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Contents

**Not Ashamed! The Sufficiency of Scripture
for Public Theology** 2

Dan Strange
*Lecturer in Culture, Religion, and Public Theology
at Oak Hill College, London*

So Who Is My Neighbour? 24

John Legg
*Retired pastor of churches in North Yorkshire and
Shrewsbury*

**Evangelical Mission Organisations, Postmodern
Controversies, and the New Heartbeat of Mission** 31

Thorsten Prill
*Senior Lecturer in Missiology and Systematic Theology at
Namibia Evangelical Theological Seminary, Windhoek*

**Did Turretin Depart from Calvin's View on the
Concept of Error in the Scriptures?** 41

Ralph Cunnington
*Assistant Minister, Aigburth Community Church, Liverpool
and Research Associate at WEST*

Review article: Trinitarian Theology 59

D Eryl Davies
*Research Supervisor and former Principal at Wales
Evangelical School of Theology*

Other reviews 69

Guy Davies, Paul Spear, Robert Letham

Foundations

Foundations is an international journal of evangelical theology published in the United Kingdom. Its aim is to cover contemporary theological issues by articles and reviews, taking in exegesis, biblical

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Introduction

Welcome to the second online edition of *Foundations* which is available in both pdf and html formats.

This issue of *Foundations* offers a range of articles and reviews which will be of interest to our readers. Dan Strange's article is the substance of the paper that he gave at the Affinity Theological Studies Conference in February 2011. John Legg provides a provocative exegesis of the parable of The Good Samaritan. Thorsten Prill identifies key issues in world mission today and challenges churches, missions and missionaries to be caught up in a missionary movement with God. Ralph Cunnington provides a critique of the views of Francis Turretin on the authority of Scripture. Eryl Davies provides a detailed review of a number of recent books dealing with the doctrine of the Trinity. There are also a number of other book reviews.

We are pleased to announce the appointment of a new editor for *Foundations*. Ralph Cunnington has accepted our invitation to be the new editor and will take up his responsibilities in September 2012. Ralph studied at WEST and Westminster Seminary (London) and is now on the pastoral team at Aigburth Community Church, Liverpool. Before being called to the ministry he lectured in Law at Durham, Birmingham, Melbourne and the University of Western Ontario, authoring books and articles on various aspects of private law. He is married to Anna and they have 3 children.

Not Ashamed! The Sufficiency of Scripture for Public Theology ¹

Dan Strange, Lecturer in Culture, Religion, and Public Theology at Oak Hill College, London

Last eve I passed beside a blacksmith's door
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;
When looking in, I saw upon the floor,
Old hammers worn with beating years of time.

"How many anvils have you had," said I,
"To wear and batter these hammers so?"
"Just one," said he; then with a twinkling eye,
"The anvil wears the hammers out, you know."

And so, I thought, the anvil of God's Word,
For ages, skeptics blows have beat upon;
Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard,
The anvil is unharmed – the hammers gone.

John Clifford

The American comedian Jerry Seinfeld has a great routine where he muses on numerous studies which have shown that people's number one fear is... public speaking. Death is number two. He goes on, 'This means to the average person, if you go to a funeral, you're better off in the casket than doing the eulogy.' This oratorical fear has been given new dramatic significance in the critically acclaimed film, *The King's Speech*. Portraying both personal story and national crisis, the film focuses on the remarkable relationship between Albert, Duke of York, who would become King George VI², the noble suffering from a debilitating stammer and seen in every way to be 'unfit' for the role of Monarch, and his speech therapist, the unorthodox and 'colonial commoner' Lionel Logue.³ The film opens with a nightmarish scene as Albert prepares to give a speech before the Empire Exhibition at Wembley Stadium in 1925. The excruciating stammer with which he has been afflicted noticeably unsettles and embarrasses those present in the stadium. The film closes with Albert's three-page radio speech given upon the declaration of war with Germany in 1939. While by no means a piece of accomplished oratory, it is a speech which displays enough drama and authority to bring some comfort and re-assurance to the millions of British citizens huddled around their wirelesses on the eve of war.

Another King's speech, *the King's speech*, the Bible, appears to have suffered a reversal of fortune to that of dear old 'Bertie' with regards to its standing in public life. Picture another two scenes which may seem somewhat 'random', but to my mind are illustratively indicative. The first scene stays with the theme of royalty, indeed the very same Windsor family. Whether one is a royalist or not, or even whether one takes any of the 'pomp and circumstance' of monarchy as being at all relevant to British life and culture, surely there was still *something* encouraging and positive for the Christian believer who listened and now incredibly for the first time *watched* the coronation ceremony of Elizabeth II in June 1953. For it was with the following words from the Archbishop of Canterbury that Her Majesty received a copy of the Bible:

Our gracious Queen: to keep your Majesty ever mindful of the Law and the Gospel of God as the Rule for the whole life and government of Christian Princes, we present you with this Book, the most valuable thing that this world affords. Here is Wisdom; this is the royal Law; these are the lively Oracles of God.

While there are those in all sectors of our society who wish it were not so, one cannot deny the relevance, role, and yes, even rule, that the Bible has explicitly played in the shaping of British life and culture. This may be obvious to some, but for many, including many Christians, there are severe cases of historical myopia and amnesia which need remedying. The Bible's influence is enormous in all fields but let us take just two examples: the Bible as the basis for common law and the motivation for the origins of modern science.

It is likely that within two hundred years of Jesus' birth Britannia had heard the Christian message, but it was not until the 511 and the preaching of Patrick, Columba, Aiden, and Augustine that Christian numbers and influence increased. The earliest document written in English is the law code of Ethelbert, which was strongly influenced by biblical ideals and law. The common law system developed during the twelfth and thirteen centuries was largely shaped by Christian values. Many aspects of the British justice system that we cherish – retributive justice, legal representation, the taking of oaths, judicial investigation, and rules for evidence – all owe a debt to a Christian influence based on the biblical revelation.

In a similar vein, inscribed in Latin over the door of the physics laboratory in Cambridge is neither 'physics is fun' nor 'leave your faith before entering' but Ps 111:2: 'Great are the works of the Lord. Studied by all those who delight in them',⁴ a verse chosen by the scientist and formulator of electromagnetic theory, James Clark Maxwell. As the author P.D James summarises concerning the 'Authorised Version', 'No book has had a more profound and lasting influence on religious life, the history and the culture, the institutions and the language of the English-speaking peoples throughout the world than has the King James Bible'.⁵

Compare our coronation scene with another televisual event held at the Corn Exchange in Brighton in September 2005. Both the audience and panel hostilely received Stephen Green, the National Director of *Christian Voice*, in his one and only ignominious appearance on the BBC's *Question Time* (a long-running political panel programme in the UK). Again, while one might not support the cause and tone of his organisation nor think Green's overall presence and communication skills were the most winsome, it was the muffled but still audible groans, sighs, and titters that were induced whenever Green answered a contemporary political issue by quoting from the Bible. For the Christian watching on, this was perhaps the most painful part to bear. For we know that not a year goes by without some new survey or poll highlighting new levels of biblical illiteracy, incredulity, and disdain in our country. As Boyd Tonkin wrote last year in *The Independent*, again on the subject of the KJV,

For anyone religious or not, who cares about the continuity of culture and understanding, Gordon Campbell lets slip a remark to freeze the blood. A professor at Leicester University, he recalls that 'When the name of Moses came up at the seminar I was leading, no one had any idea whom he might have been, though a Muslim student eventually asked if he was the same person as Musa in the Qur'an (which he is)'.⁶

Chilling indeed.

Now, in matters of public life and public policy, and remembering Alistair Campbell's infamous rebuff that 'we don't do God',⁷ there is some evidence that we just *might* be witnessing the start, albeit a glacially slow start, of a thaw regarding a discussion on the place and legitimacy of 'religious

commitments' in public life. However, it still appears that for all concerned, both Christians and non-Christians, there is a moratorium on even discussing the possible role, relevance, and rule of the Bible in public life: we *definitely* 'don't do the Bible'. Let me pose a number of awkward questions: Was the pain and frankly toe-curling embarrassment that many *Christians* felt in the Stephen Green appearance as much about the massive apologetic *faux-pas* we thought he was making in his insistence in referring to and quoting from Scripture? Were we not witnessing the awful grating of two incommensurable worlds colliding, worlds that we really believe should now never come into contact with each other? The first, the sophisticated, slick, confessionally 'thin', allegedly 'neutral' *lingua franca* of modern politics of rights, equality, tolerance, and freedoms. The second, a naïve, unsophisticated, anachronistic, and so irrelevant 'thick' description of Christian particularity, certainly mentioning rights, equality, tolerance, and freedoms, but adding 'God', 'Jesus', and 'Bible' to the mix. Were we not witnessing here the breaking of an unspeakable taboo? Was not our number one fear being realised? In this public arena were we ashamed of the Bible being used in this way? Did we think that the Bible was unfit for public service? At this low point (or should it be high point?) of inappropriateness and inconceivability, were we as Christians guilty of buying into the revisionist history which determinedly airbrushes out the impact of Scripture and forgets a time when various public figures had gathered together for six years *in* Parliament itself under the authority of Scripture?

There are, of course, many historical, cultural, sociological, philosophical, and, most important (for it undergirds them all), 'theological' factors which can be cited as reasons for the decline of the Bible's relevance, role, and rule in British lives, British homes, British culture, and British public life (and we may want to add, within many British churches). In being a part of Western culture, these factors have been well-documented and analysed and so will not be dealt with here.⁸ Of course, how our British 'world' deals with the Word is not totally within our control, but thankfully within God's sovereign providence. In the time and circumstances God has placed us, we are called to be faithful. However 'being faithful' means that as Christians in this country in 2011, we do have a role and a responsibility when it comes to reflecting and then acting upon the role we give to the Bible, not just in our own lives or in our church's (what might be called a 'bottom-up' work), but in our 'public theology' (what might be called a top-down work).⁹ It is this arena that I wish to focus on in this paper. Narrowing this focus even further, and coming closer to home, I want to concentrate on how conservative evangelicals and especially those in the Reformed community view the relevance, role, and rule of the Bible in public life, for while there may be a healthy consensus when it comes to the relevance, role, and rule of the Bible in our lives and churches, when it comes to the public square no such consensus exists.

In what follows I compare and contrast two broad positions within Reformed theology:

1. The first, and at the risk of caricature, are those who both for theological and tactical reasons argue for the 'insufficiency' (or maybe less polemically 'illegitimacy') of the use of the Bible in the public realm but rather the 'sufficiency' (or probably better, 'legitimacy') of natural revelation embodied in a natural law.
2. The second argue for precisely the opposite.

Those familiar with contemporary Reformed theology in North America will immediately recognise the derivative nature of my argument as I am piggy-backing a very 'live and kicking' discussion happening amongst Reformed theologians.¹⁰ While drawing largely from these North American theologians and this intra-Reformed North American debate, I wish to take seriously the kernel of truth that culturally and politically we are two nations divided by a common language. My aim in this paper therefore is to stimulate further theological reflection and praxis amongst Reformed believers this side of the pond, attempting to contextualise my application and conclusion within our own particular British context.

For reasons I hope to outline, and perhaps showing my hand rather early, I unashamedly embrace the stance that in our public discourse we should engage consciously and explicitly with the Bible as our ultimate authority and that by doing so we will increase *both* our opportunities for evangelism *and* the possibility for social transformation.

1. Rooting Public Engagement in God's Plan for the World

Both of these two positions on Scripture are inextricably embedded within larger theological 'visions' that differ, while employing a united 'grammar' and 'language' of confessional Reformed orthodoxy.¹¹ Before we concentrate on these respective doctrines of the use or abuse of Scripture in public theology, it is worth briefly sketching the theological tenets which both unite and divide these projects.

Let us start with the raw systematic and biblical-theological material we must fashion and which both sides take as 'Reformed' givens. First, we have the reality of God's general revelation in nature and history and God's 'worded' special revelation. A corollary here is God's moral standard or norm, his law both revealed in general revelation and special revelation. Second is the overarching world historical pattern of creation, fall, redemption, consummation, and some important 'glueing' doctrines which join them together, the concept of 'covenant' with its blessings and curses, and 'kingdom' with its rulers and realms.

Under 'creation' we must mention that all human beings are made in the image of God, made functionally to replicate God's 'speaking' and 'making' activities under God's norms and authority. In other words, human beings are by nature culture-builders. This facet of the *imago Dei* is reinforced in the cultural mandate of Gen 1:26-31; 2:18-25. Finally in terms of creation, God has ordered the world in a structurally or institutionally pluralistic way; under his supreme authority there are other subordinate authorities, each with their own unique jurisdictions, responsibilities, and sanctions (church, family, state, etc.). Under 'Fall' we must reckon anthropologically with the complimentary truths of the 'antithesis', common grace, and the image of God. The 'antithesis' is God's judicial curse sovereignly inflicted on humanity in Gen 3:15 and which from then until now puts enmity between followers of God and followers of Satan at all levels, intellectual and moral, individual and societal. The antithesis is *principally* 'the diametrical opposition between belief and unbelief and therefore between belief and any compromise of revealed truth'.¹² The Bible presents this stark contrast between belief and unbelief in many ways: light and dark, death and life, those who are blind and those who can see, covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers, those in Adam and those in Christ. I stress *principally* because as well as affirming the truth of the antithesis we must also affirm two other biblical truths. First, as believers we know in practice that a version of the antithesis still runs through our own hearts as we daily deal with our indwelling sin, sin which is a contradiction according to who we are in Christ. Second, we note an analogous inconsistency in the unbeliever.¹³

As well as the 'antithesis', we must affirm God's non-salvific common grace, his goodness showered on a sin-cursed world. In common grace God restrains his own wrath and restrains sin and its consequences in unbelievers, and he also positively blesses creation and excites the unbeliever to perform works of civic righteousness. We must also affirm that despite their rebellion epistemologically (in terms of knowledge) and ethically (in terms of morality), metaphysically (in terms of being) all men and women remain in the image of God with the dignity that this affords. In their very 'humanity' they reveal the God who is, and no matter how much they claim otherwise and try to deface this image, they can never totally succeed. The idols they necessarily fashion in creation and in the mind are distorted and perverted copies and counterfeits of the living God, whom they know but do not know. The perennial nature of the *imago Dei* includes mankind's 'culture-building' function. Does the culture built reflect worship of the living God or worship of an idol?

Under 'redemption' we have the significance of Christ's life, death, resurrection, ascension, and continuing session for *all* of creation, the Great Commission to disciple all nations, and some version of an 'inaugurated eschatology' (the now and not-yet) although shaped by one's millennial sensibilities. Finally under 'consummation' we affirm the physicality of the new heavens and the new earth.¹⁴

2. Ambitions for Public Life: A Description of Two (Reformed) Ways to Live

The above sketch should be recognisable to all those who are confessionally 'Reformed'.¹⁵ Now we witness the differences as we configure, stress, emphasise, accent, and nuance the above tenets in different ways and start to join the dots.

Theologically, one helpful way to understand these differences is viewing them as a set of interconnected relationships of continuity and discontinuity.¹⁶ What is the continuity and/or discontinuity between creation and redemption, between the cultural mandate and the gospel mandate, between the creation and new creation this side of judgment day and the new heaven and new earth the other side? Typologically and hermeneutically, what is the continuity and discontinuity between old covenant and new covenant, OT Israel and the church of Christ, OT Israel and the nations, between the Mosaic Law, the Royal Law, and the law written on the heart? More pointedly, we could boil everything down into three questions:

1. What does *God* require and demand of a society? (This is a quasi-spatial category dealing with legitimacy.)
2. What should *we* expect to see in a society in this current age? (This is a quasi-temporal category dealing with feasibility.)
3. What activities is the *church qua church* responsible for within society? (This is an ecclesiological question dealing with vocation.)

As one plots where one stands on all these questions, there will begin to appear in outline form two related but quite distinct 'visions' for public theology. Indeed, there is a strong sibling rivalry between the two. Both claim to have a rich historical pedigree (both claim to be heirs of the magisterial Reformation and the Westminster Standards), and both have their sophisticated contemporary interpreters, all who give their own variations on a theme. I can do little more here than bash out the basic melody of both before concentrating on the issue of Scripture.

2.1. A Common-Kingdom Model

The first is a common-kingdom model.¹⁷ On the 'Reformed' version of the continuity/discontinuity question, the common-kingdom model can be called a model of discontinuity and dichotomy. Its more recent advocates include Meredith Kline,¹⁸ Michael Horton,¹⁹ Daryl Hart,²⁰ Stephen Grabhill,²¹ Ken Myers,²² and especially David VanDrunen,²³ a scholar who has done more than anyone to defend and champion this vision.

A thumbnail sketch can be drawn thus:

- While God is sovereign, Jesus is Lord and King over all, and the Bible is our ultimate authority, God exercises his rule in two different ways: in two different realms, with two different norms, and with two different expectations for each realm.
 - God is Creator and Sustainer (but not Redeemer) of the common-kingdom, a civil realm that pertains to temporal, earthly, provisional matters, not matters of ultimate and spiritual importance.
 - The other realm is the 'spiritual' and 'holy' realm where God is Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer in Christ. 'This kingdom pertains to things that are of

ultimate spiritual importance, the things of Christ's heavenly, eschatological kingdom'.²⁴

- Concerning the relationship of the two, 'although necessarily existing together and having some mutual interaction in this world, these two kingdoms enjoy a great measure of independence so that each can pursue the unique work entrusted to it'.²⁵
 - From the perspective of biblical-theology (and using Kline's terminology), we can say that from the Fall, and running in parallel with redemptive history, is a God-ordained common cultural history, covenantally instituted in God's covenant with Noah, made up of both covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers and sustained by God's common grace.
 - Redemptive history and all it contains in terms of Israel, law, society, covenantal sanctions of blessings and cursings is an anomaly, a typological 'intrusion' of the eschatological kingdom to come where there will be total separation of covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers, a true theocracy.²⁶

For a common-kingdom proponent like VanDrunen, the cultural mandate given to the first Adam has been accomplished in the work of Jesus Christ, the last Adam. 'Thus redemption is not "creation regained" but "re-creation gained"'.²⁷

In defining the scope of this 're-creation', VanDrunen limits continuity between the creation now and the new creation exclusively to the resurrection of believers' bodies: 'The NT teaches that the entirety of present cultural activities and products will be brought to a radical end, along with the natural order, at the second coming of Christ'.²⁸ While believers now can and should engage in cultural pursuits joyfully and thankfully, those pursuits should always be accompanied with a 'deep sense of detachment from this world, and of longing for our true home in the world-to-come'.²⁹

A common-kingdom approach sees a looser connection than some between culture and cult, between the shape of a society and the religious presuppositions underlying that society. There is no distinctively Christian culture or Christian civilisation, and while the 'secularist' state is an enemy of the civil realm, the 'secular' state is a definition of the 'civil realm', one of the triumphs of the West. In a common-kingdom approach, and crucially for the focus of this essay, evangelical public theology concerns this mixed common cultural history, the 'civil realm' which has its own norm and moral basis. A common-kingdom approach appreciates and appropriates a version of natural law given in general revelation (Rom 1:18–32), the law written on the heart (Rom 2:14–15), common to all humanity and the moral basis for civic morality, and the common good: 'Natural law is God's *common* moral revelation given to all people of whatever religious conviction... Natural law morally obligates human beings insofar as they are created and sustained by God'.³⁰

The common-kingdom model argues that Scripture at this point is an 'insufficient' basis in the civil realm. This does not deny the doctrines of scriptural sufficiency and necessity, but it qualifies in a more minimalistic direction. For example, T. David Gordon, in a provocative edition of *Modern Reformation*³¹ and popularising his more scholarly critique of theonomy,³² argues that the phrase 'faith and life' in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* 1:6³³ must be taken in its 'religious' sense and is restricted to the covenant community: 'The Bible is sufficient to guide the human-as-covenanter, but *not* sufficient to guide the human-as-mechanic, the human-as-physician, the human-as-businessman, the human-as-parent, the human-as-husband, the human-as-wife, or the human-as-legislator'.³⁴

For VanDrunen, although Scripture does give some guidance to Christians in how they are to live faithfully in the common kingdom,³⁵ the main problem for Scripture serving as a moral *standard* for

the civil kingdom is that biblical morality is patterned on an indicative-imperative structure meant only for God's redeemed covenant people:

Scripture does not provide a common moral standard for Christians and non-Christians in the way that natural law does. Natural law is the only moral standard for which there is a common (though implied) indicative that grounds common imperatives: All people are created in God's image and have this law written upon their hearts; therefore, they should conduct themselves according to the pattern of that image and the demands of the law.³⁶

Finally, while Christians are not to be indifferent culturally, economically, and socially, the common kingdom model 'demands limited and sober expectations. This perspective gives no reason to expect the attainment of paradise on earth. The civil kingdom, regulated by natural law, is severely limited in what it can attain, but Scripture gives us no reason to expect more from it'.³⁷ It has a relative importance in the maintenance of order and restraining of evil. So as Christians we live 'hyphenated lives'³⁸ as citizens of both kingdoms, but as aliens and pilgrims and exiles, our true longing is for our spiritual home. The common-kingdom model appears to exclude both theologically and psychologically any version of a postmillennial hope.

2.2. A Confessional-Kingdom Model

The second model is what I call the confessional-kingdom model.³⁹ On the Reformed version of the continuity/discontinuity question, this model can be called a model of continuity and unity. Reformed advocates here are a far more disparate group, including those 'neo-Calvinists' associated with Kuyperianism and/or Dooyewerdianism⁴⁰ and various disciples of Cornelius Van Til: Vern Poythress,⁴¹ Peter Leithart,⁴² and especially John Frame.⁴³ For this sketch, I concern myself with the Van Tillian family.

Here God is sovereign, Jesus is Lord and King over all, the Bible is our ultimate authority, and God commands that everyone acknowledge this in every sphere of life. While still upholding structural and institutional pluralism (i.e., not confusing or conflating church, state, and family), confessional-kingdom models join together aspects they believe common-kingdom proponents falsely dichotomise: earthly and heavenly, physical and spiritual, judicial-covenantal and material, individual and cosmic, civil and religious, God's law in one realm of life and his law in another.

From the broadest perspective, redemption restores creation in all its many spheres: 'Redemption is not an ontological transformation, but an ethical reorientation and redirection'.⁴⁴ Because Christ's work is *the* significant event in history as the transition from wrath to grace, the confessional-kingdom model places less stress on the discontinuity between the earth now and the new heaven and new earth because the new creation, inaugurated by Christ's resurrection and its firstfruits, has begun in history. Therefore, rather than thinking of ourselves as 'resident aliens', might it be more accurate to think of ourselves as 'alienated residents'?⁴⁵ And when one's framework encompasses the movement from paradise lost to paradise regained and when one recognises the physicality and continuity between the now and not-yet, this motivates them to start working as soon as they are converted.

Another way of looking at this is the 'conceptual congruence' between cultural mandate and the Great Commission.

The Great Commission is the republication of the cultural mandate for the semi-eschatological age. Unlike the original cultural mandate, it presupposes the existence of sin and the accomplishment of redemption. It recognizes that if the world is to be filled with worshippers of God, subduing the earth as his vassal kings, they must first be converted to Christ through the preaching of the gospel.⁴⁶

In this vision, *if* cultural transformation is a desired end, this should not and will not come about by imposed morality but by men and women being converted and willingly submitting themselves to the King of Kings and his rule.

Like a common-kingdom approach, the confessional-kingdom approach regards the 'secularist' state as an enemy to be opposed. Unlike the common-kingdom approach, the 'secular' state is not to be prescribed but rather seen to be a 'myth', a confused, compromised, and unstable state of affairs, and a fruit of the Enlightenment rather than the Reformation.⁴⁷ The confessional-kingdom model can incorporate the concept of Christendom, and a confessionally Christian state is by no means anathema because the gospel has inevitable public and political implications.

Concerning revelation, confessional-kingdom models are far less happy to separate general revelation and special revelation, natural law and biblical law. Both are needed and always have been needed to interpret the other. Confessional-kingdom models recognise the personal knowledge of God that all unbelievers have by virtue of their being made in God's image, and yet they tend to stress more the antithesis between the believer and unbeliever and the inextricable link between cult (the worship of the living God or the worship of idols) and culture (the externalisation of that worship). That is, the noetic effects of the Fall are so damaging and debilitating that general revelation, without the clarity and regenerating power of special revelation, is severely limited and certainly is not a stable ground for moral consensus. The Bible is both sufficient and necessary to equip the Christian for *every* good work, which includes the cultural and political spheres. The confessional-kingdom model affirms common grace as a *description* of God's goodness in causing the sinner to be inconsistent in his thinking and acting, not as a *prescription* of what culture should look like in its movement from Garden to Garden-City.

For example, and in contrast to Gordon, John Frame speaks in more maximalist terms of the 'comprehensiveness' of Scripture, the way in which Christ rules our lives in a totalitarian way for our good and the good of others:

When people are converted to believe in Christ, they bring their new faith and love into their daily work. They ask how Christ bears upon their work as historians, scientists, musicians, how this new passion of theirs affects art, entertainment, medicine, the care of the poor and sick, the justice of courts, the punishment of convicts, relations between nations.⁴⁸

How then is the comprehensiveness of Scripture related to its sufficiency? Here Frame gives his own interpretation of 'faith and life' in *WCF* 1:6:

Christians sometimes say that Scripture is sufficient for religion, for preaching, or theology, but not for auto-repairs, plumbing, animal husbandry, and dentistry. And of course, many argue that it is not sufficient for science, philosophy and even ethics. That is to miss an important point. Certainly, Scripture contains more specific information relevant to theology than to dentistry. But sufficiency in the present context is not sufficiency of specific information but sufficiency of divine words. Scripture contains divine words sufficient for all of life. It has all the divine words the plumber needs, and all the divine words that the theologian needs. So it is just as sufficient for plumbing as it is for theology. And in that sense it is sufficient for science and ethics as well.⁴⁹

Both 'the light of nature' and 'Christian prudence' mentioned in the *WCF* are necessary to give us guidance, not by adding to Scripture but by applying the 'general rules of the Word'. They are 'a means of determining how the sufficient word of Scripture should be applied to a specific situation'.⁵⁰

Finally, what are the expectations of confessional-kingdom proponents? Here, as elsewhere one's eschatological commitments play a large part in answering this question. I believe one can construct versions of transformation which cover a range of Reformed eschatological views. Whatever our short-term or long-term expectations, whatever transformation we see or don't see, we are called to be faithful.

3. Authorities in Public Discourse: A Critique of the Normativity of Natural Law

The previous section sketches the contours of two Reformed 'projects' or 'visions' (one might say micro-worldviews) which are built upon and between the dynamic and configuration of many Reformed doctrinal *loci*. I hope I am not exaggerating if I were to speculate that, if from this moment on, British Reformed Christians were self-consciously to embrace either 'project', that over time this would lead to very different praxes with regards our engagement with British culture and public life.

Because of their complex and comprehensive nature, discerning the legitimacy of one 'vision' over the other is a large project, way beyond the remit of this essay. However, the question of 'authority' in public discourse is a crucial one and brings into sharp focus these visions' respective treatments of revelation, both 'natural' and 'scriptural'. This question is relevant to us here and crucial to determine which 'vision' one eventually adopts.

With this in mind and utilising the work of Frame and Leithart, I wish to look in a little more detail at the role of natural law and Scripture in both common-kingdom and confessional-kingdom arguments. At the level of theology, history, and apologetics, the common-kingdom use of natural law is flawed and 'insufficient,' and this calls into question its approach as a whole.

3.1. Theological Insufficiencies of the Common-Kingdom Model

In a recent chapter against soteriological inclusivism, I argue in some depth both exegetically and systematically that though natural revelation is in its own distinctive ways and for its own distinctive purposes necessary, authoritative, sufficient, and perspicuous,⁵¹ it is *not* sufficient for salvation; what is needed is both the light and sight that only the gospel can bring through God's Word (normatively through the human messenger in this life).⁵² My contention here is that similar arguments can be used in critiquing those who argue for the 'sufficiency' of natural law (and the 'insufficiency' of Scripture), for establishing a public theology, public policy, and more generally a moral consensus. Although I refer the reader back to that chapter for the details, it is worth briefly summarising the contours of the argument I make there and applying them here to the arena of the public sphere.

3.1.1. The Insufficiency of General Revelation

First, using Psalm 19 as an example, I argue that general revelation reveals God's works and that, as a mode or instrument of God 'speaking,' works by themselves are hermeneutically ambiguous. They need further revelatory supplementation to make them clear. This is not to drive a wedge between general and special revelation or to denigrate God's general revelation but simply to note that God's purpose in general revelation has never been for it to function independently of his 'worded' special revelation. God's 'words' are necessary to interpret and supplement his 'works'.⁵³ General revelation lacks the specificity of special revelation. God's words have always been needed to interpret, supplement, and therefore complement God's works. These two modes of revelation were never meant to be separated from one another or to work independently of each other. To make such a separation as natural-law advocates do seems artificial and lacking biblical warrant.

At this point I would note a similar unnatural decoupling that can be seen in attempts to separate 'moral' norms from 'religious' norms, for example in the claim that the second table of the Decalogue enshrines natural law and can be discovered and known *apart* from special revelation.⁵⁴

This again is to misunderstand the unity of the Decalogue and its specially revealed and 'thick' religious exclusivism for Yahweh and against idolatry.

This is not all, though, for second, this objective epistemological insufficiency of general revelation becomes intensely more acute after the Fall. According to the seminal passage in Rom 1:18-32, the knowledge of God is hideously 'suppressed' and 'exchanged', hence the antithetical language of the Bible between regenerate and unregenerate at the level of both epistemology and ethics.⁵⁵ However, it must always be noted that this 'natural' knowledge is not static information but dynamic, personal, and relational in character; man 'is a knower who does not know, a perceiver who does not perceive'.⁵⁶

3.1.2. Implications

What are the implications of this understanding of revelation for those who advocate natural law as being the prescriptive norm for public life?

First, anthropologically, Leithart notes a paradox in natural-law thinking at this point:

The problem with natural law is not that it claims too *much* for natural knowledge, but that it claims too *little*. Speaking Christianly to an unbeliever is not like speaking Swahili to a Swede; it is like speaking Swedish to an American of Swedish descent who has almost, but not quite, forgotten his native tongue. On the other hand, natural law claims too much for the ability of those who are outside Christ to embrace and put into practice what they know. The fact that men know the moral law does not, for Paul, lead to the conclusion that natural morality is sufficient as far as it goes. On the contrary, because the natural man suppresses and distorts the knowledge he cannot escape, natural morality is ultimately foolish and darkness.⁵⁷

Second, with regards the doctrine of Scripture itself, promoting natural law to the role of rule and standard in public life means relegating Scripture and so potentially jeopardising its sufficiency and *sola Scriptura*. God's revelation of himself comes to us through various media (nature, history, word, person), all of which are authoritative and consistent, all of which are interdependent on the others. However, 'the Bible has a unique role in the organism of revelation'⁵⁸ since both a verbal and written revelation are necessary for all 'faith and life' to correct our bleary vision (to use Calvin's language).

Methodologically, we are called to interpret the world through the Word, for in God's light do we see light (Psalm 36:10). Given Scripture's epistemological primacy, 'principles that cannot be established from Scripture cannot be established by natural-law argument either. When people try to add to God's word by natural-law arguments, they violate the sufficiency of Scripture'.⁵⁹ Sufficiency does not mean that the Bible speaks with a uniform specificity in all matters of faith and life but that it contains the divine words necessary for all faith and life. Given the explicitly 'moral', 'ethical', and increasingly 'religious' questions generated by the public and civil sphere, Scripture has many divine words to say on these matters, both complementing and supplementing the 'light of nature' and 'Christian prudence'.

Without acknowledging these divine words and their ultimate authority, we are left with simply more instability and confusion. Take, for example, Rowan Williams' infamous lecture on *Sharia* law in February 2008.⁶⁰ It roused many a nominal Christian in the United Kingdom and had radio phone-in bosses rubbing their hands in glee. A close look at Williams' lecture recognises an intelligent reflection that raises a number of important questions concerning the thorny issue of supplementary jurisdictions and the foundations on which we can build a legal arrangement for the whole of society. His own answer comes midway through when he speaks of 'the establishing of a space

accessible to everyone in which it is possible to affirm and defend a commitment to *human dignity as such*, independent of membership in any specific human community or tradition’.

My question here would be whether Williams’ ultimate ground of ‘human dignity as such’ is a satisfactory answer for a Christian to give. First, it appears to ‘confess’ *human dignity as such* as more ultimate than Jesus’ Lordship. But is this not tantamount to an idolatrous configuration in that it demonstrates an inverted loyalty? Second, and practically, what does ‘human dignity as such’ mean and who ultimately decides what it means? Is it so self-evident that all sectors of our pluralistic society can be united? While it may look like solid ground, it is not ground that will be stable enough to support the social cohesion that we all want.

Third, what of VanDrunen’s claim that while there is a basic moral law that binds all people, Scripture itself is an inappropriate ethical source for the common kingdom since its ethics are characterised by an indicative-imperative structure and so appropriate only for those who have been redeemed? First, while this structure may ground Christian ethical motivation, it is not the only grounds for ethics. As Frame notes, the ultimate ground is the holy character of God, in whose image we are made. Then there are universal creation ordinances given to Adam and Eve. In terms of ethical motivation, God’s commands in Scripture to do something should be grounds enough.⁶¹

Second, there are numerous examples (the prophetic literature being a pointed example) of the nations outside Israel being condemned and called to repent not simply of moral natural-law sins but ‘religious’ sins especially idolatry. Idolatry, not simply immorality, can well be described as the universally applicable ‘primal’ sin, seen clearly in Adam’s and Eve’s ‘false faith’⁶² in the Garden when they followed Satan in believing lies about God. Whether one calls it ‘natural’ or ‘biblical’, the worship of any god other than the transcendently unique Yahweh, is idolatrous and accountable.

3.2. Historical Insufficiencies of the Common-Kingdom Model

In my chapter on the insufficiency of general revelation for salvation, I argue that while the separation and distinction between general and special revelation is absolutely necessary, there is a sense in which it is somewhat abstract and artificial, both theologically and historically. Our theological categorisation of revelation as the hermetically-sealed compartments of general and special revelation are rather inadequate, for in which category does ‘redemptive history’ go? Frame demonstrates this in his re-categorisation of God’s revelation from general and special categories into three: the word that comes through nature and history, the word that comes through persons, and the word written.⁶³

If Frame is correct here, a complementary *historical* point can be made. In understanding the theology of other religions, I have noted in a recent work the importance of acknowledging phenomenologically the way religions, in their myths, doctrines, rituals, etc., have idolatrously taken and distorted not simply ‘natural’ revelation, but redemptive-historical ‘special’ revelation.⁶⁴ As cultures are religions externalised and ‘lived worldviews’,⁶⁵ we can see this perverted ‘special revelation’ influence, culture-wide. Such an influence pertains not only to epistemology but to ethics as well.

In a stimulating essay, Peter Leithart makes a plausible case that moral consensus between Christians and non-Christians does not originate in general revelation, as is often assumed, but rather originates in a mixture of general and special revelation.⁶⁶ What is often taken as evidence of general revelation, natural law, and common grace in our Western culture may actually be rather the historical influence of special revelation, biblical law, and the gospel. He calls this ‘middle grace’:

I hope to make a plausible case that much of what has been identified as a moral consensus based on natural revelation is more accurately seen as a product of general and special

revelation. Pagans hold to certain moral principles that are compatible with Christian morality not only because they are inescapably confronted with God's revelation in creation, but also because they have been directly or indirectly exposed to and influenced by the Spirit operating through special revelation and the other means of grace. Whatever moral consensus exists is thus not a product of pure 'common grace' (devoid of all contact with revelation), nor of 'special grace' (saving knowledge of God through Christ and his word), but what I call... 'middle grace' (non-saving knowledge of God and his will derived from both general and special revelation). To put it another way, because of the cultural influence of the Bible, unbelievers in America are more Christian than unbelievers in Irian Jaya. To put it another way, there is and has never existed a pure 'common grace' cultural situation.⁶⁷

Given the role that Scripture has played in the history and culture of the United Kingdom, isn't she a classic example of 'middle grace' living now off the borrowed capital of a distinctively Christian worldview? Is not it a plausible narrative that this 'Christian' worldview that was once cherished gradually became 'assumed' and that the seeds of its subsequent demise were in that 'assumption'? Hasn't this demise been due in large part to marginalising the Christian written rule and norm – Scripture? Isn't this a significant factor as to the state we are in? Don't we exacerbate this marginalisation, encourage the *status quo*, and stifle deep-rooted recovery in our suggestion that it is natural law rather than the Bible that should be the 'norm' to speak into our public life and culture?

Interestingly, William Wilberforce appears to have made exactly this point two hundred years ago in his best-seller, *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in the Higher and Middle Classes in This Country Contrasted with Real Christianity*:

The fatal habit of considering Christian morals as distinct from Christian doctrines insensibly gained strength. Thus the peculiar doctrines of Christianity went more and more out of sight and as might naturally have been expected, the moral system itself also began to wither and decay, being robbed of that which should have supplied it with life and nutriment.⁶⁸

3.3. Apologetic Insufficiencies of the Common-Kingdom Model

In our particular context, when it comes to matters of public theology, public debate and public policy, one might level the criticism that appeals to Scripture are not only theologically misguided but apologetically idealistic, naïve, and do not deal with '*real politik*'. Even if one's aspirations are limited to that of cultural preservation rather than cultural transformation, Ken Myers deems that natural-law argument will be more persuasive than those based on Scripture:

Telling a late-20th century pagan that he has disobeyed God's word is likely to have little rhetorical power. Telling him that he has, in C. S. Lewis' terms, gone 'against the grain of the universe' might well pack a bit more rhetorical punch, especially if the inevitability of cosmic splinters is spelled out. In a culture that tends to regard all rules and all religion as merely conventional, biblical law language is horribly easy to ignore.⁶⁹

Four comments can be made here, taking into account the theological and historical points I have already outlined.

First, unsupported natural-law arguments *can* be susceptible to the charge of confusing description with prescription. Thus, they commit a number of common logical fallacies, especially a version of the naturalistic fallacy (getting 'ought' from 'is')⁷⁰ and sociological fallacy (moral evaluation comes from social consensus).⁷¹

Second, and maybe pointing to a difference between the United States and United Kingdom, is there the moral consensus on some of the ethical issues that natural-law advocates point to? In 1970, A. N. Triton (a pseudonym) defended a 'creation ethic' similar to natural law: 'It is, for instance, almost universally regarded as obvious that marital faithfulness is something to be preserved as of great importance and that breaches of the moral bond are wrong'.⁷² Looking back, forty years on, such a statement now seems tragically 'of its time'.⁷³

Returning to my previous historical point, if a society like ours *has* preserved the sanctity of marriage, could this not be because of the influence of the gospel and scriptural teaching, rather than a non-supplemented natural revelation? Given the sinful suppression and exchange of truth, a 'naked' natural law would seem no basis on which to build a society. As Leithart speculates, 'Can one discern from rational reflection on history and experience that man is *imago Dei*? Will he not perhaps conclude that man instead is *imago diaboli*?'⁷⁴ Isn't it those 'peculiar Christian doctrines' that we should be referencing and promoting? To put it another way, while *theologically* it may never be legitimate, *practically* arguing from natural law maybe more possible in a more 'Christianised' culture where there is a higher degree of latent moral, ethical, and even spiritual consensus. It becomes less possible as this Christian consensus crumbles and collapses. At this point I tentatively and, I realize provocatively, suggest that our 'collapse' in the United Kingdom is further along than the United States context in which the advocates of natural law find themselves. Would common-kingdom supporters advocate natural law as strongly as they do if they were living and ministering this side of the Atlantic?

Third, while some natural-law language is so vague that it is of little substantive use (e.g., 'human dignity as such'), some natural-law language is simply 'too theological to pass itself off as a common language for believer and unbeliever'.⁷⁵ In other words, is appealing to scriptural authority any less persuasive than arguing that we are made in the image of God? This is Leithart's critique of J. Budziszewski, who is arguably the most sophisticated (and certainly the most prolific) conservative defender of natural law.⁷⁶ Concerning Budziszewski's *The Line Through the Heart: Natural Law as Fact, Theory, and Sign of Contradiction*, Leithart notes that the persuasiveness of the language that Budziszewski employs (e.g., the image of God) requires a 'conversion' just as much as 'The Bible says' language: 'At its best, this book is a book of apologetics and evangelism; not *proto-evangelism*, but evangelism *per se*'.⁷⁷ This may be a simplistic way of putting it, but if natural-law arguments are going to be seen as offensive and 'theological' as arguments which derive from Scripture, given both the epistemological priority of the latter over the former, together with gospel contained in the latter and not in the former, wouldn't it make more apologetic sense to try to get to the Bible as soon as possible?

Fourth, and related to the previous point, we continue on the epistemological ultimacy of Scripture. In his own appreciative yet critical take on Budziszewski's work, Frame notes that the philosopher has a high view of Scripture and that he admits in several places that natural law can be vindicated and grounded only in the Word of God:

If one presents a natural law argument to someone who doesn't believe in natural law, who keeps challenging the authority on which the law is based, ultimately the argument must have recourse to Scripture. So natural-law arguments ultimately depend on arguments from Scripture... Natural-law arguments are, in fact, natural law arguments warranted by the Bible. That doesn't mean that every natural law argument must be accompanied by Bible texts; rather, when an argument attempts to trace natural law back to its ultimate foundation, that foundation must be located in Scripture.⁷⁸

4. Some Caveats and Clarifications on the Sufficiency of Scripture for Public Theology

Where does this critique of natural-law arguments leave us? Before I come to a conclusion, it might be helpful to note what I am and am not saying.

I am saying that our overall trajectory and ambition, however long-term or far-off or seemingly unreachable now, should be towards distinctive Christian confession and thinking in every area of life including the public and political realm. Thus, we need explicitly biblical engagement. This is Frame's vision for the United States, and it should equally be ours for the United Kingdom:

We should never investigate nature without the spectacles of Scripture. And that same conclusion follows from the very nature of politics according to Scripture. The ultimate goal of political apologetics is nothing less than to present Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The political goal of biblical Christianity is a civil state that acknowledges him for who he is. For every institution of human culture, as well as every individual human being, is called to do homage to King Jesus. We may not reach that goal in the course of modern political debate, but that is where the debate should point, and we may well find occasion to tell unbelievers, in all honesty, that this is the direction in which we would urge society to move. And if the Lord tarries, it should not be unthinkable that one day our society could become predominantly Christian, so that the people will be, not only tolerant of biblical arguments, but eager to hear them. When and if this happens, we should certainly not refuse to bring the Bible into the public square.⁷⁹

What does explicitly biblical engagement mean? Here a number of clarifications are in order.

First, I am not denying natural revelation or even an appeal to natural-law arguments, for God does reveal himself through nature, history, experience, etc. We need natural revelation to apply the 'divine words' of Scripture to any given situation. Natural-law arguments may have their place in certain cultural situations and can be deployed. They may be persuasive on occasion. What I question, however, especially in *our* current cultural context, is the stability and prescriptive power of natural law as a *basis* for public theology and moral consensus and the apologetic appeal and persuasive power of a 'naked' natural law *apart* from the ultimate supplementation of Scripture. 'A complete ethical argument must appeal to the ultimate source of moral authority. And for Protestant Christians that is Scripture and Scripture alone'.⁸⁰ Therefore, we should not be surprised but rather be prepared when our appeal to natural revelation, or our appeal to language like 'dignity' or 'the image of God', is questioned, so moving us back down the epistemological truth chain and appeals to scriptural authority.

Second, in affirming the sufficiency of Scripture for public theology, I am not advocating quotations of chapter and verse from big floppy Bibles in every conversation within every sphere of society. We will want to contextualise biblical teaching in a way that is appropriate and persuasive to our audience. This was perhaps Stephen Green's biggest mistake. We will want to be subtle, strategic, and subversive, which may mean different levels of discourse for the pastor and the politician. However, into whatever vocation we have been called, first, our arguments will be shaped by Scripture, and when appropriate our ultimate authority can and should be named. We are *Christians* who should be arguing *Christianly*, worried not so much what others think of us but what the Lord Jesus thinks.

Given our culture's current trajectory, I would expect epistemological uncovering to be happening more and more as the 'borrowed capital' of past Christian influence dwindles more and more. In a situation where we often feel increasingly threatened, we are actually being presented with a tremendous apologetic opportunity. If we have been guilty of a crisis of confidence in the public role

of the Bible in recent years, this must be set against a wider and more desperate crisis of confidence in society itself, which has led to obvious gaps and ‘fissures’. In the language of Jeremiah, we see more and more the tragedy and futility of trying to get water from broken cisterns, be they personal, public, or political. Our job, using God’s Word, is not only to expose this futility but to point to the fount of living water, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Third, I have said very little regarding the content of the Bible’s teaching on the wealth of cultural, political, economic, and ethical issues involved in a public theology and the hermeneutical models (e.g., regarding the place of the law) that presuppose and undergird differing conclusions regarding what the Bible teaches. In a similar way that a constitution is to be distinguished from legislation, my aim in this paper has been to discuss the base or ground for public theology rather than its content. Suffice it to say that there are a number of Reformed models currently available with differing levels of specificity when it comes to the sufficient ‘divine words’ on these subjects.⁸¹ Such internal discussion needs to continue and with some urgency so that we have the semblance of a constructive answer when we are asked on any piece of public policy, ‘So, what would you do then?’ If this is to happen, we will need different Christians in all their vocations and callings to be working together and supporting one another: public theologians reflecting practically, public servants reflecting theologically, and pastors preaching, teaching, and discipling relevantly.

Fourth, there are those who fear that speaking of the Bible’s role in the public sphere might distract from our evangelistic task. Conversely, others fear that bringing the Bible into matters of public life might actually marginalise our voice and so thwart social transformation (or even social preservation for that matter). To both of these groups, I make two observations:

First, I suggest that what I am proposing should encourage more evangelism and enable social transformation to take place if God should allow.⁸² Our cultural analysis has been greatly helped in recent years by recovering and deploying the pervasive biblical category of idolatry.⁸³ In Isaiah’s cutting satirical exposé of idolatry in Isaiah 44, the prophet makes a profound comment regarding the idolater’s activity: ‘no one stops to think’ (Isaiah 44:19). Part of our apologetic and evangelistic task is ‘offensive’ to make all people, whoever they are and whatever they do, stop and think about their ultimate commitments (what the Bible calls their idols), what they are, what they promise, and what they deliver. We hope that this in turn will lead to an opportunity to describe our ultimate commitment to Jesus Christ and what he offers.

At this point we are way beyond reasoning from natural law but reasoning from Scripture. Of course, this is nothing more than a presuppositional apologetic method applied more broadly to societal engagement and public theology. Such a method has a transcendental thrust which demonstrates the solidity and true ‘rationality’ of Christian commitment by exposing the weak and irrational commitments of every other worldview.

Within the more mainstream academic discourse on public theology, such a method might not be as unappetising (or better, and using Rorty’s phrase, ‘conversation stopping’⁸⁴) as it first appears. For example, Gavin D’Costa remarks that a scholar like Jeffrey Stout has noted the importance of the ‘religious’ and ‘non-religious’ being able to ‘argue’ for basic commitments:

In his critical discussion of Rorty, Jeffrey Stout makes a very pertinent point about religion being a conversation-stopper by helpfully distinguishing between two aspects of religion in such public discourse:

We need to distinguish between discursive problems that arise because religious premises are not widely shared and those that arise because the people who avow such premises are not prepared to argue for them.

The latter is certainly not the preserve of religions, for Stout adds, 'Everyone holds some beliefs on nonreligious topics without claiming to know that they are true' (2004, 87). But the distinction is helpful in clarifying where the problem lies: certainly in religious and non-religious people not being able to 'argue' in support of their basic commitments and claims.⁸⁵

If Stout is correct, then with some confidence the Christian can participate in public discourse. In Proverbs 1:20 we read of the activities of Lady Wisdom, a personification of the living God:

Wisdom cries aloud in the street,
In the markets she raises her voice;
At the head of the noisy streets she cries out;
At the entrance of the city gates she speaks:

Given our ambassadorial role, are not Christians in our busy and congested public square not simply to speak up but rather prophetically to cry out over the 'noise' of contemporary idol-worship, a modernistic secular liberalism (with its totalitarian 'neutralising' of particularity), a postmodern secular pragmatism (with its exchange of the universal for the particular and its impotency in offering anything other than 'irresolvable conflict of cultures and discourses, without any possibility of mediation'⁸⁶), and a radical Islamic worldview? With discernment and wisdom, we will be looking for opportunities to speak in the 'thick' language of Christian particularity rather than a 'thin' discourse because we want to give a reason for the hope we have in the gospel, hope not just for individuals but for families and communities and nations. We will be looking for opportunities to speak of Jesus Christ, one greater than Solomon and the true embodiment of 'wisdom'. And when we are anxious that speaking 'Christianly' will threaten our place in the public square and our contribution to social transformation, we need to remember that real social transformation comes about only through conversion through encountering Jesus in the Word of God and by the regenerating and illuminating power of the Spirit. In summary, given our current context: our public theology *is* public apologetics and *is* public evangelism.

Second, and concerning the 'who does what' question, I reiterate the need to affirm structural and institutional pluralism distinguishing between the God-given roles and responsibilities of 'church' and 'Church', between what Kuyper calls the church as 'institute' and the church as 'organism',⁸⁷ or between what Carson calls the 'church as a church in the world' and 'Christians in the world'.⁸⁸ Some careful and joined-up thinking between these domains is imperative and in my opinion will lead to complementary strategies which mandate societal involvement and influence from both the bottom up (with its bubble-up effect) and from the top down (with its trickle-down effect).⁸⁹ Similarly, such thinking may make possible a harmonisation between what sociologist Robert Putnam calls 'church-centred *bonding*' (or exclusive) social capital, as opposed to 'community centred *bridging*' (or inclusive) social capital.⁹⁰

5. Concluding with a Public Challenge

2011 could well be labelled 'the year of the Bible'. Within the church in the UK, a major initiative *Biblefresh* has been launched with the aim of encouraging a greater confidence and passion for Scripture across the Church.⁹¹ Internationally, *Biblemesh* is a new online resource to encourage biblical literacy in churches all over the world.⁹² As welcome as these initiatives are, they are aimed primarily at Christians, preaching to the converted as it were. What about those outside the church?

In my introduction, I note the monumental rise and fall of the Bible in British public life. Even within this arena, however, 2011 presents us with a remarkable and rare window of opportunity given the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible. While *The Telegraph's* Christopher Howse may be guilty of

overstatement when we writes, 'Britain is going Bible bananas,'⁹³ there has certainly been a level of media exposure not usually accorded the Word of God. Although one might baulk at the way in which the Queen and the Archbishop of Canterbury chose to mark this anniversary in their respective Christmas Day and New Year's day addresses,⁹⁴ to have the Bible front and centre in the public consciousness certainly did no harm and may have done some good.

If there is any momentum gathering for British society, just for a few months, to give a hearing to the Bible and its place in British culture and history, won't those who sit under the Word, who truly believe it to be the King's speech and the most valuable thing this world affords, do all they can to capitalise on this exposure? Confidently, courageously, prayerfully, and unashamedly, let us take every opportunity that God gives us, formally and informally, to point to Scripture, the Lord Jesus we encounter in it, and its comprehensive sufficiency for all 'faith and life'.

¹ This article is a revised version of a paper originally presented and discussed at the Affinity Theological Conference in England in February 2011. A slightly edited version has been published in *Themelios* Vol. 36/2 July 2011 (available at http://thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/article/not_ashamed_the_sufficiency_of_scripture_for_public_theology). I wish to thank Andrew Marsh and Timothy Edwards for their insightful comments and criticisms on an earlier draft of this paper.

² Played by Colin Firth.

³ Played by Geoffrey Rush.

⁴ 'Magna opera Domini exquisita in omnes voluntates ejus'.

⁵ Cited in Susan Elkin, 'Restoring Holy Order', *The Independent* (October 17, 2010), <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/restoring-holy-order-is-the-king-james-bible-the-only-version-we-should-celebrate-2105869.html>.

⁶ Boyd Tonkin, 'Battles of a Book', *The Independent* (December 31, 2010), <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/battles-of-a-book-the-king-james-bibles-history-of-dissent-and-inspiration-2171902.html>.

⁷ Campbell was Tony Blair's combative 'spin doctor' who interjected when a journalist deigned to ask the then Prime Minister about his faith.

⁸ E.g., the works of Francis Schaeffer, David Wells, Os Guinness, Herbert Schlossberg, and most recently, James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); and Nancy Pearcey, *Saving Leonardo: A Call to Resist the Secular Assault on Mind, Morals, and Meaning* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2010).

⁹ Let us use John Bolt's definition of public theology ('North American Evangelical Public Theology Today' [public lecture, 2008; transcript given to the author]): "by 'public theology' I have in mind the careful, theological thinking about why and how Christians should bear witness in the public square. Included here are questions about how a believer personally relates to public institutions, how Christians thinks about the best way public order should be constituted, how and to what extent a Christian should strive to influence public policy... It is useful to use the term "public theology" to indicate those aspects of theological reflection that are intentionally directed to the interface between the Christian faith and public life, understood now as the equally intentional efforts of life in the public civic community, a community shared by many who do not share our faith'.

¹⁰ Indeed sometimes it seems between Westminster campuses and alumni.

¹¹ While I will demonstrate that there are significant differences between these two positions, I do not want to lose perspective and minimise the broader theological commonality which unites them both. This is an internal 'family' dispute within Reformed theology.

¹² John Frame, *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed), 188.

¹³ 'The natural man, "sins against" his own essentially Satanic principle. As the Christian has the incubus of his "old man" weighing him down and therefore keeping him from realizing the "life of Christ" within him, so the

natural man has the incubus of the sense of Deity weighing him down and keeping him from realizing the life of Satan within him' (Cornelius Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* [Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1974], 27).

¹⁴ For a general introduction, see Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1979).

¹⁵ More broadly, I would want to argue that these 'Reformed' givens are faithful to the non-negotiable biblical theological plot-line and turning points as articulated by D. A. Carson in *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2008).

¹⁶ In a larger theological context and compared to, say, dispensationalism, Reformed theology is itself a model of continuity.

¹⁷ I have decided to use the title common-kingdom over the more usual 'two kingdoms' title (remembering that the 'common' kingdom is one of these 'two' kingdoms). The phrase 'two kingdoms' is classically associated with Lutheranism, what Niebuhr well describes as 'Christ and culture in paradox' (H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* [enlarged ed.; San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2001]). As the Augsburg Confession of Faith states, 'Christ's kingdom is spiritual; it is knowledge of God in the heart, the fear of God and faith, the beginning of eternal righteousness and eternal life. At the same time it lets us make outward use of the legitimate political ordinances of the nation in which we live, just as it lets us make use of medicine or architecture, food or drink or air. The gospel does not introduce any new laws about the civil estate, but commands us to obey existing laws, whether they were formulated by heathens or by others, and in obedience to practice love'. Recent Reformed writers have baptized 'two-kingdoms' as the title for their own position on the relationship between Christ and culture.

¹⁸ E.g., Meredith Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2000).

¹⁹ E.g., Michael Horton, *Christless Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008)

²⁰ E.g., Daryl Hart, *A Secular Faith: Why Christianity Favors the Separation of Church and State* (Chicago: Ivan Dee, 2006), 250–51.

²¹ Stephen Grabhill, *Rediscovering the Natural Law in Reformed Theological Ethics* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2006).

²² Ken Myers, 'Christianity, Culture and Common Grace', at <http://www.marshillaudio.org/resources/pdf/ComGrace.pdf>.

²³ See David VanDrunen, *A Biblical Case for Natural Law* (Grand Rapids: Acton Institute, 2006); idem, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms: A Study in the Development of Reformed Social Thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010); idem, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms: A Biblical Vision for Christianity and Culture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010).

²⁴ VanDrunen, *A Biblical Case for Natural Law*, 24.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁶ As Meredith Kline notes, 'Apropos of the fifth word [commandment], it is in this New Testament age not a legitimate function of a civil government to endorse and support religious establishments. This principle applies equally to the Christian church; for though its invisible government is theocratic with Christ sitting on David's throne in the heavens and ruling over it, yet its visible organization, in particular as it is related to civil powers, is so designed that it takes a place of only common privilege along with other religious institutions within the framework of common grace' (*The Structure of Biblical Authority* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972], 167).

²⁷ VanDrunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, 26. It should be noted though that human beings continue to live and be obligated under the cultural mandate as refracted through the Noahic covenant (78–81).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 67.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 126.

³⁰ VanDrunen, *A Biblical Case for Natural Law*, 38.

³¹ This is a term given to the original article by the *Modern Reformation* editors themselves in their joint ‘response’ with Gordon in a subsequent edition of the magazine, a response brought about by several critical responses to the original paper ‘Response from T. David Gordon’ *Modern Reformation* 11/3 (May-June), 46.

³² T. David Gordon, ‘Critique of Theonomy: A Taxonomy’, *WTJ* 56 (1994): 23–43.

³³ ‘The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or the traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge... that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and the government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed’ (*WCF* 1:6).

³⁴ T. David Gordon, ‘The Insufficiency of Scripture’, *Modern Reformation* 11:1 (January–February 2002): 19.

³⁵ Chapter 7 of *Living in God’s Two Kingdoms* looks at the topics of education, vocation, and politics.

³⁶ VanDrunen, *A Biblical Case for Natural Law*, 40. VanDrunen cites several biblical instances of ‘pagans’ demonstrating natural law: Abimelech’s recognition in Gen 20 that Abraham had done ‘things that should not be done’; Abimelech’s ‘fear of God’ in Gen 20:11; and ‘a common humanity’ illustrated by Job (taken here to have been bereft of special revelation) in his reflection of his past conduct in Job 31:13–15.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 40–41.

³⁸ Hart, *A Secular Faith*, 256.

³⁹ I am intentionally using the term confessional rather than a term like transformational because in my experience the latter can be unhelpfully misleading and distracting.

⁴⁰ E.g., Al Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformation Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986). I should note that there are versions of Dooyeweridian sphere sovereignty that can resemble a common kingdom position and thus susceptible to the same critique. See Frame, *Doctrine of the Word of God*, 392–421.

⁴¹ Vern S. Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1991).

⁴² E.g., Peter J. Leithart, *Against Christianity* (Moscow: Canon Press, 2003); *idem*, *Defending Constantine* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2010)

⁴³ E.g., John M. Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2008).

⁴⁴ Michael Williams, ‘A Restorational Alternative to Augustinian Verticalist Eschatology’, *Pro Rege* (June 1992): 15.

⁴⁵ David Bruce Hegeman, *Plowing in Hope: Toward a Biblical Theology of Culture* (Moscow: Canon Press), 88.

⁴⁶ Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 310.

⁴⁷ I.e., the ‘secular’ state is in reality itself a ‘confessional’ state.

⁴⁸ John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed), 218. Key verses he cites are 1 Cor 10:31; Col. 3:17; Rom 14:23.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 221.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 224.

⁵¹ To use Cornelius Van Til’s categories in ‘Nature and Scripture’, in *The Infallible Word: A Symposium* (ed. N. B. Stonehouse and Paul Woolley; Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1967).

⁵² Daniel Strange, ‘Is General Revelation Sufficient?’ in *Faith Comes by Hearing: A Response to Inclusivism* (ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson; Downers Grove: IVP, 2008), 40–77.

⁵³ This important insight was made by Vos in his category of ‘pre-redemptive special revelation’, and Van Til elaborated on it.

⁵⁴ As Leithart (*Natural Law*, 26) notes, 'If by "natural law" one means simply "moral truth" then the Decalogue is a summary of natural law. If by natural law one means law that everyone is obligated to obey, then the Decalogue is natural law. If by natural law one means law that is rooted in the very nature of things, in the character of God and the nature of the world He has made, then again the Decalogue is natural law. But if by natural law one refers to moral principles that man is capable of discovering apart from special revelation, then the Decalogue is not natural law'.

⁵⁵ This 'suppression' and 'exchange' is variegated according to God's sovereign restraint through common grace.

⁵⁶ Paul J. Visser, *Heart for the Gospel, Heart for the World: The Life and Thought of a Reformed Pioneer Missiologist Johan Herman Bavinck (1895–1964)* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 144. Visser is quoting J. H. Bavinck, *Religieus besef en christelijk geloof* (Religious Consciousness and Christian Faith; Kampen: Kok, 1949), still not translated into English.

⁵⁷ Leithart, *Natural Law*, 19–20.

⁵⁸ Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 141.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 248.

⁶⁰ Williams' lecture 'Civil and Religious Law in England: A Religious Perspective' (<http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/1137/archbishops-lecture-civil-and-religious-law-in-england-a-religious-perspective>) was given at the Royal Courts of Justice. This example and analysis was originally brought to my attention by David Field.

⁶¹ Frame writes, 'Are any of these grounds or motivations available to unbelievers? Yes and no. Unbelievers as well as believers *ought* to appeal to the character of God and to the creation ordinances, because they are human beings. Unbelievers have no right, as unbelievers, to appeal to God's redemptive acts and presence; but they ought to become believers, so that they can make this appeal. Given that condition, unbelievers as well as believers should make their ethical decisions based on God's redemptive acts, his commands, and his presence. The whole Bible, in other words, is God's standard for all people, believers and unbelievers alike. God has not ordained separate ethics for believers and unbelievers. All human beings are subject to the same standard and ought to be motivated in the same way' (review of David VanDrunen, *A Biblical Case for Natural Law*, http://www.frame-poythress.org/frame_articles/2010VanDrunen.htm).

⁶² Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (ed. J. T. Dennison; trans. G. M. Giger; Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1992), Topic 9. Q. 6. IX.

⁶³ Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 136.

⁶⁴ Gavin D'Costa, Paul Knitter & Daniel Strange. *Only One Way? Three Christian Responses to the Uniqueness of Christ in a Pluralistic World* (London: SCM, 2011), 120.

⁶⁵ Kevin Vanhoozer, 'What is Everyday Theology?' in *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends* (ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Charles A. Anderson, and Michael J. Sleasman; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 27.

⁶⁶ This is by no means a novel idea but rather an ancient one seen in traditions like the *prisca theologia*, revived and reformed by scholars such as Jonathan Edwards. See Gerald McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁶⁷ Peter J. Leithart, *Did Plato Read Moses? Middle Grace and Moral Consensus* (Biblical Horizons Occasional Paper 23; Niceville, FL: Biblical Horizons, 1995), 4–5.

⁶⁸ Quoted in John Piper, *Counted Righteous in Christ* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2002), 25.

⁶⁹ Ken Myers, 'Natural Law without Shame', *Tabletalk* 18:5 (April 1994): 61.

⁷⁰ Frame (*Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 247, 954) argues that Budziszewski does this regarding his argument against contraception.

⁷¹ This is the criticism of Kloosterman in his review of VanDrunen's *A Biblical Case for Natural Law*. See Kloosterman's review with a robust response by VanDrunen in the December 2007 edition of *Ordained Servant Online* (http://www.opc.org/os.html?issue_id=26).

⁷² A. N. Triton, *Whose World?* (London: IVP, 1970), 84.

⁷³ As Julian Rivers pointed out in 2004, 'It may be that a culture deviates in some respect from the law of God to such an extent that some moral positions seem defensible to Scripture alone. We may rapidly be reaching that point in the Western world as regards sexual ethics' ('Public Reason', *Whitefield Briefing* 9:1 [May 2004]: 4). One thinks here of a country like Switzerland currently discussing the decriminalization of consensual incest and the U.S. case of David Epstein, charged with having a three-year affair with his adult daughter. Epstein's lawyer said to ABCNews, 'Academically, we are obviously all morally opposed to incest and rightfully so. At the same time, there is an argument to be made in the Swiss case to let go what goes on privately in bedrooms. It's OK for homosexuals to do whatever they want in their own home... How is this so different? We have to figure out why some behavior is tolerated and some is not' (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/12/15/david-epsteins-lawyer-we-_n_797138.html).

⁷⁴ Leithart, *Natural Law*, 27.

⁷⁵ Found in Peter Leithart's short review of J. Budziszewski, *The Line through the Heart: Natural Law as Fact, Theory, and Sign of Contradiction* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2009), <http://www.leithart.com/2010/05/14/natural-law/>.

⁷⁶ Budziszewski was an evangelical who became a Roman Catholic in 2003. Although his defence of natural law is now within a Catholic context, his arguments are very similar to those who defend natural law from a Reformed common-kingdom perspective.

⁷⁷ Leithart, review of Budziszewski, <http://www.leithart.com/2010/05/14/natural-law/>.

⁷⁸ Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 245.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 249–50.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 956.

⁸¹ E.g., Frame, Poythress, and Bahnsen. I would also include Chris Wright's 'paradigmatic' approach, which is a biblical foundation for the work of the Jubilee Centre. See his *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Nottingham: IVP, 2004).

⁸² It is important that we distinguish the different roles and responsibilities that we have in our individual vocations and between the 'church as church' contrasted with 'Christians in the world'.

⁸³ Deployed most popularly by Tim Keller. See his *Counterfeit Gods* (London: Hodder, 2009).

⁸⁴ Richard Rorty, 'Religions as a Conversation-Stopper', in *Philosophy and Social Hope* (New York: Penguin, 1999), 166–67.

⁸⁵ Gavin D'Costa, *Christianity and World Religions: Disputed Questions in the Theology of Religions* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 119.

⁸⁶ D'Costa, *Christianity and World Religions*, 117.

⁸⁷ On Kuyper's teaching here, see Bolt, *A Free Church, A Holy Nation*, 427–28.

⁸⁸ D. A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Nottingham: IVP, 2008), 197. I have dealt with this in a little more detail in my 'Evangelical Public Theology: What on Earth? Why on Earth? How on Earth?' in *A Higher Throne: Evangelicals and Public Theology* (ed. Chris Green; Nottingham: Apollos, 2008), 58–61. As I mention there, Tuit's statement is very helpful: 'The Kuyperian statement that every square inch of life belongs to Christ cannot be applied only to the institutional Church. Consequently, the leadership of the pastor is a special kind of leadership in close connection with the idea of office and the Word. The believer is accountable to God for the Christian leadership he gives in society as a citizen of the Kingdom guided by the Word preached and taught by the "church" leader, the pastor. One could say therefore that the life of the believer is mission, within the context of the cultural and the mission mandate, rather than that the church is mission' (Pieter C. Tuit, 'The Relationship between the Great Commission and World Transformation: Outline for a Reformed

Missiology', in *For God So Loved the World: Missiological Reflections in Honor of Roger S. Greenway* (ed. Arie C. Leder; Belleville, Ontario: Essence, 2006), 137n56.

⁸⁹ Here, and on the subject of cultural change, Hunter's *To Change the World* is particularly stimulating.

⁹⁰ Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 13, quoted in Coffee, 'The State and Social Transformation', 100. In my opinion the work and ministry of Tim Keller is a leading example of such a harmonization. See his recent book *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes us Just* (London: Hodder, 2010).

⁹¹ <http://www.biblefresh.com>.

⁹² <http://www.biblemesh.com>.

⁹³ Christopher Howse, 'The Global Phenomenon that will never be lost in translation,' *The Daily Telegraph* (November 23, 2010), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/religion/8151865/The-global-phenomenon-that-will-never-be-lost-in-translation.html>.

⁹⁴ Noting the 'co-operative endeavour' shown in the translation of the KJV, the Queen speaks of building communities and creating harmony through sport and games. Less tangentially, Rowan Williams speaks of the KJV capturing people's imagination by making sense of life and putting their individual stories into one big story, the story of the whole universe.

So Who Is My Neighbour?

John Legg, retired pastor with over forty years experience in North Yorkshire and Shrewsbury

One of the most common misconceptions among preachers, especially young ones and their advisers, is that preaching on the parables of Jesus is easy. How often a beginner has been told, 'Don't try anything complicated. Just expound a parable'! More sophisticated interpreters point out that one aim of our Lord's parables was to hide the truth from outsiders, while instructing the disciples, to whom 'The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given' (Matthew 13:10-15). This, of course, does not remove the responsibility to listen and try to understand, as the conclusion to the Parable of the Sower demonstrates: 'He who has ears, let him hear' (Matthew 13:9). However, even when we have grasped this principle, the parables are still not easy to interpret, as the debate surrounding many of them testifies. We need consider only the Parable of the Talents (with the popular simplistic usage of the modern word and the 'twin' Parable of the Pounds, Matthew 25:14-30 and Luke 19:11-27) or the problematic Dishonest Steward (Luke 16:1-13) to see that easy interpretation is rather optimistic. But surely there can be no problem with the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)? After all, a parable that lends itself to modern applications about Mods and Rockers on their motor-bikes (see many a school assembly) can hardly pose a problem to the educated and careful exegete, can it? The meaning is surely obvious! However, it is the contention of this article that the usual and 'obvious' interpretation is sadly mistaken.

The assumed meaning

In expositions of this parable, there is little discussion of the word 'neighbour'. It is simply assumed by Gordon Keddie that Jesus is teaching that our neighbour is 'Anyone in need that you can help at the time... that you meet up with in the day-to-day providence of God.'¹ The more technical Craig Blomberg concludes that 'From the Samaritan, one learns that one must show compassion to those in need regardless of the religious or ethnic barriers that divide people' and 'From the man in the ditch emerges the lesson that even one's enemy is one's neighbour'.² Even the generally most helpful and thought-provoking Kenneth Bailey writes, 'The parable gives us a dynamic concept of the neighbor. The question, "Who is my neighbor?" is reshaped into "to whom must I become a neighbor?" The answer then is – everyone in need, even my enemy!'³

But what about the original meaning of the verse that Jesus has quoted in his reply to the lawyer, Leviticus 19:18? The parallel structure of the verse (and its predecessor) makes its meaning abundantly clear: 'Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbour frankly so that you will not share in his guilt. Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the LORD' (Leviticus 19:17-18). Clearly the neighbour is one's 'brother', 'one of your people', a member of Israel, God's covenant people. This is confirmed, if confirmation were deemed necessary, by the later instructions about 'aliens': 'When an alien lives with you in your land, do not ill-treat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt' (Leviticus 19:33-34). Here is a clear distinction between the 'neighbour' and other people, however close. This would confirm that our Lord is not talking about strangers or aliens but about one's fellow-Christian when he speaks of loving one's neighbour in Luke's Gospel.

However, many do not see it this way. Nobody doubts that this is the proper understanding of the word in Leviticus. However, they state ('argue' is not the right word to use here; it is simply and

tacitly assumed) that the coming of the New Covenant has changed all this, as with some other matters, and that, in particular, our Lord's understanding of the word 'neighbour' in the parable must be substituted for the clear, but outdated, Old Testament usage. Leon Morris illustrates this alleged development in his comments on 'And who is my neighbour?' '(Jesus) saw that it meant more than the man next door. But how much more? There were different ideas among the Jews on this point, but they all seem to be confined to the nation of Israel; the idea of love towards mankind *had not reached* them'.⁴ This, he is implying, is a later development, a New Covenant universalising change.

In his exposition of the parable and especially the words, 'Go and do thou likewise', Bishop J.C. Ryle writes, 'Now if these words mean anything, a Christian ought to be ready to show kindness and brotherly love to every one that is in need.' We must pause to note that, on the contrary, 'if these words mean anything', one can only show 'brotherly love', which the good bishop mentions several times in this context, to a brother! Thus Ryle is making the same error as in the issue of a neighbour. 'Our kindness', continues Ryle, 'must not merely extend to our families, and friends, and relations. We must love all men, and be kind to all, whenever occasion requires... We should regard the whole world as our parish, and the whole race of mankind as our neighbours.'⁵ The general sentiment is beyond reproach, but the exegesis is non-existent. Similarly, Norval Geldenhuys, in his fine commentary, says that Jesus 'teaches explicitly that love for one's neighbour knows no bounds of nationality or of anything else, no matter what... if you really love God, you will also love your fellow-man and you will show neighbourly love to everyone in need of your help, no matter who or what that person may be.'⁶

Howard Marshall, on the other hand, takes great exegetical care before coming to the conclusion that 'Jewish usage excluded Samaritans and foreigners from this category', i.e. neighbour, and that this is how 'the lawyer could be expected to understand the phrase'. Then, however, in his conclusion he follows the usual interpretation and declares that 'the giving and receiving of mercy transcends national and racial barriers'.⁷ Even Ridderbos, while he says that 'the love Jesus demands' is 'not some general love of mankind', but 'a love that does not pick and choose', nevertheless goes on to define 'the neighbour', as 'anyone whom God places in our way, as is described in such an unparalleled and beautiful way in the parable of the good Samaritan'.⁸

Other New Testament occurrences

This way of looking at the 'neighbour' issue is found in interpretations of other places in the New Testament. When reference is made to the Second Great Commandment, as in Romans 13:8-10, it is often assumed that neighbour means anybody we meet. Why? Because the Good Samaritan parable is taken to prove that this is the New Testament meaning (even though Luke is not always quoted). The NIV goes so far as to paraphrase accordingly: 'Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow-man has fulfilled the law'. Where the original refers simply to 'another', which the earlier part of the sentence limits to 'one another', i.e. his readers, the NIV widens it to 'his fellow-man'. It is hard to see any reason for this except an assumed basis in the popular (but disputed) interpretation of the Good Samaritan parable.

Other references to loving one's neighbour are similarly, without argument, taken in the same way, even by the best exegetes such as Don Carson. Writing on Matthew 22:3 ('And the second is like it: "Love your neighbour as yourself"') he explains, 'The second (v.39) also concerns love, this time toward one's neighbour, which in Leviticus 19:18 applies to a fellow Israelite or resident alien, but which Luke 10:29-37 expands to anyone who needs our help'.⁹ Dr Leon Morris, dealing with the same passage, says, 'But there cannot be the slightest doubt that Jesus is extending the term

(neighbour) as widely as it can be extended; he is saying that one must love one's fellow human being.' ¹⁰ On Matthew 5:43, where again Leviticus 19:18 is quoted, R. T. France, rightly comments that 'the Old Testament, and Judaism as a whole, expected a greater love for fellow-members of the people of God than for those outside.' Then, however, he asserts that Jesus demands 'an indiscriminating love' and 'a sweeping universality'.¹¹

More surprising even than these examples of the influence of a false view of the Good Samaritan parable, are occurrences in various expositions of Ephesians 4:25: 'Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbour, for we are all members of one another'. Most Christians would immediately (and correctly) link the mention of 'members' with the New Testament doctrine of the church as the body of Christ in such passages as Romans 12:4-5 and, indeed, in Ephesians itself, chapter 3:6 and 4:11-16. This, however, is not how Professor Paul Helm sees it. Instead he argues in the reverse direction: 'And in a striking phrase, one which he normally reserves for the relationship of Christians in the church, Paul refers to all people, Christian and non-Christian alike, as being "members one of another" (Ephesians 4:25)'.¹² This is so contrary to every exegetical principle that it can only be explained on the assumption that the author cannot otherwise accommodate the general opinion that 'neighbour' now means 'everybody one meets'. Such is the power of this unproven but popular idea.

Charles Hodge admits that 'the context shows that Paul is here speaking to Christians, and the motive by which the duty is enforced shows that by neighbour he here means a fellow-Christian, as in Rom. xv.2.' Nevertheless, such is the influence of the popular view that he feels obliged to insist, 'A neighbour... the Scripture teaches' (obviously Luke 10:25-37, although he gives no reference) 'is anyone near to us, a fellow-man of any creed or nation... The obligation of veracity rests on the intrinsic excellence of truth, on the command of God, and on the rights of our fellow-men.'¹³ William Hendriksen quotes Hodge approvingly as saying that 'the word "neighbor", though having the general sense of fellow man of any creed or nation, here refers to fellow-Christian.'¹⁴

Other commentators, however, treat the verse properly in context and thus have no problem in interpreting 'neighbour' correctly as 'a fellow-believer, who has a right to the truth' (Peter O'Brien¹⁵). Andrew Lincoln most helpfully states, 'The neighbor of the exhortation, who in Judaism would have been a companion in the covenant, now takes on the specific shape of a fellow member of the body of Christ'¹⁶.

I have multiplied quotations to demonstrate how widely spread this notion is that 'neighbour' equals 'fellow-man'. For most writers it appears to 'trump' any other exegetical consideration. Men, who know and even say what it really means, feel they must nevertheless fall in with the general consensus, possibly lest they be accused of bigotry and narrowness in neglecting non-Christians. It is a form of theological (or at least exegetical) political correctness. Thus, on another reference to 'neighbour' in Galatians 5:14, quoting Leviticus 19:18, R. K. Fung comments, 'As for the question, "And who is my neighbour?" (Luke 10:29), a definitive answer has been given by Jesus in the parable of the good Samaritan and in the Sermon on the Mount: "my neighbour" refers not merely to my compatriot or personal friend' – who ever thought it did? – 'but to anyone who may cross the path of my life (Lk 10:39-36), including my enemy (Mt 5:43f.)'¹⁷ Note the expression 'definitive answer'. No one, hopefully, would deny that our Lord's teaching provides the 'definitive answer' to any question. However, the question still remains as to what that definitive answer actually is. As we move on, let me assert once more that, in Lincoln's words quoted above, Judaism's 'companion in the covenant, now takes on the specific shape of a fellow member of the body of Christ'. At this point we need to ask how this true definition has come to be neglected and even denied.

The mistaken context

As often, Jesus does not answer the question that is addressed to him in Luke 10:29: 'And who is my neighbour?' This is not, of course, because he is being awkward, but because he is being helpful, delving deeper into the subject for the benefit of the questioner. Similarly, when he was asked by someone if many would be saved, he gave no direct answer, but redirected the questioner to the issue of whether *he* would be saved, a far more important question than the speculative one that had been raised (Luke 13:23-24). So, in Luke 10, Jesus changes the subject from, 'Who is my neighbour?' (v.29) to 'Am I a neighbour?' (v.36). Although this has often been pointed out, it is not usually taken seriously. The lawyer is to consider whether he is a true member of God's people, not a fellow man, but a covenant member of Israel, a true believer.

To understand this, it is vital to understand the context in which the parable is told, vv.25-28. This is rarely done. The issue of obeying the two great commandments crops up in various places in the ministry of Jesus and too often this is interpreted in terms of salvation by works, keeping the law in order to earn eternal life. Jesus would never teach this; it is simply not true and never was true, even in the Old Testament. The suggestion, often made, that in v.29 Jesus was 'just testing' the lawyer in order to show that he could not do this, casts great doubt on our Lord's honesty. Again, by many, the stress is placed on the word 'do' in v.25, as if the lawyer was asking, mistakenly, how he can earn eternal life. This is contradicted by Jesus' commendation of his reply to the Lord's query, 'What is written in the law?': 'You have answered correctly'. This error is frequently made, as in the case of the rich young ruler (Luke 18:18-22), who though probably mistaken in his attitude, is not being directed to salvation by works (v.20), but to check whether he is keeping the covenant. The same applies to the teacher of the law in Mark 12:28-34. He, too, is directed to keep the two great commandments and, on commenting on this, receives the assurance that he is 'not far from the kingdom of God' (v.34).

A faithful covenant member would be obeying the law, not to earn his salvation, but as the outworking of his faith in God's gracious promise (and thus, implicitly, in Christ), according to the words of Psalm 103:17-18: 'But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children – with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts'. This is the real reason for Christ's answer in Luke 10:26-28. He is not teaching salvation by works or justification by obeying the law. He is answering on the basis that the questioner is a (presumed) believer, a true Israelite, who will be keeping the law. So, the lawyer's answer is right indeed. If he then goes and does 'likewise', he will inherit eternal life, by grace, through faith, manifested in obedience. As Paul writes to the Galatians, 'The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love' (Galatians 5:6). This is the mark of a true Israelite, a true believer and therefore a true neighbour (v.36). The question for us is, 'How does this general biblical theological framework fit the parable?'

The significance of the Samaritan

The clue to understanding the issue is to realise that most people interpret the parable as if it was an Israelite who came across a hated Samaritan, showed him love and helped him, even though he was not a Jew! Only such a (false) scenario would justify the idea that the parable is teaching that real love crosses national and ritual boundaries and that we must learn to love our enemies. True though that is (Matthew 5:44), it is not what the parable is teaching. Jesus is saying something far more radical. He is teaching that membership of the covenant people crosses those boundaries. Where the priest and the Levite fail, the third man passes the test. But the man is not an Israelite at all; he is a Samaritan. Jesus is teaching that the Samaritan is the one who behaves as a true Israelite should!

He is the one who treats the injured man as a neighbour should. 'Who was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?' asks Jesus. The answer is, 'The Samaritan', even though the Jewish listener would not soil his lips with the name. The real shock of the parable is only felt when, and if, the Jewish listeners hear Jesus saying that a Samaritan is behaving as, and therefore is, a true Israelite, a neighbour of all other Israelites, a covenant-keeper! The priest and the Levite, on the other hand, behave unlike neighbours and therefore are not neighbours. Jesus has, in effect, admitted a Samaritan to membership of the covenant people and excommunicated the priest and Levite – and anyone who lives and behaves like them – from the people of God.

This, it will be seen, depends on holding to the proper meaning of the word 'neighbour'. Change this to 'fellow man', anyone in need whom we meet in life, and we get a mere pat on the back for the Samaritan. Instead, we should conclude that he is given an assurance that he and his kind can be, 'not foreigners and aliens, but fellow-citizens with God's people (or 'the saints') and members of God's household' (Ephesians 2:19) and thus 'heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus' (Ephesians 3:6). The same praise of Samaritans and critique of the Jews, from a slightly different angle, is found a few chapters later in the account of the cleansing of ten men with leprosy, of whom only one, 'and he... a Samaritan', returned to give thanks.

Though this affirmation of the possibility of the conversion and covenant membership of Samaritans would have immense implications for the future, for the inclusion in the church of half- and even full Gentiles, it was actually, we presume, given in the presence of the Jews. It is on a par with John the Baptist's denial that having Abraham as their father constituted them real children of Abraham (Luke 3:8). Indeed, his baptism said the same thing; they needed to repent to become true members of Israel. Even in the Old Testament, Isaiah said the same when he aligned Israelites with 'the rulers of Sodom' and the 'people of Gomorrah' (Isaiah 1:10, see also Hosea 1:9 and Romans 9:25-29). Like John, therefore, Jesus is calling the Jews to repent and believe the gospel, not to rely on their birth and heritage for salvation.

Paul takes this even further in Romans 2:25-29. If we follow the apostle's logic we must conclude that the Samaritan was born again and a true Jew, who demonstrated his faith by his love of his (Jewish) neighbour. Arguing against the Jews' reliance on their privileges, especially the possession of the law and circumcision¹⁸, Paul says, 'If those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised?' (v.26). Whatever this might say to help Gentiles (and therefore Samaritans) in the future, the real relevance for us is what it says to the Jews: 'Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised'. Those who do not love their neighbour as themselves, like the man in the parable, show themselves to be uncircumcised in heart (v.28-29), not real members of God's people. The same applies to us today. The real message is not a widening of the concept of 'neighbour', but a stern warning that if we do not love our (real) neighbour, our Christian brother, then we are not really brothers at all, i.e. not Christians destined for heaven. The believing and loving Gentile thus puts to shame the unloving and disobedient Jew: 'The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you, who, even though you have the written law and circumcision, are a law-breaker' (Romans 2:27). The law-keeping Samaritan in the parable by his actions condemned the priest and the Levite as law-breakers. (Our Lord uses 'condemn' in the same way of 'the men of Nineveh' and 'the Queen of the South' in Matthew 12:41f). This leads to the next, and very important, point: the practical significance of this discussion.

Why is this issue important?

The point of this paper is not at all to dissuade Christians from loving non-Christians. Just as Leviticus 19:33-34 uses the same terms about the resident alien in Israel – ‘You must love him as yourself’ – so the New Testament leaves us in no doubt that we must love all men, not just Christians. We must follow the pattern of our heavenly Father, Matthew 5:43-48. Some try to argue that Jesus does not actually say that God loves all men, but this is a desperate and failed attempt to support the insupportable. We are to love our enemies, says Jesus (which must surely mean that non-enemies are to be loved also), and so be sons of our Father. Sons must be like their Father, who gives sun and rain to both righteous and unrighteous, is clearly the argument. The subject of love is again taken up in v.46, so Jesus is, without doubt, using the gift of sun and rain as the expression of the Father’s love. So we must love all men. (It is amazing that one needs to prove this connection, but there are some who refuse to accept it!)

There is no dilution of the responsibility to love all; rather, there is an emphasis on the duty to love our brothers. Galatians 6:10 makes this very clear: ‘Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers’. Even here, however, the apostle draws a distinction between those who are members of the family (i.e. ‘brothers’) and other men. Although the ‘all people’ are not excluded, there is a priority for ‘family of believers’. The fact is that there is a strong emphasis on ‘brotherly love’ in the New Testament. It even has a special word: *philadelphia*. Peter distinguishes between this and love itself in 2 Peter 1:7, as does Paul in Romans 12:9-10. Why is this? Does not the one include the other? If we love everybody, then we love our fellow-Christian too, so why the fuss? Is this mere nit-picking, an obsessive and pedantic concern with philological accuracy?

Our Lord’s words in John 13 give the lie to this charge and explain just why brotherly love is so significant and important. During his last meeting with his disciples before the crucifixion, Jesus gave them a new commandment: ‘Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another’ (John 13:34-35). In other words, brotherly love is the mark of being a disciple of Christ. John says the same, when he asserts, ‘We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers’ (1 John 3:14). Love here is not a vague sentiment. In particular, according to the context, the verse means that this is in contrast to the world’s hatred (v.13). When the world shows its hatred of God’s children, we show that we are his by loving and thus siding with them, even though it may mean persecution for us with them.

Why is this test true only of brotherly love, not of a general love of all men? The answer lies in the basis or motivation of such love. We love our brothers because they are Christ’s; we love them for his sake, because we love him. We love them, moreover, as he has loved them, following his pattern, and also for the Father’s sake (John 13:34; 1 John 3:16 and 5:1-2). Non-Christians do not and cannot do that. We must also be clear about this distinction as it is found, in a slightly different form in Matthew 25:31-46, the passage often (wrongly) called the parable of the sheep and the goats. Contrary to many expositors, we must insist that when Jesus said, ‘Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me’, he did not mean charitable works in general. He is referring only to works of mercy etc. done for his brothers, for Christians, who are our brothers too. The opposite assessment refers not to ‘brothers’, but simply to ‘one of the least of these’. In this way the ‘sheep’ are identified as those who belong to Christ, united to him. This is parallel to the words heard by Saul of Tarsus: ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’ (Acts 9:4). We are not ‘doing it for Christ’ in the sense intended here (though it will be for Christ in a more general way), when we help, feed or clothe the ordinary poor. Good though that is, it is not done because of their

relationship to Christ and thus for his sake. This, therefore, is not evidence of saving faith in him. If we followed the interpretation of this passage put out by certain Christian aid agencies to encourage us to support their (doubtless good) work, we should end by saying that anyone who gives to Oxfam or Christian Aid is certainly a believer with an inheritance 'prepared for (them) since the creation of the world' (Matthew 25:34).

In days when many Christians lack assurance and examine themselves anxiously, desperate to find some warrant for believing that they are saved, we need to put the love of the brothers in its proper New Testament place. The difficult passage in Hebrews 6 becomes much easier once we look at it from this point of view. The key to the awkward descriptions in verse 4-6 must be seen in the light, not only of the often neglected illustration in verses 7 and 8, but also 'the better things... that accompany salvation' (v.9). These fruits (v.7) and 'things' are identified as 'your work and the love you have shown him (God) as you have helped his people and continue to do so' (v.10). Genuine Christian hospitality given to our brothers in the face of persecution (13:1-3), as well as the works of Matthew 25, are much easier to see, assess and take comfort from than any amount of feelings.

We are, therefore, not concerned merely with correct exegesis, although that is very important, but with the basics of the Christian life and the assurance that we can draw from that. Further, we have here the secret of effective witness. It was of this kind of behaviour that unbelievers in the early centuries said, 'See how these Christians love one another'. We cannot help everybody, nor should we avoid and neglect those who do 'cross our path' in these difficult days. However, priority is not the same as exclusiveness and priority belongs to the people of God, our brothers and neighbours.

¹ Gordon J. Keddie, *He spoke in parables* (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 1980) 82.

² Craig L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the parables* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990) 233.

³ Kenneth E. Bailey, *Through peasant eyes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 55f.

⁴ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Luke*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary (London: IVP, 1974) 188, my italics).

⁵ J.C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, Volume 3, The Gospel of Luke, 377-8.

⁶ Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1950) 311.

⁷ I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, NIGCNT (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978) 444, 450.

⁸ Hermann Ridderbos, *The coming of the kingdom* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962) 316f.

⁹ D. A. Carson, *Matthew in The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Volume 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984) 464.

¹⁰ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (Leicester: IVP, 1992) 564.

¹¹ R. T. France, *Matthew*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Leicester: IVP, 1985) 128.

¹² Paul Helm, *The callings* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987) 120.

¹³ Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: James Nisbet, 1856) 194.

¹⁴ William Hendriksen, *Ephesians*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967) 217.

¹⁵ Peter T. O'Brien, *The letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar Commentary (Leicester: Apollos 1999) 338.

¹⁶ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word) 301.

¹⁷ Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) 246.

¹⁸ The fact that Samaritans were circumcised does not deny this point. They were still 'outsiders', non-Jews.

Evangelical Mission Organisations, Postmodern Controversies, and the New Heartbeat of Mission

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In June 2005 Jonathan Stephen, now principal of the Wales Evangelical School of Theology, published an article entitled *The Current Crisis in Evangelicalism* in the British newspaper *Evangelicals Now*.¹ In his article Stephen looked at a number of postmodern heresies which pose a severe threat to Bible-centred Christianity, including Open Theism, the New Perspective on Paul, and the Emerging Church, as well as the rejection of the doctrine of penal substitution. Six years on, these postmodern theologies have undoubtedly gained influence. However, they no longer pose a threat to evangelical churches in Europe, Australia and North America alone; there is another group in the evangelical constituency that is also affected: mission organisations and their partners overseas. At the same time a new understanding of mission is emerging among evangelicals, which also has an impact on evangelical organisations involved in cross-cultural mission.² The striking feature of this new understanding of mission is that it conceptualises mission rather broadly.³

Postmodern heresies and controversies in the mission field

Evangelical missionaries from North America and Europe have undoubtedly played an important part in the spread of the Gospel, the formation of African churches, and the practical support of the poor and marginalised, and many of them still do so. There are, however, also missionaries who bring with them some unhealthy theological baggage, such as Open Theism and certain Emerging Church philosophies. While the former with its denial of God's full foreknowledge is mercifully rare, the impact of the latter is more visible. Three of the main features of the Emerging Church are a deep distrust of the institutionalised church, a disregard of Christian tradition, and an emphasis on community.⁴ In some African countries these views manifest themselves in such a way that missionaries work independently of indigenous churches.⁵ While in the past missionaries were involved in the planting of churches, the training of church leaders and the education of children and young people in church schools, there are an increasing number of missionaries who serve in hospitals and schools, agricultural projects or projects for orphans and vulnerable children which have no, or only little, church connection. For these people their main partners are not indigenous churches and para-church organisations, but government departments and national and international non-government organisations.⁶

A new understanding of mission

Usually this approach goes hand-in-hand with a view of mission which considers evangelism and verbal communication of the Gospel at best as optional extras but no longer as the heartbeat of mission. Some understand mission first and foremost in terms of community development; their main focus is on the transformation of society and no longer on people's salvation from sin, death and the power of the devil. In other words, mission is no longer *Great Commission mission*; it has become '*kingdom mission*'. Don Carson comments:

I know numerous groups that claim to be engaging in "holistic" ministry because they are helping the poor in Chicago or because they are digging wells in the Sahel, even though few, if any, of the workers have taken the time to explain to anyone who Jesus is and what he has done to reconcile us to God. Their ministry isn't holistic; it's halfistic or quarteristic.⁷

For others, evangelism is only one of many dimensions of mission which are equally important. Consequently, the heartbeat of mission has changed.⁸ Missiologists use different terms to describe these new positions on mission. Vanderwerf, for example, speaks of the *missional church* approach.⁹ He writes:

The primary paradigm in Scripture for this approach to understanding mission is Jesus and his incarnation... Mission is to be *incarnational* ("go and be" among people) rather than *attractional* ("come to our meeting and see"). The end result of mission is not just conversion, nor just growing a church larger nor just planting new churches, but transformation – of individuals, communities and societies. Sometimes this is expressed as impacting the community for Christ, or "building the kingdom" or helping create "shalom".¹⁰

The *missional church* approach has much in common with two positions which Hesselgrave calls *revisionist holism* and *radical liberationism*. Both are much broader than the *restrained holism/social action* approach promoted by John Stott. *Revisionist holism* makes 'evangelism and social action full and equal partners'¹¹, while *radical liberationism* equates 'the biblical notion of salvation from sin with the struggle of poor and oppressed people for justice.'¹² What both positions have in common is the emphasis on the central role of the kingdom of God in mission. However, in their version of the kingdom Jesus is marginalised; mission is about the promotion of kingdom values, such as justice, peace and equality. The kingdom is first and foremost identified with social and political reforms but not so much with the king and his gospel. Furthermore, both positions stress the importance of Jesus and his incarnation as the sole missionary model. Missionaries have to do what Jesus did and say what Jesus said.

Since Jesus is seen either as God's agent of socio-political reformation, the transformer of individuals and whole societies or the saviour of the world, missionaries must become exactly that, i.e. liberators of society, transformers of culture, or saviours of needy people. The traditional evangelical view which argues that the apostle Paul and his fellow apostles are our models in mission is rejected. Postmodern evangelical missionaries no longer see themselves as witnesses (Acts 1:8; 22:15; 1 Pet. 5:1) and ambassadors of Christ and his gospel (2 Cor. 5:20; Eph. 6:20) whose core business is evangelism (Acts 6:4,7; 1 Cor. 9:16-23; Col. 1:28-29; 2 Tim. 4:1-2) and the establishment of churches (Acts 14:21-23; Acts 18:1-11). The result is missionaries who are involved in a kind of 'churchless mission'.

Theological ignorance

What are the reasons that have led to such a development? As so often, there are various reasons. One of them is theological ignorance or shall we rather call it theological naïveté? It is hard to understand how the leaders of an evangelical mission organisation, whose aim is the establishment of Christ-centred churches, can declare that they have no official position on the Emerging Church. However, it is alarming when an evangelical mission organisation, in an attempt to promote a holistic view of mission, teaches a model of the atonement which claims that Christ died so that people can be reconciled with their self and non-human creation. How do these mission leaders arrive at such conclusions? Again, there is more than one answer.

The obvious one is a lack of theological training and a limited understanding of biblical teaching. Most evangelical mission organisations require some kind of formal Bible and cross-cultural training from their missionaries. In a number of mission agencies, however, the standards in this field have been lowered in recent years. Instead of one or two years full-time training at a Bible college it is

sufficient for mission candidates to attend a six-week residential course or to complete an online course in cross-cultural mission. Of course, that does not mean that these courses have no value. On the contrary, they often help future missionaries to gain a deeper understanding of culture, the importance of team-work and the biblical basis for mission. However, it can be problematic when missionaries with a background in medicine, nursing, education, business or law who have undergone only very basic theological training are appointed as team or field leaders or given other leadership responsibilities within the mission organisation that require theological discernment. But even missionaries with a good theological knowledge might not always feel able to respond to new theological trends. Day-to-day ministry can be so demanding and at times frustrating that all some missionaries feel they can do is to concentrate on their own ministries and to keep the work going.¹³

Act of defiance

However, not all missionaries who promote Emerging Church ideas, Open Theism or the New Perspective on Paul are theologically ignorant. Sometimes it is their particular church background that makes them receptive to certain postmodern heresies. In his book *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church* Don Carson suggests that Open Theism is very appealing to those who come from an Arminian background while the New Perspective on Paul finds its advocates predominantly within the Reformed wing of the Church.¹⁴ It is interesting that missionaries who promote Emerging Church views tend to have grown up in conservative evangelical circles. For them to align themselves with the Emerging Church feels like an act of liberation, while in reality it is probably more an act of defiance. What Carson writes about the leaders of the Emerging Church movement seems to be also true for these missionaries:

One of the striking commonalities among its leaders is the high number of them who come from intensely conservative or even fundamentalist backgrounds... The passage of time has moved these churches farther and farther from the very different directions being pursued by the broader culture, and sensitive and concerned individuals within such traditions finally make a break, not least for the gospel's sake. It becomes a mark of freedom to have a glass of wine and watch some movies that our former ecclesiastical friends wouldn't approve. Understandably, the pendulum may continue to swing quite a long way.¹⁵

Similarly, it seems that it is missionaries with a conservative evangelical or fundamentalist church background who are willing to accept certain paradigm shifts in mission and to swap traditional prioritism for the *missional church*, *revisionist holism* or *radical liberationism* approach. These missionaries seem to forget that the traditional view of mission, which Keith Ferdinando calls the *making disciples of all nations* approach,¹⁶ does not rule out Christian engagement with the world in general and social concern in particular. Ferdinando reminds us of this when he writes:

Social change occurs through those who have been transformed by the gospel – through transformed communities of God's people who become salt and light in their societies. It is fruit rather than substance of mission. Communication of the gospel in its richness is the most significant "social action" that missionaries can undertake.¹⁷

False teachers

While lack of theological knowledge and interest or rebellion against one's church background and upbringing might explain some of the unbiblical positions held and promoted within mission organisations, we must not forget that the Bible also warns us against false teachers who infiltrate the church and damage the believers (e.g. 2 Cor. 11:3-4, 2 Peter 2:1-3; Rev. 2:20). If things like this can happen to a local church, why should evangelical mission organisations be spared? When

mission leaders argue that the cross of Christ might have been only 'God's plan B', because the Bible does not give us God's total perspective on his plan which would allow us to know what he was thinking at creation, they clearly go against the teaching of the Bible. The apostle Peter, for example, assures us that Christ 'was destined before the foundation of the world but was made manifest at the end of the times for your sake' (RSV, 1 Peter 1:20). Also, when mission leaders argue that the Bible's teachings on the church and church leadership are not prescriptive for us today but only descriptive of the early church, it raises some serious questions about their view of Scripture and their agenda. The same is true for those who claim that evangelism does not work in certain countries, that all we need to do is to get alongside people and sort out their problems, or that the Gospel is an invitation to live in a relationship with ourselves.¹⁸

Pragmatism and organisational culture

Sometimes theological ignorance goes hand-in-hand with a strong pragmatic approach to ministry. One example is the appointment of mission leaders. There are various reasons why missionaries are promoted to leadership positions. In some mission organisations, the percentage of former missionary kids (MKs) among both membership and leadership is noticeably high. One reason is that these adult missionary kids (AMKs) are considered to have a better understanding of African culture and the church scene, significant cross-cultural and linguistic skills, a broader worldview and a higher degree of mobility and are therefore better qualified than those without this background.¹⁹ 'They know what it's all about. They know the walk and they talk the talk', so goes the argument. However, this is not necessarily the case when AMKs have grown up in a mission-owned boarding school where they have been taught an American or British curriculum by Western missionary teachers.²⁰ Neither is it helpful when, later in life, they enter the mission field in Africa because they long 'to go home'.

In long-established mission organisations this tendency of appointing AMKs to leadership positions is sometimes supported by an organisational culture whose motto is 'We are family'. As a result the same family names appear again and again on the mission's membership list. 'Family bonds' can be so strong that it takes a long time before leaders are, if at all, disciplined for false teaching or other inappropriate conduct. Because people's common history goes back a long time, sometimes even to missionary boarding school, relationships can easily become more important than biblical truth. Loyalty to the organisation, i.e. 'the family', has priority over sound doctrine. Such an attitude is even strengthened when doctrine is viewed as something divisive and seen as a potential threat to the organisation – according to the postmodern motto *doctrine divides, but love unites*.

Being an AMK is, of course, not the only qualification for a leadership appointment. Other mission leaders may get appointed because they have been part of the organisation for a long time and it is felt that they cannot be overlooked.²¹ Others have had a successful career in their secular business before they joined the mission, suffer from ill-health and are no longer fit for front-line mission work, or are known to be people who will not oppose what their team members or superiors want to do. All these are, of course, the wrong reasons and the wrong criteria for appointing a mission leader. The right criteria can be found in Scripture. Passages such as Titus 1:5-9, 1 Timothy 3:1-13, 2 Timothy 2:1-13 and Acts 6:1-6 apply not only to church leaders who are involved in God's mission in London or Sydney but also to those who are involved in cross-cultural mission work in Africa or other parts of the world. However, as David Hesselgrave has pointed out, mission organisations tend to be rather selective when it comes to these leadership criteria.²² While they emphasise qualifications for leadership such as 'husband of one wife', 'blameless' or 'self-controlled' they tend to pay little attention to a qualification that was extremely important to the apostles, i.e. the ability to 'give instructions in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it' (Titus 5:9).

Such a pragmatic approach to ministry can also be seen when it comes to biblical doctrine in general. Hesselgrave writes: 'Many missionary leaders seem to feel that, once they have subscribed to an orthodox statement of faith, they can "bank it", "bank on it" and get on with pressing practical issues. This assumption is not usually thought through, however.'²³ Hesselgrave is right. Most evangelical mission organisations have a robust evangelical statement of faith to which all missionaries have to subscribe. But this does not necessarily guarantee that all their theological views and their ways of doing mission are actually in line with biblical teaching. To assume so would be short-sighted.

Finally, we must not forget that a pragmatic approach to mission work can also be financially motivated. In times of economic crises and tight finances, when raising money for their general fund is getting more and more difficult, there is a great temptation for mission organisations to ignore particular doctrinal issues or to compromise on them. And all of a sudden issues that were generally considered primary only a few years ago, such as the doctrine of penal substitution or the primacy of evangelism, become secondary or non-essential issues, i.e. issues that 'good' evangelicals can disagree over. Phil Johnson comments:

It is no longer safe to assume that someone who calls himself an evangelical would even affirm such historic evangelical non negotiables as the exclusivity of Christ or the necessity of conscious faith in Christ for salvation. Recently, it seems that the evangelical movement's standard response to that kind of slippage has looked like nothing else than cynical insouciance. Yet such trends represent nothing less than the abandonment of true evangelical principles.²⁴

A low view of the local church and a lack of accountability

Sometimes it is a low view of the local church and its role in world mission that fosters unhelpful strategies and even heretical views in the mission field. For many years mission organisations have been reminding local churches in the West of their responsibility for world mission. Local churches, they rightly argue, must be mission-minded. However, there is also a need for mission organisations to be church-minded.²⁵ Unfortunately, there is still an attitude among mission organisations that sees local churches first and foremost as a source of new missionaries and financial means.²⁶ Local churches and their individual members are seen as supporters of mission agencies and their missionaries, rather than as mission partners. This is especially true for interdenominational mission organisations which have no formal link with any particular church body. One reason for this is obvious: a lack of understanding of the biblical view of mission.

The biblical model of mission, as it can be found, for example, in Paul's letter to the Philippians, is not a *support model* but a *partnership model*. This model stresses a fourfold partnership between local churches and their mission workers: a partnership in praying (1:4; 1:19), in serving (1:27; 4:14), in giving (2:25; 4:15-18), and in sharing news (2:19; 2:25). The role of mission organisations must be to support these partnerships. Hammett speaks of a servant-partnership model.²⁷ He writes:

This model combines a positive appreciation for the ministry of parachurch groups with an emphasis on the theological priority of the church. Parachurch groups are seen as partners, or helpers, raised up by God to aid the church, but possessing a status subordinate to that of the church. Thus, the parachurch group should defer to the group, honor the church, accept its ministry under the authority of the church, and "find justification for its existence only in the mission of the church"...Still, the relationship is a partnership in which each has something to offer to the other.²⁸

Instead, many organisations tend to see themselves as mission specialists whose job it is to fulfil the Great Commission. They forget that the 'Great Commission is a church-centered mandate'.²⁹ As a result they are in danger of mobilising the local church for their own mission which is not necessarily God's mission.³⁰

Such a low view of the local church and its role in mission often has implications for the accountability of mission organisations – not only in the mission field in Africa but also back home in Europe or North America. While most mission organisations have councils to which the senior leadership is accountable these councils do not necessarily consist of official representatives of local churches, church fellowships or denominations.³¹ Instead, they are often made up of former long-term or short-term missionaries, representatives of other mission organisations, Christians with a special interest in world mission and perhaps the occasional church minister. In some cases, the general mission council consists exclusively of serving missionaries which means that there is no external accountability at all.³² Because of this lack of external accountability there is little sense of ownership among local churches,³³ but even more important, mission organisations receive only little or no advice and correction from churches when it comes to theological issues and mission strategies.

Complex organisational structures

When faced with heresies it does not help that many mission organisations, especially the larger ones, have a rather complex organisational structure, which makes it difficult to hold missionaries and their leaders accountable. These structures can lead to bizarre situations where, for example, mission leaders are directly involved in appointing their own supervisors every year or where missionaries, mission leaders and their supervisors are all members of the highest decision-making body of the organisation. In both cases real internal accountability is hardly guaranteed. Also, it is not unusual that missionaries working together on the same team are affiliated to different national mobilising offices of the same mission organisation or have been seconded from different agencies. While working under the same umbrella these national branches and agencies might have very different approaches to mission or take very different views on some theological controversies.³⁴ Put differently, what the UK branch may consider as heretical may be perfectly acceptable to their Canadian colleagues. A situation like this becomes problematic when, for the sake of unity and harmony, these theological issues are not addressed.

Some recommendations

What can we do about all this? Well, let me give a number of recommendations which missionaries, local churches and mission organisations may want to take to heart.

1. Missionaries: choose your mission organisation wisely!

How do future missionaries learn about mission organisations? Well, some are recommended to them by church leaders, Christian friends or missionaries sent out by their church. Others attend mission fairs organised by Bible colleges, visit the stalls of mission organisations at Christian events such as New Word Alive, or study helpful brochures, such as *Mission Matters* published by Christian Vocations. Whatever organisation they finally decide to join, their decision needs to be an informed one. The selection process of mission organisations can be quite rigorous.³⁵ Enquirers and candidates have to fill in questionnaires, provide several references and undergo a number of interviews.

Such a thorough process is undoubtedly helpful and necessary, but it must not be understood as one-sided. While it is important for the mission organisation to find out if someone is right for them, the candidate must seize the opportunity to find out if this particular agency is also right for him or

her. It is the time to find out more about the agency's character, beliefs, ministry philosophy, strategies, values and policies. It is the time to ask the agency some tough questions: What exactly is your view of mission? Is this view also shared by your leaders in the field? What do you mean when you speak of partnership? How closely do you work with local churches? What role does relief work play in relationship to evangelism, church planting and leadership training? What is your leadership style? What are your structures like? How would you describe your organisational culture? How do you deal with false teaching in your organisation? What happens when things go wrong? Not to ask such questions and to join a mission organisation just because it is well-known and long established can be dangerous. Let's not forget: what is true for individual Christians is also true for mission organisations; they cannot live on their glorious past. What counts is not their past achievements and missionary zeal, but their present faithfulness to God's truth as it is revealed in God's Word.

2. Sending churches: choose your missionaries wisely!

The idea that missionaries are Christians who are called to go without the support of their local church cannot be found in Scripture.³⁶ The biblical pattern is that missionaries are sent out by their local churches and remain responsible and accountable to them (e.g. Acts 13:1-4; 14:27).³⁷ Usually, churches have known the missionaries they send out for some time. The future missionaries have been members of the church, served in different areas, and shown an interest in cross-cultural ministry and world mission, and the church leadership has had enough time to test and confirm their missionary call. But their responsibility does not end here. They need to actively accompany their future missionary in the process of finding a suitable mission organisation which recognises the God-ordained role of the local church in mission. This may include pointing them to particular mission societies which are clearly Gospel-driven and church-minded and directing them away from others which are not. Sometimes it happens that church leaders are approached by other churches or mission organisations asking them to partner with a new or serving missionary who lacks the necessary funding. While there is nothing wrong with this, the church is still obliged in such a case to test the call of this missionary and his character, as well as his theological convictions in general and views on mission particularly.

3. Mission organisations: choose your leaders wisely!

When a large evangelical mission organisation started the process of seeking to appoint a new international director its officers drew up a list with gifts and qualities they wanted to see in their future leader. They were looking for a truly spiritual person, a careful thinker, a visionary and effective communicator, someone who was able to delegate work and exercise fiscal discipline. What was missing on this list was the ability to teach sound doctrine and to correct those who don't. If this is the case for an appointment at senior leadership level it is very likely that this quality will not be an important criterion when it comes to choosing leaders for other positions within the organisation.

To choose mission leaders wisely surely means to make sure that they are committed to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, that their lifestyles are Christ-like, that they have a serving spirit, love for their fellow workers and for those they serve, a good knowledge of the Word of God, appropriate gifts of the Holy Spirit, and biblically-informed convictions about the nature of God, human beings, the church, the work of Christ and God's mission. In other words, what is required of them is commitment, character, conviction and competency.³⁸ The latter also implies that evangelical mission leaders do not hold unorthodox views. On the contrary, they should be able to grapple with heresies and controversies, such as Open Theism, Emerging Church and the New Perspective on Paul, as well as the hot issues of mission theory and practice, i.e. holism, incarnationalism, contextualisation, and professionalisation.

Conclusion

Mission does not belong to the Church, but to God, or as Peter Lewis once said: 'Mission is not an activity of the Church but an attribute of God. It is God's activity in which he includes the Church. The Church is thus caught up in a missionary movement for God. It is caught up in his flow... There is Church because there is mission, not mission because there is Church.'³⁹ The Bible tells us that at the heart of God's mission is his desire to see 'a great multitude that no-one can count, from every nation, tribe, people and language' standing before his throne in worship (Rev. 7:9). It also tells us that his Church is entrusted with his mission to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19). What is needed for the Church to be faithful to her commission globally is mission-minded local churches, church-minded mission organisations, and theologically-minded missionaries who have a passion not only for people but also for God, his word, his truth, his glory, and the advancement of his kingdom.

¹ <http://www.e-n.org.uk/3026-The-current-crisis-in-evangelicalism.htm>

² Cf. S Guthrie, *Missions in the third millennium: 21 key trends for the 21st century* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2004) 150-151.

³ M Vanderwerf, 'Missionshift' and the way forward, *Global Missiology* 3(8), 4 (2011); SW Green, 'Report on Cape Town 2010', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 35(1):7-10, 8 (2011).

⁴ Cf. RN Gleason, Church and community or community and church?, in *Reforming or conforming: post-conservative evangelicals and the emerging church*, LW Johnson & RN Gleason (eds). (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2008) 168-169; R Ebeling, *Emerging church: Wiederbelebung alter Träume zwischen 1960 und 1980? in Missionale Theologie*, R Ebeling & A Meier (eds). (Marburg: Francke, 2009) 152.

⁵ Ray Porter suggests that in some countries which are closed to missionaries but open to Christian development and relief workers contact with the local church 'may be difficult or undesirable.' He continues: 'Because development organisations relate directly to government departments, there is no necessity of relating to local churches even when that is possible. There are some situations in which expatriate Christians have chosen not to relate to the open local church because their focus is on an unreached people group that does not share the same culture or ethnic background as the local church.' Ray Porter, Global mission and local church. <<http://www.globalconnections.co.uk/Resources/Global%20Connections/Mission%20Issues/2007/Global%20Mission%20and%20local%20Church%20Porter%2006.pdf>>

⁶ Cf. Rieck, J 2011. Grace: the means by which we do missions, *Sola* 5 Chronicles 12:4&6, 6.

⁷ Carson, D 2011. How to do justice and not undermine evangelism. <http://www.sermoncentral.com/pastors-preaching-articles/don-carson-how-to-do-justice-and-not-undermine-evangelism-943.asp?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=BetterPreachingUpdate>

⁸ It is noteworthy that even well-known theologians, who would not be considered evangelicals, see evangelism at the very heart of God's mission. Eberhard Jüngel, for example, speaks of evangelism as the 'heartbeat' of the church. Mission, he argues, happens for the sake of evangelism (Jüngel, E 1999. *Mission und Evangelisation*. Lecture, EKD synod, November 1999, Leipzig, 1 & 6). His fellow German, Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes about the role of proclamation in mission: 'No one builds the church but Christ alone... We must confess – he builds. We must proclaim – he builds. We must pray to him – he builds... It is a great comfort which Christ gives to his church: you confess, preach, bear witness to me, and I alone will build where it pleases to me. Do not meddle in what is my province.' D Bonhoeffer, *No rusty swords*, (London: Collins, 1971) 212.

⁹ Vanderwerf, 4.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹¹ DJ Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in conflict: 10 key questions in Christian missions today*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005) 120.

¹² *Ibid.*, 120.

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- ¹³ N Mackay, *Global warning: third millennium threats to Jesus' great commission mandate*, (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2001) 120.
- ¹⁴ DA Carson, *Becoming conversant with the emerging church: understanding a movement and its implications*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005) 85.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 85-86.
- ¹⁶ Ferdinando, K 2008. Mission: a problem of definition. *Themelios* 33(1):46-59, 54.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.
- ¹⁸ The idea that Christ died in order to reconcile us with ourselves has no Scriptural warrant. John Stott writes: 'The first thing that has to be said about the biblical gospel of reconciliation, however, is that it begins with reconciliation to God, and continues with a reconciled community in Christ. Reconciliation is not a term the Bible uses to describe "coming to terms with oneself", although it does insist that it is only through losing ourselves in love for God and neighbour that we truly find ourselves.' John Stott, *The cross of Christ*, (Nottingham: IVP, 2009) 225.
- ¹⁹ Cf. Sharp, L 2006. Is the mission field right for adult missionary kids? *International Journal for Frontier Missions* 23(4):143-148,144.
- ²⁰ Research shows that many AMKs are harmed by their experience of growing up as missionary children. They often have ongoing life struggles and lack cross-cultural competencies. Cf. Priest, RJ 2003. Etiology of adult missionary kid (AMK) life struggles. *Missiology* 31(2):171-192, 171-173.
- ²¹ PE Brown, *Churches in trouble? Developing good relationships in your church*, (Epsom: Day One, 2009) 158.
- ²² Hesselgrave, D 2007. Will we correct the Edinburgh error? Future mission in historical perspective. *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 49(2):121-149, 141.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 139.
- ²⁴ P Johnson, Joyriding on the downgrade at breakneck speed: the dark side of diversity, in *Reforming or conforming: post-conservative evangelicals and the emerging church*, LW Johnson & RN Gleason (eds), (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2008) 219-220.
- ²⁵ P Johnstone, *The church is bigger than you think: the unfinished task of world evangelisation*, (Fearn: Christian Focus, 1998) 205.
- ²⁶ McCain, D 2010. Church-minded missions: taking the local church seriously. *EMQ* 46(2):136-138, 137.
- ²⁷ Hammett, JS 2000. How church and parachurch should relate: arguments for a servant-partnership model. *Missiology* 28(2):199-207, 200.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, 200.
- ²⁹ E Wright, *A practical theology of missions: dispelling the mystery; recovering the passion*, (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2010) 217.
- ³⁰ McCain, 137.
- ³¹ Jonathan Rowe writes: 'Corporate governance has been a political and legal hot potato since the 1980s. Yet how many Christian mission agencies have looked to update the structures they have inherited, perhaps from as long ago as the 19th century? A strong, effective board with few personal, historical or emotional ties to the agency's staff, is one way of incorporating checks and balances into an otherwise opaque system.' Rowe, J 2006. Dancing with elephants: accountability in cross-cultural Christian partnerships. *Encounters Mission Ezine* 10:1-13, 10-11.
- ³² Cf. GR Corwin, Seven stealth ethical issues flying under the radar of many mission agencies, in *Serving Jesus with integrity: ethics and accountability in mission*, DP Baker & D Hayward (eds), (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2010) 180; CG Olson, *What in the world is God doing? The essentials of global missions: an introductory guide*, (Cedar Knolls: Global Gospel Publishers, 1998) 307.

³³ Patrick Johnstone writes: 'Mission agencies need to be aware that the potential for breakdown with local churches is great if lines of communication are inadequate, leadership unapproachable or secrecy too high. Johnstone, 209.

³⁴ Cf. M Goldsmith, *Get a grip on mission: the challenge of a changing world*, (Leicester: IVP, 2006) 75.

³⁵ Cf. JR Tallman, *An introduction to world missions*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989) 149-150.

³⁶ Hale, E undated. The role of the local church in sending missionaries.
<<http://www.gbcmpk.org/missions.htm>>

³⁷ Cf. Wright, 221.

³⁸ DW Johnson, *Biblical requirements of leaders, in Leadership handbooks of practical theology*, vol 3, JD Berkley (ed), (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994) 16-17.

³⁹ Quoted in R Paterson, *Explaining mission*, (Tonbridge: Sovereign Word, 1994) 17.

Did Turretin Depart from Calvin's View on the Concept of Error in the Scriptures?

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It is often claimed that the doctrine of biblical inerrancy has its earliest roots in the work of the seventeenth century theologian Francis Turretin and that his view of Scripture significantly departed from that of John Calvin. The view was memorably propounded by Jack Rogers and Donald McKim some thirty years ago and has resurfaced again more recently.¹ This article seeks to assess the validity of such claims. In the first part, we will identify the central arguments of those who claim that there is a fundamental discontinuity between the views of Calvin and Turretin on the authority of Scripture. In the second we will assess these arguments against the relevant primary sources.

I. The case for a fundamental discontinuity between Calvin and Turretin

Seventeenth century Protestant orthodoxy (of which Turretin was an important part) was vilified by theologians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Critics described it as 'rigid' or 'dead' and spoke of its appropriation of 'dry' or 'arid' scholasticism.² According to these commentators, it constituted a profound divergence from the humanistically-oriented approach of the sixteenth-century Reformers. In the words of Brian Armstrong, 'The strongly biblically and experientially based theology of Calvin and Luther had, it is fair to say, been overcome by the metaphysics and deductive logic of a restored Aristotelianism.'³ This matrix for understanding the relationship between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was applied to the development of the doctrine of Scripture as well. Rogers and McKim write, 'A doctrine of Scripture that made the Bible a formal principle rather than a living witness had been gradually developed. Turretin further solidified this shift of emphasis from the content to the form of Scripture as the source of its authority.'⁴ This portrayal of a shift from the content to the form of Scripture really lies at the heart of what many consider to be the fundamental discontinuity between Calvin and Turretin, to which we now turn.

1. John Calvin

Those who maintain that Calvin would not, and could not, have affirmed the verbal inerrancy of Scripture note that his focus was invariably upon Scripture's content, its doctrine and saving function, rather than upon its form. John McNeill, the editor of a recent translation of Calvin's Institutes, comments, 'It is not said [by Calvin] that the Scripture is verbally dictated; the point is simply that its teaching (*doctrina*) is not of men but of God.'⁵ In a similar vein, J.K.S. Reid writes, 'God is the author, not of Holy Scripture, but of the "doctrine" contained and transmitted by Holy Scripture.'⁶ Similarly Doumergue writes, 'it is not the words that are important, it is the doctrine, the spiritual doctrine, the substance.'⁷ The influence of neorthodox presuppositions is readily apparent in these remarks but the argument rests upon a number of more specific grounds relating to Calvin's teaching.

(i) Accommodation

Firstly, Calvin subscribed to the concept of accommodation.⁸ God's infinite and spiritual being is beyond man's comprehension and therefore, in order to communicate with us, it was necessary for God to accommodate himself to our finite and limited understandings. Calvin wrote, 'For who even of slight intelligence does not understand that, as nurses commonly do with infants, God is wont in a measure to "lisp" in speaking to us? Thus such forms of speaking do not so much express clearly what God is like as accommodate the knowledge of him to our slight capacity.'⁹ Critics have seized

upon Calvin's language of accommodation and argued that it is irreconcilable with verbal inerrancy.¹⁰

(ii) Scripture as a 'mirror'

In discussing the relationship between faith and God's Word, Calvin wrote that the Word is like a mirror 'in which faith may contemplate God.'¹¹ In his discussion of Calvin's use of this simile (which he describes as a metaphor), Reid argues, '[A] mirror makes something visible, but the representation is not the thing in itself. Applying this to the case in hand, the Bible conveys the Word of God, but for this very reason is not identical with that word.'¹²

(iii) The authors of Scripture as 'scribe', 'amanuensis', 'secretary'

Reid further argues (in reliance upon Doumergue) that the 'metaphorical use' of 'mirror' helps us to understand Calvin's ascription of the terms 'scribe', 'amanuensis', and 'secretary' to the authors of Scripture: '[T]hey are not formulas scientific and theological, in the sense in which the seventeenth century theology took them. Calvin himself says that "Scripture itself is an instrument by which the Lord dispenses to the faithful the illumination of His Spirit". But Scripture is not identified with the Lord himself.'¹³

McNeill proceeds on a slightly different tack here. He points to the context of Calvin's description of the apostolic writers as 'sure and authentic amanuenses of the Holy Spirit,'¹⁴ and insists that it 'speaks explicitly of doctrine and not of words.' McNeill continues, this time discussing Calvin's comments on 2 Timothy 3:16: 'Calvin, like the rest of us, is familiar with a use of the word "dictate" in a context in which it has reference to ideas, not to the form of words in which they are expressed.'¹⁵ So Calvin's use of these labels is either inexact or unrelated to the form of words given.

(iv) Progressive revelation

Calvin recognised five respects in which the New Testament differed from the Old, and maintained that there was a distinction between the Gospel revealed in the New Testament and the Word that preceded it.¹⁶ In his understanding, the language and forms of Scripture have varied as God has accommodated himself to men's varied and changeable capacities.¹⁷ McNeill relies upon Calvin's acknowledgment of progressive revelation to suggest two conclusions which undermine verbal inerrancy. Firstly, he claims that Calvin held to a canon within a canon noting that, in the *Institutes*, Calvin cited the New Testament 3,998 times and the Old Testament only 2,351 times.¹⁸ Secondly, he postulates that Calvin's approach to progressive revelation laid the foundation for later accommodation theories of inspiration such as Lessing's *Education of the Human Race*.¹⁹

(v) The role of the Holy Spirit in confirming the authority of Scripture

Calvin clearly taught that it is the Holy Spirit alone who can convince believers that the Scriptures come from God.²⁰ Proofs and reason are useful in confirming Scripture's authority but those who build their case on such proofs are doing things backwards because 'the testimony of the Spirit is more excellent than all reason.'²¹ Calvin concluded, 'those whom the Holy Spirit inwardly taught truly rest upon Scripture, and that Scripture indeed is self-authenticated; hence, it is not right to subject it to proof and reasoning.'²²

In discussing Calvin's teaching on the role of the Spirit, Rogers and McKim argue that Calvin adopted a Platonic-Augustinian theological method which privileged faith over understanding.²³ As we shall see, the authors present this as a significant divergence from Turretin, but do not fully develop what significance this might have for the doctrine of inerrancy.²⁴ Reid goes further, insisting that, since the Word will only produce conviction when the Spirit is active, it is impossible to identify the Spirit with the Word and as a result 'it is impossible to impose upon Calvin a doctrine of verbal infallibility and inerrancy.'²⁵ This is a very blunt statement and there is little by way of substantiation. The closest

Reid comes is his claim that the refutation of verbal inerrancy ‘rests... on Calvin’s expressed view that there is no identity of Spirit and Word, and on his statement that the Word must be supplemented by the operation of the Spirit before becoming effective for faith and salvation.’²⁶ Prust follows Reid at this point and claims that Calvin could not have held to verbal inspiration and maintained a cleavage between Word and Spirit unless he was prepared to claim that God imparts in his revelation something other than himself.²⁷ Since God does indeed impart himself, Calvin did not hold to verbal inspiration, Prust insists.

(vi) Errors

It is often claimed that Calvin could not have subscribed to verbal inerrancy because he acknowledged a number of errors in the Scriptures. Such errors fall into three main categories: misquotations, technical inaccuracies and scientific errors.

Firstly, critics of inerrancy identify a number of passages in Calvin’s commentaries where they claim that Calvin attributed to the apostolic author a *misquotation* of Scripture.²⁸ In his commentary on Romans 3:4, Calvin addressed Paul’s use of the passive voice, *krinesthai* to translate Psalm 51:4 and wrote, ‘we know that, in quoting Scripture, the apostles often used freer language than the original, since they were content if what they quoted applied to their subject, and therefore, they were not over-careful in their use of words.’²⁹ Rogers and McKim claim that Calvin here attributes a misquotation of Psalm 51:4 to Paul.³⁰ Along similar lines, McNeill writes, ‘[Calvin] is obviously a little disconcerted by St Paul’s choice of a defective rendering. But his frank acknowledgment that the apostolic writers were concerned with matter, not words and that theirs was not a *religio verborum*, is quite characteristic.’³¹

Critics also note Calvin’s comments on the quotation of Psalm 40:6 in Hebrews 10:5. Rogers and McKim write:

[I]n Calvin’s commentary on Hebrews 10:6, he affirmed that the saving purpose of the biblical message is adequately communicated through an imperfect form of words: ‘They (the apostles) were not overscrupulous in quoting words provided that they did not misuse Scripture for their convenience. We must always look at the purpose for which quotations are made... but as far as the words are concerned, as in other things which are not relevant to the present purpose, they allow themselves some indulgence.’³²

Rogers and McKim further note Calvin’s comments on the use of Psalm 8 in Hebrews 2:7, claiming that Calvin believed the author of Hebrews to be using Psalm 8 in a different sense to the one that David intended.³³ They also point to Calvin’s response to those who question Paul’s application of the words, ‘Say not in thy hearts, Who shall ascend?’ (Deuteronomy 30:12), to the death and resurrection of Christ (Romans 10:6):

If it is alleged that this interpretation is too forced and subtle, we should understand that the object of the Apostle was not to explain this passage exactly, but only to apply it to his treatment of the subject at hand. He does not, therefore, repeat what Moses had said syllable by syllable, but employs a gloss, by which he adapts the testimony of Moses more closely to his own purpose.³⁴

From these four examples, Rogers and McKim conclude that ‘Calvin understood Paul to be a preacher of the Good News of Christ, not an historian or linguist concerned with transmitting a past document with minute accuracy.’³⁵

The second category of alleged errors concerns *technical inaccuracies*. Three instances are particularly important. Firstly, Rogers and McKim claim that, in his commentary on Acts 7:16, Calvin attributed a 'manifest error' to Luke.³⁶ Secondly, they note Calvin's comments on Matthew 27:9: 'How the name of Jeremiah crept in I cannot confess to know, nor do I make much of it; obviously Jeremiah's name is put in error for Zechariah (13:7) (sic). Nothing of this sort is said of Jeremiah, or anything like it.'³⁷ Thirdly, the authors refer to 1 Corinthians 10:8 where Paul mentions 23,000 being killed instead of 24,000 (Numbers 25:9), and suggest that Calvin's explanation for this difference is found in the concept of accommodation. Rogers and McKim conclude: 'For Calvin, technical errors in the Bible that were the result of human slips of memory, limited knowledge or the use of texts for different purposes than the original were all part of the normal human means of communication. They did not call into question the divine character of Scripture's message.'³⁸

The third category is that of *scientific errors*. Rogers and McKim quote Calvin's comments on Genesis 1:14-16 and suggest that he did not believe Moses 'knew any more or thought any differently about the natural order than other people of his time and culture.'³⁹ The authors imply that Calvin thought Moses had made an error in describing the sun and the moon as the two great lights since it was clear by Calvin's day that Saturn was significantly larger. This error was acceptable for Calvin, Rogers and McKim suggest, because Moses had accommodated his language to his audience's perspective.⁴⁰

On the basis of these aspects of Calvin's teaching, it has been argued that Calvin did not and could not have affirmed verbal inerrancy. The position portrays Calvin as a humanist theologian, influenced by Platonic-Augustinian emphases, who focused upon the content of Scripture rather than its form. Error was not a problem for Calvin; indeed it was inevitable because of the accommodated nature of biblical revelation. Nevertheless, Scripture's authority remained unaffected because its authority lay in the Spirit's confirmation of its central saving message which was untouched by textual defects.

2. Francis Turretin

The writings of Turretin are often assumed to represent the high-water mark of seventeenth-century scholastic Protestantism. In an influential work on the period, Brian Armstrong posited four tendencies that he believed were associated with Protestant scholasticism: (1) it systematises religious truth on the basis of deductive ratiocination from given assumptions and principles; (2) it places reason on an equal footing with faith, thus jettisoning some of the authority of revelation; (3) it maintains that Scripture is a unified and rationally comprehensible account and that it can be used as a measure of orthodoxy; (4) it is interested in metaphysical matters and in abstract, speculative thought.⁴¹ Armstrong concludes that '[t]he distinctive scholastic Protestant position is made to rest on speculative formulation of the will of God.' This, Armstrong suggests, is a profound divergence from Calvin's approach which exhibited none of the four tendencies noted above.⁴²

Rogers and McKim present a similar picture.⁴³ They trace the roots of Protestant scholasticism back to Philip Melancthon for the Lutherans, and Theodore Beza for the Reformed, claiming that it rejected the Augustinian method of faith leading to understanding and adopted a Thomistic approach of privileging reason over faith.⁴⁴ In the authors' view, the Neoplatonic presuppositions of the Reformers were abandoned in favour of the Aristotelian principles of medieval scholasticism. This in turn led to the introduction of biblical infallibility, emphasising literary form over saving function, and the abandonment of the concept of accommodation.⁴⁵ According to Rogers and McKim, all of these features are to be found in Turretin's doctrine of Scripture. They raise a number of specific points.

(i) Focus on form over content and saving function

Firstly, the authors assert that seventeenth-century orthodoxy developed a doctrine of Scripture which turned the Bible into a 'formal principle' rather than 'a living witness'.⁴⁶ Turretin further solidified this shift from the content of Scripture onto its form, divorcing the text of the Bible from both the attention of scholarship and application to everyday life. Rogers and McKim recognise the polemical background against which Turretin wrote, noting that he faced new challenges from the Socinians, Counter-Reformation Roman Catholics and Anabaptists. In seeking to respond to these attacks, the authors suggest that Turretin fell back on the philosophy of Aristotle and the theological framework of Aquinas, producing a theology that emphasised precision and scientific statement.⁴⁷ In short, Turretin shifted the emphasis from the saving message of Scripture onto the textually inerrant form of the Bible.

(ii) Proof-texting

Rogers and McKim further claim that Turretin resorted to proof-texting, noting that he used twenty nine proof-texts in dealing with just one question on the perfection of Scripture. They suggest that a similar number of proof-texts was used to support each of the other twenty one questions concerning the doctrine of Scripture. As to Turretin's use of these texts, the authors argue that he was making the texts serve his proof rather than allowing his proof to emerge from the text.⁴⁸ They cite his use of Matthew 28:18-20 and Psalm 19:7 as examples.

(iii) Rejection of Calvin's doctrine

Rogers and McKim note that Turretin cited 175 different authorities in his discussion of Scripture including most of the Church Fathers, his Roman Catholic opponents and a number of his contemporaries. Calvin, however, is not cited once, and the authors conclude that Turretin must have realised that he was diverging from Calvin.⁴⁹

(iv) Rejection of the Spirit's role in confirming the authority of Scripture

In their discussion of the authority of Scripture, Rogers and McKim claim that Turretin departed from Calvin in not relying upon the internal witness of the Holy Spirit to persuade readers of the authority of Scripture. Instead he predicated the authority of the Bible on its inerrant form. As such, the function of the Spirit was restricted to the inspiration of Scripture and Turretin 'based the Scripture's function of communicating salvation and guidance in the Christian life on its form of verbal accuracy'.⁵⁰

(v) Elevating reason above faith

Rogers and McKim argue that Turretin adopted an Aristotelian-Thomistic methodology in elevating reason above faith.⁵¹ Support for this is evinced from the fact that Turretin gave primacy to the marks of Scripture.⁵² This was in stark contrast to Calvin who insisted that 'they were never anything more than "secondary aids to our feebleness" to give comfort to those who had already believed through the witness of the Spirit'.⁵³

(vi) The rejection of the concept of accommodation

Armstrong claims that he has not found a single example of the idea of accommodation in seventeenth-century orthodox writers.⁵⁴ In respect of Turretin, Rogers and McKim agree declaring that the concept of accommodation is 'entirely absent' from Turretin. While Calvin had 'viewed the language and thought forms of the biblical writers as human products that God had graciously condescended to use', Turretin 'treated the language and thought forms of the Bible as supernatural entities dictated directly by God'.⁵⁵

(vii) The inspiration of vowel points

Finally, Rogers and McKim criticise Turretin for his insistence upon the divine character of the vowel points in the Masoretic text of the Old Testament,⁵⁶ and the role that he played in promoting provisions to this effect in the *Formula Consensus Helvetica* (1675).⁵⁷ They imply that the position demonstrates the intellectual absurdities that proponents of inerrancy are forced into.

Rogers and McKim conclude that Reformed scholasticism reached its 'full flowering' in the theology of Turretin. He embraced the Thomistic pattern of theology and made Scripture the formal principle upon which he built a scientific, systematic theology. In so doing, Turretin rejected Calvin's emphasis upon the saving purpose of Scripture, his understanding of the Spirit's role in confirming the authority of Scripture and his concept of accommodation. In its place, Turretin constructed the edifice of inerrancy, replacing the vibrancy of Calvin's view with an approach that reified form, gave priority to reason over faith and treated Scripture as 'a compendium of propositions from which logical deductions could be drawn.'⁵⁸

II. A critique of the disjunctive reconstruction of Calvin and Turretin's doctrines

We are now well placed to critically examine the claim that there exists a radical disjunction between Calvin's view of Scripture and that of Turretin. Firstly, we will consider the claim that Calvin held to a view that was incompatible with the verbal inerrancy of Scripture and secondly we will consider whether the popular portrayal of Turretin's doctrine is accurate.

1. Would Calvin have affirmed the verbal inerrancy of Scripture?

It is of course anachronistic to postulate about whether Calvin would have affirmed the doctrine of inerrancy. In the sixteenth century, there was such a consensus concerning the authority of Scripture that inerrancy was not a doctrine that needed to be explicitly affirmed.⁵⁹ With this noted, it is however reasonable to ask whether the doctrine of Scripture expounded by Calvin was compatible with later articulations of the doctrine.⁶⁰

As even those who deny inerrancy in Calvin would affirm, Calvin made a number of statements which appear at first glance unequivocally to affirm inerrancy.⁶¹ In his commentary on 2 Tim 3:16, Calvin wrote:

This is a principle which distinguishes our religion from all others, that we know that God hath spoken to us, and are fully convinced that the prophets did not speak at their own suggestion, but that, being organs of the Holy Spirit, they only uttered what they had been commissioned from heaven to declare. Whoever then wishes to profit in the Scriptures let him, first of all, lay down this as a settled point, that the Law and the Prophets are not a doctrine delivered according to the will and pleasure of men, but *dictated by the Holy Spirit*.⁶²

In his commentary on 2 Pet 1:21, Calvin wrote that the prophets 'were *moved*, not because they were out of their minds... but because they dared nothing by themselves but only in obedience to the guidance of the Spirit who held sway over their lips as in His own temple.'⁶³ Of Moses, Calvin said, 'he wrote his five books not only under the guidance of the Spirit of God, but as God Himself had suggested them, speaking to him out of His own mouth.'⁶⁴ Of Daniel, he 'did not speak from his own discretion but whatever he uttered was dictated by the Holy Spirit.'⁶⁵ And of the evangelists, Calvin claimed, 'It gave more certainty and light to God's truth when it was established that His witnesses did not tell a pre-arranged tale, but each of them, without respect to the other, wrote

simply and freely what the Spirit dictated.⁶⁶ Calvin's classic statement on the Word of God as Scripture is found in his *Institutes*:

Let this be a form principle: No other word is to be held as the Word of God, and given place as such in the church, than what is contained first in the Law and the Prophets, then in the writing of the apostles... [The apostles] were to expound the ancient Scripture and to show that what is taught there had been fulfilled in Christ. Yet they were not to do this except from the Lord, that is, with Christ's Spirit as precursor in a certain measure dictating the words... [They] were sure and genuine scribes of the Holy Spirit [*certi et authentici Spiritus sancti amanuenses*], and their writings are therefore to be considered oracles of God; but the sole office of others is to teach what is provided and sealed in the Holy Scriptures.⁶⁷

In light of these comments, the claim that Calvin affirmed only the spiritual doctrine of Scripture and not Scripture itself looks very strange indeed. Neither the distinction between content and form,⁶⁸ nor the non-correspondence theory of truth upon which it depends are apparent in Calvin.⁶⁹ Calvin certainly considered the saving purpose of Scripture to be central but as Wayne Grudem has warned it is important not to mistake the major purpose of Scripture for the entire purpose.⁷⁰ Moreover, as John Murray has observed, it would be 'mystifyingly strange' for Calvin to affirm that the writers of Scripture 'only uttered what they had been commissioned from heaven to declare', that they 'dared nothing by themselves', that they 'did not speak from [their] own discretion but whatever [they] uttered was dictated by the Holy Spirit' and that 'the Spirit who held sway over their lips as in His own temple,' if his conception of inspiration only applied to the doctrine and not to the words of Scripture. The central thesis of those who would claim that Calvin denied inerrancy is far from proven. The next step is to re-examine the specific aspects of Calvin's teaching that are thought to support the denial of inerrancy.

Firstly, concerning Calvin's concept of accommodation, the view that it implies an errant Scripture rests upon the adage that 'to err is human'. But it is apparent that this line of reasoning is flawed as soon as Rogers and McKim attempt to set it within a more general concept of incarnational revelation.⁷¹ The authors compare human error in the Bible with the condescension of the Son in the incarnation. But there are two major problems with this analogy. Firstly, even if we were to accept the model as legitimate, it does not follow that there are errors in Scripture. Just as Jesus was truly human yet free from sin, so can Scripture be truly human and yet free from error.⁷² Secondly, as G. K. Beale has shown, the analogy does not work, since in Christ's incarnation there is one person with two natures while in Scripture there are two persons (the divine and human authors) with one nature (the Scriptural text).⁷³ Moreover, the view that biblical inerrancy is incompatible with accommodation is built upon the belief that the latter was jettisoned when the former was introduced. But as we shall see in our discussion of Turretin, this was manifestly not the case.

Reid's 'mirror' objection lacks any persuasive force. Calvin used the mirror in a simile which means that its equivalency is only partial. Indeed, later in the *Institutes* Calvin uses the mirror to describe the manner in which God revealed himself to the patriarchs through his Son.⁷⁴ Moreover, in the passage that Reid cites, the mirror is used to describe the relationship between God's Word (which Calvin identifies with Scripture) and God, not God's Word and Scripture as Reid implies. In his epistemology, Calvin distinguished between the apprehension of God (true but non-exhaustive knowledge) which is possible for humans and the comprehension of God (exhaustive knowledge) which is not.⁷⁵ In light of this distinction, the analogy of a mirror in describing the manner in which the Word reveals God appears to be very apt.

When Reid seeks to use his position on the 'mirror' passage to argue that the terms 'scribe', 'amanuensis', and 'secretary' are inexact, he is trying to have it both ways since he has only just argued for a direct equivalence between the 'mirror' and Scripture. In any event, the vague assertion that the terms are 'not formulas scientific and theological' will not do; Reid must explain what Calvin meant by the terms and how this affects the accuracy of the written record. McNeill's objections are rather more penetrating on this point but he is working on the assumption that once it can be demonstrated that Calvin did not hold to a mechanical dictation theory, then it can be concluded that Calvin did not affirm biblical inerrancy.⁷⁶ In fact, as B.B. Warfield and others have shown, 'what Calvin has in mind, is, not to insist that the mode of inspiration was dictation, but that the result of inspiration is as if it were by dictation, viz., the production of a pure word of God free from all human admixtures.'⁷⁷ In other words, 'dictation describes the effects of inspiration rather than its mode.'⁷⁸ McNeill's resort to the unproven distinction between doctrine and words is not enough.

The objection based upon Calvin's acknowledgment of progressive revelation can be dealt with fairly briefly. There is no substance to McNeill's claim that Calvin held to a canon within a canon.⁷⁹ Given Calvin's remarks on the greater clarity of the Gospel compared with the Word that preceded it, it is unsurprising that Calvin references the New Testament many more times than the Old. McNeill's trajectory criticism is also unfair. The fact that a teaching or approach to Scripture may give rise to a heresy does not mean that the teaching itself is heretical. Moreover, as McNeill himself acknowledges, Calvin explicitly rejected the view that more explicit revelation was yet to come.⁸⁰

As we observed, Reid and Prust provide little substantiation for their claim that Calvin's distinction between Word and Spirit leads to the denial of inerrancy. Prust acknowledges that, Word and Spirit are inseparable for Calvin – in Christological terminology they are 'distinct but not separate'. In light of this, we must be very careful not to push either their conjunction or distinction too far. Moreover, McNeill and Prust are mistaken in seeking to present Calvin's discussion of Word and Spirit as if it bears upon the external and abstract authority of Scripture. Calvin is quite clear that Scripture is 'self-authenticating'⁸¹ in this sense, it 'exhibits fully as clear evidence of its own truth as white and black things do of their colour, or sweet and bitter things do of their taste.'⁸² It is only at the level of authentication in the life of the believer – the personal confirmation of Scripture's authority – that the Spirit's role becomes crucial.⁸³ As Gerrish comments, 'the authority of Scripture, although it is really something *intrinsic*, is only *recognised* for what it is when the Holy Spirit illuminates the mind.'⁸⁴

Proceeding to Calvin's alleged acknowledgment of errors in Scripture, it is important to note Reid's observation that 'it seems almost endlessly possible to explain, or explain away, even on the literalist interpretation, the familiar discrepancies of the text'.⁸⁵ Thus, even an avowed opponent of inerrancy recognises the limits to this objection. Nevertheless, in view of the weight placed upon it by Rogers and McKim, it is necessary to make a few brief comments.⁸⁶

Firstly, concerning the claim that Calvin attributed '*misquotations*' to the apostles, it is clear that Calvin considered the apostles' paraphrastic quotations to bring out 'the true sense and application' of the passages quoted.⁸⁷ This is evident when we consider Calvin's comments in sections not quoted by Rogers and McKim.⁸⁸ Firstly, on the quotation of Psalm 51:4 in Romans 3:4, a few lines before the extract quoted, Calvin wrote: 'Paul has quoted this passage of David in its true and proper sense.'⁸⁹ Secondly, on the quotation of Psalm 40:6 in Hebrews 10:5, Calvin wrote, 'We must always have a regard to the end for which [the apostles] quote passages, for they are very careful as to the main object, so as not to turn Scripture to another meaning.'⁹⁰ Thirdly, on Hebrews 2:7, Calvin wrote, 'The meaning of David is this... This meaning the Apostle did not intend to overthrow, nor to turn to something else.'⁹¹ Finally, concerning the use of Deuteronomy 30:12 in Romans 10:6, Calvin wrote: 'If, therefore, we take these statements of Paul as having been made by way of amplification

or as a gloss, we shall not be able to say that he has done violence or distorted the words of Moses.⁹²

Secondly, concerning the alleged *technical inaccuracies*, Rogers and McKim are wrong to say that Calvin attributed the ‘manifest error’ in Acts 7:16 to Luke. Calvin made no such attribution of blame. In fact, as Woodbridge observes, “‘it is manifest that’ is the language of an observation, not an attribution,⁹³ and in analogous places where Calvin speaks about the need for ‘amendment’, he is describing errors in transcription.⁹⁴ The same explanation accounts for Calvin’s comments on Matthew 27:9 where the name of Jeremiah is said to have ‘crept in’. As Murray notes, this is the very language that Calvin uses when he is describing a transcription error.⁹⁵ The claim that Calvin considered Paul’s numerical ‘error’ in 1 Corinthians 10:8 to be explicable as an example of accommodation is also difficult to reconcile with the lengths that Calvin went to in order to explain the apparent discrepancy with Numbers 25:9. Calvin wrote, ‘[I]t is easy to reconcile their statements. For it is not unheard of, when there is no intention of making an exact count of individuals to give an approximate number... Moses gives the upper limit, Paul the lower, and there is really no discrepancy.’⁹⁶

Thirdly, Rogers and McKim’s claim that Calvin attributed an error to Moses in his description of the sun and the moon as the two great lights does not stand up to scrutiny. Calvin insisted that Moses was using phenomenological language; he spoke ‘in popular style what all ordinary men without training and education perceive with their ordinary senses.’⁹⁷ According to Calvin, Moses did not wish to discourage scientific study but ‘since he had been appointed a guide of unlearned men rather than on the learned, he could not fulfil his duty except by coming down to their level.’ As to Rogers and McKim’s claim that Moses’ error was tied to his concept of accommodation, the dangers of such an approach are apparent when Calvin continues, ‘when the Spirit of God opens a common school for all, it is not strange that he chooses to teach especially what can be understood by all.’⁹⁸ As Woodbridge observes, we cannot charge Moses with making an error here unless we are also willing to accuse the Holy Spirit of the same fault in the interests of accommodation.⁹⁹

The claim that Calvin held to a view of Scripture which was incompatible with verbal inerrancy has been shown to be manifestly unsound. As Dowey remarks: ‘To Calvin the theologian an error in Scripture is unthinkable... If he betrays his position at all, it is in apparently assuming *a priori* that no errors can be allowed to reflect upon the inerrancy of the original documents.’¹⁰⁰

2. Is the popular portrayal of Turretin’s doctrine accurate?

Over the past three decades, the view that Protestant orthodoxy significantly departed from the theology of the Reformers has been convincingly challenged. It has been shown that there were traces of scholasticism in the work of Calvin,¹⁰¹ and that the shift that took place in the seventeenth century was really one of *form* rather than *content*.¹⁰² Muller comments: ‘Orthodoxy intended, in its systematization of the doctrines of the Reformation, to maintain the substance while altering the form – and, in instances of issues either not fully discussed or not discussed at all by the Reformers, to add new material in substantial agreement with the teaching both of the Reformers and of the Reformed confessions.’¹⁰³ In other words, ‘scholasticism is a scientific method of research and teaching, and does as such not have a doctrinal content.’¹⁰⁴ Muller criticises twentieth-century assessments of orthodoxy for their failure to appreciate the variety of formulations of orthodoxy and their imposition of neorthodox presuppositions on older dogmatics.¹⁰⁵ He, along with others, is critical of the tendency to apply ‘Aristotelianism’ with a broad brush to orthodoxy and to claim that the ‘scholastics must therefore be rationalists.’¹⁰⁶ The underlying problem, Muller insists, is that such critiques of the Protestant orthodox view ‘tell us more about the theology of their authors than they

do about the history of Protestant doctrine.’ They commit the fallacy of identifying a “Golden Age” of Protestant theology that not only offers historical precedent for their own theology but that also is somehow recoverable in the present.’¹⁰⁷

The difference between the formulations of the doctrine of Scripture in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is explicable by reference to the different contexts in which they wrote and the different literary genres that they adopted. Turretin sought to provide a fully-developed theological system and thus focused upon the objective authority of Scripture. That is not to say, however, that the Reformers rejected the long-established tradition of the objective authority of Scripture, nor is it to suggest that the orthodox departed from the Reformers’ insight into the subjective power of the Word.¹⁰⁸ The formal innovations of the seventeenth century, such as the inclusion of a specific *locus* on Scripture in systematic theologies, were a response to the new challenges that orthodoxy faced.¹⁰⁹ Since these challenges were predominantly formal,¹¹⁰ Protestant orthodoxy responded on those terms, while continuing to stress ‘the importance of the saving message of the Gospel.’¹¹¹

Rogers and McKim’s claim that the Christocentric approach of Calvin was lost and replaced by a scientific system is unsustainable.¹¹² In his *Prolegomena* (which Rogers and McKim apparently did not have access to),¹¹³ Turretin insisted that theology is unlike *intelligentia* or *scientia* and much closer to *sapientia* (wisdom).¹¹⁴ He explicitly denied that theology is simply speculative (theoretical) insisting that it is ‘partly theoretical, partly practical, as that which at the same time connects the theory of the true with the practice of the good. Yet it is more practical than theoretical.’¹¹⁵ For Turretin, theology was theoretical because it concerns ‘God as supernaturally revealed in his word’ but it was also practical because ‘he is revealed as an object both to be known and to be worshipped.’¹¹⁶ Theology could not be wholly theoretical, for Turretin, because ‘happiness embraces not only an apprehension of the highest good by vision (which is in the intellect), but also an enjoyment of it by love (which is an act of the will).’¹¹⁷ The parody of Turretin’s theology as ‘arid scholasticism’ is shown for the distortion that it is. Moreover, Turretin did not reject the saving focus of Calvin’s theology in favour of Aristotelian scholasticism. Rather, he insisted that the object of theology is not ‘to be considered exclusively under the relation of deity (according to the opinion of Thomas Aquinas and many Scholastics after him, for in this manner of the knowledge of him *could not be saving* but deadly to sinners), but as he is our God (i.e. *covenanted in Christ* as he has revealed himself to us in his word not only as the object of knowledge, but also of *worship*).’¹¹⁸

Moving on to the argument that Turretin over-used and abused proof-texts, it is important to note that twenty nine proof texts is by no means excessive in an answer that spans nine pages and thirty six paragraphs. Rogers and McKim’s claim that a similar number of citations were used to support each of the other twenty one questions is manifestly false (the authors apparently had no access to the primary source to verify this),¹¹⁹ and absurd (given the variation in length and content of the questions). As we have already noted, Turretin was responding to his opponents on their own terms which explains his use of proof-texts. Moreover, on the whole, he was sensitive to the redemptive-historical, linguistic, and theological contexts of the texts.¹²⁰ While it is true that Turretin’s use of Matthew 28:18-20 and Psalm 19:7 might be considered to be a little strained, Calvin too was prone to use texts to serve his proofs at times, as indeed are most theologians.¹²¹

The claim that Turretin’s departure from Calvin is evidenced by his failure to cite him in his *locus* on Scripture is spurious. As Rogers and McKim recognise, Turretin focused upon the Church Fathers in order to demonstrate the historical pedigree of his doctrine. He also cited many of his contemporaries, both opponents and allies, so that he could engage with the real questions and disputations of his day. The fact that Turretin did not cite Calvin proves nothing. Moreover, it appears that Turretin did indeed cite Calvin (although not by name) in his discussion of Matthew

27:9. He noted that ‘some are of the opinion that the name Jeremiah has *crept* into the text from the ignorance of transcribers’;¹²² the very same language that Calvin used in his commentary on the verse.¹²³

Rogers and McKim wrongly conclude that Turretin predicated the authority of Scripture on its inerrancy. In fact, Turretin did precisely the opposite: ‘The authority of the Scriptures depends on their origin. Just because they are from God, they must be authentic and divine,¹²⁴ and, ‘when the divinity of the Scriptures is proved (as in the preceding question), its infallibility necessarily follows.’¹²⁵ So the infallibility of Scripture is predicated on its authority and divine origin, not the other way round. Rogers and McKim are also wrong to claim that Turretin relegated the function of the Spirit to the inerrant transmission of information. Turretin was clear that the Spirit expressed himself both externally in Scripture and internally through his ‘testimony impressed upon the conscience and speaking in the heart.’¹²⁶ Turretin continued, ‘the same Spirit who acts objectively in the word by presenting the truth, operates efficiently in the heart by also impressing that truth upon our minds.’¹²⁷ For Turretin, Word and Spirit were distinct and yet inseparable just as they were in Calvin’s thinking. Turretin wrote: ‘We prove the Scriptures by the Spirit as the efficient cause by which we believe. But we prove the Spirit from the Scriptures as the object and argument on account of which we believe.’¹²⁸

The argument that Turretin elevated reason above faith is linked to the previous point in that the key piece of evidence presented by Rogers and McKim is Turretin’s reliance upon the marks of Scripture. In fact, contrary to this assertion, Turretin insisted that ‘the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts is absolutely necessary to the inward persuasion of the divinity of Scripture.’¹²⁹ The difference between Turretin and Calvin on the importance of the marks is often overstated.¹³⁰ Both considered the marks to be relevant as shown by the fact that both provided a list of the marks. Indeed, Calvin’s list, spanning twelve pages and thirteen paragraphs is almost as long as Turretin’s, spanning seven pages and twenty two paragraphs.¹³¹ Moreover, both agreed that the marks could not, of themselves, convince the reader of the divinity of Scripture. The only difference between the theologians lay in the relative importance that they assigned to the marks.¹³²

The more general claim that Turretin elevated reason above faith is also false. Throughout his *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* the Scriptural and theological arguments precede the rational. As Muller observes, Turretin did this ‘in order to show that reason serves the theological point.’ His system was ‘rational but not rationalist; reason does not compete with Scripture for the title *principium cognoscendi*.’¹³³ For Turretin, reason ‘always judges according to Scripture as the first and infallible standard’ and reason is never permitted to pass judgment on the incomprehensible mysteries of God such as ‘the Trinity, incarnation and predestination.’¹³⁴

The popular view that the concept of accommodation was lost in seventeenth-century orthodoxy is also fallacious. In his Prolegomena, Turretin distinguished between archetypal theology (‘infinite and uncreated, which is God’s essential knowledge of himself’) and ectypal theology (‘finite and created, which is the image and ectype of the infinite and archetypal’).¹³⁵ In elucidating how that distinction related to Scripture, Turretin wrote: ‘When God understands he understands himself infinitely. But when he speaks, he speaks not to himself, but to us (i.e., in *accommodation* to our capacity which is finite and cannot take in many senses).’¹³⁶ This language of accommodation clearly echoes that of Calvin.¹³⁷ Turretin also affirmed the idea of progressive revelation just as Calvin did before him. Some things are taught ‘far clearer in the New than in the Old Testament’ Turretin wrote, and this is because ‘revelation increased according to the different ages of the church.’ This increase was ‘not as to the substance of the things to be believed, which has always been the same, but as to the clearer manifestation and application of them.’¹³⁸ Turretin was loyal to Calvin on both the concept of

accommodation and the system of progressive revelation but, just like Calvin, Turretin insisted that this left the reliability and perfection of Scripture unaffected.¹³⁹

Finally, concerning Rogers and McKim's claim that Turretin's teaching on the vowel points represented a departure from the position of the Reformers and demonstrated the absurdity of his own position, the authors appear to have misunderstood the historical context of the vowel point debate. As Muller has shown, Turretin and his contemporaries had good grounds for their position, at the time, and they were seeking to defend the Reformers' hermeneutic of the analogy of Scripture against the claim that a passage could be amended at the whim of an exegete or text critic.¹⁴⁰ Turretin's position on the inspiration of the vowel points was just one element of his overall defence of the inerrancy of Scripture and the negation of that one element does not affect the defence as a whole.

III. Conclusion

Calvin and Turretin both held to a view of the inspiration and authority of Scripture which affirmed that the Scriptures as originally given were without error in all that they affirmed. The view that Calvin only affirmed the infallibility of the saving content of Scripture rests upon decidedly unpersuasive grounds and conflicts with Calvin's unambiguous statements to the contrary.

Furthermore, the contention that a radical disjunction exists between Calvin's view of Scripture and that of Turretin remains unproven. While a shift in the form of theological discourse unquestionably took place in the seventeenth century, the content of orthodox doctrine remained substantially the same. Far from dispensing with Calvin's doctrine of inspiration, Turretin sought to defend it against the new challenges that it faced in the seventeenth century. While his methodology may be questioned, we should be in no doubt that Turretin intended his doctrine to be an expression of continuity with the doctrine expounded by the Reformers.

¹ Jack Rogers and Donald McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979) 174-175. Rogers and McKim's thesis was one of the products of the shift of thinking at Fuller Theological Seminary. The seminary had dropped its commitment to inerrancy in the early 1960s and its president, Daniel Fuller, had publically repudiated inerrancy in 1967: Daniel P. Fuller, 'Warfield's View of Faith and History,' *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* II (Spring 1968): 80-82. See the discussion in: Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976) 106-121. For a more recent articulation of the view see: Andrew T. B. McGowan, *The Divine Spiration of Scripture* (Leicester: Apollos, 2007) 98.

² See discussion of critics in: Richard A. Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford Studies in Historical Theology; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 25. Exemplars of this approach are Ernst Bizer, Walter Kickel, Brian Armstrong and T. F. Torrance. See discussion in Willem van Asselt and Eef Dekker, 'Introduction,' in *Reformation and Scholasticism: An Ecumenical Enterprise* (ed. Willem van Asselt and Eef Dekker; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001) 14-24.

³ Brian G. Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy* (London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969) 32.

⁴ Rogers and McKim, *Authority and Interpretation*, 172.

⁵ John T. McNeill, 'The Significance of the Word of God for Calvin,' *CH* 28 (1959): 141. Comments made concerning Calvin's commentary on 2 Timothy 3:16.

⁶ J. K. S. Reid, *The Authority of Scripture* (London: Methusen & Co Ltd, 1957) 43.

⁷ Doumergue, *Jean Calvin: Les hommes et les choses de son temps* (7 vols.; Lausanne: 1899-1928), IV 78. Cited in T.H.L. Parker, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries* (London: SCM, 1971) 57.

⁸ For a helpful discussion of accommodation in Calvin, see Randall C. Zachman, 'Calvin as Analogical Theologian,' *SJT* 51 (1998): 162-187.

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- ⁹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (ed. John T. McNeil; trans. Ford Lewis Battles; 2 vols.; 1559; repr., Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960) 1.13.1.
- ¹⁰ Rogers and McKim write: 'Given Calvin's understanding of the accommodated nature of God's communication in Scripture, it is not surprising that Calvin was unconcerned with normal, human inaccuracies in minor matters' (*Authority and Interpretation*, 109). See also Armstrong, *Calvinism*, 36.
- ¹¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.2.6.
- ¹² Reid, *Authority of Scripture*, 38. See also Richard C. Prust, 'Was Calvin a Biblical Literalist,' *SJT* 20 (1967): 314.
- ¹³ Reid, *Authority of Scripture*, 38.
- ¹⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.8.9.
- ¹⁵ McNeill, 'Word of God,' 141-142.
- ¹⁶ Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.11.10. The five differences are: 1. Stress on earthly benefits which, however, were to lead to heavenly concerns; 2. Truth in the Old Testament conveyed by images and ceremonies typifying Christ; 3. The Old Testament is literal; the New, spiritual; 4. Bondage of the Old Testament and freedom of the New; 5. The Old Testament has reference to one nation, the New to all nations (Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.11.1-12 (list provided by the editor, John McNeill)).
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.11.13. See also Zachman, 'Analogical Theologian,' 174-175.
- ¹⁸ McNeill, 'Word of God,' 135.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 137.
- ²⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.7.1.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 1.7.4.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 1.7.5.
- ²³ Rogers and McKim, *Authority and Interpretation*, 106.
- ²⁴ See also McNeill, 'Word of God,' 133-134.
- ²⁵ Reid, *Authority of Scripture*, 47.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 48.
- ²⁷ Prust, 'Biblical Literalist,' 315
- ²⁸ Rogers and McKim, *Authority and Interpretation*, 109-110; McNeill, 'Word of God,' 143-144. As John Woodbridge notes, Rogers and McKim's list of problem passages bears a striking resemblance to McNeill's (*Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers / McKim Proposal* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982) 58).
- ²⁹ John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul to the Romans and Thessalonians* (ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance; trans. R. MacKenzie; Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 1960) 61.
- ³⁰ Rogers and McKim, *Authority and Interpretation*, 109.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*; McNeill, 'Word of God,' 143.
- ³² Rogers and McKim, *Authority and Interpretation*, 109. The passage that Rogers and McKim are discussing is actually Calvin's commentary on Hebrews 10:5. See also McNeill, 'Word of God,' 143-144.
- ³³ Rogers and McKim, *Authority and Interpretation*, 109-110.
- ³⁴ Calvin, *Romans and Thessalonians*, 225.
- ³⁵ Rogers and McKim, *Authority and Interpretation*, 110. See also Darlene K. Flaming, 'Calvin as commentator on the Synoptic Gospels,' in *Calvin and the Bible* (ed. Donald McKim; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 147, 154.
- ³⁶ Rogers and McKim, *Authority and Interpretation*, 110. See also McNeill, 'Word of God,' 143.

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- ³⁷ John Calvin, *A Harmony of the Gospels, Vol III: James and Jude* (ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance; trans. A. W. Morrison; Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 1972) 177. The reference should be to Zechariah 11:13 (itself a copyist's error in the Torrance edition!).
- ³⁸ Rogers and McKim, *Authority and Interpretation*, 110-111.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 112.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁴¹ Armstrong, *Calvinism*, 32.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, 32-33.
- ⁴³ See also Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2001) 61-63.
- ⁴⁴ Rogers and McKim, *Authority and Interpretation*, 148. See also Armstrong, *Calvinism*, 38, 129-131.
- ⁴⁵ See also Reid, *Authority of Scripture*, 78-102.
- ⁴⁶ Rogers and McKim, *Authority and Interpretation*, 172. Along similar lines, Reid argues that orthodoxy 'lost the living reality with which Luther and Calvin had invested Scripture, so that in their hands Scripture became an external authority legalistically conceived, and adherence to Scripture rigid Biblicism' (*Authority of Scripture*, 77). Reid cites Emil Brunner who claimed that 'The age of Orthodoxy appears like a frozen waterfall – mighty shapes of movement, but no movement.'
- ⁴⁷ Rogers and McKim, *Authority and Interpretation*, 173.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 174.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 174-175.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 176.
- ⁵¹ Rogers and McKim, *Authority and Interpretation*, 176-177. See also Reid, *Authority of Scripture*, 92-96.
- ⁵² Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (3 vols.; Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1997) 2.4.6-27.
- ⁵³ Rogers and McKim, *Authority and Interpretation*, 177. Citing Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.8.13.
- ⁵⁴ Armstrong, *Calvinism*, 173.
- ⁵⁵ Rogers and McKim, *Authority and Interpretation*, 177.
- ⁵⁶ Turretin, *Elenctic Theology*, 2.11.13. See Reid, *Authority of Scripture*, 87-92.
- ⁵⁷ Rogers and McKim, *Authority and Interpretation*, 180-181, 183-184.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 188.
- ⁵⁹ As J.I. Packer notes, 'the reason why Calvin never argued this point is not because it was not important to him, but that it was not denied' ('Calvin's View of Scripture,' in *God's Inerrant Word: An International Symposium on the Trustworthiness of Scripture* (ed. John Warwick Montgomery; Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany Fellowship Inc., 1974) 98).
- ⁶⁰ For a contemporary articulation see the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978), the Lausanne Covenant (1974), and the doctrinal basis of the Evangelical Theological Society.
- ⁶¹ See Prust, 'Biblical Literalist,' 313-314; Reid, *Authority of Scripture*, 36-38.
- ⁶² John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (trans. William Pringle; Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1856) 219 (emphasis added).
- ⁶³ John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews and the First and Second Epistles of St. Peter* (ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance; trans. William B. Johnston; Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 1996), 344.

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- ⁶⁴ John Calvin, *Calvin's Bible Commentaries: Harmony of the Law* (trans. John King; 3 vols.; Forgotten Books, 1847), III: 353.
- ⁶⁵ John Calvin, *Daniel* (2 vols.; Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1852), 79.
- ⁶⁶ John Calvin, *A Harmony of the Gospels Vol I* (ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance; trans. A. W. Morrison; Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 1972), 82.
- ⁶⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.8.8-9. McNeill, the editor of this version, adds a note denying that Calvin affirms inerrancy here (p. 1157).
- ⁶⁸ John Murray writes: '[Calvin] affirms most explicitly that the Scripture is from God, that it has come to us from the very mouth of God, and that in believing the Scripture we feel the firmest conviction that we hold an invincible truth. To insinuate that this conviction has respect simply to the heavenly doctrine, as distinct from Scripture as the depository is to interject a distinction of which there is no suggestion in the relevant passages' (*Calvin on Scripture and Divine Sovereignty* (Phillipsburg, Pa: P & R Publishing, 1960) 21).
- ⁶⁹ The Bible certainly sets out a correspondence theory of truth (John 8:44; Acts 24:8). See further Norman L. Geisler, 'The Concept of Truth in the Inerrancy Debate,' *ERT* 5 (1981): 192-196; Roger Nicole, 'The Biblical Concept or Truth,' in *Scripture and Truth* (ed. D.A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge; 1983; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992) 293-296.
- ⁷⁰ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Leicester: IVP, 1994) 94.
- ⁷¹ Rogers and McKim, *Authority and Interpretation*, 99. Incarnational models of inspiration have been popular across a broad spectrum of evangelical theology over the past two centuries: Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* (ed. John Bolt; trans. John Vriend; 4 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), Vol 1: 380-382; Clark H. Pinnock and Barry L. Callen, *The Scripture Principle* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006) 111-132; Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in this Text?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998) 304-305; Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005) 23-165.
- ⁷² This argument has been advanced by numerous scholars: Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1948) 162-163; J. I. Packer, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1958) 83; Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol 1: 397-399.
- ⁷³ G. K. Beale, 'Myth, History, and Inspiration' (review of Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament*), *JETS* 49 (June 2006): 299.
- ⁷⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.8.5.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.2.14.
- ⁷⁶ Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority*, 58.
- ⁷⁷ Benjamin B. Warfield, 'Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God,' in *Calvin and Calvinism* (ed. Benjamin B. Warfield; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1931) 63. Cited by Edward A. Dowey Jr., *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology* (1952; repr., Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994) 101; B.A. Gerrish, 'Biblical Authority and the Continental Reformation,' *SJT* 10 (1957): 355, fn 2.
- ⁷⁸ Warfield, 'Knowledge of God,' in Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, 64.
- ⁷⁹ See the refutation of the view in Gerrish, 'Biblical Authority', 353.
- ⁸⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.8.7. See McNeill, 'Word of God', 137.
- ⁸¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.7.5.
- ⁸² *Ibid.*, 1.7.2.
- ⁸³ See Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Historical Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 1978), 223-226; Packer, 'Calvin's View of Scripture' in Montgomery, *God's Inerrant Word*, 109.
- ⁸⁴ Gerrish, 'Biblical Authority', 355 (emphasis in original).
- ⁸⁵ Reid, *Authority of Scripture*, 40. See also Parker, *Calvin's NT Commentaries*, 68.

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- ⁸⁶ Fuller treatments are provided by: Murray, *Calvin*, 12-31; Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority*, 59-67; Robert Godfrey, 'Biblical Authority in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: A Question of Transition,' in *Scripture and Truth* (ed. D.A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge; 1983; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992) 232-233.
- ⁸⁷ Packer, 'Calvin's View of Scripture,' in Montgomery, *God's Inerrant Word*, 106.
- ⁸⁸ See Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority*, 59-60.
- ⁸⁹ Calvin, *Romans and Thessalonians*, 61.
- ⁹⁰ Calvin, *Hebrews, 1 and 2 Peter*, 227-228.
- ⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 58-59.
- ⁹² Calvin, *Romans and Thessalonians*, 225.
- ⁹³ Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority*, 60.
- ⁹⁴ See Dowey Jr., *Knowledge of God*, 103.
- ⁹⁵ Murray, *Calvin*, 29. See also Roger Nicole, 'John Calvin and Inerrancy,' *JETS* 25 (1982): 430.
- ⁹⁶ John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance; trans. John W. Fraser; Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 1960) 209.
- ⁹⁷ John Calvin, *Genesis* (ed. Alister McGrath and James I. Packer; Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2001) 22-23.
- ⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.
- ⁹⁹ Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority*, 61.
- ¹⁰⁰ Dowey Jr., *Knowledge of God*, 104-105.
- ¹⁰¹ Richard Muller writes: 'Calvin's overtly negative reaction to the 'scholastici' conveys only a small part of his relationship to medieval scholastic theology, its method, themes and distinctions. Alongside the rejection, there is also appropriation, sometimes explicit, but often unacknowledged. There are also parallels in method and intention, notably between Calvin's approach to system and commentary and the approach of Peter Lombard' ('Scholasticism in Calvin: A Question of Relation and Disjunction,' in *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (ed. Richard A. Muller; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 57).
- ¹⁰² Asselt and Dekker, 'Introduction,' in Asselt and Dekker, *Reformation and Scholasticism*, 39; Muller, *After Calvin*, 27-33; Timothy Ward, *Word and Supplement: Speech Acts, Biblical Texts and the Sufficiency of Scripture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 62; Muller, *After Calvin*, 139.
- ¹⁰³ Richard A. Muller, *Holy Scripture: The Cognitive Foundation of Theology* (vol. 2 of *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*; 2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003) 96-97.
- ¹⁰⁴ Asselt and Dekker, 'Introduction,' in Asselt and Dekker, *Reformation and Scholasticism*, 39.
- ¹⁰⁵ Muller, *PRRD vol. 2*, 98. Muller points out that Brunner and Reid's negative assessments of orthodoxy's doctrine of revelation depends almost exclusively on 'the fact that Protestant orthodoxy did not and, of course, historically could not reflect the neorthodox interpretation of the Reformation and/or the neorthodox view of revelation as 'event'.'
- ¹⁰⁶ Muller, *PRRD vol. 2*, 100; Asselt and Dekker, 'Introduction,' in Asselt and Dekker, *Reformation and Scholasticism*, 39. The claim that English Puritanism went a different way to their continental contemporaries due to the influences of Ramism is also flawed, see: W. Robert Godfrey, 'Biblical Authority in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: A Question of Transition,' in *Scripture and Truth* (ed. D.A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge; 1983; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992) 235-236.
- ¹⁰⁷ Muller, *PRRD vol. 2*, 100-101.
- ¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹⁰⁹ Although Rogers and McKim note this, they do not give it due weight in appreciating the changes of form in which the doctrine of Scripture is presented.

¹¹⁰ Godfrey notes that the Socinians were ‘insisting on a determinative role for reason and the Roman Catholics [were] pressing the refined arguments of Robert Bellarmine and others for an authoritative church’ (‘Biblical Authority,’ in Carson and Woodbridge, *Scripture and Truth*, 237).

¹¹¹ Godfrey, ‘Biblical Authority,’ in Carson and Woodbridge, *Scripture and Truth*, 237.

¹¹² Rogers and McKim, *Authority and Interpretation*, 162, 173. It may be a more apt description of some of Turretin’s contemporaries, e.g. Gosbertus Voetius, see Muller, *After Calvin*, 240, fn 21.

¹¹³ The authors wholly relied upon Leon Allison’s selective translation of Turretin’s Institutes, see Rogers and McKim, *Authority and Interpretation*, 196, fn 170. For a damning critique of Rogers and McKim’s methodology at this point see Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority*, 116-117.

¹¹⁴ Turretin, *Elenctic Theology*, 1.6.1-8. Turretin maintains that theology is not *sapientia* strictly speaking because *sapientia* is ‘the intelligence of principles known per se and the knowledge of conclusions’ (*Elenctic Theology*, 1.6.5). See discussion in Muller, *After Calvin*, 139-140; Willem van Asselt, ‘The Fundamental Meaning of Theology: Archetypal and Ectypal Theology in Seventeenth-Century Reformed Thought,’ *WTJ* 64 (2002): 326.

¹¹⁵ Turretin, *Elenctic Theology*, 1.7.2.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.7.7.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.7.13.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.5.4 (emphasis added).

¹¹⁹ Only nine texts are used in the third question.

¹²⁰ About the interpretation of Scripture, Turretin writes: ‘To ascertain the true sense of the Scriptures, interpretation is needed... there is need of an inspection of the sources, the knowledge of languages, the distinction between proper and figurative words, attention to the scope and circumstances, collation of passages, connection of what precedes and follows, removal of prejudices and conformity of the interpretation to the analogy of faith’ (*Elenctic Theology*, 2.19.18).

¹²¹ For example, Calvin’s use of Ephesians 5:32 to support his understanding of the mysterious nature of the sacraments (*The Epistles of the Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians* (ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance; trans. T.H.L. Parker; Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries 11; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1965) 208-210).

¹²² Turretin, *Elenctic Theology*, 2.5.28 (emphasis added).

¹²³ Calvin, *Harmony of the Gospels III*, 177.

¹²⁴ Turretin, *Elenctic Theology*, 2.4.1.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.5.1.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.6.13.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.6.14.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.6.24. See also Godfrey, ‘Biblical Authority,’ in Carson and Woodbridge, *Scripture and Truth*, 238-239; Muller, *PRRD vol. 2*, 181, 281.

¹²⁹ Francis Turretin, ‘Disputatio theologica de Scripturae Sacrae auctoritate, adversus pontificos,’ in *Opera* (ed. Francis Turretin; 4 vols.; Edinburgh: Lowe, 1847), vol. 4, 237. Cited in Muller, *PRRD vol. 2*, 128. These words virtually echo Calvin’s claim that ‘the Word will not find acceptance in men’s hearts before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit’ (*Institutes*, 1.7.4).

¹³⁰ Even Robert Godfrey overstates these differences and inexplicitly adopts the parody of Turretin and Protestant orthodoxy in his conclusion to ‘Beyond the Sphere of our Judgment’: Calvin and the Confirmation of Scripture,’ *WTJ* 58 (1996): 29-39.

¹³¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.8.1-13; Turretin, *Elenctic Theology*, 2.4.6-27.

¹³² It is certainly doubtful that Calvin would have agreed with Turretin that ‘the marks which God has impressed upon the Scriptures... furnish indubitable proof of divinity’ (*Elenctic Theology*, 2.4.6). The difference is accounted for on the basis of the differing challenges that the two theologians faced.

¹³³ Muller, *PRRD vol. 2*, 179. Muller further writes that ‘[The] description of the biblical Word as fundamental and authentic echoes the scholastic identification of Scripture as *principium theologiae* – and, contrary to the claims of modern writers like Rogers, it is precisely the traditional, Aristotelian understanding of the nature of a first principle that bars any and all attempts to offer rational and empirical demonstration of the authority of Scripture and will, ultimately, render all evidences dependent on the testimony of the Spirit for their personal validation and acceptance’ (*PRRD vol. 2*, 264).

¹³⁴ Turretin, *Elenctic Theology*, 1.9.12 and 1.9.9. See fuller discussion in Muller, *After Calvin*, 143.

¹³⁵ Turretin, *Elenctic Theology*, 1.2.6. See Richard A. Muller, *Prolegomena to Theology* (vol. 1 of *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*; 2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003) 225-238. Junius earlier adopted a similar distinction in *De vera theologia* (1594), see Asselt, ‘Archetypal and Ectypal Theology’, 328. Muller suggests that the distinction is similar to Scotus’ division of *theologia in se* and *theologia nostra* but the Reformed distinction emphasises the soteriological necessity of revelation (*PRRD vol. 1*, 223-225).

¹³⁶ Turretin, *Elenctic Theology*, 2.19.8 (emphasis added).

¹³⁷ Muller, *PRRD vol. 2*, 305.

¹³⁸ Turretin, *Elenctic Theology*, 2.8.4, 2.16.5.

¹³⁹ Martin I. Klauber, ‘Francis Turretin on Biblical Accommodation: Loyal Calvinist or Reformed Scholastic,’ *WTJ* 55 (1993): 73-86.

¹⁴⁰ Muller, *PRRD vol. 2*, 412. See also Muller, *After Calvin*, 146-155.

Review article: Trinitarian Theology

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***The Message of the Trinity: Life in God (The Bible Speaks Today: Bible Themes)*, Brian Edgar, IVP, 2004, 336pp, £11.99**

***God the Holy Trinity: Reflections on Christian Faith and Practice (Beeson Divinity Studies)*, Timothy George (Editor), Baker Academic, 2006, 176pp, £12.99**

***The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology and Worship*, Robert Letham, P&R Publishing, 2004, 551pp, £18.99**

***Trinitarian Theology for the church: Scripture, Community, Worship*, Daniel J Treier & David Lauber (Editors), IVP, 2009, 270pp, £14.99**

***The Church as the Image of the Trinity: A Critical Evaluation of Miroslav Volf's Ecclesial Model (WEST Theological Monograph Series)*, Kevin J Bidwell, Wipf & Stock, 2011, 282pp, £19.00**

***Systematic Theology (Volume One): Grounded in Holy Scripture and Understood in the Light of the Church*, Douglas F Kelly, Christian Focus Publications (Mentor), 2008, 640pp, £22.99 (HB)**

‘The Christian faith is faith in the Triune God’,¹ so affirmed the first Charismatic systematic theologian nearly fifty years ago. And he was correct. A British evangelical theologian puts it more strongly: ‘Without the Trinity there is no Christian Faith’². Uncompromising words which may shock some. Other theologians have made similar statements. Professor Donald Macleod emphasises that ‘The doctrine itself is of vital importance to Christians... It is crucial to our understanding of both God and man.’³ Professor Kevin J. Vanhoozer, another evangelical theologian, affirms: ‘At the heart of the Christian Faith lie neither principles, piety nor practices but rather the work of three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.’⁴ That is another hard-hitting statement. Notice that Vanhoozer refers to ‘the work of three persons...’ as being at the heart and centre of our faith. By their ‘work’ Vanhoozer is particularly emphasising the way in which the persons of the Trinity work out together their ‘plan’ of salvation for the elect (Ephesians 1:10) and that is basically what we mean when we refer to the ‘economic’ Trinity.

By using the term ‘ontological’ Trinity, we are denoting what the three persons are in their inner relations with one another. The terms ‘economic’ and ‘ontological’ Trinity, therefore, refer to the same glorious Trinity of Divine Persons; the distinction is used for our own benefit in order to distinguish between the unique and glorious relations of the Three Persons within the Godhead and then their work together for our redemption. And what is important to appreciate is that God’s self-revelation of himself in the Word majors on the economic Trinity, that is, the three Persons working together for our redemption. That is what the Bible majors on from Genesis to Revelation.

But one other comment on Vanhoozer’s statement is required, namely, the term ‘Person’. There is only one God but there are also three that are God. As Stuart Olyott remarks, ‘the difficulty comes when we ask, “Three WHAT”. We can’t say they are three “parts” of God. That is not true. Nor are there three Gods. So how do you refer to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit? They are three... what?’⁵ That is what the church has struggled to explain. Greek writers have talked about *hypostasis* while in

the West and Latin side the terms 'persona' and 'substance' have been used but none of them are ideal. So we need great care in using the term 'Person' because they are not independent, separate, unrelated as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. What we are referring to, then, are 'personal self-distinctions within the Divine Being', each of whom can say of themselves, 'I' and refer to the others as 'He' or 'You'. But God cannot be divided or mixed up in three ways or be a collection, an aggregate or a committee of individuals. But I repeat the point again: With the doctrine of the Holy Trinity being so central to the Christian Faith, it is expected that Christians, especially preachers and church elders, study the doctrine carefully and keep abreast of some of the valuable books being published.

The aim of this review, therefore, is to sample a few of the more recent publications which I deem helpful and enriching for preachers particularly to read and constantly refer to in their ministries.

Repent of our neglect?

One contemporary writer observes: 'For many Christians, the Trinity has become something akin to their appendix: it is there, but they are not sure what its function is, they would get by in life without it doing very much, and if they had to have it removed they would not be too distressed'!⁶ And Bob Letham expresses the same concern, that 'For the vast majority of Christians, including ministers and theological students, the Trinity is still a mathematical conundrum, full of imposing philosophical jargon, relegated to an obscure alcove, remote from daily life'⁷. If that is really how we, or Christians generally, regard the Trinity, then how can we fulfil our 'chief end', namely 'to glorify God and enjoy him for ever' if we are indifferent to what he has revealed in the Word concerning himself as the Triune God?

Doctor Martyn Lloyd-Jones, in the early 1960s, wondered why we have emphasised this doctrine of the Trinity so little. His answer was blunt: 'I fear it is another example of the laziness that has come upon us – the desire for comfort, and the tendency to rest upon experiences, and to avoid anything that demands intellectual effort.'⁸

Today, however, we need to add the fact that people read less and even pastors, when they read, tend to go for lighter and easier books of a devotional or biographical nature. 'But', Lloyd-Jones warns us, 'if we have neglected the doctrine of the Trinity, shame on us! It is... the most exalted and the most glorious of all doctrines; the most amazing and astonishing thing that God has been pleased to reveal to us concerning himself'. But there are clearly other reasons for this neglect of the doctrine of the Trinity in our situation which we can identify.

One reason, as Lloyd-Jones himself also acknowledged, is the perception among Christians that it is a profound doctrine, including technical terms which the church and its theologians have used and debated over the centuries.

While the doctrine of the Trinity has had a bad press from the old Liberal theology, also the cults, there is the more worrying general indifference amongst many Christians towards Christian doctrine. The general line is that this and other doctrines are difficult, if not impossible to understand. It is true we can never fully understand how God, who is one, is also three. And it remains a mystery yet this eternal, triune God has revealed himself in the Word so we need humbly in response to search the Scriptures to see more of himself there as the One-in-Three and Three-in-One. However, we must not allow the profundity of the doctrine to deprive us of knowing what the Scripture actually reveals of the Triune God. And that in itself will lead us to worship him more and appreciate how glorious he is.

Another reason for the neglect of the doctrine of the Trinity, I suggest, lies at the door of preachers, namely, their failure to read in depth and open up adequately the riches of the Word for their congregations. This is clearly a generalization but sadly it is widely true of pastors/preachers. My personal observation is that the level of reading of many pastors is extremely basic and restricted, often limited to devotional/historical/biographical books with the occasional excursion into doctrine. Even the bible commentaries used often are only basic for sermon preparation. We desperately need to read more, to get more deeply into the Word, and engage with biblical and systematic theology.

There are very few sermons preached on the Trinity but also only occasional references are made to the Trinity in weekly sermons. For example, I have asked Christians over the past couple of years when last they heard a sermon on the Trinity and none of them could remember hearing such a sermon in the past 2-3 years at least, or even longer. A further example confirms my own suspicions: An American theologian conducted extensive research in the States as to how frequently the Trinity is preached and then as to what is preached about the Trinity. The researcher reviewed the subject and Scripture indexes of 13 volumes of *20 Centuries of Great Preaching* and volumes 34-76 of the *Pulpit Digest*. The researcher also checked all references to the Trinity or to Trinity Sunday and to 15 biblical texts usually associated with the Trinity. It was a fairly thorough piece of research. And the result? Only twenty sermons on the Trinity were found, with three preachers represented by two sermons each. A few sermons were found which made a passing reference to the Trinity or that occasionally had a Trinitarian structure. But the content of these few sermons on the Trinity was also disappointing. Even a sermon on the benediction in 2 Corinthians 13:14 did not include an exposition and was not particularly Trinitarian in its message. Other sermons on the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19 even failed to draw attention to the Trinity, although the three Persons are mentioned there! And as a consequence congregations may well be justified in thinking of the Holy Trinity like the way we regard our appendix – it is there, but not essential. Preachers – what about it? How Trinitarian is your own preaching?

Professor Vanhoozer understands the biblical Gospel in terms of a drama rather than a story – the ‘greatest drama ever staged... a cosmic stage and a covenantal plot’.⁹ He describes the Holy Spirit as the ‘primary director of the drama’ with the pastor as an ‘assistant director’ but helped by theologians. Ideally, he adds, the pastor is also a theologian and therefore must keep to the text and communicate it to people. Vanhoozer then refers to a ‘masterpiece theatre’ – the seven creeds of the church as summarising biblical teaching and also historical theology for the universal church. He talks, too, of the ‘regional theatre’ which he understands as confessional theology, based on Confessions from the Reformation onwards. These are distinctive especially in that they are more limited in their acceptance by churches. But what I want to emphasise is the ‘local theatre’ which for Vanhoozer is the local congregational theology, where the pastor instructs members in the theo drama. If pastors neglect Scripture then they become disorientated and lose out on the Gospel. And if they neglect creedal and confessional theology they also dispossess themselves and their congregations of the accumulated richness of the church’s involvement and experience in the theo-drama over the centuries.

Renaissance

Over the past sixty years or more there has been emerging a renaissance of Trinitarian theology among theologians, which has been taken up by the academic world. Earlier in the twentieth century, Karl Barth wrote vigorously in defence and elucidation of the doctrine (as well as the deity of Christ) and this against the background of an arrogant liberal, sceptical theology in Protestantism which was bent on discarding the major doctrines of the Faith. Others have built on his contribution, with theologians from the Western as well as the Orthodox churches seeking to articulate and promote the doctrine of the Trinity. In the UK in the late 1970s, there were some valuable

ecumenical contributions made in a series of three books under the title of *The Forgotten Trinity* where the influence of Professor Colin Gunton was significant. Many others have contributed since in this Trinitarian renaissance with some good material having been written and helpful insights provided into the doctrine of the Trinity. In this respect, Bob Letham laments the fact that 'this torrent of activity has yet to percolate through to the pulpit or the pew'¹⁰ which in turn reflects the fact that pastors are not acquainted with contemporary systematic and biblical theology in this area.

Biblical

What is most encouraging in recent years is the fact that some valuable work has been done in order to establish the biblical nature of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. I was thrilled, for example, some years ago to find James Packer's stimulating chapter, *The Trinity and the Gospel*¹¹. Here he undertakes a study of John 3:1-15 and in what Jesus said to Nicodemus, 'the Trinity is presented in quite a different light – not now as the linchpin of orthodox belief (which nonetheless it is) but as, literally and precisely, the sinner's way of salvation'. In fact, Packer claims further: 'As one learns the Christian gospel and enters by faith into the riches of fellowship with God that it holds forth, one is, in fact, mastering the mystery of the Triune God.' Surely there are rich gleanings here for Christians and preachers!

A more oblique biblical approach is attempted by Max Turner in his *Towards Trinitarian Pneumatology – Perspectives from Pentecost*¹². Turner argues from the biblical text that Pentecost 'not only provides what is perhaps the firmest basis for the New Testament's divine christology... but also gives pneumatology a strong push in a trinitarian direction'. This again is well worth reading as well as the immediately preceding chapters.

And I thoroughly enjoyed Brian Edgar's *The Message of The Trinity*¹³. He is convinced that 'the Christian doctrine of God as Trinity is fundamentally simple, thoroughly practical, theologically central and totally biblical'. Rather than attempting a 'proof-text' approach and depending on one or two biblical texts to prove the doctrine, Edgar claims 'It is something found in the whole testimony of Scripture concerning the story of salvation and is an unavoidable implication of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit'¹⁴. He further describes the doctrine as being 'comprehensible', 'logical', 'practical', 'foundational', 'essential', 'structural', and 'biblical'¹⁵. And in a readable, warm and helpful way, Edgar majors on expounding a range of key biblical passages in establishing that we can know and experience God in his awesome three-in-oneness.

The biblical passages he majors on include 2 Corinthians 13:14, Ephesians 1:1-14 ('A Trinitarian Blessing'), the Trinity in the Old Testament such as Deuteronomy 6:4-9 ('The Lord our God is One'), Proverbs 8:22-31 ('The Wisdom of God'), Ezekiel 37: 1-14 ('The Spirit of God'). This is followed by a long but key section on 'The Trinity in the experience and teaching of Jesus' which repays close attention and study. He rightly affirms that although the word 'trinity' does not appear, yet 'there are few descriptions of the inner, trinitarian life of God as profound and as important as the words of Jesus recorded in John 14'¹⁶. Then the final and extensive section of the book is devoted to 'The Trinity in the Experience and teaching of the early church', including the crucial passage of Acts 2:1-47, Romans 8:1-17, 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, Galatians 3:26-4:7, Ephesians 4:1-16 and Jude 20-21. I heartily commend the book to serious readers who want to grapple with Scripture and appreciate its teaching concerning the Holy Trinity.

Encouragingly, therefore, some theologians writing on the Trinity are devoting more attention to the biblical teaching on the subject and that is a welcome development. Perhaps I can refer to two further examples.

Gerald Bray provides a stimulating chapter entitled 'Out of the box: The Christian Experience of God in Trinity' in an interesting book, *God the Holy Trinity: Reflections on Christian Faith and Practice*¹⁷. Bray believes that 'we can expound the Christian doctrine of the Trinity as an extended commentary on the meaning of this verse in Galatians (4:6), which not only reflects the earliest stage of the Christian message but also defines the most characteristic feature of that message'¹⁸. Bray suggests also that in Galatians 4:6 Paul 'lays the groundwork for his assertion about the persons of the Trinity in a short phrase that readers often overlook – "Because you are sons"¹⁹. His work here deserves your attention!

But other chapters in this book are variable. I enjoyed Alister E. McGrath's chapter in which he reflects on the doctrine of the Trinity²⁰, seeing the doctrine as 'our admission... that we simply cannot fully grasp all that God is' and he welcomes the recent emphasis on the concept of *mystery* in this context. But McGrath has at least two concerns which can be mentioned here. One is that a considerable amount of theological discussion on the Trinity 'has lost its moorings in Scripture'. That is arguably true but there is a welcome return now to a more biblical approach. Two, he questions whether it is legitimate to refer to the doctrine of the Trinity 'as playing a foundational role in theology, when it is... something that we infer from other foundations'²¹. Over the following eight pages he fleshes out these two concerns in a provocative way but I would modify some of his statements. Why not read what he has to say?

Packer's chapter on 'A Puritan Perspective: Trinitarian Godliness according to John Owen'²² is well worth reading as is Timothy George's 'The Trinity and the Challenge of Islam'²³ who emphasises with Bishop Kenneth Cragg that 'bare monotheism is ultimately barren.' Teaching about the Trinity, he insists, 'is not peripheral; it is essential to our understanding of the character and nature of the one true God'. This is a MUST read for those involved in Muslim evangelism and dialogue. The other chapters I found disappointing but the book is well worth buying if only for the chapters referred to above.

I must refer to Bob Letham's helpful volume, *The Holy Trinity in Scripture, History, Theology and Worship*²⁴. This is a competent, wide-ranging, scholarly but warm and doxological study and exposition of the doctrine of the Trinity. Needless to say, pastors should make themselves familiar with this book and theology students can use it with profit as a key text for their studies in Trinitarian theology. Again, what is pleasing is that Letham spends Part One of his book examining the 'Biblical Foundations' of the doctrine and does so over three chapters with an excursus on 'Ternary Patterns in Ephesians'. The first chapters major on the Old Testament Background, Jesus and the Father then The Holy Spirit and Triadic Patterns. The author should have provided an even more extensive biblical section, yet there is considerable food for thought in these chapters and scope to develop further what are key, foundational strands of biblical teaching. Another advantage of this biblical section is that Letham does not confuse his methodology and stays within Scripture in laying some of the foundations for this important doctrine.

Part Two of the book provides an outline of the historical development of the doctrine. He bridges the N.T with the second-century Logos Christology – a critically important period – before dealing with the Arian controversy, Athanasius, the Cappodocians, the Council of Constantinople, Augustine, East and West: the Filioque Controversy, then the schism, and finally in this section an absorbing but brief chapter on John Calvin. Considering Calvin within the context of historical theology, Letham begins his focus on Calvin with the 1559 edition of the *Institutes* concluding that 'the Trinity IS his doctrine of God. It contains nothing expressly on God other than a section on the Trinity. Here is a major departure from Aquinas's separation of his discussion of the one God from his discussion on the Trinity; this is more in line with Peter Lombard's approach in his *Sentences*. So much is the Trinity integral to his understanding of God, that the whole work has a trinitarian structure'²⁵.

Against this helpful background, the reader is better placed in Part Three to follow the description and assessment of more recent theologians like Barth, Rahner, Moltmann, Pannenberg, Bulgakov, Lossky, Staniloae and T F Torrance.

Part Four picks up some critical issues regarding the incarnation, worship, creation and mission, then persons. I found all these chapters suggestive and helpful. I hesitate, however, within the scope of this article to open up on each of these issues, but allow me one reference. Chapter eighteen on 'The Trinity, Worship and Prayer' will challenge you in your approach to worship, hymns, prayer, the Lord's Supper and preaching. Letham here has some trenchant criticisms to make and I support him as 'most Christians are little more than practical modalists'²⁶. There is, therefore, an urgent need 'to refocus Western hymnody' while, 'chief of all, the Trinity must be preached and must shape preaching... A Trinitarian mind-set must become as integral to the preacher as the air we breathe'²⁷.

The remaining chapters in this final section equally deserve your attention. Better still, read the whole book, but thoughtfully and prayerfully.

Another useful book on the Trinity is *Trinitarian Theology for the Church: Scripture, Community, Worship*²⁸. The book is divided into three parts. Part One is that of 'Scripture: The Bible and the Triune Economy'. The second part is entitled 'Community: The Trinity and Society' while the third and final section is 'Worship: Church Practices and the Triune Mission'.

However, if only for the two opening two chapters by Kevin Vanhoozer on the '*Triune Discourse*' this book is well worth reading. In wanting to ground the doctrine of the Trinity more thoroughly in the Scripture then it is encouraging to find Vanhoozer highlighting the implications of Trinitarian theology for the way we come to, and use, the Bible. He first seeks to relate the doctrine of biblical inerrancy with that of the Trinity, while in his second chapter he underlines the fact that the one God speaks but also that 'speech activity is appropriated to each of the three persons'²⁹ and he explores this helpfully. His conclusion is that the Trinity 'is our Scripture Principle' which is equivalent to insisting that the church's supreme authority in all areas of faith and practice 'is the triune God speaking in the Scriptures'³⁰ but this involves demanding challenges for us. I urge you to read these two key chapters. Personally, I found the remaining chapters variable in their quality and appeal, although I was stimulated by some of them.

For example, I appreciated Mark Husbands' chapter 'The Trinity is Not Our Social Program: Volf, Gregory of Nyssa and Barth'. The chapter aims to show that social trinitarians such as Miroslav Volf are misguided in believing the Trinity to be *our* social program. Such theologians, Husbands claims, and Volf especially, 'have misread the Cappodocian fathers at crucial points'³¹ so it would be improper for us to follow them. One 'basic rule' Husbands suggests for measuring whether proposals and statements regarding the Trinity are consistent with both the Bible and the Nicene Creed is that they 'must preserve an ontological distinction between God and humanity in order to maintain an order consistent with their distinct natures'³². He sees an example of a theologian breaking this rule in Catherine LaCugna's book, *God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*. This is an extremely important chapter and I will refer shortly to Volf in another context but we need to be alert to the errors and questionable uses being made currently in what is popularly referred to as social trinitarianism .

There is a strong mission emphasis in this book and some readers may be helped by reading Keith E. Johnson's, 'Does The Doctrine of the Trinity Hold the Key to a Christian Theology of Religions?' and Robert K. Lang'at's 'Trinity and Missions: Theological Priority in Missionary Nomenclature'. Both chapters express concerns regarding the way in which Trinitarian doctrine is being used currently.

The latter writer, for example demonstrates clearly how 'evangelical understandings of mission have frequently been dislocated from their properly trinitarian home'³³. The final section of this book on Worship explores, for example, the Lord's Supper as participation in the Life of the Triune God³⁴

The very last chapter makes suggestions as to 'What to do with our Renewed Trinitarian Enthusiasm'. Emphasising the fact that 'an astonishing trinitarian renaissance has taken hold in many Christian traditions, he notes that 'we now have a shelf of books written to summarize all this recent work'³⁵. Like other writers, he refers again to the 'lack of trinitarian awareness... often reflected in Christian worship and offers some suggestions for addressing this need. Should you read and buy this book? Well, I did and have not regretted doing so!

It is a joy for me to commend Kevin J Bidwell's *The Church as the Image of the Trinity: A Critical Evaluation of Miroslav Volf's Ecclesial Model*³⁶. This book is the substance of his doctoral dissertation at WEST in partnership with the University of Wales, Trinity Saint David. I regard the book as a major, original contribution to contemporary Trinitarian theology. In terms of the importance of the subject, Robert Letham is justified in claiming that it 'can hardly be overestimated'³⁷. Volf is a leading academic theologian, hailing originally from former Yugoslavia but his studies led him to Zagreb then to Fuller Seminary before undertaking doctoral studies then post-doctoral studies under Professor Jürgen Moltmann at the University of Tübingen. The latter's influence on Volf has been profound and Bidwell describes fairly the extent of this influence in terms of two key words, namely, *liberation* and *Trinity*³⁸. Volf then employs his understanding of the Trinity to build his own distinctive egalitarian ecclesiology through using the ideas of the early English Separatist leader, John Smyth.

Chapter one sets the scene in terms of the resurgence of interest in the Trinity during the second part of the twentieth century before providing an overview of Volf's key work, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*³⁹. Volf wants his readers to journey with him and uses liberation slogans to insist, on behalf of the people that 'We are the church', rather than any kind of hierarchy. He interprets the early English Separatist leaders like John Smyth and Henry Ainsworth as being anti-clerical and opposed to any monarchical and hierarchical structures and ideas in the church. Volf then places this protest within a Trinitarian framework, while pursuing radical ecclesiastical reform. It is not surprising that he is critical of Roman Catholic and Orthodox ecclesiologies, longing for a community in the local church which reflects the community of the Triune God. In the contemporary world, Volf observed a shift away from hierarchical models of the church to a 'process of congregationalization' of Christianity with increasing lay participation so it is no surprise when he indicates that for him the Free Churches are more appropriate for the future.

Chapter two identifies and opens up the presuppositions underlying Volf's theological paradigm, especially Moltmann's social doctrine of the Trinity, including the 'pivotal issue' of 'hierarchy' versus 'equality'. Volf then aims to 'develop a non-hierarchical but truly communal ecclesiology based on a non-hierarchical doctrine of the Trinity'⁴⁰. Moltmann's influence was pivotal; Pannenberg's influence was significant also, while Volf has some affinity with the trinitarianism of the feminist Catholic theologian Catherine Mowry Lacugna and, to an extent, his own wife, Judith Gundry-Volf. His own theological paradigm is articulated in chapter four, with Bidwell safely concluding that Volf 'embraces a hermeneutic that views all theology, including a doctrine of God, the church and society, through an egalitarian window'⁴¹. His chapter five is of major importance as he describes and evaluates Volf's employment of John Smyth, the early English Separatist, as his chosen ecclesial representative (pp57-86). Bidwell rightly challenges Volf's use of Smyth as 'the voice of the Free Church tradition' which at best was a complex, fluid movement, while Volf also fails to do justice to Smyth's own developing and changing theology. This is a valuable critique.

Over the next two chapters, Volf is studied in dialogue with Joseph Ratzinger (the current Pope) and the Orthodox theologian, John Zizioulas whom Volf regards as important representatives of hierarchical ministry. Chapters ten to fourteen are extremely valuable chapters which in turn provide Bidwell's own critical evaluation of 'The Ecclesiality of the Church', 'Faith, Person and church', 'Trinity and Church' then the 'Structures of the Church' and 'The Catholicity of the Church'. Without pursuing the many important details in this extensive evaluation, the author concludes that the 'social doctrine of the Trinity' of both Volf and Moltmann 'exhibits a departure from both Eastern and Western understandings of the Trinity, the Reformers, historic creeds and the church fathers'⁴².

As I indicated on a blurb for the book, 'This is research at its best and must be read by church ministers and academics'; an important book indeed.

I cannot conclude this sample of recent books on Trinitarian theology without referring to Professor Douglas F Kelly's *Systematic Theology (Volume One): Grounded in Holy Scripture and Understood in the Light of the Church*. I personally treasure my copy and enjoy dipping into it often and I look forward to the publishing of volumes two and three. Without exaggeration, Professor Kelly is one of the most prominent, contemporary Reformed theologians who brings to his writings expertise in the biblical languages, Patristics, Reformation and Post-Reformation theology, yet who retains a warm, passionate love for the Lord and a commitment to godly service.

Chapter one (pp13-127) deals with the 'Knowledge of God: God reveals Himself', and ends with two appendices on some traditional theistic proofs, then Thomas Reid's answer to David Hume on causation. However, the bulk of the book majors on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

Chapter two (pp129-222) covers the 'Knowledge of the Triune God through Creation and Conscience'. Here, as in the rest of the volume, Professor Kelly gives detailed attention to the biblical text as, for example, Romans 1:18-23, 2:12-16, Acts 17:16-31 as well as the extensive Old Testament witness and often with insights from historical theology.

Chapter three (pp223-271) discusses the 'Western Rejection of God's Testimony to Himself in Creation and Conscience' but, while helpful, is largely historical and concentrates on the impact of the Enlightenment. Once again, this is rich, relevant material for us.

Chapter four (pp273-313) deals with the oneness of God under the title, 'God Who Is: the Holy Trinity as One Lord'. This chapter is enhanced by a lengthy but very helpful appendix on 'The Distinction in Eastern Orthodox Theology Between God's essence and His Energies' (pp295-313).

Chapter five (pp315-385) on 'What Kind of Lord he is: His Transcendence, Beauty and Majesty mean that His Sovereign Control is "Good news"' combines historical contributions with some stimulating contemporary and biblical work. But please do not miss the three most valuable appendices (pp353-384) which are most relevant and rich in their usefulness to us today in ministry. Subjects covered here are: 'Contemporary Challenges to God's Lordship' (where he affirms that 'the chief attack upon the lordship of the Triune God has come in the denial of creation out of nothing')⁴³, 'Attempts To Know the Lord outside the Community of Faith' and also the vital subject of 'Feminist Theology and the Fatherhood of God'.

Chapter six (pp387-446) has as its theme, 'The Triune God Makes Himself Known in the Covenant of Grace'. An extensive biblical approach here is strengthened by a section on the church's right interpretation of the Scripture. The thrust of the chapter is hugely important, namely, that 'we know the LORD only in and through the Covenant of Grace that he establishes'.

Another two chapters which merit reflection are Chapter seven, 'The One Lord Exists as Three Persons' (pp447-483) and Chapter eight (pp485-528), 'The Christian Church Thinks Through how God is One Being and Three Persons'. Yes, a new, contemporary theological vocabulary became necessary, so Kelly explains carefully terms like 'homoousios' (the Father and Son are of the same substance but distinguishable) and 'perichoresis' (mutual indwelling or co-indwelling) in an attempt to clarify the significance of the term 'Person' and how the One God has 'eternal inter-trinitarian relationships'. Incidentally, there is a good appendix to Chapter eight on 'The differing Approaches of the Cappodocians and Augustine to the Trinity' (pp519-528) which will prove a useful summary and evaluation for pastors as it impinges so much on contemporary Trinitarian writing.

Chapter nine (pp529-577) pursues the subject in emphasising 'The Full Co-equality of the Trinitarian Persons: No Subordination'. Here Kelly shows that the Church Fathers, medieval Scholastics and Protestant Reformers all affirmed that the 'Son and Spirit are equally ultimate and original as is the Father in the Godhead'⁴⁴ yet time was needed to clarify and secure this 'pivotal doctrine'. I found the chapter helpful if only for purposes of revision and re-assurance and I particularly enjoyed the final pages in the chapter dealing with the practical application of Trinitarian doctrine. The Chapter, as well as the book, ends with an appendix 'On The Filioque' with a brief history before discussing its theological aspects and contemporary status.

Kelly's book is a gem in many ways and it is one which you will want to refer to often with profit. Make sure you read it soon!

But a final appeal to preachers: Is it possible for us to reform our corporate worship AND preaching in order to make it consistently Trinitarian? Such a reform is urgently needed in order to deliver us from, at best, our binitarianism and, at worse a subtle expression of unitarianism.

¹ J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology*, vol.1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 83

² Gerald Bray, *The Doctrine of God* (Leicester: IVP) 246

³ Donald Macleod, *Shared Life: The Trinity & the fellowship of God's people* (London: Scripture Union, 1987) 7

⁴ Kevin Vanhoozer, *Trinitarian Theology for the Church* (Leicester: IVP, 2009) 25

⁵ Stuart Olyott, *The Three are One* (Bridgend: Bryntirion Press, 1998)

⁶ Robin Parry, *Worshipping the Trinity: Coming Back to the Heart of Worship* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2005)

⁷ Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology & Worship* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2004) 1

⁸ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Great Doctrines of the Bible: God the Father, God the Son* (London: Hodder, 1996) 84

⁹ Kevin Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2005) 89

¹⁰ Letham, 1

¹¹ *Collected Shorter Writings of J I Packer, Vol. 1: Celebrating the Saving Work of God* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998) 1-7

¹² Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit And Spiritual Gifts: Then And Now* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996) 169-180

¹³ Brian Edgar, *The Message of the Trinity* (Leicester: IVP, 2004)

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 20

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 20-32

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 169

¹⁷ Timothy George (ed), (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006) 37-55

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 39

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- ¹⁹ Ibid., 46
- ²⁰ Ibid., 17-35
- ²¹ Ibid., 26-27
- ²² Ibid., 91-108
- ²³ Ibid., 109-127
- ²⁴ (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2004)
- ²⁵ Ibid., 253
- ²⁶ Ibid., 407
- ²⁷ Ibid., 422-423
- ²⁸ Edited by Daniel J. Treier and David Lauber (Nottingham: IVP Apollos, 2009)
- ²⁹ Ibid., 18
- ³⁰ Ibid., 76
- ³¹ Ibid., 141
- ³² Ibid., 121
- ³³ Ibid., 181
- ³⁴ Ibid., 188-197
- ³⁵ Ibid., 237
- ³⁶ (Wipf & Stock: Eugene, Oregon, 2011)
- ³⁷ Ibid., vii
- ³⁸ Ibid., 5
- ³⁹ (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998)
- ⁴⁰ *The Church as the Image of the Trinity*, 14
- ⁴¹ Ibid., 56
- ⁴² Ibid., 237
- ⁴³ Douglas F. Kelly, *Systematic Theology (Volume One): Grounded in Holy Scripture and Understood in the Light of the Church* (Fearn: Christian Focus Publications, 2008) 353
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., 529

Book review

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Bread of Heaven: The Life and Work of William Williams, Pantycelyn, Eifion Evans,
Bryntirion Press, 2010, 409pp, £19.99

It is reckoned that a worldwide audience of two billion people tuned in to watch the wedding of Prince William and Katherine Middleton, making the service one of the most watched events in TV history. Of the three hymns sung in the service, two were by Methodists; *Love Divine All Loves Excelling* by Charles Wesley and *Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah* by William Williams. Strains of Williams' most famous hymn will often be heard at Welsh international Rugby matches: 'Bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more'.

For many, even in Christian circles, all that is known of William Williams is that he penned that hymn. One of the reasons why his life and other achievements have been shrouded in obscurity is that Williams has lacked an up-to-date biography in English. Yet, alongside Daniel Rowland and Howell Harris, the hymn writer was one of the big three leading figures of the Evangelical Revival in 18th century Wales. Howell Harris has been the subject of a recent major study, *Howell Harris: From Conversion to Separation 1735-1750* by Geraint Tudur (University Press of Wales, 2000). Eifion Evans' biography of Daniel Rowland is justly regarded as a spiritual classic: *Daniel Rowland and the Great Evangelical Awakening in Wales* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1985). Now we can be grateful that with the publication of Evans' volume on William Williams, that the remarkable life and work of the preacher will be more widely known and appreciated.

William Williams was a physician by trade. He was converted in his early twenties in 1738 under the preaching of Howell Harris. Williams was ordained as a Church of England curate, serving first of all in Llanwrtyd and then working alongside Daniel Rowland in Llangeitho. He was a key leader of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist movement.

Williams was a fine preacher and his ministry was much in demand in Wales and beyond. Towards the end of his life he calculated that in over forty years of preaching, he had travelled 111,800 miles, the equivalent of four times around the world. Thomas Charles testified that Williams' 'oratorical gifts were considerable; his preaching was evangelical, experiential and sweet'. He lived to proclaim salvation by the free grace of God on the basis of the finished work of Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The first generation of Calvinistic Methodists were loyal members of the Church of England; they had no wish to leave the Established Church unless thrown out by the authorities. But this created a problem: How could new Christians be nurtured in the faith if many Church of England clergymen did not preach the gospel and were not at all sympathetic to Methodism? Societies or groups of believers were set up to operate alongside the parish church system. William Williams helped to organise these societies and the local and national Associations that oversaw them. In the societies believers were encouraged to share their experiences of the Lord and their struggles in the life of faith. It was in these groups that Williams' gifts as a soul-physician really came into play. He wrote a book, *The Experience Meeting* as a manual for society leaders and to commend the value of societies to Methodist converts.

William Williams was the leading writer of the early Calvinistic Methodists. Eifion Evans gives us a flavour of his many and varied prose and poetic works. Williams published an epic poem of 1,360

verses, *A View of the Kingdom of Christ*, setting out the supremacy of Jesus in creation, providence and redemption. In *The Life and Death of Theomemphus*, the writer used Bunyanesque fictional characters to portray the trials and triumphs of a typical Calvinistic Methodist believer. His most ambitious prose effort was *Pantheologia: A History of All the Religions of the World*, printed in seven parts. It is fair to say that Williams' multi-volume work of comparative religion was not the most popular of his publications. But he wrote with the laudable aim of giving Welsh Calvinistic Methodism more of an intellectual edge.

Welcome attention is also devoted to William Williams the hymn-writer. His hymns give expression to all that was best about the Evangelical Revival in Wales. They are steeped in sound biblical doctrine and allude to Bible themes such as the believer's pilgrimage to glory. But in addition, Williams' compositions are the overflow of the heart of a gifted poet with a deep experience of communion with God. They are also enriched by the author's intimate knowledge of the struggles of the life of faith. Evans offers fresh translations of some of Williams' lesser known Welsh hymns (lesser known at least to English speakers).

The 18th century revival in Wales was not without controversy. Some attacked the revival from the outside. Williams defended the awakening against the charge of 'enthusiasm' or fanaticism. He found Jonathan Edwards' writings such as *The Religions Affections* helpful on this score. The revival was also rocked by controversy from within. Some adopted Sandemanian views that reduced saving faith to an intellectual assent to doctrinal propositions. Others advocated antinomianism and rejected the law of God as a rule of faith for believers. Williams refuted these errors in his writings. He also translated into Welsh works that addressed Sandemanian and antinomian false teachings.

An altogether trickier matter was Howell Harris' adoption of aberrant Moravian views. Harris revelled in the 'blood of God' to such an extent that it seemed he was teaching 'patripassianism', the view that the Father suffered on the cross. Daniel Rowland and William Williams argued for the orthodox Trinitarian teaching that at the cross Jesus the Son offered himself to God the Father through the eternal Spirit. Harris' unorthodox teaching and erratic behaviour in the late 1740s and 50s led to a division in the ranks of Welsh Calvinistic Methodism. Although married, Harris took a female companion with him on his preaching tours; he proclaimed Mrs Sidney Griffith a 'prophetess'. The obstinate exhorter would not listen to the reproofing voices of Rowland and Williams and so the old friends were forced to part. They were reunited in the 1760s, when Wales experienced a fresh outpouring of the Spirit.

Eifion Evans has produced a most helpful, informative and stimulating biography of William Williams. He has shown that in his multidimensional ministry, Pantycelyn was much more than a hymn writer. However, Evans can sometimes pull his punches when it comes to criticism of his hero. Williams mistakenly took the appearance of the Northern Lights as an indication that the last days were at hand (see chapter 25). He was so keen to defend the revival against detractors that he was too willing to take leaping and dancing in Methodist meetings as an evidence of the presence of the Spirit. Jonathan Edwards was more cautious in his approach, insisting that effects on the body were no certain evidence of the Spirit's work. Sometimes Evans' style can be a little odd; witness this sentence, almost worthy of Yoda, the syntactically-challenged Star Wars character, 'It was in this context that Williams forged for the Methodists this manual' (p. 263).

Anyway, I think we can learn a number of lessons from William Williams and Welsh Calvinistic Methodism.

1. Calvinistic doctrine needs to be wedded to the empowering presence of the Spirit. Evans devotes a couple of chapters to Williams' doctrine. He held to Reformed theology alright, but it was theology

on fire. We have witnessed a welcome recovery of Reformed doctrine in the last fifty years or so, but we have not yet seen a widespread outpouring of the Spirit in revival. Truth must be experienced and its power felt.

2. The need for discernment in times of revival. At the best of times, the devil is at work sowing seeds of doctrinal confusion and goading people to fanaticism. What happened to Howell Harris in the 1740s and 50s is a case in point. A revival must not be dismissed on account of the presence of errors and disorder, but neither should revivals be judged uncritically.

3. There is no contradiction between spiritual life and organisational structures. The Calvinistic Methodists had their local societies and national assembly. Independent Evangelicalism often lacks appropriate structures that enable gospel churches to pool their resources and work together – a task for Affinity, perhaps?

4. The value of believers meeting in small groups. William Williams was a great advocate of societies. Today the equivalent would be house groups. But may our house groups not simply be for the purpose of Bible study and prayer, but also an environment where believers are encouraged to share their spiritual experiences.

5. A new generation of hymn writers has much to learn from Williams' ability to mix biblical truth with heartfelt experience of the grace of God.

6. The Church of England could not contain the new wine of Calvinistic Methodism and so the Presbyterian Church of Wales was founded in 1811. But the revival did start in the Church of England. Should such a movement of the Spirit suddenly begin in today's Church in Wales, or the Church of England, how should those of us who have separated from the mainline denominations react? I trust that we would be generous-minded enough to recognise the work of God for what it was and do all we could to support those involved.

7. Evans' biography is written from an unashamedly Christian standpoint. Unlike the case with some recent works by Christian historians, Evans attributes the Evangelical Revival experienced by William Williams and others to the Holy Spirit rather than to merely human factors. His account is all the better for that. May reading this volume stir us up to lay hold of God for a fresh outpouring of the Spirit in our day.

Book review

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Fruitful leaders: how to make, grow, love and keep them, Marcus Honeysett, IVP, 2011, 216pp, £8.99

There is a lot to like about this book and much that is helpful. There is also one aspect of the book which is quite unhelpful.

It takes some of the excellent principles of Christian leadership from the Scriptures which are usually found in books mainly for pastors and applies them into a much wider definition of leadership roles. There is a great emphasis laid on spiritual development, of knowing the Lord better and of growing in spiritual character. It is made plain that a servant spirit is necessary for anyone to use their gifts well. This makes the book suitable for those aspiring to leadership and those wishing to help and encourage them.

The book has clear structure and content. It is probably best used as a study resource for individuals or groups. There are lots of headings and sub headings and plenty of bullet points. Whether you will warm to this style is a matter of taste but it allows a short book to cover a lot of ground. Each chapter has questions and checklists with an emphasis on practical application of the points raised. Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 comprise of a spiritual and a practical review respectively. The questions are thoughtful and thorough, but using the book with a mentor or friend would be especially important or such analysis could turn into introspection.

The book is immensely practical and the author's zeal is evident throughout. He wants us to read and then get up and get on with it: There are things to do and steps to take; there is a good balance between encouraging thoughtfulness and urging action. While the questions may make us think, we are not left floating about wondering what to do with fine-sounding principles. Clear programmes are outlined with progress and growth clearly targeted. Every so often I thought that this emphasis was about to go too far – the lists and questions do have some things in common with self-help books with multiple steps to achieving your goals. However, the author draws us back from this by also reminding us of the divine nature of the church and that this is about relationships more than programmes; we learn by observing others and we teach by bringing others into our ministries and our lives.

In this way the book is deliberately spiritual – the head of the church is Christ who has chosen to work through this human organisation. The purpose of the church is the glory of the Lord and the good of His people. Programmes which are well-planned and well-run are important and are encouraged but there is an acknowledgement that they can't work on their own; detached from the source that is Jesus and lacking his love, the programmes would be useless. There is a realistic optimism and a desire that faith will lead to action and this faith is clearly rooted in the Scriptures; those being trained should give good attention to knowing the Scriptures and to believing and applying them. The reality of sacrifice in service is also made plain. This is important and necessary for a book which loves using words like 'vibrant' and 'growth'. Without the reminder about trials and hindrances and Appendix 4's list of leadership killers then there could be a danger of tripping into a success-based theology defined by management strategy, positive thinking and numerical growth. Thankfully these are avoided.

There were a couple of highlights for me. I particularly liked the definition of spiritual leadership on p31 as *'working with people for their progress and joy in God, because you want churches and believers to overflow with happiness in Jesus Christ.'* This balances what might otherwise be seen as a formulaic or prescriptive approach. I also appreciated the emphasis throughout, and particularly in chapter 9, on the responsibility of the whole church in the development of leaders. Christians must learn to be followers and disciples and to urge their leaders to train and disciple them.

With much that is so positive it is a little surprising to find something of a critical and negative undercurrent in the book. It is as if zeal sometimes overflows into frustration. Let me give you an example: Chapter 8 outlines the dire shortage of new leaders and the impending doomsday scenario of most leaders retiring in fifteen years. Having included this, it should have been backed up by some statistics and some analysis of history and culture. If the contention is true then we need to know the roots of the problem. If true, we should take notice, but what is the point of criticising those who are interested enough in the subject that they have bought this book?

This negativity also emerges in the illustrations which outline more problems than solutions. They are also anecdotal, over-simplified and, at least sometimes, fictitious. The first is about Karen, for whom the book is apparently written. She is a young woman struggling to find help in developing her service for the Lord. However, she is not real. This seemed a little odd. Surely there must be some real examples out there somewhere? Anecdotes like these face the danger of being modified to make the point rather than generating real questions to be addressed. There are several negative caricatures such as the pastor-led, one-man-band church, the inward looking pastoral church or the useless academic trained at Bible College. These are not accurate or helpful. Of much greater use would have been real life, detailed case studies from the author's experience. This could have included an analysis of what can be achieved in the short, medium and long term; an honest assessment of the highs and lows of training leaders and the lessons learned from mistakes he has made along the way.

This critical spirit seems strangely out of place with the positive atmosphere of the rest of the book. Not wanting to make the same error, I will positively reaffirm that there is much that is useful in this book. For those who recognise the need for leadership training but don't know where to start, there is a lot of help to be found. For the many churches already engaged in this work, the book is a focussed resource. It will help you to assess, clarify and organise the work you are doing.

Finally, I will conclude with a small paradox which occurred to me as I drew to an end of this review. The vision behind the book sees individuals walking with others with the purpose of growing them as disciples and encouraging them into leadership of various kinds. This can be helped by a book but not accomplished by it. The real proof of the author's ministry and of any current leader who takes this vision to heart will be among those we already know and will know. It will be among those we personally identify, encourage and train and ultimately among the next group who are trained in turn by them. If the Lord blesses such training then the church will be amply provided for.

Book review

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***The People's Theologian: Writings in Honour of Donald Macleod*, Iain D. Campbell & Malcolm Maclean, eds., Mentor, 2011, 316pp, £14.99**

After a distinguished career as a pastor, theologian, author, editor, and administrator, Donald Macleod retired in 2010 as Principal of Free Church College, Edinburgh and more recently, in May 2011, as Professor of Systematic Theology. He will leave a permanent mark beyond the bounds of Scottish theology. This volume of essays celebrates Macleod's many distinctive contributions to theology and church life.

Alex Macdonald's brief introduction highlights Macleod's support for a young divinity student summoned before the Training for the Ministry Committee of the Free Church of Scotland for the indescribably egregious offence of wearing an army jacket to a prayer meeting! This support for the underdog is, he remarks, a constant in Macleod's life.

The book begins with an intriguing article by John Macleod, Donald's son, a journalist, reflecting on Macleod as a father, churchman, theologian, and editor. It considers his views on politics and contemporary issues and mentions the important point that he and his friends 'constructed a serviceable cricket-pitch on the moor downhill from the street' (p18). Since cricket is in many ways a microcosm of life, this was a good start for a productive innings by a future theologian.

Brian Wilson, editor of *The West Highland Free Press*, outlines Macleod's distinctive contributions to the paper since 1991. These articles have covered social, cultural and political matters as well as religious ones. Wilson provides a brilliant snippet on the Lewis revival of the 1950s under Duncan Campbell which, Macleod wrote, introduced 'a whole new language as unknown to the Bible as it is to the Highland pulpit' (p58).

Iain Campbell writes of Macleod's tenure as editor of *The Monthly Record*, the organ of the Free Church of Scotland, from 1977-1990. At times this proved controversial for many of the more conservative members of the church. Macleod has always been prepared to follow his convictions despite their conflicting with those of many in the Free Church. This was particularly notable on such matters as the death penalty. On a wider front, there was also interaction and strong disagreement with T.F. Torrance.

Martin Cameron provides a bibliography of Macleod's writings to the end of 2009.

In a section on historical theology there are fine contributions from Malcolm Maclean on Robert Bruce and the Lord's Supper, and from Guy Richard on Samuel Rutherford on the supremacy of God's will. The latter sheds much light – which will astound many – on the charges of fornication levelled at Rutherford in 1626, the year before his call to Anwoth. Michael Honeycutt writes on William Cunningham and the doctrine of the sacraments, of which more in a moment.

The section on systematic theology has a typically careful and well-argued contribution from Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. on the relationship between Christ's exaltation and justification. In considering the intercession of Christ, Gaffin reflects on justification as a state, which *The Westminster Confession of Faith* 11:5 affirms. This point, as an aspect of Christ's state of exaltation, has important ramifications, not least on a pastoral level.

Derek Thomas recounts the clash between the Celts, Macleod and the Welsh preacher, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, over the sealing of the Holy Spirit. Lloyd-Jones, following Thomas Goodwin and others, held that this refers to a post-conversion experience to which many believers are strangers. The connection with the Welsh interest in revival is clear. Macleod maintains, following Calvin and John Owen, that it refers to the Holy Spirit given to all God's people. Thomas agrees, correctly, that exegetically and theologically the evidence favours Macleod.

Iain Campbell contributes an important piece on the covenant of redemption. I have criticised many of the formulations of this doctrine, such as those by A.A. Hodge and others, on the ground that they treat the trinitarian persons as agents needing to enter into contractual relations with each other, and thus breach trinitarian orthodoxy. Again, the Holy Spirit is usually left out of the picture. We thereby are presented with a divine committee meeting, to which the Spirit has presented an apology for absence. That salvation depends on the harmonious counsel of the trinity is obvious but this common construction has misrepresented it. *The Sum of Saving Knowledge* describes it as a 'bargain.' Campbell goes a long way to putting this matter right. He construes the covenant in a manner compatible with the church's doctrine of the Trinity and he also makes very clear that all three persons are indivisibly active. This careful essay should be consulted by everyone concerned about the eternal trinitarian plan of salvation, and its full compatibility with the covenant of grace in human history.

There is a final section on preaching, appropriate for Macleod's commitment to the church and its proclamatory ministry. Carl Trueman makes many perceptive and incisive comments on the function of the preacher, interacting with Luther and the New Testament. Fergus Macdonald has an intriguing discussion of the Psalms in the light of postmodern literary criticism. Alastair I. Macleod writes of the multi-dimensional act of reading Scripture. Donald Macdonald discusses leadership in the church, while Rowland Ward has an interesting contribution on systematic theology and the church.

Michael Honeycutt's essay on William Cunningham's sacramental theology raises some questions, mainly in relation to its subject (pp109-131). Macleod considers Cunningham to have been Scotland's greatest theologian. That may well be so but on this particular matter he is, to my mind, seriously wanting. It is well known that Cunningham found Calvin's theology of the Lord's Supper difficult to stomach on a number of counts and described it as a blot on his reputation as a public instructor. It is clear that Cunningham was unable to grasp the element of mystery. Zwingli's attachment to neo-Platonic forms of thought had bequeathed a legacy of ontological dualism by which material objects were no longer considered to be suitable for God to convey spiritual grace. While Cunningham was critical of Zwingli on this point, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that he was impacted in this direction, particularly by his opposition to the Oxford movement.

However, whatever his treatment of Calvin indicates, on baptism Cunningham is significantly mistaken. Firstly, Honeycutt argues that Cunningham thought the Westminster Assembly considered baptism in the context of the adult baptism of converts; infant baptism was not in their sights, according to Cunningham – it was an appendage, almost a singularity. Since Cunningham influenced generations down to the present day this was a portentous claim. He was wrong; totally, monumentally wrong.

It is true that Cunningham did not have access to the full minutes of the Assembly, which have only recently been transcribed. However, when he refers to the Westminster divines, it is to George Gillespie and Samuel Rutherford, both Scots commissioners, *and not members of the Assembly*, that he appeals. The handful of Scots who were present participated in debate but were not part of the

Assembly as such and were unable to vote. Honeycutt himself makes this mistake (p128). Moreover, Cunningham's primary appeal is to the *Shorter Catechism*, from which detailed theological statement was expressly excluded.

There were a range of discussions on baptism at the Assembly, more fully-recorded by the scribe than most other matters. These covered both the theology and practice of baptism. In each case, the baptism of *infants* was in view. There is no evidence that the divines considered this in isolation from the baptism of adult converts.

The scribe recorded the following matters, among others, as arousing noteworthy debate: the place where baptism is to be administered, the church or the home, in connection with the necessity of baptising the child; whether only the children of godly parents are to be baptised; whether parents are to make a profession at the time of baptism; the nature of the holiness ascribed to infants of believers by Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:14; and the relation between baptism and the regeneration of elect infants.

Moreover, the order for baptism in *The Directory for the Publick Worship of God* refers to 'the child to be baptised'. The words of instruction before baptism speak of the reasons why 'the seed and posterity of the faithful, born within the church' have interest in the covenant and the right to its seal. The exhortation is addressed to 'the parent.' The baptismal prayer asks that 'the infant' and 'the child' 'be planted into the likeness of the death and resurrection of Christ.' The minister then is to demand the name of the child, to baptise the child, and his concluding prayer is for the Lord to 'receive the infant now baptised into the household of faith.'

Secondly, Honeycutt himself opposes David Wright's comment that the divines had a doctrine of baptismal regeneration. This argument fails on at least four grounds:

First, Honeycutt fails to distinguish the doctrine of baptismal regeneration taught by Rome from the position on the efficacy of baptism of the Assembly and the preceding Reformed confessions. Rome held that the grace of regeneration is conferred by the fact of the sacrament's performance (*ex opere operato*). In contrast, the Reformed maintained that the grace signified, sealed and exhibited in baptism is conferred by the Holy Spirit to the elect in God's own time, and ultimately received through faith. For the Assembly there is a definite connection between baptism and regeneration but baptism is not the efficient cause of regeneration, for the relationship is not causal, or logical, or temporal but theological. To regard a positive relationship between baptism and regeneration as necessarily entailing the doctrine of Rome is untenable and to do so clouds the issue.

Second, the record of debates underlines the divines' awareness of this connection. The scribe recorded several debates on the relationship between baptism and regeneration – and he did not write at length on many matters. These debates are found in sessions 260, 302, and 566.

Third, related to this previous point is the bibliographical evidence of the works of the divines. Cornelius Burgess, a prominent member of the Assembly, wrote in 1629 *The Baptismal Regeneration of Elect Infants* in which he expounded his understanding of the relationship between the baptism of infants, elect and non-elect, and regeneration. Daniel Featley, a fellow member, had also propounded similar ideas. The *Synopsis purioris theologiae* (1625), a major work of four professors at Leiden, defending the theology of the Synod of Dort, argued for the relationship between baptism and regeneration, affirming the same connection as the Assembly was to do.

Fourth, the Confession states that baptism is 'a sign and seal of... regeneration' (WCF 28.1), in which the grace promised 'is not only offered, but really exhibited, and conferred, by the Holy Spirit' to the

elect in God's own time (WCF 28.6). There is a definite theological connection between baptism and regeneration that is not to be confused with those of Rome or Lutheranism.

What emerges from Honeycutt's essay is that Cunningham's baptismal theology was hardly distinguishable from a credo-baptist one; he tacked on infant baptism as an appendix, scarcely related to the whole. Indeed, Cunningham makes the extraordinary statement for a Presbyterian that infant baptism cannot be brought within the definition of a sacrament.

Still, Honeycutt's is a provocative essay that helps to highlight why the case for the classic Reformed doctrine of baptism as expressed in the Confessions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has largely gone by default in the UK and elsewhere. This has had the effect of impoverishing theological debate, regardless of a person's views of the subjects of baptism. This lowered view of the sacraments has led the evangelical church into a kind of gnostic belittling of the material in the interests of a spiritual religion, in contrast to the magisterial statement of Genesis that God created the heavens *and the earth*.

The authors and editors are to be congratulated on this impressive volume. With them, we wish Donald Macleod many future years of the productive ministry we have valued and have come to expect.