

Book Review

Elliott, Paul M. *Christianity and Neo-Liberalism: The Spiritual Crisis in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*. Unicoi, TN: The Trinity Foundation, 2005. 453 pages (not including Trinity Foundation extras), \$19.95.

In this book, Mr. Elliot, a ruling elder at the Hanover Presbyterian Church (formerly OPC, now ERPC), covers a massive amount of territory, historical, theological and biblical. It is impossible for a review of this length adequately to respond to all the claims and arguments made therein, so I am primarily going to focus on what I know best, the theological and the biblical (and particularly, Elliott's interpretation of Herman Bavinck and Richard B. Gaffin). I believe that the major problem that Mr. Elliott has with Westminster Seminary and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church stems from his own theological understanding, and not from any objective problems inherent in these institutions. I do, however, want to make a few comments about his historical review. The outline will thus be:

- I. Some Comments about the Historical Review.
- II. An analysis of Elliott's own theological understanding by examining his view of Bavinck and Gaffin.
- III. Some miscellaneous observations.

Historical Observations

To begin, while I have concluded that Elliott is essentially mistaken concerning his evaluation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, he has done the church in general a great service in reminding us how subtly error can creep into a denomination. His review of the Auburn Affirmation, and his observations on doctrinal indifferentism are quite well made. The simple fact is that had all conservative Presbyterians at the time taken action and condemned the heresies inherent in the Auburn Affirmation, there would have been no need for the formation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The conservative Southern Baptists were able to reclaim their seminaries by this kind of action. Closer to our own tradition, both the ARP (Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church) and the RPCNA (Reformed Presbyterian Church North American Synod) in the 20th century flirted with neo-orthodoxy, but the active work of conservatives who were not doctrinally indifferent helped return these denominations to their biblical and confessional roots. It is incumbent on those with responsibility for spiritual oversight to exercise continual care and vigilance. Elliott several times points out that it takes courage and the willingness to pay the cost of one's convictions: continual prayer is needed on the part of all Christians for the leaders of the church to exercise this kind of integrity. With this in mind, I find fault with several ministers who have commented to me that they are glad I am reading this book, so that now they won't have to do so. My response? I ask these ministers, "What do you fear? How can you pre-judge the book before you have even read it?" In other words, it may well be that very doctrinal indifferentism which is the motivating factor in refusing to read the book. I would recommend to leaders that they read it: there

is much of value, and it is always better to give an answer based on the facts than on hearsay, or even a very well written book review.

In his review of the Shepherd controversy (which I missed by just a few years), and the Kinnaird debacle, with which I had some involvement, a number of historical details were brought up of which I had little knowledge.¹ I am not at this time qualified to comment on the accuracy of all these details: I will note that it did not make me proud of the individuals involved. I have seen Presbyterianism work quite well, as elders seek to do the work of the church to the glory of God; I have also seen excesses and abuses, and it strikes me in reading Elliott's précis of the events that I was looking at the use of politics, both to defend and accuse, which was not always the best use of the powers and policies of Presbyterian polity. Again, this is a warning: even if we are convinced of the absolute rightness of our position, the ends do not justify the means. We are responsible not only for the correct conclusion, but the right path to that conclusion.

With that in mind, I found the historical review did not, in my opinion, accomplish the purpose intended, which was to prove that neo-liberalism has in fact infected the OPC. This is a major problem with Elliott's book in general: the evidence cited often does not support the claims made. For example, Elliott assumes that Kinnaird's acquittal is proof positive that neo-liberalism and doctrinal indifferentism are rampant in the OPC. This ignores the possibility that Kinnaird might really have not been guilty of the heresy with which he was charged. This is, after all, a major part of the discussion, and for Elliott to offer it as a proof constitutes a major *petitio principii*. Throughout the book, I found selective quotation and reporting of events which enabled Elliott to provide the construction he wanted to place on his evidence. As another example, his comparison of the Auburn Affirmation and the current state of the OPC amounted to demonstrating certain verbal or surface similarities without proving that the same underlying hermeneutic was involved (including his discussion on hermeneutics). This is another major logical fallacy, of the type that are frequent throughout the book. Similarity does not mean identity, and the report of one committee does not necessarily reflect the majority opinion of the denomination. I am referring specifically (but not exclusively) to his comments on the OPC Committee on Creation: I am not convinced at all that Elliott's interpretation of the report is accurate, but he certainly does not adequately demonstrate that it supports his interpretation.

Theology

Elliott begins his description of the neo-liberalism of the OPC by asserting the adherence of certain individuals influential in the OPC (even though only one person is actually a member of the OPC – he names Richard Gaffin, Norman Shepherd, and John Frame) to the writings of Herman Bavinck. He compares Bavinck's conception of God with the conception that was common in the old liberalism that troubled the Presbyterian church of Machen's time. However, is this comparison a fair one? Most definitely not. Machen, in the quotation which Elliott adduces, is arguing contra the liberal and neo-orthodox view of God, which claimed that it was impossible to make any valid predication concerning the nature or being of God. It is impossible, therefore, to make

meaningful, propositional statements concerning God: such statements are, at best, a witness to the religious impressions of the one making them. What is important is the feeling of God, the overwhelming sense of awe, or majesty or love, which transforms the individual on a personal level.

Now, needless to say, such a conception is completely foreign to the Scriptures, and is completely foreign to what Bavinck is claiming as well. After all, Bavinck's entire book *The Doctrine of God* is filled with propositional statements concerning God. In his first chapter on "God's Incomprehensibility," what Bavinck is reviewing is the history of the discussion on this subject. The balance between the knowability of God and the incomprehensibility of God is one that has greatly exercised theologians in the history of the church, and that is the reason for Bavinck's survey of earlier theologians on the subject. It is clear to me that Elliott (who is apparently following John Robbins at this point, p. 45-46) simply does not understand what is meant by "incomprehensibility." The scriptural witness to God's incomprehensibility is quite clear. Among many passages that could be cited:

Isaiah 55:8-9 (ESV)

For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.
[9] For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

What is meant by incomprehensibility is not that truth cannot be known about God, but that God cannot be known in and of himself: such knowledge of God is always *mediated*. It comes to us through the analogy of creation. It comes to us through human language, but we can no more know God directly than Moses, who was permitted only a partial revelation of God (Ex 33:17-23). We are created and finite; God is uncreated and infinite. How can we therefore know God in and of himself? We cannot: we can only know what God chooses to reveal. Since God is infinite, that means there will always be knowledge of God that is beyond our ability to know. This means that we can only know God through the means or instruments of his revelation, or in other words, by analogy.

What Elliott does not inform his reader of is that Bavinck follows his chapter "God's Incomprehensibility" with a chapter entitled "God's Knowability." I am not going to summarize that chapter here: suffice it to say that Bavinck is quite in line with Scripture and the history of orthodox doctrine in his treatment of the subject. The discussion completely belies Elliott's assessment of Bavinck, and demonstrates that he and Robbins are the ones advancing novel ideas, not Bavinck.² In fact, as I read Elliott's treatment of Bavinck and other theological ideas throughout his book, I saw a strong connection to the teachings and writings of Gordon Clark, and particularly Clark's epistemology, suggesting to me the theological differences that Elliott views as significant stem primarily from his own understanding at very nearly the presuppositional level.

With regard to the teaching of Westminster professor Richard Birch Gaffin, Jr., I found similar misquoting and misunderstanding. I have personally known Dr. Gaffin since 1986 (at my matriculation to WTS in 1986), and have known him as a professor and colleague ever since. I must admit that I was extremely surprised to hear that he had been named as the chief heresiarch of Westminster and the OPC. My initial reaction was “Surely they’ve got the wrong guy!” After Gaffin’s classes “Acts and Paul” and “The Doctrine of Christ” (they’ve changed the course titles since my time at WTS, but the content remains the same), I had a far better understanding of the traditional Reformed *ordo salutis* and its biblical basis than I did before those classes, and this understanding was only deepened by courses and discussions in the Th.M. and Ph.D. level courses that I had from him later.³ However, personal reactions are worth little in a review: what matters is the documentary evidence presented.

On page 147-148, Elliot asserts:

Richard Gaffin has stated publicly that he is opposed to the New Perspective on Paul of Wright, Dunn and Sanders. But *Resurrection and Redemption* is Gaffin’s own “new perspective on Paul,” and is just as heterodox. While Gaffin’s doctrine of Salvation is couched in the language of orthodoxy, it is in fact radically revisionist, since he deconstructs and redefines not only the key doctrines of salvation – including faith, redemption, justification, sanctification, and adoption – but also the *way* of salvation itself. [p. 147-148, emphasis original]

One first of all wonders that if Gaffin’s formulations are couched in the language of orthodoxy, if he simply doesn’t mean it in an orthodox fashion? It is possible for a hostile witness to put any number of false constructions on even clearly written statements, and so I see Elliott doing to Gaffin. Elliott first quotes Gaffin:

Baptism signifies and seals a *transition* in the experience of the recipient, a transition from being (existentially) apart from Christ to being (existentially) joined to him. Gal 3:27 is even more graphic: “Those who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (cf. 1 Cor 12:13).⁴

Now, if Elliott had taken the time carefully to read Gaffin’s entire exegetical treatment of this passage (Rom 6:3ff, p. 44-59), and made a good attempt to understand the terminology and arguments employed, he may never have included this passage as an example of a heterodox statement. A comparison with our Westminster Standards is here appropriate. From the Larger Catechism:

Q66: What is that union which the elect have with Christ?

A66: The union which the elect have with Christ is the work of God's grace, whereby they are spiritually and mystically, yet really and inseparably, joined to Christ as their head and husband; which is done in their effectual calling.

And the Westminster Confession's Statement on baptism, 28.1:

I. Baptism is a sacrament of the new testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible church; but also, to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life. Which sacrament is, by Christ's own appointment, to be continued in his church until the end of the world.⁵

Elliott argues that “Gaffin eliminates the distinction between the sign (baptism) and that which it signifies (salvation).” It is almost unnecessary to point out that Elliott has introduced a distinction which is foreign to the confessional understanding of baptism. The concept of sign and seal, phrased in Gaffin's treatment as “signifies and seals,” are always considered together. It is a both/and, not an either/or. Baptism both signs and seals. Consider the redemptive benefits which the Westminster Delegates saw necessary to include: “ingrafting [i.e., union with] into Christ, regeneration, remission of sins, to walk in newness of life” [i.e., sanctification]. Elliott also quibbles with Gaffin's use of the term “existential” (i.e., describing something that actually takes place in time and space). But how does Gaffin's use of the term differ from the LC's description of our union with Christ as “spiritually, mystically, really” and “inseparably joined?” Allow me to suggest here that Elliott's argument with Gaffin is also an argument with the Westminster Standards as adopted by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and also, presumably, by his own new denomination, the Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church.

Gaffin carefully qualifies his arguments and explains them throughout, something which the reader of Elliott's book misses due to Elliott's selective quoting procedure. Gaffin is concerned in *Resurrection* with what biblical theology terms the *historia salutis*, the actual historical grounding of our salvation, which is two-fold: 1) How the story of redemption unfolds in the progress of redemption, and 2) how salvation is applied to the believer in the actual moment of time.⁶ Does this mean, as Elliott asserts (p. 149) that Gaffin redefines the entire *ordo salutis*? No, it does not. Gaffin states:

Accordingly, Paul's notion of Christ as a corporate person does *not* eliminate the necessity of reflecting on the place of the *ordo salutis* in Paul, on how he relates the benefits possessed (existentially and individually) by believers to the past historical accomplishment of Christ. In the language of classical theology, so far as the property of the believer in Christ is concerned, justice must be done both to the *alienum* and to the *proprium*, and neither aspect may be stressed to the exclusion of the other.
[p. 58]

Furthermore, I see no effort on Elliott's part to determine how Gaffin is using his terminology. We have already seen this with the use of the term “existential” above. On

page 149, Elliott claims that Gaffin sees union with Christ as commencing with “water baptism,” yet nowhere in the quotations provided nor in their extended context does Gaffin make this claim. Rather, Gaffin is making reference to the *Pauline* usage of the term baptism, how Paul himself uses the term. This may or may not include water baptism (that is a matter of the exegesis of the passages, although I would assert that Paul has primarily in view the baptism of the Spirit, cf. Rom 8:1-11; 1 Cor 12:13), but Elliott should not simply assume that Gaffin has water baptism in mind. Similarly with the word “transition” in the Gaffin quotation. Elliott eisegetes Gaffin to mean “commencement,” but even if we stipulate that Gaffin intends “water baptism,” the sign and seal of the “transition” does not have to be read as instantaneous with the spiritual reality signified. Nothing in Gaffin’s text indicates that he is contradicting the Confession at this point (cf. WCF 28:6).

We now turn to Elliott’s treatment of Gaffin on justification. As before, Elliott seems to have very little regard for the complete exegetical treatment that is Gaffin’s usual strength, and seems intent on imparting his own definitions and conclusions in a cavalier, almost callous, fashion. It would have helped greatly if Elliott had interacted with Gaffin on the level of Gaffin’s own analysis, but we see none of that, only selective quotation and misinterpretation. Again, at this point, I would turn the reader’s attention to the Westminster Standards. When does justification take place? In the traditional *ordo salutis*, it takes place after regeneration. When does regeneration take place? As part of our union with Christ. When does our union with Christ take place? After the effectual call. Gaffin proves, with capable exegesis, that these elements of the traditional *ordo* are integrally linked to the resurrection of Christ. Gaffin is especially concerned, in his section on justification (p. 119-124) to demonstrate the eschatological (fulfillment of God’s purposes in redemption) nature of justification in relationship to the resurrection of Christ. Implicit in Gaffin’s discussion is the representative nature of Christ’s work, as integrally and organically connected to the concept of our union with Christ. In terms of Christ’s justification, Gaffin argues that Christ’s justification is parallel to (but not identical with) the believer’s justification (basing his arguments primarily on 1 Tim 3:16). Christ had the sin of his people imputed to him: he bore the guilt and consequences of sin, to the point where Paul can directly call Christ “sin” (2 Cor 5:21) and “the curse” (Gal 3:13). If our sin was legally imputed to Christ, as Gaffin argues, then this makes the best sense out of the use of “justify” (Grk. ἐδικαιώθη) at 1 Tim 3:16. As the imputation of our sin to Christ was forensic in nature, so the justification of Christ, evidenced spectacularly through the resurrection, was forensic in nature. This, I think, leads to one of Gaffin’s favorite idioms in the book: the resurrection of Christ is constitutive to justification for two major reasons: a) its unique character, in that Christ was acquitted of the sin imputed to him due to his own sinless nature and God’s designation of him as the sacrifice lamb, and b) because of its parallel, or similarity, to the forensic justification that we as human beings need. Christ’s justification becomes our justification, because Christ as our representative dispensed with sin, so that his righteousness could then be imputed to us.

Through Gaffin’s explicit statements I have also brought out some of the implicit ideas in his argument, though both time and space fail for an adequate treatment of Gaffin at this

point (to do it adequately would make it equal to the book itself!). What I hope to have demonstrated is that Elliott's assertions concerning Gaffin's restructuring of justification are not only in error, but fail to take into account the actual arguments that Gaffin constructs, and particularly the exegetical evidence that he offers to support his contentions. Additionally, in footnote 14, p. 151, Elliott asserts that Gaffin's view of justification is the same as that of both the Roman Catholic theologians and Karl Barth, "as Gaffin admits on p. 131." I assume he is referring to footnote 158 on that same page of *Resurrection*. However, it is obvious that Elliott has completely misread Gaffin at this point. He is actually distinguishing his view from both: "Similarly, in the debate between Karl Barth [neo-orthodox] and Hans Küng [liberal Roman Catholic], the slogan 'to declare righteous is to make righteous,' short circuits the apostle's point of view, unless resurrection is understood to be the common denominator." Gaffin also distinguishes his position from that of A.J. Venter earlier in that footnote.

To conclude this discussion, Elliott's claim that Gaffin thereby obliterates the distinction between justification and sanctification is absurd, particularly once one realizes that Elliott has again committed the error of imputing his own meaning to Gaffin rather than trying to understand Gaffin on his own terms. It should be clear even from a cursory reading of Gaffin that he views the entirety of the traditional *ordo* as resulting from our union with Christ, in what he terms the existential, or historical, sense, and that his union with Christ is organically and integrally related to Christ's resurrection. It is not his concern to explore the logical relationship of those elements of the *ordo* one to another, but to demonstrate how they are related in the Pauline conception. In pages 124-126, Gaffin discusses the concept of sanctification from this perspective briefly, but cogently. His view of Christ's sanctification stems from the actual biblical usage of the word, which refers to definitive separation from sin ("death to sin") which occurs as the Spirit applies the redemption of Christ to us (cf. Rom 6:1ff). Does this mean that progressive sanctification (the *technicus terminus* in which the word sanctification by itself is usually intended in systematic theology) does not occur?

However, while Paul is certainly concerned with the progressive transformation the believer must undergo and the reality of his continuing struggle with sin (cf. esp. Rom 7:14-25; Gal 5:13-26), he characteristically refers the vocabulary of sanctification not to a process, but to a definitive act occurring at the inception of the Christian life (Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Cor 1:2; 6:11; Eph 5:25; 2 Tim 2:21; 1 Thess 4:7; 2 Thess 2:13). [p. 124]

Gaffin's point, which Elliott seems to have gotten, is that both aspects of sanctification, definitive and progressive, are related to our union with Christ by virtue of the resurrection. Where he misses it entirely is his claim that this is the same as the infused righteousness of Christ taught by the Roman Catholics. A simple reading of what Gaffin actually says will demonstrate that his argument has nothing to do with infusion, and everything to do with the eschatological nature of Christ's work (definitive sanctification as the ultimate deliverance from the power of sin, progressive sanctification as the application of that deliverance).

Much more could be said. Elliott's erroneous assertions are broad, and Gaffin's argumentation is very tight: he packs an enormous amount of information in a short space. What I find particularly sad in Elliott's inadequate and erroneous treatment is that Gaffin not only is not inconsistent with the biblical and confessional understanding of justification and the entire *ordo*, he also provides a tremendous exegetical foundation for understanding the structure of Paul's theological expression. This means that he has helped his readers greatly in terms of integrating the *ordo* of systematic theology, often discussed abstractly and in semi-isolation from the rest of the traditional theological encyclopedia, into the structure of biblical revelation, where it rightly belongs. The one who reads Gaffin as Gaffin intended to be read comes away with a much better understanding of all the elements of the *ordo* and a much firmer foundation for expositing the Gospel. I hope that the readers of this review get some glimmering of this from my own brief treatment of Gaffin's thought on these issues, in addition to seeing how short of the mark Elliott's treatment falls. I would also pose this question: should Elliott's own limited theological understanding be made the criterion of orthodoxy in any context?

A few Additional Comments

As I read Elliott's treatment, I began to make a list of the logical fallacies which pervade the work. In addition to selective quotation and "spinning" the evidence, I found:

- Argument by Assertion (frequent)
- Non sequitur (frequent, in the technical sense of the conclusions not following from the arguments)
- Invalid Comparisons (occasional)
- The Straw Man (reconstructing the original argument into something easier to derail – so frequent I lost count – in fact, much of his analysis of Bavinck and Gaffin was essentially straw man arguments).
- Poisoning the Well (this is the use of prejudicial and pejorative language to predispose the reader against one position in favor of another). This is quite appropriate for political campaigns, but wholly inappropriate for type of book Elliott has written.
- Ignoring proper distinctions and definitions (frequent).
- Quotation out of context (frequent)
- Guilt by association (occasional)
- Ad hominem arguments (occasional)

There were more, but these were the most frequent and disturbing. On page 310 of *Neo-Liberalism*, Elliott asserts that in Machen's time, approximately 10-15 percent of the Presbyterian church was committed to liberalism. He then asserts that his own research indicates about the same proportion are committed to neo-liberalism in the OPC church today. Now, to me, "research" is a technical term. It includes having a precise

methodology, and for statistical research in particular. One wonders just how this research was conducted. Surveys? Personal interviews with valid questions? Did the writer construct both a hypothesis and null hypothesis? Did he interview or survey a sufficient sample? If so, then fine. If not, then his “research” would be highly suspect, probably of an anecdotal nature, and essentially worthless as evidence for his assertion.

The astute reader of this review will note that I avoided any discussion (except peripherally) of Norman Shepherd. Shepherd, I find, is far more problematic than Gaffin or others treated in the book. There have been several reviews written of Shepherd’s *The Call of Grace*, and I would recommend those to the reader (simply enter the key words into your favorite search engine – many of them are online). I was privileged to see a pre-publication copy of part of Shepherd’s *Call*, and asked to comment. I wrote: “Considering the past controversies surrounding Shepherd on the subject of justification, it is incumbent on him to demonstrate how his formulations are consistent – or not – with the traditional formulations of reformed theology.” Apparently, my advice was not taken, as very little was changed in the publication copy. Or perhaps my advice was followed. I can only assume that Shepherd, as a well educated theologian, must mean precisely what he says in his writings. If he felt he made his point clear, then it certainly clearly was made, and so the criticisms of his position justly follow. By contrast, Gaffin, in both his writings and his lectures to his students, expends a great deal of effort to demonstrate the consistency of his exegetical theology with the more traditional language of reformed theology.⁷

Elliott concludes his book by arguing that it is absolutely necessary for all who are faithful to the “true gospel” to separate from the OPC (or any other denomination infected with neo-liberalism) and form new associations based on the truth. Elliott, as has been noted, has the courage of his convictions in this area. I believe that he is sincere and truly believes he is being faithful to God’s word, but I will note that the passages of Scripture he adduces to support his contention do not necessarily have to have the application that Elliott draws from them. I also note that Martin Luther did not voluntarily withdraw from the Roman Catholic church of his day: he stayed until he had no choice. Elliott often quotes J. Gresham Machen in support of his various contentions, but I note that Machen was like Luther: he stayed until there was no choice. These men stood valiant for the truth, and allowed the consequences to happen according to God’s providence, but they did not seek separation. They realized that the true separatists were those who stayed the course of their error, and the were used of the Lord to found the true continuing church in their context. I found Elliott’s arguments to the contrary, both biblical and pragmatic, to be wholly inadequate. If we were to stipulate that Elliott was right in every way, his book would have had far greater impact if it were written as an elder and member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, by one standing valiant and fighting against all the doctrinal declension and indifferentism that he decries. Alas, that is not what we see at all, and that is not the book we read.

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¹ A personal note: from 1984 to 1986, I worked at Honeywell in St. Louis Park, MN., just a few miles from the CRC church that Norman Shepherd had taken. I knew nothing of this or the controversy until I started at WTS in 1986. Otherwise, I would have been sure to have visited the church!

² Since so much of the “neo-liberal” controversy surrounds the meaning of justification, I recommend to the reader Bavinck’s chapter on the subject in *Our Reasonable Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1956). Bavinck has statements such as “Our comfort in the matter of justification therefore is that the whole righteousness which we require comes from outside ourselves in Christ Jesus” (p. 454), “[W]hen God grants us this Christ together with all his benefits out of free grace, without any merit on our part, by way of faith, then He at the same time justifies us” (p. 455) and “The justification, then, is certainly a gracious, but it is also a juridical, deed of God, a declaration by which He, as Judge, acquits us of guilt and punishment and gives us the right to eternal life” (p. 457). It appears that following Bavinck might not be such a bad idea after all.

³ I have graded for the two M.Div. level courses since about 1990. I see reflected in the answers that students give in their examinations very orthodox statements and theological evaluations. It is also significant that, unlike under professor Shepherd, students coming before presbytery who have sat under Gaffin’s teaching regularly pass those examinations without controversy.

⁴ Richard B. Gaffin, *Resurrection and Redemption*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1987), p. 50-51.

⁵ I am using an electronic edition of the Standards, Refcon, available for download in several places on the Internet, such as <http://www.tulip.org/refcon/>. Here, I have edited out the scripture notes with scripture proofs. Refcon includes several other reformed documents besides the WTS standards, and is freeware.

⁶ E.g., Gaffin writes, “[R]esurrection with Christ likewise involves an existential component. The believer’s continuing walk in newness of life [note the language of the Confession here] is based upon the resurrection with Christ as that has taken place in his actual life history” p. 47.

⁷ Gaffin actually requires his students to memorize sections of the Shorter Catechism relevant to the subject matter of his courses. His students resent this at the time, and are grateful later (even those coming from non-reformed evangelical traditions).