Bell, *Calvin and Scottish Theology* (Edinburgh: Handset Press, 1985) 70; John Macpherson, "The Doctrine of the Church in Scottish Theology," *Anthology*, 5:139.

7. Sherman Isbell, "Samuel Rutherford," in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History & Theology*, ed. David F. Wright et. al. (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 1993) 735.

attend because of declining health, he replies: "I have got summons already before a Superior Judge and Judiciary, and I behev to answer to my first summons, and ere your day come, I will be where few kings and great folks come" (Isbell, 735).<sup>8</sup> Shortly thereafter, Rutherford crosses over into Immanuel's land in 1661.

In light of Samuel Rutherford's significance as a Scottish covenant theologian, this paper will assess his contribution to the development and establishment of covenant theology in Scotland. In so doing, we will first provide an overview of the history and development of covenant theology up to the time of Rutherford. Then, we will examine his covenant theology based upon his writings, looking primarily at the works wherein he expounds his covenant doctrine, namely *The Covenant of Life Opened*, *The Trial and Triumph of Faith*, and *Ane Catachisme Containing The Soume of Christian Religion*. Finally, we will place Rutherford's covenant theology in historical-theological perspective, drawing some tentative conclusions about his role in the development and establishment of covenant theology in Scotland.

#### HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF COVENANT THEOLOGY

A history of covenant theology, especially its starting point, will in part be shaped by one's definition. Unfortunately, there is no scholarly consensus as to what constitutes covenant theology. It may be defined as using the biblical theme of the covenant as a key idea; as holding to a two-covenant system (covenant of works and covenant of grace); as holding to a three-covenant system (covenant of works, covenant of grace, covenant of redemption); as one's hermeneutic; or as a means of organization of one's theology.<sup>9</sup> While in its broadest sense covenant theology is present throughout the history

8. For a moving account of Rutherford's last days on earth see John Howie, *The Scots Worthies* (1870; repr., Carlisle, Pa.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1995) 236–240.

9. Peter Lillback helpfully summarizes the various definitions in his *The Binding of God: Calvin's Role in the Development of Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001) 26–28.

10. See Andrew A. Woolsey, "The Covenant in the Church Fathers," *Haddington House Journal* 5 (2003): 25–52; Peter Golding, *Covenant Theology*, 13–14; Lillback, *The Binding of God*, 29–35; "Covenant," in *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. S.B. Ferguson and D.F. Wright (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP, 1988) 175.

11. Lillback, *The Binding of God*, 110–113; Bierma, *German Calvinism*, 35–40.

12. See e.g. John Calvin, *Institutes of The Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill; trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960) 3,175. Cf. Lillback, *The Binding of God*, 307; Bierma, *German Calvinism*, 40–42.

of the church,<sup>10</sup> it does not appear in its more narrow senses until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

#### 1. The Reformation and Post-Reformation Period

Covenant theology begins to come into its own in the Reformation and Post-Reformation era. The Swiss reformer Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531) builds upon the covenant tradition, using the Abrahamic covenant as a model for the Christian's relationship with God. Interactions with the Anabaptists lead him to sharpen and hone his covenant doctrine, especially his teaching on the continuity and discontinuity of the Old and New Covenants. Stressing the unity of the covenants, Zwingli taught that the Old and New Covenants are the same in substance and differ only in minor matters. Like those before him, Zwingli noted that the covenant consisted of promises and conditions. God promises salvation while man is required to believe and obey, though the latter must not be understood in a legalistic or pelagian/semi-pelagian manner. The elect keep the requirements of the covenant because God graciously enables them. God's sovereignty and man's responsibility are held together in Zwingli's doctrine of the covenant (Bierma, 31–35).

Zwingli's successor Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575) is credited with the first study of the covenant in the history of the church with his *De Testamento Seu Foedere Dei Unico et Aeterno* in October 1534 (Lillback, *The Binding of God*, 110). His use of the covenant primarily revolves around his discussion of the sacraments and the development of redemption. Following his mentor, Bullinger taught that the covenant is two-sided, with promises and conditions, and that there is only one covenant of grace in substance spanning the Old and New Covenants.<sup>11</sup>

John Calvin agrees with Zwingli and Bullinger vis-à-vis the bilateral and conditional nature of the covenant. The covenant is not merely a divine promise, but includes man's response of faith and obedience.<sup>12</sup> Also in line with Zwingli and Bullinger, Calvin uses the concept of the covenant in the context of the sacraments and salvation, believing that the Old and New Covenants are the same in substance, differing only in "the mode of dispensation" (Calvin, 2.10.2). Lyle Bierma notes, however, that Calvin goes beyond these Reformers, at least in terms of clarity and development, in his discussion of the relationship between covenant and election (Bierma, 48). Calvin relates the doctrine of predestination to the covenant but he does not conflate them. Instead, he makes a distinction between general election, which includes all those in covenant, that is, members

of the visible church, and secret election, which refers to those who are predestined to salvation. Membership in the covenant is thus not co-extensive with election narrowly understood (Calvin, 3.21.5–7). Peter Lillback helpfully summarizes Calvin's position:

The covenant is not the same as secret election that infallibly secures salvation. Rather, the covenant is a general election that offers the promise of the benefits of the covenant. Only secret election ratifies the covenant in the case of any individual. Such is the covenant as viewed from the decree of God. Nevertheless, the covenant has duties for men to execute. Thus man must not look to the decree for his salvation, but to the promises he finds in the covenant that he embraces by faith. Hence, the covenant creates an intermediate category of persons between those who are the ones rejected by God, and those who are elect.... For Calvin, the covenant is the place of salvation, but not all who are in the covenant will receive that salvation because of the mystery of divine election (*The Binding of God*, 308–309).

Two of Calvin's students, Zacharias Ursinus (1534–1583) and Caspar Olevianus (1536–1587), adopt and add to Calvin's covenant doctrine. Both make the covenant idea a unifying theme in their theology, thereby making it more than just one doctrine among many and expanding the range of theological topics included under the covenant rubric. Ursinus, however, for some unknown reason does not maintain this covenant emphasis after the publication of his *Summa theologiae* (Bierma, 147).

It is at this stage that the seeds of two major developments in covenant theology are planted, namely the covenant of works and the covenant of redemption. Ursinus and Olevianus both speak of man at creation in terms of covenant though they do not use the term covenant of works. Calvin had spoken of a legal covenant, in contradistinction to the covenant of grace, but it referred to the law at Sinai and not to Adam in the garden (Murray, 4.218). Ursinus and Olevianus thus appear to be the first to describe the creational relationship in covenantal terms. Amandus Polanus (1561–1610) and especially Robert Rollock (c.1555–1599) take this idea further by developing and articulating a well-formed statement of the covenant of works.<sup>13</sup> Subsequently, the covenant of works becomes a staple of Reformed theology and is encased in the Westminster Confession of Faith (1646). Olevianus also plants the seed for the covenant of redemption by being the first to refer to a pretemporal redemptive *pactum* between the Father and the Son (Bierma, 152). The actual term "covenant

of redemption" does not seem to emerge until David Dickson's speech at the 1638 Glasgow Assembly (Coffey, 138); while the doctrine reaches creedal status in 1658 with the Savoy Declaration.

Having become a unifying theme in Reformed theology, it was only a matter of time before the covenant became an organizational method for expounding the whole of theology. Olevianus' student, Robert Howie, along with Robert Rollock and Junius, headed down this path by suggesting that everything in Scripture is related to some covenant of God. This suggestion is then enthusiastically embraced by Cocceius.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, by the middle of the seventeenth century, covenant theology is firmly established in the Reformed community, even according to the narrowest of definitions.

## 2. Covenant theology in Scotland

Robert Howie (1568–1646?) was born in or near Aberdeen and studied for the ministry at Herborn Academy in Hesse under Caspar Olevianus from 1585–1588. Evidently Olevianus made a considerable impact upon his student because Howie spoke of him with respect in his work *De reconciliacione hominis cum Deo* (1591). Having thus imbibed German Reformed covenant theology, Howie returns to Scotland where he undoubtedly influences his good friend Robert Rollock who becomes for all intents and purposes the father of covenant theology in Scotland.<sup>15</sup> Robert Rollock was the first Principal of Edinburgh University. In 1597 he publishes his widely read and influential *Tractatus De Vocatione Efficaci*, wherein he expounds the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. An English translation comes off the press in 1603 entitled *A Treatise of God's Effectual Calling*.

According to Rollock the covenant of works is the covenant that God made with man at creation, "wherein he promised him [man] eternall life, under the condition of holy and good works, which should be answerable to the holinesse and goodnesse of their creation, and conformable to his law."<sup>16</sup> The covenant of grace

13. See Rowland S. Ward, *God & Adam: Reformed Theology and The Creation Covenant* (Wantirna, Australia: New Melbourne Press, 2003) 59–60.

14. R. Sherman Isbell, "The Origin of the Concept of the Covenant of Works," unpublished M.Th. dissertation (Westminster Theological Seminary, 1976) 73.

15. See Bierma, *German Calvinism*, 176; Mark W. Karlberg, "Reformed Interpretation of the Mosaic Covenant," *Westminster Theological Journal* (hereafter *WTJ*) 43 (1980): 22.

16. Robert Rollock, *A Treatise of God's Effectual Calling* (London, 1603) 7.

consists, as does every covenant,<sup>17</sup> of two parts. First, there is the promise of life, which consists of the gift of righteousness (imputed and inherent) and is grounded upon the person and work of Christ. Second, there is the condition of faith. Although good works by believers are not strictly a condition of the covenant, they “are necessarie unto eternall life promised in the Gospele, but not as merits, or meritorious causes: but as the means and way, wherein we are to proceed on from justification and regeneration unto glorie and life eternall” (Rollock, 19). Thus, Rollock follows a train of theologians in asserting the bilateral and conditional nature of the covenant of grace. He also follows Olevianus and Calvin in affirming a distinction between two types of calling. What Calvin had done in terms of election (general and secret), Rollock does in terms of God’s gracious calling; and both are essentially the same as Olevianus’s distinction between the substance and administration of the covenant. Rollock writes:

Our calling, to speak thereof in the first place, is by Gods free grace, and that in a double: respect, for first in our effectually calling the publishing of the covenant, & the preaching of the gospele, is of the only free grace of God.... Next faith, whereby we receive the promise of the covenant, which is offered unto us in Christ, is of the mere grace of God.... That former grace may be called the grace of our vocation, this grace is common to all that are called elect and reprobate. But the latter grace in our effectual calling, may be called the *grace of faith*, appertaining only to the elect: for it is given only to those that are predestinated, to life everlasting to believe.... For whereas there is a double mercy of God in our effectual vocation, to wit: First, an offering

of Christ with all his benefits, in the covenant of grace, or the Gospele: secondly, faith to receive Christ being offered.... Therefore in our effectually calling two graces must be understood the grace of our vocation, or of the offering Christ unto us, and the grace of faith, or of receiving Christ by us (233–235).

Another Scottish covenant theologian worthy of mention before we move on to discuss Samuel Rutherford is John Cameron (c. 1579–1625) who was born and educated in Glasgow. He spent most of his teaching career on the continent, where he developed a three covenant view: covenant of nature, covenant of grace and subservient covenant. His unique contribution was his explanation of the Sinaitic covenant, which he considered to be a third covenant (the subservient covenant), distinct from the covenant of nature and the covenant of grace.<sup>18</sup> Although rejected by Rutherford and the Westminster Assembly,<sup>19</sup> Cameron’s distinctive view does seem to have influenced later Scottish and American covenant theologians.<sup>20</sup>

#### SAMUEL RUTHERFORD: HIS COVENANT THEOLOGY

According to Rutherford, a covenant is a reciprocal relationship which is both personal and legal. It is reciprocal in that a covenant “speaks something of giving, and taking, work, and reward, and mutual engagements, betwixt parties.”<sup>21</sup> It is personal and legal in that a covenant can be described in marital and commercial terms (Torrance, 102–103). In other words, a covenant involves parties, promises and conditions. Rutherford sees three main covenants in Scripture: the covenant of works, the covenant of grace and the covenant of redemption.

##### 1. *The covenant of works*

The covenant of works involves two parties, a promise and a condition. The two parties are God and Adam who represents all of mankind. On the basis of 1 Corinthians 15:47, Rutherford concludes that Adam is a “publick” person, “to whom was committed the standing and falling of all mankind” (Rutherford, *The Covenant of Life*, 1, 225). Thus, the answer to the question, “With whom did God make the covenant?” is “With Adam and with all mankind in him.”<sup>22</sup> Since Adam broke the covenant, all are guilty of his sin, inclined to evil and unable to do any good (ibid, 172).

The promise of the covenant of works is eternal life that is communion with God in glory (Rutherford, *The Covenant of Life*, 16, 49–50). This life is distinct from

17. “The covenant of God generally is a promise, under some certaine condition,” Rollock, 6.

18. Originally written in Latin, an English translation of John Cameron’s work on the three covenants was prepared by Samuel Bolton and appended to his book, *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom* (London, 1645).

19. See D. Patrick Ramsey, “In Defense of Moses: A Confessional Critique of Kline and Karlberg,” *WTJ* 66 (2004): 379–384.

20. See James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification* (1867; repr., Carlisle, Pa.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1997) 38–39; Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977) 2.374–375. Buchanan and Hodge define one aspect of the Mosaic covenant as a legal national covenant in similar terms to Cameron’s subservient covenant.

21. Samuel Rutherford, *The Covenant of Life Opened: Or, A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace* (Edinburgh, 1655) 15–16.

22. Samuel Rutherford, “Ane Catechisme Conteyning The Soume of Christian Religion,” in Alexander F. Mitchell, *Catechisms of the Second Reformation* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1886) 175.

and better than the life and fellowship Adam had in the Garden of Eden since it is eternal, in glory and held out to Adam as reward.

The condition of the covenant of works is obedience to God's law, positive and moral.<sup>23</sup> Part of the law in question is the law of nature, which is written on man's heart, and it is to be kept by the strength of nature. For these reasons, Rutherford agrees with Rollock, whom he calls solid and eminent, in labeling the covenant of works a natural covenant.

Rollock had asserted that the covenant of works was founded in nature because God made the covenant with man who was created pure and holy, and thus able to keep the law of the covenant, which was the very same law written on his heart. "Therefore," Rollock writes, "the ground of the covenant of works was not Christ, nor the grace of God in Christ; but the nature of man in the first creation holy and perfect, endued also with the knowledge of the law" (7). Thus, one difference between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace is that the good works in the former are required from man according to his own created natural ability, while good works in the latter "are required of them which be in Christ, not such as proceede from their own nature, or such as they can yeelde of their own strength, but onely such as proceede from the grace of regeneration" (9).

Rutherford agrees with Rollock because he admits that there are good reasons for calling the covenant of works a natural covenant in contradistinction from the supernatural covenant of grace (Rutherford, *The Covenant of Life*, 19). Moreover, his definition of the covenant of works in his catechism says that we are obligated to "keep the law by the strength of our nature" (Rutherford, "Catachisme," 175). Nevertheless, there are several aspects of the covenant of works that are not natural, which make the term "natural covenant," insufficient. For example, the positive laws of the covenant, such as the observance of the *seventh* day and the command to not eat the fruit of one tree, are not "deduced from the Law of Nature" (Rutherford, *The Covenant of Life*, 19). Also the covenant itself was not natural to man's created state. As a creature made in the image of God, man was naturally obligated to love, trust, fear and obey God. But God was not compelled to make a covenant promise or to lavishly reward him for his obedience (20–21). Thus, "it is condescension that he [God] commands Covenant-wayes, with promise of a reward to the obeyer."<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the reward promised in the covenant of works is not natural. Rutherford explains:

But that Adam should have such an eminent life, for

the reward of his obedience as a communion with God, which is farre above his obedience, is the free donation of God: nor is there any necessary connexion between Adams perfect obedience, and so high and eminent life, nor can this Covenant, as touching such a promise, be written in his heart (Rutherford, *The Covenant of Life*, 22).

Consequently, if Adam had obeyed, he would only have merited the reward *ex pacto* (196). Rutherford, therefore, concludes that the covenant of works was a gracious covenant. It was gracious in the sense of "undeserved goodnesse," and with respect to its establishment and terms. However, this covenant was not gracious in a gospel sense in that it was not a fruit of the work of Christ and God did not promise to enable man to keep the covenant (35, 22, 194).

## 2. *The covenant of grace*

Like the covenant of works, the covenant of grace, according to Rutherford, involves two parties, promises, and a condition. We will look at these in turn and then conclude this section by looking at what Rutherford has to say concerning the unity of the covenant of grace.

### a. *The parties of the covenant of grace*

There does appear to be some development in Rutherford's thought concerning the parties of the covenant of grace. In his catechism, which according to John Coffey was written during his ministry in Anwoth,<sup>25</sup> Rutherford only mentions two covenants (covenant of grace and covenant of works) and that the parties of the new covenant are God and the elect only. He does, however, make a distinction, which he builds upon and elaborately expounds in his work on the covenants, between the preached covenant that is to all and the elect who alone are "the heires and the bairnes of the promeis to

23. Rutherford, *The Covenant of Life*, 19; "Ane Catachisme," 175.

24. Rutherford, *The Covenant of Life*, 15. Rowland Ward notes some tension in this regard in the Westminster Standards. In one place it is suggestive that a promise of eternal life is attached to the natural/moral law whereas elsewhere it seems to be a result of God condescending to enter into covenant. See his *God & Adam*, 72.

25. Coffey, *Samuel Rutherford*, 41. No evidence however is given to support this assertion. This handwritten catechism was first published in 1886 in Mitchell's *Catechisms of the Second Reformation*. Mitchell avers, without any supporting evidence, that it was undoubtedly prepared for the purpose of being presented before a committee of the Westminster Assembly (*Catechisms of the Second Reformation*, xxxiv–xxxv).

quhom the inheritance is bought” (Rutherford, “Catachisme,” 176). In his work *The Tryal & Triumph of Faith*, first published in 1645, Rutherford states that the parties of the covenant of grace are on the one hand God and on the other hand Christ and the elect in him. He writes:

The parties of the Covenant are, God and Man.... Now the parties heer, on the one part, is God; on the other, *The Mediator Christ, and the children that the Lord gave him*. Observe, 1. In the Covenant of Nature and Works: God and his friend *Adam* were parties contracting: And in the second covenant, God and his fellow Christ, and all his are parties ... Christ is the party here; so Christ hath a sevenfold relation.... 7. As he is a side or the half of the Covenant; he is the *Party contracting in the Covenant*.... 7. The seventh relation of Christ maketh way to the parties, and here Christ cometh under a double consideration, one as God; so he is one with the Father and Spirit, and the Lord and the Author of the Covenant. 2. As Mediator, and so he is on our side of the Covenant; Then is the Covenant made with Christ and all his heirs, assigns principally with Christ.... As the covenant of nature and works was made with *Adam*, and all his, and there were not two covenants; so here, the better covenant coming in the place of the former, is made with the second Adam and his children, Rom. 5.18,19. 1 Cor. 15.20, &c.<sup>26</sup>

By making Christ the principal party of the covenant of grace, Rutherford appears to include what he will later call the covenant of redemption or the covenant of suretyship under the rubric of the covenant of grace. To be sure he does extend the covenant back before time as being transacted between the Father and the Son in eternity. But he does so in the context of the covenant of grace and with respect to Christ as the principal party (*Tryal & Triumph*, 72–73). Thus, there does not seem to be three clearly delineated covenants at this point.

Rutherford’s discussion of the parties of the covenant of grace in 1645 is strikingly similar to that found in the Westminster Standards, particularly Larger Catechism question 31. That the concept of the covenant of redemption was still subsumed under the covenant of grace by Rutherford during the time of Westminster Assembly seems to indicate that it was still in its nascent form and may help explain the reason for its conspicuous absence from the Westminster Standards.

In his fullest work on covenant theology, published

six years before his death, Rutherford does make a sharp distinction, though not a separation, between the covenant of grace and the covenant of redemption (Rutherford, *The Covenant of Life*, 308–309). Since the two covenants differ in the “parties contracting,” it is not surprising to find that Rutherford does not refer to Christ as the principal party of the covenant of grace. Instead, he notes that the party besides God is either the elect alone or all within the visible church, depending upon which perspective of the covenant is being considered. Like many others before him, Rutherford distinguishes between the external administration and internal appropriation of the covenant. He notes that there are two ways a person can be in covenant with God: “externally by Visible profession, and conditionally, not in reference to the Covenant, but to the thing promised in Covenant, which none obtains, but such as fulfill the condition of the Covenant” (72). Correlatively, he says that the covenant must be considered in two ways:

*In abstracto* and formally, in the letter as a simple way of saving sinners, so they believe, so all within the Visible Church are in the Covenant of Grace, and so it contains only the will of precept. 2. In the *concret*, as the Lord carries on the Covenant in such and such a way, commensurably with the decrees of Election and Reprobation; As the Lord not only promises, but acts and ingraves the Law in the heart, commensurably with his decree of Election, so the Elect only are under the Covenant of Grace (*The Covenant of Life*, 94).

Thus, from one perspective the covenant of grace is made with all those who have made a profession of faith, and their children. All those who come under the “the call and offer of Christ in the Preached Gospel,” and give their consent by making a profession and receiving the seals, along with their children, are “externally in Covenant” and “under the Covenant of Grace” (72, 86, 87, 90). This is so because God’s promise of salvation through faith is made to them, whether they believe or not (91–92). That some are reprobate does not imply that they are not truly in covenant with God because a conditional covenant with promises and requirements is a genuine covenant (90). To deny that it is, is to make the mistake of the Anabaptists who “ignorantly confound *the promise*, and the thing promised; the Covenant, and benefits Covenanted” (90). Thus, “it is no inconvenient that the Reprobate in the Visible Church, be so under the Covenant of Grace, as some promises are made to them, and some mercies promised to them conditionally” (94). Yet, from another perspective the covenant

26. Samuel Rutherford, *The Tryal & Triumph of Faith* (London, 1651) 64, 65, 70, 72.

of grace is made only with the elect. From the perspective of the thing promised and of special promises the covenant is only established with the elect. And if we consider the covenant in terms of fulfillment or with regard to the special and principal blessing of regeneration then the covenant is restricted to the invisible church (92, 343).

The relationship between these two perspectives of the covenant, both of which are gracious (107), is that of means to an end. Preaching of the Gospel is the saving means of regeneration and faith. Faith comes by hearing the preached word. Thus, "external Covenancing goes before internal Covenancing as the means before the end, and the cause before the effect" (107). Therefore, in order to properly identify the parties of the covenant of grace and avoid the opposing errors of the Antinomians and Anabaptists on the one hand and the Socinians, Arminians and Papists on the other, Rutherford says that the covenant must be considered "As Preached according to the approving and commanding will of God," and "as it is internally and effectually fulfilled in the elect according to the decree and the Lords will of purpose." Once this distinction is made, the parties of the covenant of grace become clear:

The parties contracters in the Covenant preached, are God, and all within the Visible Church, whether Elect or Reprobate, and their seed, they professing the Gospel.... But the parties contracters of the Covenant in the latter respect [the internal covenant] are, Jer. 31. Heb. 8. only, *the house of Judah, the taught of God, the people in whose heart the Law is ingraven* (*The Covenant of Life*, 340).

#### *b. The promises of the covenant of grace*

In his catechism, Rutherford states that God promises forgiveness of sins, renovation of our nature and life eternal in the new covenant. The promises are preached to all outwardly but only the elect are the heirs and children of the promise. He also states that all the promises of the covenant are made to Christ as principal and to the elect as heirs and assigners ("Catechisme," 176–177).

Expounding upon this theme that all the promises are made to Christ in *The Tryal and Triumph of Faith*, Rutherford says that the promises "flow from God to us, but all along they fall first on Christ" (74). The promises are of two sorts, some only to Christ while others to Christ and his elect. The promises to Christ and his elect are also divided into two kinds: general and special. The general promise is "I will be your God." The special

promises, which are first made to Christ and then by proportion to the elect are the gift of a new heart and a new spirit, justification, victory and dominion, the Kingdom and glory and resurrection from the dead. Concerning the promise of justification, Rutherford writes:

Justification is promised to Christ, not personall, as if he needed a pardon for sin, but of his Cause, there is a cautionary or Surety-righteousness due to the Surety when he hath paid the debt of the broken man, and commeth out of prison free by Law, so he came out of the Grave for our righteousness, but having first the righteousness of his Cause, in his own person, *Isaiah 50.8. He is near that justifieth me (saith Christ) who shall contend with me?* 1 Tim. 3.16. *Justified in the Spirit.* So have we Justification of our persons, and Remission in his blood, Eph. 1.7. and that by Covenant, Jer. 31.32.33 (*Tryal & Triumph*, 76).

A key distinction made in *The Covenant of Life Opened* is between conditional and absolute/unconditional promises, which naturally correspond to the external and internal aspects of the covenant of grace. The promises which require a response in order to receive the promised blessing are made to all in the visible church. The unconditional or absolute promises which do not require a response in order to be received are made only to the invisible church. Rutherford writes:

For all the promises belong not the same way, to the parties visibly and externally, and to the parties internally and personally in Covenant with God. So the Lord promiseth life and forgiveness shall be given to these who are externally in the Covenant, providing they believe, but the Lord promiseth not a new heart and grace to believe, to these that are only externally in Covenant. And yet he promiseth both to the Elect (*The Covenant of Life*, 94).

Since only the elect receive the blessings that are promised and the "special and principal Covenantal blessing" of a new heart is only promised to "the Elect and Invisible Church," it is appropriate to say in one sense that the "promises of the Covenant are not really made to the Reprobate within the Visible Church" (92).

Conditional and unconditional promises also correspond to the perceptive and decretive will of God. The perceptive or what Rutherford calls the approving and commanding will of God refers to the promises, precepts, and threatenings of the covenant and applies to all in the church, the elect and non-elect; whereas the

decretive will refers to the effectual fulfillment of the promise of a new heart in the elect only, according to the decree of election (340–344). This distinction between the conditional and unconditional promises is exactly the same that is made in the Westminster Confession of Faith 7.3:

Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ; requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life his Holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe.<sup>27</sup>

### c. The condition of the covenant of grace

James Walker has observed that Rutherford's genius is evident in his letters (Walker, 8). It can also be seen in his ability to equally stress God's sovereign role and man's responsibility in the covenant and to maintain the proper relationship between law and grace. That he does so is all the more remarkable in light of his supralapsarianism, which has been unfairly characterized as "breath-takingly stark" and "stern and extreme."<sup>28</sup> William Tisbe, a giant intellect and first prolocutor of the Westminster Assembly, held to supralapsarianism, yet

he also believed in justification before faith, thereby stressing the sovereignty of God to the detriment of the responsibility of man in the covenant.<sup>29</sup> The fact that Rutherford had to defend Reformed orthodoxy against Arminianism and Antinomianism, while the older Tisbe focused upon Arminianism, helped, but many lesser intellects who followed in his wake were unable to maintain the proper balance as demonstrated by the English Non-Conformist debate in the 1690's and the seventeenth century Marrow controversy.

Rutherford's careful balance between the divine and human roles is highlighted in his discussion on the condition of the covenant. According to the Scotsman, faith is the only condition of the covenant.<sup>30</sup> To limit the condition to faith only is in line with Rollock but is somewhat of a departure from a good number of notable Reformed theologians, such as Calvin, Ursinus, John Ball, and Turretin, who include obedience.<sup>31</sup> So why did Rutherford not include obedience? He seems to relate the condition of the covenant with justification when he says that faith only is the condition "because Faith sendeth a person out of himself, and taketh him off his own bottom, that in Christ he may have his righteousness."<sup>32</sup> This does not mean, however, that good works are not necessary for salvation or that they are not required by those in the covenant. Although not a condition of the covenant, "holiness and sanctification is the condition of the Covenanters" (*Tryal & Triumph*, 77). Another distinction made is between the covenant of grace and the broader Gospel, which is similar to the one made by Turretin between justification and the covenant (Turretin, 2:189). Rutherford writes:

But wee may say the formal promise of the covenant of grace is made to believing, as the Law-promise is made to doing Legally, and perfectly out of our own, without grace; and that the Gospel, as it is larger then the covenant of grace; and as it containeth the whole doctrine of grace, taught by the *Prophets and Apostles*, is a promise of life eternall, made to Evangelike and unperfect doing through the strength of grace.<sup>33</sup>

Concerning the nature of faith that is required, Rutherford says that it must be lively and sincere. It is of the nature and essence of saving faith to persevere to the end but the condition of the covenant is not faith as it perseveres to the end. A sinner is justified if he sincerely believes, the moment he believes, whether his faith is weak or strong. Indeed, if faith did not immediately justify but only as it endures to the end, then no one would be completely justified, saved and united to Christ, until

27. *The Confession of Faith and Catechisms of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church with Proof Texts* (Willow Grove, Pa.: The Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 2005) 30–31.

28. See Guy M. Richard, "Samuel Rutherford's supralapsarianism revealed: a key to the lapsarian position of the Westminster Confession of Faith?" *Scottish Journal of Theology* 59 (2006): 27–44. See also *The Confessional Presbyterian* 4:162–170, 310.

29. See Hans Boersma, *A Hot Pepper Corn: Richard Baxter's Doctrine of Justification in Its Seventeenth-Century Context of Controversy* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2004) 68, 80–88.

30. Rutherford, "Ane Catechisme," 176; *Tryal & Triumph*, 77. T.F. Torrance is therefore mistaken to assert that Rutherford believes that "with faith obedience also is a condition of salvation and justification," *Scottish Theology*, 103.

31. See Calvin, *Institutes*, 3:17:5; Zacharias Ursinus, *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, trans. G. W. Williard (1852; repr., Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, n.d.) 99; John Ball, *A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace* (London, 1645) 18; Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr., trans. G. M. Giger (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1994) 2:175.

32. Rutherford, *Tryal & Triumph*, 77. Cf. "Ane Catechisme," 176; *The Covenant of Life*, 201.

33. Samuel Rutherford, *Survey of the Spirituall Antichrist* (London, 1648) 2:38.

death, which is contrary to the testimony of Scripture (*The Covenant of Life*, 201–204). Refusing to avoid the difficult questions, Rutherford addresses the objection that in Scripture the promise of eternal life is made to faith that perseveres to the end. In answering this objection, he resorts to a distinction between the title and possession of life. The former is given to a sinner the moment he believes, while the latter as he perseveres to the end of his life (204–205).

Though faith is a condition, condition must be understood properly. Condition is not to be understood in the Arminian sense of “a free act, which we absolutely may perform by free-will, not acted by the pre-determining grace of Christ” (*Tryal & Triumph*, 84). Nor is it to be understood in the Popish sense of “doing that which by some merit moveth God to give to men wages for work” (84). So faith is not a condition in any pelagian/semi-pelagian or meritorious sense. For that reason Rutherford is content to say that faith is not a condition in a strict and narrow sense.<sup>34</sup> However, one must not swing to the other extreme and conclude that faith is not a condition in any sense, which is to commit the error of the Antinomians. Rutherford writes:

But if a condition be taken Evangelicallly for a qualification wrought in us, by the grace of Christ, and without which we are not justified, nor saved; then to deny the Gospel to be a conditionall covenant, is to bely the Gospel.... We teach that faith in Christ is both a condition of grace on our part, but not Antecedent and preparatory to the Covenant, and also a grace promised, when the new heart is articulated to us; so that Christ bringeth into the covenant himselfe, his righteousness, his free grace, and the condition of Faith that receives him (*Spirituell Antichrist*, 2.40, 129).

Besides faith, good works play a pivotal role in the covenant, though they are not, as we have already noted, a condition of the covenant. As a condition of the “covenanters,” good works are necessary for salvation as the believer’s way to salvation and eternal life. According to Rutherford, these scriptures “evidence to us, that holy walking is a way to heaven, as sowing is to harvest, and that Christ maketh a promise of life eternall to him that doth his Commandements”: 1 Timothy 4:8; John 15:2; Matthew 25:29; Galatians 6:8; 2 Corinthians 9:6; Philipians 4:17–18; Romans 8:13, 6:22; Revelation 22:14 and John 14:23 (2:37–38). Once again the distinction between title and possession is employed to explain the role of good works. Keeping God’s commandments is a “mean, and way, not to the right of salvation, but to the actual

possession of it.”<sup>35</sup> Faith in Christ gives us the right to eternal life based upon the person and work of Christ. Walking in the path of holiness leads us into actual possession of the life we have in Christ. The grace of God is what enables the elect to live holy lives and is itself a “fruit of the Covenant of Grace promised to us” (*Tryal & Triumph*, 182). Indeed, this role of good works would seem legalistic if it were not for the fact that God has promised and tied himself by covenant to make his children holy. God has both promised to cause his elect to walk before him in truth and he has promised to save and deliver the upright in heart (183). Therefore, good works do not merit salvation, or purchase the right to eternal life. In addition, they do not have any effective influence or proper causality to receiving or possessing eternal life. Nevertheless, they are the way to salvation as “sowing is to harvest, running to the garland, wrestling to the victory.”<sup>36</sup>

These distinctions notwithstanding, Tobias Crisp, among others, objected to this role of good works. While insisting that sanctification is an inseparable companion to justification and that believers are created in Christ Jesus for good works, Crisp vigorously denied that good works are a way to life or salvation. They are “the business of a person that he hath to do in his Way, Christ; but it is not the Way it self to Heaven.”<sup>37</sup> For Rutherford, and the Westminster Standards, however, good works are not just the way of salvation but also the way to salvation (see Larger Catechism 32).

#### d. The unity of the covenant of grace

Following his Reformed predecessors, Rutherford argues that the old covenant is the same as the new covenant in substance (*The Covenant of Life*, 111). The one covenant of grace is declared in the old covenant “to the Jews under shadow and types in the law of ceremonies, and in the new testament clearlie in Christ” (“Catachisme,” 178).

Rutherford defends the unity of the covenant of grace against those who viewed the Mosaic Covenant as a covenant of works or as a legal subservient covenant (*The Covenant of Life*, 56–65). He notes that the covenant of works is made with perfect men, who do not stand in need of mercy, while the preface to the

34. *Tryal & Triumph*, 85; *Spirituell Antichrist*, 2:39–40.

35. Rutherford, *The Tryal and Triumph*, 182. Cf. *The Covenant of Life*, 177.

36. Rutherford, *Spirituell Antichrist*, 2.39. Cf. *The Covenant of Life*, 180.

37. Tobias Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted* (London: 1690) 46.

Ten Commandments expresses God's mercy to Israel. Furthermore, the Sinaitic covenant is the same as the one made with Abraham, which was a covenant of grace. To be sure there were some differences, yet it was the same in substance as the promises and requirements are the same.

### 3. *The covenant of redemption*

Rutherford marshals eleven arguments to prove from the Scriptures that there is a covenant between Jehovah God and the second person of the trinity. A key point is the interaction between God and Christ, wherein God makes certain promises to Christ and Christ willingly submits to the conditions in order to obtain the promises. Specifically, Jehovah promises to give a people to the Son and the Son chooses to "own and answer for the given, and to lose none, but to raise them up at the last Day" (*The Covenant of Life*, 293). And as Rutherford notes, "a mutuall agreement between Jehovah and the Son for one and the same undertaking is a compact and Covenant, to have us saved" (293).

The covenant of redemption is to be considered in two ways: its transaction in eternity and its transaction in time. This covenant was decided upon and made before the world began. It was decreed from everlasting. Nevertheless, it did not become a real covenant until it was made in time. It "had not being as a Covenant, nor could have any, so long as the Covenant of Works did stand" (31). Thus, it was not until Adam sinned that the covenant of redemption took effect.

That this covenant is distinct from the covenant of grace is made clear by Rutherford's discussion of the differences and relationship between these two covenants (308–315). There is a difference in parties. The covenant of redemption is between Jehovah God and the second person of the trinity. The covenant of redemption is the foundation of the covenant of grace. Therefore, "though the Covenants of Suretyship and of Reconciliation differ, yet must they not be separated" (309). Moreover, the covenant of redemption has different commands, promises and conditions. Christ is not only required to keep the law, but he is also given the special command to lay down his life as a sacrifice for sins. Unlike the elect, Christ is promised dominion over all. As we have seen, the condition of the covenant of grace is faith. Christ exercised a faith of dependency, but faith was not a condition of the covenant of redemption. Rather, since the covenant is "a bargain of buying a people to God," the condition was "the payed price and rason" (356). Included as well was

the requirement of obedience to the moral law because that "was the condition of the Covenant of Works, to which the Man Christ, as Man, was oblidged, that he might have right to Law-justification and life eternall" (356). Consequently, in the covenant of redemption, Christ willingly became the second Adam, agreeing to fulfill what the first Adam had failed to do in the covenant of works. Rutherford writes:

He [Christ] hath place in the Covenant of Works as a satisfier for us. 2. As a doer and an obedient fulfiller thereof in all points. And he is *Mediator* and *Surety* of the Covenant of Grace. 2. The first *Adam* marres all, the second ADAM who makes all things new, mends all. The first *Adam* was a publick sort of stirresman, to whom was committed the standing and falling of all manking, and in reference to man, the standing Heaven, Earth, and Creatures in their perfection, and he spoiled all, put all things a-reeling. The second ADAM received in his arms the whole Creation that was a-falling.... He satisfied for our sins, and for our breach of the Covenant of Works (225).

#### SAMUEL RUTHERFORD'S CONTRIBUTION TO SCOTTISH COVENANT THEOLOGY

Having briefly examined the history of covenant theology and the covenant theology of Samuel Rutherford, the first observation to be made with respect to assessing Rutherford's contribution to the development and establishment of covenant theology in Scotland, is that it was already established in Scotland and elsewhere by the time Rutherford makes any sort of contribution. After Rollock died in 1599, covenant theology became the norm in Scotland. This is not to say, however, that Rutherford did not make a significant contribution. He not only helped to maintain covenant theology in Scotland, he was instrumental in developing and advancing it. Rutherford's tremendous influence upon the Scottish church, his contribution to the Westminster Assembly and his discussion of the covenant of redemption substantiate his notable impact upon Scottish covenant theology.

#### 1. *Rutherford's influence upon the Scottish church*

Great men of great influence tend to leave a lasting impression and Rutherford is no exception. Many have noted his vast influence upon the Scottish church and theology. For example, M. Charles Bell has written that

Rutherford “played a major role in shaping the religious and political thought of his day, and his teaching made a lasting impact well into the future” (Bell, 70).

One way Rutherford was able to impact Scottish theology was by serving as professor for over twenty years at St. Andrews. In so doing, he “exercised an immense influence on the future ministry of [the Scottish] church” (Walker, 9). Teaching the next generation of pastors and theologians is a sure way to pass on distinctive theological views and positions, especially if the students become influential. Such was the case with Rutherford who taught William Guthrie. Of Guthrie's impact on Scotland and connection with Rutherford, Bell writes:

Guthrie's influence, however, was gained not so much as a parish minister as it was from his only published work, *The Christians' Great Interest*, which first appeared in 1659. This work is truly a classic in Scottish divinity, and because it was so widely read in Scotland over so many generations, it provides an accurate reflection of the theological views of both clergy and laity. Having studied under Rutherford, one would expect that Guthrie would reproduce the main tenets of Rutherford's theology, and such, in fact, is the case (Bell, 84).

Rutherford's numerous published writings are another influential factor. He published eight theological works amounting to approximately 4,000 printed pages, including one work devoted to the topic of covenant theology (Coffey, 114). Perhaps his greatest legacy, however, is his involvement with the Westminster Assembly, to which we will now turn.

## 2. *Rutherford's contribution to the Westminster Assembly*

Samuel Rutherford was one of the original eight Scottish delegates commissioned by the 1643 General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to attend the Westminster Assembly, meeting in London, England. He was received by the Assembly on November 20 1643 and was the longest serving Scottish commissioner, leaving on November 9 1647. Although George Gillespie was the one who spoke the most of all the Scots,<sup>38</sup> Rutherford played a major role in the Assembly's debates. Guy Richard writes:

Rutherford's influence is seen in the prominent position he assumed in the proceedings of the Assembly. Chad Van Dixhoorn, who is working to publish the

full minutes of the Assembly, informed me in private conversations that Rutherford is among the most outspoken of the divines and commissioners in terms of sheer quantity of speeches given before the Assembly (Richard, 36n38).

Being active in the proceedings of the Assembly certainly indicates an influential role but it would be very difficult to determine to what extent and degree Rutherford impacted the shaping of the Westminster Standards, especially its covenant theology. After all, covenant theology was well developed in England before the first session of the Westminster Assembly. Determining who influenced who or whether they were already in general agreement on covenant theology is not easy to discover and is certainly beyond the scope of this paper. What is fairly certain is that there is general agreement between the covenant theologies of the Westminster Standards and Rutherford.

We have noted already the similarity between the two in regards to the parties of the covenant of grace, at least with respect to the early Rutherford. Further agreement was also noted between Rutherford and the Westminster Standards on the promises of the covenant of grace. To this we can add the covenant of works (see WCF 7.1) and the condition of the covenant of grace. Similar to Rutherford, the Westminster Standards only mention faith as a condition of the covenant. Though good works play a prominent role in salvation in that, also like Rutherford, they are the way to salvation, they are not technically said to be a condition of the covenant (see WLC 32).

Rowland Ward has recently argued that the Westminster Assembly did not side with Rutherford concerning the three covenant system. Instead, he avers that there is an intentional tension in the Confession to allow room for those who held to the covenant of redemption like Rutherford and for those who did not like Edmund Calamy (Ward, 71–72). The problem with this explanation is that it fails to take into account that Rutherford, assuming our earlier analysis is correct, did not hold to a three covenant system at the time of the Assembly. Rutherford's position in the 1640's seems to be the same as the Confession, namely a two covenant view system, containing the ingredients of a three covenant system.

According to A.T.B. McGowan, the one significant disagreement is Rutherford's supralapsarianism, though

38. R.S. Paul, *The Assembly of the Lord* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1985) 116.

he points out that the Confession does not condemn this view.<sup>39</sup> However, in a recent study, Guy M. Richard has demonstrated that the Confession's views are most consistent with Rutherford's particular brand of supralapsarianism. Indeed, he says that the "Confession is perhaps 'more patient' of a supralapsarian reading, especially if we understand it through the eyes of Rutherford" (Richard, 43).

Since the Westminster Standards were adopted by the Scottish church, Rutherford's similar if not identical covenant theology was ensconced in the Church of Scotland. One could hardly imagine a greater contribution to the maintenance and propagation of covenant theology in Scotland.

### 3. Samuel Rutherford's doctrine of the covenant of redemption

As John Murray has observed, the emergence of the covenant of redemption "signalized a distinct development in the formulation of covenant theology" (Murray, 4:234). Rutherford, who was probably building upon the work of his friend David Dickson, was one of the first Scottish theologians to teach a three covenant system. Thus Bell correctly writes that "his formulation of a conditional covenant of redemption, as distinguished from the covenant of grace, marks a further advance in Scottish covenant theology" (Bell, 83). Not all later Scottish theologians, however, followed Rutherford in embracing a three covenant system, notably Thomas Boston and Adam Gib.

#### CONCLUSION

Covenant theology is inextricably linked to Reformed theology and to a lesser degree to Scottish theology. Among the numerous first rate theologians of Scotland stands the towering figure of Samuel Rutherford. Living during a pivotal period in Scotland's history, Rutherford played an instrumental role in shaping and molding the theology that would dominate the Scottish church many years after his death.

Following a long distinguished line of great theologians, Samuel Rutherford upheld and defended Reformed orthodoxy in general and covenant theology in particular. He defended biblical truth against Arminianism and Romanism on the one hand and Antinomianism on the other as he boldly proclaimed the

absolute sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. His greatest contribution was perhaps his role in advancing covenant theology with his exposition of the covenant of redemption. Though he died nearly three hundred and fifty years ago, his covenant theology lives on in Scotland and throughout the world, particularly wherever the Westminster Standards are embraced. ■

### In Brief: James Walker's Assessment of Samuel Rutherford

Samuel Rutherford I have put first on this list and perhaps he is the greatest.... It is not easy to find any one in Church history with whom to compare this remarkable man (though I have sometimes thought of Bernard of Clairvaux), a man of power, I may say of genius, fresh, bold, penetrating, to whom no subject came amiss, teeming with intellectual energy, distinguished for his learning, but never cumbered by it, the greatest scholastic of our Presbyterian Church, and yet we are told, the plain and faithful preacher, the fieriest of Church leaders and the most devout of saints, equally at home among the tomes of Aquinas, and writing letters to a poor congregation. Altogether a sort of intellectual, theological, religious prodigy. Great defects he had assuredly. His intensity, both intellectual and spiritual, led him to extremes. He seems to have written *currente calamo*; and in style and arrangement he greatly fails. But for all, he is one of our highest names. And it was not only his countrymen that thought thus of him; he was twice over invited to occupy a chair in the Low Countries, whose universities were still in their glory. James Walker, *The Theology and Theologians of Scotland: Chiefly of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. Cunningham lectures, 1870-71, Second Edition, Revised (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1888) 8, 13. ■

39. A.T.B. McGowan, *The Federal Theology of Thomas Boston* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1997) 5.