

# REFORMATION TODAY



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## Carey 2001 - January 9th - 12th

Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire

Open to men and women along the lines of former Grace/Carey conferences. En suite rooms available.

Themes include: *Evangelism and missionary enterprise*

John Blanchard has been invited to present the subject of encouraging evangelism in the wake of his book *Does God Believe in Atheists?* which is opening doors for evangelism. Further planning for Carey 2001 is under way.

### Concerning this issue, *RT 175*

#### *The justification of theology*

One of the first activities of our Lord following his resurrection was to teach theology. On the road to Emmaus he joined two depressed disciples. While they walked he took them on a course of biblical theology, 'And beginning with Moses and all the prophets he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself (Luke 14:27). What was the effect of this theological exercise? Afterwards the two testified, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

#### *Call to Prayer*

*Know that the Holy Scriptures constitute a book that turns the wisdom of all other books into foolishness, because not one teaches about eternal life except this one alone. Therefore you should despair of your reason and understanding. With them you will not attain eternal life, but, on the contrary your presumptuousness will plunge you and others with you out of heaven (as happened to Lucifer) into the abyss of hell. But kneel down in your room and pray to God with real humility and earnestness (as David did), that he through his dear Son may give you his Holy Spirit, who will enlighten you, lead you, and give you understanding. Martin Luther*

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Front cover: *On opening day of the Christian Compassion Ministry building in Manila workmen put the final touches to the building; see page 17.*

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# What is Theology?

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## *Editorial*

Two major articles take up the pages of this issue. Both are preceded by the question ‘What is Theology?’ There is often suspicion about systematic theology and rightly so when we remember the arid nature of scholasticism. The term ‘scholastic’ was used first by humanists and 16th-century historians of philosophy to describe the theologians and philosophers of the Middle Ages. It was a negative, derogatory term conveying the idea of a tradition-bound, logic-quibbling mentality, combined with a slavish adherence to the Greek philosopher Aristotle. There has never been a clean slate because every generation leans on the preceding line of teachers. It was inevitable that some scholastic ideas and principles percolated into the theology of the Reformers and Puritans. Not all those ideas and principles are unhelpful or wrong. Every axiom and every principle must be examined in the light of Scripture. This introductory comment prepares the way for what I will say presently about systematic theology.

## **A definition of theology**

The word theology comes from the Greek *Theos* (God) and *logos* (meaning ‘word’ or ‘a conveying of information’) which appears 331 times in the New Testament. *Logos* is used in a variety of ways. The opening verse of the prologue to John’s Gospel is well known: ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.’ *Logos* is sometimes translated as ‘story’ and sometimes as ‘news’. *Theology* means the knowledge of God.

Writing to Timothy, Paul urges, ‘What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit, that was entrusted to you.’ Here theology is described as *the pattern of sound teaching* and as *the good deposit*. This exhortation of Paul to Timothy reminds us that theology is not just an academic exercise. We keep the truth *with faith and love in Christ Jesus*. Our faith as Christians is a faith that unites us to Christ. He said, ‘If you hold to my teaching (*logos*) you are really my disciples’ (John 8:31). The manner in which we do this is with love. We love him, the fountainhead of true theology which is experimental and practical for us. For us Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6).

Paul reminds Timothy, 'From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness' (2 Tim 3:15,16). All Scriptures are infallible and reliable for they have been breathed from God. Therefore Scripture is the only reliable source of theology. We are reminded again that theology has to do with personal salvation. From his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice Timothy had been taught the holy Scriptures for the purpose of salvation.

I will broaden my definition of theology by describing three disciplines, namely, Biblical Theology, Historical Theology and Systematic Theology.

### **Biblical Theology**

Biblical Theology is the study of the progressive manner in which God has revealed himself in the Scriptures. Biblical Theology has to do with the Bible story line from Genesis to Revelation. It has to do with a study of God's revelation of himself stage by stage through history. Hebrews 1:1,2 sums this up:

*In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.*

God has spoken. He has spoken through the course of history. He has spoken in various ways and at many times to our forefathers. God's speech has been recorded and his acts have been described in the Scriptures. These revelations have a consummation point because they concern the coming of his Son. His Son has now come and it is in him that the self-revelation of God is consummated. The incarnation, the life and death and resurrection are foretold in the Old Testament. Hence we call the OT the book of promise and the New Testament the book of fulfilment. The NT has its own biblical theological structure: gospel narratives, history, letters of exposition, pastoral epistles and finally apocalypse.

Biblical Theology is concerned in particular with the progress, coherence, inter-connection and unity of God's revelation of himself. In short, Biblical Theology is the work of exhibiting the religion of the Bible according to its progressive development. Biblical Theology displays the unity and majesty of God's revelation of himself. The progress from the book of promise to the book of fulfilment is thrilling and exciting. Biblical Theology has greatly strengthened the testimony of Christianity.

Evangelical and Reformed scholars such as Geerhardus Vos, J Barton Payne, G F Oehler, Chester Lehman and S G De Graaf have contributed outstanding works on Biblical Theology.

## **Historical Theology**

Historical Theology is the study of Christian doctrine as it has been debated and formulated through the centuries. William Cunningham's two volume *Historical Theology* (1,200 pages, Banner of Truth) is an excellent work which traces out the manner in which Christian doctrine has been clarified. As an example of the usefulness of Historical Theology I draw attention to the controversy between Pelagius (383-410) and Augustine (354-430). Cunningham describes the Pelagian controversy and the role of Augustine to refute the heresy of Pelagianism (vol 1, 321-358). In the course of describing this controversy Cunningham expounds the doctrines of the fall of man into sin, the meaning of the bondage of the will and the importance of these issues for the Church through history. Indeed it was a revival of the doctrines of grace that has led to a theological renewal in the post-1960 English-speaking world. The recently published *Story of Christian Theology* by Roger E Olson (IVP/Apollos, 650 pages, 1999) unfolds the development of theology through the centuries. Unlike Cunningham who stands firmly within the Reformed faith Olson is radically Arminian, bent on moving the old boundary markers and precarious with regard to Process Theology.

## **Systematic Theology**

Systematic Theology is the discipline of ascertaining what the whole Bible teaches on any one given topic, for example what is revealed about the three persons of the Godhead in the books of the OT and then in the NT. In the hands of a proficient theologian this will result in a well-constructed overall view of the nature of God as he has revealed himself. As indicated in the conclusion of *The Story of Theology* it only takes one deviation (example: the denial of God's immutability) and all is lost. Also to make a point, if Christ sinned only once in his life, all would have been lost.

As an architectural student I worked one vacation time for a firm that specialised in swimming baths. I was introduced to the engineering required to ensure that there are no cracks or leaks. (It will cost a fortune to mend an Olympic size swimming pool). Using that analogy, when it comes to the nature of Christ and the Trinity, the slightest deviation can result in a disastrous theological leak! Bob Letham took us safely through the subject of the humanity of Christ (RT 172), a subject that is always inadequate unless complemented with his deity, which matter is made good in this issue.

John Calvin (1509-1564) was the outstanding systematiser of theology in the period of the 16th-century Reformation and his Systematic Theology, *The Christian Institutes*, has been a powerful influence ever since. He was followed by Francis Turretin (1623-1687) of Geneva whose 2000 page *Systematic Theology* has recently been published in three volumes. Roger Nicole describes Turretin as a marvellous synthesiser. Many Systematic Theologies have appeared subsequently. In Reformed circles the best known are those by Charles Hodge and Louis Berkhof. There is usually an overlap in Systematic Theology and Historical Theology and as an example Louis Berkhof is particularly helpful in the way he reviews the past. For instance with Justification by Faith he looks first at the OT terms, then the NT. His next section views the doctrine as it has developed in history.

The two most recent works of Systematic Theology are by Robert Reymond (Thomas Nelson, USA, 1209 pages) and Wayne Grudem, a 1250 page offering published by IVP in 1994 (see review RT144, Mar-Apr 1995). Note the systematic nature of Grudem's *Systematic Theology* as it is presented in 57 chapters which fall under seven major sections:

1. The Doctrine of the Word of God.
2. The Doctrine of God (one chapter subsumes the subject of the Trinity)
3. The Doctrine of Man
4. The Doctrines of Christ and of the Holy Spirit
5. The Doctrine of the Application of Redemption
6. The Doctrine of the Church
7. The Doctrine of the Future

Every chapter concludes with a bibliography referring to the leading Systematic Theologies: Anglican, Arminian, Baptist, Dispensational, Lutheran, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic. Included as appendices are nine historic confessions of faith which have appeared from 325 AD to 1978 AD. Some of these confessions are short summaries of what all Christians believe, but some such as *The Westminster Confession of Faith* are mini-Systematic Theologies.

We must approach the study of theology with humility and repentance. Theology is about salvation. The careful ordering of truth is designed to build up the believer and protect him from error. Theological lectures, if they are Christian, should be preceded by prayer: *Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in your law* (Psalm 119:18 New Living Translation). Without the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit we will never know God and without his enablement we will not grow as we should in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18 NIV).

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# The Deity of Christ

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*Dr Robert Letham*

Recently, I wrote in *Reformation Today* about the humanity of Christ and argued, with the historic Christian Church and against some recent and contemporary scholars, that in the incarnation Christ did not assume a corrupt, fallen human nature. I pointed out that in no way did this militate against his true humanity nor curtail the impact of the temptations he faced. Indeed, if this had not been the case he could not have saved us for he would then have needed a saviour himself, for inheriting a fallen nature would have placed him under the curse that came on all Adam's offspring.

If we were to leave the matter there, we would have an incomplete, a distorted view of who Christ is. Certainly, the humanity of Christ has been neglected over the years. In battles against liberal theology the Church had to stress Christ's deity and so his humanity was, to some extent, downplayed. However, if our account is to do proper justice to the person of Christ we must now move on to consider his deity, for he is not only fully man but also fully God. After we have done that, we will consider how his deity and humanity are related, for he is one person, not two. This has profound implications for our own relationship with God.

## **Old Testament expectation**

Immediately after the fall God pronounced a curse on the serpent – 'I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel' (Gen 3:15). This was fulfilled by the offspring of the woman, Jesus Christ, dealing a mortal blow to the offspring of the serpent, the devil. This, the most primitive declaration of the gospel, is couched in the language of conquest. This victory was to be achieved by man (the seed of the woman), by Christ in his obedient and righteous humanity on our behalf. In the prophets there is a growing insistence that Yahweh himself would come in person to deliver his people, in line with the



teaching of the Psalms that he alone is the deliverer and that it is vain to look to man for salvation. However, the lesson of both Testaments is that this could only be achieved by God himself living and acting in our humanity. Man alone could not do it, for it required a strength greater than his capabilities. On the other hand, God alone could not do it for, as the *Heidelberg Catechism* (1563) put it, since man had sinned man must atone for sin.

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.

When the angel announces the impending birth of Jesus, it is in these terms that it is couched. For example, in Matthew 1:21 Joseph is told to call the child Jesus, which means saviour. Salvation is consistently and exclusively referred to Yahweh in the Old Testament. This is underlined in 1:23 where the son mentioned by Isaiah was called Immanuel, or God-with-us. We shall now consider a small sample of the biblical teaching on the deity of Christ.

### **Jesus' own claims**

#### *John 5:16-47*

The Jewish leaders try to kill Jesus for breaking the Sabbath and for calling God his Father, making himself equal with God. Jesus denies the charge of blasphemy by citing the witnesses required by Jewish law in support of his claims. John the Baptist, the works given to Jesus by the Father, the Father himself and the Scriptures all testify concerning the truth of his testimony. His claim to be equal with God is true, not false. In the end, Jesus turns the tables on his accusers by charging them with failure to believe the testimony of Moses concerning him (45-47).

#### *John 8:58*

In conflict with his opponents, Jesus says, 'Before Abraham was, I am.' This was understood by his audience as a claim that he was living prior to Abraham and thus, to them, was totally unacceptable.



### *John 10:25-39*

Jesus says both he and the Father grant eternal life and so preserve Jesus' sheep from perishing. He and the Father are one. The Jews charge him with blasphemy, for making himself equal with God. The penalty for blasphemy was death by stoning. Jesus denies he is blaspheming, not by withdrawing his claim but by reinforcing it (34-9). His message is that he is telling the truth and so not committing blasphemy.

### *John 14:1*

Jesus makes himself co-ordinate with God as the object of faith. It is not quite certain whether he uses imperatives or indicatives, but this does not affect the point. In the first case he would be saying, 'Believe in God, believe also in me.' If the latter, he says, 'You are believing in God, you are also believing in me.' It is conceivable that the first could be indicative and the second imperative or (less likely) the reverse. Whatever the case, and the context favours two imperatives, Jesus regards himself as equal with God as the proper object of faith for his disciples.

### *John 14:7-10*

In response to Thomas, Jesus points out that to know him is to know the Father, and to Philip he says, 'He who has seen me has seen the Father.' Behind this is his claim that he and the Father are one and that he shares with the Father in being the object of the disciples' faith.

*This leads us on to consider Jesus' discussion of his relation with the Father, a theme that pervades John's Gospel but is also present in the Synoptics.*

### *Matthew 11:25-27*

Jesus describes himself as the Son. He shares knowledge and sovereignty with the Father. He thanks the Father for hiding 'these things' [the things Jesus had been doing and teaching] from the wise and revealing them to babes. Then he claims that knowledge of the Father is a gift given by the Son to whoever he chooses. As the Father reveals the things concerning the Son to whoever he pleases, so the Son reveals the Father – and 'all things' that the Father has committed to him – to whoever he pleases. Moreover, only the Father knows the Son but in turn only the Son knows the Father. In short, Jesus shares fully in both the sovereignty and mutual self-knowledge of God the Father.

### *John 5:16ff*

Repeatedly Jesus asserts that he was sent into the world by the Father, that he shares with the Father in giving life, in raising the dead, and in judging the world.

This is something the Father has given to the Son but which the Son consequently possesses in himself.

#### *John 14-17*

Throughout these chapters Jesus constantly refers to the relation between himself as the Son, and the Father and the Holy Spirit. Particularly noteworthy is his pervasive reference to the mutual indwelling of the three (cf. 14:20 'On that day you will realize that I am in my Father'). Here we see how close and inextricable are questions about the deity of Christ with those relating to the Trinity.

### **Jesus' works**

#### *Creator*

John 1:1-18 declares the eternal identity of Jesus Christ with the eternal Word who made all things and who is with God and who is God. More about this later, for other New Testament writers say the same.

#### *Judge*

##### *John 5:22-23*

Jesus is the judge – the judge of all the world can only be God, therefore Jesus is equal to and identical with God.

#### *Lord of nature*

##### *Matthew 14:22-36*

Jesus' walking on water is the action of Yahweh, the God of Israel who is described in the Old Testament as the one whose path lies through the waters (Ps 77:19; Job 9:8). Moreover, it is Yahweh who has the power to calm the raging storm (Job 26:11-14; Ps 89:9, 107:23-30). Thus Jesus displays the functions of deity. As a consequence note the change in the disciples. When they first see Jesus striding across the lake they are filled with fear and terror (26). On realising who he is, and seeing the effects of his command of nature, they are smitten with the recognition that 'this is the Son of God' (33). It is worth noting that Jesus greets them (27) with the statement 'I am' (*ego eimi*), a declaration of deity. The NIV limply paraphrases it, 'It is I.'

In addition there are the host of records of Jesus' miraculous power over sickness and disease, his production of food to sustain thousands at one sitting and the like. While the Synoptic Gospels present these more as evidence of the coming of the kingdom of God, in so far as they point to his lordship over the world they also lend support to the general point we are making here.

### *Saviour*

As we pointed out, the Old Testament stressed that deliverance for God's people could only come from Yahweh not from man. Psalm 146 is a good example, where Israel is urged, 'Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save... Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God, the maker of heaven and earth, the sea and everything in them.' Jesus' healings, including the raising of the dead, demonstrate him to be the Lord of life, indeed life itself. The cumulative impact of his creative and healing miracles point to deliverance from all that enslaves. T F Torrance correctly and forcibly describes Jesus' whole ministry as anticipating and demanding the resurrection.

### **The apostolic witness**

#### *Paul*

##### *Romans 9:5*

The punctuation of the Greek text of Romans 9:5 has occasioned immense discussion. The details are too complex to consider here. But the overwhelming balance of argument supports this not as an independent doxology addressed to God ('God be blessed for ever') but as an ascription of praise and deity to Christ ('Christ, who is God blessed for ever'). See the commentaries of Sanday & Headlam and C E B Cranfield, and Bruce Metzger's small monograph, 'The Punctuation of Romans 9:5'.

Since salvation is a work of God himself, the apostle's consistent description of Jesus as Saviour is itself an implicit attribution of deity as we see in Titus 2:11-13 where Paul couples a designation of Jesus Christ as 'our God and Saviour' (cf. Titus 1:4, 3:6; Phil 3:20; 2 Peter 1:11; 2 Tim 1:10).

##### *Philippians 2:5f*

Referring to Christ's pre-incarnate state, Paul says that he did not use his status in the form of God as something to be exploited for his own advantage but instead 'emptied himself'. He uses a present participle, denoting continuance, so that Christ's being in the form of God neither ends nor is curtailed by his incarnation but rather continues. Incidentally, this attitude of loving self-abasement reflects the character of God! Moreover, this attitude continues for in his incarnation he adds the form of a servant, humanity, becoming obedient to death itself, even the death of the cross. Thus he empties himself by addition not subtraction, by adding his human nature with all that entailed, not by abandoning his deity. In turn, on his resurrection the incarnate Christ is exalted by the Father to his right hand and given the name that is above every name, the name of Lord (*kurios*), the Greek equivalent of Yahweh.

*John*

*John 1:1-18*

The Word who is 'in the beginning' (note the allusion to Genesis 1:1) is 'with God' or directed toward God and, moreover, is also equated with God. Jehovah's Witnesses point to the absence of a definite article and argue that the text means the Word is a god. However, nominative predicate nouns preceding the verb, as is the case here, normally lack the definite article. The issue is one of Greek syntax. John is pointing to the unity, equality and distinction of the Word (*logos*) and God (*theos*). He then underlines that the Word is the creator of all things (3-4), and that he became flesh (14). To cap it all, he is the only-begotten God (18).

John's description of Christ as creator is echoed by Paul in Colossians 1:15-20, where he is said to have made all things and to sustain his creation in being. The author of Hebrews says the same in 1:1-4, where the Son is the one through whom the world was made and who directs it towards his intended goal.

The evidence is overwhelming. We could go on and on. No wonder Thomas, confronted with the very tangible evidence of Jesus' resurrection could say in response, 'My Lord and my God' (John 20:28). Consistently, Jesus Christ is the object of prayer (cf. Acts 7:59) and worship (cf. Revelation chs. 4-5). As Josiah Conder wrote:

Thou art the Everlasting Word, the Father's only Son;  
God manifestly seen and heard, and heaven's beloved One.  
Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou, that every knee to Thee should bow!

In Thee most perfectly expressed the Father's glories shine:  
Of the full Deity possessed, eternally divine.  
Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou that every knee to Thee should bow!

### **The relation of Christ's deity and humanity**

On many occasions I have heard Christians say that Jesus is half God, half man. This is wrong. If it were so he would be neither God nor man but a mixture of the two. Rather, he is fully God, and fully man, one hundred per cent both. He is both God and man at one and the same time. Moreover, he is so as one person, not as some kind of amalgam.

If he were not fully God he could never have truthfully said to Philip, 'He who has seen me has seen the Father' (John 14:9). He could have given us no true

revelation of God and would have been no more than a prophet or a great religious teacher. In fact, he could hardly have been that, for he would have been lying. At the same time, if he were not fully man he could not have saved us, for human sin required a perfect human obedience to atone for it.

Let us have a more detailed look at what all this entails. Deity is, by definition, uncreated. God alone is the creator and is not brought into being by anything else. He is self-existent from eternity. Thus, the Son has a relation to the Father and to the Holy Spirit that is eternal, without beginning, in the unity of the undivided Trinity. The early Church spoke of the relation between the Father and the Son as one of 'eternal begetting'. They did not seek to explain how this relation exists but instead affirmed that it was unlike anything we humans could understand and, moreover, something beyond the bounds of creation since it occurs in the eternal life of the Godhead. 'Begotten, not created' the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed puts it. The view has gained ground over the last century or so that the Greek word *monogenes* (only-begotten) has no reference to begetting but simply means 'one and only', pointing to the uniqueness of the Son, without reference to the manner of this relation. However, in the past few years the meaning of *monogenes* has come up for renewed debate in scholarly circles and it is strongly argued by some that we cannot extract all reference to begetting from it. Be that as it may, it is impossible for us to describe or define the relation between the Father and the Son. It is something known only to God.

If deity is alone uncreated, humanity is most definitely created. Human beings are creatures, that is obvious. In terms of Christ, his humanity was 'conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary'. Thus in terms of his deity, Christ is equal to God from eternity while according to his humanity he is one with us as a creature with bodily, mental and psychological limits. However, when we consider this further it is clear that there is no precise symmetry. The second person of the Trinity takes the initiative, assuming the human nature into union. The humanity is simply conceived and born, and so grows and develops as humanity does after conception. The two natures do not come together as two co-equal partners, coalescing into a greater whole. As Paul wrote, 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself' (2 Cor 5:19). It was God who took the initiative, the humanity was of necessity passive and receptive. This is a stupendous mystery.

The result is that Christ is one person, having two natures. The Logos (the second person of the Trinity) assumes the human nature into personal union. The natures are not separate as if he were some form of schizoid. The Logos did not indwell

a previously existent human nature or, we might say, a human being – as if the humanity had some separate or independent existence of its own. It was not like two pieces of plywood glued together by some third substance. That would not have been an incarnation but an indwelling and Jesus would have been little more than a supernaturally indwelt prophet. No, the eternal Son added a human nature taking it into personal union, so that the ‘personality’ of the incarnate Christ is that of the Son of God. The Second Council of Constantinople (553) stressed this. As I wrote before (RT 172):

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 personalized by its own particular and separate person but can be, as it were, granted personhood, enveloped, and instantiated 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.

This is based on the relationship between God and man. Perhaps better, we could say that the relationship God established between himself and man at creation was grounded upon his purpose that was to reach expression in the incarnation of his Son. Let me explain what I mean.

In Genesis 1 God is said to create man in his own image. Discussions of what this means have been legion. Whatever it means it tells us that, for all the infinite distinction between the creator and the creature, there is nonetheless a created compatibility between God and man, something God himself established from the first. He made us to be like himself on a creaturely level. He made us to be partners of his, in obedience and fellowship.

The first Adam (Adam means man) was thus created in the image of God. The second Adam, Jesus Christ, is the image of God. As Paul says of him, 'He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation' (Col. 1:15) or simply, '[he] is the image of God' (2 Cor. 4:4) We could add the great opening sentence of Hebrews to this too where the writer describes the incarnate Son as 'the brightness of [the Father's] glory and the express image of his substance' (Heb. 1:3). The point in all these statements is that they refer precisely to the Son in his incarnate life, as man. It is as man that he is the image of God. So, from where we stand, we are in the image of God most accurately when we are in Christ. At



root, there is a created compatibility between God and man, established by God himself.

So Christ's two natures are 'without confusion, without change' because of the creator-creature distinction. God cannot cease to be God or change into a creature, neither can the creature become God nor be mixed with the creator in some kind of ontological soup. That would be metamorphosis, not incarnation. On the other hand, and equally, the deity and humanity are 'without confusion, without change, without division, without separation' since they come together in one united integrated person. This is so for this is incarnation, not an indwelling. *We neglect either side of this statement at our peril.*

### Some implications for ourselves

Thus Calvin can say that the incarnation of the Son of God is a pledge of our sonship – a basis for assurance of our salvation. In Christ, from conception through to the ascension and beyond, we see our humanity taken into union with God!

You have raised our human nature, in the clouds to God's right hand;  
There we sit in heavenly places, there with you in glory stand:  
Jesus reigns, adored by angels, man with God is on the throne;  
Mighty Lord, in your ascension we by faith behold our own.

Christopher Wordsworth (1862)

The ascension of Christ, seen in the light of the incarnation, points to our being taken up to the heavenly places in and with Christ. It shows us that behind the glorious reality of justification by grace through faith (grounded on Christ's divine-human righteousness), and the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the stupendous truth of union with Christ secured by his incarnation, his perfect human obedience, his ascension to the right hand of God, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Also, that Christ is one with God from all eternity ('of one substance with the Father' as the ancient creeds put it) tells us something very important. As Calvin also said, we ought not to think that the will of the Father differs in the slightest from what he has revealed in his Son. Jesus is the full and true manifestation of the Father to us, on our level, as man. Therefore if we want to know what God has in his heart for us, we must look to Christ. He has declared the Father's will to us, for he is the express image of the Father, one with God from eternity.

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# Joy

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*Don Garlington*

*Dr Garlington has opened up an aspect of experience which is important yet rarely expounded. This extract is from a sermon preached at Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto Canada on Sunday 15 November 1998, and published in **The Gospel Witness**, February 1999.*

In 1 John 1:4 John says, 'We are writing this that your joy may be full (complete).' When you compare that with the Gospel of John, chapter 4, you come to understand that our life in Christ has an artesian quality about it, it springs up, it bubbles up, it wells up, it overflows. So Jesus can say that we have been granted the Spirit as the water of life, the living water and it flows over unto eternal life.

Our joy in Christ is meant to have this artesian quality about it. I don't think that joy is to be reduced to other elements, in other words, other concepts. Now there are good words, like the word resignation, that is submitting to the providence of God, even though it may hurt at the moment. Perseverance, which means that we 'keep on keeping on' in spite of adversity. There is chastisement, and there are many other words that we could mention, but joy is not to be identified with any of these.

Joy is what the disciples experienced when they came to recognise that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Joy is what the apostles experienced when they had been beaten, of all things, and they went out rejoicing that they had been counted worthy to *suffer for the name*. Jesus told them, 'Rejoice. Not because you cast out demons, but because your names are written in the Book of Life.'

It has been said that Christ died to make us holy and not happy. We are not happy in the sense of expecting that every day there is going to be a smile on our face and a spring in our step, and we will just bounce along as though there are no problems in life. But it can be an over-simplification. It can become an effective half-truth, because Christ *did* die to make us holy, and yet our holiness, depends upon our experiencing the resurrection of Christ in daily existence: 'that I may know him and the power of his resurrection' and with joy anticipate the time when he comes again to make me his own.

There are many enemies that seek to eradicate our joy. Our enemies may be the same as David's in Psalm 3, where David is fleeing from Absalom his son. His enemies are crying out to him that there is no help for him in God. It is a dramatic scene because David is literally quite surrounded and these people are shouting into the camp, and saying, 'You might as well give up

because you deserve everything that has come upon you.' David sensed that of course and it went straight to his heart, which is why he began Psalm 3 with that lament, 'Oh Lord how many are my enemies. How many who rise up and say of me, "There is no help for him in God."' '

Now we don't have precisely those enemies but we do have the enemy within. We have the enemy of indwelling sin, as Paul calls it in Romans 7. That enemy is bound and determined to eradicate our joy in Christ, and we must not let that joy be wiped out because our holiness to a large degree depends upon it.

The way we fight back is by confession. We come into the presence of our Father and say that we have sinned, sinned against light, sinned against grace, sinned against the holy law and when we do, as in the case of David, you know what he does? He comes and he puts his hand under our chin and lifts our head back up again, so that he is the lifter up of our head. Then we continue, then we get on with it because the things that really matter haven't changed.

... Here is *the normal Christian life*. The Christian life is one of living in covenant relationship which simply means a family relationship. Christ is the bridegroom of his people. 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.' This is essential to our joy being complete (1 John 1:4-9).



*The beautiful city of Kuala Lumpur (see p.21)*

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# Travels in S E Asia

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*Report by the editor*



*Above:*  
A happy Brian and Nocy Ellis at the opening  
of the new CCM building

*Below:*  
The opening day service for CCM building





*Pastor Ngun Tung of Mandalay  
with his wife*

## **Philippines, Myanmar, Malaysia and Singapore**

**Philippines** - The population of the Philippines is 70 million in over 700 islands. 65% are Roman Catholic, mostly nominal.

There are some events that we may not think significant at the time, but in 1979 a decision was made. Missionary Brian Ellis was encouraged by Evangelical Press to start a wholesale Reformed literature outreach, which continues to be effectual throughout the Philippines.

The primary reason for my visit to the Philippines in February 2000 was to participate in a Pastors' Conference which in the event was attended by 140 who gathered over three days,



*Dr Ken Brownell with Ayemin, an excellent  
translator. Ayemin is pastor of a  
Pentecostal church*

something which would never have been contemplated had these men not been influenced through Reformed books as already described. Our meetings took place in Cubao Reformed Baptist Church in the heart of Manila (10 million). There was a high standard of ministry by Filipino leaders Noel Espinosa (Principal of Grace Ministerial Academy), Rene





*Sing Foo Lau, church planter in Penang with Josiah (10), Jo-ezer (4), Jo-hanan (6) and Jo-hannah (8). Photo taken at airport which the children enjoy*

Maramara and Rolly Seveses. The closing message was given by missionary Steve Hofmaier of the USA.

I was privileged to attend the opening of a new building to house 48 children for 'Christian Compassion Ministries' (CCM). Brian and Necy Ellis began the children's work in response to the needs of the homeless five years ago when they discovered people sleeping rough in Harvard Street, 70 metres from their church. They began with 4 children and the work has grown steadily. Wonderful progress has been made as seen in the photos on page 17 and front cover.

**Myanmar** - The principal reason for the period of 11 days in Myanmar was to work as a team with Dr Kenneth Brownell, pastor of East London Tabernacle, UK and Patrick Buckley of Southampton. A conference for pastors took place at Immanuel Baptist Church (Pastor Paul Johns), a church which has to organise services to satisfy a congregation numbering 3,000 made up of different language groups. I taught in Grace Seminary which is led by Dr Neng Khan Thang. It was a great joy to observe the delight that so many have in expository preaching and a highlight for me was to preach at the Lai Baptist Church to a congregation of 550 meeting at the Myanmar



*Pastor Andrew Liu of Sarawak (left) and Dr Poh Boon Sing*

Christian Seminary. The usual congregation of about 750 is centred in another suburb and awaiting the completion of their new building which will accommodate about 900.

I spent time with Pastor Ngun Tlung of Mandalay Baptist Church who was visiting Rangoon. He leads a church of 400 members and is working to establish four further churches in surrounding areas. One already has 40 members and is 8 miles north of Mandalay in Amarapura (where Adoniram Judson suffered long imprisonment). Six miles to the west is Patheinkyi with 10 members. There is a university here which is strategic since the main university in Yangon (Rangoon) has been closed for fear of a revolution. Then 120 miles south of Mandalay is Pakkaku with 40 members and the fourth church-plant

is 17 miles to the east in Phayangtang with 25 members. Ngun Tlung is Hakha Chin and has prepared 6 books, including *Who is in Control?* translated into his language and ready to go, when he can obtain the funding.

While in Yangon I met a Korean pastor. I asked him whether he maintained a daily early morning prayer meeting in his church. He affirmed that to be common Korean practice and said that fifty percent of his membership gather every morning at 5 a.m. in the winter months and 4.30 in summer. He urged that wisdom be exercised in our giving while in economically deprived countries (Romans 12: 8). The churches in Myanmar could be destroyed by the West if the local Christians in Burma ceased to support their own pastors, build their own



buildings and finance their own church planting. Wise giving to assist specific enterprise is helpful but if the indigenous people perceive the churches to be the creation of the West it will not only blunt initiative but destroy credibility.

**Malaysia** - The population of the mainland peninsula bordering Thailand is 15 million and a further 5 million live in East Malaysia located on the north side of the island of Borneo. I was astounded by Kuala Lumpur which I last visited in 1988. The architecture is magnificent and great pride is taken in keeping the city beautiful. It is a pleasure to drive or walk there.

It was a joy to stay with Dr Poh Boon Sing and his family. They have a most unusual house which they are able to use as a church. Poh's wife, Goody, has a garden which consists of a large terrace with trees growing in huge terracotta pots and a wide variety of herbs in smaller pots. The meetings went well. It was interesting to talk to a young minister, Andrew Liu, from East Malaysia and to learn about conditions in KL. Poh is an excellent example of zeal in church-planting - a work that is not easy in a country having 52% Malay Muslims, to which sector evangelism is prohibited.



*Wei En Yi, pastor of Shalom Reformed Baptist Church, Singapore*

An air flight took me to Penang for the first time. This 15k x 24k island is just off the north of the peninsula. I stayed with and ministered for Pastor Sing Foo Lau whom I met when he was a student in London.

**Singapore** - At the southern tip of Malaysia is Singapore, a city-state with a population of 3 million, 77% Chinese. Singapore is impressive, a beautiful and clean city that seems to get better and more interesting with each visit. The city buildings are so well designed and everywhere there are wonderful flowers and lush tropical foliage.

It was a joy to be with Pastor Wei En Yi, preaching in his church and at the new church in the suburb of Dover. My last meeting was a ministers' fraternal on the day of my return flight to Manchester, UK.

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# The Story of Theology

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*Erroll Hulse*

2000! A new millennium! This is an appropriate time to look back and marvel at the way the Holy Spirit has preserved the original theology (see editorial) of the Bible, especially through the dark ages of papal ascendancy and power from about 500 to 1517 and again through the massive century-long attack of modernism from the 1850s to the 1950s.

An artist depicting a battle on his canvas selects principal characters and paints them in detail against the background of the whole. I will apply this principle to historical narrative.

## *Early Theological Efforts*

As the Christian Church grew she faced not only crises of persecution but dangers that threatened her life through false teaching. The New Testament has strong warnings concerning heresy and the damage caused by divisions (2 Tim 3:1-9; 2 Peter 2:1-3; 1 John 4:3; Jude 3,4). Danger of division motivated the calling of the first ecumenical council of Nicea. In the year 325, 318 bishops convened. The chairman was the Emperor Constantine. High on the agenda was the heresy promoted by Arius (250-336). Arius was a presbyter in Alexandria who, like the Jehovah's Witnesses of our day, taught that Christ was a created being. Arius denied the eternal deity of Christ. The Council of Nicea paved the way for what was later published as the *Nicene Creed*.

Theologians seek to define truth as clearly as possible. Not only are single words vital in defining truth, even a single letter can separate between truth and error. The key word of the Council of Nicea in rejecting Arianism was the Greek word *homoousios* which means, of the same substance. One letter 'i' added, *homoiousios* means, of similar substance. The addition of 'i' fully accommodated the Arian heresy. At Nicea it was firmly rejected. Christ is of the same substance with the Father, not of similar substance. The phrase 'begotten, not made' was

included in the *Nicene Creed*. The Emperor Constantine required that all bishops sign the new creed or else be deposed and exiled. He attached an anathema clause to the creed for those who believed that Christ came into existence or was created.

At the Council of Constantinople in 381 and again at the Council of Ephesus in 431, the issue of Christ's nature was further clarified. In 451, 500 bishops met at Chalcedon. The outcome was the *Chalcedonian Definition*. These creeds testify to meticulous attention given to detail concerning the doctrine of the person of Christ. In the process, understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity was strengthened. The Reformed and Puritan Confessions of the 16th and 17th centuries reflect the lucidity and balance of the work achieved in those early times.

An important development in the story is the controversy that arose between a British monk, Pelagius, and Augustine (354-430) who was the foremost theologian of the fifth century. Pelagius denied the doctrine of original sin. In refuting Pelagius, Augustine built up a biblical doctrine of sovereign grace which proved invaluable in the 16th-century Reformation when the doctrines of grace were recovered. Augustine, who worked in Latin, was not clear about justification. The Latin *justificare* means to **make** righteous. The Greek *dikaioo* in the NT means to **declare** righteous. Sadly Augustine's error perpetrated much harm.

In 1054 a difference over the eternal relation of the Holy Spirit divided the Eastern Church from the Western Church. The former held that the Spirit proceeded from the Father only, while the latter maintained the procession was from the Father and the Son.

### *The Church and Theology*

The story of theology is intertwined with the story of the Church. Roman Catholic historian Thomas Bokenkotter, in a spirit of exultation, tells us that when the Roman Empire was cracking at the seams Leo was the genius who dramatically and successfully asserted the supreme authority of the papacy.<sup>1</sup> Pope Leo I, who held office from 440 to 461, enunciated the grandiose theory of papal primacy. Rome increasingly gained complete supremacy in the West. Sadly for the next 1,000 years right up to the advent of the 16th-century Reformation the story of theology is mostly a story of decline.

It is important here to qualify the above statement by pointing to the fact that there was a self-conscious effort to apply Christian truth to law and politics in the medieval Church. Some bishops of Rome such as Gregory (540-604) were leaders of outstanding quality. Decline was first gradual but then steep and catastrophic.

The Reformers were scandalised by late medieval corruptions and heresies. For instance, it was Johann Tetzel's hawking of indulgences that infuriated Luther.

Doctrines and practices not sanctioned by the Bible were added, such as prayers directed to Mary (600), celibacy of the priesthood decreed by Pope Gregory VII (1079), transubstantiation (1215) and purgatory (1439). Finally tradition, the basis on which so many anti-biblical doctrines had been added, was declared to be of equal authority with the Bible at the Council of Trent in 1545.

In spite of this protracted period of doctrinal decline we must not think only in negative terms. Jesus promised that he would build his Church in the face of the gates of hell. Every generation gives testimony to the faithfulness of the Son of God. He was building his Church, even in those dark times between 500 and 1517. Peter Waldo (1130-1205) a wealthy merchant in Lyon, France, is an example of a Christian who exercised a wide and effective ministry within and in spite of the opposition of the Roman Catholic system. When Waldo was converted he followed Jesus' words to the rich young ruler. He sold all he had, provided for his family, and then gave the rest of his estate to the poor. Thereafter his life was devoted totally to spreading the gospel. The Waldensian movement, named after him, spread over a wide part of Europe.

In 1229, the Council of Toulouse forbade the reading of the Bible by laymen, but the disciples of Peter Waldo continued to be rooted in the Scriptures. The Waldensian leaders memorised much of the New Testament. Their entire approach was in conflict with papal policy. Inevitably this led to excommunication and persecution.

Raymond Lull (1232-1316) was a further example of a Bible-based evangelical Christian who laboured from within the R C Church since there was little or no alternative. Lull devoted his life to missionary work among Muslims.

Outstanding theological treatises are difficult to locate in the medieval times. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) produced a work on the atonement in which he contended that the atonement was necessary to satisfy the majesty of God. The most significant theologian of the medieval Church was Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274). His literary output was enormous. He leaned heavily on the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, and is rated as first among the scholastic theologians of that period. (For meaning of 'scholastic' see editorial).

Jan Hus (1373-1415) and his close friend Jerome of Prague (1371-1416) were influenced by John Wycliffe (1329-1384) of Oxford University. These men were theologians of stature and they sought to bring the Church back to the Bible. Hus and Jerome were burned at the stake.

God's chosen instrument to bring to an end the long epoch of decline and increasing corruption of the Western Church was Martin Luther (1483-1546). The basic principle undergirding the 16th-century Reformation was *Sola Scriptura*, the sufficiency of Scripture. The doctrine of justification by faith alone was rediscovered and proclaimed with great power by Luther and his disciples. The sole basis of God's justification of sinners is the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. The revival of theology through the 16th-century Reformation is reflected in the confessions and catechisms of that time. The Geneva Confession of 1536 and the Heidelberg Catechism of 1563 are typical of the quality and usefulness of these documents.

The Reformation represents a new plateau in the story of theology. The gospel had been submerged for centuries and those who cherished it had been driven out, persecuted and martyred. Cyriakus Spangenberg, one of Luther's students, regarded his mentor as 'the great prophet' and described him as the third Elijah (John the Baptist being the second). From this conviction Spangenberg, who ministered in Mansfield, Germany, never wavered. He maintained that 'no other teacher had ever given clearer or more comprehensive instruction than Luther regarding the proper distinction between law and gospel, with its correct understanding of righteousness, good works, and repentance'.<sup>2</sup> I esteem Luther's conversion to be a prototype in history, like that of Abraham, an amazing example of justification with contempt poured on works righteousness. In 1561 Spangenberg castigated Germany for uncouth ingratitude in lack of appreciation of Luther and asserted that his writings were a treasure given by God to be held in all honour next to the Holy Bible. The relevance of Luther's writings is seen in the fact that much of his work is available on CD Rom (for information: [www.ages.library.com](http://www.ages.library.com)).

Restoration of the principle of *Sola Scriptura* and clarity in the doctrine of salvation was *the* great achievement of the Reformation. By that sharp instrument of the Spirit whole nations were turned from Rome to Protestantism. Sweden is an example. Olaus and Laurentius Petri studied at Wittenberg and were the instruments by which all Sweden was won for the Reformation.<sup>3</sup>

However with regard to ecclesiology, the Reformation was incomplete. The Radical Reformers sought to recover the NT order for church membership and church discipline. The Magisterial Reformers were not ready for such drastic measures. The conflict over this matter is clearly illustrated with Ulrich Zwingli and his disciple Conrad Grebel.<sup>4</sup> Grebel asserted, as did Felix Mantz: 'The medieval order can be laid low with nothing as well as the termination of infant baptism,' and Hans Seckler: 'Infant baptism is the supporting pillar of the papal order and as long as it is not removed there can be no Christian congregation.'<sup>5</sup>

The clash between the Magisterial Reformers and the Radical Reformers showed that christening also needed to be subject to *Sola Scriptura*. Anabaptist leaders were soon martyred. It is not surprising that, apart from pointing to the nature of the Church as a gathered body of those called out of the world (1 Cor 1:1,2), their movement was able to contribute little to the story of theology, although Balthasar Hubmaier (1481-1528) was a learned man and a major Baptist apologist.

A valuable chapter in the story came through the English Puritans of the 17th century. They refined the theology of the Reformers and, more than any other body of ministers before or since, successfully blended doctrine, experience and practice. 'They did not show their people the Promised Land from afar but led them into it, pressed upon them its fruits and bade them boldly claim all its territories.'<sup>6</sup> Happily we continue to benefit from the unique library of biblical exposition bequeathed to us by the Puritan divines. The theological maturity of the Puritan preachers of the 17th century is reflected in *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (1643-47).<sup>7</sup> John Owen, who earned the title the Prince of the Puritans, has left treatises which are unrivalled: *The Holy Spirit, Justification, Mortification of Sin*, and a commentary on the letter to the *Hebrews*. Owen was the first to explore Biblical Theology.<sup>8</sup>

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), the most significant theologian of the 18th century, deserves the title *the theologian of revival*. The extraordinary revivals witnessed by Edwards inspired six books from his pen on that subject. These include one of the most popular missionary biographies ever, namely, the life of David Brainerd. Brainerd witnessed a spiritual awakening among the American Indians. Edwards' classic work is *The Religious Affections* in which he traces out, practically and experimentally, the difference between a true and false profession of faith. In his book *The History of Redemption* Edwards demonstrates the purpose of God to glorify his Son by gospel conquest to the ends of the earth.

During a barren period Andrew Fuller (1754-1815) whose complete works have been published in three volumes (a total of about 2,400 pages, Sprinkle, 1988), was a theologian used to liberate the Baptists from hyper-Calvinism and charter a course for them which heralded the age of foreign missionary endeavour.

The story of theology in the 19th century is one of consolidation for the Reformed faith. Charles Hodge (1797-1878) and B B Warfield (1851-1921) were leading theologians of this time. Both taught at Princeton Seminary. 'Princeton Theology' is regarded as *the* expression of conservative Calvinism in America during the 19th and early 20th centuries. In 1915 Warfield published an essay on the Inspiration of Scripture which must surely rank among one of the most crucial and effective expositions ever. In it he exegeted 2 Timothy 3:16. 'God's breath is the irresistible

outflow of his power; Psalm 33:6, ...every scripture is the product of the Divine breath. ...Scripture in all its parts and in all its elements, down to the least minutiae, in form of expression as well as in substance of teaching, is from God; but the whole of it has been given by God through the instrumentality of men.<sup>9</sup> Warfield's work proved to be a tower of strength when the long battle intensified as scholars of the Higher Critical school attacked the Bible relentlessly.

Calvinism declined in the middle of the 19th century and continued to shrink in the first half of the 20th century. Thus there was little theology of calibre by which modernism could be refuted and rejected. Liberal theology accelerated increasingly through the latter part of the 19th century. By 1950 views destructive of the Bible had advanced so far as to predominate in every mainline denomination. During the period 1850-1950 most mainline seminaries succumbed to liberal theology. Lost too was Princeton Seminary which for many years had been the bastion of the Reformed faith. However, led by Gresham Machen (1881-1937), some seceded from Princeton to form Westminster Seminary which has continued faithfully in the Presbyterian tradition. Professor John Murray (1898-1975) played a key role in carrying forward the baton of sound theology to the next generation.<sup>10</sup>

Scotland and Holland held firm but modernism seemed to sweep all before it in the second half of the 19th century as is graphically illustrated by the Downgrade Controversy from 1887 to 1892 (the year of Spurgeon's death). C H Spurgeon, the greatest Puritan preacher of his age, was defeated in his effort to stem the tide of liberal theology in the Baptist Union of England. Only a small minority were willing to stand with him.

During the 1920s a theological movement called fundamentalism gathered momentum with the purpose of defending the fundamentals of the faith. Whereas confessional Christianity represents an integrated, well-structured unified theology, fundamentalism is random and non-integrated. Fundamentalism adds premillennialism to its required fundamentals and sometimes dispensationalism.<sup>11</sup> In Britain today that would exclude about 99 percent of Reformed pastors.

In my story I include A W Pink (1886-1953), a prolific expository writer. You will not find his name in the hall of fame or in the new *IVP Dictionary of Theology*. Pink was a lonely voice for Calvinism in Britain and the USA. His influence was exerted through a monthly publication *Studies in the Scriptures* which served a remnant of free grace believers. It was largely through the preaching ministry of Dr D Martyn Lloyd-Jones that a renewal of theology began in the 1950s. This renewal accelerated through the republication of Reformed and Puritan books in the 1960s, 1970s and beyond.



In England recovery has taken place by way of growing churches, denominationally independent, mostly Reformed Baptist, but generally linked by fellowship. In America there is a trend for Reformed Baptists to have formal association. Some seminaries have been won back. Southern Seminary, which was the first Southern Baptist seminary to be founded (1858), fell under liberalism and in recent years has been brought back from liberal theology under the leadership of President Albert Mohler. Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, is typical of several seminaries in the USA where the inerrancy of Scripture is upheld. Dr Don Carson, a foremost defender of the faith today, teaches theology at Deerfield. There are outstanding Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminaries in the USA: Philadelphia, Jackson, Orlando, Greenville, St Louis, and San Diego. These and other examples can be cited as part of a gradual upgrade in theology after a long and barren period.

### *Consensus in Theology*

Consensus in the basic truths has increased and doubtless will continue to do so. For instance if we place Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology* beside that of Robert Reymond there is full agreement on the doctrines of grace. This is important as a divide continues throughout the evangelical Church worldwide concerning the sovereignty of God in salvation. On the one side are the monergists who believe that salvation is of the Lord entirely. On the other side are the synergists who believe in God's grace but believe at the same time in the role of free will in salvation. 'Salvation is by God's grace,' they say, 'but it is mixed with a human contribution and that makes the difference.' This controversy divided John Wesley from George Whitefield. Understanding of monergism has greatly improved and is now well presented in expository literature. Whereas in the first half of the 20th century, Calvinists formed a tiny minority, their number has increased since the theological renewal of the 1960s and beyond.

### *Differences that remain*

First there is the question of baptism already referred to. The place of baptism determines the nature and constitution of the Church.

Second there is the subject of the continuation of the charismata. Wayne Grudem contends for the continuation of prophecy in the Church and for the exercise of supernatural gifts: tongues-speaking, and performing of signs, wonders and miracles. The early Montanist movement contended for this position as did

Edward Irving (1792-1834). The impediment to this position is the huge gap between claims and reality. All Christians believe that God can do miracles today but the evidence suggests that the Holy Spirit confines stupendous miracles to times of special revelation.

Third there is the question of church government. It cannot be denied that the NT advocates plurality of male elders in the churches. Differences remain as how best to implement church government.

Fourth there is the subject of eschatology referred to above under fundamentalism. With the recovery of Reformed and Puritan theology a more optimistic view of the future has increased.

### *Conclusion*

Jeremiah described the human heart as deceitful above all things (Jer 17:9). Sinful propensities operate as much in theologians as in any other people. Professional theologians make their living in academic institutions where 'making a name for themselves' may be a temptation. While originality and new discoveries are important in other fields such as medicine or physics, Scripture alone is the basis for Christian theology. What is needed is relevance, refinement, clarity, application, balance and spiritual power in teaching the unchanging truth of God. As a body of divines, the 17th-century Puritans excelled in these subjects. They preached the unchanging gospel and applied it in a living way to their contemporaries for the advancement of godliness. Sadly there have also been some theological scholars who have expended energy on and propounded new ideas which eventually have been proved erroneous, unedifying and unprofitable.

It only takes one wrong move in travelling to a given destination to guarantee non-arrival! Recently when travelling in Africa I was glad to have a cell phone by which, when in difficulty, I could be guided step by step to my destination. More than once I found that I had taken the exact opposite direction to the correct one! So, in theology, as was demonstrated in the controversy involving Arius, one letter can make all the difference between truth and soul-destroying heresy.

This is especially vital with regard to subjects that lie at the very heart of salvation theology. On any one principal issue in theology, one new idea, if false, can lead to disaster. For instance the very latest book on historical theology carries the title *The Story of Christian Theology - Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform*.<sup>12</sup> The author, Roger Olson, (see editorial comment) describes the development of

Process Theology from the 1960s. Process Theology, declares Olson, is embraced in many mainstream liberal Protestant seminaries. This theology teaches that God himself is evolving. Process Theology is naturalistic. It poses God as one of us. The immutability of God safeguards us from a quagmire of this kind. In Malachi the Lord declares, 'I the LORD do not change' (Mal 3:6). That is just one of many fixed points in theology in which we build only on the rock of truth.

Today more than at any previous time, we are in possession of an unprecedented corpus of Christian expository materials. These address the origin, process and content of the books of the Bible. We have more assistance to help us with the original languages than ever before. We are blessed with unrivalled resources for exegesis of the biblical text. We can access high quality exposition in Biblical Theology, Historical Theology and Systematic Theology. And to all this can be added a rich Puritan library of practical and experimental divinity.

Our Triune God is alive with us every moment of our journey. Man is to live not by bread only but by every word that has come from the mouth of God. (For Jesus that was the OT- cf. Matt 4:4). It is not a new theology we need but a great spiritual revival which will inspire us to share the original theology (God's living Word) and its rich legacies according to the great commission of our Lord: 'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age' (Matt 28:19-20).

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5. Leonard Verduin, *The Reformers and their Stepchildren*, Christian Hymnary, 1991, page 205
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9. B B Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1948, 442 pages, cf pages 131-166. Warfield first addressed this theme with A A Hodge in an article published in the *Presbyterian Review*, 1881
10. An excellent biography (160 pages) of Prof John Murray, is found in volume three of the *Collected Writings of John Murray*, (four volumes in all) Banner of Truth, 1982
11. Dispensationalism was popularised by C I Scofield who taught that there are seven dispensations: Innocence (before the fall), Conscience (from the fall to Noah), Human government (from Noah to Abraham), Promise (from Abraham to Moses), Law (from Moses to Christ), Grace (the Church age), the Kingdom (the Millennium). Each period is a probation and in each man fails and a new start is made. There is no biblical warrant for such an arbitrary imposition on Scripture. The whole OT anticipates and moves forward to the advent of Christ. A case can be made for two principal dispensations but not seven
12. Roger E Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, by IVP (Apollos), 652 pages hardback, 1999

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# Mozambique

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*E-mail report from Karl Peterson*

*March 10th* - The road to one of the worst affected cities in Mozambique, Chokwe, has just opened up and my colleague, Patrick Mulenga, and I are preparing to make a one day trip there tomorrow, Wednesday. We will bring food, hoes, machetes, clothes, pots and pans, medicines and whatever else we can fit into Patrick's 4x4 vehicle.

We first go to the area where our church is (or was) and try to locate a believer or two from there. Many are still in 'refugee' camps or scattered in other areas. If we can find someone from our church we'll tell them to prepare the rest (are they even alive?) and await our second trip in a few days when we'll come with a large truck with building supplies and a group of people to help them. Pray for our safety and success in this small but urgent venture.

*March 17th* - Thank you for your prayers for our trip to the city of Chokwe, one of the areas most affected by the floods in Mozambique. Four of us left early Wednesday morning laden with various helps to distribute among people from our church there and their neighbours.

The destruction we saw in that major city was vast. A 'mud line' over two metres high from the ground on every building and house showed us to what point the waters had covered the city. There is not one shop or bank in town that was left with anything in it of redeemable value, not to mention the countless mud huts that were completely washed away or that were left as skeletons with a few standing posts. The only thing remaining of our chapel deep in one of the poorest neighbourhoods was the tin roof sheets given by the Sunday School children at Fairview Bible Chapel in Colorado, USA.

The 4x4 got stuck in deep mud on the way to the chapel so we had to off-load all that we'd bought while I hopped on the back of a motorcycle and rode off

to 'Biarro 3' where our believers were. They welcomed me like their long lost brother and were relieved that they had not been forgotten. We entered the 'chapel', sang a hymn of thanks and knelt in the mud to thank the Lord that none among the 20 families in the congregation had lost their lives. We all returned to the place where the car was stuck and distributed clothing and other goods. 'Hinkwasvo' was the Shangaan word we would hear throughout the day. 'Everything' was lost. Appropriately, they approached the car singing one of their favourite hymns, 'There is nothing in this life but Jesus our Shepherd.'

We were among the very first people to arrive in the city where not much help had been given directly to the people outside of the many refugee camps. The problem wasn't the rain that fell on their heads but the flooding that came from Zimbabwe when they were forced to open the sluices from the Limpopo River dam. I enquired why there hadn't been a warning for people down-river to flee. 'They warned us, but told us the water would come during the following day,' was the response. The calculation had been wrong by a number of hours and the roaring wave of water consumed the city and its sleeping people at 1.00 a.m. One man we spoke with spent four days on his roof, others hurriedly climbed trees, our friends from 'Biarro 3' fled to a nearby hill.

Back in Maputo we are forming a team to return there with urgently needed food, house-building materials, hybrid corn seed for their fields and a kit for each family consisting of 20 or so items to give them a jump start on building their lives again. We still wrestle with what kind of long-term help we can provide for them.

Another team is forming to visit and help our friends in the city of Xai-Xai which is in the same area. Xai-Xai is still cut off from the rest of the country and the airport is closed but through phone contact we are hearing how we can help people from our church there and their neighbours. Once the road opens, we'll be there. Yet another committee is forming to help people upcountry near the city of Beira.

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*Editorial Postscript* The mass media, especially TV, play a crucial role in reporting disasters like the floods in Mozambique. We saw heroic work by South African pilots with the helicopters and other vital life-saving work. Never mentioned was the fact that Missionary Aviation Fellowship was there from day one using seven aircraft including two helicopters. MAF, Castle Hill Ave, Folkestone, Kent, UK CT20 2TN, are worthy of our support.

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