



HADDINGTON HOUSE JOURNAL

Volume 5

2003

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Jack C. Whytock, Andrew A. Woolsey

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1. To provide for students, laity and ministers an annual publication to develop their minds and souls through in-depth articles and reviews reflective of the theological basis and ethos of the Trust.
2. To keep readers informed about new books or other publications and thus to be a means of encouraging their stewardship of time and money.
3. The selection of articles and works for review in each journal will usually reflect the fourfold division of the departments in the theological curriculum: biblical theology, systematic theology, historical theology and applied theology, thereby providing balance as to the content of the journal but also to provide balance to the readers to see the unity of the curriculum. It will not be a journal devoted to one department of the theological curriculum.
4. The journal will endeavour to highlight, by way of articles, reviews, or booknotes, works to assist the student in their studies and others in their ongoing training.
5. The journal will encourage the cultivation of writing and provide an avenue for publication and the exchange of knowledge.
6. The journal will also include one article or review devoted to the theme of theological education.
7. The journal will also endeavour to include some news about the wider evangelical Presbyterian community of churches or efforts in mission or theological work.
8. Prior to publication, all articles and reviews will be read by select individuals who uphold the theological basis and ethos of the Trust. It will be their task to comment, proof, and ensure the quality of the journal.

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Dedicated to the honour and memory of
Dr. Thomas McCulloch
upon the 200th anniversary of
his arrival to Nova Scotia in 1803,
the first Professor of Divinity for Presbyterians
in British North America.

Theological Education and Training and the Modern Rise of Distance Learning¹

Jack C. Whytock

The purpose of this paper is to present a philosophy of theological education and training through the use of distance learning. This will come at the conclusion of this paper. Before we come to this philosophy of theological education and distance learning we must explore three other areas by way of background. First, we must develop a common understanding of the language we will use; second, we must set forth the possible advantages and positive aspects of theological education by distance learning; and third, we must set forth the possible weaknesses of theological education by distance learning. This will lead us to our object – “towards” a philosophy of theological education and distance learning. I use here the word “towards”

¹ I would like to express my appreciation to several people who have interacted with me on this subject. In particular to the Faculty of Divinity, the Faculty of Education, and members of GUIDE (Glasgow University Initiative in Distance Education) of the University of Glasgow to whom I presented many of these ideas in December, 2001. Their questions and comments have been very helpful. Also to Clive Wright formerly of Farnham, England for an interview I conducted with him about his experiences in distance education through the Open University. The substance of this paper was given at a 2002 Haddington House Winter Lecture in Moncton, N.B. The questions which followed that lecture I have attempted to integrate into this paper. Last, a version of this paper was given at the Károlyi Gáspár Institute, Miskolc, Hungary in May, 2002. Each of these three venues has been very different – the first very much an academic setting; the second where “it” is actually practised; and the third, a context of trying to think through such matters for the future. I have appreciated comments which were generated following all three venues.

as I see within our own context we are still refining this, therefore, I want to leave the door open for ongoing discussion. Tonight I will set forth four areas in this lecture relating to the overall theme of theological education and the rise of distance learning.

I.) Setting Forth Some Terms

I begin by formulating definitions for key words used in this paper:

A) i) Theological Education: I define this term as those *formal studies* in theology or divinity conducted through disciplined pedagogical forms involving a systematic course of instruction. Thus, drawing out and developing mental or intellectual thought in the study of theology.

ii) Training: I define training as that *informal* development of the subject by way of application of the intellectual to the moral, spiritual, and pastoral life of the student.

B) The Modes Employed:

i) Formal Pedagogical Forms: Pedagogy is the science of how to teach/instruct and the modes employed. This varies immensely, eg. from the formal lecture, the seminar, the tutorial, written work, and examinations. All of these can be in a “classroom” or hall but also through distance education.

ii) Informal Training: will likewise vary immensely; eg. conducting meetings, attending meetings to observe, preaching critiques, debates, discipleship by mentoring, etc. Observation is often key here. In Presbyterian circles, a good example of this would be a student attending as an observer the courts of the church.

iii) Distance Education: is one pedagogical form employed in the science of education. By distance we

imply a certain remoteness, i.e., “Being at a distance” yet able to acquire a systematic course of instruction in a given field to develop mental or intellectual comprehension.

Technically speaking, in the world of theological education when we use this pedagogical form of distance learning it is distinct from a “correspondence programme”. There is some imprecision here but generally speaking “correspondence” implies virtually no interaction, other than mail only and it is more at a vocational level and is graded at a different level. Nevertheless, many individuals will continue to interchange the pedagogical terms. For our purposes and philosophically we will use the terms distance education and distance learning to describe that educational mode whereby a student learns “at a distance”. Thus correspondence implies what it says – correspondence only.²

II) The Advantages of Theological Education by Distance Learning

Some of these are obvious and others may be less obvious:

i) it allows for flexibility in that you can “study when and

² Toronto Baptist Seminary, Toronto, Ontario continues to use the term “correspondence courses” for its distance education courses. Most theological schools today would not use this terminology but restrict their language to distance learning or distance education. Some such as Potchefstroom use the terminology of “telematic” learning which certainly incorporates many ingredients of distance learning. Most schools use the words “distance learning”, for example, Reformed Theological Seminary, St. John’s College, Covenant Seminary, etc. Occasionally the term “open learning” is found. The conclusion is fairly clear for today: distance learning and distance education are the most preferred and precise words to use. Individual colleges then often adopt their own unique word or acronym to describe their distance education programme, for example virtual, access, or telematic.

where it is most convenient”; Most institutions which employ distance education will state this as their first advantage. It allows the student the ability to study at their own pace in their own environment;

ii) it allows a larger or broader range of students to become involved in serious, formal theological studies, eg. homemakers in rural communities, fishermen, elders, deacons, etc... Thus it certainly promotes life-long theological education and provides systematic study programmes so that greater depth of biblical, theological, historical and pastoral subjects can be studied beyond the normal church-life situation. Local church leadership whether Sunday School teachers or “lay” officers can access this kind of teaching and benefit from such. This can have a very positive impact and maintain a strong relationship between the church and the theological college or seminary. It is a continual reminder that the theological institution exists for the church not as a research graduate centre;

iii) it can be integrated with existing or current work if finances prohibit relocation, etc...;

iv) it allows someone who is exploring their “call” to commence some formal theological studies and the result may be confirmation one way or the other;

v) it allows someone currently labouring in a “ministry” to carry on if they cannot re-locate or leave that “ministry”. I think here of those with very little or no theological education or training;

vi) it allows the full-time Christian worker an opportunity to continue to be guided in select courses or areas which will strengthen their maturity as workers in God’s kingdom. Thus their education is broadened and continues as a continuing education programme with

minimal disruption; and

vii) distance education has tremendous potential for the mission context. This last point could have great implications in a nation or with a people group where the establishment of a full traditional “campus” approach is not possible. This model can be adapted to the mission scene very quickly, for example, with an emerging denomination where perhaps there are only one or two students to educate and train in any given year. Distance learning properly employed could be the way forward in this situation.

III.) The Weaknesses of Theological Education by Distance Learning

i) The chief weakness is what is known as the “*missed factor*” in all distance education; namely, the diminished level of interaction between instructor/student and student/student and in theological studies this can be critical. It is held commonly by Evangelicals that the academic study of theology must be conducted in a setting where there are godly teachers modeling the way of our Lord.³ Also, the student must be so engaged as to be able to effectively communicate. Distance learning certainly undercuts these two points because of the “*missing factor*” of interaction. Many of the greatest educationalists all emphasized “the importance of the

³ Joseph Pipa wrote: “With respect to distance education, we need to keep two cautions in mind. First, private, non-social learning is not the best way to train men for the ministry. The classroom environment is essential for the development of well-balanced ministers. Second, we need to use the Internet with great caution. I trust we have learned our lessons from the television that the medium does shape the message. The Internet is probably not the best place for serious intellectual pursuits.”

teacher as an agency in education”.⁴ This is a significant challenge;

ii) too much flexibility for some students who cannot function with self-discipline outside of a pedagogical hall environment;

iii) it is a matter of debate, but possibly a higher “drop out” rate occurs than with a conventional classroom environment. This is particularly the case with language courses, but it can also go beyond this;

iv) many students feel they are not able to judge where they are at in a group; that is, for the competitive this is true. How important this is in theological education we will leave for the moment;

v) the student has an *isolated feeling* (this can be related to weakness No. i, but it can certainly articulate distinctly one aspect of the “*missed factor*”);

vi) expanding on the “*missed factor*” is the idea that “enthusiasm for knowledge and learning” for many students comes from good instructors. Distance education has to overcome this factor – namely, the infusion of enthusiasm for a subject by the instructor;

vii) another “*missed factor*” is the student living at a distance may not have access to a working theological library;

viii) many argue that applying distance education to theological education undermines a clear purpose for the seminary to centre upon the education and training of candidates for the ministry. This mode of education

⁴ Elmer H. Wilds, *The Foundations of Modern Education* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1936), p. 343.

brings in too many other “kinds” of student. Some would argue that it undermines the office of minister of Word and sacrament.⁵

IV.) Towards A Philosophy of Theological Education by Distance Learning

Here I want to not only interact with the advantages and weaknesses of theological education by distance learning but also draw upon experience and include this in setting forth a philosophy of such an educational mode.

I begin by dispelling a “*myth*” which may be in some of our minds; namely, distance education or learning is a new or recent educational pedagogical approach. Generally, most people will attribute it to a post-World War II phenomena and more pointedly to after the 1960's and 70's. In essence, I see this as a myth. *Prior to the mid-nineteenth century there were various pedagogical modes in operation for the theological education and training of Presbyterian students.* I will now briefly cite some.

In eighteenth century Scotland there were two main approaches used to educate theological students. All students followed an arts course in one of the universities *afterwhich they then entered one of the Divinity Halls within the universities or in one of the Dissenting Presbyterian Halls.* The length of session each year varied *from six weeks to up to six months.* Thus, we notice that the length of a session was not as long as we might think. Second, the fact is that even at these lengths of session, attendance was not always universal or consistent. Third, there was an incredible prescribed list of topics to present discourses on by the students and many of these were never done *within the Halls of Divinity.* Rather many of these were done before the Presbytery – on average 10 to 13 such assignments. The

⁵ See, D. G. Hart, “Overcoming the Schizophrenic Character of Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition” in *A Confessing Theology for Postmodern Times* ed. Michael S. Horton (Wheaton, Il: Crossway, 2000), pp.111-130.

Presbytery would assign these at one meeting and expect the student to work “*on their own*” and prepare their discourse. Also, at the end of one session in the Hall the Professor would make assignments for what discourses the student would present the following session. Again, after six or eight weeks they would leave and work on their assignments, “*on their own*”, then come back and present them. During these times away from the Hall they did their assignments with Presbytery and taught school or served as a family tutor. This method has several of the marks of learning at a distance – working on your own, engaging in work to support yourself, and flexibility of schedule to a certain extent. Since neither University or Dissenting Hall awarded degrees or diplomas, the system placed final authority clearly in the hands of the Presbytery to say that the individual was now ready for licensure. It was not a “correspondence” course of studies, however, one cannot call it a full residential programme either. In conclusion, it was residency together with what we now call distance learning. This leads me to see that a modified distance learning has been used in theological education historically.⁶

My assertion is that distance learning is not incompatible with formal theological education and informal training. However, several requirements must be maintained alongside the use of distance education in theological education, and I offer four ingredients to a successful use of distance learning in theological education.

a) The “*missed factor*” of interaction in part can *be overcome* by mandatory residential periods. In the Dissenting Hall these were about six weeks in length. Shorter periods can be offered with the same effect since language requirements will be done also in residential programmes and other means of interaction are available today; for example, e-mail, telephone, plus efforts

⁶ See my thesis, J.C. Whytock, “The History and Development of Scottish Theological Education and Training, Kirk and Secession (c.1560-c.1850)” (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Wales, Lampeter, 2001).

should be made to provide other formal opportunities for interaction, such as these winter seminars or debates. Our *2003 Handbook* reads as follows:

For example mandatory Summer Schools are in place for the degree programmes and in the divinity degrees an overall percentage of courses taken must be in class. There are philosophical reasons for this such as: the need for students to interact, pray, work and fellowship together; opportunity for oral student assignments in class; homiletic critique sessions with Tutors, Professors and students; and observation of students.⁷

The “*missed factor*” with students is also overcome through these residential opportunities. Also, students are to be encouraged outside of these to interact with one another. I envisage the mandatory residential periods such as summer or winter schools to have daily devotional elements, extended opportunity for fellowship and conversation – to build a theological community – and to expose the student to solid lecturing through knowledgeable instructors walking with the Lord. From this must then follow fellow student interaction outside of the mandatory residential periods. These residential schools must include oral presentations in the classroom by the students and time to respond to peer questions. In homiletic workshops at such residential periods students must preach before their fellow students and before the whole faculty. Loving constructive critique must follow. This cannot be done by video, email or telephone – all must be together.

Next I would say we need to re-emphasize something past generations knew well – the art of debate and argumentation. I recommend special debating events with assigned teams and topics given out in advance. These need good direction. We are preparing students to lead churches, to evangelize and confront our culture. Seminary must give them tools to that end. I am not

⁷ *Haddington House Handbook, 2003, p.2.*

advocating a return to medieval disputations, I envisage something different.

I also believe the “*missed factor*” must be honestly met by the traditional seminary too. With the trend to “maturer” students commuting to class has not the older interactive model changed? At the risk of being subjective I must still ask – do all professors have a real passion to enrich their students with intense interaction? I went to seminary and well remember both positive and negative encounters in this regard. The so-called “traditional” model today does have need for certain methodological “overhalls”. Criticisms must not only be levelled against the employment of distance learning. Criticisms must be fair, given the vast changes we have seen in theological education over the last 150 years.

b) Distance education must by its very nature set forth exact common definitions and expectations for all student work. The student does not always have the luxury of *discussing assignments with a Professor in-depth*. Thus the use of a printed *STANDARDS* for all students, tutors and visiting professors is very important. While doing research into Protestant Scottish theological education I increasingly became aware that there were many affinities to distance learning as we now call it. Also the assignments were given and the assumption was that the student knew exactly what each assignment implied. My problem was to reconstruct the definitions for each of those assignments. Only rarely in the Scottish tradition would I find “hints” as to the exact nature of each assignment. This all forced me to conclude that working today with students from various ethnic, cultural, educational and ecclesiastical backgrounds forces the distance instructor to become very explicit in defining himself when it comes to assignments, etc. Thus, one remedy is to provide the distance student an extensive handbook or standards book covering all the terminology of the assignments. At Haddington House we issue this annually to all our students. I quote here now some of the terminology and definitions we employ:

BOOK SUMMARY: To make a summary presentation of the main themes and arguments of the book. The stress is not so much your opinion or reaction but to demonstrate that you have mastered the flow of argumentation of the book.

BOOK REVIEW: It highlights important parts or themes of the book without giving all details. It also expresses your personal opinion about a book's value or worth. Comparisons are sometimes made to other works. The information should be presented in an interesting and creative way. Opinions must be supported with thoughtful explanations and specific references.

ESSAY OR RESEARCH PAPER: This is the basic form of writing in academic areas. It is a piece of writing in which ideas on a single topic are presented, explained, argued or described in an interesting way. It will result from gathering, investigating, and organizing facts and thoughts on a topic.

ORAL AUDIO CASSETTE: not "winged;" prepare first, organize your thoughts, then make a cassette in a quiet room to ensure good listening quality. This could be in the form of a summary, a review or a teaching session.

EXEGESIS: This word comes from the Greek, meaning, "interpret". It is to draw forth the explanation or interpretation of the text of Scripture. It should be viewed in the light of a sacred undertaking.

SERMON CRITIQUE: Closely related to what is said above on the seminar. This will focus particularly on student sermons. Haddington House has developed a 10 point sermon critique sheet which the Professor will use during the sermon critique session. Students will freely participate in the discussion but will

conduct themselves in a manner which is in keeping with righteous discussion and edification.

EVALUATION of ESSAYS: In assessing student essays the marker will use the following as criteria: good analytical ability, knowledge of pertinent literature, evidence of independent critical thought (not repeating information from the lectures) and well crafted with clear logical argument and a good grasp of concepts.

EXAMINATION ASSESSMENTS: In assessing student examinations the marker will use the following criteria: good analytical ability, confident knowledge of the topic, good grasp of concepts, well-structured answers demonstrating clear and logical argument supported by evidence, clear knowledge of pertinent literature and not inaccurate or irrelevant to the questions and not displaying errors or omissions, and shows ability to organize thoughts.⁸

There must also be a certain fluidity here, for example, perhaps in the next volume there may be new terms added. Also, since essay writing is a major component of student work and the distance learner may come from a background where this was not common, the student may need guidance in this. Therefore, we must help the student ask and answer “Why Write An Essay?”, “How to Write an Essay” and with the actual “Writing” of the essay. In distance learning the student handbook thus takes upon an added dimension and this must be impressed upon student and tutor alike. The same can be said for documentation.

I would include here the fact that a distance student has to be made aware of finding adequate library resources at the beginning of their studies. This should be discussed with each student at the outset. Ideas here include helping the student

⁸ *Haddington House Handbook, 2003*, pp.36, 37.

uncover theological libraries near them; the use of the internet for searches and collections; attending Summer School to use the resources there; and, purchasing the books which are required for each course which are all designed to create a good working library in theology for a home library.

Here I would state that just handing things to all students to read is not enough. First, we today assume too much. Not all students come to study theology with the pre-requisites in place as in time past.⁹ Now we cannot turn a divinity programme into something which will try to overcome all such deficiencies. However, we can make one or two critically crafted lectures delivered at the right time to overcome many problems: for example, Spurgeon's lectures to his students on how to approach and use commentaries or Smith's chats to students on reading commentaries. Students do not always know how to read from the gems and may need help. This comment goes for seminaries employing distance learning just as it does for traditional residential seminaries/colleges. I would envisage about every three years doing two lectures on the topic of biblical interpreters, reading, and knowing how to build and use effectively a ministerial library. If this were done every three years it would reach all students passing through most of our programmes of study. I would not do it in week one – no, it should be mid-way during a year so that the students have had some initial exposure. I disagree with seminaries that believe such things can all be done the week before classes start! Students (most that is) are not ready at that point.¹⁰

⁹ Sharon Roberts and David Muir, *The Distance Learner: A Travel Guide for Christians Studying Theology* (Nottingham: St. John's Extension Studies, 2001), pp.24-34. Some students may need to be given help in reading. I have noticed this on more than one occasion. This is not just a distance learning issue!

¹⁰ I enjoy this quotation from Sire: "In its primary thrust reading directs thinking... When the text of a great work fully engages the mind, when the reader is so completely occupied with what is being read, the world of the text becomes the world of the reader."

Distance education must by necessity place great value in the textbooks employed. Comenius believed “in the value of the textbook as an agency of instruction”.¹¹ In distance education especially, utmost attention must be given to the proper selection and assigned usage of textbooks. If this is maintained there can be great blessing to the student.

If the educational institution works with a well formulated set of common definitions of assignments understood by all instructors and students this will greatly help the process. If the matter of pre-requisites has been properly addressed this will also aid the distance learner. Teaching on resources to use and how to approach them will also be important. Last, the selection of the correct textbooks must be given added attention. This will go “hand-in-hand” with well formulated syllabi that clearly give requirements in an orderly fashion, etc. Without an administrative control watching this whole process I believe the results could be disastrous. However, all of the above could equally be said for the non-distance delivered courses so we must practice fairness and not level this as really a fundamental weakness of this teaching mode. A properly balanced use of theological education and training which employs as one mode of its delivery distance learning could be a wonderful option for the small mission denomination. A well run “centre” with all the syllabi and course tapes, etc. could direct the operation employing suitable tutors for these distance education courses. Then combining this with the annual, bi-annual, or tri-annual “schools” has great potential for good. One key person employed

James W. Sire, *Habits of the Mind* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2000), p.148. We should see such development from year one to year three or four in a student’s reading, writing, and argumentation. And to that end pedagogical forms should change accordingly.

Saul Bellow: “People can lose their lives in libraries. They ought to be warned.”

¹¹ Wilds, *Foundations of Modern Education*, p.342.

at the centre with perhaps a capable support assistant would be sufficient. Some would call this key person the Director of Distance Education, others may call him the Dean of Distance Studies. The title will vary, but without such a position it will become a “nightmare”. At the centre the library would be housed, rooms for sleeping provided, etc. I believe this may not be all that far removed from what our forefathers often did only we are combining some modern methods and tools which were unavailable to them.

c) As with the systematic study of subjects over a three or four year interval in a class setting there will be progress in student development to allow for changes in assignment patterns, etc., so this also is the case with doing theological education by distance learning. Foundational courses will require more direction and input and well produced audio or visual materials. The “voice” is a critical dimension. By year three, there will be a noticeable change. Perhaps all audio or visual materials will be gone, assignments will be different – gone will be book summaries, grading of lecture notes – now students have honed their abilities to be more reflective in their reading. Students will grow in independence through the years.

d) Distance learning and theological education continually bring together three Christian virtues; namely, self-discipline or the discipline of self, discernment and the glory of God (in our secular world we hear it more along the lines of self-motivation). The Christian pastorate is intimately linked to these three Christian virtues and visions. In essence, the world of the distance learner is not in methodology very far removed from that of a Christian pastor. (Please note I said in methodology not in function.) Discipline has in English the root word disciple and is also related to learning, studying, and being under tutelage. For growth to be made the disciple must also be self-disciplined. Students must develop scheduling within their studies undertaken at a distance. For example, students need to maintain contact with their course tutor. This is all too common a problem – the student who fails to maintain contact with their tutor. Also,

lateness by the student is the second major problem. In reviewing several distance learning educational providers I see that many have tried to address this. For example, Erskine Theological Seminary's, E.D.E.N. (Erskine's Distance Education Network) programme includes in their student literature a section "Steps to Course Completion" plus "Technical and Procedural Matters".¹² Distance learning must cultivate this. Certain things can be done to aid this such as developing reasonable schedules and by keeping the aims, purposes and goals in view: the glory of God, the serving of His people, the entering into "the call", and the development of one's own spiritual growth. Discernment is intimately related to these other two Christian virtues. Tutors must help the student to grow in discernment.

Before leaving this point on "Towards a Philosophy of Theological Education by Distance Learning" I want to make this recommendation to all administrators, instructors and trustees involved in the process. We need to be serious in studying this mode of education and availing ourselves of the opportunities and resources which are available on this mode of learning. However at this time it will mean stepping outside of our theological discipline. I say this because if we will only talk or read within this sphere we will find a small venue of people and publications. There are some there but not as large as it could be. I am not advocating membership in some of what follows but to read and study some of this to relate it in educational principle to what we might be doing. I list here four organized bodies that are worth our investigation:

- Open and Distance Learning Quality Council, U.K.;
- The Commonwealth of Learning;
- The European Association for Distance Learning; and
- The Center for Research in Distance Education (ASF) at the Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg.

I mention two or three things which have been helpful to me. In 1998 the Open and Distance Learning Quality Council adopted

¹² Erskine Theological Seminary, E.D.E.N., Fall, 2002 "Welcome to E.D.E.N."

standards in open and distance learning. Perhaps we could do our own self-study to see where we could improve as Christians striving for excellence in all ways by considering their standards with our practice? I have benefited from reading on occasion the newsletters of the European Association for Distance Learning. It was through this Association that I became acquainted with Börje Holmberg, described as the “dean of researchers” for distance learning. Holmberg’s latest book *Distance Education in Essence: An Overview of Theory and Practice in the early 21st Century* comes to us under the auspices of The Centre for Distance Education at the northern German, Oldenburg University.¹³ If we would seriously discuss the use of distance learning in theological education and training then we too will be “educated” in this mode of education. We too must be learners of the “craft”, if we want to move towards a philosophy of this subject. I maintain that this is a fundamental point.

Conclusion

I want to briefly comment on one of the charges leveled against distance learning and its use in theological education. The charge that distance education undermines the theological education and training of candidates for the ministry is a very serious charge. Yes, it can, but so can dead academia which has all the marks of conservative Reformed orthodoxy. We must live in our century and not emulate everything from the past. Where will we send elders or deacons or deaconesses (women who want to serve overseas doing nursing or TESL, etc.) to study? Should

¹³ Börje Holmberg, *Distance Education in Essence: An Overview of Theory and Practice in the early 21st Century* (Oldenburg University, 2001). I find the following quotation by Holmberg very helpful: “On the basis of my many years of experience... the most favourable factor paving the way for motivated students’ success and preventing dropout is empathy between the learning and teaching parties, availability of immediate support and advice when difficulties crop up, ease in consulting tutors and other subject specialists and general feelings of rapport.”, p.74. Another book which I have found very helpful is by Otto Peters, *Distance Education in Transition: New Trends and Challenges* (Oldenburg University, 2002).

we establish separate schools for them if they want to pursue good theological education and training? Is it wrong for a school of theology to provide education to teachers wanting a solid Christian foundation to teach at a Christian Day School? Also could we not help young Christians with a transition year between home and university providing an overview of theological studies and a Reformed worldview? I believe the answer for today is that the “seminary” can allow other students a place to study. We must not fall prey to the temptation to lower the Divinity student standards but just because a temptation exists does not mean we throw everything out. The internet has many temptations yet it can still be used well. The household of the faithful can be blessed through the use of distance learning and theological education. If anything the theological institution will become more the hand maiden of the local church or of mission work. I suspect the way homiletics is conducted through our Haddington House could be viewed as a very intimidating experience by many in the “traditional” seminaries. Therefore I challenge these charges.

We can move now from “towards a philosophy of distance learning and theological education” to developing actual models. I have included some specifics of our model at Haddington House School of Theology but each situation will have to develop its own model worked out from this common philosophy. I can see models on the mission field where there is a “common centre” with an able administrator and leader and tutor.¹⁴ Annual or bi-annual courses could be held here enabling the students to remain in these locations the remainder of the year. Between residential sessions these students can work at a distance through the co-ordinator of the centre. Now a whole host of modes of pedagogy will have to be explored. For example, will it include audio or video lectures, beyond printed syllabi, will e-mail of paper and examinations be used, will a

¹⁴ I think two models which could incorporate some of what I have just said: International Theological Education Ministries, Inc. (Training the shepherds in the countries of the former Soviet Block – www.christforrussia.org) or Carey School of Theology (Romania, South America, Asia – www.sentex.net/carey).

pool of qualified tutors be raised up specializing in particular courses, etc? Such models I believe are now being explored and implemented and will allow us to advance the historic Evangelical and Reformed faith to the world.

Throughout my fourth section “Towards A Philosophy of Theological Education by Distance Learning” I have attempted to interact with some of the possible weaknesses of employing distance learning in theological education. I believe many of these weaknesses can be overcome and are also a challenge to what many call the “traditional” residential theological seminary model. Yes, distance learning can be employed in theological education if the following five ingredients are met:

- (1) the “missed factor” must be overcome – critical to the world of theology;
- (2) clarity must be set-forth to tutor and student;
- (3) that all those involved in the process must be “students” of this pedagogy and understand the character, theory, and practice of distance learning;
- (4) as Comenius saw for children, so in theology, there must be natural developmental stages of learning, so the same in distance education when employed in theological education; and
- (5) the Christian virtues and vision of self-discipline, discernment, and the glory of God must be cultivated.

With a proper philosophy of distance learning and theological education the student may grow in the theological disciplines and, I believe, have their hearts and lives affected. I also believe that with a proper philosophy we do not need to diminish our standard that we want a well-trained ministry. The Scriptures certainly set before us the great importance of solid standards in this regard and I believe if much of the fourth point of this paper is followed the standard will not be just maintained but can aid this calling. The Reformers “all placed a great emphasis on education” in part because they were university men who had been blessed by the revival of learning in the Renaissance.¹⁵ So matters of education should also very much

¹⁵ Pipa, “Seminary Education”, p. 13.

concern us. Ministerial education and training is not a matter of indifference but of vital importance and we need to seriously study, discuss and pray about how we will engage in such.

The Covenant in the Church Fathers

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It has sometimes been said that the introduction of the covenant idea as a theological category is a phenomenon of modern times. One writer of the dispensational school went so far as to state: "Theologically the theory is of comparatively recent development. It was, of course, unknown to the apostolic and early church fathers, never taught by the church leaders of the middle ages, and not mentioned even by any of the great teachers of the reformation period itself. No reference is made to it in any of the great confessions of faith, either Lutheran or Reformed, until the time of the *Westminster Confession*."¹

So before examining the works of the Reformers themselves, in order to test this assumption, it would be helpful to see if there are any guidelines or precursors among the church fathers or in medieval theology which might have influenced or informed Reformed theological thought at this point. The

¹ F. C. Lincoln, "The Development of Covenant Theory", *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 100 (1943), 136.

acquaintance of the Reformed theologians with both the Greek and Latin fathers of the church needs no underlining. They ranged widely through their works. Calvin's writings are saturated with quotations from the patristic authors. They are his second major source after the Scriptures. No other Reformer has such a wealth of patristic references. Calvin's acquaintance with some patristic writings depended on Eusebius and Cassiodorus and his knowledge of church councils and canon law, but many of them he knew first hand.²

One of the emphases in the Reformed use of the covenant was to demonstrate the unity and continuity or harmony between the Old Testament and the New. This was especially so in relation to the early Anabaptist controversy, and was a continuing concern for Calvin.³ But this was an old issue. With the church under attack, first from Judaism itself, and later from Gnostic and pagan writers who sought to isolate Christianity from its Judaistic roots, the early Fathers were pressed to explain the relationship between the Old and New Testaments.⁴ The covenant was

² J.T. McNeill and F.L. Battles, ed. and trs. Calvin *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols. LCC. XX (Philadelphia, 1960). "Author and Source Index", 2.1592–1634; see *Institutes*, 1.13.27, where Calvin gives a penetrating exposition of Irenaeus' *Adversus Haeresus*, 111.61ff and 111.9.1; also W.N. Todd, "The Function of the Patristic Writings in the Thought of John Calvin" (unpublished Th.D. thesis, Union Theological Seminary, 1964), 156–157, 174, 203–204, 220ff.

³ Calvin, *Institutes*, 11. 10–11.

⁴ Marcion and Celsus were the main contributors here. On Marcion see: E.C.Blackman, *Marcion and His Influence* (London, 1948); R. M. Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity* (Oxford 1959), ch.5; "Notes on Gnosis" *Vigiliae Christianae*, 11 (1957), 145–151; W. H. C. Frend, "Marcion" *Expository Times*, 80 (1969), 328–332; J. Knox, *Marcion and the New Testament* (Chicago, 1942). On pagan writers see: Origen, *Contra Celsum*, ed. and trs. H. Chadwick (Cambridge 1953); 1). Winslow, "Religion and the Early Roman Empire", *Early Church History*, eds. S. Benko and J.J. O'Rourke (London, 1979), 237–254; S. Benko, "Pagan Criticism of Christianity During the First Two Centuries AD", *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, eds. H. Temporini and W. Haase 23.2 (Berlin, 1979), 1055–1116.

naturally seen as a unifying factor in the dealings of God with men throughout both periods.⁵

Epistle of Barnabas

Before considering one or two of the fathers in more detail, there are two writings worth mentioning briefly in this respect. The basic argument of the first part of *The Epistle of Barnabas* concerned the Jews' violation of the covenant of the Lord received by Moses on Mount Sinai. Because they despised the promises in this covenant they lost it, and it became the possession of the Christian church. "The covenant is ours" now, said the author, since the new covenant founded on the sufferings of Christ was the fulfilment of these promises.⁶ This was precisely the covenant announced again and again by the prophets.⁷ The Old Testament sacrifices and ordinances, including circumcision, were types of this new covenant and were designed to teach its spiritual realities, but since the coming of Christ they have now been abolished.⁸ New Testament baptism and the Cross of Christ were constantly prefigured in the old, and as the covenant belonged to those who, like Abraham, believed, the Christians and not the unbelieving Jews, are now the heirs of

⁵ W.H.C. Frend, "The Old Testament in the Age of the Greek Apologists AD 130–180", *SJT*, 26. (1973), 129–150; R.M. Grant, "The Decalogue in Early Christianity", *HTR*, 40 (1947), 1–17; R.P.C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, (London, 1959); A. Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 7 vols. trs. N. Buchanan, (London, 1894–1899), 11.230–280; R.V. Moss, "The Covenant Conception in Early Christian Thought" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis University of Chicago, 1954), 155ff; W.C. van Unnik, "Ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη – a Problem in the early History of the Canon", *Studia Patristica* 4 (Berlin, 1961), 223ff; Z.P. Thundyil, *Covenant in Anglo-Saxon Thought* (Madras, 1972); "The Covenant Idea in the Second Century", E. Ferguson, *Texts and Testaments*, ed. W.E. March (San Antonio, 1980), 135–162.

⁶ *The Epistle of Barnabas*, 107–108, *ANCL*, vol.1, eds. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (Edinburgh, 1867).

⁷ *Barnabas*, 109–112.

⁸ *Barnabas*, 102–105, 112–115.

the covenant.⁹ The Lord has given to them the covenant which he once gave to Moses. Christ suffered on their behalf in order that they might inherit the promises and be “constituted heirs through him”. Christ was manifested so that he might redeem his people, and that “He might by His word enter into a covenant with us”.¹⁰ In this way the church became the spiritual temple of the Lord.¹¹

Justin Martyr

Again, in Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho* the covenant played a similar major role in the discussion. Trypho, the Jew, admired the moral integrity of the Christians, but because they refused to observe the Old Testament festivals, Sabbaths, and the rite of circumcision he accused them of “despising this covenant rashly”, (i.e. the covenant of the law).¹² Justin replied with an exposition of “the final law” or “the new covenant” in contrast to all the temporal ceremonial observances and sacrifices of the Old Testament. He showed that the Christians were the true sons of Abraham, who had obtained righteousness and salvation through Christ.¹³ Enoch and the other Old Testament saints also received the spiritual circumcision of “the everlasting law and the everlasting covenant”, which was proclaimed by the prophets.¹⁴

Irenaeus of Lyons

Irenaeus was one of the clearest expositors of the covenant amongst the fathers. He held that out of longsuffering to

⁹ *Barnabas*, 120–125.

¹⁰ *Barnabas*, 125–126.

¹¹ *Barnabas*, 128–130.

¹² *The Writings of Justin Martyr and Athenagoras*, 99, *ANCL*, vol. 2, eds. A. Roberts and T. Donaldson (Edinburgh, 1867).

¹³ *Writings of Justin Martyr and Athenagoras*, 100ff.; see also, 248–253.

¹⁴ *Writings of Justin Martyr and Athenagoras*, 140; see also, 150f, 254f.

fallen man, God condescended to give “more covenants than one” to mankind, accommodating them to “the general scheme of the faith”.¹⁵ There were “four principal [Greek catholical] covenants given to the human race” – one from Adam to Noah, a second to Noah after the flood, the third to Moses, and the fourth was the one which summed up all the others in the gospel, bringing renovation to men and translation to the heavenly kingdom.¹⁶ However, he referred more frequently to the two covenants, meaning that which was under Moses and the new covenant in Christ. While there were differences in these covenants “fitted for the times”, they nevertheless manifested unity and harmony, because God was their author and their mutual purpose was the benefit and salvation of men.¹⁷ It was the same gracious God “who was announced by the law and the prophets, whom Christ confessed as His Father”. Therefore, there could only be one end to both covenants.¹⁸ The new covenant was both “known and preached by the prophets”. There was no contradiction;¹⁹ no instead, it was the spurious interpretation of the law by the Pharisees that Christ and the apostles opposed, since the law taught “the necessity of following Christ”.²⁰

True keeping of the law was an inward matter and only possible through the love of God in the heart.²¹ Irenaeus clearly distinguished between the letter of the law and the Word which liberates the soul from bondage to the mere letter. The Word corresponds to the natural precepts or righteousness of the law and the love of God in the heart.

¹⁵ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, ANCL vol. 5, eds. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (Edinburgh 1868), 1.10.3.

¹⁶ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 111.11.8.

¹⁷ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 111.12.11–12.

¹⁸ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, IV.5.1ff.

¹⁹ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, IV.9.3ff.

²⁰ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, IV.12.1–5.

²¹ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, IV.12.2.

This same grace was available to those of old as well as to later Christians, though it was more obscurely revealed then.²² It was not by any observance of signs or sabbaths that they were justified but by believing God independently of the law of Moses.²³ The decalogue was given in covenant as an addition to the natural law inscribed upon men's hearts, because of their hardness and rebellion. Because the decalogue also reflected the righteousness of God, it has never been cancelled, not even by Christ, but remains in force. Christ has cancelled the bondage of the laws promulgated by Moses, but he has "increased and widened those laws which are natural and noble, and common to all". Christ's interpretation of the law remains as a reminder to those who have truly received the power of liberty of their continuing accountability to God, and as "the means of testing and evidencing faith", whether they will reverence, fear and love the Lord.²⁴ The temporal, Levitical ceremonial laws had a similar function. The true offering of sacrifices and oblations was not something that God needed *per se*, but was intended to discourage idolatry, and to be an expression of the love of the offerer and of his trust in what the sacrifices signified. Men were not sanctified by the sacrifices, but the sacrifices were sanctified, as it were, by the consciences of the offerers, and therefore were accepted by God as from a friend.²⁵

The faith of Abraham and the other Old Testament saints was identical with that of Christian believers. Christ came for one as much as for the other.²⁶ Both were justified by faith through Christ, who gathered "into the one faith of Abraham those who, from either covenant, are eligible for God's building". Abraham "did in himself prefigure the two covenants, in which some have sown, while others have reaped".²⁷

²² Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, IV.13–14.

²³ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, IV.16.2; see also, IV.25.

²⁴ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, IV. 15–16.

²⁵ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, IV.17–18.

²⁶ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, IV.21–23.

²⁷ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, IV.25.1,3.

Here, then, in outline is the “covenant theology” of one of the early church fathers. Several points are worth noting. Irenaeus regarded the covenantal relationship between God and man as a divine arrangement, involving a condescension by God to man’s capacity and condition. He saw the covenant as the central factor in the unfolding of salvation history. While there were different expressions of covenant, the covenant in Christ was requisite for the saints of all ages, with one way of salvation for the church going back to the time of Adam. Irenaeus distinguished between the mere letter of the law and its spirit. He identified both the natural law, the moral law and the love of God with the righteousness of God. Cerimonial laws were abrogated with the coming of Christ, but the moral law continued in force and has a continuing function in the lives of those who have been liberated by the gospel as a means of testing the reality and strength of their faith. The covenant of grace, therefore, while unilateral in its initiation and accomplishment, had for Irenaeus a strong bilateral and ethical emphasis in its outworking in Christian experience.

Clement of Alexandria

Clement of Alexandria was another of the fathers to whom the Reformers referred, and who also used the idea of the covenant.²⁸ Clement, in one place, spoke of four covenants in the Old Testament. These were made with Adam, Noah, Abraham

²⁸ McNeill and Battles, *Institutes*, 2.1.608. It is hardly likely, however that Calvin knew Clement's works first hand. See Todd, “The Function of the Patristic Writings in the Thought of John Calvin”, 37. On Clement see: E. Molland, “The Concept of the Gospel in the Alexandrian Theology”, *Skrifter utgitt av Det Norske Videnskaps – Akademi* (Oslo 1938), 5–84, 16–30, 69–75; R.B. Tollinton, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Liberalism*, 2 vols. (London, 1914); J. Wytzes, “Paideia and Pronoia in the Works of Clemens Alexandrinus” *VC*, 9 (1955), 148–158. [Editor’s note: Readers are directed to the recent work by A.N.S. Lane, *John Calvin Student of the Church Fathers* (Edinburgh and Grand Rapids, 1999). This work provides an excellent study of Calvin’s writings and his patristic sources. It is perhaps the best book on the subject at present.]

and Moses.²⁹ But Clement, like Irenaeus, more frequently designated two – the covenant made with the Jews of old, and the new spiritual covenant made with believers since Christ’s coming.³⁰ He suggested that the two tables of the decalogue “may be a prophecy of the two covenants”, but that it was “the same God who furnished both covenants”; therefore, the difference was more dispensational.³¹ “There is but one, true, ancient, universal Church, one in substance, and idea, in origin, in pre-eminence, and it collects into the unity of one faith those from both covenants, so that in fact there is rather one covenant manifest in different periods by the will of God”. Into this covenant all were gathered who were ordained or predestinated by God before the foundation of the world.³²

Not surprisingly, Clement devoted a lot of time to showing the relationship of law to gospel.³³ “Both the law of nature and that of instruction [i.e. Mosaic] are one,” he said, and these reflected the divine character in teaching righteousness. Obedience to the law, then, was an imitation of “the divine character, namely righteousness”. Both covenants could be viewed as manifestations of one righteousness. In this way, Clement, in one place, interpreted the covenant as God himself, arguing that the word [Greek *theos*] (God) comes from [Greek

²⁹ Clement, *Eclogae Propheticae*, 111, 151. Text used is in *Clemens Alexandrinus*, 3 vols. and index, ed. O. Stählin, *Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der Ersten Drei Tahrhunderte*, vols. 12, 15, 17, 39, (Leipzig, 1905–1909, 1936).

³⁰ Clement, *Stromata*, IV.5.327. Text of *Stromata*, *Protrepticus* and *Paedagogus* used comes from *The Writings of Clement of Alexandria*, 2 vols. trs. W. Wilson, ANCL, vols. 4 and 12, eds. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, (Edinburgh, 1867–1869).

³¹ *Stromata*, IV. 16. 383; IV.5.327.

³² *Stromata*, IV.17.487. On predestination see also, 1.12.388.

³³ This has been noted by Molland, “The Concept of the Gospel in the Alexandrian Theology”, 16–30, and also by Wytzes, “Paideia and Pronoia in the Works of Clemens Alexandrinus”, 154–155, although the latter has failed to note the covenantal link between law and gospel. He refers to them as separate ways to God.

thesis] (“placing”, “order” or “arrangement”).³⁴ A covenant, therefore, was an arrangement God made with man, and by dealing with man in this way, and thus expressing anger and love towards him, God was “condescending to emotion on man’s account”.³⁵

While the law was given through Moses, it was given and governed by the “benign Word”, that is, Christ, who was the “first expounder of the laws”, and whose name and office Moses predicted (Deut.18:15).³⁶ This meant that the law was more than a letter, it was a “living law”.

The law had a spiritual or “beneficent” purpose or action, and only those who sought and loved the Lord could truly understand it or benefit from it. This was where the Jews failed in the time of Jesus and Paul. They used the law wrongly, not recognizing that “both the law and the gospel are the energy of one Lord, who is ‘the power and wisdom of God’,” and that both beget salvation. Therefore, “faith in Christ and the knowledge of the gospel are the explanation and fulfilment of the law”.³⁷

For Clement, there was a single end to all God’s dealings with men, whether by law or by gospel. This he described often as “assimilation to God” or restoration to the image and likeness of God, of which the Word (Christ) was the model.³⁸ Christ “taught and exhibited... Himself as the Herald of the Covenant, the Reconciler, our Saviour, the Word, the fount of life, the giver of peace”.³⁹ Even Adam, Noah and Abraham who lived before the law, also lived according to the law, because they too sought

³⁴ *Stromata*,1.29.470; 11.18.48,51. See also V.6.244, where both covenants are seen as manifestations of one righteousness, and *Protrepticus*, 1.20, where Clement uses the words “order” and “arrangement” in relation to creation.

³⁵ *Paedagogus*, 1.8. 163.

³⁶ *Stromata*,1.26.461–462, and *Paedagogus*, 1.7.153.

³⁷ *Stromata*,1.27.464–466; IV.21.201; see also, 11.18.53ff,191ff and *Protrepticus*, 11.10iff.

³⁸ *Stromata*,11. 22. 78; *Paedagogus*, 1. 12. 18 1.

³⁹ *Protrepticus*, 10.99.

this conformity to God's image and likeness.⁴⁰ This was the true aim of faith in Christ or "that restitution of the promise which is effected by faith".⁴¹ Like New Testament believers, those "old Hebrew wanderers...learned by experience that they could not be saved otherwise than believing on Jesus".⁴²

Since the coming of Christ, the Lord has invited all men to the knowledge of the truth and has sent his Spirit to bring men to that knowledge by working faith and love in their hearts. But this was an ancient message. Clement said, "You have God's promise; you have his love, become a partaker of his grace. But do not suppose the song of salvation to be new... Error seems old, but truth seems a new thing." The "new song" was but a manifestation of the Word, and he was from the beginning. It was he who spoke through Moses.⁴³ The newness, Clement emphasized, was that of "new minds, which have become newly wise, which have sprung into being according to the new covenant". These new or "young" minds needed instruction in "the Word, the milk of Christ", as to how they should conduct themselves in the world.⁴⁴ This consequent ethical obligation was the main thrust of the *Paedagogus*, and is to be compared with Calvin's emphasis on instruction, teachableness, and being in the school of Christ.⁴⁵ In one place, Clement seemed to make a more rigid dichotomy between the law given by Moses, and the grace and truth which came by Christ. The law, here, he said, was "only temporary".⁴⁶ But clearly this passage can only refer to the

⁴⁰ *Stromata*, 11.19.58f.

⁴¹ *Stromata*, 11.22.78; see also, IV.22.204ff.

⁴² *Protrepticus*, 9.82–83.

⁴³ *Protrepticus*, 1.22.

⁴⁴ *Paedagogus*, 1.5,127; 1.6.138.

⁴⁵ see W.H. Neuser, "Calvin's Conversion to Teachableness" *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Theologiese Tydskrif*, 26 (1985), 14–27. Neuser's lecture is useful in that it gathers together Calvin's use of "docilitas", but it still requires much work in relation to the contexts in which it occurs.

⁴⁶ *Paedagogus*, 1. 7. 153.

manifestation of the law in the Mosaic dispensation, since repeatedly Clement stressed the continuity of the law through Christ who is its fullest manifestation. The law was never abolished or invalidated. The law produced wisdom through the fear [Greek *eulabeia*] of the Lord. By working the knowledge of sin and repentance, it trained or instructed men to Christ, and then had a function of discipline, leading to the way of perfection in Christ.⁴⁷

There is a strong bilateral character to Clement's teaching at this point. He said that the command, "The man that doeth them shall live in them"⁴⁸ had a two-fold function. For both the Hebrews and New Testament Christians, it "declares at once their life and ours" which was "by one covenant in Christ"; and secondly, it declared their correction and training.⁴⁹ Christian progress, therefore, was a healthy fear of the Lord producing faith, obedience and love. Hence, "the works of the Lord, that is, his commandments, are to be loved and done". For Clement, the paths of wisdom constituted the "conduct of life, and variety that exists in the covenants".⁵⁰ Clement's entire exposition of the true Christian gnosis was bilateral in character. Faith issued in the duty of fulfilling that "perfect righteousness" in "both practice and contemplation."⁵¹ And that obedience was the evidence of true faith: "The perfect propitiation, I take it, is that propitious faith in the gospel which is by the law and the prophets, and the purity that shows itself in universal obedience, with the abandonment of the things of the world, in order to that grateful surrender of the tabernacle, which results from the enjoyment of the soul."⁵²

⁴⁷ *Stromata*, 11.7.20.

⁴⁸ Leviticus 18:5 and Romans 10:5.

⁴⁹ *Stromata*, 11.10.29–30; 11.11.30–31.

⁵⁰ *Stromata*, 11.12.33–35; VI.15.374.

⁵¹ *Stromata*, IV.16.184; see also, V.11.261ff.

⁵² *Stromata*, IV.25.213.

Clearly, there was a dual emphasis in Clement's view of the covenant. On the one hand, he saw it entirely as the gift of God's grace, but at the same time, there was a strong ethical obligation enjoined. But the fulfilling of this obligation was also contained in the gift of grace, as demonstrated in this passage on the covenant from *Protrepticus*: "It is that treasure of salvation to which we must hasten, by becoming lovers of the Word. Thence, praiseworthy works descend to us, and fly to us on the wings of truth. This is the inheritance with which the eternal covenant of God invests us, conveying the everlasting gift of grace – and thus our loving Father the true Father – ceases not to exhort, admonish, train and love us."⁵³ So while Clement emphasized that the salvation of man was entirely the work of the Lord himself, he could at the same time, in the context of the covenant, employ the language of commerce and speculate on how much this salvation was worth if one wanted to buy it. He concluded that it was beyond price, inestimable, yet "you may, if, you choose, purchase salvation, though of inestimable value, with your own resources, love and living faith, which will be reckoned a suitable price. This recompense God cheerfully accepts", for the sake of Christ.⁵⁴

Here, in the second century, the very same issues were raised as came to the fore in seventeenth-century covenantal theology. Faith, love, obedience and good works are depicted as gifts of the grace of God, yet they are described as our "own resources", underlining the duty of exercising them in Christian experience. Tollinton is quite right when he says, "Clement adheres to the Biblical conception of the Covenant as an agreement or compact between God and man...God enters into the relationship of His grace and goodness, man in the spirit of duty and obedience." He could have added "gratitude".⁵⁵ It is quite obviously wrong to infer that there is no discussion of

⁵³ *Protrepticus*, 10.88.

⁵⁴ *Protrepticus*, 9,82–83.

⁵⁵ Tollinton, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Liberalism*, 2.204.

mutual obligations in the fathers' view of the covenant.⁵⁶ One other comment: The last quotation from Clement shows that it was not necessary to await the development of sixteenth and seventeenth century social contract theory in order to introduce mercantile language and illustrations into the exposition of covenant theology, simply because the idea of mutuality in the covenant was much older.

Augustine of Hippo

Of all the fathers, the favourite of the Reformers was Augustine. John T. McNeill says that "Calvin's self-confessed debt to Augustine is constantly apparent" throughout the *Institutes*, and he proves his point in the "Author and Source Index" by listing 730 references to the Bishop of Hippo's works.⁵⁷ It can be said that the entire Reformation developed within the Augustinian framework of the relation of human nature and divine grace. Luther emerged from the Augustinian tradition, but Calvin was Augustine's most ardent, though not uncritical, followers.⁵⁸

The covenant was important for Augustine, and for anyone to say that he "makes only peripheral use of the covenant doctrine"⁵⁹ or that he "makes no use of the idea in his *City of*

⁵⁶ Stoute, "The Origins and Early Development of the Reformed Idea of the Covenant", 23.

⁵⁷ McNeill, *Institutes*, "Intro." 1.lix; "Author and Source Index", 2.1593–1601; L. Smits, *Saint Augustin dans l'oeuvre de Jean Calvin*, 2 vols. (Assen, 1957–1958). Volume 2 contains every reference and allusion to Augustine; F. Wendel, *Calvin: The Origin and Development of His Religious Thought*, trs. P. Mairet, (London 1963), 124–125.

⁵⁸ McNeill, *Institutes*, "Intro.", 1.lvii see especially n.59 where studies of Calvin and Augustine are listed, to which must be added B. B. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine* (Philadelphia, 1956), a series of scholarly articles edited by M. Kik.

⁵⁹ C.S. McCoy, "The Covenant Theology of Johannes Coccius" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Yale University, 1957), 56.

God”, is difficult to understand.⁶⁰ Augustine built upon the patristic position, with his main emphasis upon two covenants, the “old” as manifested supremely in the Sinaitic arrangement, and the “new” in Christ.⁶¹ But this distinction between the old and the new in terms of law and gospel was not so narrow and absolute as is often thought. Preus supported this view: “Augustine,” he said, “does not transpose the two-level situation of the biblical letter into an absolute Old Testament/New Testament division, even though much of what he argues points in that direction.”⁶² For example, Augustine did not confine the giving of the law covenant to Sinai. Discussing his favourite proof text on the subject of original sin (Gen. 17:14), he claimed “that even infants, riot in consequence of the character of their own life, but because of the common origin of the human race, have all broken God’s covenant by that one act in which all men sinned”.⁶³ He proceeded then to indicate that he considered the Sinaitic covenant to be “a more explicit” form of a *pre lassos* Edenic covenant made with Adam:

Many covenants, to be sure, are called God’s covenants in addition to the two chief ones, the old and the new, which all may learn by reading them. Now the first

⁶⁰ W. A. Brown, “Covenant Theology”, *ERE*, 13 vols. (Edinburgh, 1908–1926), 4.219.

⁶¹ A. Augustine, *Ennarationes in Psalmos*, 104.7. Translations used are *The Works of Aurelius Augustine, Bishop of Hippo*, 14 vols. ed. M. Dods (Edinburgh, 1872–1886); *De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos*, trs. P. Levine et al, *LCL*, IV–V (London, 1966); *De Catechizandis Rudibus liher unus*, trs. J.P. Christopher (Washington, 1926); *Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, 6 vols. Library of the fathers (Oxford, 1847–1857). Other texts consulted: *Sancti Aurelii Augustini Hipponensis Episcopi Opera Omnia*, 11 vols. in 15 (Paris, 1836–1838); *Aurelii Augustini Opera, in Corpus Christianorum*, series Latina, vols. 27–57 (Turnholt, 1954–1984); *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, ed. J.H.C. Burleigh, *LCC* VI (London, 1953); *Augustine: Confession and Enchiridion*, ed. A.C. Outler, *LCC* VII (London, 1955); *Augustine: Later Works*, ed. J. Burnaby *LCC* VIII (London 1955).

⁶² J.S. Preus, *From Shadow to Promise* (Cambridge, Mass. 1969), 16 n.19.

⁶³ Augustino, *De civitate Dei*, XVI.133.

covenant given to the first man is really this ‘on the day that you eat, you shall die the death’ (Gen.2:17). Now since a more explicit law (*lex evidentior*) has been vouchsafed later, and the Apostle says. ‘But where there is no law, there is no transgression’ (Rom.4:15), how can the words we read in Psalms be true, namely: ‘I have reckoned all sinner’s on earth as transgressors?’ (Ps.119:119). Only on the ground that all who are held in bondage by any sin are guilty of transgressing some law.

Wherefore if even infants, as the true faith maintains, are born sinners, so they are also seen to be transgressors of the law that was issued in the garden of Eden... this since circumcision was a sign of regeneration and the act of birth brings perdition upon the infant through the original sin by which God’s covenant was first broken, unless regeneration sets him free, these divine words must be interpreted as if they said: ‘He who has not been regenerated, his soul shall perish from among the people’ for he broke God’s covenant when in Adam, together with all mankind, he himself also sinned... since he [God] did not expressly state what sort of covenant the infant has broken, we are free to understand it as referring to that covenant whose infringement could be attributed to the child’.⁶⁴

Adam, according to Augustine, was made upright with “no need for a Mediator”.⁶⁵ He could have continued in that uprightness, “though not without divine aid,” or become corrupted, by his own choice. Either way, God’s will would be done, “either by man, or at least concerning him.”⁶⁶ Augustine distinguished clearly between grace before and after the fall: “Did Adam have the grace of God? Yes, truly, he had it largely, but of a different kind. He was placed in the midst of benefits which he had received from the goodness of his Creator; for he

⁶⁴ Augustino, *De civitate Dei*, XVI. 133–135; see also, *Enchiridion On Faith, Hope and Love*, VIII.27, the reference to man breaking away “from the wholesome discipline of God’s law” .

⁶⁵ *Enchiridion*, XXVIII. 108.

⁶⁶ *Enchiridion*, VIII. 107.

had not procured those benefits by his own deserving.”⁶⁷ Adam did not need grace for deliverance then, but grace for perseverance, the exercise of which was left to his free choice. And Augustine did not object to the idea of meritorious obedience in this context: “That he willed not to continue was absolutely the fault of him whose merit it would have been if he had willed to continue.”⁶⁸ Adam was created neither wise nor foolish, but a rational creature, who could “at least receive a commandment, which he ought to obey”.⁶⁹ Such obedience to the covenant, Augustine speculated, would have caused Adam to pass into the company of the angels with no intervening death, to “a blissful immortality that has no limit”.⁷⁰

Augustine also stressed the unity of the race in Adam – in him “appeared the entire plenitude of the human race”, so that when Adam sinned, the entire race broke the covenant in him, and was “to be held liable to the same penalty” – punishment by death.⁷¹ Speculation on the cause of sin beyond the human will was discouraged by Augustine. Sin was to be attributed to the will of man, for “God is not the author of the evil a man does, though he is the author of the evil a man suffers”.⁷²

The term “covenant of works” was not used by Augustine, but this picture he presented of the divine arrangement with Adam in Eden before the fall, contained all the ingredients of such a covenant as later portrayed by the “covenant theologians”. It was a bilateral arrangement whereby the promise of a “rise to better things” would result from exercising the

⁶⁷ *De corruptione et gratia*, 29.

⁶⁸ *De corruptione et gratia*, 30–32.

⁶⁹ *De libero arbitrio*, 3.xxiv.71–72.

⁷⁰ *Civitate*, XII. 111; see also, *Enchiridion*, VIII.25 and *De peccatorum meritis*, 1. 2. 2.

⁷¹ *Civitate*, XII.129, XIII.141; see also, XIV.259, *Enchiridion*, VIII.26 and *De peccatorum*, 111.

⁷² *De libero arbitrio*, 1.i.1, 3.xxi.63; see also, *Civitate* XII.27, *De vera religione* XIII.27 and *De dono perseverantiae*, 46.

“stewardship of righteousness”,⁷³ and death would be the consequence of disobedience. Furthermore, this law or covenant was not only given verbally, but was an expression of the absolute and unchangeable eternal law which was “stamped upon our minds”.⁷⁴ There was, therefore, continuity between the law given in Eden and that given on Sinai. Both were expressions of the eternal law. The “more explicit” giving of the Edenic covenant at Sinai was necessary due to the corruption of sin.⁷⁵

Augustine argued that if human nature could fulfil the law of perfect righteousness, then it could be “sure of its reward, that is, to secure everlasting life”.⁷⁶ But since the fall the condition of man has been such that this is utterly impossible. Everyone now arises from “a condemned state” (*ex damnata propagine*).⁷⁷ Christ was the only example of anyone achieving moral perfection in this life.⁷⁸ Consequently, any good man can receive must be through grace: “So he [God] manifest[ed] a new covenant of the everlasting inheritance, when man, renewed by the grace of God, might lead a new life, that is, a spiritual life.”⁷⁹ This grace, however, was not intended for all. It was a distinguishing grace rooted in divine predestination. Since the fall, no man could attain to eternal life, but God has chosen to elect some men to salvation from this lost and perishing mass.⁸⁰ And “to those he has predestinated unto eternal death, he is also the most righteous awarder of punishment, not only on account of the sins which they add with indulgence of their own will, but

⁷³ *Enchiridion*, VIII.25.

⁷⁴ *De libero arbitrio*, 1. vi. 15.

⁷⁵ *De libero arbitrio*, 1.xv.31–xvi.35.

⁷⁶ *De natura et gratia*, 2. ii.

⁷⁷ *Civitate*, XV.412,413; *De natura et gratia*, 7.vii–14. xiii; *De spiritu et littera passim.*; *De peccatorum* 11. 7. vi.

⁷⁸ *De spiritu et littera*, 1.1; see also, 61.xxxv–66.xxxvi.

⁷⁹ *De catechizandis*, 96; *Enchiridion*, IX.30–32.

⁸⁰ *Enchiridion*, IX.28–30; see also, xxv and *De Praedestinatione*, 10–11.

also because of their original sin”.⁸¹ Augustine distinguished between a general and a particular election.

Israel was chosen as God’s people, just as many Gentiles were later called to the marriage through the Word, but not all of these obtained the election of grace, that is, the special calling by which the elect are taught of God and receive the gift of faith in order to believe. This distinction is important, since, for Augustine, it corresponds to the covenant of the law at Sinai and the covenant of grace in Christ.⁸²

The covenant of grace was first made with Adam himself after the fall, for “even Adam was delivered by the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ”,⁸³ who is the second Adam and the One who answers to all that the first Adam lost.⁸⁴ Augustine said that there were four temporal, historical epochs or “ages” in the history of salvation – before the law, under the law given by Moses, under the grace revealed by the coming of the Mediator, and after the resurrection. But he emphasized that the grace revealed through the Mediator “was not previously absent from those to whom it was to be imparted, although in conformity to the temporal dispensation it was veiled and hidden”. It was through this grace that righteous men of old believed (e.g. Job, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David), “for none of the righteous men of antiquity could find salvation apart from the faith of Christ”.⁸⁵

Those who were righteous under the time of the law were also under grace. Christ was their Mediator too. Though his incarnation had not yet happened, the fruits of it still availed for the fathers. Christ was their head. They believed in his resurrection yet to take place, just as Christians *Anno Domini* believe in his Judgments yet to come.⁸⁶ So the men of God in the

⁸¹ *De Praedestinatione*, 10–11; see also, *De dona perseverantiae*, 35.

⁸² *De praedestinatione*, 32–34, 14–16.

⁸³ *De natura et gratia*, 24.xxi.

⁸⁴ *De peccatorum*, 11ff.

⁸⁵ *Enchiridion*, XXXI. 118; *De perfectione*, XIX. 12; *De vera religione*, XXVII.50; see also, *De catechizandis*, 96–97.

⁸⁶ *De gratia christi*, 11.27–32.

Old Testament were shown to be heirs of the new. The new covenant was actually more ancient than the old, though it was subsequently revealed. It was “hidden in the prophetic ciphers” until the time of revelation in Christ. Abraham and those before and after him were therefore “all children of the promise and of grace”.⁸⁷ Also, it was through the operation of the same Holy Spirit that the men of old belonged to “the grace of the new covenant”.⁸⁸ So while there were different manifestations in the covenant corresponding to different ages, there was but one *testamentum aeternum* throughout all ages, entered by faith alone.⁸⁹ In every age, everyone, whether children or “decrepit” old men, said Augustine, must come into the new covenant by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁰ Only by receiving the Holy Spirit, and not by any power of the human will, could any delight in, or love for, God arise in the soul and begin a movement towards perfection.⁹¹

This stress on the operation of the Spirit is crucial to understanding Augustine’s doctrine of the law. He made a clear letter/spirit distinction. The mere teaching of the commandments without the presence of the life-giving Spirit was a letter that killed, and by this he meant teaching the actual precepts of the law and not just a figurative as opposed to a literal interpretation of Scripture. The commands of the law were good and praiseworthy, but when the Holy Spirit’s aid was not given causing men to “desire good” (*concupiscentia bona*), then evil desire would actually increase through the very prohibition, good as it was.⁹² This was the distinction Augustine made between law and grace. The law “makes sin to be known rather than shunned”,

⁸⁷ *Contra duas epistolas Pelagianorum*, 111.6–8.

⁸⁸ *Contra duas epistolas Pelagianorum*, 111.12.

⁸⁹ *Ennarationes in Psalmos*, 104. 7; 73. 2.

⁹⁰ *Enchiridion*, XIII. 43–46.

⁹¹ *De spiritu et littera*, 4.ii; 5.iii; see also, *De Peccatorum*, 11.7.vif.; 11.34.xx.

⁹² *De spiritu et littera*, 6.iv–7.v; see also, 23.xiv–32.xix; *De gratia Christi*, 1.9; *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, 22–23; *Contra duas epistolas*, 111.2.

but grace shows forth “the destruction of sin and the renewal of righteousness”, which could not come to man by the letter of the law.⁹³ Only the righteousness of God, “not the righteousness of man or the righteousness of our own will,” could justify a man before God, and this righteousness was the “gift of God through the help of the Holy Spirit”, bringing faith in Christ just as foretold by the prophets.⁹⁴

It was just at this point that the Jews failed. They received a law that was holy and just and good, and which was a continuing testimony and witness to the unchanging righteousness of God as it had been to Adam. But they refused to appreciate that it could no longer justify and that the righteousness of the law (i.e. their own efforts to keep the law) was totally inadequate. They thought that the letter could suffice them for life, and so they became doers of the law only and not seekers of divine mercy. They had an eye for the earthly promises alone and were ignorant of what the promises signified. They were moved by cupidity and carnal fear rather than faith working by love. These were the children in bondage, opposed by Paul in the fourth chapter of Galatians.⁹⁵

Augustine’s references to the temporality of the law or the old covenant must be understood in this context. He distinguished between those in the Old Testament, who, discerning the true spiritual nature and function of the law, used the law lawfully,⁹⁶ and those who desired to worship God for material benefits only – “a carnal people living after the old man, and leading a carnal life, eagerly desired of the Lord God carnal rewards and received them as a symbol of spiritual blessings”.⁹⁷ For the former, the old

⁹³ *De spiritu et littera*, 8. v–9. vi; see also, *Da perfectione*, V.11; *Contra Faustum* XV.8.

⁹⁴ *De spiritu et littera*, 15. 1x; see also, *De natura et gratia*, 1.1. The righteousness of God as shown in Rom. 1, is not the commands of the law only but “the aid afforded by the grace of Christ”. See also, *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, 24.

⁹⁵ *Contra duas epistolas*, 111.13,18–23,9.

⁹⁶ *De spiritu et littera*, 16.x.

⁹⁷ *De catechizandis*, 72—73,96–97.

covenant brought a knowledge of their sin and led them to Christ. They had, therefore, “no further use for it” in relation to their salvation.⁹⁸ The latter failed to recognize that all those visible blessings which were bestowed upon them in the old covenant, and bestowed through the ministry of the patriarchs and prophets, “signified spiritual mysteries closely associated with Christ and the church of which even those saints were members, although they lived before Christ our Lord was born according to the flesh”.⁹⁹ The manifestation of the new covenant in Christ, which was only new in a revelatory sense, made “the first covenant to be antiquated”, in the sense that the spiritual blessings it pointed to were fully manifested, and the carnal or material use of it was abolished, although there is still “a carnal multitude” in the church today who stand in a similar relationship to the new covenant.¹⁰⁰ They may even have the signs of Christ, but they cannot enter the kingdom of God, because they continue in iniquity.¹⁰¹

The distinction, therefore, between the old covenant and the new, between law and grace, was not so radical in Augustine as is often assumed. The old covenant at Sinai also contained the heavenly promises, indeed it was established in order to present them to the people in veiled form. The law and the sacraments were “to be spiritually understood”.¹⁰² The new covenant was contained in the old. This is what lay at the heart of Augustine’s famous dictum: “*In veteri testamento est occultatio novi, in novo testamento est manifestatio veteris*,”¹⁰³ or as he said again, “the new covenant is foreshadowed in the old. For what is that which is called the old covenant but the veiled form of the new, and

⁹⁸ *De spiritu et littera*, 16.x.

⁹⁹ *De catechizandis*, 84–85; see also, *Ennarationes in Psalmos*, 34–7; 88.i.3–5.

¹⁰⁰ *De catechizandis*, 72–73.

¹⁰¹ *Ennarationes in Psalmos*, 88. ii.4.

¹⁰² *Contra duas epistolas*, 111.10.

¹⁰³ *De catechizandis*, 26–27.

what else is that which is called the new but the unveiling of the old".¹⁰⁴ What applied literally to the old covenant, also applied figuratively to the new.¹⁰⁵ The new covenant was actually revealed first, but veiled until Christ's coming within the old, which was later revealed at Sinai.¹⁰⁶

What has been considered so far would encourage the expectation of some idea of continuity of law under the full manifestation of the covenant of grace since both testify to the one righteousness of God. Augustine could speak of a sense in which the justified man had no further use for the law, and that the old covenant was antiquated, but he went on to explain that this did not mean that "the law of works belongs to Judaism and the law of faith to Christianity". The moral law belonged to both, just as faith belonged to both, because both magnified the righteousness of God.¹⁰⁷ Christ fulfilled and did away with the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament, and fulfilled and established the moral teaching or precepts of the law as a duty in the lives of his people. Moral precepts were distinct from typical observances which prefigured Christ. The latter came to a close when fulfilled in Christ, but the former "are fulfilled... by the accomplishment of what they promise", both in Christ and in his people.¹⁰⁸

The law of faith also brought the knowledge of sin since it contained the moral law, but the difference was that what one could only enjoin, the other granted to belief. No none could be righteous without the operation of God's grace writing the law within the heart by the Holy Spirit. This Augustine saw as the essence of the new covenant prophesied in Jeremiah 31:31ff, as distinct from the old covenant not kept by the fathers, who looked for the earthly and material goods promised rather than "the

¹⁰⁴ *Civitate*, XVI.129.

¹⁰⁵ *Civitate*, XVII. 253.

¹⁰⁶ *Contra duas epistolas*, 111.7.

¹⁰⁷ *De spiritua et littera*, 21.xiii.

¹⁰⁸ *Contra Faustum*, XIX; quote XIX.18.

eternal and heavenly goods belonging to the new covenant”.¹⁰⁹ The new covenant fulfilled the same law which was in the old. The failure to keep it was through no fault of the law, but due entirely to the fleshly desires of the “old man”.¹¹⁰ No man, whether the Jew who had the letter of the law written or Gentile who were never confronted with the letter of the law from the old covenant, “can claim credit for his own fulfilment of the law”. This was only brought about by the Holy Spirit writing the law in the hearts of the elect who were the seed of faith through Abraham.¹¹¹

Augustine said that it was only the man who was first justified who could begin to do the works of the law referred to in Leviticus 18:5, which “If a man do, he shall live in them”. But the justified man did not do these works in order to win the favour of the Justifier. That was won through faith. But the faith that saved raised men up to live sober, righteous and godly lives. In this way, faith did not make void the law, it produced a love of righteousness and “by the love of righteousness comes the working of the law” which men, saved by grace, freely wanted to keep and live by.¹¹² The commandments could only be kept by the grace of God, which was “indispensable for the observance of the precepts”.¹¹³

When Paul said that faith was the gift of God, Augustine insisted that he did not mean “to deny good works or empty them of their value, because he also said that God rendered to every man according to his works; but he would have works proceed from faith and not faith from works”.¹¹⁴ True faith would produce good works, and a faith which did not was insufficient for salvation, so in this sense, Augustine argued that eternal life

¹⁰⁹ *Contra Faustum*, 32.xix–33; 34.xix; 36.xxi.

¹¹⁰ *Contra Faustum*, 35.xx.

¹¹¹ *Contra Faustum*, 40.xiv–50.xxix.

¹¹² *Contra Faustum*, 51.xxix–52xxx.

¹¹³ *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, 8.

¹¹⁴ *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, 17.

could be spoken of as a reward for service, although that service itself was the result of saving grace.¹¹⁵ These good works were guided by, and reflected, the righteousness which was in the law.

The law, said Augustine, was not only necessary for the people under the old covenant, “but also is now necessary for us for the right ordering of life...Who is so impious as to say that he does not keep these precepts of the law because he is a Christian and is established not under the law, but under grace?”¹¹⁶ The difference was that under the letter of the old covenant men sought to do these things in the hope of gaining happiness thereby; to believers under the new, through faith in the Mediator, “a spirit of grace is ministered, so that they may do these things well”, though never perfectly in this life.¹¹⁷ In this way the law that could not be fulfilled through law was fulfilled through grace, since “the grace whereby God works within us to will what is good, he means nothing else than the law and the doctrine. For in the law and the doctrine of the holy scriptures are promised future glory and its great rewards”.¹¹⁸ The secret of this fulfilment of the law by the Christian was the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit. Thus, the commandments of the law were not burdensome or grievous, as they were to the Jews, because they never are to God’s beloved.¹¹⁹

The question now is: What was man’s responsibility, if any, respecting faith and obedience in this covenant relationship? Augustine certainly emphasized the priority of grace to all else in God’s dealings with man. Salvation was a divine gift of mercy so that men could not arrogate to themselves anything concerning it as their own work. It was God “who both prepareth the will to receive divine aid and aideth the will which has been prepared...Why are we admonished to ask in order to receive, unless it be that he who grants us what we will is he through

¹¹⁵ *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, 18–21, 28.

¹¹⁶ *Contra duas epistolas*, 111.10.

¹¹⁷ *De perfectione*, V111. 18–19.

¹¹⁸ *De gratia Christi*, 1.10–11.

¹¹⁹ *De perfectione*, X.21.

whom it comes to pass that we will". God's mercy always "predisposes a man before he will, to prompt his willing".¹²⁰ Again and again, Augustine returned to this question of the priority of grace and the reality of human freedom, always affirming that the grace which was primary was also the ground and source of human willingness.¹²¹

Does this mean that men in spite of Augustine's disclaimer are "insensate stones", without will and reason of their own?¹²² Augustine asked whether if the gift of grace followed only upon faith: "Is this faith itself in our own power?" In reply, he made a distinction between man's "will" and his "ability": "We sometimes will what we are not able to do", and *vice versa*. He then defined "power" or "ability" as "the union of the will with the capacity to act".¹²³ Augustine argued that it was absurd to say that a man can believe if he will not, since belief is consenting to the truth spoken. If consent is an act "faith must be in our power". But this of will, then power itself was from God and granted by him. Man "believes when he will, and when he believes, believes willingly", but that belief is given by God himself and is not implanted in us by nature.¹²⁴

Augustine explained that God worked this power to will and believe in the elect by both external and internal means – externally by the preaching of the law and the gospel; internally by the Holy Spirit. In this way God sought to renew man's will without violating his nature.

Fallen man only willed evil, but God renewed that will while respecting its freedom. In fallen man, natural "freedom of choice could produce no act of belief", so God worked by inducement and invitation to initiate consent. "Assuredly then it is God who brings about in a man the very will to believe, and in

¹²⁰ *Enchiridion*, IX. 31–32; see also, XXIV.97.

¹²¹ *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, 29; *De predestinatione*, 19,39–43; *De dono perservantiae*, 4.

¹²² *De peccatorum*, 11. 5. vi.

¹²³ *De spiritu et littera*, 53.xxxi.

¹²⁴ *De spiritu et littera*, 54,xxxii; 55.xxxii.

all things does his mercy anticipate us, yet to consent to the calling of God or to refuse it, as I have said, belongs to our own will.” Beyond this Augustine would not go, but simply abandoned the somewhat roundabout argument by resorting, as he so often did, to the *o altitudo* of Paul (Rom. 11: 33).¹²⁵

It is clear from this and many other passages that Augustine did not regard the believer as totally passive in the process of experiencing salvation, both with respect to faith and obedience. In the progress to perfection those who were members of the *Civitas Dei* were frequently admonished to good works: “It is on this account that numerous precepts are enjoined upon us concerning mutual forgiveness and the great care requisite for maintaining peace, without which no one will be able to see God.”¹²⁶ Commenting on such texts as Isa. 1:19-20, Gal. 3:19, and Rom. 5:20, Augustine was able to affirm that the promises of God in both covenants were “full of conditions of this sort”, but always to the end that men may be driven to grace and faith.¹²⁷ The precepts of the moral law were still enjoined as a duty of life upon Christians, and were seen as an evidence of true faith.¹²⁸

Augustine frequently reminded his readers of their promises to this end in the covenant which they had made with God in baptism.¹²⁹ For him the idea of covenant not only had a unilateral element in which God sovereignly announced his intentions of grace concerning men, and what he had bound himself to perform in Christ the Mediator and Sealer of the covenant,¹³⁰ but it also had a bilateral element when God entered into an agreement with his people in which they bound

¹²⁵ *De spiritu et littera*, 60. xxxiv.

¹²⁶ eg. *Civitate*, XIV.305ff; XV.430–435; *Sermones Suppositicios*, CCX in *Opera Omnia*, V.2894.

¹²⁷ *De perfectione*, XIX. 12.

¹²⁸ *Contra Faustum*, XIX.18ff.

¹²⁹ *Sermones Suppositicios*, CCLXIV in *Opera Omnia*, V. 3042f, 3055; *De rectitudine catholicae conversationis*, in *Opera Omnia*, VI.1704,1762.

¹³⁰ *Ennarationes in Psalmos*, 88. 1. 3–5.

themselves to walk according to his precepts. In one place, Augustine offered a clear bilateral definition: “*Pactum est quod inter aliquos convenit*”.¹³¹

It is pointless to claim that the Reformers accepted “an Augustinian notion of unilateral testament, not a bilateral covenant”.¹³² Indeed, while Augustine usually used *testamentum* when referring to Christ and especially to his death, he made it clear that he did not think of the word only in unilateral terms. He said: “*Testamentum sane in Scripturis non illud solum dicitur, quod non valet nisi testatoribus mortuis; sed omne pactum et placitum testamentum vocabant*”.¹³³ For Augustine *pactum* and *testamentum* were used interchangeably, and *testamentum* carried the idea of mutual responsibility as well as the idea of unilateral promise.¹³⁴

Summary

Some conclusions can now be drawn from this brief outline of the use of the covenant in several of the church fathers.¹³⁵ First, they all used the idea of covenant to stress the

¹³¹ *Heptateuchum Locutionem*, 1 .Gen.21:27. I am indebted to Peter Lillback for this quotation. See also *Ennarationes in Psalmos*, 102.25.

¹³² J. W. Baker, *Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant: The Other Reformed Tradition* (Ohio, 1980) 189.

¹³³ *Ennarationes in Psalmos*, 82.6. trs. “Indeed, testament in the scriptures not only speaks of what is not effective except by the death of testators, but every covenant and agreement they call a testament.”

¹³⁴ Even K. Hagen, whom Baker cites to support his exclusive unilateral argument, admits at this point, “Augustine described *testamentum* in rather bilateral terms”; see, K. G. Hagen, *A Theology of Testament in Young Luther: The Lectures on Hebrews* (Leiden, 1974) 35.

¹³⁵ Others could also be considered. For example, Chrysostom, who saw the covenant of grace proceeding from both the Father and the Son as well as the old covenant: “*Nam ut Vetus Testamentum non Patris tantum est, verum et Filii; ita gratia non Filii solum est, set et Patris, et communia omnia*”, *Sancti Joannis Chrysostomi Opera*, 13 vols. (Paris, 1839), 10.790. He also discussed the relationship of the old covenant to the new with respect to elements of continuity and discontinuity and regarded the Old Testament saints as having the same kind of faith as those in the new (12.204–205; 9.561 etc.). Tertullian also made use of the idea [see, E. Ferguson, “The Covenant Idea in the Second

unity, and explain the differences, between the Old and New Testaments. Secondly, they saw the covenant soteriologically as one eternal covenant in Christ manifest throughout all ages from the time of Adam. Thirdly, there was a dual emphasis in their presentation of the covenant. It was a unilateral promise of grace given sovereignly by God, but it also required a response of faith and obedience from man, though this response was only by divine enabling and not by any natural inherent power resident in fallen man. Fourthly, in the case of Augustine, there was a definite use of the idea of covenant in a legal sense, though still in a context of “grace”, with respect to Adam in his unfallen state. Finally, again in Augustine especially, there was a close association of the covenant with baptism, so that it is erroneous to locate the origin of the idea of the covenant in this connection in the Zurich reformation.¹³⁶ Baker was far off the mark when he declared that “Bullinger’s idea of the covenant was not Augustine’s. Augustine’s was a theology of testament, not a notion of bilateral covenant,” and equally so when he went on to say that “none of the church fathers, save perhaps Irenaeus, developed any sort of bilateral, conditional covenant notion. It was a theology of testament that Bullinger discovered in the fathers, not a theology of covenant”.¹³⁷ There was ample scope in the fathers, as in the Scriptures, for discovering both the idea of unilateral promise and bilateral covenant, and it would be more true to say that the Reformers, including Bullinger, followed them in both.

Century”, *Texts and Testaments: Critical Essays on the Bible and Early Church Fathers*, W. E. March (San Antonio, 1980) 148–150].

¹³⁶ Baker, *Bullinger and the Covenant*, 1–3.

¹³⁷ Baker, *Bullinger and the Covenant*, 20, 23.

An Introduction to Two Thousand Years of Jewish Evangelism

John S. Ross*

**In October, 2002 Rev. John Ross delivered the following as a popular, requested lecture at the Maritime Reformed Institute meetings. Rev. Ross spent the last seventeen years as the executive secretary of Christian Witness to Israel before returning to the pastorate in November, 2002 at Greyfriars Free Church of Scotland, Inverness. He is also working on a Ph.D. thesis on the history of Jewish evangelism through Highland Theological College and has contributed several scholarly articles on this subject.*

1. JESUS AND THE LOST SHEEP OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL

During his ministry on earth Jesus appointed that the Gospel was to be directed primarily to ordinary Jewish people, “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt 10:6; 15:24). His ministry was directed to the poor, the blind, the lame, the diseased, those who wept, those who were widowed, the demonised, the persecuted, the captives, the weary and heavy laden, those ignorant of the law, prostitutes, tax collectors, publicans and sinners. Many had lost their place in society through repression, exploitation or discrimination. At the same time they were the victims of circumstances and the perpetrators of unacceptable, immoral and unlawful practices and lifestyles. His encounters with such people (unlike the religious leaders) are consistently depicted in terms of messianic compassion (Mark. 1:42; 6:34; 8:2; 9:22; Matt. 14:14; 20:34) which was by no means sentimental and uncritical (Matt. 11:20), but included a clear call to repentance (Matt. 4:17; Mark. 1:15, 6:12; Luke 13:3,5).

Jesus enjoyed considerable popularity among the Galilean people, who, with a passion for sensationalism and material gain (John 6:26–27) would turn out in large numbers to witness his miracles and hear his teaching (Cf. Matt. 16:9–10, Mark 2:4; 5:27; Luke 5:1). In Jerusalem, too, great crowds heard him with delight (Mark 13:37) especially when his teaching consisted of criticism of the established teachers (Mark 13:37–40).

Jesus, sending his disciples to these “lost sheep” (Matt. 9:35–10:42), knew how fickle they were, and warned the Twelve that their mission would be difficult. They would face hatred and opposition (Matt. 10:17–21, 22–23), their words and works would be divisive as they called for unswerving loyalty to Jesus (Matt. 10:21, 34–39). At the end of his earthly ministry few remained faithful to him, and even many of the disciples deserted him.

2. THE APOSTLES, THEIR FRIENDS AND SUCCESSORS.

After the Ascension of Jesus the witness of the apostles to the Jewish community was marked with outstanding success. In only one day, the Jewish feast of Shavuot (Pentecost), three thousand Jewish people were baptised (Acts 3:41), and each day following “the Lord added to their number” (Acts 3:47), until over five thousand men believed, not counting women and children. No section of the Jewish community lay outside the reach of the Good News, even “...many of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7). With the transformation of the Sanhedrin’s leading hit-man, Saul of Tarsus, first century Judaism was shaken to its core.

Paul’s theology and practice of Jewish mission.

(i.) *The theological primacy of Jewish mission.* Romans 1:16. The meaning of *πρωτον* (first). *TDNT* – “*requiring special notice*”. A clue to understanding the meaning of *first* in Rom. 1 & 2 is Matt. 6:33. In seeking *first* “his kingdom” believers are not merely giving the Lord the first hour of each day or the first day of the week. They are placing the kingdom at the very centre of their lives – it is the hub around which their lives revolve.

Likewise, witness to Israel lies at the heart of the continuing history of redemption and the outworking of God's missionary purposes in the world. This is corroborated by our Lord's commission in Acts 1:8; the spheres of missionary activity indicated are *concurrent* not consecutive. It is the abiding commission of Christ to his Church for all time. Note the use of the present continuous tense.

(ii.) *Paul's missionary strategy in Acts.* (First a warning! Acts is transitional and it is unsafe to develop doctrine or practice from Acts alone, without the corroboration of the epistles, the normative books of the New Testament. That is why we started by looking at Romans 1:16.) The important chapters are: 13:5, 6; 14; 14:1; 17:2; 17:10; 17:16–17; 18:4; 19:8 etc. In 28:17 Paul calls first for the Jewish leaders to visit him, cf. in light of Romans 1:11f. Of course having preached to the Jewish community there often was polarisation and, on the part of some, rejection, so Paul then “turns from” the Jewish people to the Gentiles. But this turning away is never total or permanent, it is always local and specific, and in response to the rejection by a particular community. What I find challenging and significant and of abiding relevance is that Paul so operates *not* as the Apostle to the Circumcision but as the Apostle to the Gentiles! In other words, Paul is setting out a paradigm (a model or standard of procedure) not just for Jewish mission but world mission – his witness to the Jews is integral and strategic in reaching the Gentile community.

After the Apostles.

It was a miracle that Jews who believed in Jesus and Jews who did not could co-exist in the synagogue throughout the terrible years of Roman vengeance against Palestine (c. AD 67–74). In 67 a general rebellion broke out against Rome's tyranny. Vespasian the Emperor sent his son Titus to crush it. (What followed is probably to be seen as the fulfilment of much of Matt. 24 and of the book of Revelation too. A better knowledge of Jewish Christianity would help us to understand such prophetic material in the NT). In 70 the Temple was destroyed and

Jerusalem razed to the ground. The next year, Titus held a triumphant procession through Rome in which the ritual objects of the temple, and its leaders, were displayed. In 74 the last Jewish resistance ceased as Masada fell.

The serious tensions between Jewish Christians and their fellow Jews did not become terminal until around 132–135 AD when Jewish Christians refused to support the attempt by Bar Kochba, the false messiah, to overthrow Roman power. Their refusal to support Bar Kochba was largely due to his earlier persecution of their people. As a result of the introduction into the Synagogue liturgy of the *Shemoneh 'Esreh*, a curse against those who had not supported Bar Kochba, Christians were now unable to attend synagogue worship. From then on witness could only be conducted from outside of the community, for no believer in Jesus could attend a synagogue where maledictions against the Messiah and his people were part of the liturgy.

As throughout the wider Roman empire the Good News was welcomed by more and more Gentiles, so the cultural balance shifted. The Hebrew Scriptures came to be considered as inferior to the Greek language and Greek philosophical traditions became the accepted framework for Christian reflection.

Dialogue with the Jewish people was often carried on in a bitter spirit. From the second to the sixth century, there emerged a whole body of writings entitled *Adversos Judaeos* (*Against the Jews*). Justin Martyr's *Dialogue With Trypho The Jew* (c.160 AD) was a little softer than most. Others, like Chrysostom, sought, often with deplorable arguments, to justify the suffering that had befallen the Jewish nation. It became increasingly difficult to find an authentic and gracious presentation of the Gospel to Jewish people. Augustine of Hippo was almost a lone voice when he called the Church to preach "...with great love for the Jews. Let us not proudly glory against the broken branches; let us rather reflect by whose grace it is, and by how much mercy, and upon what root we have been grafted".

3. THE MIDDLE AGES

As people like Isodore of Seville wrote his book *Against the Jews*, and Raymond of Martini contributed his *Muzzle for the*

Jews there were few attempts to respect the integrity of the Jewish people. On the contrary, the Middle Ages were a time when Jews found their lives held in disregard and many perished in the Crusades. Under duress, large numbers of Jews became nominal Christians. However, coercion cannot account for all who turned to Jesus. In twelfth century England so many Jews professed Christianity that William II, probably for economic reasons, endeavoured unsuccessfully to turn them back to Judaism. Under Henry II centres were opened to care for those who had been ejected from their ghettos because they had embraced Christianity. In 1290, through a cynical measure calculated to raise the standing of the king, the Jews were expelled from England and all debts owed to them were cancelled.

4. THE REFORMATION AND THE PURITANS

During the early part of the Reformation Martin Luther entertained the hope that the Jews, who had endured mistreatment at the hands of the medieval papacy, would join him in working for religious reform. To win them for the Reformation he wrote a tract entitled *That Christ was born a Jew*. When the Jews rebuffed his overtures, Luther adopted a embittered attitude towards them thus preparing the way for future anti-Semitism. However, preaching within a few hours of his death Luther more or less returned to his former compassion, telling his congregation, “we have to...bring them to the Christian faith that they may receive the true Messiah who is their flesh and blood.”

John Calvin generally had a more benevolent view of the Jews; although at times his remarks could be acerbic, he nevertheless taught that the Bible indicated a time when Israel would be restored by coming to faith in their Messiah.

Among Jews who came to believe in Jesus during the second wave of the Reformation was John Immanuel Tremellius (1510–1580), who became professor of Old Testament in Heidelberg and one of the compilers of the Heidelberg Catechism. Following Calvin, many, such as the Dutch theologian Voetius (1588–1676) and the English Puritans, emphasised the Biblical prophesies and encouraged prayer for the

conversion of the Jews. Whilst they did not themselves engage in missionary activity among the Jews, the Puritan belief in a future spiritual restoration significantly motivated later missionary developments. Puritan philo-Semitism created such a climate as to make it possible for Oliver Cromwell in 1655 to allow again Jewish re-settlement in England.

5. THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES

If England had not always been a comfortable refuge for Jewish people, in the northern kingdom of Scotland it was different. Scottish acquaintance with Jewish people probably dates from about 1290, when Jews found a refuge in Scotland after the violent expulsion of the English Jewish community. Other Scots made acquaintance with Jewish people through pilgrimage, trade and travel. The minutes of the Edinburgh town council record the goodwill shown to David Brown, a Jewish trader, who, in 1691, applied to the city fathers for permission to live and trade in the city. Hitherto only Christians had any privileges within the city of Edinburgh or suburbs. However, Brown was given permission because the city fathers held that:

Jews as such are not to be considered or treated as other infidels. They being the ancient people of God of the seed of Abraham...they are beloved for their fathers [*sic*] sake upon which and several other accounts it is that they are allowed the liberty of trade in places of greatest trade where the reformed religion is professed.¹

In England the universities were only open to members of the Church of England, thus excluding Jews from following academic courses. In Scotland however there were no such restrictions and so closer contact became possible for Scottish students, including those training for the Christian ministry, when

¹ Cited by John Cosgrove, "Scottish Jewry" in Stephen W. Massil, ed. *The Jewish Yearbook 5760-5761* (Valentine Mitchell, 2000), p.12.

in the late eighteenth century Jewish students started to attend the Scottish universities. By 1780 there was an established Jewish community in Scotland, although not religiously organised until some years later (1816 Edinburgh, 1823 Glasgow).

During the eighteenth century the first steps were taken to establish organised witness and in this Scottish Christians took a lead. Bizarre though it may seem to us today, in North America, David Brainerd was originally employed by the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SSPCK), his task was to preach the Gospel to native Americans, who were then believed to be descended from the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. Brainerd's mentor Jonathan Edwards and a Scottish minister from Cambuslang called M'Culloch entered into a trans-Atlantic prayer pact, the Concert for Prayer, for the spread of the Gospel, particularly to the Jews.

In 1742, under George Whitefield's ministry, there was a revival at Cambuslang, near Glasgow. One of the converts, Claudius Somers, became one of M'Culloch's elders and the maternal grandfather of a certain Claudius Buchanan. Buchanan, born in 1766, was baptised by the elderly M'Culloch, then seventy-five years of age. As a young man he ran away from home, was converted in London, became a brilliant student at Cambridge, a protégé of Charles Simeon, and a curate to John Newton, later becoming a chaplain to the East India company and perhaps the first British missionary to the Jews. He visited the Beni Israel Jews around Bombay and the Cochin Jews of the Malabar coast, witnessing to them of their Messiah, and collecting Hebrew manuscripts. Buchanan was highly influential both in England and Scotland, contributing directly to the establishment in 1809 of the London Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Jews now Church's Ministry Among Jewish People (CMJ) and indirectly to what is now Christian Witness to Israel (CWI).

Meanwhile on the continent Moravian missionaries made an impact on the Jews of Saxony who "accustomed to bitter treatment, expressed their amazement at the kindness shown to them by the Moravians". In 1728 in Halle, under Professor John Henry Callenberg, the *Institutum Judaicum* was established for

the instruction of Jewish Christians and the training of missionaries to the Jewish community. Two of whom, Midman and Monitus, made the first recorded attempt to reach Hungarian Jews with the Gospel but who were rapidly forced to withdraw by the intolerant Habsburg authorities.

In 1809 there was established The London Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Amongst the Jews. This was originally an inter-denominational work, including both Anglicans and Dissenters (mainly London based Presbyterians connected to the Church of Scotland). It was strongly supported in Scotland, where many auxiliary societies were established to raise finances for the work and to pray for its success.

One of the London Society's foundational principles has been summarised in the following statement:

It is the object of the London Society for promoting Christianity among the Jews, to limit themselves to the simple object of convincing their Jewish Brethren that Jesus is the Messiah, the saviour of the world; leaving them, when thus instructed, to search the Scriptures, and judge for themselves, respecting all inferior points on which Christians themselves are not agreed.²

This was interpreted to mean that Jewish converts of the mission would be encouraged to decide for themselves, which Christian denomination they should join. A policy which was believed would have enabled all Christians to work together. However, the work was so successful that many Jewish people asked for baptism. A dispute broke out as to which denomination they were to be baptised into; were the new converts Anglicans or non-Anglicans? As the work rapidly grew, a very large debt was accumulated by the Society. Anglicans supporters indicated

² Anon., "The annual report of the London Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Among the Jews" in *Edinburgh Christian Instructor*, 10 (April, 1815), pp. 282f.

that if the work did not become totally Anglican they would cease to support. A split was inevitable and the non-Anglicans withdrew. Under Anglican control the Society continued to grow and became the largest and most effective Jewish mission of its day.

However, in Presbyterian Scotland support for the Church of England Jewish mission began to wane. Scottish Christians, both in Scotland and south of the border, now sought to establish their own church mission to the Jews. At the 1838 General Assembly of the Church of Scotland it was agreed to establish such a work and four ministers were commissioned to undertake an extensive survey of Jewish communities in Europe and Palestine and advise the General Assembly where would be best to establish the first mission stations. Because of Jewish communities in India and Aden, these places had been suggested as suitable locations for a mission. One person strongly advocated starting a work in Jamaica. Political instability in the region effectively ruled out establishing a work in Palestine. The first missionary was Daniel Edward, who was sent to Iasi, Romania. In 1841 Dr John (Rabbi) Duncan and his team arrived in Budapest, Hungary. Other stations included Constantinople (Istanbul).

In November 1842 Robert Murray M'Cheyne, one of the four ministers sent out by the Church of Scotland, was preaching at communion services in the National Scots Church, Regent Square, where his friend James Hamilton was minister. He met with a number of men who had links to the London Society but who had had no choice but to withdraw from it when it became a Church of England Society. Hamilton and M'Cheyne were influential in establishing at that time The British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Among the Jews (now CWI).

Around the same time Jewish missionary work was also started by the Irish Presbyterians and the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists. In Europe, by the end of the first half of the nineteenth century, witness to Jewish people was being carried by agencies from Germany, Switzerland, and Norway. By the end of the century Jewish missions were the very centre of the Church's missionary activity. Even missionary leaders, called by God to

labour in other fields, still had the Jews on their heart. For example, Hudson Taylor the founder of China Inland Mission (now Overseas Missionary Fellowship) sent each year his first missionary donation to the work of John Wilkinson, inscribed on the back with the words of Romans 1:16, “to the Jew first”.

6. THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

A great harvest resulted from the work of the nineteenth century, earning it the reputation “as the most fruitful of all missionary work”. By the nineteen thirties, in Hungary alone it was estimated that there were over 100,000 Christians of Jewish descent. Austria had 17,000 “Jesus believing Jews”, Poland 37,000, Russia 60,000, and the USA 20,000.

All across Europe, throughout the 20s and 30s, Jewish people attended church services, listened to talks and discussed the claims of Jesus the Jew with missionaries. By 1945 the Nazi’s Final Solution had wiped over 6,000,000 Jewish men, women and children from the face of the earth. Into the death camps had streamed the transports carrying a cargo devoted to destruction and along with Orthodox and assimilated Jews were those who believed in Jesus. Even in Auschwitz, the Lord did not leave himself without witnesses.

Since the Holocaust leaders in the Jewish community, with a bitterness never before experienced, have misrepresented Jewish evangelism as an act of hostility aimed at destroying the very community it seeks to address. Traditional missionary societies felt intimidated by such outbursts and their approach became retiring and low-key. In the nineteen sixties some young American Jews rebelled against tradition. They opened their minds and hearts to someone of whom their parents disapproved, Jesus. They wanted to find ways in which they could share their new faith and this resulted in a fresh, innovative and authentically Jewish evangelistic approach. This in turn re-invigorated some of the older societies and has resulted in many Jewish people coming to faith.

So at the start of the third millennium, both in Israel and in the Diaspora, there is a vibrant and articulate community of Jewish people who find that Jesus is all that the Hebrew prophets

claimed for him and more. So great is the impression made by this movement today that the Jewish community is finding it more and more difficult to deny its claim to be both Christian and authentically Jewish. One Rabbi writing to *The Jerusalem Report* lamented, “we have little hope of stemming what is fast becoming a ‘Jewish Christian’ reality”. To use what seems to me an entirely appropriate Jewish expression – Hallelujah!

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A Report on Theological Education and Travels in Eastern Europe

Jack C. Whytock

In May, 2002 I was invited to teach a course on Presbyterian Polity at the Károlyi Gáspár Institute of Theology and Missions in Miskolc, Hungary. During this trip I honoured this commitment and also had opportunity to learn more about evangelical and Reformed work in Eastern and Central Europe. This report will highlight some of my findings.



Miskolc is a city which is strategically located in eastern Hungary near the Romanian border. Thus the students come from three countries: Ukraine, Romania and Hungary, though all belong to the Hungarian people group in these respective lands. This Institute is quite new having been only founded in 1992 and belongs to the new Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and

Eastern Europe. This evangelical Presbyterian Church holds to the Helvetic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Westminster Confession of Faith and is ruled by presbyters. (The use of the title “Presbyterian” in their name shows the contrast with the state church with bishops.) The Institute is named in honour of the great Hungarian Protestant Reformer, Károlyi Gáspár, who translated the bible into Hungarian in three years. It was published in 1591 shortly before his death.

In the classroom I was struck by the dedication of these students and pastors who were sacrificially serving Christ Jesus. After my return to Canada I was glad to hear of the first baptism service of three Gypsies by ministers of this mission work. The students were faithful in class and I was blessed with very capable translators. I also did several lectures on homiletics and had opportunities to preach there.

One of the most recent publications from the staff at this Institute in Miskolc is the first Hungarian translation of J. Gresham Machen’s *Christainity and Liberalism*. This has often been viewed as a classic work here in the West but was unavailable in these Hungarian speaking lands. Imré Szöke wrote an introductory essay to accompany this work. I received several favourable comments about this essay and asked Imré if he would translate it into English for our *Haddington House Journal*. He consented and here it is. (I actually met Imré in 2001 in Philadelphia at the International Conference of Reformed Churches where he was there as an observer, so my 2002 trip to Hungary was our second meeting.) Imré’s article which follows this report bridges several things not only in our *Journal* but also in our work at Haddington House. It is an essay helping establish the context for this new Hungarian translation of Machen’s work, but it also helps us in the Haddington House community to learn about churches abroad and their theological work. It gives Imré’s personal insights into Hungary and helps us understand this people group and the context for ministry. We are grateful to Imré for translating this essay for us to read.

Now to return to my tour of Eastern and Central Europe. After leaving Miskolc I was hosted in Budapest by another minister of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. Miskolc and

Budapest to me are cities in contrast. Budapest is more in “western” Hungary and is closer to Austria. It is a fascinating city. I toured the Bible Museum at the Károlyi Gáspár University of the Hungarian Reformed Church (this is the “state” Protestant Church) and many historic sites before leaving for the Czech Republic by train. A highlight was walking across the chain link bridge built by Scottish engineers to link Buda and Pest. (As I walked across the bridge I thought about the work of Rabbi Duncan and the Jewish Mission.)

My train route was north along the Danube River into Slovakia through its capital – Bratislava where I was joined in my coach by a Salesian priest from Prague. The only common vocabulary we could find was some German, but he handed me some papers in English so I devoured these. The train route meandered through Slovakia and on into the Czech Republic, through the Bohemian forest, Moravia, and into Prague. The purpose of my time in Prague was to meet Pavel Hosěk at the Evangelical Theological College and to learn about Evangelical theological work in the Republic. This College is operated by the Brethren (not Brethren as in Plymouth, but the word is used here to describe sympathizers of Jan Hus, the martyr of 1415). Here I met with two faculty and was graciously hosted in their seminary. The Church lost their seminary building in 1948 when it was seized by the Communists. In 1990 they were awarded a building which they sold and have built this facility. I was also taken to two of their new church plants to talk to students in English and make observations.

Both Brethren churches I was taken to were, from my impressions, wonderfully balanced evangelical church plants. At the first church my translator was a Canadian who runs youth camps in Moravia. The second Brethren church I attended on Sunday evening was very well attended with mainly young students. The prayer meeting at the end of the service was especially moving. I had hoped to visit the new Baptist seminary in Prague but time did not allow. However, I did tour the historic Charles University founded in 1348, with three faculties of theology.

My host, Pavel Hosěk, is sponsored by Mission to the World of the Presbyterian Church in America, and he is a Czech citizen. His parents were atheists as he was until age 20. He was able to help sort out a highly complex ecclesiastical and educational scene to this Canadian. Pavel teaches Systematic Theology and is also in the Department of Augustinian Theology, reflecting an older European Hussite tradition.

One of the very exciting works in Prague is the Institute for Christian Studies that serves in various universities and colleges there. Dr. Ted Turnau (supported in part by Ballston Centre ARP Church, Ballston Spa, New York) is another PCA missionary working in Prague but entering the national universities teaching apologetics and worldview courses. I commend the work of the Institute and their commitment to evangelism in this city. Their work in Prague takes the name of The Komensky Institute.



Dr. Morton Smith had encouraged me to meet with Rev. Sid Anderson, the Presbyterian Church in America missionary in the Czech Republic, who is involved with a new seminary. Unfortunately, while I was there he was on furlough and we never met.

I appreciated seeing the way theological education and training is being developed in the Czech Republic now following the Velvet Revolution. It was interesting to see that almost the entire library at the Evangelical Theological College was in English as was also the case at the Károlyi Gáspár Institute in Miskolc. This is reflective of the rise of English as the Latin of our day. The other very striking thing about theological work in Hungary and in the Czech Republic was the youthfulness of all the staff – another sign of an emerging church after Communism and liberalism.

Pavel Hosěk reviewed with me the developmental stages of how in 1989 they reopened the Evangelical Brethren Seminary by distance courses then in 1994 they began to supplement this with day classes and now things are a combination of both modes with more teachers proving a fuller opportunity to the student body which averages about 10 new students each year.

Like any trip one must be selective and there were other places which I would have liked to have visited. Two which I mention and inform our readers of are The Academy for Reformational Theology (Die Akademie für Reformatorische Theologie) in Marburg, Germany and the Reformed Theological Institute in Bucharest, Romania. The Academy in Marburg is a Presbyterian sponsored seminary with three full time professors plus guest lecturers. Marburg is home to the world's first Reformed University. The Institute in Romania is assisted by the British Evangelical Council and has had several noteworthy conservative Presbyterians teach there.

Now to the article which follows. It is a slightly adapted introductory essay by Imré Szöke to the newly translated work of Machen's *Christianity and Liberalism*. Imré offers here his personal applications which he takes from Machen's life and offers these to the current Hungarian church situation. It would certainly make for an interesting discussion group in a church adult class or home group. His concluding thesis is that of secession – an issue which has always met with a variety of responses – Scotland and the Netherlands being two parallel situations. I encourage you to not only take this article up but all the other articles and have a discussion group one evening. As

we were going to press I read J.I. Packer's recent article in *Christianity Today* (Jan.21, 2003) entitled, "Why I Walked: Sometimes loving a denomination requires you to fight" and could not help but think of Szöke's essay. I would also direct the reader to two works by Francis A. Schaeffer which should be read together with Imré Szöke's article: *The Church Before the Watching World* and *The Mark of the Christian*. Do not be put off by the copyright years 1970 and 1971 because in many ways these two works by Schaeffer have a classic ring about them. I am convinced that you could have a very engaging study group with this suggestion.

I thank the Lord for the wonderful opportunity to teach at the Károlyi Gáspár Institute of Theology and Missions in Miskolc, Hungary and also to travel and have meetings in the Czech Republic. What a joy to meet fellow believers.

Machen, Liberalism and Personal Insights into the “Hungarian” Lands

Imré Szöke*

** Rev. Imré Szöke is a minister with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe and the Associate Director of the Károlyi Gáspár Institute of Theology and Missions in Miskolc, Hungary. For further details please read the preceding report to this article.*

The name of the American Presbyterian theologian, J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937), is not so well known in Hungary. But this should not be the case since it is of such importance to know those in recent times who belong to the “cloud of witnesses” spoken of in Hebrews 12:1. We hope that the publication of this book will be of valuable help in this regard. We will see that J. Gresham Machen was not a common gardener theologian. The hope of this publisher is that as a result of the clarity of his distinct message, the Hungarian reader will be enabled to step out of obscurity and hold this theologian in high esteem as one of their favorites.

The book is striking and convincing in its simplicity, consistency and Biblical application. Even Walter Lipmann, a contemporary critic, who was no friend of Biblical Christianity, could not do anything but confess: “It is an admirable book... a cool and stringent defense of orthodox Protestantism... We shall do well to listen to Dr. Machen.”¹ We can look upon the book as an apologetical piece, but it is also an important theological tool providing a reference point for those who want to understand the

¹ Walter Lipmann, *A Preface to Morals* (New York, 1929), p. 32.

fundamental differences between *conservative, Biblical Christianity* and *Liberalism*. Machen is outspoken in regard to everything and a true modern reformer, worthy of that theological heritage which once was represented by Princeton Theological Seminary and later carried forward by Westminster Theological Seminary.



Our book and its introduction deal with a topic which, until now, was mostly treated as a taboo in Hungary. By this we mean that very few writings or books have ever been published with the specific goal of unmasking liberalism. Thus the goal of this introduction is to present in a brief and cogent form the problem of liberalism, by drawing attention to its existence and spiritually detrimental consequences. We also desire to instill within the reader a reformational way of thinking, for this is the burning need of the hour. Paradoxically, many professing Hungarian Christians do not know anything about the existence of liberalism, nor are they able to recognize it. Unfortunately, this is so even among those more seriously-minded. They have grown up on liberalism's poisonous diet which has inevitably been built into their spiritual bodies as "biblical teaching." Liberalism is so endemic that we can hardly perceive it. In a way, "we live and move and have our being" in it. That is why it is extremely important to be acquainted with its characteristics, language, the

factors which helped its propagation and the lessons to be drawn from it in church history. We will try to help in this by using more quotations than usual. In this way we should understand more easily Machen's message for his era, and for today.

Therefore, using Dr. Machen's biography as our blueprint, we will deal with a number of important features of liberalism and the factors which helped its propagation. This will be followed by a brief survey of the American situation. Then we will say a few things about the Hungarian situation. We ask our readers to join us and participate in this spiritual "circuit."

Brief Biography of J. Gresham Machen

J. Gresham Machen was born in 1881 in Baltimore, Maryland. He commenced his higher education at Johns Hopkins University and continued it at Princeton Theological Seminary. After earning degrees at these places, he spent one year in Germany at the universities of Marburg and Göttingen. Among the Americans, three great Presbyterian theologians of the 19th century: Charles Hodge, James H. Thornwell² and Benjamin B. Warfield made a significant impression upon him. Warfield was also his professor. Between 1906 and 1929 Machen was professor of New Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary. With all his strength he opposed the intended reorganization of Princeton Seminary by the liberals. Unfortunately, he was not successful in this. Following this reorganization he resigned from his professorship at Princeton. From 1929 until his death, he taught at Westminster Theological Seminary where he undertook a lion's share of the work in establishing this institution. Furthermore, he was a founding member and president of the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions, established in 1933. He had a decisive role in starting two famous periodicals. We have in mind here *Christianity Today* and *The Presbyterian Guardian*. In December of 1936 he set out on a preaching tour in the state of North Dakota when he suddenly

² For a more detailed account of the interesting influence of James H. Thornwell upon Machen see: Bradley J. Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1991), pp. 31-36.

became seriously ill. In spite of this he held strictly to the agreed schedule. Over the next four days his health rapidly deteriorated as a result of severe pneumonia and, on January 1, 1937, departed to be with his Savior. At this time J. Gresham Machen was not in the ministry of the Presbyterian Church.³ By the use of “church discipline” the liberals who had by this time taken control of the church, “rewarded” his faithfulness to the Word and the Confessions by removing him from the ministry. Of course, this was due to his firm stand for the Word of God. One of his favorite sayings was: “There is no such thing as presenting truth without attacking error.”

In spite of his outspokenness, Dr. Machen was known as a humble Christian by his contemporaries. This was clearly seen by his submissive attitude towards the long and often humiliating “disciplinary” procedures. He endured the most unimaginable gossip concerning himself and his family, for example, that he had become wealthy by distributing liquor. That is why he was even called a “beer baron” behind his back.⁴ Needless to say, such gossip had no basis whatsoever. He was very fair with everyone; no one ever heard a hurtful remark from him. That is why even his theological adversaries counted his death a loss and spoke with much appreciation concerning him in their statements. His remarkable testimony was recognized mostly by his posterity.

This is how they wrote about him in a Baltimore journal following his death:

What caused Dr. Machen to quit the Princeton Theological Seminary and found a seminary of his own was his complete inability, as a theologian, to square the disingenuous evasions of Modernism with the fundamentals of Christian doctrine. He saw clearly that the only effect that could follow diluting and polluting Christianity in the

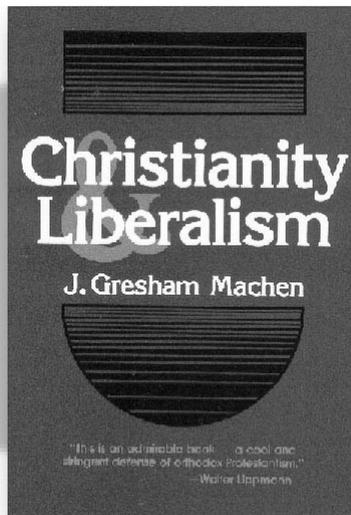
³ Here, and in what follows, when the term *Presbyterian Church* is used, this always refers to the *Presbyterian Church in the USA*, unless otherwise stated.

⁴ William White Jr., *Van Til—Defender of the Faith* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville-New York, 1979), p. 55.

Modernist manner would be its *complete abandonment* and *ruin*. Either it was true or it was not true. If, as he believed, it was true, then there could be *no compromise* with persons who sought to whittle away its essential postulates, however respectable their motives.

Thus [Machen] fell out with the reformers who have been trying, in late years, to convert the Presbyterian Church into a kind of literary and social club, devoted vaguely to good works... His one and only purpose was to hold [the Presbyterian Church] resolutely to what he conceived to be the *true faith*. When that enterprise met with opposition he fought vigorously, and though he lost in the end and was forced out of Princeton it must be manifest that he marched off to Philadelphia with all the honours of war.⁵ (*italics mine*)

Machen's main published works in chronological order are: *The Origins of Paul's Religion* (1921), *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923), *New Testament Greek for Beginners* (1923), *What is Faith?* (1925), *The Virgin Birth of Christ* (1930), *The Christian Faith in the Modern World* (1936), *The Christian View of Man* (1937), *God Transcendent* (1949).



⁵ H. L. Mencken, "Dr. Fundamentalist" *Baltimore Evening Sun*, Jan. 18, 1937.

The Distinctive Characteristics of Liberalism⁶

What is characteristic about theological liberalism? What are the factors promoting its spread? How can a church which has become liberal be recognized? We are looking for answers to these questions. In what follows we only wish to list some basic viewpoints which we trust, in the course of reading this book, will become all the more crystallized. Let us see, then, the main distinctive characteristics to be attributed to liberalism.

First and foremost, there is the destruction and then replacement of the Bible's authority. In this regard liberals take aim at many things (inspiration, inerrancy, authenticity), but very especially, the supernatural origin and historicity of the Bible. When liberals first made their appearance, they made a wrong presupposition as a starting point. They thought that if the Bible needs to be defended, then let this be in just a few areas. This way the task will be easier. If we do not insist upon the trustworthiness of the Bible, if we do not emphasize the authenticity as well as the historicity of the biblical stories and miracles, then Christianity may become a more saleable product in the intellectual marketplace. Possibly mission will also become easier. However, this presupposition proved to be completely false. According to *J. I. Packer*, Christian revelation—although supernatural from beginning to end—proffers and mediates a complete worldview, which constitutes a connecting and intelligible whole.⁷ To upset this by accepting certain parts and doctrines, while on the other hand marginalizing others, is folly. But liberalism goes further. While on the one hand it destroys the authority of the Bible, it works hard at building its own new central system of authority. Therefore, in the liberal church, the determinative factor substituting the Bible will be the authority of a kind of Protestant “teaching office.” This may be

⁶ This section takes into consideration the peculiar characteristics of the Hungarian situation. While these marks may be common knowledge to the Western Christian reader, it is by no means obvious to Hungarian pastors and Christians to whom they minister.

⁷ J. I. Packer, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God* (William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1964), p. 162.

the authority of the synod, the episcopacy, the theological professor(s) or some other constituted ecclesiastical forum.

The *second* distinguishing characteristic of liberalism is the redistribution or reformulation of Christian truths. Let us acquaint ourselves with this liberal language by looking at the following brief extract from the work of one liberal within the Hungarian Reformed Church (HRC):

Let us accept with *openness* the new challenges and allow these to *question* our knowledge to date. He who confesses, however, that his faith and life philosophy does not require supplementing, or he who does not desire to step beyond established fundamental truths is a fundamentalist and dogmatic... This also means, however, that *he must redistribute the truths of faith in every age...* It would not be good if we bound our faith to the text since, by this we would come into conflict with the Reformation. That is to say, the Reformation acknowledged that *the Holy Spirit is He who makes the Scripture revelation for us*. Here the following question comes up: Does the Scripture itself in its every part contain the eternal message? To this *we must answer no...* *It makes no sense* to regard those expositions and applications which Paul held to and viewed, simply as *eternal rules*.⁸ (italics mine)

Here it is suggested that, in place of eternal truths, something new must be sounded out. Furthermore, it is taught that the truth is not unchangeable and eternal in essence, but something new. This thought, taken from Heidegger, is very much built into the liberal world-view. Consequently, since the Reformation there has never been so much confusion and uncertainty in the Protestant camp with regard to what to believe and in which direction to progress. According to J. I. Packer, further negative implications and consequences in relation to the

⁸ Sándor Szathmáry, *A Reformáció Alapkérdései* [*Basic Questions about the Reformation*], *Református Egyház* [*Reformed Church*], Vol. XLVII, No. 10, 1995. Szathmáry is a famous HRC “research professor” who has written and translated a number of liberal books. Ironically, most of these works have been published by John Calvin Publishing.

church include the undermining of preaching, weakening of faith, a shallow spiritual life and a falling away from systematic Bible reading.⁹

We name as the *third* important distinguishing characteristic, the effective obsolescence of the Confessions. This has essentially three outcomes: the *outright rejection* (on occasions concealed) of the Confessions, the *substitution* of a new Confession and the “*revision*” or “*new interpretation*” of the old Confessions.¹⁰ The liberal churches certainly submit orally to an insistence upon the Confessions, but they are far from accepting them in their hearts. They pay only lip service to the Confessions. They treat the Confessions merely as *historical documents* which are not normative for today and whose stipulations are not authoritative. A contemporary theologian exposes this erroneous outlook thus:

The old doctrinal affirmations, the confessions of faith from the period of classical orthodoxy as well as the creeds from the patristic period that sought to summarize biblical truth, are now typically considered *naive and completely out of date*. They do no longer serve as the means of defining what should be confessed, even if they are retained for liturgical purposes. The whole idea of confession, in consequence, has shifted from truth with an *external and objective* referent to intuition which is *internal and subjective*.¹¹ (italics mine)

We only note here as an unfortunate example that the theological approach to foundational principles used in, and the language of the Hungarian introduction to, the Second Helvetic Confession are coloured by the liberal mindset.

⁹ J. I. Packer, *God Speaks to Man: Revelation and the Bible* (The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1965), pp. 18-19.

¹⁰ Allan Harman, *The Place and Significance of the Reformed Confessions Today* (Banner of Truth Magazine, January, 1973), pp. 29-30.

¹¹ David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology* (W. B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1992), p. 118.

We emphasize as the *fourth* distinguishing characteristic, the trap of terminology, i.e. that cunning use of words with which well-meaning Christians are misled. Liberalism, in a similar way to the sects, makes use of a storehouse of devices in which is found linguistic diversion. Just as a Jehovah's Witness can look us in the eye and say that he believes that Jesus is the Son of God (but by this he understands that Jesus is a created being who has a beginning and is not of the same substance of and equal with the Father, but a created archangel, etc.), similarly, liberal theology can also speak about Jesus Christ (the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith), but this Jesus is not the Jesus of the Bible. This deceptive language has become obvious in the case of a good number of liberal theologians. Dr. Bernard Ramm has also pointed out that, for example, Paul Tillich in the process of radically redefining theological language, has caused complete confusion.¹² We need to keep in mind, therefore, that liberal theologians certainly speak about the Word, revelation, redemption, and the resurrection, but with them these theological concepts possess a completely different meaning and content. If we are not aware of this, a casual acceptance of their sermons and lectures will continue unchallenged. For the reality is that such lectures speak of something entirely different from what we think.

Liberalism's *fifth* distinguishing characteristic is related to its spread. This always percolates from the top downwards into the church. Liberalism appears under the label of scholarship so that first of all, the theological institutions submit to it. This is then followed by the clergy and later by the entire church. Harold Lindsell states his view on this as follows:

In almost every case, unorthodoxy has its beginnings in the *theological seminaries*. They are the fountainhead of the churches. *As the seminaries go, so go the churches*. Almost inevitably, graduates of a theological institution reflect the viewpoints of their teachers. More than that, they usually go beyond their teachers, and carry their

¹² Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults* (Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1985), p. 18.

aberrant viewpoints to the farthest extreme. Once the theological seminaries go liberal, it does not take long for the denominations they represent to follow them.¹³
(italics mine)

The spread of the later theological literature also reflects this. It is worth giving some attention to such literature on offer from official ecclesiastical publishers, since the dominant viewpoint with regard to the church can be deduced from this.

With regard to the *sixth* characteristic, we see that liberalism and ecumenism go hand in hand. If the Word does not possess absolute authority, then perhaps other denominations are also right. The *World Missionary Conference* set up in Edinburgh in 1910, already proved to be a bad sign in this direction. For the emphasis there was already upon *unity*, and not biblical *teaching*. If however, we sail forward under the flag of religious pluralism, the Roman Catholic–Lutheran “*Joint Declaration*,” signed on October 31, 1999, should not surprize anyone. If ecumenism is the goal, then what is the purpose of mission? Rather, let us continue with *dialogue*. In other words, as they (the liberals) word it, “Let us waken up, and discover in other religion(s) the hidden and sleeping Christ.” By this they call into question the entire *raison d’être* of Christian mission resting on Biblical foundations.

Let us now examine two factors which promote the spread of liberalism:

We would name as the *first* factor, indifference towards systematic theology (dogmatics). The Presbyterian theologian, Gordon H. Clark, writes concerning this phenomenon as follows: “Theology, once acclaimed ‘*the Queen of the Sciences*,’ today hardly rises to the rank of a scullery maid; it is often held in contempt, regarded with suspicion, or just ignored.”¹⁴ Earnest Christians are saying: “No one is interested in doctrine. Doctrines only divide, there is no need for confessions, only Christ.” Of course, for us there is mystery surrounding the question of who

¹³ Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1976), p. 197.

¹⁴ Gordon H. Clark, *In Defense of Theology* (Mott Media, 1984), p. 3.

this Christ is, what he is like and what he teaches. Unfortunately, there are those who would like to separate the person of Christ from his teachings. Christianity without doctrine, however, is not Christianity at all. Perhaps today's Christians are marked most of all by spiritual infancy and lack of knowledge. That is why it is easy to mislead them, and so frequently they fall into the trap of following persuasive leaders. It is also because of this that they are not fit for the task of filtering out false teaching, or recognizing gradual theological diversion and liberalism. Ultimately, this is why they are incapable of bringing about reformation. They simply do not see the significance of these things.

Secondly, the passive attitude and wait-and-see policy of small evangelical groups within the liberal churches almost promotes the progress of liberalism. This is also betrayed by the inactivity of a quiet pietism and subjective Christianity. Thus liberalism is permitted to spread practically unchallenged in any way. This phenomenon, as we shall see, was most conspicuous in the case of American Presbyterianism.

Let us put forward the question: What is a liberal church like? If we examine such a church we would find that the characteristics and factors discussed above will *always* be present, but for now we consider it beneficial to give attention to a few other points:

1. The church saturated by liberalism slowly becomes a *social institution* oriented to serving. Social work is the determining factor and the general make-up of the church in society, not the fulfillment of a mandate received from Christ. It becomes important to be identified in every dignified secular program. The salient questions for such a church are as follows: What do they think of us? To what degree are we present in society?¹⁵ Thus the goal, through more and more statistical indicators, is to maintain relevance in society. But how many believers could God count in such a church?

¹⁵ See for example, the recent Hungarian census where the material level of interest with respect to state subsidies is by no means negligible.

2. Such a church, being tuned in to the humanistic spirit of the age, specializes in emphasizing *unity and tolerance*. It “fittingly” backs this up with selected portions of Scripture. We, however, would remind the dear reader of the testimony of Luther as he spoke to those who, on the basis of love towards one’s neighbor, wanted to dissuade him from representing Biblical teaching: “Cursed be that love and unity for whose sake the Word of God must be put at stake.”¹⁶ Such a church has long since given up on the exclusiveness of the gospel of Christ.

3. From these latter two observations it follows that in such a church there is no, nor can there be, a place for *church discipline*. The building blocks of the social-nominal church typify the one we are describing, one which cannot submit to the distinguishing characteristics of the true church.

4. Finally, as a Reformed theologian from Holland put it, “In place of *exegesis popularis*, it is rather, *exegesis scholastica* which characterizes preaching in the church.” Instead of the clear, simple preaching and exposition of the gospel, often lofty, scholarly sermons are delivered. The meek listener ponders over these to discover what they are, whether philosophical meditation, or a literary or historical lecture. At such a time, of course, the flock goes home hungry. (C. H. Spurgeon, the great Calvinistic Baptist preacher, condemned this particular brand of preaching thus: “Our task is not to entertain goats, but to feed sheep.”) Let no one misunderstand! The preacher should be a learned person, but we do not want the kind of scholarship which results in the dishonor of God’s Word and leaves the flock without nourishment. Such preaching which is neither Christ-centered nor personal, has no application, and does not call sin by its proper name. Nor does it address the need for repentance or build upon the whole counsel of God’s Word (Acts 20:27).

“Just what is being sketched out here?” the reader may ask. “What is happening in such a church?” Well, it is just what Calvin drafted up in clear details a few hundred years ago. He wrote the following in connection with the false church:

¹⁶ David Hedegard, *Ecumenism and the Bible*, p. 22.

But, as soon as falsehood breaks into the citadel of religion and the sum of necessary doctrine is overturned and the use of the sacraments is destroyed, *surely the death of the church follows*—just as a man’s life is ended when his throat is pierced or his heart mortally wounded.¹⁷ (italics mine)

Although it is rather gruesome to read such comparisons, it is not by chance that Calvin chose these. He wanted to point out that Christians in every age should actively confront those who are cutting the throat of, and inflicting a deadly wound upon, the church. Such people bring about the death of the church, i.e. *the death of the Biblical church*. Liberalism, dear reader, in a similar way to the false church, has done just that. Of course, in the meantime the liberal church as a social institution lives on and is “blossoming.” But let us hear more from the great Reformer:

If the *foundation* of the church is the teaching of the prophets and apostles, which bids believers entrust their salvation to Christ alone—then *take away that teaching*, and how will the building continue to stand? Therefore, the church must tumble down when that sum of religion *dies* which alone can sustain it. Again, if the true church is the pillar and foundation of truth (1Tim. 3:15), it is certain that no church can exist where lying and falsehood have gained sway.¹⁸ (italics mine)

It is important to understand that liberalism perilously affects the essence of Biblical Christianity. Liberalism proclaims another Word, another Christ and another gospel (2 Cor. 11:3-4), and not the eternal gospel (Rev. 14:6). Thus, liberalism is not some insignificant form of methodological exchange of views, but is something completely different. It is concerned with what autonomous *man* thinks about the doctrinal system of the Bible, God, man, revelation, Christ, salvation, the Church, etc. Biblical

¹⁷ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1960), Vol. II., p. 1041.

¹⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, pp. 1041-1042.

Christianity, on the other hand, is concerned with—and stands for—what *God* has revealed about these things. Man’s thinking changes, but what God has revealed is eternal. In this regard, these points are at one with the chapters of this book.

Finally, one more quotation which is also relevant in regard to its timeliness:

For if they are churches, the power of the keys is in their hands; but the keys have an indissoluble bond with the *Word*, which has been *destroyed* from among them... Finally, instead of the ministry of the Word, they have *schools of ungodliness* and a sink of all kinds of errors.¹⁹
(italics mine)

Liberalism has successfully driven out the Word from the church in spite of its continual boasting to be a theology of the Word. The “theology of the Word” rejects the truth that God’s Word, in the objective sense, is the Holy Scriptures. This is one of the roots of the problem, and that is why there is no church discipline. That is why relativism is reigning at every level, and the citadels of liberalism are precisely those theological institutions which Calvin very fittingly describes. Let us not be surprised then at what Christ on one occasion said: “However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8)

As a final thought, let us not forget that while God will later judge individuals *in eternity*, here and now he is judging churches. The Scottish theologian, Maurice Roberts says in this regard, when referring to the letters to the churches in the Book of Revelation: “If these epistles early in the Book of Revelation teach anything, they surely teach us that Jesus Christ *does not dwell* for very long in churches where sin is left undealt with.”²⁰ (italics mine) For Christians in every era “[it is their] constant and continual duty to keep pure the church of God. It is a perpetual

¹⁹ Calvin, *Institutes*, p. 1051.

²⁰ Maurice Roberts, *The Christian’s High Calling* (The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 2000), p. 197.

problem, and no church can afford to be indifferent to it, if it is to expect God's blessing."²¹ In a similar vein, the late professor of Westminster Seminary, R. B. Kuiper, declares:

The church that has grown indifferent to the truth is, to put it mildly, *on its way out*. And a church that knowingly tolerates in its midst denial of the basic truths of the Word of God is itself *guilty* of such denial and by that very token has *ceased being a true church*.²² (italics mine)

Let us understand that it is primarily the church of every age—and not society—that will be divinely assessed and judged in the light of the cross of Christ. This assessment however, is taking place now and not in eternity.

The Battle of American Christianity against Liberalism and Modernism. Machen's Role. Lessons. New Faithful Presbyterian Churches.

In our short historical survey we will just be touching upon some of the more important stages and incidents. In any event, we consider it necessary to mention these in order to better appreciate that world and church background in which J. Gresham Machen lived and labored.

The Presbyterian Church for almost two centuries was a faithful steward of the gifts entrusted to it. In 1729 the synod of this Presbyterian Church received the Westminster Confession of Faith as the subordinate standard by which its practice in matters of faith was to be regulated (this was the so-called *Adopting Act*). By adopting this confession, the ministers of the church were bound to an acceptance of its teaching. The end of the 19th century, however, brought gradual but assertive changes.

²¹ Roberts, *The Christian's High Calling*, p. 201.

²² R. B. Kuiper, *The Glorious Body of Christ* (The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1987), p. 108.

Liberalism akin to that in Europe arrived to the American continent also.

The sliding away of a church from a confessional to a liberal standing is the result of a long process of erosion. We can see this very clearly in the case of the Presbyterian Church. Let us look at how it happened. As a consequence of his liberal views, the synod of the Presbyterian Church in 1893 suspended Dr. Charles A. Briggs, a professor at Union Theological Seminary, from the gospel ministry.²³ Briggs rejected the inerrancy of Scripture and, among other things, believed that in questions of faith the Bible is not the final and only authority. He taught that human reason possesses the same authority as the Scriptures. Briggs imbibed these new doctrines while studying in Germany. He confidently proclaimed:

The Presbyterian Church as a church tolerates *contra-confessional doctrines*... in large numbers of its teachers and pastors... The Westminster System has been virtually *displaced* by the teaching of the dogmatic divines. It is no longer practically the standard of faith of the Presbyterian Church. The *Catechisms are not taught* in our churches, the *Confession is not expounded* in our theological seminaries... There have been *so many departures* from the Standards in all directions, that it is necessary for all parties in the Presbyterian Church to be generous, *tolerant*, and *broad-minded*.²⁴
(italics mine)

In response to the decision of synod, Union Theological Seminary withdrew and suspended itself from the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church. By this means Briggs could retain his professorship and continue to sow the seeds of heresy. Another interesting development was that the Presbyterian Church continued to accept and ordain Union's graduates, so that Briggs

²³ Edwin H. Rian, *The Presbyterian Conflict* (The Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, 1992), p. 9.

²⁴ George P. Hutchinson, *The History Behind the Reformed Presbyterian Church Evangelical Synod* (Mack Publishing Company, Cherry Hill, N. J., 1974), p. 152.

in an indirect way poisoned the church with the teachings of liberalism. (Aside from these events, it is a thought-provoking concept as to what would become of those churches in which questions of discipline and doctrine are not addressed as part of the theological training!)

The seriousness of the situation is illustrated to an even greater extent by the Princeton theological professor, Benjamin B. Warfield (1851-1921) who, in a closing conversation with Machen, compared the church to *rotten, decayed wood*²⁵ which falls and crumbles to pieces where it attempts to imitate the Reformation. Warfield's words have proved to be prophetic. Machen, later writing in a letter to his mother, said that Warfield at that time had hoped that believers would see the dead condition of the church and its cold spirituality and would recognize that a full Christian life could only be lived/worth living outside the then-existing church, in a new Reformed church. The words of our Lord come to mind:

No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one. If he does, he will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. (Luke 5:36-38)

The first assault from the liberal camp came in May, 1922. The famous sermon of Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick (a Baptist pastor) titled: "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" circulated the country and was part of an intentional propaganda campaign. The point worthy of note is that Fosdick was a Baptist who was a minister in a Presbyterian church (by this time the liberal way of thinking had already made room for such an anomaly). A gradual response and long and uncertain disciplinary procedures ensued. Finally, after fairly long delays, Fosdick was dismissed from his Presbyterian congregation. In his declarations

²⁵ Ned. B. Stonehouse, *J. Gresham. Machen: A Biographical Memoir* (William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1954), p. 310.

his liberal convictions were laid open to all. For example, he said this about the Scriptures: “We know that every concept in the Bible has a *primitive* and *simplistic* origin.”²⁶ Elsewhere, in connection with Christ, he urged the conservative camp to “give up your *theological* Christ and give us back our *ethical* mentor.” So much for the convictions of Fosdick.

The Fosdick affair, on the other hand, proved to be only the tip of the iceberg. The publication of the so-called *Auburn Affirmation* (January 9, 1924) was the event which truly shocked Presbyterian believers. The message of the document is worth calling attention to, since a plain reading of it demonstrates both doctrinal confusion and an emphasis on the acceptance of those with differing theological world-views. The declaration was signed by 1,293 ministers of the Presbyterian Church. This is an ornate document of dogmatic slothfulness because those who signed the declaration attacked the teaching of their church in five areas. The debate broke out around questions of the *inspiration* and *inerrancy* of the Bible, the *virgin birth* of Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ’s *propitiation* and sacrificial work of *reconciling* us to God, Christ’s *bodily resurrection* and *ascension*, and *supernatural miracles*. The outcome was a draft declaring that it was not necessary to confess these teachings in order to be an entirely lawful minister of the Presbyterian Church. Now, what does the dear reader think? That some among those who signed the draft were disciplined? *No, not one!* Indeed, the 1924 synod did not even bother to deal with the affair!²⁷ (It is worth noting that in the liberal church there is no doctrinal disciplining! At most it is confessional Christians who are “disciplined!”)

²⁶ Jenő Sebestyén also mentions this in his course on Apologetics (*Korszellem és Kálvinizmus* [The Spirit of the Age and Calvinism], A Budapesti Református Teológia Segélyegylete [The Benevolent Society of the Budapest Reformed Theology], Budapest, 1938, pp. 52-53.)

²⁷ If we take only a glance at the Hungarian Protestant literature, an abundance of material stands at our disposal for compiling a Hungarian version of the *Auburn Affirmation*. The above views have long since been popularized without any hint of disciplinary procedure.

In another regard it is illuminating to know that prior to, and during these events, the Presbyterian Church in a succession of declarations repeated in refrain-like manner, her faithfulness and commitment to the historic confessions (in their case, the Westminster Confession and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms). Such were for example, the 1910, 1916 and 1923 declarations of Synod. Of course, by this time it was mere formality. The only thing these declarations were good for was to pacify the consciences of believers.²⁸

The next station for the propagation of the new ideas of liberalism was the “*reorganization*” of Princeton Seminary. Up to this time Princeton had been on record as the main stronghold of conservative Presbyterianism. But this “reorganization” was, unfortunately, nothing other than the transition from the confessional to the liberal outlook. The reference point in the history of this institute is the year 1929, since this year marks the milestone between the old conservative and the new liberal Princeton. This is how today’s church historians and theologians still refer to it.²⁹

²⁸ Perhaps these phenomena are well known to the reader, for in the Hungarian context, this can also be seen. On the one hand, great emphasis is placed upon the importance of holding to the confessions; on the other, upon spreading the most liberal teachings. In the same breath reference is made to the confessional church and to the state/nominal church. This interesting duality is a typical characteristic of liberalism. In the liberal dialectical theology these opposing viewpoints can be reconciled. The Psalmist says in relation to such an idea: “They speak idly everyone with his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak.” (Psalm 12:2)

²⁹ For anyone who would like to know more about the “reorganization” of Princeton as well as the personal and theological tensions which ensued there, we recommend the following: David B. Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary: The Majestic Testimony 1869-1929*, Vol. 2 (The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1996). The battle surrounding the “reorganization” did not only occur between the conservative and liberal camps but, unfortunately, between various strains of conservative groups also. For example, Machen’s greatest opponent was Charles Erdman who, although belonging to the Confessionalists, still did not agree with that Reformational way of thinking represented by Machen. According to Erdman, a much more moderate and tolerant attitude should have been expressed towards the liberals. In Machen’s judgement, however, this meant nothing less than giving

What was about to take place would have been unimaginable only a few years earlier. In the academic year 1938-39 for example, Emil Brunner was appointed to the chair of dogmatic theology at Princeton. It is difficult to imagine, after the famous Hodge family (Charles Hodge, A. A. Hodge, Casper Wistar Hodge) and Benjamin B. Warfield, that now Brunner had become the leading theologian of Princeton. This is the same Brunner who cast out the inerrancy of the Bible and the virgin birth. He taught, for example, concerning the Bible that it can *become* the Word of God, but only in a very limited sense. For this he used the illustration of a phonograph record. If, for example, a recording of Caruso³⁰ is played back, he said, then the wonderful Caruso voice flows out of the loudspeaker, but in addition to this, the crackling of the phonograph needle and other foreign noises can also be heard. These *cracklings* and *foreign noises* are the contradictions of the Bible and human errors.³¹ One dreads to think what will happen if this record gets a little old—such as the Bible is! What will be the quality of the play-back? How much of Caruso's voice will be heard? Likewise with regard to the message of God's Word. It is regrettable that believers who remained in the Presbyterian Church were not able to prevent his appointment.

Professors unwilling to compromise left the Princeton institute. Who were they? Four very famous professors were: Dr. Robert Dick Wilson, Dr. J. Gresham Machen, Dr. Oswald T. Allis and Dr. Cornelius Van Til. Twenty-nine students from the upper grades followed them.

The reorganization of Princeton (1929) made necessary the establishment of Westminster Theological Seminary. The four professors who had left Princeton were joined by R. B. Kuiper (a former student of Warfield), Allan A. MacRae, Ned B.

up the most important doctrines. I have found D. G. Hart's study: *J. Gresham Machen, the OPC and the Problem of Christian Controversy* also a very helpful presentation of the situation.

³⁰ Enrico Caruso was a world-famous Italian tenor.

³¹ Emil Brunner, *Our Faith* (Charles Scribner Publishing, London, 1936), p. 10.

Stonehouse and Paul Wooley. The latter three had studied in the old Princeton. They formed the teaching department of the new theological institute. One year later John Murray arrived. He, also, had taught at Princeton. Westminster Seminary, as an institution, was independent of the church. The Presbyterian Church certainly tried to put pressure on this institute by not accepting its graduates, but ultimately it could not successfully exclude them.³²

Liberalism and modernism gradually penetrated the ranks of the Board of Foreign Missions also. Consequently, a new concept of missions was born. The church's missions committee also published a book dealing with relevant questions. Its title was *Re-thinking Missions*. It was particularly scandalous in the way it sketched Christian missions along with the new ideology. It urged that Christians must unite with the representatives of other religions (Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims) so that they can more effectively fight against materialism and immorality. Common points of contact and common truths must be found upon which to build. At this time more and more liberals appeared among the leaders of the Board of Foreign Missions. There were also missionaries operating under the direction of the Board who did not believe in the doctrine of original sin. Some from the conservative camp gave vent to their indignation because of these developments. Three names are worth emphasizing: Robert Dick Wilson, J. Gresham Machen and Carl McIntire. In their writings they criticized the contemptible condition and liberal outlook of the Board of Foreign Missions and urged immediate changes. The most thorough analysis came from none other than Dr. Machen who, in a 110-page treatise,³³ commented on the situation. He once again set out his viewpoint in the course of an open debate with Dr. Robert E. Speer who was the leading light of the Board of Foreign Missions. Speer, however, did not answer Machen's questions. Instead, he read out

³² The majority of Presbyterian theological seminaries—to this very day—have remained institutions independent of the church.

³³ The title of this document is: *Modernism and the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.*

a viewpoint from an already prepared manuscript. The meeting came to an end without any concrete conclusion. The only option left was separation, and so in 1933, the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions was founded. This new mission board wanted to return in its entirety to the old biblical, confessional principles.

Meanwhile, legal proceedings were conducted against Machen. On March 29, 1935, he was found guilty. Throughout the proceedings the church court did not give him an opportunity to defend himself. He lodged an appeal which was rejected.³⁴ The church press and the religious columns of secular newspapers expressed indignation at the resolution passed against Machen. Even the Unitarians understood the removal of Machen as a dramatic turn of events and a regrettable tragedy. It is important to note here, however, that at this time those in the position of moderatorship in the church courts were, in the majority, liberals, and among these moderators were some who had signed the Auburn Declaration. Machen at that time had sternly criticized the declaration, saying that it was none other than a recent revelation of destructive modernism which is the deathly enemy of Christianity.³⁵

Of course, in many ways the option of inner reformation was broached since a significant part of the church membership was comprised of converted confessional Christians. Among the leaders of this camp Dr. Clarence E. Macartney, Dr. Walter D. Buchanan and Dr. Samuel G. Craig are worth mentioning. (It is a sad fact that these men, to a certain degree, were supporters of Machen but later backed down.) A question was put forth to them: "What are these advocates of 'reform from within' doing to alter the *serious doctrinal defections* in the church and to return it to the control of those who believe that the Bible is the Word of

³⁴ Margaret E. Harden ed. *A Brief History of the Bible Presbyterian Church and Its Agencies*, pp. 33-34.

³⁵ Chalmers W. Alexander, *Shall we Unite with the Northern Presbyterian Church?* (The Southern Presbyterian Journal Company, Weaverville, North Carolina, 1954), p. 19.

God?”³⁶ (italics mine) Unfortunately, this camp was defeated in every battle. According to Edwin H. Rian there are three reasons for this: 1. Those in favor of reforming from within were not in possession of a comprehensive plan with regard to the reformation of the church; 2. Church history shows that there is no hope for inner reform if the organization of the church and its leading bodies have come under the influence or supervision of liberals; 3. There was not a single confessing seminary within the church which could have been depended upon for support.³⁷ Instead, they employed professors who denied the very essentials of the Christian faith. (By the way, all three of these marks in regard to liberalism are true of Hungary and the Hungarian Reformed Church.)

What was the motto of those espousing *inner reform*? “Avoid premature conflicts.”³⁸ Of course, it was always too premature! 1926, 1929, 1934, 1936 and even 1965 still proved to be a premature time. In this latter year a new confession gained acceptance. During this time the conservative powers were rapidly crumbling to pieces and becoming even more isolated. The liberal camp, however, was firmly entrenched and strong.

One final station to which we must turn is the so-called *1967 Confession*, which was accepted in Columbus, Ohio. The Presbyterian Church (its name at this time was already changed to the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.) for practical purposes substituted the Westminster Confession for an acceptance of this new confession. The new confession—to mention but a few of its deficiencies—reduces the Bible to a human work containing errors, and makes Jesus Christ appear as

³⁶ Edwin H. Rian, *The Presbyterian Conflict* (The Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, 1992), p. 182.

³⁷ Rian, *The Presbyterian Conflict*, pp. 189, 193.

³⁸ Through today’s evangelical groupings, certain accepted principles proffer a similar goal: “While it is possible to preach the gospel in the church, there is no reason for anxiety!” or “Let the unbelievers get out of the church! We as believers are staying in—whatever happens!” This mentality is especially true for Hungary. That is why no one espousing Reformed convictions left the Hungarian Reformed Church in the last 450 years.

a social reformer and moral ideal. The conservative ministers, who were an insignificant minority, could not prevent an acceptance of the new confession. Their representative, William T. Strong, did everything to achieve this. In his remarks he criticized the work of the committee assigned the task of drafting the confession, and requested a rejection of the confession draft. But the vote determined everything. By this time only one more option remained. The popular Christianity Today magazine commented as follows: “The only recourse left to conservatives at this assembly was *to register a protest*, which Strong did and to which the assembly replied.”³⁹(italics mine) Of course, this protest could not stop the process of compiling the new confession. The Auburn Declaration—among other things—had by this time already caused irreparable damage.

What are the lessons to be learned? Neither in the theological seminaries, church bodies, nor in the mission societies did inner reform make any progress. We can put forward the question: “Why?” Gary North tersely diagnoses the problem in his more than one thousand-page analysis. Let us hear his answer to this question:

The liberals had a *systematic, comprehensive, consistent* strategy. The conservatives did not. The liberals had tactics that were integrated into their strategies. The conservatives did not. The liberals had the advantage of being part of a self-confident Progressive movement that saw itself as the wave of the future. The conservatives did not... *You can't beat something with nothing*. Strategically, the conservatives had nothing. The liberals had a great deal. Most of all, they had the climate of respectable intellectual opinion on their side. They were historicists in an era of historicism. They were social reform Darwinists in an era of social reform Darwinism (post-1890). They were dogmatically anti-dogmatic, in an era of dogmatic anti-dogmaticism. They were for ecclesiastical pluralism in an age of political pluralism. Their spiritual accomplices outside the Church controlled the major institutions of higher learning, and

³⁹ “Presbyterian Discoveries in Columbus”, *Christianity Today*, Vol. IX., Num. 19., June, 1965.

the Presbyterian Church required its ministerial candidates to graduate from these institutions. Above all, they were men who had rejected the doctrine of hell in a culture increasingly dominated by an educated elite that had rejected the doctrine of hell.⁴⁰ (*italics mine*)

In large measure, the irresoluteness of the *indifferent* camp as well as the “ecclesiastical pacifists” in the church, contributed to all these liberal strategies. It is sad that in both these camps there were also quite a number of Christians. These were Christians who did not perceive the danger or, who even though they knew about it, did not want to stand up for the truth. These were Christians who were not interested in those weighty questions which they should have confronted. They were Christians who, above all else, forsook everything on the altar of peace, including the truths of God’s Word.

J. Gresham Machen did not live to see it, but after his death a number of new confessional churches were formed. We would not want to weary the reader with a long list, and so we would just mention three of these new churches. These are: the *Bible Presbyterian Church*, the *Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (OPC) and later, the *Presbyterian Church in America* (PCA).

A. General Survey of the Hungarian Setting

The Hungarian reader may with all justice ask: “What is all this to us? What concern do we have with the battle of American Christianity and liberalism? Let everyone get on with sorting out his own problems!” All right then, let us do precisely that since Hungarian and neo-Protestantism are also suffering from liberalism. Hungarian Protestantism for now well over one and half centuries has been under the influence of liberal German theology. It is for this reason Sándor Makkai lamented in 1916: “There will be no Hungarian theology *until we cease reciting the*

⁴⁰ Gary North, *Crossed Fingers—How the Liberals Captured the Presbyterian Church* (Institute for Christian Economics, Tyler, Texas, 1966), pp. 798-799.

German theology.”⁴¹ (italics mine) Indeed, the influence and fruits of German liberal theology became all the more obvious. A list could be drawn up of those theologians who were preachers of these viewpoints. There are also many present-day preachers who could be added to that list. Certainly, anyone who takes only a cursory look at the changing events of theology and church history, very quickly becomes aware of the startling similarity between the American and Hungarian situation. “There is nothing new under the sun,” says the Preacher in Ecclesiastes, and it is no different in our case.

Machen’s book, which was published in 1923, brought about a kind of second Reformation in America. This book is still very timely for us here in Hungary, since we were left out of that Reformation. Hungary was left out of that second wave of reform initiated by the Machen camp eighty years ago. The time has long since been ripe for it.

What is the Hungarian situation like? We just offer a little sample of what really happened. We will clarify some of the relevant aspects and show some of the scenarios and similarities with the American scene. The task of evaluating rests with the reader, for whom this is also a responsibility. If you read this book, try to form your own opinion. Proceed with open eyes and an open Bible, since the two are inseparable. Walk with open eyes and an open Bible into the Hungarian churches and seminaries and see what is going on.

What happened in Hungary and Transylvania? The same thing. Liberalism and modernism penetrated and then became the accepted views. It was present early on in the Hungarian theological seminaries. In the first wave the doctrines of Revelation and the Word were affected in just the same way as has been previously mentioned. Later, however, it demolished the entire theological system. Let us look, for example, at the homiletical course of Lajos Gönczy. He taught practical theology in Kolozsvár (Cluj) from 1924. Already at that time he wrote this:

⁴¹ Károly Fekete, *Ötven éve halt meg Makkai Sándor [Sándor Makkai Died Fifty Years Ago]*, Református Egyház [Reformed Church], Vol. LIII, No. 9, 2001.

“The very first thing which must not be forgotten in relation to a text is that the Scripture and the Word are not *adequate* concepts. The Word is *more*, something *other* than Scripture. Scripture *just points towards* the Word. Consequently, every text can be treated as a *simile*”⁴² (italics mine). What kind of a sermon is it which considers a text to be a simile? Gönczy continues: “The Word is not locked into the Scripture in such a way *that, anyone taking the Scripture into his hand receives the Word of that Scripture also*. The Word is more, other than, greater than Scripture. The speech of Scripture is always fragmentary, stammering speech.”⁴³ (italics mine)

Although the liberal viewpoints were already present by the turn of the 20th century and thereafter increased in strength, the ultimate thrust in their spread was brought about by the visits of Emil Brunner and Karl Barth and the growing respect for the viewpoints of their “disciples.” Emil Brunner came to Hungary in 1935. Later Barth followed him. In January 1936, Barth was elected as “*honoris causa*” professor of theology at Kolozsvár. He himself came on a tour to Hungary and Transylvania (today’s Western Romania) in autumn of 1936, and in the spring of 1937, visited Hungary once again. During his visits he was in Debrecen, Sárospatak and Kolozsvár.⁴⁴ From these visits a number of papers and studies have been published. But who was this Karl Barth? What kind of viewpoints did he confess? Let’s just see what Barth says in connection with the Word and the Bible?

If God *has not been ashamed* to speak through the Scriptures with *its fallible human words, with its historical and scientific blunders, its theological contradictions, with the uncertainty of its transmission* and above all with its Jewish character, but rather accepted it in all its fallibility to make it serve Him, we

⁴² Lajos Gönczy, “Homiletika” [Homiletics], (Typed Manuscript Lecture Notes, delivered in Cluj, 1924), p. 64.

⁴³ Lajos Gönczy, “Homiletika”, p. 65.

⁴⁴ There are HRC seminaries in all these places.

ought not to be ashamed of it when with all its fallibility it wants anew to be to us a witness; it would be *self-will and disobedience* to wish to seek in the Bible for infallible elements.⁴⁵ (italics mine)

A brief critique of Barth was translated into the Hungarian language and summarized thus:

Is the Word of God the Bible for Karl Barth? First of all we must answer this question with a plain “no”. According to him the Word of God is not separated from God... The Bible, according to Barth is a *human work*. Historically, it is like every other book which appears on the market, entirely *conditional*... Revelation and Scripture according to him are *two different things*.⁴⁶

Furthermore, “since Scripture according to Barth is not in a direct way but *indirect* way the Word of God... we are not at all assured that when we read the Word of God we are in reality hearing the Word of God and not something entirely different.”⁴⁷ (italics mine)

In spite of this, Barth’s effect and influence has been the determinative factor in Hungarian theology to this very day. In his prize-winning thesis at Debrecen seminary, Balázs Sándor says this about him: “We are glad to say of him that *since Calvin, he is the greatest mentor of Reformed theology*.”⁴⁸ Indeed, “that is why it was necessary—not just for our people—that Karl Barth could visit our country and assess the state of

⁴⁵ Edward J. Young, *Thy Word Is Truth* (The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1991), p. 227.

⁴⁶ Heinrich Jochums, *A nagy csalódás [The Great Delusion]* (Primó Kiadó, Budapest, 1986), p. 30.

⁴⁷ Heinrich Jochums, *A nagy csalódás*, p. 31.

⁴⁸ Balázs Sándor, *Barth Károly és a Magyarországi Református Egyház [Karl Barth and the Hungarian Reformed Church]*, (Debreceni Református Kollégium Sokszorosító Irodája [The Duplicating Office of the Debrecen Reformed Theological Seminary], Debrecen, 1993), p. 7.

affairs in our church and that this problem solver, in a *more authentic way* could *provide direction* to our leaders.”⁴⁹ (italics mine) Amidst this problem solving, these leaders unfortunately did not make use of the best compass. If the Bible did not serve as a compass, no other solution remained—they turned to men.

Lajos Imre, a theological professor at Kolozsvár, appraised Barth’s visit as follows:

It is clear that this is not dialectic theology but a message which God has given to the Reformed churches and to the entire world *through* Barth.... Paul writes to the Galatians that they receive him as an angel of God, like Jesus Christ and with joy. If he wrote this about himself, we can also say that *God’s true messenger has walked among us in the person of Barth*; we ask God that He will make his sojourn here *fruitful* for our church.”⁵⁰ (italics mine)

“God’s messenger?” we might well ask. By all means, Lajos Imre should have examined this claim on the basis of Galatians 1:6-12. With regard to the fruits of Barth’s theology, these have already become ripe.

We have read in one very thorough work how it came that slowly, but surely, the working team (so-called *Coetus Theologorum*)⁵¹ of theological professors under the leadership of Béla Vasady, “revealed entirely the effect of Barthian theology and the trend it represented.”⁵² Zoltán Gálfy, analyzing the theological situation of the Hungarian Reformed Church of

⁴⁹ Balázs Sándor, *Barth Károly és a Magyarországi Református Egyház*, p. 9.

⁵⁰ Lajos Imre, *Barth professzor látogatása [Professor Barth’s Visit]*, *Az Út [The Way]*, 1936, pp. 260-261.

⁵¹ The so-called “*Coetus Theologorum*” was composed of professors from all the theological seminaries of the HRC (Budapest, Debrecen, Sárospatak, Pápa and Kolozsvár). Each seminary represented Barth’s viewpoint.

⁵² Zoltán Gál, *A “dialektikai teológia” hatása [“The Effect of the Dialectic Theology”]*, *A Magyar Protestantizmus [Hungarian Protestantism] 1918-1948* (Kossuth Könyvkiadó [Kossuth Book Publishers], 1987), p. 347.

Transylvania before the Second World War, reasons: “The task of Transylvanian theological thought has achieved its purpose in these years in that the teaching of *Barth and Calvin alluding to one another, complementing one another and enlightening one another have become a unified Reformed doctrine.*”⁵³ (italics mine) Therefore, everyone appears to be a great cultivator of the “Theology of the Word”. The concern is justified: “Was this trend an epigone of Barth? Far from it! As László Ravasz said: The direction is the same but the footprints are different.”⁵⁴ (italics mine) This is a revelation of their own “confession”. Whoever has ears, let him hear. Since this time the churches have come a long way in following this trend—a long way from the Bible and Christ.

Jeno Sebestyén, who was a professor at Budapest, was the only theologian who wrote articles against Barth saying that we have nothing to learn from him. Sebestyén spoke of Barth as someone who misrepresented himself as a Reformed theologian. As a representative of Historical Calvinism he writes this in an address entitled “Is Karl Barth Reformed?”:

Since from the beginning we have preached that *we do not believe in the German theology which, long ago betrayed the spirit of Reformed theology*, naturally, from the beginning we were distrustful of every kind of future theological trend emanating from Germany, thus mistrustful of Barth too... If we want to learn *Reformed* theology from foreigners then *we will not go to the school of Barth.*⁵⁵ (italics mine)

⁵³ Zoltán Gálfy, *100 éves a Kolozsvári Református Teológia* [100 Years of Reformed Church Theology at Kolozsvár Seminary], *Erdélyi Református Naptár* [The Almanac of the Transylvanian Reformed Church] 1995, (Erdélyi Református Egyházkerület [The Reformed Church District of Transylvania], 1994), p. 122.

⁵⁴ Zoltán Gálfy, *100 éves a Kolozsvári Református Teológia*, p.122.

⁵⁵ Tibor Bartha ed., *Studia et Acta Ecclesiastica*, Vol. 5 (A MRE Zsinati Irodájának Sajtóosztálya [The Press Division of the Synodical Office of the HRC], Budapest, 1983), p. 366.

What a pity that so few Hungarian theologians thought like this. Jenő Sebestyén also said something else in the columns of *Hungarian Calvinism* in 1936:

Theological thought in the life of the Hungarian Reformed Church (indeed even more so in Lutheran church life) has long since, in *exceeding great measure*, stood under the effect of German Protestant theology... From this it follows that before Barth ever came, among the bishops and professors of the Hungarian Reformed Church, there were for the predominant part believers of the non-Reformed trends, whether Ritschlians, or believers of the school of Historical Religion, or religious psychologists, or modernists or some other German Protestant theological trend or school. *However, they were not willing to stand upon a determinative confessional Reformed theological foundation because they did not consider it sufficiently scholarly.* Then Barth came and his arrival carried great appeal to souls raised up on German Protestant theology so that he enticed into his own camp those who at this time were, for the most part, modern theologians, believers of the school of Historical Religion, religious psychologists, Ritschlians, Schleiermacherians, etc. and gave them the *illusion* that at one and *the same time* they could be Reformed theologians and theologians operating on a scholarly basis.⁵⁶ (italics mine)

In 1938 the Theological Department of Debrecen University appointed Cornelius Van Til, professor of Apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary, as honorary professor (*honoris causa*). Van Til was not able to be present personally in Debrecen, but prepared a short salutatory speech.

We quote some portions from this unspoken address prepared for Debrecen. We do this because he makes mention of the significance of the stand maintained by J. Gresham Machen. It is obvious from the speech that Van Til was not aware of the real Hungarian situation. He believed that he was coming into the

⁵⁶ Jenő Sebestyén, *A Barthianizmus a Magyar Református Egyházi Életében* [Barthianism in Hungarian Reformed Church Life], *Magyar Református Önismereti olvasókönyv* [Hungarian Reformed Church Primer] (MRE [HRC] Kálvin János Kiadó [John Calvin Publishing], Budapest, 1997), p. 150.

midst of heroes of the Reformed faith, although at this time it was rather a liberal atmosphere similar to that on the American scene, which was reigning. (Of course, this was not his fault. He simply did not have accurate information about Hungary.) Let us then hear Van Til:

...Your institution has had a great and notable career. For hundreds of years you have held aloft the banner of the Reformed Faith in the *midst of unbelief and half-hearted Christianity*. No words that I could find would sufficiently extol the glory of your past. As one stands in awful silence before the statues of great men, so I stand in your midst admiring what has here been done...

...Has the Reformed Faith flourished in the New world as it has flourished in the old? Indeed it has. The Reformed Faith came early to our shores. It has had a large influence in our history. Many great institutions of learning have sponsored its cause. But alas, all this is now largely a matter of the past. Colleges and Seminaries that once were proud to honor Calvin now spurn him or *pay mere lip service* to his name.

You ask, no doubt, how this has come to pass. The answer is not far to seek. Men have listened to *false philosophy and the traditions of men* instead of to the Word of God. Not that there has been a sudden and open denial of the Faith. The change came gradually through the substitution of *Arminianism for Calvinism* in our institutions of learning and the pulpits of our land. Thus the soil was prepared for a philosophy of which man and not God forms the center and end. When that philosophy came, it was not in the form of Pragmatism and Materialism that it sought to gain control of the Church. Pragmatism and Materialism make an open attack. No one can mistake their colors. But Satan came as an angel of light. He came in the form of Idealism. After the manner of the Samaritans of old, the Idealists claimed identity with the people of God. Do we not all stand for high ideals? they asked. Do we not all serve the same God? Shall we not unitedly wage war against Materialism and Secularism? Thus the Idealists reasoned and thus they flattered. Many of the watchmen on Zion's walls, weary of constant struggle, heard this siren voice and yielded to temptation. They preached on

high ideals, on righteous causes and on noble aspirations, but they *forgot the offence of the Cross*...

...In more recent days, dialectical theology has come to Princeton... For Dialecticism as for Idealism the Homo Noumenon is the final court of appeal. Accordingly, for Dialecticism as for Idealism there is no final revelation given unto us in the Scriptures. For the Reformed Faith the believer should think of himself as subject to the Scriptures; for Dialecticism the believer should think of the Scriptures as subject to himself. *The Reformed Faith holds to objective truth revealed in history; Dialecticism is subjective through and through*...

...We shall not despise the day of small things. *We shall give special honor to the late **Professor J. Gresham Machen***, who more than any other man was used of God in this return to the Faith of the Fathers. We shall rejoice before God that He has raised up a testimony to the Reformed Faith *among those who had forsaken it*.

Idealist philosophies of one sort or another will continue to offer their compromises. They will use *language scarcely discernible* in form from the *mother tongue* of historic Calvinism. Yet in the name and in the strength of God we shall defy them. By the grace of God we shall build alone to the salvation of sinners and to the glory of our covenant-keeping God.

Now as in closing I again pay my tribute of respect and praise to your honored institution I plead with you and with all my brethren here present to pray for us that our labor be not in vain in the Lord. As you are much older than we and can rightfully claim the glories of the past, lead us, we beseech you, in the future. *Go before us* in the battle for historic Calvinism. *Help us identify and combat* the subtle enemies that come in the guise of friends. Then we shall follow gladly and together we shall labor till He comes.⁵⁷ (italics mine)

⁵⁷ Cornelius Van Til, *Debrecen Address*, (typescript manuscript on deposit in the archives of Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.), 1938. Note: Appended to the manuscript in the author's writing are these words: "Not delivered. The celebration was not held on account of the war-scare." Also, "I was invited to attend their 400th Anniversary."

It is a mark of great grace that ultimately, Van Til did not follow in our footsteps. Where would American Reformed Christians be today?

More than 60 years ago the above admonitions and exhortations were clearly proclaimed. It is as though we had read the script for the Hungarian scenario. Did these harmful events not happen in Hungary and Transylvania as well? Is what Van Til said not well worth taking to heart? But what Hungarian today is prepared to be expelled in a similar way to Machen from a denomination? Who is willing to accept this “discipline”? Who are those today who are taking the lead in the continuous battle for historic Calvinism? Who today can say with David: “You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing”? (Psalm 16:2)

Poor Cornelius Van Til received this great honor from those whose department of dogmatics was a few years later directed by István Török, a former disciple of Karl Barth and faithful successor of his theology. Without a doubt, in Debrecen they forgot about which side Van Til stood on. (But Van Til’s true sentiments with regard to their theology can be found in his popular critique of Barth and Brunner called: *The New Modernism*⁵⁸). Why did the theologians at Debrecen award him with such an honor? Perhaps it was because of certain considerations pertaining to church politics. It is possible. At any rate, it is interesting that after this, István Török was invited as professor. Let us familiarize ourselves with the viewpoints Török held concerning revelation, the Word and the Bible, as he expressed them in a conference at Pápa in 1936:

Through feeble men a book was written which visibly bears the marks of *human feebleness*: the historian *can point out errors* in it and exert his criticism upon it, the scientist *can smile at the primitiveness of the Bible’s world-view*... How can this human word be the Word of God?.. If God speaks through the human word, then a *miracle* is taking place. This miracle, however, does not occur in every place in the

⁵⁸ Entire title: *The New Modernism, An Appraisal of the Theology of Barth and Brunner* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1st ed., 1946).

Bible; the Word speaks here and there in words... *but the Word of God is never a certainty in the Bible but only a possibility.* The Word is there within the human words of the Bible just as a telephone message is in a telephone cable or as the glow of heat is in the iron: two kinds of expressions are “distinguishable” and “to be distinguished” (quotation marks mine), but they cannot be separated from each other. This was for me the second great teaching of today’s theology. From this I got to know of the error of *yesterday’s theology.* The error was that that theology *identified* the human word of the Bible with the divine Word.⁵⁹ (italics mine)

The problem with this way of reasoning is that miracles become evermore rare as fewer and fewer people take the teaching of the Bible seriously. Török teaches that it is possible for some people to hold the Bible in their hand, and yet this does not at all mean that they are also holding the Word of God. Moreover, how is anyone going to distinguish between the human word and the Word of God and on what basis? Let us observe what István Török calls “yesterday’s theology”! According to our Confessions the Word of God is a *certainty* and is itself the Bible. We quote the Second Helvetic Confession: “We believe and confess *the canonical Scriptures* of the holy prophets and apostles of both Testaments *to be the true Word of God,* and to have sufficient authority of themselves, not of men.”⁶⁰ (italics mine) Sad to say, this passes for a theology of yesterday, or a naive theology. Let us hear the cynicism of one HRC theologian in this regard:

From *the naive theological period* right up to the Enlightenment, Bible stories about Jesus Christ are taken as *historical facts in their entirety...* But with regard to the

⁵⁹ István Török, *A mai teológia és a Biblia [Today’s Theology and the Bible]*, Magyar Református Önismereti Olvasókönyv [*Hungarian Reformed Church Primer*] (MRE [HRC] Kálvin János Kiadó [John Calvin Publishing], Budapest, 1980), p. 436.

⁶⁰ 2nd Helvetic Confession, Chapter 1., in John H. Leith ed., *Creeds of the Church* (John Knox Press, Louisville, 3rd ed., 1982), p. 132.

New Testament stories about Jesus it *is not important* to know whether these *actually took place or not*; it is their message that matters and the *kerygma* inherent within that message which is of vital significance to our existence...⁶¹ (italics mine)

Elemér Kocsis stated this more than 20 years ago. It is startling to read such things, but it is also a sad reality and no different today. A present-day example of this thinking is the professor of theology at HRC's seminary in Kolozsvár (Cluj), Tamás Juhász who teaches the following concerning inerrancy and inspiration of Scripture: "*It is a cheap thing* to claim something for which there is no evidence... For mistakes were not only committed by the copyists—*the holy writers themselves were feeble men who could err*... The Bible is *not a literally inspired book* but, *inspired according to its meaning*."⁶² We ask, in what sense can its meaning be inspired? Who determines this? How do we determine what the "inspired" meaning is of a particular passage? We hope it is becoming clear to the reader that this kind of liberal approach to the Bible leads us into a cul-de-sac.

In the final analysis, it is those who have recognized this afresh who have attempted to sound the alarm bell. Let us look at an example of this. It may be that this alarm signal is ringing late, but in any event, let us observe it:

If in church government the emphasis is not on the *Bible and Confessions*, man will grow in increased measure--it may be the role of a body or an office-bearer--in the church. But if *man* will be the *main authority*, then in corporate or personal decisions, *individual lobby* interests will thrive... The present structure of the Hungarian Reformed Church makes provision for either individuals or smaller bodies, for

⁶¹ Elemér Kocsis, *Hirdesd az Igét—Az igehirdetok kézikönyve* [*Preach the Word—The Handbook of Preachers*], (A Magyar Ref. Egyház Zsinati Irodájának Sajtóosztálya [The Press Division of the Synodical Office of the Hungarian Reformed Church], Budapest, 1980), p. 98.

⁶² Tamás Juhász, *Üzenet, Az Erdélyi Református Egyházkerület Gyülekezeti Lapja* [*Message, The Congregational Weekly of the Transylvanian Reformed Church District*], Vol. 9, No. 9, May 1st, 1998.

example, the Presidency of Synod or the Courts of the Synod or the Presidencies of Presbyteries to make certain decisions which *do not agree with the Bible or our Confessions*, without any consequence or control... Throughout the past ten years a new concentration of strength and power has come into existence in our church whose authority is assured by a *law-book* with a non-Biblical foundation and *by money* granted as funding from the State, *not by the Bible and our Confessions.*⁶³ (italics mine)

Now if this is all true, then what should be the next practical step? Or is it still untimely to speak about this? We ask, “Will there be a new biblical reform?” We hope that there will be. We trust that this reform will become evident through the formation of *new confessing* Reformed denominations. We hope, furthermore, that the example of the American Presbyterian “reformers from within” as well as the “indifferent camp” have clearly shown us that such methods of reform are not feasible.

Closing Thought

I would encourage the reader to study this book so that he may focus exclusively on the status and condition of Hungarian Protestant Christianity. Forget about the fact that an American theologian wrote this book eighty years ago. Imagine rather, that the writer is someone who has seriously appraised today’s Hungarian situation, and a sense of responsibility to the Word has motivated him to write the book. If we read the book in this way, I believe we can learn a lot from J. Gresham Machen. We will understand that we must fight for the cause of God—by word and deed. Especially in an age when there are so few committed warriors and when the terms *Reformation* and *Confessionalism* have become hackneyed clichés. Above all else, it is necessary at

⁶³ Álmos Ete Sípos, *Hangsúlyeltolódások a MRE teológiájában a rendszerváltás után* [*The Shifting of Emphasis in the Theology of the HRC after the Change of Political Regime*], delivered on October 14, 2000, Cegléd. (Sípos is an evangelical minister of the HRC. His comment above and in other sources confirm the reality of the present situation of Hungarian Protestantism.)

such a time to confront prejudices and be willing to accept the inevitable scorn. Let us not try to close our eyes to everything, since in the Christian life there is no golden middle road. There is only a narrow road on which we must walk. And God's blessings are attached to that road. The *hard battle* undertaken by Machen was also marked by an extraordinary *spiritual vitality*. I hope that it has become clear that, for us also these two characteristics go hand in hand. We cannot take part in one without the experience of the other. And remember, no one can fight the battle in our place.

Machen warned that in addition to the proclamation of the gospel, Christians of every age have one other important task. They must keep guard over the faith, "that was once for all entrusted to the saints." (Jude 3) Let us take note then that Christianity which behaves indifferently to liberalism nurses a viper in its bosom. Unfortunately, our forefathers did not manage to escape the snakebite or find a cure for it in good time. Consequently, the lamentable condition of today's Hungarian Christianity is not so much to be attributed to the spread of *Communism*, but rather of *Liberalism*. We should take note of this.⁶⁴

If you read this book and reflect upon the demands it is making of you, I ask that you remember the summons of two great Reformers. One of these is from Luther and the other from Machen. Luther, at one time said this:

If I profess with loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at the moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. *Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved*, and to be steady on all the

⁶⁴ Very few people realize the seriousness of the effects of Liberalism upon Hungarian Christianity. From the middle of the 19th century it had begun to cripple the Protestant Churches long before Communism arrived. So it is a misrepresentation of the truth to say to Western Christians that the present church situation is due mostly to the bleak 45-year Communist era. By the time Communism arrived, Liberalism had already done its job well.

battlefield besides, is merely flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.⁶⁵ (italics mine)

J. Gresham Machen in his usual quiet determination attempted to induce those gathered together in Princeton Chapel to action in this way:

What are you going to do, my brothers, in this great time of crisis? What a time it is to be sure! What a time of glorious opportunity! *Will you stand with the world? Will you shrink from controversy? Will you witness for Christ only where witnessing costs nothing? Will you pass through these stirring days without coming to any real decision? Or will you learn the lesson of Christian history? Will you penetrate, by your study and your meditation, beneath the surface?...* Will you hope, and pray, not for a mere continuance of what now is, but for a rediscovery of the Gospel that can make all things new?... God grant that some of you may do that!⁶⁶ (italics mine)

Let us pray then, that God will have mercy upon us and work in us, and give us clear theological vision so that, as mature Christians, we will undertake the battle against those who are the “enemies of the cross of Christ” (Phil. 3:18).

⁶⁵ Clark Pinnock, *A New Reformation: A Challenge to Southern Baptists* (Jewel Books, Tigerville, S.C., 1968), p. 5.

⁶⁶ J. Gresham Machen, “The Separateness of the Church”, John Robbins ed., *The Church Effeminate* (The Trinity Foundation, 2001), p. 600. This sermon was preached on March 8, 1925.

Evangelical Biblical Interpreters: Puritans, Germans and Scots (Part 1)¹

Jack C. Whytock

Purpose: The purposes of this our second, monthly, winter Haddington House lecture are several. First, tonight we want to promote the serious study of the Word of God – the scriptures. To that end we want to introduce or to become better acquainted with select evangelical interpreters who have stood the test of time. In addition to this overarching purpose I offer also the following: to help with guidance for your personal library acquisitions; to give some guidance in the vast field of biblical interpreters; to help you in your studies, preaching and writing by giving signposts to library usage; and to encourage you to see the faithful workers who have served their generation and laboured well.

Each generation can be blessed by taking a few hours of study on the heritage of evangelical biblical interpreters. Most will cite Spurgeon's two masterful lectures in the nineteenth century which eventually became his *Commenting on Commentaries*.² Spurgeon is not alone in that practice; in our generation I think of similar efforts done by D. A. Carson,³ Peter

¹ This lecture was first given on February 28th, 2002 as Haddington House Winter Lecture No. 2, Moncton, N. B. This paper is in substance that lecture. It is also reflective of the way Haddington House attempts to conduct theological training.

² There have been various printings of this, not to mention the electronic format of this work now available.

³ D. A. Carson, *New Testament Commentary Survey*, third edition

Masters, Cyril J. Barber, or John F. Evans⁴ – one of which, each serious bible student should possess. This lecture will I hope open the door to this subject.

At the outset I would say that your very attendance here tonight goes far in keeping us from certain dangers in the field of biblical interpretation. One being the attitude which pretends not to need help from commentators. I will give to you a couple of quotations from Spurgeon to set the tone for this lecture. Commentaries should not be neglected

as an aid to your pulpit studies, you will need to be familiar with the commentators: a glorious army...we have found the despisers of commentators to be men who have no sort of acquaintance with them; in their case, it is the opposite of familiarity which has bred contempt. ...who can pretend to biblical learning who has not made himself familiar with the great writers who spent a life in explaining some one sacred book?⁵

Spurgeon further challenged the audience of The Pastor's College:

No, my dear friends, you may take it, as a rule that the Spirit of God does not usually do for us what we can do for ourselves, and that if religious knowledge is printed in a book, and we can read it, there is no necessity for the Holy Spirit to make a fresh revelation of it to us in order to

(Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988).

⁴ John F. Evans, "A Guide to Biblical Commentaries And Reference Works for students and pastors", revised 1993 edition (privately produced at Haddington House, Moncton, N. B.). This list is by no means exhaustive of annotated bibliographic works or commentators. For a fuller list see Evans, page 4 and 5.

⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, "Lecture No. 1"

screen our laziness. Read, then admirable commentaries...

Yet Spurgeon was also wise enough to know that even good things must be properly approached and went on to write:

...be sure you use your own minds too, or the expounding will lack interest...Freshness, naturalness, life, will always attract, whereas mere borrowed learning is flat and insipid... So to rely upon your own abilities as to be unwilling to learn from others is clearly folly; so to study others as not to judge for yourself is impecility.⁶

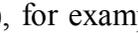
Criteria for inclusion in the study of admirable commentaries:

The criteria I have adopted as to whom would be included tonight in this lecture of admirable commentators is first, their evangelical theological stance (I take this in the categories of the Reformation solas); second, that they are either multiple volume sets or composite multiple volume sets or commentators who at least produced commentaries or works on several scripture books; third, to select commentators representing a wider European context to educate us in the larger scope of evangelical interpretation; and fourth, as much as possible to select works available in reprint form or fairly readily available in good libraries.

The Puritans: The Two Matthews

We begin with the Puritans, and limit our discussion here to the two Matthews, namely Matthew Henry and Matthew Poole. I will assume that most will have heard of each and many of you will own each in some form. My biographical information will be brief here. I begin with the older of the two, namely

⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, "Lecture No. 2".

Matthew Poole (b.1624 - d.1679) who had been a student at the noted Puritan institution at Cambridge, Emmanuel College. In 1662 he along with 3,000 other Puritans was ejected from his pulpit. Basically the remainder of his life was spent in exhaustive study and writing, chiefly in exile in Amsterdam where he died. His *magnum opus* was not his English commentary we use today but rather the work which underlies it, his *Synopsis Criticorum* a five volume, folio sized Latin work, which brought together the writings of bible scholars from several nations. This was a very learned work not suitable for a wide readership. Having completed this his *magnum opus* he set to work to produce “annotations” upon the whole bible. Annotations were first in the style of brief notes upon each verse printed at the bottom of a page such as in a study bible. Poole’s proposal was to produce such annotations but somewhat fuller since he would not print the text at the top of the page but insert the commentary between verses. The work relies heavily upon the church fathers (for example, Jerome or Ambrose) but this Poole never tells you in the actual annotation. He never cites his references but rather it reflects the maturity of years of study. The purpose was to provide the plain sense of the text. Thus, it was not to cite other authors (these are hidden), nor was it to be critical, nor to deal with controversies rather the goal was to arrive at the plain sense, and reconcile seeming contradictions – simply to open up the scripture. On occasion a word will be printed in Greek (without transliteration), for example, Acts 2:27, , or in Hebrew.⁷ On page 389 volume three I checked and there are five words in the original languages. Thus, it is beyond a simple Bible annotation in a Study Bible. However in the three volume reprint of the 1685 edition we must acknowledge one fact – Matthew Poole did Genesis to Isaiah 58 and upon his death editors went through his works to complete the remainder to

⁷ Matthew Poole, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible* original 1685 *Annotations on the Holy Bible* reprint (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1979). I prefer the Banner of Truth reprint over the recent Hendrikson reprint because the Hendrikson set have reduced the print size by approximately 10%.

Revelation. So there are some internal inconsistencies. In much of the Old Testament you will not find Hebrew words whereas in the New Testament you will find the Greek. Also in the Old Testament Hebrew references are made in the side-bars and in English.

Matthew Henry

The bible student should also know that the Puritan Matthew Henry really came at the end of the Puritan period and had Poole at hand in his own study. In fact, Matthew Henry claimed that if he himself was brief upon a certain text it was because Matthew Poole covered it so well that there was no need to repeat the same material. Therefore in a certain respect Henry must sit beside Poole on the library shelf!



Matthew Henry (b.1662 - d.1714) was born in the year of the Great Ejection when Matthew Poole was beginning his *magnum opus*, the *Synopsis Criticorum*. Henry was trained in a Nonconformist Academy, then studied law, and was privately ordained to his first charge at Chester in 1687.

Henry was uniquely trained by his father Philip, a first rate scholar and Puritan minister. We know that Matthew went to

visit Richard Baxter in prison and had a profound sense of the sufferings of God's people. It was in 1704 that he began his multi-volume *Commentary on the Bible*, completing to the end of Acts at his death in 1714, the remainder being completed by editors working from his notes.⁸ It is not a work which attempts full textual exegesis but strives to bring a plain interpretation with much reflective application. At times Henry displays a limited knowledge of the manners and customs of Bible lands. Its strength lies in its Christological focus, its covenantal focus, its pastoral piety, and stress upon relevance. The secret to understanding it lies in Henry's view that the study of scripture was "part of the life of prayer. The two always went together. One prayed that one might understand Scripture and studied Scripture that one might know how to pray".⁹

His commentary was based upon his "exposition" from the reading of the scripture lesson as *lectio continua*.¹⁰ Today we would call this meeting the Adult Class. It was not a sermon. Ministers delivered an exposition and a sermon. Thus, Henry's intent in these "expositions" was not higher critical matters – God's Word was reliable and possessed harmony – the Scripture interpreted by Scripture directs us how we are to glorify God and enjoy him forever.¹¹

⁸ Since there are so many reprint sets of Matthew Henry's *Commentary* which include the "Memoirs" I will not recommend one particular set. In preparing this paper I used the old, undated Revell six volume edition.

⁹ H.O. Old, "Matthew Henry" in *Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Downers Grove: IVP, 1998), p.196.

¹⁰ Old, "Matthew Henry", p.197.

¹¹ Many of the old reprints include on the title page these words following the title: "wherein each chapter, is summed up in its contents: the sacred text inserted at large in distinct paragraphs; each paragraph reduced to its proper heads: the sense given, and largely illustrated with practical remarks and observations." Notice the paragraph structure – ideal for family worship – part of Henry's plan.

In conclusion Poole and Henry should be by our side. We should turn to Poole to aid us to uncover the plain sense and we must not rush reading him. He is concise and uses an economy of words and all sidebars must be studied. Follow him with Henry who bequeaths to us that “tradition of pastoral theology unsurpassed in the history of Christianity in the English speaking world.” Be aware that at times Henry, like other Puritans, may not always pay exacting attention to the text “in front of them” unlike Calvin, a prince of exegetes. Remember that both Poole and Henry have internal differences in part within these multi-volume works because some come to us at the hands of editors. Finally as Ligon Duncan said “Puritan theology has served for more than three centuries as the basic doctrinal framework for evangelicalism.” Thus, attention to Poole and Henry, properly used, leads us in a noble way – that of a Christological, evangelical, experimental and practical cultivation of the faith.

German Interpreters: 18th and 19th Centuries

We move now from the English Matthews to three classic German bible commentators: Johann Albrecht Bengel, Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg, and Johann Peter Lange. As we proceed it will become more obvious why each has been selected.

(A) Johann Bengel (b.1687 - d.1752): The Exegete of Pietism

Johann Bengel was one of Germany’s foremost Pietistic Lutheran New Testament scholars and remains a classic writer and interpreter of the New Testament. Students working with commentaries written in the last twenty years will have noted that Bengel’s name is still being quoted and reference made to his work.¹² Unfortunately few take the time to enquire as to who he was and how he approached his work as a bible interpreter.

Bengel’s father had been a pastor who died while Johann

¹² See, John Stott, *The Message of Acts* BST (Downers Grove: IVP, 1990), pp.6, 13, 33, 109, etc.

was a boy and was raised by David Spindler a Latin Schoolmaster and conventicle leader. He studied at the University of Tubingen and afterwards served as a pastor and on the faculty at Denkendorf cloister school. In latter years he was appointed superintendent in Herbrechtingen then Alpirsbach. He made an extensive study of German Pietism and was well aware of certain of their exercises.¹³

His first major contribution in the area of biblical studies is that of being “the father of textual criticism”. As a young man he corrected a new edition of a German Bible with particular attention on punctuation. This followed in 1734 with *Grundtext*, which marks a significant point of establishing a Greek text with an accompanying apparatus.

What concerns us here tonight primarily is his *magnum opus* work on interpreting the New Testament in his 1742 *Gnomon Novi Testamenti* a classic in New Testament interpretation. This work took twenty years for Bengel to produce. It was titled *Gnomon*¹⁴ after the Latin word for “pointer or indicator”, that is, “his aim being to point out or indicate the full force and meaning of the words and sentences of the New Testament.” Spurgeon said of it – “Men with a dislike for thinking had better not purchase (these) volumes...” The last English printing was in 1971 by Kregel’s of Grand Rapids. Robert Clouse wrote: “Among evangelical scholars, Bengel’s

¹³ David Bundy, “Johann Albrecht Bengel” in *Dictionary of Evangelical Biography 1730-1860* ed. Donald M. Lewis Vol. I (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), pp.82-83.

J. Weborg, “J.A. Bengel” in *Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters*, pp. 289-294. Weborg gives a helpful bibliography on Bengel, including reference to his doctoral thesis on Bengel.

¹⁴ I have used the 1862 English translation. John A. Bengel, *Gnomon of the New Testament. Pointing out From the Natural Force of the Words, the Simplicity, Depth, Harmony and Saving Power of its Divine Thoughts*. Trans. Charlton Lewes, Marvin Vincent, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Perkinpine and Higgins, 1862).

Gnomon is still in use.” The popular title today for the *Gnomon* is *New Testament Commentary* (2 volumes).

Bengel’s “Essay on the Right Way of Handling Divine Subjects” provides us with helpful insight into his views of biblical interpretation. I make quotation from this essay now:

- Put nothing into the Scriptures, but draw everything **from** them, and suffer nothing to remain hidden, that is really **in** them.
- Though each inspired writer has his own manner and style, one and the same Spirit breathes through all, one grand idea pervades all.
- The true commentator will fasten his primary attention on the **letter** (literal meaning), but never forget that the **Spirit** must equally accompany him; at the same time we must never devise a more spiritual meaning for Scripture passages than the Holy Spirit intended.
- The **historical** matters of Scripture, both narrative and prophecy, constitute as it were the **bones** of its system, whereas the **spiritual** matters are its muscles, blood vessels, and nerves. As the **bones** are necessary to the human system so Scripture **must** have its **historical** matters. The expositor who nullifies the historical groundwork of Scripture for the sake of finding only spiritual truths everywhere, brings death on all correct interpretations. Those expositions are the safest which keep closest to the text.

David Brown, of the famous Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown commentary, (who viewed Bengel as his favorite Biblical scholar), commended all students of Scripture to “Suffer not your theological studies to deaden your spirituality. Walk closely with God in the midst of your studies, as great Bengel did; so that when his students met daily for their studies, and he began with a few words of prayer, they said his prayers were like morning

dew.”¹⁵

The *Gnomon* is not like a Henry’s Commentary or Poole’s Annotations. Rather Bengel’s purpose was to closely set forth textual help on the Greek text, then giving the word sense, to proceed to exegesis and finally to provide that which was for edification. Bengel is master of sending the reader to other scriptures to see the harmony. He never flaunts his profound learning of Jerome or Augustine but simply uses them to carry his desire to open the text.

Today most would discount his eschatological views which were chronological and very popular by many in the mid-eighteenth century. (Namely 1836/7 as the time for the Millennial Reign of Christ.) This aside Bengel stands within that great German evangelical tradition of bible interpreters who were textually rigorous, scholarly, precise, yet pious. As Bengel worked so he lived: “Apply the text wholly to yourself; apply yourself wholly to the text.” Students of the Word must not neglect solid and rigorous intellectual study of the Word of God nor lose the focus of the spirit of religious affection as they work with it.

(B) Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg (b.1802 - d.1869): The Champion of Biblical Orthodoxy

Hengstenberg also was greatly indebted to a father who set before him an excellent sphere of training prior to his going to the University of Berlin. However, Hengstenberg as a young man was attached to the German Rationalist school of thought. Then he came under the influence of Pietists and was converted while teaching Eastern languages at Bâslé Missionary College. He attached himself to those who were Evangelical and Orthodox Lutherans. Thus Hengstenberg moved from once being a sympathizer of such Rationalist bible scholars as David Friedrich Strauss to becoming the apologist for Christ the Messiah of the

¹⁵ Wilbur M. Smith, “Biographical and Bibliographical Forward” in Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *A Commentary* 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), I, p.m.

Old Testament prophecies. All who in orthodox evangelism know the center of scripture to be Jesus Christ owe a great debt of gratitude to Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg who fought this critical matter. He was a rigorous scholar and eventually gained a prestigious Professorship at the University of Berlin yet his motto can be summarized well in his recorded last words: “No orthodoxy without pietism, no piety without orthodoxy.”

Hengstenberg’s landmark work was *Christology of the Old Testament and a Commentary on the Messianic Predictions*.¹⁶ (Note the full title.) In this classic work is a defence of the principle that Christ is in the center of the Old Testament revelation. He was not just the scholar refuting the critics, nor simply a philologist, he was also an expositor. The English translation we possess is an abridgement from his original four volume set. Yet it remains one of the best commentaries on the theme of Christology for us in English. He works his way through a massive survey of Old Testament passages which Evangelicals had long seen as Messianic. Beginning in Genesis with the *Protevangelium* he works his way through other passages in Genesis, Numbers, Deuteronomy before turning to the Messianic Psalms. (The abridgement omits the Angel of the Lord discussion and II Samuel 7.) Then he turns to the Prophets, but first gives an excellent essay on the nature of prophecy before turning specifically to Isaiah, Zechariah, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Micah, Haggai, Malachi, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. The result – 700 pages in English abridgement as a commentary on the Messianic Predictions. The student should know that Hengstenberg cannot be rushed through. He is well aware of what the Rationalist Critics wrote and he labours like a lawyer dissecting their argument and uses all his powers in the process.

His other works, many of which have been translated into

¹⁶ The current reprint edition of Hengstenberg’s classic we have available today in English is an abridgement of his original multi-volume work. This must be borne in mind when reading from this English edition. See, E. W. Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament*, trans. Reuel Keith, abridged by Thomas Kerchever Arnold (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1970). The 1970 was in hardback, but recent printings are now in paperback by Kregel and with a foreword by Walter C. Kaiser.

English include commentaries on *Psalms, John*,¹⁷ *Ezekiel, Job, Revelation* and *A Commentary on Ecclesiastes, with Treatises on Song of Solomon, Job, Isaiah*.¹⁸ Many Reformed ministers of the last two generations have told candidates for the ministry to scour the used book stores and buy Hengstenberg. If you see them or some of the more recent reprints bear this in mind.

Hengstenberg's other writings are not commentaries as such but were a nineteenth century defence of traditional authorship for several Old Testament works. See his *Dissertations on the Genuineness of the Pentateuch* and *Dissertations on the Genuineness of Daniel*.

The legacy of nineteenth century German Rationalism is still with us. We can find it resurfacing in current works in Old Testament studies where the force of Christology in the Old Testament is muted. Thus the relevance of Hengstenberg's challenge remains. For those who use Albert Barnes', *Notes*, Barnes in essence put Hengstenberg into the Isaiah commentary in that series. I conclude with Peter Masters' words on Hengstenberg's *Christology of the Old Testament* – "The foundation stone in the preacher's library".¹⁹

(C) Johann Peter Lange (c. 1802 - d.1884): Germany's Outstanding Conservative Bible Scholar

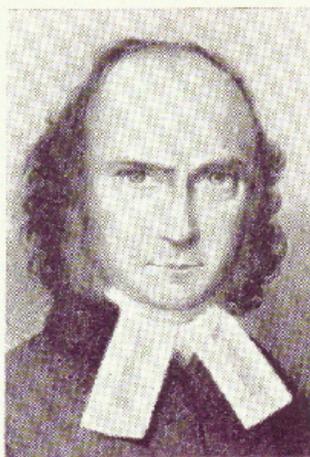
As the German interpreter Hengstenberg set forth a proper Christology in the Old Testament it was the German bible interpreter Johann Peter Lange who took to task the false teaching of Strauss on the life of Christ by producing a conservative bulwark. Bible students must be aware of Lange's

¹⁷ Still available in reprint form from Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids.

¹⁸ As far as I am aware it is not available in modern reprint form but can still often be found in used book stores.

¹⁹ Peter Masters, *The Preacher's Library* (London: Wakeman, 1979) as in *A Classic Bible Study Library for Today* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1988), p.13.

contributions in biblical interpretation.²⁰



JOHN PETER LANGE

Lange was a Reformed pastor and later a Professor at the University of Zurich then at the University of Bonn.²¹ He produced the most complete life of Christ ever written. It clearly is a German parallel to Alfred Edersheim's *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* in many regards, except, Lange deals extensively with the critics and creates an apologetic at the same time. Lange was dealing with an age in which German Bible teachers were attacking the gospels as frauds, that they must be rationalistically set aside, and that they are "mythical". Along with others Lange was a leader in a German school of theology (Vermittlungstheologie) which endeavoured to be faithful to the Reformation Confessions yet interact with the modern writers. It

²⁰ It is most dissappointing that Lange has been forgotten by many today. He was not included in the large John H. Hayes, ed., *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* 2 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999).

²¹ D. S. Schaff, "J. P. Lange" in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, ed. S. M. Jackson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1963), VI, p.411.

was somewhat of a loose school including the pietist Friedrich Tholuck of whom Charles Hodge was greatly indebted. As far as I am aware Lange's *Life of Christ* is now relegated to library shelves and has not been reprinted since the late 1950's.²² So I will pass on to his commentaries.

This is a massive commentary set which is really a composite, multi-volume work. J. P. Lange was really its chief German editor and authored several of the volumes. He was reliant upon Keil and Delitzsch, yet took a different structural approach. Each book of the bible is introduced extensively, followed by "General Preliminary Remarks" upon each chapter, then "Exegetical and Critical" comment, followed by "Doctrinal and Ethical" comment, and last "Homiletical and Practical". By comparison, Keil and Delitzsch's comments on Genesis 21 span 5 1/4 single column small pages, whereas, Lange provides 8 1/2 double column large size pages with full categorical divisions. Clearly the Lange series by volume is of a different order. Lange authors several commentaries on books of the Bible in this set, such as Genesis, Exodus, Matthew, Mark, and John. Some of these have also been singularly printed by several publishing houses, so again watch for them in used book shops or new reprints.²³

This imposing Bible commentary set possesses "brilliant homiletical hints" particularly those by Lange. Spurgeon said of it "I do, however, greatly prize the series lately produced under the presidency of Dr. Lange... For homiletical purposes these volumes are so many hills of gold, but, also, there is a dross [dross]...". The series has generally been afforded the distinction of being "the greatest commentary covering the entire Bible to be published anywhere in the 19th century... a gold mine for those

²² The first English translation was edited by Marcus Dods in his younger years. J. P. Lange, *The Life of the Lord Jesus Christ*, trans. M. Dods 6 volumes (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1864). The last reprint I have seen is the 1958 Zondervan printing done in Grand Rapids.

²³ I have consulted the T. & T. Clark edition for this lecture which is housed in the Haddington House Library.

who are willing to work its rich veins.” (Wilbur M. Smith).²⁴ Spurgeon’s comments “on dross” refer to one or two of the other entrants in the series. However, several of the entrants possess the caliber of Lange in every regard. For example Packard did the entry on Malachi and in recently working with it on Malachi 3:1-5 I saw the same exegetical and critical caliber as with Lange. It was conservative and interacted with Hengstenburg and Keil and offers sound exegesis. Both Packard’s “Doctrinal and Ethical” and “Homiletical and Practical” divisions set forth helpful evangelical application – no dross here. That Lange, for all the volumes with which he was involved, attempted to keep his hand upon who was involved is evidenced by Lange’s rejection of W. Pressel’s commentary on Zechariah because Pressel opposed the genuineness of this prophecy. (Such a story sounds all too contemporary to our age). I think at moments you will find great exegetical blessing – these men worked and mined hard – you will feel humbled to see how the knew Cyril, Augustine, Vitringa and others like old friends – it is like we are babes in the study next to them.

Lange in his early years had several essays and poems published in Hengstenberg’s famous periodical, *Evangelische Kirchenzeitung*. Though one was Reformed and the other Lutheran, both were committed to orthodox, biblical, evangelicalism and we see in Lange a catholic spirit.²⁵

Conclusion of Part I

Our purposes I now remind you of were:

- to promote serious study of the Scripture with piety;
- to help with guidance for your personal library acquisitions;

²⁴ Wilbur M. Smith, *A Treasury of Books for Bible Study* (Boston: W. A. Wilde, 1960) and Wilbur M. Smith, *Chats From a Minister’s Library* (Boston: W. A. Wilde, 1951).

²⁵ *Wycliffe Biographical Dictionary of the Church*, ed. Elgin Moyer, revised edition (Chicago: Moody, 1982), pp.234-235.

- to give signposts and direction to library usage; and
- to encourage you to be mindful of the faithful workers in the Vineyard before you, many of whom we can still mine.

I hope the brief comments I have made on the two Matthews of the Puritan age will help you as to how you approach and use them. With the three Germans – Bengel, Hengstenberg, and Lange – see that each offer unique contributions in biblical interpretation – close textual study with proper religious affections, the glory of Christ in all the Word, and evangelical grammatical historical exegesis leading to thoughtful homiletical and practical application.

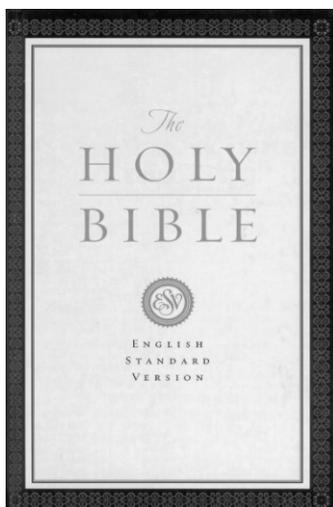
In part two of this lecture we will move from Germany to Scotland and I will develop a plan of building your library.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Book Reviews

***The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers, 2001, 1328pp., hc and leather. \$39.30. (Price reflects casebound edition.) ISBN 1-58134-316-7**

The launching of the English Standard Version (ESV) in October of 2001 added to, what Peter J. Thussen calls, “the burgeoning Babel of Bibles”. Working from the 1971 text of the Revised Standard Version (RSV), a committee of over one hundred scholars committed to historic evangelical orthodoxy has closely examined and compared each word of the RSV with the original language texts to produce a version touted as “an essentially literal translation”. The translation team reads like a veritable “Who’s Who” of contemporary conservative evangelicalism.



Textual Basis

The textual basis of the ESV differs little from that used by the New International Version (NIV) and the New American Standard Bible (NASB). The translators state that they have a high regard for the Masoretic text and reflect that text whenever possible in their translation. In exceptional, difficult cases, other sources are consulted and a divergence from the Masoretic text is made. It is interesting to note, then, that in Exodus 1:22 the translators opted to follow the Samaritan, Septuagint and Targum texts rather than the Masoretic text by inserting the words “to the Hebrews” following the phrase “Every son that is born. . .”. The NIV, on the other hand, translates the Masoretic text (as it does in Isaiah 15:9, compare with ESV), though noting the textual variations in its footnote. Normally, however, if there is divergence from the Masoretic text it is noted in the footnote. From my study the ESV does this more consistently than either the NIV (cf. Psalm 60:8) or the NASB (Judges 14:15).

The Greek text used for the New Testament rendering is eclectic based on the 1993 UBS text and *Novum Testamentum Graece*. As such you will find little differences in the choices made by the ESV, NIV, and NASB translators. The footnotes are extensive, providing a helpful compact textual critical apparatus in an English Bible version.

Translation Philosophy

It is in its translation philosophy that the ESV purports to find a niche among faithful English translations. Eschewing the dynamic equivalence or “thought-for-thought” approach of some translations, the ESV tends to a “word-for-word” translation, what it calls, an “essentially literal” translation.

The ESV recognises that a word-for-word translation may be literally precise but comes at the cost of diminished readability. In language that is in vogue today in translation circles, it is a challenge to maintain both formal and functional equivalence. For many Christians the NASB, while employing a formal equivalence philosophy fails at making it functionally equivalent. So, the NASB, though accurately rendering the text (and therefore helpful for seminary students in their original

language classes while preparing for tests) is not the version of choice for personal and public reading for many Christians and churches.

The ESV translators, then, attempt to bridge the gap between formal and functional equivalence. They have done that very well, though at times there are some awkward renderings. One of the obstacles of the NIV has been its careless propensity to leave out conjunctions. For example, in Luke 9:23 Jesus issues a call to discipleship. He proceeds to defend that call with three statements beginning with the preposition *gar*. The NIV translates only the first *gar*. The ESV carefully translates each one. Similarly, in Hebrews 4:8 the ESV renders the Greek text more judiciously. The NIV has God speaking, at a later time, of another day. That is, “later” modifies the verb “have spoken”. The Greek has “later” modifying the noun day. Both the ESV and the NASB reflect that. The ESV’s commitment to a word-for-word translation is also evident in the utilisation of technical theological terms such as propitiation in Romans 3:25 and flesh for *sarx* in Romans 8:8. “Lord of hosts” is used in the Old Testament instead of the NIV’s “Lord Almighty” (cf. Isaiah 6:3). When reading the ESV the original text is transparent, making this an excellent version from which to study and preach.

The devotion to formal equivalence is not always evident however. In Revelation 10:11 John is spoken to by a plurality of persons rendered in the NASB as “And they said to me. . .”. While not negating the possibility that John was spoken to by more than one person the ESV (like the NIV) opts for “And I was told. . .”. In Genesis 50:23 the Hebrew has Joseph’s son Manasseh’s children born on Joseph’s knees. The ESV expresses that phrase as “were counted as Joseph’s own” though in the footnote it gives the Hebrew reading.

This devotion to word-for-word translation has, as mentioned above, led, in my opinion, to some unnecessary infelicities. For example, in Philippians 2:1-2 the “if” of verse 1 would be helpfully complemented by a “then” in verse 2. This would make it read more smoothly. Admittedly, my thinking regarding the degree to which the ESV’s functional equivalence has been successful is affected by my use of the NIV for the past

11 years. I imagine someone employing another version such as the New King James Version (NKJV) might find the ESV eminently readable.

In the climate of egalitarianism in which the Church finds itself the ESV is to be commended for its maintenance of biblical usage regarding gender. Where there is no counterpart for “man” in the original the ESV does not translate “man” and when people are meant for men (as in Genesis 4:26) people is employed in the translation. Unlike the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) which translates “brothers” in the NT as “brothers and sisters” the ESV retains a literal translation of *adelphoi* and places a recurring (and somewhat annoying because of its repetition) footnote stating that *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings in God’s family. Similarly, *huioi* is mostly expressed as sons, not children, because of its meaning as a legal term in the adoption and inheritance laws of the first century Rome.

Since the NIV’s publishing of the complete Bible in 1978 there has consistently been frustration expressed by some Christians who are familiar with the original languages because of the NIV’s paraphrastic tendencies. For many the NIV was a welcome arrival after the RSV’s publication in 1952. For conservative Christians the RSV, though hailed as a great translation for the most part, suffered from a liberal bias and therefore could never be trusted fully. The *almah* matter of Isaiah 7:14, where *almah* was translated as “young woman” instead of “virgin”, guaranteed the RSV’s relative obscurity among evangelical Christians. The translators of the NIV held to the inerrancy of Scripture and sought to make clear the unity of the Testaments by, for example, capitalizing the anointed one in Psalm 2:2, seeing it as a reference to the Messiah, Jesus. Contrary to many fundamentalists, the NIV was an evangelical and faithful translation of God’s inerrant Word. Perhaps the ESV will satisfy conservative evangelicals who have long used the NIV but desired more commitment to a word-for-word translation. I believe the ESV has struck an adequate balance between faithfulness to the original texts and read-ability. It does appear to

be filling a niche. Over 200,000 copies have been sold since the ESV appeared a year ago.

The ESV is available in a variety of formats. Everything from the hardcover (casebound) edition to a genuine leather Thinline edition is obtainable. A pew edition can also be purchased. The cross references and concordance in the Classic Reference Bible are extensive. There are book introductions which are brief but helpful. A free CD-ROM, with the complete ESV text and a wide range of Bible resources, was included with all copies of the first two ESV editions published during the first year. Indicating the time in which we live, the ESV can also be accessed via the internet at www.gncc.org/esv. The ESV is published by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers which is a not-for-profit organization. This fact, in itself, might make the ESV attractive to many who are bothered by the thought of corporations exploiting God's Word, the revelation of his free grace in Jesus Christ, for excessive profits.

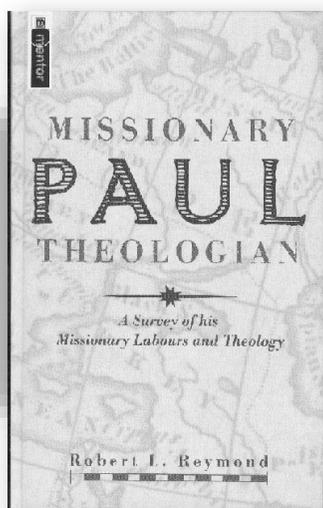
What will be the reception of the ESV? Will many churches opt for its use in corporate worship and recommend it to its members? For many who were concerned about the NIV the ESV might have arrived too late. The NKJV has enjoyed prominence among many conservative evangelicals even if they were not committed to its textual basis and though its rendering is somewhat stilted. At least conservative evangelicals can be confident that the ESV is a faithful rendering of the Word of God.

It is tempting to think that English Bible translation, from Wycliffe's work through Tyndale's, the Geneva, the Authorised, the American Standard, the RSV, the NIV, and a plethora of others, is a forward march to a more perfect Bible. If that thought were true the ESV might be another stop along the way – it is not the end point. The development of Bible translation continues, the ESV notwithstanding. For now, it seems to me that we remain in a situation where we must select, from the many viable possibilities, one that most adequately suits our particular purpose.

Reviewed by John van Eyk, who since 1998 has been a Tutor of Haddington House, and since 1995 has been pastor of Riverside Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, Cambridge, Ontario.

***Paul, Missionary Theologian.* Robert L. Reymond.
Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2000, 636pp.,
hc \$53.00. ISBN 18572-497-5**

Having spent time on the mission field in South Korea, Japan and Jamaica, Reymond wrote this book with, “the needs of mission agencies, missionaries, and missionary candidates in mind” (p.14). For this reason, from the outset Reymond clearly states that his volume on Paul was not written to provide the readership with just another scholarly commentary on the apostle. Instead, Reymond endeavours to submit, “such a portrait of the man and his ministry and say some things that most ‘Paul studies’ that are being made available to the Bible student today do not say.” (p.9). Reymond hopes to provide students and missionary candidates with a “biblical basis for becoming ‘world Christians’” declaring God’s law-free gospel (p.14).



This initial comment directs the reader’s attention to the significance of the preface for an essential understanding of not only the purpose of this book but also its design. Reymond’s approach is classically orthodox. He is particularly concerned to

portray Paul's missionary theology, which, he stresses, is derived entirely from Christ and rests firmly on His teaching. While denying a voice to the divergent views of those in line with F. C. Baur and of E. P. Sanders, Reymond takes, "Luke's Acts and Paul's letters as they stand" and seeks to present, "the biblical facts about this great pioneer missionary" (p.13).

Considering the topic, the 636 pages should not be viewed as copious but as appropriate for such a considerable undertaking. Depending on the subject and point being made, the writing style varies rather predictably between moderately readable to highly readable. Reymond does not hesitate to quote extensive portions of scholarly works yet he manages to temper this feature with his own insightful comments, critical evaluations and relevant applications. He demonstrates a keen ability to expound complex ideas in concise and plain language without losing the import of thought. The chapters contain ample helpings of Greek, enough to satiate the appetite of any so interested (a 'representative glossary' is included). The reasonably well-bound volume is divided into two parts. Part one examines Paul's Missionary Labours while part two delves into Paul's Missionary Theology.

In the first part, Reymond follows F. F. Bruce's, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* and Martin Franzmann's *The Word of the Lord Grows*. This, Reymond explains, is because the chapters were originally lectures for seminary students at Covenant Theological Seminary. Bruce's and Franzmann's books were required reading for the course and the lectures were, "...used to assist my students in their reading of them." (pp.11-12). After chronologically outlining the relationship of Paul's letters to Luke's Acts, Reymond presents the life of Paul the Zealot Jew, his conversion and first evangelistic efforts followed by his 'five' missionary journeys and brief outlines of his letters.

Reymond holds to the South Galatian hypothesis/view. As well, "moving against the majority opinion of New Testament scholars," (p.11) he argues in favour of Pauline authorship of Hebrews. Reymond defends his position on a theological and historical basis (pp.257, 273). He includes useful chapters on the Jerusalem conference and the divine authority and canonicity of Paul's correspondence.

In this first section, Reymond deliberately stresses the importance of the fact that Paul, “was proclaiming the gospel which he had received, as he says, in and by his conversion experience itself – ‘by revelation from Jesus Christ’” and not something he had learned during his life in Judaism or from the original apostles (pp.68-69). Peter and the apostles’ recognition of the authenticity of the gospel Paul preached and the equivalence of his apostolic calling was essential (p.102). Even so, Reymond endeavours to show the basic continual unity between Paul and Peter over and against the view of C. K. Barrett (pp.192-193). It is significant that at junctures Reymond’s comments are based on the emphasis that Paul, “was simply fulfilling his own mission resolve ‘to know nothing among them but Jesus Christ and him crucified’” (p.164), and as a result the law-free gospel greatly advanced despite ardent opposition and many difficulties even within the congregations.

Part two presents Paul’s missionary theology which Reymond has chosen to treat separately rather than interspersing it among the commentary on Paul’s missionary journey and correspondence. Reymond proposes that, “central to Paul’s thought is the primacy of God’s sovereign divine grace as his grace comes to expression in the cross-work of the incarnate Christ in behalf of sinners” (p.308). This theme is reminiscent of his “A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith”. Having stated this Reymond refers to part two as a “‘mini’ systematic theology which takes into account Paul’s perception of the triune God’s gracious work of saving the elect and restoring the cosmos to its paradisaical state by the cross-work of Christ” (p.309). Reymond arranges his chapters according to the economical trinity (the triune God’s saving work), starting with sin and ending with Pauline eschatology. Reymond devotes a chapter each to justification and the “Christian and the Decalogue” defending the third use of the law.

Reymond’s approach is commendable. He does justice to the theology of Paul by placing Paul’s doctrine of justification within the proper context of God’s sovereignty. In the chapter on justification, Reymond draws attention to the increasingly many-sided threat to the orthodox reformed understanding of this doctrine. He takes issue not just with Rome but also with

evangelical ecumenicals such as D. G. Bloesch, N. T. Wright and with the ‘new perspective’ on Paul, critically evaluating E. P. Sanders’ “covenantal nomism” (pp.429, 449, 452, 560-564). More attention, however, should have been devoted to E. P. Sanders’ incorrect understanding of sin (pp.315-316), which impacts his entire view.

In general, Reymond capably reaches his goal. To demonstrate that *as Paul*, “we” should contend for the Word of truth, the entire counsel of God, and taking seriously God’s sovereignty in salvation we should, *as Paul*, proclaim God’s law-free gospel, justification by faith alone to the world (pp.557-584). However, Reymond seems to emphasize Paul the missionary at the expense of recognizing Paul’s pastoral heart (eg. on p.499). This is unfortunate yet forgivable. What may be of greater concern is that Reymond writes with a presupposition about the nature of missions. His definition of missions is that of transnational and transcultural foreign missions. Nowhere does he even intimate that because the world has come to us in North America, the longstanding definition of missions must be substantially redefined to include “home missions”. Ironically, the issues he has discussed are found in our own backyard.

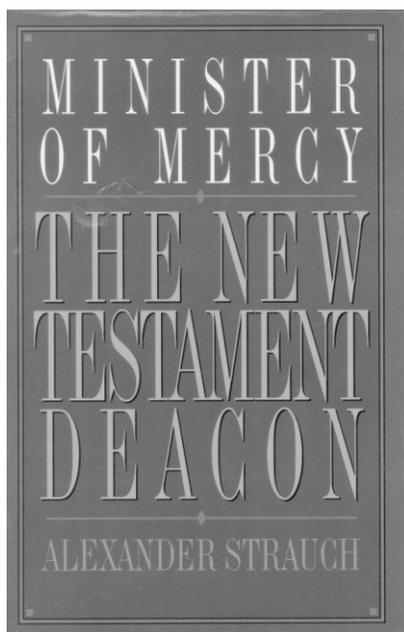
Pastors, missionary candidates, students and select laymen will appreciate and enjoy this volume for its faithful survey, informative insights into Paul’s journeys and theology, and more importantly for its truly edifying and highly relevant applications.

Reviewed by Frank Z. Kovács who became a Tutor with Haddington House in the fall of 2002 and is pastor of the Reformed Hungarian Church (ARP) Toronto, Ontario.

***The New Testament Deacon: The Church's Minister of Mercy.*
Alexander Strauch.**

**Littleton, Colorado: Lewis and Roth, 1992, 191 pp., paper
\$9.99 U.S. ISBN 0-936083-07-7**

Since there is such a dearth of contemporary writing on the office of the deacon it is always good to read new books on the subject. Thus, it is with pleasure that I read *The New Testament Deacon* by Alexander Strauch especially when I read these statements on the back cover of the book: "The deacon's ministry, therefore, is one that no Christ-centred, New Testament church can ever afford to neglect" and "Christians today must understand the absolute necessity for and vital importance of New Testament deacons to the local church..."



This book consists of four main sections with each having chapter divisions within. The four sections are: Dividing up the work: Word and Deed; A Two Office Church: Overseers and Deacons; The Qualifications for Deacons; and, The Importance

of Deacons in the Church. Strauch sets the tone with a helpful introductory essay “Facing the Issues” which, together with the endnotes, goes a long way to setting forth a contemporary understanding of where we are. That is, some churches with a diaconate operate more on the model of a corporation executive than as ministering servants, whereas others operate as building and property managers. In still others, deacons are “church factotums” (those who operate in virtually every area of church life). Thus, the challenge to learn again what the New Testament teaches on the diaconate and the four parts which follow are just that –“a biblical examination and exposition of all New Testament texts on deacons”. The book does not concern itself with the actual “implementation and operation of the diaconate” as Strauch has written a second book *The New Testament Deacon: Study Guide* in which practical ideas and suggestions are given. I suspect many would rather jump to this second book, but I would say that the subject matter of the first must take priority.

Strauch is a member of the Evangelical Theological Society and writes clearly from a perspective of one who upholds the inerrancy of the Scriptures. Though he does not claim to be a Presbyterian, he is friends of Presbyterians and reads from many in that tradition. He applauds Calvin who he views “made the most conscientious effort to restore the New Testament deacon” and [Strauch’s book] “is basically in agreement with Calvin’s sixteenth century reform of the church-deaconate” (p.163). Obviously the reader will pass judgment on such a statement. Overall I think Strauch is fair in this statement with one or two significant exceptions. It is interesting in his acknowledgments he thanks George W. Knight III whose *The Pastoral Epistles A Commentary on the Greek Text* is clearly a seminal work in this field. One can detect Knight’s influence upon Strauch’s book. Knight is a Presbyterian and Strauch a teacher and elder in a church or “Brethren Chapel” in Littleton, Colorado. The latter has been teaching there for thirty years and on occasion has also taught New Testament and Philosophy at Colorado Christian University. The Brethren movement of which Strauch is involved has many affinities with certain schools of Presbyterian

polity which stress two offices over three offices. However, Strauch's "brethrenism" is very much part of his polity and can be seen in this book. All readers need to be aware of this.

In Part One Strauch discusses the matters of the shepherds' priorities for word and prayer. Here he describes shepherding in the broad sense of pastor or elder. He walks us through the recent controversies in New Testament thought on whether or not Acts 6 is setting forth the office of the deacon and concludes that it is. His writing style is easy to follow and does not become overly technical for a lay person to follow in any of this controversy.

Part Two is a brief discussion on the two offices of overseer and deacon. We then come to the heart of the book, Part Three, "The Qualifications for Deacons" which takes over fifty pages. Here is one of the most orderly and edifying studies I have read to date on this subject. This section alone could constitute the basis for an adult bible class, a training workshop, or a retreat for several hours in a local church. Also, this section would be worthy of use in seminary classes on Presbyterian polity. There may not be universal agreement with all Strauch's conclusions, but he presents the clear conservative positions, in a readable fashion and with fairness.

I see three weaknesses in the work or its use. First, a chapter on the Old Testament and mercy as a background to the New Testament should have been included. I see this as a common fault in most discussions on diaconal mercy work, including many Reformed and Presbyterian authors. Second, it should be used next to the Presbyterian documents on the office of the deacon which are in our *Forms of Government*. This would give a fuller benefit of a greater corpus of material to supplement Strauch. Also, I reiterate that we must not ignore the fact that our polity as Presbyterians is not Brethren. Third, since the stress is clearly on the New Testament it could lead to imbalances by the readership if they are not aware of the fuller picture which means historical theology needs to be studied. A richer discussion on the applied theology of the diaconate historically in Reformed and Presbyterian circles should be incorporated by those using this work as a teaching resource.

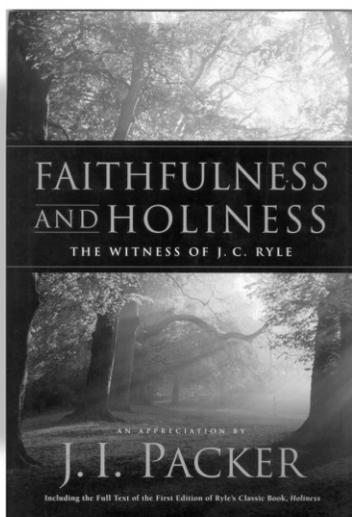
The work from my perspective is marred by this failure and a few brief endnotes did not satisfy me here. Strauch is aware of Owen, but the corpus is much fuller than that. With these three points acknowledged and easily overcome I am pleased to commend this work which is clearly the best work written on the New Testament deacon in a long time. It expands on many things lightly touched upon in Timothy Keller's *Ministries of Mercy* or Lester de Koster's book on deacons. Lewis and Roth have done a wonderful job in their publishing and I commend their series "Biblical Church Leadership From a New Testament Perspective" which lists twenty-four resources including eleven by Alexander Strauch. We look forward to reviewing more from this series in this *Journal* our first being *The New Testament Deacon the Church's Minister of Mercy*. Our readers will be interested to know that this book has already been translated into Korean and Spanish. I would like to know how it is received by Korean Presbyterians many of whom have had a rich ministry in this area. At present this book can only be ordered from the publishers in Colorado and thus I have included the price in US dollars.

Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock

***Faithfulness and Holiness The Witness of J.C. Ryle* .
J.I.Packer .**

Includes the full text of the first edition (1877) of Ryle's book *Holiness*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2002, 272pp., hc, \$29.99. ISBN 1-58134-358-2

J.I. Packer's *Faithfulness and Holiness* is actually two books in one. The first section is an 88 page appreciation of Bishop John Charles Ryle (1816-1900). The second section of the book is the full text of the first edition of Ryle's book, *Holiness*.



Packer's appreciation on Ryle is twelve short chapters: A Great Man, A Great Victorian, A Great Sufferer, A Great Change, A Great Evangelical, A Great Puritan, A Great Agenda, A Great Preacher, A Great Legacy, and A Great Tradition. From the titles of the chapters it is quite obvious that Packer has a high regard for his fellow Anglican. Packer includes many of Ryle's own works and draws mostly from Ryle's autobiography entitled *A Self-Portrait* to pay tribute to Ryle. The book does not contain the events of Ryle's life written in chronological order; instead it is a character sketch of the Bishop "highlighting his quality and

stature as an English evangelical leader.” (p.9) Ryle stood for puritan truths in the days when they started to decline. Packer writes of Ryle:

Ryle honed his skills, but never changed his tune. While industrial, commercial, and educational development brought a new coolness and sophistication to England’s national culture, and while the Church of England struggled with a plethora of new emphasis, visions, tasks, and cross-currents of debate, Ryle remained the man that he had been before 1850. Thus, thought of as a mover and a shaker when he was young, he was widely written off as a dinosaur in his last years, and that understanding of him continues still. (pp.9-10)

His achievements, impact and universality made Ryle a well known name in Reformed circles. Ryle wrote in a punchy, Victorian style defending the Reformed Faith alongside fellow Victorian Charles Spurgeon. Packer leads us through the sufferings of Ryle; family bankruptcy at the age of twenty-five, his poverty, and deaths of his first and second wives. According to Packer, Ryle’s trials are what God used to mould the future Bishop into the man we know him as today. In this book we see Ryle’s agenda to evangelize England, purge the Church, unite Christians and of course to encourage holiness. We are informed also of Ryle’s faithful efforts as a preacher and as a Bishop in the Anglican Church. This book introduces us to Ryle, a spiritual-giant who stood his ground among his critics and left behind a great legacy. Packer summarizes:

I see him as a single-minded Christian communicator of profound biblical, theological, and pastoral wisdom, a man and a minister of giant personal stature and electric force of utterance that sympathetic readers still feel and I aim to present him as such. (p.11)

Packer’s fifth chapter on Ryle “A Great Evangelical” is a brilliant pithy essay which allows Ryle to speak for himself. Ryle is quoted at length here by Packer from *Knots Untied*

(Ryle's most popular book while alive). The depth and simplicity, characteristic of Ryle are at their best here:

...To the question 'what Evangelical Religion is?' the simplest answer I can give is to point out what appear to be its leading features ... The first leading feature in Evangelical Religion is the absolute supremacy it assigns to Holy Scripture, as the only rule of faith and practice... the second... the depth and prominence it assigns to the doctrine of human sinfulness and corruption... the third ... the paramount importance it attaches to the work and office of our Lord Jesus Christ,... We hold that an experimental knowledge of Christ crucified and interceding, is the very essence of Christianity... the fourth... the high place which it assigns to the inward work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of man... the fifth and last... is the importance which it attaches to the outward and visible work of the Holy Ghost in the life of man... (pp. 31-33)
[italics inconsistent in text]

Now, reader, there is something to ponder!

The second section of the work is Ryle's book *Holiness*. Packer includes this work for three reasons: to show us Ryle's style of writing which is systematical and gradual build-up to make his point (to quote snippets of Ryle then does not do him justice); the whole work must be read to be properly understood; and *Holiness* lays out the truths of Christian sanctification, and though dated, is still relevant for the modern day Christian.

Ryle's reason for writing was to sow the seeds of a scriptural view of "holiness". The Bishop saw a lack of holiness in professing believers and was concerned that the "Higher Life Movement" was producing a shallow faith. To Ryle, holiness was being conformed to God's Son.

Holiness contains seven theologically rich chapters. For this review I will give a brief summary of each chapter.

1. Sin. The first chapter gives a biblical definition of sin. Sin, according to Ryle is not to be taken lightly. A false view of sin had lead to perfectionism, false piety, and lack of holiness in the 19th century.
2. Sanctification. Here Ryle reveals its true nature, visible marks and clears the confusion between justification and sanctification.
3. Holiness. Ryle expounds what true holiness is, why it is needed and how it is attained.
4. The Fight. Christianity is a fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Ryle points out that a believer is to be known by his inward warfare and inward peace.
5. The Cost. In the fifth chapter Ryle explains the cost of being a Christian, the importance of counting the cost, and why counting the cost is needed.
6. Growth. Here we are shown biblically what growth is, the results of growth, the marks of growth and the way to grow.
7. Assurance. In the last chapter the reader learns that assurance is based on scripture (though Ryle is careful to articulate true believers may not have assurance) and how to know if one is saved.

This book is recommended reading for all Christians. Those who have been blessed by Ryle's writings will especially enjoy Packer's appreciation of Ryle. Much can be learned from the life of this Christian. Those who have been facing trials will find strength from Ryle's sufferings. Packer uses the Bishop's hardships to teach us that God uses all things for the good of those who love Him. It was a brilliant idea of Packer to include the 1877 edition of Holiness to pay tribute to Ryle, as well as to show us that his writings were not obsolete in his day, nor are they obsolete for us today. As a layman in the church I would love to see this book used in an adult class or in a home group – what a great way for folks to meet Ryle and then take up Ryle's Expository Thoughts on the Gospels or his other devotional books.

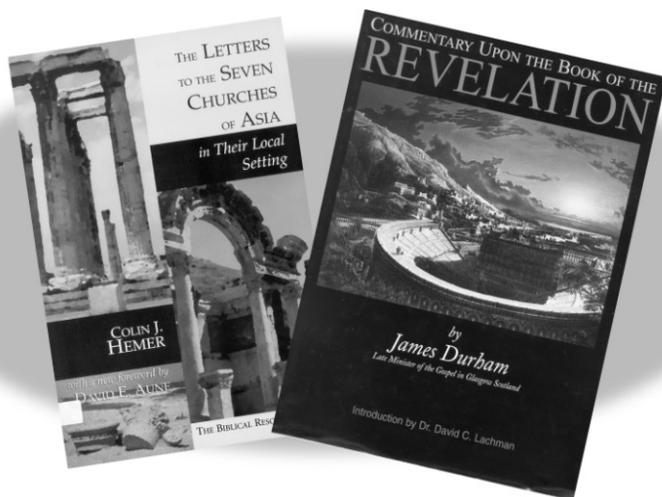
The book is attractively bound in hardback with an elegant dust cover. Packer has included notes not only to his twelve chapters but also notes to each of Ryle's chapters in Holiness. These together with general and scripture indices plus an extensive note of ten pages on faith and assurance and further "Extracts from Old Writers" makes this an invaluable resource. It is thirty dollars Canadian well spent.

Reviewed by Charles (Charlie) P. Farrell a student of Haddington House in the Certificate of Christian Studies Vocational programme and an employee of Avis Canada. Charlie also serves as an active host to refugees and on his congregation's missions committee.

Book Notices

In *Book Notices* we inform readers about works which have been recently added to the Haddington House Library. Most entrants here are currently in print but on occasion we will include rare and valuable books we have acquired to which students and patrons may want to come and consult. *Book Notices* are made in keeping with our editorial policy to help our readers in the stewardship of their resources and time. Our *Journal* uses the standard abbreviation “hc” to denote hardcover. The International Standard Book Number (ISBN) has been included with all books.

Bible Department



The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting.

Colin J. Hemer, with a new foreword by David E. Aune, “The Biblical Resource Series”, original 1986. Grand Rapids and Livonia: Eerdmans and Dove, 2001, 338 pp., paper. ISBN 0-8028-4714-5

“This modern classic by Colin Hemer explores the seven letters in the book of Revelation against the historical background of the churches to which they were addressed. Based on literary,

epigraphical, and archaeological sources and informed by Hemer's firsthand knowledge of the biblical sites, this superb study presents a clear picture of the New Testament world in the latter part of the first century and its significance for broader questions of church history." – back cover

"This work has perennial value and will continue to be consulted for years to come by those who want to wrestle with the complex problems presented by the text."

– David E. Aune, from the foreword

"One of the best contributions ever published on the letters of Revelation."

– Gerhard Maier in *Theologische Literaturzeitung*

Colin J. Hemer was a research fellow at Tyndale House in Cambridge, England. I had the pleasure of spending several meals with him in 1984 while at Tyndale. He was busy working on this work at that time and died shortly thereafter in 1987. I recall him saying how we need good evangelical geographers. This came out of conversations arising from my recently completed arts work where I had told him about the geography courses I had enjoyed. I was a very young and naive student at the time, likely still naive, and failed to appreciate at the time the position Hemer and F. F. Bruce stood. I will always remember his kind discussions and care he expressed and his encouragements. Aune's and Maier's words speak well on this book.

– J.C.W.

A Commentary Upon the Book of the Revelation.

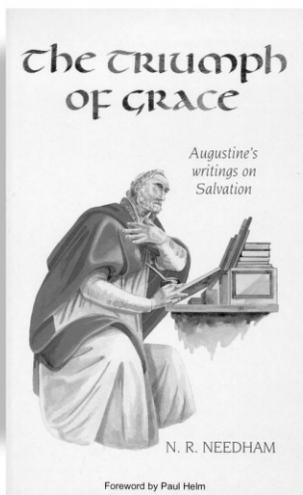
James Durham. Introduction by David C. Lachman. Original 1658. Willow Street, Pennsylvania: Old Paths, 2000, 1001pp., hc. ISBN 0-8028-4714-5

James Durham, a Covenanter minister, was known for his piety and great learning. Spurgeon described this commentary with these words, “After all that has been written, it would not be easy to find a more sensible and instructive work than this old-fashioned exposition. We cannot accept its interpretations of the mysteries, but the mystery of the gospel fills it with sweet savour.”

This commentary is based upon Durham’s Sunday morning lectures, before the morning service, somewhat akin to an adult bible class lecture. Unfortunately the publisher confuses it as “sermons” when it is not. It was included in the famous Scottish Expository Series which originated with David Dickson and comes recommended by Robert Baillie, Durham’s colleague in ministry and Professor of Divinity at Glasgow University. The work also contains about 25 additional essays which were theological essays and not part of the lecture series. Historicist in interpretation.

– J.C.W.

Systematic Theology



The Triumph of Grace: Augustine's Writings on Salvation.
N. R. Needham. London: Grace, 2000, 304pp., paper. ISBN 0-946462-58-5

“This book brings together choice quotations from Augustine on the theme of salvation. Here readers can sample for themselves what one of the masterminds of Christianity had to say about creation, the fall, original sin, free will, law and grace, incarnation and atonement, the new life in Christ, predestination, and the perseverance of the saints. It is a profound, radical and vital message that today’s Church desperately needs to hear again if she is to recover her spiritual and theological health.”

– back cover

“Why should an Evangelical learn theology from a 5th century African bishop who believed in baptismal regeneration? It is an interesting question. The answer is probably that this bishop knew more about God’s grace, both theologically and in his

spiritual experience, than almost any other Christian who has ever lived... Theologically speaking, Martin Luther and John Calvin saw themselves as doing little more than trying to restore true Augustinian doctrine and spiritual practice to the Church.”

– Needham

The Biblical Doctrine of Infant Baptism.

Pierre Marcel. Trans. Philip Edgcumbe Hughes. original 1951. Seoul and New York: Westminster Publishing House, n.d., 256pp., paper. ISBN 0-227-6785-9

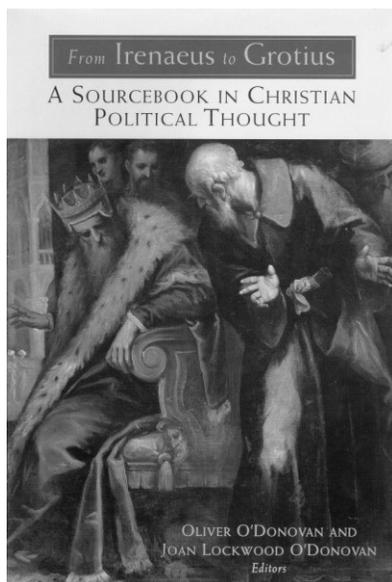
“*The Biblical Doctrine of Infant Baptism* has established itself, since its first publication in English in 1953, as the authoritative treatment of a subject that is frequently discussed without a full understanding of its Biblical background. The virtue of Dr. Marcel’s book is that it treats of its highly complex subject within the broad context of the theology of justification and of grace without ever losing sight of the Biblical evidence. It is only when he has shown, after a careful study of both Old and New Testaments, the position of a child within the Covenant of Grace that he turns his attention to the specific subject of baptism. The author’s vindication of the doctrine of infant baptism is the more impressive because it does not rely upon archaeological or patristic evidence about the practice of the early Church – convincing as that evidence may be – but on the evidence of Scripture.”

– back cover

“The late Dr. Pierre Marcel, minister of the French Reformed Church... prepared this study in the late 1940's in part to counteract the growing influence of Karl Barth and his followers. These had raised new questions about the legitimacy of the continuance of the household principle in the New Covenant, and consequently challenged the propriety of infant baptism. Marcel’s response went far beyond answering these objections... such that the final product... became an outstanding modern defense... Indeed, there is no better presentation.”

– Wm. Shishko

Historical Theology



From Irenaeus to Grotius A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought 100-1625.

**Editors Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan.
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999, 838pp., hc. ISBN 0-8028-3876-6**

I debated placing this under systematic theology and a strong case could be made for such as “political theology” is emerging in its own and is being related to ethics by some. However, I decided to place it under historical theology as it is arranged chronologically.

“The texts in this volume have been chosen to illustrate the use of Christian theological arguments in political discussion throughout the period when such arguments were commonplace. For a millennium and a half, from the patristic age to the early modern period, the themes of creation, fall, Christology, the church, and

eschatology, and the appeal to a wide range of Old and New Testament texts, dominated the way political discussion was conducted. This unique sourcebook provides access to this tradition of theo-political argument through primary texts representative of how Christian beliefs have fashioned Christian political ideals and practices...

Intended for anyone interested in the development of Christian political thought, this volume will be especially valuable to readers for whom the interaction of theology and politics is a live issue today..."

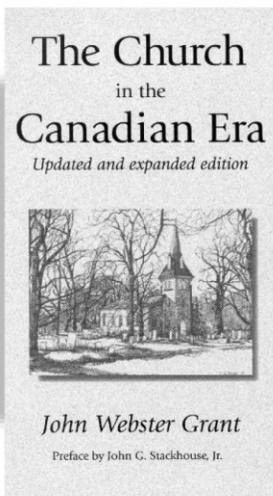
– dustjacket

“Destined to be the standard collection of its kind for the twenty-first century.”

–Cary J. Nederman

“The O’Donovans’ collection will become a classic.”

–Nicholas Wolterstorff



The Church in the Canadian Era (Updated and expanded edition).

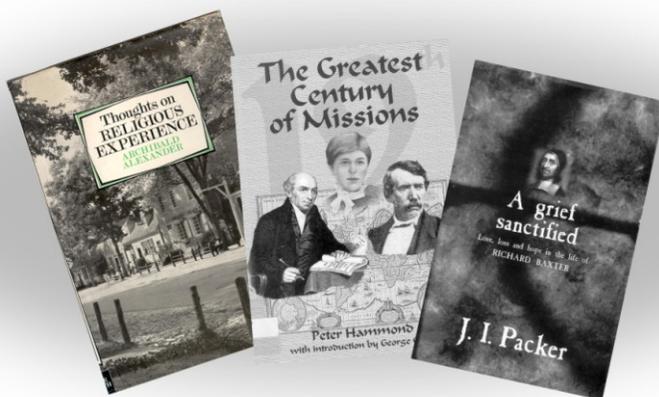
John Webster Grant. original 1972. Vancouver, B.C.: Regent College Publishing, 1998, 274pp., paper. ISBN 1-57383-119-0

“John Webster Grant’s *The Church in the Canadian Era* was originally published in 1972. It remains a classic and important text on the history of the Canadian churches since Confederation. This updated edition has been expanded to include a chapter on recent history as well as a new bibliographical survey...”

“What marked Grant’s work throughout his long and fruitful career—and shows up in good effect in this volume—was an admirable combination of indefatigable research in both primary and secondary sources, fluent writing, and fair-mindedness to every subject... It is with great satisfaction, then, that I commend this landmark of Canadian church history and, indeed, of Canadian history in general.”

—John G. Stackhouse, Jr.

Applied Theology



Thoughts on Religious Experience.

Archibald Alexander. original 1844. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1978, 338pp., paper.

ISBN 0-85151-757-9

“The nature of spiritual experience is probably both the most interesting and the most difficult subject in Christian literature: interesting because it concerns human life in all observable stages from childhood to death, and embraces all the emotions and behaviour possible in a man regenerated by the Holy Spirit; difficult because the adequate treatment of the subject makes immense demands upon an author. To trace accurately such experiences as conversion, sanctification and backsliding, as they appear in human consciousness, presupposes a sound biblical theology as well as a spirituality of mind and a pastoral knowledge broad enough to interpret all the varieties in type which occur.

Twenty years a pastor and preacher in a revival era, then forty years a professor at Princeton Theological Seminary

(commenced in 1812 when he was the sole instructor), Archibald Alexander brought to this volume the best wisdom of his life. From his own observations, and from case histories drawn from Christian biography, he follows his subject with the hand of a master. He was, in Dr. Theodore Woolsey's words, 'The Shakespeare of the Christian heart'. Primarily concerned with what ought to be the impress made upon the life by scriptural truths he has nothing of the vague devotionalism of the religious mystics. But within this biblical context a wide variety of experiences pass under review, along with a consideration of the practical problems involved in an understanding of the new-birth, Christian growth, spiritual conflict and kindred subjects.

This is a lucid and fascinating volume almost alone in the field which it covers." –dustjacket

The Greatest Century of Missions.

Peter Hammond. Introduction by George Grant. Cape Town: Christian Liberty Books, 2002, 146pp., hc and paper. ISBN 0-9584549-2-2

"The Greatest Century of Missions is a treasure trove of incredible adventures, inspiring exploits and unbelievable achievements of some of the most extra-ordinary people in the most momentous era of Christian advance. This book will be an invaluable resource for pastors and missionaries and a textbook for senior homeschoolers, Christian schools and Bible colleges. It should be required reading for prospective missionaries.

– back cover

"The nineteenth century missions movement... was a great era of Biblical faith. Appropriately, Dr. Peter Hammond beautifully captures this remarkable multi-faceted legacy in *The Greatest Century of Missions*. Not only does his fluid narrative make the individual missionaries come to life, he highlights their vision, their motivation, their theological faithfulness, and their long-term cultural impact.

“It is my prayer that as modern Christians read this much needed book, they will see the great pioneers, these culture-shapers, these soul-winners and nation-builders of the nineteenth century in an entirely new light—and that we will model our own twenty-first century efforts after theirs. I am convinced that if we do, we too will see a glorious transformation of men and nations.”

– from the Introduction by Dr. George Grant

- Excellent illustrations
- Contains questions for discussion on each chapter.
- Excellent for Sunday School classes, Christian Schools, Homeschoolers and ministers to give to their mission committees.

– J.C.W.

A grief sanctified. Love, loss and hope in the life of Richard Baxter.

J. I. Packer. Leicester, England: Crossway Books, 1997, 208pp., paper. ISBN 1-85684-090-5

“This is a book for Christian people about six of life’s realities—love, faith, death, grief, hope, and patience. Centrally it is about grief...”

– J. I. P.

“Bereavement becomes a supreme test of the quality of our faith,” writes Dr. Packer, and in our own times of grieving, he says, we need all the help we can get.

Margaret, the wife of Richard Baxter, died in June 1681 at the age of forty-five. Baxter, a prominent pastor and preacher, was heartbroken. Only weeks later he wrote a memoir of Margaret’s life and death. Edited by Dr. Packer, it forms the heart of this book.

In our own century, C. S. Lewis suffered a similar loss and wrote *A Grief Observed* shortly after the death of his wife, Joy. Dr. Packer treats us to an illuminating comparison between the two

bereavements and adds a wealth of his own wise reflection.”
– back cover

Surely every pastor and ministering layman must consider this in
applied theology. – J. C. W.

HADDINGTON HOUSE TRUST

*for the Advancement of
Evangelical Presbyterian Theological Training*

The *Haddington House Trust* is for the advancement of evangelical Presbyterian theological training. It exists to strengthen the work of conservative evangelical Presbyterian theological education and training in Canada and from Canada.

The theological basis of the Trust is the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms together with the Presbyterian form of government. The Trust stands in the great reformational tradition of the evangelical and experimental Reformed Faith and holds to a conservative Presbyterian polity rooted in a complementarian theology of the ministry and eldership. The ethos of the Trust is the marriage of theology and piety. The ethos and theological basis will be kept in view in all Trust work.

The Trust has five purposes:

1. To provide in harmony with its theological basis and ethos theological courses both in a residential setting and through distance by means of tutors and visiting professors (Haddington House School of Theology);
2. To advance the publication of materials in harmony with its theological basis and ethos. This will first be through its annual journal and second through the undertaking of additional publication endeavours (Haddington House Publications);
3. To advance its own library and study centre for evangelical Presbyterianism in Canada (Haddington House);
4. To advance the work of evangelical Presbyterian theological education and training by special lectures, papers, or meetings both inside and outside of Canada; and
5. To draw together a body of Trustees. The Trustees will be governed by an annual vow to uphold the ethos and theological foundations of the Trust and who will provide guidance and direction in the execution of the above four items.

We welcome as *Patrons of the Trust* all who share this common agenda. Patrons to the Trust are individuals, married couples, or institutions who pledge \$120.00 annually for the support of the Trust. Patrons agree to make an annual commitment each December for the coming year. A tax receipt is given for \$100.00 of the \$120.00. The \$20.00 covers the receiving of the journal and newsletters. We encourage all in Canada and outside of Canada who desire to see a renewed zeal in Canada for evangelical Presbyterianism to become Patrons of the Trust.

Additional gifts are accepted at anytime throughout the year for a tax receipt.

