Editorial

This edition includes papers from the 2015 Rutherford House Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference on Reformed Worship by Drs Terry Johnson and Paul Wells. Terry Johnson's paper has been divided into two parts, with the second part due to appear in the next issue. These papers provide thoughtful reflections on worship from the church in the past and for the present.

Today as I write there is renewed optimism over a vaccination against Covid-19. The news brings hope of improved life and conditions for many. Pfizer, one of the companies behind the vaccine introduced their latest results in a press release as, 'a great day for science and humanity.'[1] It sounds promising, but there is much to discover as to what effects it will have. Shortly afterwards the Prime Minister urged caution as the vaccine is still in trial stage.

In a helpful article on how the church has responded to pandemics in the past, Darrel W. Amundsen and Gary B. Ferngren comment that during the Black Plague in medieval times, 'Clergy stressed repentance as the best medicine and treatment; physicians, a healthy regimen; and governmental officials, restrictive containment.'[2]

Today at daily briefings government officials and medical officers address the nation. The message is the same as in the past, suppress the virus and take steps for maintaining health. These press conferences provide social and medical advice but no spiritual guidance is offered. Amundsen and Ferngren comment on widespread changes in thinking about the origin of plagues since the cholera epidemic of the 19th century. The disease was traced back to natural causes of contaminated water supplies. Whereas at one time all would have agreed a cause was the wrath of God (or the gods in Roman times), 'As our focus shifted to inoculation, sanitation, and germ theory, theological explanations for disease receded for many.'

This is not to say that the desire, or realisation of a need to trace back to supernatural causes has ceased. It can't, as the soul is made for eternity, temporal social and medical advice is unable to address the eternal

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1 'Pfizer and BioNTech announce vaccine candidate against Covid-19 achieved success in first interim analysis from phase 3 study', <https://www.pfizer.com/news/press-release/press-release-detail/pfizer-and-biontech-announce-vaccine-candidate-against> [Accessed 16 November 2020]

2 Darrel W. Amundsen and Gary B. Ferngren 'The Plagues that Destroyed', <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/plagues-that-destroyed-135> [Accessed 16 November 2020]

matters of death and judgement, hastened by disease. Neither should we conclude that clergy do not have a platform on which to speak. Although clergy do not have the prominent platform as government or medics of high standing have, congregations gather in almost every part of the country around God's word, and now since the pandemic, there is an increased online presence that gives easy access for any who should wish to listen to church services.

If there is a consistency in the message today from government officials and physicians with that of the past, is it also true of the clergy? Is the church's message the same as it was, or has it changed? Readers will be able to arrive at their own assessment of these questions, through their own experiences in church and listening to or watching services from other churches online. One observer in the United States found the message of repentance was lacking among messages addressed to some of his country's largest congregations.[3] Perhaps you have found otherwise. If not, it's worth asking why not? Why wouldn't the message be the same? The tracing of disease to natural causes doesn't fully explain the meaning of the times we live in. Yes, there are natural causes to diseases and plagues, but the creation and its events find their origin in the purposes of our supernatural Creator, not the creation and natural, physical causes.

Neither does a lack of proclaiming repentance arise because of a lack of this message in the Bible. Among Jesus first words recorded in Mark's gospel are 'repent and believe in the gospel' (Mark 1:15); his message was one of daily repentance, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me' and the apostolic message was that 'now he commands all people everywhere to repent' (Acts 17:30).

Consequently, repentance has always been in the vocabulary and practice of the church. However the history of repentance in the church has often been an unhappy subject. There were days when it was generally taught that absolution of sin was only through confession to an earthly and fallen priest. Martin Luther's anger at the selling of indulgences sparked his nailing of his 95 theses to the church door in Wittenberg, his first thesis being, 'When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, "Repent" (Mt 4:17), he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.'[4]

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3 Colton Corter, '4 Reflections after Listening to 18 Hours of Sermons in America's Biggest Churches' <https://www.9marks.org/article/4-reflections-after-listening-to-18-hours-of-sermons-in-americas-biggest-churches/> [Accessed 16 November 2020]

4 Martin Luther, 'The 95 Theses' <https://www.luther.de/en/95thesen.html> [Accessed 16 November 2020]

The issue in the 16th century wasn't repentance *per se*, it was the way in which this teaching had been uprooted from its true setting in Christian life and was being administered as a means of spiritual bondage for financial and material profit. Repentance is the right medicine for the fallen human condition, but it needs also to be administered correctly and appropriately. We can consider not only that Jesus preached *repentance*, but *Jesus* preached repentance. He speaks the message of repentance and provides the power needed for it. Repentance cannot be a hopeful teaching if it is detached from him.

In Paul's writing to the Corinthians we can observe two kinds of grief: 'godly grief' and 'worldly grief'. Following this, there are two kinds of repentance: that which leads to life and that which leads to death, 'For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death' (2 Cor. 7:10). In Scotland the old terminology that was used to describe this difference was that of 'evangelical' repentance that is motivated by godly grief and 'legal' repentance that follows from worldly grief. In proclaiming the message, care needs to be taken with the spiritual medicine of 'repentance', that 'evangelical repentance' is being administered, that is 'repentance that leads to life' (Acts 11:18) and not the 'legal repentance' which leads to death.

Legal repentance and worldly grief are rooted in a servile fear of God, it is of the flesh. But evangelical repentance and godly grief derives from the Spirit and a filial fear of God. The evangelical kind comes from Christ because godliness comes from him. Thus in describing the 'mystery of godliness' Paul immediately directs his words in praise of Christ' person and work (1 Tim. 3:16-17).

Since the word 'repentance' doesn't necessarily mean Christian repentance – church history tells of Christian martyrs offered the opportunity to 'repent' before suffering death for their Christian faith – it needs to be accompanied with biblical counsel, providing answers to the questions, 'from what?', 'to what (or better, whom!)?', 'how?', as well as 'why?' and 'for how long?'. Rightly administered and acted on, repentance has a happy outcome. In Lachlan Mackenzie's poem, 'The Happy Man,' was 'born in the city of regeneration in the parish of repentance unto life.'[5]

On reflection, examining ourselves we may find that our repentance is not what it ought to be, or could be. Luther found that he could not adequately repent of his repentance. We may find as Christians that our own repentance has been a mixture of both types that we have described, evangelical at times and legal at other times. Identifying the difference

[5] Iain H. Murray, *The Abiding Witness of Lachlan Mackenzie* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1979), p. 5.

between the evangelical type and the legal type and the differences in their origins, may assist in seeking more of the evangelical kind. While it may not provide the medical solution to the pandemic, it provides the cure for the greater need which the pandemic heightens awareness of and hastens, the matter of our mortality and the summoning to God's throne to give account of our lives. In Christ's message of repentance God has graciously summoned us before that day, to turn to him in faith and repentance and thereby be saved from the judgement to come. As such we can say afresh and communicate in these times, 'repentance as the best medicine and treatment'.

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Correction: The 15th Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference on the Doctrine of Scripture was in 2013, not 2015, as mentioned on p. 5 of the previous edition of the Bulletin.

Worship From Calvin to Westminster: Continuity or Discontinuity?

Terry L. Johnson

Hughes O. Old in his groundbreaking book, *The Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship*, posed a question of Calvin's *Form of Church Prayers* that no one, particularly liturgical scholars, had bothered to ask for a very long time. Could Calvin's claim that the Genevan form of worship was, 'according to the custom of the ancient church,' be sustained? Old's answer was, 'we have every reason to take Calvin seriously.'[1] He proceeded to trace in the church fathers sources for *Lectio continua* reading and preaching of Scripture, for a full diet of Scripture-based prayer, for psalm-singing, and for the regular administration of the sacraments understood as means of grace and 'visible words' of God.

A similar claim was made by the Westminster Assembly's divines upon the publication of its *Directory* (1645). Their claim was not of continuity with the ancient church, which they assumed, but continuity with the first generation of Reformers. They explain in the 'Preface' to the *Directory* that they were 'persuaded' that 'our first reformers […] were they now alive […] would join with us in this work.'[2] Moreover, they understood themselves to be answering 'the expectation of other reformed churches' for whom, along with 'many of the godly at home,' the Liturgy 'proved an offence.' Consequently, they argued, their work of 'further reformation' was required, bringing the churches of England, Ireland and Scotland into conformity with 'the reformed churches abroad.'[3]

A subcommittee of the Assembly was appointed on December 2, 1643, to draft a *Directory for the Public Worship of God*. It consisted of four English Presbyterians: Stephen Marshall, Charles Herle, Herbert Palmer, and Thomas Young; one very vocal and persuasive Independent: Thomas Goodwin; and four Scots: Robert Baillie, George Gillespie, Alexander Henderson, and Samuel Rutherford. This work was completed on Decem-

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1 Hughes O. Old, *The Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag Zurich, 1975), p. xiii.

2 The *Directory* cited is found in *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1976), p. 374. Likewise from the same publication we will cite the Parliament's call for an Assembly of Divines and the Solemn League and Covenant.

3 *Directory*, pp. 373, 374; Parliament's call for an Assembly of Divines sought liturgically 'nearer agreement with […] other Reformed Churches abroad,' p. 13.

ber 27, 1644, and was approved by the House of Commons on January 3, 1645.

Did they succeed? Is the *Directory* a clear descendent of the *Genevan Psalter* of 1542 and its successors, with its 'Form of Church Prayers?' Our answer, like Hughes Old's regarding Calvin's claim of continuity of which the 'Ancient Church,' is yes. The *Directory*, along with the Waldegrave and Middleburg orders produced by the Puritans, and Richard Baxter's post-*Directory* Savoy Liturgy are of 'the same lineage,' as Bard Thompson notes in his classic, *Liturgies of the Western Church*.[4]

'Calvin the Liturgist' is a title of which the great Reformer is worthy, given the extensive influence of his liturgical ideas.[5] We will attempt to demonstrate that the *Directory* is unmistakably a part of the family of services produced by Reformed Protestantism, with strong lines of continuity in its principles, elements, order, and ethos. Movement may be discerned, yet this should not be understood as a *departure* from the tradition, but its faithful *development*.

The central principles governing the *Directory* easily may be traced back to their ultimate source in Scripture. Yet they may also be traced to their penultimate source in Geneva. 'Puritan apologetics were filled with citations to the liturgical ideas of the Reformed divines,' notes Thompson.[6] The Assembly as a whole and the sub-committee in particular consisted of scholars of the highest order. The leading Puritans were participants in the international Calvinist movement. Continental and British Calvinists read each other's books and often corresponded in the international academic language of Latin. Horton Davies' suggests, that 'it is doubtful if the Puritans were aware of the cleavage between themselves and John Calvin' and speaks of their 'apparent unawareness of the radical nature of (their) changes.' This claim cannot be sustained.[7] Neither can William D. Maxwell's charge that 'A knowledge of liturgiology was not the field of learning in which the Divines who composed the *Directory* excelled.'[8] Shared principles and practices undergird both Calvin's *Form* and the Westminster Puritan's *Directory*, suggesting direct dependence

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4 Bard Thompson, *Liturgies of the Western Church* (New York: Fortress Press, 1962), p. 319.

5 See Terry Johnson, 'Calvin the Liturgist', in *Tributes to John Calvin*, ed. by David W. Hall (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2010), pp. 118-52.

6 Thompson, *Liturgies*, p. 319.

7 Horton Davies, *The Worship of English Puritans* (1948; Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1997), p. 48. This charge was repeated by J. I. Packer in *A Quest for Godliness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), p. 238.

8 William D. Maxwell, *John Knox's Genevan Service Book* (1556; Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1931), p. 45.

on Calvin's *Form*, adapted to the political and ecclesiastical realities of 17th century Britain.

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Continuity between Calvin and the Westminster Puritans can be seen first in the liturgical implications of their common Protestant doctrine. Both Calvin's *Form* and the *Directory* are based on the central principles of Reformed theology. These principles led not only to a revolution in the reading and preaching of Scripture, but also revolutions, or perhaps better, the restoration of ancient practices, in the administration of the sacraments, prayer, and church song. Certainly there are points at which theological and exegetical principles were applied differently. Yet, as sons of the Reformation, the Westminster Puritans embraced the Reformers' theologically derived liturgical reforms. This meant that services would be conducted in the language of the people; they would be purged of extra-biblical content; congregational singing would be restored; public prayer would be expanded by incorporating neglected genres; the eucharist would be administered in both kinds as a covenantal meal, not a mass; and the role of the clergy would be redefined as preacher rather than priest, pastor rather than mediator. We may use the Reformation mottos to demonstrate our meaning.

* *Sola Scriptura* was understood by all to require the reduction of the liturgy. From Zwingli to Bucer to Calvin to the Westminster Puritans, the consistent conviction of Reformed Protestants was that Scripture must determine the structure and content of divine worship. Some have attempted to drive a wedge between Calvin and the Puritans, but we judge these attempts to have failed.[9]

Calvin is emphatic that there is 'nothing obscure, nothing ambiguous' in the warnings of Deuteronomy 12:32 and Proverbs 30:6 not to 'add to' or 'take away' anything from God's word, 'when the worship of the Lord

[9] See attempt by R. J. Gore, *Covenantal Worship: Reconsidering the Puritan Regulative Principle* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), especially pp. 53-89. For decisive rebuttals, see Derek W. H. Thomas, 'The Regulative Principle: Responding to Recent Criticism', in *Give Praise to God: A Vision for Reforming Worship*, ed. P. G. Graham, et.al. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), pp. 74-93; T. D. Gordon, 'Review Article: The Westminster Assembly's Unworkable and Unscriptural View of Worship' in *Westminster Theological Journal*, 65 (2003); W. Robert Godfrey, *John Calvin: Pilgrim and Pastor* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2009), pp. 78-80.

and precepts of salvation are concerned.'[10] The church is forbidden 'to burden consciences with new observances, or contaminate the worship of God with our own inventions.'[11] 'I know how difficult it is to persuade the world that God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by His word,' Calvin laments in his 1543 treatise on 'The Necessity of Reforming the Church.'[12] He calls 'for the rejection of any mode of worship that is not sanctioned by the command of God.'[13]

Consistent with Calvin's view, the Westminster Puritans insisted that

> the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture.[14]

The writers of the *Directory* were careful 'to hold forth such things that are of divine institution in every ordinance.' Yet they allowed for 'other things' which they 'set forth according to the rules of Christian providence, agreeably to the general rules of the word of God,' that is, what the *Confession* refers to as '*circumstances*.'[15]

This insistence was maintained through Calvin and the Westminster Divines, their ecclesiastical descendants in Scotland, England, New England, and Princeton, and continues to the present day.[16] The church, Reformed Protestantism has agreed, is only to do in worship that which Scripture enjoins by precept or example. Inherited practices which could be biblically justified were maintained and typically transformed, as in the cases of preaching, prayer, Scripture reading, singing, and the administration of the sacraments. Extra-biblical ceremonies, rituals, signs, images, symbols, decorations, and gestures were removed so as to allow

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10 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. by John T. McNeill, 2 vols, The Library of Christian Classics, Volume XXI (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), IV.x.17, p. 1195.

11 Ibid., IV.x.18, p. 1197.

12 John Calvin, 'The Necessity of Reforming the Church', in *Selected Works of John Calvin: Tracts and Letters*, ed. by Henry Beveridge, 7 vols (1858; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 1:128.

13 Ibid., p. 133.

14 *Westminster Confession of Faith*, XXI.1; cf. Larger Catechism, #s 108 and 109.

15 Directory, p. 374. Confession, I.7.

16 See the work of modern authors such as John Leith, Hughes Old, T. David Gordon, Richard Mueller, Derek Thomas, Ligon Duncan, and Robert Godfrey, among others.

undistracted focus upon the ministry of the word and the God-ordained signs of the Lord's Supper and baptism.

The principle that worship must be 'according to Scripture' has sometimes been called the 'regulative principle' and has distinguished Reformed Protestantism from the less rigorous approach to the reform of worship pursued by the Lutherans and Anglicans. The discussion was refined over time, particularly by the Puritans. *Elements*, which were carefully limited (Scripture reading, sermon, prayer, sung praise, the administration of the sacraments, and creeds) were distinguished from *forms* (types or shapes the elements might take) and *circumstances* (lighting, seating, building, time, etc.) where greater latitude was allowed.[17] Still, 'according to Scripture' meant in practice that the reform of worship was based on biblical exegesis and careful theological formulation.

* *Solas Christus* was understood by all to require the reform of the eucharist. Because the atoning work of Christ is 'finished' (John 19:30); because His death is once for all; because His sacrifice is final and complete (Heb. 10:12; 1 Peter 3:17), and because the mediatorial office is exclusively His (1 Tim. 2:5), a sacrificial understanding of the eucharist was abandoned by Reformed Protestants. The Reformed held to a spiritual presence of Christ in the Supper, a *true* presence of Christ rather than a *real*, that is, rather than a physical, carnal, corporeal, or localized presence.[18] Biblical exegesis led to the *understanding* of Communion as a covenantal meal. These theological and biblical insights demanded a new *manner* of administering the eucharist, as altars were replaced by tables, the minister faced the congregation from behind the table, with the host unelevated. These reforms further required an altered identity of the clergy, from priests to pastors and preachers. 'All those things which smack of sacrifice' had to be removed, as Luther said.[19] Reformed Protestants acted where Luther hesitated. The language of sacrifice as well as all gestures, garments, furnishings, and rituals that implied sacrifice were eliminated. Calvin said, 'The Lord has given us a table at which we may feast, not an altar on which a victim may be offered; He has not consecrated priests to sacrifice, but ministers to distribute a sacred feast.'[20] That is to say, the eucharist, Reformed Protestantism insisted, is *communal* not mystical, a *meal* not a mass, a *supper* not a sacrifice, administered by a

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17 See Johnson, *Reformed Worship*, pp. 30-32; *Westminster Confession of Faith*; XXI.3-5; I.7.

18 See Johnson, *Worshipping With Calvin* (Darlington, England: EP Books, 2014), 157-172; *Westminster Confession of Faith*, XXIX.5, 7.

19 Cited in Thompson, *Liturgies*, p. 111.

20 Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.xviii.12, p. 1440.

pastor not a priest, on a *table* not an altar. All of this is reflected in the administration of the Lord's Supper in both Calvin's *Form* and the Westminster Puritans' *Directory*.

* *Sola fide* was understood by Reformed Protestants to require vernacular services and the reform of the reading and preaching of Scripture. Since believers are justified by faith alone and since justifying faith 'comes by hearing the word of Christ' (Rom. 10:17), it is necessary, Calvin and the Westminster Puritans agree, for Scripture in the language of the people to have a prominent place in the worship of the church.[21] 'The chief and greatest aim of any service is to preach and teach God's word,' said Luther in his introduction to his *Deutsche Messe* (1526).[22] At the time of the Reformation, vernacular services replaced the Latin mass; *lectio continua* reading and preaching replaced *lectio selecta*, or even extra-canonical readings; congregational singing of vernacular Psalms and biblical hymns replaced monastic choirs singing incoherent 'versicles.'

Both Calvin and the Westminster Puritans insisted that the reading, preaching, singing, and praying in worship all be rich in Scriptural context, that the people might be sanctified by the truth (John 17:17). 'In contrast with either the Catholic or Lutheran church, Reformed worship was characterized by a particular single-minded focus on the sacred text of the Bible as preached, read, and sung,' notes Reformation scholar Philip Benedict, 'and by a zeal to eliminate all unscriptural elements from the liturgy.'[23] Calvin's *Form* and the Westminster Puritans' *Directory* reflect this principle.

* *Sola gratia* was understood by all to require the reform of prayer. 'Grace alone' was emphasized by the Reformers beyond 'faith alone' in order to guard the gospel from any encroachments of works-based righteousness. The faith which saves is itself a 'gift of God' (Eph. 2:8, 9). Salvation is a product of the divine initiative beginning in eternity, accomplished in the person and work of Christ, and applied by the Holy Spirit. Upon this principle all the Reformers agreed. The agent of application,

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21 See Luther, 'Concerning the Ordering of Divine Worship in the Congregation', cited in Thompson, *Liturgies*, p. 98.

22 Thompson, *Liturgies*, p. 129.

23 Philip Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 490. Elsie McKee adds, 'For Reformed Christians, as for Protestants generally, the exposition of the Biblical text, in the language of the people, became a central and necessary part of all right worship of God' ('Context, Contours, Contents: Towards a Description of Calvin's Understanding of Worship', in *Calvin Studies Society Papers 1995, 1997*, ed. by David Foxgrover [Grand Rapids: CRC Product Services, 1998], p. 82).

the One Who initiates redemption in the believer's experience, is the Holy Spirit. Believers are born again by the Holy Spirit (John 3:5-8), confess Jesus as Lord (and are justified) by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3; Rom. 10:9), receive the Spirit of adoption (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 5:22, 23), are sanctified by the Spirit (1 Peter 1:2) and are kept or preserved by the power of God the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:5). The application of the whole *ordo salutis* is a supernatural event. The *Shorter Catechism* produced by the Westminster Puritans affirms (Q 29):

> we are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us *by his Holy Spirit*.

This understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit had a powerful impact on worship, leading to the above-mentioned 'revolution in prayer' as dependence upon God the Spirit came to be expressed through what Hughes Old has called 'a full diet of prayer.'[24] The invocation, the congregational confession of sin, the intercessions, the prayer of illumination, and the benediction were restored to the regular worship of the church. Moreover, the internal and spiritual dimension of worship came to take precedence over the external and formal, simplicity over elaborate and ostentatious ritual and ceremony.

* Finally, *Soli Deo Gloria* led to reliance upon in the ordinary means of grace. Carlos Eire argues that in the late Middle Ages, access to divine power was sought through the cult of saints, relics, images, and pilgrimages. In Eire's terms, the transcendent was sought through the imminent, the heavenly through the earthly, the spiritual through the material.

> Late medieval religion sought to grasp the transcendent by making it imminent: It was a religion that sought to embody itself in images, reduce the infinite to the finite, blend the holy and the profane, and disintegrate all mystery.[25]

The Reformers protested, *soli Deo gloria*, to which might be added, urges Eire, the principle *finitum non est capax infiniti*, 'the finite cannot comprehend the infinite.' John Leith explains that 'Reformed theology has resisted every effort to get control of God, to fasten the infinite and indeterminate God to the finite and the determinate whether it be images, or

[24] Hughes Old, *Worship that is Reformed According to Scripture* (1984, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), p. 173.

[25] Carlos M. N. Eire, *War Against the Idols; The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 11.

the bread and wine of the sacraments, or the structures of the church.'[26] Negatively this meant the elimination of everything in the church's external devotion that implied magic or the domestication of God: Marian devotion, the cult of saints, relics, images, pilgrimages, and the doctrine of transubstantiation. Positively, it meant an internalizing of piety and a simplified approach to God through the ordinary means of word, sacraments, and prayer. The reforms of both Geneva and Westminster were theologically-driven, arising from a shared Protestant theology.

PROPER MOTIVATION AND ATTITUDE

Continuity between Calvin and the Westminster Puritans may be found not only in their concern for the right *form* of worship, but in their concern for the right *attitude* in worship. They were not content with proper form. They fully embraced the Old Testament prophetic critique of formal correctness disconnected from righteousness (e.g. Isa. 1:11-17; Jer. 7:4-7; Amos 5:21-24).[27] They insisted that true worship must flow from the heart. Contrary to the principle of *ex opera operato*, attitude and motive must be correct. God-pleasing worship must be both in 'truth' and in 'spirit' (John 4:24). Both Calvin and the Westminster Puritans took with the utmost seriousness the warning of Jesus of those who 'honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me' (Mark 7:6; Isa. 29:13).

FORM WITH FREEDOM

Consequently, Calvin and the Westminster Puritans shared a concern for balance between correct form and the freedom that is necessary for heart religion. Since the publishing of Charles Baird's *Presbyterian Liturgies*, Calvin's letter to Lord Somerset often has been cited as evidence that Calvin demanded an undeviating uniformity according to the wording of his *Form*. Rowland S. Ward, in his essay on '*The Directory*,' argues that his words, 'certain form, from which ministers be not allowed to vary' have to

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[26] John H. Leith, *Introduction to the Reformed Tradition*, Revised Edition (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), p. 74.

[27] See Hughes O. Old, 'Prophetic Doxology' in *Themes and Variations for a Christian Doxology: Some Thoughts on the Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), pp. 91-110; and Old, 'John Calvin and the Prophetic Criticism of Worship', in *John Calvin and the Church: A Prism of Reform*, ed. by Timothy Gearse (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), pp. 230-46.

do not with the prayers, but the catechism.[28] The subsequent translation shortly after Baird's is clearer.[29] The prayers of the Genevan liturgy itself primarily were prescribed. Yet, according to the rubrics, the form provided 'is generally used,' which sounds like some latitude was expected.[30]

There are other indications that room was made for freedom in worship. The form of the prayer before the sermon, the prayer of illumination, was 'left to the discretion of the Minister.'[31] Also the public prayers of the weekday services as well as the afternoon service of the Lord's Day were free. The minister, according to the rubrics, was to frame 'the sort of exhortation to prayer which may seem suitable to him, adapting it to the times and to the topic of his sermon.'[32] According to the rubrics of the Strasbourg edition of the 'Form of Church Prayers,' the minister prior to the absolution was to deliver 'some word of Scripture to console the conscience,' the content left to his discretion.[33]

By allowing these areas of latitude, Calvin, according to nineteenth century church historian Philip Schaff, 'opened the inexhaustible fountain of free prayer in public worship, with its endless possibilities of application to varying circumstances and wants.'[34] Charles Baird sees the union of free prayer and prescribed forms in Calvin's service as the 'peculiar excellence of the Genevan worship.'[35]

Whatever restrictions he might contemplate in the liturgy, Calvin is adamant respecting freedom in preaching. He complains to Somerset 'that there is very little preaching of a lively kind in the kingdom, but that the greater part deliver it by way of reading a written discourse.' Without discounting the possible abuse of fanatics, he insists that preachers be allowed to have 'free course,' that their preaching 'ought not to be lifeless but lively.' He appeals to 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 and 1 Corinthians 14:24, 25, urging that 'the Spirit of God ought to sound forth by their voice, so as

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28 Rowland S. Ward, '*The Westminster Directory*', in Richard A. Muller and Rowland S. Ward, *Scripture and Worship: Biblical Interpretation to the Directory for Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007) pp. 104, 105; he notes that both D. G. Hart and W. D. Maxwell have been misled.

29 That of Jules Bonnet, in *Selected Works of John Calvin*, ed. by Henry Beveridge (1858; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 5:191-92.

30 Thompson, *Liturgies*, p. 197.

31 Thompson, *Liturgies*, p. 199.

32 Ibid., p. 197.

33 Ibid., p. 198.

34 Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 8 vols (1910; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), VIII, 371.

35 Charles W. Baird, *The Presbyterian Liturgies* (1855, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1957), p. 24; Thompson, *Liturgies*, p. 197.

to work with mighty energy.' Whatever the dangers, nothing ought to be allowed 'to hinder the Spirit of God from having liberty and free course.' If ministers were tied down to books of homilies and written sermons, he feared the Reformation would not make the progress in England that otherwise it would if 'this powerful instrument of preaching be developed more and more.'[36] The subsequent Reformed tradition moves beyond Calvin but not against him, in the direction of increasing latitude in worship, from Knox to the Westminster *Directory*, to the present.

The *Directory* likewise sought to strike a balance between form and freedom. It 'aimed at the merits of a prayerbook,' says Davies, 'without its attendant disadvantages.' It sought 'a marriage between order and liberty,' a middle way between prescribed liturgy and unguided freedom.[37]

On the one hand, the Westminster Puritans were concerned with form and uniformity. They gathered on July 1, 1643, at the bequest of the English Parliament to settle 'the Government and Liturgy of the Church of England' as well as its doctrines.[38] Parliament ratified the 'Solemn League and Covenant' on July 15, 1644, the price required by Scotland for its military support in Parliament's war with Charles I. This agreement further informed the Assembly's work. The Solemn League and Covenant on the one hand required that Parliament join with the Scots in 'the *preservation* of the reformed religion in the Church of Scotland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government,' and on the other hand 'the *reformation* of religion in the kingdoms of England and Ireland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government.' The goal was 'the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, confession of faith, form of church government, directory for worship and catechizing.'[39] By this means these three kingdoms were to be brought 'to the nearest conjunction and *uniformity* in religion, confession of faith, form of Church government, directory for worship and catechizing.'[40] According to Scottish commissioner Robert Baillie (1599-1662), the intention of the post-Solemn League and Covenant Assembly was 'to abolish the great Idol of England, the Service Book, and to erect in all the parts of worship a full conformity to Scotland in all things worthy to be spoken of.'[41] In other words, once the Solemn

36 Calvin, 'Letter to Protector Somerset', *Selected Works*, 5:190-92.

37 Davies, *Worship of the English Puritans*, p. 129.

38 Act of Parliament, 13.

39 The 'Solemn League and Covenant' cited is found in the *Westminster Catechism of Faith* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1976), p. 359 (my emphasis).

40 Ibid. (my emphasis).

41 Cited in D. B. Forrester, 'Worship', in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Wheaton, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), p. 896.

League and Covenant was adopted, the Westminster Assembly would be required to find forms of doctrine and worship which might be acceptable 'not merely to the Church of England, as promising to serve her internal peace, and efficacy,' explains B. B. Warfield, 'but also the Church of Scotland as preserving the doctrines, worship, discipline, government already established in that Church.' Warfield continues:

> The significance of the Solemn League and Covenant was, therefore, that it pledged the two nations to uniformity in their religious establishments and pledged them to a uniformity on the model of the establishment *already existing in the Church of Scotland*.[42]

This was the Scottish nation and church that had vehemently rejected a modified Prayer Book in 1637 and demanded a freer form of worship even than had been enjoyed under the regime of the 'Book of Common Order.' About this ('Knox's Liturgy'), Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661), one of the Scottish commissioners had said, 'We will not own this liturgy. Nor are we tied to it.'[43] Read prayers and a fixed liturgy grew in disfavour among the Scots, throughout the 17th century. Rutherford said characteristically of his and succeeding generations, 'I could never see precept, promise, or practice for (read prayers), in God's word.'[44]

Still, note the goal of 'uniformity' in worship. The *Directory* itself provides 'the general heads' of the service order, 'the sense and scope of the prayers,' as well as 'the other parts of public worship,' to which 'being known to all,' were meant to result in consensus regarding 'the substance of the service and worship of God.'[45] We have noted that the *Directory* provides 'some help and furniture' to assist ministers by providing a sample invocation; a sample pastoral prayer (as it later came to be called)

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42 B. B. Warfield, *The Westminster Assembly and its Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 26.

43 Cited in Brian D. Spinks, 'The Origin of the Antipathy to Set Liturgical Forms in the English-Speaking Reformed Tradition', in *Christian Worship in Reformed Churches Past and Present*, ed. by Lukas Vischer (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), p. 79.

44 Samuel Rutherford, *Letters of Samuel Rutherford* (1664, 1891; Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth, 1984), p. 611. He continues, 'Our church never allowed them, but men took them up at their own choice. The word of God maketh reading (1 Tim. iv. 3) and praying (1 Thess. v. 17) two different worships. In reading, God speaketh to us (2 Kings xxii. 10, 11); in praying, we speak to God (Ps. xxii. 2, xxiii. 1.) […] The saints never used [read prayers], and God never commanded them; and a promise to hear any prayers, except the pouring out of the soul to God, we can never read.'

45 *Directory*, p. 374.

which includes confession of sin, assurance of pardon, intercessions, and illumination; a sample prayer after the sermon; sample words of instruction and exhortation prior to and for the administration of baptism; and sample words of instruction and exhortation prior to and for the administration of the Lord's Supper. Sample language is provided for the blessing of the communion elements, for the distribution of the elements, for the post-communion charge to communicants to walk worthy of the sacraments, and for the concluding thanksgiving prayer. Considerable direction is given on how sermons are to be preached.

All this to say, significant attention is given to form and uniformity. Ministers were not left to their own devices. The *Directory* itself explains that it was meant to provide 'public testimony' to the Assembly's 'endeavours for uniformity in divine worship,' which, they explain, 'we have promised in our Solemn League and Covenant.'[46] Their concern for uniformity, even catholicity, extended beyond the bounds of Great Britain, as we have seen, including the Reformed churches abroad. Their concern will reappear in the petitions and presentations of the English Presbyterians (e.g. Reynolds, Calamy, Case, Manton, Baxter, Bates, Howe) to Charles II upon his return to England in May 1660, when they will urge that a revised prayer book 'not be dissonant from the Liturgies of other reformed churches.'[47]

On the other hand, there is considerable concern for freedom. The Assembly produced not a liturgy, but a *directory*. Uniformity was sought, but not word-for-word uniformity. Unity was the goal, but not a unity that stifled the work of the Holy Spirit. While not opposed to set prayers in principle, the concern for the exercise of 'gift of prayer' was paramount among the Westminster Puritans. We find this concern among their predecessors such as John Field and Thomas Wilcox in their *Admonition to Parliament* (1572), in William Perkins' *Art of Prophesying* (1592), in William Bradshaw's *English Puritanism* (1605).[48] We see this concern expressed in the preface to the *Directory* and again in the directions. George Gillespie (1613-1648), Scottish commissioner and author of *Aaron's Rod Blooming*, urged 'that man who stirs up his own gifts doth better than he that useth set forms.'[49] This is typical of the outlook of the Westminster Divines.

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46 Ibid.

47 Timothy J. Fawcett, *Liturgy of Comprehension, 1689: An Abortive Attempt to Revise the Book of Common Prayer*, Alcuin Club Collections No. 54 (Southend-on-Sea: Mayhew-McCrimmon Ltd., 1973), p. 2.

48 Spinks, 'Origin', pp. 66-82.

49 Cited in Alexander F. Mitchell, *The Westminster Assembly: its History and Standards; Being the Baird Lecture for 1882* (1883; Still Waters Revival Books,

The concern for free prayer reappears years later in the Presbyterians' 'Exceptions Against the Book of Common Prayer' presented to the Anglican Bishops in May of 1661. They urged that in a revised prayer book the liturgy not be 'too rigorously imposed; nor the minister so confined thereunto, but *that he may also make use of those gifts for prayer and exhortation*' that Christ has given to the church.[50] When rebuffed and faced with the prospect of praying 'in no words but are in the Common Prayer book,' they bitterly complained of the 'brevity, ineptness, and the customariness' of those prayers and of their inevitable impact of taking 'off the edge of fervor with human nature' and of preventing the 'enlargedness, copiousness, and freedom as is necessary to true fervor.' They maintained that 'A brief, transient touch and away, is not enough to warm the heart aright; and cold prayers are likely to have a cold return.' The resulting uniformity would produce unity, but this would be 'to cure the disease by the extinguishing of life, and to unite us all in a dead religion.'[51]

Again, they were not opposed to liturgy or set prayers or fixed forms. The preface to the *Directory* complains of 'the reading of *all* prayers,' not just *some* prayers but all, having the effect of 'an idle and unedifying ministry,' with ministers failing 'to exercise the gift of prayer, which our Lord Jesus Christ pleaseth to furnish all his servants whom he calls to that office.'[52] The models of prayer supplied by the *Directory* could and indeed were turned into actual prayers as early as 1645 with the publication of *A Supply of Prayer for Ships*, intended for circumstances when no minister, that is, no one with the gift of prayer, was available. Rather, they urged in their 'Exceptions' in 1661, 'we would avoid the extreme that would have no forms, and the contrary extreme that would have nothing but forms.'[53] The concern for free prayer reappears at the Savoy Conference in July 1661, and at subsequent attempts of toleration and/or comprehension from the mid-1660s to the 1680s. It was essential to the English Puritans throughout their history that place be given to free prayers and that the gifts of prayer be exercised.

Alexander Mitchell is right to clarify that 'nothing was further from their intentions than to encourage unpremeditated or purely extemporary effusions.'[54] Rather, 'they intended the exercise of prayer to be matter of thought, meditation, preparation and prayer, equally with the preach-

1992), p. 227.

50 Cited in Fawcett, *The Liturgy of Comprehension*, p. 2 (my emphasis).

51 Davies, *Worship of the English Puritans*, p. 154.

52 *Directory*, pp. 373, 374 (my emphasis).

53 Davies, *Worship of the English Puritans*, p. 154.

54 Mitchell, *The Westminster Assembly*, p. 228.

ing of the word.'[55] Even the Independent Philip Nye urged a middle way between set forms and extemporary prayers: 'I plead for neither, but for *studied* prayers.'[56] Mitchell cites with approval the later sentiment of Queen Victoria: 'that the simple fervent prayer of a Scottish minister may touch a chord in the heart which the grandest liturgy had left unmoved.'[57]

The Pastoral or Great Prayer provides what the *Directory* deems 'a convenient order, in the ordinary public prayer.' Yet 'the minister may defer (*as in providence he shall think meet*) some part of these petitions till after his sermon, or offer up to God some thanksgivings hereafter appointed, in his prayer before the sermon.'[58] Here again is latitude. In all the prayers the minister 'is left to his liberty, as God shall direct and enable him, in piety and wisdom to discharge his duty.'[59]

The portion of Scripture to be read is 'ordinarily' to be 'one chapter of each Testament […] at every meeting, and sometimes more.' Yet this 'is left to the wisdom of the minister.' His sermon subject is to be 'some text of scripture,' yet he is to choose which text 'as he shall see fit.' [60] They were careful to explain that their detailed instruction for preaching was 'not prescribed as necessary for every man, or upon every text, but only recommended.'[61] Indeed we may regard concern for preaching to be the other major interest of the Assembly. The Prayer Book, the Preface argues, as imposed by the Prelates, had been a 'great hindrance of the preaching of the word, and (in some places, especially of late) to the jostling of it out as unnecessary, or at best, as far inferior to the reading of common prayer.'[62] Freedom to preach, even encouragement to preach, was considered vital.

Further, the Lord's Supper is to be administered 'frequently.' Yet 'frequently' is left undefined. 'How often' is to be 'considered and determined by the ministers and other church-goers of each congregation, as they shall find most convenient for the comfort and edification of the people committed to their charge.'[63]

Along the spectrum from unalterable form to liturgical anarchy, Calvin is to the right of middle favouring form, the Westminster Puritans to the left of middle favouring freedom. Yet there is continuity, the Westminster Puritans' differing emphasis driven by their 'long and sad

55 Ibid.
56 Ibid., p. 229 (my emphasis).
57 Ibid., pp. 230, 231.
58 *Directory*, p. 379.
59 Ibid., p. 382.
60 Ibid., p. 375.
61 Ibid., p. 381.
62 Ibid., p. 373.
63 Ibid., p. 384.

experience' of an imposed liturgy, as well as their desire for a religious settlement that would include the Independents.

Thompson considers the *Directory* 'a monumental effort to comprehend the virtues of form and freedom.'[64] Similarly, Horton Davies regards the *Directory* as 'a notable attempt to combine the spontaneity of free prayer with the advantages of an ordered context or framework of worship.'[65] Indeed, 'It aimed at avoiding the deadening effect of a reiterated liturgy as also the pitfall of extempore prayer – the disordered meanderings of the minister.'[66] The *Directory* allows both types of prayers, and says Davies, 'is itself the direct lineage of the Calvinist liturgies.'[67]

SIMPLICITY AND SPIRITUALITY

Calvin also insisted that worship be simple and spiritual, simple because spiritual.[68] 'Simplicity was the hallmark of Calvin's liturgical policy,' says Thompson.[69] All the 'shadowy symbols of the old dispensation,' all the 'lifeless and theatrical trifles' of the medieval church, as Calvin called those things, and all external forms that encumbered spiritual worship were removed, that the heart might be undistracted and the word might be heard unhindered.[70] Preaching was to be in a plain style. Ministers should handle the Scripture with 'modesty and reverence.'[71] They 'must not make a parade of rhetoric, only to gain esteem for themselves.'[72] Public prayers were to be offered without 'ostentation and chasing after paltry human glory.'[73] Baptism was to be administered in simplicity, omitting the 'theatrical pomp' of the Medieval service with its candles, chrism, exsufflations, spittle, exorcisms, etc., 'which dazzle the eyes of the simple and deadens their minds.'[74] No other ceremonies were to be allowed to distract the elect from those few ceremonies (i.e. baptism and

64 Thompson, *Liturgies*, p. 353.
65 Davies, *Worship of the English Puritans,* p. 141.
66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
68 See Godfrey, *John Calvin*, pp. 81-83.
69 Thompson, *Liturgies*, p. 194.
70 Ibid., 195; Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.xvii.43, p. 1421.
71 From Calvin's commentary on Luke 4:16, cited in Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1947), p. 119.
72 John Calvin, 'Letter CCXXIX – To the Protector Somerset', in *Selected Works of John Calvin*, V, 190.
73 Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxx.30, p. 893.
74 Ibid., IV.xv.19, p. 1319.

the eucharist) ordained by God. 'Everywhere there is too much of processionals, ceremonies, and mimes,' Calvin complains. 'Indeed,' he says, 'the very ceremonies established by God cannot lift their head in such a great crowd, but lie as if crushed down.'[75] Only as much ceremony was allowed as was necessary for the conducting of the service. In keeping with this, the churches of Geneva were stripped of their pictures, statues, and symbols; clergy traded their priestly vestments for black robes; altars were removed and replaced by plain communion tables; the various anointings and exorcisms in connection with baptisms were eliminated; processionals, incense and extraneous gestures and postures were abolished.

The calendar also was simplified. Saint's days were eliminated and only the 'Five Evangelical Feast Days' were retained: Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension Day, and Pentecost. Otherwise, the weekly Lord's Day was to be the primary holy day of the Christian community.

Simplicity was closely associated with spirituality and internality. Focus was to be on the heart, not right formulas, right rituals, or right ceremonies. Prayers were to be offered with 'a single and true affection that dwells in the secret place of the heart.'[76] Singing was to 'spring from deep feeling of heart' and with care 'that our ears be not more attentive to the melody than our minds to the spiritual meaning of the words.'[77] Simplicity facilitated the undistracted attention of the mind upon God's word, and undistracted devotion of the heart upon Christ.

Likewise the Westminster Puritans endeavoured to rid the public worship of the church of the Prayer Book's 'many unprofitable and burdensome ceremonies' which had 'occasioned much mischief,' as the 'Preface' argues. Too many 'ignorant and superstitious people' were pleased with mere 'lip-labour' in their participation in the reading of common prayer, and as a result, had 'hardened themselves in their ignorance and carelessness of saving knowledge and true piety.'[78] Heart religion is the concern throughout the *Directory*.

The *Directory* provides 'help and furniture' for ministers, but not so much as to lead than to become 'slothful and negligent in stirring up the gifts of Christ in them.' Rather, they themselves are by meditation, carefulness and observation of providence 'to furnish (their) heart(s) and tongue(s) with further or other materials of prayer and exhortation, as shall be needful upon all occasions.'[79]

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75 Ibid., IV.xviii.20, p. 1448.
76 Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xx.30, p. 893.
77 Ibid., III.xx.31, 32, pp. 894-95.
78 *Directory*, p. 373.
79 Ibid., p. 374.

Prior to the 'Great' or 'Pastoral' Prayer, the minister 'is to endeavour to get his own and his hearers' hearts to be rightly affected with their sins, that they may all mourn in sense thereof before the Lord, and hunger and thirst after the grace of God in Jesus Christ.' The confession of sin with which the Great Prayer begins is to be undertaken 'with shame and holy confusion of face.'[80] The prayers of illumination for the minister and people with which the Great Prayer concludes are further evidence of the concern for the spirituality of Christian worship, as opposed to mere form.

The minister is to prepare for preaching not only through theological and biblical education but spiritually. He ought 'to seek by prayer, a humble heart' to grow in knowledge. He is to be diligent in his 'private preparations.' He is to preach 'powerfully […] plainly […] faithfully […] wisely […] gravely […] with affection […] and, as taught of God and persuaded *in his own heart*, that all that he teacheth is the truth of Christ.'[81] Communion instruction, prayers and exhortations are to be performed 'with suitable affections, answerably to such a holy action, and to stir up the like in the people.'[82] The people themselves are to come having had the sacrament announced the Sabbath day before that they might make 'due preparations unto.'[83] At every point in the public service, encompassing all participants from the minister to the congregation, nothing was to be undertaken in a rote, mindless, or mechanical manner. Spiritually correct aspirations were to inform and motivate participants throughout.

These spiritual concerns led the Westminster Puritans to the concomitant concern for simplicity as it did for Calvin, lest unnecessary ceremony or distracting activity undermine the spiritual goal of the public service. The minister is to preach 'plainly,' not drawing attention to himself through 'enticing words of man's wisdom,' so that 'the meanest may understand.' He is to shun 'all such gesture, voice, and expressions, as may occasion the corruptions of men to despise him and his ministry.'[84] Baptism is to be administered 'without adding any other ceremony.'[85] Weddings are to be conducted 'without any other ceremony.'[86] Calvin's concerns, clearly, have been passed along to the Westminster Puritans.

The Westminster Puritans went beyond Calvin in eliminating the church calendar in its entirety in favour of the weekly Sabbath. 'There

[80] Ibid., p. 376.
[81] Ibid., p. 381.
[82] Ibid., p. 385.
[83] Ibid., p. 384.
[84] Ibid., p. 381.
[85] Ibid., p. 383.
[86] Ibid., p. 388.

is no day commanded in scripture to be kept holy under the gospel but the Lord's day, which is the Christian Sabbath,' the *Directory* maintains.[87] Consequently, 'Festival days, vulgarly called *Holy-days*, having no warrant in the word of God, are not to be continued.'[88] Here we find the Westminster Puritans going beyond Geneva.

REVERENCE

Finally, Calvin insists upon the attitude of *reverence* in worship.[89] The tone of the prayers and songs and sermons in Geneva was sober, serious and reverent. This can be illustrated by the language that he uses to describe the tunes which would be used in the singing of the psalms. The church's tunes, he says, should 'be neither light nor frivolous, but have gravity and majesty, as Saint Augustine says.' Further, 'There is a great difference between the music which one makes to entertain people at table and in their homes and psalms which are sung in the presence of God and his angels.'[90] The melody, he says, should be 'moderated' in order 'to carry gravity and majesty appropriate to the subject and even to be suitable for singing in the church.'[91] What was true of the church's song was to be true of the entire service. Reverence is Calvin's 'first rule' of prayer, and he denounces 'levity that marks an excess of frivolity utterly devoid of awe.'[92] The people kneeled for the confession of sin, the men with their heads uncovered.[93] Sermons were to be preached with dignity and humility.

Similarly, the congregation is called by the Westminster Puritans to 'enter the assembly, not irreverently, but in a grave and seemly manner.'[94] The minister is to begin the service with prayer 'in all reverence and humility.' The tone of reverence is to be maintained, as the *Directory* explains:

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87 Ibid., p. 394.

88 Ibid.

89 See Godfrey, *John Calvin*, pp. 83-86.

90 John Calvin, 'Foreword to the Psalter' in *John Calvin: Writings on Pastoral Theology*, ed. by Elsie Anne McKee (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), p. 94. This may also be found under the title 'Calvin's Preface to the Psalter' via the 'articles' page at <https://sites.google.com/site/fpcrhomepage/> [accessed 8 October 2020]; or 'Form of Prayers', in *Selected Works of John Calvin*, II, 100-12.

91 Calvin, 'Foreword', *Writings on Pastoral Theology*, p. 94.

92 Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xx.4, 5, pp. 853-54.

93 Baird, *Presbyterian Liturgies*, p. 27; *John Calvin: Writings on Pastoral Piety*, ed. by Elsie McKee, 100; Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xx.33, p. 897.

94 *Directory*, p. 375.

> The public worship being begun, the people are wholly to attend upon it, forbearing to read anything, except what the minister is then reading or citing; and abstaining much more from all private whisperings, conferences, salutations, or doing reverence to any person present, or coming in; as also from all gazing, sleeping, and other indecent behaviour, which may disturb the minister or people, or hinder themselves or others in the service of God.[95]

Those who enter late are 'reverently to compose themselves to join with the assembly.'[96] The sermon is to be preached 'gravely.'[97] The 'ignorant, scandalous, profane, or that live in any sin or offence against their knowledge or conscience' are to be warned to refrain from coming to God's 'holy table.'[98] Psalms are to be sung reverently, the voice 'tunably and gravely ordered.'[99]

Behind all this is a high view of the Lord's Day. Worshippers are urged to so order the 'worldly business of (their) ordinary callings' that possible distractions may be 'timely and seasonably laid aside, as they may not be impediments to the due sanctifying of the day when it comes.'[100] Worldly recreations and employments are to be set aside. Even 'worldly words and thoughts' are to cease. Meal preparation is not to be allowed to interfere with participation in worship. Devotional preparation is urged:

> That there be private preparations of every person and family, by prayer for themselves, and for God's assistance of the minister, and for a blessing upon his ministry; and by such other holy exercises, as may further dispose them to a more comfortable communion with God in his public ordinances.[101]

Worshippers are to arrive on time and remain until the end:

> That all the people meet so timely for publick worship, that the whole congregation may be present at the beginning, and with one heart solemnly join together in all parts of the publick worship, and not depart till after the blessing.[102]

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95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid., p. 381.
98 Ibid., p. 384.
99 Ibid., p. 393.
100 Ibid., p. 386.
101 Ibid.
102 Ibid.

As in Geneva, congregations gathered both in the morning and evening on the Lord's Day. Consequently the Westminster Puritans even addressed the time between the services:

> That what time is vacant, between or after the solemn meetings of the congregation in publick, be spent in reading, meditation, repetition of sermons; especially by calling their families to an account of what they have heard, and catechizing of them, holy conferences, prayer for a blessing upon the publick ordinances, singing of psalms, visiting the sick, relieving the poor, and such like duties of piety, charity, and mercy, accounting the Sabbath a delight.[103]

Worship among the Puritans, as well as with Calvin, was serious business. External correctness was important, but of itself, insufficient. The heart must be right. The motive must be correct. Simplicity then, was insisted upon for the sake of spirituality. Was there development? Certainly.[104] Should it be understood as continuous with Calvin? Absolutely.

The second part of this article will appear in the next edition.

[103] Ibid.

[104] On Calvin's view of the Sabbath and its compatibility with the subsequent sabbatarianism of Reformed Protestantism, see Richard Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath* (Fearn, Ross-Shire: Christian Focus Publications, 1998).

THE LITURGICAL SHAPE OF REFORMED WORSHIP[1]

Paul Wells

If our knee-jerk reaction to liturgy is that it is irrelevant and that many other aspects of worship are more engaging, it might just be that the *Zeitgeist* is subtly oppressing us.[2] As Terry Johnson comments, from the turn of the last century until the 1960s, evangelicals lost touch with the older Protestant tradition, which reaches back to the ancient church via the Reformers, and in so doing, lost the church's own liturgical culture.[3] Since then, the assault of popular culture, plus the rise of market-oriented seeker churches lead by Rev. Dr Feelgoods, have turned worship inside out. Our predecessors would have great difficulty recognising many churches today as the assembly of God's people for *holy worship*, a term that is dead in the water of postmodernism.

Liturgy is generally taken to mean a prescribed form of worship, as in Chrysostom's liturgy or the *Book of Common Prayer* or, in a more specific sense, the formularies used in the celebration of the Roman Eucharist. Originally from the Greek *leitourgia*, used of public or state duties and services, it was applied in the Septuagint to the temple service in Jerusalem. John Owen argued that these ceremonies are carnal shadows of the things to come, replaced in the New Testament by the liberty of the Spirit in the new covenant dispensation of grace.[4] This association of liturgy with what is Jewish allowed Owen to say that liturgy is a temporary arrangement awaiting the good things to come. Although it was consequently done away with by the apostles, the Papacy returned to 'Judaism' with its unbiblical ceremonies and traditions. This line of argument does not bode well for any liturgy in a nonconformist context. Can there be any liturgy, a precise *duty* rendered to God in worship, is the question for many Reformed people, rather than the shape of the liturgy.

Discussions about the shape of public worship, or liturgy, polarise rather predictably in different contexts into a face-off between the advo-

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1 A French version of this text, 'La forme liturgique du culte réformée', was published in *La Revue reformée*, 68 (2017:5): 61-86.

2 It is worth noting that of the four Constitutions adopted by the Second Vatican Council, the third was devoted entirely to the subject of liturgy, S*acrosanctum Concilium*.

3 Terry L. Johnson, *Worshipping with Calvin* (Darlington, Evangelical Press, 2014), p. 244.

4 John Owen, *Works*, 16, 'Discourse on Liturgies', ch. 1.

cates of structure (the institution) who wish to maintain form in line with tradition (as gatemen), and the defenders of liberty (the event), for whom (as adventurers) spontaneity is of the essence. Moreover, to say that 'evangelicals are not interested in the technicalities of liturgical worship' is an understatement.[5] The word liturgy makes most evangelicals shudder, a tribute to the influence of Owen who maintained that 'all liturgies, as such, are false worship […] used to defeat Christ's promise of gifts and God's Spirit.'[6] Liturgy suggests deadness and smacks of dreaded Anglicanism.

However, to pretend that 'our church has no liturgy' hides the fact that there is an implicit one, made up of 'slots', often the remit of solo performers. This form of liturgy, that Gerald Bray calls 'the hymn-sandwich pattern'[7], has recently mutated into the 'worship-message sandwich'. The outcome is predictably amorphous, laced with songs of doubtful pedigree, when it is not rescued by star music leaders who run the show. In a sense we cannot escape liturgy in one form or another. However, we may legitimately wonder if contemporary worship has anything to do with what divine worship should be. Having cleared the house of liturgy, many worse demons have returned to take up residence, and the last state may well be worse than the first.

Behind the generality of these remarks lie serious issues, not least whether the God we claim to worship approves of what we do in his name and if, when worship is driven by feel-good motives, blissful ignorance might not be a mask for a subtle kind of blasphemy.[8] So liturgy becomes a real pastoral dilemma, often a case of walking the tightrope between what ought to be practiced biblically, and what the punters want, sometimes because of their young people.

In the context of the Reformed tradition, questions about liturgy are traditionally of another nature than these present concerns and often centre around the relation of the Scripture principle to *adiaphora*. On the one hand, taking the high ground, are those who brandish the regulative principle with the assurance of Goliath, and on the other, the libertarians who are at ease with liturgical flexibility. Ultimately we find ourselves back to debates about how the Scripture principle works.[9] Are forms of

5 James I. Packer, *Among God's Giants* (Eastbourne, Kingsway, 1991), p. 324.

6 Ibid, p. 328, no reference given.

7 Gerald Bray, *God is Love. A Biblical and Systematic Theology* (Wheaton, Crossway, 2012), p. 710.

8 Johnson, *Worshipping with Calvin*, pp. 75ff.

9 Daniel R. Hyde comments on the widespread inflation of the regulative principle – 'It is becoming more and more a commonplace within conservative, traditional Reformed circles to attribute the phrase "regulative principle

ceremony and liturgy that are not explicitly authorised by Scripture legitimate, when they are not forbidden by it? How does our answer affect the shape of Reformed liturgy? Such questions appeared early on in the Reformation. If Scripture is the final authority, in what sense is it alone? So Luther promoted music in the churches because he saw no scriptural rule against it, whereas Zwingli removed the organ from the church in Zurich, because he found no biblical justification for musical instruments in Christian worship.[10] Later even flowers would be banned in some places of worship for the same reason! Today those who wish to introduce drama and dance in worship claim, if they claim anything, that there is nothing in Scripture to forbid it.

In our attempt to outline the shape of Reformed liturgy we will seek to respect the regulative principle, although not in the way advocated by Owen. We propose to consider: firstly, the regulative principle as foundational; secondly, the covenant and the way it might structure a Reformed liturgy; thirdly, elements of the liturgy as divine invitation and human response in worship; and finally, some advantages of liturgy in the context of life as worship.

1 THE DUTY AND MANNER OF WORSHIP

'We worship God because God created us to worship him. Worship is at the center of our existence, at the heart of our reason for being' says Hughes Oliphant Old in his classic work *Worship*.[11] If worship is our duty, the manner of it has not been left free to human invention but is principled by God's revelation in Scripture. We propose to look at three cases within the Reformed tradition dealing with the duty and manner of worship and questions of liturgy, in the light of the so-called regulative or Scripture principle.

The regulative principle was not a Puritan invention; it can be traced back to Calvin, and was adopted by the Reformed Churches in their confessions and catechisms.[12] The Scripture itself is regulative of both church

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of worship" to John Murray'. Hyde documents recent contributions to the debate in '"The Fire That Kindleth All Our Sacrifices to God": Owen and the Work of the Holy Spirit in Prayer', in The Ashgate Research Companion to John Owen's Theology, ed., Mark Jones, Kelly M. Kapic (Farnham, Ashgate Publ. 2012), p. 251 n. 10.

10 Mark A. Noll, Turning Points (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 1998), p. 193.

11 Hughes Oliphant Old, *Worship. Reformed According to Scripture* (revised and expanded edition, Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), ch. 1.

12 William Young, 'The Puritan Regulative Principle of the Church'. Originally published as a series in the *Blue Banner Faith and Life*, vol. 14, no. 2, April-

government and the worship of God, in contrast with the Lutheran and Anglican view that what is not forbidden in the Word of God may be allowed in worship.[13] Ceremonies in worship are thus indifferent (*adiaphora*, things neither commanded nor forbidden by the Scripture). The Reformed view, by contrast, stated that only what is prescribed by the Word of God may be used in worship. It assumed that Scripture is unique and its authority, sufficiency and perspicacity order divine worship. The regulative principle is implied in Calvin's view of true religion as 'faith so joined with an earnest fear of God that embraces willing reverence, and carries with it legitimate worship as prescribed in the law.'[14]

Far from being a restrictive straightjacket, the regulative principle was the foundation for freedom from the traditions of men, from an authoritarian Church, and from the irreligion innate in the human mind that spawns superstitions.[15] It stands for God's rule against bipolar manifestations of antinomianism. The Scripture principle, founded on divine revelation, is really the sole way of protecting human freedom of conscience in worship and elsewhere, against *legalism*, invasive human authorities that add to Scripture, and against *anarchy*, which ignores the objective truth of Scripture and replaces it with the subjectivity of human ideas and desires.[16] Both legalism and anarchy are spin-offs of antinomianism, which is the mainspring heresy, that of rejecting God and his revelation. Both were identified by Calvin and the Puritans as manifestations of 'will-worship', self-made religion, the human mind set against God.[17] If,

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June 1959, vol. 16, no. 1, January-March 1961 and 'The Puritan Principle of Worship', in *Puritan Papers, I: 1956-1959*, ed. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (Phillipsburg, P&R Publishing, 2000), pp. 141-153.

13 Sometimes called the normative over against the regulative principle, whereas the Roman principle is called 'the inventive principle'. I don't know who coined these terms.

14 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I.ii.2.

15 Ibid, II.viii.17 on the second commandment. In his work on saints and martyrs, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), Robert Bartlett points out that in the context of world religions 'It is only the Protestants of Europe and their overseas descendants who have ever really turned their backs on the saints' (p. 637). This is no doubt a result of the regulative principle in worship.

16 These are external manifestations of B. B. Warfield's rationalism and mysticism and Cornelius Van Til's rationalism and irrationalism as the enemies of Christian theism.

17 William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1997), p. 288, opposes instituted worship and will-worship, devised by men and unlawful. Superstition is an excess of religion by addition. Instituted worship is the means ordained by the will of God to increase natural worship and is wholly

in their time, opposition to the regulative principle came from an authoritarian church in Rome or from the English Act of Uniformity of 1662, today it probably comes more from the authoritarian media-driven culture of subjective individualism. But, as Calvin reminds us, 'we are not to seek from men the doctrine of the true worship of God, for the Lord has faithfully and fully instructed us how he is to be worshiped.'[18]

The regulative principle, however, 'is by no means always easy to apply'[19] as developments in subsequent Reformed theology, including the work of the Westminster Assembly, amply illustrates. In this context, it has been current to drive a wedge between Calvin and the Calvinists,[20] and the contrast in the realm of the shape of liturgy is unavoidable. In Calvin's *Forme des prières et chants ecclésiastiques, avec la manière d'administrer les sacrements et consacrer le marriage, selon la coutume de l'Eglise ancienne*, 1542,[21] the reference to the ancient church reveals Calvin's hand. In Calvin's form of liturgy, congregational responses play a part, some set texts are present, for example the confession of sin, and also set prayers including the Lord's Prayer. Calvin also respected the Apostles' Creed, criticised in no uncertain terms by some Puritans. Even kneeling is not rejected. One doubts that Calvin, if he had reacted in detail, would have considered the *Book of Common Prayer* an 'unperfected booke, culled and picked out of that popishe dunghill the Masse book, full of abominations.'[22] In his liturgy he was influenced by Bucer and Zwingli, but also by Farel, who published the first French Reformed liturgy at Neuchâtel in 1533, and introduced it in Geneva in 1537. In the regular Sunday service it included a general prayer, the Decalogue, confession of sins, repetition of the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, a final exhortation and the benediction. None of this Calvin took to be in con-

set forth in the second commandment. Cf. James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1869), I, 324, 327.

18 Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.x.8.

19 John R. de Witt, 'The Form of Church Government' in *To Enjoy and Glorify God: A Commemoration of the 350th Anniversary of the Westminster Assembly*, ed. John L. Carson and David W. Hall (Edinburgh, Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), p. 166.

20 Hyde, art. cit, p. 251, n. 11-13.

21 Calvin, *Opera*, VI, 161–210.

22 Hyde, art. cit, p. 255. Calvin said with moderation that the second Edwardian Prayer Book of 1552 contained *multas tolerabiles ineptias*, Packer, *Among God's Giants*, p. 326. Calvin would also have looked askance at the criticism of the Creed made by one of the Puritan Independents as being 'old patchery and evil stuff'. James H. Nichols, *Corporate Worship in the Reformed Tradition* (Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 1965), p. 105.

tradiction with right worship of God or the Scripture principle, even if it might be thought, in terms of later debate, that Calvin was straying away from the regulative toward the normative principle.[23]

With John Owen things developed in another direction and the feel is different in his numerous writings against liturgy.[24] One has the impression that Owen's objections to liturgy do not initially formally relate to a regulative principle, but accrue primarily from material considerations, and particularly his doctrine of the Holy Spirit: 'The question is whether Christ or Antichrist? whether the worship of God or idols? whether the effusion and waiting for the effusion of the Spirit of God in his worship, or all manner of superstitious impositions?'[25] Owen thought that liturgies were Satan's best arm for neutralising the gifts and graces of God, communion with the Spirit and Christ's leading in worship, for to be affected by the Spirit is to be led by Christ. Liturgies foster neglect of the Spirit's gifts and reliance upon 'an operose form of service to be read by the minister; which to do is neither a peculiar gift of the Holy Ghost to any, nor of the minister at all.'[26] Owen's approach is nuanced and shows a certain tolerance, particularly in the practice of prayer, contrasted with John Bunyan's, for example; what is unacceptable is not reading prayers or composing them beforehand but the imposition of an invariable set form which must be used *ne varietur*.[27] In common with Calvin, simplicity and spirituality in worship are opposed to the 'rabble' of Roman ceremonies.

Finally, a further case can be added to make a triptych. In the 19th century, the Scottish theologian James Bannerman, writing on public

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23 As some criticisms of John Frame's writings on worship (*Worship in Spirit and in Truth* and *Contemporary Worship Music*, (Phillipsburg, Presbyterian and Reformed, 2012)) have recently claimed. See *The Regulative Principle of Worship*. A Report adopted by the Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America, March 8, 2001.

24 Cf. Nichols, *Corporate Worship in the Reformed Tradition*, ch. V, on Puritanism and the anti-liturgical movement.

25 Owen, *Works*, IX, 402, quoted by Hyde, art. cit, p. 252, n. 21. In a more detailed discussion Owen's remarks on liturgy would have to be set in the context of his theology of the trinitarian appropriations. Worship with the triune God is through the media of the persons: the Father, sin and confession; the Son, pardon and union; the Spirit, communion.

26 Hyde, art. cit, p. 258.

27 Iain H. Murray, 'On the Directory for Public Worship', pp. 185-89, in *To Enjoy and Glorify God*, indicates that the concern of the Westminster divines is not set prayers or extemporaneous prayers but praying in a way which is biblical, studied and edifying. Cf. also Nichols, *Corporate Worship in the Reformed Tradition*, pp. 98-105.

worship, stated that the duty of worship is enjoined by Scripture. The duty is natural, as all are called to worship God, but the public order of worship is specially instituted in Scripture as is the manner of worship.[28] If the way to God is closed for sinful man, the conditions and manner of entrance into his presence must be dictated by God himself, and indicated in what is expressly ordained by Scripture, which limits the power of the church over the conscience.[29] Christ indicated doctrines and institutions to shape human worship, and additions are not legitimate. So the church has a ministerial and not a magisterial or inventive function. 'The proper idea of public worship is the positive institution prescribed for the approach of sinners in their Church state to, and their fellowship with, God.'[30] However, Bannerman continued by adding a distinction between questions concerning worship which are *in sacris* and those that are *circa sacra*. The first concerns ceremonies and institutions *in* the worship of God in which the church has no power, but is called to administer and apply what is dictated by Christ in Scripture, under his authority. The second relates to matters *about* worship; in this respect, the church acts at particular times and in different situations in such a way that everything is done decently and in order, according to the rule of 1 Corinthians 14:33, 40. The light of nature and reason, human laws and customs, are hereby respected. Also things that are not 'expressly set down in Scripture' may be done 'by good and necessary consequence (and) may be deduced from Scripture.'[31] The church has no power in the first area, but it has discretionary powers in the second.

This distinction, Bannerman admits, implies the difficulty of drawing

> the line between matters of decency and order, which it is competent to the Church to regulate in the circumstances of its worship, and matters of express appointment and command in the ceremonies of its worship, which it is not competent for the Church to regulate and interfere with.[32]

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28 Bannerman, *The Church of Christ*, I, 340-43.

29 Cf. *Westminster Confession of Faith*, XX.ii.

30 Bannerman, *The Church of Christ*, I, 348.

31 *Westminster Confession of Faith*, I.vi.

32 Bannerman, *The Church of Christ*, I, 354, refers to three marks that distinguish between *in sacris* and *circa sacra*, described by George Gillespie in his *Dispute against the English-Popish Ceremonies Obtruded upon the Church of Scotland* (1637). Ceremonies and circumstances are distinguished: i) circumstances are not of the essence of worship; ii) circumstances are not directly determinable by Scripture; iii) the church regulates circumstances but not the parts of worship. No doubt more considerations could be added.

This would seem to imply that in questions concerning the shape of the liturgy there is room, in a Reformed perspective, to take into account all that relates to the human situation, the needs of particular historical circumstance and culture, without endangering conformity to the regulative principle.[33] It also implies that there is formally a place in the liturgy for human response in confession, prayer and praise, as long as worship *circa sacra* does not contradict or add to the truth revealed in Scripture, and the principles ordained for proper worship. In the light of these factors, it appears possible to say that Calvin's form of worship with a responsive liturgy respects the regulative principle just as much as Owen's, in spite of appearances to the contrary. In both cases the regulative principle would be broken only if the Scripture principle were contravened in the manner or content of worship.

This brings us to a further issue that should engage us regarding Reformed worship, namely that worship involves two actors, God and man, invitation and response, which is also the formal structure of the covenants in the history of salvation. This raises further questions as to outcomes when the regulative principle is applied in such a way as to eliminate the response and participation of the congregation in worship though liturgical acts. Does it not establish a new kind of teaching priesthood as the only actor in worship, resulting in what Nicholas Wolterstorff called 'the tragedy of liturgy in Protestantism'?[34]

2 REFORMED WORSHIP AS COVENANTAL WORSHIP

'What takes place on Sunday in church buildings is not the rental of a building to this or that preacher to do there as he sees fit, but it is very definitely a gathering of the congregation in its lawful assembly.'[35] That assembly is summoned by the Lord and it is therefore 'the assembling of ourselves' (Heb. 10:25) to meet with our God for worship, as a reconciled congregation.[36] As Saviour the Lord calls to worship, and when his people draw near to meet with him, the world is left behind. 'All sin, all activity in a sinful world, all consequences of earlier sins, all the impact on our hearts of a God-denying demon world – all this *separates* us from God and leaves an empty space between God and our soul', but

[33] I am not claiming that Bannerman himself would have seen it this way.

[34] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1983), ch. 12. Cf. Abraham Kuyper's comments on church becoming a lecture hall rather than the assembly of believers, *Our Worship* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2009), pp. 15, 189.

[35] Kuyper, *Our Worship*, pp. 6, 8.

[36] Ibid, pp. 9-10, 13, 16.

this fades in the overwhelming presence of the One who calls. Worship is therefore 'a coming together with the congregation of Christ, in order to meet together, the Eternal Being', and not something for the purpose of propaganda, evangelism or entertainment.[37] The calling of God and his presence shapes the service of worship, the liturgy of the assembly. As Abraham Kuyper said, 'all liturgy is predicated on the foundational notion that the church has authority over the minister and not the minister over the church regarding the manner in which our holy worship shall be practiced in the gathering of believers.'[38] How then are the call and the presence of God regulative of covenantal worship?

The biblical covenants are shaped in terms of union and communion based on divine call, God's invitation, stipulations and promises, and human response (restipulation) in the covenant: firm pledges and promises on God's part and serious obligations on ours.[39] 'The various biblical covenants relate to God's initiated self-obligation (grace) as a necessary first movement, and to an obligation which God imposes on human beings for conduct and action that will bring blessing to them.'[40] This structure has profound implications for worship, as it does for all of human life, but particularly for worship, as it is there we meet God, our Creator and Saviour, in a foundational way.

Divine worship in a Christian perspective is a joyful, new covenant, public meeting with the risen Lord. It is *the Lord* himself who calls us into his presence and whose blessing we receive at the end; what takes place between these two moments is worship as a covenantal activity. The form it takes is liturgy that expresses the basic structures, the order and the nature of the binding relationship between God and his people. In a Reformed context, the form of public worship repeats the story of redemption, its messianic foundation, and reflects the order of salvation.[41] It causes us to look heavenward, *sursum corda*, because our altar is not on earth, but in heaven, where the Great High Priest represents and receives us.

> There is no need to bring any other sacrifice, because the one sacrifice of Christ is a *perfect* sacrifice. Not only has sin been completely atoned for, but

37 Ibid, pp. 14, 15.

38 Ibid, p. 6.

39 Deuteronomy 10:12-22. Cf. Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, pp. 278-79. The words 'for yourself' in the commandments and in the OT imply the reciprocation of the covenant.

40 William J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation* (Milton Keynes, Paternoster, 2013), p. 2.

41 Von Allmen, *Célébrer le salut*, pp. 12-36.

> Christ has also earned total righteousness and holiness. And the only sacrifice that still remains is our own surrender to death by our act of *perfect faith*.[42]

By faith we are joined to the risen Lord whose life of obedience sealed the new covenant for us.

How then can we describe the worship-shaping function of the covenant? Many biblical examples of practice could be used to illustrate the principle, but here we find it useful to follow a suggestion made the Swiss Reformed theologian Jean-Jacques Von Allmen.[43] The covenantal order of salvation can be expressed as being structured in a *sacramental* and a *sacrificial* way, God calling us in Christ to present ourselves as living sacrifices in his service (*logikèn latreían*, Rom. 12:1). In worship we meet the Lord and his gift of salvation and we reply to that call.[44] Those who received the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost became a community founded on the apostles' teaching, the breaking of bread and prayers (Acts 2:42, 20:7). The Lord regularly calls his people together to renew covenant with him. Worship therefore has a double aspect: it is *sacramental* (God proclaims the divine *mystery* of salvation) and *sacrificial* (our counterpart in *offering* obedient service to the Lord). Von Allmen understands these two terms in the sense proposed by Philip Melanchthon in his *Apology for the Confession of Augsburg*: 'theologians properly distinguish between sacrament and sacrifice […] a sacrament is a ceremony or a work in which *God* accomplishes for us what the promise joined to the ceremony offers […] while a sacrifice, on the contrary, is a ceremony or a work that we render to God to honour him.'[45] To put it another way, the liturgical shape of worship and its content is structured by these two complementary elements, which could be called more simply as the reciprocity of gift and gratitude.

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42 Kuyper, *Our Worship*, p. 22 and on 'The Altar', pp. 20-23.

43 In his books *Une réforme dans l'Eglise* (Grembloux, Duculot, 1971), pp. 13-16 and *Célébrer le salut* (Labor et Fides/Cerf, Genève/Paris, 1984), pp. 46-50.

44 Von Allmen, *Celebrer le salut*, pp. 47-50, talks of the nuptuality of the encounter with Christ that reveals what the church is as bride of Christ.

45 Ibid, pp. 46-47 and *Une réforme*, p. 13, quoting Philip Melanchthon from *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1930), p. 354, my translation. The language of sacrament and sacrifice has most often been used in debate about the Eucharist. Cf. Daniel Brevint's *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice* (1673), prepared by John Wesley was highly influential in Methodism: http://anglicanhistory.org/england/brevint/. Accessed 15/08/15.

Von Allmen stated that 'this distinction can be applied also to the church which is at one and the same time sacrament and sacrifice, grace and thanksgiving, the gift of God and human obedience.'[46] From these two aspects of the covenant, the divine act and the human response, an attempt can be made to describe a possible liturgical form of the Christian worship service. The divine action and the human reply are conjoined in such a way that God makes himself known to us and is heard by us, and we confess him to be God and express allegiance to him.

It can hardly escape our attention that the reciprocity of sacrament and sacrifice are present in post-Vatican II Roman Catholic theology and language, although not in the way we are using it. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states,

> The Eucharist is also the sacrifice of the Church. The Church which is the Body of Christ participates in the offering of her Head. With him, she herself is offered whole and entire. She unites herself to his intercession with the Father for all men. In the Eucharist the sacrifice of Christ becomes also the sacrifice of the members of his Body. The lives of the faithful, their praise, sufferings, prayer, and work, are united with those of Christ and with his total offering, and so acquire a new value. Christ's sacrifice present on the altar makes it possible for all generations of Christians to be united with his offering.[47]

However the problem, as in Edward Schillebeeckx's *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, is that the sacrament swallows up the sacrifice, and the sacrifice itself becomes sacramental. This seems to be a result of Schillebeeckx's theandric interpretation of Chalcedon: 'Christ is God in a human way, and man in a divine way. As a man he acts out his divine life in and according to his human existence. Everything he does as a man is […] a divine act in human form; an interpretation and transposition of a divine activity into a human activity.'[48] So Israel assumes a sacramental role in salvation, Christ becomes the 'primordial' sacrament of God for humanity, since 'Christ himself is the Church, an invisible communion in grace with the living God'[49] and the church consequently becomes the sacrament of the risen Christ, the encounter with God. When sacrament engulfs sacrifice the human response in the offering of worship to God,

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46 Von Allmen, *Une réforme*, p. 13.

47 *Catéchisme de l'Eglise Catholique* (Paris, Mame/Plon, 1992), p. 294, §1368. Cf. Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, I. 13.

48 Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* (London, Sheed and Ward, 1963), pp. 13-14; 17ff. Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, I. 1, 8.

49 Ibid, pp. 12-13.

loses its full humanity. Hospitality given and received are two distinct realities.

Just as God and man exist for each other in the covenant, so also in worship the sacramental and the sacrificial are made for each other. God's election and call are gifted and sacramental, *for us*, man's reply is sacrificial, *to God* in thanks and obedience. The sacramental is primary because without God's saving act and presence, the sacrificial deflates to man-centred will-worship, a mantra, a cry of distress or a superstitious round of vain offerings. With the sacrament given, the sacrifice becomes praise for the grace received and holy obedience of consecration to serve the Lord. As Von Allmen stated, the kerygma, the Lord's table, and the divine commandments are sacramental; faith, hope and loving obedience are sacrificial responses to grace.

This structure implies that the church is not a free agency to invent a liturgy by stacking up this and that like the ingredients in Gerald Bray's sandwich. The church does not invent, she *replies* to God's call; the church-sacrifice originates in, and is held by the church-sacrament, including in the liturgy.[50] Nor is worship in constant mutation, because the sacramental elements belong to the Lord and remain unreformable, *in sacris*, whereas the sacrificial aspects of worship, *circa sacra*, are reformable in the light of better understanding of the gospel in the human response, contextualisation in differing cultural situations, and are refined in progressing historical expressions. So worship can be different in different localities, but the sacramental aspects of the gospel are the same. We believe no other thing than the witnesses and martyrs of the ancient church, but we express ourselves differently.[51]

These propositions might seem to be advocating a move away from the regulative principle to a kind of normative principle in worship. Nothing of the sort is suggested, but rather the quest for a structure of worship that respects the bipolarity of the covenant and meeting with God. Expression of the sacramental and the sacrificial in worship must both be normed by God's word. Our covenantal response in worship and liturgy must be in harmony with the covenant treaty, Scripture, even when it is a spontaneous response. This might mean, for instance, that if Psalm singing is the ideal response in the realm of music, being given by God him-

50 Von Allmen, *Une réforme*, p. 14.

51 Von Allmen (Ibid, p. 16) cautions about the danger of monophysitism in ecclesiology, where the sacrament devours the sacrifice and reform becomes impossible, and a sort of nestorianism in ecclesiology in which the relation of the sacrificial to the sacramental is cut and the church plays at constant change. If the second is the temptation of liberal churches, the first might be that of evangelical conservative worship stuck in a time warp.

self for that end (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), other responses are not illegitimate when humanly composed hymns are orthodox in expression, and faithful to biblical revelation. If our sung responses are 'Bible-filled' they are legitimate,[52] and it is our responsibility not to sing or pray heresy.

God's people are constantly called, in their worship, to seek an optimal adequation of the sacrificial to the sacramental, so that God be worshipped 'in spirit and in truth' (John 4:24). In the sacramental we express the catholicity of the church, and in the sacrificial the fact that 'the Corinthian church did things differently from the Jerusalem church.'[53] But how, and in what way, can this be applied to the shape of Reformed liturgy?

3 THE SHAPE OF NEW COVENANT LITURGY

Since the time of Enoch people began to call on the name of the Lord, or worship him (Gen. 4:26) and Christians call on God in the name of Jesus, who stands among them (Matt. 18:20; 28:20). This means publicly recognising God's presence and worshipping him because of his grace and through the mediation of Christ. God gives his name and identifies himself as the Lord and we reply to his overtures. Invitation and response are two complementary aspects of worship and express the divine and the human meeting in covenantal fellowship. Unfortunately this bipolarity in worship has generally fallen away even in Reformed and Presbyterian circles today, and in evangelicalism opposition to Anglican liturgy has resulted either in putting worship on the back burner, with an exaggerated concern not to overstep the regulative principle, or in a communal stream of consciousness in worship song.

True, there is no set form or liturgy of public worship in the New Testament.[54] The order of worship itself is sacrificial and can vary according to different times, seasons and cultural situations. However this does not mean that all the elements necessary to reflect theologically on the shape of worship are not present in Scripture. From start to finish worship should be a lively dialogue between God's word and our response. When Calvin elaborated the Geneva liturgy, I believe he tried to do justice to both hearing God and responding to him. Any meeting with God calls for repentance and forgiveness because we are sinners, even if we are God's people. A liturgy worth its salt follows a dynamic movement from God's lordship to recognition of our sin, the provision made for our salvation in

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52 Johnson, *Worshipping with Calvin*, pp. 129-48.

53 Nicholas Wolterstorff, 'The Reformed Liturgy' in *Major Themes in the Reformed Tradition*, ed. D. K. McKim, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1992), p. 277.

54 Oscar Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship* (London, SCM Press, 1953).

Christ, and praise. All this leads to a communal confession of faith that prepares us to receive God's word preached and the Lord's supper, which ought to be an integral part of the liturgy of the church, and not an addition.

Without pretending to be exhaustive or to move beyond the realm of a possible shape of Reformed liturgy, the following is an attempt to indicate some elements belonging to the sacramental and to the sacrificial aspects of worship:[55]

1) In the *sacramental aspects* of worship we meet God to listen and hear what he has done to enact our salvation. They include the following biblical features which model the liturgy of the assembled congregation and make up its backbone:

- the votum ('Our help is from God...') and the salutation expressing God's gracious welcome into his presence, as he meets with his people – for instance 'Grace and peace from God...' (Not 'Morning all' or greeting those around us). This is an essential, but largely forgotten, part of the liturgy; God initiates worship, calling us into his presence to meet with him; we approach God, recognising that he is our God and we are his people. God's meeting with us is the condition of worship – and this can be expressed by a Psalm (100, 121, 122 etc.), a text like 1 Timothy 1:2 or, for example, one of Christ's 'I am' sayings that invite us to worship;

- the hearing of God's law from the Old or the New Testament (We enter God's presence each week as sinners in need of forgiveness. This is not legalism; it is in line with Calvin's 'third use of the law' in Christian life). The presence of law and grace in promise illustrates in miniature the shape of the *historia salutis*;

- God speaks through Scripture, read from both Testaments;

- the preaching of the word of God (using *lectio continua*), is *his* word to us when Scripture is faithfully proclaimed;

- the 'visible words' of the Lord's supper and baptism;

[55] We leave aside questions such as whether all of the service should be conducted by the minister from the pulpit, and when the congregation might stand, sit or kneel.

- the benediction (the Aaronic blessing, or another) ends worship. It seems important that the minister or teaching elder pronounce the blessing in the name of the Lord to be received by the assembly. (Members of the congregation do not bless each other, as practiced in some congregations). We leave the presence of God renewed and carry *his* blessing with us in our 'profane' activities.

2) The *sacrificial aspects* of worship are woven into the fabric provided by the sacramental aspects of the liturgy, and they include the following biblical elements in response:

- communal confession of sin in response to God's law (using 1 John 1:5-10 for example, another biblical text, or a text such as Calvin's confession);

- prayers for forgiveness, prayer before the sermon, as well as general intercession and praise, plus the Lord's prayer.[56] All prayer is offered with biblical content, as suggested by the Westminster *Directory*. Free prayer depends on the situation of the congregation;

- the singing of Psalms, or parts of Psalms as liturgical responses, and hymns;[57]

- the confession of faith of the church (the Apostles, Nicean and Athanasian creeds, biblical confessions such as Philippians 2, a question and answer from the *Heidelberg Catechism* or an article of a confession of faith etc.).[58]

3) The church elders, acting as God's servants, lead in the first aspects of worship; the congregation replies collectively, as a body, in the second. The order itself may be open to many variations.

The weaving together of these elements in a dynamic, structured and coherent whole in which the covenant partners play out their specific roles one with respect to the other shapes a Reformed liturgy. Calvin and others, including Abraham Kuyper, have tried to capture this living, dia-

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[56] Kuyper, *Our Worship*, p. 35, refers to four elements of prayer: confession, adoration, thanks and supplication.

[57] On the demise of psalmody in Protestantism see Johnson, *Worshipping with Calvin*, pp. 128-38.

[58] Are church notices and offerings a part of Christian worship as such? Offerings have greater biblical warrant than notices. Notices can be given before the beginning of worship, and the means for offerings can be provided at the exit rather than taken during the service.

logic and relational aspect of divine worship.[59] Kuyper's ideal shape of liturgy was the following:[60]

> Tolling of the bell – singing of psalm – entry of council and handshake with minister – votum – salutation – singing of psalm – exhortation to confession – public confession of sin (liturgical prayer, kneeling) – absolution – Apostles creed (spoken or sung by people), singing of psalm – Scripture reading – prayer before sermon, concluded with Lord's prayer – sermon – offering and singing of psalm, prayer for the needs of Christendom – singing of psalm – reading of ten commandments – benediction.

Two aspects of this suggested shape of the liturgy are particularly disagreeable to people today, particularly evangelicals. Firstly, Kuyper's idea that liturgy is born of the restriction of the freedom of the minister, and secondly, form is thought to be unspiritual.[61] However, in both cases, the shape of the liturgy restricts arbitrary action which degenerates into absence of form, and therefore of movement. A Reformed liturgy has its instrument in form and the form is filled with meaning, because of the sequence of acts that structure worship. Liturgy is not an addition to what was appointed and commanded by Christ and the apostles, who are said to have known nothing of liturgy.[62] It is a reflection of the divine-human encounter in the judgment of sin and the conferring of grace. When filled with biblical meaning reflecting the *historia salutis*, the structure becomes a suitable vehicle for the Holy Spirit's action, uniting the body of believers in the reality and hope of salvation. This is an appropriate antidote to both superstar performers and to the subjective super-spirituality that is so prevalent in worship today.

4 SOME ADVANTAGES OF LITURGY

A liturgical structure of worship also has some forgotten advantages.[63] Firstly, regularity is important in human life, and Reformed liturgy has the advantage of repetition. Isaiah brings the following exhortation to God's people: 'When you come to appear before me […] wash yourselves, make yourselves clean, remove the evil of your deeds from before my

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59 Movement and telelogy are generally absent in the average evangelical 'hymn-sandwich' service. Over against formless worship, the *Book of Common Prayer* is not without some formal advantages.

60 Kuyper, *Our Worship*, p. xl.

61 Ibid, pp. 10-11, 24-27.

62 As in Owen, *Discourse on Liturgies*, pp. 48-58.

63 Johnson, *Worshipping with Calvin*, pp. 225-39.

eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do good' (Isa. 1:12, 16, 17). These verses summarise the shape of Reformed liturgy: meeting with God strengthens our ties with him and loosens them from the world's shaping to do good. As reconciled people we become a pilgrim church, at home with God, and less at home in the world.[64] As John Bolt comments: 'Christian worship is distinguished from the daily life of service to God by the *liturgy* of God's *called-out and assembled* people in which they practice a storied communion with God that loosens their ties with and involvement in the world's counterstories.'[65] The shape of the liturgy shapes our lives, with the eternal Sabbath as their finality. The very regularity of liturgical worship serves to keep this ultimate reality before us. *This* is the story that shapes our existences and we need to be reminded, forgetful as we are, that *this* is our foundation and we are a pilgrim people with a kingdom task, and no permanence here below.

Secondly, memory is important. Together with biblical texts, the symbols of Reformed worship used in its liturgy are of great value in times of life crisis and distress, because through repetition they are rooted in our memory, if not in our subconscious mind. The Lord's Prayer, the Confession of sin, the Ten Commandments, the words of the votum or the blessing and articles of the catechism, are anchors that remain when all else is slipping away, and they serve to keep our heads above water when we seem to be drowning. Who knows what this mental structuring might save us from at times when human beings are living longer at least in the West? Memorised, these Christian texts and others become second nature.

Finally, liturgy is not just refuelling, but when it is absent, as Nicholas Wolterstorff points out, life as a whole is altered.[66] In the shape of Reformed liturgy as sacramental and sacrificial God is apprehended in a history which is both his and ours, and of which he is the Lord. We remember the past of God's promise, expect the future in hope, and in the present we take heed of God's word in obedience. The liturgy gives teleological structure to our lives past, present and future, because we have received the promise of the Lord in baptism, the hope of salvation at his Table, and day by day we seek to live sacrificially in his service. As a whole, Reformed liturgy has suggestive symbolic value, reminding us of the mainsprings of our life as new creatures in Christ.[67] Sunday worship

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64 Kuyper, *Our Worship*, pp. 14-15.

65 John Bolt, 'All life is worship?' in Kuyper, *Our Worship*, p. 326, italics Bolt's.

66 Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*, pp. 149ff.

67 This is the opposite of present phenomenological approaches to worship in which human culture and experience are treated as a large symbolic field

exemplifies the structure of Christian life which is both remembrance and expectation. So all of life is worship, nothing is secular, all is in rhythm with what God has done.[68] In this respect too, the Lord's table is integral to Reformed liturgy. 'Just as the gospel is expressed symbolically in the sacrament, it is expressed structurally in the liturgy.'[69] One and the other present Christ, who is our life.

CONCLUSION: THE LITURGICAL TRAGEDY?

Worship in both Presbyterian and evangelical churches in the western world today invariably neglects congregational response, which may be one of the reasons for the rise of music-dominated services.[70] Psalm singing has well nigh disappeared, including in some orthodox Presbyterian denominations in the United States.[71] Worship services generally neglect responsive Psalm singing, the Lord's Prayer, saying the confession of faith together, the reading of both Testaments and God's law (including the decalogue). The large scale removal of the sacramental elements from worship serves to impoverish our encounters with the living God and ends up in focusing on the ability of the preacher. How many evangelical believers would be hard pushed today to repeat the Creed, the Ten commandments or the Lord's Prayer, to say nothing of the *Te Deum*? This is a sad loss of the faith-markers that bind us to the Lord of the covenant.

How is an order of service created? By organising the sacramental and sacrificial aspects of worship to bring the gospel to the fore. In this respect, as Michael Horton says, the liturgy 'provides ways of preaching the word even before the sermon begins.'[72] All of the elements can be

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mediating mystery and the divine through which 'God continues to impinge on all of life.' This approach proposes a new model for understanding religion in which 'revelation continues to grow and develop under God within the traditions of the community', which are receptive to outside influences in a listening process and an openness of spirit. In fact, it is suggested that there may be better understandings of God from outside the tradition than from within. See, for example, how these statements are developed in David Brown, *God and Mystery in Words: Experience through Metaphor and Drama* (Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 270ff.

68 Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*, p. 154.

69 Bryan Chappell, *Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape our Practice* (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2009), p. 84.

70 Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*, pp. 158-59 on the dangers of Reformed worship becoming 'didacticism'.

71 Johnson, *Worshipping with Calvin*, pp. 218ff.

72 Michael Horton, *A Better Way. Rediscovering the Drama of God-Centered Worship* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2002), p. 142.

directly based on Scripture, found in the classic texts of the Church or within the Reformed tradition. Calvin's liturgy, the Westminster divines' *Directory of Public Worship* or even the *Book of Common Prayer* might help us reflect on what is appropriate to the shape of liturgy.

If both these elements of liturgical worship are Bible-centred and Christ-oriented in content, the presence of the Holy Spirit may be invoked with confidence to animate the rest.

PRESENT-DAY IMPLICATIONS OF WILLIAM CUNNINGHAM AND MISSIONARY BAPTISM

J. CAMERON FRASER

William Cunningham (1805-61) was a good friend of Princeton theologian Charles Hodge (1797-1878). According to John Macleod (1872-1948) in his *Scottish Theology*, each considered the other 'the foremost Reformed divine of their day.'[1] However, one area of disagreement between Cunningham and Hodge would have been over the status of baptised children. Hodge held that since God's covenant promise 'is not only to parents, but to their seed, children are by the command of God to be treated and regarded as of the number of the elect, until they give undeniable evidence to the contrary.'[2] This differed only slightly from the view known as presumptive regeneration associated with the Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) and thought to go back at least to Heinrich Bullinger (1504-75) and the First Helvetic Confession of 1536.[3] Whereas Kuyper and others taught that baptised children should be presumed to be regenerate until and unless they proved otherwise, Hodge based the presumption on the doctrine of election rather than regeneration. Thus, a child might be presumed to be elect, but not yet necessarily regenerate. In either case, the child was presumed to be a child of God until proven otherwise.

Both presumptive election and presumptive regeneration seek to make the same judgement of the state of baptised children as is made of professing believers. We cannot read the hearts of believers but can and must only take their outward profession as evidence of election and regeneration. The same judgement of charity is applied to their children. This results from understanding the meaning of baptism as applying equally to believers and their children.

As noted in a previous article, Cunningham disagreed. He believed that the biblical and confessional model was of adult (or believers') baptism and that infant baptism, while defensible in its own right, was a modification of adult baptism. Believers' baptism is not necessarily of adults, but this is how Cunningham described it.

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1 John Macleod, *Scottish Theology in relation to Church History* (Edinburgh: Knox Press and Banner of Truth reprint, 1974), pp. 269-71.

2 Charles Hodge, 'The Church Membership of Infants', *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, 30, No. 2 (April, 1858), 375-76.

3 See John Murray, *Christian Baptism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974), p. 54, n. 30.

Among critics of Cunningham, John Murray conceded that he might have been right that biblical adult baptism is '*that* from which mainly and principally we should form our conception of what baptism is and means and was intended to accomplish.' But, says Murray, when Cunningham says that 'it is adult baptism alone which embodies and brings out the full idea of the ordinance […] there does not appear to be good warrant for such discrimination.'[4] Robert Letham goes further in charging Cunningham's baptismal theology with being hardly distinguishable from a credobaptist one. Cunningham was, in Letham's view 'wrong; totally, monumentally wrong'.[5]

It does seem to me that if we are to attribute the same significance to infant baptism as to believers' baptism, the most logical approach is that of presumptive election (as in Hodge) or presumptive regeneration (as in Kuyper). This is because the New Testament language encourages us to believe that its recipients are born again, except where that is clearly not the case, as with Simon Magus (Acts 8:18-24). Indeed, some language, such as 'baptism now saves you' (1 Pet. 3:21) seems to point in the direction of baptismal regeneration.[6]

Lewis Bevens Schenck in *The Presbyterian Doctrine of Children in the Covenant* claims that presumptive regeneration was the view of John Calvin as well as of Presbyterian orthodoxy. He blames the revivalist preaching of the Great Awakening for a shift in emphasis from the nurture of covenant children to an approach that treated them as unbelievers

4 John Murray, *Christian Baptism* p. 88, n. 55.

5 Robert A. Letham, 'Book Review: *The People's Theologian: Writings in Honour of Donald Macleod*, Iain D. Campbell & Malcolm Maclean, eds., Mentor, 2011.', in *Foundations*: 61 (Autumn 2011), 75.

6 As I said in my previous article, the point surely is as Anthony Lane and others (with slight variations) note: repentance, faith, baptism and the reception of the Holy Spirit all belong together in the New Testament understanding of receiving salvation. Thus, those passages that appear to give to the act of baptism a redemptive or regenerating significance are to be understood in the context of the whole. The various other elements are present as well. See e.g. Anthony N. S. Lane, 'The Dual Practice View', in *Baptism: Three Views*, ed. by David F. Wright, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2009), p. 144.

in need of conversion.[7] Others claim that Calvin taught a form of baptismal regeneration.[8]

Some (by no means all) who have grown up with presumptive regeneration or election and then come into contact with more conversion-oriented evangelical teaching (perhaps especially through the influence of the charismatic movement) discover that they were never truly born again in the first place and undergo a conversion experience, bringing them into a 'personal relationship with Jesus'. One consequence of this can be a rejection of their infant baptism as a meaningless formality, a desire to be rebaptised and then to have their own children dedicated rather than baptised. Then there are church planters and other pastors of a more evangelistic nature who find infant baptism as traditionally understood to be a barrier to new converts and other Christians who think of infant baptism as implying baptismal regeneration, and thus reject it. At least in the context in which I minister, with a strong background of presumptive regeneration (although no longer officially called such), there has been a growing movement among some church planters in particular to permit baby dedication in place of baptism. Can Cunningham help us here?

The truth is that there are a variety of confusing interpretations of infant baptism among those who practice it. These range from baptismal regeneration, presumptive regeneration, presumptive election, covenant baptism[9] (which can include any of the previous views, but can also mean simply that the covenant sign of baptism, corresponding to the Old Testament sign of circumcision is applied to the believer's children because they are partakers of the covenant of grace made with Abraham and renewed in Christ) to what has been described (usually critically) as 'baby baptism with water'. Believers' baptism, by way of contrast, can seem much simpler and more straightforward. Baptists sometimes assume that those who practice infant baptism believe that the ceremony automati-

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7 Lewis Bevens Schenck, *The Presbyterian Doctrine of Children in the Covenant: An Historical Study of the Significance of Infant Baptism in the Presbyterian Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003 reprint, originally published by Yale University Press, 1940), chaps. II & III. For a critical review of Shenk, see Kenneth Stewart in 'Book Reviews', *Presbyterion: Covenant Seminary Review*, 30/2, pp. 125-26.

8 For a helpful refutation of this, as well as that Calvin taught presumptive regeneration, see James J. Cassidy, 'Calvin on Baptism: Baptismal Regeneration or the Duplex Loquendi Modus?' in *Resurrection and Eschatology: Theology in Service of the Church. Essays in Honor of Richard B. Gaffin*, ed. by Lane G. Tipton and Jeffrey C. Waddington (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008), pp. 534-54.

9 Some Reformed Baptists also describe their view (discussed later) as 'covenant baptism', but with a different meaning.

cally means recipients are born again. This is true of the Roman Catholic ritual, although regeneration thus conferred may subsequently be lost. It is also true, at least in the wording if not the practice of Lutheran and Anglican ceremonies. Reformed theology generally rejects such a view, but sometimes struggles to explain the difference. This essay will argue that a view closer to Cunningham's will help clear up misunderstandings between fellow-believers, and further, that a dual practice of infant baptism and baby dedication will promote the unity of Christ's church. I arrive at this conclusion by a consideration of the following evidence.

THE CIRCUMCISION-BAPTISM ANALOGY

There are Baptists who would agree with Letham's assessment of Cunningham, while finding his argument for infant baptism unconvincing. As noted in the previous article, this argument (brief as it is) follows traditional lines of covenant continuity and federal holiness. However, Cunningham makes no explicit mention of what lies at the heart of the covenant continuity argument, the circumcision-baptism analogy (Gen. 17; Col. 2:10). This seems curious, especially as Ulrich Zwingli, the subject of Cunningham's essay, 'Zwingli and the Sacraments', is credited with having developed this argument that became a staple of the Reformed defence of infant baptism.[10]

An original approach to the circumcision-baptism analogy is offered in Meredith Kline's *By Oath Consigned*, based on his research into extra-biblical suzerainty treaties. Kline sees circumcision and baptism as involving both malediction and consecration, covenant curse as well as covenant blessing. There are some difficulties with this approach, not least that Scripture nowhere speaks of circumcision and baptism in this way, although as Kline points out, it does speak metaphorically of 'a baptism of fire' (Luke 12:50 cf. Matt. 3:11). The argument depends on reading extra-biblical examples into the biblical text. For instance, in stating that baptism is a form of water ordeal, Kline appeals for support of this concept to Qumranic and Ugaritic texts, although he also references Israel's Red Sea ordeal and the Noahic deluge (1 Cor. 12:2, 1 Pet. 3:21), as well as

[10] Jack W. Cottrell, 'Zwingli's Covenant Theology and the Reformed Doctrine of Baptism', Evangelical Theological Society Papers, 38th Annual Conference 1986. Cottrell notes the influence of Augustine's theology, but fails to mention his use of the circumcision-baptism analogy, although he does recognize that Zwingli's use of the analogy was not new. (According to David Wright, the use of the analogy was discussed in the time of Cyprian at a council of African bishops in 253. See David F. Wright, *Infant Baptism in Historical Perspective: Collected Studies* (Milton Keyes: Paternoster Press, 2007), pp. 29-31.)

Israel's passing through the Jordan River to inherit the land of Canaan.[11] However, debatable as Kline's approach may be, it is a reminder that all biblical covenants have two sides, blessing to those who obey and curses on those who disobey. To quote Sinclair Ferguson:

> The redemptive covenants of Scripture all have this structure. Given to people already under the curse, they offer the blessing of salvation to those who trust and obey. If people spurn the covenant in unbelief and disobedience, the curse remains. This is the pattern with Noah (Gen. 5:29; 6:13; 8:21), with Abraham (Gen. 15:7-21) and also with Moses (Ex. 6:2-8; 34:10-18; Deut. 28-30). The pattern finds its ultimate fulfillment in Christ. He enters into humanity's accursed situation and bears the divine anathema so that the blessing promised to Abraham might come to the Gentiles (Gal. 3:13-14; cf. the cry of dereliction Mk. 15:34).[12]

In general, Baptists have rejected the circumcision-baptism analogy, as did Karl Barth (1886-1986), the father of neo-orthodoxy in the Reformed tradition. In *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism*, Barth dismissed circumcision as belonging to the nation of Israel and charged infant baptism with being linked to the 'Constantinian' state-church concept in Europe.[13] Paul Jewett (1919-91) saw Barth as anticipating his own argument in *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace*.[14] Jewett nevertheless acknowledges that Old Testament circumcision also 'becomes a symbol of renewal and cleansing of heart' (Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4; Rom. 2:29), and in discussing Colossians 2:11-13 he states,

> To experience the circumcision of Christ in the putting off of the body of the flesh, is the same as being buried with him and being raised with him through faith. If this be true, the only conclusion we can reach is that the two signs, as outward rites, symbolize the same inner reality in Paul's thinking. Thus circumcision may fairly be said to be the Old Testament counterpart to baptism.[15]

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11 Meredith G. Kline, *By Oath Consigned* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), pp. 55-62.

12 Sinclair B. Ferguson, 'Infant Baptist View', in *Baptism: Three Views*, ed. by David F. Wright, p. 98.

13 Karl Barth, *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism* (London: SCM Press, 1959). However, in what proved to be his final word on the subject several years later, Barth did recognize the force of Calvin's use of the analogy, but not without qualification. See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1970) IV.4, Fragment, 195-96.

14 Paul K. Jewett, *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), p. 92.

15 Jewett, *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace*, pp. 86, 89.

An earlier monogram by Jewett, *Infant Baptism and Confirmation*[16] provided a scholarly basis for David Kingdon's 1973 book, *Children of Abraham*, in which he states regarding circumcision-baptism,

> The analogy does in fact exist, but it is the nature of it which is in question. The covenant with Abraham included promises that his physical seed would be multiplied and given a land. In the New Testament this is seen as a spiritual seed and a spiritual inheritance [….] The abrogation of the principle "thee and thy seed" is seen in the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34) where possession of inward spiritual life is required.[17]

Kingdon's popular work represents a resurgence of Reformed Baptist thinking that accepts the unity (as well as the diversity) of the old and new covenants and claims to be in continuity with the London Baptist Confession of 1689. In recent years, there have been a plethora of similar publications, among the most helpful of which are collections of essays in *Believer's (sic) Baptism* (edited by Thomas Schreiner and Shawn Wright)[18] and *Recovering a Covenantal Heritage* (edited by Richard Barcellos).[19] The point being made is that in the heightened spirituality of the new covenant, it is those circumcised in heart (i.e. the regenerate) who are the true children of Abraham (Gal. 3:26-28 etc.).

HOUSEHOLD BAPTISM

Paedobaptists regularly point out that the difficulty with this line of reasoning is that it is humanly impossible to guarantee the regenerate church membership claimed by Baptists as the New Testament norm.[20] There are examples of professed believers falling away (Acts 8:18-24; 1 Tim. 1:20), as

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16 Paul King Jewett, *Infant Baptism and Confirmation* (Pasadena, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1960).

17 David Kingdon, *Children of Abraham* (Hayward Heath, Sussex: Carey Publications, 1973), p. 6. Wright does allude to the *Epistle of Barnabas*' assertion that the counterpart of circumcision in the flesh is circumcision of the ears and heart by the Holy Spirit (Barn. 9:1-9; 10:11) but it was not associated with baptism; Wright, *Infant Baptism in Historical Perspective*, p. 53.

18 Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn Wright, eds. *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007).

19 *Recovering a Covenantal Heritage: Essays in Baptist Covenant Theology*, ed. by Richard Barcellos (Create Space Independent Publishing Platform, 2014).

20 See e.g. pp. 272-85 of 'The Polemics of Anabaptism from the Reformation Onward' in Gregg Strawbridge, ed., *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003). It was when he began to see that the new covenant includes warnings of apostacy (Heb. 10:28-30) that Strawbridge's study

well as warnings about that possibility (John 15:2, 6; Rom. 11:13-21; Heb. 6:4-6; 9:13-20). However, what the New Testament pattern indicates is the missionary baptism of professed believers. It is possible to acknowledge this while still affirming that the model of at least four out of twelve missionary baptisms in the New Testament is of converts and their households, remembering Cunningham's point that if paedobaptists were more in the habit of witnessing adult baptism (as happens in missionary situations), they would have less difficulty understanding baptism's significance. Household baptism is generally a second line of reasoning in paedobaptist polemic, but I agree with Ken Stewart that it should be the primary one.[21]

The German scholar Joachim Jeremias did extensive research into what he called the '*oikos*-formula', from the Greek term for 'household'. He also researched the origins of proselyte baptism, whereby Gentile converts to Judaism would be both circumcised and baptised along with their families, although children born subsequently were not baptised. Jeremias first held this to be the case with Christian converts (i.e. children born after the parents' conversion were not baptised), but later changed his position.[22]

Jeremias' fellow-countryman Kurt Aland replied to Jeremias, questioning his claims as to the antiquity of infant baptism. Aland devoted a chapter to the '*oikos*-formula', arguing that,

> the data that can be gathered from the New Testament seem to me in no way to justify the confidence with which the existence of infant baptism in New Testament times, or even quite generally of the baptism of children, is derived nowadays from the "*oikos*-formula". I would even contest whether we have any right to talk about an "*oikos*-formula" in the New Testament.[23]

Jeremias replied to Aland's reply, with *The Origins of Infant Baptism*, in which he states:

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of the issue 'took a decisive turn' in his movement from a Reformed Baptist to a paedobaptist position (p. 4).

21 Kenneth J. Stewart, *In Search of Ancient Roots* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press), p. 135.

22 Joachim Jeremias, *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries* (London: SCM Press, 1960), pp. 43-58.

23 Kurt Aland, *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?* Translated with an introduction by G. R. Beasley-Murray (London: SCM Press, 1961), p. 91. Beasley-Murray offers an extended discussion of household baptisms in *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), pp. 312-20. He also finds 'no clear trace of influence' from proselyte baptism 'on the interpretation of baptism in the New Testament' (p. 330).

> The house in the narrower sense includes […] the father of the family, the mother of the family and the children of every age; in the wider sense the relations living in the house were also reckoned in, but not the servants without further comment. It is natural to conclude from this that the references to the 'whole' household are intended in the first place to include the children. We do not assert that in each case children were, in fact, actually present. But we do mean that Paul and Luke could under no circumstances have used the phrase, 'a household' or 'his whole family' were baptized, if they had wished to say that only adults had been baptized.[24]

Meredith Kline takes 'household' in the broader sense of including servants and suggest that 'if it could be shown that servants were received into the church on the basis of the authority principle, it would follow a *fortiori* that the continuity with the Old Testament practice included infants too.' He continues, 'But what has to be determined is whether the household subordinates who were involved, of whatever variety, were received and baptized on the basis of personal conviction and confession or because they belonged to the household of the one who confessed the Christian faith.' Then Kline makes the remarkable (for a paedobaptist) concession, 'And that is where certainty does not appear attainable.'[25]

Of the biblical examples of household baptisms, the one that provides the most support for a paedobaptist interpretation is of the Philippian jailer's baptism recorded in Acts 16:31-34. The NIV records that following his baptism, along with that of his household, 'He was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God – he and his whole family' (Acts 16:34b). The ESV, on the other hand, has 'And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God', placing the emphasis on the fact that *he* believed, and *they* rejoiced along with him. This is closer to a literal translation than the NIV. However, F. F. Bruce in his commentary on Acts notes, 'Here the adverb [*panoike*, "with his entire household"] may be taken grammatically with either *egalliasato* ["he rejoiced"] or *pepisteukos* ["he having believed"]; in sense it probably goes with both.'[26] Bruce

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[24] Joachim Jeremias, *The Origins of Infant Baptism* (London: SCM Press, 1962), p. 12.

[25] Kline, *By Oath Consigned*, 97. On the related question of the baptism of infants born into Christian households, Wright observes that the evidence 'will sustain the confidence of neither a Jeremias nor of an Aland' ('The Origin of Infant Baptism-Child Believers' Baptism', in *Infant Baptism in Historical Perspective*, p. 20.)

[26] F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 3rd rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990). Quoted by Bruce Ware, 'Believers' Baptism View', in *Baptism: Three Views*, p. 32.

Ware, in offering the Baptist perspective in *Baptism: Three Views*, notes that if Bruce is correct that the household phrase goes both with believing and rejoicing, 'we have strong reason to dismiss the notion that the jailer's household included infants.'[27] He continues,

> What makes the most sense here is that (the) offer of salvation is given to the jailer specifically while also including his house (Acts 16:31). Paul and Silas spoke the word of the Lord specifically to the jailer but included with him were all that were in the house (Acts 16:32). Then the jailer was baptized (single verb), he along with all his family (Acts 16:33). Finally, he rejoiced and believed in God, along with his entire household (Acts 16:34)[28]

In support of this interpretation, Ware points to a parallel situation in Acts 18:8 which states that 'Crispus … believed … together with his entire household.'[29]

This suggests to me the wisdom of Kline's concession that 'certainty does not appear attainable' as to whether members of households in Acts were baptised on the basis of the head of the household's faith or their own. Likewise, J. I. Packer notes that infant baptism is a practice that the New Testament 'neither illustrates nor prescribes nor forbids'.[30] But surely we can at least agree with Sinclair Ferguson when he says, 'God deals with families (Ps. 68:6)' and comments,

> This […] is further exhibited in the way in which Paul's letters include children as "saints" and exhorts them to fulfill specifically covenantal responsibilities: "Obey your parents in the Lord for that is right (Eph. 1:1, 6:1-3; cf. Col. 1:2; 3:20)." Paul's appeal to the Mosaic covenant in the Ephesian context implies that the same dynamic which grounded the relationship of parents and children in the old continues in the new.[31]

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27 Bruce Ware, 'Believers' Baptism View', in *Baptism: Three Views*, p. 32.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid. Not surprisingly, Ware also rejects the view that 'the promise is for you and for your children' in Acts 2:39 is relevant to infant baptism. However, it is difficult to think that Jews hearing that for the first time, with their Old Testament covenant background, would not have interpreted it in a paedobaptist fashion. See Joel R. Beeke and Ray B. Lanning, 'Unto You and Your Children', in *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism* ed. by Gregg Strawbridge (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003), pp. 49-69.

30 J. I. Packer, 'Baptism', in *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1993), p. 214.

31 Ferguson, 'Infant Baptist View', in *Baptism: Three Views*, pp. 106-07. See also Douglas Wilson, *To a Thousand Generations: Infant Baptism-God's Covenant Mercy for the People of God* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2000) and his essay,

Later, after quoting the Westminster Larger Catechism's answer to the question 'How is our baptism to be improved?' (Q & A 167) and noting that the principles of Ephesians 6:1-4 'apply to every aspect of parental responsibility and children's experience,' Ferguson adds:

> None of this should be misunderstood as implying that paedobaptists believe their children do not need to 'be converted'. True, many children from Christian families cannot remember a decisive 'conversion' moment, but conversion should not be reduced to a moment of psychological crisis. It is simply shorthand for the faith and repentance which marks the continuance as well as the beginning of the Christian life. The gospel sign of baptism – whether received in infancy or in later years on profession of faith – calls us all to this lifelong conversion.[32]

David Wright provides post-apostolic evidence from the so-called *Apostolic Tradition* (c. 220 AD) of instructions for baptism that placed 'the little children' first 'with a distinction between those who can speak for themselves, who shall indeed do so, and those who cannot, for whom the parents or other family members will speak.'[33] However, 'It is not until the early years of the fifth century […] that we encounter the first evidence of how parents or others did speak for the children.' They were asked 'Does he/she believe?' to which the reply was given 'He/she believes.'[34] Augustine explains this in terms of baptism being the sacrament of faith, such that 'a child is made a believer (*fidelem*), though not yet by that faith (*fides*) which resides in the will of those believing, nevertheless already by the sacrament of that faith.'[35]

Wright notes that 'If one adopts the reading of the evidence given by Joachim Jeremias […] then one must believe that in the early fifth century infant baptism was all but universal for the children of Christians.' Yet, Wright claims (contrary to Jeremias's later opinion), 'a great deal of

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'Baptism and Children: Their Place in the Old and New Testaments', in *The Case for Covenant Infant Baptism*, ed. by Gregg Strawbridge, pp. 286-302.

32 Ferguson, 'Infant Baptism View', pp. 110-11.

33 Wright, *What Has Infant Baptism Done to Baptism? An Enquiry at the End of Christendom* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2005), p. 39.

34 Wright, *What Has Infant Baptism Done to Baptism?,* pp. 41-42. Cf. Hippolytus, Apostolic Tradition, 21:12-18; P. F. Bradshaw, M. E. Johnson and L. E. Phillips, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), pp. 88-95.

35 Wright, *What Has Infant Baptism Done to Baptism?,* p. 51. Wright references Susan A. Keefe, *Water and the Word: Baptism and the Education of the Clergy in the Carolingian Empire*, Vol 2 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), p. 349.

hard evidence in the fourth and early fifth centuries that the offspring of Christian parents […] were not baptized as babies.'[36] Household baptism was missionary baptism.

Cunningham believed that children 'whether baptized or not, should be treated and dealt with in all respects as […] unregenerate, still needing to be born again.'[37] Kingdon expresses himself similarly: 'Believers' children are privileged children because they are within the sphere of the preaching and nurture of the church, but they are not made Christian children by privilege, but by true conversion of the word of God through the belief of the truth.'[38] This is the opposite of presumptive regeneration. A mediating position is offered by Dr. J. Douma, responding to both Kuyper and Kingdon that:

> our children are Christian children. By the call of God (and not their own 'Christianity') they are separated from the children of this world. But they must accordingly behave as children of God. That does not come by itself; and *with* Kingdon we are against all false security. We heartily agree with him that one should not presume that our children are regenerate, for such a presumption cultivates that false security [….]But it does not cultivate false security when we say, as opposed to Kingdon, 'You are a Christian child', and then add with Kingdon, 'Repent and believe the gospel.' For conversion and faith are daily matters, a calling for our adults as well as our children.[39]

Although almost certainly less than what Douma intended to mean, Anthony Lane notes that we may speak of Christian children in the same was as we talk of Jewish, Muslim or Hindu children.[40] At the very least, the children of believers are members of Christian households, with all the privileges and responsibilities entailed.

INFANT BAPTISM AND BABY DEDICATION

Based on historical research, David Wright suggests that early church practice allowed for various forms of baby dedication, as well as infant baptism.[41] In what was to be Wright's last literary work, published post-

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36 Wright, *What Has Infant Baptism Done to Baptism?,* pp. 42-43.

37 Ferguson, 'Infant Baptism View', pp. 110-11.

38 Kingdon, *Children of Abraham*, p. 99.

39 Dr. J. Douma, *Infant Baptism and Regeneration*, a booklet based on a series of articles in *De Reformatie*, Kampen, the Netherlands, October 1976, p. 35.

40 Anthony N. S. Lane, 'Dual-Practice View', in Wright, *Baptism: Three Views*, p. 169.

41 Wright, 'Infant Dedication in the Early Church', in *Infant Baptism in Historical Perspective*, pp. 116-38.

humously and already quoted, *Baptism: Three Views*, Anthony Lane also takes this position, as well as agreeing with Wright that the historical and biblical evidence supports a dual-practice approach to baptism. The other two contributors to this volume, Bruce Ware and Sinclair Ferguson, are dismissive of it, considering it incoherent and naïve, as well as historically and biblically questionable. The arguments for and against can be read in the responses and counter-responses to Lane's essay, but given the New Testament emphasis on church unity (John 17:21; Eph. 4:4), I find it difficult to argue with his conclusion:

> The New Testament practice of baptism was converts' baptism, the immediate baptism of those who come to faith as part of their initial response to the gospel. This needs to be modified for children born into a Christian home, either into infant baptism or into baptism at a later date. The New Testament evidence for how such children were treated is not unambiguous. Both approaches can be defended on biblical grounds. No grounds exist for insisting on one way to the exclusion of the other. The policy of accepting diversity is the only policy for which the first four centuries of the church provide any clear evidence.[42]

On dedication, Lane observes:

> Many churches observe some sort of dedication ceremony after the birth of the child. This is followed by a period of Christian nurture [….] If all goes well, it concludes with the grown-up child making a personal public profession of faith in baptism. In other churches the newborn baby is baptized. This is followed by a period of Christian nurture [….] If all goes well, it concludes with a personal public profession of faith […] which may or may not be called confirmation.[43]

Likewise, David Wright opines:

> The attractiveness of recent attempts to bridge 'the waters that divide' is that they penetrate behind divergent practice and dare to claim that both administrations of baptism can be embraced within one theological framework

[42] Lane, 'Dual-Practice Baptist View', p. 169. Peter J. Leithart offers an alternative (somewhat speculative) interpretation of the evidence, according to which covenantal infant baptism was apostolic practice and teaching, the first generation of biblically literate Jewish believers were all but wiped out in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, and succeeding generations of baptismal rituals were influenced by Greek mystery religions. 'Infant Baptism in History: An Unfinished Tragicomedy', in *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism*, ed. by Gregg Strawbridge, pp. 246-62.

[43] Lane, 'Dual Practice Baptism View', p. 163.

> with little remainder. The one baptises believers' babies and nurtures them within the community of faith until they profess that faith responsibly for themselves. The other dedicates or gives thanks for believers' babies and nurtures them within the community of faith until in baptism they respond to the gospel in their own profession. For both categories of baptismal subjects the prospective perspective is critical, both from an early acknowledgement of a child as God's gift to be reared in and to faith, and from the later time of responsible decision, which is not so much an arrival as a fresh point of departure.[44]

Reformed Baptists generally, as well as paedobaptists, reject infant dedication as a poor substitute for infant baptism, without clear biblical warrant. The modern practice is thought to have developed in conjunction with the Sunday School movement and 'the natural Christian instinct of parents who did not agree with the biblical doctrine of infant baptism but desired to have a corresponding rite for their children.'[45] Biblical support, it is suggested, can be found in the examples of Hannah bringing Samuel to the temple (1 Sam. 1:24), Mary and Joseph in bringing the infant Jesus to the temple (Luke 2:22) and the mothers bringing their children to Jesus to be blessed (Luke 18:15 uses the word 'babies').[46]

Paedobaptists point out that baby dedication focuses on the faith of the parents at the expense of the grace and promises of God in baptism. A common argument is that there is no better picture of the unmerited grace of God than a helpless infant incapable of doing anything to merit divine favour.[47] This would be a powerful and convincing argument,

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44 David F. Wright, 'Scripture and Evangelical Diversity', in *Infant Baptism in Historical Perspective*, p. 269. See also David F. Wright, 'Infant Dedication in the Early Church', in *Baptism in the New Testament and the Church, Historical and Contemporary Studies in Honor of R.E.O. White*, ed. by Stanley E. Porter and Anthony R. Cross (Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Suppl. Ser. 171; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) pp. 352-78.

45 Brian G. Najapfour, *Child Dedication Considered Historically, Theologically, and Pastorally* (Caledonia, MI: Biblical Spirituality Press, 2014), p. 33.

46 Najapfour, himself a former Baptist, exegetes these passages referenced and finds that they do not provide adequate biblical support for child dedication. However, while not mandated in Scripture, 'it can serve to bind the dedicators to honoring the Lord' (p. 30). Najapfour hopes to 'encourage those who practice baby dedication to consider the Reformed doctrine of infant baptism' (p. 34).

47 See e.g. J. Douma, 'Do we not point out to the Reformed Baptists what for them, too, is the heart of the gospel when we criticize their rejection of infant baptism?' (*Infant Baptism and Regeneration*, p. 36.) John Stott notes that Articles 25, 27 & 28 of the 39 Articles of the Church of England 'all begin with the statement that a sacrament is a sign not of what we do or are, but of what God

except that it is nowhere used in the New Testament in connection with baptism. Rather, the stress is on the faith of the believer responding to God's offer of salvation. Besides, the faith of the baptized believer is no less a sovereign gift of grace.[48]

To be sure, infant baptism involves not *first* our dedicating our children to God, but claiming his covenant promises as the one initiating the relationship so established. However, there is a fair amount of support for seeing dedication as 'the second' part of baptism.[49] For instance, the baptismal vows of the Presbyterian Church in America (influenced more by J. H. Thornwell's Southern Presbyterian view than by Hodge's in the north)[50] ask three questions, the last of which is: 'Do you now unreservedly dedicate your child to God, and promise, in humble reliance upon divine grace, that you will endeavour to set before (him) a godly example, that you will pray with and for (him), that you will teach (him) the doctrines of our holy religion, and that you will strive, by all the means of God's appointment, to bring (him) up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?'[51] Likewise, Archibald Alexander of Princeton (1772-1851) spoke of parents 'about to dedicate [their children] to God in holy baptism' praying

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has done or does' (John Stott and J. Alec Motyer, *The Anglican Evangelical Doctrine of Infant Baptism* (London: The Latimer Trust, 2008), p. 7.)

48 Wright, in making this point, also notes that since paedobaptist churches also baptise believers on profession of faith, 'these churches cannot afford to incorporate in their theology of baptism any elements that are applicable only to babies' ('Baptism and the Evangelical Divide', in *Baptism in Historical Perspective*, p. 294.)

49 This terminology is taken from the Rev. Ken Koeman's (1942-2018) answer to a letter in the Q & A page of *The Banner* (the denominational magazine of the Christian Reformed Church) in August 18, 1997: 'Dedication is the second half of baptism. Baptism is God speaking to the child, promising him or her the blessings of the covenant, promises claimed and treasured by the parents. Dedication is the response of the parents, placing the child into the hands of God and promising to train him or her in the gospel [….] But without baptism, dedication loses the solid foundation of God's promises that gives it substance and purpose. It's like a wedding in which only the bride gives the ring.'

50 Hodge and Thornwell differed publicly about whether baptized children should be subject to church discipline. Hodge considered Thornwell's position (that a profession of faith was the indispensable condition of church discipline) meant 'abandoning the ground to the Independents and Anabaptists.' 'The General Assembly', in *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, 31, No. 3 (1859), 604. Quoted in Schenck, *The Presbyterian Doctrine of Children in the Covenant*, p. 99.

51 *The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America* (Decatur, GA: Office of the Stated Clerk, Sixth edition, 2017) p. 165.

earnestly 'that they might be baptized with the Holy Ghost.'[52] Alexander goes on to speak of this as a form of baptismal regeneration, language Cunningham would have clearly rejected, but the point is that Alexander understood baptism as at least in part a form of dedication.

To quote another authority from the past, Richard Baxter, whose overall defence of infant baptism J. I. Packer describes as speaking for the Puritan movement in general,[53] states:

> I have oft shewed that *If our Childrens part in the Covenant of Grace upon their Parents dedication of them to God and so their Church-membership*, were but yielded, the rest (whether they should actually be *Baptized with Water*) would be much less cause of our distance and alienation, than on both sides it is usually judged. Yea, if the Anabaptists would but say, [*I Dedicate this Child to God, as far as he hath given me power, and heartily desire that God may be his Father, Christ his Saviour, and the Holy Spirit his Sanctifier*]: And did ever any of you prove this to be a sin? And we are ready on our part to profess that [*Infant- Baptism will save none at age, that confess not to the same holy Covenant*].[54]

At the same time, Packer says of Baxter's own position, 'As in other legal agreements, so in God's covenant, parents are entitled to pledge their children as well as themselves. The child's right to baptism has thus a double foundation: his parentage, the fact that he is a child of professing Christians which makes him eligible for it, and his parents' actual decision to dedicate him to God, which makes it his due.'[55]

Packer himself adopts a position much like that of Lane above: 'the Christian nurture of baptist and paedobaptist children will be similar: dedicated to God in infancy, either by baptism or by a dedication rite (which some will see as a dry baptism), they will then be brought up to live for the Lord and led to publicly professing faith on their own account in confirmation of baptism (which some will see as a wet confirmation).'[56]

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52 Archibald Alexander, *Thoughts on Religious Experience* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1978 reprint. First published 1844), pp. 12-13.

53 'In the Baptist controversy, his fellow-Puritans regarded him as a champion of their cause' (J. I. Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2013), p. 285.)

54 Richard Baxter, *Rich. Baxter's review of the state of christian Infants etc.* (London: Nevil Simons, 1676), p. 4. I do not mean to suggest that all Puritans would have agreed with this.

55 Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man*, p. 280.

56 J. I. Packer, 'Baptism', in *Concise Theology*, (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2001), pp. 215-6.

There are in fact denominations that, at least in theory, allow for dual practice of infant baptism and baby dedication,[57] and interestingly, there appears to be a move in this direction among some in the present Free Church of Scotland.[58] It might be argued that this is a logical development of Cunningham's view, adapted to accommodate those who remain unconvinced of infant baptism. At the very least, to repeat the conclusion of my previous article, I would suggest that it is only on Cunningham's understanding of infant baptism, rather than presumptive election or regeneration, that progress can be made in recognizing the unity among evangelical Christians of the church's "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. 4:5). [59]

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[57] For some (not all) examples, see Kenneth J. Stewart, *In Search of Ancient Roots: The Christian past and the Evangelical Identity Crisis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), p. 136. See also Donald Bridge and David Phypers, *The Waters that Divide: Two Views on Baptism Explored* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1977), pp. 199-200.

[58] Donald Macleod (who called Cunningham 'Scotland's greatest theologian'), has expressed strong opposition to 'a growing demand for Baptist style Services of Dedication for Infants' in the Free Church of Scotland <www.donaldmacleod.org.uk/dm/should-presbyterians-have-dedication-services/> [Accessed 18 June 2018]. Macleod, in my view, is ably refuted by David Robertson <https://theweeflea.com/tag/infant-dedication> [Accessed 18 June 2018].

[59] Donald Macleod expresses a common view when, after acknowledging that the debate between Baptists and paedobaptists is not about fundamentals, he continues, 'There is no doubt that it is difficult to have the two points of view co-existing in one church or denomination, but that is a practical, not a theological, difficulty.' ('Christian Baptism', in *A Faith to Live By: Understanding Christian Doctrine* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Mentor imprint of Christian Focus, second edition, 2010), p. 229.) I agree with Macleod when he later states that 'the children of our Baptist friends are as much covenant-children as our own. The fact of their not being baptised does not mean they are not covenant-children. It means only that the sign of the covenant is not put upon them.' (p. 235). Macleod references Presbyterians and Anglicans preaching in Baptist churches, but is this enough? Baptists and paedobaptists also work happily together in para-church organizations, agreeing to differ on the issue of baptisms. But para-church organizations, with their limited statements of faith, are a testimony to the failure of the organized church to achieve the structural unity and witness that Jesus prayed for in John 17:21.

WHEN PREACHING STYLES MEET: WHAT AFRICAN AND WESTERN PREACHERS CAN LEARN FROM EACH OTHER

THORSTEN PRILL

Preaching is a privilege and at the same time hard work. It requires as John Stott has pointed out careful preparation, sincerity, earnestness, courage and humility.[1] Humble preachers recognise that their style of preaching is only one of many. Failure to do so can easily make their preaching less effective, particularly when they preach among those who are culturally different from themselves. This is a lesson learned the hard way by many African church planters in Europe and Western missionaries who serve on the African continent.[2] A one fits it all approach to preaching usually does not work, as the following scenario, which is fictitious but based on real cases, illustrates:

A British preacher was invited by a Western mission organisation to run a series of preaching workshops for African church leaders in a southern African country. On previous visits to this country, he had noticed that the sermons preached in the local churches were almost exclusively non-expository topical sermons. Coming from an evangelical church tradition that highly valued expository preaching, he concluded that a change in the churches' practice was needed. To bring about such a change was a long term project and it had to start with the training of pastors. He, therefore, decided that the focus of his preaching classes should be expository preaching. While the African pastors generally appreciated the new preaching style, especially the fact that they could see how a particular passage fitted into the big picture of the Bible, they perceived the sermons preached by the guest from Europe as dry and lacking relevance for their daily lives. In addition, they felt uncomfortable that the British preacher seemed to be unwilling to deal with topical sermons in his workshops. The African church leaders had the impression that their traditional way of preaching was considered inferior by their visitor and as a result, many of them reverted to the preaching of topical sermons after the end of the training.

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1 See J. Stott, *I Believe in Preaching* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1993), pp. 211-328.

2 Cf. A. Moyo, 'Church-Planting Considerations for African Reverse Missionaries in Britain in the Postmodern Era', in *African Voices: Towards African British Theologies*, ed. by I. O. Olofinjana (Carlisle: Langham Global Library, 2017), pp. 75-78.

CONTEXT MATTERS

The British preacher rightly grasped the central role which preaching should play in the life and mission of the church. It does not take us long to see that the biblical authors leave us with no doubt that preaching was central to Jesus' earthly ministry and that of the apostles. When Jesus started his ministry he said to his disciples: 'Let us go somewhere else - to the nearby villages - so that I can preach there also. That is why I have come' (Mark 1:38). Likewise, following Pentecost, the apostles continued with the preaching of the good news. In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul, for example, writes about his motivation: 'Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!' (1 Cor. 9:16). In Acts 6:4 the twelve underline the primacy of preaching when they declare that they will continue to give their 'attention to prayer and the ministry of the word'.

The British preacher also recognised the great value of an expository sermon, which Bryan Chapell defines as,

> A message whose structure and thought are derived from a biblical text, that covers the scope of the text, and that explains the features and context of the text in order to disclose the enduring principles for faithful thinking, living, and worship intended by the Spirit, who inspired the text.[3]

However, by insisting on one particular preaching style, he inadvertently sent out a message of theological superiority - a message which did not convince or endear his approach to his African students. By preaching expository sermons in the style he preached them in his home church in the UK, the preacher also ignored the difference in church culture which existed between urban Britain and rural Africa, and the need to contextualise his sermon message. He presented the gospel in a way that was first and foremost culturally relevant to himself and less so to the African pastors.

THE CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

The British preacher came from a church which had a strong low-context orientation. In low- context churches, the sermons are usually, as James Plueddemann points out, expository sermons which 'concentrate on what the Bible says and less on the immediate felt needs of the people'.[4] The

[3] B. Chapell, *Christ-Centred Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), p. 31.

[4] J. E. Plueddemann, *Leading Across Cultures: Effective Ministry and Mission in the Global Church* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2009), p. 87.

sermons are logically structured and usually delivered in a calm and dignified manner. They are usually verse-by-verse expositions of a particular biblical passage.[5] Verse-by-verse expository preachers often go consecutively through a biblical book.[6] The worship service in low-context churches typically follows a certain order and starts and finishes precisely at the set times.[7] The accompanying songs and hymns tend to contain good biblical theology and often focus on the attributes of God and the work of Christ.

Most of the African churches the British preacher had visited and to which his workshop participants belonged were high-context churches. High context-churches prefer topical sermons that draw on the Scriptures but seek to address the present needs of the hearers.[8] The preachers address the needs of their listeners because they understand their nature, or as Ezekiel Ajibade puts it:

> If they are told not to engage in idolatry or any other form of diabolic compromise the gospel must meet their needs. This is one of the reasons for the rise of African Independent Churches and this is one of the reasons the Pentecostal and charismatic movements have not only drawn many away from mainline evangelical churches but have affected their structures and content of worship. Preaching must carry life and the Word must be confirmed as it is preached.[9]

In high-context churches, the sermons are often delivered in a lively way.[10] Most African preachers preach with passion and expect the congregation to respond spontaneously. Exclamations such as 'Amen', 'Hallelujah' or 'Preach it Pastor' are very common. The same is true for the rest of the

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5 T. S. Warren, 'Can Topical Preaching Also Be Expository?', in *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today's Communicators*, ed. by H. Robinson and C. B. Larson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), p. 419.

6 Ibid., p. 419.

7 Plueddemann, *Leading Across Cultures*, p. 87.

8 Ibid., p. 87.

9 E. A. Ajibade, 'A Historical Overview of Preaching in Africa in the 19th and 20th Century' (unpublished research paper, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, undated), 12-13 <https://www.academia.edu/34832354/a_historical_overview_of_preaching_in_africa_in_the_19_th_and_20_th_century> [accessed 13 October 2020].

10 Cf. A. Wright, 'Lessons Learned From My Minority Experience', in *What Happens When Students Are in the Minority: Experiences That Impact Human Performance*, ed. by C. B. Hutchison (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), p. 182.

worship in such churches. There tends to be a lot of body movements among the worshippers and the songs which the congregation sing are often vigorous songs with simple repetitive messages.[11] In high-context churches worship means an energetic and enthusiastic celebration.

In many churches, we can find elements of both a high-context and a low-context orientation.[12] There is, however, a danger when one orientation becomes too dominant. Plueddemann notes: 'The danger of a service that is overly high-context is that it can lead to shallow emotionalism, self-centeredness, and false teaching, while the danger of overly idea-oriented worship is that it can lead to dead orthodoxy.'[13]

At this point, it must be noted that there are many African Christians who prefer to worship in the way they have inherited from the Western missionaries who first came to share the gospel with their foremothers and forefathers.[14] These Christians, who usually belong to mainline Mission Initiated Churches, love the old Western hymns, the traditional liturgies and the structured way of preaching. In contrast to Pentecostal and African Independent Churches (AIC) which seek to preserve elements of indigenous spirituality (such as loud congregational prayer, African-style music and dancing), experience shows that attempts to indigenise the worship or preaching style in such Mission Initiated Churches are often met with resistance from the congregation. Preachers in Africa and those who train them 'must be conscious of these two divides and must be able to reach each group'.[15] They must be flexible and able to preach both topical and expository sermons.

Like verse-by-verse expository preaching, topical preaching must be biblically based and expositional, and like most topical preaching in Africa, verse-by-verse expository preaching must engage with the African culture of the listeners. To be both, expositional and contextual, is undoubtedly the biggest challenge for both indigenous and Western preachers in Africa. Many Pentecostal or AIC preachers, for example, centre their message on the felt needs of their hearers at the expense of biblical truth.[16] They communicate their messages in a culturally relevant

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11 Plueddemann, *Leading Across Cultures*, p. 87.

12 Ibid., p. 86.

13 Ibid.

14 Cf. E. A. Ajibade, 'Communicating the Gospel to the African Church' (unpublished research paper, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017), 7 <https://www.academia.edu/34636431/Communicating_the_Gospel_to_the_African_Church> [accessed 13 October 2020].

15 Ibid.

16 E. A. Ajibade, 'Towards the Concept of an African Christian Preaching: Preliminary Considerations and Building Blocks' (unpublished research paper,

way, but they still fail their congregations because 'their hermeneutics are faulty and a good hermeneutic is the foundation for a good homiletic'.[17] Their topical sermons go biblically astray, as they make the biblical passages speak about a subject that is different from the one intended by the inspired biblical authors.[18] According to Marius Nel, many African Pentecostal preachers would, in principle, agree that a proper exegesis of the sermon passage with the help of commentaries, concordances, and Bible background books is necessary, but in practice, there is significant reluctance among them to carry out a thorough grammatical, historical and literary study of the biblical text.[19] Nel explains:

> They fear, however, that academic work in exegeting the text may minimize the influence of the Spirit because, they argue, the Bible is not automatically and mechanically the word of God but only becomes the word when the life-giving power of the Spirit assimilates, enlivens, and transmits it. (...) What the text meant in its original cultural context is less important for Pentecostals looking for the link with the contemporary situation and its application in daily life. This hermeneutic constantly reinforces the conviction that the spiritual and extraordinary supernatural experiences of biblical characters need to be re-enacted in the lives of contemporary believers.[20]

Others, who have been trained in the West or by Western missionaries in Africa, preach Bible-based expository sermons, but also fail their hearers because they communicate biblical truth in a way that tends to ignore the cultural background and social situation of their listeners. Like the British preacher, they forget that they do not deliver their message in a socio-cultural vacuum. While the former need to learn how to expound the Scripture accurately, the latter need to learn how to communicate unchanging biblical truth in the 'language' of their African audience, i.e. they need to learn how to contextualise the message. What is needed is both the application of hermeneutical principles and the use of cul-

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Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015), 9 <https://www.academia.edu/34576981/towards_the_concept_of_an_african_christian_preaching_preliminary_considerations_and_building_blocks> [accessed 13 October 2020].

17 Ibid.

18 Cf. D. Sumukjian, 'The Biblical Topical Sermon', in *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today's Communicators*, ed. by H. Robinson and C. B. Larson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), p. 421.

19 M. Nel, 'Re-enactment Leading to Transformation: A Critical Assessment of the Distinctives of Pentecostal Preaching', *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 3/1 (2017), p. 294.

20 Ibid., pp. 294-5.

tural, historical and social insights. Everyone who preaches in Africa (or in African churches in the West) needs to be familiar with the African worldview, which is often still influenced by pre-Christian thinking.[21] For instance, a preacher must understand the reason why so many of his hearers ask him to pray for them after the Sunday service: Some of them may believe that they cannot approach God directly while others may be convinced that the prayer of the 'man of God' is more powerful than their own. Ajibade gives a helpful definition of Christian preaching in Africa, which takes these points into account. 'African Christian Preaching', he writes, 'should be preaching that is principally biblical, based on the text of God's word, and interpreted and explained in the language and idioms of the Africans, considering their cultural milieu and aiming at bringing the (…) transformation that Africa needs.'[22]

THE BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

When we look at the apostle Paul's preaching ministry it becomes obvious that it was characterised by a great deal of flexibility and sensitivity.[23] Paul's preaching style differed much depending on his audience. The evangelistic sermons he preached to Jews and God-fearers in the synagogues were different from the ones he preached to Gentiles who did not have any connection with the Jewish faith and the Hebrew Bible. Paul was very much aware of the differences in worldviews and culture between those who were biblically literate and those who were not.

The apostle knew that he had to adjust himself and his preaching, without compromising the Gospel message, to his hearers and their socio-cultural background. He had to translate the content of the good news into words meaningful to his audiences in their particular contexts. In Paul's own words: 'To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law [….] I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessings' (1 Cor. 9:19-23).

In Pisidian Antioch, for example, Paul speaks to Jews and God-fearing Gentiles in the local synagogue (Acts 13:16). By addressing his Jewish

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21 B. A. Ogunlana, 'Preaching Christ in African Context', *BTSK Insight* October (2017), p. 92.

22 Ajibade, 'Towards the Concept of an African Christian Preaching', p. 5.

23 Cf. R. L. Reymond, *Paul Missionary Theologian: A Survey of his Missionary Labours and Theology* (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2000), p. 563; J. W. Thompson, *Peaching like Paul: Homiletical Wisdom for Today* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 36.

audience as 'fellow Israelites', he may appeal to their national pride, as David Williams suggests.[24] However, there is another purpose for choosing these words. The apostle stresses that he is one of them. Paul wants to leave his Jewish listeners in no doubt that he is a true Jew, or as he puts it in his letter to the Philippians, that he is 'of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews' (3:5). The people Paul is speaking to are familiar with the Jewish Scriptures and the history of Israel. Mindful of this, Paul chooses a message which 'is tailored to suit an audience with a background of knowledge about the Old Testament'.[25] Thus, he begins his sermon by recapitulating Israel's history from the patriarchs to the monarchy. Having mentioned the reign of King David he immediately turns to 'the Saviour Jesus' (Acts 13:23). The historical survey Paul gives serves only one purpose: '[T]o root the coming of Jesus in the kingly succession of Judah and to show that the career of Jesus was in fulfilment of prophecy.'[26] Paul's sermon is both 'a classic rabbinical sermon' and 'a classic apostolic proclamation of the gospel'.[27]

Speaking to the biblically illiterate intellectuals of Athens gathered in the Areopagus, Paul decides to choose a different approach.[28] Paul's audience is committed to various Greek philosophies and in Acts 17:18 Luke mentions two of them: Stoicism and Epicureanism. In other words, their worldview is totally different from that of the Jews and God-fearers in Pisidian Antioch. Therefore, Paul decides not to quote biblical texts but Greek poets and philosophers to strengthen his argument.[29] I. Howard Marshall points out that the quotes Paul uses in verses 28 'come from Aratus, but they are also found in a slightly different form in Cleanthes, *Hymn to Zeus*'.[30] After referring to the religious interest of the Athenians as a touchpoint to attract their attention,[31] Paul begins his sermon by constructing a biblical worldview.[32]

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24 D. J. Williams, *Acts* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), p. 232.

25 A. Fernando, *The NIV Application Commentary: Acts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), p. 386.

26 I. H. Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Leicester: IVP, 1999), pp. 220-1.

27 H. O. Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church: Volume 1: The Biblical Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 174.

28 D. A. Carson, 'Athens Revisited', in *Telling the Truth: Evangelizing Postmoderns*, ed. by D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), p. 388.

29 M. J. Newell, *Crossing Cultures in Scripture: Biblical Principles for Mission Practice* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2016), p. 238.

30 Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 289.

31 Newell, *Crossing Cultures in Scripture*, p. 237.

32 Carson, 'Athens Revisited', p. 394.

To start with Moses, the history of Israel or the promise of a Messiah would not be helpful. Paul has first to establish a framework, in which the person of Jesus, his death on a Roman cross and his resurrection from the dead make sense.[33] Before he introduces the risen Jesus to them, Paul explains that God is the creator God and ruler over everything who 'does not live in temples built by human hands' (Acts 17:24). He continues to stress God's self-existence, human dependence on him, the descent of all nations from one man, the diversity of ethnicities and human habitation, God's immanence, the need for humans to seek God and to repent of their sin (Acts 17:25-31). Keith Davy comments: 'Paul's message in Acts 17:22-31 was a philosophically driven presentation, appropriate to the Greek philosophers gathered in the Areopagus. Here Paul presented biblical truth without biblical references.'[34]

The apostle Paul clearly had the ability to contextualise not only himself as the message bearer but also the gospel message itself. We can see this in the sermons he preached and which are recorded in the Book of Acts, as we can also see in his letters within which he uses different images that illustrate the good news of salvation in Christ.

Depending on the people he addresses, Paul borrows language from the market place, the law court, the temple, the family, the military or politics,[35] or as Dean Flemming puts it: 'Paul does not feel compelled to recycle the same images and themes to explain the Gospel of Christ in every letter. Rather, he draws on whatever language is needed for the gospel to be incarnated in the life worlds of his mission communities.'[36] Writing to the Roman Christians, who live in a depraved Gentile society that despises them,[37] the apostle uses the language of the courtroom to illustrate the gospel message, 'For we maintain that a person is justified

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33 Ibid., p. 394.

34 K. A. Davy, 'The Gospel for a New Generation', in *Telling the Truth: Evangelizing Postmoderns*, ed. by D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), p. 358.

35 In 1 Corinthians 6:20, for example, Paul uses the language of the market place when he reminds the Corinthians that they 'were bought at a price', while in Ephesians 1:5 he uses the language of the family by writing that God 'predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ'. The language of the military can be found in texts like Colossians 2:15, 'And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them triumphing over them by the cross.'

36 D. Flemming, *Recovering the Full Mission of God: A Biblical Perspective of Being, Doing and Telling* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic), p. 169.

37 Cf. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1971), pp. 16-17.

by faith apart from the works of the law' (Rom. 3:28). In his letter to the Christians in Philippi, a Roman colony, Paul applies another language, i.e. the language of politics. In chapter 3, verse 20 he assures them, 'But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.' Paul's choice of language is deliberate. In a city whose population has the same privileges as the citizens of Rome,[38] the image of citizenship is one the Christians can easily relate to. The same is true for the believers in Corinth. In 2 Corinthians 2:14 the apostle writes, 'But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.' Paul is using the military image of the Roman triumph, one of the most impressive scenes in Roman public life.[39] The Roman triumph was a victory parade celebrated by Roman generals on their return to Rome after a successful military campaign. The successful general rode in a chariot accompanied by his soldiers and the captives they had taken from many nations. In Paul's picture the Roman general, who has defeated the enemies of Rome, has become the Christ who defeated the enemies of humankind, i.e. sin, death, and the devil.[40] Flemming's comment on the apostle's approach is particularly helpful. He writes:

> With striking flexibility and creativity, Paul relates the good news and its implications to people's situations. Long before missiologists started using the term Paul engaged in the "contextualization" of the gospel. We would do well to follow Paul's lead. Although the sacred story at the heart of the good news does not change, we are called to flexibly engage our ever-changing world. This requires listening to people's stories and concerns, as well as discerning how the good news might speak to their particular life circumstances.[41]

Depending on the context and situation African and Western preachers find themselves in, some languages of salvation might be culturally more relevant and effective than others. The picture of *adoption into God's family*, which Paul uses in passages such as Romans 8:23 or Ephesians 1:5, can be, as Victor Kuligin points out, particularly helpful to those who

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38 T. C. Smith, 'Philippi', in *Lutterworth Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. by W. E. Mills (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1994), p. 684.

39 P. Barnett, *The Message of 2 Corinthians: Power in Weakness* (Leicester: IVP, 1999), p. 52.

40 Cf. L. J. Ogilvie, *The Communicator's Commentary: 1, 2 Corinthians* (Milton Keynes: Word Publishing, 1986), p. 218.

41 Flemming, *Recovering the Full Mission of God*, p. 170.

have experienced isolation and estrangement in their lives.[42] Kuligin continues:

> In Namibia, this model of salvation is quite powerful. Some studies put the birthrate of children born out of wedlock somewhere around 90 percent, a shocking statistic. Marriage is a relative rarity, and it is an anomaly to find people who were raised their entire childhood by two parents. (...) There are few Namibians who can speak of the warmth and security that come from an intact, nuclear family. Those who can have a great blessing that many of their fellow compatriots will never know. It is in this atmosphere of the disintegration of the family that the adoption model of salvation can be quite moving.[43]

CONCLUSION

While it can be very helpful to introduce African preachers from high-context churches to the concept of sermon series and verse-by-verse expository preaching, they should also be familiarised with topical sermons which are grounded in Scripture and which avoid common mistakes like eisegesis, proof-texting or spiritualising. At the same time, Western missionaries and preachers from low-context churches need to be encouraged to preach both classic and topical expository sermons that make use of African proverbs, folktales or examples from daily life in rural and urban Africa. If the apostle Paul could quote Greek poetry in Athens, there is no reason why a preacher who preaches on James 1:22-25 in an African church cannot use an African saying like 'The roaring lion doesn't kill the game' to drive home the message that Christians need to be doers of God's Word. '[T]he proclamation of the gospel will be more effective if the African cultural experiences and identity are accommodated.'[44] In other words, the gospel of salvation needs to be contextualised. 'Instead of pretending that one size fits it all', Kuligin notes, 'we need to approach individuals in their specific context and share the gospel in the light of their particular struggle'.[45]

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42 V. Kuligin, *The Language of Salvation: Discovering the Riches of What It Means to Be Saved* (Wooster: Weaver Book Company, 2015), p. 58.

43 Ibid.

44 Ajibade, 'Towards the Concept of an African Christian Preaching', p. 7.

45 Kuligin, *The Language of Salvation*, p. 21.

When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment. By Ryan T. Anderson. New York: Encounter Books, 2018. ISBN: 9781594039614. 251pp. £19.99.

In *When Harry Became Sally*, Ryan Anderson discusses gender dysphoria (where someone feels their gender identity is opposite that of their biological sex) and its relation to the transgender movement. He argues that society must reconsider and reshape its response to the transgender movement, building on the thesis, 'The best biology, psychology, and philosophy all support an understanding of sex as a bodily reality, and of gender as a social manifestation of bodily sex.' (p. 2). While expressing compassion for those with gender dysphoria, he believes the mainstream approach of affirming and transitioning prevents patients from considering alternatives and is especially age-inappropriate for children. The book is a measured, research-based introduction to a conservative view on the topic, well footnoted but pitched for the capable lay reader.

In chapter one, Anderson asserts that politicians and culture shapers seek to stifle debate regarding gender dysphoria and enforce their progressive orthodoxy. One example is the Canadian government's decision to defund Toronto doctor Kenneth Zucker's gender identity clinic in response to activist pressure. Though he is a leading gender dysphoria expert and open to helping individuals transition, he was considered not affirming enough. Chapter two outlines Anderson's understanding of transgender ideology. On the one hand, trans ontology, which makes gender identity determinant of sex, leads to medical remedies and social policies which affirm gender identity. On the other hand, Anderson sees contradictions in activists' narrative. For example, he notes that they assert that science backs their claims while also denying that biology determines gender; he argues that it must be either-or. De-transitioners share their stories in chapter three. Common themes which emerge include feeling pressured to transition, regretting bodily damage done, and realizing unexplored underlying psychological issues had shaped their gender dysphoria.

Chapter four discusses the science of gender. Whereas scientific literature indicates sex is determined by biology, reflected in the composition of each cell, and affects individuals' health needs, Anderson find that social policy literature in particular takes a different view on sex. He argues that the rarely occurring disorders of sexual development (which are distinct from gender dysphoria) are not a third sex or a neutral difference but are akin to other developmental issues, a 'pathology in the development…

of the male or female body,' (p. 88). Chapter five focuses on the science of gender dysphoria. Anderson states that by defining this condition as a variant of normal human functioning rather than a psychological disorder such as anorexia, treatment focuses on the body rather than the mind. However, he sees psychology as a more reliable explanation and treatment for gender dysphoria. Chapter six requests caution in treating children, observing that gender dysphoric children will desist if left alone, whereas affirming therapies appear to become self-fulfilling. He notes that: giving children authority to determine their gender is unusual since we don't ordinarily consider them medical experts; many gender dysphoric children have co-occurring psychopathologies, especially autism; and puberty blocking therapy has not been shown to be safe or reversable. In Chapter seven, Anderson proposes a 'mature and nuanced view of gender' where 'we don't all have to conform to a stereotype,' (p. 145). He argues that culturally conditioned gender roles are optional (e.g. women staying at home), while it is still good to order society in light of demonstrated sex differences (e.g. mothers and fathers tend naturally to complementary approaches to parenting). Chapter eight considers public policy. Anderson asserts that what trans activists want from society goes beyond asking for fair treatment to demanding full agreement with and adaptation to their ideological position. He believes this creates its own disparities (for example, for biological women in sport) and stifles free speech and choice (where dissent brings social consequences).

Anderson has brought together a wide range of research on a hot cultural topic in a single readable volume to support his thesis. The book is helpful for anyone, regardless of their ideological position, interested in an articulate big picture perspective on this issue. While clearly arguing for a conservative position, *When Harry Became Sally* is not shrill, dramatic or unkind. The work is descriptive and prescriptive, outlining the history and thinking of the transgender movement, and offering a balanced approach to public policy and a positive vision for human flourishing. While occasionally examining situations in the UK and elsewhere, most of the details are USA-specific. It is beyond my expertise to comment on Anderson's academic and medical sources. However, I believe the merits of his case would stand stronger and gain a better hearing if he had sought to identify not only the weaknesses but the strengths of activists' arguments, and if he had placed greater emphasis on the common goals he and trans activists can agree on. Pastors, theological trainers and engaged church members will find this a helpful resource in thinking through their approach to this very current topic.

David Mitchell, Connect Church, Kirkcaldy

Reading Revelation in Context: John's Apocalypse and Second Temple Judaism. Ben C. Blackwell, John K. Goodrich and Jason Maston eds. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2019. ISBN 978-0-310-56623-6. 204pp. £14.99.

Understanding the context of any biblical book is crucial in making sense of the narrative and teaching points it seeks to communicate. Perhaps more than any other book it is essential to set firm contextual foundations for the book of Revelation to prevent abstraction or distraction from the message it contains. This is the express aim of the volume edited by Blackwell, Goodrich and Maston. *Reading Revelation in Context* has been designed to help the reader of John's apocalypse notice the important influence of second temple literature on the content and composition of the book.

The editors were well aware of their task noting that 'there exists virtually no nontechnical resources for beginning and intermediate students to assist them in seeing first-hand how Revelation is similar to and yet different from early Jewish apocalypses and related literature' (p.28). Their efforts are to be commended as this volume of essays paves an accessible path of study for those who are not so well versed in second temple Jewish literature.

A number of details about this book are worth highlighting. First of all, there is a brief and helpful introduction to the topic of both apocalyptic and second temple Jewish literature. As part of this, there is a survey of key historical moments from the period which aids the accessibility of the book for those who have not studied the period in great detail.

The main body contains 20 short chapters which following the message of John's apocalypse sequentially. Each essay can be accessed as a stand-alone, and this is perhaps how many readers will access the work. The contributions are drawn from leading scholars in second temple literature and the book of Revelation and, on the whole, they hold the fine balance of academic rigour with an engaging style. One of the best features of the work is the interchange in each chapter between a specific piece of second temple literature and the biblical text, showing how the coming of the messiah has both altered and advanced the second temple Jewish context.

For example, Ian Paul's discussion of 2 Maccabees 7 and Revelation 6:1–17 was very helpful in connecting cultural conceptions of martyrdom and how they are reframed in light of Christ. Issues surrounding persecution and retaliation in challenging circumstances are not distant but close to hand for many believers throughout the world. Therefore, recognising

how Christ reframes the discussion from imminent vengeance to anticipated victory is highly pertinent.

Another contribution worth highlighting is Westfall's use of the epistle of Enoch in correspondence with Revelation 18:1–24. Injustice, wealth and power all come under scrutiny in this second temple work, as they do in Revelation, and time spent engaging with these themes is never wasted. As Westfall notes these are crucial issues for the church of the twenty-first century. Neither revolt against or complicity with a globalised world are in view, but patient obedience to Jesus Christ.

One final detail which is worth pointing out are the helpful resources listed at the end of each chapter. They fall into three categories: additional ancient texts, English translations and critical additions and secondary literature. If the reader desires to engage more thoroughly with the text under discussion these are a helpful starting point.

Reading *Revelation in Context* hits the mark the editors were aiming for. It is an accessible resource which will benefit students in biblical studies and would be helpful for pastors looking to understand the influences of John's cultural context which help to shape his apocalyptic message.

Martin Paterson, OMF International, Glasgow

Conversations with Calvin: Daily Devotions. By Donald K. McKim. Eugene: Cascade Books, 2019. ISBN: 978-1-5326-5097-0. xvi + 170pp. £20.00.

Conversations with Calvin is a collection of eighty-four devotional readings based on the writings of John Calvin. This new volume accompanies the author's *Coffee with Calvin* and other previous devotional books complied by Dr McKim on the works of Martin Luther, Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The book provides readers with an accessible avenue into the riches of the theology of John Calvin combined with a simple and flexible resource for daily devotional reading.

At the beginning of the book there is a brief but informative introduction guiding the reader as to how to use the book. There follows the devotional readings, each of which is divided into three sections. First, there is a reference to a passage of Scripture, the full text of which is not included in the book. These follow the canonical order of the English Bible: two from Genesis, eighteen from the Psalms, eleven from the Prophets, twenty four from the gospels, two from Acts, and twenty seven from the Epistles. Secondly, there is a brief quotation from Calvin's commentaries which relates to the Bible passage (the previously published *Coffee with Calvin* took its quotations from the *Institutes*). Thirdly, there is a short devo-

tional written by McKim engaging with both the Bible passage and the quotations form Calvin.

A wide range of topics are covered: humility, silence, baptism, patience, hope, death, heaven, and many more. This breadth of subject takes the reader through a stimulating journey that touches on many aspects of Christian discipleship. The devotional passages are very effective in both drawing out theological doctrine while at the same time encouraging practical application in the life of the reader. So the reader is taught precious truths concerning the person and work of Jesus, while also being challenged to think about the importance of forgiving others and helping those in need.

One of the great strengths of the book is that is a timely reminder that the works of theologians like John Calvin should never be considered irrelevant to the daily life of a Christian disciple. No doubt many have thought that a writer like Calvin is for a seminary classroom, not a personal quiet time. But such a dichotomy between theological doctrine and personal piety is never drawn in Scripture, nor in the history of the Church. As a tool for bringing Calvin's teaching into the daily walk of a believer, this book is to be greatly commended.

The layout of the book is clear and helpful. Each devotion takes only a few minutes to read, so the book is not a burdensome commitment. The total of eighty-four devotions is an advantage for those who will enjoy the flexibility that this brings. But for readers who prefer a more rigid devotional aid structured around a weekly or annual pattern, this may be a less attractive feature of the book.

A devotional resource focussed on Calvin is an excellent starting point for someone who has never read his writings. And for those who may be looking for something a little different as a devotional aid, again this book is recommended. However, it is to be acknowledged that a focus on Calvin, or indeed any other writer, in a devotional resource may not be an approach that every reader feels comfortable with.

Overall, *Conversations with Calvin* is a very helpful resource which is both edifying and enjoyable to read. It will help the reader become more familiar with Calvin, who in turn will help the reader become more acquainted with Jesus.

Thomas Davis, St Columba's Free Church, Edinburgh.

The New Testament in Antiquity: A Survey of the New Testament within its Cultural Contexts. By Gary M. Burge and Gene L. Green. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020. ISBN: 978-0-310-53132-6. 623pp. £40.00.

This handsome (and heavy!) hardback volume is a revised edition of a book published under the same title in 2009. The initial volume had a third co-author, Lynn Cohick, but due to other commitments Cohick was unable to be involved in the revision.

The book belongs to the genre of 'New Testament Introduction'. It is intended to provide necessary orientation to the New Testament in its historical, cultural, geographical, literary, and intellectual contexts for theological students and other interested readers. As with many such introductions written within the last two decades or so, it does this with an attractive combination of photographs, illustrations, maps, and sidebars on various topics as well as the main text. Thus, while the book is more than 600 pages long, the main text comprises less than half of the total page area on many of these pages. Thus, while some teachers (and students!) may look at the page count and consider it daunting, the actual volume of text is not unmanageable for students. The visual aspects of the book are of a very high quality as is the paper used and the book feels generally well-constructed. Readers will enjoy the attractive presentation. As usual these days, the book is available in digital form for users who might prefer to integrate it into a digital library.

The authors explain some of the distinctives of their book in the introduction. One of these is a commitment to include images which contribute to the learning process of readers and not to include images simply because they are visually appealing. In particular, they include numerous images of coins (including the one on the front cover) which relate to the periods and figures being discussed.

The main text is clearly written and guides the reader through new material with frequent reference to relevant biblical texts and also relevant non-canonical texts. Although the authors are clearly drawing on excellent scholarship (as seen from the solid bibliographies), there is generally little engagement with specific scholarly discussions. There are typically only a handful of notes provided at the end of each chapter. On highly contested issues of authorship (for example, relating to Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles), the authors lay out the issues helpfully and, while they do not make a firm argument for one position or another, they do emphasise that there remain good reasons for accepting the traditional ascriptions even if many reject them. The chapter bibliographies do not

reflect much diversity, although a few books are written by women and I was pleased to see a couple of references to African scholarship.

There is, perhaps, a greater emphasis on the social world of the first century in this book than in some others, with helpful discussion of the relationships between patrons and clients, the family, the experience of women, and more. The sidebars include frequent citations from ancient documents which provide context and highlight the importance of primary sources.

The authors and publisher have collaborated effectively to produce a very attractive volume that provides helpful initiation to the contents and context of the New Testament for students, preachers, or other interested readers. Preachers who finished their formal theological education some time ago may well find this a useful and quite accessible volume to read in order to catch up on some recent discussion of the New Testament and its context. In academic settings in the UK, lecturers may have to give serious thought to how they might use such a book as a textbook. In a crammed curriculum, it is hard to find space for a course that provides an overview of the whole New Testament, but teachers of more focussed courses on the Gospels or Paul, or Hebrews would probably require the students to read works that engage in more detail with recent scholarship. A volume like this, then, becomes attractive but rather expensive supplementary reading. But as a library resource, this volume will help to draw readers into the world of the New Testament in an enjoyable and reliable manner.

Alistair I. Wilson, Edinburgh Theological Seminary

The God Who Acts in History: The Significance of Sinai. By Craig G. Bartholomew. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7467-2. xxii + 265pp. £24.99.

This book is about the possibility of God acting in history and this theme is explored in the light of a particular puzzle. Bartholomew has observed that Jewish and Christian scholars of the Old Testament often comment on the significance of the Sinai event, Exodus 19–24, for the history and faith of Israel, while at the same time doubting the historicity of the event. For readers of biblical studies this book is a valuable investigation of the relationship between contemporary biblical studies and unexpressed philosophical presuppositions of scholars.

In chapter 1 Bartholomew describes the puzzle as he has observed it. He gives examples of both Jewish and Christian scholars for whom the Sinai event is of fundamental importance, while the historicity of the event is not. For these scholars the historicity is either not affirmed, or described as unknowable. Chapter 2 is a close engagement with the work

of Benjamin Sommer, particularly his *Revelation and Authority* (2015). For Bartholomew, Sommer's dichotomy between a stenographic or participatory view of revelation is not widely representative in contemporary scholarship and largely depends upon an understanding of God not speaking.

In chapters 3–6 Bartholomew reviews the philosophical presuppositions of Sommer's rejection of God speaking, or acting, in human history. This review takes the reader from the 12th Century and Moses Maimonides to the 18th Century and Immanuel Kant. Bartholomew seeks to show that non-biblical philosophical ideas of God and humanity informed presuppositions about the speaking and acting of God in history. Bartholomew helpfully demonstrates that alongside a doubting of the acting of God in history scholars at all stages through this period held different positions which accepted the possibility of biblical accounts of God speaking and acting having historical foundations. Bartholomew's main observation in these chapters is that such philosophical presuppositions need to be clearly identified and regularly investigated.

Chapters 7–8 present an account of the possibility of God speaking and acting in history. Bartholomew reviews the work of Colin Gunton very positively and argues that a strand of contemporary philosophical writing finds a place for divine action and speaking within an understanding of God's providence.

Bartholomew's study finally comes to a direct reading of the Sinai narrative in chapter 9. In this key chapter Bartholomew employs three reading strategies: literary, theological and historical to investigate Exodus 19–24. In a thorough reading of the text Bartholomew demonstrates that the text does offer a plausible account of God's speaking and acting at Sinai.

In his summary (pages 230–232) Bartholomew appears to identify two key findings from his study. He argues that scholars who want to read the Hebrew Bible through the lens of philosophical views of God should, or perhaps must, make a case for reading the bible in this way. It is not clear that this point would be widely contested, I expect that some scholars may believe their foundational assumptions have been so thoroughly explored in scholarship that repetition is not necessary. Bartholomew also concludes that the issue of God, 'is the one subject that is often taboo in scholarship and academic biblical interpretation' and that this taboo needs to be broken. This is a point which is well made throughout this book. The main body of Bartholomew's book is almost a review of the history of philosophy from Maimonides to Kant. Unless the reader is well versed in the works of these scholars it will be difficult to evaluate Bartholomew's reading of these works. Some biblical studies students will find

the philosophical review covers material which is new for them but which will be helpful for them in writing and researching in biblical studies. Theology and philosophy students may already know the material covered in Bartholomew's review. However, Bartholomew's demonstration of its presuppositional role in biblical studies is a valuable contribution. This book would be of most use to students or academics. It is a book which valuably reminds us of the dangers of an unreflective reliance upon presuppositions in scholarship and the necessity to address the question of God in biblical and theological studies.

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Some Pastors and Teachers: Reflecting a Biblical Vision of What Every Minister is Called to Be. By Sinclair B. Ferguson. Edinburgh, UK: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2017. ISBN: 978-1-84871-789 3. xvi + 802pp. £14.99.

If you are looking to add breadth and depth to your preaching and pastoral ministry then let over fifty years of pastoral wisdom and insight from Sinclair Ferguson help you. This lengthy work by Dr Ferguson comes from a lifetime of previously published articles arranged to 'reflect particularly on being a pastor and teacher, and on doctrines and themes especially relevant to the preaching of the gospel' (p. xi). Ferguson arranges the material thematically and it supplies an assortment of treasures from church history, as well as systematic, biblical and pastoral theology that will help pastors fulfil their ministry calling. In *Some Pastors and Teachers*, Ferguson is no ivory tower theologian but typifies the absolute best of what it means to be a pastor-theologian. He navigates across hundreds of years of history, theology and biography and still ably makes his pastoral theology relevant. For Ferguson, true pastoral theology always ends in God's glory 'for true theology always leads to doxology' (p. 767).

Some Pastors and Teachers (Eph. 4:11) serves as a compendium of themes and tasks for pastoral ministry. There are five major sections (*Pastors and Teachers: Three Johns, John Calvin: Pastor-Teacher, Puritans: Pastors and Teachers, The Pastor and Teaching,* and *The Pastor and Preaching*) consisting of a total of thirty-nine chapters. While Ferguson presents these essays as a unified whole, each ably stands on its own as no chapter is dependent on any other chapter. One will have to invest mental and spiritual equity in this book for it is engaging on many levels. The first eighteen chapters are an accounting of three of Ferguson's heroes: John Calvin, John Owen, and John Murray. Ferguson explores and explains each of these pastor/theologian's theology and passion for preaching and pastoral ministry. In the next thirteen chapters (19–31) Ferguson investigates the

depths of theology. He clearly, ably and fairly places all the issues before us, although the readers may not affirm each of his conclusions. The final eight chapters (32–39) are a mishmash of pastoral theology topics such as *Exegetical Preaching, Preaching Christ from the Old Testament Scriptures, The Preacher as Theologian, Preaching the Atonement, Preaching to the Heart, Preaching and the Reformed Theological Tradition*, and *A Preacher's Decalogue*. The *Epilogue* serves as a doxology for Reformed theology; its *Biblical teaching, Calvinistic singing* and *Christian experience*.

From the title, readers may dive into this volume expecting a fully orbed pastoral theology, only to find its material as much homiletic, and historical and systematic theology, as it is pastoral. Ferguson declares that 'each chapter is an entity of its own' (p. xiv) while simultaneously 'these essays seemed to self-select and rearrange themselves in my mind into a coherent whole' (p. xi), still it reads more like a *Festschrift*, albeit by one author. Editing would have aided the book's movement simply because some of the material is repetitive at times. Still, this minor limitation to reading the book as a whole would make it easier to read individual chapters on their own and it does not affect the book's rich content in any way. Reading it is an exercise, but well worth the pastoral harvest one will reap.

The contributions of this work are too many to list. The scarlet thread of vibrant Christology permeates Sinclair's work and he illustrates this from the ministries of Calvin, Owen, Murray as well as his own doxological Calvinism while God's sovereign grace and glory open the door to 'transformation into the likeness of Christ, and anticipation of being with Christ where he is in order to see him in his glory (John 17:24)' (p. 774). This type of Christology is the key to the minister's growth, 'In Christ's incarnate, crucified, risen, and glorified humanity lies the sanctification I lack myself' (p. 526), as well as the ground and centre of our preaching, 'Know and therefore preach 'Jesus Christ and him crucified' (1 Cor. 2:2)' (p. 755).

The reclamation of pastor as theologian may be the most urgent word that ministers hear from Sinclair. He rightly concludes the notion that 'theology is for the academy and ministry is for the church' stands patently false — 'You cannot be pastor without simultaneously being a theologian' (p. 686). While he does argue for sound homiletics (pp. 651–658), preaching is more about the life of Christ overflowing in the minister in an instinctual way, 'Preaching biblically has become their native language' (p. 672). Sinclair's call to repentance for ministerial professionalism, flash and flair should get the attention of every man of God, 'Time was when four words brought out goose-bumps on the necks of the congregation — "Let Us Worship God"' (p. 612). To be sure, the experience and sagacity expressed in *A Preacher's Decalogue* (pp. 753–764) is alone, worth the

minister's investment. Ferguson will stretch you, call you out, thoroughly inform and equip you and do it all for the glory of God.

Tony A. Rogers, Southside Baptist Church, Bowie, TX, USA

The Earliest Commentary on the Prophecy of Habakkuk. By Timothy H. Lim. (The Oxford Commentary on the Dead Sea Scrolls). Oxford: OUP, 2020. ISBN: 978-0-19-871411-8. xii + 182pp. £65.

The Oxford Commentary on the Dead Sea Scrolls is a new commentary series, and Timothy Lim's volume is the first published within it. The series will provide a set of commentaries on the most intact scrolls, aiming to provide scholarship of the highest level which is accessible to 'non-specialists'. This book will surely be considered a reference work for anyone working on the Pesher Habakkuk from Qumran (1QpHab). In addition to people with specialist interest in the Dead Sea Scrolls, this work will be of value to readers with some working knowledge of Hebrew, who want to know more about the interpretive methods employed in the Sectarian community of Qumran around the time of Jesus.

The book is laid out in the manner we would expect from a commentary series. It begins with an introduction covering various details about Pesher Habakkuk before moving on to the translation and commentary. The introduction includes some technical sections on the physicality of the scroll (e.g. 'Physical Dimensions and Skin Preparation' and 'Script and Palaeography'), as well as sections discussing the historical setting of the work and various themes running through it (e.g. 'Grammatical Forms and Historical Contexts' and 'A Wicked Priest of the Temple').

The translation and commentary is set out in structural sections. In each section, the Hebrew text is presented, followed by Lim's translation. After this are extensive textual notes followed by a 'comment' section. In the notes, Lim comments on a wide variety of relevant topics such as word variation from the Masoretic Text to comments on the substance of the commentary and the method of interpretation employed. The comment section is generally quite short and contains comments on features including the substance of the Pesher Habakkuk, the author's interpretive methods, and historical referents for the comments made.

One feature that will be of particular interest to NT backgrounds are Lim's comments on the methods of interpretation employed. He notes that the community that produced the Pesher Habakkuk appears to treat Scripture as containing a multiplicity of meanings: 'Scripture, for them, is… polysemic, as the triple interpretation of the one verse of Hab. 1:5 illustrates clearly' (p. 53). He also demonstrates that the community appeared to accept textual variants on an equal level. For example, at Col. 11, line 9

of Pesher Habakkuk, he highlights evidence that the author would sometimes quote one reading of the biblical text, while commenting on a variant reading, thus validating that reading (the variant concerns the position of two letters, with the biblical quote being a Hebrew original of what is found in the Old Greek, while the interpretation follows the Masoretic Text; see p. 150).

This is an excellent work. However, although it aims to be accessible to 'non-specialists', a fair knowledge of Hebrew is of great value in reading this volume. In addition, Hebrew in the work is unpointed (i.e. without vowel marks) which may put some people off, but more faithfully replicates the source material. Taking into account these considerations, and looking beyond a specialist audience, this work may be of most value as a reference work in a library. For theological colleges, it may be of great interest when discussing NT backgrounds and methods of interpreting Scripture contemporary to the NT.

(Note that while every effort has been made to be impartial in evaluation, Timothy Lim was my doctoral supervisor.)

Philip D. Foster, Edinburgh

Beginning Biblical Hebrew: A Grammar and Illustrated Reader. By John A. Cook and Robert D. Holmstedt. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-8010-4886-9. 139 + a-93 + r-90pp. £35.99.

Intermediate Biblical Hebrew: An Illustrated Grammar. By John A. Cook and Robert D. Holmstedt. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020. ISBN: 978-0-8010-9762-1. 208pp. £28.00.

A number of years ago, Cook and Holmstedt, two high profile Ancient Hebrew linguists, had their introductory Biblical Hebrew course published as *Beginning Biblical Hebrew*. This was followed up this year with their intermediate grammar, *Intermediate Biblical Hebrew*. These books are reviewed together and primarily evaluated on that basis because they are intended to form a set. These works form a departure from the usual method of presenting Hebrew to students. The authors employ second-language acquisition techniques in their work and teach from a very welcome and long-missing modern linguistic perspective. These texts are an excellent development on the scene of Biblical Hebrew grammars.

Beginning Biblical Hebrew

This book is set out in three major sections: Grammar Lessons (pp. 19–139); Appendices and Glossaries (pp. a-1–a-93, centre of book); and Readings (pp. r-1–r-90, rear of book, pages in Hebrew order, right to left). There

are 50 grammar lessons and 13 readings. Grammar lessons are brief and minimal with a number of exercises. New word lists tend to be quite short for grammar lessons, less than 10 a lesson. Grammar lessons cover all the basic features of grammar and the standard verbal stems. They also include topics that often go missing. For example, the last lesson is on Lexical Semantics and comments on how we can be sure we have the right meaning for words that are polysemous or have homonyms. It's worth saying that this description is at a very basic level and more draws these concepts to the students attention than anything else.

Readings are intended to fall at appropriate points in the use of the grammar, as can be seen from looking at the contents page. The first reading falls after lesson 9. Readings tend to be longer with more exercises and illustrated readings. The first 'reading' is an illustration of a prototypical home with various animals and people tagged. However, subsequent readings are in the form of comic strips of a biblical text. Many of these come in multiple parts with the story continuing across readings. Initially, readings report the biblical story in a very simplified form with modern punctuation marks added. By the last reading students are encountering the exact biblical text complete including cantillation marks. Readings include longer word lists than grammar lessons. These new words are directly from the illustrated readings and come with their own illustrations up until reading 11.

The centre of the book contains the appendices and glossaries. The appendices contain much information left out of the main part of the book including descriptions of phonology (Appendix A), nominal morphology (Appendix B), and verbal morphology (Appendix C). There are also two additional appendices on Using a Lexicon (D) and Terminology (E). Finally, Hebrew–English and English–Hebrew glossaries are included.

Intermediate Biblical Hebrew

Cook and Holmstedt's intermediate illustrated grammar takes the student through the entire Elijah story from 1 Kings 16:29 through to 2 Kings 2:14 in 24 lessons. Each reading contains much more grammar together with examples than the introductory text (around 6 pages of grammar per reading). The exercises take up less space and require the student to answer questions based on the points of grammar being learnt and the reading just read.

At the rear of the book (from p. 151) there are a number of appendices and glossaries. Appendix A displays images of the Aleppo Codex covering the Elijah story. The student is encouraged to try their hand at reading the manuscript at various times throughout the grammar. Appendix B

contains weak verb paradigms and Appendix C briefly comments on the accentual system. This is followed by a Linguistics Glossary covering the linguistic terms used in the grammar, and a Hebrew–English Glossary.

Evaluation

There is much to like in these two volumes. Although it may run the risk of putting some people off, Cook and Holmstedt have used Hebrew in their titles and explanations on a regular basis. For example, in *Beginning Biblical Hebrew* exercises are numbered using the Hebrew alphabet with the title of each exercise also written in Hebrew. Translations are given for these the first time they appear (it perhaps would have been helpful to give translations the first few times). In addition, Hebrew terms for grammatical features are used extensively. For example, what are called stems in traditional grammars are called בִּנְיָנִים (*binyanim*, i.e. constructions). This use of Hebrew in learning Hebrew is to be commended and brings the texts more in line with good second language acquisition methods.

It is important to draw attention to the fact that these grammars aim to achieve a more humble amount of Hebrew grammatical knowledge at each level than is often expected. Initial emphasis is all on the ability to read. It's possible that this approach may produce students who are more confident with a more modest grasp of the grammar which may, in turn, produce students who commit more errors in early exegetical uses of the language. However, the real test of these works will be in whether or not they produce students who continue to read and continue to improve in their Hebrew knowledge. It has long been apparent that Hebrew study in seminary is inadequate for conveying the Hebrew ability required to easily read the Old Testament. It is after the Hebrew course ends that the real work begins where there are no exams to motivate learning. These texts may inspire more students on to continued learning more frequently than any other textbook I have read or seen to this point. If they achieve this, they are worth any apparent short-term lack.

Although I may quibble with various minor linguistic points, the main negative to these texts is the difficulty with quickly locating their descriptions of certain grammatical points. It was not the purpose of these texts to provide reference grammar ease in locating discussions of grammatical points. However, these books would have benefitted greatly from indexes to help the student and instructor locate where certain issues are discussed.

I would heartily recommend Hebrew instructors consider using both these textbooks in the classroom. Although *Beginning Biblical Hebrew* may not amount to an academic year length text, this could be worked around. Teachers may find that *Beginning Biblical Hebrew* can be com-

pleted in less than an academic year. If so, a start might be made to the intermediate grammar in the same year. If an instructor decides not to use these texts, they would do well to employ some of the principles used in these texts to teach their students. There is a burden of responsibility on instructors to inspire students in the love of Hebrew that will carry them along the long road that begins when they leave the classroom. Otherwise we restrict the knowledge to the few who none can deter.

Philip D. Foster, Edinburgh

Advances in the Study of Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic: New Insights for Reading the Old Testament. By Benjamin J. Noonan. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020. ISBN: 978-0-310-59601-1. 336pp. £22.99.

In this volume, Noonan describes currents in linguistics and advances in understanding the Semitic languages to illustrate how these apply to the field of Biblical Hebrew and Biblical Aramaic. This book is comparable in many respects to *Linguistics & Biblical Exegesis* (Lexham Press, 2017), but it is more thorough. Each chapter is structured similarly. It begins with a general discussion of a linguistic theory and then explains how it has been applied to various aspects of Biblical Hebrew and Biblical Aramaic. Finally, he offers a way for research to move forward in this particular area regarding Hebrew and Aramaic. In this respect, this volume is an ideal source for the intermediate student looking for research avenues. He also discusses a few books or series that incorporate a particular linguistic approach (e.g., the various discourse analysis approaches present in *Baylor Handbook on the Hebrew Bible and Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament*).

In the first chapter, Noonan summarises linguistics. Next, he overviews previous approaches to the study of Biblical Hebrew and Biblical Aramaic. He discusses lexicology and lexical semantics in chapter 3 and how these approaches inform the various lexica of Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic. Beginning with chapter 4, Noonan deals with opposing viewpoints related to various topics. He begins with the verb focusing on the verbal stems in chapter 4 (e.g., Is the *Nifal* in Hebrew passive-reflexive or medio-passive?) and the verbal system in chapter 5 (i.e., Does the Hebrew verbal system primarily denote tense [F. Matheus], aspect [J. Cook], mood [J. Joosten], or is it a mixture of each [R. Hendel]). He covers approaches to discourse analysis in chapter 6 (e.g., Should analysis focus on the clause, sentence, paragraph, or a larger discourse level?). This discussion leads to the debate regarding word order in Biblical Hebrew (i.e., Is the basic word order subject-verb-object (S-V-O) though various factors trigger a change

to V-S-O [R. Holmstedt] or is the basic order V-S-O [A. Hornkohl]?) and Biblical Aramaic in chapter 7 (i.e., Is there a free word order in Biblical Aramaic [S. Kwon] or is the basic word order V-S-O [R. Buth]?). Other linguistic aspects such as register (i.e., Is *na'* a polite particle [S. Kaufman] or an emphatic one?), diglossia (i.e., Is there a literary register and a colloquial register in the Hebrew Bible [G. Rendsburg] or not?), and dialects in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Is there evidence for a northern dialect of "Israelian" Hebrew in some texts such as Judges and Kings [G. Rendsburg] or not [N. Pat-El]) appear in chapter 8. He discusses in chapter 9 whether the texts in the Hebrew Bible can be dated linguistically according to its lexical (A. Hurvitz and A. Hornkohl) or grammatical features (R. Polzin and A. Hill) or not (I. Young and R. Rezetko). Regarding the dating of Biblical Aramaic texts such as Daniel, he mentions that K. A. Kitchen and E. Y. Kutscher think the Aramaic of Daniel is closer to Imperial Aramaic (600-200 BCE) while S. R. Driver and H. H. Rowley think it is closer to Middle Aramaic (200 BCE-250 CE).

The strength of chapters four to nine is that Noonan presents the opposing view-points in a concise and accessible manner while not choosing sides. This allows the student to think through each explanation in order to find the most convincing argument based on the evidence. This also leaves room for the student to disagree with all previous approaches. If this is the case, the "evaluation" at the end of each section can be particularly useful as it notes several places where the student could forge an answer to the debate.

Chapter 10 suggests that advances in the study of second language acquisition illustrate that the Grammar-Translation model, which has previously been used to teach Biblical languages, should be replaced by a Communicative-Language Teaching model (see the Hebrew textbooks by J. Cook and R. Holmstedt, R. Buth, and H. Dallaire). In his conclusion, Noonan emphasises that a proper understanding of linguistics and Semitic languages is significant for faithful exegesis. Thus, Noonan's goal in presenting these advances in linguistic analysis is pastoral. A better understanding of linguistics produces a better grasp of Hebrew and Aramaic leading to a better understanding of the Hebrew Bible.

This volume is an amazing resource as it compiles a vast array of information in an easily accessible format. Noonan has created a resource to which students will frequently return. This volume would be an ideal supplementary text in an introductory or second year Biblical Hebrew or Biblical Aramaic course or an exegetical course. It will broaden the student's perspective so they do not simply experience one approach to the

grammar of Biblical Hebrew and Biblical Aramaic. Also, it will awaken the student of Biblical languages to the larger field of linguistics.

Josiah D. Peeler, University of Edinburgh

God's Being Towards Fellowship: Schleiermacher, Barth, and the Meaning of 'God is love'. By Justin Stratis. T&T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology. London: T&T Clark, 2019. ISBN: 978-0-5676-8557-5. x + 195pp. £76.50.

Books juxtaposing the views of two theologians sometimes degenerate into a running commentary followed by a half-hearted attempt at constructive criticism. This is not such a book. Stratis begins, outlining the tendency of modern theologians to uncritically embrace a social, 'object-directed' account of divine love which assumes that because human love requires an external object, so too does God. Yet, as Stratis recounts, a broad tradition inaugurated by Augustine offers a different approach. Sometimes, Augustinians see love as dispositional. Love then speaks to God's innate tendency to act benevolently. Yet this Augustinian trajectory is also capacious enough to allow for moderate, chastened accounts of object-oriented love. In this case, divine love first of all refers to an *intrinsic* movement within the singular, simple divine being. By contrast to this Augustinian approach, the modern, object-directed accounts of love which Stratis criticises, tend to think love requires an external object and therefore accent the distinction between the triune persons in a 'social' direction, such that each triune person is a sort of 'external object' of love to the others. Stratis's project is an attempt to critically retrieve the Augustinian perspective over against the prevalence of social accounts of divine love. For this retrieval, Stratis selects two modern dialogue partners: Karl Barth and Frederich Schleiermacher. Neither begins with a human, creaturely definition of love which dictates how things must stand with God *if* he is to be loving. Instead, each seeks to discern through dogmatic analysis what it might be that makes God's love uniquely divine.

To summarise some key conclusions of Stratis's patient exposition: for Schleiermacher, love is a complete description of God's causality towards creatures, describing God's communication of himself to creatures through his presence to their religious consciousness. For Barth, love is a description of the fully self-moved and complete triune life, which is specified in God's decision to have fellowship with human creatures by electing to live, suffer and die as the man Jesus Christ. These two approaches are very different, but Stratis is far more interested—and here he is following a trend in contemporary scholarship—in noting the similarities between Barth and Schleiermacher. One key insight Stratis gleans from

them, is that a fully Augustinian account of divine love must nonetheless be more than *merely* dispositional—as he provocatively argues *contra* Katherine Sonderegger. If, with 1 John, 'God *is* love,' then God is not merely prone to love, but God's singular being is eternally characterised by loving movement. He is a 'being-toward-fellowship'.

Stratis's work is remarkably perspicuous, particularly for a text dealing with such technical matters. The exposition of Barth and Schleiermacher is both detailed and broad (his analysis of Schleiermacher's *Dialektik* and Barth's early writings on divine personality are particularly helpful), and the argument is highly relevant to contemporary debates, making an important contribution which should be taken seriously, particularly by those who assume love requires an external object.

One of the most striking aspects of the book is Stratis's general avoidance of Barth's voluminous criticisms of Schleiermacher. The benefit of this approach, is that each theologian is heard on their own terms. The cost, is that the reader is offered little direction in discerning why they reach such radically divergent material conclusions with respect to divine love, nor is there much consideration of what is at stake in their disagreements. Stratis also narrates Schleiermacher's and Barth's respective criticisms of the classical theological tradition somewhat uncritically. This neglect of critical analysis or even extended defence of Barth and Schleiermacher's critiques of traditional ways of construing the divine being—to take one example—makes their respective critiques of 'substantialist' ways of speaking of God appear less convincing than they might have been. Furthermore, Stratis seeks to defuse some well known objections to the consistency of Barth's project in the *Church Dogmatics* by, in particular, making recourse to Barth's repudiation of substantialist approaches to the being. The result, is that this lack of sustained attention to the nature of Barth's disagreements with prior dogmatic approaches strains even the exposition of Barth himself at a few moments.

Yet these are minor quibbles. The patient, charitable readings of Barth and Schleiermacher Stratis offers pay rich dividends. *God's Being Towards Fellowship* makes an important and provocative contribution to contemporary thinking not only about the love of God but about the doctrine of God more broadly.

Jared Michelson, Cornerstone Church, St Andrews

Christianity in the Twentieth Century: A World History. By Brian Stanley. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018. ISBN: 978-0-691-15710-8. xxi + 477pp. Hb. £30.00.

Historians of Christianity are now obliged to take account of the global character of the church. Growing awareness of the massive growth of the church in the 'Majority World' has led to the development of a distinct academic discipline known as 'World Christianity'. Among several important voices who have shaped this field, such as Andrew Walls and Lamin Sanneh, Professor Brian Stanley, Professor of World Christianity at the University of Edinburgh, has distinguished himself as a careful and reliable historian of the global church.

Stanley has now produced a creative and compelling account of Christianity in the twentieth century, put into attractive physical form by Princeton University Press.

Faced with the impossible task of discussing the church's experience and expressions throughout a whole century and in many different contexts, and also of engaging with the vast amount of literature, Stanley has wisely chosen to focus his narrative more narrowly. After an introduction that sets out his approach, Stanley addresses 15 themes in so many chapters by means of careful consideration of appropriate case studies. Each chapter introduces the theme in question. Stanley then considers two different situations, normally from two different continents. For example, chapter one is entitled 'Wars and Rumors of Wars' (yes, the spelling follows American conventions). The first section of the chapter examines, in broad terms, the impact of the First World War on Christianity. Stanley then concentrates on the impact of the First World War on the British churches, on the one hand, and American fundamentalism between the wars, on the other. Finally, Stanley offers a brief reflection on the significance of the material he has surveyed. Similarly, chapter two (on the relationship between Christianity and nationalism), after a brief global survey, focuses on 'Protestant nationalism in Korea' and 'Catholic nationalism in Poland'.

Other topics covered by Stanley include West African prophet movements (chapter three); Orthodox and Protestant churches in the Soviet Union (chapter 4); the church and ethnic conflict in Rwanda (chapter seven); and 'Pentecostal' expressions of Christianity in Ghana and in Brazil (chapter thirteen). In each case, the opening section of the chapter carries the story of the church forward and offer a broad perspective on developments, while the case studies allow much closer attention to be given to specific issues, people and movements. The final section of each

chapter allows for reflection and critical analysis. It is a remarkable and highly effective framework for tackling a vast topic.

This is a scholarly book (pages 367-477 are taken up with numerous endnotes, a substantial bibliography and indices), but it is not a technical book. An interested and competent reader will gain a great deal from this book even if they have not engaged in serious study of the topic previously.

Of course, the book does not tackle every conceivable topic and it is likely that readers will find themselves wishing that certain topics had been included and, perhaps, more interested by some discussions than by others. In my own experience, that was the case to a certain extent, but my overwhelming experience was that Stanley held my attention by explaining the significance of the various case studies, by keeping the extent of the immersion in any topic fairly concise, and by helpfully drawing out fascinating aspects of the various human stories.

Doubtless, some readers will find some of the expressions of Christianity discussed by Stanley perplexing and perhaps even beyond the bounds of what they consider worthy of the name 'Christian'. The discipline of World Christianity does indeed engage with Christianity at the level of self-identification by various individuals and groups. Stanley does not attempt theological evaluation of the various claims and viewpoints of the different groups he studies. But, understood on these terms, his careful scholarship and thoughtful reflections provide a wonderful resource for anyone who wishes to understand the story of how Christianity as a worldwide movement came to be what it is today.

One final comment: In an age of astronomical prices for academic books, Princeton University Press are to be commended for producing a high-quality hardback volume at a reasonable price (regardless of the list price, it is available for around £20). I hope that will lead to a wide readership for this fascinating and important book.

Alistair I. Wilson, Edinburgh Theological Seminary

Hope in a Secular Age: Deconstruction, Negative Theology, and the Future of Faith. By David Newheiser. ISBN: 978-1-108-49866-1. 184pp. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. £75.00.

'The typical act of eluding…is hope. Hope of another life one must 'deserve' or trickery of those who live not for life itself but for some great idea that will transcend it, refine it, give it a meaning, and betray it' (p. 64). —Albert Camus

David Newheiser presents his case that in the last century hope has been thought of more as a religious relic than a vital discipline. He pairs the unlikely duo of 19th century French philosopher Jacques Derrida with

the 5th Century Christian mystic Pseudo-Dionysius to create a defence of Christian hope; a hope, Newheiser holds, that is primarily worked out in a political context.

In the first two chapters, Newheiser utilises the Derridean idea of différance and the Dionysiusian perspective on negative theology as reasons that a new affirmation of hope is needed. This affirmation is an attempt to speak of the unspeakable—democracy for Derrida and God for Dionysius. For both of these men, the unspeakableness of the unknowable does not preclude speech, rather, this speech requires a self-critical aspect.

Chapter 3 turns to determining the nature of this hope that attempts speech of the unknowable. Contrary to Camus, Newheiser takes hope out of the realm of fantastical dreams. He ascertains that hope does not indicate a wilful abdication of current circumstances due to a believed salvation. Hope is not even a virtue since it lacks its own content; rather, hope is better thought as a discipline. A discipline that, in the manner of Derrida and Dionysius, 'can incorporate a self-critical vigilance that opens the possibility of unpredictable development' (p. 84).

Newheiser turns to defending his use of Derrida and Dionysius in compatible terms in Chapter 4, reacting to the critiques of Jean Luc Marion and John Caputo who both hold that negative theology (Dionysius) and deconstruction (Derrida) are incompatible. While Newheiser grants that these two thinkers approach self-critical assumption—the term hope is not explicitly used in their works very often—from different allegiances, as it were, it is in part this fact that makes their similarity on this topic so striking and convincing.

In the final two chapters of the book Newheiser incorporates the discipline of hope within the secular—read political—sphere. He mounts a defence in Chapter 5 as to why it is appropriate to read Derrida within a religious—even messianic—sense, and in Chapter 6 he interprets Dionysius's theological apophasis in a political context. He first defends his decision to use hope as a religious, specifically Christian, term. Since Dionysius was a Christian mystic, it tracks that his perspective would be theological in nature; the case is not as clear for Derrida. Specifically, Newheiser holds that 'although Derrida is uneasy about religion, he draws upon religious traditions for the purpose of political reflection. Because religious traditions open imagination to a justice that transcends the status quo' and thus are beneficial within the political realm (p. 109). Newheiser also uses Derrida to make the point that it is naïve to attempt to remove religion from the political sphere. Even though religion can lead to dogmatically-fuelled violence, the political system still mirrors a religious system. 'Although modern democracies no longer locate authority in a monarch modelled on the divine, they practice rituals centred on

sites of extraordinary significance – the flag, the founding, the constitution, the nation' (p. 132). And because it acts as a mirror, we must allow the religious to inform the secular. This turns the attention to Dionysius in the final chapter.

The idea of apophasis was fleshed out by Dionysius in a specifically religious context; but it has secular value when paired with the Derridean idea of democracy. Viewing democracy as the unknowable and the unspeakable by means of negative theology encourages one to both attempt speech while at the same time being self-critical of that speech. The importance of this posture is that it shields against political dogmatism and allows for the discipline of hope to take hold. For Newheiser, the introduction of hope within the secular context is essential in the pursuit of democracy. As he says in this introduction: 'On my account, hope constitutes a disciplined resilience that allows us to admit that our cherished assumptions may be misguided and that familiar institutions may be unjust. For this reason, it nurtures the work of attentive reflection and democratic debate—open, undetermined, and honest' (p. 16).

I think Newheiser has an important lesson that deserves to be heard within a political context. As he states toward the end of the work, the current political climate is filled with dogmatism and nationalistic—even tribalistic—leanings. Into a context such as this, his attempt to insert the discipline of hope is a worthwhile endeavour. However, there are some foundational questions that remain unexamined. Specifically, Newheiser builds his idea of hope on the theological unspeakableness and unknowableness of God without commenting on the humility and incarnation of God. Throughout Scripture God is very clearly physically interacting with the world. In Genesis he is walking and talking in the Garden; in Exodus he is leading by a column of fire; in the Gospels he becomes incarnate; in Acts he indwells. I do think that Dionysius, and Newheiser's interpretation, is correct that God is unlike any other object in that He cannot be contained in any sense by language; however, I would have liked to see Newheiser incorporate or comment on how humility of God fits along side of the unspeakableness of God. Overall, I think that *Hope in a Secular Age* has an instructive and well-timed desire to redefine hope as an active and humbly engaging discipline rather than a discipline of elusion.

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Christianity: A Historical Atlas. By Alec Ryrie. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020. ISBN: 9780674242357. 224pp. £28.95.

For centuries, students and other interested readers have encountered works of academic church history almost exclusively through the means

of written prose. While the monographs and articles of a whole host of exceptional writers have introduced their readers to their ancestors in the faith, visual—and particularly pictorial—engagement with the Church of the past has been typically relegated to a handful of black and white images interspersed throughout an otherwise text-heavy monograph.

In *Christianity: A Historical Atlas*, Alec Ryrie has curated a rich and elaborate Christian history through the lens of cartography. He admits, early on, that such an endeavour might seem 'a strange project', however he goes on to suggest that 'Christianity is a profoundly geographical religion, and maps have a particular power to tell its story'. (p. 8) The geography of Christianity has commonly been marginalized, not unlike the often-ignored maps in the back of a printed Bible.

Ryrie begins with an examination of the movement of God's people throughout the biblical narrative. These sections and their accompanying maps are contextualised to show movement, growth, and decline throughout the Old and New Testaments. This moves seamlessly into an exploration of the life and times of the early church. Presenting the information in this way, Ryrie is able to present the significant work of early Christian missionary activity from the Near East to North Africa, Europe, and Asia Minor. Equally striking is the imperial expansion that occurs in the wake of the Roman Emperor Constantine's conversion following the Battle of Milvian Bridge. These accounts will be familiar to anyone with a Christian background, however the ability to 'see' the geographical ramifications of theological developments spreading out across continental landscapes offers an immeasurably helpful vantage.

Similarly, the exploration of Christianity in the Middle Ages includes helpful visualisations of the usual suspects. Thus, readers can visualize Charlemagne's conquest and expansion throughout the unfolding of the Carolingian Renaissance. Equally helpful is a visual exploration of medieval developments in Christian architecture, illustrating the transition from smaller church buildings to the massive Gothic cathedrals which, in many cases, still form the basis of urban landscapes throughout Europe. Amid these discussions, however, are even more interesting investigations of figures who will be far less familiar to readers. The missionary efforts of the brothers Cyril and Methodius are impressive not only for the miles they travelled, but even more for Cyril's work as a linguist collecting and categorizing the Slavic language. Ryrie notes that Cyril's 'proficiency in, and respect for, their native language impressed the Slavs and contributed to a highly successful mission, so much so that it attracted the resentment of rival Frankish clergy, who insisted upon the Latin liturgy.' (p. 58)

A further section on the Age of Reform surveys the various Reformation movements provides thorough accounts of the unfolding colli-

sion of theological unrest throughout the European continent. Readers will encounter, for instance, the widespread chaos of the Peasants' War in Germany, spreading like wildfire from Wurttemberg throughout Tyrol and Saxony. What is perhaps more interesting throughout this section is Ryrie's inclusion of a much wider scope, illustrating developments in Christianity outside of the European stage. A particular highlight is the story of King Nzinga of Kongo (modern-day Angola), whose friendship with Portuguese missionaries led to his son being educated in Portugal. Nzinga's grandson, Henrique, would go on to become a bishop in the Catholic church, a position not held by an African for centuries prior.

The final section, focusing on Christianity in the Modern world, surveys the church throughout a time of revolution. As such, it considers developments alongside both the American War of Independence and the French Revolution. It also considers and explores the rise of evangelical Christianity from a series of revivals in Britain and North America to a global expression of faith. Once again, while Ryrie highlights Western figures and events, a significant portion of the section is devoted to the global church.

In summary, *Christianity: A Historical Atlas* is a welcome contribution to the history of Christianity. It is also a one of the most beautiful books I've read in some time. The artwork and design are of the highest standard. In its pages we have vivid visual illustrations of historical people, places, and events. There is, of course, some truth to the old adage that a picture is worth a thousand words, but in this book, Ryrie gives readers both! The images and maps are printed in a high quality, glossy presentation, and when combined with editorial comments from one of Britain's leading historians, the result is an aesthetically pleasing, intellectually stimulating, and spiritually convicting tour through the corridors of Christian history.

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