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Dr Andrew Curry

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The Irish Baptist Historical Society

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EDITORIAL

In this journal I am pleased to present a collection of articles taken from lectures delivered under the auspices of the Irish Baptist Historical Society during 2025. Together, they reflect our ongoing commitment to exploring the people, ideas, and practices that have shaped Baptist life in Ireland and beyond.

The opening article by Jared Mays examines the life and ministry of Christopher Blackwood, Dublin pastor and theologian. By situating Blackwood within his historical and ecclesial context, this study brings renewed attention to a significant yet often overlooked figure in Irish Baptist history a pastor who significantly shaped the ethos and theology of early Irish Baptists.

Dr Karina Wendling, Associate Professor at the University of Lorraine addresses the complex relationship between language, power, and Irish Baptist mission. Her article dives into the long and complex history of Gaelic suppression in Ireland—from medieval laws designed to crush Irish culture, to the radical shift brought by Baptist missionary movements determined to bring the Bible to Irish-speaking Catholics in their native tongue. Drawing from rare archival material spanning Oxford, Dublin, and the Vatican, she reveals how unlikely religious alliances and colonial strategies reshaped the relationship between faith, identity, and language in Ireland. She demonstrates how the Irish language—once seen as rebellious—became a tool for conversion and cultural negotiation, and how Baptist innovations opened the way for a new appreciation of the Irish language by Protestants, at least in Ireland.

The final article is a review by Michael A. G. Haykin examines Carl R. Trueman's *Classical Theology for the Modern Mind*, a concise yet weighty contribution addressing the place of classical Trinitarianism and Christology within contemporary Evangelical and Reformed contexts. Though modest in length, Trueman's work advances a

compelling argument for the retrieval of historic theological formulations in the life and worship of the church. Haykin carefully engages the book's central themes, highlighting both its critique of modern evangelical tendencies and its call to recover the riches of patristic and Reformation thought. In light of ongoing discussions concerning theological method, tradition, and the nature of God, this review provides a timely and thoughtful assessment of Trueman's proposal and its significance for present-day ecclesial life.
It is with sadness that I will no longer be able serve on the committee of the Irish Baptist Historical society due to an international move. I remain grateful for the work of the society and look forward to continuing to learn about our rich inheritance of theological practice through future journals the society will produce.
"The writing of Church-history is the duty of all ages, because God's works are to be known, as well as his Word." Richard Baxter

DR. ANDREW CURRY

Jared Mays (MA, PhD)

Jared has served as the Global Seminary Coordinator for RTIM since 2025. Prior to this role, he and his family were sent by Third Avenue Baptist Church to serve the local church in Northern Ireland. During this time, Jared completed his PhD at Queen's University Belfast. Jared is passionate about equipping pastors around the world with world-class theological training for faithful service in local churches and has worked in academic contexts for eight years. In addition to his role with RTIM, he researches and writes on seventeenth-century theology and the development of denominational identity. Jared and his wife, Zoe, live in Louisville, Kentucky, with their four children—Knox, Callum, Graham, and Elsie Kate—and are members of Third Avenue Baptist Church.

Karina Bénazech Wendling (MPhil, PhD)

Karina is an Associate Professor at Université de Lorraine/IDEA and Associate Researcher at LEM-CNRS. She holds a PhD in History and Anthropology of Religions from EPHE-PSL. Her research explores transatlantic religious education and politics in the long 18th century, focusing on Ireland, Haiti, and the Americas. A specialist in Irish history, she has taught at several French universities and previously worked in secondary education. She received multiple research grants for her work on Protestant missions and education in Ireland.

Michael A. G. Azad Haykin (B.A., M.Rel., Th.D.)

Michael Haykin is Director of The Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies and Professor of Church History and Biblical Spirituality. Dr. Haykin has taught Church History at different institutions in North America and abroad for over 40 years. He is a member of the Royal Historical Society and Evangelical Theological Society among others. Haykin is married to Alison and they have two children.

CHRISTOPHER BLACKWOOD: DUBLIN PASTOR AND THEOLOGIAN

JARED MAYS

Within the spectrum of Christian traditions, Baptists are often styled as the blue-collar bunch. Anglicans have long claimed linkage to the ancient church. Presbyterian and Reformed groups bring to mind a high view of God and complex, abstract theology to match. In the 21st century west, if you were to ask many lay-Christians, "which Christian denomination heavily utilizes the Christian tradition in order to articulate complex theological concepts?," not many people would name Baptists. While it may be true that over time, Baptist theology has tended towards pragmatism and even anti-intellectualism, this could not be said for some of the group's first leaders. Key among these leaders was the Dublin pastor and theologian, Christopher Blackwood (1606–1670). As we look to Blackwood's writing, there are two major themes that I want us to see: his use of the Christian tradition and his desire for Christian unity. In order to do this, I will provide a very brief sketch of Blackwood's background and the Baptist context in Ireland in the 1650s, before we look at Blackwood's theology of Christian unity and his use of sources in two of his major works, *A Soul Searching Catechism,* first published in 1653 and republished in 1658 and Blackwood's magnum opus, a commentary on Matthew entitled, *Expositions and Sermons Upon the Ten First Chapters of the Gospel of Jesus*

Christ, according to Matthew, published in 1659.

This brief look at Blackwood will give us important insight, not only into 17th century Irish Baptist history, but Baptist theology more broadly in the very days that it was blossoming. What we will see is a pastor who desired to maintain links with the Christian past, and with his Christian brothers of other denominational persuasions. This use of the past and desire for unity is what I am calling Baptist catholicity.

Blackwood's background gave him a unique ability to argue for both theological unity and diversity. Educated at Pembroke College, Cambridge and ordained in the established church in 1628, Blackwood's interest in non-conformity grew over time. His involvement in non-conforming circles eventually caused him to reevaluate the validity of infant baptism. Eighteen years after his ordination, Blackwood was convinced of anti-pedobaptism by the "General Baptist" ministers, Francis Cornewell and William Jeffery.[1] After his conversion to anti-pedobaptism, Blackwood continued his relationship with the "General Baptists" and ministered alongside Richard Kingsnorth (d. 1677) in a new congregation at Staplehurst, despite never giving up his Calvinistic soteriology.[2] Tensions arose, however, between two over their views on the extent of the atonement and Kingsnorth was chosen over Blackwood to pastor the Staplehurst congregation.[3]

The diversity of Blackwood's ecclesiastical background must be taken into account as we examine his catholicity and theological method. His formal education gave him the abilities of a scholastic theologian, that is, one who can articulate theology as they did in the

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[1] D. Brown, 'Christopher Blackwood: Portrait of a Seventeenth Century Baptist' in *Baptist Quarterly*, 32:1 (1987), pp. 28–29.

[2] M. B. Yarnell III, 'Christopher Blackwood 1605–1670' in M. A. G. Haykin and T. Wolever (eds), *The British Particular Baptists*, Vol 1, 2nd ed. (Springfield, 2019), 120.

[3] 'Account of the Original of the Church of Spilshill in Steplehurst,' p. 768, cited in Yarnell III, 'Christopher Blackwood 1605–1670,' p. 121.

universities. His being in Cambridge, in particular, in the early 17th century also meant that he was exposed to Puritan ideas. Cambridge was considered the hotbed of Puritanism at that time, and the Puritan emphasis on continually Reforming church practices surely had an impact on Blackwood. Lastly, his General Baptist background exposed him to ideas that were not common to Calvinistic Baptists, namely, the laying on of hands after baptism. While Blackwood would essentially cut all formal ties with the General Baptists, he kept this curious aspect of their practice (LOoH). Interestingly, it was the laying on of hands, where we see some of Blackwood's strongest appeals to the church fathers.

In 1652, Blackwood began pastoring a Baptist congregation in Dublin after he came to Ireland as a chaplain to Charles Fleetwood's army.[4] By the time of his arrival, Baptists held a disproportionate amount of power in Ireland.[5] When Fleetwood arrived, the island was already conquered by the English Republicans other than a few rebellious pockets which survived in the west.[6] Thomas Patient (d. 1666), a signer of both the 1644 and 1646 Baptist confessions, arrived several years before Blackwood in 1650 and was already exerting a baptistic influence over Congregationalist churches.[7] T.C. Barnard has argued that the Baptist cause in Ireland was closely linked to the army, meaning that the rise and decline of baptistic ideas coincided with the rise and decline of military control of the

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[4] Brown, 'Christopher Blackwood: Portrait of a Seventeenth Century Baptist' p. 31.

[5] John Cunningham, "Divided Conquerors: The Rump Parliament, Cromwell's Army and Ireland." *The English Historical Review* 129, no. 539 (2014): pp. 835–836.

[6] T. C. Barnard, 'Fleetwood, Charles, appointed Lord Fleetwood under the protectorate (c. 1618–1692), army officer' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 23 Sep. 2004; Accessed 18 Apr. 2023. https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-9684.

[7] Larry J. Kreitzer, *William Kiffen and His World* (Centre for Baptist History and Heritage, 2018), pp. 215–216.

island.[8] This meant that there was already an existing network of Baptist leaders and churches into which Blackwood could disseminate his ideas. Blackwood's ongoing affiliation with the Baptists in London also meant that his writing is of great relevance to understanding the larger Baptist movement as it continued to develop in England. In 1677, for example, the prominent Baptist minister Thomas DeLaune (d. 1685) named Blackwood as a strong defender against infant baptism.[9] Another prominent Baptist leader, Benjamin Keach, cited Blackwood throughout the 1680s and 90s. Given his influence in Ireland and his later influence in England, Blackwood's writing is relevant to understanding the development of Baptist theology, especially what I am calling, Baptist catholicity. In order to understand Blackwood's theology of catholicity, we must understand how he viewed the spirituality of the church. Upon Blackwood's conversion to the Baptist position, he published a treatise against the practice of infant baptism entitled *The Storming of Antichrist* (1644) which, despite its polemical nature, revealed Blackwood's conception of catholicity. In *The Storming of Antichrist*, Blackwood's zeal for his newfound position was apparent, but so too was his educational background and knowledge of the church fathers. Blackwood's work made several appeals to the patristic tradition and attempted to show the catholic identity of Baptists. Blackwood's understanding of catholicity was spiritual rather than visible or national. Citing the Zurich Reformer, Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531), Blackwood wrote,

Catholick, [comprehends] all the elect or body of Christ, borne

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[8] T. C. Barnard, *Cromwellian Ireland: English Government and Reform in Ireland 1649–1660* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 101–102.

[9] Thomas DeLaune, *Truth Defended. Or, A Triple Answer to the Late Triumvirates Opposition in their Three Pamphlets Viz. Mr. Baxter's Review, Mr. Wills His Censure, Mr. Whiston's Postscript to His Essay, &c. with Mr. Hutchinson's Letter to Mr. Baxter a Little before His Death. and a Postscript in Answer to Mr. William Walker's Modest Plea for Infants Baptism. by Tho. DeLaune* (London, 1677), p. 6.

or unborne, which were purchased with Christs blood (Eph. 5:25)...The Fathers were wont to call the Church Catholike, in opposition to Heretikes; and in opposition to the Churches formerly closed up in Judaea, but not dreaming of any such united visible body here upon earth, also in respect that all believers had one and the same faith.[10]

Blackwood argued that it was believers' being united in the same faith that made them catholic, not being a part of any particular ecclesial body. It was their profession of faith in Christ that would cause them to be united to a visible manifestation of the catholic church in the form of the local church. He argued,

Profession, That which makes us members of the Catholike, I mean Christs bodie,... I say that which makes us members of the catholike, the profession hereof makes us members of a particular Church, faith doth the one, the profession of faith doth the other, Acts 8.37, 38. Acts 19.18. and this profession is required in New England before any person is admitted as a member. Now infants baptisme utterly destroyes this note, being they are members already.[11]

It is worth noting that despite Blackwood's articulation of spiritual catholicity, he still believed in membership in a particular visible church which logically entailed believer's baptism. In this way the spiritual nature of the church was directly connected to Baptist catholicity.

Blackwood's articulation of catholicity contained several features significant for Baptists. First, Blackwood emphasized catholicity in terms of an invisible, spiritual unity of faith and not in terms of a visible magisterial body. Second, that visible magisterial body which claimed to the Catholic church (Roman Catholicism) was seen as a "monster" more influenced by "Antichrist" than Christ. This theme of Roman anti-catholicity was common among the Baptists and, in

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[10] Blackwood, *The storming of Antichrist,* pp. 6–7.

[11] Blackwood, *The storming of Antichrist*, p. 17.

truth, all Reformed Protestant groups.

By the time *A Soul Searching Catechism* was republished in 1658, Blackwood was well established as the pastor of the Dublin congregation. His pastoral inclinations were on display in his epistle to the reader, where Blackwood described the catechism as a practical tool to be used by ordinary Christian families. He believed that to preach the truth without catechesis was akin to constructing a building without laying a foundation.[12] Blackwood hoped his catechism would be a theological foundation for the Christians in his church, to the point that Blackwood provided a shorter children's catechism at the end of work for those unable to memorise the standard version.[13] This meant that the catechism was not a polemical work or intended to fuel theological debate. Whether Blackwood's catechism discussed the doctrine of God, theology of baptism, or the practice of the laying on of hands, it was meant to instruct the lay-Christian in their daily life. To this end, Blackwood began the catechism with a call to Christian unity. "If thou art different in judgement from me in some one Point proposed," Blackwood pleaded, "yet let not that hinder thee from informing others in the rest of the Points wherein we are agreed."[14]

In order to show this agreement, Blackwood utilised historic orthodox language throughout the catechism on subjects like the doctrine of God, the Trinity, and the Incarnation. For example, Blackwood began his catechism by setting forth proofs for God's existence which echoed the Western Christian tradition. He argued that all effects entail a cause, and therefore, God must be the "first universal cause."[15] This type of argument, commonly referred to as a "cosmological argument," was common in Western philosophy as early as Plato's *Laws* and Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, however, the Christian articulation of the cosmological argument was primarily

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[12] Blackwood, *A soul-searching catechism*, p. unnumbered.
[13] Blackwood, *A soul-searching catechism*, p. unnumbered.
[14] Blackwood, *A soul-searching catechism*, p. unnumbered.
[15] Blackwood, *A soul-searching catechism*, p. 1.

developed by Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) in his *Summa Theologiae* and *Summa Contra Gentiles*.[16] Blackwood also argued that one cannot understand God "in his essence" or "as he is."[17] This too, echoed the thought of Aquinas who argued that because of God's transcendence, his nature and essence cannot be understood in totality.[18] While Blackwood did not cite Aquinas directly on these points, he did cite him by name in other works, so he would have been aware of Aquinas' thought. Whatever the case, it is apparent in the opening pages of his catechism that Blackwood was heavily relying on commonly accepted theological terminology.

Throughout the catechism, Blackwood also showed his rootedness in the common Reformed vocabulary of his day. On God's election of persons to salvation, for example, Blackwood argued that God predestined certain persons to destruction.[19] A theology of reprobation, or "double predestination" as it is sometimes called, was a feature in the writings of the English theologian, William Perkins (1558–1602) who, in turn, claimed the doctrine was consistent with Augustine and Aquinas.[20] A theology of reprobation was common in many Reformed authors, including Theodore Beza (1519–1605) and was not at all inconstant with the theology of

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[16] Bruce Reichenbach, "Cosmological Argument," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2024 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2024/entries/cosmological-argument/>.

On Aquinas' articulation of the cosmological argument, he wrote, "One is therefore forced to suppose some first cause, to which everyone gives the name 'God.'" Thomas Aquinas, ST II, q. 2, a. 3.

[17] Blackwood, *A soul-searching catechism*, p. 2.

[18] Casey Edler, "Thomas Aquinas and the Kalam Cosmological Argument: Tension at the Heart of Natural Theology," (PhD diss., University of St. Thomas (Houston), 2016) pp 26–34.

[19] Blackwood, *A soul-searching catechism* (London, 1653), p. 6.

[20] William Perkins, *Works*, Volume 6, Joel R. Beeke and Greg A Salazar (eds) (Grand Rapids, 2018), pp. 18–21.

Calvin himself.[21] Blackwood also echoed strands of the Reformed tradition when he spoke of the three-fold office of Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King.[22] While not exclusively responsible for the proliferation of the three-fold office of Christ, Calvin placed a certain "accent" on the three-fold office which was similar in the Heidelberg Catechism and was seen throughout the Reformed tradition.[23] Given his educational background at Puritan Cambridge, Blackwood was likely aware of these common Reformed categories and, therefore, saw fit to include them in his catechism. This reveals not only Blackwood's education and exposure to the wider resources of the Christian tradition, but also his eagerness to use these categories in his writing. Even if indirect, Blackwood's adoption of both Thomistic and Reformed terminology is instructive for our understanding of Baptist catholicity, especially when one considers that the catechism was intended for the everyday Christian.

This brings us to Blackwood's reliance on patristic sources, both indirectly through general influence and directly through citations. One indirect example is Blackwood's belief that evil is the privation of good, a concept which finds its roots in Augustine.[24] Blackwood wrote, "So the sun causes darkness, not by overcasting the air, but hiding his light."[25] While this concept came from Augustine, it also became the normative way to conceptualise evil in Western theological and philosophical thought, so it is unclear if Blackwood cited this directly from Augustine, or whether this concept was something that he learned or came to believe intuitively. There is, however, one subject in Blackwood's catechism in which he

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[21] D. C. Steinmetz, 'Theodore Beza (1519–1605): Eternal Predestination and Divine Sovereignty' in *Reformers in the Wings: From Geiler von Kaysersberg to Theodore Beza*, 2nd ed (Oxford, 2003), pp. 114–120.

[22] Blackwood, *A soul-searching catechism*, p. 17.

[23] L. F. Schulze, "Calvyn en die Heidelbergse Kategismus," in *die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi,* Volume 27 Number 4 (11 June 1993), pp. 487–499.

[24] P. K. H. Djung, 'Augustine's Account of Evil as Privation of Good' in *Jurnal Teologi Reformed Indonesia*, 4/1 (2014), 43–55.

[25] Blackwood, *A soul-searching catechism*, p. 10.

appealed directly to the church fathers as an authority: the laying on of hands.

Blackwood believed that the New Testament presented the laying on of hands in two instances that were still normative for churches today; the ordination of persons to church offices and the "laying on of hands after baptism, which is a praying for an increase of the Spirit on baptised persons."[26] Blackwood was aware that this belief would receive pushback, so he immediately sought to combat objections by arguing that the "laying on of hands on baptised persons after baptisme [is] an Apostolical institution, or an Ordinance of Jesus Christ."[27] He grounded this claim in his interpretation of Hebrew 6:1–2, where he argued that the laying on of hands was a fundamental principle of the Christian faith. Blackwood believed that "an increase of the Spirit [is] conveyed in laying on of hands."[28] For Blackwood, just as there is a special conveyance of grace in the ordinances of the Lord's Supper, prayer, preaching, and baptism, so too is there a special "increase" of the Holy Spirit in the laying on of hands.[29] He saw the laying on of hands as a necessary ordinance like any other. Just as it would be error to reject preaching or the Lord's Supper, so too would it be an error to neglect the laying on of hands after baptism.

In order to reinforce his argument for the laying on of hands, Blackwood appealed to the ubiquity of the practice in the patristic tradition. "Lest any man think this a new doctrine," he argued, "let him consult the Fathers, who oft mention laying on of hands after Baptisme."[30] This is the only place in the catechism where Blackwood explicitly invoked the authority of the church fathers. He also provided a list of church fathers and sources for catechumens to consult on this practice. Included were Tertullian, Cyprian of

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[26] Blackwood, *A soul-searching catechism*, p. 54.
[27] Blackwood, *A soul-searching catechism*, p. 55.
[28] Blackwood, *A soul-searching catechism*, p. 56.
[29] Blackwood, *A soul-searching catechism*, pp. 54, 56.
[30] Blackwood, *A soul-searching catechism*, p. 58.

Carthage, Augustine, Miltiades, Fabian, Ambrose, Urban, Clement of Rome, and Eusebius. Blackwood's familiarity with these authors, or at least the works that are presented in the catechism, is noteworthy. Blackwood was, in some sense, proof-texting these church fathers in order to vindicate this somewhat eccentric position. This reveals Blackwood's desire for theological catholicity, even on a minority position among baptistic Calvinists such as the laying on of hands.

Blackwood's appropriation of these church fathers teaches us how he understood the use of the Christian past. On the one hand, Blackwood's invocation of these figures was done in such a way that would add legitimacy to his argument. On the other hand, he was not arguing that the laying on of hands was only valid because of its ubiquity in the patristic tradition, rather, he was merely attempting to point out that the doctrine was nothing new. The witness of the church fathers was not Blackwood's final authority but aided in his biblical interpretation. The use of the Christian tradition to bolster exegetical claims was a common theme in Baptist theological method and would continue to play an important role in the coming decades.

Blackwood failed to include any "General Baptist" sources in his case for the laying on of hands even though it was their common practice. Given Blackwood's background amongst the "General Baptists," one might assume that his catechism revealed a desire for catholicity with this Arminian baptistic group. After all, the laying on of hands was not a common position among Blackwood's fellow Calvinistic Baptists, so perhaps Blackwood viewed this distinctive as a point of unity between the Calvinistic and Arminian anti-pedobaptists. William Kiffin, for example, was strongly opposed to the laying on of hands, making Blackwood the only prominent Baptist to argue for the practice until Benjamin Keach several

decades later.[31] One of the "General Baptist" figures who convinced Blackwood of credo baptism in 1644, William Jeffrey, was a well-known advocate for the laying on of hands after baptism.[32] Perhaps Jeffrey's influence on Blackwood extended beyond credobaptism. Despite this background, however, Blackwood never referenced a "General Baptist" figure in his articulation of the practice. Instead, Blackwood was more concerned to show unity with the church fathers. Blackwood's patristic appeals provide one of the strongest examples of catholicity from the Baptists of the 1650s, even if his views on the laying on of hands put him at odds with other Calvinistic Baptist figures.

Blackwood's catholicity extended beyond his catechetical writing and was also evident in his biblical exegesis. In 1659, Blackwood published his largest work entitled *Expositions and Sermons Upon the Ten First Chapters of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, according to Matthew.*[33] Like the catechism, this work was published during his Dublin pastorate and his expositions on Matthew were a product of his preaching ministry. Blackwood compiled several sermons and notes into a biblical commentary which spanned over nine hundred pages in length, making the *Expositions and Sermons* one of the largest single treatises written by a Baptist in the seventeenth century.[34] Not only was this the largest volume Blackwood had written, but more than

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[31] Interestingly, Keach also came from a "General Baptist" background, perhaps finding a kindred spirit in the Calvinistic Blackwood.

[32] Yarnell, 'Christopher Blackwood (1605–1670.' P. 122.

[33] Christopher Blackwood, *Expositions and Sermons Upon the Ten First Chapters of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, according to Matthew. Written by Christopher Blackwood, Preaching to a Church of Christ in the City of Dublin in Ireland* (London, 1659).

[34] The only larger work seems to have been Benjamin Keach and Thomas DeLaune, *Tropologia, Or, A Key to Open Scripture-Metaphors Wherein the most Significant Tropes (as Metaphors, &c.) and Express Similitudes, Respecting the Father, Son & Holy Spirit, as also such as Respect the Sacred Word of God, are Opened, and Parallel-Wise Applied, Together with the Disparities : From which Practical Inferences are Deduced, for Edification of the Reader* (London: 1681).

any other work shows his educational prowess, theological acumen, and —most importantly for this presentation— his knowledge of the Christian tradition. Blackwood's broad citations display his willingness to use thoughts and ideas from anyone that he deemed to be in line with Scripture or aid in his interpretation of Scripture. Like his catechism, Blackwood's *Expositions and Sermons* showed an able knowledge of patristic sources, however, his commentary on Matthew also showed his dependence on medieval thought and his special affinity for Reformed and Protestant commentators.

Blackwood made his knowledge of the church fathers evident throughout the *Expositions and Sermons.* In maintaining the theme of unity and diversity, Blackwood used patristic sources both as a foil and a way to aid in biblical interpretation. In a section which argued against praying to saints, for example, Blackwood appealed to the second and third-century theologians Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Irenaeus, and argued that they spoke against the practice.[35] Blackwood argued that in the third-century, Origen introduced the idea that deceased saints interceded on behalf of Christians. He believed that praying to saints was popularized by eastern theologians such as Cyprian of Carthage, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus.[36] Blackwood's condemnation of Origin and Cyprian is noteworthy because he cited them positively elsewhere.[37] Not only did this show Blackwood's awareness of doctrinal development in the early church, but it also revealed his willingness to both utilize and critically engage with early church authorities. Blackwood's theological method allowed him to use and reject figures in different ways to benefit his biblical interpretation, agreeing with a figure on the one hand and dismissing them on the other. If a given figure had something helpful to say, he could appropriate them as a witness to the orthodox faith, even if he

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[35] Blackwood, *Expositions*, p. 111.

[36] Blackwood, *Expositions*, p. 111.

[37] Blackwood, *The storming of Antichrist*, p. 5; Blackwood, *Expositions*, p. 3, 220.

disagreed with other aspects of their theology. In this way, Blackwood mirrored the Reformed tradition which held of special place of respect for early Christian figures while it prioritized Scripture over tradition.[38]

The most prominent patristic figure in Blackwood's writing was Justin Martyr whose works were cited some twenty-two times.[39] While Martyr is utilized throughout his work, one example gives explicit insight into how Blackwood sought to use historical interpretation in his biblical exegesis. In his exposition of Matthew 5:19–20,[40] Blackwood made the argument that the Decalogue was equivalent to the "Law of Nature." For Blackwood, this explained why certain Old Testament laws were no longer in place at the coming of Christ, yet Jesus taught that the Law was not abolished.[41] Blackwood used Martyr to help him hold this tension between the Old and New Testaments. Quoting Martyr, Blackwood wrote, "Christ the everlasting and final law is given to us, and a faithful Testament, after which Testament there will not be further law, precept, nor any command."[42] Blackwood explained, "These and much more Justin saith, [and] I cite this to abate the heat of some who are too much inclining to Jewish observations, for my self I judge, as before, the Old Testament to be in force, the former restrictions and limitations by me laid down being observed, and so doth Justin."[43] Blackwood's comments here give a keen insight into

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[38] Richard A. Muller, *Post–Reformation Reformed Dogmatics – The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725* (2nd ed), (Grand Rapids, 2003), Vol. 2: p. 348.

[39] Blackwood, *Expositions*, pp. 111, 132, 190, 197, 210, 216, 217, 225, 225–26, 228, 242, 252, 266, 275, 293, 307, 329–28, 378, 381, 396, 489.

[40] "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (KJV).

[41] Blackwood, *Expositions*, p. 3, 224.

[42] Blackwood, *Expositions*, p. 226

[43] Blackwood, *Expositions*, p. 226.

his catholicity. He explained to his readers that he cited Justin so that it might "abate the heat of some." In other words, there was a proactive purpose for referencing the early church figure. While Blackwood could have made his case purely from the biblical text, his appeal to Martyr revealed his desire to appropriate early church figures when it bolstered his biblical interpretation. He wanted his readers to understand that he stood on the shoulders of the Christian past and that he was able to interact with the various exegetical insights of these authors.

Beyond his use of the early church fathers, Blackwood displayed an awareness of the medieval tradition as well, particularly the work Thomas Aquinas and Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153). While his medieval citations were not as extensive as those of the early church fathers, his use of these medieval figures revealed, at minimum, his exposure to and appreciation for these theologians. Aquinas is cited positively in two sections of the *Expositions and Sermons*. In one instance, Blackwood was attempting to explain the desert temptation of Jesus recorded in Matthew chapter 4. In a passage which described the Devil bringing Jesus to the highest point in the temple, Blackwood acknowledged the interpretive difficulty writing, "Then the devil taketh him and setteth him on a Pinacle of the Temple. It's questioned whether the matter were onely in vision?" To answer this question, Blackwood turned to Aquinas. "Now though the devil did so take Christ that he might be seen of all," Blackwood wrote, "yet Christ (as Aquinas observs) did so invisibly act (the devil not knowing it) that he could be beheld of no man, either by hindering the sight of his body, or the sight of their eys."[44] Blackwood utilized Aquinas' interpretation to show the power of Christ in making himself invisible to the world without Satan noticing, certainly an intriguing proposition for Blackwood. Blackwood also cited Aquinas in his exposition of Matthew 10, where he sought to justify Jesus' command to the disciples to carry nothing with them as they were

[44] Blackwood, *Expositions*, pp. 96–97.

sent out. Blackwood explained, "Aquinas saith, It was a custome among the Jews to provide for their Masters, therefore Christ bids them carry nothing when they went to the Jews, but that custome being not among the Gentiles they had power to carry provisions."[45] In both of these citations, we can see Blackwood's appreciation for Aquinas' interpretive insights. Blackwood had a working knowledge of Aquinas' biblical commentary and utilized them him when he saw fit.

Bernard of Clairvaux was a more prevalent medieval figure used in Blackwood's *Expositions and Sermons*. Bernard was a twelfth-century preacher, abbot of the newly founded Cistercian house of Clairvaux, and contemporary of Peter Abelard (d.1142).[46] Referred to by Blackwood simply as "Bernard," the twelfth-century abbot was cited for his biblical interpretation and was commended by Blackwood as a valuable example "concerning the way and method how to preach" and of distinguishing the "Law from the Gospel".[47] In his exposition of Matthew 1:20, Blackwood adopted Bernard's phrase, "Bride of the Holy Ghost," in reference to the Virgin Mary's consent in conceiving Christ. He wrote,

> [Mary] conceived Christ by faith, before she conceived him in her flesh, and her consent was required, that she might as it were (to use Bernards expression) be the Bride of the Holy Ghost, and conceive by him. Besides it was needful the Virgin should know whom she bore in her womb, and whence she conceived.[48]

This use of Bernard shows Blackwood's willingness to appropriate medieval theological categories to aid in biblical interpretation and, therefore, teaches us about the place of tradition in Blackwood's thought. In addition to aiding his exegesis, Blackwood showed a genuine reverence Bernard's spirituality. When

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[45] Blackwood, *Expositions*, p. 729.

[46] Anthony N. S. Lane, *Bernard of Clairvaux: Theologian of the Cross* (Trappist, KY, 2013), p. 3; Cf. G. R. Evans, *Bernard of Clairvaux* (Oxford, 2000), p. 9.

[47] Blackwood, *Expositions*, p. 831.

[48] Blackwood, *Expositions*, p. 16.

contemplating the comfort of Christians in death, he used Bernard's life as an example. "Bernard, when sometimes he was sick to death," Blackwood wrote, "sounded no other thing than this, 'I have lost my time, because I have lived wickedly, but one thing comforts me, thou wilt not despise a broken and a contrite heart.'"[49] While Blackwood appreciated the theological insights of Aquinas, it was Bernard who he set forth as an example of a godly Christian life.

In addition to these patristic and medieval citations, Blackwood was influenced by the exegetical work of the more recent Protestant tradition. Blackwood had an affinity for Reformed orthodox exegesis and utilized the insights of John Calvin, Benedictus Aretius (1505–1574), Theodore Beza, Matthias Martinius (1572–1630), John Davenant, Franciscus Junius (1545–1602), and Amandus Polanus (1561–1610). Blackwood also showed an awareness of the Lutheran scholastic theologian, Christian Chemnitz (1615–1666) who was cited throughout the *Expositions and Sermons*.[50] Despite these citations, no Protestant thinker was more influential on Blackwood's biblical interpretation than Martin Luther (1483–1546). Blackwood used Luther throughout this work, some eighty times in total, more than any other figure. Luther's works were constantly in Blackwood's mind, if not constantly in front of him in his study. Blackwood's admiration was clear by the title he gave to the German Reformer: "Holy Luther."[51] At the same time, Blackwood's view of Luther was not without criticism, and he was wary of Luther's bombastic personality and divisive nature. In a section of the *Expositions and Sermons* that dealt with the topic of Christian charity, for example, Blackwood referenced an interaction between Calvin and Luther where he stated that Luther lacked charity while Calvin was virtuous. Despite this honest depiction of Luther, Blackwood's admiration for the Reformer and dependence

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[49] Blackwood, *Expositions*, p. 425.
[50] Blackwood, *Expositions*, pp. 354, 4, 75, 220, 234, 33.
[51] Blackwood, *Expositions*, p. 424.

on his biblical insights was clear.

Blackwood's reception of Luther took various forms. In theological matters such as the trustworthiness of Scripture, Blackwood cited Luther writing, "One Title of the Word is greater than Heaven and Earth, said Luther."[52] Most often, Luther was used as a guide to faithful biblical exegesis. In his exposition of the Lord's prayer, for instance, Blackwood cited Luther's interpretation of the phrase, "And forgive us our trespasses," stating, "The Lords prayer teaches us that we are daily sinners, and always sin, and that our whole life is a repentance, Luth. Tom. 1.301."[53] Elsewhere, when he wrote on the Sermon on the Mount, Blackwood argued for the importance of viewing God as a good father who cares for his children. Again, Blackwood received this insight from Luther, writing, "If we could conceive God were our Father and we his children, the world would be base to us, with all its glory, wealth, and pleasures, we would not be solicitous for livelihood, we would not be so confident earthly things being present, nor cast away our confidence, they being taken away. Luth. Tom. 4.127."[54] Blackwood's heavy utilization of Luther displayed a theological method which used resources beyond the patristic and medieval periods. Despite the denominational differences that existed between the Lutherans and the Reformed in the seventeenth-century, Blackwood nevertheless saw Luther as an important guide to his biblical interpretation.

Conclusion

In closing, I want to take off my historian hat for a moment and put on my theologian hat. Now that we have seen how Blackwood used the Christian tradition in order to aid in his own theology, what does that teach us about the doing of Baptist theology today? One of the helpful things about looking to the past is that we might assume, "this is what Christians have always done"... or, as Baptists, "This

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[52] Blackwood, *Expositions*, p. 225.

[53] Blackwood, *Expositions*, p. 402

[54] Blackwood, *Expositions*, pp. 510–511.

is what Irish Baptists have always done." As we look to Blackwood's theology, there are many things that we can learn, but I just want to briefly touch on two.

First, Blackwood's theology of catholicity helps us understand how to navigate the complex denominational milieu of 21st century Christian life. Often, you will hear well-meaning Christians downplay doctrinal distinctives in favour of cultivating Christian unity. Blackwood can help us understand that doctrinal emphases or distinctives need not assume a lack of unity and brotherly affection across lines of disagreement. While it is true that doctrine divides (and in a sense, it should), that doesn't necessarily mean that we need to be divisive. If Blackwood gives us any example, it is this; from the very birth of the Baptist movement, both doctrinal distinctiveness and doctrinal unity were championed. Think back to Blackwood's comments regarding the catholic, invisible church. There is a real sense of unity that all Christians can have because of their like faith in Christ. What makes us a part of Christ's universal church is not being a part of a specific visible body but our common faith in the gospel. At the same time, this in no way caused Blackwood to shy away from controversial theological topics, like his arguments for believers' baptism or even his controversial view of the laying on of hands. This dual emphasis on catholicity and distinction is what lead Blackwood to argue that those who are a part of Christ's universal church *must* unite themselves to a local church. At the end of the day, your convictions about the spiritual gifts, the place of children in God's covenants, or what should be included in Christian worship will force you to join a church with similar convictions. Blackwood reminds us that our faith in Christ gives us common ground, but we still must unite ourselves to a particular local church. So, Blackwood is helpful on holding this tension between distinctiveness and Christian unity.

Second, I think Blackwood's wide reading of the Christian tradition can teach us something about the possible blind spots of our own theological backgrounds. I would confidently assume that many

Baptists today are not as well read in as our seventeenth century forebearers. Many of us have probably not read any of the Lutheran Scholastic theologians or the monumental theological works produced by Reformed Orthodox authors like Theodore Beza, Peter Martyr Vermigli, or Franciscus Junius. But almost every early Baptist was soaking themselves in such material. Many pastors have probably read some Augustine, they might know some of the background to the trinitarian debates of the early church, but how many have read what the eastern church fathers thought about baptism, because many early Baptists cited their writing. Blackwood understood himself as a debtor to the Christian past, even while he sought to reform some of the perversions of former times in light of Scripture. Because Blackwood's ultimate standard was Scripture alone, he felt free to cite and use anyone and everyone who agreed with Scripture, even if he didn't agree with them on everything. Indeed, Blackwood likely felt more freedom to plunder the writings of Church History because Scripture was his standard and he would use that which he believed agreed with the Bible. So here is another tension that Blackwood can help us to hold; the supremacy of Scripture and the help that we find in understanding that Scripture from those who have gone before us. As Baptists, we must learn from figures like Blackwood and read more early church fathers, more medieval thinkers, and more Protestant traditions that are not our own. I believe that when we do, we will be greatly benefited. Baptists may often be styled as the pragmatic, simple minded, and anti-theological group, but, if we look back to our own history, even the history of Baptists on this island, we will see that we too have a rich theological heritage, and that our heritage leads us to seek unity with both the Christian tradition and unity with other Christian groups… all while standing firm on our doctrinal distinctives.

LANGUAGE, POWER, AND BAPTIST MISSIONARIES: BRINGING THE REFORMATION THROUGH IRISH SCHOOLS[1]

KARINA WELDING

Gathering in pubs or coffee houses can sometimes have surprising outcomes. Indeed, between 1802 and 1804, Evangelicals of different denominations met at the Crown & Anchor Tavern in London to discuss the establishment of a society devoted to the "dispersion of the Holy Scriptures."

After several special and extraordinary meetings, the formation of the Bible Society took place at the London Tavern on Thursday, March 1, 1804. The general assembly was chaired by Granville Sharp and Henry Thornton, the treasurer.[2] It aimed to "circulat[e] the Scriptures through the Br Dominions & extend its influence to other Countries, whether Christian, Mahometan or Pagan."[3] Supported by

[1] The lecture relies on the author's forthcoming monograph *Converting Ireland: Religious education, language and colonialism*, Irish Studies Collection, Manchester University Press, 2026, as well as on more recent research.

[2] Cambridge University Library, BFBS archives, BSA/ES/5.

[3] Cambridge University Library, BFBS archives, BSA/A1/1.

the highest echelons of British Society and several statesmen, the presidency was offered to Lord Teignmouth in May 1805. This renewed interest for the wide circulation of the Bible throughout the world was a direct result of the Evangelical revival and the ensuing development of Protestant foreign missions.

A decisive change occurred when a Baptist missionary, William Carey, engaged with fellow Evangelicals and published a pamphlet to defend the development of missionary work in countries throughout the Empire. This new emphasis put on vernacular languages emulated other Baptists to circulate Bibles in Gaelic languages to allow all classes to read the Bible in their native language. However, this could not be possible without increasing popular education, as many among the population of the British Isles were still illiterate. Yet, promoting elementary education in Irish meant bypassing the legislation against the Celtic languages implemented by the British Crown to ensure its power of the Crown throughout the British Isles.

The first to dare to engage in such a venture were to be the Baptists. But in promoting the use of vernacular Bibles in schools open to all, even Irish Catholics, they did not just challenge the centre of the British Empire, they also contravened Vatican decrees. How could such a radical shift happen when people's minds were still imbued with fears of revolutions, less than ten years after the United Irishmen's failed rebellion of 1798? To answer this question, I would like to explore with you the role played by dissenters – and Baptist missionaries in particular – in transcending barriers to reach out to all categories of Irish society thanks to their integration in the wider interdenominational network of Bible Societies. We will thus embark on a journey from India to London and across the British Isles in the company of the main figures that contributed to this radical shift: the missionary William Carey, the pastor Albert Blest, the convert, Thaddeus Connellan, and the theologian Christopher Anderson, who all contributed to the formation of the Baptist Irish Society and the rehabilitation of the Irish language.

William Carey, the missionary

In 1792, William Carey, a Baptist minister, published *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (1792). This book marked a decisive turning point in the history of Protestant missions. It provoked a real craze for foreign missions in the metropolis, well beyond the Baptists themselves. Indeed, the foundation of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) that same year was quickly followed by the interdenominational London Missionary Society (LMS) in 1795. Among the strategies advanced by Carey, bringing the Bible to indigenous peoples stood prominently. To those who argued work was needed at home, Carey replied: "with them the case is widely different who have no Bible, no written language (which many of them have not)."[4] Demonstrating that throughout history, Christian missionaries had cared for those who hadn't heard the Gospel, he invited his contemporaries to bring the Bible to all the earth.

However, the use of native languages was not a Protestant innovation, since linguistic issues have always been intrinsically tied to Christian missions' endeavours. Catholic missionaries had been the first to experiment how decisive using native languages was for their success. Codifying them and editing dictionaries in the Roman alphabet counted among the Jesuits' endeavours in Peru and India.[5] Because of the multiplicity of dialects, however, mastery of indigenous languages was not necessary to ordain village priests, so that many of the faithful did not understand mass in the 16th century, while preaching missionaries resorted to translators to

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[4] Willam Carey, *An Enquiry into the obligations of Christians, to use means for the conversion of the heathens*, London, Button and son, 1818, p. 13.

[5] João Rodrigues Tçuzu (1561–1633) who composed a Portuguese-Japanese dictionary, Michael Cooper, *Rodrigues the Interpreter, an Early Jesuit in Japan and China*, New York/Tokyo, Weatherhill, 1974.

convey their message.[6] A major figure, the Jesuit Pierre Biard (1611 and 1613), had defined a threefold missionary strategy for New France that would span across time and religious divides: first, learning the community language, then, writing works "with didactic virtue – grammars and dictionaries," and finally translating fundamental religious texts (prayers, catechism) so that indigenous peoples would learn portions "by heart."[7] Material and practical obstacles did not allow these ambitions to be fully realised, but using vernacular languages remained necessary to turn the population into good Catholics, especially after the arrival of Protestants.

When the latter started to get involved in foreign missions, they adopted the strategies Catholic missionaries had adopted before them, but they put the emphasis on something new: allowing the converts to read the Bible by themselves. However, traveling across the Empire to convert the indigenous peoples was not an easy thing when one was a nonconformist. Carey thought that the globalisation of trade would favour missions. At the time, the most powerful trade company was the East India Company. Such an approach was not without ambiguities, but it did not prevent the former from experimenting harsh opposition. The Company initially refused to grant entry into its territories to missionaries and Governor-General Richard Wellesley (1798–1805) passed new regulations introducing press censorship and restrictions on freedom of movement. In 1792, Baptists, as well as Catholics and other nonconformists, were still discriminated against by British law. Therefore, William Carey and his colleague John Thomas even had to enter India illegally.

A favourable change occurred though, when their work in

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[6] Simon Ditchfield, "'One World in Not Enough': the 'Myth' of Roman Catholicism as a 'World Religion'," in, Simone Maghenzani and Stefano Villani (eds.), *British Protestant Missions and the Conversion of Europe, 1600–1900*, New York & Londres, Routledge, 2021, p. 15.

[7] Éva Guillorel, "Gérer la "confusion de Babel" : politiques missionnaires et langues vernaculaires dans l'Est du Canada (XVII^{e}-XIX^{e} siècle)," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, vol. 66, No. 2, 2012, pp. 179-180.

translating the Bible finally attracted the attention of the Evangelical chaplain of the Company. This improved Carey's relationship with the Company to the point that he collaborated with them in managing an indigo plantation for several years[8], though the Baptists clearly opposed the opium trade.[9] The involvement in global foreign missions enlarged the religious competition within Christianism, which raged not only in the planting of new churches, but also in education. For instance, the SPG supported teachers to counter Quakers and Baptists' expansion among Indigenous and African-American communities. Despite their religious competition, they all shared the same agenda of "civilising" categories of people they deemed inferior, and among these, Catholics[10]. The Revival then introduced a new dimension to the Protestant missionary effort, as Wesley's Arminianism emphasised all human beings are called to be saved and the intimate transformation of individuals. Godefroid Kruth's unequivocal assertion in 1886 clearly exemplifies how the conceptions held by missionaries of all denominations, and even confessions, were shaped by the colonial mindset: if one drew the borders of civilisation on a map of the world, one would find the borders of Christianity, because "civilisation and Christianity are two equivalent terms.[11] It sought to make Anglicanism an official religion by obtaining so-called "establishment laws" from the colonial

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[8] Jon Miller and Gregory Stanczak, "Redeeming, ruling, missionary societies and East India Company," *Journal of the Scientific Study of Religion*, No. 48, 2009, p. 337.

[9] Karen Chancey, "The Star in the East: The Controversy over Christian Missions to India, 1805–1813", *The Historian*, vol. 60, No. 3, spring 1998, p. 507.

[10] David Bebbington, "The Evangelical Transformation of British Protestantism for Mission," dans *British Protestant Missions [...]*, p. 184.

[11] Jean Pirotte, "Les stratégies missionnaires du XIX^{e} au début du XX^{e} siècle : une mise en perspective générale de l'intérêt pour les missions du grand nord canadien," *Études d'histoire religieuse*, 62, 1996, p. 15.

received from the various regions of the island emphasised the crying need for Bibles.

Given the country's economic situation, the BFBS sold the books at cost price. The Cork Bible Society followed and was granted the same status as the HBS. This could not have been possible without an existing local community sympathetic enough to Evangelical efforts. A similar association was also founded in London the same year, the London Hibernian Society (LHS), whose reputation quickly surpassed that of the Irish auxiliary, a pattern that was to become common. But Evangelicals were not yet convinced of the necessity to use the Irish language, so the publication of the Irish Bible was suspended by the BFBS committee in 1806.

To understand their reluctance, it may be useful to mention that, as early as the Anglo-Norman conquest, legislation against the Gaelic language had been introduced in Ireland and regularly reinforced (1366, 1665, 1695, 1733). First, the intention was to codify the habits and customs of the conquered territories and prohibit any gaelicisation of the settlers to preserve their English identity. This legislation was a direct response to their acculturation in the Pale. Contrary to the reformed tradition, Henry VIII passed the "Act for English Order, Habit and Language" (1537) to remove all obstacles to the expansion of the English language and reinforce the legislation against the vernacular languages. As Tony Crowley reminds us, "Failure to use English was to be taken as a sign of political dissent."[15]

And indeed, the BFBS committee was concerned of the wider political implications as the Irish language could be exploited by those advocating separation and independence.[16] While the Committee of the BFBS was hesitating to adopt such a controversial

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[15] Stat. Ire. 1786:28 H 8. C.xv., dans Tony Crowley, *Wars of Words: The Politics of Language in Ireland, 1537–2004*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 14.

[16] David Hempton et Myrtle Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

course, they undertook a survey and entrusted a Baptist minister in testing the Scottish Gaelic New Testament, "in order to ascertain his opinion as to the practicability or expediency of using them as a substitute for the Irish."[17] In September 1809, Albert Blest (1755–1837), who was to become the secretary of the London Hibernian Society, insisted on the importance of using an Irish Bible in a letter to the BFBS. With a teacher in his employment, they had tried using it, but "the progress of the pupils ha[d] been considerably retarded by the almost insurmountable difficulties the Scots Gaelic present[ed] to the Irish learner."[18] The BFBS recorded that:

Mr Blest thinks this very probable and proceeds to remark that in addition to their prejudice against an English translation, those who are capable of reading one are incapable of understanding it, and though many of the Country people can read the English and speak it, they think in Irish, and fully & readily understand a Discourse in that language only. From this, they never fail to feel much dissatisfaction when their Priests give a sermon in English.[19]

Albert Blest's letters demonstrate the decisive role played by the teacher in his employment in persuading him first, and then the BFBS committee to overcome English prejudice against the Irish language. In the first occurrences, the teacher's name is not correctly spelled, but the details provided by Blest fit those provided in other sources. It is undeniable that this teacher was a Catholic convert from Sligo, Thaddeus Connellan.

Thaddeus Connellan, the convert

Though the spelling of his name sometimes differs in the sources, it is possible to identify him as the teacher Blest mentions in his letters to the Committee of the BFBS. Blest informs them that he has employed a teacher who was a Priest before he came in contact with him. Interested by the Gaelic manuscripts Blest had in his

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[17] Cambridge Library, BFBS Archives, GBR/0374/BSA/B1/4/77.

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] Cambridge Library, BFBS Archives, GBR/0374/BSA/1/4/78.

possession, they started discussing the Bible. Connellan then converted and opened a school with the support of Blest, where he developed a new pedagogical approach.

On 30 October 1809, Blest thus asserts to the BFBS that for Connellan, "The diffusion of the Scriptures in his native tongue is more than ever, his desire. Before, it was an enthusiastic passion for the language; now, I trust I can say it is from a sense of the infinite importance of the salvation therein revealed."[20] Connellan also insisted on the fact that:

[T]here are in every county, and almost in every parish, those, who by application, have attained reading the Irish, and that the great bias of the natives to their vernacular tongue would ultimately ensure the sale of a large impression, and the Instructions communicated in the schools would much accelerate it; every individual so instructed would stimulate all around. A testament in the Irish language would be deemed invaluable, and those who would be prevented by prejudice from receiving the Gift of an English Testament would gladly pay more than the price of an English one for one in Irish.[21]

The BFBS Committee added: "Mr Blest thinks this very probable and proceeds to remark that in addition to their prejudice against an English translation, those who are capable of reading one are incapable of understanding it, and though many of the Country people can read the English and speak it, they think in Irish, and fully & readily understand a Discourse in that language only. From this, they never fail to feel much dissatisfaction when their Priests give a sermon in English."[22]

There is no doubt that Connellan contributed to the publication of the LHS Irish Primer in 1810 and the BFBS New Testament in 1811, as the 17th LHS report mentions his class as the place where "the introduction of the vernacular into the system of education in Irish

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[20] **Albert Blest, Greenville to BFBS, 30 October 1809.**

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] *Ibid.*

was effected."[23]

In December 1811, Blest informed Samuel Mills, Treasurer of HBS, that Connellan had distributed 100 copies of the Irish Testament published by the Bible Society. According to him, Connellan was of opinion that the demand was high, especially in the countryside:

Mr Blest also mentions an instance of a young man who had been brought up a Catholic having found so much profit by reading a NT, which he had found neglected in his masters house, that he had actually served six months beyond the term of his apprenticeship to obtain it as his own ... the young man had become a pious Protestant.[24]

Several other sources confirm that Thaddeus Connellan toured Ireland, but also the British Isles, to promote his new system of education in Irish, as well as the Irish Bible. In a narrative he wrote for his British sponsors, he recounts:

[A]s soon as I was afterwards employed to teach and construct schools for the use of the Irish peasantry I adopted the plan of teaching the languages the scholar felt and knew best. I sought to convince the public and gentry of the value and ease of my discovery, and found so few to agree that in many instances I got opposition from both Clergy and the Squires of the land till I made my success prove, that my plan was sound and necessary for such as I took in hands.[25]

This is confirmed by William Wilberforce's diary as he visited him and other members of Parliament to convince the government elites that his new system of education allowed him to teach reading in Irish in two months and English soon afterwards.

It was then finally decided to print 2,000 copies of the New

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[23] Quoted in Pádraig De Brún, *Scriptural Instruction in the Vernacular: The Irish Society and Its Teachers, 1818–1827*, Dublin, School of Celtic Studies, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 2009, p. 17.

[24] Cambridge Library, BFBS Archives, GBR/0374/BSA/1/5/180.

[25] British Library, Thaddeus Connellan, A Narrative, 1839.

Testament in Irish, followed by the complete Bible. By 1814, the HBS counted 53 auxiliary associations and had distributed 50,000 Bibles and New Testaments, expanding further west with branches in Kerry and Galway. In 1816, Connellan wrote to the Knight of Kerry, Maurice FitzGerald (1774–1849) in which he gave a detailed account of his efforts to promote his project of large-scale Irish language education. His tour took him to the various counties of the province of Munster, including Cork, thanks to the financial support already given to him by Maurice FitzGerald. He was able to "explore the state of learning among my poor Countrymen in Neighbouring Mountains of Killarney."[26] At the end of this tour, Connellan emphasised the favourable reception of the villagers for the reading of the Bible in their language and the state of misery in which the population found itself.

However, Thaddeus Connellan, certainly because he employed Catholic teachers, is not mentioned in the minutes of the first Baptist Society devoted to education in Irish. The influence they acknowledged was that of the Baptist theologian, Christopher Anderson.

Christopher Anderson, the theologian

As the Baptist archives at the Angus Library show, Christopher Anderson (1782–1852), a Scottish minister, first advocated for the development of vernacular education as a means to reach the Highlands' Catholic population. He adopted the circulatory system developed by Griffith Jones (1684–1761), a shepherd turned clergyman, who came to prominence as a powerful and successful preacher.

In the early 1730s, Jones had opened charity schools,[27] aiming at

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[26] Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (hereafter PRONI), Belfast, FitzGerald Papers, MIC 639/6, Thaddeus Connellan to the Right Honourable Maurice FitzGerald, 9 October 1816, p. 1.

[27] G. W. Rusling, "The Schools of the Baptist Irish Society," *British Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No. 8, pp. 429–42, p. 434.

allowing people to read the Bible and at catechising them. He had then devised a circulating system in which schools were generally held for three months in a particular neighbourhood, after which time the schoolmaster would move on to another district, a system he deemed better suited to a rural environment with a scattered population.[28]

Following his example, Christopher Anderson formed the Edinburgh Society for the Support of Gaelic Schools (ESSGS) in 1811. The society enrolled itinerant teachers who roamed the Highlands with their bibles in hand. For greater efficiency, the teachers were to work in cycles of two to three years in each locality. They could also act as Scripture-readers to propagate the Gaelic Bible. Most patrons of the Society were members of the Scottish nobility, alongside soldiers, clergymen and laymen. For instance, Charles Grant, who was soon to become Chief Secretary for Ireland, even became its vice-president.

But Anderson did not restrict his concerns to Scotland. Relying on the success of the Gaelic Schools in Scotland, he devised a "Plan of Irish Circulating Schools" he presented in his *Memorial.* In it, he explicitly refers to Rev. Jones to prove that the plan was "no *theory.* In a country deplorably destitute, poor and ignorant, the schools of the Rev. Griffith Jones did wonders, although they were far from being so complete or so well appointed as the circulating Schools of modern times, in Wales and the Highlands of Scotland."[29] The extent of Jones's sole work, who managed to have 150,212 persons "taught to read the Welsh Scriptures" in 24 years, should serve as evidence to the benefit of such a system for Ireland. Though not proficient in Gaelic himself, as he acknowledges in his *Historical Sketches of the Native Irish* (1828), he had a keen interest in Irish manuscripts.

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[28] Wyn James, "Griffith Jones (1684–1761)," p. 63.

[29] Angus Library, Regent's College, Oxford, Baptist Irish Society, *First Annual Report of the Baptist Society*, pp. 48-9.

Following his frequent visits to the Marsh's Library, he compiled Irish publications, a compilation still of importance today.[30] As evidenced by letters from George Barclay to John Saffery, Barclay and Anderson toured Ireland for six weeks as early as 1813.[31] They promoted the Serampore Mission, but also prepared the way for evangelistic work in Ireland. A year later, Anderson wrote to Saffery following a communication in the *British magazine*: he couldn't agree with him about Ireland being "fertilized", since those whose native language was Irish were not only abandoned, but ignored by his brethren. Sure, there was the "The Scotch & Irish Itinerant Society,"[32] but missionary work in Irish was deeply needed.

Previous policies based on "strange prejudices" had always excluded *Gaeilge* from schools and official communication. So, in 1815, he published his *Memorial in Favour of the Native Irish*, which convinced Baptist ministers to form a society in favour of in Irish. His pamphlet was not only decisive in the development of vernacular education in Ireland, as his biographer recalls, but it also opened up debates on the font to be used for printing educational material.[33]

Using a national font to produce an "authentic Irish" book would help remove any obstacles the English character might represent to Irish Catholics. His arguments not only convinced Baptists in Britain, but also Irish Anglicans:

Must not an individual learning to read the Irish in the English Character be somewhat perplexed, [he argued], when in almost every word, he is required to take notice that the characters have a different force in the Irish Tongue?' Certainly, elementary books comparing

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[30] Richard Sharpe and Micheal Hoyne, *Clóliosta – Printing in the Irish language, 1571–1871: An attempt at narrative bibliography*, Dublin, DIAS, 2020.

[31] Angus Library, Regent's College, Oxford, D/BIS/2, George Barclay to John Saffery, 11 June 1813.

[32] Angus Library, Regent's College, Oxford, D/BIS/2, Christopher Anderson to John Saffery, 18 May 1814.

[33] *The Life and Letters of Christopher Anderson*, *op. cit.*

English and Irish in Roman characters had a value in "prepar[ing] the mind for receiving the English Alphabet.

Yet, turning the argument around, he asserted, 'so the adoption of the Irish Alphabet; operating as an additional stimulus, in however small a degree, may conduce to the same end.' He therefore advised them to choose national authenticity and become the 'best benefactors of their country.'[34]

According to Anderson, the proximity between the English and Irish letters – he noted only six different letters – could be confusing because of their different pronunciations. He therefore advised the committee to use a proper cursive that would respect Catholic sensibilities by adopting a font associated with Irish identity. After close examination, this cursive appears very similar to that of Bedell's manuscript and respective of Catholic tastes. Besides, this approach was faithful to the Scriptures, as he indicated in his twofold demonstration about the advantages of a national character: as you can see on the slide, he quotes 1 Corinthians 9:20 and transcribes it in his cursive: 'And unto the Jews, I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews.'

To confirm that, he told the story of a 'native Irishman' who shouted out, in front of a book in the Irish font, 'this is our own language indeed, root and branch!' Anderson thus insisted on the importance of textual representation "to spread pure and undefiled religion.'[35]

Protestant Irish societies

When the Irish Bible finally became available for popular distribution, illiterates still represented a large part of the Irish-speaking population. Individual access to the Scriptures, so important to promote individual conversion and the reformation in Ireland, could therefore not be achieved without a large-scale education of the most disadvantaged classes. Convinced by Anderson, the Baptists established their Irish Society as early as

[34] TCD, IE TCD MS 7,644, IS Committee Proceedings, vol. A, pp. 5b-6b.

[35] TCD, IE TCD MS 7,644, IS Committee Proceedings, Vol A, p. 5b.

1814.

The Society had three principal objects: to employ itinerant evangelists, to establish schools and to engage in the distribution of Bibles and tracts. Popular education was mainly given in charity schools, of poor repute as the Commissioners of Education showed in the 1814. It was therefore decided to implement a new system in the Irish language. Formed in London that same year, the society issued a Teacher's Guide with directions relating to attendance, classes, progress, rewards and punishments derived from Christopher Anderson's principles for Scotland.

Basically, the curriculum consisted of an introduction to the 3 Rs, with the Bible as the essential 'primer' and they encouraged memorisation of long biblical portions. Churches were kept informed of the society's achievements and its setbacks by the *Irish Chronicle*, by annual reports, and by deputation visits to the churches. It directly benefitted from Baptist Missionary Society, as the latter funded the Baptist delegates" Irish tours.

Significantly, as Rusling points out, it was also one of the unitive forces at work within the denomination.[36] The Society, and more specifically the Ladies' Auxiliary – a pattern that will be repeated by the Anglican Society – also supported "native preachers" as Anderson's letters demonstrate.[37]

Although in relation to the denomination's size the Baptist contribution was a considerable one, it is classed as one of the smallest contributions to Irish education[38]. The society nonetheless counted 1,000 children in their schools in its first year, and still only 88 schools and some 4,000 students in 1826. Rusling showed that the highest total of pupils on the rolls in one year was 10,000, a figure attained in 1832-33, with some hundred schools.

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[36] G. W. Rusling, "The Schools of the Baptist Irish Society", *British Quaterly*, vol. 22, n°8, pp. 429–442.

[37] Angus Library, *Ibid.* 31 July 1816.

[38] 5 Baptist churches, out of eleven that existed 150 years ago, *First report*, p. 31.

Its limitations were primarily due to its strict religious stance. Though the committee initially advocated the exclusive use of Irish, this policy was quickly abandoned because of the lack of qualified Baptist teachers and because the Society would not employ Catholic schoolmasters. They also distributed tracts on doctrinal subjects like baptism[39], which would not be an impediment for Catholic parents. These different factors contributed to its stagnation and limited scope[40]. But the Baptist Irish Society was first and foremost a British one. Unsatisfied by this prioritization in policies, Thaddeus decided to look outside of the Baptist denomination to ensure the development of his Irish method of instruction.

As protestant Irish speakers were few, Connellan employed Catholic teachers, which did not please the Baptists. For Connellan, this could favour discussions with the priests who would compare the Irish Bible with the Douai version and concede that the Irish version was more suitable. His example, not followed by the Baptist Irish Society, nonetheless convinced the Establishment. Thaddeus Connellan's contacts with senior Irishmen, who were convinced of the merits of his Irish education project, and his involvement with the Irish branch of the BFBS, meant that by 1814 he had gained access to influential Evangelicals, as confirmed by William Wilberforce's archives in the Bodleian Library. Previously overlooked by historians of education in Irish and Protestant missions, Wilberforce's diary confirms Connellan's decisive role in connecting nonconformists with Anglicans, as well as grassroots agents with British and Irish elites.

In the preface to his Primer, an elementary textbook published in 1824, including a bilingual alphabet, he presents his method of "religious education", i.e. an education based on the Bible, as the remedy for the "barbarism and miseries of Ireland," as well as a

[39] Angus Library, BIS, first Minute book 1832–1844, p. 5.

[40] The work of the society was handed over to Irish control in 1888, but its educational work had been concluded in 1865, when the society was merged with the Home Missionary Society.

bulwark against the "strongest mental control" exerted by priests over souls. Using arguments likely to convince the Protestant elite, he managed to convince them that such an education could make them "loyal, industrious and happy, like very many of the more-enlightened and better-informed brethren, who labour to be "a country's safety, and a nation's pride."[41]

Although of humble origin, Connellan was able to curry favour with intellectuals such as Lady Morgan, Evangelicals such as Pastor Albert Blest, but also politicians and aristocrats. While he praised the local Anglican bishop, he did not dare to visit him without an introduction, fearing that the bishop "would suspect him of being a [preacher] seeking to introduce [a new] doctrine, rather than a simple and expeditious method of instructing the poor Irish."[42] FitzGerald had already opened a school on his land for which Connellan had sent the teacher elementary textbooks, an example apparently followed by other landlords, even before the Irish Society was created. In a postscript, he mentions the sending of the New Testament to the knight to be mailed to Tralee. Connellan also suggests that Lord Kilmore and other friends might introduce him in the future and "confirm the usefulness of his plan and his desire to do good," showing that by 1814 he already had the support of several members of the Irish aristocracy.

FitzGerald, who was a member of the Privy Council and personal friend of the Duke of Wellington, Arthur Wellesley (1769–1852), certainly introduced or mentioned him in London political circles. Indeed, Robert Peel (1788–1850), then First Secretary for Ireland, wrote in 1814 to a member of the Dublin government: "There is a very extraordinary man here [...]. He is employed [...] by a society

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[41] Thaddeus Connellan, *The Irish-English Primer or First Guide to the Irish Language: intended to assist the native Irish in learning English through the medium of the Irish language*, By his Majesty's Special Command, Londres, R. Watts, 1824, p. iii.

[42] PRONI, FitzGerald Papers, MIC 639/6, Thaddeus Connellan to the Right Honourable Maurice FitzGerald, 9 Oct. 1816

in London, to promote the education of the poor, and particularly the reading of the Bible."[43] His letter to the Under Secretary of State William Gregory (1766–1840), asking for more Bibles in Irish, confirms the support he received from within the government.[44] In the end, he helped strengthen the legacy of the Baptist pioneering enterprise in implementing education in Gaelic by allowing the formation of the Irish Society for Promoting the Education of the Native Irish through their own Language, founded in 1818 in Dublin.

Initially intended as non-denominational, the committee opted for an Anglican identity to gain the patronage of ecclesiastical authorities. The success of his method was such that his primer was published in 1824 by "special commission from his majesty" King George IV. From a motion submitted by J. D. Sirr on 17 February 1817, recorded in the minutes of the Sunday School Society, it appears that Sirr had an interview with Connellan in 1817, after his efforts had attracted the attention of Dublin gentlemen.[45] No doubt this was in connection with the petitions against the opposition of priests to the government which Connellan and his pupils sent to the authorities and to the Bishop of Cork requesting Bibles in Irish. Connellan – who remained a Baptist – thus managed to unite a range of Protestants from non-conformist circles to the Royal family itself. Indeed, Queen Victoria's mother and friends would be financial contributors to education in Irish in the 1830s and '40s.

Conclusion:

To conclude, Baptists were indeed the first to advocate a new policy towards Celtic vernacular languages, allowing the formation of

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[43] PRONI, T3229/4/10, Robert Peel, Whitehall to Lord Clare, 28 August 1843.

[44] National Archives of Ireland (hereafter NAI), Dublin, CSO/RP/1818/67, Thaddeus Connellan to William Gregory, 20 January 1818.

[45] Sunday School Society reports, 12 February 1817, quoted in De Brún, p. 23.

societies devoted to increasing the literacy of the poor population in their native tongue. However, the Baptist Society was formed in London and quickly abandoned its dedication to Irish, which was taken over by the Anglican society. At some point, the two societies acknowledged their respective work.

Albert West thus wrote to the committee of the Irish Society to inform them they had advertised the apologetic work of William Sankey in the *Irish Chronicle*.[46] While they had no problem with the BIS buying copies of *A Brief sketch of various attempts which have been made to diffuse a knowledge of the Holy Scriptures through the Medium of "The Irish Language"*, they were critical of the publication of its contents by means other than their own. Even if they were less ambitious because stricter on religious terms, the Baptists definitely opened the way for a better consideration of Celtic languages among British protestants.

Indeed, in both Baptist and Anglican cases, the policy of teaching in Irish was designed as a missionary strategy that contravened British governmental principles, as well as Vatican decrees. Though successful in the 1820s, these initiatives faced financial impediments, but their main obstacle emerged after Catholic Emancipation in 1829. The growing nationalist movement, relying on the priests' support, aligned itself with Rome's opposition to the use of vernacular Bibles.

Tensions then intensified and culminated during the Great Irish Famine of 1845-51. Protestant and Catholic sources on Irish schools alike, whether lay or clerical, show that the centrality of the Bible in education was commonly shared because in line with the Reformation. However, despite some criticisms by Ultramontane Catholics, it was not considered a threat before the introduction of Irish Bibles in schools during the first two decades of the nineteenth century. Not only did this strategy prove to be innovative, but it was also perceived as deeply transgressive by the Catholic Church, and

[46] TCD, IE MS 7544, IS, Committee Proceedings, vol. A, p. 9b.

Vatican's denunciations of Irish schools aligned with its opposition to the BFBS's influence at home and abroad, as demonstrated by the several encyclicals passed between the 1820s and 1840s.[47]

Conversely, the success of Irish missions among the British public also proceeded from the fear created by the catholicisation of Irish nationalism. Yet, British Baptists and Irish Protestants involved in Irish education did not renounce the innovations brought by Thaddeus Connellan, a native Irishman, and by the Scot Christopher Anderson, as allowing the Irish people to read the Bible and examine the sacred texts on their own was deemed far more important than politics.

Through their desire to integrate inculturation into missionary strategies, they planted the seeds that allowed the Celtic Revival to flourish at the end of the 19th century. However, tragically, this aspect of Irish history has been erased from the memories of Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants alike. I hope that renewed interest in Irish Protestants' historical appreciation and respect for the Irish language will help both religious communities to find common ground.

[47] For more details on the pastoral letters and encyclicals, see *Converting Ireland: Religious education, language and colonialism*, Manchester University Press, 2026.

A REVIEW OF CARL R. TRUEMAN, *CLASSICAL THEOLOGY FOR THE MODERN MIND*

MICHAEL A. G. AZAD HAYKIN

A review of Carl R. Trueman, *Classical Theology for the Modern Mind*(Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2026), 77 pages; PB; ISBN: 979-8-8749-0620-7

In an extremely short compass, Carl Trueman makes a trenchant and convincing case for the vital need for modern Evangelical and Reformed churches to have their teaching and their worship informed by classical Trinitarianism and Christology. In an introductory section, he rightly notes that modern occidental culture has been shaped by "deep-seated antihistorical intuitions" and that this has seeped over into conservative Evangelical culture (4–5). Ironically, in this regard then, conservative Evangelicalism is anything but conservative. Unlike the Reformers, for example, who were immersed in "creedal Christianity, traditions of biblical exegesis," and a "fundamental commitment to the notion of the church as a corporate institution guided in her reading of the word by the Spirit," modern Evangelicals are shaped by a bare "biblicism" summed up in the phrase "No creed but the Bible" (6–7), by pragmatism (8–9) and "by moralistic therapeutic deism" (9), where the latter is more a mood than an overt intellectual orientation (9). Trueman finds evidence for these assertions in both contemporary Evangelicalism's ignorance about classical theology as well in her

worship. With regard to the latter, many modern churches have "adopted contemporary forms of worship and hymnody that arose out of a culture that often regarded the past as hidebound and [that] also prized spontaneity and emotion" (11). The result has been the overall abandonment of the canon of hymnody that is "saturated with classical theology" (11).

Drawing upon his own considerable reading in and reflection upon historical theology, Trueman first delves into the Reformation's attitude towards the classical theological formulations of the Ancient Church as well as the ongoing significance of Nicene Trinitarianism for the Protestant tradition (Chapters 1–2). He begins by noting that the amount of time that it took for the Ancient Church to formulate the doctrine of the Trinity is witness to the complexity of coming to what is appropriate speech about God (16–19). It was not until 381 that the Trinitarian debates of the Ancient Church were finally settled. Here, Trueman cites the scholarship of R. P. C. Hanson, Lewis Ayres, and Khaled Anatolios to highlight this complexity and to emphasize that "Nicene formulations" should not be understood as "simply falling off the pages of Scripture nor as a straightforward battle between a clearly orthodox party and a clearly heretical one" (18–19).

A renewed appreciation for patristic Trinitarianism means, among other things, that the popular, though novel, Evangelical concept of "the eternal functional subordination of the Son," what is called EFS, must be seen as a significant deviation from Nicene orthodoxy (20). Lying behind this novel idea is, in Trueman's estimation, "a bare biblicism" and a lack of "serious engagement with the intellectual history of the church" (22). For the Reformers, as for Ancient Church authors like the Cappadocians and Augustine, the doctrine of the Trinity has profound soteriological implications: "a non-Nicene God" simply cannot save (22 and 44). Trueman thus judges that the debates over EFS, which were especially prominent in 2016,

cannot be viewed "as minor disagreements within a family" (44). Holding fast to the proper identity of the God who saves is as important as affirming the biblical way of salvation (44–45).

Now, the Reformers to a man were deeply read in patristic literature (14–16) and this meant especially that they were committed wholeheartedly to the doctrine of the Trinity as formulated by the Councils of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381): "No Reformer wanted to overthrow Nicaea" (25). The Reformation traditions that developed over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries shared this determination to cleave closely to patristic creedalism. Trueman finds clear evidence of this determination in the various Protestant confessions from Anglicanism's *Thirty-Nine Articles* (1571) to the Baptist *Second London Confession* (1677/1688) (25–26). At one point, he illustrates this from the latter document (40–41), which, in Article 2.3, states:

> In [the] divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences, the Father, the Word or Son, and Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence, yet the essence undivided: the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son; all infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God, who is not to be divided in nature and being, but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations; which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence on him.

Trueman argues that a proper understanding of this text must begin with not only patristic formulations but also the doctrine of God found in medieval commentators like Thomas Aquinas (c.1225–1274). Drawing upon the scholarship of Heiko Oberman with regard

to the medieval and Reformation understanding of the relationship between Scripture and tradition, Trueman thus emphasizes that the Reformers and their Protestant heirs did not reject tradition (34–35) but employed it under the norm of Holy Scripture. And the tradition that they utilized was both that of the Ancient Church as well as her medieval successor.

It is in this context that Trueman grapples explicitly with what essentially underlies the entire argument of this book, namely, the concept of retrieval or what is sometimes called *ressourcement*, a French term that I prefer though Trueman considers it a "rather opaque" word (36–42). This idea emphasizes the value of the past—in contradistinction from the present antihistorical *mentalité*—for present thought and action. Of course, not everything that past theologians thought should be retrieved for employment in the present. Luther's tracts on the Jews and Judaism are a good example here (37–38). It is especially the heritage of confessionalism that should guide this recovery of past theology: the confessions "provide the normative framework for retrieval, and retrieval is to serve the church by elucidating the confessions" (38).

Is historical retrieval, though, to be limited to the confessions? I think, for example, of the rediscovery of the missional significance of Matthew 28:19–20 by William Carey (1761–1834) and his circle of Baptist friends in the late eighteenth century. While not inscribed in a confessional document, this rediscovery of great importance for the modern movement. Trueman cites the epistolary correspondence of Samuel Rutherford (1600–1661) as an example of what need not be retrieved for they posses no "intrinsic authority for the church today" (38). And yet, the remarkable Christocentric piety within these letters is one that can be of great spiritual value today. Rather than circumscribe theological *ressourcement* to confessional documents, it would be better to emphasize, as Trueman does, that any such retrieval must be guided by recognizing

that what is retrieved owes its validity to the Bible as the "ultimate authoritative source," the "norming norm," of all theology (41–42).

In Chapter 3, Trueman discusses the ecumenical implications of his argument. He is at pains to emphasize that knowing the God of Holy Scripture is as important as any soteriological affirmation. In fact, Trueman is convinced that it is more important. Thus, the Puritan John Owen (1616–1683), long a figure of interest for Trueman, regarded Socinianism with its Unitarian God as being beyond the pale of Christianity, while he was quite prepared to acknowledge the important contributions made by medieval Roman Catholic theologians to theology proper (46). Trueman admits that what this means for ecumenism "is not immediately obvious" to him, though he does think it should force Evangelicals to rethink their attitude to non-Protestant traditions (46).

The fourth chapter deals with how classical theology can aid pastoral ministry. Trueman emphasizes that while classical theology entails a commitment to divine impassibility and immutability, this does not mean that the "God of classical theism" is not "a pastorally useful God" (52)—though, the latter is a very poor turn of phrase! The fact that God in himself does not suffer does not mean at all that we cannot turn to God in our suffering. Our Lord in his humanity knows full well what it means to experience human "struggles and knows what it is like to be made of frail human flesh" (54).

The final chapter on worship emphasizes that the study of classical theology should, above all, move its adherents to worship and be part of a worshipping community. Classical theology is a doxological theology. Driving home Trueman's argument are a couple of texts from the Cappadocian Fathers: a passage from Gregory of Nyssa's (c.335–c.395) *Life of Moses*, which was written near the close of Nyssen's life and which is a spiritual meditation on the believer's unending growth in the knowledge of God and then one from

Gregory of Nazianzus' (c.329–389) *Oration* 40.41, which was preached on January 6, 381 The latter contains one of the most marvellous Trinitarian passages penned by the Cappadocians:

No sooner do I conceive of the One than I am illumined by the splendour of the Three; no sooner do I distinguish them than I am carried back to the One. When I think of any one of the Three I consider the whole, and my eyes are filled, and the greater part of what I am thinking of escapes me. I cannot grasp the greatness of that one so as to attribute a greater greatness to the rest. When I contemplate the Three together, I see but one torch, and cannot divide or measure out the united light.

As Trueman rightly notes in conclusion: "what we see so wonderfully set forth" in such texts is the classical theology that lies behind all the church's great historic liturgies and much of her hymnody. To recover classical theology is not to recover an approach to an academic discipline; it is to recover the great, rich tradition of what it means to be a worshiping community (70).

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