
A (New) Systematic Theology For Our Times: A Review Article*

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It is always an occasion for celebration when the Reformed world is treated to a comprehensive statement of what the church – reformed according to the Scriptures – confesses. The work under review, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* by author Robert L. Reymond, is the culmination of nearly three decades of instruction at two institutions, Covenant Theological Seminary in the early years and Knox Theological Seminary in the latter. It is unquestionably a helpful addition to Reformed dogmatics, a valuable compendium of Calvinistic teaching.¹ At the same time, however, the appropriateness of the title of the work under review can be fairly questioned. Does this work truly set forth a *new* systematics? If so, what is really new about the method or the content? As for originality, there are only isolated places in the text where the author breaks from tradition. Essentially, this handbook in dogmatics relies heavily upon the exegetical and theological formulations of others, notably that of Charles Hodge, B. B. Warfield, Louis Berkhof, and John Murray. What Reymond offers his readers is a repristination of Old School Presbyterianism (nineteenth to mid-twentieth century): for this reason it is difficult for this reviewer to regard Reymond's work as saying something truly new for Reformed Christianity at the turn of the millennium. Nevertheless, the study does have its place and it does helpfully interact with the current scene.

With reference to the theological encyclopedia, the present volume is properly classified as a study in confessional dogmatics. Reymond's outline and discussion highlight the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms*, and the purpose of this handbook is to defend and explicate that system of doctrine for the present generation. In light of this it is surprising that Reymond does not address the matter of confessionalism, what is itself an important and vital component of Christian (i.e., church) doctrine. And closely related to confessionalism is the discipline of historical theology. It would have been helpful to the reader if Reymond had focused greater attention upon the historical nature of the theological enterprise, and to have elucidated his own work more fully in terms of that historical-ecclesiastical stream to which he belongs. Of course, no comprehensive dogmatics (such as that produced by Reymond) can be expected to provide all the required exegetical work. It is in the nature of a dogmatics to summarize the fruits of a particular exegetical-theological tradition. Nonetheless, this consideration makes the historical element all the more important in dogmatic exposition. No Christian theologian can work independently of churchly doctrine; every interpreter of the Bible approaches his/her task from a specific theological vantage point. In the case of Reymond, there is no doubt where he stands. The reader of *A New Systematic Theology* will readily discern that its author is an exponent of Reformed Puritanism, a doctrinal system summarily, yet comprehensively, set forth in the Westminster standards.² For the most part, Reymond sees it as his task

to defend that system of doctrine against modern attacks. In establishing his case the author might also have given further attention to the topic of hermeneutics.³ Needless to say, in contemporary theology issues of hermeneutical methodology have come under intense, critical scrutiny. Other competing theologies (and methodologies) on the contemporary scene – such as neoorthodoxy, contextualization, liberation theology, and feminism – receive little or no attention in this compendium. Their inclusion would have been highly instructive in a restatement and defense of the historic Christian faith.⁴

The purpose of this review is to engage in a critically constructive analysis of Reymond's *magnum opus*. My questions and comments hopefully will generate further discussion and debate. (Space restraints necessitate that my remarks be selective and suggestive.) Reymond's special interests over the course of his teaching career have been principally two: Reformed epistemology and the person and work of Jesus Christ. What detracts from an otherwise insightful exposition of Reformed theology, however, is the author's extreme supralapsarianism. (More on this below.)

I Theological Prolegomena: The Stance of Faith

For an understanding of the author's theological convictions and orientation, we must turn to the "Preface." There we are told that Reymond writes from a "Reformed perspective," but that he has not "slavishly followed the established pattern of 'orthodox' or 'Reformed' thought when it did not commend itself to me because of its failure to conform in some way to what I perceive to be the teaching of Holy Scripture."⁵ Rightly, the Word of God is regarded by the author to be the final rule of faith and life; the creedal statements of the Reformed churches, by implication, are secondary norms. As a confessional dogmatician, Reymond takes up the theological task as an unabashed presuppositionalist, applying the reformational principle of the analogy of Scripture (whereby Scripture is understood to be its own best interpreter). But there is more to biblical presuppositionalism than this, as subsequent discussion will indicate. The author's "Reformed perspective" is further described as follows: "the distinctive nature, richness, and beauty of the Reformed faith [is] the teaching of Holy Scripture, and [is] interpreted, expounded, and exhibited in John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* and the great national Reformed confessions, particularly the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Westminster Assembly's Catechism, Larger and Shorter."⁶ This, in sum, is "the established pattern" of Reformed orthodoxy.⁷ Each chapter and section of the dogmatics open with a citation from the Westminster standards. Clearly, the reader is to understand that Reymond is not a free thinker, but rather one who stands squarely in the tradition of post-Reformation, Puritan-Reformed orthodoxy (i.e., Westminster Calvinism).

What is the justification for theological study? Who needs theology? Theologian and social critic David Wells in his three volume jeremiad castigates modern-day evangelicalism for its doctrinal shallowness and moral indecisiveness.⁸ Significantly, Reymond's prolegomenon addresses both the necessity and warrant for theology as an *intellectual* (as well as moral) discipline. In the words of Anselm, Christian faith is a faith that seeks understanding. Reymond begins by addressing the nature and necessity of divine revelation. Humankind as created by God was to become a race of peoples enjoying covenant fellowship and communion with God as Creator and Lord. Adam and Eve, our first parents, were God's image-bearers. All nature revealed the power and

goodness of God, but general revelation could not be rightly interpreted apart from special, supernatural revelation. Subsequent to the Fall, personal renewal (regeneration and illumination) by the Spirit of God became necessary for true knowledge of God and humanity.

Concerning the Word incarnated and the Word inscripturated Reymond explains that, contrary to the teaching of neoorthodoxy,

It is still biblical to insist that Jesus Christ is the incarnate Word of God, the supreme revelation of God, and not a vague "event" that occurs in a nonverbal personal encounter. And it is still appropriate to teach that the Bible is the written (propositional) Word of God, divinely inspired and therefore infallible. And the Holy Spirit both inspired the Bible and creates saving faith in the redeemed, illuminating them with respect both to the nature of Scripture itself and to Scripture's message to them.⁹

Human language as a gift of God is the appropriate vehicle of God's Word-revelation, even though God *accommodates himself to human capacity*. Modernist language philosophy wrongly regards the infinite distance between God (the unknowable One) and the finite creature as implying the inability of human language to serve as a vehicle of divine communication. God's revelation, according to this viewpoint, is *supratemporal*, beyond all rational comprehension. (There is no place in this philosophy for "propositional truth" as that contained in the sacred writings. Accordingly, the Bible is understood to be merely an account of the human community's religious experience of the Ineffible.) Reymond correctly points out the weaknesses in this modernist philosophical attempt to undermine the Bible's inspiration and authority. However, Reymond's conception of the eternity of the Word of God leads him to view the Bible mistakenly as a collection of "timeless truths." He writes that "despite the 'occasional' or *ad hoc* character of its many literary parts, the Scripture's doctrine of Scripture binds us to view its teachings as timeless truths intended 'for our instruction, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness.'"¹⁰ Neither the analogical character of human knowledge of God nor the historico-covenantal nature of divine revelation is given its proper due. With respect to the latter, the author fails to draw together adequately the various biblico-theological and systematic threads.

Just how does Reymond understand the relation between knowledge in the mind of God and knowledge in the mind of man? Is there an identity of content? Reymond lays out the three alternative positions, namely, that the relationship is univocal, equivocal, or analogical, and then opts for the first of these three. There is, Reymond maintains, an *identity of content*, although human knowledge is not as exhaustive as God's.¹¹ Here Reymond takes vigorous exception to the views of the twentieth-century's greatest Reformed apologist and presuppositionalist, Cornelius Van Til, who espoused the analogical understanding of human knowledge. Reymond attempts to undercut Van Til's teaching by referring to the views of John Frame, one of Van Til's students who "attempted to extricate [his] revered mentor from the serious difficulty in which he has ensnared himself."¹² But Reymond rightly proceeds to speak of the problem in Frame's own theological method, what is called multiperspectivalism. This methodology causes Frame to misread Scripture and the Reformed tradition, including the writings of Van Til. At the foundation of Van Til's thought is acknowledgement of the Creator/creature

distinction, one which underscores the infinite distance between God and humanity. Although the knowledge that God imparts to humanity is true and genuine, such knowledge is never identical with God's knowledge. Nor is any aspect of humanity's being identical with God's. God is wholly other than his creation. Reformed epistemology must reckon with the analogical character of human understanding – man thinks God's thoughts after him.¹³

As a student of Van Til, I recall well his insistence upon the paradoxical nature of *all* biblical doctrine (the term he used was “hyperdox”). Truth as it exists in the mind of God is beyond finite, human understanding: God's truth is inexhaustive, something the creature can never fully (i.e., exhaustively) comprehend. Contrary to Reymond's reasoning, to know truth (or some truths) *as God knows it* would imply that the creature was equal with God. Divine mystery is resolved only in the exhaustively rational mind of God. Reymond's analysis entails the faulty equation of biblical “paradox” with genuinely contradictory teaching. The two are not the same: to the finite mind divine truth merely gives the *appearance of contradiction*. It is the nature of faith to take God at his word. But Reymond urges students of the Bible to “be solicitous to interpret the Scriptures in a noncontradictory way,” and commends to them the practice of biblical harmonization.¹⁴ (This recommendation is quite different from the reformational principle of comparing Scripture with Scripture.)

The largest portion of Reymond's prolegomena is devoted to setting out the evangelical and Reformed doctrine of the Word as the infallible, inerrant revelation of God. According to Reformed orthodoxy, the authority of the Scriptures is self-attesting. In this *locus*, as elsewhere, Reymond favors a collage of biblical passages, rather than detailed exegetical argument. Concerning the process of canonization, Reymond correctly favors the position of Herman Ridderbos. “In sum,” observes Reymond, “the formation of the twenty-seven-book New Testament canon, after all is said and done, appears ultimately to have been the work, not of men, not even of the church, but of God's Spirit alone.”¹⁵ In an appendix he adds: “the Christian must and will rest confidently in the assumption that God led His church in those first four centuries to recognize what He had intended should be included in the New Testament canon.”¹⁶

2 Theology: God and Humanity

John Calvin in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* states that knowledge of God is inseparable from man's knowledge of himself.¹⁷ From this same conviction Reymond in his “Introduction to the Doctrine of God” offers his personal reasons for belief in God against the backdrop of the classical theistic proofs (which he rejects). He explains that “my faith as a Christian in the Christian God and the self-attesting Christ of the New Testament is the result of the regenerating work of the Spirit of God which he wrought in my heart by and with the objective, revealed truth of the self-evidencing, self-validating Word of God.”¹⁸ In this compact statement of faith the author summarizes the Calvinistic doctrine of the Word and the Spirit as divine interpreter. It serves as a fitting link between the opening prolegomena and the theological exposition that ensues. Although the existence and divinity of the true God are known by all men and women, saving knowledge after the Fall is imparted only to the elect. That knowledge is dependent upon God's special, supernatural revelation, which in divine providence God was pleased to preserve in the pages of the inscripturated Word, itself the product

of human authors inspired by the Holy Spirit. (Unlike any other literature the sacred writings are both human and divine.) God's revelation has been made known in nature and in Scripture. True knowledge of God is, accordingly, dependent upon general and special revelation. Reymond's assertion that Christian faith (i.e., church doctrine) is the product of the self-attesting Christ speaking through the Scriptures and of the illumination of the Holy Spirit fails to reckon with the fallible, human component in the interpretive process. If the apprehension of Christian faith is simply the result of God's working in the human heart, why do genuine believers differ in their interpretation of the Bible? Why do not all believers share the *same* doctrinal understanding? (And why the plethora of Protestant denominations?) The answer lies in the interplay between Scripture and tradition in the act of interpretation. Theology finds expression in the community of faith, resulting in dogmatic statements which bind a particular confessing body to the teachings of Scripture as interpreted by its ministers (more broadly, the ruling bodies). These statements of faith function as subordinate standards within the life of the church(es); they comprise a collection of writings that, unlike the Word of God, are always open to revision and correction. Ultimately, God the Spirit is the final interpreter of his Word. We are reminded once again that the church of Christ is to be reformed and ever reforming in light of the teachings of Scripture.

Reymond begins his exposition of theology proper by considering two aspects of God's self-revelation, his name and his nature. The church confesses the triune God of the Bible to be the only true God, the creator, redeemer, and sustainer. Christians commonly identify God as "spirit," Jn 4:24 serving as the classic proof-text. According to Reymond, "when we say that God is "spirit," we are only using theological shorthand for saying that God is personal and noncorporeal – two of his other attributes."¹⁹ On the matter of God's eternity, Reymond takes exception to the Augustinian position. He contends that this attribute of God must not be viewed in terms of "timelessness." Returning to the question of knowledge as it exists in the mind of God, Reymond queries whether there is any "consciousness of successive duration in his mind." Denial of such, argues Reymond, results in "much theological mischief."²⁰ The danger, as I see it, lies in attempting to probe the divine mind from the standpoint of finite human reason. God's supratemporal existence ("timelessness") is *sui generis*. This divine attribute does not prevent or impede God's rule over and governance of his creatures in history, nor does it imply that God is somehow incapable of entering into the "real" world of space and time. Contrary to Reymond's contention, God's existence transcends time. What weighs heavily in Reymond's discussion is his insistence upon a univocal relation between divine and human knowledge (including the epistemological aspect concerning *how* one knows).

The first indication of the trinity of God in the OT, states Reymond, is found in Gen 1:26. The reader is not apprised of other interpretations of this divine pronouncement ("Let us make man"). Preferable is the view that the (angelic) sons of God are summoned in the creation of man after God's image, an image likewise borne by the angelic host. The Spirit of God (the theophanic Presence) brooding over the unformed earth is also identified in Scripture with the Son in whom all things were created.²¹ The economic distinctions within the Godhead, the unique operations of the three Persons in creation history and in redemption, become increasingly apparent with the progressive unfolding of the history of salvation. With respect to the opening

chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans (vss. 3,4), Reymond is persuaded that the apostle contrasts the eternal, divine Sonship of Christ with his humanity. Hence "Spirit" in this passage is understood to refer to Christ's divine nature. However, redemptive-historical interpretation of this text, as Reymond notes, sees a contrast between Christ's prior state of humiliation (his incarnation) and his subsequent exaltation in eschatological glory (his resurrection and ascension into heaven). The consensus of Reformed opinion now appears to favor the latter view. Other important texts relating to Christ's role in creation and redemption include the opening chapters of John's Gospel (vvs. 1-5), Colossians (vvs. 15-20), and Hebrews (vss. 2,3). It would have been helpful if Reymond interacted more fully with the exegesis presented by those in the salvation-historical school of interpretation on these and other biblical texts.²²

Reymond rejects the trinitarian formulation advanced by the ancient church fathers at Nicea, notably, the assertion that the Son was "begotten out of the Father." He maintains that "these Fathers taught that the Son derives his essential being or existence as God from the Father (see their 'out of the being of the Father') through an 'always continuing and yet ever complete' act of begetting on the Father's part. In sum, the Father alone has being from himself; the Son eternally derives his being from the Father."²³ Although Reymond turns to Calvin and to Gerald Bray (a modern-day interpreter of Calvin) for support, the case against Nicea has not been fully established. Better is Warfield's reading cited by Reymond. To be sure, defining precisely the distinguishing properties of the Father, Son, and Spirit is difficult. Reymond concedes:

I do not intend to deny that the three Persons of the Godhead do have distinguishing, incommunicable properties which are real, eternal, and necessary. Indeed, without them there would be no Trinity. The distinguishing property of the Father is paternity (*paternitas*) from which flow "economical" activities in which the Son and Spirit do not share; the Son's is filiation (*filiatio*) from which flow "economical" activities in which the Father and Spirit do not share; and the Holy Spirit's is spiration (*spiratio*) from which flow "economical" activities in which the Father and the Son do not share, all descriptions which can be justified by Scripture.²⁴

Reymond's argument is unclear and inconsistent. I doubt that twentieth-century theologians have attained the philosophico-linguistic tools lacking in the early church. Ancient and modern attempts to explain what it means that the Son, in the words of the *Westminster Confession*, is "eternally begotten of the Father" (whereby the unique property of the second Person of the Trinity is filiation) and that the Spirit "eternally proceeds from the Father and Son" (whereby the unique property of the third Person is spiration) are justified and necessary. There is no evidence that the Westminster divines intended to distance themselves from the formulations of Nicea. If the confessions of the evangelical and Reformed churches can be improved upon, Reymond has not convincingly shown the way.

In the section on the decrees of God, including both election and reprobation, Reymond's chief disputant is Clark Pinnock. Calvinism does not contradictorily teach that whereas God determines (i.e., foreordains) all things that come to pass in history, man freely chooses to act of his own will. Man (male and female) as a creature of God, God's image-bearer, is not autonomous – the human will is exercised only in the context of the sovereign, all-determinative will and purpose of God. In regards to the

evil performed by humanity and angels Reymond correctly refutes the notion of “bare permission” on God’s part. God foreordains whatsoever comes to pass. “Divine *permission* and human *freedom* simply do not resolve the difficulties which Pinnock presumes that they do.”²⁵ Reymond speculates that if Adam had sustained the probationary test, all humankind

would have needed gratefully to look to Adam, still living among us, as our “Savior” from sin and death and as “our righteousness.” God would then have been required eternally to share his glory with the creature, and his own beloved Son would have been denied the mediatorial role which led to his messianic lordship over men and to his Father’s glory which followed (see Phil 2:6-11).²⁶

Reymond reasons that God decreed Adam’s fall into sin in order to magnify the surpassing grace revealed in Jesus Christ. Adam’s transgression, on this view, becomes merely the means to an end. Two comments are offered by way of response. Firstly, does not this formulation detract from the integrity of Adam’s original knowledge, righteousness, and holiness? The implication is given that Adam was somehow dependent upon the (mediatorial) strength and merit of Christ’s righteousness in order to accomplish the “one act of righteousness” (Rom 5). It is simply wrong to suggest that Adam functioned as a savior from sin. Salvation from sin was not in any sense applicable to the original state of Adam. Secondly, Reymond fails to discern the mediatorial role of the Son in creation. The Son’s mediation was not an aspect of his incarnation exclusively. In the eternal counsel of God, the so-called “Covenant of Redemption” between the Father and the Son, Christ’s messianic office was (is) founded upon the Father’s determination to save the elect.

The Reformed world of scholarship has become increasingly divided over the interpretation of the days of creation. Reymond unhesitatingly favors the teaching found in the Westminster standards concerning the literal six days (“in the space of six days”). The question arises whether Reymond would advocate strict adherence to these confessional statements as the means of securing peace and unity in the Reformed communions? If so, what does this say of his endorsement of the reformational principle of *sola scriptura*? Is he prepared to allow diversity of opinion on matters that do not undermine the system of doctrine nor jeopardize the fundamentals of the faith? Reymond boldly asserts: “I can discern no reason, either from Scripture or from the human sciences, for departing from the view that the days of Genesis were ordinary twenty-four-hour days.”²⁷ While Reymond is free to express (and teach) his opinion, can he and the six-day creationists extend the same freedom to those who think otherwise? On the question of the age of the universe Reymond shows greater reserve. Although he and I favor “a relative young earth and a relative short history of man to date,” neither of us are dogmatic on the issue.²⁸

Concerning God’s design of the universe, Reymond views redemption as the purpose for creation. John Murray, on the other hand, sees redemption as God’s purpose for the *postlapsarian* world. Murray’s position, in my judgment, distinguishes more carefully between the historical epochs of creation and redemption, each having its own particular purpose and design.²⁹ (One aim of recreation is to bring the original goal of creation, viz., eschatological consummation, to fulfillment by means of the reconciling work of Jesus Christ.) The doctrine of the decree(s) of God must not obscure the

historical diversity associated with God's planning for the sake of its ultimate unity. Unfortunately, differences among Reformed dogmaticians on these issues resulted in the unnecessary division between infra- and supralapsarians.³⁰

Moving on to what is viewed in the Westminster standards as God's special work of providence, namely, the Covenant of Works between God and Adam prior to the Fall, the reader is introduced to some of the problems and complexities in scholastic Reformed orthodoxy. At the time the Westminster divines worked on their confession and catechisms, a new Protestant scholasticism was emerging. Some of the scholastic definitions and terminology recovered from a former period in the history of Christian doctrine were helpful, others were not. Great care must be exercised in the study of Reformed dogmatics, perhaps nowhere more so than in its doctrine of the covenants. For example, reintroduction of the Thomistic nature/grace scheme unknowingly undermined teaching pertaining to the covenantal relationship between God and humankind at creation. Contrary to Reymond's assertion, the natural state of Adam was not distinct from the covenantal – human obligation to obey God was natural as it was covenantal. There were not two stages or orders of creation, one natural and the other covenantal. The dichotomy between an initial state of nature and a subsequent covenantal order is unbiblical; it is wholly speculative in origin.³¹ Equally unacceptable is the notion that the Covenant of Works, though broken, remains perpetually in effect after the Fall. Contrary to Reymond, the legal principle ("do this and live") is no longer operative, not even hypothetically. The original Covenant of Works has forever been abrogated. Under the Covenant of Grace, which extends from the Fall to the Consummation, the legal principle was reinstated on the earthly, *temporal* level during the period from Moses to Christ, the time when the Israelites were subject to the stipulations and sanctions of the legal covenant made at Sinai. Prosperity and blessing in the land of Canaan was contingent upon Israel's own obedience to the law of Moses. Wherever there is covenant based on works, there is simultaneously a period of probationary testing. Such was the case at the beginning with Adam in the Garden of Eden, later under the Mosaic economy, and finally in conjunction with the messianic task of Christ, the second Adam.³²

These criticisms aside, Reymond defends traditional Reformed teaching on the covenants against its detractors, particularly revisionists like Norman Shepherd and Daniel Fuller. He agrees with those who maintain that Adam's successful completion of the probationary assignment would have meant that he *merited* the covenantal reward of confirmation in righteousness and, ultimately, entrance into eschatological glory at the consummation of history. The theological term "grace" pertains *exclusively* to the redemptive era, in that it speaks of the saving beneficence of God extended to sinners (in spite of their *demerit*). Hence the term "grace" is not applicable to the preredemptive epoch of creation history. The reward promised to Adam for faithful obedience to God was a matter of justice, not grace. (The discussion in this section should lead Reymond to reconsider his interpretation of Adam's probationary task and the mediatorial role of the Son in creation noted earlier.) Reymond's discussion of the divine covenants has a direct and immediate bearing upon the biblical doctrine of justification by faith ("apart from the works of the law"), the subject of another *locus* in Christian dogmatics.

3 Soteriology: The Doctrine of Christ and His Spirit

This section opens with a discussion of the “plan of salvation.” Here one finds a strictly logical presentation of God’s decree(s), the occasion for probing into “the rational mind” of God. Starting from the end and proceeding to the means necessary for its accomplishment, Reymond claims that “The rational [human] mind recognizes that only in this way is each element of the plan purposive and contributory to the coherence of the entire plan.”³³ Here again, Reymond’s supralapsarianism says more than is warranted from the text of Scripture (on the basis of exegesis and what the author calls “legitimate ‘sanctified’ deductions”).

What is uniquely distinctive in Reformed theology is the doctrine of the covenants. With respect to the progressive unfolding of biblical revelation the divine covenants provide the structural framework for the history of creation and redemption. The redemptive epoch is the subject of Reymond’s chapter on “The Unity of the Covenant of Grace.” While summarizing the Reformed (federalist) position, Reymond offers a critical analysis of the teachings of dispensationalism, which he fairly examines in terms of both its earlier and its later exponents. To be sure, contemporary dispensationalism manifests a wide range of thinking. The so-called “progressive dispensationalists” of recent years have adopted many features of Reformed covenant thinking, the chief exceptions being (1) its understanding of the relation between Israel and the church, and (2) its strict adherence to premillennial eschatology. Another aspect of this debate is the question concerning the nature and content of saving faith in the Old and New Testaments. Reymond observes: “It is difficult to conceive of two evangelical perspectives on Old Testament faith differing more radically.” He concludes that “these two theological systems are mutually exclusive.” In dispensationalism there are “*at least two* different plans of salvation in Scripture.”³⁴ Reymond identifies these doctrinal peculiarities as the “soteriological discontinuities and difficulties of the dispensational system.”³⁵ In his elaboration of covenant theology Reymond at the same time appears oblivious to what is mainstream Reformed interpretation of the Mosaic Covenant. It was largely through the teaching of John Murray that contemporary Reformed orthodoxy was diverted from the classic position. Little did Murray realize that (independently of his work) the revolution which was to take place in historical and biblical studies at the close of the twentieth century – especially the contentious debate over Paul’s understanding of the Mosaic law – would radically transform the theological landscape less than five hundred years after the Protestant Reformation.³⁶ (So significant is this development that the future of evangelicalism itself remains uncertain.)

The next place in the theological system where these issues converge is the teaching on substitutionary atonement. Reformed theology maintains that Christ, born under the law, fulfilled all righteousness for the sake of God’s elect. By means of his active obedience Christ satisfied the legal demands of the original Covenant of Works, and by means of his passive obedience he exhausted its penalty and curse. Supralapsarian speculation leads Reymond to question the doctrine of the *consequent* absolute necessity of Christ’s atonement. Problematic here is Reymond’s understanding of God’s aseity and the eternal decrees as they exist in the mind of God. Reymond fails to recognize that God was not obliged to save the elect any more than he was obliged to

create the world. The decree(s) to create and to redeem is external to God's essential being. After treating the topic of the accomplishment of redemption on the basis Christ's atoning sacrifice, attention turns to the application of redemption by the Holy Spirit, who in the economy of redemption is the Spirit of Christ. Reymond upholds the Calvinistic interpretation over against the unstable and inconsistent position of Moise Amyraldus (the view that came to be known as "Amyraldianism"). According to Amyraldus, Christ's atoning death was universal in extent (i.e., unlimited), while the Spirit's efficacious application of salvation was restricted to the elect alone. Consistent Calvinism teaches the doctrine of Christ's limited atonement and its effectual application by the Holy Spirit to those chosen in Christ.³⁷

Reymond follows the traditional *ordo salutis* (order of salvation). In recent years questions have been raised concerning this formulation. Reymond observes that "the divine application of salvation is not 'one simple and indivisible act' but rather comprises a 'series of acts and processes' [and follows] a very definite order."³⁸ The several benefits, though distinct, are nevertheless inseparable – the believer united to Christ in his death and resurrection does not possess one without possessing all of these saving benefits.³⁹ Agreeing that union with Christ has two foci (one in eternity and one in time), Reymond maintains that the former refers to *being* in Christ from all eternity and the latter to *becoming* actually ingrafted into Christ. Reymond's distinction between "being" and "becoming" is confusing. Murray's view, with which Reymond differs, does greater justice to the historical dimension of union with Christ, without in any way detracting from the truth of God's eternal predestination of those elected in Christ.⁴⁰ The doctrine of justification by faith is formulated along precise Calvinistic lines, emphasizing the sole instrumentality of faith in the appropriation of Christ's perfect righteousness, the (alien) righteousness imputed to the believer. Good works, though necessary as evidence of justifying faith, are what have been prepared in advance by God for believers; they exemplify the power of the gospel to transform the believer into a new creation. The imputed righteousness of Christ, however, ever remains the exclusive basis of salvation. Final justification, i.e., judgment according to works (but not on the *ground* of works), is God's vindication and approbation of the saints who walk in true righteousness and holiness.⁴¹ Recent assaults upon the confessional Reformed teaching have arisen in some very unexpected places and among some of the most distinguished voices in Reformed theology. Reymond rightly opposes a statement drawn up in the 1990s, entitled "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium."⁴² Reymond also takes vigorous exception to the argument of John Gerstner claiming that Aquinas held a Protestant understanding of the doctrine of justification.⁴³ Disappointingly, however, Reymond only makes passing reference to the highly important debate among contemporary biblical theologians and exegetes regarding Paul's interpretation of the Mosaic law. Surely this controversy deserves more analysis and critique than is offered in *A New Systematic Theology*.⁴⁴

The remainder of this section takes up the subject of sanctification. Although the sinner redeemed by God's grace has been delivered from the curse of the law, he is called to be perfect just as his Father in heaven is perfect. (In Reformed theology the "third use of the law" has reference to the commandments of God which are normative for godly living.) The ethics of the kingdom of Christ are laid out in the canonical

documents of the New Covenant. Reymond regards the Decalogue, what is presented in the Bible as a summary of the Mosaic law, to be an ethical code for Christian living. Of particular importance to Reymond is the (Puritan) doctrine of the sabbath, as enunciated in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms*. However, one must not lose sight of the fact that since the time of the Reformation onwards, the doctrine of the sabbath has proven to be one of the major points of contention among Reformed interpreters.⁴⁵ Whereas the reality of the Christian's struggle with sin remains uncontested, differences of opinion arise in the interpretation of this ongoing spiritual battle. Departing from the Augustinian position on Rom 7, what has been the dominant view among Reformed exegetes, Reymond construes Rom 7:14-25 as a description of the apostle's struggle with sin when he was yet unconverted. (Reymond devotes an entire appendix to this Pauline text.) With respect to the filling of the Spirit Reymond correctly states: "The Spirit's filling activity follows upon the Spirit's sealing work, is ongoing in the life of the Christian, and is involved in and is an aspect of the Christian's progressive sanctification." He adds: "To be filled with the Spirit is to be indwelt by the word of Christ; to be indwelt by the word of Christ is to be filled with the Spirit."⁴⁶ God who sovereignly initiates the work of salvation in the life of the believer will see it to completion. Salvation both begins and ends with God. Bringing to a close Reymond's discussion of the application of salvation by the Spirit of Christ to God's elect, the author reiterates the judgment of John Murray and J. I. Packer that adoption (i.e., sonship) is the "apex of redemptive grace and privilege."⁴⁷ What greater blessing can one experience or conceive than the enjoyment of being a son of the Most High, a member of God's family having the privilege of intimate fellowship and communion with God. These are only some of the many gems that Reymond has gleaned from the treasury of Reformed soteriology.

4 Ecclesiology: The Church Reformed and Reforming

Some would argue that the real test of the church's doctrine lies in the ecclesiastical ordering of the life (and faith) of God's covenant people. Agreeably, this stands as a biblical objective or standard by which to measure the health of the church. In the presbyterian and Reformed communions the local church is governed by elders who are committed to rule God's household according to the doctrines and principles of the faith delivered once-for-all to the saints. But sin, in both its individual and corporate dimensions, impedes the perfect attainment of this goal. Even so, the church must ever strive after (perfect) holiness and righteousness. In the Reformed tradition the marks of the true church include the preaching of the Word and the proper administration of the sacraments. Important also – some would say essential – for the spiritual well-being of the household of faith is ecclesiastical discipline.

The people of God, called the church, are those who by God's sovereign good pleasure are called out of the world to bear God's name among the nations. Beginning in the Garden of Eden after the Fall God established his Covenant of Grace with faithful sons and daughters, those confessing his name and walking in his commandments. This covenant was not restricted to the elect seed (those chosen from all eternity to be the heirs of everlasting life), though the *proper purpose* of redemptive covenant is sovereign election and grace. "The church of God in Old Testament times," observes Reymond, "was not equivalent to the nation of Israel *per se*, for there were always some

– and sometimes many, if not most – within that nation who were never more than the physical seed of Abraham.”⁴⁸ After surveying the history of the church in the Old and New Testaments, Reymond concentrates on the church after Pentecost, the New Covenant people of God.⁴⁹ (The spiritual core is the seed of election.)

Worship in the Reformed tradition is conducted in accordance with the “regulative principle.” God’s people worship their Creator and Redeemer not according to their own desires or inclinations, but according to the dictates of Scripture. The elements of worship (i.e., singing, the reading of the Scriptures, prayer, the presentation of offerings, the exposition of the Word) are set forth in the pages of the New Testament; nothing more and nothing less is appropriate or legitimate in corporate, public worship on the Lord’s Day. Reformed churches, however, have not been able to agree fully on the *application* of this principle. Among the divisive issues is the use of instrumental accompaniment and “special music” by choir or vocalists. Some congregations observe exclusive psalm-singing. More recently, debates have arisen over “contemporary worship,” including the legitimacy of drama, dance, and Scripture songs in place of (or alongside of) the traditional hymns of the church. Controversy also surrounds the use of “church-growth” methodologies in worship, missions and evangelism, a controversy which reflects in part differences between Old School and New School Presbyterianism in the nineteenth century. According to the regulative principle, explains Reymond, “true worship may include only those matters which God has either expressly commanded in Scripture or which may be deduced from Scripture by good and necessary consequence.”⁵⁰ Reymond urges that worship be “biblical, spiritual, simple, weighty, and reverent.”⁵¹ Even though his application of the Reformed principle of worship is somewhat wooden, Reymond’s discussion is highly instructive for evangelical and Reformed churches at the close of the twentieth century. I maintain that there is room for (cultural) diversity as reflected in music and in liturgical forms and practices, be they “formal” or “informal.”

With regard to the doctrinal and confessional life of the church Reymond rightly contends that “the church must reflect deeply on the truth of God’s Word and frame what it finds there in symbols and confessions in order better to engender in its members a clear conception of their faith and to convey to outsiders a definite understanding of its doctrines.”⁵² This responsibility cannot be emphasized enough. One of the pressing needs among the Reformed churches today is a modern creedal statement formulated in the context of present-day challenges and controversies.⁵³ Evangelical Reformed Christianity will not survive this new millennium unless it takes seriously its obligation to know, love, and revere God’s Word. (Were this to take place, doubtless, many of the lesser problems facing the church would dissipate.) Central to the church’s fulfillment of the Great Commission is the establishment of learning centers as part of the educational ministry and missionary outreach of the church throughout the world.⁵⁴ Here lies the biblical formula for genuine church growth. Reymond sadly notes: “Even the evangelical church shows signs of losing confidence in the convincing and converting power of the gospel message. ... The winning message, it seems, is the one that helps people to solve their temporal problems, improves their self-esteem and makes them feel good about themselves.”⁵⁵

Preaching to the heart and to the mind remains the God-ordained method of building the kingdom of Christ. By his sovereign and powerful working through the preaching

of the Word and the faithful administration of the sacraments God is establishing his everlasting kingdom of life and righteousness.

The basis of admission into the church of Christ is a credible, sincere profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. While catechetical instruction is both advisable and necessary (in order for those converted to the faith to make a *credible* profession of faith), growth in Christian doctrine and life takes place over a lifetime. The presbyterian directory or book of church order describes the government of the church from the lowest judicatory to the highest (from session to presbytery to general assembly). In this system of church government the bond which unites individual churches is twofold: (1) a shared confession of faith; and (2) the book of order. Apostolicity, one of the attributes of the true church, brings into view the requirement for doctrinal purity among the churches.⁵⁶ The chief responsibility of the elders is the spiritual nurture and protection of Christ's flock. Church discipline, exercised in truth and in love, is a matter of moral suasion, not physical coercion.

The second ecclesiastical office in presbyterianism is that of the deacons, those appointed to attend to the temporal needs of the congregation (thus freeing the elders to devote their time and energies to spiritual oversight). Here also, Reformed congregations have manifested divergent understandings of the church's diaconal responsibilities. Properly conceived, "the work of Christian benevolence [has] reference to all the church's needy."⁵⁷ Reymond views this duty of the congregation in caring for the needy within her own walls, however, as merely one of priority. Included in the ministry of the diaconate, he argues, is care for the needy in the community and in the world at large. This all-too-common (mis)understanding confuses the cultic and cultural institutions as established by God after the Fall. Church and state are two distinct and separate realms. By common grace, Christians and nonChristians work and live together; in their civic affairs they are governed by rules and policies laid down by the ministers of the state. One of the responsibilities of civil servants is the protection and care for the poor, the distressed, and the needy within the commonwealth. Beyond this, God has made special provision for the saints by ordaining the office of the deacon as part of the institutional governance of the church. What is required of Christians is the prayerful and responsible allocation of time and talent, finances and other resources, to these cultic and cultural tasks respectively. The church of Christ is not a social organization serving the needs of the secular community; its task is wholly different from that of the state. The church is the communion of the saints gathered for worship and service; its task is to declare God's message of mercy and grace to those who are perishing. Apart from faith in Christ, sinners remain under God's wrath and condemnation.

Until recent years the ecclesiastical offices of elder and deacon had been restricted to men. That policy is now rapidly changing in both evangelical and Reformed communions. There are many ramifications of this debate for the Christian church. For instance, Reymond's understanding of the teaching of Scripture precludes women from having any voice whatsoever in public worship. Presumably, his view would exclude women from ushering, praying, reading Scripture, or rendering musical solos. And what about women serving on committees of the session or assisting in the diaconal work? While Reymond encourages women "to engage in the intellectual discipline of theological study," can that education be put to good use in the church and in the

seminary? Much hard thinking is yet to be done in this area. Reymond points out: “the world of the Old Testament was a patriarchal world. Originally its patriarchy was a perfect patriarchy reflecting the federal headship of the male in the pre-Fall Edenic condition.” The fact that the Fall had introduced injustices and abuses in the male/female relationship (both in the marriage institution and in society as a whole) explains why God was willing in OT times “to recognize and adapt himself to a *sinful* patriarchal culture.”⁶⁸ Such recognition, however, makes it all the more necessary for the New Covenant people of God – those who enjoy the status of full sonship and who are the recipients of the complete revelation of God in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments – to dismantle those barriers which prevent women from exercising their God-given talents and abilities.

5 Eschatology: The Consummation of History

“This area of theology,” writes Reymond, “is the capstone of systematic theology, with every other locus of theology finding its resolution in it.”⁵⁸ As a spokesman for covenant amillennialism, the author anticipates Christ’s second advent to be “the next important messianic event on the horizon.”⁵⁹ It is this event, also called the Day of the Lord, which signals the final judgment, the separation of the wheat from the tares. Are all evangelicals agreed on the import of these two eschatological events, the return of Christ and the last judgment? Sadly, the answer is no. But as Reymond accurately states, “the doctrines of the final judgment and of hell for the impenitent and the unbeliever are among the *cardinal* doctrines of the Christian faith.”⁶⁰ The controversial views of Pinnock are again featured in Reymond’s critique of (radical) evangelical theology and defense of historic Christian teaching on the end times.

Prior to that great and awesome Day, there is the present, interadvental conflict between Israel of the flesh and the true Israel of God. This conflict is but one aspect of the spiritual battle fought in the earthly and the heavenly realms, a warfare involving the entire cosmos. While the hardening of the Jews at the outset of the Christian era means blessing for the Gentiles, the apostle Paul anticipates the complete accomplishment of God’s redemptive purpose. Through the preaching of the gospel to both Jew and Gentile, God is calling the full number of the elect to faith and repentance. Together, believing Jews and Gentiles comprise the Israel of God.

“The instrumentality of the church’s proclamation of the gospel,” explains Reymond (in opposition to the teachings of premillennialism), “meets all the details of [Rom] 11:26 as well as or better than the instrumentality of Christ’s second coming.”⁶¹ To offer any other word of hope to unbelieving Jews would amount to the preaching of another gospel. Israel’s former, ethnic identity as the chosen people of God has no significance with respect to the heavenly reward to be enjoyed by all those who are elect in Christ. The earthly land of Canaan is no longer the site of God’s (theocratic) dwelling; the temple of Jerusalem has been destroyed, never again to serve as the sacred place of worship; the altar of sacrifice has been replaced by the heavenly throne upon which the victorious Lamb of God is seated in power and glory. “It is indeed a strange twist of thinking, if not outright disloyalty to the gospel,” observes Reymond, “for the Christian to aid or abet the Jew in the retention of these Jewish distinctives which provide him the ground for his hope of salvation, the holding on to which only solidifies him in his unbelief.”⁶² Failure to recognize these teachings of biblical eschatology

betrays a fundamental misreading of the Old Covenant. Indeed, “[realized] eschatology is the capstone of systematic theology.” It is that which draws together all the strands of redemptive revelation. Hopefully, renewed appreciation of amillennial covenant theology will be one of the many rewards of reading and digesting *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*.

References

- * Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998).
- ¹ Two recent works in Reformed systematics which incorporate the distinctive contributions of biblical theology (with different degrees of success) are Gordon J. Spykman, *Reformational Theology: A New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), and Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, 1993). For a broad perspective on developments in contemporary evangelicalism, see Gary Dorrien, *The Remaking of Evangelical Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998). Dorrien favors the revisionist school represented by such writers as Stanley Grenz and Clark Pinnock.
 - ² Compare Mark W. Karlberg, “Doctrinal Development in Scripture and Tradition: A Reformed Assessment of the Church’s Theological Task,” *CTJ* 30 (1995), pp. 401-418. On problems relating to creedal subscription, see *The Practice of Confessional Subscription*, ed. David W. Hall (New York: University Press of America, 1995).
 - ³ Consult especially, Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991).
 - ⁴ For a succinct overview of various contemporary theologies see the study by Donald K. McKim, *The Bible in Theology and Preaching: How Preachers Use Scripture* (Nashville, Abingdon, 1985).
 - ⁵ *A New Systematic Theology*, p. xxi.
 - ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xxxiv.
 - ⁷ See the provocative work of John H. Leith, *The Reformed Imperative: What the Church Has to Say That No One Else Can Say* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988).
 - ⁸ David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth: Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1993); *God in the Wasteland: The Reality of Truth in a World of Fading Dreams* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994); *Losing Our Virtue: Why the Church Must Recover Its Moral Vision* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). John H. Leith in *From Generation to Generation: The Renewal of the Church According to the Church According to Its Own Theology and Practice* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox 1990) offers an analysis of the contemporary church that differs from, yet compliments, Wells’.
 - ⁹ *A New Systematic Theology*, p. 17.
 - ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 52, original italicized.
 - ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 102.
 - ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 102, n.19.
 - ¹³ For my critique of Frame’s (multi-)perspectivalism, see “On the Theological Correlation of Divine and Human Language: A Review Article,” *JETS* 32 (1989), pp. 99-105; and for my critique of Frame on Van Til, see “John Frame and the Recasting of Van Tilian Apologetics: A Review Article,” *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 9 (1993), pp. 279-296. Regarding the discipline of systematics, Van Til maintains that Reformed theology “is not a system of theology in accordance with a logical methodology borrowed from Aristotle or from Kant. On the other hand, it is not chaos. Biblical truth is systematic; that is, it is orderly. Its various doctrines are not deductions from a common central theological principle, but they stand in orderly relation to one another. The one is meaningless without the other. They supplement

one another. Together, they form what may properly be called a system of truth; that is, the content of Scripture is an analogical system of truth" (*The Theology of James Daane* [Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1959], p. 123).

¹⁴ Reymond writes: "Certainly there are biblical concepts that we cannot fully understand. ... Such concepts are *mysterics* to us, but they are not contradictions in terms." In a footnote he adds: "If someday [God] tells us how he did these things, then of course we will be able to understand them" (*A New Systematic Theology*, p. 107, n.31).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1112.

¹⁷ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960) 1.1.

¹⁸ *A New Systematic Theology*, p. 152.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 162; cf. pp. 166-67. Reymond perpetuates an ancient tradition of exegesis. Dissenting from this interpretation, I contend that the Johannine text speaks contrastingly of two ways of worship observed by the people of God: under the Mosaic economy worship focused upon the holy, theocratic site in Jerusalem, whereas under the New Covenant worship is unrestricted. The contrast is redemptive-historical and eschatological. "Spirit" has reference to the (Spiritual) presence of God in the midst of his people (there is some overlap here with the letter/Spirit contrast as that pertains to the two covenants, the Mosaic and the New; see especially the argument set forth in the Letter to the Hebrews). In his Gospel, John is particularly fond of comparing OT shadows with NT realities. Jn 4:24 is one instance of it.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 173, 174.

²¹ See the illuminating work of Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Baker Biblical Monograph; Grand Rapids, Baker, 1980). Elsewhere Kline writes: "In pre-Consummation earth history the heavenly Glory-Presence has appeared occasionally in localized symbolic fashion in the form of the theophanic Glory-cloud. This earthly projection is identified in the Bible as the Spirit, and accordingly the heavenly reality, while a trinitarian manifestation, is more particularly identified with the Spirit." He continues: "There is then an eternally continuing Glory-embodiment of God's Spirit-Presence in creation, shaping creation and constituting it a temple. The primal creation event that brought this Glory-Spirit epiphany into existence (Gen 1:1) may be called the endoxation of the Spirit. It is comparable to the incarnation of the Son. Incarnate Son and endoxate Spirit are both living embodiments of the God of Glory" ("The Exaltation of Christ," *Kerux* 12/3 [December 1997], p. 12).

²² Geerharus Vos, the pioneer of twentieth-century Reformed biblical theology, was also a notable dogmatician. Standing in that same tradition today is Meredith G. Kline, whose literary output has been significant. See the forthcoming *festschrift* written in his honor. My article is entitled "Reformed Theology as the Theology of the Covenants: The Contributions of Meredith G. Kline to Reformed Systematics" (in *Creator, Redeemer, and Consummator: Essays in Biblical Theology Presented to Meredith G. Kline*, eds. H. Griffith and J. R. Muehler (Greenville: Reformed Academic Press, forthcoming). This writing, as well as others cited in the present article, can also be found in my *Covenant Theology in Reformed Perspective: Collected essays and book reviews in historical, biblical, and systematic theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2000).

²³ *A New Systematic Theology*, p. 325.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 336.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 355. Compare Paul K. Jewett, *Election and Predestination* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), and my review of this book in *WTJ* 48 (1986), p. 388-91. See also the "Declaration of Faith Regarding Predestination," written on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Reformed Church in Japan, published in *Theological Forum* 26 (1998), pp.

- 27-42; the same issue carries Richard A. Muller's positive evaluation, "Declaring the Faith Today: The Reformed Church in Japan on Predestination" (, pp. 3-46).
- ²⁶ *A New Systematic Theology* 377; cf. p. 414.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 392.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 396. Compare the discussion in *Three Views on Creation and Evolution*, eds. J. P. Moreland and J. M. Reymonds (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, forthcoming).
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 397-403.
- ³⁰ See especially Van Til's *The Theology of James Daane*. Concerning true knowledge of God after the Fall, both Murray and Reymond oppose a natural theology standing independently of God's supernatural revelation. Reymond's appeal, however, to the christomonistic formulation of T. H. L. Parker in this discussion is unfortunate. Surely Reymond does not advocate neoorthodoxy, but his extreme supralapsarianism does blur the biblical distinction between creation and redemption, and between common grace and special grace. Kim Riddlebarger in "The Lion of Princeton: Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield on Apologetics, Theological Method and Polemics" (Ph.D. dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1997) argues unpersuasively that Warfield's natural theology is biblical and presuppositionalist; his case rests on Warfield's belief in the absolute necessity of the regenerative work of the Spirit for understanding God's revelation in nature and in Scripture. "Despite the unfortunate and ill-deserved confusion that surrounds his methodology," writes Riddlebarger, "B. B. Warfield must be placed among the most significant American apologetists of the period" (p. 132). Lacking in this work is substantive interaction with the theological argument and apologetic of Van Til, as well as other exponents of this school of thought.
- ³¹ Better is Reymond's statement that "The covenant of works reflects the fact that the most fundamental obligation of man the creature to God his Creator always has been, is now, and always will be obedience to the will of the Creator. As *covenant* creature (and therefore always as either covenant *keeper* or covenant *breaker*), man is always ultimately related to God on a *legal* (covenantal) basis" (*A New Systematic Theology*, p. 439). Consult further Mark W. Karlberg, "The Original State of Adam: Tensions in Reformed Theology," *EvQ* 59 (1987), pp. 291-309.
- ³² The angels, like our first parents, were initially placed on probation; those who with Satan rebelled against God were cast out from the Presence of God. There is an ethical dimension to creaturely knowledge of God. Failure to guard the holy temple of God in the garden of Eden culminated in Adam's expulsion from the earthly sanctuary, just as the evil angels were previously cast out from the heavenly sanctuary. Compare my "Israel Under Probation: An Evaluation of Frank Thielman's *Paul and the Law*," paper read at the regional meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in Valley Forge, PA (April 4, 1995), and "The Significance of Israel in Biblical Typology," *JETS* 31 (1988), p. 257-69.
- ³³ *A New Systematic Theology*, p. 492.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 509.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 544. Compare the helpful collection of essays in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. J. S. Feinberg (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1988), and in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition*, eds. C. A. Blaising and D. L. Bock (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1992). I have reviewed the former volume in my "Israel and the Eschaton: A Review Article," *WTJ* 54 (1992), pp. 135-152.
- ³⁶ See Mark W. Karlberg, "The Search for an Evangelical Consensus on Paul and the Law," *JETS* 40 (1997), pp. 563-79; and my "Paul's Letter to the Romans in the *New International Commentary on the New Testament* and in Contemporary Reformed Thought," *EvQ* 71 (1999), pp. 3-24. Consult also P. T. O'Brien, "Justification in Paul and Some Crucial Issues of the Last Two Decades," *Right with God: Justification in the Bible and the World*, ed. D.

- A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), pp. 69-95. Edmund P. Clowney in "The Biblical Doctrine of Justification by Faith," *Right with God* (pp. 17-50) cites the study paper "Westminster Statement on Justification" (May, 1980) drawn up by the faculty of Westminster Seminary addressing issues in the seminary's doctrinal controversy on justification, a controversy that has divided both faculty and constituency since the mid-1970s. On the broader context of these debates, see the collection of essays in *Presbyterion* 8/1 (1982) and Reymond's summary analysis in *A New Systematic Theology*, pp. 431-22.
- 37 Compare B. B. Warfield's superb treatment in *The Plan of Salvation: A Study of the Basic and Essential Differences Between Various Interpretations of the Christian Religion* (Revised edition; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970). See also my review of G. Michael Thomas' recent study, *The Extent of the Atonement: A Dilemma for Reformed Theology from Calvin to the Consensus* in *TrinJ* 20 NS (1999), pp. 116-119.
- 38 *A New Systematic Theology*, p. 704. Compare Anthony A. Hoekema's treatment in *Saved by Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989).
- 39 Reymond questions Murray's analysis of the *ordo*, specifically, his contention that union with Christ is foundational to the entire process, wherein regeneration is seen as the result of God's initial act in effectually calling sinners to Christ (*A New Systematic Theology*, p. 716).
- 40 Reymond adds the clarifying comment: "the Scriptures will not permit us to believe that, because God elected certain people in Christ from all eternity, they have therefore always enjoyed the fullness of his favor in history and that for them there is no transition from wrath to grace in history. ... It is only when they are brought to faith in Christ by their effectual calling that the elect *actually* become partakers of Christ and of the salvific blessings of his cross work" (*ibid.*, p. 737).
- 41 Reymond espouses the common, but problematic, view that rewards in heaven result in gradation among believers: *A New Systematic Theology*, pp. 750-52, 1020-22.
- 42 I would add that the sequel, "The Gift of Salvation," does not fare any better. See the remarks by W. Robert Godfrey in "A Discussion on Justification," *The Outlook* 49/2 (February 1999), pp. 5-7.
- 43 *A New Systematic Theology*, p. 746, n.54.
- 44 Consult Philip Eveson, *The Great Exchange: Justification by Faith Alone in the Light of Recent Thought* (Bromley: Day One, 1996), and the "Interview with Peter Jensen" in *Modern Reformation* 8/2 (March/April 1999), pp. 19-23.
- 45 See the useful collection of essays in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982).
- 46 *A New Systematic Theology*, pp. 765, 766.
- 47 *Ibid.*, p. 761.
- 48 *Ibid.*, p. 806.
- 49 See further, J. A. Heyns, *The Church*, trans. D. R. Briggs (Pretoria: N. G. Kerkboekhandel Transvaal, 1980), and Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church* (Contours of Christian Theology; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995).
- 50 *A New Systematic Theology*, p. 870.
- 51 *Ibid.*, p. 872. Consult *Leading in Worship: A Sourcebook for Presbyterian Students and Ministers Drawing Upon the Biblical and Historic Forms of the Reformed Tradition*, ed. T. L. Johnson (Oak Ridge, TN: The Covenant Foundation, 1996), and Hughes Oliphant Old, *Worship That is Reformed According to Scripture* (Guides to the Reformed Tradition; Atlanta: John Knox, 1984). See also my "Music in Worship: An Historical Sketch and Theological Appraisal," *The Outlook* 49/9 (October 1999), pp. 3-6.
- 52 *A New Systematic Theology*, p. 878.
- 53 See note 2 above.

- ⁵⁴ Reymond places special weight on seminary training; see my discussion in “Current Theological Trends in Reformed Seminaries: The Dilemma in Ministerial Education,” paper read the Eastern regional meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in Lancaster, Pennsylvania (April 3, 1998).
- ⁵⁵ *A New Systematic Theology*, p. 882.
- ⁵⁶ Concerning the minister of the gospel, Reymond writes: “He is ever to bear in mind that his authority as a minister is subordinate to the authority of Scripture. . . . he must not take offense when his auditors examine the Scriptures, as did the Bereans (Acts 17:11), to see if what he is preaching is true” (p. 917).
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 892.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 980. Consult further the amillennial studies by Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), and G.K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (The New International Greek Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).
- ⁵⁹ *A New Systematic Theology*, p. 1023.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1084.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1029.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 1031.

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The Lord poured out his Spirit with sovereign freedom. This is encouraging. We cannot trigger the Spirit’s downpour but we should always abound in hope, for we live in the age of the Spirit.

The Lord Jesus may at any time and under any circumstances grant us a fresh bestowment of his Spirit. And we can be certain that nothing will defeat God’s purpose whenever he chooses to renew a season of unusual spiritual richness. How can any opposition down here on earth restrain the outpouring of the Spirit from on high? It is God’s free decision, effortless accomplishment, and sovereign purpose. ‘I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Sovereign Lord’ (Ezek. 39:29). At any time, in any measure, upon any church, the Sovereign Lord is able to send the showers of his Spirit, for his greater glory, our richer joy, and the salvation of the nations.

God has promised us this blessing. ‘I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh’ (Joel 2:28). ‘The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call’ (Acts 2:39). Now let us seek his promise. Let us seek it earnestly, laying hold of him in prayer and not letting go. Let us seek it wisely, not sitting around waiting for ‘a special motion of the Spirit before we act, but confidently obeying our Lord’s comminds to go and speak at any price and against all opposition and ridicule, even as we continue to pray. He will empower us, according to his will, as we are moving forward in faithful obedience.

Raymond Ortlund in *Revival Sent From God*, commenting on Joel 2:28-29 in reference to the ministry of Jonathan Edwards
