

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_sbct-01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_sbct-01.php)

**SCOTTISH  
BULLETIN  
OF  
EVANGELICAL  
THEOLOGY**

**Volume 16 Number 2      Autumn 1998**

## CONTENTS

93 **EDITORIAL**

**ARTICLES**

- 97 **THE FUTURE OF JESUS CHRIST**  
Richard Bauckham, St Mary's College, University of St Andrews
- 111 **CALVIN AND ENGLISH CALVINISM: A REVIEW ARTICLE**  
G. Michael Thomas, Brighton Road Baptist Church, Croydon
- 128 **MAKING SENSE OF MATTHEW 25:31-46**  
Graham Foster, Steeple Church and Mary Slessor Centre, Dundee
- 140 **THE EARLY EDUCATIONAL MISSION OF THE SCOTTISH MISSIONARIES IN MADRAS PRESIDENCY: ITS SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**  
Joshua Kalapati, Madras Christian College, India
- 156 **B.B. WARFIELD'S APOLOGETICAL APPEAL TO 'RIGHT REASON': EVIDENCE OF A 'RATHER BALD RATIONALISM'?**  
Paul Kjoss Helseth, Minnetonka, Minnesota

**BOOK REVIEWS**

- 178 John Saxbee: *Liberal Evangelism* (Peter Cook)
- 179 David J. Atkinson and David H. Field (eds): *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology* (Charles M. Cameron)
- 183 John H. Walton: *Covenant: God's Purpose, God's Plan* (Harry Mealyea)

## EDITORIAL

### WHITHER EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY IN SCOTLAND?

Life out of death is a law of institutional as well as spiritual life. This autumn has witnessed the demise after more than a century of Glasgow Bible College, known for most of that era as BTI, the Bible Training Institute. Its merger with Northumbria Bible College of Berwick-upon-Tweed (earlier named Lebanon Missionary Bible College) has given birth to International Christian College (housed in temporary premises in Glasgow). As we welcome this visionary new foundation, which is committed to melding the strengths of both parent colleges – Northumbria’s community-based devotion to cross-cultural vision, informing and integrating the whole curriculum, and Glasgow’s metropolitan provision of training for diverse career tracks of Christian service – we should not fail to mark the disappearance from the Scottish scene of BTI/GBC. It proved one of Dwight L. Moody’s most enduring legacies to Scotland, and its contributions to evangelical Christianity well beyond Scotland have been distinguished. *Deo gratias.*

A health-check on evangelical theology in Scotland might register the ambitious new ICC as well as the lusty youngster in Elgin, the Highland Theological Institute, in addition to the established colleges serving the Scottish Baptists and the Free Church of Scotland. Additional institutional resources are found in Rutherford House in Edinburgh. Nor should the orthodox-evangelical-biblical segment of the Divinity Faculties’ teaching spectrum be forgotten. The health-checker might conclude that at least in institutional terms the patient is vigorously active. This judgement might be reinforced by reviewing publishing outlets, societies and fellowships for theological conference and even the solid expository fare of many a Scottish pulpit.

Yet the overall verdict on the vitality of evangelical theology would surely not be unreservedly favourable. We devote greater energies to historical theology than to contemporary constructive theology (as a comparison of the number of volumes in the two Rutherford Studies series makes plain). A tradition that will rightly be eternally grateful to the Reformation – for there it was reborn – is bound to find endless inspiration in that and successor generations. Yet just as the Reformers drew creatively on the early church Fathers, and even the medievals, so we dare not be rooted so fast in Reformation divinity that we lack the agility to address present-day realities. Where does one look, for example, for theological orientation on those vast and increasing reaches of contemporary human experience taken up with leisure, entertainment, sport, holidays? Will we work in heaven? The word ‘retirement’ meant something rather different not so long ago (so that when I started teaching in New College I was assigned not an office but a ‘retiring room’).

'Active retirement' was almost an oxymoron. It would at least give the lie to those tired jibes about kill-joy Calvinism if one of the sons or daughters of John Knox were to write a masterly theology of leisure.

Or to look in another, not wholly unrelated direction, what theologically are we to make of the progressive displacement of the verbal by the visual in human communication, or at least of the textual and literary by the electronic? When it was that Christians first started taking their own Bibles to worship services I do not know, but it has been possible for less than a quarter of the church's history. It cannot be long – if it has not happened already – before worshippers turn on their hand-held mini-computers to find Jeremiah 31 instead of opening the leaves of a paper Bible. The former, I trust, will no less be Scripture for not being in printed form.

Readers will immediately think of other pressing areas of contemporary life that clamour for the attention of biblically-tutored wisdom. Some of the most demanding bear not so much on how we spend our time or communicate with each other but on our very humanity. *Created, not made* is the telling title of a book by Oliver O'Donovan. What degree and kinds of 'making' (re-making, unmaking) are compatible with the recognition that we are indeed created beings, not human artefacts?

My concern is not to list but to illustrate the contemporary challenges before an evangelical theological community that is perhaps as instinctively conservative as any in the world. It is a concern not that we should draw any less copiously on our rich traditions of Reformed and Scottish divinity, but that we do so with the most self-conscious and deliberate of intentions to address the life of Christian people at the turn of the millennia. When explicating Scripture we do not seek to become men and women of the first century, or of earlier still. No more can our theology be a replication of sixteenth- or seventeenth-century formulations. There are likely to be pressing issues of the first order clamouring for our attention on which our hallowed forefathers can afford little or no help. Indeed, to limit ourselves to their horizons may well disable us at the outset from constructive theologizing on some of the demands of our day.

This sharply contemporary imperative should inform not only our treatment of specific issues but also the whole cast of our theological work. Millennial theology in Scotland, and most insistently evangelical (gospel-led) theology, has to function in a missionary-cum-apologetic mode. That is, it has to serve the fulfilling of the Great Commission as truly as, and perhaps not much less directly than, pioneer outreach to 'unevangelized fields'. Scripture yields more than hints about the heavy responsibility of those who once heard or knew and turned away, but equally of those who should have spoken and kept silent. Will evangelical

theologians in Scotland be catalysts in precipitating that *metanoia*, that decisive turn-around in the orientation of heart and mind, in pastors, deacons, elders and other leaders which will convert the church to mission? If we need a missiology for Scotland – and no less for Britain and Europe and the West at large – we are certain not to find it in our own native resources. We will need to sit at the feet of those whose spurs have been won at the frontline of cross-cultural mission. It is no accident that the late Lesslie Newbigin was the most significant theological interpreter of the Western church's missionary task in the last generation.

Mention of Newbigin recalls the apologetic dimension of the contemporary challenge to theology. Teachers and preachers of Scripture need all the help they can get to do so with a sharp sensitivity to the peculiar prejudices, delusions, obsessions, misconceptions, ignorances abroad in our culture. It is inevitably a confusing situation, for all manner of half-remembered Sunday school stories, half-digested media distortions and sensationalized half-truths combine with varying measures of nostalgia, guilt and sentimentality to make our contemporaries far more complicated than unevangelized heathen. A little knowledge is a dangerous thing, yet not without promise even when suppressed (*cf.* Rom. 1:18). In this context a great deal more evangelism will have to be pre-evangelism. Now will it be pastorally inexpedient, for this is the world of subtly insidious corruptions to which Christian people are all the time exposed.

Not least powerful will be the apologetic of life, and especially the life of the Christian congregation. I conclude this editorial by returning to theology's role in the forming of the missionary church – a church which is more often over against its human environment rather than a reflection of it. 'A church of the people' is an ambiguous phrase. In a favourable sense, it identifies a church that adds no *skandalon* to that of the gospel itself by its unnecessarily alien cultural forms or styles – of language, speech, music, social level, aesthetic tastes, even moral sensibilities. Re-reading the gospels with these criteria in mind may give us fresh experience of the power of God's Word. We may not be called to embrace the leper or share a meal with a prostitute, but how successfully do we make the brother or sister struggling with homosexuality one of us? Or in quite a different direction, does our church teaching display the homely touch of Jesus the story-teller, rather than the heavy didacticism of the lecture-room?

Missiologists like Lamin Sanneh use the image of translation to characterize the transposition of the Christian faith from one cultural matrix into another. In our patch in late second-millennium Britain, we have to grapple with the tricky task of translation not so much from the ancient Near East as from the yesteryear of our own tradition. Its very proximity and familiarity may mask the need for translation altogether.

## SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

But if the saints can cope with the AV/KJV, teenagers cannot – *and should not be faced with negotiating this skandalon!* And this is just the tiniest example. If Gentiles did not have to become, in effect, Jews in order to become Christians (the Galatian controversy), then no socio-cultural conversion should be expected of those who would in Scotland in 1998 trust in Christ for life and death.

Along these and other lines Scottish evangelical theology, especially in the national Church, will be called to give discerning attention to what I like to call 'the science of the congregation'. It must complement, and perhaps correct, our manifold theologies of ministry. It is a moot point which should come first. For my part, too much ecclesiology labours under the inhibiting weight of the legacies of Christendom, establishment and parish. But more urgently, ours must be a practical or applied theology of the congregation, recognizing its high calling to be a living embodiment of the gospel.

If these reflections need any excuse, this is my last opportunity to exercise the editorial BiC. From the first issue of 1999 the Revd Dr Kenneth E. Roxburgh, Principal of the Scottish Baptist College in Glasgow and formerly minister in the now not-so-new town of Livingston, takes over as editor. His Edinburgh doctoral thesis on Thomas Gillespie and the Origins of the Relief Church is being prepared for publication by Peter Lang. I wish him very well in this chair.

# THE FUTURE OF JESUS CHRIST (Finlayson Memorial Lecture 1998)

RICHARD BAUCKHAM  
ST MARY'S COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

## 1. The Strange Absence of the Parousia from Christology

My title is a phrase used by (among others<sup>1</sup>) Jürgen Moltmann in his *Theology of Hope* (see the title of chapter III). In a striking definition of eschatology, Moltmann wrote that, 'Christian eschatology does not speak of the future as such.... Christian eschatology speaks of Jesus Christ and his future.'<sup>2</sup> This is a statement about eschatology rather than Christology, but, since for Moltmann not only must eschatology be christological but also Christology must be eschatological, it is not surprising to find a substantial treatment of the parousia in his book on Christology, *The Way of Jesus Christ*.<sup>3</sup> But Moltmann is very unusual in this. The parousia is ignored or barely mentioned in most books on Christology.<sup>4</sup> Surprisingly, perhaps, this is true despite the strong sense of the eschatological nature of Jesus' preaching of the kingdom and his resurrection which much Christology in this century has recovered. It is the risen Christ, not the coming Christ, who dominates the eschatological perspective of modern Christology. If we suppose that the neglect of the parousia in Christology results from the persistent influence of traditional divisions between theological topics and turn to studies of eschatology for reflection on the parousia, the picture is not much improved. With notable exceptions (I think especially of G. C. Berkouwer<sup>5</sup> and Wolfhart Pannenberg<sup>6</sup>) treatments of eschatology tend to treat the parousia simply as emblematic

---

<sup>1</sup> E.g. S. H. Travis, *Christian Hope and the Future of Man* (Leicester, 1980), ch. 5.

<sup>2</sup> J. Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (tr. J. W. Leitch; London, 1967), p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> J. Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ* (tr. M. Kohl; London, 1990), ch. 7.

<sup>4</sup> One exception is the now forgotten but excellent essay by H. Frick, 'The Hidden Glory of Christ and its Coming Manifestation', in G. K. A. Bell and A. Deissmann, *Mysterium Christi* (London, 1930), pp. 245-73.

<sup>5</sup> G. C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ* (tr. J. Van Oosterom; Grand Rapids, 1972), especially ch. 5.

<sup>6</sup> W. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3 (tr. G. W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids, Edinburgh, 1998), pp. 608-30.



of the end of history and give it little attention in itself, concentrating instead on such end-time topics as resurrection and judgement. A properly christological interest in the parousia, that is, a consideration of the parousia with respect to what it says about Jesus Christ, is as rare in eschatology as it is in Christology.

I doubt that there is a single explanation for this strange absence of the parousia from Christology. The reasons may be, in part at least, as follows. Classical Christology focused in a rather static manner on the constitution of the God-man as established by the act of incarnation. This required one to think backwards to the pre-existence of the Logos but not forwards to the future of Jesus Christ. Insofar as Christology in the modern period has continued the concerns of classical Christology, even if in new forms such as kenoticism, the issue has been how to conceive of incarnation in a way that similarly has focused on pre-existence and incarnation as such (How could God become human? How can divinity and humanity be united in the one Christ?). It is significant that in such discussions, which bring to Christology a particularly modern sense of the thoroughly human nature of Jesus' human experience, it is the humanity of Jesus in his earthly and mortal life that is at stake, not the humanity of the risen, exalted and coming Christ. Kenoticism, indeed, makes the latter peculiarly difficult to conceive, a problem sometimes rightly alleged in criticism of kenotic theories. But even when the need to understand the incarnation in a way that does justice to the differences between the pre-Easter Jesus and the post-Easter Jesus has been recognized, the interest has been merely in the contrast between these two states: humiliation and exaltation. The state of exaltation itself is perceived statically, with the result that the parousia raises no questions not already raised by exaltation as such.

Looking more broadly at the context of Christology in the modern period, there are two very relevant features, both concerned with history. One is the rise of the modern understanding of history in the sense of the scientific study of the past, which has put the question of the historical Jesus and relationship of the historical Jesus to the Christ of faith in the dominant position in much modern Christology. This is a further reinforcement of the tendency for Christology to look backwards at the expense of looking forwards.

The other factor is the rise of the modern understanding of history in the sense of the modern idea of historical progress, to which Christian theological thought about history and eschatology has often more or less assimilated itself. Here the attention certainly turned towards the future in the sense of Enlightenment optimism about the historical future that arises out of the present. But this has encouraged the reduction of the parousia to a symbol of the utopian goal towards which human history, under the influence of the gospel and the Spirit, is evolving. What is here found

problematic in and therefore removed from the traditional understanding of the parousia is twofold: both the traditional reference to the future coming of the human individual Jesus of Nazareth and also the positing of a discontinuity between the course of history and the end which God gives to the world in the parousia. In a modern progressivist understanding, the goal of history is wholly continuous with the steadily increasing advance of the kingdom of God within history, and is related to Jesus only in the sense that this utopian goal is envisaged as a fully Christlike human society. Therefore, instead of the biblical parousia images of Jesus coming from heaven, which suggest a transcendent rupture of the course of history, in which the human figure of Jesus is central, the Pauline images of the body of Christ and being 'in Christ' are sometimes considered more helpful and taken to depict, not only the influence of the Spirit of Christ in the church now, but also the progressive course of history towards some kind of christification of the world. Christ here becomes, in effect, some kind of principle or form of relationship to God, exemplified in the historical Jesus and propagated through his historical influence in the church, but entirely unrelated to the 'post-existent' Christ, as Geoffrey Lampe labels the biblical picture of the risen, ascended and coming Christ.<sup>7</sup>

Lampe's own reductionist Christology dispenses with both the really 'pre-existent' and the really 'post-existent' Christ, arguing that all that matters in the traditional view of 'post-existence' can be preserved by speaking of the presence and activity of the Spirit of God who was in Jesus. Lampe helpfully illustrates how a thorough-going reconception of Christianity in terms of the historical progressivism of the modern age eliminates not only the future of Jesus Christ but also the presence of Jesus Christ, not only the parousia but also the resurrection and the ascension, as ways of speaking of the real relationship between the eternally living human person Jesus Christ and this world. This is in reality a new kind of docetism: a dissolution of the human Jesus himself into divine immanence in history.

The modern theological tendency to dispense with the parousia thus seems to me to have much to do with an inability to conceive of the human individual Jesus in an active role in relation to this world and its future and also to the enormous influence of the Enlightenment doctrine of immanent historical progress towards utopia. These issues seem to me to go much deeper than the pseudo-scientific arguments with which Bultmann, in oft-quoted remarks, dismissed the parousia as belonging to a pre-scientific worldview and as in any case disproved by the failure of the early church's expectation of the parousia in the near future. It has become clear that, in the following attempt to understand the parousia as

<sup>7</sup> G. W. H. Lampe, *God as Spirit* (Oxford, 1977), esp. ch. 6.

an aspect of Christology, two important aspects of our task will be to elucidate the sense in which Jesus as a human individual can play the role the biblical image of the parousia assigns him and to define the sense in which the parousia represents something qualitatively different from the merely continuous development of present.

## 2. The Future of Narrative Christology

In the trinitarian structure of the creeds of the ancient church, such as the two which are still in use, the Apostles' and the Niceno-Constantinopolitan, the second credal article always takes the form of the story of Jesus. The christological reflection on Jesus' relation to God, which is characteristic of the eastern creeds and appears as expressing Nicene orthodoxy in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, is placed within this narrative of Jesus and serves to interpret it. Moreover, the narrative looks to the future of Jesus as well as recounting his past. According to the Apostles' Creed, 'he will come again to judge the living and the dead', to which the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed adds that 'his kingdom will have no end'.

Thus implicitly, in the form of its creeds, the early church recognized that the identity of Jesus is a narrative identity, an identity which can only be adequately rendered by telling the story in which his identity takes place. The conceptual tools with which the Fathers could develop Christology did not easily lend themselves to expressing such a narrative understanding of identity. The Fathers give the impression that Christological definition is in principle separable from the narrative, even though it is derived from the narrative and is in turn intended to enable an appropriate reading of the narrative. We can perhaps go further in asserting that the story of Jesus is integral to his identity.

However, recent examples of narrative Christology<sup>8</sup> seem to give no more place to the parousia than other forms of Christology. Of course, the parousia cannot be narrated in the same way as the past history of Jesus. The narratives of it in, for example, 1 Thessalonians 4 and Revelation 19 are not historiography, as the Gospel accounts of the crucifixion, for example, are. This is for two reasons: the parousia is not only a still future event, but also the event which will end history and is therefore intrinsically transcendent of history. For both reasons it lacks the contingent and concrete actuality of narrated history (even the theologically interpreted history in the Gospels) and can be narrated only in symbols that convey its essential meaning. Its images depict only what, in the purpose of God, must be so, nothing of what, through the contingencies of history, may or may not be so.

<sup>8</sup> E.g., most recently, M. L. Cook, *Christology as Narrative Quest* (Collegetown, MN, 1997).

Nevertheless, the parousia is the end of the story which must be in some sense anticipated and articulated for the sake of the meaning of the rest of the story. The story the Gospels tell is, by their own testimony, an unfinished story, open not only to the history of the church as its continuation but also to this projected conclusion, the parousia, which the Gospels are able to narrate in the form of prophecies by Jesus. (Rarely noticed is the fact that the last words attributed to Jesus in the Fourth Gospel, according to the best text of 21:23, are the words 'until I come' – a fact the more remarkable in that this Gospel's eschatology is usually thought to be overwhelmingly realised.) The parousia is the narrative prospect of Jesus' identity, as the Gospel histories are its narrative retrospection.

It is by no means unusual for narratives to include projects, expectations and anticipations which reach forward beyond the time frame of the narrative itself, but in this case, the story of Jesus, there is a unique aspect to its prospect. The parousia concludes not only the story of Jesus but also the story of the whole world. Though the rest of Jesus' story is implicitly related to the whole world, only the parousia makes clear its unique character as a story which will finally include the whole history of the world in its own conclusion. This is why the parousia is essential to Jesus' identity. It defines him as the one human being whose story will finally prove to be identical with the story of the whole world. In New Testament terminology, it defines his identity as that of the Messiah. Apart from the parousia he could not be called Christ in the New Testament meaning of the word.

### **3. Now and Then**

In the context of most christological work, this sub-heading would naturally be understood to refer to the 'then' of the pre-Easter Jesus and the 'now' of the exalted Christ in the present. I want to ask if there is not as important a qualitative difference between the 'now' of the exalted Christ and the future 'then' of the coming Christ. To put the question differently: is the parousia adequately understood as the completion of historical process, the outcome of some kind of incremental process of immanent divine activity in the world, such as theological versions of modern progressivism have so often assumed, or does it represent something really new, something quite different from what will have happened hitherto in the history of the world, an event in which Jesus himself relates in some important sense differently to the world? This is a critical question not only with regard to liberal theologies assimilated to modern secular progressivism, but also in respect of the tendency in Karl Barth and others to reduce the parousia to an unveiling of what is already true, a revelation of what has already been accomplished in the past

history of Jesus, new only in the sense that this is now made unequivocally known to all.<sup>9</sup>

This latter view could be supported by appeal to the way the New Testament can speak of the parousia as the 'unveiling' (or revelation: *apokalupsis*)<sup>10</sup> of Christ or his 'appearance' (*epiphaneia*).<sup>11</sup> Corresponding verbs are also used.<sup>12</sup> But in that case we must also notice that the New Testament also, and most often, refers to the parousia by the use of the verb 'to come' (*erchomai*) and by the word *parousia* itself,<sup>13</sup> which in this context must mean not merely 'presence,' but 'arrival'. In many of the texts what will be 'seen' at the parousia is precisely Jesus 'coming' from heaven.<sup>14</sup> In these usages we have, in fact, three forms of contrast between now and then: the Jesus who is now not seen will appear or be seen; the Jesus who is now hidden will be revealed; the Jesus who is now absent will come.

In the last case, we should not be troubled by the implication that Jesus is presently absent, as though this were in contradiction with the various ways in which the New Testament understands him to be present with his people now, including Jesus' promise, at the end of Matthew's Gospel, to be with his disciples until the end of the age. Presence can take many different forms and is therefore compatible with forms of absence.<sup>15</sup> When I speak to someone on the telephone I am in one sense present to them by means of my voice conveyed by the telephone line, while also being in another sense absent. To collapse the parousia into Christ's presence with us already is to evade the essential question of the form and purpose of his presence to his people and to the world in each case. From the way the New Testament texts speak of Jesus' coming at the end it is clear that it is a coming to do things that he has not done hitherto: to save (in the sense of bringing believers into their final destiny in resurrection), to eliminate

---

<sup>9</sup> For a brief account of Karl Barth's understanding of the parousia, see J. Thompson, *Christ in Perspective* (Edinburgh, 1978), ch. 10: and for criticism, see Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, p. 318.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Cor. 1:7; 2 Thes. 1:7; 1 Pet. 4:13.

<sup>11</sup> 2 Thes. 2:8; 1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 4:1, 8; Tit. 2:13.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. *apokalupto*: Luke 7:30; 2 Thes. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:13; *phaneroo*: Col. 3:4; 1 Pet. 5:4; 1 John 2:2, 3:2; *opthesomai*: Heb. 9:28.

<sup>13</sup> Matt. 24:3, 27, 37, 39; 1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thes. 2:19, 3:13, 4:15, 5:23, 2 Thes. 2:1, 8; James 5:7, 8; 2 Pet. 1:16, 3:4; 1 John 2:28.

<sup>14</sup> E.g. Matt. 16:28, 24:30, 26:64; Mark 13:26, 14:62; Luke 21:27; Rev. 1:7.

<sup>15</sup> See the helpful discussion of presence as a christological category in G. O'Collins, *Christology* (Oxford, 1995), ch. 14, which, however, lacks any discussion of the parousia!

the powers of evil from the world, and, most often in the texts, to judge the living and the dead.<sup>16</sup>

While the language of coming makes it especially clear that the parousia brings not just more of the same, but something new, we should not miss the fact that the language of hiddenness and manifestation or revelation also makes this point in its own way. What is hidden now is Jesus' heavenly glory, his lordship over the whole world which his sitting on God's heavenly throne at God's right hand portrays, and also his fellowship with his people in which their true nature as his people is hidden. This present hiddenness of Jesus' rule explains why, for example, in the book of Revelation the beast's power can appear godlike and invincible, triumphant over the Christians whom he puts to death. The real truth of things from God's perspective – for example, that the martyrs, by their witness to the truth even to the point of death, are the real victors – breaks through to those who have eyes to see, but it is only at the parousia that it finally prevails as the truth which all must acknowledge. This revelation is more than the unveiling of what is already true, though it is that, because the unveiling itself makes a difference: no longer can anyone pretend or be deceived, those who wield power by deceit can do so no longer, all illusions and delusions must perish before the truth of God and all who insist on clinging to them must perish also. It is in this sense that Jesus, though seated on the throne of the universe, has not yet brought all things into subjection to God. The revelation of his lordship will also be its final implementation.

From this point of view, the parousia is the event which concludes history by making the final truth of all things manifest to all. This is why the language of 'revealing' and 'appearing' is used in the texts not only of Jesus, whose true relationship to the world is made evident to all, but also of all that his judgement of every person who has ever lived will bring to light (1 Cor. 4:5). There is nothing hidden that will not be uncovered (Matt. 10:26). The full and final truth of each person's life will be made known, not least to that person. Similarly, the language of 'revealing' and 'appearing' is used of the final destiny of those who believe in Jesus, 'a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time' (1 Pet. 1:5<sup>17</sup>). The parousia is that revelation of all that is now hidden, the disclosure of the full and final truth of all who have lived and all that has happened, that determines the form in which this present creation can be taken, as new creation, into eternity. Thus in the parousia, both as coming and as unveiling, something happens which, in relation to the world as it is now, will be both new and

---

<sup>16</sup> The phrase 'to judge the living and the dead' is stereotyped: Acts 10:42; 1 Pet. 4:5. Cf. also Acts 17:32; 2 Cor. 5:10; James 5:9; Rev. 19:11.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Rom. 8:19; Col. 3:4; 1 John 3:2.

conclusive. As the New Testament understands it, the parousia cannot be taken as a symbol merely of the outcome of history that history itself will provide.

#### **4. Jesus' Human Identity in Universal Relatedness**

In this section and the next, I shall consider the parousia in relation to Jesus' human identity and to his divine identity respectively. This is not intended as some kind of Nestorian division of the one Christ, but simply as a matter of two perspectives on the one Jesus Christ. Jesus, as I understand Christology, is God's human identity. He is both God's *truly human* identity and *truly God's* human identity. Since this is a narrative identity, it should be possible to look at the parousia as the end of his story from both of these perspectives.

Christology involves the assertion of Jesus' universal relatedness. In the history of Christology a variety of concepts have been used to express this: representativeness, substitution, incorporation and participation, universal humanity, and others. All these concepts are attempts to express the fundamental conviction that this one human individual Jesus is of decisive significance for all other human persons, whether they are yet aware of it or not. Other human individuals, of course, have exercised very extensive historical influence, and in some cases, such as the unknown people who first discovered how to make fire or who invented the wheel, it might be said that they have made a difference to the lives of virtually all subsequent human beings. But the Christian claim about Jesus asserts something more than an historical impact of this kind. The claim is that in some way Jesus is intrinsically – in his very identity – related to each and every other human being.

How can this be said of a human individual? Some of the christological concepts I mentioned in fact attempt to conceptualize Jesus' universal relatedness by denying him human individuality. The attempt is made to view his humanity as some kind of supra-individuality in which others are included. Or his humanity is in effect dissolved in the universal presence of God. Unless we are prepared to deny individuality to all humans in the resurrection, a position surely contradictory of the very notion of resurrection, such views must be considered docetic. They fail to preserve the true humanity of Jesus, human (as the Fathers said) in every respect as we are, and no less truly human in his risen and exalted humanity than in his earthly and mortal humanity. In not maintaining the true humanity of the risen and coming Jesus, such interpretations contradict the New Testament principle that our eternal destiny is to be like him.

I suggest that a more satisfactory approach is by means of the only way in which human individuals can transcend their individuality without losing it: that is, in relationships. Human individuality is also relationality.

There are individuals only in relationships – with other humans, with God, and with the non-human creation. Such relationships are integral to the narratives in which human identity is found. We are who we are in our relationships with others and in the story of our relationships with others.

In Jesus' case – and focusing for the purpose of our argument now only on his relationships with other humans – his human individuality is unique in its *universal* relatedness. He is the one human being who is intrinsically related to each and every other. How does this universal relatedness take place narratively? It is not constituted solely by his incarnation as human, but by the particular course of his human story. We can say that in his earthly life and death Jesus practised loving identification with others. In his ministry he identified in love with people of all sorts and conditions, excluding no one, and finally in going to the cross he identified himself with the human condition of all people in its worst extremities: its sinfulness, suffering, abandonment and death. Only because Jesus died in loving identification with all could his resurrection be on behalf of all, opening up for all the way to life with God beyond death. Thus in his life, death and resurrection, the exalted Christ has established his identity as one of open identification with others, open in principle and potential to all who will identify with him in faith. Until the parousia his identification with all remains open to all. This means that, insofar as his human identity is constituted by his universal relatedness, it is open to all that takes place in relation to him. His narrative identity cannot be complete until every human story with which he has identified himself has turned out as it will have done at the end. The parousia as the completion of his own identity, as revelatory of the final truth of his loving identification with all, will be also the completion of the identity of all others. Their identity, the truth of their whole lives brought to light at the end, will be defined either by his loving identification with them or by their refusal to let it be so defined. For those who have sought their own identity in his identification with them, his parousia will be the revelation at once of who he finally is and of who they themselves finally are: 'your life is hidden in Christ with God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory' (Col. 3:3-4; cf. 1 John 3:2).

Thus Jesus' identity at the end is inclusive of others, but not in a way that dissolves his properly human individuality. As the one who has identified in love with all other humans in their own stories, his story finally includes also theirs. Since his loving identification with them is prevenient but not preemptive, that is, it is open to all but actualized only in the living of their own lives, his own identity as the one human whose identity is found in the story of his relatedness to all others remains to that extent open until his parousia.



We may perhaps take a little further this principle that Jesus' own identity is open to the future because it includes his relationships to all things (and not only to all people). We should be more cautious than many of us have been in speaking of the finality of Christ with reference to the Gospel story of his life, death and resurrection. His story will not be complete until his parousia. I would say that Jesus in his history, Jesus of Nazareth crucified and risen, is definitive for our knowledge of who God is, of who we are in relation to God, of who Jesus is in relation to God and to us and to all things. It is definitive, in the sense that anything else must be consistent with this, but not final, in the sense that there is nothing else to be known. Since Jesus' identity is in universal relatedness, Christian understanding and experience are not to be focused on Jesus to the exclusion of all else, but on Jesus in his relatedness to everything else. We shall know Jesus better as we see everything we can know or experience in its relatedness to him, just as we shall know and experience everything more truly as we see it in its relatedness to Jesus. To put the issue in relation to our theological work, neither the Bible nor Jesus in himself contains all the data of theology; rather Jesus in his relatedness to all human knowledge and experience constitutes the potentially inexhaustible data of Christian theology and by the same token requires the necessary provisionality of its conclusions. Only the parousia will reveal all things in their final truth as they appear in their relationships to Jesus and only the parousia will reveal Jesus himself in the final truth of his identity in universal relatedness.

### **5. Jesus' Divine Identity in Universal Lordship**

The meaning of incarnation – what it really means that Jesus is God's human identity – appears most clearly in the way the New Testament tells and interprets the story of Jesus in two very remarkable ways. First, Jesus' loving identification as one human being with others, taken to the depths of degradation and abandonment on the cross, is *God's* loving identification with all people. Secondly, God's universal sovereignty over his whole creation, God's uniquely divine relationship to the world, is exercised by the *human* Jesus, exalted to God's heavenly throne. It may not be too much to say that all of New Testament theology consists in the understanding of each of these two new theological truths and of the relationship between them.

In biblical thought it is intrinsic to God's identity, what distinguishes him as the only true God from all other reality which is not God, that he is the sole Creator of all things and the sole Lord over all things. But even God's identity for us is, biblically speaking, a narrative identity yet to be completed. Since his ultimate sovereignty coexists now with much in the world that opposes his will and contradicts the destiny he intends for his creation – failure and evil, suffering and death – God's rule remains to be

achieved, in the sense of implemented in the overcoming of all evil and the redemption of the world from nothingness. God's identity as the one true God of all is at stake in the achievement of his eschatological kingdom. He will prove himself God in the overcoming of all evil and in the acknowledgement of his deity by all creation. If it is in Jesus that God's sovereignty comes to universal effect and universal acknowledgement, which is what the New Testament writers intended when they depicted his enthronement and parousia, then Jesus' own story belongs to the narrative identity of God himself.

This is why a great deal of what is said about the parousia in the New Testament echoes, with verbal allusions, Old Testament prophetic expectations of God's demonstration of his deity in a conclusive act of judgement and salvation. Many of these Old Testament texts are those which speak of God's 'coming' to implement his rule in judgement and/or salvation: hence the frequency with which the New Testament speaks of the parousia as Jesus' coming. Most of these Old Testament texts speak of God's 'coming'; and even more of them speak in some way of God's action, not through the agency of a messianic or other non-divine figure, but simply as God's own action.<sup>18</sup> (Daniel's vision of the humanlike figure coming on the clouds of heaven is the most notable exception.<sup>19</sup>) Jesus' future coming as Saviour and Judge of all is God's eschatological coming to his creation to establish his kingdom. It brings to completion God's own narrative identity for us. It does so already in the sense that to believe in God truly as God we must expect it and look forward to it.

## 6. Jesus Christ the Same Yesterday, Today and Forever

The title of this section may not, in its original context in Hebrews 13, mean what I here take it to mean: the commentators disagree. But it does express succinctly what I assume is uncontroversial: that Jesus in his earthly history, in present heavenly session, and in his future coming is in each case the same Jesus Christ. His narrative identity is a narrative

---

<sup>18</sup> Hos. 6:3\* (James 5:7); Mic. 1:3\* (?1 Thes. 4:16); Zech. 14:5b\* (1Thes. 3:13; 2 Thes. 1:7); Isa. 2:10, 19, 21 (2 Thes. 1:9); Isa. 40:5 (?1 Pet. 4:13); Isa. 40:10\* (Rev. 22:12); Isa. 59:20 (Rom. 11:26); Isa. 63:1-6 (Rev. 19: 13, 15); Isa. 66:15-16\* (2 Thes. 1:7-8); cf. 1 Enoch 1:9\* (Jude 14-15). (\* indicates those OT texts which include the word 'come'.) Note also the OT phrase 'the day of YHWH' appearing as 'the day of the Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. 5:5), 'the day of the Lord Jesus' (1 Cor. 1:8; 2 Cor. 1:14), 'the day of Christ Jesus' (Phil. 1:6), 'the day of Christ' (Phil. 1:10; 2:16); and 'the day of the Lord' (1 Thes. 5:2; 2 Thes. 2:2).

<sup>19</sup> Dan. 7:13\* (Matt. 24:30, 26:64; Mark 13:26, 14:62; Luke 21:27; Rev. 1:7. Note also Zech. 12:10, 12 (Matt. 24:30; Rev. 1:7).

*identity*. Narrative identities of course frequently contain surprises and puzzles which put someone's identity in doubt. Yet narratives must convince their readers that their characters remain credibly the same persons. Acting, as we say, 'out of character' requires the kind of explanation which we also always seek in real life, even if unsuccessfully, when people we know surprise us. Even in people's inconsistencies we seek some degree of consistency. Random and arbitrary inconsistencies threaten our perception of personal identity. Yet in Jesus' case we expect more: absolute moral consistency, complete self-constancy in adherence to the purpose of God which he embodies and enacts. Without such self-constancy his identity could not be God's human identity.

Therefore we must seek Jesus' self-identity in the three phases of his identity which we have considered, *i.e.* his self-humiliation in loving self-identification with all, his exaltation in hidden sovereignty over all, and his future coming in manifest sovereignty over all. One way in which the New Testament texts maintain his self-identity is by insisting that the risen, ascended and coming Christ is the same Jesus who was crucified. In the resurrection appearances Jesus shows the marks of his crucifixion to identify himself. In Revelation 5, it is the slaughtered lamb who is enthroned in heaven and receives the acclamation of his sovereignty from all creation. It is the one they have pierced whom all the tribes of the earth will see at his coming on the clouds (Rev. 1:7), preceded by 'the sign of the Son of man,' most likely the cross as his sign of identity (Matt. 24:30). Even the rider on the white horse who comes to judge and to make war wears a robe dipped in blood (Rev. 19:13).

This means that Jesus' loving self-identification with all, which reached its furthest point in his death abandoned and under condemnation, is not, as it were, laid aside in his exaltation, but is established as the permanent identity of the one who rules all things from God's throne, as the permanent character of God's universal sovereignty. If the crucified Jesus rules for God, then God's rule is radical grace.

What of the parousia? This understanding of Jesus' self-identity is most easily understandable in what we might call the optimistic eschatology of the Christ-hymn in Philippians 2 and of the similar scene of cosmic acclamation in Revelation 5. There God's rule comes to be universally acknowledged when it is seen to be exercised by the crucified Jesus. But we know that in their context in the New Testament such passages offer only one perspective. More commonly the Christ who comes in glory comes to judge and his judgement includes condemnation. Is this the same Jesus as the crucified one who bore the condemnation of sinners in his love for them? Is this the faithful friend, the one who laid down his life for his friends, now become the judge who metes out retributive justice? Is the slaughtered lamb turned slaughterer? It is important to see that the parousia poses this issue very sharply. Essentially

it is the same question about God's love and God's judgement that we should have to ask even if Jesus were not depicted as the end-time judge. But since he is, we cannot divide God's activity into his love in Christ and his wrath outside of Christ. It is the crucified Christ who comes in judgement, and certainly not to avenge his blood on his murderers, but as the one who forgave his murderers as he hung dying. Should we perhaps turn our questions around: what kind of justice can it be that the crucified Jesus comes to provide? In any case, the parousia brings us face to face with one of the most difficult issues in New Testament theology and discourages too ready and easy an answer.

I leave the question open here, but my final, short section has a kind of relevance to it.

### **7. Jesus' Story as the Story of the Whole World**

In the penultimate verse of the Bible, Jesus says – his last words within Scripture – 'Behold I am coming soon' – and the prophet John answers, on behalf of all his readers: 'Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!' (Rev. 22:20). This eager prayer for the parousia sums up much of the attitude to the parousia expressed throughout the New Testament. Modern Christians not uncommonly have difficulty understanding why the parousia should be so desirable. It is, of course, because the parousia brings an end to all evil, suffering and death, the final redemption of ourselves and all creation that we know to be God's purpose in Christ. To love or to long for his appearing, as 2 Timothy 6:8 puts it, is fundamentally a response to the theodicy problem, especially by those who suffer the evils and injustices of this world, whether on their own account or on behalf of others. The Christian form of the theodicy problem is: why does God delay the parousia? Why does God not intervene at once to deliver his creation from the evil that ravages it? Why did the twentieth century, which George Steiner memorably calls the most bestial in human history, have to happen? Why must children be burned alive in Auschwitz and buried alive in Cambodia and still the Lord does not come to halt the carnage for ever and wipe away every tear from every eye?

Yet, although it is not for us to know the times and the seasons, we are not left wholly uncomprehending of the delay. God in his longsuffering mercy keeps open the opportunities for repentance; he extends the time of his grace. And therefore the patience he requires of those who wait for the parousia, that courageous holding out for God in testing circumstances, is a kind of trust in his grace, an alignment with his gracious longsuffering. Thus, with regard to the parousia, we are pulled two ways, even as we seek to share God's concern for the world. The parousia does not solve for us the agonizing problem of world history. We cannot really tell its story and reach a satisfying conclusion, as the modern myths of historical progress have all tried to do and failed. We can only tell Jesus' story as

## SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

the story that will turn out to be also the world's story. So what we know of the end of the world's story is that it lies in the hands of the one who has lovingly identified himself with both the guilt of the perpetrators of history and the fate of the victims of history.

# CALVIN AND ENGLISH CALVINISM: A REVIEW ARTICLE

G. MICHAEL THOMAS,  
BRIGHTON ROAD BAPTIST CHURCH, CROYDON

The republication of R.T. Kendall's *Calvin and English Calvinism*<sup>1</sup> is to be welcomed. As the author observes in the preface to this edition, the work has caused a great deal of interest and controversy since it was first published in 1979. This was not only in scholarly circles, but, partly due to Kendall's association with the late Dr D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones and his appointment as minister of Westminster Chapel, the views expounded in this work became widely known in conservative Reformed circles, and have been hotly debated. Paternoster Press have performed a valuable service by making it available again, because it deserves to be known by a new generation, and also because those who read it twenty years ago may find that to reconsider it now sheds light on their own theological pilgrimage. *Calvin and English Calvinism* is unchanged, except for the addition of a new preface, in which the author makes it clear that his views remain unaltered, and an appendix, attempting to demonstrate Calvin's espousal of a 'universal atonement' position, taken from an unpublished thesis by Curt Daniel<sup>2</sup>. Apart from this there is no attempt to take account of research over the last twenty years, and so the bibliography is now significantly out of date.

## The Argument

Kendall concerns himself with the teaching of English 'Calvinists' on faith and assurance. He wisely avoids the term 'Puritan', recognizing that its ecclesiological connotations might exclude from his study those who participated in a common flow of thought regarding the meaning and experience of salvation. He prefers to speak of the 'experimental predestinarian' tradition. A certain bias away from convinced Anglicans is detectable, however, in the selection of theologians studied. It could be argued that one or two thoroughly episcopal Anglican predestinarians such

---

<sup>1</sup> R.T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism*; Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 1997; 263pp., £19.99; ISBN 0 85364 827 1.

<sup>2</sup> C. Daniel, 'Hyper Calvinism and John Gill' (Ph.D. University of Edinburgh, 1983).

as Bishops Joseph Hall and John Davenant and Archbishop James Ussher, men of international influence and reputation, deserved inclusion, and might have significantly affected Kendall's conclusions. Perhaps they were not considered sufficiently 'experimental'.

The author endeavours to show that in this tradition: a) faith came to be seen as an act of the will rather than of the understanding; b) repentance came to be seen as preceding faith in the *ordo salutis*, and, to this end, the preaching of the law came to be regarded as necessary preparation for the proclamation of the gospel; c) assurance came to be separated from saving faith, to be obtained not as part of the direct act of faith but by a subsequent 'reflex act'; d) assurance came to be based upon sanctification; e) preparation for faith became a key element. Kendall makes it clear that he regards these trends with disfavour, and that 'Westminster theology is...haunted with inconsistencies' (p. 212).

Such a stand would give students of historical theology, especially those who would see themselves as being in the Reformed tradition, much to think about. Kendall's claims, however, are more radical. He maintains that, in the above points, English Calvinism was departing from Calvin himself. At the root of these retrograde developments was the doctrine of limited atonement, a belief not held, according to Kendall, by John Calvin. It was Theodore Beza, Calvin's co-worker and successor at Geneva, who introduced limited atonement, and who carried Reformed Christians in the direction of seeking assurance on the basis of sanctification, with all the introspection and legalism that went with it. The difference between Calvin's and Beza's doctrine of faith is not merely quantitative, but qualitative, and the origin of the difference is linked to Beza's doctrine of limited atonement (p. 38). In the process of working out his contentions, Kendall makes his criticisms boldly: 'Calvin's thought, save for the decrees of predestination, is hardly to be found in Westminster theology' (p. 208). 'Westminster theology hardly deserves to be called Calvinistic' (p. 212). In that Beza's departure from Calvin is seen as the root of almost all the problems tackled in the book, this review will concentrate chiefly on the relationship between the theology of the two Genevan Reformers.

Kendall's first sentence in his first chapter, on Calvin, sets the scene uncompromisingly: 'Fundamental to the doctrine of faith in John Calvin is his belief that Christ died indiscriminately for all men' (p. 14). He adds to this the novel opinion that, while Calvin maintained universal atonement, he taught that Christ prays only for the elect, and thus election is ratified, not by the atonement, but by the intercession of Christ. He explains that, according to Calvin, the benefits of Christ's passion are obtained through

faith. Such faith in Christ carries within itself its own assurance of salvation and election, for Christ is, in Calvin's phrase, the 'mirror of election'. Those troubled about whether or not they are chosen should look away from predestination, and look to Christ, and so find all the assurance they need. We are told that 'the later distinction between faith and assurance seems never to have entered Calvin's mind' (p. 25). However, Kendall faces the fact that Calvin taught that there was such a thing as temporary faith, which could resemble in some respects the faith of God's elect. This Kendall regards as an unfortunate lapse on Calvin's part, because it gave rise to the question, 'Is my faith the faith of the elect or the kind of faith it is possible for a reprobate to exercise?'

In contrast to the opening sentence of the chapter on Calvin, the chapter on Beza begins with the words, 'Fundamental to the doctrine of faith in Theodore Beza... is his belief that Christ died for the elect only' (p. 29). Because Beza's strong supralapsarian doctrine of predestination led him to limit the work of Christ to the elect, the initial act of faith could not be a knowledge of God's love in Christ to *me*, and the salvation which he has obtained for *me*. It had to have the character of an appropriation of God's love and salvation offered indiscriminately but not known, at that stage, to be intended or valid for *me*. Accordingly, Beza could not teach that assurance could come directly by looking to Christ, as an integral part of saving faith. Rather, by a subsequent act of reflection or logical deduction, a person reasons, 'Only the elect believe, I believe, therefore I must be one of the elect.' Because it can be difficult to observe and judge the quality of one's own faith, Beza took the further step of encouraging people to regard their good works as evidence of their faith. Kendall describes Beza's double-payment argument: the person who knows Christ died for him can tell the devil that his salvation is beyond doubt since a just God cannot demand double payment for sin. It should be pointed out that it has not been shown that Beza used this argument as a proof or consequence of limited atonement. The passage referred to simply relates the sacrifice of Christ to the person who is feeling troubled about his sins.<sup>3</sup> There are other places, however, where Beza argues that God's justice will not allow Christ's sacrifice to be ineffective for those for whom it was offered, namely the elect. Kendall has been criticized for basing his conclusions on a narrow band of Beza's writings (those that are more systematic, and are available in English translation), and it has been suggested that a survey of Beza's

---

<sup>3</sup> Beza, *A brief and Pithie Sum of the Christian Faith* (London, 1572), pp. 21a-21b.



homiletic literature would create a more balanced picture. Whether or not this is the case, it is difficult to argue with the main outline of Kendall's account of Beza.

Following the treatment of Calvin and Beza, and a glance at the Heidelberg theologians, *Calvin and English Calvinism* goes on to demonstrate the concern of teachers like William Perkins, Paul Baynes, John Preston and Thomas Hooker to lead people to faith in Christ, and to enable them to have an assurance of being true believers and therefore of having been predestined to faith and salvation. The task set for English Calvinists, as inheritors of the theology of Calvin and Beza, was to enable people to distinguish in themselves between true and temporary faith, as described by Calvin, and to do so without the help of a universal atonement, which had been removed from the Calvinistic inheritance by Beza. Kendall leads us through various attempts to do this, and argues that the definition of saving faith became more and more voluntaristic in the process. It was necessary for faith to be an act of the will, mainly because the lack of universal atonement took away the possibility of the initial act of faith being an assured knowledge that 'Christ died for me'. The climax of this process was the Westminster Confession, which presented a theology significantly different from Calvin's.

Readers should appreciate that it is difficult for an account covering so many theologians to carry full conviction at every point. It would be possible to question a number of Kendall's conclusions along the way, e.g. the classification of the Heidelberg theologian Ursinus as an upholder of limited atonement (p. 13 n.9). Kendall's account of the English predestinarians should be compared with other studies, such as that of Wallace<sup>4</sup>, before all its conclusions about individual theologians should be accepted. This is not to dispute, however, that the broad picture Kendall paints of the thought of English experimental predestinarians is convincing. In the opinion of the reviewer, he establishes the importance to them of assurance, helpfully describes the problems relating to assurance inherent in their system, and shows that they came to rely a great deal on the action of the will, both in preparing oneself to believe, and as the crucial distinction between saving and non-saving faith. It is fascinating to see the story unfolding in slightly different ways in different thinkers, to the point where so-called 'antinomianism' developed as a reaction to the stress on faith as a condition, preparation for faith, and good works as the

---

<sup>4</sup> D. Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination: Grace in English Protestant Theology 1525-1695* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1992).

evidence of faith. Such antinomianism was not a denial of the value of the moral law in guiding the conduct of the Christian, but of exalting it to be such a key factor in preparation and assurance, and of presenting faith as if it were another law by whose fulfilment salvation could be won.

### Some Questions

We can be grateful to Dr Kendall for detecting differences between this kind of theology and that of Calvin. There is a distinction between Calvin's characteristic way of encouraging people to find assurance of election in their communion with Christ by faith and Beza's tendency to urge people to deduce their election from their faith by rational argument. Calvin's theological and pastoral acuteness made him aware that to look to Christ by faith is very different from looking at one's faith in Christ, but Beza does not show the same sensitivity. The Westminster Confession's assertion that the 'principall acts' of saving faith are 'Accepting, Receiving, and Resting upon Christ' does not seem to be wholly in tune with Calvin's definition of faith as 'a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ', nor does Calvin's insistence that faith is, or at least entails, a measure of assurance, sit comfortably with the Westminster *Larger Catechism's* 'Assurance of grace and salvation not being of the essence of faith, true believers may wait long before they obtain it'.<sup>5</sup>

However, some of his important points remain doubtful. Is it justifiable to make Beza as critical to the development of Reformed theology as Kendall does? English 'Calvinists' drew on sources other than Beza – indeed, other than Geneva – from Zurich and Heidelberg, for example. There is evidence that the predestinarianism of Martin Bucer, the reformer of Strasbourg, had led him to a limited atonement position as early as the 1530s, while Jerome Zanchi became a prominent defender of both absolute predestination and limited atonement, and in this connection was devoting attention to the problems of assurance, in Strasbourg in the early 1560s.<sup>6</sup> Certainly in the case of Bucer, and almost certainly in the case of Zanchi, there was no crucial dependence upon Beza in this: these positions arose easily and naturally from the predestinarianism shared in common by the Reformers.

---

<sup>5</sup> Citations from Kendall, pp. 201, 18, 203.

<sup>6</sup> See G.M. Thomas, *The Extent of the Atonement: a dilemma for Reformed theology from Calvin to the Consensus* (Carlisle, 1997), pp. 7-8, 96-8.

It is not entirely true, as Kendall seems to say (p.19), that Calvin always used words like 'knowledge', 'illumination', 'assurance' to describe the nature of faith. He also used voluntaristic words like 'embrace' and 'receive',<sup>7</sup> while Beza was not averse to defining faith as assurance.<sup>8</sup> While Calvin focuses on the assurance that arises directly as faith in Christ is exercised, he does leave the door open to the possibility of reasoning from one's faith by a process of deducing cause from effect, when he says that our election is confirmed to us by faith, in the sense that 'that which was unknown is proved' – we ascend from faith to God's secret ordination, 'in order that the effect may not bury the cause'.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, it would be possible to give a more sympathetic account than Kendall's of Beza's teaching on assurance. Undoubtedly sanctification played a part in it, but in the discussion in *A Brief and Pithie Sum of the Christian Faith*, which Kendall makes use of on p. 33, it is by no means the only factor. Beza speaks of the assurance that is part of faith and of the witness of the Spirit of adoption within the believer. He appeals to sanctification, but this could be interpreted as simply saying that sanctification (and here he is talking about loving God and hating sin rather than merely doing good deeds) can only be present as a result of faith and the grace of God, and so is a sign of grace, and that faith without works is dead. Beza does talk about commencing with works in the search for assurance, but this is because he thinks in terms of chains of cause and effect. Works, being the last link in the chain that starts from predestination are thought of as the most accessible first point in the route to discovering predestination. However, although works occupy this position, they are never more than subsidiary, a help in confirming the reality of one's faith. Our point is not that Beza's discussion is as careful as might be wished, or that it does not embody a dangerous tendency, or that Beza's emphasis on limited atonement did not blunt the edge of the assurance inherent in faith, but merely that his teaching on assurance would not have to sound quite as crude as Kendall makes it, especially when he goes so far as to accuse Beza of thinking of faith as being 'rewarded' with salvation.

---

<sup>7</sup> E.g. *Institutes* 3:24:6, 3:11:7.

<sup>8</sup> See Beza, *A Book of Christian Questions and Answers* (London 1584), section 4, question 3, 'What is fayth? A certaine perswasion and assurance which every true Christian man oughte to have, that God the father loveth him, for Jesus Christ his sonnes sake.'

<sup>9</sup> *Institutes* 3:24:3.

These points illustrate a weakness in Kendall's work, namely the way he overstates his case. Readers are presented with blacks and whites, where more subtle shades would be truer to the subject. If he had claimed to have detected trends and emphases rather than a 'radical departure', the reaction to his findings might have been less excited, but more profitable. This is especially apparent in regard to the presentation of Calvin and Beza as holding diametrically opposed views on the extent of Christ's redeeming work to which we turn now.

### **Calvin and Beza on the Extent of the Atonement**

Kendall maintains that, in spite of believing in the predestination of a limited number, Calvin held firmly to the view that Christ died for all. He attaches great importance to this point, while conceding that 'a definitive study on this is yet to be written' (p. 3). His claim about Calvin's position is supported in the text and footnotes by a number of citations from Calvin (supplemented by an appendix with more citations), most of which are given brief treatment and seem quite ambiguous. For example, to quote 'Christ suffered for the sins of the world, and is offered by the goodness of God without distinction to all men'<sup>10</sup> as evidence of universal atonement begs the question how Calvin understood the terms 'world' and 'all'. The quotation includes the expression, 'without distinction', so dear to later advocates of limited atonement, who would use it in contrast to the expression, 'without exception'. The way Calvin set aside the 'sufficient for all, efficient for the elect' formula of the Middle Ages (and later Reformed theology of all shades) is taken by Kendall to be a rejection of limited atonement, whereas Calvin's meaning in the two contexts in question seems rather to lean in the opposite direction: he will not appeal to the formula because it does not say enough about predestination.<sup>11</sup> Beza,

---

<sup>10</sup> From Calvin's *Commentary on Romans*, on 5:18, on p. 13 n.3.

<sup>11</sup> J. Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, trans. and ed. J.K.S. Reid (London, 1961), pp. 148-9; *Commentary on 1 John*, on 2:2. Kendall appears to believe that 'sufficient for all, efficient for the elect' was a formula espoused by Reformed theologians who favoured limited atonement. In fact, it was dear to those who took the other side of the argument, such as the English deputation, and Matthias Martinius of Bremen, at the Synod of Dort. Those who favoured a very restricted position found it something of an embarrassment, because they had to add that, while the sufficiency was universal because of the

without question an advocate of limited atonement, admitted the truth of this formula, but dismissed it as being not very useful, just as Calvin did.<sup>12</sup> Kendall says that Calvin never makes 'all' mean 'some' (p. 13, nn. 2-3), but in fact, Calvin bewilderingly takes 'all' to mean 'some' in some places dealing with the atonement, and 'some' to mean 'all' in others where the context is similar.<sup>13</sup> Besides the weakness and ambiguity of much of Kendall's evidence in advocating that Calvin maintained what, on the face of it, seems an unlikely combination of particular predestination and universal atonement, readers will look in vain for any help in understanding how Calvin could have cheerfully maintained that Christ died for all and yet God only elected some. Did Calvin not feel there was some difficulty in holding such apparently incongruous doctrines? If he did hold them, is there no evidence of his seeking to explain how both can be true, or of a tendency to regard the one or the other to be telling the more basic truth about God? Did he think of the decree of election as somehow subordinate and logically posterior to the decree to send Christ, or that both are parallel and never meet? Kendall says, 'Calvin's position, despite his saying Christ's death for all makes all inexcusable, still requires that one be among the number of the elect to be saved' (p. 17), but he does not seem to feel that there is some difficulty in this, or wonder whether the penetrating mind of Calvin felt at all uncomfortable about it. One feels the need for more attention to how universal atonement and particular predestination fitted into the rest of Calvin's theology before being convinced that Kendall has given a complete explanation of the matter.

It is not possible to make an adequate investigation in this article of whether Calvin believed that Christ died for all or for the elect only. The view that Calvin believed in universal atonement, though it has

---

infinite merit of Christ, this sufficiency did not correspond to any divine intention within the decrees of predestination.

<sup>12</sup> Beza, *Ad Acta Coloquii Montisbelgardensis Tubingae Edita Responsionis Pars Altera* (Geneva, 1588), pp. 217-18.

<sup>13</sup> *Commentary on 1 John*, on 2:2. 'all refers to all who would believe.' *Commentary on 1 Timothy*, on 2:5, 'The universal term all must always be referred to classes of men but never to individuals.' *Sermons on Isaiah's prophecy of the Death and Passion of Christ*, trans. and ed. T.H.L. Parker (London, 1956), p. 141, 'The word "many" is often as good as equivalent to the word "all".' *Commentary on Hebrews*, on 9:27, 'He says, "many", meaning "all", as in Romans 5.15.'

supporters, also has critics.<sup>14</sup> While not denying the force of some of the citations given by Kendall, they do need to be set beside others, amply provided, for example, in Rainbow's *The Will of God and the Cross*, which support the other side of the argument. A survey of these may not convince the impartial reader that Calvin was a wholehearted exponent of limited atonement, but it will demonstrate that Kendall has been selective in his quotation. References can be given almost *ad infinitum* to support both points of view. Both sides can even appeal to Calvin's comments on the same passages of Scripture. For example, in his *Commentary and Sermons* on 1 Timothy 2:3-6, his understanding of the 'all' God wills to save and for whom Christ died seems to swing backwards and forwards

---

<sup>14</sup> Among those maintaining that Calvin held to universal atonement are P. van Buren, *Christ in Our Place: the Substitutionary Character of Calvin's Doctrine of Reconciliation* (Edinburgh, 1957), pp. 102-6; B. Hall, 'Calvin against the Calvinists', in G.E. Duffield (ed.), *John Calvin* (Abingdon, 1966), pp. 19-37; B.G. Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy: Protestant Scholasticism and Humanism in Seventeenth-Century France* (Madison, WI, 1969), p. 137 n. 58; M.C. Bell, *Calvin and Scottish Theology: the Doctrine of Assurance* (Edinburgh, 1985), pp. 13-19; J.W. Anderson, 'The Grace of God and the Non-elect in Calvin's Commentaries and Sermons' (Th.D., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1976), pp. 104-46; C. Daniel, *op. cit.*, pp. 777-828; S. Strehle, 'The Extent of the Atonement within the Theological Systems of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries' (Th.D., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1980), pp. 84-94; A.C. Clifford, *Atonement and Justification; English Evangelical Theology 1640-1790: an Evaluation* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 142-61. Among those who regard Calvin's teaching on the atonement as essentially particularistic are P. Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists* (Edinburgh, 1982); R. Nicole, 'John Calvin's View of the Extent of the Atonement', *Westminster Theological Journal* 47 (1985), pp. 197-225; W.R. Godfrey, 'Tensions within International Calvinism: the Debate on the Atonement at the Synod of Dort' (Ph.D., Stanford University, 1974), pp. 80-82; R.A. Muller, *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins* (Durham, NC, 1986), pp. 33-5; J.H. Rainbow, *The Will of God and the Cross: an Historical and Theological Study of John Calvin's Doctrine of Limited Redemption* (Allison Park, PA, 1990).

between 'the elect of all classes' and 'all including those who perish'.<sup>15</sup> The facts that Calvin gives no – or virtually no – attention to the extent of the atonement as a topic in its own right, and that scattered throughout his writings are many statements that lean one way and many that lean the other, are enough to indicate that to classify Calvin simply as adhering to one or other position is suspect and possibly, in terms of the development of Reformed theology, anachronistic. Kendall is correct in recognizing, as a general fact, that Calvin may not always have been consistent, so it is regrettable that he did not apply this insight to Calvin's position on the extent of the atonement. The reviewer believes that, as a rule, Calvin spoke of the atonement as universal when he was dealing with the promise of the gospel, and particular in the context of eternal election.<sup>16</sup> Whether or not this is the best analysis, it seems that a more nuanced treatment than claiming Calvin as a supporter of either universal or limited atonement is required. Kendall's claim that Calvin held to universal atonement but to a particularistic high priestly intercession is perhaps a concession towards this necessity. It is not really surprising if, when focusing on the exalted Christ, Calvin speaks chiefly of the efficacy of his work, and therefore has in mind the elect as the intended recipients of salvation. But Christ's intercession is also of a piece with his sacrifice as two aspects of his priestly work, and Christ is the object of faith as both sacrifice and intercessor. So Calvin can also use the language of universal applicability in connection with the intercession.<sup>17</sup> An unqualified division between universal atonement and limited intercession is unlikely to stand scrutiny, but a more general recognition that Calvin saw both universal and particular aspects to Christ's saving work seems to be demanded by the evidence.

Calvin sometimes spoke of Christ's death as being intended for the elect, and sometimes spoke of it in universal terms. It can therefore be said that Beza was faithful to him in teaching that Christ died for the elect, but

---

<sup>15</sup> See *Commentary, and Sermons of M. John Calvin on the Epistles of S. Paule to Timothie and Titus* (London, 1579). See also Thomas, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-3.

<sup>16</sup> See Thomas, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-34.

<sup>17</sup> In *Sermons on Isaiah, op. cit.*, pp. 143-8, Calvin says that Christ does not pray for all. He explains that the intercession of Christ is only effectual to those who avail themselves of it by faith. He also says, in the same context of Christ's death and intercession, 'Let us not fear to come...seeing He is sufficient to save us all.'

that his predestinarian consistency prevented him having Calvin's freedom to speak of Christ's dying for all. Kendall is right to detect a shift. But it was a shift of emphasis, based on elements in Calvin's thought, not the sharp change of direction Kendall portrays by passing over some elements in Calvin's thought.

### Predestination

Behind Kendall's insistence that Calvin stood for the universality of the atonement, can be detected the view that, to Calvin, predestination was just one doctrine among others. It did not exercise a controlling influence over other doctrines, and did not cause them to be modified, even if they seemed inconsistent with particular predestination. Predestination was a truth to be brought forward to emphasize that salvation is all of grace, and to perform certain practical functions like producing gratitude, humility and confidence in the believer. But it was not to be integrated into a system of doctrine, certainly not as a controlling factor, and it was to be pushed to the background when inviting people to faith or dealing with those struggling with doubts and fears. This view of Calvin has seemed to appeal widely to those who would regard themselves as his followers today and has been advocated by scholars like W. Niesel, B.G. Armstrong, C. Partee and A.C. Clifford.<sup>18</sup> Kendall identifies himself with the view that Calvin introduced predestination only to explain the observed differentiation in the way people respond to the gospel (p. 15 n.4).

However, there are a number of persuasive studies indicating that predestination was more dominant in Calvin than this view allows.<sup>19</sup> His

---

<sup>18</sup> W. Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin* (Philadelphia, 1956), esp. pp. 159-81; Armstrong, *op. cit.*; C. Partee, 'Calvin's Central Dogma Again', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 18 (1987), pp. 191-9; Clifford, *op. cit.*

<sup>19</sup> D.N. Wiley, 'Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination: his Principal Soteriological and Polemical Doctrine' (Ph.D., Duke University, 1971); I. McPhee, 'Transformer or Conserver of Calvin's Theology? A Study of the Origins and Development of Theodore Beza's Thought' (Ph.D., Cambridge University, 1980); P.C. Holtrop, *The Bolsec Controversy on Predestination, from 1551 to 1555: Statements of Jerome Bolsec and the Responses of John Calvin, Theodore Beza and other Reformed Theologians* (Lewiston, NY, 1993). W.J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: a Sixteenth-Century Portrait* (New York, 1988), pp. 232-4, has pointed to 'the existence of two rather different Calvins.... Later



contests with Bolsec and Castellio, and the lack of sympathy between Bullinger and him over his attitude to predestination in the Bolsec dispute,<sup>20</sup> and works like the *Eternal Predestination* and the *Congrégation on Eternal Election*,<sup>21</sup> are enough to make this clear. This prominence of predestination accounts for the presence of passages seeming to favour limited atonement as well as those indicating universal atonement. While it may be necessary, with H. Bauke, to understand Calvin's theology as a *complexio oppositorum*<sup>22</sup>, in which apparently contradictory elements are embraced, there are many indications that Calvin made efforts to integrate his doctrine of predestination with the whole range of his teaching, and that some elements have been adapted to fit the predestinarian commitment. At the end of his treatment of predestination in the *Institutes*, he deals with biblical texts that seem to show that God has a desire to save all. Calvin's approach is that when universal saving will and particular predestination seem to be in conflict, particular predestination must take precedence.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, it is not true that predestination simply fulfils the function of explaining why some rather than others believe, for in a prominent position in introducing *Institutes* 3:24 on election, he traces the gospel itself, and not just the response to it, to predestination.<sup>24</sup> This strongly predestinarian flavour to Calvin's theology means that Beza's soteriology may as easily be regarded as a legitimate organic development of Calvin's

---

Calvinists were the heirs of the systematic and philosophical Calvin....'

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, the letter of 27 November 1551, in *Registres de la Compagnie des Pasteurs de Genève au Temps de Calvin*, vol. 1 (Geneva, 1962), pp. 124-5.

<sup>21</sup> In *Calvini Opera*, 8, cols 89-118.

<sup>22</sup> H. Bauke, *Die Probleme der Theologie Calvins* (Leipzig, 1922), pp. 16-19.

<sup>23</sup> *Institutes* 3:24:15-17: 'seems to deny' 'he only means...' 'he means nothing more than...' 'we must expound the passage [seeming to speak of a universal will to save] so as to reconcile it with another [speaking of election and reprobation]', 'however universal the promises of salvation may be, there is no discrepancy between them and the predestination of the reprobate, provided we attend to the effect' (*i.e.* reprobation wins!), 'all that is meant by the promise is....'

<sup>24</sup> 'the preaching of the gospel springs from the fountain of election...', *Institutes* 3:24:1.

teaching as a radical departure from it. Indeed, it may be regarded as a development made almost inevitable by the loose ends in Calvin's own thought. When it is considered that Beza was compelled by historical circumstances to defend and consolidate Calvin's teaching, it is not surprising that the polemical task should have produced a more logically defensible system. Thus, while differences of emphasis may readily be conceded, the sharp division asserted by Kendall is unsubstantiated.

The historical situation would seem to contain a presumption against driving such a wedge between the two Genevan Reformers, since it was Calvin who appointed Beza to preside over the Genevan Academy, and the two worked alongside each other in Geneva for sixteen years between 1548 and 1564. Beza's strongly supralapsarian predestinarian position was known to Calvin even before Beza came to Geneva from Lausanne, and there had been correspondence between the two on some of the finer points of predestination. Indeed, it was in the process of defending Calvin against Bolsec that Beza's infamous 'Table' of predestination was drawn up and circulated prior to publication.<sup>25</sup> Yet there is no evidence that Calvin – who was not slow to warn people of dangerous tendencies in their thinking, and had Bolsec arrested and expelled from Geneva for errors over predestination, raised any objection at all to Beza's emphases. Moreover, whilst it was true that Beza showed a greater concern to systematize, all the raw materials of his system can be found in Calvin. The historical situation must place the onus of proof on anyone who wishes to maintain that Beza departed seriously from Calvin, and, mainly because Kendall's account of Calvin's doctrine of predestination is incomplete, the reviewer is not convinced that he has demonstrated his thesis. Most of the major recent studies of Beza's thought have recognized important elements of continuity from Calvin.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> See letters of Beza to Calvin of 21 January 1552, 29 July 1555 and 22 January 1558, in *Correspondance de Théodore de Bèze*, ed. H. Aubert, F. Aubert and H. Meylan (Geneva, 1960-), vol. 1, pp. 81-4 (and see p. 84 n.5), 169-73, vol. 2, pp. 168-71. The 'Table' can be found in Beza, *The Treasure of Trueth* (London, 1576).

<sup>26</sup> See J. Raitt, *The Eucharistic Theology of Theodore Beza: Development of the Reformed Doctrine* (Chambersburg, 1972), p. 71; J.S. Bray, *Theodore Beza's Doctrine of Predestination* (Nieuwkoop, 1975), esp. pp. 86-106, 142; McPhee, *op. cit.*, esp. pp. 42-3, 82-3; Muller, *op. cit.*, esp. p. 95; R.W. Letham, 'Theodore Beza: a Reassessment', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 40 (1987), pp. 25-40; M. Jinkins,

**Limited Atonement, Predestination and Assurance**

Readers of *Calvin and English Calvinism* could be forgiven for coming to the conclusion that the anxiety over assurance within the Reformed tradition resulted partly from Calvin's raising the question of temporary faith, and mainly from Beza's doctrine of limited atonement. It would have been reasonable to have put some simpler explanations into the foreground. Any theology that proclaims salvation through faith is bound to precipitate the question in its adherents, 'Do I have faith?' The undeniable phenomenon of 'temporary faith' would necessarily give rise to questions about the nature of one's faith. It is difficult to see why Kendall should blame Calvin for talking about temporary faith and indicating how to distinguish it from the faith of God's elect. Kendall gives no suggestion what the alternative to this discussion might be.

Furthermore, whatever the effect of teaching about universal or limited atonement, it was surely the doctrine of predestination that gave added weight to concern about assurance within the Reformed tradition. To hold that salvation depends on faith raises questions, but to hold that such faith is the gift of God and will be granted only to those who have been predestined, irrespective of any personal effort or qualities, and that only such persons will persevere to the end for final salvation, invests those questions with much heavier significance. Calvin acknowledged this: 'Among the temptations with which Satan assaults believers, none is greater or more perilous than when disquieting them with doubts as to their election.... For there is scarcely a mind in which the thought does not sometimes arise, Whence your salvation but from the election of God? But what proof have you of your election?'<sup>27</sup>

Calvin's answer was to point away from the eternal decree, in that it is impossible to know who has and has not been elected by trying to scrutinize the decree. Those in doubt should turn to the 'posterior signs', the temporal manifestation of the decree, namely Christ and our calling.<sup>28</sup> As we embrace Christ offered to us in the Word, then Christ becomes our

'Theodore Beza: Continuity and Regression in the Reformed Tradition', *Evangelical Quarterly* 64 (1992), pp. 131-54. W. Kickel's *Vernunft und Offenbarung bei Theodor Beza* (Neukirchen, 1967), portrayed Beza as seriously departing from Calvin, but even that work had to recognize that, with respect to predestination, Calvin had signposted Beza's way (p. 47).

<sup>27</sup> *Institutes* 3:24:4, cf. 3:21:7, 3:24:6.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:24:4-6.

'mirror of election': believing in him, we know that we have been chosen in him. Calvin's espousal of an atonement with a certain universal aspect enabled him to urge people to look away from the decree to Christ, and to exercise a direct act of faith in him, finding assurance in Christ and the Word, and not in themselves. Both Calvin and Beza warned people not to look directly into God's decrees, but to look to Christ. Calvin expected assurance to arise directly in the act of looking in faith to Christ. Beza, working with limited atonement, tended to think of steps of faith by which one reaches assurance indirectly. Calvin allowed that other signs may have some kind of supporting role in bringing assurance,<sup>29</sup> whereas Beza put greater confidence in being able to detect such faith by looking at one's works. Though Calvin's may be judged the better way, the basic fact, which should not be overlooked, is that both were engaged in the enterprise of telling people to look away from predestination. The doctrine of predestination carried with it the assurance that the eternal salvation of the believer is secure because undergirded by the eternal and unchanging purpose of God, but, at the same time, it created an anxious concern to discover one's preordained status. This does not come across in *Calvin and English Calvinism*, which gives the impression that limited atonement was the main cause of difficulties over assurance, rather than a diminution of a difficulty inherent in the doctrine of predestination.

It may be instructive to appreciate that the Lutherans criticized the Reformed for posing a threat to assurance. Lutheran indignation against Zanchi in Strasbourg in 1561-2, and Beza at the Colloquy of Montbéliard in 1586, was intensified by the Reformed espousal of limited atonement. However, the basic Lutheran objection was against a doctrine of predestination that posited a decree of election of a certain number of people before the world began. To the Lutherans, the way that doctrine of predestination caused Beza and Zanchi to limit the extent of the atonement to the elect was not surprising. But they did not see the root of the problem of assurance in limited atonement. In spite of Zanchi's and Beza's protestations to the contrary, the Lutherans regarded talk of absolute decrees about particular persons as meaning that people's attention would inevitably be diverted away from the Word and sacraments towards a process of prying into unfathomable mysteries, and could result only in either presumption or despair. It would be interesting to investigate whether the Lutherans discerned any difference between Calvin and

---

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:14:19.

Calvinists in this respect. The reviewer is not aware of any evidence that they did.<sup>30</sup>

Kendall's blaming of limited atonement for problems of assurance might be tested by a study of those Reformed theologians throughout the period in question who held to universal atonement. Among these would be James Ussher, John Davenant, Joseph Hall, Samuel Ward, John Preston (possibly), John Arrowsmith, Richard Vines, Lazarus Seaman, Edmund Calamy, Richard Baxter (whose 'neonomianism' was united with a vigorously defended universal atonement position) and in France, John Cameron and Moïse Amyraut. If problems over assurance were mainly due to limited atonement, we would expect such theologians to have something very different to say about faith and assurance than their universal-atonement contemporaries. The reviewer suggests that, as far as the English were concerned, it would be hard to establish a qualitative difference between their teaching about faith and assurance and that of their contemporaries. Cameron and Amyraut did revert to Calvin's explanation of faith as primarily a persuasion of the mind. However, the proponents of universal atonement, including these two, emphasized the character of faith as a condition as much as, if not more than, others. While their view of the extent of Christ's work may have had some bearing on their doctrine of faith and assurance, it would seem that it was by no means the only factor.

### **Covenant Theology**

Were other factors besides predestination and limited atonement responsible for fostering introspection, uncertainty and legalism? Kendall points to one, but perhaps could have attached even greater importance to it: the development of covenant theology in which a covenant of law or works is superseded, in God's dealings with human kind, by a covenant of grace and faith. Within this sort of covenant theology faith was seen as a condition to be performed, in some way analogous to the performance of works as the condition of the old covenant. As a condition to be performed it was liable to be viewed as an act of the will more than a kind of knowledge. Kendall states that 'Faith for Calvin was never a "condition"' (p. 210). In fact Calvin did refer to faith as a condition sometimes, but it was not his characteristic way of expressing himself, and Kendall's point may be accepted in so far that the formal conditionalism of later covenant theology is not to be found in the Genevan Reformer.

---

<sup>30</sup> See Thomas, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-8, 89-99.

Kendall repeatedly makes the provocative claim that English Calvinism's voluntaristic concept of faith was Arminian. If this be granted, the similarity was surely not because Arminius held to limited atonement, or particular predestination! It may well have had something to do with the commitment to the concept of a conditional covenant, which seventeenth-century Calvinists and Arminians shared. Among seventeenth-century English 'Calvinists', whether proponents of limited or universal atonement, covenant theology and particular predestination made a powerful combination. The covenant condition mitigated the inaccessibility of predestination, while predestination prevented the covenant condition from being impossible for people to fulfil, and left no place for pride on the part of those who might fulfil it. One might say that, in this construction, the very difficulty of the condition magnified the predestining grace of God which gives the ability to fulfil the condition. One might almost suggest that the grace of God would be magnified much more if God had made the condition even more difficult, and then graciously granted to the elect the ability to fulfil it. But one might then recognize that one would be travelling a road that led far away from the original genius of the Reformation doctrine of justification *sola fide, sola gratia, sola iustitia Christi*.

### Conclusion

R.T. Kendall has performed a considerable service by bringing into the open questions that need to be pondered, for they get close to the heart of the Reformed heritage. By setting Calvin and Beza in such sharp opposition, and not giving emphasis to their considerable common ground over predestination and even the extent of the atonement, he has perhaps laid something of a false trail. The story could have been told as one of development more than departure. Readers will gain most from *Calvin and English Calvinism* if they resist the temptation to cast Calvin as a hero and Beza as a villain in an attempt to distance themselves vicariously from some elements in the Reformed inheritance.

## MAKING SENSE OF MATTHEW 25:31-46

GRAHAM FOSTER

STEEPLE CHURCH AND MARY SLESSOR CENTRE, DUNDEE

In his short story, 'Where Love is God is',<sup>1</sup> Leo Tolstoy describes how Martin Avdéich, a cobbler, endures a period of religious questioning and doubt (presumably not unlike Tolstoy's own) which culminates in an evening of Scripture reading and meditation. He drifts into sleep and dreams that the Christ is saying to him: 'Expect me, I will come tomorrow.' The next day dawns and during its course Martin shows kindness to a needy old man, to a destitute young woman and her infant, to an old woman and to the rascally boy who has stolen some fruit from her. As the day draws to a close he feels disappointment that his expectation of receiving Christ has not been fulfilled. However, in a further mystical experience he comes to realize that the Saviour had in fact come to him in the needy strangers whom he had met and that in receiving them kindly he had welcomed the Christ. The punch-line of the story is: 'Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers you did it to me.'

These words occur, of course, in Matthew's Gospel chapter 25, verses 31 to 46. Tolstoy's story represents what has come to be a popular understanding of this Matthean passage. According to this understanding the essential message of the pericope is held to be that Christ is present, even although unrecognised, in the hungry, the thirsty, the homeless stranger, *etc.* In attending to their needs the 'righteous' – so they are pronounced to be in the end-time judgement – discover that they were in fact doing something good for Christ, the Son of Man. They will be rewarded accordingly. Those who failed to respond as the righteous did suffer a correspondingly grievous fate.

### A Common Interpretation

So common is this interpretation that it is often merely noted in the passing in Christian discourse. For instance, I recently heard an Old

---

<sup>1</sup> Tolstoy wrote the story in 1885. It appears in English translation in *Twenty-Three Tales* (London, 1956), pp. 131-46. A version for children, with adaptations but essentially the same message, was published by Lion Publishing (1976) with the title *Papa Panov's Special Day*.

Testament scholar deliver a sermon on Deuteronomy 10:18,19. In these verses there is a clear command to love and care for the stranger. The preacher took this up as the main thrust of his exhortation. In the flow of his delivery there was brief reference to Matthew 25:35, 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me'. The implication was quickly drawn that in caring for needy strangers we the hearers might find, to our surprise, that we were caring for Christ himself.

Another example may be found in the writings of Jürgen Moltmann. In a section of his book, *The Spirit of Life*, in which he stresses the empathy of God and the solidarity of Christ with the vulnerable and the victims of life he states: 'According to Matthew 25, the Son of Man-Judge of the world identifies with the least of his brothers and sisters to such an extent that whatever happens to them, happens to him.'<sup>2</sup>

In the one instance an Old Testament scholar and in the other a systematic theologian adopt, without question, a certain understanding of the Matthean passage, an understanding which is frequently assumed in Christian preaching and writing, both at the popular and the more academic levels.

This interpretation is not lacking support amongst some modern, that is twentieth-century, New Testament scholars and commentators. Sherman W. Gray<sup>3</sup> reports from an examination of hundreds of writers from 1900 to 1986 that 34% take this so-called 'universalist' view of the passage. Gray also notes, however, that prior to the modern era this view occurs very rarely. For illustrative purposes I choose a few representative instances from twentieth-century scholarship.

- A. H. M'Neile in his commentary on Matthew (1915): the love and sympathy of the Son of man for all sufferers is profoundly expressed in the phrase 'these my brothers'.<sup>4</sup>
- J. C. Fenton (1963): 'The distinction [between the blessed and the cursed] is made according to whether a man has, or has not, shown mercy to the oppressed.'<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life* (London, 1992), p. 129.

<sup>3</sup> Sherman W. Gray, *The Least of My Brothers: Matthew 25: 31-46: a History of Interpretation* (SBL Dissertation Series, 114; Atlanta, 1989), p. 348.

<sup>4</sup> A. H. M'Neile, *The Gospel according to St Matthew* (London, 1915), p. 371.

<sup>5</sup> J. C. Fenton, *Saint Matthew* (London, 1963), p. 400.



- E. Schweizer (1976): 'Jesus awaits us in all who are poor, homeless, alone'.<sup>6</sup>
- F.W. Beare (1981): 'the thought now is that Jesus looks upon every kindness done to a person in need, however lowly, as a kindness done to himself'.<sup>7</sup>
- G. Bornkamm (1982): 'the Son of Man calls the underprivileged his brethren'.<sup>8</sup>
- P.S. Minear (1982): 'He [the Son of Man] identifies himself first of all not with me but with my neighbour.... Only when the Lord is absent can people love him by loving their neighbours. And his love is best attested when the neighbour is "one of the least"'.<sup>9</sup>

One of the hermeneutical methods explicitly used by some of these writers is to identify a prominent theme in the gospels, or specifically in Matthew, and then to show how Matthew 25:31-46 fits in with that theme and how the pericope may therefore be interpreted in the light of it. Fenton, for instance, understands the passage in terms of the emphasis he detects in Matthew that the righteousness required in the kingdom of God consists of deeds not words, deeds of mercy not sacrifices of the Law.<sup>10</sup> It is, however, legitimate to ask whether this is the correct theme to bring to bear on this passage, or whether it is sufficiently nuanced to allow the distinctive elements of the passage to be heard. If it is an inappropriate theme or if it is insufficiently precise then the effect will be to silence the peculiar features of the passage rather than let them speak. One would expect the meaning of Matthew 25:31-46 to cohere with the rest of the Gospel, but the possibility of a fresh idea or insight emerging from the passage must also be allowed.

### A 'Fitting' Interpretation

There is another, equally significant, kind of fittingness which should be noted. The line of interpretation highlighted above also fits in with some overlapping trends evident in the churches in this century. I think for instance of the tendency in some parts of the church in the 1960s to

---

<sup>6</sup> E. Schweizer, *The Good News according to Matthew* (London, 1976), p. 479.

<sup>7</sup> F.W. Beare, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (Oxford, 1981), p. 495.

<sup>8</sup> G. Bornkamm in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, edited by Bornkamm, G. Barth and H.J. Held (2nd edit. London, 1982), p. 37.

<sup>9</sup> P.S. Minear, *Matthew the Teacher's Gospel* (New York, 1982), p. 183.

<sup>10</sup> Fenton, *Saint Matthew*, pp. 400f.

develop Bonhoeffer's 'religionless Christianity' in a variety of theologies in which transcendence was subsumed under immanence. God is found in the world. The sphere of Christian service is the world rather than the church, especially the suffering world. This was further taken up in the 1970s and beyond by the prominence given in liberation as well as liberal theologies to God's apparent 'bias to the poor'. Mother Teresa provided a vivid illustration of this. She was often quoted as saying that in caring for the poor people who die on the streets of Calcutta she was caring for Christ himself. Added to this is the churches' loss of confidence in dogma and the consequent shift in emphasis from beliefs to behaviour as crucial for our relationship with God. This is well expressed in the Sydney Carter song, 'When I needed a neighbour, were you there?...and the creed and the colour and the name won't matter, Were you there?' Tolstoy's story may be regarded as representing a nineteenth-century version of similar convictions.

Matthew 25:31-46 could be construed as supporting such so-called secular understandings of the Christian gospel. It was very appealing to find in the passage the idea of a Christ unencumbered by doctrine, identified with the poor sufferers of the world and eliciting a response as free as Christ himself from doctrinal baggage. An *incognito* Christ served by *incognito* Christians? E. Schweizer illustrates something of this when in the commentary quoted above he moves from exegesis of the passage to application and writes:

There can be a genuine, if incomplete faith that consists only of carrying out God's will towards the poor and lowly.... The man who has such faith worships God and enriches himself though he intends neither.<sup>11</sup>

Equally interesting in this respect is that in the 1970s when the conservative evangelical movement in Britain rediscovered a sense of calling to social action alongside the preaching of the gospel it looked to Matthew 25:31-46 for a dominical proof text. John Stott wrote a booklet, *Walk in His Shoes*, published by IVP in association with Tear Fund in 1975. In it he declares that the basis of the Son of Man's separating judgement between sheep and goats would be the presence or absence of good works of love towards the needy of the world.<sup>12</sup> Stott thus concurs with the understanding of the passage found in the volume on Matthew in

---

<sup>11</sup> E. Schweizer, *Matthew*, p. 480.

<sup>12</sup> John R.W. Stott, *Walk in His Shoes* (Leicester, 1975), p. 19.

the Tyndale Commentary series written by R.V.G. Tasker published first in 1961 which sets forth a 'universalist' view.<sup>13</sup> Although the more recent commentary on Matthew in the Tyndale series by R.T. France<sup>14</sup> interprets the passage in a different way (see below) it seems that Stott's understanding of it in relation to the Christian's concern for a world of need continues to have wide influence in the conservative evangelical constituency.

### **Universalist or Particularist?**

It will be apparent, then, that this interpretation of Matthew 25:31-46 is a popular one, so much so that it is seldom questioned. Nonetheless, the question of whether this is a proper interpretation remains to be asked. The fact is that in recent years it has been seriously questioned among New Testament scholars.

As noted above, Sherman W. Gray traces the history of interpretation of the passage from the earliest periods of the Christian era. Although many varied interpretations have been advanced through the centuries he indicates that there are basically two approaches.<sup>15</sup> The one to which I have drawn attention above might be called the 'universalist' approach. The other, called by Gray the 'restrictive' or 'particularist', does not read in this passage an encouragement to merciful action amongst the needy understood in a general way. Rather, the passage provides some consolation for hard-pressed Christians, the brothers of Jesus, who go out as Christian witnesses among the nations. There they may find a hostile reception with the result that they are hungry, thirsty, homeless, ill-clad, in poor health, perhaps even in prison. In such dire straits the people into whose community they have come may regard them sympathetically, whereas amongst others they may be met with cold indifference. In the judgement those who have actively shown their concern for Christians will be rewarded, for in caring for the needy followers of Jesus they were in fact responding positively to Jesus himself. Those who have not will receive due punishment.

---

<sup>13</sup> R.V.G. Tasker, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew* (London, 1961), pp. 237 - 9.

<sup>14</sup> R.T. France, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (Leicester, 1985), pp. 354-8.

<sup>15</sup> Gray, *The Least of My Brothers*, p. 9.

Graham M. Stanton neatly encapsulates the alternative approaches thus: 'The nub of the exegetical dispute can be put quite simply. Is this pericope concerned with the attitude of the world in general to the needy (the "universalist" position), or is it, rather, the world's attitude to the church which is in view (the "particularist" interpretation)?'<sup>16</sup>

It might be possible to dispose of the matter quickly by suggesting that those who take a universalist view of the Christian gospel will tend to take a universalist view of the passage and those who take a particularist view of the gospel will tend to take a particularist view of the passage. This does not quite hold good in respect of some in the conservative evangelical community who adhere to a particularist view of the gospel but take on board a universalist view of this passage, with, of course, consequential problems which must be resolved within the totality of this theology regarding justification by faith rather than by works. John Stott, in the booklet referred to above, still referring to Matthew 25, but citing other New Testament texts, handles the problem in this way: 'although our *justification* is by faith only, our *judgement* will be on the basis of works, "good works" or "well-doing"'.<sup>17</sup> The responsible attitude is surely not to come to the passage looking for support for a preconceived theological stance, but to derive an interpretation of the text which makes the best sense of the pericope in its context.

### **The Four Key Issues**

According to Stanton<sup>18</sup> the interpretation of the passage rests largely on four key issues: 1. Who are the people gathered for judgement? (25:32); 2. Who are the brothers of the Son of Man? (25:40,45); 3. What is the nature of the list of merciful acts? (25:35,36); 4. What is the literary type of the passage? Of these it will be seen that the second is most important.

**1. Who are the people gathered for judgement? (25:32)** They are described as 'all the nations'. Some suppose that these are the nations now evangelised, and therefore 'Christian'. So, in line with the parables which precede this passage it is claimed that we are looking at the judgement of the Christian church. Yet there is no assumption in Matthew

---

<sup>16</sup> Graham M. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People* (Edinburgh, 1992), p. 209.

<sup>17</sup> Stott, *Walk in His Shoes*, p. 20.

<sup>18</sup> Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People*, pp. 212ff.

that all who are evangelised will become Christian – just the opposite (*cf.* 24:9)! Further, it can be argued that the preceding parables have dealt adequately with the judgement of Christians and that a different kind of judgement can be spoken of at this point. (See 4. below.)

The phrase is characteristically used in Matthew to designate the nations beyond Israel to which Christian disciples are to go as witnesses (24:9,14; 28:19). It seems therefore that the passage depicts the judgement of the nations to which the gospel has been taken. It seems also that 'the least of these brothers of mine' are not included in this judgement. They are neither on the left nor on the right of the Son of Man. In judicial terms, they are not in the dock; they are in some sense *with* the Son of Man occupying some other position in the court.

If this is so, it undermines the line of interpretation which suggests that it is professing Christians who are here being judged in terms of their charitable concern for the needy. It also therefore challenges the relevance of questions regarding justification by faith or by works such as are raised not only by Stott but more substantially by Ulrich Luz.<sup>19</sup>

**2. Who are the brothers of the Son of Man? (25:40,45)** Who are 'the least of these brothers of mine'? In Matthew's Gospel 'brothers' is used to refer to Jesus' disciples (12:49-50; 23:8; 28:10), apart, that is, from references to blood relations. 'Little ones' (probably interchangeable with 'the least') refers to those who believe in Jesus (1:42; 18:6,12,14). There are strong reasons therefore to see this passage corresponding to the concluding section (10:40-42) of the commission given to the disciples to go to Israel with the gospel of the kingdom. There we read: 'And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward' (10:42). Here in chapter 25, albeit in a more developed form, is a similar pronouncement in the context of the wider commission to the Gentile nations. The key references, 1:23 and 28:20, at the beginning and at the end of Matthew's Gospel which indicate that God identifies with his people through Jesus and that Jesus identifies in particular with his missionary disciples reinforce this understanding of 'the least of these brothers of mine' in the passage under consideration.

This would mean then that the basis of the end-time judgement of the nations is not adherence to or neglect of a general humanitarian ethic.

---

<sup>19</sup> Ulrich Luz, *The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 131f.

Rather it has to do with the manner in which the nations treat hard-pressed disciples of Jesus. On the basis of what we read in chapter 10 we are perhaps meant to understand that a response to the messenger of Christ is indicative of a response to the message of Christ. However, it will only emerge at the glorious appearing of the Son of Man that in their treatment of these representatives they were in fact meeting and responding affirmatively or negatively to Jesus himself.

It should be stressed that, according to Matthew 25:31-46, the crucial characteristic of those who have or have not received merciful treatment is not so much their identity as needy in a general way but their identity as needy followers of Jesus. The surprise element in the passage does not arise from the fact that the righteous or the cursed did not know that they were responding to Christian messengers but from the fact that they did not realise that the Son of Man was so immediately present to those who represented him and derivatively therefore also to those who encountered his representatives. The surprise for the righteous will be pleasant, the surprise for the cursed will be unpleasant. It is probably the realisation which comes to the latter at the end-time which is of more importance to Matthew's first readers who will have found in the passage some consolation for the harsh treatment they are receiving in the Gentile world.

Some would argue that Matthew has taken a received pericope which originally had a broader reference in terms of the identification of Jesus with the poor and that he has restricted its meaning, making it more sectarian. Gray, however, questions this procedure as purely conjectural because we have no control mechanisms to test such a unique piece of gospel material.<sup>20</sup> Stanton contends that there are no passages in Matthew or in early Christian literature which identify Jesus specifically with the poor but that there are instances of his identification specifically with his disciples elsewhere within Matthew – as noted above.<sup>21</sup> It might be added that the concept of Jesus' identification with his people appears in at least one other strand of New Testament literature. In Acts 9:4,5: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." Jesus thus identifies with his persecuted people in Jerusalem and in Damascus. It is also noteworthy that in Acts 16 Lydia and the jailer indicate their positive response to the message of Jesus by providing hospitality and care to the messengers (vv.

---

<sup>20</sup> Gray, *The Least of My Brothers*, p. 355.

<sup>21</sup> Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People*, pp. 217f.

15,33,34; see also Luke 10:16). Thus, although Matthew 25:31-46 taken as a whole is unique, we find that a crucial element in the passage is unique neither to the passage nor even to Matthew's Gospel. The argument for Matthean creativity at this point is thus seriously undermined.

**3. What is the nature of the list of merciful acts? (25:35,36)** Six kinds of need are cited in the passage – the needs of the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and those in prison. The list does not quite match up with others that would be current in or around Matthew's day which describe the needy in society generally. There are several omissions, not least the care of widows and orphans. The needs cited are, of course, prevalent in society, whether in the Middle East of the first Christian century or universally in the twentieth. However, there is a more likely match between the items in this list and the kind of problems frequently faced by Christian missionaries as a small, assertive (not aggressive) minority in a society where their unique claims for Christ were not well received. We have evidence for this in Matthew 10:14-20. Otherwise in the New Testament we have the instances already cited in Acts and Luke. Many others could be added from the descriptions of Paul's missionary journeys. Likewise in the Corinthian correspondence Paul himself gives examples of the kind of harrowing treatment to which he and his associates were subject: see 1 Corinthians 4:11-13; 2 Corinthians 6:4,5. There are also of course thanksgivings in the epistles for merciful treatment to pioneering missionaries. Particular note should be taken of Galatians 4:13,14: 'you know that it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first; and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus'.

The idea of non-Christian Gentiles visiting Christian prisoners is sometimes seen as a problem but, as Stanton points out, in the ancient world prisoners were dependent on people outside the prison bringing them food and drink.<sup>22</sup> Physical sustenance was not provided by the prison authorities. Prisons were, thus, to this extent, open prisons and prisoners were potential beneficiaries of caring treatment from sympathetic outsiders, whether Christian or not. Stanton also draws attention to the interesting

---

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.

passage, Joel 3:1-3, in which the nations are judged for their improper treatment of prisoners taken from among God's people.<sup>23</sup>

**4. What is the literary type of the passage?** Stanton argues that Matthew 25:31-46 is an apocalyptic discourse rather than a parable. He sees correspondences between it and passages in apocalyptic writings such as 4 Ezra, 1 Enoch, 2 Baruch and the Apocalypse of Abraham.<sup>24</sup> According to Gray, in the Jewish apocalyptic discourses it is common to find that there are successive judgement scenes, first for Israel and then for unbelievers.<sup>25</sup> This corresponds with the pattern in Matthew 24/25 where the passage under consideration is concerned with the judgement of the nations and is preceded by teaching which deals with the judgement of the church. According to Stanton, a recurring theme in these apocalypses, whether Jewish or Christian, is that the wickedness of the pagan nations will be judged and in particular their behaviour towards God's people will be rewarded or punished. So, he concludes, 'Matt 25:31-46 is a final consolation to the recipients of the gospel. God's enemies will be judged on the basis of their treatment of the brothers of the Son of man, however insignificant.'<sup>26</sup>

#### **Making Sense of the Passage**

Stanton's phrase, 'a final consolation to the recipients of the gospel', refers presumably to the first recipients of Matthew's Gospel. The passage makes sense if it is understood to be addressed to a striving and struggling missionary-minded Christian minority community in a largely antithetical majority culture. It provides for them an apocalypse, a revelation, of what will be in the end-time. Then it will be seen that their missionary endeavours have not been wasted, and that those who have received them in a kindly way in the midst of their hardships will enter into the kingdom prepared for them. Conversely, those who have stood hard-faced against them (and their message?) will receive their dues. The passage is, then, a

---

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 220, 224f.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 221ff.

<sup>25</sup> Gray, *The Least of My Brothers*, pp. 358f.

<sup>26</sup> Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People*, p. 229.



means of encouragement to disciples of Jesus who wish to remain faithful through difficult times.<sup>27</sup>

On the other hand it is difficult to know what sense the passage might have if it is understood to be addressed to those who with little or no knowledge of or faith in Christ are engaged in worthy humanitarian endeavours amongst the needy in society. For one thing, if they have heard or read the passage and have understood it in the universalist sense then they will not be able to respond with surprise at the end-time judgement! More seriously, it is difficult to know what kind of response is expected of them if the passage is supposed to be addressed to them. Will they be spurred on to greater charitable endeavour by discovery that they are in fact caring for Christ in caring for needy others? Will they be drawn thereby to faith or more complete faith in Christ? Whether they are practical or dogmatic humanists it seems unlikely that the passage, taken this way, would have any relevance for them at all. They do not require any religious undergirding to their humanitarian care.

Again it might be asked: What does the passage actually say to *Christian* readers who have come to understand it in a 'universalist' way? Does it teach that they should care for their needy neighbour because in caring for her they are caring for the Lord? But to think in this way is to make the caring action very self-conscious, which is the very opposite of what might otherwise be construed from the passage. Further, there is no guarantee that their needy neighbour is going to feel better if he is made aware that they are helping him because they see Christ in him; he may in fact feel demeaned as a result.

There is a further consideration for those who take the passage in a universalist sense. Whether they take some encouragement for their own actions from the idea that Christ is in the recipients of their care, or whether they find it helpful to be assured that other people without any overt acknowledgement of Christ are nonetheless engaged in doing God's will in the world by caring for the needy, do they also believe that the Son of Man will in the end-time judgement make a division between the sheep and the goats, the righteous and the cursed? If they take other elements of the passage seriously, do they also take due account of this particularist element?

---

<sup>27</sup> An interpretation along these lines can be found in David E. Garland, *Reading Matthew* (London, 1993), pp. 242-5, and in R.T. France, *Matthew*, pp. 354-8.

It is no part of the purpose of this paper to undermine the kindly response of humanists or anybody else for that matter to the needy in society. Likewise there is no intent here to criticise specifically Christian concern for those who in our own country and in the world at large are burdened with physical or material need. On the contrary, followers of Jesus Christ who take the teaching of Old and New Testaments seriously will have strong impetus to be in the vanguard of engagement with people who suffer physical and material ills. The point is that this particular passage simply does not bear upon these issues. Rather than press it into the service of something for which it was not intended either by Matthew or by Jesus we should instead attend to its distinctive teaching.

### **Conclusion**

Therefore, before coming to the passage we should, if we are members of the Christian community, heed the warning parables relating to the judgement of the church in Matthew 24/25. Then as we attend in particular to the teaching of 25:31-46 we should first of all take heart that when we seek to represent Christ in the world he himself is very present in our witness. Secondly, we should be encouraged that when non-Christians receive us sympathetically they are perhaps indicating a sympathetic response to the gospel or a willingness so to respond. Thirdly, we should take comfort from the fact that when in this harsh world Christian brothers and sisters – or we ourselves – are treated coldly or cruelly by those with whom we share the gospel, Christ still identifies with us in these circumstances. Fourthly, we should derive consolation from the realisation that the last word lies not with those who ill-use humble followers of Jesus – it lies with him as the kingly Son of Man with whom they and all people will have to do in the end.

# THE EARLY EDUCATIONAL MISSION OF THE SCOTTISH MISSIONARIES IN MADRAS PRESIDENCY: ITS SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

JOSHUA KALAPATI  
MADRAS CHRISTIAN COLLEGE, INDIA

The historical roots of the Scottish educational mission in South India date back to 1835, the year in which a school was opened by the two Church of Scotland chaplains of the East India Company. Since then its chequered history has continued through many ups and downs for about a century and a half. Through their indefatigable energy and unswerving dedication, the missionaries were destined to play a major role in the overall development of the Madras Presidency. Their mission included everything that would bring about a transformation – intellectual, social and spiritual. It is indeed difficult to measure the fruits of their labour with precision, because the indirect and unseen results of their effort are as significant and substantial as the direct and the palpable ones. An attempt is made below to elucidate their multi-faceted educational mission and its far-reaching consequences for Indian society, especially in South India.

## The Educational Mission

*1. Aims and objectives.* Alexander Duff, who started a school in Calcutta in the year 1830, was the first Scottish educational missionary to India. Duff's strategy was to educate the higher classes of Hindu society in biblical and Western knowledge through the medium of English. His firm belief was that, if the high-caste Hindus were converted to Christian faith through education, they would in turn do the same to those below them, a strategy which came to be known as Duff's 'downward filtration theory'. Under the able leadership of Duff, the school became 'for a generation the largest and most successful missionary school in India'.<sup>1</sup> The instant success of the Calcutta school was followed by the establishment of another Scottish school in Bombay under the leadership of John Wilson, which also became immensely popular. John Anderson was the third to develop the Scottish educational enterprise in Madras from the year 1837. These three seized the opportunity to train the youth of the major Presidencies in India. Dwelling on the importance of their contribution, Duncan Forrester writes as follows:

---

<sup>1</sup> D.F. Wright *et al.* (eds), *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh, 1993), p. 259.

## EDUCATIONAL MISSION OF THE SCOTTISH MISSIONARIES

Alexander Duff in Calcutta, John Wilson in Bombay and John Anderson in Madras together with their colleagues and imitators saw in this situation an opportunity both to make converts and influence the mind of India in a Christian direction. The converts they made, though few in number, were rather different from most earlier converts to Christianity; they came from higher castes; they were intelligent, restless and well-educated men who in many cases made considerable material and social sacrifices in order to become Christians; and a number of them became influential and widely respected intellectual leaders in the broader society.<sup>2</sup>

As the two Scottish chaplains in Madras were unable to devote much time to the development of the school, they sent an application to their Mission Board seeking a 'missionary who might do for Madras what had already been done for Calcutta'. This request, coupled with the rousing address by Duff to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in May 1835, prompted the sending of the young Anderson to Madras as a missionary in 1837. Having rented a building in Armenian Street, 'on April 3rd, 1837, with firm faith in God and in the power of His word and spirit, he began his labours as missionary of Christ with fifty nine Hindu boys and young men.'<sup>3</sup>

The following instructions were given to Anderson by the General Assembly Committee for Foreign Mission:

1. To train the youth of Madras in sound, comprehensive biblical knowledge;
2. To raise up thoroughly trained and pious teachers and preachers, who would evangelize the masses of their country; and
3. To target especially the higher classes of the Hindu society in Madras.<sup>4</sup>

With these objectives in mind, Anderson included in the curriculum branches as diversified as English, history, geography, arithmetic, mathematics, algebra, elements of astronomy, political economy, logic, moral philosophy and natural theology. He made it emphatically clear however, that 'every branch of knowledge communicated is to be made subservient to this desirable end [of biblical truth]'.<sup>5</sup> Anderson thus was first a Christian and only then a teacher. He clearly sought to make Scripture and conversion central to all secular teachings. According to John Braidwood, Anderson's biographer-colleague, Anderson had three 'grand

---

<sup>2</sup> D.B. Forrester, 'Christianity and Early Indian Nationalism', in *Colloques Internationaux du C.N.R.S.* 582 (Paris, 1978), p. 332.

<sup>3</sup> George Pittendrigh and William Meston, *Story of Our Madras Mission* (Edinburgh, 1907), p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in A.B. Campbell, 'Madras Mission of the Free Church of Scotland', *Report of the South India Missionary Conference* (Madras, 1858), p. 37.

<sup>5</sup> Pittendrigh, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

aims': 1. To convert his pupils to God, 2. To qualify such converts to become teachers and preachers, and 3. To use these trained agents to instruct, convert and form Christian communities in the land.<sup>6</sup> This uncompromising missionary zeal led him to face many serious problems posed by Hindu orthodoxy.

By contrast, William Miller, who arrived in Madras in 1862 to succeed Anderson, sought to redefine the role of educational mission. He believed that education should make a 'leavening impact'. As he put it, '[The Mission Institutions'] central idea is that of associating all education and all thought with revealed truth, and of making them thus a channel whereby *it may enter into and leaven the mind of the community*'.<sup>7</sup> In this endeavour, Miller suggested, the task of the educational work is 'ploughing and sowing', whereas the responsibility of 'harvesting' would be of those engaged in preaching.<sup>8</sup> Thus Miller was led to believe, like Duff, that education should be understood as a preparation for evangelism, *preparatio evangelica*. He was, however, opposed to using education as a 'bait for conversion'. Conversion of individuals in Christian institutions, Miller believed, should not be primary but subsidiary.<sup>9</sup>

**2. Expansion.** When Anderson arrived in Madras in 1837, there were only two other schools, besides the one being run by the chaplains of the Church of Scotland – one established by the government and the other called the Native Educational Society Institution.<sup>10</sup> Anderson soon succeeded not only in developing the school, but also in establishing a network of schools around Madras. He opened a school in 1839 in the Hindu temple town of Conjeevaram, which was fifty miles away from Madras. Through the dedicated work of his missionary friend John Braidwood, a school building was constructed there in 1841. A school at Nellore was also brought under the control of the Scottish mission in 1840. Another was established in Chingleput in 1840. In Madras itself in 1841 a branch school was set up at Triplicane, a district of Madras.<sup>11</sup> It

<sup>6</sup> J. Braidwood, *True Yoke-Fellows in The Mission Field: the Life and the Labours of the Rev John Anderson and the Rev Robert Johnston* (London, 1862), p. 62.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Pittendrigh, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>8</sup> See William Miller, 'The Place of Education as a Missionary Agency', *Report of the General Missionary Conference* (London, 1873), pp. 107-8.

<sup>9</sup> See T. Ambrose Jeyasekaran, 'William Miller and the Meaning of Christian Education in India', *Bulletin of Scottish Institute of Missionary Studies* (1988-9), p. 48.

<sup>10</sup> See Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>11</sup> See Pittendrigh, *op. cit.*, p. 35-8.

## EDUCATIONAL MISSION OF THE SCOTTISH MISSIONARIES

needs to be mentioned that the Revd P. Rajahgopaul, the earliest convert of Anderson, opened schools separately for Chetty community and for the poor children of the rag pickers in 1870.<sup>12</sup>

Thus the Scottish mission enjoyed a monopoly over the educational scene in Madras Presidency. Its domination continued for well over a century. Although these schools faced frequent problems because of caste prejudices and religious conflicts, they proved to be indispensable. Stephen Neill, dwelling on the importance of the Scottish mission schools, observes that

The Scots succeeded because what they offered was so much better than what was being offered by others. At the time there was little effective competition. As a consequence, though the Christian schools were emptied as a result of conversions, they always filled up again; students, frustrated in their search elsewhere for what the Scots provided, in the end came back to the original source.<sup>13</sup>

Stephen Neill also pays a generous tribute to the missionaries that they were free from racial superiority and their relationship with their pupils was akin to the traditional Indian relationship between the 'guru' and 'chela' as beautifully expressed in the ancient Hindu classics.<sup>14</sup>

**3. Innovations.** As part of their educational mission, the missionaries introduced a number of measures, which have had far-reaching consequences towards the advancement of various sections of society in Madras Presidency. A few are mentioned here.

The residential and boarding system was introduced into the educational set-up. It was in fact a necessity, because students thronged Madras from faraway places and could not afford to stay outside on their own in lodgings or eat in hotels. Therefore William Miller started the student homes, as they were called, in 1881 on an experimental basis. They provided both lodging and boarding under one roof. These student homes became immensely popular. Miller introduced the principle of self-governance in the hostel management. In these hostels, students without barriers of language, caste, colour or creed mingled together and ate and slept together. It was probably for the first time that peoples of all sections of the highly segregated Indian society were brought together under one roof. A harmonious social life was thus nurtured in the educational provision. Miller believed that this residential system would gradually shape the future responsibilities of the students. Truly, in the

---

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>13</sup> Stephen Neill, *A History of Christianity in India (1707-1856)* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 327.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 328.

words of his biographer, 'He was a great believer in hiding a little leaven in the meal so as to leaven the whole lump.'<sup>15</sup>

Another innovation introduced into the educational system was the formation of the literary and debating societies. At Madras Christian College, which came into reckoning in 1877, Miller inaugurated several societies such as the History Union, the Philosophical Society, and the Tamil and Telugu Societies. In these societies the creative spirit of the students was kindled and fostered. Young students from these societies later emerged as outstanding orators and writers who played significant roles in the renaissance of India. Also, the Alumni Association started in 1891 was the oldest of its kind in India. Down the generations it has taken a vigorous part in the developmental activities of the College.

Mention also must be made of the monitor system that was introduced by Anderson himself. As the very few missionary teachers found the handling of the large number of students quite unwieldy, Anderson appointed class monitors, who in turn would handle the students, including overseeing their discipline. Some of the early converts were given this assignment. This measure contributed immensely towards shaping leadership qualities apart from orienting them to the teaching profession. However, these monitors 'were employed only on the lower levels of teaching'.<sup>16</sup>

**4. *Ecumenism through education.*** Although several missions had been operative in India since the seventeenth century, there was not much interaction among them. Bringing them under one joint enterprise was quite a task indeed. It was a stroke of genius and tremendous far-sightedness that William Miller initiated an ecumenical venture through the portals of education, which was to have lasting importance. This venture in fact was a historic necessity. Miller recounts that after 1841, the government of the Presidency opened schools conducted by officials of its own. From these schools, 'all religious, and in particular all Christian, elements were as much as possible excluded'.<sup>17</sup> This trend towards secularizing of education was strengthened with the formation of Madras University, along with those of Calcutta and Bombay, in 1857. Disturbed by these developments which would naturally lead to the dilution if not dissolution of the Christian character of education, Miller presented a blueprint to the Foreign Missions Committee of the Free Church of Scotland in 1874, giving his reasons why a Christian College for Southern India was a necessity and why it should have a corporate

---

<sup>15</sup> O. Kandaswamy Chetty, *Dr. William Miller* (Madras, 1924), p. 27.

<sup>16</sup> See Neill, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

<sup>17</sup> William Miller, *The Madras Christian College: A Short Account of Its History And Influence* (Edinburgh, 1905), p. 13.

## EDUCATIONAL MISSION OF THE SCOTTISH MISSIONARIES

structure. He also explained the financial implications of such a move. Miller enjoyed such good rapport and influence among other missions in Madras that he ensured their formal support for his grand plan.<sup>18</sup> Consequently, the Foreign Missions Committee negotiated with the various mission bodies in Madras. This move was endorsed by the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland in 1875, as a result of which the Central Institution, which already had B.A. classes since 1867, was transformed into a Central Christian College and named Madras Christian College on January 1 1877. The Church Missionary Society and the Wesleyan Missionary Society supported the move and gave financial support. The S.P.G. mission and the London Missionary Society promised to send students, and the Church of Scotland sent a friendly communication.<sup>19</sup> Miller's dream of all Protestant bodies jointly sharing the burden of Christian higher education came closer to fuller reality in 1910, when the Church of Scotland, which hitherto carried a college on its own, decided to join the Union. This was also the year in which the Madras Christian College Governing Board was created, thus making it independent of the Foreign Missions' Supreme Governing Board.<sup>20</sup> By the beginning of 1913 Madras Christian College became a truly corporate and ecumenical enterprise. As many as six societies, viz. the United Free Church, the Wesleyan Mission, the Church Missionary Society, the Church of Scotland, the London Missionary Society and the American Baptist Missionary Society joined as partners in the control and maintenance of the College.<sup>21</sup> This was probably the first time in history that so many churches were involved in a single educational enterprise.

This joint endeavour proved to be highly successful not only in establishing the reputation of the Madras Christian College as a premier institution in India but also in giving impetus to the formation of other such joint ventures among educational institutions. The United Theological College in Bangalore, St Christopher's Training College, the Meston Training College in Madras and the Medical College in Vellore

---

<sup>18</sup> See Miller, 'Need of a Christian College for Southern India' – A Letter to the Committee on Foreign Missions of the Free Church of Scotland (Madras, 1874). Miller's proposal was endorsed by those in Madras belonging to Church of Scotland, Church Missionary Society, Christian Vernacular Education Society, Doveton Protestant College, Gospel Propagation Society, London Missionary Society and Wesleyan Mission Society.

<sup>19</sup> See Pittendrigh, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-6.

<sup>20</sup> See *Minutes of the United Free Church of Scotland (May 1908-April 1912)*, nos. 1526, 1636.

<sup>21</sup> See *Report of the United Free Church of Scotland Foreign Missions-1912*, pp. 25-6.



## SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

were all results of sharing the burden together by the like-minded missions.<sup>22</sup> Today the same ecumenical spirit continues to be the guiding force behind the high reputation all these institutions enjoy.

This co-operative effort fructified not only at the level of education but created a congenial atmosphere among the various missions in South India leading to the formation of the Church of South India (C.S.I.). The role of the Scottish missionaries in and through Madras Christian College in facilitating the formation of the C.S.I. is well brought out by Bengt Sundkler:

The role of Madras Christian College in bringing about a climate of co-operation should be stressed. Organized at first by the Free Church of Scotland in 1867, the college was reorganized in 1910 on a co-operative basis with the two Scottish Missions (Free Church of Scotland and Church of Scotland), the Wesleyans and the Church Missionary Society as supporting bodies. Most of the Indian leaders in the unity movement, for example Azariah and K.T. Paul, had received their academic training at this college. The influence of professors such as Wm. Miller, Wm. Skinner, A.G. Hogg (United Free Church of Scotland) was considerable.<sup>23</sup>

**5. Journalistic mission.** When the Educational Act of 1835 was passed by the Government, the English language was accorded official status. This measure came as a great boon for the missionaries. Soon they started to use English effectively as a medium in their schools and began periodicals to ventilate their opinions on matters pertaining to religion and society. Alexander Duff founded the monthly review called *The Calcutta Christian Observer* in 1832. Under Duff's editorship *The Observer* assumed 'a characteristically polemical tone'. Duff used the journal as a platform to 'promote his mission theories' and speak for the converts and protect their legal rights.<sup>24</sup>

In Madras, John Anderson started the periodical called *Native Herald* on October 2, 1841. The contents of the first number give a fair glimpse into its character. They comprised an exposure of the idolatry of the Hindus, the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, remarks on Christian school books, etc. *Native Herald* received an instant rejoinder, which sought to defend Hinduism

---

<sup>22</sup> See J.M. Orr, 'The Contribution of the Scottish Missions to the Rise of Responsible Churches in India' (Ph.D. thesis, New College, Edinburgh, 1967), p. 371.

<sup>23</sup> Bengt Sundkler, *Church of South India. The Movement Towards Union (1900-1947)* (London, 1954), pp. 29-30.

<sup>24</sup> I.D. Maxwell, 'Alexander Duff and the Theological and Philosophical Background to the General Assembly Mission to 1840' (Ph.D. thesis, New College, Edinburgh, 1995), p. 170.

## EDUCATIONAL MISSION OF THE SCOTTISH MISSIONARIES

against the attacks of Anderson. Anderson rejoiced over this reaction and wrote to a friend to say, 'Nothing could work better for advancing our great object. To examine, defend and discuss is the way to pull down error and to establish God's truth in India.'<sup>25</sup>

The Revd P. Rajahgopaul, the first convert of Anderson, later founded the Native Christian Literature Society and collected a great amount of books for both Christian and Hindu readers. This literary activity was continued by the Revd R.M. Bauboo, Rajahgopaul's successor, and Tabitha his wife. Tabitha, apart from her interest in teaching women, became the editor of the Tamil periodical *Amrita Vachani*. She also coedited South India's first Indian Christian journal, *The Eastern Star*.<sup>26</sup>

The journalistic mission which aroused a great deal of interest and posed a challenge to the Hindu intelligensia in Madras reached its height with the starting of *The Christian College Magazine* in 1883. It was initially a monthly whose aim was to 'awaken or to keep awake an interest in higher things, and in every social, moral and literary question affecting India's present and future'.<sup>27</sup> True to its aim, it generated a great deal of intellectual vigour and curiosity among the educated, involving Christian apologists on one side and their Hindu counterparts on the other. At another level it was the professors of the Madras Christian College debating with their learned students, past and present. A cursory look at the articles published reveals the apologetic fireworks, which in turn reveal the determination of learned Hindus to oppose Christian missionaries at all levels. This literary activity by way of polemics involving Christians and Hindus greatly fostered the nationalistic spirit in the youthful minds of the Indian community.

In the year 1883-4, the Revd Professor Charles Cooper set the ball rolling. In his article, 'The Philosophy of the Upanisads', Cooper argues that Hinduism is basically pantheism, and 'pantheism negates morality, at least in any real sense. It does away with personality, free will, and hence responsibility. Right and wrong become merely a phenomenal distinction. Whatever is, must be, is therefore right.'<sup>28</sup> T.P. Ramanatha Iyer joins issue with Cooper and strongly rejects the criticism that the Hindu temper is generally pessimistic. He takes pains to put forward as many as seventeen arguments to rebut Cooper's views.<sup>29</sup> These polemical exchanges of very high intellectual order continued for about a decade

---

<sup>25</sup> See Braidwood, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

<sup>26</sup> See S. Sathianadhan, *Sketches Of Indian Christians* (Madras 1896), pp. 19-37. Quoted in Orr, *op. cit.*, p. 369.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in *Report of the Third Dicentennial Missionary Conference* (1892-3), Vol.11 (Bombay, 1893), p. 679.

<sup>28</sup> See *The Christian College Magazine* I (1883-4), p. 35.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 293-9.

before culminating in the most famous one between S. Subrahmanya Sastri and Professor A.G. Hogg during the year 1904-5.

Sastri in an article on 'Hindu Philosophy'<sup>30</sup> maintains that the doctrines of karma and the transmigration of souls are the highest sanctions of Hindu morality and as such are the cardinal principles of Hindu philosophy. Sastri surveys the essence of the systems of Indian philosophy, juxtaposing it with the Western philosophical systems. He concludes that the Vedanta system afforded the most stable foundation for ethics, because its cardinal principle 'Tat Twam Asi' provides the true knowledge that all persons are one reality in Brahman, and therefore it urges one and all to rise above all desires and wants. This ideal that all human beings are ultimately one is higher than the concept of universal brotherhood. Most of his views are clearly advanced against Christianity.

Alfred Hogg, the Professor of Philosophy, in his initial response, while commending the critical spirit of Subrahmanya Sastri, nevertheless chides his overeagerness to 'accentuate superficial parallelism and ignore the fundamental contrasts' between the Indian and Western systems. He then proceeds to give a detailed reply to Sastri's charges in his famous article 'Karma and Redemption', which was serialized in five parts in 1904-5.<sup>31</sup> Hogg begins with his now famous distinction between faith and belief – faith being immediate and existential, while belief being the intellectual expression of faith. In summary he claims that the contrasts between Christianity and higher Hinduism are in the area of belief and not faith. He argues that the Hindu idea of karma and the Christian doctrine of redemption differ in that the former is predominantly judicial and the latter moral. He points out that the God who is love and personally intervenes in human affairs is conceivable in Christianity alone. Nevertheless, Hogg makes a passionate plea for effective intellectual intercourse between Christian and Hindu thinkers. He suggests that the points of divergence between them would take them closer to Truth than their superficial agreements. In this endeavour the Christian must cast off his alien mould and reconstruct and reshape his thought in order to be more acceptable to the Hindu, at the same time making the historical person of Jesus Christ and his gospel the very centre of his thought.

Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the great Hindu philosopher and apologist, having studied under the Scottish missionaries during 1904-8 at Madras Christian College, was no mute spectator. How he fielded himself

---

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII (1904-5), pp. 68-83.

<sup>31</sup> For Hogg's initial response see his article, 'Mr. Subrahmanya Sastri on Hindu Philosophy' *ibid.*, pp. 121-8. Hogg's elaborate response was his 'Karma and Redemption' which was serialized in V parts in the same volume. Part I (pp. 281-92), Part II (pp. 359-73), Part III (pp. 393-409), Part IV (pp. 449-69) and Part V (pp. 505-22).

## EDUCATIONAL MISSION OF THE SCOTTISH MISSIONARIES

in the arena of polemics was brought out by Eric J. Sharpe: 'It may well have been Hogg's book, *Karma and Redemption* (1904-5 in article form), in which the ethical basis of Vedanta was subjected to criticism which prompted Radhakrishnan to write his first work of Hindu apologetics, *Ethics of Vedanta* (1908).<sup>32</sup> Such was the determination of Radhakrishnan to defend his faith against the criticisms of his missionary teachers that he contributed an article with polemical overtones to the *Madras Christian College Magazine* entitled, 'Hindu Thought and Christian Doctrine', in 1924 which was 16 years after he left the College.

Thus the Scottish missionaries aroused the religious consciousness in the Hindu intellectual community by forcing them to debate freely with the Christian apologists. This intellectually enlightening endeavour immensely contributed to the sense of Indian nationalism and patriotism. The missionary criticisms of Hindu faith and practice challenged the Hindu elite and forced them to defend their national and religious heritage. Through their writings the missionaries stirred and stimulated the power of thinking in the Hindu mind. This is precisely what they hoped for. In a letter to a friend as early as October 1863, William Miller wrote:

There is a great power of thinking in [Hindus]. In our particular line of work this is the great thing that is needed, *just to get them to think*. The barest even intellectual realization, if real one, of the truth that is lying dormant in their minds would be the most likely of all human means to lead them to Christ.<sup>33</sup>

**6. Women's education.** One significant achievement of the Scottish missionaries in Madras was their labour among the women's community. While it was still taboo for Indian women to come out into open society and interact with others, the missionaries encouraged them in many ways, which was indeed a milestone in social upliftment in the Madras Presidency. Stephen Neill rightly observes; 'one feature of the work in Madras which distinguished it from the other Scottish enterprises was the extraordinary success of the work for girls'.<sup>34</sup>

Since the early Danish missions started the setting up of girl schools, other missions followed them all over India. Anderson zealously advocated the need and necessity of women's education. In *Native Herald*, with a firm Christian conviction Anderson wrote, 'Native females are to be

---

<sup>32</sup> See John Hinnels and Eric J. Sharpe (eds), *Hinduism* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1972), p. 101. The influence of the Madras Christian College and the missionary teachers therein on Radhakrishnan's life and thought form part of the author's doctoral work entitled 'Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and Christianity', submitted to the University of Madras, 1994.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in Pittendrigh, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-2 (emphasis mine).

<sup>34</sup> Neill, *op. cit.*, p. 321.

permanently raised from their present fearful degradation... the blessed light of the cross, and the love of Him who hung there, must beam into their dark souls, if they are ever to taste of life and glory. *And why should the females not taste it as well as their fathers, husbands and brothers?*'<sup>35</sup> As a result of his labours, a school for girls was opened towards the end of 1843 and another at Triplicane in 1844. Mrs Braidwood took active part teaching the girl students. The Madras school came to be known as the Madras Girls Day school. There were 100 girls present at the end of the year 1843. Their ages ranged from four to ten. They took their first examination in December 1844. By the year 1846, the number of girls had swollen to 400. But sadly, girls were often withdrawn by parents at an early age and arrangements were made for their marriages. In spite of this, the numbers increased and additional branches were opened in Chingleput, Wallajahbad and Sriperumbudur.<sup>36</sup>

Another notable feature in women's education was the setting up of boarding schools and orphanages. When the girls were baptized by John Anderson, they were disowned by their parents and relatives, and therefore he had to provide them shelter in his own residence. Thus a boarding school became a necessity. The Ladies Society in Scotland gave a generous grant and thus the first school named 'The Boarding School for Convert and Orphan Girls' came into reckoning.<sup>37</sup> In order to find employment for these educated girls, a lace school was set up in Chingleput, where large sales of lace became a source of income for the school. There were also training schools set up for women teachers.<sup>38</sup>

The Scottish mission in Madras was also distinguished for its Zenana work. This refers to the practice of ladies visiting the native women in their own residences, teaching them and educating them on many matters of social importance. This Zenana work arose chiefly because a large number of Indian women were confined to their homes and were seldom allowed out by the men at home. This Zenana work was largely undertaken by the wives of the missionaries and by women missionaries. Zenana work developed directly out of the school mission.<sup>39</sup>

### **Social Reform through Education**

The Christian missionaries were largely responsible for shaking up the inertia of the status quo of the Indian society, in which several evils were deeply seated and the various sections of the population were reconciled to them. With the tacit backing of the British government, the missionaries

<sup>35</sup> Braidwood, *op. cit.*, p. 270 (emphasis mine).

<sup>36</sup> Pittendrigh, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-106.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 110-12.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

## EDUCATIONAL MISSION OF THE SCOTTISH MISSIONARIES

raised cudgels against all the evil practices of the society. The Scottish missionaries were in the forefront. The following two instances witness to their unimpeded zeal to bring about social reform through the mission of education.

**1. Fighting casteism and untouchability.** The question what caste is, says Duncan Forrester, is easy to pose, but extraordinarily difficult to answer.<sup>40</sup> This is chiefly due to its long and chequered history, much of it remaining unrecorded. The Laws of Manu and the Hindu Vedas and Shastras give us a variegated connotation of caste. One thing is very clear: caste was and has ever been the basis for social stratification in India. Its presence is so pervasive that M.N. Srinivas, the eminent sociologist, observed that caste was everywhere the unit of social action.<sup>41</sup>

The missionaries fought against the caste system and untouchability when these were at their worst expression especially in South India. In the words of a missionary, 'In no part of India has the caste acquired a firmer hold than in the Southern Presidency, and nowhere is the cleavage between the caste and the non-caste more complete.'<sup>42</sup> The missionaries opposed caste and untouchability tooth and nail, because Christianity, they professed, believed in social equality and inequality was a sin in God's creation. In the words of Duncan Forrester, 'Equality is seen as the necessary concomitant of social justice, of a humane and caring social order, of human dignity and of progress. Inequality, on the other hand, breeds racialism, the denial of the proper claims of the individual and reaction.'<sup>43</sup>

The champion who railed against these twin evils in Madras was John Anderson and the arena was the Scottish school of which he was the head. Narration of just one incident would highlight the acuteness and enormity of the problem. On October 19, 1838, a year after the school was started, three Pariah boys managed to enrol themselves as students in the school. They wore the false caste marks on their foreheads. As soon as this was detected, there was a groundswell of aversion and protest from the upper caste pupils. The parents of these caste students petitioned to Anderson to expel these 'intruders' or at least place them on separate benches so that their sons might not get 'polluted'. Anderson refused to concede either of these demands. The caste boys therefore left the school and the numbers fell from 276 to 100. The Native Education Society exploited the situation

---

<sup>40</sup> D.B. Forrester, *Caste And Christianity* (London, 1980), p.8.

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in R.L. Hardgrave, Jr, *The Nadars of Tamilnadu: The Political Culture of Community in Change* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969), p.1.

<sup>42</sup> Pittendrigh, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>43</sup> Forrester, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

by admitting the boycotting students, thus adding to Anderson's woes. But the missionary stood like a rock and finally gained a moral victory. The students gradually returned and the institution flourished more than ever before.

A.B. Campbell narrates two decades later in 1858 the consequences of this moral victory:

Pariah and Brahmin might be seen sitting together on the same bench, learning the same lessons, and struggling together for the mastery. To all who were acquainted with the condition of the people of Madras at that period, to all who know how bigoted and strong their attachment to caste was, this victory which was gained by the missionary will appear no light and trivial matter. *Indeed, this was a blow given to caste, the effects of which were then felt throughout South India, and are so felt to the present day.*<sup>44</sup>

However, caste system in India has not only not disappeared but continues to flourish today even among the Christians, although untouchability surrounding it is largely dismantled. Anderson's tenacity in retaining the Pariah boys even at the risk of the school being closed and him being physically threatened, which Braidwood so movingly narrates in his biography on Anderson, mirrors not only his Christian convictions of human equality and dignity, but his zeal to bring about a social reform in a highly segregated society. He had failed to eradicate caste, but his determination to fight social evils so early in Indian renaissance is a milestone in social reform.

**2. The anti-Nautch movement.** The term 'Nautch' is an anglicized form of the Sanskrit word 'Natya', which simply means Dance. An age old Hindu custom was to employ young girls to dance at public and private functions and in religious ceremonies. These dancers were branded derogatively as *Devadasis* (Deva=God; dasi=slave), which meant that they were married and enslaved to the gods. These were treated as the handmaidens of gods, because they were married off to the temple deity at an early age and employed in most temples in South India. 'Devadasi' became a caste by itself when these dancing girls formed their own customs, laws of inheritance and rules of etiquette. These were exploited by the priestly caste of Brahmins. They used to carry on a trade in dancing girls from castes such as vellalas and kaikolas.

There was a great deal of aversion among missionaries and educated Hindus against this practice, because Nautch dancing was often associated with prostitution. While many prostitutes were not Nautch girls, all Nautch girls were treated on a par with prostitutes.

---

<sup>44</sup> Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 38 (emphasis mine).

## EDUCATIONAL MISSION OF THE SCOTTISH MISSIONARIES

The crusading missionary against Nautch dancing was William Miller. When the Madras Hindu Social Reform Association was formed in 1892, Miller organised most of its meetings at the Madras Christian College, of which he was the Principal. The objectives of the Association were the promotion of women's education, improvement of domestic and marriage habits and amalgamation of castes. Miller, who presided over these meetings, severely criticised the evils of child marriage, oppressed widowhood, untouchability, priestcraft etc. In 1893, Miller officially launched the highly successful anti-Nautch movement. This meeting was supported by the other missionaries throughout the Presidency. The high point of the movement was the active co-operation between the missionaries and the Hindu reformers.<sup>45</sup>

### Conclusion

#### Educational Mission for Nation-building

Although Christian missionaries were in 'social and ideological marginality',<sup>46</sup> their role in arousing the feelings of nationalism in the Indian mind was by no means insignificant or unsubstantial. Through education, fighting of social evils and superstitions and ushering in a new social and economic order, the missionaries tremendously contributed to nation-building. They did not do so directly, but moulded the native mind in such a way that it was soon overcome with nationalist sentiment. The Indians were geared to build a new nation. They started their own schools and colleges, began bringing about social reform and for the first time raised the slogans of self-reliance and self-rule.

A significant achievement of the Scottish missionaries was the shaping of the Hindu elite, who later played a major role in nation-building. Positively, through the process of education the missionaries caused a great deal of awareness in them. Negatively, they provoked them to undertake developmental tasks on their own. Sometimes, this negative reaction was discernible almost instantly. R. Suntharalingam explained this negative mood as follows:

Starting schools was one of the ideas which Hindu leaders in Madras conceived in their efforts to stem the tide of missionary advance. Another idea that was tried out was the starting of news papers to counter the propaganda of the missionary organs, especially *Native Herald*, which the Free Church of Scotland had launched in October 1841 in the wake of the student conversions earlier in that year. Since 1840, the Hindu cause was espoused by *The Native Interpreter*.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> See G.A. Oddie, *Social Protest in India* (New Delhi, 1979), pp. 102-9.

<sup>46</sup> Forrester, 'Christianity and Early Nationalism', *op. cit.*, p. 331.

<sup>47</sup> R. Suntharalingam, *Politics and Nationalist Awakening in South India (1852-91)* (Tucson, AZ, 1974), p. 38.



The most noteworthy feature of the missionary labour was its stamp upon the Indian renaissance movement and the regeneration of Hinduism. In the words of S. Manickam,

The revival of Hinduism and the various reform movements which have sprung up since the last quarter of the 19th century are but the direct result of the missionary activities. Not willing to remain passive to the missionary attacks on popular Hinduism, superstitious beliefs and customs, the Hindu orthodoxy sharply reacted, which in turn brought about the revival of Hinduism and the regeneration of the Hindu society. This fact alone places the Hindu community under a great debt of gratitude to the Christian missionaries.<sup>48</sup>

It is no exaggeration to say that the native Christian leadership was largely formed by the Scottish missionaries. Great Indian Christian leaders like V.S. Azariah, K.T. Paul, Chenchiah, Chakkarai, D.G. Moses, Paul D. Devanandan and Rajaiah D. Paul among others were trained under the Scottish missionaries. These leaders played a significant role in shaping the future of the Indian church.

The impact of Western civilization on the nationalist movement was well acknowledged by many Indian Christians of the later years. For instance, Rajaiah D. Paul says,

No one in his senses ever questions the fact that it is the impact of Western civilisation, which is based on a Christian culture, that has been responsible for the new ideas of freedom and democracy which in expressing themselves have produced the results which we see now.<sup>49</sup>

R.D. Paul goes on to enumerate the ways in which the Christian missionaries transformed the natives and their thinking. They rescued them from idolatry, saved them from a religion divorced from morality, convinced them of a personal God against a range of pantheistic belief in deity, weaned them from polytheism, from bloody sacrifices to gods and goddesses, erased superstitions, released them from the fetters of caste, made them aware of untouchability as a crime *etc.* He concludes that 'Hinduism has reformed itself from all its more blatant wrongs because of the spread of Christian ideas in this country and the people's acquaintance with Christian ways of thinking.'<sup>50</sup>

All this does not mean to suggest that the Scottish mission was perfect or its missionaries free from folly. Like all other missionaries they too had their share of imperfections, weaknesses and even prejudices. V.S. Azariah who himself studied under Scottish missionaries at Madras Christian

---

<sup>48</sup> S. Manickam, *The Social Setting of Christian Conversions in South India* (Wiesbaden, 1977), p. 257.

<sup>49</sup> Rajaiah D. Paul, 'Missionary Activity in Present Day India', in Blaise Levai (ed.), *Revolution in Missions* (Vellore, 1957), p. 8.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

## EDUCATIONAL MISSION OF THE SCOTTISH MISSIONARIES

College lamented at the 1910 Edinburgh conference that the Indian workers expected 'friendship' rather than 'condescending love' from the foreign workers. He cited some instances of the imperious attitude of missionaries, certainly not his teachers, but others he experienced later in his career.<sup>51</sup> Likewise, Stephen Neill pointed out with reference to the Scottish missionaries that like the other missionaries elsewhere, these at times converted the natives not only to Christian faith but also to the European ways and European habits of dressing.<sup>52</sup> Truly, there are many instances of converts developing an unsuspecting adulation for anything Western and despising their own native culture.

These imperfections notwithstanding, the educational mission of the Scottish missionaries in Madras Presidency was an ennobling saga of sacrifice and a story of success. It was indeed a 'tryst with destiny' towards ushering in a modern India.

---

<sup>51</sup> See V.S. Azariah, 'The Problem of Co-operation Between Foreign and Native Workers', in *History and Records of the World Missionary Conference-1910*, pp. 306-15.

<sup>52</sup> Neill, *op. cit.*, p. 321.

## B. B. WARFIELD'S APOLOGETICAL APPEAL TO 'RIGHT REASON': EVIDENCE OF A 'RATHER BALD RATIONALISM'?

PAUL KJOSS HELSETH  
MINNETONKA, MINNESOTA

Princeton Seminary was founded in 1812 in order to defend biblical Christianity against the perceived crisis of 'modern infidelity'.<sup>1</sup> Its founders took their stand between the extremes of deism on the one hand and 'mysticism' (or 'enthusiasm') on the other, and resolved 'to fit clergymen to meet the cultural crisis, to roll back what they perceived as tides of irreligion sweeping the country, and to provide a learned defense of Christianity generally and the Bible specifically'.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries theologians from Princeton Seminary proved to be the most articulate defenders of Reformed orthodoxy in America. Their apologetical efforts have come under intense critical scrutiny, however, because critics allege that these efforts were based upon an accommodation of theology to the anthropological and epistemological assumptions of 'the modern scientific revolution'.<sup>3</sup> Scottish Common Sense Realism and Baconian inductivism rather than the assumptions of the Reformed tradition were the driving forces behind the Princeton theology, critics contend, despite the fact that these forces often were tempered by the Princetonians' personal piety. Critics conclude, therefore, that the theologians at Old Princeton Seminary were not the champions of Reformed orthodoxy that they claimed to be. They were, rather, the purveyors of a theology that was bastardized by an 'alien philosophy'.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Mark Noll, 'The Founding of Princeton Seminary', *Westminster Theological Journal* 42 (1979), p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> Noll, 'The Princeton Theology', in *The Princeton Theology*, ed. David Wells (Grand Rapids, MI, 1989), p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> George Marsden, 'The Collapse of American Evangelical Academia', in *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*, ed. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Notre Dame, IN, 1983), p. 241.

<sup>4</sup> This is the general theme of John Vander Stelt's *Philosophy and Scripture: A Study of Old Princeton and Westminster Theology* (Marlton, NJ, 1978). The Dutch and Neo-Orthodox branches of the

## APOLOGETICAL APPEAL TO 'RIGHT REASON'

What, then, are we to make of this conclusion? Were the Princeton theologians in fact 'nineteenth-century positivists who did not reject theology'?<sup>5</sup> Did they accommodate their theology to anthropological and epistemological assumptions that are diametrically opposed to those of the Reformed tradition? I have argued elsewhere that such a conclusion cannot be sustained, simply because it misses the moral rather than the merely rational nature of the Princetonians' thought. When Old Princeton's 'intellectualism' is interpreted within a context which affirms that the soul is a single unit that acts in all of its functions – its thinking, its feeling, and its willing – as a single substance, it becomes clear that the Princeton theologians were not cold, calculating rationalists whose confidence in the mind led them to ignore the import of the subjective and the centrality of experience in religious epistemology.<sup>6</sup> They were, rather, Reformed scholars who consistently acknowledged that subjective and experiential

---

Reformed camp generally agree with this assessment of Old Princeton. Contemporary interpreters who endorse this assessment are indebted in one way or another to Sydney Ahlstrom, 'The Scottish Philosophy and American Theology', *Church History* 24 (1955), pp. 257-72. See, for example, Ernest Sandeen, 'The Princeton Theology: One Source of Biblical Literalism in American Protestantism', *Church History* 31 (1962), pp. 307-21; Samuel Pearson, 'Enlightenment Influence on Protestant Thought in Early National America', *Encounter* 38 (1977), pp. 193-212; and Marsden, 'Collapse', pp. 219-64. Older studies that are critical of the 'intellectualism' of Old Princeton include Ralph Danhof, *Charles Hodge as Dogmatician* (Goes, 1929); John O. Nelson, 'The Rise of the Princeton Theology: A Generic History of American Presbyterianism Until 1850' (Ph.D., Yale University, New Haven, CN, 1935); William Livingstone, 'The Princeton Apologetic as Exemplified by the Work of Benjamin B. Warfield and J. Gresham Machen: A Study of American Theology, 1880-1930' (Ph.D., Yale University, New Haven, CN, 1948).

<sup>5</sup> George Marsden, 'Scotland and Philadelphia: Common Sense Philosophy from Jefferson to Westminster', *Reformed Theological Journal* 29 (1979), p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> The word 'rationalism' and its cognates are used in this essay to refer to a confidence in the mind that springs from indifference to the noetic effects of sin. This indifference, moreover, has its origin in an accommodation of theology to the assumptions of Enlightenment philosophy.

concerns are of critical importance in any consideration of religious epistemology. Indeed, they recognized that the operation of the intellect involves the 'whole soul' – mind, will and emotions – rather than the rational faculty alone, and as a consequence they insisted that the ability to reason 'rightly' – *i.e.* the ability to see revealed truth for what it objectively is – presupposes the regenerating activity of the Holy Spirit on the 'whole soul' of a moral agent. Old Princeton's 'intellectualism', in short, sprang from an endorsement of the classical Reformed distinction between a merely speculative and a spiritual understanding of the gospel rather than from accommodation to the assumptions of Enlightenment thought.<sup>7</sup>

The question arises, however, as to how the assumptions of the Reformed tradition are related to the Princeton apologetic in general and the apologetic of Benjamin B. Warfield (1851-1921) in particular. Is not Warfield's insistence that the Christian religion has been placed in the

---

<sup>7</sup> The Princeton theologians endorsed an understanding of Christian anthropology known as Realistic Dualism. According to this doctrine, the soul is a single unit that necessarily acts as a single substance. It is comprised of two rather than three faculties or 'powers': the understanding, which takes precedence in all rational activity, and the will, which is broadly defined to include the emotions and volitions. The will, moreover, is not a self-determining power, but rather a power that is determined by the motives of the acting agent. For an excellent analysis of the doctrine of free agency that flows from this anthropology, see Paul Ramsey's introductory essay to Jonathan Edwards, *The Freedom of the Will* (New Haven, CN, 1957), especially pp. 38-40. For an excellent statement of the distinction between a merely speculative and a spiritual understanding of the gospel, see Jonathan Edwards, 'Christian Knowledge', *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1992), II, pp. 157-63. For an extensive analysis of the issues addressed in this paragraph, see my dissertation, 'Moral Character and Moral Certainty: The Subjective State of the Soul and J. G. Machen's Critique of Theological Liberalism' (Ph.D., Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI, 1996), chs. 1, 2, and my article "'Right Reason" and the Princeton Mind: The Moral Context', *Journal of Presbyterian History*, forthcoming.

world 'to reason its way to its dominion'<sup>8</sup> a particularly egregious example of Old Princeton's 'rather bald rationalism'?<sup>9</sup> Is not Warfield's apologetical appeal to 'right reason', in other words, in fact evidence of an accommodation of theology to the assumptions of an essentially humanistic philosophy?<sup>10</sup> This essay argues that it is not, simply because the moral considerations that rule in the epistemological realm also rule in the realm of apologetics. Whereas Warfield certainly affirmed that the primary mission of the Christian apologist 'is no less than to reason the world into acceptance of the "truth"',<sup>11</sup> he nonetheless recognized that the 'rightness' of the apprehension that leads to the advancement of the kingdom is produced by the *testimonium internum Spiritus Sancti*. He acknowledged, therefore, that the labours of the apologist will be of little or no consequence without the sovereign workings of the Spirit of God, for he recognized that only the renewed soul has the moral capacity to see revealed truth for what it objectively is, namely glorious. That this is the case, and that a reorientation in how we think about the appeal to 'right reason' is long overdue, will be clear after an examination of the relationship between the objective and the subjective in Warfield's religious epistemology.

**Knowledge of God and Religious Faith: Conditioned by the 'Ethical State' of the Soul**

Warfield maintained that the correct context for understanding the relationship between the objective and the subjective in religious epistemology is that provided by Augustine's ontology of 'theistic Intuitionism' and Calvin's conception of the *sensus deitatis*. Whereas Augustine argued that 'innate ideas' are 'the immediate product in the soul of God the Illuminator, always present with the soul as its sole and

---

<sup>8</sup> B. B. Warfield, 'Introduction to Francis R. Beattie's *Apologetics*', *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield*, 2 vols, ed. John E. Meeter (Nutley, NJ, 1970 and 1973), II, pp. 98-9.

<sup>9</sup> Livingstone, 'The Princeton Apologetic', p. 186.

<sup>10</sup> For this appeal, see Warfield, 'Beattie's *Apologetics*', *Shorter Writings*, II, pp. 99-100, and 'A Review of *De Zekerheid des Geloofs*', *Shorter Writings*, II, pp. 120-21.

<sup>11</sup> 'Christianity the Truth', *Shorter Writings*, II, p. 213.

indispensable Light, in which alone it perceives truth',<sup>12</sup> Calvin insisted that the knowledge of God, as a fact of self-consciousness that is quickened by the manifestations of God in nature and providence, 'is given in the very same act by which we know self. For when we know self, we must know it as it is: and that means we must know it as dependent, derived, imperfect, and responsible being.'<sup>13</sup> Though Warfield conceded that there are some interesting differences between Augustine's and Calvin's ontologies of knowledge, he argued that their doctrines are essentially the same simply because both acknowledged that God is not only the God of all grace and the God of all truth, but 'the Light of all knowledge' as well.<sup>14</sup> Both acknowledge, in other words, that

man's power of attaining truth depends. . . first of all upon the fact that God has made man like Himself, Whose intellect is the home of the intelligible world, the contents of which may, therefore, be reflected in the human soul; and then, secondly, that God, having so made man, has not left him, deistically, to himself, but continually reflects into his soul the contents of His own eternal and immutable mind – which are precisely those eternal and immutable truths which constitute the intelligible world. The soul is therefore in unbroken communion with God, and in the body of intelligible truths reflected into it from God, sees God. The nerve of this view, it will be observed, is the theistic conception of the constant dependence of the creature on God.<sup>15</sup>

If Warfield was convinced on the one hand that the knowledge of God reflected into the soul constitutes the foundational fact of human self-consciousness, he was persuaded on the other that this knowledge is the spring of religious expression as well. The justification for this contention is to be found in his assertion that 'Man is a unit, and the religious truth which impinges upon him must affect him in all of his activities, or in

---

<sup>12</sup> 'Augustine's Doctrine of Knowledge and Authority', in *Tertullian and Augustine, The Works of Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield IV* (New York, 1930), pp. 143-4.

<sup>13</sup> 'Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God', in *Calvin and Calvinism, The Works of Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield V* (New York, 1931), p. 31. Cf. 'God and Human Religion and Morals', *Shorter Writings*, I, pp. 41-5.

<sup>14</sup> 'Augustine's Doctrine of Knowledge', p. 143.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 145-6. On the differences between Augustine's and Calvin's ontologies of knowledge, see 'Calvin's Doctrine of Knowledge', p. 117.

none.<sup>16</sup> Because he recognized that the soul is a single unit that acts in all of its functions as a single substance, Warfield argued that the knowledge of God that is reflected into the soul and quickened by the manifestations of God in nature and providence 'can never be otiose and inert; but must produce an effect in human souls, in the way of thinking, feeling, willing'.<sup>17</sup> It must produce, in other words, an effect that manifests itself first in the conceptual formulation of perceived truth (perception 'ripening' into conception), and second in the religious reaction of the will (broadly understood to include emotions and volitions) to the conceptual content of this formulated perception ('as is the perception ripening into conception, so is the religion').<sup>18</sup>

But if it is the knowledge of God that is reflected into the soul that underlies the religious reaction of the will, then why, we must ask, are there so many forms of religious expression? Why, in plain English, do not all rational agents react in the same fashion to the knowledge of God that is manifest in nature and providence? The answer to this question lies in Warfield's warning against supposing that 'the human mind is passive in the acquisition of knowledge, or that the acquisition of knowledge is unconditioned by the nature or state of the acquiring soul'.<sup>19</sup> While Warfield maintained that the religious reaction of the will is determined by the conceptual formulation of perceived truth, he nonetheless recognized that the conceptual formulation of perceived truth is itself conditioned by the moral or 'ethical state' of the perceiving soul.<sup>20</sup> It is the 'ethical state' of the perceiving soul that determines the religious reaction of the will,

---

<sup>16</sup> Warfield, 'Authority, Intellect, Heart', *Shorter Writings*, II, pp. 668. Anyone who doubts that Warfield endorsed the doctrine of Realistic Dualism should read this short yet extremely important essay. See also 'Augustine's Doctrine of Knowledge', pp. 150-51.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>18</sup> Warfield, review of *Foundations: A Statement of Christian Belief in Terms of Modern Thought*, by Seven Oxford Men, in *Critical Reviews, The Works of Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield X* (New York, 1932), p. 325; cf. 'The Idea of Systematic Theology', *Studies in Theology, The Works of Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield IX* (New York, 1932), pp. 53-4; 'Calvin's Doctrine of Knowledge', pp. 37-8.

<sup>19</sup> 'Augustine's Doctrine of Knowledge', p. 149.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149, n. 37. Cf. 'Calvin's Doctrine of Knowledge', pp. 31-2, 38; 'Augustine and the Pelagian Controversy', *Tertullian and Augustine*, pp. 295-6, 401-4.



Warfield argued, for it is the 'ethical state' of the soul that conditions the purity or clarity of perception and thereby the purity or clarity of the conception that underlies religious expression. Since knowledge is a function of the 'whole man' rather than of the rational faculty alone, we must conclude that there is more than one form of religious expression simply because the knowledge that kindles the religious reaction of the will is qualified and conditioned by the 'whole voluntary nature' of the agent that knows.<sup>21</sup>

### **Relationship between the Conception of the Mind and Religious Reaction of the Will**

Having established that the 'ethical state' of the soul conditions both the perception and the conception of the mind, we must now consider how the conception of the mind is related to the religious reaction of the will. Why, in short, does 'the nature of our [theological] conceptions so far from having nothing, [have] everything, to do with religion'?<sup>22</sup> The key to understanding the relationship between conception and religious expression can be found in Warfield's assertion that 'Religion is not only the natural, but the necessary product of man's sense of dependence, which always abides as the innermost essence of the whole crowd of emotions which we speak of as religious, the lowest and also the highest.'<sup>23</sup> While Warfield insisted that dependence upon God is the foundational fact of human self-consciousness, he also maintained that the vital manifestation of this consciousness in religion unveils the flowering of this sense of dependence in a manner that is determined by the moral agent's conceptual formulation of perceived truth.<sup>24</sup> In this statement, however, Warfield links religious expression with the sense of dependence in a manner that seems to bypass the determining role of conceptual truth. Religion, to wit, is in this instance not explicitly regarded as the vital effect of the knowledge of God in the human soul, but rather as the necessary product of the natural sense of dependence, *i.e.* of the innermost essence of the whole crowd of emotions that constitute the very core of human being. How, then, does Warfield reconcile what might appear to be a

---

<sup>21</sup> 'Augustine's Doctrine of Knowledge', p. 149, n. 37; *cf.* pp. 149-50.

<sup>22</sup> Warfield, *The Power of God Unto Salvation* (Philadelphia, PA, 1903), pp. 243-4.

<sup>23</sup> 'God and Human Religion', *Shorter Writings*, I, p. 42.

<sup>24</sup> *Cf.* Warfield, 'On Faith in its Psychological Aspects', *Studies in Theology*, p. 338.

contradiction at this point? How can he maintain that religion is both the vital effect of the knowledge of God in the human soul and the necessary product of the natural sense of dependence without appearing to suggest that religious expression has its origin in more than one source (one rational and objective, the other emotional and subjective)? The solution to this apparent contradiction will be virtually self-evident after a brief analysis of the mental movement called faith.

In response to the notion that responsibility attaches to faith only when the act of faith springs from the 'free volition' of an autonomous moral agent, Warfield argued that we are responsible for our faith simply because faith – from its lowest to its highest forms – is an act of the mind the subject of which is 'the man in the entirety of his being as man'.<sup>25</sup> While Warfield acknowledged that the mental movement called faith 'fulfills itself', *i.e.* is specifically 'formed', in that voluntary movement of the sensibility called trust, he insisted that the act of faith includes – indeed is based upon – 'a mental recognition of what is before the mind, as objectively true and real, and therefore depends on the evidence that a thing is true and real and is determined by this evidence; it is the response of the mind to this evidence and cannot arise apart from it'.<sup>26</sup> Since Warfield was convinced that faith is a mental conviction which as such is 'determined by evidence, not by volition', he concluded that the act of faith is best defined as that 'forced consent' in which 'the movement of the sensibility in the form of trust is what is thrust forward to observation'.<sup>27</sup>

It must be borne in mind, however, that though Warfield insisted that the fulfilment of faith in the movement of trust is determined or 'forced' by what is rationally perceived, he never suggested that the consent of the mind is 'the mechanical result of the adduction of the evidence'.<sup>28</sup> 'There may stand in the way of the proper and objectively inevitable effect of the evidence', he argued, 'the subjective nature or condition to which the evidence is addressed'.<sup>29</sup> But how can this be? If faith is indeed a 'forced consent', then how can 'the subjective nature or condition to which the evidence is addressed' block 'the objectively inevitable effect of the evidence'? Warfield maintained that 'Objective adequacy and subjective effect are not exactly correlated', simply because "'Faith," "belief" does not

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 341.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 342, 315.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 317, 331.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 314, 336.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 314, 336.

follow the evidence itself. . .but the judgment of the intellect on the evidence.'<sup>30</sup> According to Warfield, the 'judgment of the intellect' refers not to an act of the rational faculty alone, but rather to an act of the mind in which the 'complex of emotions' that reflects the 'ethical state' of the soul and forms the 'concrete state of mind' of the perceiving agent plays the decisive or determining role.<sup>31</sup> What, then, does the 'complex of emotions' that forms the 'concrete state of mind' of the perceiving agent do? Why, in other words, is the 'judgment of the intellect' the most prominent element in the movement of assent, the 'central movement in all faith'?<sup>32</sup> It is the most prominent element in the 'central movement in all faith', in short, because the 'complex of emotions' that forms the 'concrete state of mind' of the perceiving agent determines not only the 'susceptibility' or 'accessibility' of the mind to the objective force of the evidence in question, but also the reaction of the will to what is rationally perceived.<sup>33</sup> When the 'judgment of the intellect' is conceived of in this fashion, or in that fashion which recognizes that 'judgment' is an act of the 'whole man' that 'underlies' the agent's response to perceived truth,<sup>34</sup> it becomes clear that the conception of the mind is related to the religious reaction of the will simply because the 'complex of emotions' that forms the 'state of mind' of the perceiving agent also determines the activity of the will, broadly understood. This explains, among other things, why 'The evidence to which we are accessible is irresistible if adequate, and irresistibly produces belief, faith.'<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 318.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 314, 331. For more on the 'judgment of the intellect' and the 'complex of emotions' that form the 'concrete state of mind' of the perceiving agent, see Helseth, 'Moral Character and Moral Certainty', p. 89, n. 71.

<sup>32</sup> Warfield, 'On Faith', p. 341. The movement of assent is the central movement in faith because it 'must depend' on a prior movement of the intellect, and the movement of the sensibilities in the act of 'trust' is the 'product' of assent. Thus assent ties together the intellectual and the volitional aspects of faith. Cf. pp. 341-2.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 336-7; cf. review of *The Christian Faith: A System of Dogmatics*, by Theodore Haering, in *Critical Reviews*, p. 412.

<sup>34</sup> 'On Faith', p. 314.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 336.

**'Faith' of Sinners in their Natural State**

The foregoing analysis has established that faith is both the vital effect of the knowledge of God in the human soul and the necessary product of the natural sense of dependence simply because it is the response of the 'whole man' to the knowledge of God that is reflected into the soul and quickened by the manifestations of God in nature and providence. The question that we must now consider is what makes the faith that informs the religious reaction of the will 'saving' faith. If it is indeed true that 'no man exists, or ever has existed or ever will exist, who has not "faith"',<sup>36</sup> then what for Warfield sets the faith of the elect apart from the faith of those who are perishing? The forthcoming discussion proposes an answer to this question by examining the nature of faith in moral agents that are fallen and moral agents that are renewed. It suggests, in short, that the regenerate form their consciousness of dependence in a manner that renders their salvation certain because the regenerate alone have the moral ability to see revealed truth for what it objectively is, namely glorious.

Again following Augustine and Calvin, Warfield maintained that 'it is knowledge, not nescience, which belongs to human nature as such'.<sup>37</sup> He insisted, therefore, that had human nature not been disordered by the 'abnormal' condition of original sin, all moral agents – 'by the very necessity of [their] nature'<sup>38</sup> – not only would have known God in the purest and most intimate sense of the term, but they would have entrusted themselves to his care because their consciousness of dependence would have taken 'the "form" of glad and loving trust'.<sup>39</sup> The capacity for true knowledge and loving trust was lost, however, when Adam fell into sin, for Adam's sin plunged his posterity into a state of spiritual death. Why, then, does spiritual death prohibit the unregenerate from responding to the consciousness of dependence in a loving and trusting fashion? The answer has to do with the 'noetic as well as thelematic and ethical effects' of the fall.<sup>40</sup> Warfield argued that the unregenerate remain largely indifferent – if

---

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 338.

<sup>37</sup> 'Augustine's Doctrine of Knowledge', p. 158.

<sup>38</sup> 'Calvin's Doctrine of Knowledge', pp. 36, 43.

<sup>39</sup> 'Review of *De Zekerheid*', *Shorter Writings*, II, p. 116; cf. 'On Faith', p. 338. On the relationship between 'the disease of sin' and Warfield's contention that 'Man as we know him is not normal man', see 'Augustine's Doctrine of Knowledge', pp. 156-8; 'Calvin's Doctrine of Knowledge', pp. 32, 70.

<sup>40</sup> 'Augustine's Doctrine of Knowledge', p. 158.

not hostile – to the gospel because the knowledge of God that is reflected into their souls is ‘dulled’, ‘deflected’ and twisted by the power of sin.<sup>41</sup> Whereas ‘unfallen man’ had an intimate knowledge of God because the truth of God was reflected clearly in his heart, the unregenerate are incapable of such knowledge and love because the sinful heart ‘refracts and deflects the rays of truth reflected into it from the divine source, so rendering the right perception of the truth impossible’.<sup>42</sup> While ‘abnormal man’ thus remains conscious of his dependence upon God and believes in God in an intellectual or speculative sense, he can neither ‘delight’ in this dependence nor can he trust in the God on whom he knows he is dependent simply because the truth of God is deflected by a corrupt nature ‘into an object of distrust, fear, and hate’.<sup>43</sup>

Since, then, the fallen sinner’s consciousness of dependence is formed by fear and hate rather than by loving trust, it follows – given the intimate nature of the relationship between the conception of the mind and the religious reaction of the will – that the fallen sinner is unable to respond to the consciousness of dependence in glad and loving trust because the sinner as such is morally unable to do so. Herein lies the heart of the depravity that constitutes the fallen condition. While the fallen sinner cannot escape the knowledge that he is and always will be dependent upon God in every aspect of his existence, he is morally incapable of entrusting himself to God because ‘he loves sin too much’,<sup>44</sup> and thus cannot use his will – which in the narrower sense is ‘ready, like a weathercock, to be turned whithersoever the breeze that blows from the heart (“while” in the broader sense) may direct’<sup>45</sup> – for believing. Fallen sinners, therefore, neither will nor can trust in God not because there is a physical defect in the constitution of their being, but rather because the sinful heart lacks the moral ability to ‘explicate’ its sense of dependence and obligation ‘on right

---

<sup>41</sup> ‘Calvin’s Doctrine of Knowledge’, p. 32; cf. ‘Augustine’s Doctrine of Knowledge’, pp. 155-6.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155. On the failure of general revelation, see ‘Calvin’s Doctrine of Knowledge’, pp. 39-45.

<sup>43</sup> ‘On Faith’, pp. 338, 339; ‘God and Human Religion and Morals’, *Shorter Writings*, I, p. 42; cf. ‘Review of *De Zekerheid*’, *Shorter Writings*, II, p. 116.

<sup>44</sup> ‘Inability and the Demand of Faith’, *Shorter Writings*, II, p. 725; cf. ‘On Faith’, p. 339.

<sup>45</sup> ‘Augustine and the Pelagian Controversy’, pp. 403-4.

lines'.<sup>46</sup> It lacks the moral ability to form its consciousness of dependence in loving trust, in other words, because it is blind to the true significance of what it can rationally perceive.<sup>47</sup>

### **Saving Faith: Certain Consequence of 'Right' Knowledge of God**

But does this 'abnormal' state of fallenness prevent the unregenerate from ever delighting in the knowledge of God? Does spiritual death, in other words, render saving knowledge of God impossible? According to Warfield, it does not for the elect because God has graciously intervened to meet this desperate condition by means of a twofold provision for the removal of the natural incapacities of fallen sinners.<sup>48</sup> To begin with, God has rescued fallen sinners from their 'intellectual imbecility'<sup>49</sup> by imparting a supernatural revelation that 'supplements' and 'completes' the truth manifest in general revelation.<sup>50</sup> Whereas God has published a compelling revelation of his truth in the natural constitution of the moral agent as well as in nature and providence, this general revelation 'is insufficient that sinful man should know Him aright' because it is not reflected clearly in minds that are blinded by sin.<sup>51</sup> As the remedy for this inability to know God aright God has given to fallen sinners a revelation adapted to their needs. It is this special revelation, the purpose of which is to 'neutralize' the noetic effects of sin by providing a 'mitigation for the symptom', that then serves as the objective preparation for the 'proper

<sup>46</sup> 'God and Human Religion', *Shorter Writings*, I, p. 44.

<sup>47</sup> For a more comprehensive discussion of the relationship between the inability to see revealed truth for what it objectively is and the 'infinite variety' of 'religions and moralities' that are produced by 'reprobate minds', cf. 'God and Human Religion', *Shorter Writings*, I, pp. 42-4; and my brief discussion of Warfield's distinction between 'man-made' (*i.e.* natural) and 'God-made' (*i.e.* supernatural), 'unrevealed' and 'revealed' religion in 'Moral Character and Moral Certainty', appendix 2.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. 'Calvin's Doctrine of Knowledge', p. 47; 'Augustine's Doctrine of Knowledge', p. 159.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 159-60.

<sup>50</sup> Warfield, 'Christianity and Revelation', *Shorter Writings*, I, p. 27.

<sup>51</sup> 'Calvin's Doctrine of Knowledge', p. 32; cf. 'Augustine's Doctrine of Knowledge', p. 222.

assimilation' of the knowledge of God manifest in general revelation.<sup>52</sup> 'What special revelation is, therefore – and the Scriptures as its documentation – is very precisely represented by the figure of the spectacles. It is aid to the dulled vision of sinful man, to enable it to see God.'<sup>53</sup>

While special revelation as such is 'the condition of all right knowledge of higher things for sinful man',<sup>54</sup> it is clear that this revelation alone – its objective adequacy notwithstanding – will not yield a true and compelling knowledge of God if the soul to which it is addressed is morally incapable of perceiving and receiving it. This is due to the fact that sinners who are at enmity with God need more than external aid to see God; they need 'the power of sight'.<sup>55</sup> They need, in other words, a remedy for their moral bondage to sin so that 'the light of the Word itself can accredit itself to them as light'.<sup>56</sup> Wherein, then, is this remedy to be found? Warfield insisted that it is found in the central component of regenerating grace, namely the *testimonium internum Spiritus Sancti*. Whereas the subjective corruption of the fallen sinner's moral nature precludes the possibility of a 'hospitable reception' for the truth of God in the perceiving mind and heart,<sup>57</sup> the testimony of the Spirit renders the perception and reception of the truth certain because the internal operation of the Spirit renews and inclines the powers of the soul 'in the love of God', *i.e.* in affection not only for the knowledge of God that is reflected into the soul, but for the consciousness of dependence upon God as well.<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 159, 222.

<sup>53</sup> 'Calvin's Doctrine of Knowledge', p. 69. Warfield suggested that general and special revelation together form an 'organic whole' that includes all that God has done – in nature, history, and grace – to make himself known. As such, special revelation was not given to supersede general revelation, but rather to meet the altered circumstances occasioned by the advent of sin. *Cf.* 'Christianity and Revelation', *Shorter Writings*, I, p. 28.

<sup>54</sup> 'Augustine's Doctrine of Knowledge', p. 161.

<sup>55</sup> 'Calvin's Doctrine of Knowledge', p. 70.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>57</sup> 'God and Human Religion', *Shorter Writings*, I, p. 43.

<sup>58</sup> 'On Faith', p. 339. On the relationship between regeneration and the 'habits or dispositions' that govern the activity of the soul, *cf.* Warfield, 'Regeneration', *Shorter Writings*, II, p. 323; 'New Testament

## APOLOGETICAL APPEAL TO 'RIGHT REASON'

Since regenerating grace radically alters the moral nature and thereby the certain operation of the 'whole soul', we can infer that the elect perceive and receive the truth of God because they have been enabled by grace to 'feel, judge, and act differently from what [they] otherwise should'.<sup>59</sup> As a consequence, '[they] recognize God where before [they] did not perceive Him; [they] trust and love Him where before [they] feared and hated Him; [and they] firmly embrace Him in His Word where before [they] turned indifferently away'.<sup>60</sup>

Yet how, specifically, does the testimony of the Spirit render the perception and reception of the truth certain? Why, in other words, is the witness of the Spirit effectual? Warfield maintained that the internal operation of the Spirit accomplishes its ordained end simply because it implants, or rather restores, 'a spiritual sense in the soul by which God is recognized in His Word'.<sup>61</sup> This restoration of susceptibility to spiritual truth then has two certain effects. In the first place, it enables the regenerate to reason 'rightly'. Though Warfield acknowledged that the witness of the Spirit is not revelation in the strict sense of the term, he insisted that it 'is just God Himself in His intimate working in the human heart, opening it to the light of the truth, that by this illumination it may see things as they really are and so recognize God in the Scriptures with the same directness and surety as men recognize sweetness in what is sweet and brightness in what is bright'.<sup>62</sup> Despite the fact that the testimony of the Spirit thus 'presupposes the objective revelation and only prepares the heart to respond to and embrace it', it nonetheless is the source of all our 'right knowledge' of God because it is the means by which the regenerate are enabled to 'see' through the spectacles of Scripture, *i.e.* to 'discern' the beauty and truthfulness of the Word.<sup>63</sup>

If the testimony of the Spirit on the one hand is the immediate means by which regenerated sinners are enabled to see and know things 'as they really are', on the other it is the less direct though no less effectual means to the rise of saving faith in the regenerated soul. The justification for this contention lies in Warfield's commitment to the unitary operation of the

---

Terms Descriptive of the Great Change', *Shorter Writings*, I, pp. 267-77.

<sup>59</sup> 'Calvin's Doctrine of Knowledge', p. 111.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 79, 32, 111-12.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 32, 121, 70, 79.



soul. Because he recognized that there is an intimate connection between the conception of the mind and the religious reaction of the will, Warfield insisted that a 'right' apprehension of revealed truth will immediately and irresistibly manifest itself in an act of saving faith simply because the sense that informs the perception of the mind is the same sense that determines the activity of the will, broadly understood. Since the knowledge of God that is communicated to the regenerated soul via the 'conjoint divine action' of Word and Spirit is a 'vital and vitalizing knowledge of God' that 'takes hold of the whole man in the roots of his activities and controls all the movements of his soul',<sup>64</sup> we must conclude that the testimony of the Spirit renders both true knowledge and saving faith absolutely certain because it is the implanted sense of the divine that 'forces' regenerated sinners to see and pursue that which they perceive (rightly) to be both true and trustworthy. It follows, therefore, that

If sinful man as such is incapable of the act of faith, because he is inhabile to the evidence on which alone such an act of confident resting on God the Saviour can repose, renewed man is equally incapable of not responding to this evidence, which is objectively compelling, by an act of sincere faith. In this its highest exercise faith thus, though in a true sense the gift of God, is in an equally true sense man's own act, and bears all the character of faith as it is exercised by unrenewed man in its lower manifestations.<sup>65</sup>

### **'Right Reason': Appeal to the 'Stronger and Purer Thought' of Christian Apologist**

Having established that the 'keystone' of Warfield's doctrine of the knowledge of God is to be found in the 'conjoint divine action' of Word and Spirit,<sup>66</sup> the question that we must finally consider is what we should make of his apologetical appeal to 'right reason'. Must we conclude, along with the consensus of critical opinion, that Warfield was a rationalist whose approach to apologetics was built upon an almost 'Pelagian

---

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 31, 75.

<sup>65</sup> 'On Faith', pp. 337-8. On the essential similarity between faith in 'renewed man' and faith in 'unfallen man', see p. 340. For my assessment of how Warfield's understanding of the *testimonium internum Spiritus Sancti* is related to that of Calvin, see 'Moral Character and Moral Certainty', appendix 1.

<sup>66</sup> 'Calvin's Doctrine of Knowledge', p. 113; cf. pp. 82-3.

## APOLOGETICAL APPEAL TO 'RIGHT REASON'

confidence'<sup>67</sup> in the mental competence of even the unregenerate mind? Must we conclude, in other words, that Warfield's apologetic sprang from an accommodation of theology to anthropological and epistemological assumptions that are diametrically opposed to those of the Reformed tradition? The remainder of this essay argues that we must not, unless we want to do a terrible injustice to Warfield's understanding of the task of apologetics.

Before we move on to this consideration, however, the conclusion to the foregoing analysis must be articulated at this point because it outlines the epistemological context within which the forthcoming discussion must take place. To this point we have seen that objective and subjective factors were of critical importance in Warfield's religious epistemology simply because he acknowledged that the soul is a single unit that acts in all of its functions as a single substance. We may plausibly conclude, therefore, that Warfield's 'intellectualism' had its likely origin not in an accommodation of theology to the rationalistic assumptions of Enlightenment thought, but rather in the desire to preserve two important elements of the Princeton tradition in an increasingly subjectivistic age. The first has to do with the classical Reformed distinction between a merely speculative and a spiritual understanding of the gospel. Because he recognized that the moral or 'ethical state' of the soul determines both the quality of perception and the quality of conception, Warfield maintained there is 'a shallower and a deeper sense of the word "knowledge" – a purely intellectualistic sense, and a sense that involves the whole man and all his activities'.<sup>68</sup> While he conceded that all moral agents are religious beings because all moral agents 'know God' in at least an intellectual or speculative sense, he insisted that only regenerated sinners know God in a spiritual or saving sense, because it is only in the souls of the regenerate that there is a 'perfect interaction' between the objective and subjective factors that impinge upon religious epistemology and underlie religious life and practice.<sup>69</sup> Since Warfield was convinced that saving or 'real' knowledge of God involves the 'whole soul' and as such 'is inseparable

---

<sup>67</sup> Jack Rogers and Donald McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible* (San Francisco, CA, 1979), p. 290.

<sup>68</sup> Warfield, 'Theology a Science', *Shorter Writings*, II, p. 210.

<sup>69</sup> 'Authority, Intellect, Heart', *Shorter Writings*, II, p. 669; cf. 'Review of *De Zekerheid*', *Shorter Writings*, II, p. 115ff.

from movements of piety towards Him',<sup>70</sup> it is clear that the charge of rationalism cannot be sustained simply because there is more in his thought to a saving apprehension of revealed truth than the merely rational appropriation of objective evidence.

If Warfield's 'intellectualism' had its origin on the one hand in the desire to safeguard the enduring veracity of the distinction between a merely speculative and a spiritual understanding of the gospel, it had its origin on the other in the effort to uphold the foundational principle of Augustinian and Reformed piety, namely that 'It is God and God alone who saves, and that in every element of the saving process.'<sup>71</sup> Whereas the vast majority of Warfield's contemporaries reduced the Christian religion to a natural phenomenon by bending Scripture 'into some sort of conciliation' with the latest pronouncements of modern science, philosophy, and scholarship,<sup>72</sup> Warfield championed both the objective basis of Christian faith and the absolute sovereignty of God in salvation by grounding the gift of saving faith in the ability to reason 'rightly'. 'Christianity is not', he argued, 'a distinctive interpretation of a religious experience common to all men, much less is it an indeterminate and constantly changing interpretation of a religious experience common to men; it is a distinctive religious experience begotten in men by a distinctive body of facts known only to or rightly apprehended only by Christians.'<sup>73</sup> Since Warfield was persuaded that the act of saving faith is 'a moral act and the gift of God' – *i.e.* an act with 'cognizable ground in right reason'<sup>74</sup> – we must conclude that he was neither an overt nor a covert rationalist who undermined the sovereignty of God in salvation by emptying saving faith of its subjective and experiential components. He was, rather, a consistently Reformed scholar who recognized that because

---

<sup>70</sup> 'Calvin's Doctrine of Knowledge', p. 37. For more on how objective and subjective factors are related in 'sound religion' and 'true religious thinking', and on how there is a symbiotic relationship between religion and theology because of the unitary operation of the soul, *cf.* 'Authority, Intellect, Heart', *Shorter Writings*, II, pp. 668-71; 'Theology a Science', *Shorter Writings*, II, p. 210; Andrew Hoffercker, 'Benjamin B. Warfield', in *The Princeton Theology*, ed. David Wells, p. 67; Helseth, 'Moral Character and Moral Certainty', appendix 2.

<sup>71</sup> Warfield, *The Plan of Salvation* (Philadelphia, PA, 1915), p. 59.

<sup>72</sup> Warfield, 'Heresy and Concession', *Shorter Writings*, II, p. 675.

<sup>73</sup> Warfield, review of *Foundations*, pp. 325-6.

<sup>74</sup> 'Apologetics', p. 15.

## APOLOGETICAL APPEAL TO 'RIGHT REASON'

the operation of the intellect involves the 'whole soul' rather than the rational faculty alone, the 'taste for the divine' that informs the ability to reason 'rightly' and leads to the fulfilment of faith in the movement of trust 'cannot be awakened in unbelievers by the natural action of the Scriptures or any rational arguments whatever, but requires for its production the work of the Spirit of God *ab extra accidens*'.<sup>75</sup>

Given Warfield's clear stand within the epistemological mainstream of Reformed orthodoxy, what, then, are we to make of his apologetical response to the modern era's relocation of the divine-human nexus? What are we to make, in other words, of his apologetical appeal to 'right reason'? An important indication of how we should approach this question is suggested by Warfield's definition of the term 'apologetics'. Whereas 'apologies' are defences of Christianity 'against either all assailants, actual or conceivable, or some particular form or instance of attack', 'apologetics' is 'a positive and constructive science' that undertakes 'not the defense, not even the vindication, but the establishment. . . of that knowledge of God which Christianity professes to embody and seeks to make efficient in the world'.<sup>76</sup> While apologies thus derive their value from that which is incidental to the propagation of the Christian religion, namely the defence of Christianity against 'opposing points of view', apologetics is of the essence of propagation because it

finds its deepest ground. . . not in the accidents which accompany the efforts of true religion to plant, sustain, and propagate itself in this world. . . but in the fundamental needs of the human spirit. If it is incumbent on the believer to be able to give a reason for the faith that is in him, it is impossible for him to be a believer without a reason for the faith that is in him; and it is the task of apologetics to bring this reason out in his consciousness and make its validity plain.<sup>77</sup>

When we approach the appeal to 'right reason' with the positive and constructive nature of apologetics in mind, it becomes immediately clear

---

<sup>75</sup> 'Calvin's Doctrine of Knowledge', p. 124, n. 99.

<sup>76</sup> 'Apologetics', p. 3.

<sup>77</sup> 'Apologetics', pp. 4, 15. The apologist must validate the truth that has been established simply because faith, though it is a moral act and the gift of God, 'is yet formally conviction passing into confidence'. Validation is necessary, therefore, because an intellectual conviction of the truth of the Christian religion is 'the logical *prius* of self-commitment to the Founder of that religion', 'Review of *De Zekerheid*', *Shorter Writings*, II, p. 113.

that whatever we make of the appeal must give due consideration to the inherently offensive orientation of the apologetical task. It is this realization, then, that brings us to a critical interpretive juncture. Is the appeal that plays a 'primary' role in 'the Christianizing of the world' addressed to the regenerate reason of the Christian apologist, *i.e.* to the individual who is labouring to establish the 'objective validity' of the gospel of Christ?<sup>78</sup> Or, is the appeal addressed to the potential targets of apologetical science, *i.e.* to individuals who are analyzing the grounds of faith that are being established by the Christian apologist? Whereas the consensus of critical opinion would have us believe that the appeal to 'right reason' was an appeal 'to the *natural man's* "right reason" to judge of the truth of Christianity',<sup>79</sup> our analysis of the relationship between the objective and the subjective in Warfield's religious epistemology suggests a different conclusion. We have seen that the ability to reason 'rightly' presupposes the regenerating activity of the Holy Spirit on the 'whole soul' of a moral agent simply because the soul is a single unit that acts in all of its functions as a single substance. When we interpret the appeal to 'right reason' in this light, it follows that the appeal was not primarily an invitation to the unbeliever's neutral reasoning to judge of the truth of Christianity. It was, rather, a call to 'the men of the palingenesis' to establish the integrity of 'the Christian view of the world' by urging their "'stronger and purer thought" continuously, and in all its details, upon the attention of men'.<sup>80</sup> Not only does this interpretation do justice to the

---

<sup>78</sup> 'Beattie's *Apologetics*', *Shorter Writings*, II, p. 99.

<sup>79</sup> Jack Rogers, 'Van Til and Warfield on Scripture in the Westminster Confession', in *Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussions on the Philosophy and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til*, ed. E. R. Geehan (Phillipsburg, NJ, 1980), p. 154.

<sup>80</sup> Warfield, 'Beattie's *Apologetics*', II, pp. 102-3, 100-102. While Warfield acknowledged that there 'do exist. . . "two kinds of men" in the world' who give us 'two kinds of science', he insisted that the difference between the science of the regenerate and the science of the unregenerate is not 'a difference in *kind*', but rather a difference in 'perfection of performance'. The science of the regenerate is of a higher quality than that of the unregenerate, he argued, not because it is 'a different kind of science that [the regenerate] are producing', but rather because the entrance of regeneration produces 'the better scientific outlook' and thereby 'prepares men to build [the edifice of truth] better

## APOLOGETICAL APPEAL TO 'RIGHT REASON'

context of the appeal.<sup>81</sup> More importantly, it explains why the Christian religion will 'reason its way to the dominion of the world'<sup>82</sup> without deteriorating into a 'rather bald rationalism'. The Christian religion will bring the 'thinking world' into subjection to the gospel of Christ,<sup>83</sup> in short, not because Christians have 'unbounded confidence in the apologetic power of the rational appeal to people of common sense',<sup>84</sup> but rather because Christians recognize that 'the Christian view of the world' is true and capable of validation 'in the forum of pure reason' through the superior science of redeemed thought.<sup>85</sup>

The Christian, by virtue of the palingenesis working in him, stands undoubtedly on an indefinitely higher plane of thought than that occupied by sinful man as such. And he must not decline, but use and press the advantage which God has thus given him. He must insist, and insist again, that his determinations, and not those of the unilluminated, must be built into the slowly rising fabric of human

---

and ever more truly as the effects of regeneration increase intensively and extensively'.

<sup>81</sup> Just as the soldier in combat appeals to his sword as the means to advancing the objectives of the Commander in Chief, so too the Christian apologist appeals to his 'right reason' as the means to bringing the 'thinking world' into subjection to the gospel of Christ. To conceive of 'right reason' as anything other than the offensive weapon of the Christian apologist – for instance, as the 'self-established intellectual tool' of the autonomous natural man, Cornelius Van Til, 'My Credo', *Jerusalem and Athens*, p. 11 – is fundamentally to misconstrue the word picture being painted in the context of the appeal. It is to make Warfield guilty, moreover, of reducing the Christian religion to a natural phenomenon, and of endorsing what he elsewhere describes as 'autosoterism'. Cf. Warfield, 'How to Get Rid of Christianity', *Shorter Writings*, I, p. 60.

<sup>82</sup> 'Review of *De Zekerheid*', *Shorter Writings*, II, p. 120.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism 1870-1925* (New York, 1980), p. 115.

<sup>85</sup> Warfield, 'Beattie's *Apologetics*', *Shorter Writings*, II, p. 103.

science. Thus will he serve, if not his own generation, yet truly all the generations of men.<sup>86</sup>

### **Conclusion: Warfield and the Task of Apologetics**

This essay has challenged the prevailing historiographical consensus by shifting the focus of interpretation for Warfield's 'intellectualism' from a perspective that locates it within the context of Scottish Common Sense Realism to a perspective that is compatible with the anthropological and epistemological assumptions of the Reformed tradition.<sup>87</sup> Whereas the consensus of critical opinion would have us believe that Warfield was a rationalist who accommodated his theology to the assumptions of Enlightenment philosophy, this essay has demonstrated that no such conclusion can be justified simply because Warfield's 'intellectualism' was moral rather than merely rational. This is historically significant not only because it neutralizes the rather tenuous claim that Warfield and his colleagues at Old Princeton gave the back of their collective hand to the subjective and experiential components of religious epistemology,<sup>88</sup> but also because it gives us a clear understanding of why Warfield engaged in the task of apologetics. While Warfield acknowledged that 'rational arguments can of themselves produce nothing more than "historical faith"', he nonetheless insisted that 'historical faith' is 'of no little use in the world' because what the Holy Spirit does in the new birth is not to work 'a ready-made faith, rooted in nothing and clinging without reason to its object', but rather 'to give to a faith which naturally grows out of the proper grounds of faith, that peculiar quality which makes it saving

---

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* Thus, the efforts of the apologist are not directed towards arguing the unregenerate into the kingdom of God, but rather towards establishing the 'objective validity' of 'the Christian view of the world'. The apologetical task, therefore, is focused primarily on the labour of the apologist, and only secondarily on the mind of the unregenerate.

<sup>87</sup> For a substantial challenge to the historiographical consensus, see Kim Riddlebarger's outstanding dissertation, 'The Lion of Princeton: Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield on Apologetics, Theological Method and Polemics' (Ph.D., Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, 1997).

<sup>88</sup> For example, see Daniel B. Wallace, 'Who's Afraid of the Holy Spirit?', *Christianity Today* (September 12, 1994), p. 38; Sandeen, 'The Princeton Theology', pp. 307-19.

## APOLOGETICAL APPEAL TO 'RIGHT REASON'

faith'.<sup>89</sup> Since the Holy Spirit 'does not produce faith without grounds',<sup>90</sup> we can infer that Warfield engaged in apologetics not to argue the unregenerate into the kingdom of God, but rather to facilitate their engagement in the most basic activity of human existence, namely reaction to the truth of God that is reflected into the soul. As Andrew Hoffercker has incisively noted, the underlying assumption of this approach to apologetics is of course that the Spirit – who blows where he wills – will enable the elect to see revealed truth for what it objectively is, thereby rendering their saving response to the truth certain.<sup>91</sup>

---

<sup>89</sup> 'Review of *De Zekerheid*', *Shorter Writings*, II, p. 115; cf. 'Calvin's Doctrine of Knowledge', pp. 124-5, n. 99; Andrew Hoffercker, *Piety and the Princeton Theologians* (Phillipsburg, NJ, and Grand Rapids, MI, 1981), pp. 101-3, 108-9.

<sup>90</sup> 'Review of *De Zekerheid*', *Shorter Writings*, II, p. 115.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Hoffercker, *Piety*, p. 109; Warfield, 'Beattie's *Apologetics*', *Shorter Writings*, II, p. 99. I would like to thank the Revd David W. Hall for his helpful comments on an earlier draft of this essay. This essay is the revised edition of an essay that originally appeared in *Premise*, the on-line journal of the Center for the Advancement of Paleo Orthodoxy. See Paul Kjoss Helseth, 'B. B. Warfield and the Princeton Apologetic: The Appeal to "Right Reason"', *Premise* 4, 4 (1997), p. 5. Uniform Resource Locator <http://capo.org/premise/97/Dec/p971205.html>. For an analysis of how the issues addressed in this essay are related to the ongoing debate in the Reformed camp over apologetical method, see Helseth, 'The Apologetical Tradition of the OPC: A Reconsideration', *Westminster Theological Journal* 60 (1998), pp. 109-29. For a more comprehensive version of this last essay, see Helseth, 'J. Gresham Machen and "True Science": Machen's Apologetical Continuity with Old Princeton's Right Use of Reason', *Premise* 5, 1 (1998), p. 3. Uniform Resource Locator <http://capo.org/premise/98/FEB/p980203.html>.



## REVIEWS

### **Liberal Evangelism**

John Saxbee

SPCK, London, 1994; 118pp., £7.99; ISBN 0 281 0461 3

This short paperback is presented as a 'flexible response to the decade of evangelism'. It contains a 'determined presentation of biblical Christianity as having a vital contribution to make in the propagation of the Gospel which is not to be regarded as merely the province of evangelicalism'. Chapter 1 however acknowledges 'the sheer enormity of the gap which has widened between liberalism and evangelism'. The first task is to propose how this gap can be bridged. Thus it is necessary to have some clear understanding of the nature of liberalism, which is largely set out in the second chapter 'The Liberal Tendency'.

For Bishop Saxbee, liberalism understands that while Christ is the source of all truth, such truth is not merely revealed through Scripture. The Bible has its part to play, and there are indeed many more truths to be observed through Scripture as techniques of criticism advance. But these are to further discoveries in knowledge at large, in all of which we are to identify the face of Jesus to present to others. Culture has its own contribution to make to theology, but not in the way modern Evangelicals would see it, as a means of presenting old things in new ways. Liberalism can never be satisfied with a static Christianity, but one which, as it discovers new things, develops, changes and with openness and honesty is ready to reject some of the tradition. 'Liberalism in theology is that mood or cast of mind which is prepared to accept that some discovery of reason may count *against* the authority of traditional affirmation in the body of Christian theology.'

It is Saxbee's view that in liberal evangelism, the evangelist does not have to be someone who is first of all the possessor of a well-worked-out theology. A cardinal virtue, in this concept, is being practical. Whoever is involved in any kind of care has already become involved in evangelism, such as being a good neighbour for example. Thus the reader who prefers practice to theory is invited by the author to start the book half way through and still get the gist of it, although it is to be hoped that most readers will want to engage with the theological scene-setting in Chapters 1 and 2.

In the closing chapter Saxbee admits to being willing to adopt evangelical methodology as expounded by Alister McGrath: 'The art of

effective apologetics is hard work; it demands mastery of the Christian tradition, an ability to listen sympathetically, and a willingness to take the trouble to express ideas at such a level and in such a form that the audience can benefit from it.' However, he is not willing to accept what he calls 'McGrath's inflexibility with respect to truth'. Other world views, he maintains, are 'potential allies within the quest for meaning and not implacable rivals'. The book gives an interesting insight into the mind set of a classic liberal.

*Peter Cook, Alston, Cumbria*

## **New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology**

Edited by David J. Atkinson and David H. Field

Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, 1995; 918pp., £27.99; ISBN 0 85110 650 1

This *Dictionary* will be of interest to readers holding a wide range of theological and ethical opinions. Readers of a more conservative bent are likely to be alerted by the list of topics mentioned on the front dust-cover, 'Reproductive Technologies; Transplant Surgery; Health and Health Care; Psychoanalysis; Issues of Economic and Social Justice; Genetic Engineering; Single Parenthood; Suffering'. Others of a more liberal tendency, not normally drawn to conservative evangelical publications, may suspect that this *Dictionary* is unlikely to enter into much real dialogue with today's issues. For all readers, there is a challenge to think again – to the more conservative, to take seriously contemporary problems, and to the more free-thinking, to give due attention to the theological foundations upon which we are to base our ethical judgements. Here we have 'Christian Ethics'. This is not an independent ethic, which has no authority other than subjective opinion. This is ethics grounded in the Christian faith. Moreover, this is 'Pastoral Theology'. This *Dictionary* is not for the armchair theologian reluctant to get down to making difficult and demanding decisions. Our ethics 'must be firmly grounded in doctrine' (33). Our theology must be 'essentially practical' (42). We may hope that this work will help the ethicist to take a greater interest in theology and the theologian to become more involved in ethics. The adoption of a theological starting-point need not entail an arrogant authoritarianism. The article on 'New Testament Ethics' describes the New Testament 'moral tradition' as 'diverse and pluralistic, not simple and monolithic', stressing that it would be 'impossible and impoverishing' to 'force this variety into

one systematic whole'. This recognition of variety within the New Testament need not throw us into ethical confusion. With our faith fixed on Jesus Christ, 'crucified' and 'raised from the dead', we are to 'form conduct and character and community into something "worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1:27)' (64).

If the whole of life is to be lived in the light of the gospel of Christ, there needs to be both 'a Christ-centred spirituality' and a 'passionate social concern' (86, 107). The *Dictionary* displays both breadth of outlook and a real concern for depth of relationship with God. The importance of prayer – 'our central means of communicating with God' – and meditation – 'attentive listening to the gospel' (70) – is emphasized. There is a vital connection between the two – depth of spirituality and breadth of social concern. There is still something of a 'Martha and Mary' situation in today's church (Luke 10.38-42). Some are deeply concerned about social issues with less interest in spirituality, while others, majoring on spirituality, show little inclination to get involved in social issues. No one can be a Jack of all trades. Some have a particular responsibility for expounding God's Word. Others, such as doctors and social workers, find themselves right at the frontline of some very complex ethical and social issues. This *Dictionary* will prove invaluable to a wide range of people, concerned in some way or other with improving the quality of human life. It is to be hoped that preachers will learn from the social articles, broadening their understanding of human experience and extending the range of their practical applications of God's Word. Other readers, drawn to it because it contains articles related to their own field of expertise, would also learn much from the more obviously theological articles. By placing such a wide range of material within a single reference book, the publishers have produced a valuable resource which could contribute significantly to making spiritually-minded people more socially aware and socially concerned people more biblically and theologically informed.

Any selection of articles for special comment would vary from one reviewer to another. I will highlight some contemporary issues which illustrate well the *Dictionary's* concern with maintaining biblical standards while taking account of the complexity of modern society with its many and varied problems.

*Abortion:* 'The prophetic proclamation of the principle of the sanctity of life must be matched by concern for those who do not and cannot accept that standard.' There is here neither a theological authoritarianism which runs roughshod over people's feelings nor an easy-going approach which treats abortion as a purely medical matter without any moral implications.

*AIDS:* Emphasising the importance, in pastoral work, of 'a firm, vital and personal commitment to Jesus Christ, the Resurrection and the Life', this article calls for 'a sensible and sensitive pastoral approach'. Carefully avoiding 'a thoughtless judgmentalism', we recognise that AIDS is often bound up with other problems emerging from humanity's 'moral and spiritual chaos'. Acknowledging that our response to this complex set of problems must be medical and social as well as spiritual, we must not lose sight of God's ultimate answer – 'the gospel of hope from a God of love and grace'.

*Capital Punishment:* This subject is discussed with sensitivity. Observing that some defend the death penalty on the basis of Genesis 9:6, the article points out that 'If an innocent person is mistakenly executed there is no remedy. Life's value is the very reason that the death penalty raises such troubling questions.' Staunch defenders of the death penalty may raise their eyebrows at this, claiming that Scripture is not being taken seriously. This article also cites John 8. The scribes and Pharisees were desperate to enforce the death penalty. Jesus said, 'Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.... Has no one condemned you?... Neither do I condemn you.'

*Pacifism:* A balanced approach emphasizes the strengths and weaknesses of the pacifist position: 'Pacifists will continue to raise serious questions about the efficacy and validity of violence for Christians. At the same time they will increasingly recognize that they do not possess pat answers to difficult questions posed to them by other Christians.' The important point is this: We need to be willing to listen to one another. This point is emphasised further in the closely related article on *Violence*.

*Pluralism:* There is a real concern with affirming 'Christianity's claim to be unique' while maintaining 'pastoral sensitivity to other religions'. Particular attention is drawn to 'the fact that all men and women are created in the image of God and have some awareness of God's law written on their hearts (Genesis 1-3; Romans 1-3)'. In our mission and evangelism, we ought not to forget this.

*Pornography:* We have here a positive statement which provides a helpful perspective from which to view other subjects related to sex, e.g. *Cohabitation, Homosexuality, Prostitution, Transsexualism, Transvestism:* 'It is not sufficient simply to express outrage or personal distaste, or even to invoke moral platitudes. A serious response involves theological reflection on the nature of man and woman and the divine purpose of sexuality.'

*Science:* Often, there have been two monologues going on side-by-side – a scientific one and a religious one. Scientism dismisses religion as pre-scientific. Religion proceeds as if it has nothing to learn from science. Here, we have some wise advice: ‘A dialogue must therefore take place between our interpretation of God’s creation (science) and our interpretation of God’s Word...and we may well get the content of neither part of the dialogue right if we ignore the other part.’

*Secularization:* The tone of this article is neither compliant – ‘These days are so different from the good old days’ – nor complacent – ‘We’ll just have to move with the times’. There is here the challenge of presenting ‘historical Christian commitment with integrity and contemporaneity...without the superfluous cultural baggage of earlier times’. If this challenge is taken seriously, there can be no place for either opting out, retreating into the past, or going with the flow, giving up on Christian faith and Christian living.

*Technology:* Should we do all that we can do? This article calls for ‘biblical commitment...appropriate for these times’. Biblical commitment must be maintained if technology is not to be ‘severed from ethical constraint’.

*Urbanization:* For some, the urban world has been their life-long experience. For others, it is something with which they are distinctly uncomfortable. Whatever our starting-point, we can learn from this article’s realism – ‘The urban world may have rejected God’ – and its hope – ‘God has not rejected those who dwell in it’. There is an urban mission. With realism, we must recognize candidly that it will never be anything other than difficult. With faith, we must believe that there is hope.

*Unemployment:* From the biblical viewpoint, we must stress that work is not everything – ‘human worth does not depend on work’. We must not forget this if our hope for the future is to be based on spiritual resources and not merely social policies. But to draw attention to the spiritual dimension is not to play down the seriousness of the social problem. We must work with the unemployed, developing ‘training and job creation projects’ and ‘providing sensitive pastoral support for individuals who are out of work’.

One final thought about looking for your own personal interests and moving beyond them. Living in Northern Ireland, I looked for an article on sectarianism and found that the *Dictionary* moved from *Secrecy* to *Secularization*. (There is an article on *Toleration, Religious*.) In Northern Ireland, we hear a great deal about sectarianism, mostly from those who are part of the problem rather than the solution, but it does not appear to be

such a major problem outside it. If our own interests are too narrowly defined by particular circumstances which are constantly calling for our attention, we may find that we are left behind, fighting yesterday's battles while the rest of the world has moved on to other issues, the emergence of which we have hardly even begun to notice. This *Dictionary* will help many to move on – to a deeper understanding of Scripture and a more relevant application of its message to today's world and tomorrow's world.

*Charles M. Cameron, Castlemilk: West, Glasgow*

## **Covenant: God's Purpose, God's Plan**

John H. Walton

Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 1994; 192pp., \$15.99; ISBN 0 310 57751 9

Few Evangelicals would dispute the fundamental importance of the covenant in Scripture. At the same time there is a great diversity of opinion concerning the way in which covenant is to be understood. This book attempts to find ground for an evangelical consensus. The author's approach is influenced by his commitment to biblical theology. His principal thesis is that the covenant, while clearly redemptive, is essentially revelatory. He argues that when the covenant is viewed primarily as a means of revelation there are significant implications for our understanding of the continuity and discontinuity of the covenant, the conditionality of the covenant and the people of God.

The eleven chapters in the book are clearly written and the author often helpfully summarises the thrust of his argument at the end of each chapter. A number of useful diagrams and tables are included. The author begins by asking why the covenant was made and he summarises the variety of views that have been advanced. His own view is teased out in the second chapter, 'The purpose of the covenant is to reveal God', a view that is advanced with copious textual proofs. Chapter 3 discusses the number of the covenants and the author concludes there is 'one covenant in two major stages'. The first stage is to be found in the Old Testament and this in turn can be broken down into phases, which are teased out in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 investigates and compares the parallels between these phases. The jeopardy of the covenant in each of these phases, with its implications for conditionality, provides the subject matter of Chapters 6 and 7, while Chapter 8 explores the relationship of the covenant to the people of God – and asks, with particular reference to Romans 11, what place ethnic Israel has in the purpose of God. In Chapter 9 the author

turns his attention to the unifying concept of the covenant and asks if we should not be looking for a 'common purpose' rather than a 'central theme' which will bind the biblical teaching on covenant together. This should not surprise us since he is attempting to remove the discussion of covenant from the field of systematic theology. Chapter 10 assesses the part which the law plays within the covenant framework; was it intended to save in the Mosaic phase? What is its relationship to the New Covenant? The final chapter contains the author's summary and conclusions. He attempts to show that his stress on the revelatory purpose of covenant provides common ground for Evangelicals from different polarities, drawing together both covenant theologians and dispensationalists. He is also concerned about those who attempt to escape from a theologically controversial subject by limiting their teaching and preaching to character studies of Abraham, Moses and David. But, he argues, we can become so preoccupied with the relationship of such individuals with God and believe that this is the key to deepening our own relationship with God, that we miss out on the covenant as a mechanism by which God has chosen to reveal himself. 'Knowing Abraham, Moses and David does not provide the key to a successful relationship with God – knowing God provides the key to a successful relationship.'

John Walton has the humility and grace to accept that his is not the only right approach to a proper understanding of the covenant. And the reader may not be persuaded by the thesis. However, this book will make us think about an important subject and the author's helpful and invaluable insight into the biblical text does in itself make the book worth reading.

*Harry Mealyea, Bargeddie Parish Church*