



Reformed theology in Scotland

Donald Macleod

This paper was given at New College, University of Edinburgh as one of the Cunningham Lectures for 2009/10. This took the form of a series of public lectures on “Faith in Scotland: The Reformation and its Influence.”

You have allotted me a wide field, abounding with complex issues and fascinating personalities. This also raises serious boundary questions. What do we mean by ‘Reformed’ theology? And was there a distinctive Scottish type?

Selection, obviously, is required. What I propose is to limit myself to four specific areas and examine how they were handled by the theologians of Scotland’s Calvinist orthodoxy, glancing occasionally at their impact on our church history and on wider national developments.



Christology

The first of these areas is Christology. Scottish theologians produced remarkably few monographs on the so-called distinctives of Calvinism. Knox did, of course, write a lengthy treatise on Predestination, but it does little beyond reproducing Calvin. There is a lengthy excursus on the same subject in Boyd of Trochrigg’s monumental *Prelections on Ephesians*: a work which fully justifies James Walker’s description of Boyd as ‘a great divine buried under the weight of his own erudition’. It also justifies Calvin’s decision not to burden his commentaries with excursions on the various heads of doctrine, but to embody them instead in his *Institutio*. Boyd’s commentary contains, scattered throughout its pages, an un-systematic Systematic Theology, and it is hardly surprising that when you add the excursus to the exposition the

result is a word-count of one-and-a-quarter million. The treatise, *De Praedestinatione*, occupies 81 double column folio pages (54–135): a substantial volume in its own right. It had few successors in Scotland: perhaps none was required.

Samuel Rutherford, a remarkable combination of inexhaustible scholastic, seraphic preacher and Christ-intoxicated martyr, ventured with relish into other areas of Calvinist polemics, bequeathing us (sanitised in Latin) such works as his *Examen Arminianismi*, *Pro Divina Gratia* and *De Divina Providentia*. It was this last work that prompted Richard Baxter to comment that Rutherford's *Letters* was the best book he had ever read, and his *De Divina Providentia* the worst. James Walker, who was probably the last to read it, commented that it addressed every question from which we now shrink. No wonder, then, that 'the good Mr Wodrow' looked into it and was terrified. He had little stomach for the distinction between *potentia absoluta* and *potentia ordinate*; and even less for exploring the concurrence between divine and human agency in the commission of sin.

But if there are relatively few Scottish publications on predestination and its associates, there is a voluminous literature on the person and work of Christ. James Durham, for example, gave us *Christ Crucified* (an exposition of Isaiah 53), *The Unsearchable Riches of Christ* and an *Exposition of the Song of Solomon*, which continues in the tradition of Bernard of Clairvaux and uses the text as a Christological allegory. John Brown of Wamphray, author of a splendid treatise on Justification, a brilliant defence of the outed Covenanters (*An Apologetical Relation*) and a massive four-volume defence of the Sabbath (*De Causa Dei contra Antisabbatarios*: reputed to be larger than the four volumes of Turretine's *Institutes*), also found time to write *Christ: The Way, the Truth, and the Life*.

In the nineteenth century, Edward Irving stirred the pot with his *Six Sermons on the Incarnation*, and Marcus Dods the Elder (father of the later Professor Marcus Dods of New College) replied with *On the Incarnation of the Eternal Word*. A. B. Bruce's, *The Humiliation of Christ*, besides being one of the very best series of Cunningham Lectures (delivered in 1874), is impeccably orthodox, in marked contrast to his posthumous article on "Jesus" in *Encyclopedia Biblica*. The Christological tradition continued with James Denney,

H. R. Mackintosh, Donald Baillie and, most recently, Professor T. F. Torrance.

But the one I want to focus on briefly is Samuel Rutherford. There is a well-known story of an English merchant visiting Scotland in the seventeenth century and reporting: ‘I came to Irvine, and heard a well-favoured proper old man, with a long beard, and that man showed me my heart. Then I went to St Andrews, where I heard a sweet, majestic-looking man, and he showed me the majesty of God. After him, I heard a little fair man, and he showed me the loveliness of Christ.’ The proper old man was David Dickson; the majestic-looking man was Robert Blair; and the little fair man was Samuel Rutherford.

It seems a little incongruous that as Rutherford warmed to his Christological themes he looked as if he would fly out of the pulpit, but this passion for Christ comes across in all Rutherford’s popular works: not only in his *Letters*, where the language of human eroticism is pressed into the service of Christian devotion, but also in *The Trial and Triumph of Faith* and *Christ Dying and Drawing Sinners Unto Himself*. But it burns especially brightly in his *Communion Sermons*, collected by Andrew Bonar from various long-forgotten publications and re-issued by him in 1876.

The very fact that these are Communion Sermons is itself interesting. There is no distinctive Scottish theology of the Sacrament. Robert Bruce’s *Sermons* follow Calvin closely, and the degree to which they commanded respect in Scotland is clear from the fact that they were edited and published by three New College professors: Cunningham, John Laidlaw and T. F. Torrance. Cunningham’s own essay, “Zwingli and the Doctrine of the Sacraments” is more thought-provoking than Bruce; and the charge that it shows up Cunningham as a Zwinglian is rather neutralised by the Principal’s casting serious doubt on whether Zwingli was a Zwinglian at all. Perhaps, even as we speak, he and Karl Barth are having a jolly old discussion about labels and how to survive them.

But there *were* distinctively Scottish elements in our Communion practice. Nowhere else was Augustine’s link between word and element taken more seriously. There was no sacrament without the word, but neither was the sacrament a mere appendix to the word: something done ‘at the close of this service’. Instead, the Liturgy

of the Word and the Liturgy of the Upper Room were seamlessly joined. Eucharist was evoked by remembrance, and remembrance by proclamation. Hence the importance of the Action (or Thanksgiving) Sermon, which led into the Table and always focused on some aspect of the Passion. It was this that drove the interest in Christology and gave us the distinctively Scottish genre of ‘sacramental discourses’.

Rutherford’s are gems of their kind. He is at pains throughout to emphasise that the atonement is rooted in the love of God. It does not procure it. It expresses it. The love of God, he insists, is older than the death of Christ; or, at greater length, ‘if God should begin at any time to love sinners, His love would have had a beginning; and if His love had a beginning, Christ Himself would have had a beginning, because love with Him is one with His essence and nature.’ It is to this love that faith looks: ‘Live on his love, and you are wholly fed. Lie on his love, and that is a sweet bed.’

Linked to this was a stress on the divine identity of the Crucified One. The Lord of Glory was hanging on that tree. Even more boldly, he declares that the blood which Christ offered to the Father was blood that ‘chambered in the veins and body of God’. This brings out with remarkable power the meaning of the *homoousion*: the one who dies on the cross is one and the same in being with God the Father. It is himself that God offers on the cross. Yet Scottish theologians grasped with equal tenacity that Christ is *homoousios* with us according to his humanity; and sometimes they expressed this in terms strikingly reminiscent of Rutherford. For example, the nineteenth-century preacher, Alexander Stewart of Cromarty, whose sermon outlines were published in *The Tree of Promise* (1864), declared that the blood which sprang under the lash from the back of an American slave was that ‘one’ blood which flowed in the veins of the Son of God. It was the same sure-footed stress on the humanity of Christ which led such theologians as the elder Marcus Dods to lay down that Mary, the Virgin Mother, contributed to her Son precisely what any human mother contributes to her child.

Rutherford is equally clear on the *kenosis*, and it may be no coincidence that the Kenotic Theory of the Incarnation would prove so attractive to later Scottish theologians such as H. R. Mackintosh, D. W. Forrest and the Scots-born P. T. Forsyth. Rutherford is closer

to Calvin's idea of the kenosis as a *krupsis* or veiling: 'howbeit He carried the God-head about with Him, the sight and sense of the God-head was covered in the days of Christ's humiliation'. He even suggests that during his work on earth it was kept under lock and key: 'there was a bar and a lock put on the God-head, that he saw not as He now seeth.' And when he comments on Gethsemane, Rutherford even allows himself to say that at that point our whole salvation hung in the balance, suspended on the free-will decision of Christ (with the liberty of alternative choice?): 'Indeed, though it was not possible that Christ should miscarry; yet to our appearance, our salvation was in a venture. If Christ had here gotten a wrong cast, and gone a wrong step; then adieu to our salvation.'

But what is perhaps most remarkable in Rutherford is how close he comes to violating what was then an unchallenged axiom, divine impassibility: 'O what a fray was there! God weeping, God sobbing under the water. Never was there such a fray in heaven, and earth, either before, or shall be after. Angels might have quaked, if they be capable of such passion. They might have said, "Alas! What ails our dear Lord and Master to cry so hideously?"' This takes with utter seriousness the fact that it was the Lord of Glory who was hanging on the tree: 'Darkness was in all Judea when our Lord suffered. And why? Because the candle that lighted the sun and the moon was blown out. The Godhead was eclipsed, and the world's eye was put out.' All the details surrounding the cross are called into service to press home the paradox of divine suffering. For example, commenting on Jesus' words, 'I thirst', Rutherford breaks into a remarkable apostrophe: 'O wells! O lochs! O running streams! Where were you all when my Lord could not get a drink? Oh fie on all Jerusalem! For there was wine enough in Jerusalem, and yet their King, Jesus, is burnt like a keel (kale)-stick [...] O floods, O rivers, O running streams! what has thus angered you at your Creator, that you would not send your Lord a drink?'

When he comes to the words, 'he gave up the ghost' (Luke 23:46), he is clearly mindful of Jesus' claim to be the Life: 'O Life of Life! wouldst thou be death's taken prisoner? Oh! to see that blessed Head fall to the one side! Oh! to see Life wanting life! To see Life lying dead!' Even the forsakenness of the Son on the cross is addressed

boldly, yet with remarkable pathos: ‘Nay, under desertion, Christ could not get a blink or word of His Father. Nay, I say more, God might not, He could not, as law went then. Christ cried, “Is there not a word, dear Father, not a look?” And He answers, “No, not a look for a world.”’ Yet all the time, in harmony with such New Testament passages as John 3:16 and Romans 8:32, Rutherford keeps in view the priesthood of the Father: the fact that, ‘God his Son not sparing, gave him to die’: ‘O Father, what ails Thee at Thy dear and only Son? O what evil way went these feet, that they are pierced? [...] O what sin hath that fair face done, that it is spitted on? [...] O what evil has that blessed Head done, that it is crowned with thorns?’

Given such preaching, it is hardly surprising that Scottish Communion Seasons were often marked by ‘meltings’.



The extent of the atonement

The second issue I want to look at is the extent of the atonement. It is not inherently important, and certainly not a fundamental doctrine, but it was destined to play a fateful role in the history of Scottish Presbyterianism.

The question here is deceptively simple: Did Christ die for all, or did he die only for the elect? Thomas Chalmers, that great inspirer of nineteenth-century evangelicals, made plain in his Class Lectures (later published as *Institutes of Theology*, 1856) that he regarded it as a question that ought never to have been asked. While formally acquiescing in the doctrine of limited atonement, he tended to view it as an abuse of the doctrine of predestination: a step too far. To an extent this reflected Chalmers’s own temperament. It was of him that James Walker remarked that he never met a scholastic distinction but he felt he was in the presence of an enemy. But his aversion was not merely temperamental. He feared that whatever answer was given would have serious implications for evangelism. On the one hand, the view that Christ died for all could lead (as it eventually did in the case of his friend, Erskine of Linlathen) to universalism, which made evangelism superfluous. On the other, the idea that Christ died only for the elect could give the sinner too much reason to deflect the immediacy and urgency of the gospel. Confronted by the love of God and the offer of

reconciliation we have no right to defer our response while we go back into God's eternal decree to see if we are elect; or forward to the Day of Judgement to see whether we shall be sheep or goats. The preacher must focus not on what God intends to do, but on what the sinner must do; not on the past or on the future, but on a present in which the one thing that matters is that here and now Christ is offering himself to sinners. That offer immediately puts Christ within our reach; and by doing so it makes faith in him a categorical imperative.

But Chalmers was too late to prevent the question being asked, not by Calvinists as such, but by the Remonstrants of Holland, followers of Jacob Arminius, who in 1610 asked the Dutch Parliament (the Estates) to pronounce on their own doctrine that Christ died for all men, and for each and every man. The Estates wisely remitted the question to a synod which included not only representatives of the Dutch church but delegates from other European churches, including one Scot, Walter Balcanquhal (though as a delegate of the Church of England: no invitation was extended to the Church of Scotland). When this Synod met at Dort it rejected the Arminian view and laid down instead what has come to be known as the doctrine of Particular Redemption or Limited Atonement: Christ died to redeem all those and those only who have been elected to eternal life. At the same time, the Synod laid down that the promise of the gospel and the command to repent and believe were to be pressed on every human being, and on each one in particular.

This doctrine was not much treated of by Scottish divines, though James Durham, has an Excursus on it in his *Commentary Upon the Book of Revelation* and Cunningham devoted seventy pages to it in his *Historical Theology*. Nor, despite what critics say, is it at all prominent in the Westminster Confession. Indeed, it takes a keen eye to find it there, few would know where to look, and Professor A. F. Mitchell said it wasn't there at all.

It first became an issue in Scotland in connection with the Marrow Controversy. This controversy had its roots in the publication in London in 1646 of a book called *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*. The book was cast in the form of dialogues between Evangelista, representing the marrow of the gospel, and spokesmen for various less wholesome alternatives, such as Nomista (the Legalist), Antinomista

(the Antinomian) and Neomista (the Neonomian, who made faith and evangelical obedience rather than the work of Christ the ground of our acceptance with God). The dialogues themselves were conducted largely by quotations from ‘modern’ divines (modern being defined in relation to 1646) and the book itself had the imprimatur of Joseph Caryl, Theological Censor to the Westminster Assembly, who recommended it as ‘a discourse stored with many necessary and seasonable truths’. The book made no stir at the time, and England quickly forgot it. It was destined, however, to make a real stir in Scotland. Sometime in 1699 or 1700 (he tell us in his Memoirs that he could not remember precisely when) Thomas Boston found it lying on a windowsill in the home of one of his parishioners in Simprin, and ‘relished it greatly’, particularly because at the time he was ‘confused, indistinct and hampered’ as to the free offer of the gospel.

Boston recommended *The Marrow* to his friends and as a result it was republished in Scotland in 1718. More orthodox than the redoubtable Mr Caryl, the theological sniffer dogs, led by Principal Hadow of St Andrews, quickly detected the whiff of heresy. The General Assembly had already shown its penchant for hyper-orthodoxy in 1717, when it condemned the so-called Auchterarder Creed, which declared that it is not sound and orthodox to teach that we must forsake sin before coming to Christ. The Assembly of 1720 took the same approach to *The Marrow*, condemning its teaching and forbidding ministers from recommending the book or saying anything in its favour. From this finding (which came to be known as ‘the Black Act’) twelve brethren dissented. Dubbed ‘the Marrow Men’, they not only dissented: they defied, and in 1726 Boston even went so far as to issue a new edition of the condemned volume, complete with voluminous notes. Others simply circumvented the Act, the most notable example being the Reverend John Colquhoun of Leith, who, John Macleod tells us, told his congregation that while he was forbidden to recommend *The Marrow* he was not forbidden to recommend Boston’s “Notes”.

The key charge against *The Marrow* was that it taught ‘universal atonement and pardon’, and the passages quoted in support of the charge were precisely those which most appealed to Boston: passages which set forth unambiguously the universal offer of the gospel. The paradox here is that on the question of the extent of the atonement

Boston and his associates were, to a man, firm believers in the doctrine of particular redemption. When it came to the extent of the gospel offer, however, they were unambiguous universalists; and the reason is not far to seek. They did not infer their commission from a dogma, but from the imperious language of scripture itself. They were especially enamoured of John Preston's translation of Mark's form of the Great Commission, engrossed in the text of *The Marrow*, 'Go and tell every man, without exception, that there is good news for him'. This good news was, 'Christ is dead for him; and if he will take him, and accept of his righteousness, he will have him.' Similarly, taking its cue from Paul's words to the Philippian Jailer ('Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved', Acts 16:31), *The Marrow* declared, 'Be verily persuaded in your heart that Jesus Christ is yours, and that you shall have life and salvation by him; that whatsoever Christ did for the redemption of mankind he did it for you.' Boston comments, 'By this offer, or deed of gift and grant, Christ is ours before we believe'. He is careful to add that this does not mean that we are already saved: 'The giving here mentioned, is not giving in possession in greater or lesser measure, but giving by way of grant, whereupon one may take possession. And the party to whom, is not the election only, but mankind lost.' Every human being, therefore, is warranted to take possession of Christ and his salvation: 'The offer is free, full and universal, so that no man has ground to exclude himself.'

The Marrow Controversy was to prove significant for two reasons. First, it set the evangelistic tone for Scottish Calvinistic orthodoxy, which contains virtually no trace of Hyper-Calvinism, and certainly no churches of the kind which led one English observer to compare their missionary efforts to an angler sitting on a riverbank beside a notice proclaiming, 'All fish welcome here!' Scottish Calvinism was always uninhibitedly evangelistic, believing that it had no right to defer its obedience to the Great Commission till it understood God's logic. Even the punctilious Seceder, Adam Gib, insisted in his *Display of the Secession Testimony* that the mission of every preacher is 'to make a full, free, and unhampered offer of Christ, his grace, righteousness, and salvation to all mankind, to whom they have access in providence.' Cunningham, noted for the judiciousness of his language, lent this doctrine the full weight of his authority. Insisting that our conduct

should be governed not by inferences from the dogma of the extent of the atonement, but by the instructions that God has given, he went on to declare: ‘God has required us to proclaim to our fellow-men, of whatever character, and in all varieties of circumstances, the glad tidings of great joy – to hold out to them, in His name, pardon and acceptance through the blood of atonement – to invite them to come to Christ, and to receive Him – and to accompany all this with the assurance that “whosoever cometh to Him, He will in no wise cast out.”’

The other long-term result of the Marrow Controversy was that the party lines drawn during the debate would soon be reflected in the Secession of 1733. Thomas Boston died a year earlier (his youngest son, also Thomas, would found the Relief Church in 1761) and James Hog (who had arranged for the republishing of *The Marrow* in 1718) died a year later. But two other key players, Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine, would be pivotal figures in the Secession, and though the number of seceding clergy was small the public standing of the Twelve Brethren, allied to the Assembly’s clumsy handling of patronage, ensured that for the first time since the Reformation a significant proportion of Scots were alienated from the national Kirk. She would never recover that lost ground; and Scottish Christianity would suffer with her. At the same time, however, the Seceders became the natural custodians of the Marrow Theology, particularly its emphasis on the universal offer of the gospel. Adam Gib was still protesting (to the extent of forty pages) against the 1720 Act condemning *The Marrow* when he wrote his *Display of the Secession Testimony* in 1774. But Gib’s best efforts could not prevent the Secession from developing the Marrow Theology in the very direction of which its opponents had accused it: Universal Redemption. The original Marrow Men had refused to infer from the doctrine of limited atonement the idea of a limited gospel offer. Their successors would be less cautious in their use of logic. They would deduce from the universal offer the doctrine of universal atonement.

But before we look at that development we must glance at a second major controversy where the key issue, once again, was the extent of the atonement: the case of John McLeod Campbell. Campbell was a Gaelic-speaking minister of Skye parentage, his father from

Dunvegan and his mother the youngest daughter of Macleod of Raasay (which means he was closely related to another troublesome Skye man, Roderick Macleod of Snizort, whose father was a younger son of Macleod of Raasay). In 1825 he was ordained and inducted to the parish of Row (Rhu) in Dumbartonshire. Shortly afterwards rumours began to circulate that strange doctrines were being preached from the Row pulpit and Campbell was called to account by his local presbytery. The case eventually ended up in the General Assembly and Campbell was deposed from the ministry on 24 May, 1831.

There is a superficial resemblance between the case of McLeod Campbell and the case of the Marrow Men, in that the case against him was based on the 1720 finding (the Black Act) which had condemned the Twelve Brethren. This, like much else in the proceedings against Campbell, was highly irregular: the Black Act was not part of the constitution of the Church, and had itself been condemned by such eminent nineteenth-century churchmen as Andrew Thomson. It was chosen because it included a formal Assembly condemnation of the two heresies of which Campbell was accused: universal redemption, and assurance being of the essence of faith.

But Campbell was no Marrow Man. Boston and his associates were thoroughgoing Calvinists who strenuously denied that they taught universal redemption; and when they taught that assurance was of the essence of faith their understanding of the concept was quite different from Campbell's. He meant by it that it is of the essence of faith to be assured that you are saved (a perfectly defensible position); they meant that it is of the essence of faith to be assured that Christ is yours in the offer of the gospel, and that though you be the vilest sinner you have the right to take him as your Saviour. The Seceders would later distinguish between these as the assurance of sense and the assurance of faith.

Campbell, by contrast, regarded universal redemption as the very heart of the gospel. Not only so: he believed, and preached, universal pardon, with the added complication that universal pardon did not mean universal salvation. Those who rejected the divine pardon would be condemned to 'gospel wrath'. But events would show that Campbell's quarrel was not with the small print of the Westminster Confession, but with the whole idea of a particular atonement by means

of the obedience and self-sacrifice of Christ. By the time he published *The Nature of the Atonement* in 1856 it was clear not only that such concepts as vicarious punishment, imputation and penal substitution were abhorrent to him, but that he disowned Calvinism root and branch, arguing that the very doctrine of God was at stake. In place of the doctrine of Anselm, Luther, Calvin and Owen he advocated the idea of atonement by vicarious repentance and a perfect confession of sin. The real atoning power, however, seems to lie according to Campbell in the influence which Christ's repentance has on the sinner himself, persuading him to come to God in the spirit of sonship. The individual spirit must say 'Amen!' to the divine 'Amen!' of the Son of God; and this is the real atonement. The decisive thing is the moral influence of the cross on ourselves.

Contemporary Scottish theologians such as A. B. Bruce and Thomas Crawford (*The Atonement*, 1871) were not impressed. How could there be a perfect confession of sin where there was, as Campbell himself admitted, no personal consciousness of sin? But Campbell was by no means alone. He belonged to a close-knit circle of like-minded men, all of intense and ardent piety, keenly interested in premillennial speculation, spiritual gifts and miraculous healing, but united above all in disaffection towards orthodox Calvinism. The best known members of the circle were Edward Irving and the layman, Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, who both shared Campbell's passion for universal redemption. But another member was Alexander Scott, son of Dr John Scott, Cunningham's Senior Colleague at Greenock. Scott, later an associate of F. D. Maurice, was himself deposed by the same 1831 Assembly because of his conscientious refusal to subscribe to the Westminster Confession. Despite the personal embarrassment, Cunningham, who had heard Campbell preach the doctrines in question, played a significant part as a witness in the proceedings against Campbell.

But from start to finish, Thomas Chalmers played no part, and though he was a member of the 1831 Assembly he contrived, as Hanna, his biographer, tell us, to be 'out of town' on the fateful day. His excuse was that he had not had time to read the papers. The truth was he had no stomach for it. As we have seen, he shrank from the question of the extent of redemption, fearing that whatever answer

was given there would be a risk to evangelism. The doctrine of limited atonement might easily inhibit men from preaching Christ fully and freely; the doctrine of universal redemption could easily prove a precursor to universalism. But over and above these considerations, Chalmers was also on friendly terms with all the members of the Campbell circle. In July 1818 for example, he records, ‘Mr. Erskine of Linlathen called between one and two, and spent the day with me. ... I have had a great treat in Mr. Erskine – a holy, spiritual, enlightened, and affectionate Christian’. And while there is no record that he himself ever harboured doubts about the Confession, it is equally true that he never harboured doubts about the piety of Campbell (or of Irving, who was deposed in 1832). ‘[H]e did not hesitate to say,’ writes Hanna, ‘that could a window have been opened into Mr. Campbell’s breast, it would have been seen that he did not differ so greatly from many of his brethren in the ministry, as looking simply to the evidence of statements and facts they were judicially compelled to believe.’ The deposition does not appear to have led to any breakdown in the relationship. In 1838, Chalmers, Campbell and Erskine all happened to be in Paris at the same time, and in his Introductory Narrative to his father’s *Reminiscences* Campbell’s son, Donald, tells us that ‘the three friends were very much together.’ Even in the course of a key pre-Disruption debate in the General Assembly of 1841 Chalmers referred to Campbell as ‘that holy and affectionate person’.

It is vain to speculate what Chalmers would have thought had he lived to see the publication of *The Nature of the Atonement* in 1856. I suspect he would have felt a profound sense of betrayal.



Fraser of Brea

Yet the efforts of Campbell, Irving and Erskine were not to prove the decisive moments in the erosion of Calvinist orthodoxy. Indeed, the years following Campbell’s deposition would prove to be a Golden Age of Scottish Reformed theology. Nor was it the philosophy of Kant, the theories of Wellhausen, or the theology of Ritschl which would eventually persuade Scottish Presbyterianism to cast loose from its Confessional moorings. It was unease over the doctrine of limited atonement, and that unease was fatefully linked with a work by the

revered Covenanter, James Fraser of Brea: *A Treatise of Justifying Faith*.

Brea is an estate in Easter Ross, and Fraser, like Thomas Hog of Kiltarn and James Fraser of Alness, is a reminder that the pre-Culloden Highlands were by no means the preserve of barbaric heathenism. He wrote his *Treatise* while imprisoned on the Bass Rock between 1677 and 1679, and he probably never intended to have it published. It appeared only in 1722, twenty-four years after Fraser's death, and the original edition caused little stir. In 1749, however, it was republished with an Appendix, "Concerning the Object of Christ's Death", and it was this Appendix which caused alarm, particularly in the Secession, because in it, in the words of Adam Gib, 'the Arminian point of universal redemption is largely set forth, in somewhat of a new dress.' Such was the Seceders' veneration for Fraser that some, including Gib himself, affected to disbelieve that Fraser was the author at all, but when an active campaign to promote the teaching of the book got under way, the Seceders felt they had to take action, and in 1753 the Associate (Anti-Burgher) Synod, alarmed by 'the said revival of Arminianism', passed its Act Concerning Arminian Errors: an implicit condemnation of Fraser's *Treatise*. Many were unhappy, but of the forty-eight ministers who then belonged to the Associate Synod only one, Thomas Mair, protested. Mair had a close family connection with Fraser, and was probably responsible for the 1749 publication. His father had been a colleague of Fraser's while he was Minister at Culross, and the young Thomas, along with his sister, had transcribed a copy of the *Treatise*. He continued to agitate the case in defiance of the Synod's Act of 1753, and in 1757 he was deposed.

But the seed sown by Fraser had sprouted, and could not be weeded out so easily. The idea of universal redemption had entered the Secession's bloodstream. When the Reverend James Morison of Kilmarnock (later the founder of the Evangelical Union) was arraigned before the Synod of the United Secession Church in 1841 accused of Amyraldianism, his defence was that he taught nothing but what he had learned from his professors at the Divinity Hall, Robert Balmer and John Brown. Balmer died before the case against him could be resolved, but Brown was exonerated by the Synod in 1845. This was fair enough: Amyraldianism is an elusive concept. First

propounded among the Reformed by Scotland's own John Cameron and perpetuated by his pupil, Amyraut, at the French Academy of Saumur, it is best defined as the idea that 'Christ died conditionally for all, unconditionally for the elect.' This very clearly illustrates the adage that the definition of a fudge must itself be a fudge, but it falls short of proving that Amyraldianism is of such intrinsic gravity as to warrant deposition. The trouble was that no one could deny that Brown was an Amyraldian. Nor did many deny that Amyraldianism was incompatible with the Confession. This left the United Secession Church with an uneasy conscience, and in 1879 it solved the problem by adopting a Declaratory Act, allowing liberty of opinion 'on such points in the Confession as do not enter into the substance of the Reformed Faith'. When, the Seceders (now the United Presbyterian Church) later entered into union negotiations with the Free Church it quickly became clear that no union was possible unless the Free Church also adopted a similarly-worded Declaratory Act, which it did in 1893; and the Church of Scotland followed in 1906. James Fraser's leaven had done its work. Virtually the whole Presbyterian family had turned its back on unqualified Confessionalism. Whatever our view of the merits of such a development, it is a remarkable illustration of the law of unintended consequences.



The doctrine of the church

But the subject which above all others captured the attention of Scotland's Reformed theologians was the doctrine of the church. This was especially true of the seventeenth century, but the nineteenth century also produced a voluminous literature, including John Macpherson's splendid overview, *The Doctrine of the Church in Scottish Theology*. It is here, too, that Scottish theology achieves its greatest international significance. Presbyterian churches in America, Australia, Korea and northeast India may no longer cling to their mother's apron strings, but all acknowledge that they inherited their principles, more or less complete, from their Scottish spiritual forebears.

John Knox set up no presbyteries, and this can easily lead to the conclusion that he was no Presbyterian. But if Presbyterianism means, not government by presbyteries, but government by presbyters, the

essential principles of such a polity were already in place in Calvin's Geneva. Here presbyters and bishops were seen as one and the same; and here, too, it was laid down that churches must be governed not by one individual, but by a plurality of such presbyters. There had to be a presbyterion: a college or council of presbyters, which, as Calvin laid down in his *Institutio*, 'was in the church what a council is in a city.' From this derived the Scottish presbytery, the Genevan consistory and the Dutch classis. The geographical area covered by such a council was a matter of administration, not theology. It could be a local kirk session, overseeing one congregation, or a general kirk session, covering all the congregations in one city. In the early days of the Reformed Kirk in Scotland government was by such kirk sessions, synods and what were originally known as conventions of the Universal Kirk, but later came to be known as the General Assembly.

The oversight afterwards exercised by presbyteries was originally delegated to the Superintendents. Only in 1581, three years after the publication of the *Second Book of Discipline*, did the Assembly begin to erect presbyteries, and more than a century would pass before what W. M. Campbell called *The Triumph of Presbyterianism* (1958). The so-called Golden Act of 1592 formally recognised and established Presbyterian government, and by the following year presbyteries were in place throughout Scotland, but James VI and Charles I remained determined to replace them with bishops, and only in 1638, when the whole of Scotland united under the National Covenant, did the Kirk come under effective Presbyterian government. Even then, the triumph was short-lived. Oliver Cromwell, who governed Scotland as part of a united Commonwealth from 1651, was no friend of Presbyterianism and banned all meetings of the General Assembly, which never met between 1649 and 1690. Under his murderous successors, Charles II and James VII, Presbyterianism was on the rack, and a full-blown episcopacy ruled the Kirk. Only with the Revolution Settlement of 1690 was Presbyterianism finally secure. It had taken one hundred and forty years to consolidate in Scotland the polity which Knox had witnessed in Geneva.

The best succinct exposition of Scottish Presbyterianism is Alexander Henderson's *Notes on the Government and Order of the Church of Scotland* (printed anonymously in 1641, but referred to

in Baillie's *Letters* as the work of Henderson). Henderson captures its genius in a brilliant summary: *superiority without tyranny, parity without confusion, subjection without slavery*. Such a polity was no mean achievement. How could there be order where all were equal and where none had authority over another? By ensuring, said Henderson, that each individual was subject to the collective will of the several 'assemblies'; and by erecting a system of graded courts, where the lower was always subject to review by the higher: the kirk session by the presbytery, the presbytery by the synod, and the synod by the General Assembly.

Scotland's seventeenth-century theologians believed firmly in the divine right of presbytery, yet at the same time they could be remarkably flexible and willing to adapt, especially in the case of 'kirks not settled'. They invoked this principle when approving the Westminster Confession in August 1647, declaring that the right of the civil power to convene synods (affirmed in Chapter 31.2 of the Confession) applied only to churches not duly constituted in point of government. The same adaptability had shown itself earlier in the *First Book of Discipline*. Recognising the shortage of properly trained ministers, the Kirk authorised the use of Readers; and in the absence of a comprehensive network of presbyteries it appointed Superintendents. This latter office was no sinecure. Superintendents were under obligation to preach at least three times a week and also under obligation to keep on the move. They could stay in any one place only as long as it took to set the local church on its feet, usually by arranging for the appointment of either a Minister or a Reader. This was far removed from monarchical episcopacy and even further removed from all notions of apostolic succession, as is made clear in the fact that there was no separate ordination to the office of Superintendent. They were simply ministers on secondment. But it is worth noting that in the later controversies over bishops, the resistance of Scottish theologians focused not only, or even primarily, on the office itself, but on the manner of their appointment. To appoint bishops because that was the settled will of the Scottish people was one thing; to have them imposed by royal decree was something else. It was this attitude that fuelled national resistance to Laud's Liturgy in 1638. The imposition of the Prayer Book was an assertion of royal

supremacy which violated not only the spiritual independence of the Kirk, but the constitutional rights of the Scottish people and the prerogatives of their parliament.

The Scots Confession (Article XVI) defined the church as ‘ane company and multitude of men chosen of God, who rightly worship and imbrace him be trew faith in Christ Jesus’. But who are those characterised by ‘true faith’? Who, in other words, should be members of the kirk? Scottish divines, without exception, operated with a clear distinction between the church visible and the church invisible (an unworkable distinction, in my view). The latter consisted of the elect of all ages, but they were known only to God, and it was no business of presbyters to try to identify them. When it came to membership of the church on earth the question was not whether someone was a member of the church invisible, but whether he or she was a visible Christian. Presbyters could look only on the outward appearance.

This is something on which theologians like Durham and, later, Boston, were adamant. The church could ask only for a sincere (serious) profession of faith: a profession which was credible because it was accompanied by an appropriate degree of knowledge and an outward Christian lifestyle. Beyond such a profession the church could not go. According to Durham’s *Treatise Concerning Scandal*, for example, no human judicatory is competent to determine the true state of another man’s soul. Hence, ‘sincerity of true grace’ is not to be inquired into as the condition of membership of the visible church: nor, indeed, as a condition of restoration after discipline. Presbyters could not take the line, ‘I’m not convinced he’s repented!’ The same principle applied to the restoration of the lapsed as to the admission of new communicants. There could be no ‘inquisitorial minuteness’ and no pretending to be able to see into another man’s heart.

In Thomas Boston this is worked out particularly in relation to the question, ‘Who have right to baptism, and are to be baptised?’ (the Sixth of his Miscellaneous Questions, in Volume VI of his *Works*). Boston rejected the practice of virtually indiscriminate baptism as advocated by Rutherford in Chapter 12 of his *Peaceable and Temperate Plea for Paul’s Presbytery in Scotland*: a practice which rested on the principle that the sacrament belonged to all those of Christian descent; or, alternatively, to all those born within the covenanted nation. On

the contrary, said Boston, the criteria for admission to baptism are the same as those for admission to the Lord's Supper. The right belongs only to believers, making a sincere and credible profession of the true faith.

Yet, even in Boston it was visibility that mattered. In fact, there was a twofold right to baptism: a right before God and a right before the church. Before God, *in foro Dei*, the right belonged only to those who were true believers and thus members of the invisible church. But someone who was not a member of the invisible church might be entitled to it *in foro ecclesiae* because she made a credible profession and lived, visibly and externally, as a Christian. On the other hand, someone who was a member of the church invisible might not be entitled to baptism before the church because she had no visible faith. In the sight of God, she was a true believer, but for one reason or another she was not, at least at that moment, a Christian in the sight of the church and the world.

All this implied a clear and deliberate rejection of the Congregational view that membership of the church belonged to those and those only who were true believers: a position from which it followed that no one should be admitted unless the church were satisfied that he or she was genuinely born again. To the architects of Scottish Presbyterianism this was intolerable. No one had the right to deny membership of the church to another simply because he wasn't personally convinced that the applicant was a member of the church invisible. Yet this is exactly the pattern that later developed within the Separatism which blighted the church in Scotland's North Country. For reasons which are not clear, but which probably had something to do with a mistaken passion for a pure church, the Congregational view of church membership supplanted the Presbyterian till we finally reached the position laid down by the Sutherland elder, John Grant, as recorded in Alexander Auld's *Ministers and Men of the Far North*: 'I never admit anyone to the Table unless I first get him from the Lord.' It was this curious blend of mysticism and legalism, rather than any lack of assurance, that led to the paucity of communicants in the Highlands. Potential applicants knew they would meet with a barrier of suspicion. And from the same root grew the practice of the Half-way Covenant, distinguishing radically between the standard for

admission to Baptism and the standard for admission to the Supper. Baptism was for those who were half-way in, at least in the sense that they had not formally repudiated the church. The Supper was for those you ‘got from the Lord’.



Spiritual independence

But the single most crucial issue in Scottish ecclesiology was the church’s spiritual independence. The mediaeval church had adopted the view that the temporal power was subordinate to the spiritual. According to a papal bull of 1302, St Peter held the keys of both: not that the church could directly wield the sword, but the state was to wield it *for* her. Over against this Calvin insisted, at least in theory, on the separation of church and state. Each had its own governance, and each was independent of the other. But this view was far from acceptable throughout Europe. In Catholic countries the crown was still subject to the church. In the Lutheran states of Germany, the principle of *cuius regio eius religio* prevailed: the Elector decided which religion was to be followed. In England, the Act of Supremacy (1534) declared the Sovereign to be the earthly head of the church, simply transferring to the Monarch the spiritual power previously exercised by the Pope, and granting him or her power to repress, reform, order and correct at will.

But in Scotland, church and crown were on a collision course. The Kirk had developed Calvin’s position to the point where Andrew Melville could remind James VI that there were two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland, and that in the kingdom of Christ Jesus James was neither a king, nor a lord nor a head, but a member. James and his successors, on the other hand, looked enviously at the English model: the absolute supremacy of the crown over all matters spiritual as well as temporal. It was to progress this ideal that the Stewarts pressed so insistently for bishops; and not simply for bishops, but for bishops who were royal appointees. From this point of view, episcopacy was a device for ensuring secular control of the church. This absolutism reached its climax with Charles II and his Act Recissory (1661), repealing at a stroke of the royal pen all the pro-Presbyterian Acts of the Scottish Parliament. In that instant, every institution in Scotland

lost its independence: Parliament, the Judiciary, the Privy Council and the bishops all became subservient to the royal will, leaving the people defenceless in the face of an escalating reign of terror. From within the church alone came resistance: not always measured, not always moderate, not always reasoned and not always Christian. The times made good men mad. But here alone, among the outed, hunted and exiled ministers, could be heard the voices of resistance, propounding the people's right to resort to defensive arms against a perfidious king and declaring that there were divinely set limits to royal power.

In the end, these voices triumphed: not that the replacement of James VII by William of Orange was the direct outcome of Covenanter resistance, but Scotland's Revolution Settlement was negotiated by men who had themselves suffered for the Covenant and its limited monarchy represented their principles and fulfilled their dreams. William brought the moderation the country sorely needed and gave the Church the spiritual independence she sought, recognising her Presbyterian government and abolishing prelacy and patronage. This independence was confirmed in the Articles of Union of 1707, which pledged the united parliament to maintain the church settlement for all time to come.

But the ink was scarcely dry when the Act of Patronage of 1712 deprived the Church of her independence in the most crucial area of all, the election of her ministers, and invested in 'heritors' (usually landlords) the right to present ministers to vacant charges, regardless of the wishes of congregations. The results were disastrous and long-lasting. For seventy years successive General Assemblies sought repeal of the Act, but they sought in vain. Control of the Church passed, as Hugh Miller bitingly remarked, to 'Scotland's acres'. Patronage replaced episcopacy as the way to secularise the church, and as the years went by, the lairds took full advantage, giving preferment to men who would serve their own social and political interests, and leaving men like Thomas Boston marginalised in tiny parishes like Simprin and Ettrick. What was worse, the people had no taste for the patrons' nominees and either gave up church-going altogether or joined the growing body of Seceders. The right to call their own ministers was a cherished principle of intelligent Presbyterians, and patronage was

an intolerable grievance. This is what precipitated the lamentable secessions of the eighteenth century and the Disruption of 1843. The mischief cannot be calculated and its fruits are with us still.

In the course of the Disruption controversy the Evangelical party moved beyond campaigning against the intrusion of ministers and against interference by the civil courts to a much more radical assertion of the rights of the Christian people. To begin with, Chalmers had a much more limited vision, enshrined in the Veto Act of 1834, which gave parishioners no more than the right to veto the patron's nominee. Later, he would probably have been satisfied with merely transferring the rights of patrons to presbyteries, allowing them to nominate ministers to vacancies. But Miller and Cunningham had a much clearer vision: the people had a right not simply to veto or to object they had a right to elect, nominate and call. This, after all, had been the position of the *First Book of Discipline* ('it appertaineth to the people, and to every several Congregation, to elect their Minister') and Cunningham argued for it, against Robertson of Ellon, in a massive pamphlet of 180 pages ("The Rights of the Christian People", 1841). Chalmers acquiesced, probably for pragmatic reasons: the people were far more likely than the heritors to elect a minister with a passion for mission and evangelism.

But we should remember, too, the political background. The Reform Act of 1832 had extended the franchise to relatively minor property-holders, and this enabled Hugh Miller in his Letter to Lord Brougham to make merry with the idea that the people of Scotland were now deemed fit to judge the qualifications of a Member of Parliament, but not the requisites of a gospel minister. The Reform Act had its limitations however: women were still disfranchised, and not until 1928 would they be granted equal voting rights with men. This makes it all the more remarkable that when the Free Church Assembly of 1846 passed an Act Anent Election of Office-Bearers, it invested the right to vote in such elections in 'the members of the congregation in full communion with the Church'. A right previously invested in 'male heads of families' had now passed to women as well as men! The revolution appears to have passed unnoticed.



Christianity and science

The final issue on which I wish to comment briefly is the remarkably restrained response of Scottish Reformed theology to scientific developments in the nineteenth century. It was far from the melodramatic ‘warfare between science and religion’ in which the relationship is often cast.

The key names here are, of course, Thomas Chalmers and Hugh Miller. Miller, both a pioneering palaeontologist and a brilliant populariser of geology, is the name more likely to come to mind, but Chalmers’s was the decisive voice. Both men were creationists in the biblical sense that they regarded the universe as the work of an almighty personal God and the Genesis account as a divinely-inspired narrative of the process. The key issue at the time was the age of the earth. Usher’s chronology had placed the origin of the universe very precisely in the year 4004 BC. Geology, however, had begun to suggest that the earth was far older. It is important to remember here that geology itself was still a very young science; and equally important to note the role played by Scots in laying its foundations. It was only in 1788, eight years after the birth of Chalmers, that Edinburgh-born James Hutton published his epochal *Theory of the Earth*; and when another Scot, Sir Charles Lyell, laid the groundwork for the new science in his three-volume *Principles of Geology* (published between 1830 and 1833) Hugh Miller was already in his late twenties.

Applying the uniformitarian principle that the present is the key to the past, geologists now presented an ever-strengthening case that the processes currently operating on the earth’s surface are sufficient to account for all geophysical features. But there was one proviso: these processes would have taken millions of years. Did geology have that much time? On Usher’s chronology, clearly not. But Chalmers gave geology all the time it needed. As early as 1804, in a lecture at St Andrews, he had declared that Moses did not fix the antiquity of the earth, and he remained of that view till the end of his life, as can be seen from the opening page of his *Daily Scripture Readings*: ‘We can allow Geology the amplest time for its various revolutions without infringing even on the literalities of the Mosaic Record’. Miller similarly rejected the Young Earth theory (and would later claim

in *First Impressions of England and Its People* that his views were shared by all the leading Disruption theologians such as Cunningham, Candlish and his own minister at Cromarty, Alexander Stewart). We are living in a graveyard, he declared: all around us lie the remains of extinct species, and common sense tells us they didn't die just yesterday. Their fossils are testimony to ancient geological eras.

Miller was able to say this with impunity because he was protected by the great name of Chalmers, and underlying the attitude of both men was a profound respect for science itself. Scientific questions, Miller insisted, must be settled scientifically: not by *a priori* dogma, but by empirical observation and experiment. Specifically, geological questions had to be settled geologically, not theologically, and theology had no alternative but to work its way round the well-established conclusions of the science. To pursue a different course, opposing science and attributing the earth's features to the Noachian Deluge (for example), would merely play into the hands of infidelity. What had to give way, however, was neither science nor the divine authority of scripture, but our exegesis. This committed both Chalmers and Miller to a harmonising interpretation of Genesis.

Chalmers's harmonisation took the form of proposing a gap between 'the beginning' (a period in indefinite antiquity, when God created the worlds out of nothing) and the work of the six days. In that gap, he argued, geology had all the time it needed. Miller knew that the geological evidence left absolutely no place for such a gap, just as he knew that the fossil record made plain that there were more than three days between the creation of vegetation and the creation of the first humans. His own accommodation of Genesis to geology was that the six days were not literal days, but vast geological eras. Thus interpreted, he argued, the sequence agreed closely with the sequence indicated in the fossil record.

Neither view can satisfy us today. The interpretation of Genesis is not a matter of exegesis, but a matter of genre. We have to ask what Genesis 1 was seeking to do in its own context; and we have to refrain from pressing it into the service of questions it was never intended to answer.

By the time Darwin published his *Origin of Species* in 1859 both Chalmers and Miller were dead. Miller, who had repeatedly criticised

earlier versions of the Development Hypothesis as expounded by Lamarck and Robert Chambers (while denying that they involved positive atheism), would almost certainly have attempted a rigorous, science-based rebuttal. But the truth is that the Theory of Natural Selection never provoked in Scotland the furore it provoked in England. Later Scottish theologians were as reluctant as Chalmers and Miller to set religion and science on a collision course.

This caution can be seen in, for example, the 1878 Cunningham Lectures of John Laidlaw, Professor of Systematic Theology at New College from 1881 to 1904. Laidlaw's subject was *The Biblical Doctrine of Man* and he roundly declared, 'The Bible should not be committed to any theory of the origin of species'. He recognised in the Genesis account both divine fiat and creative process (mediate and immediate creation?), but refused to propound any scheme of reconciliation between Genesis and geology. He did, however, detect an irreconcilable difference between the Darwinian and the biblical accounts of the origin of the human species. He was not alone in this. Sir Charles Lyell before him was prepared to accept only a discontinuous evolution. 'Man' was created by a special divine act: evolution, said Laidlaw, could account for neither the best of him nor the worst of him.

This tradition of respect for science can be seen equally clearly in James Orr's, *The Christian View of God and the World* (1893). In our own day its foremost representative has been Professor T. F. Torrance, whose *Theological Science* was published in 1969 and whose dialogues with Philoponus, Clerk Maxwell, Einstein and Polanyi have been made accessible to ordinary mortals in Alister McGrath's *T. F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography*. For Torrance, of course, the questions which had engrossed Chalmers and Miller were no longer live issues. His concern was with the theological grounding of science and the theological implications of scientific method. Far from living in isolation from each other, theology and science, he argued, should be interactive disciplines, existing in a synthesis of mutual obligation. The basic point of contact here was that both start with givens, theology with God and science with the universe; and each can be known only on its own terms. In science, 'we think not as we choose to think, but as we are compelled to think in accordance with

the nature of the object'. The same is true in theology. There must be an accord between the known and the knower, between the intelligible and the intelligent.

For this very reason there is a crucial difference in methodology between the two disciplines. Science proceeds on the assumption that it is dealing with objects. Theology cannot proceed in this way. It cannot approach God as if he were an object. Here Torrance exploits the terminology of Martin Buber. We cannot know God as It: he can be known only as Thou. Yet both disciplines deal in truth, not merely in impressions. Torrance uses the *homoousion* to illustrate this. In theology the term means that since the Father and the Son are one, the truth about the Father is disclosed in the Son. In science it means that the universe yields the truth about itself to our enquiries. God is as he presents himself in the Son. The universe is as it presents itself in the phenomena. It does not deceive us. Yet there still remains a crucial tension: science can describe and illustrate the order in the world, but it cannot explain it. That is the task, or part of the task, of theology. Otherwise we end up with Naturalism, according to which, adapting the language of John C. Lennox in *God's Undertaker*, 'the totality of physical things that exist' explains 'the totality of physical things that exist'.

But if Scottish theologians characteristically showed a genuine respect for science, the respect was often reciprocated by our most distinguished scientists. Pre-eminent among these stands James Clerk Maxwell: a man in whom, according to his biographer, Ivan Tolstoy, a unique level of scientific insight and sophistication was combined with a simple, unquestioning faith. That faith revealed itself easily and naturally, as we see from a letter he wrote to his wife during one of his absences from home: 'I am always with you in spirit, but there is one who is nearer to you and to me than we ever can be to each other, and it is only through Him and in Him that we can ever really get to know each other. Let us try to realise the great mystery in Ephesians V, and then we shall be in the right position with respect to the world outside, the men and women whom Christ came to save from their sins.' The great mystery is, of course, the union between Christ and the church, and it is this union that Maxwell points to as the ideal of marital intimacy. Did he ever wonder whether this union takes place within

its own special spiritual ‘field’, as valid as any of those in which, as he himself had shown, physical objects exist?



Conclusion

What of the vitality, today, of Scottish Reformed theology? Calvinistic orthodoxy is certainly in a parlous state, at least on this side of the Atlantic, and the only reassurance we seem able to offer ourselves is that our changing fortunes are somehow manifestations of the principle, *semper reformanda*. No one will deny the need for such reformation. Yet we must be careful lest in the process of alleged re-formation we evolve into another species. We must not lose our character as a ‘Reformed’ church. Any *aggiornamento* must be resourced not merely from the crumbs of post-modernity, the findings of sociology and the insights of ecumenism, but from our own rich but long-neglected Reformed heritage. Not that we can revive ourselves by simply reading old books. But as the Reformers drew inspiration from the Fathers, so we can draw fresh life from the great reforming doctors, Scottish as well as Continental: provided, of course, we are prepared to reassess and re-evaluate them in dialogue with others and, above all, in the light of our own formative principle, *sola scriptura*. Such a reclaimed theology, grasped with conviction and preached with passion, would enable us both to evangelise the world and to secure for Christ his rightful place in the public square.