

A Tribute to Rev. Prof. Alexander Barkley, M.A., D.D.

From his friend, Rev. Prof. Adam Loughridge.

I have lost a friend, a lifelong, worthy and trusted friend, a true man and a man of God. Hamlet's words from Shakespeare are appropriate. Speaking of his father, he says: "He was a man. Take him for all in all, I shall not look upon his like again".

Our friendship began in boyhood some 80 years ago. We met at Church. We sat together in a Sabbath School class taught by a well read godly man who gave us our first taste of Reformed Doctrine as he explained and applied the Westminster Shorter Catechism.

Our fathers had been friends and fellow-workers in Kilraughts Reformed Presbyterian Church, serving as elders and joint precentors for some 40 years.

Our friendship developed at school, at college and throughout our whole life. We shared a room at University and at the Theological Hall. It was enriched by a unique correspondence that lasted almost 54 years. He wrote of many things. His monthly letter told me of his family and their successes, of his pulpit and pastoral work, of his reading, of life in Australia, its politics and sport, and of the various strands and changes in the life of the wider church. He was no narrow churchman, but counted among his friends many from the larger denominations. But again and again he would refer to his beloved college, of its simple origin and its wonderful growth. I recall the pleasure he had in showing us the former buildings in Maud Street during our first visit in 1981. He was proud and rightly so, of its achievements. He often mentioned the happy association he had with the Board, with his colleagues on the staff and not least with the students whom he looked on as though they were his children. The move to the new location at Waurin Ponds gave him great satisfaction. He wrote of the excitement he felt at this new

development. It was very fitting that in spite of his deteriorating health he was able to deliver the keynote address at the official opening, speaking on “Perspectives for a new Beginning”.

Alex Barkley was a fine theologian. He rejected the vague speculations of so much of modern theology. Philosophy did not really interest him. His well-trained mathematical mind drew him increasingly and constantly to the clear logic of John Calvin. He mastered the principles and doctrines of Calvinism and taught them in pulpit and classroom, not in a dry-as-dust manner, but in a clear and lively and warm-hearted way.

Central in his theological concepts was Christ. As a convinced Covenanter he dwelt much on Christ, His Crown and His Covenant. To his students and to young ministers he would say: “Preach Christ. Preach Him as the only remedy for a sin-sick world. Preach Him and His righteousness as the only standard for personal and national life”.

He came to the end of life’s journey doing what he had always done: “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith”

Truly “the memory of the just is blessed”, and “He rests from his labours and his works follow him”.