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A Fresh Exposition of Adoption: II. Some Implications

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> Of course it had never been doubted or concealed by any worthy expositor of the ways of God in salvation, that we are children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. Adoption is a Christian benefit. But much depends on the place in the mind given to a thought like this, and, especially, much depends on the dogmatic form it assumes, and the virtue allowed to it in the system.
>
> Robert Rainy, 'Dr. Candlish as a Theologian'[1]

> Adoption has not come into its own in the teaching and discussion of our [Reformed] doctrines.
>
> Samuel A. King, 'The Grace of Adoption'[2]

Having traced, thus far, an outline of Paul's understanding of adoption,[3] we turn now to consider, as promised, its implications for Westminster Calvinism. The focus on the theology of conservative Presbyterianism is not simply tribal. It is historical. Given the rather bleak theological history of adoption, it is to the Presbyterians (and one or two of their forebears) we may turn for some of the more self-conscious discussions of adoption.[4] Over recent centuries, however, Presbyterians have lost sight of

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1 See William Wilson's *Memorials of Robert Smith Candlish, Minister of St. George's Free Church, and Principal of the New College, Edinburgh*, (Edinburgh, 1880), p. 615.

2 Samuel A. King, 'The Grace of Adoption', *Union Seminary Magazine* 22 (1910), p. 30.

3 Tim J. R. Trumper, 'A Fresh Exposition of Adoption: I. An Outline', *SBET* 23.1 (2005) pp. 60-80.

4 Consider especially the foundational contributions of Calvin and the Westminster Standards (Tim J. R. Trumper, 'An Historical Study of the Doctrine of Adoption in the Calvinistic Tradition' (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 2001), chs 1–5.

the doctrine.[5] Thus, the emerging renewal of interest in adoption offers us the opportunity to consider what the impact would be on Westminster Calvinism – notably its almost exclusively juridical view of the gospel[6] – were Presbyterians to recover the familial or filial aspects of their theological heritage.

In what follows, I suggest that while the impact of the recovery of (the biblical theology of) adoption would be largely methodological, it promises to have specific relevance for Westminster Calvinism's theology, soteriology and doxology. Without a constructive-Calvinistic approach to the issues of the day, the likelihood of this renewal of Westminster Calvinism is remote.[7]

I. THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THEOLOGY

First, we consider the *principia theologiae* – the doctrines of Scripture and of God.

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5 Elsewhere I have traced the reasons for this (*ibid.*, ch. 6).

6 Douglas F. Kelly writes: 'the departure within the Westminster Tradition itself from this fruitful Biblical theme of family relationship at the very heart of Christian salvation weakened... the impact that these powerful Standards could have exercised'. ('Adoption: An Underdeveloped Heritage of the Westminster Standards', *Reformed Theological Review* 52 [1993], p. 112).

7 Constructive Calvinism occupies a centre-right position between revisionist Calvinism (neo-orthodoxy) and orthodox Calvinism (traditional Westminster Calvinism). It refuses the disdain revisionist-Calvinists have for Westminster theology and the naively uncritical spirit of orthodox Calvinism. It opts instead for a sympathetic-critical attitude that retains a respect for the tradition without enslavement to it, and considers the kernel of truth found in neo-orthodox criticisms of Westminster Calvinism an opportunity for biblical renewal consistent with the historic Puritan belief that God has more light to shed on his Word.
Those abreast of current scholarly discussions ought to note that constructive Calvinism is consistent with the Mullerite reappraisal of the interpretation of the history and theology of the Reformed tradition, and yet is not bound by it (see Richard A. Muller's latest volume, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* [Oxford, 2003]). Constructive Calvinism is also sympathetic to the protest of Stanley J. Grenz's and John R. Franke's post-Foundational theology, but is concerned for a foundationalist renewal of Westminster Calvinism (*Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* [Louisville, 2001]).

The Doctrine of Scripture

In theory, the Reformed understand Scripture to be both one and diverse, divine and human.[8] Containing 66 books differing in content, genre and figures of speech, the Bible nevertheless maintains a 'consent of all the parts', which speaks in unison of the 'full discovery... of the only way of man's salvation' (Westminster Confession of Faith [WCF] 1:5). In practice, however, our tradition of theology has struggled to maintain the balance between the unity and the diversity of Scripture. Richard Gaffin suggests a chief reason for this when he notes 'the tendency' of the Protestant dogmaticians 'to treat Scripture as in the interests of the system, as a collection of more or less isolated proof texts (*dicta probantia*), without adequate attention to context', and 'as a manual of "timeless" first principles of static truths'.[9]

On the one hand, such systemic and dogmatic constraints afforded little opportunity to express the Christian faith in biblico-theological terms, as had Calvin, the theologian of adoption.[10] By the Puritan era, interest in the *ordo salutis* – especially the inter-connectedness of adoption and regeneration, justification, and sanctification respectively – had generally overtaken the broader concerns of the *historia salutis*.[11] On the other hand,

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8 This should not be understood to mean that the divineness and humanness are equally ultimate. Scripture is finally God's Word, not of human origin. Thus, we preachers announce, 'Let us hear the Word of God.'

9 Richard B. Gaffin Jr., 'The Vitality of Reformed Dogmatics' in J. M. Batteau, J. W. Maris, and K. Veling (eds), *The Vitality of Reformed Theology: Proceedings of the International Theological Congress June 20-24th 1994, Noordwijkerhout, The Netherlands* (Kampen, 1994), p. 23.

10 Herman N. Ridderbos points to the apologetic character of Reformation teaching in order to explain its emphasis on the forensic rather than the eschatological content of the faith (*When the Time Had Fully Come: Studies in New Testament Theology* (Jordan Station, Ontario, 1982), p. 58). This lopsided emphasis was regrettable, not least because 'the redemptive-historical [i.e. eschatological] character of the New Testament (NT) provides a more exact delineation of what Reformed theology means by 'organic' inspiration; as contrasted to 'mechanical' inspiration, which it rejects'. (Herman N. Ridderbos, *Redemptive-history and the New Testament Scriptures: A Study of Paul's Soteriology*, transl. H. De Jongste, revised by Richard B Gaffin, Jr.; second revised ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ, 1988), pp. 49, 71).

11 While notice may be taken of the interest in biblical theology of such giants as John Owen (*Biblical Theology* or *The Nature, Origin, Development, and Study of Theological Truth, in Six Books*, Latin, Oxford, 1661; transl. S. P. Westcott. [Pittsburgh, PA, 1994]) and, later, Jonathan Edwards (*Works*,

the Puritans missed the opportunity to transform the humanist interest in the constituent parts of Scripture into a mature expression of its authorial diversity. In continuing the tradition's predominant interest in Paul,[12] they tended either to read Paul into the other NT authors or *vice versa*. In consequence of this, Puritan dogmatics were characterised by a coalescing of the respective theologies of the NT. This explains their conflation of the Bible's rich yet distinctively structured models, as is typified by the typical inclusion of John 1:12-13 and 1 John 3:1 among the proof-texts of adoption. In effect, the Puritan tradition of systematics created from the models of new birth and adoption a single mega-model of sonship or childhood.[13] The mega-model is the product of the neglect of Scripture's diversity – which neglect reduces its unity to a bland uniformity and creates a deficit between our conservative understanding of Scripture and our use of it.

Things, however, are changing. First, the renaissance in Calvin studies has given rise to both a reawakening of interest in Christian humanism (with its emphasis on getting back to the sources [*ad fontes*]) and to a fresh enthusiasm for the salvation-historical approach to Scripture. Secondly, the biblico-theological emphases of Princetonian Geerhardus Vos and Dutch theologian Herman Ridderbos have confirmed the worth of the redemptive-historical approach.[14] Drawing on the influences of

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vol. 1, reprint ed. [Edinburgh and Carlisle, PA, 1990], pp. 532-619), the WCF contains but one explicit redemptive-historical passage (7:5-6). Note, in fact, the title of Jonathan Edwards' subsequent treatment of biblical theology: 'A History of the Work of Redemption containing the Outlines of a Body of Divinity including a view of the Church *in a Method entirely New*' (italics inserted).

12 Gaffin writes: 'Reformed theology has always thought itself to be distinctively Pauline, more sensitive than other traditions to the deeper motives and trends of the apostle's teaching and more consistent in its expression of them.' (*Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul's Soteriology*, second ed. [Phillipsburg, NJ, 1987], p. 11).

13 See, for instance, the language and title of Sinclair Ferguson's otherwise helpful article 'The Reformed Doctrine of Sonship', *op. cit.*, pp. 81-8.

14 Quite rightly, Gaffin describes Vos as the 'father of Reformed biblical theology'. He it was who recognised 'the substance of the "critical" charge', that Reformed orthodoxy had accorded inadequate attention to the historical character of the Bible. In seeking to rectify this, Vos opened up what is now the perennial question of the inter-relationship between biblical and systematic theology. He believed that 'by giving greater, more adequate attention to the redemptive-historical structure and content of biblical revelation, or, in other terms, by attending to the rootage of that

Calvin[15] and Vos[16], John Murray sought, thirdly, to infuse systematic theology with the redemptive-historical perspective.[17]

The coalescing of these developments has brought conservative Presbyterians to the threshold of a new and exciting era in the history of

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revelation in the dynamically unfolding history of God's covenant' the tendencies of the scholastic approach to systematic theology could be offset (Gaffin, 'The Vitality of Reformed Dogmatics', p. 23).

15 Writing in 1964, Murray observed: 'Every careful reader of Calvin, especially of his *Institutes*, detects what may be called his biblico-theological method in contradistinction from the more scholastic method of his predecessors in the medieval tradition and of many of his successors in the Protestant tradition. This does not mean that Calvin is not systematic. He was a humanist before he was a reformer. And logic in argumentation and in the sequence and arrangements of his topics is manifest on every page.' (J. Murray, *Collected Writings*, vol. 1, reprint ed. [Edinburgh and Carlisle, PA, 1989], pp. 305-11; vol. 3 [Edinburgh and Carlisle, PA, 1982], pp. 337-9; vol. 4 [Edinburgh and Carlisle, PA, 1982], pp. 158-204 [reproduced in booklet form in *Calvin on Scripture and Divine Sovereignty* (Welwyn, Hertfordshire, 1979), pp. 302-4]). Calvin, it is fair to say, was Vosian before Vos!

16 'Vos and Murray' came, says Gaffin, to 'agreement in their conception of biblical theology and its relationship to systematic theology' such that 'this aspect of their thinking constitutes a direction' ('Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology' in John H. Skilton [ed.], *The New Testament Student and Theology*, vol. 3, [Phillipsburg, NJ, 1976], pp. 42-3). Yet, of the handful of attempts to discuss the relationship of biblical to systematic theology, Gaffin notes, 'Professor Murray appears to be alone in having devoted a separate study to it.' (*ibid.*, p. 39; see also p. 32).

17 Yet Murray barely acknowledges the notion of authorial diversity. He comes closest to mentioning it in his article 'Systematic Theology'. There he states that, 'the various passages drawn from the whole compass of Scripture and woven into the texture of systematic theology are not cited as mere proof texts or wrested from the scriptural and historical context to which they belong, but, understood in a way appropriate to the place they occupy in this unfolding process, [and] are applied with that particular relevance to the topic under consideration' (*Collected Writings*, vol. 4, p. 21). Nonetheless, Murray so challenged the longstanding influence of Francis Turretin and Charles Hodge on Reformed systematics that he began to reshape the system of Westminster Calvinism by rejecting the tradition's rather sterile and entrenched regurgitation of the Westminster Standards. For all his esteem of them, Murray reminded Westminster Calvinists that the WCF is to be read through Scripture, not *vice versa*. Thus, he became the father of constructive Calvinism.

Westminster Calvinism. For the realisation of the recovery of a truly biblically-reflective doctrine of adoption, there needs to be further attention given to the issue of authorial diversity. Only then will we be sure that Paul's model has been understood in its own right. The need to understand adoption in the context of a holistic view of salvation and in the face of competing soteric models (I am thinking of the question of their ultimacy) suggests that perhaps the multiperspectivalism of John Frame and Vern Poythress has something relevant to say in this more localised regard.[18]

If the possibilities of a fresh biblical theology of adoption are anything to go by, the new era promises an improved utilisation of Scripture. By attempting to expound adoption along biblico-theological lines, I have sought to continue the push for its recovery and to illustrate the potential that its combined emphases on redemptive history and authorial diversity have for the methodological and doctrinal renewal of Westminster Calvinism.[19] What has to be determined in the new era is the inter-relationship between biblical and systematic theology. As Gaffin rightly says, the 'encyclopedic nature' of the question requires 'extended, maturing, and concerted reflection'.[20]

In considering this matter, Gaffin suggests 'the not entirely modest proposal' of discontinuing the use of the term 'systematic theology', believing the nomenclature 'biblical theology' to resolve ultimately the inter-relationship between the two disciplines. Yet, to retain the one term at the expense of the other, suggests the complete absorption of systematic theology, thereby eliminating the discipline. This is neither Gaffin's meaning nor intention. I prefer we speak of biblical dogmatics or some such term that acknowledges the validity of the historical *and* logical ordering of which the two disciplines speak. Together the adjective 'biblical' and the noun 'dogmatics', while not an ideal combination, do at least remind us that our *foci* on redemptive history and authorial diversity issue in doctrinal formulae reflective of both the content and feel of Scripture. In short, biblical dogmatics portends a better use of Scripture

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[18] John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ, 1987), pp. 162-3, *passim*; Vern Sheridan Poythress, *Symphonic Theology: The Validity of Multiple Perspectives in Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1987).

[19] We need to be clear about this renewal. 'It would be quite misleading,' says Gaffin, 'as is often done by its more enthusiastic advocates, to create the impression that biblical theology brings something totally new into the life of the church. Rather it is largely a matter of correcting and balancing certain trends of the more recent post-Reformation past' ('Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology', p. 43).

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 39.

while retaining the esteem we have for it. If it implies the sacrifice of the accepted method of systematics, it does so in view of the promise it makes of reflecting more accurately the Bible's internal system of truth.

The Doctrine of God

In addition to suggesting corrections to Westminster Calvinism's theological method, the recovery of adoption also promises a healthy adjustment of its feel. While we may rightly protest the neo-orthodox accusation that Westminster Calvinism is legalistic, we cannot deny that the neglect of adoption lent it a legal aura. Consequently, the accusation of legalism stuck more than it had a right to.

Westminster Calvinists must take some responsibility for this. Not even Thomas Erskine's and John McLeod Campbell's early nineteenth-century revolt against the juridical tenor of Westminster Calvinism, as forceful and successful as it was, awoke Westminster Calvinists to the lopsidedness of their view of God.[21] As James Lindsay was later to note:

> Strange that nothing like full justice has yet been done in modern theology to the sovereign and absoluteness of God – so emphasised in Reformed theology – by adequately setting forth of that sovereignty, not on a monarchical basis, but as interpreted in terms of Fatherhood. I say strange because – though it seems often unknown or forgotten – Calvin had the high merit to be the first theologian for ages to give Fatherhood its rightful place in Christian experience.[22]

By finally recovering adoption, and elevating thereby the profile of the Fatherhood of God, Westminster Calvinists may balance their espousal of the legal (juridical) and gracious (relational/familial) aspects of biblical teaching, and lay to rest, at last, indictments such as Lindsay's.

Yet, Reformed Christians are very sensitive about their view of God, and could resist fresh talk of his Fatherhood.[23] After all, we are not

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[21] Trumper, 'An Historical Study', ch. 7.

[22] James Lindsay, 'The Development of Scotch Theology', *Princeton Theological Review*, vol. 4, no. 3 (1906), p. 343.

[23] Gaffin's warning is timely and captures the spirit of constructive-Calvinism: 'In a time, like ours, of unprecedented radicalism and profligate experimentation, both theologically and ethically, the temptation to become reactionary becomes all the stronger. For instance, we may believe, probably rightly, that present abuse of the Reformation's *semper Reformanda* has never been more flagrant. But the prostitution of that principle, no matter how glaring, does not remove its truth. We may not

accustomed to thinking of God's sovereignty in terms of his Fatherhood. Too often we have looked with suspicion on those who have made much of the Fatherhood of God, fearing such an emphasis to be a return to the universalism of the Victorian era or an expression of sentimental pietism. Such fears fail to recognise the prominence of the NT's language of divine Fatherhood, nor do they appreciate the 'de-familialisation' of the gospel that has occurred in the theology of conservative Presbyterianism over recent centuries. Only once Westminster Calvinists discern fully the discrepancy between their theology and that of the NT will they finally embrace the idea of God's Fatherhood and find a way to teach it commensurate with his justice. Such a balance is not only essential to the renewal of Westminster Calvinism, it is critical to a biblically-legitimate response to our liberal and neo-orthodox critics.

Yet, for all the reticence Westminster Calvinists have in speaking of the Fatherhood of God, the current climate should help us overcome it. Talk of God's Fatherhood is crucial to countering feminist demands that the church speak instead of God's motherhood. Believing the Scriptures to be theologically normative, there are a number of reasons why Westminster Calvinists cannot address God as 'Mother'. First, because the NT never calls us to, and neither, historically, has the church. Second, because to do so ignores the language of Scripture. For Paul, for instance, it is not God who is mother but the 'Jerusalem above' (Gal. 4:26). What governed the apostle's use of language, then, was not misogyny but theology; hence his willing reference to the daughters of God (2 Cor. 6:18) and his gender-neutral use of *tekna* (Rom. 8:16, 17, 22; 9:8).

Many today, however, do not accept the normativity of Scripture. Sallie McFague claims that Scripture is but an exemplar of how to do theology rather than a dictum for it.[24] Thus, she argues the legitimacy of exchanging the model of God as Father for that of Mother. While the limitations of space preclude an answer in terms of the nature of both Scripture and the Christian faith, we can offer a word about her pragmatic desire to formulate Christian terminology that is personally meaningful.

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suppose that theological construction ever reaches definitive finality. Today no less than Bavinck's ... "the deadly embrace of a dead conservatism" (to use his striking turn of phrase) remains a live threat to the vitality of Calvinism, including its dogmatics.' ('The Vitality of Reformed Dogmatics', p. 18).

[24] Sallie McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (London, 1987), p. 30.

For every person who has suffered at the hands of a brutal father, there is another rendered a nervous wreck by a screeching mother. If talk of divine Fatherhood is inappropriate because of a minority of brutal fathers, then surely a minority of psychologically destructive mothers also precludes us from speaking of God as mother. How then do we refer to God? If we move *in perpetuam* from one model of God to another, surely, at some point, we will exhaust the models of Scripture and start constructing models of our own that have but the faintest connection to inscripturated revelation. Once we have gone this far, we will find that it is personal experience that has become the basis of our faith, but it is doubtful whether such a faith could still be called Christian.[25]

That said, conservative Presbyterians must aver a naïvely sexist use of the language of *Abba* (as if God were male). One way to do this is to appropriate with less embarrassment Scripture's female imagery of God's love. While not overturning the divine paternity, this imagery reinforces the view that God's Fatherhood can be motherly in its expression.[26] Thus, we may stay within the bounds of Scripture while relating more effectively to the cultural changes around us. At the end of the day, it is sound biblical exegesis that guards us from the dictates of any 'ism', whether hyper-conservative or hyper-liberal;[27] and a belief in the authoritative sufficiency of Scripture that maintains a confidence in the ongoing cultural relevance of its message.

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[25] At some point feminists will have to choose either to moderate their protest or to forsake the faith in favour of a post-Christian feminism. In orthodox Christianity 'Scripture stands, its veracity untainted by either the cultures in which it comes to us or the cultures to which it goes. God's revelation can make use of our cultures but always stands in judgment over them.' (Harvie M. Conn, 'Normativity, Relevance, and Relativism' in Harvie M. Conn (ed.), *Inerrancy and Hermeneutic: A Tradition, A Challenge, A Debate*, (Grand Rapids, MI, 1988), p. 209).

[26] For the biblical evidence of this see Alan E. Lewis (ed.), *The Motherhood of God: A Report by a Study Group appointed by the Woman's Guild and the Panel on Doctrine on the invitation of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1984), p. 32ff.; cf. Thomas A. Smail, *The Forgotten Father*, reprint ed. (London *et al.*, 1990), pp. 62-4. John W. Cooper addresses some of this in *Our Father in Heaven: Christian Faith and Inclusive Language for God* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1998), pp. 265ff.

[27] 'Whatever an individual's conclusions and decisions, the question of the "motherhood of God" can be asked and answered as an issue of biblical exegesis and interpretation, governed by the criterion of what is true to Christ and his Word, and to the exclusion of any unbiblical neo-pagan goddess religion' (*The Motherhood of God*, p. 62).

II. IMPLICATIONS FOR SOTERIOLOGY

Leaving aside the general theological implications of our exposition of adoption, we turn to those that are more especially soteriological. As we do so, we discover the same want of a redemptive-historical context. To correct this, we must admit our soteriology to a process of 'christocentrification' that impacts both its orientation and its shape.

The orientation of Soteriology

Paradoxically, the redemptive-historical contextualisation of Westminster Calvinism's soteriology challenges the rather typical preoccupation with what we were in Adam.

This preoccupation is explained, first, by the time and energy later Calvinists have spent defending their covenantal interpretation of the Edenic scenario. It needs minimal familiarity with the Calvinistic tradition to realise how contentious an issue this is – needlessly so in my opinion.[28] Exegetically, the evidence (e.g. Hos. 6:7 [margin], Exod. 19:5, Deut. 4:13, Rom. 3:27,[29] and Gal. 4:24)[30] is open to further discussion. Historically, Calvin's version of federal theology, and John Murray's for that matter,[31] reminds us that one need not hold to a defined covenant of works to remain firmly within the covenantal tradition. Richard Muller has implied, furthermore, that the formulation of a covenant of works began as a pragmatic attempt to undergird the Reformation principle of salvation by grace alone.[32]

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[28] Michael S. Horton and I share this view. See his article 'Law, Gospel, and Covenant' (*Westminster Theological Journal [WTJ]* 64 (Fall 2002), pp. 285-6) and mine, 'Constructive Calvinism and Covenant Theology' (*WTJ* 64 (Fall 2002), pp. 387-404 *passim*).

[29] It is somewhat curious to find Herman Witsius using Romans 3:27 to assume the distinction between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace (*The Economy of the Covenants Between God and Man: Comprehending a Complete Body of Divinity*, vol. 1 [transl. and revised W. Crookshank; Edinburgh, 1803], pp. 48-9).

[30] Muller writes more generously: 'the doctrine was a conclusion drawn from a large number of complex texts, among them, Genesis 1:26-27; Leviticus 18:4-5; Matthew 19:16-17; 22:37-39; Romans 1:17; 2:14-15; 5:12-21; 7:10; 8:3-4; 10:5; Galatians 3:11-12; 4:4-5, with Hosea 6:7 and Job 31:33 offered only as collateral arguments. It was, moreover, a conclusion largely in accord with the exegetical tradition' (*After Calvin*, p. 183).

[31] *Collected Writings*, vol. 2, pp. 47-59.

[32] Muller, *After Calvin*, p. 184.

Given these details, it is legitimate to ask why it should be thought necessary to consider a covenant of works a test of orthodoxy? Perhaps we have been mistaken to assume that the defence of the Law-Gospel antithesis requires necessarily a covenant of works. Could not Adam's probation have been established on the basis of natural law (the law written on his heart) rather than on the basis of an explicitly *covenantal* relationship to God?[33] Could not the covenantal interpretation of the Edenic scenario have resulted from the superimposing of the Bible's covenant motif on the biblical evidence of the Law-Gospel antithesis?[34] As Reformed biblical theology develops we may have to ask ourselves honestly whether, for all the rigour of Reformed exegesis, it was as free of dogmatic construal as is assumed,[35] and whether the formulation of a covenant of works was not a human rather than a divine buffer against heterodoxy. Faithfulness to Scripture and the ongoing theological task should preclude us from being pressurised by a fringe element of the Westminster community from looking afresh at the biblical data. It is sound exegesis rather than accusations of neo-orthodoxy that must confirm, or otherwise, the biblical credentials of a covenant of works.

I surmise that even if a covenant of works survives the maturation of a Reformed biblical theology, it will not continue to dominate federal theology as it does presently in the minds of some.[36] We may expect over

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[33] I have posed this question at length in 'Covenant Theology and Constructive Calvinism', *op. cit.*

[34] This possibility came to mind when considering the weight Witsius places on Romans 3:27 in his consideration of a covenant of works (see fn. 29). A. T. B. McGowan's definition of covenant theology suggests likewise: 'Based... on the parallelism between Adam and Christ in Romans 5 and 1 Cor. 15 it is a complete schema of thought involving every doctrine. The covenant of works (or nature) and the covenant of grace are the main sub-divisions although some... included a covenant of redemption.' (*The Federal Theology of Thomas Boston* (Carlisle and Edinburgh, 1997), p. 1).

[35] Horton, 'Law, Gospel, and Covenant', p. 287. Note in this regard Iain Murray's claim that, 'while it was [John] Murray's life-long practice to recommend Puritan authors, he did not generally commend their commentaries' ('Life of John Murray' in John Murray, *Collected Writings*, vol. 3, p. 29fn.). Even Muller, for all his circumspection, acknowledges that 'the language of the doctrine is certainly different from the language of the Reformers and even from that of earlier successors to the original Reformers' (*op. cit.*, p. 189).

[36] This was not always the case. See John L. Girardeau, *The Federal Theology: Its Import and its Regulative Influence* (J. Ligon Duncan III [ed.] with an introduction by W. Duncan Rankin. Greenville, SC, 1994) and his

the coming years a re-prioritising of our focus on Christ as is illustrated by a biblico-theological approach to adoption. Shaped by the trajectory of redemptive-history stretching from Abraham (the promise of the inheritance) to Christ (its fulfilment), a biblico-theological approach takes our eyes off Adam and helps us get them back on Christ. This is as it should be. Scripture furnishes us with considerably more data concerning his person and work than Adam's.[37] To gainsay this, is, in effect, to treat biblical revelation as a plateau, and to claim that the Adam-Christ parallel is completely symmetrical in its output of theological data.

The preoccupation with Adam is explained secondly, by the unsettled question of his status in Eden. Prior to the nineteenth century, it was assumed, it seems, that Adam was either God's son, his subject, or both. But when Victorian liberals claimed, in effect, that sonship is a right of nature, Robert Candlish, leader of the Free Church of Scotland after Thomas Chalmers's death (1847), used the first series of Cunningham Lectures to reject wholesale Adam's original sonship. While his stand made no impact on liberal thinking, it aroused discussion among conservatives, first in Scotland then in the deep American South.[38] Regrettably, the controversy absorbed what little conservative interest there was in the familial side of the faith. Thus, to this day Westminster Calvinists have made negligible progress in recovering the Fatherhood of God and adoption.

Discussions of Theological Questions, first published 1905 (Harrisonburg, VA, 1986), pp. 68-9; cf. Hugh Martin, *The Atonement in its Relation to the Covenant, the Priesthood, the Intercession of our Lord* (Edinburgh, 1976), pp. 29-30).

37 Hugh Martin writes: 'it will uniformly be found that the theology which is meagre in reference to the Covenant of Grace, is still more so as to the covenant of works. The first Adam was but "the type of him that was to come", the shadow of the "last Adam". And where the "last Adam" is little recognised as a covenant head, there can be little reason or inducement to recognise the "first" in that light either. It is in Christ pre-eminently that the doctrine of covenant takes fullest shape; and apart even from express verbal affirmations of it, we find that it is continually subsumed in Holy Scripture's descriptions of His work in the days of His flesh, and of His reward in His risen glory.' (*ibid.*, p. 35).

38 See John L. Girardeau's treatment of adoption in his *Discussion of Theological Questions*, G. A. Blackburn (ed.), 1905; facsimile reprint ed. (Harrisonburg, VA, 1986), pp. 428-521 and Robert A. Webb's *The Reformed Doctrine of Adoption* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1947), pp. 28-78.

I suggest in the current climate of change that only a recovery of adoption along biblico-theological lines, with its focus on Christ, can free us from our forefathers' preoccupation with Adam's original status.[39] Whatever we are to make of Paul's borrowed reference to God's offspring (Acts 17:28), and the correlation between adoptive sonship and Adam's original standing before God, it is evident that the issue was not the apostle's overriding concern.[40] What interested Paul was the 'now but not yetness' of what we are in Christ rather than the 'then but no moreness' of what we were in Adam.

The Shape of Soteriology

First, the recovery of adoption, with its accompanying impact on the profile of union with Christ, challenges the dangers of reductionism in the present popularist approach to Reformation teaching in some Reformed circles in North America. While the concern for its spread among the Christian masses has been admirable, its frequent and convenient summation in terms of the five solas (*sola scriptura*, *solus Christus*, *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, *soli deo gloria*) is threatening to breed a generation of Reformed Christians quasi-Lutheran in their outlook.[41]

While there is no doubting the need to maintain as best we can a united front with evangelical Lutherans on the essentials of classic Protestantism,[42] traditionally Calvin is understood to have altered the shape

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[39] The knowledge we now have of Calvin's well-rounded theology of adoption may help us in this regard (Trumper, 'An Historical Study', chs 1–4).

[40] In the broader realms of theology, acceptance of Adam's historicity seems all but gone. Conservative theologians must take some responsibility for this. We have left unchallenged the claim that there is no more to the Genesis account than the symbolization of the person, or persons collectively, and the emergence of freedom in history (Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin [eds], *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, vol. 2, [Minneapolis, 1991], p. 98). Instead, we have chosen as our battlefield the valid but less urgent issue of the days of creation.

[41] Michael F. Bird's recent article 'Incorporated Righteousness: A Response to Recent Evangelical Discussion concerning the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness in Justification' (*Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 47 no. 2 (June 2004), pp. 253-77), expresses well a number of the points made hereafter.

[42] The new Finnish interpretation of Luther, with its emphasis on Luther's understanding of unification with God, suggests that differences between Luther and Calvin may have been less substantive than previously thought. For more, see Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (eds), *Union with*

of Luther's soteriology. Instead of regarding justification as an hermeneutical category,[43] Calvin taught that it is a single, albeit crucial, doctrine – one of two benefits of union with Christ (*duplex gratia dei*).[44] *Unio cum Christo* Calvin understood to play an architectonic (shape-making) role in soteriology. In my opinion, it entails incarnational,[45] representational[46] and pneumatological dimensions.[47] Justification, by contrast, Calvin understood to be its central column. These differences in role mean that the two doctrines should not be understood to compete for our attention. Both are crucial.[48] Bird writes:

> Justification cannot be played off against union with Christ, since justification transpires in Christ. To be sure union with Christ is not something that is entirely synonymous with justification. Yet neither is union with Christ an ancillary concept subsumed under justification or *vice versa*. Rather, union with Christ comprises Paul's prime way of talking about the reception of the believer's new status through incorporation into the risen Christ by faith.[49]

Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, UK, 1998), pp. 9ff. and 42ff.

43 See Eberhard Jüngel's *Justification: The Heart of the Christian Faith*, transl. Jeffrey F. Cayzer (Edinburgh and New York, 2001) and Robert D. Preuss' opening chapter 'The Centrality of the Doctrine of Justification and Its Hermeneutical Role' in *Justification and Rome* (St. Louis, MO, 1997), pp. 15-20.

44 It could be said that the WCF contains a *triplex gratia dei*: justification, adoption, and sanctification. Cf. Calvin's comments in *Inst.* 3:11:1 with WCF 11-13 and LC 69.

45 Hebrews 2:14-18

46 Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:45-49

47 Pneumatological union includes elements that are mystical or definitive (1 Cor. 1:9, 6:7; Eph. 5:30) and spiritual or progressive (John 15:1-8; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:1).

48 Cf. Calvin, *Inst.* 3:11:10; *CC Gal.*, 43 [*CO* 50 (78): 199] and the end of *Inst.* 3:16:1 [*CO* 2 (30): 586]. Nonetheless, the phrase 'in Christ' is much more frequent in Paul than objective references to Christ being 'for us' (see Ridderbos, *When the Time Had Fully Come*, pp. 44ff.). Paul uses profusely the formulae 'in Christ', 'with Christ', 'through Christ', 'of Jesus Christ', 'in the blood of Christ', 'in the name of Christ', 'Christ in me' (see Adolf Deissmann, *The Religion of Jesus and the Faith of Paul: The Selly Oak Lectures, 1923 on the Communion of Jesus with God and the Communion of Paul with Christ*, second ed. [New York, 1926], pp. 162, 171-80).

49 Bird, 'Incorporated Righteousness', p. 275.

Thus, 'the genuine opinion of the Reformed is this', to quote Witsius, 'that faith justifies, as it is the bond of our strictest union with Christ, by which all things that are Christ's become also ours'.[50]

The mutual appreciation of justification and union with Christ makes both theological and apologetic sense; although few to date have realised this.[51] Typically, Protestant apologists have defended justification from the accusation it is a legal fiction by simply protesting all the louder that it is not. Such an approach achieves very little, for it fails to explain why justification is not a legal fiction. What is needed is an undisputed *exegetical* justification of the notion of imputation,[52] and an ongoing demonstration of the theological use to which union with Christ can be put. It is surely difficult to maintain the accusation that Calvary's transaction of two thousand years ago is a legal fiction when myriads of sinners have come to know the benefits of it through union with Christ! Seeking to sustain the existential awareness of the union God's people experience, Calvin writes:

> We do not contemplate him [Christ] outside ourselves from afar in order that his righteousness may be imputed to us but because we put on Christ and are engrafted into his body – in short, because he deigns to make us one with him. For this reason we glory that we have fellowship of righteousness with him.[53]

And yet, so often we have contemplated him from afar! Thus, our difficulties in defending justification have been largely self-inflicted. By focusing on justification in isolation from pneumatological union we have set Christ apart from ourselves, and thus defended justification inadequately, and endangered our assurance in the process.

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50 Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants*, vol. 1, p. 415.

51 Notwithstanding our reliance on Pauline theology, the Reformed tradition has been slow to pay more than lip service to union with Christ. Adolf Deissmann attributes the neglect of the motif to the doctrinaire approach to Pauline studies that characterised nineteenth-century scholarship. Pauline scholars focussed on the apostle's fight against the law, justification, redemption and 'almost anything else', Deissman claims, except union with Christ (*The Religion of Jesus and the Faith of Paul*, pp. 154, 202; cf. Trumper, 'The Theological History of Adoption II: A Rationale', pp. 182-6; 'An Historical Study', introduction and ch. 6).

52 A rare exception is John Piper's *Counted Righteous in Christ: Should We Abandon the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness?* (Wheaton, IL, 2002).

53 *Inst.* 3:11:10

But there is more. By neglecting union with Christ we inject credibility into the Roman Catholic argument that Protestants isolate justification from sanctification. The biblical way to ensure that we maintain both the distinctiveness and inseparability of these doctrines is to emphasise union with Christ. As justification and sanctification both flow from union with Christ it is impossible for those enjoying a oneness with the Saviour to be justified without also being sanctified. Calvin writes:

> By partaking of [Christ] we principally receive a double grace: namely, that being reconciled [justified] to God through Christ's blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a judge a gracious Father; and secondly, that sanctified by Christ's spirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life.[54]

Union with Christ safeguards, then, both Protestant and Catholic/Orthodox concerns: the freeness of the grace of justification and the importance of renovation. The same faith that unites us to Christ also justifies us, and the union that promises us justification promises us sanctification as well. Thus, we are justified through faith alone (solafideanism),[55] yet never by a faith that remains alone. We are saved, says Benjamin Warfield, not out of works, but unto them.

Second, the heightened profile the recovery of adoption affords union with Christ – notably by its connecting of the sons (*huioi*) of God with the Son (*huios*) – challenges the soteriological layout of the Westminster Standards. While it is questionable whether the Standards contain an *ordo salutis* as such, it is clear that union with Christ receives very little explicit attention. The Standards supply some sense of its federal character, but they express inadequately its pneumatological character, which 'is the

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[54] *Inst.* 3:11:1 [*CO* 2 (30): 533]; cf. *Inst.* 3:16:1 [*CO* 2 (30): 586] and Randall C. Zachman, (*The Assurance of Faith: Conscience in the Theology of Martin Luther and John Calvin* [Minneapolis, 1993], p. 189; see also pp. 11, 188 and 204).

[55] B. B. Warfield uses the term in contradistinction from Ethicism (justification by works) ('The Alien Righteousness', *Faith and Life*, first published, 1916 [Edinburgh and Carlisle, PA, 1974], p. 324). Elsewhere he states matters otherwise: 'Justification by Faith... is not to be set in contradiction to justification by Works. It is set in contradiction only to justification by our own works. It is justification by Christ's Works.' ('Justification by Faith, Out of Date' in John E. Meeter [ed.], *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield – I* [Phillipsburg, NJ, 1970], p. 283).

essence of the Christian proclamation and experience', and, without which, 'we miss the heart of the Christian message'.[56]

What explicit reference there is to union with Christ, notably in 26:1, lends weight to Thomas Torrance's revisionist-Calvinistic claim that in the WCF's '*ordo salutis*' union with Christ is reached through various stages of grace.[57] The orthodox-Calvinistic refutation of this, while valid, appears hollow given the lip service often paid the doctrine in the more recent history of the tradition. Constructive Calvinists for their part understand how Torrance could criticise the Standards as he has, but are surprised he has not found the solution in the Larger Catechism (LC). Answer 66 states clearly that union with Christ occurs in effectual calling – that is, in the initiatory stages of the *applicatio salutis* – although it also has ongoing relevance for the Christian life and community (communion of the saints). Nonetheless, these organisational inconsistencies, coupled with the findings of an emergent Reformed biblical theology (such as the recovery of union with Christ and adoption), inevitably raise the question as to whether the time has come to revise the Westminster Standards. While we may doubt whether a new confession of faith could ever gain the acceptance that the WCF has enjoyed, it is clear that the ecumenical function of the 1647 Confession has undergone serious erosion. Now that the WCF has become the subject of as much division as of unity, at some point conservative Presbyterians worldwide will come to realise that the maintenance of healthy communion requires a new confession that stands in the tradition of the WCF but speaks to the understanding and needs of the present.

An improved WCF requires, among other things, that its *ordo* (or better *applicatio*) *salutis* be set within a more pervasive redemptive-historical framework. It is in this way that our soteriology may be 're-christocentrified'.[58] Next, we must be more explicit about union with

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[56] Richard N. Longenecker, Word Biblical Commentary 41, *Galatians* (Dallas, TX, 1990), p. 159.

[57] T. F. Torrance, *Scottish Theology: From John Knox to John McLeod Campbell* (Edinburgh, 1996), p. 128.

[58] It is said that the *ordo salutis* tends to decentralise Christ's role in our redemption, for its focus is redemption rather than the Christ in whom we are redeemed. To quote Sinclair Ferguson, it 'distorts the basic NT (Pauline) emphasis on *historia salutis*, substituting for it a less than biblical emphasis on personal experience' (*New Dictionary of Theology* [Leicester and Downers Grove, IL, 1988], s.v. 'Ordo salutis'; cf. George S. Hendry, *The Westminster Confession of Faith for Today: A Contemporary Interpretation* [London, 1960], p. 16).

Christ. There is historical precedence for this. The Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Confession (1823), for instance, posited a valuable chapter on union with Christ between those on effectual calling (ch. 22) and justification (ch. 24). Thirdly, we must consider afresh the WCF's chapter on adoption, notwithstanding its seminal historical significance. As WCF 12 stands, it lacks Paul's redemptive-historical unfolding of adoption; it relies too heavily on extra-Pauline texts of the NT; and it leaves unanswered, more understandably, the question of whether adoption is an expression of union with Christ or a benefit flowing from it, and is of little help in determining whether adoption is an addendum to justification or a different model of soteriology intended to complement it.[59] Fourthly, the fresh awareness of union with Christ and adoption confirms the need Westminster Calvinism has for increased emphasis on the essential ministry of the Holy Spirit. While his ministry was applied widely throughout the WCF by its authors, the want of sustained attention to it has made it easier for the neo-orthodox to explain their rejection of the Standards.[60]

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[59] Whereas the *ordo salutis* model stressed traditionally the sequential nature of the doctrinal elements of soteriology, scholars are asking nowadays whether the different facets of salvation are not better understood as multiple perspectives on the one gospel (cf. the comments of Ridderbos [*Paul*, p. 197] and Edwin H. Palmer [*Scheeben's Doctrine of Divine Adoption* (Kampen, 1953), pp. 181-3]). It is in this sense too that I wonder whether Frame's and Poythress' multiperspectivalism has something substantive to say about the shape of soteriology (cf. fn. 18).

[60] See T. F. Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, p. 141; 'The Substance of the Faith: A Clarification of the Concept in the Church of Scotland' in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 36 (1983), p. 329; 'From John Knox to John McLeod Campbell: A Reading of Scottish Theology' in David F. Wright and Gary D. Badcock (eds) *Disruption to Diversity: Edinburgh Divinity 1846-1996* (Edinburgh, 1996), p. 12. For a defence of the WCF's emphasis on the Spirit, see Sinclair B. Ferguson's chapter 'The Teaching of the Confession' in Alasdair I. C. Heron (ed.) *The Westminster Confession in the Church Today: Papers prepared for the Church of Scotland Panel of Doctrine*, (Edinburgh, 1982), p. 36, and Douglas Milne's article 'The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Westminster Confession' in *Reformed Theological Review* (Australia) 52 (1993), pp. 121-31. Milne calculates that the Spirit is mentioned on 48 occasions in the WCF alone.

III. IMPLICATIONS FOR DOXOLOGY

We close aptly, if briefly, by noting the implications of the recovery of adoption for the doxological tempo of Westminster Calvinism.

First, the recovery should hail an enrichment of our experiential knowledge of God and increase thereby our assurance of his loving kindness.[61] While the proverbial flourish of Calvinism in colder and darker climes has been explained psychoanalytically by the affinity its adherents have with the sense of doubt bred by the doctrines of election and limited atonement (a misnomer), I suggest, contrary to the belief of revisionist Calvinists, that if there is any truth to the hypothesis, the doctrines of unconditional election and definitive atonement are not to blame.[62] What has affected the quality and tone of our piety is the lopsidedness of our emphases on the justice of God and the third use of the law.

The lopsided emphasis on divine justice, mentioned earlier, has quenched the fullness of many a Calvinist's experience of the Spirit of adoption.[63] What references there are to the Fatherhood of God and adoption tend to feel somewhat doctrinaire and lack the warm tenor of eighteenth-century Methodism and nineteenth-century Brethrenism.[64] Thus, today,

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61 Kelly, 'Adoption', p. 120.

62 As one reared in the Calvinistic tradition, I do not recognise the neo-orthodox claim that Calvinists are forever asking themselves how they can know they are among the elect. They have a primary basis of assurance in the witness of the Spirit and a secondary basis in the genuineness of their obedience.

63 Rare are the specifically *filial* expressions of worship and piety found, for instance, in George Whitefield's testimony (cited by John Stoughton in *History of England from the Opening of the Long Parliament to the End of the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 6: *The Church in the Georgian Era* [London, 1881], pp. 125-6). Elsewhere I have written of the second chance that World Harvest Mission's *Sonship* program has afforded the Calvinistic tradition to recover the Fatherhood of God. The first chance fell to our forefathers when faced with the protest of John McLeod Campbell and Thomas Erskine of Linlathen. See 'An Historical Study', Conclusion; and *When 'History Teaches us Nothing': The Sonship Debate in Context – A Case of Déjà vu* (unpublished at the time of writing).

64 Cf. Trumper, 'The Theological History of Adoption. I.', pp. 24-6, and 'The Theological History of Adoption. II.', pp. 190-2. Of the Reformed hymnals presently in widespread use – *Christian Hymns* and *Praise!* in the UK and *Trinity Hymnal* in the US – none compares to the quality or quantity of hymns on adoption found in *Gadsby's Hymns* (Sand Springs, OK), 2003, which alone compares to Brethren hymnody such as is found in *Hymns of the Little Flock* (1881). In its preface and the contents *Hymns of the Little*

expressions of the familial side of the faith sound alien to many Reformed ears – an attempt to dumb-down the faith into something quasi-liberal or quasi-charismatic – when in point of fact a sound appreciation of the familial aspects of the gospel help us recover the more biblical feel of earlier Calvinism.

Likewise, the lopsided emphasis on the third use of the law has overshadowed the relevance of Christ's example, and robbed many in our tradition of the balanced view of Christian living found, for instance, in Calvin.[65] By understanding sanctification very much in the context of the relationship between the sons of God and their heavenly Father, he was able to describe the Christian's obedience to the law as a gladsome and a loving response, rather than as something dutiful and potentially, if not actually, legalistic. Calvin realised more than do many of his followers the importance of looking to Christ's impeccable obedience of the law for our supreme example. Our elder brother, the firstborn (Rom. 8:29), demonstrated perfectly what it means to please the Father (cf. John 8:29). To ignore this is to render the law achristocentric, its obedience open to a self-righteous and arid legalism, and our defence of its third use ineffective.

Secondly, the historical and exegetical work required to recover adoption should resurrect familial aspects of our tradition's theology of the sacraments, and refresh thereby our community's appreciation of them. The loss of the Father-son dynamic in the relationship between God and his people faded the colour of our theology of the sacraments. This led, I suggest, to a general decline in our tradition's esteem of the sacraments, which in turn has encouraged a new sympathy, among a minority, for Anglo-Catholicism, Roman Catholicism and Eastern orthodoxy.

It is worth remembering that Calvin understood baptism to signify, among other things, the initiation of union with Christ, and described it as the *symbolum adoptionis*. Similarly, the LC states that baptism is, 'a sign and seal of ingrafting into himself, of remission of sins by his blood, and regeneration by his Spirit; *of adoption*, and resurrection unto everlasting life' (Ans. 165 [italics inserted]). The Lord's Supper, by contrast, Calvin understood to depict the continuation of union with Christ.[66] He pictured it

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Flock explains its paternal flavour by stating its adherence to 'the great principle in selecting and correcting', namely, 'that there should be nothing in the hymns for the assembly but what was the expression of, or at least consistent with the Christian's conscious place in Christ before the Father'.

[65] Trumper, 'An Historical Study', chs 4–5.

[66] John Calvin, 'Catechism of the Church in Geneva' (1545), in *Calvin's Selected Works*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI, 1983), pp. 86, 92-3 [*CO* 6:116-

as a lavish banquet laid on by the Father for his children. By eating in faith, God's sons remember the Lord, are raised to heaven to eat of Christ's flesh and drink of his blood, and receive thereby the grace that sustains their union with the Saviour. Likewise, in the WCF the Supper is said, among other things, to be for our 'spiritual nourishment and growth' in [Christ]' (29:1; *cf.* LC 168). There, however, the cannibalistic overtones of Calvin's imagery have been toned down: 'Worthy receivers', it is said, eat both outwardly and inwardly, 'really and indeed, yet not carnally nor corporally, but spiritually, receive and feed upon Christ crucified, and all benefits of his death' (29:7).

Thirdly, the recovery of adoption must surely impact our view of the church. The doctrine challenges that individualistic preoccupation with salvation born of an isolated consideration of justification ('How can a man be righteous before God?' [Job 9:2]). The remedy for individualism lies, however, not in a redefining of justification (God's declaration that sinners are members of his covenant family) – as 'new perspective' scholars would have us believe[67] – but in the reintroduction to Protestant soteriology of (a renewed perspective on) adoption. The communal orientation of adoption ought always, then, to supplement the individual focus of justification. Not only does such an implementation negate the need to redefine justification, it better equips us to address a dysfunctional world 'of broken families and disrupted relationships, where masses seek for a sense of belonging and intimate, personal and family relations'.[68]

Fourthly, the recovery of (a biblical theology) of adoption lends weight to the contemporary emphasis on the eschatological nature of redemption. Whereas, in earlier times, theologians such as John Gill and Abraham Kuyper located the gospel (specifically justification) in eternity past,[69]

17, 132]; Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament* (Edinburgh, 1995), p. 150.

67 Seyoon Kim writes: 'With its radical reinterpretation of Paul's gospel, especially his doctrine of justification, ... the New Perspective School is in many respects overturning the Reformation interpretation of Paul's gospel. The potential significance of the school for the whole Christian faith can hardly be exaggerated.' (*Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, UK, 2002), p. xiv).

68 Kelly, 'Adoption', p. 114; Erroll Hulse, 'Recovering the Doctrine of Adoption', *Reformation Today* 105 (Sept.–Oct. 1988), p. 14.

69 For the details on Gill see Trumper, 'The Theological History of Adoption. II', p. 191. On Abraham Kuyper see his *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, transl.

present-day proponents of the new perspective on Paul locate the gospel ultimately in eternity future. We may sympathise with this, but just as we have spoken out against the 'then' but 'no moreness' of those preoccupied with Adam, so we must warn against the 'then' but 'not now' outlook of scholars of the new perspective. Their location of the gospel in eternity future promises to undermine the possibility of a present assurance. A redemptive-historical approach to adoption typifies, by contrast, the mediating position occupied by Reformed biblical theologians who express the gospel's eschatological tension in terms of its 'now' but 'not yetness'. The adopted were chosen in Christ in eternity past, receive their adoption *in transitu*, and shall go on to experience its consummation in eternity future (Rom. 8:18-23). This consummation we may call the adoption *simpliciter*, so long as we understand that it publicly ratifies the adoption received in principle the moment there occurs union with Christ in his Sonship.

CONCLUSION

The issues dealt with throughout this two-part article warrant a monograph. Nonetheless, in the space available I have sought to provide a fresh exposition of adoption, drawing from it those implications portending the renewal of Westminster Calvinism. While some readers may prefer the *status quo*, ongoing developments in biblical and historical theology suggest God may not. We are surely witnessing in our day the reality of the Puritan belief that God continues to shed light on his Word. This light sanctions, I believe, neither the revisionist-Calvinist rejection of Westminster Calvinism, nor its orthodox-Calvinistic mummification, but a biblically-based renewal that offers to revitalise the theology of conservative Presbyterianism for generations to come. The constructive Calvinist sees this potential and works towards its fulfilment.

Rev. Henri De Vries; originally published, 1900 (Chattanooga, TN, 1995), p. 389; cf. p. 390.