

Rutherford Centre for Reformed Theology

February 2024

From our Chair: Professor Marjory Harper



At RCRT's final Board meeting on 25 January we began by reflecting briefly on some of the lessons we can learn from the well-known and much-loved Old Testament story of Ruth, Naomi and Boaz. While in our retrospective reading of the narrative we can see the Lord's sovereign hand at work in His dealings with all these individuals, they themselves would have had no idea of the long-term legacy of their lives or of the part each played in God's providence.

So it is with us. Our perspective is limited and opaque but the Lord can and will bring fruit far beyond anything we see, experience or imagine, and will do so to His glory. It is in

such a light that we view RCRT's activities over the last four decades, committing the work – past and future – to God's perfect plan for the furtherance of His Kingdom.

Our meeting was characterized by a poignant blend of sadness and anticipation: sadness at the end of an era but confident anticipation that the Lord will bless the ongoing work as it is taken over by Highland Theological College. Elsewhere in this final Newsletter Andrew McGowan reflects on his involvement with Rutherford House and RCRT over four decades. We are immensely grateful to Andrew for his vision, commitment and tireless enthusiasm as Director of RCRT in recent years, and thankful most of all to God for sustaining and blessing the work in its three key areas: research and writing; education and training; and promotion of the Reformed Faith.

Books for Africa

Around half a ton of theological books published by Rutherford House over the years was duly dispatched to Africa. This was a longstanding project which hit various obstacles along the way but thanks to Ryan Faber, an American missionary in Zambia, it was finally accomplished. The plan is to distribute the books through the Reformed Family Forum, a network of Reformed/Presbyterian churches in southern Africa with roots in the mission work of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa. The transport costs came from Partners in Mission, the mission agency of the Dutch Reformed Church of the Free State (South Africa).



Under the Rainbow

Since coming under the auspices of Rutherford House (and then RCRT) the online resource 'Under the Rainbow' has grown and developed considerably. RCRT has provided support, accountability and encouragement to allow the resource to grow. Most importantly UTR has benefited by being surrounded by those who believe in the value of the resource and get behind it in prayer. Over the years the following areas in particular have been progressed:

1. A professionally made film resource available on the website specifically for men dealing with infant loss.
2. A DVD resource in the form of a life-term prisoner's interview made available within all the prison estates in Scotland, for use in dealing with grief, for handing out to individuals and use in groupwork.
3. Regular upgrading of the website with fresh material being added from a variety of sources.
4. The resources presence came to social media, and new posts are now regularly added on both Facebook and Instagram.

In the last year two people have come alongside the UTR team, and the board of directors has always been a great source of encouragement and inspiration, as well as providing essential practical support. In the last couple of years a group of people are also contacted a few times a year with specific prayer points for UTR – this support is invaluable.

We are very grateful to Andrew for approaching UTR in the first place, after seeing how it fitted with the RCRT aim of helping people to think biblically (in our case, about miscarriage, still birth and infant loss), and for all his input. We would like to express our thanks to the board also for all its support in progressing ideas and publicity.

UTR will continue as it did prior to coming alongside RCRT, on its own website: [Under the Rainbow](#) and social media accounts: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#) page. Should you wish to support UTR financially or otherwise, please contact Judith at jalkeefe@aol.com.

Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference 2025

The Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference, which has taken place every second year since 1985, will continue under the auspices of the Highland Theological College.

The next conference, being the third in our series on ecclesiology, will take place from 3rd – 5th June 2025 at the Edinburgh Theological Seminary.

The subject is 'Creeds, Confessions and the Church'. We are already contacting speakers and expect that a programme of speakers will be published soon on the HTC website.

If you would like to be added to the mailing list for the conference, please contact Mark Stirling (mark.d.stirling@uhi.ac.uk).

The RCRT Ecclesiology Series

The RCRT Ecclesiology Series of books published by Wipf & Stock, edited by Professor McGowan and the Rev Dr John McClean of Christ College, Sydney, will continue until the series is completed.

Three volumes are already in print:

Billy Kristanto *Ecclesiology in Reformed Perspective*

A.T.B. McGowan (ed) *Engaging Ecclesiology*

(Papers from the 2021 Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference)

A.T.B. McGowan (ed) *The New Reformed Book of Common Order*

One volume is at the typesetting stage:

A.T.B. McGowan (ed) *The World Reformed Fellowship Statement of Faith*

(in multiple languages)

One volume is currently at the editing stage:

A.T.B. McGowan *The Holy Spirit and the Church*

(The papers from the 2023 Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference)

Two monographs, plus the papers from the 2025 Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference will complete the series.

Transferring Support

If you have been a financial supporter of the Rutherford Centre for Reformed Theology, you should cancel your Direct Debit or Standing Order with immediate effect.

As you will know from the last two Newsletters, some of the work of RCRT will be taken over by the Highland Theological College (HTC) and, at the point of closure, the remaining financial assets of RCRT will be transferred to HTC.

If you would like to transfer your giving to the Highland Theological College, here is the account information:

- Sort code: 60-83-01
- Bank: Unity Trust Bank
- Account number: 20229489
- Account name: Highland Theological College Donations Account
- Please remember to include your name and 'donation' in the reference.

If you have any problems, contact Will Gwynn, who is the Marketing and Communications Manager at Highland Theological College.

His email address is: will.gwynn@uhi.ac.uk and his office phone number is: 01349-780030.

Rutherford House

The Rev William Still of Gilcomston South Church in Aberdeen had a huge influence on the rise of evangelicalism in the Church of Scotland. With others he created the Crieff Brotherhood (later the Crieff Fellowship) to encourage and support evangelical ministries in the Kirk, not least those who were in congregations which did not share their evangelical views. The Fellowship was based on several convictions: first, the need for systematic preaching through the Scriptures, covering the whole Bible. He once famously said that it takes a whole Bible to make a whole Christian. Second, the vital importance of Prayer in the life of the congregation. Third, the simplification of congregational structures to focus on the essentials of the Word, Fellowship and Prayer. He inherited a church with many clubs, organisations and social activities but he closed them down. He once said that the task of the Minister is to feed the sheep and not to entertain the goats!

Mr Still also had a deep concern for theological education and the lack of evangelicals teaching in the four ancient universities where Church of Scotland Ministers were educated. It was Dr Sinclair Ferguson, however, who set out the vision in 1980 under the name 'The Westminster Project', the intention being to establish a centre for evangelical scholarship, which would seek to engage the Church and the divinity faculties, from a Reformed and evangelical perspective. In 1981, Mr Still, Sinclair Ferguson and others created the Scottish Evangelical Research Trust as a vehicle to establish the proposed Study Centre. Mr Still was appointed chairman of the Trust and the Rev Dr Nigel Cameron was appointed as Warden of the Study Centre. In addition to the Trustees who had primary responsibility for the Trust, the Trustees appointed a Council, chaired by the Rev Martin Allen, to deal with the day to day work of the Study Centre. The



Council duly set up various sub-committees: property, finance, library and research & publications. There was also agreement that the Study Centre should be called 'Rutherford House' after the famous 17th century Scottish theologian Samuel Rutherford (pictured).

A large house at 17 Claremont Park in Edinburgh was duly purchased, with the bulk of the funding coming from 'the ladies' as they were anonymously called, being two sisters from the USA who were friends of Mr Still and supporters of his ministry. Renovation works then began on the building to make it fit for purpose, primarily on what would become the library. The library of the late Gordon Anderson-Smith was donated by his widow Myrtle to be the core of the new library. Myrtle was herself a special collections librarian at Aberdeen University and did a huge amount, with others, in getting the library established. Rutherford House was formally opened in February 1983, with an inaugural lecture by the Rev F.D. Kidner, formerly Warden of Tyndale House in Cambridge. A service of dedication was led by Mr Still, chairman of the Trustees.

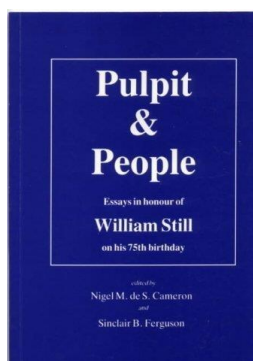
By the autumn of 1982 Rutherford House had published two booklets, 'Is there Substance to our Faith?' and 'Freedom and the Fundamentals'. It had also agreed to publish *The Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* in partnership with the Scottish Evangelical Theology Society. Plans were afoot for a new series of booklets to be called 'Rutherford House Forum Papers' to deal with issues in debate within the Church of Scotland.

An annual Rutherford House Week was established and Dr J.I. Packer lectured in 1983. In 1984 we had Professor Edmond Clowney and Dr D.A. Carson as the speakers. The annual week was soon an established part of the calendar, with the speakers such as Dr Carl Henry

travelling around Scotland. At the same time, since the warden, Dr Nigel Cameron had a significant academic interest in medical ethics, Rutherford House established the 'Medical Ethics Project' and began to produce the journal *Ethics and Medicine*.

One major development in 1985 was the establishment of the Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference, which has taken place every two years since. Since the Tyndale Fellowship focussed on biblical studies, it was thought that Rutherford House could make a parallel contribution by concentrating on systematic and historical theology. It was agreed that the conference would be biennial, alternating with the Fellowship of European Evangelical Theologians conference, which is also biennial and which some supporters of Rutherford House attended.

The titles of the first few conferences indicate the range of topics under consideration: 'The Challenge of Evangelical Theology: Approach & Method' (1985); 'Issues in Faith and History' (1987); 'The Power & Weakness of God: Impassibility & Orthodoxy' (1989); 'Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell' (1991); and 'The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age' (1993). The normal practice was to produce a book after each conference and some notable volumes were published. Prominent speakers were invited to all of these conferences, and this resulted in serious and sustained debate. It would take up too much space to list all of the contributors over the years, but they have included T.F. Torrance, Paul Helm, Kate Sonderegger, Colin Gunton, Henri Blocher, Cynthia Brown, Bruce McCormack, David Wright, Julie Canlis, Kelly Kapic, Oliver O'Donovan, Elizabeth Shively, Michael Horton, N.T. Wright, Karla Wubbenhorst, Lewis Ayres, Francis Watson, Katherine Sonderegger, Don Carson, John Webster, David Fergusson, Donald Macleod, Kees van der Kooi, Kevin Vanhoozer, and many more. The work of the Dogmatics Conference was deepened and advanced by the establishment of the Rutherford House Fellowship, similar to the Tyndale Fellowship.



In 1986 a festschrift was presented to Mr Still called *Pulpit and People*, published by Rutherford House and edited by Nigel Cameron and Sinclair Ferguson. It is common for academics to receive such an honour but less so for Ministers. He was, however, such an exceptional man that he truly deserved the honour. We recently received a request to digitise the book and so it is now available at Rob Bradshaw's Biblical Studies website: https://biblicalstudies.gospelstudies.org.uk/pdf/pulpit-and-people/pulpit-and-people_141.pdf

1986 was also the year that the Surgeon-General of the USA, Dr C. Everett Koop, visited the UK under the auspices of Rutherford House. A new element of the work of Rutherford House began that year with the establishment of lectures and conferences for elder training.

Dr Nigel Cameron, as the first warden of the House, occupied the post for approximately ten years. The Rev David Searle became the second warden. One significant emphasis during this period was providing support and encouragement to young ministers, as well as organising conferences and training for ministers, elders and others, both in Scotland and in Northern Ireland. The publication of books was also accelerated during this period. Mr Searle retired in 2003 and the Rev Dr Bob Fyall became the first 'Director' of the House, a post which he held for four years. During Dr Fyall's tenure, there was a re-emphasis on the House as a centre for evangelical scholarship and engagement with the Academy.

In 2007-8 discussions were held regarding the future of the Rutherford House building. The library was not being used as well as had originally been hoped and there were very few people who came to RH for sabbatical or study leave. The decision was made to sell 17 Claremont Park. In June 2008, Dr Jason Curtis was appointed Director and he helped to find offices in 1 Hill Street. Later, due to the high cost of 1 Hill Street, RH moved to offices in Palmerston Place Church. During Dr Curtis' tenure, one of the key emphases was on church revitalisation. After Dr Curtis left, there was a period without a Director, as the Trustees worked on the vision, finances and future shape of the work.

This rethinking by the Trustees led to Rutherford House being renamed the 'Rutherford Centre for Reformed Theology' and relocating to the Highlands of Scotland. The Rev Professor Andrew McGowan was appointed as Director of this new phase in the life of the work. Professor McGowan had been a member of the Council of Rutherford House since its inception in 1981 and later served as a Trustee and as Chair of the Trustees. In this period there were three elements: research and writing, education and training, and promotion of Reformed Theology. One emphasis was on ecclesiology (the doctrine of the church) which led to a number of books being published in the RCRT Ecclesiology series by Wipf & Stock.

Part of the new vision which led to the establishment of RCRT and the move to premises within the Highland Theological College, was to support the work of HTC, especially its research side. The absence of a Reformed and Evangelical theological college where Church of Scotland ministers could be educated was one of the drivers of Sinclair Ferguson's initial vision for Rutherford House and indeed he gave a lecture at the opening of HTC. The synergy means that for RCRT to merge into HTC is a natural conclusion to the trajectory we have been on. The Trustees of RCRT hope and pray that this coming together will be of benefit to the evangelical cause in Scotland and we would urge prayer for its successful merger.



There is much more could be said about what has been accomplished by Rutherford House and by RCRT in the past 40 years but the above is sufficient to give some indication of the varied work which has been done to encourage people to think biblically and theologically. That work will go on within HTC, for which we are very grateful.

It is also appropriate at this point to thank all of the people who have been involved in Rutherford House and RCRT throughout these past 40 years. This includes the Trustees, the Board and Council members and those who served on the many committees. We give thanks for the full-time and part-time staff, including administrative and library staff as well as the various Wardens and Directors. We remember too the many volunteers who gave of their time and energy to progress the work. We are also grateful to those who helped to fund Rutherford House over the years, including those who gave for particular projects, and those faithful friends who have given each month right through to the present day.

Above all, however, we are grateful to God for giving Mr Still and others the vision in the first place and then demonstrating his faithfulness, his guidance and his support at every stage of the work. May all the glory be his.