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## EDITORIAL: HOW DO CHURCHES GROW? BELIEVING AND BELONGING

An academic theologian in Britain who is interested in how churches grow is as rare as (to adapt his own image) a pelican in Princes Street or Park Lane. One who believes that churches actually can grow is an even rarer bird, a species one might have thought extinct rather than merely endangered. Hence a warm editorial welcome to *A Vision for Growth. Why Your Church Doesn't Have to be a Pelican in the Wilderness* (SPCK, London, 1994; 117pp., £6.99; ISBN 0 281 04759 6), by Robin Gill who is the Michael Ramsey Professor of Modern Theology at the University of Kent.

For me the most suggestive material is found in chapter 2 on 'Believing and Belonging':

In matters of faith, belonging is primary. Intellectuals are apt to forget this. We are so concerned with thought that we frequently convince ourselves that *belief* is primary. People believe and then they belong, so it is assumed ... in that order. In contrast, I am convinced that the order is mostly the other way around – we belong and *then* we believe.

The conviction, or assumption, shared by many Evangelicals (I am here particularizing more specifically than Gill) is that once people are brought to faith through conversion, then they will become active church members. Or they should.... The challenge presented in the follow-up to a Billy Graham-type mission (so-and-so professed faith, and now he or she must be integrated into a church) has taught us that it does not always work so neatly. Sometimes it does; people come to faith and then start attending worship and learn to belong.

But Robin Gill cites impressive survey evidence that puts belonging before believing for most people. Interviews with lapsed Methodists rarely threw up loss of faith as the reason for their disappearance from the pews. Christian belief appears to have persisted longer than churchgoing. Today we are witnessing a collapse in belonging leading to, not caused by, a decline in belief. When newly active Christians have been questioned about what brought them to commitment, they rarely mention a transition from unfaith to faith. They speak rather about returning to the fold they knew as children, or some personal or familial link, or some special experience, like marriage, or bereavement, or a house-move, that brought

them into touch with a congregation. Very often the crystallization of a new faith awareness takes some time.

The typical pattern instead seems to be this. Changing from unbelief to belief is usually a slow process.... There may have to be years of belonging before belief feels fully comfortable. Conversely, people who *stop* belonging may retain core Christian beliefs for many years.... Disbelief does not appear usually to be the main reason for ceasing to go to church.

This perspective fills Gill with foreboding:

If belonging is the first stage in the Christian life, then belonging is fast disappearing in Britain today. The area that is disappearing at the most alarming rate is that of child belonging.

He does not underestimate the difficulty of kindling belief among those who have had no experience of church or Sunday school..., who have had no prior belonging at all.

The terms of this analysis will not come naturally to many Evangelicals, for whom explicit profession of faith is the starting point rather than the goal of the journey. Yet they carry an inescapable challenge, partly because evangelical congregations seem no less vulnerable to decline than others (as the results of the 1994 church census will bear out), and partly because of the social and cultural gulf opening up between the churched and the never-churched among us.

The challenge addresses especially the shape and quality of the local congregation's life. Is it open and accommodating to those seeking to belong *simpliciter*, without or before faith? Does it extend bridges enabling the fearful and the uncomfortable and the self-consciously lost (socially or culturally, not spiritually!) to creep in – and once in, not to be smothered by overwhelming assumptions, demands or expectations? It was said of the Servant of the Lord that 'a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench' (Is.42:3). What ethos should characterize the community of the Servant, as it seeks to nourish believing in the wasteland?

### **Community: on what terms?**

Re-creating community is the concern of two Edinburgh Church of Scotland ministers, Bill Clinkenbeard and Ian Gilmour, in *Full on the Eye. Perspectives on the World, the*

*Church, and the Faith* (Bavelaw Press, Edinburgh, 1994; 105pp., £4.95; ISBN 0 9517168 1 6). Their perspectives on contemporary Scotland are sharply drawn, nor do they pull any punches on the church – which seems to be the Church of Scotland. ‘Hey Dad, We Shrank the Church’ is a wonderful title for a retrospect from 2050. ‘It is possible... to project a society largely devoid of the historic church.’

Our joint-authors’ prescription is a key focus on community, expressed in a church on the corner-shop model rather than the supermarket. The Christian community gathered to hear and speak the Word of God, celebrate the sacraments and enjoy fellowship – how traditional it all sounds! But there is a good dose of radicalism here too. The authors’ concern is only to *open* a discussion. That it might be a genuine dialogue with the likes of your Editor could depend on their readiness to abandon hoary libels about fundamentalists and literalism. They want greater emphasis on the resurrection of Jesus, ‘however it is interpreted’. But you are not allowed this ‘howeverness’ if you appeal, as they do, to the faith of the early church. It only happens now if it happened then, like the cross.

### **Must baptism decrease?**

In May 1995, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland was recommended by one of its committees to approve the admission, subject to certain provisos, of unbaptized children to the Lord’s table. Readers unaware of this tawdry proposal, which was brought to the Assembly bereft of any shred of theological clothing to cover its indecency, may need to prick themselves to be sure they are not hallucinating. The Scottish Kirk once had an honoured name in the world for theological virility. And even after doctrinal discipline vanished with the coming of age of liberty of opinion even on matters indubitably entering into the substance of the faith, baptism remained inviolate. Just you dare to do anything to allow anyone else to claim that you are repeating it! But now it seems you do not even need it once!

For if unbaptized children, it was argued, why not unbaptized adults? And what of the Church’s noble profession of being part of the one holy catholic and apostolic church? Could anything be more blatant a breach of catholic and apostolic order than to admit the unbaptized to

communion? It seems that such a perspective had never crossed the proposers' horizon. The suggestion was another salvo – more a damp squib in the event – in a continuing campaign to promote the place of the Lord's supper in the normal life of the church. A good thing, you might think, and you would be right. But you can have too much of a good thing (like the doxologies added indiscriminately to every psalm in the third edition of the *Church Hymnary*, as Alec Cheyne once quipped). If the price of the increase of one dominical sacrament is the decrease of the other, then one is certainly having too much of a good thing.

More generally, the proposal reflects a stubborn tendency to minimize baptism. In a way, making infant baptism the theological norm (as well as the norm in practice) could be said to have invited this fate, but now is not the occasion to pursue such alluring hares. Certainly as the church in the West heads into a new era of primary mission, baptism, and more particularly conversion-baptism (which might be said to be a third option, alongside baptism of infants and of believers), must come into its own. As Karl Barth saw, infant baptism belongs to Christendom: it came into its own well after Constantine, and it is already fading fast as Christendom disintegrates. Yet infant baptism is baptism, and the difference between baptized and unbaptized children in the same Sunday school is no mere logistical or pastoral untidiness.

The most surprising defender of the proposal on the floor of the General Assembly was Professor James Torrance. Robin Gill's book reminded me of a common theologoumenon of his – that we do not believe in order to belong, but we believe because we already belong. This dictum moves in a different orbit from Gill's pastoral sociology, and we must not confuse the two. I suspect that it is a half-truth masquerading as a whole truth, but that is for another day. But if a believing response to belonging takes sacramental form, then that must first be baptism. To reverse the sequence of baptism and supper is theologically inept and ecclesially frivolous.



# **THE UNIQUENESS OF DIVINE REVELATION AND THE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES: THE CREED ASSOCIATION'S STATEMENT**

**THOMAS F. TORRANCE, EDINBURGH**

In view of ideas now being given currency about biblical authority in the Church of Scotland, it may be helpful to draw attention to two articles of the Creed Association which were drawn up in the two decades after the end of the Second World War. The Creed Association was originally proposed and financed by a wealthy Glasgow businessman of rather pronounced liberal views, called Templeton, in the first decade after the end of the First World War, when its leading participants were H.R. Mackintosh and A.B. Macaulay. Right from the start it was rather more traditional and conservative in its outlook than Templeton had hoped! Its activity came to an end with the death of Mackintosh in 1936; but after the end of the Second World War it was given a new life under the inspiration of A.B. Macaulay, when the participants were John Baillie, James Pitt Watson, John Burleigh, Hugh Watt, William Manson and R.W. Stewart, with A.N. Bogle as chairman. It was Macaulay's idea that some younger theologians should be invited to join, when I proposed J.K.S. Reid, R.S. Wallace and D.F.S. Dick. I agreed to act as secretary. After a few years this task was taken over by G.B. Hewitt, then in the Education Department in the Church's offices in 121 George Street. We usually met in New College. Unfortunately the Creed Association never finished its work and ceased to function once again when George Hewitt died. Nothing of its work was ever published.

During its life after the Second World War work was done on sixteen articles toward a confession of faith. These were headed by a 'Preamble':

We believe that God has spoken; that his Word came to the prophets, became flesh in Jesus Christ, was witnessed to by the Apostles, comes to us through the Scriptures as the living Word of God, which calls the church into being, and to which the church bears continuing witness.

It was only after articles on the evangelical and Trinitarian substance of the faith were completed that the Association

turned to compose two articles dealing with the Holy Scriptures and the bearing of the Christian revelation to other religions. Both of these seem to be relevant to the call increasingly heard today for a reinterpretation of the Bible in the light of modern cultural ideas, and in view of the problem of so called 'inter-faith' relations. On both of these, as on the articles on the sacraments, William Manson left his distinctive mark.

### **Article XII** **The Word of God**

1. The Word of God is the eternal Son of God who as Word of the Father, eternally begotten and abiding in the communion of the Spirit within the Holy Trinity, comes to us as the Revealer through whom God in his love makes known the mystery of his own being.
2. In Jesus Christ the Word made flesh God has truly manifested his glory in human form and by mighty acts has reconciled the world to himself. In this man Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary, the eternal Son of God has assumed human nature and existence into oneness with himself in order thus, as true God and true man, to become the final Word of God to man, and the one Mediator between God and man, through whom we enter into communion with God and apprehend his glory.
3. Within the Church Jesus Christ by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit bears witness to himself through the witness and tradition of the Prophets, as the coming Saviour, and through the witness and tradition of the Apostles, as the Saviour who has come. Through their written word Jesus Christ the Word made flesh continues to speak, testifying to the mighty acts whereby he has redeemed the world, and offering himself to all people, men, women and children as Saviour and Lord.
4. The Old and New Testaments are acknowledged to be Holy Scripture and the authoritative Word of God, because Jesus Christ speaks to us in them. Through the Spirit the human word of the Old and New Testaments is elected and formed to be the authentic means of divine revelation, and is so conjoined with the Word of God as to be the written Word

of God to man. Thus the Scripture as human word is to be distinguished from the divine Word but not separated from it. By means of this Scripture God continues through the Spirit to speak his Word to the Church.

5. As the Church listens to the Word of God speaking through the Holy Scripture, and fulfils its commission to proclaim Christ, God himself is active in the Church declaring his Word through human witness and ministry. Thus through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit the word of the Church in exposition and application of Holy Scripture becomes the living Word of God to man.

### **Article XVI Revelation and Religion**

1. Since God made the whole universe to reflect his glory we apprehend created things through the clear shining of his uncreated Light, but since God remains invisible in his own transcendent Being, we are unable to see his Light directly in the world or trace its shining back to him as its eternal Source. God is everywhere present to us so that our minds are intended to have a true sense of his deity and are moved to wonder and worship. Thus true religion arises as the response of the human spirit to the Creator.

2. In his purpose God has given to all that he has made creaturely light by which they are made intelligible and invite our understanding. Since they are distinct from God they are to be explored and investigated out of themselves and become amenable to rational exploration. In his creative purpose God has given man a special place in the universe, and it is part of that purpose that nature should be disclosed to human insight and scientific enquiry. When the structures and patterns of nature are seen as God's creation and thus dependent on him, they reflect the revelation of his greatness and power. But when this is not seen it is not the fault of God or of nature but of man who, through sin, has alienated himself from God and damaged his relation to the universe around him, and thus introduced disorder into the creation.

3. The Spirit of God is ever present giving all things being in their relation to the Creator. The Spirit of God continues to

shine increasingly throughout the universe. This is true in a more intimate way with man, who is given being and is supported in his personal existence by the Word of Divine Power even though he has revolted from God's fellowship and violated the law of his own being. Through men's estrangement the shining of God's self-revelation suffers refraction in his existence, so that ambiguity and opaqueness result in his understanding. While he retains a certain sense of the greatness and power of God, he shuts himself off from the knowledge of who God is for he gets himself in the way and eclipses the light of Heaven. His relation with God is dark and enigmatic; when he gropes after God he cannot find him and turns the truth into a lie. At the very best he can only raise an altar to the unknown God.

4. Through this fragmenting and darkening of man's relations with God religion has give place to the many religions of mankind which reflect the different answers that men have tried to give to the mystery that surrounds their existence or attempts they have elaborated to recover the lost destiny of mankind. Each arises under the pressure of God's presence but becomes distorted through the turning of the human spirit back upon itself, so that in spite of man's wonder and yearning for the Creator and Redeemer the answers and attempts of men can have no content except the mythological creations and projections of their own spirituality. Thus the truth in every religion is inextricably intertwined in the depth of the human spirit with man's estrangement and self-deception and can only take perverted form through assimilation with notions (whether crude or refined) within the different ethnic cultures within which it is expressed. Yet they all manifest the anguish and the need of the human condition and bear broken witness to the Reality of God.

5. It is the clear shining of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ alone that reveals the true nature of the human quest in the non-Christian religions which their followers are unable to discern for themselves, since the rise of the spirit of man toward God is thwarted by its very self-centredness. Because God's self-revelation by word and deed has taken final and complete form in Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life, all other ways to the Father are thereby invalidated or

revealed to lead astray. Hence, while not rejecting anything that is good and true in other religions we are unable to acknowledge any revelation of God outside of Christ to which we can respond as his sure and certain self-disclosure or as his way of salvation for men. Since God has provided us in Jesus Christ the one and only Mediator between God and man, the revelation of God in him cannot be regarded merely as a variation of or a supplement to a general revelation, nor can the Christian religion be regarded as one among the many religions of mankind, for both the Christian revelation and the Christian response to it are grounded upon the absolute and final self-giving of God for all mankind. We believe that it is through this revelation and religion alone that all that is good and true in the other religions may reach proper affirmation and fulfilment.

6. 'The Christian religion' in history has found expression in the thought and language of different ages, peoples and cultures. In this way it has assimilated much that does not derive from God's self-revelation but from man's own imagination and mythological projections, so that it has not escaped the idolatrous distortions at work in the non-Christian religions. Thus through human sin and self-will even the 'Christian religion' may be turned into a form of man's cultural self-expression or the means whereby he gives sanction to a socio-political way of life, and may even become the means whereby he seeks to justify himself before God. As such it stands constantly in need of correction and renewal through reference to its source in Jesus Christ. It is in this way that the Christian Church grows and develops throughout history, its tradition becoming richer and fuller, the more surely and truly as it is grounded upon the unchanging foundation that has once and for all been laid in Jesus Christ.

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I pray that the publication of these two articles may help both toward a clarification of people's thinking, and toward the strengthening of their belief in the authority of the Holy Scriptures and the uniqueness of divine revelation in Jesus Christ.

# ADOPTION IN THE THOUGHT OF JOHN CALVIN

NIGEL WESTHEAD, HULL, NORTH HUMBERSIDE

## Introduction

Viewed historically the doctrine of adoption for a variety of reasons has had a chequered career and has been more often in the dark than in the light. The Reformed tradition in general is no exception to this, although in more recent times there have been green shoots of recovery, notably in the works of R. A. Webb, R. Candlish and W. Cunningham in the nineteenth century and J. Boice, J. Murray and J. I. Packer in the twentieth.<sup>1</sup> As S.B.Ferguson has noted,<sup>2</sup> the absence of the doctrine even from the works of Reformed dogmaticians cannot be attributed to Calvin who, in the view of J. Scott-Lidgett,<sup>3</sup> made more of the Fatherhood of God than any other writer of the Reformation, thus striking a note 'which has not been heard since Irenaeus'.<sup>4</sup> Such sentiments invite research into Calvin's understanding of adoption and the Fatherhood of God and the paper which follows distils some of the major features of that inquiry.

## Adoption and the Trinity

For Calvin, adoption is very much a privilege for which all three Persons of the Trinity are responsible, albeit in diverse ways in accordance with their respective functions in the Godhead. It is the first Person of the Trinity who is specifically the believer's Father.<sup>5</sup> This is reflected in the context of Calvin's remarks about the role of the Holy Spirit in the work of adoption where the third Person is distinguished from the Father and the Son, and the Father is seen as the agent in adoption. In this connection Calvin

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1 S.B. Ferguson, 'The Reformed Doctrine of Sonship', in N.M. de S. Cameron and Ferguson (eds.), *Pulpit and People. Essays in Honour of William Still* (Edinburgh, 1986), pp. 81-8.

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 82f.

3 J.S.Lidgett, *The Fatherhood of God* (Edinburgh, 1902), pp. 253ff.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 257.

5 *Institutes* 3:1:3. All quotations from the *Institutes* are from the translation by J.T. McNeill and F.L. Battles, 2 vols. (*Library of Christian Classics* 20-21; London, 1961).

recognises two angles from which the Fatherhood of God can be viewed. First he thinks of the 'creative'<sup>6</sup> Fatherhood of God, that is, the fatherly relation he sustains to all human beings and angels by virtue of their being his creatures: 'At their creation angels and men were so constituted that God was their common father' (*Inst.* 2:14:5). From a second angle, he views the privilege of adoption as most properly one constituted by grace and not nature, a consequence of the 'free benevolence of God' (*Inst.* 3:1:3). These two aspects are contrasted at various points in Calvin's writings as we shall now see. The sonship established by created endowment is elsewhere explicated, at least as far as humanity is concerned, in terms of the *imago Dei*. Calvin states:

I allow, indeed, that... because Adam was made in the image of God, his posterity were always reckoned, in a certain sense, to be children of God.<sup>7</sup>

Even the prelapsarian relationship of humanity to God is only 'in a certain sense' to be construed in terms of sonship, and such restraint on Calvin's behalf with regard to 'creative' sonship alerts us to the possibility of there being a fuller, more certain and fundamental sense in which the notion of sonship is to be conceived. This latter sense is apparent when he comments on adoption as viewed in relation to the fall and to God's work of redemption. Because of the fall we are not now sons, for 'our sin [is] just cause for his disowning us and not regarding or recognising us as his sons'. But the Father-son relationship is re-established by the message of the cross, which we ought to embrace 'if we desire to return to God our Author and Maker from whom we have been estranged, in order that he may again begin to be our Father' (*Inst.* 2:6:1). It is, we might say, in this 'redemptive' sonship that for Calvin adoption properly consists. A 'sure' adoption is only to be received by coming to Christ the Head.<sup>8</sup> This

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6 This phrase, as far as I am aware, is not Calvin's but is a useful denotation for this aspect of his thought. It is taken from John Murray, *Collected Writings*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh, 1977), pp. 223ff.

7 *Comm.* on Exod. 4:22f. (*Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses... in the Form of a Harmony I*, p. 103). All quotations from Calvin's commentaries are from the Calvin Translation Society translations (Edinburgh, 1844-55).

8 *Comm.* on Exod. 4:22f. (*Harmony I*, p. 104).

redemptive sonship is so far superior and qualitatively different as to permit Calvin to aver that creative sonship is not sonship at all, for 'to neither angels nor men was God ever Father', but he becomes so only 'by free adoption' (*Inst.* 2:14:5). 'The adoption of all the godly is gratuitous and does not depend on any regard to works.'<sup>9</sup>

The sharp distinction between 'adoption by nature' and 'adoption by grace' and the enhanced character of the latter is reflected in Calvin's comments on those biblical passages which *prima facie* speak of the universal fatherhood of God and its correlate, the universal brotherhood of man. Whilst commenting for instance on Ephesians 4:6, and recognising a universal dimension to God's Fatherhood by citing Acts 17:28, Calvin affirms that 'Father' is the term 'which applies only to the members of Christ'. Again his comments on Isaiah 63:16 confirm the view that sonship, properly speaking, is the 'peculiar privilege of the Church'. A similar delimitation is made with regard to Malachi's question 'Have we not all one Father?' (2:10), where for Calvin the 'all' is exclusively a reference to the Jews.<sup>10</sup>

The Trinitarian nature of the privilege of adoption in Calvin comes to further expression in the central place given by him to Jesus Christ. There is no adoption outside of Christ, for 'to be sure', says Calvin, 'the inheritance of heaven belongs only to the children of God.... Moreover it is quite unfitting that those not engrafted into the body of the only begotten Son are considered to have the place and rank of children' (*Inst.* 2:6:1). Outside of Christ, asks Calvin, 'with what confidence would anyone address God as "Father"?' In effect Calvin anticipates the reply, 'no one', 'unless we had been adopted as children of grace in Christ' (*Inst.* 3:20:36). Furthermore, it is the Son who, by his work of atonement secures the grounds upon which the Father can justly adopt us as his sons. The sinner is under the law with its 'bonds of harsh and dangerous requirements, which remit nothing of the extreme penalty of the law and suffer no transgression to go unpunished' (*Inst.* 2:7:15).

Adoption is the category Calvin used to describe the status one enters into upon release from the law. But this is achieved

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<sup>9</sup> *Comm.* on 1 John 3:1.

<sup>10</sup> *Comm.* on Mal. 2:10 (*Twelve Minor Prophets*, pp.540-41).



by Christ himself becoming a curse for us, being made subject to the law, 'that we should not be borne down by an unending bondage, which would agonise our consciences with the fear of death' (*Ibid*). Our access to the Father in prayer is a way 'opened to us by the blood of Christ, [that] we may rejoice fully and openly that we are the children of God.'<sup>11</sup> It is precisely because adoption is the fruit of the cross that we must 'embrace it [*i.e.* the cross] humbly' if our sonship is to be restored (*Inst.* 2:6:1).

What is equally essential to the procurement of our adoption for Calvin is not only that Christ takes our place to release us from the law of God, but that he takes our nature through incarnation, so that 'what he has of his own by nature may become ours by benefit of adoption' (*Inst.* 3:20:36). In fact, asks Calvin, 'Who could have [restored us to God]... had not the self same Son of God become the Son of man, and had he not so taken what was ours as to impart what was his to us, and to make what was his by nature ours by grace?' (*Inst.* 2:12:2). The incarnation makes possible the atonement, which in turn restores us to God our Father. The incarnation, however, is not merely a means to atonement but is itself an event upon which our adoption is founded whereby Christ as much as the Father comes to occupy the role of 'Adopter'. Of Christ's role in adoption Calvin says:

His task was so to restore us to God's grace as to make of the children of men, children of God; of the heirs of Gehenna, heirs of the heavenly kingdom.... Therefore... we trust that we are sons of God, for God's natural Son fashioned for himself a body from our body... that he might be one with us... he took our nature upon himself to impart to us what was his (*Inst.* 2:2:2).

This imparting of what was his to us and the taking of what was ours to himself Calvin styles a 'wonderful exchange' (*Inst.* 4:17:2). But what, more precisely, is it that is 'exchanged' in the act of incarnation? Calvin answers in lofty prose:

[His] becoming son of man with us [makes] us sons of God with him; that by his descent to earth, he has prepared ascent to heaven for us; that, by taking on our mortality, he has conferred his immortality upon us; that, accepting our

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<sup>11</sup> *Comm.* on Rom. 8:15f.

weakness, he has strengthened us by his power; that receiving our poverty unto himself, he has transferred his wealth to us; that, taking the weight of our iniquity upon himself... he hath clothed us with righteousness (*Ibid*).

Does all this mean that for Calvin, the incarnation as an historical event *de facto* constitutes all men and women children of God in virtue of the 'exchange' of their humanity for the privileges and status belonging to him as Son? We have already seen that Calvin's own sharp differentiation between what we are by nature, on the one hand, and by grace, on the other, leads him to deny the universal fatherhood of God. The same point can be arrived at, however, by following his thinking on incarnation. For Calvin, the historical event of incarnation does not obviate the need for an existential engrafting into Christ, for, as already noted, 'it is quite unfitting that those not engrafted into the body of the only begotten Son are considered to have the place and rank of children' (*Inst.* 2:6:1). Clearly there is a union of God and humanity by virtue of incarnation, but there is also required for sonship in its deepest signification an 'engrafting' into Christ. This engrafting is effected through faith, since

flesh alone does not make the bond of brotherhood... when we say that Christ was made man that he might make us children of God, this expression does not extend to all men. For faith intervenes, to engraft us spiritually into the body of Christ (*Inst.* 2:13:2).

We can bring some completeness to our understanding of the Trinitarian structure of Calvin's thinking on adoption by a glance at the role he assigns to the Holy Spirit. The major function of the Holy Spirit in relation to adoption is to create within the believer a filial confidence – an assurance or persuasion of being a son or daughter of God. Our assurance of God's paternal care for us 'is made certain by the Spirit of adoption'.<sup>12</sup> In fact, says Calvin, the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of adoption precisely 'because he is the witness to us of the free benevolence of God' (*Inst.* 3:1:3). As has often been pointed out, Calvin held to the belief that assurance of salvation was of the essence of saving faith: 'no one can be called a son of God, who does not know himself to be

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

such'.<sup>13</sup> In keeping with this latter sentiment, Calvin will not allow, as some modern Calvinists have done,<sup>14</sup> that the Spirit of adoption is the privilege of a few. Rather it is, 'the common privilege of all the saints'.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, when commenting on the parallel Pauline passage in Galatians 4:6, Calvin affirms that

In venturing... to call God your Father, you have the advice and direction of the Spirit of Christ.... Let it be observed that Paul ascribes this universally to all Christians.

What is crucially important in Calvin is the inseparable juxtaposition of Word and Spirit in creating a filial consciousness in the believer. Assurance of our sonship comes from leaning and resting upon the knowledge of the divine favour towards us as revealed in the Word, but also as 'sealed on our hearts by the Holy Spirit' (*Inst.* 3:2:7). The promise of our adoption is given by God in the Word, but its veracity and applicability to ourselves need to be witnessed to by the Spirit in our hearts, and are not witnessed to apart from that Word.<sup>16</sup>

### **Adoption and the Covenant**

A second major aspect of Calvin's thought, in addition to the Trinitarian dimension, is what we might call the 'covenantal' or perhaps the 'redemptive-historical'. By this we refer to the movement and development of thought with regard to adoption that Calvin perceives in the unfolding of redemption across the contours of covenantal disclosure. In a word, we have to take cognisance of the fact that Calvin's understanding of adoption is arrived at by employing what

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13 *Ibid.* On Calvin's view that assurance is of the essence of saving faith, as distinct from the later Puritan idea of assurance as the reflex act of faith, see A.N.S. Lane, 'Calvin's Doctrine of Assurance', *Vox Evangelica* 11 (1979), pp. 32-54.

14 *E.g.*, D.M. Lloyd-Jones, *Romans. An Exposition of Chapter 8, 5-17. The Sons of God* (Edinburgh, 1974).

15 *Comm.* on Rom. 8:15f.

16 For a detailed exposition of Calvin on the Spirit's role in testifying to believers' adoption, see A.N.S. Lane, 'John Calvin: The Witness of the Spirit', in *Faith and Ferment. Westminster Conference Papers* (London, 1982), pp. 1-17.

has been called the biblico-theological method.<sup>17</sup> What results does this method yield as used by Calvin for the doctrine of adoption? To answer this question it is important to remind ourselves of the broader covenantal framework in which Calvin's understanding of adoption in particular is set. For Calvin, any transition or development in the notion of sonship across time must be set against the relationship between the old and new covenants.

In principle these covenants are essentially one. Any movement from one to the other and the attendant changes are formal rather than substantial and do not affect the inner unity of the covenants. Thus in *Institutes* 2:10:1, 2, Calvin points out three major areas of agreement between old and new covenant: 1. The Jews as much as we had set before them the promise of eternal life or immortality, except in a more temporal mode. 2. The Jews were saved as much by grace and not works as we are. 3. The Jews as much as we had Christ at the centre of their faith and religion. Calvin's arguments for the inherent oneness of these two administrations are summarised in his usual vivid manner:

Let us, therefore, boldly establish a principle unassailable by any stratagem of the Devil: the Old Testament... that the Lord had made with the Israelites had not been limited to earthly things, but contained a promise of spiritual and eternal life... away with this insane and dangerous opinion that the Lord promised the Jews... nothing but a full belly, delights of the flesh, flourishing wealth, outward power, fruitfulness of offspring and whatever the natural man prizes! (*Inst.* 2:10:23).

For these reasons, when Calvin thinks of sonship in the Old Testament, he can speak of it in New Testament terms. The covenant with the Jews for instance, he calls 'the covenant of adoption' (*Inst.* 3:2:22), and the even older covenant with Abraham is one which consisted in 'receiving by free adoption as sons those who were enemies' (*Inst.* 1:10:1).

Of course there are contrasts to bear in mind too: 'I freely admit that there are differences between the two testaments'

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<sup>17</sup> For definition, see G. Vos, *Biblical Theology* (Edinburgh, 1982), pp. 3-18, and for bibliography, E.P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ, 1979), pp. 122f.

(*Inst.* 2:11:1). For Calvin these are principally as follows:<sup>18</sup>  
 1. A stress on temporal blessings, but blessings which nevertheless symbolised spiritual good. '[God] willed', says Calvin:

that for the time during which he gave his covenant to the people of Israel in a veiled form, the grace of future and eternal happiness be signified and figured under earthly benefits, the gravity of spiritual death under physical punishments (*Inst.* 2:11:3).

2. In the Old Testament truth was conveyed by symbols, types and ceremonies. The truth conveyed is the same but the mode is different. The law and the prophets 'gave a foretaste of that wisdom which was one day to be clearly disclosed, and pointed to it twinkling afar off' (*Inst.* 2:11:5).

3. The Old Testament is literal, the New Testament is spiritual. Citing 2 Corinthians 3, Calvin contrasts the 'letter' of the old with the 'spirit' of the new, and 'life' with 'death' and 'condemnation' with 'righteousness' (*Inst.* 2:11:7-8).

4. The Old Testament refers to one nation, the New to all.

5. The final difference between the two covenants bears more directly on the subject of adoption. Citing Galatians 4:22ff., Calvin pinpoints the advancement that the New Testament brings in the believer's experience in these words:

The Old Testament struck consciences with fear and trembling, but by the benefit of the New they are released into joy. The Old held consciences bound by the yoke of bondage; the New by its spirit of liberality emancipates them into freedom (*Inst.* 2:11:9).

As one might expect, there is further detail to be found on this matter in Calvin's comments on Paul's discourse on the covenants in Galatians 3 and 4. Here again Calvin institutes a threefold contrast between the adoption of Old and New Testament believers. First, the Jews were 'under the custody of the law... [which]... did not restrain them from faith; but, that they might not wander from the fold of faith, it kept possession of themselves'. Again this does not mean that the ancient believers were not 'sons', for when Paul speaks of believers who lived 'before faith came' (Gal. 3:23), he does so, says Calvin, 'not in an absolute, but in a comparative sense'. Again, 'while they had the mirror, we have the

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<sup>18</sup> For what follows see *Inst.* 2:11:1-14.

substance', but, 'whatever might be the amount of darkness under the law, the fathers were not ignorant of the road in which they ought to walk.'<sup>19</sup> Secondly, believers under the law were 'children' under a 'schoolmaster', being trained for more mature years:

The law was the grammar of theology, which, after carrying its scholars a short way, handed them over to faith to be completed. Thus, Paul compares the Jews to children, and us to advanced youth.<sup>20</sup>

Just as a child is not so indefinitely but comes to adulthood, so he is not expected to be under the schoolmaster all his life. Here again, we believers of the new dispensation, 'under the reign of Christ, [need] no longer any childhood... consequently, the law has resigned its office.'<sup>21</sup> Thirdly,

Paul explains and illustrates the difference that exists between us and the ancient people... by introducing a third comparison, drawn from the relation which a person under age bears to his tutor.<sup>22</sup>

For Calvin, Old Testament believers resemble 'slaves'. They are in fact 'sons', since the period of guardianship lasts only until the time appointed by the Father, after which they will be free. 'In this respect', says Calvin, 'the fathers under the Old Testament, being the sons of God, were free; but they were not in possession of freedom... [until] the coming of Christ.'<sup>23</sup> Pursuing this line of thought on Galatians 4:24, Calvin terms the covenant symbolised by Hagar as 'legal' and that by Sarah as 'evangelical', the former 'makes slaves', the latter 'makes freemen'.

Thus from a comparison of the old with the new covenant Calvin provides us with a series of sustained contrasts that are the index to his understanding of how sonship develops across these epochs of redemptive revelation – between 'fear' and 'joy', 'bondage' and 'freedom', 'legal' and 'evangelical', 'childhood' and 'adulthood', 'slavery' and the 'freedom of sons'. But salvation does not terminate upon the 'now', but on the 'not yet'. Salvation reaches out to the future and

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19 *Comm.* on Gal. 3:23.

20 *Ibid.*

21 *Comm.* on Gal. 3:25.

22 *Comm.* on Gal. 4:1.

23 *Ibid.*

provokes us to consider not only what we have become by grace, but what, by that same grace, we shall become at the consummation of all things. What of this eschatological dimension to adoption in Calvin?

To begin with he is aware of the 'now' and the 'not yet' as his comments on 1 John 1:2 make clear:

Our present condition is very short of the glory of God's children; for as to our body we are dust and a shadow, and death is always before our eyes; we are also subject to a thousand miseries, and the soul is exposed to innumerable evils; so that we find always a hell within us.

But, Calvin continues: 'the fruit of our adoption is as yet hid, for in heaven is our felicity, and we are now far away travelling on the earth'. The lucidity of his thought on this point is particularly apparent in his comments on Romans 8:25ff., a context in which Paul himself is speaking of sonship and its privileges. In his comments on Romans 8:17 for instance, it is the thought of sonship as being the qualification for receipt of the heavenly inheritance that is uppermost, and so Calvin affirms, 'It is for children that inheritance is appointed: since God has adopted us as his children, he has at the same time ordained an inheritance for us.' From his comments on Romans 8:23 we can see how he regards the future inheritance as the climax of adoption or that in which adoption properly consists: 'adoption [is] employed here to designate the fruition of the inheritance to which we are adopted', an inheritance, he continues, which amounts to being received by God our Father 'into his celestial inheritance'. This final adoption, furthermore, has as one of its main components the redemption of the body without which 'the sacrifice of the death of Christ would be in vain and fruitless'. Receipt of the heavenly inheritance and the redemption of the body to that end are juxtaposed to a third element that 'all those whom he adopts... be conformed to his [*i.e.* Christ's] example'.<sup>24</sup> This note is sounded again in his comments on John's words 'we shall be like him' (1 John 3:2), on which Calvin comments:

He does not understand that we shall be equal to him... but we shall be like him, because he will make our vile body conformable to his glorious body... the final end of our

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24 *Comm.* on Rom. 8:29.

adoption is, that what has in order preceded in Christ, shall at length be completed in us.

In a word, the climax of this grace of adoption is renewal in God's image. This image, as we have seen, is the ground of our being children of God by creation. This was only sonship 'in a certain sense', but now the final phase of adoption brings us into sonship in its fullest and richest sense, being conformed not to Adam but to the last Adam, Jesus Christ.

### **Adoption and Justification**

We must now look briefly at a third aspect of Calvin's thinking in the area of adoption, namely, the relationship between adoption and justification. This issue arises since in the history of dogmatics, adoption has not always been viewed as distinct from justification, but rather as a subordinate aspect of justification.<sup>25</sup>

Given that Calvin himself does not treat adoption as a distinct locus of soteriology but does so treat justification, may one infer that, whilst adoption is a central privilege and core blessing, it is so nevertheless in deference to justification? Certainly there is some evidence to suggest this. In discoursing on justification, Calvin says:

Paul surely refers to justification by the word 'acceptance' when in Ephesians 1:5-6 he says: 'We are destined for adoption through Christ.... That means the very thing that he commonly says elsewhere, that "God justifies us freely"' (*Inst.* 3:11:4).

Later in the same passage Calvin equates justification and reconciliation, strengthening further the thought that justification and adoption may not be distinct. Again in the context of justification he asserts that

Christ cannot be torn into parts, so these two which we perceive in him together and conjointly are inseparable – namely, righteousness and sanctification. Whomever, therefore, God receives into grace, on them he at the same time bestows the Spirit of adoption (*Inst.* 3:11:6)).

Thus in sum, if Calvin can so mix the soteriological metaphors of justification with regeneration, reconciliation and sanctification, the impression created is that adoption and justification would hardly be separable in his mind.

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<sup>25</sup> See Ferguson, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-4.



### Adoption and the Christian Life

Before drawing this paper to a close, we cannot omit to mention the strong practical and experimental overtones that Calvin associates with the privilege of adoption. What adoption means in practical terms in the believer's life can be divided under two heads – responsibilities and privileges.

Upon those adopted into God's family a three-sided responsibility devolves, first towards the Father, secondly towards the family and thirdly towards the world. As children of the heavenly King we are to be conscious of our high calling and behave in a manner commensurate with that status.

It is no common honour that we are reckoned among the sons of God: it belongs to us in our turn to take care, that we do not show ourselves to be degenerate children to him. For what injury we do to God, if while we call him Father we defile ourselves with abominations of idols! Hence the thought of the high distinction to which he has elevated us, ought to whet our desire for holiness and purity.<sup>26</sup>

Indeed, 'we have been adopted for this reason: to reverence him as our Father' (*Inst.* 3:17:6). A further reason is in order that our lives might

express Christ, the bond of our adoption.... Since God revealed himself Father to us, we must prove our ungratefulness to him if we did not in turn show ourselves his sons (*Inst.* 3:6:3).

There are, in the second place, responsibilities to discharge towards other members of the family. As far as occasion requires, says Calvin, there ought to be nothing that we are not prepared to share with one another, and the reason is that 'one Father is common to us all... and every good thing that can fall to our lot comes from him' (*Inst.* 3:20:36f.). Since we are sons and God is our Father, 'it becomes us ... to show to his people, to his family the same zeal and affection that we have toward this Heavenly Father'. Thirdly, the charitable and forgiving spirit that should characterise believers in their relationships to unbelievers Calvin sees as a mark of adoption.

The Lord excludes from the number of his children those persons who being eager for revenge and slow to forgive,

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<sup>26</sup> *Comm.* on 2 Cor. 6:18.

practise persistent enmity and foment against others the very indignation that they pray to be averted from themselves (*Inst.* 3:20:45).

Such weighty burdens are made light, however, when set against the multifarious privileges of adoption which are scattered throughout Calvin's writings. To begin with, the title Father 'supplies us with sufficiently copious materials for confidence'<sup>27</sup> in prayer, and the fact that all the hairs of our head are numbered 'instructs us to depend on the fatherly care of God which is exercised over these frail bodies'.<sup>28</sup> In addition, adoption is that grace which enables believers to entertain a hope beyond this world, for

the kingdom of Heaven is not servants' wages but sons' inheritance... which only they who have been adopted as sons by the Lord shall enjoy, and that for no other reason than this adoption (*Inst.* 3:18:2).

Further, by disclosing himself to us as 'Father', God 'frees us from all distrust' and as such testifies to us of 'his own boundless love toward us', with the result that he will never fail us and will ever be merciful to us. To look elsewhere for help is to reproach God 'for poverty, or want of means, or cruelty or excessive rigour' (*Inst.* 3:20:36). Even our sins cannot dilute the streams of fatherly love that flow to us, and so we are 'not [to] pretend that we are justly rendered timid by the consciousness of sins'.

If among men a son can have no better advocate to plead his cause before his father ... than if he himself, suppliant and humble, acknowledging his guilt, implores his father's mercy – for then his father's heart cannot pretend to be moved by such entreaties – what will he do who is the Father of mercies and God of all comfort? (*Inst.* 3:20:37).

Moreover, the Fatherhood of God and our relationship to him give us a perspective from which to view all the hardships and rigours of this present life. A life marked by such features is not to be thought of as incompatible with being a child of God but of its very essence.

For whomever the Lord has adopted and deemed worthy of his fellowship ought to prepare themselves for a hard,

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27 *Comm.* on Matt. 6:9 (*Harmony of the Evangelists* I, p. 317).

28 *Comm.* on Matt. 10:29 (*Harmony* I, p. 465).

toilsome, and unquiet life, crammed with many and various kinds of evil (*Inst.* 3:8:1).

But it is ever to be remembered that these things are not the product of impersonal forces of blind fate or chance or caprice but 'the Heavenly Father's will'. This is how even Christ as the Son of God learned obedience, and it is for the noble and ultimate purpose of conforming us to Christ's image that our Father so proceeds with us. What is more, this God who is our Father,

is not only a father but by far the best and kindest of all fathers, provided we cast ourselves upon his mercy, although we are ungrateful, rebellious and froward children (*Inst.* 3:8:1).

**‘FALLING DOWN AS IF DEAD’:  
ATTITUDES TO UNUSUAL PHENOMENA  
IN THE SKYE REVIVAL OF 1841-1842**  
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Recently the so-called ‘Toronto Blessing’ has focused considerable attention on supernatural phenomena in the context of Christian worship, especially of a charismatic nature. The appearance of the phenomena – falling down, crying aloud, shaking, weeping – has led to discussion of the relationship between the ‘Blessing’ and what the Protestant churches have historically recognised as ‘revival’. A wide range of views has been expressed, few of them new.<sup>1</sup> In the contexts of most revival movements which have swept the northern hemisphere in the course of the last three centuries or so, similar phenomena have manifested themselves, and have generated expressions of approval, scepticism, guarded acceptance or outright rejection (and variations of these) among those who have witnessed their presence.<sup>2</sup> So it has been with the manifestations of the ‘Blessing’.

Given the surprise with which the phenomena of the ‘Blessing’ have been received in some quarters, it may be useful to draw attention to the appearance of supernatural phenomena in Scottish revivals of the past. Within certain sectors of Evangelicalism, there is a convenient tendency to ignore, or overlook, the physical impact of revivals, in such a way that the reconstructed model of revival fits the present paradigms of churches which are now anxious to preserve their spiritual decorum.

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<sup>1</sup> The ‘Toronto Blessing’ is described in a rash of ‘instant’ books, most of them covering much the same ground and seemingly concerned to establish the authenticity of the experience. These include Guy Chevreau, *Catch the Fire* (London, 1994) and Patrick Dixon, *Signs of Revival* (Eastbourne, 1994). The latter is more interesting than most because of the author’s ability (as a doctor) to assess the human factors which may contribute to, or create, such phenomena.

<sup>2</sup> See Michael A.G. Haykin, *Revival, Signs and Wonders: Some Evangelical Perspectives from the Eighteenth Century* (Richmond Hill, Ontario, 1994).

Present-day definitions should not, however, blind us to past realities. Revival movements which led to a dramatic increase of congregational size without some measure of disturbance have been comparatively rare. Nowadays, we may not readily associate supernatural manifestations with the more conservative churches of Scotland, particularly in the Scottish Highlands, but, as this article will demonstrate, some religious bodies, even in the Highlands, have had considerable experience of such phenomena.

If there is a tendency in some quarters to make revivals respectable, there is also a propensity to believe that revivals have a uniform morphology. Such movements may, in fact, vary their style as they develop. As the present article hopes to show, there is some evidence that a revival movement may go through different phases; unusual phenomena may be present at one stage, but not at another. As a revival movement progresses, it may be transformed from an initial phenomenal outburst, with overtly physical manifestations, to a quiet but steady flow of responses. It is also possible for a movement which begins relatively quietly to display more 'extreme' manifestations in the course of its development.

This article offers a tentative case study of the unusual phenomena accompanying one major Highland revival (or awakening), namely the revival that occurred in the Isle of Skye in 1841-2. It will consider how the revival, and particularly its physical manifestations, were portrayed and assessed by contemporary observers. It will also look briefly at a later account of events which scarcely mentions the phenomena which were so evident to the first observers.

### **Baptist Perspectives**

A fascinating and (hitherto) little-known description of the Skye revival by a contemporary observer was provided by the Revd James MacQueen, pastor of the small Baptist church at Broadford. Writing his dispatches to the Baptist Home Missionary Society for Scotland, MacQueen gave the following account of events in the late autumn of 1841 and the spring of 1842:<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Reports of the Baptist Home Missionary Society for Scotland, chiefly for the Highlands and Islands* (Edinburgh, 1829-46), 1843, pp. 8-9. The volume is held in Glasgow University Library. For

September – I suppose you have heard what has occurred in the other end of the island. They had the sacrament last week, and, I hear, that between 12,000 and 15,000 attended, and that hundreds fell down as if they were dead. This usually commences with violent shaking and crying out, with clapping of hands. Those affected were mostly women and children. We have had two or three instances of it in this station, and it is likely it will go over the whole island. I think it is better to refrain from these men, and let them alone; if it be of man it will come to nought.

December – I never saw the church so lively and zealous as at present.... I never saw such a general desire to hear in every part of the station, and, indeed, through the whole island. Four persons were baptised since I last wrote to you. I cannot visit one half of the places to which I am invited. This awakening commenced in the north of Skye, by means of a Gaelic schoolmaster. It has extended to all the parishes of the island....

March – Ten persons have been baptised and added to us since the beginning of winter.... As to the revival, things are more moderate. The crying and fainting are dying away in most places, but the desire to hear is the same. The revival has extended to the mainland; in some parishes it is at its height, and the people are carried home in carts.

Independent confirmation of the phenomena described by MacQueen is provided by another Baptist minister who was visiting Skye in 1841. Duncan Ferguson, who was stationed in the Ross of Mull, went to Skye on the death of his brother, Angus, who was the Baptist pastor at Uig. According to Ferguson, he too experienced 'those contortions and screamings which have been so frequent'. When preaching one evening, presumably in the Baptist chapel at Uig, he had to conclude early, because he was unable to hear his own voice above the noise caused by the supernatural manifestations among his listeners.<sup>4</sup>

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James MacQueen (c. 1801-54), a native of Cromdale, Strathspey, see Donald E. Meek, 'The Independent and Baptist Churches of Highland Perthshire and Strathspey', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, 56 (1988-90), p. 322.

<sup>4</sup> *Baptist Home Missionary Society Reports*, 1843, pp. 10-11.

### Presbyterian Perspectives

In the 1843 Report of the Edinburgh Society for the Support of Gaelic Schools, the Revd Roderick MacLeod of Snizort provided the following account of the Skye revival and its origins:<sup>5</sup>

Mr Norman MacLeod [a Gaelic schoolmaster] was appointed to the station at Unish in May 1839, and opened a school there on the 15th of June following. In April 1840, a few individuals appeared to be awakened to a sense of their lost condition by nature. Towards the end of August of the same year there seemed to be an unusual concern among the people relative to their spiritual interests; and many cried out at the meetings in apparent distress of mind. The effect of these impressions continued in an increased attention to the things that belong to their peace. Symptoms of declension, however, began to appear; and the period for the teacher's removal drawing near, he felt his spirit unusually moved regarding their state. Under these circumstances he met with his scholars on the morning of the 15th of May last, being the Lord's day, and the last day of the Session, and experienced much tenderness towards them. About two o' clock in the afternoon he met with the people for worship, when an individual cried out. They met again at night, when he read the 11th chapter of Mark, and made some remarks on the parable of the barren fig-tree, and in conclusion adverted to his three years' residence with them, and asked, now that he was about to leave them, what fruit they had brought forth. On his asking that, the most extraordinary emotions appeared among the people; some wept, and some cried aloud as if pricked in their hearts, while others fainted, and fell down as if struck dead. In this state they continued together the whole night; and instead of the teacher's going away on the morrow, as he had previously intended, such was the awakening that he remained sixteen days, reading and praying, – the people

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<sup>5</sup> *The Thirty-second Annual Report of the Society for the Support of Gaelic Schools* (Edinburgh, 1843), pp. 16-17. On the Revd Roderick MacLeod (1794-1868), revered for his evangelical austerity and known in Gaelic as *Maighstir Ruairidh*, see Roderick MacLeod, 'The Bishop of Skye', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, 53 (1982-4), pp. 174-209.

continuing to assemble with so little intermission, day or night, that he could only get two hours' sleep early every morning. The state of things at Unish, as may be readily conceived, soon began to be noised abroad; and the consequence was, that numbers from various parts of the country were attracted to the scene, many of whom became similarly affected with the rest.

Immense crowds began to gather at Unish, but, because of the dangers inherent in travelling to the area by sea, the venue was changed to the more accessible location of Fairy Bridge:

[A] well-known spot, called Fairy-Bridge, where three roads now meet, was pitched upon as the most convenient place for meeting, and continued to be the scene of a weekly preaching to thousands for about two months, when the advance of the harvest season rendered it expedient to discontinue it. Multitudes from all parts of Skye, excepting the distant parishes of Strath and Sleat, flocked to Fairy Bridge; and as proof of one design of Providence at least, in permitting such outward manifestations as took place under the Word, it is a fact worthy of notice, that some who never went to hear the Gospel in their own parish, were induced by what they heard was going on, to go many miles beyond to hear it. Soon after the awakening broke out in Unish, it appeared also in Geary, another Gaelic School station in Waternish, under Mr Murdoch MacDonald, the teacher there, – and also at Glendale in the parish of Diurnish: – so that from that extreme and intermediate point, where it first commenced, it proceeded to the right and to the left, till now, in a series of regular successive movements, it has traversed the whole of the island, from north to south, yea and beyond, even to the islands of Eigg and Rum, in the parish of Small Isles, the most distant bounds of the Presbytery of Skye.

In the parish of the Small Isles, the impact of the revival produced physical manifestations, as the parish minister, the Revd John Swanson, pointed out:<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Thirty-second Annual Report*, p. 21. For John Swanson (1804-74), a native of Gravesend, Kent, who learned Gaelic in the course of his Highland ministry, see *Disruption Worthies of the Highlands* (Edinburgh, 1886), pp. 127-36.



Considering the elements which the Word had to work on here, that when its power was first felt, there was a good deal of physical excitement, will not surprise you. But this is gradually subsiding, as the judgement is becoming more enlightened. Of the general result of the work among us, I cannot yet speak decidedly. I doubt not that there are many cases in which it will be good and glorious, and as yet I have no reason to despair of any awakened soul.

Donald MacKinnon, Gaelic Schools Society teacher in Eigg, reported in November 1842:<sup>7</sup>

About the revivals in this island: it is generally known that this was the most benighted parish in all Scotland, in regard to the gospel; half the population are Roman Catholics and the Protestants are almost Papists at heart; although Mr Swanson laboured among them for about nearly three years, yet little or no saving effect was visible upon any of his hearers until the 7th of August last, when the first cry was heard. As our minister was preaching, a widow woman was impressed, the whole audience noticed her, and arrested their attention: I may say the awe of God fell upon all. We met again in the evening of the same day when three more women were impressed with a sense of their sins and misery, and crying aloud for mercy; upon Thursday evening following, Mr Swanson's ordinary week-day for lecturing, I cannot remember any more being impressed but the above four, but next Sabbath the cries from the meeting-house could be distinctly heard at the distance of half a mile.... At the meeting-house there are generally two kinds of weeping, *viz.* weeping for fear of hell, by those who are under the spirit of bondage; and others weeping for joy, which is more desirable, and which some of them count their life and health. The Roman Catholics are not ashamed to call this work 'the work of the devil', and calling that kind of temporary sickness which accompanies it 'the braxy', and some such names in contempt and ridicule.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Thirty-second Annual Report*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>8</sup> 'The braxy' was a bacterial disease which affected sheep, particularly in autumn and winter. The bacteria acted very quickly, and sheep collapsed, usually being found as corpses which were carried home by the shepherd. The sarcastic humour of the term in

By the autumn of 1843, the awakening evident in Skye and the Small Isles had spread to the Outer Hebrides, notably to North Uist, where, by September, Norman MacLeod, the former Gaelic Schools Society teacher at Unish, was now itinerating as a catechist and exhorter. MacLeod's impact was immediate, as the Revd Norman MacLeod of Trumisgarry, North Uist, reported to the Edinburgh Gaelic Schools Society in January 1844:<sup>9</sup>

He had scarcely set his hand to the work when several, especially among the young, became sensibly distressed at his meetings under conviction of sin, and their lost condition. From this, as a centre point, the revival has been spreading south and north.... Persons of all ages and sexes are affected; but the majority of them are within the period called the prime of life. In this parish particularly, numbers of children, from eight to fourteen years of age, are impressed; and it would be an affecting sight to see their parents, as I have more than once seen them, carrying them out of the meeting-house, apparently lifeless with exhaustion and overpowered feelings. Respecting the bodily emotions exhibited by the impressed, I would only observe, that they are similar to those of such as were visible subjects of revival lately in Skye, and in several other parts of Scotland, in recent as well as in more remote periods. We have every reason to hope, that many, besides those visibly impressed, are partakers of the spiritual benefits of his merciful visitation. There is reason to fear, however, as has often been the case in times past, that numbers of those who now seem promising will fall away; yet the practical effects of the work are highly gratifying, and unquestionably evidence of its heavenly origin. Gross sins are abandoned – carnal levities are given up. A deep and general interest is felt and shown in what is important and saving in religion.

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this context is obvious. It should be noted, however, that name-calling of this kind, equating a revival with a disease, is not restricted to Roman Catholics; cf. the 'Stewarton Sickness' of 1626 and the 'Toronto Sickness' of 1994!

<sup>9</sup> *The Thirty-third Annual Report of the Society for the Support of Gaelic Schools* (Edinburgh, 1844), pp. 17-18.

### Commentary

The Baptist and Presbyterian accounts of the 1841-2 revival in Skye and beyond share a number of common perspectives. As both accounts indicate, the principal trigger in the movement was the Gaelic Schools Society teacher at Unish in Skye, and the context of the initial phase (the impending departure of the schoolmaster, a major authority-figure in the community) demonstrates that human emotions contributed significantly to the 'excitement'. Young people, including children, were among the first to display the unusual physical phenomena. Women were also particularly strongly affected. The intensity of the phenomena is clear, as is their nature – prostrations, shouting, weeping – though the Baptist account gives more specific details (shaking, clapping *etc.*) Baptists and Presbyterians indicate that the phenomena were most evident at the beginning of the revival, and that matters gradually became 'more moderate' as 'enlightenment' (as Swanson calls it) increased.

Where the accounts differ most obviously is in their attitude to the phenomena. The Baptist preachers show the higher degree of caution in accepting them, especially in the initial stages. James MacQueen's entry for September 1841 contains more than a hint of disdain towards the movement, together with a profound scepticism: 'I think it is better to refrain from these men, and let them alone; if it be of man it will come to nought.' His attitude becomes more positive, however, as he observes later that, because of the energising effect of the awakening, his church is 'zealous and lively', and the people's desire to hear the Word has increased. The yardstick being applied is that of spiritual interest, which counterbalances MacQueen's initial view that the movement, at least in its first phase, is superficial and emotional. The contribution which the revival makes in the longer term to the spiritual vitality of his own church allays his fear that it is natural rather than supernatural.

The Baptists' (initially) rather dismissive approach is particularly interesting since it might be expected that they would have been more willing than Presbyterians to welcome the appearance of revivals exhibiting strong supernatural phenomena. They were by no means strangers to revivals, as most Baptist churches in the Highlands and Islands were built on localised revival movements, but it does seem that the

phenomena in the Skye revival were quite different from anything they had previously experienced.<sup>10</sup> With Baptist leaders elsewhere in Britain, it is likely that MacQueen and Ferguson shared a disaffection towards 'enthusiasm', and that they were anxious to test the reality of the experience in the longer term at the level of lasting and demonstrable spiritual commitment. Even so, their response may have been shaped by more down-to-earth considerations, affecting the survival of their churches. By the 1840s, the Baptist missionary outreach to the Highlands and Islands was in what might be termed broadly a stable phase, and it is possible that the outburst in Skye was seen as a threat to that stability – particularly since the revival might be seen as an indication of the forces that were at work beyond the confines of these small Baptist churches. Even the Establishment itself was now showing signs of divine visitation.

For Presbyterians, the evangelical currents which had swept through the Highlands and Islands, and had affected other parts of Scotland, were reaching the intensity of a tidal race, soon to be directed into the Disruption of 1843. The Skye revival was seen by the Revd Roderick MacLeod of Snizort as an indicator of the success of evangelical Presbyterianism, but more particularly as a vindication of the policy of placing Gaelic Schools Society teachers in Highland parishes. MacLeod and other writers who were in contact with the society thus tended to speak in much broader terms which did not give a central position to the phenomena. They were, nevertheless, well aware of their existence, and MacLeod was prepared to accept them as a way of attracting the attention of those who had no previous contact with the gospel. The success of 'outward manifestations' in bringing such people under the influence of gospel preaching was regarded as an indicator of providential intervention. It is especially noteworthy that Roderick MacLeod himself was the main preacher at Fairy Bridge, and that, despite his enduring reputation for immense spiritual seriousness, he did not try to suppress the phenomena. A degree of sensationalism could aid the evangelical cause, and the revival as a whole could be

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<sup>10</sup> For a general discussion of Baptist work in the Highlands and Islands, see chapter 15 of David W. Bebbington (ed.), *The Baptists in Scotland: A History* (Glasgow, 1988).

employed to give maximum publicity and local focus to a populist religious movement which would soon follow himself and other evangelical leaders into the Free Church of Scotland.<sup>11</sup>

Other commentators were more guarded about the significance of the phenomena. John Swanson, parish minister of the Small Isles, does not entirely conceal his unease when he feels it necessary to define the 'excitement' as deriving from the nature of 'the elements which the word had to work on here', hinting perhaps that the phenomena are explicable as a kind of exorcism required to cleanse a 'papist' parish, or as the product of some sort of confrontation between the forces of deep darkness and spiritual enlightenment.

But could the 'excitement' be taken as proof that the Word was working in those individuals who were 'visibly impressed'? Norman MacLeod of Trumisgarry appears to have thought that it could not, and he at least was prepared to accept that there could be seeming 'conversions' which would prove to be fruitless:

We have every reason to hope, that many, besides those visibly impressed, are partakers of the spiritual benefits of this merciful visitation. There is reason to fear, however, as has often been the case in times past, that numbers of those who now seem promising will fall away; yet the practical effects of the work are highly gratifying, and unquestionably evidence of its heavenly origin.

In responding to the phenomena in such a manner, the Presbyterian ministers whose comments have survived show a breadth of understanding which is not evident in the response of the Baptist ministers. The basis of their understanding is apparent in their references to unusual phenomena in previous revivals in Scotland and in their

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<sup>11</sup> It is significant that Skye was visited in September 1841 by the Revd John MacDonald of Urquhart (more commonly associated with Ferintosh), and it seems likely that it was he who conducted the communion service to which James MacQueen alludes; see *Thirty-second Annual Report*, pp. 18-19. MacDonald was seldom far from any of the main Highland revivals of the early nineteenth century, and he had a particularly important role in preaching during communion seasons which were focal points of revival (and of 'phenomena').

willingness to assess the present phenomena and their significance as part of a general 'visitation' which, though potentially flawed in some respects, was overall a work of 'heavenly origin'. It would seem likely that they were familiar with the writings of Jonathan Edwards, and that they derived their perspectives from him.<sup>12</sup> Baptists, on the other hand, were reacting 'on the hoof', so to speak, and one can see their responses being hammered out as the revival went through different stages and phases. Baptists and Presbyterians were, however, at one in regarding spiritual fruit, represented in changed lives and 'lively' churches, as the chief product by which the reality of the revival could be tested.

### **The Revival in Retrospect**

The contemporary accounts of the Skye revival can be set alongside a later description, from the work of the Revd Alexander MacRae, who quoted the following (unattributed) summary in his book, *Revivals in the Highlands and Islands in the 19th Century*:<sup>13</sup>

In 1839 Mr McLeod was translated to Snizort, his native parish. It was now the period of the Ten Years' Conflict, and into that movement he threw himself with his whole heart and soul. His sympathies were entirely on the side of the spiritual independence of the Church, and the spiritual rights and privileges of the Christian people. The circumstances of the time called for a large amount of extra parochial duties, for in 1840 another extraordinary revival movement began in Skye, which agitated the island from end to end, and extended even beyond it. It commenced at Unish, a hamlet near Waternish Point, under one of the Gaelic School Society teachers, Norman MacLeod, an old soldier who had served under General Abercromby in Egypt, was severely wounded at Alexandria, and retired on a pension. He was a single-minded, humble, earnest Christian man. The evening before his intended removal from Unish to occupy another station – a Sabbath evening

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<sup>12</sup> For an introduction to Jonathan Edwards' perspectives on revival, see J.I. Packer, *Among God's Giants: Aspects of Puritan Christianity* (Eastbourne, 1991), pp. 408-32.

<sup>13</sup> Alexander MacRae, *Revivals in the Highland and Islands in the 19th Century* (Stirling, 1905), pp. 75-7.

– he assembled the people for a farewell service. He read to them the 11th chapter of Mark, and made some remarks on the barren fig tree. He referred to his three years' residence among them, and asked what fruit they had brought forth. At this a most extraordinary emotion was manifested. The people would not retire, but continued there all night; and instead of the teacher leaving on the morrow, as was intended, such was the thirst to hear the Word that he remained with them for several weeks reading, praying and exhorting. Day and night the services were continued, with little intermission. The state of things at Unish was soon noised abroad, and many from other parts were drawn to the scene, and were similarly affected by the Word. As the parish minister was unfavourable, Mr MacLeod was invited to come and preach to them. This he readily agreed to do, and on the day fixed for the service a vast crowd assembled. Full fifty boats had come with people from the various parts of the coast around, and the impression made was remarkable. It was then thought advisable to change the place of meeting from Stein to Fairybridge, where three roads met, for it was central, though not near any dwelling. For many months a weekly service was conducted there by Mr McLeod, and crowds resorted thither from all parts of Skye.

Here the focus has moved perceptibly from the revival itself to the role of Roderick MacLeod as the main preacher of the movement. There is no direct allusion to the physical manifestations which had so concerned the contemporary writers, perhaps because they were – in the long term – of little significance. The experience as a whole is used to reinforce the picture of an emerging Presbyterian evangelical leadership in the Highlands and Islands in the early 1840s.

### **Conclusion**

The contemporary evidence of the 1841-2 revival in Skye and surrounding districts shows that 'outward manifestations' were well known in the context of Highland revivals of the nineteenth century, although later accounts tended to reduce their significance. These manifestations posed the same range of problems for their observers as comparable phenomena do today. The view that 'the revivals of the past' were 'pure' is challenged by such evidence. Even 150 years ago, the

'blessing', when it came, was essentially 'mixed', and required to be handled with care.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> I am very grateful to Dr Murray Simpson, Librarian, New College Library, Edinburgh, for providing photocopies of the relevant sections of the Annual Reports of the Society for the Support of Gaelic Schools.



# THE BASIS OF PAUL'S ETHICS IN HIS KERYGMATIC THEOLOGY

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## Introduction

The title of this paper implies that *there is an important relationship between Paul's ethics and his theology and presentation of the gospel*. In fact, as we shall see, Paul's ethics sprang out of his theology. If this is true, it is of great importance for the modern church, at least if we ascribe normative value to Paul's way of making ethical judgements. It means that modern Christians are not free to make merely pragmatic or situational ethical decisions, but that these need to take basic theological principles fully into account.

It implies too that theology is the true driving force of ethics, at least at the conceptual level. If this is so, then the current situation in the church should be a matter of real concern, for, although there is a fairly lively interest in ethics, this is coupled with a widespread neglect of theology. This attitude is at best unbalanced and at worst it will rob ethical judgements and consequent actions by Christians of any distinctively Christian content. The church is called to witness to the world both by its message and by its life. It is imperative for us to face the fact that it is in grave danger of losing any distinctiveness in either.

It is another implication of our title that *Paul did not inherit a complete system of ready-made ethical judgements or precepts*. Paul had to work at ethical issues, to see how they related to the gospel he was commissioned to proclaim, and to make decisions accordingly. These decisions affected not only his own conduct but also that of those to whom he wrote his letters.

It could of course be argued that Paul as a Jew possessed a major ethical document in the Old Testament, and that all that was needed was for him to apply its precepts and encourage their application in the churches. Now it is quite true that he quotes the Old Testament in ethical contexts and that at many other points his ethics show its influence. Even as a Jew, however, he did not come to the Old Testament without presuppositions; before his conversion these were supplied by the Pharisaic training through which he had passed.

Although the ethical problems faced by the Christian churches had similarities to those raised for the Jewish synagogues, they were not completely identical. For this reason it was inadequate for him simply to apply the Jewish ethical tradition he had inherited from his Rabbinic mentors and forbears. In any case, we would expect the change in his theological perspective which followed from his conversion to affect his outlook on ethical matters. This then raises the question as to the hermeneutical principles he applied in giving ethical counsel to the churches, and, without doubt, these principles reflect his theology.

It could also be argued that he was a disciple of a great ethical Teacher, and that all he needed to do was simply to state and apply the ethical precepts of Jesus. Now he does do this from time to time, but there were, as he himself says, situations for which no clear guidance was given in the teaching of Christ. In such situations he made his own judgements, although he recognizes that he did not do so unaided. He says, 'Now about virgins: I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgement as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy' (1 Cor. 7:25).

A further argument that might be advanced is that there was a Christian ethical tradition, itself reflected in his writings, so that he could simply apply its precepts. But, of course, new situations were arising all the time in the young churches for which he had some responsibility, and that tradition could not possibly cover every contingency.

### **Diverse Interpretations of Paulinism**

I will use the term 'Paulinism', although realizing that it has some unhelpful nuances, as a designation for Paul's basic theological stance. This theological stance has not always been understood in the same way. As will be seen, the debate as to the nature of Paulinism has considerable bearing on the issue of the relationship between his theology and his ethics, because the central concept of his theology has so often been regarded as intimately related to his ethics. As Keck and Furnish say, 'What one identifies as the theological center of

Paul's gospel will, in large part, determine the way all other aspects of his preaching and teaching are construed.'<sup>1</sup>

Keck gives a useful summary of 'Paul's Theology in Historical Criticism' in an appendix to his book, *Paul and his Letters*.<sup>2</sup> He concentrates on the history since the rise of the Tübingen School early in the nineteenth century. My own treatment owes something to his but also differs somewhat from it.

**1. Paulinism as essentially freedom from the law through Christ.** Characteristic Reformation teaching, especially in its Lutheran form, placed great emphasis on Paul's doctrine of justification as central to his whole outlook, and the Reformers employed it in their critique of the salvation theology and practice of the medieval church. They recognized in Augustine of Hippo one who had anticipated their own understanding of Paul's doctrine of justification.

Luther thought of Paul essentially as a converted Pharisee. His life had been characterized by a consciousness of moral failure, expressed classically in Romans 7. Augustine too had been impressed by this, for it had an echo in his own experience. This sense of failure they believed had been induced in Paul by his unsuccessful attempts to keep the law of Moses in order to be justified by God. To Paul the gospel centred in the cross, interpreted in legal terms as a divine act of penal substitution. This did not mean that the law had no abiding function beside its elenctic or convicting function, for Paul was no antinomian. Most Reformed theologians have held that for Paul the law had a continuing place as setting standards for Christian character and conduct.

For the Reformers, of course, Paulinism, although the classic presentation of Christian truth, was not out of harmony with the rest of the New Testament, even though the justification terminology might not appear elsewhere very frequently.

Then came F.C. Baur and the Tübingen School, who held that in fact there was profound theological disharmony in

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<sup>1</sup> L.E. Keck and V.P. Furnish, *The Pauline Letters* (Nashville, 1984), p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> L.E. Keck, *Paul and his Letters*, second edit. (Philadelphia, 1988), pp. 126-58.

early Christian history. This history was dominated by conflict over the law between the early Petrine and the slightly later Pauline churches. The latter were predominantly Gentile and held tenaciously to his doctrine of freedom from the Mosaic law. With this assumption, the Tübingen School maintained that only Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians and Galatians were definitely genuine Pauline writings and that Acts was a deliberate rewriting of history motivated by a desire to bring the two groups together. Rudolf Bultmann also emphasized the forensic element in Pauline theology, and he showed a remarkably clear understanding of it and how it cohered with other aspects of Paul's thought.

Here is Bultmann's view of the apostolic doctrine of the cross:

The Jesus who was crucified was the pre-existent incarnate Son of God and as such he was without sin. He is the Victim whose blood atones for our sins. He bears vicariously the sin of the world, and by enduring the punishment for sin on our behalf he delivers us from death.<sup>3</sup>

This is the basis for Paul's justification doctrine.

That hardly sounds like Bultmann's own theology and of course it is not! He made it clear, of course, that he could not accept this teaching at all, and he declares 'This mythological interpretation is a hotchpotch of sacrificial and juridical analogies which have ceased to be tenable for us today.' So, as we shall see, he gave Pauline theology instead an existentialist interpretation.<sup>4</sup>

Luther's approach to Paul's teaching has been much questioned recently. F. Watson, summing this up says that:

The work of Stendahl, Davies, Sanders and Räisänen is symptomatic of a very widespread feeling of dissatisfaction with the Lutheran approach to Paul. This is also apparent in the work of such scholars as M. Barth, G. Howard, J.D.G. Dunn, N.T. Wright, and (perhaps most significantly) in the important new three-volume

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3 R. Bultmann, in H.-W. Bartsch (ed.), *Kerygma and Myth* 1 (London, 1962), p. 35.

4 *Ibid.*

commentary on Romans by U. Wilckens. The process of 'deLutheranizing Paul' is well under way.<sup>5</sup>

There has also been much discussion about the crucial passage in Romans 7. J.C. Beker, for example, asserting that most scholars have come to a new consensus, says that there is

convincing evidence that Romans 7 is not autobiographical.... This is one of the instances in which New Testament exegesis seems to me to have made decisive and irrefutable progress, despite the fact that many scholars have continued to see Paul's own frustration with the law as one of his reasons for denouncing its validity as a way of salvation.<sup>6</sup>

Also of course, largely through the work of E.P. Sanders,<sup>7</sup> there have been attempts to re-design the image of Pharisaism that most of us have and to view it as finding the centre of Israel's relationship with God not so much in the law as in the covenant of which, of course, the law was an important expression. This then means, if Sanders is right, that there was more emphasis on grace in the Pharisaic outlook than has been generally understood.

The debate continues, but it should be clearly realized that it raises questions not only whether Paul's conversion was simply theological, with little or no basis in his ethical experience, but also whether the presentation of Pharisaism in the Gospels is really accurate. As this presentation is, in general, common to them all, a negative verdict would have very serious implications. Of course, what the theological leaders of the Pharisees taught and what the rank and file Pharisees of Galilee taught might well have been somewhat different in emphasis. It is the former we know from the Rabbinic literature; it is chiefly the latter that comes before us in the Gospels.

## **2. Paulinism as essentially participation in Christ.** Can the whole Pauline doctrine of salvation be understood in

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5 F. Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 18.

6 J.C. Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Edinburgh, 1980), pp. 478-9, n.23.

7 E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (London, 1977).

terms of justification or are other categories needed? We might perhaps add a category like adoption, which J.I. Packer characterized as a much neglected aspect of Paul's thought that should be taken alongside his justification doctrine.<sup>8</sup> This however, although somewhat different, still relates to an objective transfer of the sinner into a new position, just as justification does, although now conceived more in terms of the family than of relationship to the divine law.

The idea of participation is however somewhat different. In relation to the atonement it relates more to representation than to substitution, and of course, there have been participationist doctrines of the atonement going back into the patristic period, perhaps represented most strikingly in the Recapitulation doctrine of Irenaeus.

Towards the close of the nineteenth century, the History-of-Religions School arose. Its members taught that the Christian faith very early became Hellenized, and they regarded this as one feature of the general tendency to philosophical and religious syncretism which prevailed at the time.

Wilhelm Bousset,<sup>9</sup> for instance, taught that the Antioch church, living in a major Hellenistic centre, included many converts drawn from Hellenistic cults. It was natural that, in such a syncretistic atmosphere, they should simply transfer to Jesus the belief they already had in a supernatural lord. Salvation was secured by incorporation into him through the initiation-rite of baptism and the sacred meal of the eucharist, ideas already congenial to them through the mystery religions.

Paul, Bousset said, inherited this theology and so had a participationist view of the Christian's relationship to Christ. Paul, however, gave more ethical content to the resulting 'life out of death' than was usual in the mystery cults.

Bousset practically ignored Paul's Jewish and legalistic background and put very little emphasis on the justification concept.

Albert Schweitzer attacked the Hellenization theory. Keck quotes Schweitzer as saying that, according to the History-of-Religions School,

Paulinism ought to be detached from early Christianity and closely connected with Greek theology. The contrary is the

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<sup>8</sup> J.I. Packer, *Knowing God* (London, 1973), pp. 230-32.

<sup>9</sup> W. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos* (London, 1971).

case. It stands in undisturbed connection with the former, whereas it shows no connection whatever with the latter.<sup>10</sup> For Schweitzer, Jesus, early Christianity, and Paul are continuous, with 'a continuity grounded in the Jewish apocalyptic theology they all shared'.<sup>11</sup>

It comes somewhat as a surprise therefore to find that Schweitzer too maintained that Paul held to a participationist view of salvation, and that this in fact prepared the way for the ultimate Hellenization of the Christian faith, which, in his view, took place in Asia Minor after Paul's death. This was his emphasis in his two major books on Paul.<sup>12</sup>

It is important to understand precisely what Schweitzer is asserting. He says:

One thing which surprises us in the Pauline Christ-mysticism is its extraordinarily realistic character. The being in Christ is not conceived as a static partaking in the spiritual being of Christ, but as a real co-experiencing of his dying and rising again.... The believer experiences the dying and rising again of Christ in actual fact, not in an imitative representation.<sup>13</sup>

Through union with Christ, Paul held, believers are assured of a place in the kingdom that is to be ushered in at his return. Schweitzer attacked those, like H.J. Holtzmann, who held that Paul's union with Christ concept is 'an essentially ethical relation'.<sup>14</sup> The sacraments are realistic acts, truly effecting union with Christ, and not merely symbols. They have of course ethical implications, but in essence they are efficacious acts, effecting real incorporation.

E.P. Sanders warmly approves of this participationist interpretation of Paul and credits Deissmann and Schweitzer with 'discovering' it.<sup>15</sup> Bultmann on the other hand reacted against it and divided up the passages in which it is found under different headings so that he did not need to discuss it

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10 A. Schweitzer, *Paul and his Interpreters* (London, 1912), p. 230.

11 *Op. cit.*, p. 134.

12 *Paul and his Interpreters* (see n. 10 above) and *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, second edit. (London, 1953).

13 A. Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, pp. 13, 16.

14 *Ibid.* p. 17, n. 1.

15 E.P. Sanders, *op. cit.*, p. 453.

as such at all,<sup>16</sup> and he found its various elements in such features of Hellenism as gnosticism and the mystery religions. In this, as in other ways, Bultmann shows that he never really got away from the old History-of-Religions movement.

The view that union with Christ is central to Paul's theology was developed for Scottish and other English-speaking readers, by James S. Stewart in his influential book, *A Man in Christ*.<sup>17</sup> To him union with Christ was more central than justification in the soteriology of Paul.

**3. Paulinism as essentially preparation for the second advent of Christ.** Schweitzer, anticipated somewhat by Johannes Weiss, held, in opposition to most of the liberals of his day, that early Christianity, following Jesus, was essentially apocalyptic in its outlook and message. Jesus came to proclaim the imminent incursion of the kingdom of God. The apocalyptic message was taken over by his followers in terms of a second advent, and so was inherited by Paul, who believed that Christ would return to wind up the present world order by ushering in the kingdom of God.<sup>18</sup>

Just as, according to Schweitzer, the ethics of Jesus were interim ethics, in which the disciple was always to have his eye on the imminent end of the present order, so Paul's ethics too were essentially ethics of the interim, now conceived as the period between the two comings of Christ. He says that 'Paul's ethic... is born, like that of Jesus, of the eschatological expectation'.<sup>19</sup>

Käsemann, a leading pupil of Bultmann who eventually reacted somewhat against his teaching, emphasized the importance of apocalyptic. Early Christianity, he said, was characterized by 'Enthusiasm', attributed to the Spirit of God. This, along with apocalyptic, was found in early Jerusalem Christianity. The possession of the Spirit was viewed as the pledge of the *parousia* of Jesus. On Hellenistic soil, however, and especially at Corinth, apocalyptic did not have a natural

16 E.P. Sanders, *ibid.* makes this point about Bultmann.

17 J.S. Stewart, *A Man in Christ* (London, 1935).

18 A. Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, pp. 52-100.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 309.



home and so Paul, who did think apocalyptically, had to restrain somewhat the charismatic enthusiasm of the Hellenistic Christian converts.

J.C. Beker, in his work, *Paul the Apostle*,<sup>20</sup> advocates an apocalyptic approach, as the subtitle of his book, 'The Triumph of God in Life and Thought', shows. Apocalyptic was, he believes, the main theological motif of Paul's thought, for the gospel itself is essentially a proclamation concerning the future.

**4. Paulinism as essentially existential action in response to God's action in Christ.** This is especially associated with Rudolf Bultmann. He emphasized Hellenistic and especially gnostic influences, but what to him was unique in Christianity was the claim that God had acted in Christ. So he set out to demythologize Christianity.<sup>21</sup> 'Bultmann recast both gnostic mythology and New Testament theology into existentialist categories, so that despite differences in vocabulary what came to light was a remarkably similar self-understanding.'<sup>22</sup> He thought of New Testament thought in general and Pauline thought in particular as classic statements of early existentialism.

God has acted in Christ's death and resurrection, although we should note that for Bultmann the cross was historical and the resurrection mythological! This action of God now constitutes for the Christian a pattern of existential living, and his proper response is to adopt that pattern for his own life. He is to accept his death before its time and this will result in a life out of death that will be devoted to God's will.

It has to be said that Bultmann's conception is open to two most serious criticisms. First, he has been guilty of eliminating all the evidence on which other views are based simply by declaring that evidence to be the product of myth-making. Secondly, his own exposition is not simply coloured by but based entirely on a philosophical viewpoint which first came to clear expression in the nineteenth century in the works of Kierkegaard and, in the form to which he

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20 See n. 6 above.

21 L.E. Keck, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 136.

subscribed, emerged only in the twentieth century in the work of Heidegger.

**5. The elusive coherence of Paulinism.** As we have seen, Paulinism has been interpreted in at least four major different ways, which prompts us to wonder if there is really one golden key that will open the door to the whole theology of Paul. There seem so many possibilities. Beker, who, as we have seen, interprets Paul apocalyptically, admits that this is not carried through consistently in all that Paul wrote, especially, it appears, at the practical, ethical level. He says that there are clearly instances where the situational demands suppress the apocalyptic theme of the gospel (*e.g.* Galatians), or where the theme seems to impose itself on the situation (*e.g.* 1 Corinthians 15). Notwithstanding Paul's occasional inconsistencies, however, his hermeneutical intent is clear. 'He is able to grasp the basic truth of the gospel without minimising its situational relevance', he says,<sup>23</sup> in summarizing chapter 7 of his book.

Keck observes that,

Given the nature of the Pauline corpus, it is not surprising that from time to time scholars have asked whether Paul was a *coherent thinker*. To understand Paul's thought as theology one must first assemble the pieces into as coherent a whole as possible, giving each element its proper weight.<sup>24</sup>

As far back as 1872, Lüdemann argued that Paul's thought lacked coherence. He said that in Romans 1-4 (and Galatians) salvation is through atonement, justification and faith, while in Romans 5-8 (and Corinthians) it is destruction of the flesh and liberation of the spirit through participation in Christ and bestowal of the Spirit. In this way, Lüdemann embraced both the juridical and the participatory interpretations.<sup>25</sup> Somewhat similarly, Sanders maintains that Paul, ministering as he did both to Jews and Gentiles, held together the juridical and

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23 J.C. Beker, p. x.

24 L.E. Keck, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

25 H. Lüdemann, *Die Anthropologie des Apostels Paulus* (Kiel, 1872).

participatory categories and so two concepts of the human plight.<sup>26</sup>

Keck and Furnish go further and say that Paul combined three different approaches.

Most interpreters could agree that all three of these doctrines (justification by faith, the life in Christ, the final triumph of God) play some role in Paul's thought and that they are, in fact, somehow interrelated. However, there is no consensus about which, if any, can be identified as the theological centre of his gospel. This is one of the decisions each interpreter must make, at least provisionally, if the task of interpretation is to proceed; for every specific Pauline text needs, eventually, to be read within the context of Paul's overall thought.<sup>27</sup>

It is surely significant that Albert Schweitzer, who had a most distinctive view himself and also a great gift for demolishing the positions of other scholars, should admit that there are more sides to Paul's theology than the one for whose recognition he is well-known. He says,

There are in fact three different doctrines of redemption which in Paul go side by side: an eschatological, a juridical, and a mystical.... Paul lives at the same time in the simple ideas of the eschatological doctrine of salvation, in the complicated Rabbinical and juridical conceptions, and in the profundities of the mysticism of the being-in-Christ, passing freely from the one circle of ideas to the other.<sup>28</sup>

It is true that Schweitzer regarded the mystical doctrine as the most important, but he does recognize the existence of the other two.

As we have seen, J.C. Beker views Paul's thought as primarily apocalyptic, but he recognizes that there are other motifs at work, and he seeks to integrate them by using the techniques and literary tools of structuralism. He emphasizes Paul's hermeneutic. The deep structure or primary language is the apocalyptic meaning of Christ, the surface or secondary is the particular linguistic expression, like justification and participation.<sup>29</sup>

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26 E.P. Sanders, *op. cit.*, pp. 501-8.

27 L.E. Keck and V. Furnish, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

28 A Schweitzer, *op.cit.*, p. 25.

29 J.C. Beker, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-19.

This would seem, however, to have troubling negative possibilities. It may turn out to be little better than Bultmann's position, for in its surface or secondary language may turn out to have no more ultimacy than Bultmann's 'myth'. We might also compare Paul Tillich's understanding of much theological language, both in the New Testament and in later theology, as simply symbolic of the one colourless reality which lies beyond it and is other than it, that is, Being or Ground of Being. Twentieth-century theology has proved fertile in devising ways of eliminating elements of New Testament theology it finds uncongenial or thinks inconsistent.

**Paulinism as rooted in the *kerygma* and its Old Testament background.** There is however a way of integrating the diverse elements in Paul's thought which does not sacrifice the ultimacy of any of them, and it is to see all his thought as based on and as a development of the primitive Christian *kerygma*.

C.H. Dodd, in *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments*,<sup>30</sup> argued that one *kerygma* should be seen as the basis of all the diverse material to be found within the New Testament. It is true that there have been many attempts to overthrow his thesis, but it can still be well supported. We may analyse it in a threefold way. There is, first of all, the proclamation proper, which is the apostolic assertion that God has acted in Christ, particularly in his death and resurrection, for human salvation, sealed by the gift of the Spirit, and in anticipation of his second advent. Then there is the support for that proclamation in terms of the Old Testament anticipation of which it was the fulfilment. Finally, there is the practical application of this message to the hearers in terms of the call for repentance and faith and baptism. How does this *kerygma* relate to the three main interpretations of Paul's thought which we have identified?

We will consider first justification and union with Christ. These are both related to the central facts of the *kerygma* and therefore to each other. The effect of Christ's death is to justify the believer and the effect of his resurrection to hold

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30 C.H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments* (London, 1964).

out the possibility of union and so of communion with him. Not only so, but Paul occasionally relates justification to Christ's resurrection (*e.g.* Rom. 4:25), and of course, he taught that union with Christ involves identification with him both in his death and his resurrection. The Spirit of God features in Paul's soteriology both as evidence of our justification (Galatians) and also as the living bond of our union with Christ.

What about the second advent? This too has a place in the *kerygma* – although Dodd, as is well known, held that in much of the New Testament, including the writings of Paul, realized eschatology increasingly takes over, so that the end is already given in the saving facts that have been accomplished in Christ. Now we may accept that there is an important element of realized eschatology in Paul's thought without relegating the unrealized element to second-class status. Paul in fact gives an eschatological dimension to his salvation doctrine, as more and more New Testament scholars are emphasizing.

We have still to consider the place of the Old Testament background in the *kerygma* and also the place of repentance, faith and baptism, and so we will move on to consider the implications of Paul's kerygmatic theology in the ethical sphere. First, however, there is another issue we must address briefly.

### **Theological Influences on Paul's Ethics**

**1. The Old Testament.** Ethics has a theological basis in the Old Testament, for it is clearly based on the nature of the God whose revelation of himself is there recorded, and whose expressed will, reflecting his character, found expression in its commands. Those commands were, of course, largely to be found in the Mosaic law.

The law cannot however be viewed in isolation. As Paul himself showed in Galatians, it was preceded by God's promise to Abraham. As a study of the Old Testament shows, it was also preceded by the redemptive act of the exodus and this is itself mentioned at the opening of Exodus 20, which records the Decalogue.

In that the promise, the exodus and the law all have their origin in God, we would expect the Pauline ethic to bear the marks of them and to be consistent with them, for God's

purpose may have moved on, but God's character had not changed.

**2. Contemporary Judaism.** Paul's conversion meant that he had to re-think the interpretation of the Old Testament and therefore the understanding of it in which he had been reared. This would focus especially on the law, because this was so central to the Pharisaic outlook. As we have seen, some modern writers, following E.P. Sanders, have emphasized that behind the Pharisaic commitment to the law was a concern for the divine covenant with Israel, and that this was even more fundamental than their commitment to the law. Even if this is so, however, there is no doubt that, in terms of the practical *ethic* of the covenant, this was conceived to have its basis in the law.

It is not surprising therefore to find that discussion of the law, its purpose and functions, is prominent in the teaching of Paul.

**3. Contemporary Hellenism.** The conflict between those who interpret Paul's thought Hellenistically and those who interpret it against a Rabbinic background is by no means over. There is no doubt that many of Paul's social attitudes and moral instructions can be paralleled in the popular Hellenistic philosophies of his day.<sup>31</sup> This was, however, the period of Middle Platonism, when Platonism was being modified by all kinds of other philosophical and religious ideas, and there were many different versions of it current at the time. In fact philosophical and religious syncretism was the very atmosphere of the Hellenistic world at this time and, as we see from Philo, Hellenistic Judaism was not exempt from it.

The real question, however, is not one of parallels but of influence. Ethical parallels there may have been, and Paul may even have been aware of them. Just as Rabbinic teaching can provide parallels to some of the precepts of Jesus without this undermining the distinctiveness of his outlook as a whole, so the presence of parallels with Hellenistic ethical concepts need not call into question the biblical and gospel

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<sup>31</sup> V. Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville, 1988), pp. 27, 28, 44-51.

roots of his ethics. After all, he could quote pagan poets even to illustrate theological concepts, while at the same time, as B. Gärtner has shown,<sup>32</sup> being completely true to the Old Testament roots of the gospel.

**4. Christ and the gospel.** Paul's encounter with Christ was of course the greatest of all the influence we can discern. We will explore this in the next section of this paper.

### **The Gospel Ethics of Paul**

The great ethical principles we see at work in Paul's life and teaching all come from the gospel itself or from the Old Testament interpreted in the light of the gospel. Consider the following:

**1. The gospel presents us with a challenge as well as a blessing.** Paul says to the Philippians, 'Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ' (Phil. 1:27; cf. Eph. 4:1; Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:12).

**2. Through the gospel Christ has established his right to command his people.** He is Lord of all, for this he died and rose again, and his ethical teaching needs to be taken with great seriousness (1 Cor. 7:10). Paul clearly regarded this teaching as constituting an abiding ethical challenge to the Christian.

**3. The Christian's acceptance with God is grounded in Christ's atoning work, accepted by faith.** This is true whether Paul is expressing this in terms of legal righteousness or of adoptive sonship. Both are to be viewed as new positions, the products of God's grace, with their basis in Christ's work. We can see this clearly, for instance, in Romans 3 and Galatians 3. This means that, however ethical activity is to be conceived, whether as evidence of grace or as grateful response to grace, or as both, it cannot be rightly viewed as the means of acceptance with God.

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32 B. Gärtner, *The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation* (Lund, 1955).

**4. The Decalogue is an abiding standard for the ethical dimension of the godly life.** The *kerygma* makes reference to the Old Testament as bearing witness to the gospel of Christ. This might well imply that the discontinuity between the law and the gospel suggested in passages like Romans 3 and the Epistle to the Galatians cannot be taken as a complete theology of the relationship between the testaments. Indeed, a passage like 2 Corinthians 3 strongly suggests elements of continuity also.

This applies in particular to the Decalogue, the heart of the Mosaic legal system. P.D. Miller has argued convincingly for the special place of the Decalogue in the Old Testament legal system.<sup>33</sup> This place is so special that it is difficult to think it was intended to be applicable only within the Old Testament economy.

Paul encountered professing Christians who clearly held to an antinomian view of the Christian life, and some at least of these argued for complete ethical licence for the Christian, and lived accordingly (Rom. 6:1ff.).

Antinomianism and licentiousness are commonly identified, but it would be useful to distinguish them, confining the use of the former terms to the realm of theory and the latter to that of practice. S. Westerholm,<sup>34</sup> for instance, holds that Christians are not, for Paul, under the law even as a standard of behaviour (a theoretically antinomian position) but rather are to walk in the Spirit. Nevertheless God does not change, so this means that the Spirit leads them to do the moral will of God which, in fact, seems like obedience to the law. In this case 'antinomianism' does not lead to licentiousness.

Did the Spirit communicate the moral will of God entirely by direct inward guidance? To say this would not be true to the facts, for Paul, who knew himself to be an instrument of the Spirit, addressed many objective moral imperatives to the churches to whom he wrote.

We must however put a large question mark against the idea that, for Paul, the Old Testament moral law was now without

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33 P.D. Miller Jr., 'The Place of the Decalogue in the Old Testament and its Law', *Interpretation* 43 (1989), pp. 229-42.

34 S. Westerholm, *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith: Paul and His Recent Interpreters* (Grand Rapids, 1988), p. 173.



relevance or function for Christians. It is remarkable, for instance, how many commands of the Decalogue are to be found in the Epistle to the Colossians. It is true that he there says that the written code has been cancelled, but he appears to expound this mostly in ritual terms (Col. 2:14-23). Imperatives in this Epistle repeat or are apparently based on the sixth (anger, rage, malice, 3:8), seventh (3:5), ninth (3:9) and tenth commandments (greed, which is idolatry, 3:5). Also, love is all-comprehensive (3:14).

If we can accept as Pauline the Epistle to the Ephesians, which has so much teaching parallel to that to the Colossians, we find that this is even more remarkable in this regard, for all the commandments from the sixth to the tenth are found in some form or other in Ephesians 4:25-5:7, while the fifth commandment is actually quoted (and in its full imperative form) in Ephesians 6:1-3. If such imperatives are to be found in Paul's letters to the churches, is it not highly probable that he will also have given such teaching orally when establishing a church or subsequently visiting it?

**5. The character of Christ is an abiding challenge to the Christian.** In a theology which is based on an act of supreme sacrificial love, it is impossible that the character of the Person who performed this act should be a matter of ethical indifference.

It is clear enough that the reader of Paul's letters faces the challenge of Christ's character. It is widely recognized that it was Christ who sat in the 'studio' of Paul's imagination when he wrote 1 Corinthians 13. Also, in Philippians 2, he commends the humble, sacrificial mind of Christ, and in 2 Corinthians 10:1 the meekness and gentleness of Christ. There can be little doubt that his perspective on the character of Christ and his example for Christian living is centred on Calvary and the events that led to it, and in this respect we might compare the First Epistle of Peter.

The very strong Pauline emphasis on love is also surely related to the character of Christ. Certainly it stems also from the character of God, but that character was supremely revealed in Christ.

**6. The Christian is one with Christ in his death and resurrection, so that the Christian life is a life out**

**of death.** The *kerygma* called for repentance, faith and baptism. Paul appeals to the baptism of the Roman Christians in countering licentiate antinomianism (Rom. 6:1ff.). The symbolism of their baptism, with its enactment of death and resurrection, signifies that incorporation into Christ means participation in the central events of his work.

The atoning death, with its judicial release from sin, and the resurrection, with its pledges of new life, contain the basis, the challenge and the promise of a new life-style for the Christian. In practice, this involves a deepening of repentance in the constant putting off of the old nature and a deepening of obedient faith in the constant putting on of the new (Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:9, 10).

**7. Heavenly resources are pledged to the Christian through the exaltation of Christ.** Again, assuming the Pauline authorship of Ephesians, we find that in that Epistle Paul takes further the teaching given in Romans 6 about the consequences of our incorporation into Christ. Exalted as we are with him, Christ is for us the source of all spiritual blessings, and these are our resources for practical Christian living. The exhortations to walk in the light, in love, to walk as he walked, and so on, are the practical consequences of the assertion that we are seated with him in the heavenlies.

In Philippians, Paul makes it clear (as does the second letter of Peter) that the practical expression of these resources takes place through knowledge of Christ (Phil. 3:7-11), and so through the communion that union makes possible and that was illustrated in our Lord's teaching in his allegory of the vine and its branches.

**8. The Holy Spirit channels these resources in the everyday experience of the Christian.** Paul's doctrine of the work of the Spirit is strongly ethical. The mutual indwelling of Christ and the Christian and the indwelling of the Spirit appear to be two sides of the same coin (Rom. 8:9-11). In practical terms it is the Spirit whose activity provides the dynamic for actual Christian living (Gal. 5:22-26).

This dynamic is not channelled automatically, but requires the grace-secured co-operation of the Christian, who is to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18), to walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:25), and to refrain from grieving the Spirit (Eph. 4:30).

The primary fruit of the Spirit is love (Eph. 5:22), and it is love for Christ and love for others that is to motivate the ethical life of the Christian. Without it, the good deeds of a Christian are empty of true virtue (1 Cor. 13:1-3). Here then is God's character of holy love, to which the Old Testament bears witness and which God's Son expressed in his earthly life, now channelled into and through the life of the Christian.

**9. The return of Christ is an ethical spur to the Christian.** The Christian is to live his life in the light of the return of Christ when all will be judged (Rom. 14:9-12; 2 Cor. 5:10). Any period of crisis prior to Christ's return will likewise sort out the Christian's priorities and help him or her to make ethical decisions (1 Cor. 7:26, 29-31).

**10. In all this Paul was at one with the ethical perspective of the early church.** Paul's acceptance of the ethical paraenesis common to the early church is not in doubt, as A.M. Hunter showed convincingly.<sup>35</sup> He may not have had to develop that paraenesis in some ways because of new ethical challenges and dilemmas faced by the churches, but he did not depart from it in principle.

**11. Paul sometimes appealed to the ethics of the prevailing culture of his readers to support precepts established on other grounds.** There are examples of this in 1 Corinthians 11:14 and in his use of a quotation from Menander in 1 Corinthians 15:33. We might compare this with his quotation of pagan poets in the Areopagus address in Acts 17. In both cases, the revelation in Christ and its interpretation of the Old Testament formed the basis of Paul's ethical counsel, but he recognized that at times this might coincide with the best of pagan ethics.

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<sup>35</sup> A.M. Hunter, *Paul and his Predecessors*, second edit. (London, 1961).

## REVIEW ARTICLE

### **Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration and Interpretation**

Donald G. Bloesch

Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 1994; 384pp., £19.99; ISBN 0 85364 589 2

Reading this book caused me to look back over my own theological journey. In this extended review, I share some of its key elements. They may help others to think about the issues involved in our approach to Scripture as well as stimulating interest in the writings of Donald G. Bloesch.

I first became aware of his name when, as a divinity student in the mid-1970s, I read his book *The Evangelical Renaissance*. Bloesch's approach to Scripture differed from the view I had become acquainted with through reading E.J. Young's *Thy Word is Truth: Some Thoughts on the Biblical Doctrine of Inspiration*. Bloesch presented a perspective which aimed at being evangelical without being fundamentalist. This is the approach he now argues in much greater detail in this latest book. He distinguishes from both liberalism and fundamentalism.

In *The Evangelical Renaissance*, Bloesch listed a number of theologians who could be associated with this position, among them, G.C. Berkouwer. My reading of Berkouwer's *Holy Scripture* led me into a thorough-going study of Berkouwer's writings, later published under the title, *The Problem of Polarization: An Approach Based on the Writings of G.C. Berkouwer* (1992). This concern with the problem of polarization lies at the heart of Bloesch's *Holy Scripture*: 'This book is designed to build bridges between various parties in the church but also to show where bridge building would be a venture to futility'.

I was naturally inclined to make connections between Berkouwer's work and Bloesch's 1994 volume of the same title. Noting Bloesch's helpful combination of optimism and realism, I was reminded of Bloesch's statement in an earlier work, *The Ground of Certainty: Toward an Evangelical Theology of Revelation* (1971): 'The great theologians from Paul and Augustine to G.C. Berkouwer and Karl Barth... have been able to explain what the faith does not mean as well as what it means.' This commendation can also be applied to Bloesch himself. He is a theologian who will help the reader to discover fruitful pathways while avoiding spiritual cul-de-sacs.

In *The Crisis of Piety* (1968), Bloesch expressed his concern that there should be a healthy balance between devotion and doctrine, which is echoed in *Holy Scripture*, where he warns against 'reducing revelation to rational information' and 'misunderstanding revelation as an ecstatic experience devoid of cognitive content'. Seeking to maintain the proper

balance between faith's rational and experiential elements, he points out that while he does 'not wish to downplay or deny the propositional element in revelation', he seeks to emphasize that 'this element is in the service of the personal'.

While I was in the U.S.A. in 1978-9, we heard much about 'the battle for the Bible', revolving especially around Harold Lindsell's *The Battle for the Bible* (1976), and *Biblical Authority* (1977) edited by Jack Rogers. This debate lies in the background of Bloesch's *Holy Scripture*. He has listened to what various people have been saying over the course of the years. Now he makes his own significant and substantial contribution.

Following my year in the U.S.A., I had an article published in *Reformed Review* (1980), 'The Reformation Continues: A Study in Twentieth Century Reformed Theology' (comparing Berkouwer and Louis Berkhof), alongside one by Bloesch, 'The Sword of the Spirit: The Meaning of Inspiration'. The two impressively complemented each other. Bloesch's theme emerges on the first page of his 'preface' to *Holy Scripture*: '[the Bible's] worthiness as a theological guide and norm does not become clear until it is acclaimed as the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17), the divinely chosen instrument by which the powers of sin and death are overthrown in the lives of those who believe'.

A few years later, in 1987, following some heated debate in *Life and Work*, my small booklet entitled *The Bible* laid particular emphasis on the vital connection between the Holy Spirit and the Holy Scriptures, echoing Bloesch. In discussing the difficult and controversial subject of biblical inerrancy, both of us have referred to Berkouwer. Here, under 'The Question of Inerrancy', Bloesch cites Berkouwer: 'G.C. Berkouwer rightly asks "whether the reliability of Scripture is simply identical to that reliability of which we frequently speak concerning the record of various historical events. Frequently, terms such as 'exact', 'precise', and 'accurate' are used for it.... Such a modern concept of reliability clearly should not be used as a yardstick for Scripture"'.

Seeking to interpret the concepts of infallibility and inerrancy creatively, my booklet also quoted Berkouwer: 'The Holy Spirit in His witness to truth does not lead us into error but into pathways of truth (II Jn.4). The Spirit, with this special concern, has not failed and will not fail in the mystery of God-breathed Scripture.'

Like Berkouwer, Bloesch highlights the profound truth contained in the concepts of infallibility and inerrancy. Uncomfortable with the term 'inerrancy' because of its association with 'a rationalistic, empiricistic mentality that reduces truth to facticity', Bloesch insists that he 'wish[es] to retain what is intended by this word – the abiding truthfulness and normativeness of the biblical witness', a truthfulness which is grounded in 'the Spirit who speaks in and through this witness'. In *Holy Scripture*, Bloesch discusses a wide range of important issues, e.g. 'Scripture and the Church', 'The Hermeneutical Problem', 'Rudolf Bultmann: An Enduring Presence', 'The Bible and Myth'. I have highlighted his discussion of the

inerrancy debate, whose importance is emphasized by the fact that Bloesch returns to this issue in the concluding section of the book – ‘The Current Controversy’.

Donald Bloesch is not well known in the U.K. He is the author of over twenty other titles and this volume is the second in his comprehensive seven-volume systematic theology. The first is *A Theology of Word and Spirit: Authority and Method in Theology. Holy Scripture* (published in the U.S.A. by InterVarsity Press) has Name, Subject and Scripture Indexes.

What does this important voice from the U.S.A. have to say to us in our situation? He is concerned about the growing polarization between liberals and Evangelicals – a matter which must surely concern us also. He seeks to be both conservative and progressive: ‘I believe in forging a new statement of orthodoxy that stands in continuity with the past but addresses issues and problems in the present’. Bloesch identifies the pitfalls we must take care to avoid: ‘We must be wary of a sectarianism that elevates peripherals into essentials, but we must also beware of falling into an eclecticism that draws on too many disparate sources of truth and does not adequately discriminate between truth and error’. I hope that the voice of Bloesch will be a significant one among our students and teachers of theology.

*Charles M. Cameron, St Ninian's Parish Church, Dunfermline*

## REVIEWS

### **The Best of Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

Compiled by Christopher Catherwood

Kingsway, Eastbourne, 1992; 241pp., £8.99; ISBN 0 86065 406 0

The reader of this volume needs to be sensitive to the fact that it is compiled by the proud grandson of a famous man. Not that this calls for concession – far from it; but it follows that we are affected by what Christopher Catherwood says about his grandfather in the introductions to his choices. Choosing cannot have been easy from the wealth of material even so far published of Dr Lloyd-Jones' many years of phenomenally fruitful ministry.

The wonder to many deeply appreciative readers will be that Catherwood begins with what might be considered the good doctor's most unfortunate utterance, namely that on the controversial issue of baptismal regeneration. For there is little doubt that despite his emphatic and dogmatic assertion, with various scriptural references, that the word 'baptism' does not necessarily belong to the believer's initial experience of Christ but can belong to a subsequent blessing, in the eyes of most orthodox judges, he is not able to make it stick. One such eminent judge, Howard Marshall, writing of the crux of Acts 19:1-4 says, 'These men can hardly have been Christians since they had not received the gift of the Spirit; it is safe to say that the New Testament does not recognise the possibility of being a Christian apart from possession of the Spirit.' (*Acts*, p. 305).

Dr. Lloyd-Jones is in a far safer field on 'Healing and Medicine', and while many of the things he says initially may be comparatively elementary and matters of common sense (which is not always so common), some of his later observations only a man of his medical knowledge and experience could have made. His handling of the subject of 'Spiritual Depression' also shows what a master psychologist as well as physician he was, enabling him to distinguish, as a pastor needs to, elements in a depressive state which may have other than spiritual causes.

His evangelistic message on the Cross is an excellent example of his wide-ranging ability to use Scripture to drive home his message. However, perhaps the most effectual and moving parts are the sermons on 'The Sparrow and the Swallow' (Ps. 84:1-3) and 'Life in the Spirit, Balanced Discipline', both of which amply bear out what Catherwood testifies to, and what many who retain impressions of Lloyd-Jones' severe attitude to life need to know, namely his compassionate heart and tender dealings with those who consulted him in times of need. The queues generally waiting to see him after services in Westminster Chapel alone bear testimony to his rare pastoral gift, but it needed to be put on record that it was not only his own loved ones who enjoyed his exquisite

kindness, but many including complete strangers. This is very beautiful and moving. His exceedingly sensitive understanding of children is surely one of his rarest qualities.

Those who have read and re-read *Preaching and Preachers* will recall the great benefit they derived from its author's experience of preaching – not only all those years in Westminster Chapel, but in countless places, especially in America. It was right that choice be made from what the compiler calls the 'magisterial Romans series', and what better than part of the climactic eighth chapter on 'Final Perseverance', which is appropriate for one as thoroughly Reformed as he. The book ends fittingly with a most entrancing exposition of John 17:24, entitled 'With Him in the Glory'. There is no doubt that the dear man longed to be with the Lord; and that longing comes through in almost every paragraph of this heavenly meditation.

I have left the chapter on 'Knowing the Times, Evangelical Unity: An Appeal' to last, because along with the baptismal regeneration controversy, it illustrates how the monumental reputation of this 'prince of preachers' has been affected by his excursions into debatable areas, both of which seem to detract from the true greatness of the man. The challenge to Reformed Evangelicals in mixed denominations to consider their position, even if that challenge was not as confrontational as has been alleged, was undoubted. And although his grandson as a boy was glad to have heard his grandfather give it, there is surely no doubt that it was misconceived. Everyone has heard how John Stott was constrained to object to his utterance on that occasion. When years later he came to speak at a rally in Edinburgh, James Philip, who was to chair it, was deeply concerned as to what he would say.

The astute old man suspected what was in James' mind, and before the meeting volunteered the information that he was not going to tell them all to leave the Church of Scotland. To which James replied, 'I am very glad that you're not!' What he meant by that was that he, one of the most pacific souls, would have been obliged, like John Stott, to object if he had done so.

What a pity these two items should have been included in this otherwise excellent book. Fortunately, however, there will be ample opportunity for us all to read more and more of the Doctor's works as, happily, they continue to pour from the press.

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**Pentecost, Mission and Ecumenism: Essays in Intercultural Theology; Festschrift in Honour of Professor Walter J. Hollenweger**

Edited by Jan A.B. Jongeneel *et al.*

Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 1992; 376pp., n.p.; ISBN 3 631 44010 3

Since Pentecostalism has been viewed by commentators from both conservative and liberal perspectives as largely an anti-intellectual development, it is perhaps not surprising that, until comparatively recently, it was little noticed and analysed within academic theological circles. With increasing interest in such aspects as narrative theology and the sociocultural aspects of church development, however, the situation has happily changed. The theologian who has probably contributed more than any other to bring about that change is Professor Walter Hollenweger, the Swiss Pentecostal pastor who became Professor of Mission at the University of Birmingham. It is fitting, therefore, that this collection of essays in intercultural theology, focusing on the Pentecostal context, is dedicated to him.

The volume opens with valuable biographical material on Hollenweger himself and his developing theology, a section which does not eschew the anecdotal, as is entirely appropriate given the Professor's particular interest in the field of orality.

The bulk of the volume is taken up by essays of considerable diversity, involving doctrinal, cultural and missiological analyses. Of particular interest are essays by Iain MacRobert, Cecil Robeck and others which explore the social concern of the early Pentecostals. At a time when Pentecostalism is (not always justly) identified with the New Right in the USA and with apolitical pietism, which usually evolves into a pro-status-quo conservatism in other parts of the world, it is important to be reminded of those pioneer Pentecostals who challenged, for example, racial and class barriers in the name of the gospel, and especially how they saw the role of their Pentecostal distinctiveness in their social context. MacRobert writes of William Seymour, the black leader of the Azusa Street mission, Los Angeles (where Pentecostalism broke out onto the world scene in the 1900s), that 'Spirit baptism was, for Seymour, more than a glossolalic episode. It was the power to draw all peoples into one Church without racial distinctions or barriers.' Such reminders are all the more needful, moreover, given the fact that the formation of the actual historical record has not been immune to racial bias, for example, in the way that Pentecostal histories generally acknowledge the white Charles Parham (despite his later fall from grace, probably as a result of an accusation of homosexuality) as the 'father' of the movement while playing down Seymour's pioneering role.

Other essays focus on the role of Pentecostalism within the ecumenical movement, a seemingly surprising development given the separatist emphasis of the early days of the movement, and owing much to the work of David du Plessis in bringing the wider Christian world to the attention of the Pentecostals and the Pentecostals to the attention of the so-called 'mainstream' denominations. Du Plessis quite deservedly merits a full essay by Martin Robinson on his life of ecclesiological diplomacy.

Most significant of all, perhaps, is the recognition in several of the essays of the re-emergence or the rediscovery of the revolutionary power of the Pentecostal vision, as in Jean-Jacques Surmond's essay 'The Church at Play', which explores Pentecostal renewal of the liturgy as potentially a worldview-changing (or even, ultimately, world-changing) force, a potential which he argues can be seen beginning to become reality, especially in some Third World contexts.

Inevitably, a volume which is a collection of short essays covering such diverse facets of the field of study may leave the reader somewhat frustrated in wishing to see a deeper or wider treatment of each particular aspect. Such frustration should, in this case, however, be seen as the constructive result of a very effective whetting of the appetite, with extensive footnotes and bibliographies ably pointing the way forward for those who wish to study further. If indeed they do so, they will have caught something of the enthusiasm for this subject, the importance of which is only just being recognised, which has fired the life-work of Walter Hollenweger himself.

*Siôn A. Owen, Glasgow Bible College*

## **Christ and Creation**

C.E. Gunton

Paternoster Press, Carlisle, and Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, 1992; 127pp., £5.99; ISBN 0 85364 527 2 (UK); 0 8028 0579 5 (USA).

To produce 'a summary dogmatic christology' in the space of 127 pages is a considerable challenge and one tackled with enthusiasm and erudition by Colin Gunton in this printed version of his 1990 Didsbury Lectures at the British Isles Nazarene College. As Gunton points out, only limited revision of the lectures has been made and so a number of topics have to be left aside, but the resulting volume provides ample stimulation for thought.

Several unifying themes are evident throughout the book's four chapters, chiefly the relationship between creation and incarnation and also the essential role which the doctrine of the Holy Spirit must play in formulating Christology. Underlying these is the familiar theme developed in other Gunton works of the need to view the being of God as a trinitarian communion of Father, Son and Spirit.

The first chapter, 'An Interpretation of Scripture', sets the scene for what follows and considers several terms that have been applied to Christ. At the outset Gunton stresses that a faithful Christian theology must in some way be an interpretation of the Old and New Testaments, and it is there that Christ and creation are first related. He believes, however, that modern criticism and the Christian tradition cannot be ignored, since the Spirit uses the latter and draws out new insights, and he cautions against enforcing unity on Scripture as if every text had an inspired significance. The criteria to be used for discerning those texts which do have inspired significance are not explained, and Gunton's doctrine of Scripture at this point fails to do justice to the 'God-breathed' character of 'all scripture'.

The rest of the chapter considers the designations 'Lord', 'God', 'Man' and 'Cosmic Saviour'. Gunton shows that Jesus is portrayed as both Lord of creation and as part of it. He upholds creation, reestablishes the dominion lost in Adam and manifests true humanity in his birth, temptation, death, resurrection and ascension. Gunton stresses that the work of Christ relates to the whole creation, but not independently of the salvation of human beings: creation is not of concern apart from people.

The second chapter, 'Christ the Creature', examines two interrelated themes, namely what it is to be a human creature and how Christ is the same as and also different from us. With regard to the first theme, Gunton argues that to be a creature is to be made what one is by and in a network of relationships and he applies this to Jesus in his 'horizontal relatedness'. It is also essential to take into account Christ's relatedness to God, his 'vertical relatedness', which Gunton links closely to the work of the Spirit.

With regard to the second theme, Christ is shown to be different from us in that he stands in a redemptive relationship to the world of created relationships and he is a perfect sample of creation's directedness to future perfection before God. These themes are then related particularly to Christ's resurrection and ascension.

The third chapter, 'Incarnation, Kenosis and Divine Action', considers how the action of Christ which has its roots in eternity restores creation to its proper relationship to God. Gunton argues that the only satisfactory relationship of God to the world is trinitarian, allowing God to be both related to the world and distinct from it. Christ becomes part of the creation without ceasing to be what he was eternally. To explain how this is possible, Gunton makes use of the term *kenosis* which he defines as an act of power, contrary to many modern views. By his sacrifice Christ brings about a reordering of creation, through his redemptive condescension. Creation and redemption are related thus: 'The divine self-emptying is the actualisation in time and space of the very love which gives being and form to the world.'

The concluding chapter, 'In the Image and Likeness of God', stresses that it is supremely Christ who is the image of God and the source of human renewal in that image. This image Gunton considers in terms of

relatedness and dominion, in a dynamic of relationships with God, humans and the created order, and representing God to creation and creation to God. The beginning of the restoration of the image is to be located in the Church and is the work of the Spirit as he particularizes the work of the ascended Christ. By their priestly work renewed men and women offer the creation to God as a sacrifice of praise.

In a short space a great range of subjects are touched upon, often of necessity rather briefly, but always in a stimulating way. Not all of Gunton's views can be accepted, for example a formulation of the atonement which makes no reference to penal substitution, but there is much of value to be considered positively. So many names and themes are mentioned that, in spite of the brevity of the work, the lack of an index is a sad omission. If the value of a book is measured by the number of lines of thought which it sparks off, *Christ and Creation* well repays study.

*W. David J. McKay, Coleraine*

### **New Bible Commentary – 21st Century Edition**

Edited by D.A. Carson, R.T. France, J.A. Motyer, G.J. Wenham

IVP, Leicester, 1994; xii+1455pp., £34.99; ISBN 0 85110 648 X

The *New Bible Commentary* has served Bible students for over four decades now. It has already been extensively revised (1970) in its time of service, but now it has again undergone change in order to prepare it for action in the twenty-first century. It is more than a cosmetic change, too. The preface tells us 'nothing remains from 1953 and little from 1970'. So what is new?

The NIV is adopted as the text on which the commentary is based (which is surely a sensible move, given its widespread use, even if the RSV was a slightly more appropriate study version) and a clearer typeface is used which is certainly easier to read than the previous version. The new edition is some one hundred and fifty pages longer than the previous edition. There are, however, more substantive changes as well.

First, the authors. The group of editors' names hints that this is a work exhibiting evangelical commitment alongside scholarly excellence, and this is borne out as we note the list of contributors. Many have already written major commentaries on the book for which they are responsible here (*e.g.* O'Brien on Colossians and Philemon, Wenham on Genesis), though some well-known authors have tackled something different from their full-scale works (*e.g.* Goldingay on Proverbs, Motyer on Psalms) and there are also a good number of younger or less well known scholars included (*e.g.* Gempf on Acts). A second new characteristic of this commentary is an emphasis on the structure and

literary form of the various books. This is seen particularly in the new introductory essays which deal *inter alia* with general principles of interpretation and the characteristics of the various literary genres (e.g. OT poetry, Gospels, Letters). Thirdly, bibliographies have been updated to incorporate key works from more recent days, although, as in the previous edition, there is no significant interaction with secondary material in the main body of the commentary.

So there is much that is new. But many good things remain the same. For example, a concern to deal first and foremost with the meaning of the biblical text, and a critical conservative approach to introductory matters (the integrity of Isaiah is defended, Daniel is dated in the sixth century BC, Ephesians is accepted as Pauline) without allowing these questions to obscure the text itself.

One of the key tests for a commentary is how it deals with a difficult text. In 'notes' on the 'spirits in prison' passage in 1 Peter 3 we are given a summary of the various positions, referred to discussions by W. Grudem and R.T. France, and offered the suggestion that the phrase refers to something accomplished between the death and resurrection of Jesus. Thus we are enabled to make an informed judgement and follow up the discussion, even if, as we might expect, not all our questions are answered.

All in all this is a worthy successor to the third edition of the *New Bible Dictionary*. It is questionable whether it is worth buying this edition if you already have the third edition, since it also was a very dependable work, but if you are looking for a one-volume commentary to buy or recommend then this commentary can be commended as an excellent basic resource for Bible study.

*Alistair Wilson, Free North Church, Inverness*

## **Understanding Doctrine. Its Purpose and Relevance for Today**

Alistair McGrath

Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1990; 182pp., £6.99; ISBN 0 340 53822 8

No one could disagree with Alistair McGrath's contention that to many people 'doctrine' seems both petty and pedantic: whilst they may have a profound experience of God, doctrine seems unreal. McGrath agrees that Christianity is about encountering a living and loving Lord, not about finding the right combination of words, but he goes on to point out that in order to talk about God or to share experiences, doctrinal statements must be made. The aim of this book is to explore *what* doctrine is and *why* it matters.

Before embarking on these themes, McGrath first stresses that we cannot avoid choices regarding beliefs and actions, and that we must have

values, which are determined by beliefs which may be stated as doctrine. Christian doctrine thus provides the fundamental framework for Christian living. McGrath forcefully exposes how people often make Jesus in their own image to endorse their own values. At the centre of Christian doctrine must be the person and work of Christ, and McGrath defines doctrine as 'the Christian church giving an account of itself, as it answers the call of God in Jesus Christ'.

The first main part of the book is entitled 'Doctrine: What It Is' and deals with the relationship of doctrine to description (cpt 2), revelation (cpt 3), experience (cpt 4) and Christian identity (cpt 5). In chapter 2, for example, McGrath argues that doctrine is a matter of truth rather than of relevance: to be concerned about doctrine is to be concerned that our actions are a response to *God*, not to some illusion. As far as revelation is concerned, Scripture acts as a control over doctrine since it provides our only access to the history of Jesus. McGrath maintains that all Christians agree on the authority of Scripture, although his quotation from the Vatican II Constitution on Divine Revelation scarcely gives a balanced view of the outlook of modern Roman Catholicism on authority.

Many valuable points are made in these chapters, for example regarding the communal nature of the reading of Scripture and its relationship to tradition, the way in which biblical narrative is authoritative and how it may be converted into doctrine, and the place of doctrine in interpreting experience. McGrath argues that doctrine enables the Church to be faithful to her calling and that it also stimulates evangelism to those outside the Church.

The second part, 'Doctrine: Why It Matters', takes up a range of issues: Doctrine and Faith, Doctrine and the Christian Life, Is Christianity Possible without Doctrine?, The Coherence of Doctrine and The Challenge of Heresy, Wrestling with Doctrine: Discovering the Creeds. With regard to the Christian life, McGrath draws out in a very helpful way the significance of the doctrines of justification by faith, creation and prevenient grace for Christian spirituality, and provides a similar set of links between doctrine and ethics. The difficult and unpopular subject of heresy is well handled in relation to Arianism and Apollinarianism, but his view of the McLeod Campbell trial, whilst reflecting a contemporary consensus, will not satisfy all Scots. The final part, 'Some Key Doctrines Examined', provides a concise but stimulating survey of the doctrines of the Person of Christ, the Work of Christ and the Trinity.

McGrath writes well and clearly, and at a level which should be grasped by most educated Christians, the readership which it would appear that he has in view. Good use is made of illustrations, especially those drawn from church history, the life of Luther being a clear favourite. Rarely do these illustrations obstruct the progress of argument and often they prove very illuminating. Given that the reader is not expected to be theologically literate, however, more care could have been taken with

quotations from theologians whose basic position is entirely at odds with McGrath's. Thus Bultmann is quoted without any indication that many other things that he said would be totally unacceptable. Those who would recognise the problem would not need to be reading the book. In the same vein, the bibliography provides material from the most diverse, and often conflicting, sources without any indication of the writer's orientation being provided. The beginner moving on to read Hendrikus Berkhof, Leonardo Boff or George Lindbeck is in for a few surprises, not all of them pleasant. More guidance for the uninitiated is needed.

*Understanding Doctrine* succeeds well in introducing Christians to the basic issues involved in the formulation of doctrine and its role in church and individual life, and would provide a helpful structure for a course of studies on the subjects discussed.

W. David J. McKay, Coleraine.

### **Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ. Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology**

Edited by Joel B. Green and Max Turner

Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 1994; 536pp., £29.99; ISBN 0 8028 3750 6

This handsome volume is a *Festschrift* to honour Professor I. Howard Marshall on his sixtieth birthday. The list of thirty contributors, many of them conservative, is impressive, ranging from older scholars, such as George Beasley-Murray, Leon Morris, Kingsley Barrett and the late Donald Guthrie, to many younger ones. Many of the latter have studied or done research under Howard Marshall. They are almost equally divided between British and North American authors with half a dozen from other lands.

In their preface, the editors (writing of the past two decades) say that 'some scholars have taken an increasingly gloomy attitude toward the possibility of knowing much about Jesus from the canonical Gospels, while others have begun moving the whole discussion into fresh areas of creative inquiry.' The contributors to this volume belong to the second category, and there is an emphasis on the veracity of the historical documents to be found in the New Testament.

The work is divided into three sections. It comes as no surprise, in a tribute to a real Lukan scholar, to find that section 1, on Jesus, the Synoptic Gospels, and Acts, is by far the longest, with its seventeen chapters accounting for more than half the book. Again we are not surprised to find a number of the essays addressing issues arising from Luke and Acts, although Mark and Matthew are not neglected.

It is always good to be confronted with biblical facts we have not noticed before. The reviewer, for instance, was taken by surprise to find Eckhard Schnabel saying that in Luke 'the references to Gentiles are on a

more modest scale than those in Matthew and in Mark', which he then went on to demonstrate. Rainer Riesner makes out an interesting case for taking seriously Chrysostom's identification of Simeon, mentioned in Acts 15:14, not with Simon Peter but with the aged saint who uttered the *Nunc Dimittis*. There is some convergence of interests so that, for instance, both Darrell Bock and Earle Ellis focus attention on the accusation of the religious authorities that Jesus was a blasphemer. Some contact is made with contemporary issues, such as ecology and liberationism.

Section 2, following the title of Howard Marshall's Inaugural Lecture, is entitled, 'Jesus, Paul and John'. Some of the studies are wide-ranging, such as Donald Guthrie's fine survey of the Christology of revelation, while others focus on more detailed issues, such as Jesus as head of the church in Colossians and Ephesians and also the Christological basis of the Johannine footwashing. The reviewer found Stephen Travis' approach to Pauline atonement doctrine interesting but unconvincing.

The final section deals with wider issues relating to New Testament Christology. Gordon Fee, writing on Christology and Pneumatology in Romans 8:9-11 (in section 2 of the book), takes issue with the views of J.D.G. Dunn, and Max Turner does so much more fully in the masterly essay which opens section 3. Interestingly, this is followed by a chapter written by Professor Dunn himself, in which he seeks to counter M. Casey's views on the development of New Testament Christology.

The whole volume is very stimulating and there is little doubt that the arguments and findings of many of the essays will need to be taken seriously by subsequent workers in this field of study. There are some quotations of untranslated German, but these are few and brief. One small criticism: quite a number of volumes of this kind provide the reader with a complete list of the writings of the scholar in whose honour they are produced. It was a little disappointing to find this feature absent from the present volume.

*Geoffrey W. Grogan, Glasgow*

## **Theological Basis of Ethics**

Karl Barth

Westminster/John Knox Press, Louisville, KY, 1993; 70pp., \$9.99; ISBN 0 664 25325 3

This book is a lecture delivered in Germany on October 9th, 1929. In addition to the text itself, Barth offers the reader twenty-eight pages of footnotes! Many add substantially to the discussion and for the serious student of historical theology, may be the most interesting and rewarding part of the book. Barth directs the reader to many passages in Augustine, Luther and Calvin. He seeks to distance himself from tendencies in Augustine (and later the Council of Trent) which misrepresent divine



grace. In affirming the importance of grace, Barth draws much support from Luther and Calvin.

The book is published in the 'Library of Christian Ethics', 'designed to present a selection of important texts that would otherwise be unavailable for scholarly purposes and classroom use'.

Barth's lecture is broken down into three parts: The Holy Spirit as Creator / Reconciler / Redeemer. Under the heading 'The Holy Spirit as Creator', Barth stresses that 'being in the image of God only becomes actual fact when the Holy Spirit comes on the spot on man's behalf', and that 'Christian life is human life that has been made open by the Holy Spirit to receive God's Word'. On 'The Holy Spirit as Reconciler', Barth writes, 'Christian life is man's actual life in the Holy Spirit'. Because this righteousness – this being accounted as righteous – attaches to the actual man, it coincides with his sanctification'. Expounding the theme 'The Holy Spirit as Redeemer', he describes the Holy Spirit as 'Spirit of promise' and Christian life as 'the new life in hope'.

*Charles M. Cameron, St Ninian's Parish Church, Dunfermline*

## **Computers for Churches**

Nigel Hardcastle

CCBI, London, 1993; 168pp., £6.95; ISBN 0 85169 213 3

This book is a clear and well-organised review of the main tasks performed by a computer used in a church and is a guide (as the sub-title says) to planning and buying computer systems for church use. It is the compilation of the results of a Church Computer Project directed by Nigel Hardcastle from 1986 to 1989, but it has been updated for publication in 1993. It is excellent value. Written in a style which is easy and conversational the author covers all of the major topics and concerns that a church ought to consider when planning a computer system. The author never loses sight of the real objectives, that of helping to run a church. The first page says: 'A computer will never do the really important jobs in church life. It will never care for a person, love them or preach the gospel to them. The church is about relationships with God and with people. Computers cannot help here. (However) the church needs to deal with information.'

The suggested uses of a computer in churches are for word-processing, desk top publishing, record handling (or databases), financial transactions and computer Bibles. Before tackling each of these Hardcastle looks at computer basics. In a short space (only 13 pages) he explains a lot of the jargon and demystifies the machine. Common sense prevails throughout. 'There is no point in trying to use the computer for your accounts if (the treasurer) is not happy with the general idea or the particular program.' Early in the book a seven-step plan to buying a computer is presented. This and the advice that follows is excellent stuff. If you have not thought through all the steps or understood the problems then you ought

not to rush into buying anything. There is quite a long section on publishing and another on the requirements of the Data Protection Act. Part 5 of the book opens out the human side of the system: Who will operate it? All in all, I do not think there are any topics that should be covered which are not given an airing. Advice is simple and obviously based on experience. Where particular makes of computer hardware and particular brands of software are mentioned then the information is well presented and up to date. Nigel Hardcastle gives sound advice on selecting an appropriate software package and how to choose a computer that many systems purchasers (not only in churches) could benefit from. He also gives an insight into his own preferences and what he has bought.

I found only two problems with the book. The first is minor and personal. The layout of the text has been done on a computer (the author tells us so) and sometimes looks more like a report, with five or six different type fonts on one page, than a book. I found this annoying. The second is that, as the information is so up to date but set in a constantly changing market, the book will date quickly. The basic advice about buying will still be relevant, but the particular systems recommended will not. Of course the answer is to have the author revise the text regularly. I hope he will do so.

*Maurice Houston, Charis House, Edinburgh*

## **Freedom to Reform: The 'Articles Declaratory' of the Church of Scotland 1921**

Douglas M. Murray

T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1993; xii+179pp., £8.95; ISBN 0 567 29216 9

The Chalmers Lectures of 1991 delivered in the Edinburgh and St Andrews Divinity Faculties dealt most appropriately with the background, formulation and significance of the Articles Declaratory (1921), which paved the way for the 1929 union of the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church and remain the Kirk's key constitutional statement. Dr Douglas Murray, who lectures in church history and kindred subjects in the Glasgow Faculty, here provides the first extended account of the framing of the Articles. He makes much use of manuscript papers and unpublished minutes. This book will certainly be the standard record of the negotiations and debates which issued in the framing of the Articles.

But Dr Murray's conclusions as to the 'freedom to reform' (surely it should be 'freedom to change'? It is too readily assumed today that all change is for the better) conferred by the Articles are unlikely to go wholly uncontested. This is not only because, as he faithfully chronicles, conflicting legal opinions have in recent years been given on this very point, nor only because of the subtlety of some of the wording of the Articles (for example, Article I is itself not exempt from revision, it

seems), but also because he does not always distinguish as clearly as he might between what the Articles say and what their original framers intended them to say, or said that they say. As a recent General Assembly debate on the import of the legislation authorising the ordination of women put unambiguously beyond doubt, all that counts is what the law says – not what its originators intended it to say, or what they said (in this case in the Assembly debate when it was enacted) that it said.

The confusion on this point may reflect the difference between the historian's and the lawyer's understanding of texts. It is very natural for the former to believe that the decisive voice in interpretation should lie with authorial intention. The lawyer has every right to allow for a mismatch between intention and execution, and where it occurs to insist on attending only to the execution. As it is, Murray's final paragraph rather cuts the corners (this is, after all, no disinterested historical enquiry) when he says that 'The Articles stated the church's identity in terms of catholic doctrine, not of the Westminster Confession.' This hardly squares with the statements in Articles II and IV. What presumably he meant to say (!) is that the Articles, on his interpretation, allow the Church in future to redefine its identity without reference to the Westminster Confession.

By the same token, the Church of Scotland could cease to be Presbyterian, deny its continuity with 'the Church of Scotland which was reformed in 1560', disown its role as a national Church with a call to serve 'the people in every parish of Scotland', and even submit to the papacy so long as the Church at the time agreed to regard this action as consistent with Article I, which merely talks vaguely about 'adhering to' the Scottish Reformation. One may wonder whether the fathers of the union really intended the Church to be open to such chameleonic mutability. But then when the chips are down, what they intended is an historical irrelevance. The irony is that the interest of Douglas Murray and others of like mind in this freedom to change bears chiefly upon the possibility of dispensing with secondary elements such as the Westminster Confession and synods. In their confidence in the lyrical recital of catholic doctrines set out in Article I as the sole essential (but not irreformable!) bearer of the Church's continuity and corporate life, they would be wise to reflect on the nonchalance with which liberal churchmen regularly repeat such statements in the Apostles' or Nicene Creeds wilfully heedless of their meaning as originally formulated. What price such 'freedom to reform'? Tinkering with the status of the Westminster Confession increasingly looks like a cosmetic indulgence when the health of the Body suffers from galloping consumption.

*D.F. Wright, New College, University of Edinburgh*

## **Assurance of Faith: Calvin, English Puritanism, and the Dutch Second Reformation**

Joel R. Beeke

Peter Lang, New York, 1991; 518pp., £26; ISBN 0 8204 1428 X

The questions of salvation – ‘What must I do to be saved?’ – and the assurance – ‘How can I know I am saved?’ – are distinct: ‘A person may be really saved, and still not be sure, in his own mind, of his salvation.... His salvation is not in doubt, but he may be in doubt about his salvation’ (J.G. Vos). This book is concerned with the question of assurance. Its historical analysis is summed up thus: ‘Different emphases notwithstanding, the Reformers and post-Reformers, both English and Dutch, are essentially one: *Assurance of salvation ought to be regarded as the possession of all Christians in principle, despite varying measures of consciousness*’. Its practical significance is summed up thus: ‘the divines we have studied have set before us the model we need today: right and rich doctrinal thinking coupled with (and, indeed *leading to*) sanctified and vibrant living.’

Citing L. Berkhof, the author identifies ‘two extremes that should be avoided’; (i) ‘it is possible to have a true living faith without any degree of subjective assurance’; (ii) ‘no one is in a state of grace who does not have absolute assurance’ (p. 176). Beeke traces the ways in which various writers have sought to avoid these two extremes. While he offers much insightful exposition of individual authors, such as John Calvin, John Owen and Thomas Goodwin, his main concern is to offer an analysis of historical trends.

Regarding historical trends, we may note Beeke’s comments on the relationship between Calvin and (a) the Westminster Confession; and (b) the Dutch Second Reformation. He emphasises that the post-Reformation developments, both English and Dutch, must be seen in the context of an increased ‘taking for granted (of) God’s saving grace’ which ‘fostered dead orthodoxy’. On the relation between Calvin and the Westminster Confession, Beeke writes, ‘Though not departing in essence from the teaching of the Reformers, the WCF’s chapter 18 does systematize emphases and distinctives that were minimized by Calvin’. Observing that ‘their varying emphases are related to the somewhat different questions being raised in the early and later Reformation era’, Beeke contends that ‘the WCF’s divines are by no means parted from the company of the Reformers’. Concerning Calvin and the Dutch Second Reformation, Beeke maintains that ‘these Dutch divines as a whole did not misread Calvin and the Reformers, but simply adapted the teaching of the early Reformers in a practical way to their own day’. This adaptation produced ‘a “nearer”, “more intimate”, or “more precise reformation”’ in which they ‘sought to *apply* Reformation truths to daily life and “heart”

experience'. Their 'goal was to join doctrine to the whole of life' (p. 390). Their great theme may be summed up thus: *'The scriptural appeal for sanctification must be zealously pursued. Reformation doctrine must be lived'* (p. 389).

This is not merely a scholarly work which 'implicitly repudiate(s) the sharp distinction... between Calvin and Calvinism'. It is a work of real spiritual value, guiding the believer away from both despondency – 'Assurance... must never be regarded as the privilege of "exceptional sainthood"' (John Murray) – and complacency – 'none are so perfect' that 'their assurance' cannot 'be increased' (George Downname).

*Charles M. Cameron, St Ninian's Parish Church, Dunfermline*

## **Human Immortality and the Redemption of Death**

Simon Tugwell

Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1990; 196pp., £12.95; ISBN 0 232 51830 0

The central argument of this book is that the tension between ideas of the immortality of the soul and of the final resurrection and judgement creates significant problems for Christian eschatology. In particular, it leads to a conflict between the tendency to locate the decisive moment of judgement at death, and the tendency to locate it at the resurrection. A number of intermediate positions also emerge. Augustine *e.g.*, holds that the final judgement of the soul will not occur until the end, but that in the meantime, the soul is kept in a 'hidden receptacle' and given a provisional reward or punishment. Much later, Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas argued that since the beatitude of the soul and body together is higher than merely the beatitude of the soul, we must await the resurrection to receive our full reward.

Tugwell's implicit, but nevertheless clear, thesis is that Christian theology would do best to opt for the clarity of the full-blown resurrection-only scenario, and to leave the philosophically and theologically dubious doctrine of the soul and its immortality to the ancient Greeks, whence it came. The view that 'all are alive to God', grounded in the relation of time to eternity rather than in the soul's own putative post-mortem existence, provides a sufficient basis for dealing with the problem of the continuity of existence of the dead, who from the temporal point of view have simply ceased to be.

It is, however, difficult to extract this thesis from the book, buried as it is in a history of Christian eschatology, and contrasted as it is with a lengthy account of pagan Greek views. As a mine of information, the book is invaluable, insightful, and an impressive feat of scholarship. It is not, however, a systematic treatise on human immortality and the redemption of death, nor does it attempt to provide a complete historical picture, since the analysis does not extend beyond the pre-Reformation era. This limits the usefulness of the book, but it also helps to define its

scope clearly for potential readers. Specialists will no doubt find it a helpful volume, and indeed the book includes an index and a glossary for non-specialists; most Protestants, however, along with those looking for a direct response to modern doubts about Christian eschatology, are still likely to find it somewhat abortive.

*G.D. Badcock, New College, University of Edinburgh*

### **On Being the Church. Essays on the Christian Community**

Edited by C.E. Gunton and D.W. Hardy

T.& T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1989; 263pp., £15; ISBN 0 567 0095010

This is a must for those seeking a more meaningful rationale for the church's existence. Six essays centre around the theme of 'sociality' – community as the identity of the church. They represent a commitment to the possibility of the church as a community of sociality. It makes interesting reading because of the contributors' various churchmanships and their approach to the doctrine of the church from a theological perspective. They are not so much concerned with the *functional* identity of the church as with its *ontological* roots and seek to identify the proper foundation upon which a meaningful doctrine of the church can be built, that is, the Triune God who comes to us in incarnation.

D.W. Hardy starts with the central question of *sociality*. His is a practical concern broadening the horizon of the church beyond that of a particular institution to grasp intelligently the foundations of society in order to appreciate the church as community. Thus, there is a movement from 'created sociality' into which we are all born, towards a truly 'redeemed sociality' found in Christ's church. In the second essay, C.E. Gunton develops the more particular paradigm of sociality. 'The Church is what it is by virtue of being called to be a temporal echo of the eternal community that God is.' The doctrine of God has not sufficiently influenced our understanding of the church. Thus, a legal-political view of the church has developed, the authority structure of which is developed in the third essay by W. Jeanrond with his penetrating critique of ecclesial authority as the manifestation of secular rather than theological concepts of authority. C. Schwobel and R. Roberts add more particular responses. The former exegetes the divine and human boundaries in the church according to Luther and Calvin. The latter offers a penetrating critique of Anglican ecclesiology in dialogue with the Bishop of Ely, Stephen Sykes. Lastly, the essays end on a refreshingly biblical note, where each essay can 'be brought into fresh relation with the Bible' through D. Ford's comparison of 2 Corinthians in order to see what lessons can be gained for today.

This book of essays deserves wide reading and well achieves its aim of attempting to unite 'the academic study of theology' with the narrow focus and pragmatic procedures of 'official church conversations and committees'.

*G.W.P. McFarlane, London Bible College*

## **Faith and Modernity**

Edited by Philip Sampson, Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden  
Regnum Books / Lynx Communications, Oxford, 1994;  
352pp., £17.50; ISBN 0 7459 3039 5.

In 1989, Os Guinness delivered a paper on 'Faith and Modernity' in Manila at the Second Lausanne Conference. This provoked much interest and led to an international conference on 'Modernity and Postmodernity', held at Uppsala in 1993. The papers given at it are brought together in the present volume.

The modernity / postmodernity distinction has come into vogue in recent parlance, especially since about 1985, to describe a distinction of outlook which has emerged increasingly during the second half of our century.

In the Introduction the editors define 'modernity' and postmodernity' as used in the volume: 'Modernity is the intellectual and cultural heritage of the Enlightenment project – namely, the rejection of traditional and religious sources of authority in favour of reason and knowledge as the road to human emancipation. From this point of view, postmodernity refers to the progressive loss of confidence in, if not failure of, the Enlightenment project since 1945. This accelerated in the seventies and eighties as the consequences of modernization became more apparent.' Several of the contributors, however, make it clear that they consider postmodernity to be simply a further stage of modernity.

The writers represent different disciplines – theology, philosophy, sociology, missiology, communication – and they handle a wide range of subjects. Inevitably the scope is huge, for it relates to a whole culture. Most of the book addresses the tension between modernity and Christianity. Two chapters on truth, authority and modernity by Newbigin and Netland reveal some difference of outlook, the former holding that every system of thought must rest on an undemonstrable faith-basis, the latter that Christianity must be seen not as a preferred belief-system but as demonstrable truth.

There are chapters discussing the relationship of modernity to the doctrine of God, to anthropology, morality, eschatology and spirituality. Divine transcendence, the divine moral order, the uniqueness of Christ and the balance of the spiritual, intellectual and physical in the biblical world-view are here set over against modernity's obsession with human beings

as self-creative, self-defining and autonomous and yet, paradoxically, as doomed to lose any real personal significance.

The longest chapter is by Lars Johansson and is a penetrating analysis of the New Age phenomenon as a synthesis of the premodern, modern and postmodern. He says, 'The NA claims to present a new holistic vision of humanity as a cure for Cartesian dualism. But their solution is not holistic enough.' He points out that biblical Christianity affirms the value of the physical as well as the spiritual and intellectual. This is followed by chapters on economics and information technology.

John Seel, himself an American Evangelical, mounts a devastating critique of certain aspects of American Evangelicalism in its corruption by modernity, but warns us that we too are in danger. Vinay Samuel's subject, 'Modernity, mission and non-Western societies', in the handling of which he makes special reference to Islam and Hinduism, is very important and much too brief.

The final chapter is a revised version of Os Guinness' paper, entitled 'Mission modernity: seven checkpoints on mission in the modern world'. It is very clearly written, uncomfortably so at times, especially when he writes about the worldliness of modern evangelical Christians. 'No persecutor or foe in two thousand years has wreaked such havoc on the church as its modernity.' Nevertheless, with all his criticisms and warnings, he sounds a note of hope, encouraging us to understand the challenge of modernity, and to put our trust in the eternal power of God's Word and Spirit.

As there is, regrettably, no index, you may have to read the volume right through to find items that interest you most. It will not do you any harm, for it compels thought on a matter of great importance for the church's mission today.

*Geoffrey W. Grogan, Glasgow*

## **Living on the Edge**

Clive Calver, Steve Chilcraft, Steve Gaukroger and Peter Meadows

Lynx Communications, Oxford, 1993; 96pp., £6.00; ISBN 0 7459 2689 4

*Living on the Edge* consists of study material originally prepared for the 80,000 people who attend one of the annual Spring Harvest events held on four sites throughout the UK each year. It forms the substance for the main seminars that are taught at different levels each morning following the daily Bible exposition. Many people who have taught or attended main seminars will welcome their being made available to a wider audience in this publication.



Spring Harvest seeks to cater to the whole range of evangelical perspectives and to present a holistic theology that leads to action both in the church and in the community. Both these perspectives are reflected in this material.

The themes in the book – environment, ethics, evangelism and eternity – do not hang too comfortably together beyond the obvious initial letter. That said, each study stands on its own and the four provide a representative range of issues suitable for discussion and study. The material is laid out in double columns with key points and arresting quotes down the margins. There is a contemporary feel to the way the material is presented and handled and a real effort to take seriously John Stott's two horizons of the Word and the world. Flow charts, bar graphs and statistics sit comfortably with Bible verses and theological explanation. The use of 'bullet points' and lists makes the presentation more accessible to groups.

The material is written by thoughtful intelligent Christians rather than 'experts', and that is both a strength and a weakness. The writers have obviously sought to research and represent contemporary evangelical opinion on the issues and to present fairly where Evangelicals disagree. The weakness is that like all such issues the 'experts' have moved further on and can get irritated at what to them seem dated arguments, or lack of precise terminology. But the material is intended to introduce Christians to these issues and to provoke them to action and I believe they do precisely that. There is a section on foundational and further reading at the end of each chapter.

During the last few years I have taught seminars at Spring Harvest using the main seminar material. There has always been far more material provided than can be taught in 90 minutes. I believe that the material is balanced, stimulating, provocative and practical. It faces up to issues we can often be tempted to duck. It exposes us to opinions that we may never have considered before. I hope that this will be the first of an annual series which also provide an excellent introduction into the ethos and heart of Spring Harvest.

*Colin Sinclair, Scripture Union, Glasgow*

## **The Dead Sea Scrolls Today**

James C. VanderKam

Eerdmans / SPCK, Grand Rapids / London, 1994; 210pp.,  
£9.99; ISBN 0 281 04774 X

Recent years have witnessed a renewed interest in the documents discovered in the late 1940s and early 1950s in caves not far from the north-western shore of the Dead Sea at a location known as Qumran. Unfortunately, undue attention has focused on the more sensational claims of certain scholars / journalists (e.g. Eisenman; Baigent and

Leigh), giving many people a very distorted view of the significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls for our understanding of the origins of Christianity. In the light of the misinformation circulating today VanderKam's book is both welcome and timely. Here, in marked contrast to some recent works, is a sober, balanced and up-to-date introduction to the Scrolls.

While most of the book reflects views which enjoy widespread support among scholars, the ordinary reader should be aware that this is not always the case. On occasions he seeks to move forward the discussion of particular issues by presenting his own ideas. This is especially so as regards the section on the canon of Scripture. Here VanderKam suggests that certain books (*i.e.*, Jubilees; 1 Enoch; the Temple Scroll) which are not now part of the Jewish canon (that is, the OT in the Reformation tradition) were viewed by the Essene inhabitants of Qumran as scripture. While the evidence as presented suggests such a conclusion, VanderKam's case rests on one important premise: all books which were 'especially authoritative' were viewed as scripture. Yet, while it is true that all books of scripture are normally viewed by believing communities to be authoritative, the reverse does not necessarily follow.

Presbyterians, for example, may consider the Westminster Confession to be especially authoritative, but this does not automatically make it part of scripture. Unfortunately, VanderKam's criterion of authoritativeness lacks the very kind of precision which is required in deciding which books were held to be scripture at Qumran. Differing degrees of authoritativeness may have existed. Certain books may have been viewed as authoritative without at the same time being considered scripture. What we can know, however, is that almost all the books which comprise the present Jewish canon were known and highly esteemed at Qumran.

These observations regarding the canon of scripture at Qumran highlight the danger which exists in trying to arrive at firm conclusions on the basis of limited evidence. Similar comments might be made about parts of VanderKam's work (*e.g.* the composition of Daniel ch. 4; the Scrolls and the New Testament). Given the limited nature of the evidence before them, scholars often speculate beyond what it indicates in an attempt to shed more light on a specific subject. In such instances we must always be conscious that we are in the realm of uncertainty, not fact.

The reservations voiced should not be seen as detracting seriously from what is a very valuable introduction to the Dead Sea Scrolls. VanderKam is to be thanked for the lucid way in which he brings together a wealth of information on the Scrolls in a very accessible form.

*T.D. Alexander, The Queen's University of Belfast*

**Bible Praying**

Michael Perry

Fount Paperbacks, London, 1992; 352pp., £9.99; ISBN 0 00 627609 1

'Restore unto us the years that the locust hath eaten'. Fifty years ago a phrase like this came naturally into a minister's public prayers. In his lecture on extempore *Public Prayer*, Spurgeon urged his students to prepare by 'the commitment to memory of the Psalms and parts of Scripture containing promises, supplications, praises and confessions such as may be helpful in the act of prayer.' A minister friend once showed me Professor James Moffatt's *A Book of Biblical Devotions for Ministers of the Scottish Church*. Published in the 1920s, this was an anthology of Bible passages in the words of the Authorised Version, arranged under subject headings. I felt that something of the sort, in modern translation, would be a great help to ministers, not only in private devotions, but in the preparation of services. I made a start for my own use by listing New Testament benedictions in various modern translations, but realised that much more could be done. The good news is that now much more *has* been done.

Perry's *Bible Praying* consists of 534 prayers, in or adapted from the words of Scripture, under subject headings which follow the sequence of a typical modern Anglican service. The prayers are in modern English, and the wording is the arranger's own, but clearly owes much to felicitous phrases in a variety of translations. Under each heading the prayers are arranged in the order of their biblical origin: half are from the Old Testament (especially Psalms and Isaiah) and half from the New. Two examples illustrate the method used:

**APPROACH** (from Deuteronomy 12).

Lord, our God,

this is the place where we may worship you;

you have set your name here.

Here in your presence

our families shall rejoice,

because you have blessed us;

here we present to you

the offering of our lives;

here we pledge our obedience to your laws;

here we pray for our children,

that we and they

may do what is right in your eyes.

Lord, our God,

this is the place where we may worship you. Amen.

**BLESSING** (from Isaiah 26).

Trust in the Lord,

your eternal Rock,

and he will keep your minds in perfect peace.  
Keep faith with him,  
walk with him, wait for him, desire him;  
reach out to him in the night,  
seek him in the morning:  
and his blessing be upon you always.  
Amen.

The book is a large paperback and would benefit from a smaller (and cheaper?) reprint, but it is made to last and opens well, and the layout is excellent – no pages need to be turned during a prayer. There are two indexes – Season and Subject, and Bible Reference. If some subjects are more adequately represented than others, this may act as a spur to users to produce their own prayers!

I heartily recommend this book.

*William G. Young, North Kessock*

## **Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology**

Edited by Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino

Orbis, Maryknoll, NY, 1993; 751pp., \$44.95; ISBN 0 888344 917 X

It was a quarter of a century ago that liberation theology first began to register as a specific movement in the history of the church. Beginning with Gustavo Gutiérrez's exploratory lectures and essays of 1968 and his seminal *Teología de la liberación* of 1971, the church, at first in Latin America and speedily in many quarters of the First World, was alerted not so much to 'a new theme for reflection' but to 'a new way of doing theology'. Such, at least, was the claim. It became increasingly difficult during the 1970s to avoid the challenge of liberation theology even if the specific contextual canons of the movement made it impossible for First-World Christians to apply liberationist principles to their own *de facto* oppressionist situation. Yet by the late 1970s such terms as praxis, liberation, and 'the preferential option for the poor', as well as knowledge of the existence of the sort of theology being practised by ordinary people in the innumerable base communities of South America, had become part of the current western Christian consensus. Whatever qualms traditionalists had with this new way of doing theology, criticisms, for the most part, were muted. The feeling was that this movement could not, indeed should not, be ignored.

That was in the 1970s. Despite immense practical and theological energy generated by the liberationist movement during its first phase, within a decade there were signs of both increasing development and a more obvious reverse. The excitement of discovery was being tempered by a growing appreciation of the intractabilities of the situations which

liberation theology had set out to change and an admission to a certain naiveté, both political and doctrinal, in liberation theory itself. Nowhere was this more patent than in the attitude of Gutiérrez, whose integrity has remained intact throughout the vicissitudes of the last two decades and a half. If liberation theology was chastened by both internal criticisms and external events, not least being the (unexpected) triumph of democracy in so many of the South American states during the 1980s, the movement's basic perceptions were still felt, by its practitioners, to be sound and its witness relevant to the ongoing life of both the church and the world. However subversive it was deemed to have been, not least by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, its ultimate acceptability had by 1987 been assured following John Paul II's cautious espousal of some of its themes in his own uniquely conservative / radical social teaching. Then came 1989 and that is where this authoritative compendium of liberation theology begins.

1989 was a momentous year both for international socialism generally and for liberation theology particularly. The breaching of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of communism and the discrediting of socialism could have been felt to have destroyed the validity of the liberationist movement permanently. But November 1989 also witnessed the murder of Ignacio Ellacuría, one of the editors of this volume, along with five of his fellow Jesuits. Liberation theology was obviously still considered as potent a threat then as it had been nine years earlier when those same forces of reaction had murdered another Salvadorian churchman, Archbishop Oscar Romero. This hefty volume, therefore, despite its unblushingly academic appearance, still witnesses to a live and potentially dangerous theology. Its contents supply perhaps the most substantial resumé of liberation theology to date.

*Mysterium Liberationis* has two parts, the first covering the history, methodology and distinctive features of liberation theology, while the second, which is subdivided into five, includes what the editors call the 'Systematic Contents of the Theology of Liberation'. There is much overlap between the two sections and a good deal of repetition occurs even within the separate sections. The treatment of the different themes, though, is extensive if not quite exhaustive, and even a glance at the list of authors shows how authoritative the volume is. There are contributions by both Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, by Enrique Dussel, Pablo Richard, Juan Luis Segundo, José Comblin, Gustavo Gutiérrez, Jon Sobrino and at least a dozen others. The treatment of both the history and the methodology of the movement is workmanlike rather than striking and the sections interpreting individual doctrines such as the Trinity, God the Father, Jesus as liberator and as mediator of God's reign, and the Holy Spirit, indicate at least a desire to remain faithful to classical orthodoxy even if the result, in some cases, is not wholly convincing. Despite some turgidity, the book succeeds in presenting the reader with both a guide and up-to-date assessment of the movement and its significance. Although one

is conscious of a degree of self-criticism among some of the contributors, no sharp critique is provided. The book's usefulness is in its descriptive content and in its factual analysis of liberationist theory and themes.

If the planning and much of the compilation of this volume had been completed by 1989, its publication, four years later, coincided with yet further change. By the mid-1990s liberation theology has been criticized even more vociferously from within; Latin American Catholicism is being challenged by Protestant Pentecostalism to an amazing and unprecedented degree; and Marxism seems now to be positively antediluvian. Sobrino, in his preface, rises to this three-pronged challenge by claiming: 1) that whatever validity current ecological, feminist and cultural criticisms of liberation theology may have, they do not by any means invalidate the movement's original thesis: 'It remains true ... that the most original and fruitful features of the theology of liberation ... remain its mode of understanding the business of theology as a theoretical reflection on praxis [and]... the identification of the world's poor as a *locus theologicus*'; 2) had the institutional church allowed the base communities to renew the ecclesiastical structure rather than operate on its periphery, the rise of Pentecostalism may have been stemmed; and 3) liberation theology, despite its use of Marxist economic analysis, was never enamoured of Marxist ideology. Be that as it may, the fact that these criticisms have had to be parried indicates that liberation theology has gone through a very significant transitional phase. Whether it will be deemed a live theological option by the end of the millennium is anyone's guess. With the persistence of poverty, ongoing oppressions, and the continuing call for radical discipleship one hopes that the gains of liberation theology will not be forgotten, but its very contextuality in both practice and theory may militate against the movement's permanent significance.

Either as a transitional report on the progress of liberation theology, or, more sombrely, as the movement's epitaph, *Mysterium Liberationis* deserves to be read widely.

*D.Densil Morgan, School of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Wales, Bangor*

## **Women at the Well: Feminist Perspectives on Spiritual Direction**

Kathleen Fisher

SPCK, London, 1989; 215pp., £7.95; ISBN 0 281 04426 0

This is a book about helping people, especially women, in spiritual growth. Its author is a spiritual director, social worker, teacher and psychotherapist. Her writing arises directly out of her experiences in working with women, and her conviction that they have the gifts and

resources for strong personal and spiritual growth. These resources are what she called 'the spring within', which is God's empowering grace given through Jesus Christ (*cf.* John 4:13-124).

There are ten chapters, covering such topics as women experiencing God, Jesus and women, women and power, violence against women, the problem of anger, and relationships with female members of one's own family. The book is eminently easy to read, yet so full of ideas that it needs to be taken at a gentle pace over a period of time. There are useful notes and a bibliography, and each chapter includes exercises involving relaxation, physical movement, Bible reading, personal reflection, 'journalling' and imaginative meditation. The exercises are designed to be used individually or in groups, in the context of spiritual direction.

Kathleen Fisher writes as a committed feminist. She sees women's great needs as affirmation and a sense of self-worth, and liberation from pressure from men to conform to male ideals and values. Women also need strategies for bringing about change, especially in areas of social injustice and personal oppression, and freedom to develop into full personhood in relationships of mutuality and friendship. She believes that our concept of God is profoundly influenced by the images and language we use for God in prayer. She challenges the idea of an exclusively male imagery, advocating a wide range of fresh, non-masculine images, such as God as mother, water, or fire, and Jesus as a sister. She encourages women to explore their own spiritual pilgrimage, to be aware of the presence of God, to be strong and active (rather than passive or resigned), to identify imaginatively with biblical women, and with Jesus, whose maleness she sees as theologically unimportant.

The book evinces a strong sense of the reality of God, and of the potential of women (and men) for a profound relationship with God. I liked its emphasis on the redefining of 'power' in terms of mutual relationships, and on the transformation of society, rather than on the social adjustment of individuals in situations of oppression. But the book raises questions which need careful thought. How does the revelation of God's nature through Scripture relate to our awareness of it through personal experience? How does psychotherapy's current emphasis on self-esteem and self-development relate to biblical teaching on self-denial, mutual submission, and total dependence on God? At times there is a looseness in the way the author talks about God, suggesting a sympathy for pantheism rather than a full Christian doctrine of sin and redemption. I also felt uneasy about some of the exercises. For example, exploring one's sexual 'life-line' might be very painful for someone abused in childhood; rituals like that of 'self-blessing', using candles, water and incense, could readily become sub-Christian.

Yet in spite of such reservations, I felt this is a book which could help pastors, counsellors and other carers in relating to women. It would also make good reading for teachers, ministers and students who are not yet familiar with some of the basic concepts of modern feminism.

Ruth B. Edwards, University of Aberdeen

## The Writings of John Calvin: An Introductory Guide

W. de Greef. Translated by Lyle D. Bierman

Baker Books, Grand Rapids, and Apollos, Leicester, 1993; 254pp., £14.99; ISBN 0 8010 3021 8 (USA), 0 8511 435 0 (UK)

This is a key book indeed for all who love that kind of interpretation of Scripture, so readily attributable to John Calvin, which properly unfolds the mind of the writer and at the same time conveys the vital message of the Holy Spirit to the mind and heart of the reader. Surely he was not only the one who merits this description, but he was the foremost expositor of all time, and one to whom any biblical scholar or preacher worth his salt readily refers.

Willem van't Spijker, the writer of the foreword, aptly describes de Greef's introduction to the entire corpus of the writings of Calvin (who produced 'more in the space of thirty years than any other one person can adequately study and digest in an entire lifetime') as a 'guidebook to the vast quantity of secondary literature on Calvin and also an orientation to the many writings that flowed from Calvin's own pen. This is the kind of book that is among the materials given to a traveller about to embark on a fascinating journey. It contains descriptions of the route, calls attention to points of interest here and there, offers us views which even today take us by surprise.... Calvin himself is a reliable guide to a time in need of the reminder that, in all situations, human beings stand before the face of God.'

The first third of the guide is given over to a brief life of Calvin, punctuated by appropriate references to letters, which should be pursued to give deeper insights into the genius of the Reformer and his biblically conceived charisma. The last chapter is devoted to some examination of these letters. Every page is also well peppered with footnotes referring to secondary literature.

Most important of Calvin's writings were what T.H.L.Parker has called his twin-towered cathedral, the *Institutes* and the *Commentaries*, the former being a companion to the latter. The *Institutes*, of course, is Calvin's *magnum opus* of biblical theology, to which the late Dr D.M. Lloyd-Jones referred a young preacher (together with Hodge's *Systematic Theology* and the Westminster symposium's *The Infallible Word*) with the words, 'If you master these, you really need no more!'

The development of the six editions of the *Institutes*, in Latin and French, between 1536, a tract particularly for new Christians, and the definitive edition of 1559, which is in effect a near-exhaustive exposition of the Apostles' Creed, is traced in Chapter 8. Chapter 3 deals not only



with the background and writing of each of the commentaries and their dedicatory epistles, but also with a complete survey of Calvin's other expository works, *i.e.* his lectures and sermons, enumerating those sermons which as yet have not been published.

Calvin's applied theology is to be found in the discussion at some length of his published debates and tracts, including those which strove for Christian unity (for instance, the *Confession of Faith concerning the Lord's Supper* and the *Consensus Tigurinus* of 1549, agreement with Bullinger and Zurich), as well as his polemic outbursts against the Anabaptists and the 'libertines', the *Reply to Cardinal Sadoletto*, the *Treatise on Relics*, and others.

The value of this brief but meaty work is threefold. First, it provides an introduction to all who would embark on being a student of the greatest biblical expositor of all time. Secondly, it offers a flip-through reference for those who are already well-seasoned in Calvin's works. Thirdly, it enables anyone who wishes to know who Calvin was and what is his place in history and theology, to attain just that and to be inspired, perhaps, to want to know more.

A word of warning, therefore, to the intended new student of Calvin: de Greef gives only the story of Calvin and the background to his works, with very little of the flavour of his writings. This can only come from reading the text of Calvin himself.

*Peter Cook, St Andrews, Cheadle Hulme*

## **A Commentary on 1 John**

Robert S. Candlish

Banner of Truth, Edinburgh, 1993 (reprint of 1877 edition); 577pp., £12.95; ISBN 0 85151 662 9

Among the many associates of Thomas Chalmers, perhaps none were more noteworthy than Edward Irving and Robert Candlish. The former was Chalmers' assistant at St John's Glasgow in his earlier days, is well known as the founder of the Catholic Apostolic Church, and has become a hero of many Pentecostals and Charismatics in recent years.

Less well known outside Scottish Reformed evangelical circles is Robert Smith Candlish. He was minister of St George's Edinburgh and, with Chalmers, was one of the principals in the founding of the Free Church of Scotland. He succeeded Chalmers both in the Chair of Divinity at New College and in prominence in the Free Church. A founder of the Evangelical Alliance, he became Principal of New College in 1862. Foremost among his writings was the commentary under review. When looked at in the light of the teachings of Irving and his successors, it demonstrates that no one grouping has the monopoly over dynamic spiritual renewal. The commentary may indeed well be described as a thorough examination of biblical Trinitarian renewal.

If Irving and his supposed successors in the present day renewal movement have laid themselves open to the charge of neglecting in-depth biblical exposition, many of those who have reacted against the Charismatic movement are hardly guiltless of the counter-charge of reducing the apostles' doctrine to mere cerebral orthodoxy. In these respects, Candlish sets us all on a right course. He leads us quietly, step by step, through the letter from the pen of the disciple so loved by Christ. He teaches us to meditate (rather than speculate) on the objective truths contained within the letter, then directs us to open our hearts to spiritual renewal and reformation of Christian conduct inspired by those very truths.

Candlish constantly stresses the need for new birth and adoption as the sons of God, without which we can walk only in darkness and unrighteousness of life, lacking intimate knowledge of and fellowship with the Trinitarian God. Only when, through faith, we have passed from darkness to light, from death to life, may we begin to learn what it is to abide in Christ, draw spiritual sustenance from him and be led along the paths of light, righteousness and love. Only then can we find victory over the world and its destructive influences and withstand its prince, the antichrist, the father of all that is false, not least in religion.

The commentary is divided into four sections outlining the conditions for divine fellowship between God and his people; the nature of light, producing the guileless spirit (which is its primary condition), righteousness and the secret of sinlessness (which is its intermediate condition), love (which is its ultimate condition) and the divine fellowship itself, which conjointly overcomes the world and the antichrist.

The sections are made up of forty-six relatively short and simply constructed lectures, each of which consists of a brief introduction to the text under consideration, followed by two or three principal points, again sub-divided into a few short secondary points. Nevertheless, the lectures need to be read several times in order to extract the full measure of the wholesome teaching. Candlish moves steadily through the letter verse by verse, phrase by phrase, word by word, in each unit of thought, enlarging and applying to the reader the implications.

This is not a technical commentary; there are no background considerations, the grammatical and critical work has been consigned to the preparation. In his own words, Candlish's aim is 'to bring out the general scope and tenor of the apostles' teaching as simply and clearly as I can.' Certainly the most valuable of all his practical teaching is to be found in Lecture 41 on prayer, for which alone the book is worth buying.

The commentary thus merits a careful and meditative study, it provides a book for spiritual exercise in sanctification and mortification, a guide to renewal, trinitarian and biblical, through fellowship with the Father in the Son, 'His own good Spirit helping us'.

*Peter Cook, St Andrews, Cheadle Hulme*

## **What's Wrong with Preaching Today?**

A.N. Martin

Banner of Truth, Edinburgh, 1992; 29pp., 95p; ISBN 0 85151 632 7

This short booklet was originally published in 1967, the year in which it was delivered as an address to the Ministers' Conference of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in the USA. It is in two parts, dealing first with 'The Man' and then with 'The Message'. The first part is based on the author's biblically-based conviction that the efficacy of preaching is largely dependent upon the nature and spiritual character of the person doing the preaching. That is to say, preaching is not a performance, it takes place when God uses a man to declare his Word. To prepare for this task the preacher needs to prepare not only his message but also himself. Martin gives attention to various aspects of this preparation including the personal devotional life and secret prayer.

It is also the case, however, that no matter how well qualified and prepared the preacher might be spiritually, his message must also be well prepared. Martin points to the need for solid biblical content, solid doctrinal substance and practical application. The preacher must never peddle his own opinions or ideas, rather his function is to take the Word of God and expound it to the people of God. The text must be exegeted, its doctrinal relation to other texts must be explained and then the whole must be applied.

Finally, the manner in which this message is communicated also comes in for attention. It must be preached with an urgency and a conviction which can come only from the Holy Spirit. This is a useful little booklet and is to be commended.

*A.T.B. McGowan, Highland Theological Institute*

## **Divine Government**

R.T. France

S.P.C.K., London, 1990; 135pp., £7.99;  
ISBN 0 281 04471 6

The term 'the kingdom of God' in the synoptic gospels is, like the 'Son of Man', one of the most hermeneutically elusive phrases in the New Testament. So it is hardly surprising to find yet another New Testament scholar turning his attention to it. What is more surprising is that, though he is best known for his work on Matthew's gospel, here he has written a book subtitled 'God's Kingship in the Gospel of Mark'. But as he argues himself, 'Mark is a more limited, and in some ways less developed, record of Jesus, and for that reason a suitable starting point for an attempt to get as close as we can to what Jesus Himself taught, and

thought, about the Kingdom of God'. The book, in fact, is the more or less unaltered text of a series of lectures delivered in Australia, and, as such, has retained the engaging robust directness of the lecture medium but without sacrificing too much academic rigour in detail.

This detailed argument comes through especially in the core thesis of the book, that the phrase 'kingdom of God' has to be understood dynamically in terms of active rule and authority, rather than statically or spatially. France argues trenchantly and, I think, convincingly for this dynamic understanding of *he basileia tou theou*, to the extent that he prefers the rendering 'divine government' which he adopted for the title of the book.

Having established this understanding, the rest of the book seeks 'to unpack some of the rich content which Mark has included in his use of the phrase, as a key to his understanding of what it was that Jesus came to do'. France investigates his material along traditional historical-critical lines in five short but cogently argued chapters. The result is an interesting and persuasive book, accompanied by notes which engage the scholarly literature and provide an entry point for the reader wishing to pursue particular lines of enquiry.

This is a book which can easily be read at a single sitting, though its episodic lecture-structure encourages a more extended, reflective approach which helps the reader get more from the text. Dr France has produced a work which is both scholarly and homiletically suggestive, and is at the same time eminently readable – in short, a useful addition to the study library.

*Alan Macgregor, Kirkconnel*

### **Concise Evangelical Dictionary of Theology**

Edited by Walter A. Elwell, abridged by Peter Toon

Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1991; 569pp., £19.99; ISBN 0 8010.3210 5

*The Concise Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (CEDT)* is a scaled-down and up-dated version of the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (EDT)* published in 1984. Around 200 articles have been cut out of *EDT*, and the remaining articles abridged. Despite this trimming down, *CEDT* still contains over 1000 articles and aims to be comprehensive. It deals with most issues in doctrine and practice which arise directly from Scripture. It also follows these issues as they came to be discussed in the development of the church's thinking. This means that the reader is introduced to a large number of influential thinkers in the history of the church. Various religious and philosophical approaches from outwith the Christian tradition are also covered. *CEDT* also aims to be understandable. The publishers say that the goal was 'that the scholar find the dictionary correct; the layman usable'. *CEDT* is particularly 'designed for those who want to quickly find broad, general definitions and facts'.

Contributors to the *CEDT* include many of the leading names in the evangelical world, as J.I. Packer, Carl F.H. Henry, F.F. Bruce, G.W. Bromiley. But over 260 contributors are listed and, as the publishers say, 'no attempt has been made to enforce uniformity'. An example of this lack of uniformity might be found when the reader compares the article on 'Mariology' with that on 'Mary, Assumption of'. In the latter, the belief that Mary was sinless and was assumed body and soul into heaven to be crowned Queen of Heaven is clearly identified with the Roman Catholic Church and the comment is made, 'There is no explicit biblical basis for this teaching'. However, in the article on 'Mariology', there are statements like 'She is Queen of Heaven... Mary's involvement in salvation makes her co-redemptrix along with Christ' without any indication that the views being described are peculiar to the tradition of the R.C. Church. Perhaps this omission occurred as an accident during the difficult work of scaling down this particular contribution from its original length. Similarly, although the reader is told after the article on 'Deism' that he may seek further light on the subject by reading the article on 'Lessing', Lessing seems to have slipped quietly out between 'Leo I, the Great' and 'Lewis, Clive Staples'!

Generally, *CEDT* is strongly committed to basic evangelical emphases. Now and again however I had a sense of disappointment, as with the weak statement, under 'Euthanasia', 'Both revealed and nonreligious principles suggest that active euthanasia is less than God's best.' On the other hand, there are many articles in which the traditional evangelical position on difficult questions is expressed with great skill and economy of language, as in the brief article on 'Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit': 'It is the enlightened, wilful, high-handed nature of such sin that makes it unforgiveable.' In that and other contributions, the data from Scripture are arranged and presented in an impressive way. Such articles have the potential, not only to inform the reader, but also to impart spiritual edification.

To sum up, *CEDT* is not perfect; but as an attempt to provide a theological dictionary which is accurate, accessible and attractively presented it achieves a high level of success.

*John Tallach, Alford Place Church, Aberdeen*

## **Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness**

Eugene H. Peterson

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids / Gracewing, Leominster, England,  
1992; 197pp., £9.95; ISBN 0 8028 3705 0

*Under the Unpredictable Plant* comes with a glowing recommendation from William H. Willimon of Duke University, describing it as 'the new book for pastors'. Some readers may agree with Willimon. I felt that the increased sense of expectation only served to heighten my disappointment. Part of my disappointment may stem from the fact that I am reading Peterson within a Scottish context, while he writes primarily and explicitly for an American readership. His basic insights are transferable to the British situation, and others may enthuse about his book more than I.

This book has three different aspects. It confronts a contemporary issue, protesting against religious careerism. It builds upon spiritual insights, drawn from the book of Jonah. It presents Peterson's spiritual autobiography. Each of these is interesting. Trying to combine the three is difficult. At times, Peterson's insights into the prophecy of Jonah are striking. At other times, Jonah appears to disappear from view more than one might have expected in a book whose chapter-titles allude to Jonah, and whose chapters each begin with a text from Jonah. I think here of Peterson's lengthy account of his interest in Dostoevsky (pp. 49-67). This section is based on Peterson's chapter, 'Fyodor Dostoevsky: God and Passion', in *Reality and the Vision*, edited by Philip Yancey. Does *such* a large section of Dostoevsky really fit into this book? At times, I wondered if there was not too much of Peterson's own story in this book. Even if you do not read the whole book, it would be worth noting Peterson's insights on Jonah: e.g. 'Going to Nineveh to preach was not a coveted assignment for a Hebrew prophet with good references. But Tarshish was something else... exotic... adventure... a far-off and sometimes idealized port... a distant paradise.' Peterson shares his own experience: 'I gradually gave up my illusions of Tarshish and settled into the realities of Nineveh. But not easily, and not all at once'. You may find yourselves wanting to read more, but do not read with the preconception that this is 'the new book for pastors'!

*Charles M. Cameron, St Ninian's Parish Church, Dunfermline*

## An Introduction to the Christian Faith

Robin Keeley (ed.)

Lynx Communications, Oxford, 1992; 352pp., £9.95; ISBN 0 7459 2384 4

This is an updated version of *The Lion Handbook of Christian Belief* (1982). There are differences. This is a paperback, while the original was hardback. The original had plenty of colour and photographs. This version has no colourful photographs. It is text only. The significant differences, in favour of the present edition, are the inclusion of questions 'for further thinking' and lists of 'Bible references'. The questions are found at the end of twenty-six of the thirty chapters, while the Bible references are placed at the close of seventeen of the chapters. These additions will be particularly helpful to the student. A preacher planning to preach on a given theme may find the questions helpful in suggesting a line of approach which might be taken. Leaders of study groups will find much to clarify their own thinking and to stimulate discussion. While this edition lacks the eye-catching colour of the original, it remains very accessible to those who have no formal theological education. We have distinguished academics, writing in a way that is simple and clear, *e.g.* D.A. Carson on 'The Personal God'. We have distinguished churchmen making a significant contribution, *e.g.* George Carey on 'Made in the Image of God', 'Good News of Freedom' and 'Finding Faith'. But this is by no means a book produced solely by distinguished academics and churchmen. Among the ninety-four contributors, there is great variety. This is not simply a compendium of biblical and systematic theology. It provides quite an education in practical theology – *e.g.* articles on 'Depression', 'Grief', 'Physical Handicap', 'Christian Healing', 'Violence and Non-Violence', 'Marriage and Divorce' – in historical theology – the series of articles on 'People and Movements through the Centuries' – and in comparative religion – 'How Muslims (Hindus, Marxists) see Jesus', 'God in Other Religions', 'Christianity and Marxism'. There is also a fairly substantial glossary. It is well worth reading through the whole book over a period of time – preferably not with the haste required for book review purposes! It would be best read within the context of an ordered plan for study, teaching, preaching and learning through discussion. Even if you never read the whole book, it is well worth having as a reference book, which will help you to think theologically without getting too bogged down in academic technicalities.

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## The Glory of Christ

Peter Lewis

Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1992; 505pp., £9.99; ISBN 0 340 56894 1

This is a book of quality. It richly deserves the praises accorded it by the publishers – ‘this magnificent work’ – and by Terry Virgo – ‘this outstanding book’. Dr R.T. France, Principal of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, describes it as ‘rich material from a preacher-theologian’. Its quality derives from the fact that Lewis has learned from many others. *The Glory of Christ* is primarily a study of the Scriptures from one who has spent much time, over many years, learning from God’s Word. He has drawn much upon commentaries and dictionaries, notably from the *New International Commentary on the New Testament* (he refers to seven commentaries in this series), *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* and the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (from each of these, he cites twelve articles). The range of his reading is most impressive. There are over 750 references to other writers. Often, Lewis has a better way of putting things than many of the scholars he quotes. He writes as ‘a preacher-theologian’ who provides us with ‘a towering book of pastoral scholarship’.

In thirty-four chapters, Lewis explores many aspects of the Christian faith, focusing attention on its central figure, our Lord Jesus Christ. I have highlighted the scholarly qualities of this book, since Lewis himself tends to play down this aspect. Reading the book’s opening words, ‘This is a book of theology for everybody’, the more scholarly among us might suspect that it is a bit lightweight. This would be a mistaken impression. The reader who intends to read *The Glory of Christ* from beginning to end faces a demanding challenge. It should, of course, be said that this book need not be read from cover to cover. The material is well organized and the chapter titles give a clear indication of their content. The reader can easily identify a particular matter of interest and then read the appropriate chapter.

The Elders and members of Cornerstone (Evangelical Church, Nottingham), are greatly privileged to have, as their pastor, such an able expositor of God’s Word. The reader can benefit greatly from this expository ministry by reading this book ‘about Jesus... written so that as we get nearer he might get *bigger* – in our minds,... hearts and ... lives!’

*Charles M. Cameron, St Ninian’s Parish Church, Dunfermline.*