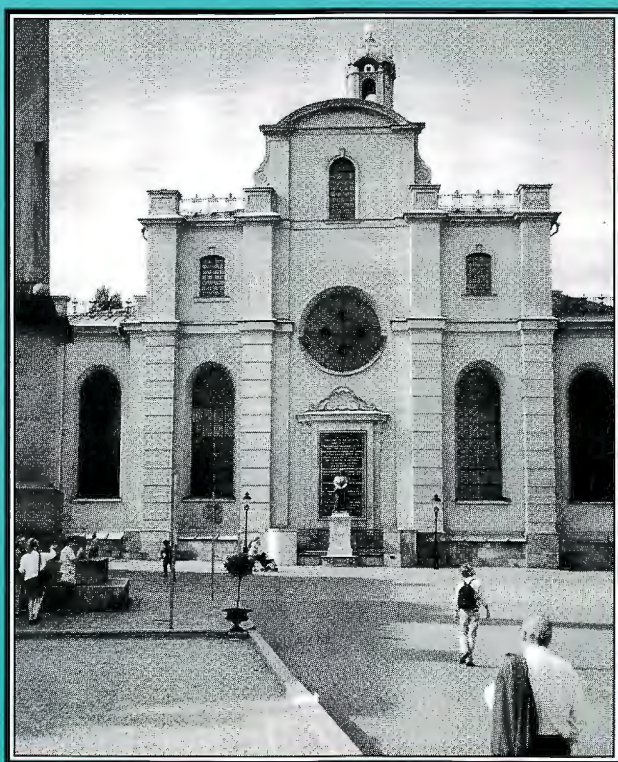


REFORMATION TODAY



NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1999

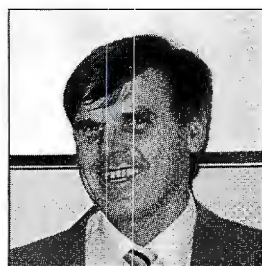
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Robert Latham



Tom Wells



Martin Holdt

Personalia:

Dr Robert Latham is senior minister of Emmanuel Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Wilmington, Delaware.

Tom Wells is pastor of Kings Chapel, West Chester, Ohio.

Don Lindblad is pastor of Trinity Reformed Baptist Church, Kirkland, Washington State.

Martin Holdt, contributor to *RT* 170 and 171, fell seriously ill with paralysis down his left side and the loss of sight of his left eye during the air flight to Toronto on August 19th. Martin's wife Elsabe who is an anaesthetist flew immediately to Toronto. On August 27th a massive 2.5 cm tumour (thankfully benign) on the pituitary gland was removed. Tom Wells drove eight hours to visit Martin in hospital. Martin returned to work in mid September. On October 12th he reported signs of return of sight to his left eye.

Sharon James is an historian. Her husband Bill is associate editor of *RT* and the pastor of Emmanuel Church, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, UK.

Front cover: *In accordance with tradition, Birger Jarl, the founder of the city of Stockholm, commissioned the erection of a small village church at the highest point of the island called Stadsholmen. This was during the latter half of the 13th century. Following destruction by fire, a new considerably larger church was built in the same place. It was consecrated in 1306. Major conversions were made throughout the 15th century, including raising the vaulting of the building. The late-Gothic structure that emerged now constitutes the core of the five-aisled Stockholm Cathedral which is used for the coronation of Swedish kings and queens. The statue of Olaus Petri (see page 2) stands in the forefront of the cathedral.*

Editorial

Conviction of sin is not common today. This calls for attention. The Puritans excelled in their understanding of and ability to apply the reality of our sinfulness. John Owen declared that there are two things in original sin. First the guilt of the first sin. We all sinned in him (Adam). His one sin is the sin of us all. He was a federal head to us. Second there is the derivation of a polluted, corrupted nature from him. That which is born of flesh is flesh.

When sin is so pervasive and corrupting how is it conceivable that Christ would be wholly free from it? This as Bob Letham shows is no easy matter. It is essential that our Lord partake of human nature fully, yet at the same time be completely free from sin. The doctrines of the Holy Trinity (see RT 167) and the person of Christ form the great central foundational truths of our faith: truths which have enormous implications for us in practical terms. In our spiritual union with Christ we need to feel the absolute security of his divine and human natures combined in one person without confusion. With regard to his having been protected in the womb of Mary John Owen is reassuring:

‘Now,’ declares Owen, ‘from both these was Christ most free. First he was never federally in Adam and so not liable to the imputation of his sin on that account. Secondly for the pollution of our nature it was

prevented in him from the instant of conception. “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” The pollution of sin was prevented by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit who attended the very separation of his bodily substance in the womb to that sacred purpose to which it was set apart; so that on all accounts he is “holy, harmless and undefiled” ’. (Owen, *Works*, vol 2 page 64.)

Did Christ partake of our fallen human nature?

Bob Letham explains what is meant: ‘A crucial point to remember is that our fallen nature is inherently sinful. We inherit corruption from the moment of our conception. This contaminated nature we receive from our parents and they from theirs, and so on all the way back to Adam. This corruption entails an unavoidable inbuilt propensity to disobey God. We cannot but do wrong. Even if we do what is intrinsically good (obeying our parents when children, acts of kindness to the needy) we do so from wrong motives and not with a view to the glory of the triune God.’ But our Lord was shielded entirely from original sin.

We are grateful for the sterling quality of the exposition by Dr Letham.

Olaus Petri and the Reformation of Sweden

Editor



Olaus Petri

For further details see inside front cover

Olaus Petri (1497-1552) and Laurentius Petri (1499-1573) were sons of a blacksmith. These brothers turned out to be reformers of extraordinary calibre. Their vision and drive for reform was stirred by the example and preaching of Martin Luther. The time they spent at Wittenberg was crucial and formative. Olaus' education began in a monastery at Orebro. That was followed by study at Uppsala University, then at Leipzig and finally at Wittenberg where he received a degree in 1518. He enjoyed the personal friendship of Martin Luther and gained valuable insight and experience in church government while travelling with Luther to churches and schools.

Both Olaus and Laurentius were gifted preachers. Laurentius was appointed the first Protestant archbishop of Uppsala. He exercised great skill and wisdom to guide the Church through turbulent times. He convened the Synod of Uppsala in 1536 in which all the ministers were admonished to preach the pure Word of God.

The reformation in Sweden involved drastic political changes which brought a sudden transition from Roman Catholicism to Lutheran Protestantism, a change so profound that Sweden has remained monolithically Lutheran ever since. The spiritual implications of the change took at least half a century to penetrate the thinking of the population. In this, among others, Olaus and Laurentius Petri were mighty instruments. Olaus particularly combined in his person the gift of preaching, writing and the extraordinary determination needed to promote and consolidate the reformation. He had fire in his soul. This was transmitted through his preaching. He possessed a superb mastery of his language and had the skill to proclaim the message in vivid style. He wrote, 'To preach the word of God is the trade of the preacher, even as smithery is the trade of the smith, and just as he cannot rightly be



The City Hall of Stockholm was designed by the architect R. Östberg. Building commenced in 1911 and was due to be completed in 1920. However it was inaugurated on 23 June 1923, exactly 400 years after the entry of Gustav Vasa into Stockholm

called a smith who does not attend to his smithing, neither can he be called a preacher who does not preach.’

Bishops shall consecrate no priest who is incompetent to preach the Word of God.’

The principal event in the political background concerned a national uprising in which Danish rule was ended by Gustavus Vasa (1496-1560). Vasa was elected king in 1523 and he presided over the demise of Roman Catholicism. His chief councillor was Lars Anderson, a man who had embraced the principle of the primary authority of the Bible. The king convened a national conference at Westeras in 1527. This was decisive for the reformation. Articles 20 and 21 of the *Ordinances of Westeras* read, ‘The Gospel shall hereafter be taught in every school.

Typical of monarchs at that time King Vasa was vexed with economic pressures. He looked to the Church for financial help. In 1527 all Church possessions that were not strictly necessary for its spiritual work were confiscated. A few years later another very serious crisis arose with tension from about 1539 to 1544. This was called ‘the German Period’. The king sought to bring the Church entirely under his personal control. Olaus Petri strongly opposed this and showed exemplary courage in maintaining and contending for the independence of the Church. The

Roman Catholics attempted to exploit the situation to promote their interests. Lars Anderson and Olaus were charged with treason and condemned to death in 1540. However they were pardoned and heavily fined instead. At that time King Vasa began to see greater dangers from Roman Catholicism than from an independent Lutheran Church. At a national conference at Westeras in 1544 Roman Catholic practices were banned and Sweden was declared to be 'an evangelical Kingdom'.

It was in 1523 that Olaus began to preach in earnest against the papal system. He contended that the primary responsibility of the Church was to preach the pure Word of God. He was a versatile author whose works included a history of Sweden, polemical treatises, expositions and also the first Swedish catechism. His book *Useful Instruction* (1526) was the first printed product of the Swedish reformation. From 1527 onwards his writings increased and gained widespread popularity. He worked with Lars Anderson in translating the New Testament into Swedish and this paved the way for a new translation of the whole Bible in 1541.

Olaus rejected the doctrine of celibacy for priests which at that time also applied to deacons. He married in 1525.

We must admire the way in which the Holy Spirit prepared Olaus and Laurentius Petri for their ministries. Of course the transition from Roman Catholicism to Lutheranism was sacral, political and external rather than spiritual and internal. Nevertheless there were powerful preachers like the brothers Petri to seize the opportunity to advance the cause of the gospel. When we study the magisterial reformation we have to look for the true church of believers within the system, *ecclesiola in ecclesia*, the church within the Church. It is one thing to declare a nation to be evangelical, it is entirely another for the people to be evangelical in their hearts.

In 1900 ninety-nine percent of Sweden professed to be Christian. Now there is a population of about 8.3 million, 64 percent of which profess to be Lutheran but only five percent attend church regularly. Since the reformation in Sweden Roman Catholicism has never been a serious threat to Protestantism. As in most Western countries today materialism, evolutionary humanism and post-modern philosophy impede the progress of the saving gospel of Christ. There are about 220,000 members of evangelical churches outside the Lutheran State Church. Very few individuals adhere to or even know about the Reformed faith. As far as we know there are no Reformed Baptist or Presbyterian churches in Sweden.

The Reality of Sin

Editor

The Puritans were strongest where we are weakest today. This is especially true with regard to the doctrine of sin.

Principal reasons which underline the urgent need to be clear about what sin is are as follows.

Firstly, we live in the climate of post-modernism. Western society encourages sin massively and resists definition or clarity about sin. Post-modernist philosophy is fiercely antinomian, that is anti-law. Right and wrong is judged according to human feelings. The result is a slide into an abyss of lawlessness. The consequences of lawlessness are seen in the alarming increase in family break-up, divorce, crime and overcrowded prisons. An example of a book which deals with this theme is *The Vanishing Conscience* by John F MacArthur Jr, a study which demonstrates that failure to deal with sin as sin lies at the foundation of America's moral collapse.¹

Secondly, a ministry which is weak and flabby on the subject of sin is a useless ministry. A preaching ministry that does not result in conviction of sin is useless. If it does not wound how can it heal? The good news is only for sinners. The unbelieving world caricatures and mocks preachers. They are sometimes depicted as silly, soft and effeminate. At other times the typical preacher is portrayed as one who bellows and raves. The young Spurgeon was by far the most effective preacher of his time but was fiercely ridiculed and opposed in the press. Those truly called know that the Word of God is as sharp as a two-edged sword and that their business is to wield that sword (Heb 4:12).

Thirdly, Christ and him crucified is our theme. Christianity is unique as it alone deals faithfully with the root problem of mankind which is sin. And Christianity is unique as it provides the only effectual remedy for sin. Christ appeared that he might take away our sins. He, who knew no sin, was made to be sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in him (2 Cor 5:17). The enormity of sin is seen in the death of deaths that was Christ's. Millions of dollars are invested in scientific laboratories to seek solutions for disease but our business as pastors and preachers is to deal clearly and faithfully with sin,

its nature, guilt and consequences, and then the remedy which is found uniquely and only in the blood and sacrifice of Christ. 'Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world!' (John 1:29).

Fourthly, without a biblical understanding of sin we cannot deal correctly and faithfully with the great central themes of life, namely, creation and the historic space-time fall of Adam and Eve, the nature of law, the place of conscience, the history of redemption, Christ's active and passive work, regeneration, sanctification, ultimate judgment and eternal heaven and hell.

Fifthly, arising out of the above, no reality is more terrible in all the universe than eternal hell. Sin is the principal issue explaining why there should be such a thing.

The Puritans were direct in their treatment of this subject in a variety of treatises. They dealt with the subject of sin comprehensively. Jeremiah Burroughs in his book *The Evil of Evils*² declared of sin that it makes a man conformable to the devil, 'for sin is of the same nature as the devil and a furtherance of the devil's kingdom in the world'.

The strengths of Puritan teaching:

1. They used God's moral law to define sin
2. They expounded the truth of original sin
3. They stressed the necessity of mortification of sin
4. They warned of eternal punishment

1. The Puritans used God's moral law to define sin

Ralph Venning (1621-1674), a popular preacher in London four years after bubonic plague swept the city in 1665, wrote a book *The Plague of Plagues*,³ an apt title since there is no plague like the plague of sin which kills every member of the human race. Physical death is the first death. The plague of sin is also responsible for the second death whereby all those who die in their sins are subject to eternal punishment in hell. Venning divides his exposition into four parts, 1. What sin is, 2. The sinfulness of sin, 3. The witnesses against sin, and 4. Application in which he describes the good news of how to escape from the guilt and power of sin.

Venning begins his treatise with definition: 'Sin is the transgression of a law, yea of a good law, yea of God's law. Sin presupposes that there is a law in being, for where there is no law there is no transgression (Rom 4.15). But where there is sin, there is a law, and a transgression of the law. Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law, for sin is a transgression of the law (1 John 3.4). That this is the sin intended in our text is apparent from Romans 7:7. Now the law not only forbids the doing of evil, whether by thought, word or deed, but also commends the doing of good. So to omit the good command is sin, as well (or ill) as is the doing of the evil that is forbidden.'

Edward Reynolds (1593-1676) was an eminent preacher greatly skilled in the Greek language. He served in the Westminster Assembly and wrote a treatise titled *The Sinfulness of Sin*. This principally consists of an exposition of Romans 7:9: 'Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died.' Reynolds shows that a man may have the law in the letter and yet be without it in power and spirit. But the Holy Spirit takes the law and convinces a man that he is in a state of sin.

He continues: 'Now the law gives life and strength to sin in three ways: First, by way of the curse and obligation of it, binding the soul with the guilt of sin to the judgment of the great day. Second, by the irritation of the law: "Sin took occasion by the law, and so by the commandment became exceeding sinful." Third, by conviction, laying open the wideness of sin to the conscience. As a serpent seems dead in the snow but is revived by heat so sin seems dead when covered by ignorance but when awakened a man finds himself in the mouth of death.'⁴

The majority of Puritans placed much stress on the preaching of the law to bring men to an awareness of sin. William Perkins knew that true repentance was the result of gospel grace, but he opposed those who for this reason would despise the preaching of the law. Anthony Burgess declared that the exhibition of 'the pure, strict and exact obligation of the Law' makes 'all thy deformities' to appear, and so 'in this sense it is good to be a legal preacher, and a legal hearer often'. He considered that this legal preaching was 'the great work that the ministers of God have to do in their congregations in these times. Men must come to the knowledge of sin in themselves, by the Law', and this is no 'easie matter', but 'it is the preaching of the Law of God . . . that will . . . discover to them their hidden and secret sins; never was any brought to a sight of his sinnes, . . . but only by the preaching of the Law of God.'⁵

2. The Puritans expounded the truth of original sin

Thomas Goodwin in his great work *An Unregenerate Man's Guiltiness Before God in Respect of Sin and Punishment* proceeds directly to the root of the matter, namely, original sin.⁶ Goodwin begins with Romans 5:12: *Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* Goodwin opens up Romans chapters one to three to show that sin has universally overtaken the world, not one person excepted. Having established the truth of original sin and guilt, Goodwin proceeds to show how corruption has overtaken man in all his faculties, his understanding, affections, conscience and will.

The Puritan doctrine of original sin is expounded among others by David Clarkson, Thomas Watson, John Flavel, John Owen, and later in the same tradition by Thomas Boston and Jonathan Edwards.⁷ The clearest definition which sums up the doctrine of original sin is that of the Larger Westminster Catechism, question 25:

Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate into which man fell?

Answer:

The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the loss of that righteousness in which he was created, and the corruption of his nature, whereby he is utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually; which is commonly called original sin, and from which all actual transgressions proceed.

Similar wording is found in chapter 6 of the Westminster Confession, paragraph four. In the 1689 Baptist Confession the same paragraph reads:

*The actual sins that men commit are the fruit of the corrupt nature transmitted to them by our first parents. By reason of this corruption, all men become wholly inclined to all evil; sin disables them. They are utterly indisposed to, and, indeed, rendered opposite to, all that is good.*⁸

All born to Adam inherit⁹ his guilt and corruption. The clause 'rendered opposite to all that is good' does not mean that every person is as bad as he possibly could be. There is an enormous amount of good in the world. This

good we ascribe to the loving kindness of God. We call it common grace. God's common grace is widely misconstrued since it is argued that since there is so much good in the world, this gloomy view of sin which I have been describing cannot be correct. But it is correct. Man's depravity is stark. Recall the two great World Wars of this century, the holocaust organised by the Nazis (six million Jews perished in the extermination camps plus a further six million who were classed as belonging to undesirable categories), and the Gulag (eighteen million perished in the death camps in the Soviet Union under Stalin). The genocide in Cambodia, Rwanda/Burundi, Yugoslavia, and currently the murders in East Timor, all bear gruesome evidence of the depravity of man. World history is a saga of sin and suffering but life would be impossible were it not for the tremendous power exercised by the Holy Spirit to restrain sin and keep it under control.

It can be argued, if man is fallen in all his faculties, why expend effort to persuade him to believe and repent? The answer is that the Holy Spirit uses preaching and literature to invade the dominions of darkness. He is the Spirit of regeneration. He uses the proclamation of biblical truth to arrest and convert. He convinces the world of sin, righteousness and judgment to come (John 16:8).

Adam was given a specific law. He represented the human race. In breaking that law his guilt is imputed to all his descendants. Thomas Watson suggests that much was involved in that first sin. Included was unbelief, ingratitude, discontent, pride, disobedience, theft, presumption, carelessness (lack of thought or consideration), and murder.¹⁰ Murder, because Adam had been told most clearly that in the day he ate that fruit he would die. In his sin he murdered his posterity. Watson places unbelief at the head of his list. Stephen Charnock in an exposition of John 16:9, 'Of sin, because they believe not on me', asserts unbelief to be the fountain of all sins and suggests that God has to employ the highest means to bring men to a sense of the sin of unbelief.¹¹ Of all sins unbelief is the most harmful because it is a sin against the only remedy available.

Adam stood in the place of us all in his disobedience and sin. What he did was in effect what all his posterity, each and every one of us, did. Thomas Manton expresses it this way: 'We saw the forbidden fruit with his eyes, gathered it with his hands, ate it with his mouth; that is, we were ruined by those things as though we had been there and consented to his acts.'¹²

Original sin is not an easy truth to grasp. Herman Bavinck, the great Dutch theologian, declares that this question is the second greatest enigma that exists.

The origin of being is the first enigma. Bavinck adds that the origin of sin is certainly the hardest cross for man's understanding to bear.¹³

3. *The Puritans stressed the necessity of mortification of sin*

John Owen's exposition on the mortification of sin in believers is a classic work. In it Owen opens up Romans 8:13 under the following heads, 1. A duty prescribed: *mortify the deeds of the body* 2. The persons denoted: *You*, if you mortify 3. The promise attached: *you shall live* 4. The means employed: if you *through the Spirit* and 5. The condition: *IF* you mortify.¹⁴

Owen stresses that the Christian should all his life make it his business to mortify the power of indwelling sin. 'The vigour, and power, and comfort of our spiritual life depends on the mortification of the deeds of the flesh.' He warns sternly of the power that lies in unmortified sin.

'Sin aims always at the utmost; every time it rises up to tempt or entice, if it has its own way it will go out to the utmost sin in that kind. Every unclean thought or glance would be adultery if it could, every thought of unbelief would be atheism if allowed to develop. Every rise of lust, if it has its way, reaches the height of villainy; it is like the grave that is never satisfied. The deceitfulness of sin is seen in that it is modest in its first proposals but when it prevails it hardens men's hearts, and brings them to ruin.' Owen quotes Hebrews 3:13 which tells us that sin deceives – 'the deceitfulness of sin'! Remember how sin deceived the Israelites in the wilderness when they hardened their hearts.

Thomas Manton in an exposition of Romans 6:14, 'For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace,' reasons, 'There is still sin in us, a bosom enemy which is born and bred with us, and therefore soon will get the advantage of grace, if it be not well watched and resisted, as nettles and weeds, which are kindly to the soil, and grow of their own accord, will soon choke flowers, which are planted by care and industry, when they are neglected and not continually rooted out. We cannot get rid of this cursed inmate till this outward tabernacle be dissolved, and this house of clay be crumbled into dust, like ivy gotten into a wall, that will not be destroyed till the wall be pulled down.'¹⁵

Mortification of sin extends to thoughts of the mind. Obadiah Sedgwick opens up Psalm 19:13: 'Cleanse me from secret sins.' 'Secret sins will become public sins if they are not cleansed. If you suppress them not in their root, you shall shortly see them break out in the fruit. A fire catches first the inside of the

house and if not put out makes its way to the outside, 'Lust when it has conceived brings forth sin' (James 1:15).¹⁶

Sometimes we are deeply shocked by the falling into sin followed by the complete apostasy of some who have been highly esteemed as preachers and leaders in the Church. This is a reminder that no believer is exempt from the necessity of mortification of sin. Often there is very real pain involved in mortification. Jeremiah Burroughs' principal thrust in his great book *The Evil of Evils* declares that there is more evil in the least sin than in the greatest affliction. He points out that the heroes described in Hebrews chapter eleven chose and preferred the most terrible afflictions rather than to sin by denying their faith.

4. *The Puritans warned of eternal punishment*

Ralph Venning describes the hell into which Jesus descended in the bearing away of our sins. 'He suffered all kinds of sufferings. He suffered in every part and member of his body from head to foot. He suffered in his soul. He cried out on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" He had all kinds of aggravating circumstances united in his sufferings.' 'The greatness of Christ's sufferings is a full witness against the sinfulness of sin.'¹⁷

Christ's achievement to atone for and take away our sin is immense. This is appreciated when we see what every sin deserves. Venning does not shrink from telling of the appalling torments which result from sin. 'Hell is the centre of all punishments, sorrow and pain, wrath and vengeance, fire and darkness,' 'These torments will be without intermission and will be forever . . . there will be aggravations of these torments for those who have lived long in sin, those who have had more opportunity to repent, and more knowledge, and for apostates who have turned their backs on God.'¹⁸

Ralph Venning displays a wonderful ability to have the text of Scripture exercise its own power. He proceeds:

The persons sentenced: *those on his left hand*
The sentence: *Depart from me*
The state they are in: *cursed*
The torment: *everlasting fire*
The company that is theirs: *the devil and his angels*.¹⁹

The weight of the guilt of sin is stressed by John Flavel in his treatise on the Soul of Man. 'The guilt of all sin gathers to, and settles in the conscience of

every Christless sinner, and makes up a vast treasure of guilt in the course of his life in this world.’²⁰

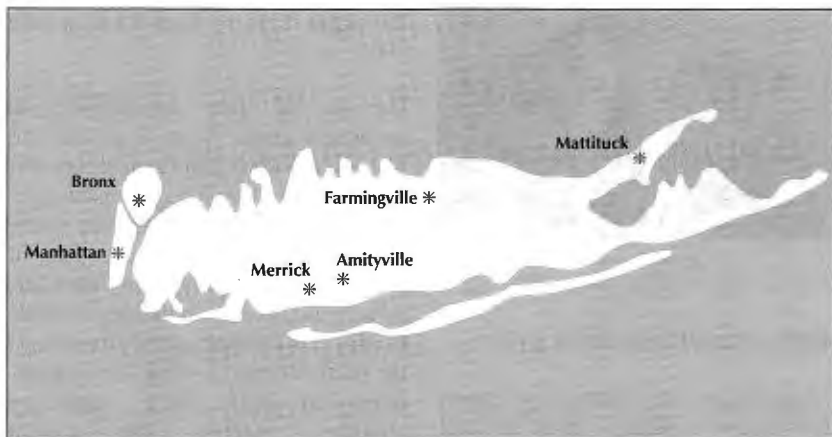
George Swinnock (1627-1673) in a deeply moving exposition on Matthew 25:41 titled ‘The sinners’ last sentence’ exposes the guilt of law-breakers ‘He breaks the whole law by breach of any one of them, because he sins against love, and breaks that bond and knot which keeps and fastens the whole law together.’²¹ In a sermon on the same text Richard Adams concludes by reminding his hearers that our Lord urged that we are to fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Luke 12:5). Adams exhorts to flee speedily from sin by repentance and holds up the superlative love of Christ displayed in undergoing the punishment that was our due. ‘O let us now bathe our souls in the blood of Christ that everlasting burnings may not hereafter seize upon us.’²²

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- 4 Edward Reynolds, *The Sinfulness of Sin*, Soli Deo Gloria, 1992, page 114ff.
- 5 This paragraph is cited from Ernest F. Kevan’s outstanding book *The Grace of Law* published in 1976 by Baker Book House. A valuable service has been rendered by the publication of a new edition by Soli Deo Gloria.
- 6 Thomas Goodwin, *Works*, vol 10.
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- 8 *A Faith to Confess* transposition into modern English of the 1689 Confession published by Carey Publications.
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- 11 Stephen Charnock, *Works*, Parsons’ edition, 1815, vol 6, page 289ff.
- 12 Thomas Manton, cited in a bound volume titled *Man’s Total Depravity*, written by Arthur W Pink, and published in 1969 by Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.
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Two Decades of Church Growth

Don Lindblad



Map of Long Island

If an evidence of the Lord's favour is the frequent establishing and unfettered flourishing of new churches, then one of the most blessed places in North America at present is Long Island, New York state. Within a few short years three Reformed Baptist churches have either been formed or re-formed from existing congregations. In addition, these churches currently co-operate in the establishing of other churches, as well as encouraging existing congregations emerging from Arminianism and Pentecostalism.

Long Island forms the south-eastern part of New York state. From west to east it extends 120 miles, and from north to south it varies from 12 to 23 miles. It has a population in excess of six million, greater than 41 of the 50

United States. The island consists of crowded urban areas, smaller residential towns, fishing villages, resort centres and rural farmland.

Four counties comprise the island: Kings (city of Brooklyn); and Queens on the west, forming part of New York City; Nassau immediately to the east; and finally Suffolk. Suffolk County is by far the largest, occupying the eastern two-thirds of Long Island.

During the 1940s an evangelical fellowship of churches established the First Baptist Church of Merrick in south central Nassau County. The church flourished and at its height grew to around 300. In 1987 Scott Syracuse, native to Long Island, accepted a call to become first the assistant pastor and youth director, and



Mike Gaydosh

shortly thereafter the senior pastor.

Committed to the doctrines of grace, this brother sought to bring biblical reformation to the church. God-centred worship and doctrinal preaching, however, resulted in controversy and division, with the predictable losses both in attendance and membership. The congregation was reduced to around 60 before it began to experience significant growth once again.

In 1957 the First Baptist Church of Merrick worked with others to establish the Calvary Baptist Church of Amityville in the south-western corner of Suffolk County. A couple from the Merrick church donated the land for the building in Amityville. Theological reformation began here in 1981 when Mike Gaydosh became the pastor.

Also native to Long Island, Pastor Gaydosh was eager to introduce his church to the Reformed faith. He wisely adopted a course of careful

exposition of the great truths of Scripture. Changes were introduced gradually over a period of time, first in worship, then in government and finally in missions. Though there were some defections as well, the church did begin to grow, from 85 to around 200.

Because of their commitment to sovereign grace, Scott Syracuse and Mike Gaydosh began to meet together weekly for fellowship and encouragement. This continued for seven years. Though reformation proceeded at different rates in the two churches, change did take place in both of them. Profiting from their weekly meetings, the pastors began to look for opportunities to bring their respective churches together for mutual edification and encouragement.

By August 1994 Calvary Baptist, a church of 240, squeezed into a building designed for 200. First Baptist of Merrick, a congregation of 80, was meeting in a spacious facility that could seat 400. Talks of a merger began to surface. And, why not? Here were two churches with the same theological perspective, located some seven miles from one another, each with a different need that could possibly be met by the other.

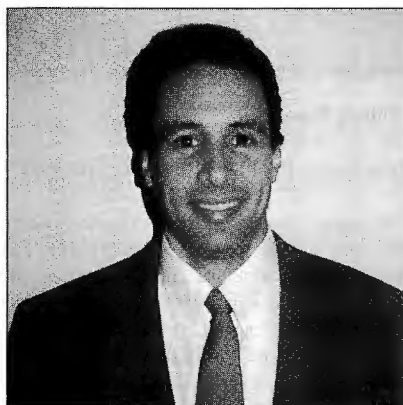
On January 1, 1995 the churches merged, becoming Grace Reformed Baptist Church of Long Island. Both facilities are used each Lord's Day, the church meeting in Merrick in the morning and in Amityville in the evening. Both pastors preach each Sunday, one in the morning and the other in the evening. The congregation also sponsors Calvary Press, begun in 1991.

Due to continued growth at Calvary, and because a number of people were travelling as far as 50 miles to services, the church considered starting a new work to the east. With one and a half million people in Suffolk County alone, this seemed both providential and appropriate. Initial efforts, though, proved unsuccessful.

In mid-March 1996 Rich Jensen resigned his position in an area Baptist church due to growing convictions over the application of the Reformed faith. After contact with Pastor Gaydosh, members of Grace Reformed were found helping to begin a new church. By August 140 were meeting regularly in Farmingville and by October 12 Hope Reformed Baptist Church was formally organised. However, a number of people were driving great distances from farther east to attend Hope. To help them, Grace and Hope began co-ordinating efforts to help establish Faith Reformed Baptist Church in Mattituck.

Meetings began the last quarter of 1997 with Chris Hatten preaching. In January 1998 regular morning and evening services on the Lord's Day were begun with 40-50 in attendance. Presently about 75 assemble weekly.

The pastors of these three churches are all native to Long Island and remain close, as do their churches. These pastors meet weekly for the reading of theological works, discussion and prayer. All three churches subscribe fully to the *Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*. Grace and Hope are members



Scott Syracuse

of Reformed Baptist Mission Services and the Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America. Faith has plans to apply for membership.

Recent developments include co-operative efforts to establish another church in Manhattan. As well, two Pentecostal pastors, representing two different churches in the Bronx, contacted Chris Hatten recently. Both men have come to the doctrines of grace and desire to align their churches with confessional Reformed Baptists.

In a day when Christians notoriously do not get along with one another, and so many churches scandalously destroy their own peace with division, it is refreshing to observe this demonstration of co-operation and unity among strongly confessional Reformed Baptists. Let us rejoice in what God has done specifically for brethren on Long Island, and let us pray the God of heaven to give us more of his presence in similar prosperity throughout this needy world.

Hitler's Pope

Hitler's Pope

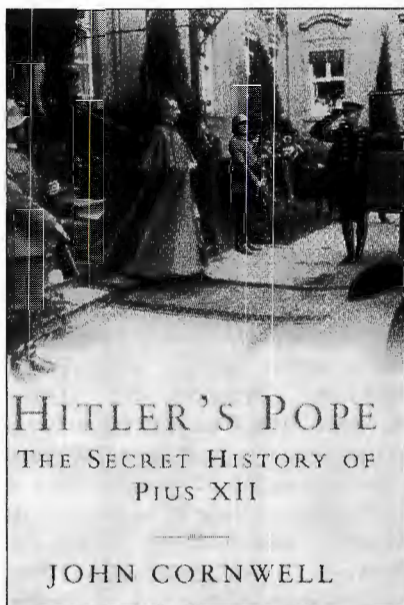
The Secret History of Pius XII

John Cornwell, 417 pp, Viking, £20.00, 1999

Thoroughly researched and brilliantly written this book tells the story of Eugenio Pacelli, 'the world's most influential churchman from the early 1930s to the late 1950s'. Born in 1876, Pacelli became Pope Pius XII in 1939. He died in 1958. John Cornwell, who recently described himself in a radio interview as a struggling Catholic, set out to write a positive biography of Pacelli. He was given generous access to vital documents in the Vatican but incurred bitter opposition when he came to the conclusion that Pacelli exerted 'a fatal and culpable influence in the history of this century'.

Pacelli was ordained a priest in 1901. His exceptional talent soon brought an invitation to be understudy to Pietro Gasparri the foremost authority in canon law. In 1930 Pacelli succeeded Gasparri as Cardinal Secretary of State and in 1939 he followed Pius XI as Pope of Rome. During the 1920s Pacelli acted as papal nuncio in Munich and Berlin. He was deeply involved in German politics. In 1933 Pacelli found a successful negotiating partner for his Reich Concordat in the person of Adolf Hitler.

A summary of his fatal influence reads as follows: 1. Pacelli was the instrument by which the testimony of the 23 million strong German Roman Catholic Church was muffled so that it could not resist the Nazis and Hitler's rise to power. 2. Pacelli was compliant in the ethnic cleansing by Roman Catholic Croats in which two million Orthodox Serbs were massacred, the barbarity of which beggars belief, especially since Franciscan monks were leaders in those atrocities. 3. As the most powerful ecclesiastical leader on earth, and self acclaimed viceroy of God, Pacelli who was an anti-Semite, scandalously did nothing to discourage the holocaust in which six million



The front cover of John Cornwell's book Hitler's Pope. Cardinal Pacelli, the future Pope XII, leaving the presidential palace in Berlin in March 1939

Jews were exterminated in gas chambers. 4. In 1944 Pacelli was passive when 1,000 Jewish neighbours in Rome were rounded up in trucks with many little children, their eyes filled with terror. These trucks passed by St Peter's Square on their way to the gas chambers.

We have our own sins of omission. This review is not to throw stones at Pacelli but rather advertise a book which confirms powerfully the corruption of the Papal system. The Church of Rome is not appropriate for believers. When we reason with Jews let us explain to them the difference between sacralism (Hitler, Mussolini, the notorious Pavelic, and Franco were the subjects of an obviously ineffective baptismal regeneration!) and spiritual discipleship, and point out that Baptists too have been persecuted over many centuries.

The Humanity of Christ and a Fallen World

Robert Letham

The humanity of Christ in the Bible

At the centre of the Christian gospel is the incarnation of Jesus Christ. This dominating fact bestrides the pages of the New Testament – ‘the Word became flesh and lived among us.’ As Paul describes it ‘God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself’ (2 Cor 5:19). We celebrate this every Christmas with good reason, for without it we could not be saved. It was the incarnate Christ who died on the cross, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. He is now at God’s right hand making intercession for us. In the words of Christopher Wordsworth, ‘You have raised our human nature, in the clouds to God’s right hand.’

Underlying this stupendous mystery is the astonishing point that God alone could not save us. Let me repeat, God alone could not save us! This is not due to any lack or deficiency on his part. He has the power to do as he pleases. But in terms of who he has revealed himself to be, he could not save us. He declares himself to be just. While a simple fiat could, theoretically, have brought our pardon, it would have been inconsistent with his justice, out of harmony with his character as he has revealed it. Therefore, the first question in our deliverance from sin and death, arising even before our own salvation came into consideration, was the satisfaction of God’s own justice. Being the God he is, he could only save us in accordance with the dictates of his own character. This was no limitation on God. Rather, it was his freedom – to act in harmony with who he is and not be constrained by anything or anyone outside himself. Atonement for human sin thus had to be in accord with divine justice. The sin of the first Adam could be atoned for only by a second who did not bear the guilt and corruption inherited from the first. The Saviour had to be man, a perfect and righteous man. This is expressed eloquently by the *Heidelberg Catechism* (1563), Q. 15-17:

15. Q. What kind of mediator and deliverer should we look for then?

A. He must be truly human and truly righteous, yet more powerful than all creatures, that is, he must also be true God.

16. Q. Why must he be truly human and truly righteous?

A. God's justice demands it: man has sinned, man must pay for his sin, but a sinner cannot pay for others.

17. Q. Why must he also be true God?

A. So that, by the power of his deity, he might bear the wrath of God in his humanity and earn for us and restore to us righteousness and life.

Luke's account of the birth announcement by the angel to Mary is significant (Luke 1:29-35):

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; his kingdom will never end.' 'How will this be,' Mary asked the angel, 'since I am a virgin?' The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.'

Jesus was 'conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary', as *The Apostles' Creed* states. The language here is strongly reminiscent of Genesis 1. There the Spirit of God broods over the waters at creation, hovering like a bird. So Luke describes Jesus' conception by the Holy Spirit as a new creation, the Spirit overshadowing Mary as he did the primeval waters. At the same time, he sanctifies Jesus (or sets him apart). The significance of this is apparent in part in chapter 3, where Luke traces Jesus' human ancestry back to Adam, demonstrating his full humanity as a true member of the race. On the other hand it points to a problem, raising the question of how Jesus could have avoided involvement in the sin and misery into which the race had plunged and which required a Saviour to deliver it. The creative role of the Holy Spirit is the key, not only conceiving him but simultaneously setting him apart as the Son of God according to the flesh, as holy and belonging to God as the first of a new creation, a second Adam. Indeed, the last clause in v35 can be rendered in a number of ways – 'the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God' (the best reading, cf. 3:38), 'the one to be born will be called the holy Son

of God', or 'the son to be born will be called the holy one of God'. Either way, the focus is on the holiness, the setting apart, of this child and his status as Son.

The New Testament portrays Jesus the Son of God as also completely human. He eats and drinks, grows from infancy to maturity, progresses in wisdom and stature, in favour with God and man (Luke 2:42, 52). While a child, he is subject to his parents (Luke 2:51), later entering the family business as a carpenter. He is, on occasions, weary and expresses hunger and thirst (John 4:6-7), he has a full range of human emotions (cf. 11:33-36) and eventually suffers death. His resurrection is, of course, resurrection from the dead. As a result he is able to sympathise with us in our weakness (Heb 4:14-16), and intercede for us at the right hand of the Father (Heb 7:25).

The humanity of Christ in church dogma

The Council of Chalcedon (451 AD) met to resolve some crucial issues concerning the person of Christ and, in doing so, set the seal on the major boundaries of the church's understanding of who Christ is. The church had been troubled by the teaching of Eutyches, who had argued that Christ's humanity was absorbed by his divinity, the result being some kind of mixture of the two. From the other side of the spectrum, Nestorius so stressed the integrity of the humanity that he appeared to teach that there were two separate persons. He emphasised the two natures so as to undermine the unity of Christ's person. Both these ideas were heretical. If they were true, the Christian faith would be false. If Christ were not fully man he could not save us. If the Son had not assumed the humanity into personal union, there would be no incarnation, for he would only have indwelt a man, like a special prophet. Either way, we could not be saved for atonement could not have been made from within our own humanity. To combat these extremes Chalcedon held that Christ is both God and man in one person.

Therefore, following the holy Fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his

Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer, one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation ...

This means that he is from eternity of one identical substance with the Father. As the Son, everything that belongs to God belongs to him. He is eternal God, the second person of the Trinity. On the other hand, he is also one with us. In the incarnation, he took to himself a human nature, like us in every way apart from sin. However, he is not some form of schizoid for he is one person, simultaneously God and man. It is not a case of his being fifty per cent God and fifty percent man, for he is fully God and fully man. Nor is the divine and human intermixed, like ingredients in a soup, so that the result is some intermediate being half way between. On the contrary, the divine and human natures remain such in their integrity – they are without mixture. At the same time, they are without separation, for the incarnation is a union, not merely an indwelling.

Thus, the supreme mystery of the incarnation can be summed up in the following way. What occurred was this – the eternal Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, took into union with himself a human nature created in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit. This union continues for the whole of eternity, so that the humanity is permanently united to the Son, and remains human.

Further developments arose at the Second Council of Constantinople (553 AD). The next paragraph or two will focus on some exceedingly difficult but equally important concepts. At the same time, we run the danger of over-simplification. However, I hope that we will be able to grasp the main point, for it has significance for what we will then go on to discuss. In the century after Chalcedon, the monophysites (the advocates of one nature) maintained there was only one nature in Christ. Conceptually, Chalcedon appeared incongruous to them. Philosophically, they held a nature must be related to a person and so, since Christ was one person he could only have one nature. However, defenders of Chalcedon (who included the monk Leontius of Byzantium and, more importantly, the Emperor Justinian) used an obscure facet of Aristotelian philosophy to argue that a nature does not have to be personalised by its own particular and separate person but can be, as it were, granted personhood, enveloped, and instantiated (represented by a concrete example) from another.

Moreover, it was argued, the eternal Son or Logos is capable of providing the personhood of the assumed human nature, both because he is the divine creator and also since man was made in the image of God with a created compatibility on the creaturely level. So the Second Council of Constantinople came up with the exceedingly important dogma (called *enhypostasia*) that the Son, the second person of the Trinity, provided the person of the incarnate Christ. The human nature (body and soul) was taken into union by the deity. It was not a case of two separate natures somehow meeting one another and coalescing into one. It was entirely one-sided. As Paul said, 'God was in Christ.' God was the active agent, the humanity was conceived. The result is a union in which the humanity has its own personal integrity, but is not in any way separate or apart by itself. The deity provides the personhood for the assumed humanity. This is rooted in the fact that since man was made in the image of God there is a created compatibility between God and man. The Son is able to embrace and enclose the humanity in union without violating its created integrity. Thus, the humanity of Christ has no separate existence of its own apart from this personal union.

The point of all these abstruse and complex discussions was that the incarnation is essential for our salvation. 'Whatever is not assumed cannot be healed,' wrote Gregory of Nazianzen (330-89). Unless Christ had come in our own flesh and blood we could not be saved. The letter to the Hebrews stresses this in no uncertain terms, especially in chapter 2. The gospel was at stake. An appearance of God in human form was not enough. An assumption of human nature that remained separate from personal union with God would have left us with a divine messenger or a highly inspired man, not a Saviour. Only the union established in the incarnation could avail for us.

Christ's humanity and ours – are there any differences?

The question remains – what kind of human nature did Christ assume in the incarnation? Was it the nature of Adam before the fall, a sinless nature but with the potential to disobey God and fall into sin? On the other hand, did he take a fallen nature, like Adam and his successors after the fall – which we all inherit from Adam – with an inbuilt bias to sin? Or was it something else entirely, a nature preserved from sin and its associated contamination and, if so, how could he still be one with us?

In the last two centuries an increasing number (including Edward Irving, most notably Karl Barth, T F Torrance, and Colin Gunton) have argued

that, for Christ to identify with us in our fallen condition, it was necessary for him to have a fallen human nature. By assuming humanity in its fallenness he redeemed it from where it actually is. Unless he had done this he could not have saved us in our actual state as fallen human beings. Nor could he effectively sympathise or intercede for us if he had no experience of our own condition. If that were the case, we would have a hollow Saviour.

The earliest heresy on the person of Christ was docetism. It held that his humanity was only apparent, not real. Docetic influences have been present in conservative circles in the past three centuries. In response to attacks on the supernatural nature of Christianity, so much attention has been given to defending the deity of Christ that his humanity has been neglected. The advocates of Christ having a fallen human nature see themselves avoiding this tendency to docetism. An unfallen nature, it is held, would mean his humanity was not a real one for it would be detached from the real world in which we find ourselves. Instead, they claim, Christ acted in redeeming love from within our own nature, sanctifying it and offering it up to the Father. T F Torrance cites Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444) approvingly to the effect that the Son 'penetrated into the disobedient sonship of our Adamic humanity and restored it to proper sonship in the image of God by living out within it a life of continuous and perfect obedience to the very end'.

This argument at first sight has a certain appeal. It appears to paint a satisfying picture of Christ living a sinless life within the precise conditions we are in, so achieving a complete and thorough deliverance for us. However, all is not as straightforward as this, for reasons we shall now examine.

What is at stake

1. A crucial point to remember is that our fallen nature is inherently sinful. We inherit corruption from the moment of our conception. This contaminated nature we receive from our parents and they from theirs, and so on all the way back to Adam. This corruption entails an unavoidable inbuilt propensity to disobey God. We cannot but do wrong. Even if we do what is intrinsically good (obeying our parents when children, acts of kindness to the needy) we do so from wrong motives and not with a view to the glory of the triune God.

Moreover, in objective terms, we are guilty of the first sin of Adam. Adam was appointed by God as covenant head of the entire human race. Each

member of the race is included in the group or team headed by Adam. Adam's actions led the whole team into ruin. Even the youngest infants are part of the team and, if they die, are still involved in all the devastation Adam brought. Thus the guilt Adam incurred by his sin of breaking God's law is shared by every member of the race. So too is its penalty – death.

Thus there are three things we all share, as members of the human race, in solidarity with Adam: first, the guilt of his first sin, in which we participated; second, the penalty of that sin, death; and third, the inheritance of a corrupt nature.

The New Testament uniformly describes Christ as committing no actual sins. Consequently, Jesus' sinlessness has occasioned little controversy in the history of the church. He challenged his opponents to convict him of sin, a claim they found unanswerable (John 8:46). Whereas Adam was tempted in a beautiful garden and succumbed, Jesus was tempted in a bleak desert and triumphed (Matt 4:1-10). His life was devoted to the will of the Father (John 4:34, 17:4, Matt 26:39, Heb 10:5-10, Rom 5:12-21 et al.). Those who claim Christ had a fallen human nature also defend his sinlessness. Both Karl Barth and T F Torrance strongly maintain this. Indeed, they argue that his triumph is magnified by his living a sinless life from out of the depths of our own fallen nature. However, this will not do. If Christ took our fallen nature, even committing no sins of his own, a number of inescapable consequences would follow. These consequences would cut the foundations from under our salvation.

First, fallen human nature is described as corrupt. This corruption is inherited via our parents and so on through successive generations descending from the first Adam (Rom. 5:12-21, Ps. 51:5 et al.). This inherited corruption is a consequence of the guilt of Adam's sin, which all people share due to their participation in Adam, the covenant head of the race. If Christ had a fallen human nature it is unavoidable that he would be included in the sin of Adam and its consequences. Even if he had not sinned in practice throughout the course of his life, he would still have been guilty of the sin of Adam and have inherited the corruption shared by the rest of the race. In short, he could not have saved us since he would have needed atonement himself, if only for his inclusion in the sin of Adam. Since we saw that Christ's humanity never exists by itself in separation from his person, any attribution of fallenness to that nature is a statement about Christ himself. If his human nature were fallen, Christ himself (and so the second person of the Trinity) was fallen, corrupt and subject to the

penalty faced by Adam and the rest of the human race. Need I say any more?

In contrast, the letter to the Hebrews stresses he did not need to atone first for his own sins and then afterwards for the sins of others. This is the great point of difference between Christ and the high priests of old Israel. None of them could effect our salvation since they were sinners. If Jesus had needed atonement himself, he could not be the mediator of a better covenant. On the other hand, Jesus, since he needed no atonement for himself, is able to save us completely. Thus there is this one point of discontinuity between Christ and us. He did not commit actual sins and he was also separate from the need for atonement for sin (Heb 4:15, 7:26).

Some might think at this point that the virginal conception is in some way connected with his avoidance of 'the entail of consequence' resulting from the sin of Adam. This may be so, but it seems to me sounder to see this matter safeguarded by the creative, sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in setting him apart from sin and corruption and so beginning a new humanity with Christ (the second Adam) as its head.

2. It follows that those who advocate the assumption of a fallen human nature by Christ and also wish to preserve his sinlessness go on to abandon historic covenant theology and the claim that the race participates in the sin of Adam as its covenant head. By cutting the ties between Adam and the race, a way is sought to offset the possibility that Christ inherited sin and guilt.

However, if this relationship of solidarity with the first Adam is jettisoned the other side of the equation is threatened too – the participation of the new humanity in Christ, the second Adam. It is no surprise that Barth, Torrance (as Irving before them), and Gunton have doctrines of the atonement significantly different from Reformed orthodoxy. Irving described the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement as 'stock-exchange divinity', a phrase cited approvingly by Gunton. Some of these scholars have done magnificent work in defending and expounding various areas of the Christian faith. However, this particular point is one of their Achilles' heels. Not only is there a fatal blow to Christ's capacity to save us, but our participation in the new humanity in Christ is threatened.

It follows that if Christ had a fallen human nature, although committing no actual sins himself, sooner or later he would have died (from pneumonia, in bed of old age) as a consequence of being under the covenant headship

of Adam with all that it entails. This could never save us, for only by his substitutionary sufferings on the cross could atonement be made. This contradicts his own testimony that his death was voluntary and that he laid it down freely, 'I lay down my life – only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord' (cf. John 10:11,14-15,17-18). All we said above about salvation as consistent with God's character and the resultant need to demonstrate his justice points to the necessity of the cross. That alone could save us. There was simply no possibility of any other outcome.

3. The argument that to sympathise effectively with us Christ needed to share our fallenness and corruption sounds rather like the argument that to counsel a person who has committed adultery it is necessary first to commit adultery oneself. Christ's sympathy as high priest is directly connected to his ability. His sympathy is effective sympathy. He sends us grace to help us in time of need. He is able to do so precisely because he has been tempted and emerged without stain. It is his conquest of temptation that qualifies him as our high priest, not any possibility that he was subject to it.

The boundaries of reflection and some questions to ponder

1. An obvious premiss for the idea that Christ had a fallen human nature is that anything other than a propensity to sin would diminish his humanity. But is it true that sinfulness and corruption are indispensably necessary parts of being human? What of Adam before the fall – was he less than human because he had not yet sinned or corrupted himself? Or how about the redeemed in heaven – since we will then mercifully be free from sin will we no longer be human? Do we lose our humanity in the process of salvation? Is sanctification a dehumanising? On the other hand, does being human consist in devoting ourselves to sin so that our fallenness can be more and more confirmed?

The answer to all these questions is 'no'. A fallen nature is a necessary part of what it means to be a fallen human being but it is not definitive of a human being. In fact, being human is being in relation to God as his image-bearers. That was how Adam was first created and that is how the second Adam pre-eminently is. No, we gain our humanity by being rescued from sin and corruption, not by wallowing in it.

2. The question remains – how could Christ have been truly tempted if this

were so? Were not his temptations genuine and does not that imply that his human nature had something about it that responded to them?

This simply begs the question as to what is the essence of temptation. Temptation is incitement to sin, from whatever source that incitement arises. With us, we face onslaughts from three sources, the world, the flesh and the devil. The key for us is the flesh. Temptations from without (from the world and the devil) meet an answering response from within. There is always something within us that finds such inducements attractive. Often we do not need external stimuli to draw us to sin. There is enough within us to lead us astray without our having time to seek responsibility elsewhere. We have enough on our plate coping with ourselves.

With Jesus, temptation came from without, from the devil and from the world around him. Nevertheless, this was still temptation. It was still inducement to break the law of God. If anything, he felt it more fiercely. He endured the uninhibited fury of the devil seeking to divert him from the course prepared by the Father (Matt 4:1-10). If we walk into the teeth of a gale we feel its force far more than if we were to allow ourselves to be swept along by the current and offer only token resistance. The stronger we resist the more forceful the buffeting will feel. So with Jesus, no one felt temptation more than he, since no one has ever resisted it like he did. It is enough that he was induced to sin. The twin forces of the devil and militant human opponents were quite sufficient, for his steadfast resistance made their enticements unrelenting in their fury.

3. Christian theology is inter-related. New developments in one area inevitably impinge on others. If you enter a room, by opening the door you set in motion new wind currents. Objects on the other side of the room will be disturbed or displaced by the draught. If other windows are open, curtains will billow, your favourite lamp may come crashing to the floor and smash to smithereens – without your laying so much as a finger on it. Here, a claim concerning the humanity of Christ has the profoundest results, affecting the entire doctrine of salvation. The gospel itself is at stake. Entailed in that gospel are the eternal deity of Christ, and his unabridged humanity with its assumption into personal unity by the Son. Following all this comes his conquest of sin and death. If he had assumed a fallen human nature he could not have achieved this, for he would have needed a Saviour himself.

Thankfully, Christ did not come to share our terminal illness but to deliver us from it.

Cameroon

Philemon B Nfor lectures at the Cameroon Baptist Theological Seminary in Donga, Matung Division, Cameroon. He is gathering information concerning unreached people groups in Cameroon of which there are about twenty. A recent Mission Conference at CBTS focused on the Baka people.

The following report comes from Desma Bosch who works with World Team Ministries in the Baka area.

There are an estimated 30,000 Baka pygmies dispersed throughout the rain forest of southeastern Cameroon. They live in leaf or brush huts as semi-nomadic hunters and gatherers, subsisting on whatever game and produce the forest provides. Life is harsh, malnutrition and disease are common, and half of all Baka infants die. Because of their small size and the stigma of their reputation as thieves, the Baka have been misunderstood and regarded as nearly sub-human by some tribes. As such, they have been targeted for abuse, exploited, and even hunted. Consequently, the Baka are wary of outsiders and live in almost total isolation from other groups.

The Baka's home in Cameroon's rain forest is being destroyed at the

fastest rate of any on earth, and missionaries fear that the opportunity to reach these gentle people within their own language and culture may forever disappear along with the forest in the next 20 years. 'I long for the day when Baka men, women, and children will crowd around a bamboo shelter like this one and listen intently to true stories of their Creator-Redeemer.'

Cameroon is a secular state with strong tribal and Islamic religious influences. The Baka believe in a supreme god Komba, who created all things. But the ancestors ran away from Komba and hid in the forest, living in a way that displeased the creator. By their continual perversity, the people eventually drove this always somewhat distant creator god from their presence. By contrast the spirit of the forest, Jengi, has a very direct influence over daily life. At one time Jengi had been bound, and the ancestors had been instructed to leave him bound, but chose to loose him to see him dance. Jengi is a dangerous being, and if disturbed, the forest will not provide food and will cause problems such as sickness, adultery, and quarrels. The motivating force in religious ritual is to keep in good relationship with Jengi, who is at once dangerous and fearsome but also the source of well-being and strength.

Sierra Leone

Mike and Vi Webb, experienced missionaries, who have latterly been running 'Link House' for students in Cambridge, have felt burdened to return to Sierra Leone with *Unevanglised Fields Mission* despite the precarious situation in that country. They are due to leave on the 6th October. Below are excerpts from their September newsletter:

UFM agree to our going providing the first two or three months be regarded as an assessment visit to determine the feasibility and pattern of our future ministry. The shock of the destruction and poverty will be difficult to cope with. 20% of Freetown has been destroyed with up to 90% in some suburbs. In a country of 4.7 million people, over 1 million are displaced and a further 600,000 are refugees outside the country. There are food shortages and medical facilities are scarce or non-existent.

Peace talks started and an agreement was signed. However there is a large degree of scepticism as the agreement provides amnesty for all those who committed the murders, rapes, amputations, etc. There is no sign of sorrow or repentance for all the devastation and human destruction. In fact the agreement gives the rebels 4 seats in the government and a key post in diamond administration.

Pastors coming to Freetown from the interior tell of difficulty in travel and

widespread starvation and illness but UN relief teams have been hampered by the antagonism and uncertainty of the rebels.

We hear that Freetown is fairly quiet except in the east where there are reports of increasing numbers of robberies. Regent Road Baptist Church is just one of the many buildings destroyed earlier this year. (Mike preached in this large church in 1996; now it is just a shell).

Please pray for real peace and justice in Sierra Leone ... that the West/UN would fulfil their promises... for the Christian leaders ... for the Christians, their life and witness ... for ourselves, our preparation and our support.

We expect to return to the UK in mid-December. We should then have a better idea of what priorities the Sierra Leone churches have for us and the best way to operate a Bible teaching and pastoral ministry.

Support may be directed for the EFSL/Sierra Leone Mission Appeal to: UFM Worldwide, 47a Fleet Street, Swindon, Wilts SN1 1RE, UK.

Turkey

A report from Tearfund concerning Christian relief efforts among victims of the recent earthquake in Turkey. September 1999.

We have had direct and indirect contact with a number of Christian groups and churches working in the area. One group, the US based Christian agency *World Relief* is

working directly with a group of local Turkish churches. On the day of the earthquake *World Relief* dispatched staff to Turkey from the Kosovo region to begin talking with the churches about their vision for response. In a meeting arranged by the churches with one provincial governor, the governor requested that *World Relief*, as the agency presented to him by the churches, be responsible for a tent city. The governor wasn't quite ready to allow the churches to do it themselves, but we believe it was a big step forward that he allowed and even requested that an agency presented by the churches be responsible for the 'city'.

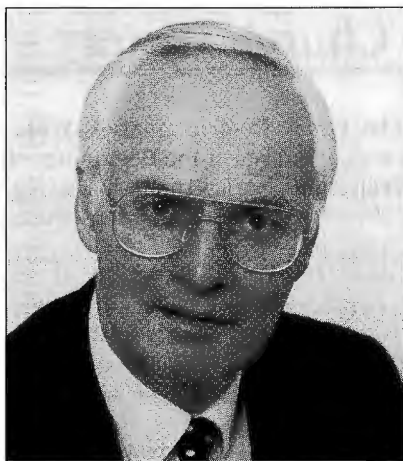
Here at Tearfund we have decided that as *World Relief* is working in such close partnership with many of the same churches that we would otherwise support, we will channel all funding received from supporters specifically for the Turkish earthquake to *World Relief*. People are free to send donations through any of the normal channels to Tearfund and these will be forwarded to *World Relief* as quickly as possible for their work in Turkey.

*UK addr: Tearfund, 100 Church Rd,
Teddington, Middx, TW11 8QE
website : www.tearfund.org*

Belgium

*New minister at the International
Baptist Church of Brussels*

Andrew Anderson, formerly pastor of
Philip Street Baptist Chapel, Bristol



Andrew Anderson

and then engaged in an itinerant preaching ministry, has accepted the call to be pastor of the International Baptist Church of Brussels. He will commence his ministry there on 26 November 1999.

A congregation of about 300 meets on Sunday mornings for the main preaching service at 11.00. During the week there is a network of home-groups. The English-speaking church serves a wide diversity of people who work in 'the capital of Europe' for the European Commission, NATO, the embassies and for a number of multinational companies. Often 30 nationalities are represented in the congregation.

The church is located at:
78 Lange Eikstraat,
1970 Wezeweimbeek-Oppem, Brussels
Tel/fax +32 2 731 1224
email:
IBC_Brussels@compuserve.com

Church History – recent publications

The Great Reformation: A Wide-ranging Survey of the Beginnings of Protestantism. R. Tudur Jones. rep. 1997 by Gwas Bryntirion Press. 288pp. pbk.

Gwas Bryntirion Press is to be congratulated for keeping this fine work (originally published in 1985 by IVP) in print. The interest of this volume lies precisely in the wide range referred to in the title. Rather than sticking to the often told story of Reformation in Germany, France, Switzerland and England, the author includes sections on Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Sweden, Finland, Ireland, Scotland, Italy, Poland, Hungary, and (of course!) Wales. The thirty-eight chapters are short and pithy, each introduced with a marvellous quotation. So for example, one of the chapters on the Radicals of the Reformation is introduced with a sentence from the last will and testament of Anneken Jans, intended for her baby boy and written the night before she was martyred: 'Where you hear of a poor, simple, cast-off little flock which is despised and rejected by the world, join them; for where you hear of the cross, there is Christ.' (93). This work is accessible enough for the general reader, but the clear structure and bibliography mean that it will also be useful for teaching outline church history courses.

Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity. Mark Noll. Baker, USA; IVP, UK. 1997. 335pp. pbk. £11.99.

In this attractively produced work Noll

chooses twelve decisive moments in Christian history, and describes them with a measure of detail and depth. By placing them in context the reader is able to get an overview of the whole of Church history, but by focusing in on these episodes, he rescues church history from being a mere list of events. He is able to give more attention to individual characters, and give more of a sense of 'what it felt like' than in a more traditional outline work. I bought this book with eager anticipation. One expects in an overview a fairly 'neutral' treatment of the different strands in Christian history. But Noll fails to ask the necessary questions about the Church-State union that was Christendom; he argues that after Christ's commission, the rise of monasticism 'was the most important – and in many way the most beneficial – institutional event in the history of Christianity' (84); he argues that 'virtually all cross-cultural proclamation of the Gospel in the Middle Ages was done by monks and friars' (101); but fails to ask the fundamental question of 'what sort of Gospel were these monks and friars proclaiming?' In concentrating on the official institution of the 'Church' there is a deafening silence on the story of the believers who right through the Middle Ages were persecuted by that very institution. Writers who have told that alternative story (such as Broadbent and Verduin) are ignored. Being academically neutral is one thing, but being this selective is unacceptable.

Sharon James.

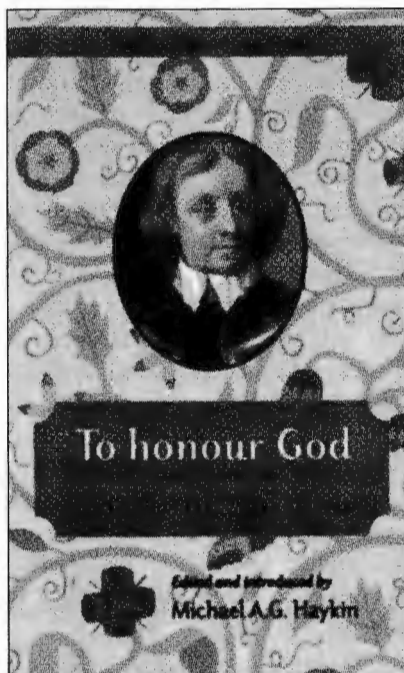
Joshua Press

Tom Wells

Readers of RT have a double reason to be interested in the formation of a new publishing house in Canada, *Joshua Press*. First, we are glad to welcome another publisher that will concentrate its interest and resources 'to advance the cause of Christ by the publication of Reformed literature'. Second, we are pleased to see that its editorial director is RT's associate editor, Michael Haykin. May God's richest blessings go with this endeavour!

Joshua Press has already released three titles that should interest RT's readers. The first is a tiny volume of 47pp by Jim Elliff, *Led by the Spirit*, telling us how the Holy Spirit guides the believer today. Two things strike us here. First, Elliff himself has made the pilgrimage from the kind of mystical 'leading' that many Christians experiment with, to a solid biblically-based understanding of the will of God. In this way he shows that he has walked where many of us have walked. This is not mere theory. Second, the discussion and the point at which he arrives show eminently good sense. The book closes with a checklist of steps to help you, making this not simply good advice but practical help. Price: \$4.99 U.S.

A second volume, *To Honour God*, is edited by Haykin and surveys the



spirituality of Oliver Cromwell in 341 pp. It is the first in what will be a continuing series entitled *Classics of Reformed Spirituality*. In the first chapter Haykin shows us what 'spirituality' means in Cromwell's case by laying bare some of his basic convictions. Here we find a man overwhelmed with the goodness of God to himself and to his fellow believers toward whom he shows a wonderfully magnanimous spirit. We discover too that he is in advance of his day in his attitude toward

religious liberty. Note the argument in this quotation:

‘Is not liberty of conscience in religion a fundamental? So long as there is liberty of conscience for the supreme magistrate to exercise his conscience in erecting what form of church government he is satisfied he should set up, why should he not give it to others?’ Why not indeed! The bulk of this volume is given to Cromwell’s letters to all kinds of men and women. Haykin has edited these and included explanatory endnotes that will give clarity to the general reader and hints for further study to laymen and scholars. It closes with some of Cromwell’s public declarations, including a speech to parliament, some dying sayings and a dying prayer rich with earnest desire and intercession for his fellow believers. A select bibliography is added.

The third volume in this trio is an autobiography of a 20th-century missionary to Quebec, Murray Heron. Its title is *Footprints across Quebec*. I first picked it up with a certain reluctance since I knew nothing of Mr Heron and little of Quebec. What I discovered, however, was a genuine adventure story of battles fought on a smaller scale than Cromwell’s, but in the highest of causes, taking the gospel where it was previously largely unknown. And they were battles! Heron and his people were attacked quickly and viciously in territory that had belonged

exclusively to the Roman Catholic Church. Street meetings led to physical abuse and jail, not for the abusers, but for the soldiers of Christ. Prison, however, proved to be a fertile field for gospel witness!

‘The governor of the prison... was quite upset that so many prisoners were reading the Bible. He had granted us permission to have Bibles to read, but wanted us to understand they were for our personal use... He warned us that if other prisoners were found reading the Bible, he would remove all copies from the prison. When we informed other prisoners of this threat, far from discouraging them, it only increased their desire to read the Scriptures. New Testaments and Bibles were hidden under mattresses and kept away from the eyes of the guard. The Word of God continued to be read in private with greater intensity and urgency. Needless to say, the Word did its work!’

This is a book to be read and thoroughly enjoyed. Not only does adventure run throughout it, but meeting Murray Heron and his associates will stir the hearts of young and old alike with a desire to get out the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We look forward to further volumes from Joshua Press Inc., 317 King Street West, Dundas, Ontario L9H 1W5, Canada. They are happy to send a catalogue on request.

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