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SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

The scope of the *Bulletin* is broadly defined as theology, especially Scottish and Reformed, whether biblical, systematic-dogmatic, historical or practical, and Scottish church history. Articles submitted for publication should be sent to the Editor, books for review to Rutherford House (see below).

Contributors are free to express their own views within the broad parameters of historic evangelicalism. The opinions of contributors may not be assumed to be those of Rutherford House or the Scottish Evangelical Theology Society.

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EDITORIAL

This brief editorial is being written in the midst of some personal chaos. I am coming towards the end of one ministry and am just a couple of weeks away from being inducted to a new charge, a church plant in St Andrews. But my wife and I are still trying to arrange temporary accommodation there until a permanent home is ready, and we are also struggling to find suitable premises to hold services. However, the prospect of a new congregation is hugely exciting, and it is a real privilege to be invited to take this on, even if it means becoming an assistant minister for a while! If you are ever in St Andrews...

Obviously this changes all kinds of things, and I mention it only because it has implications for *SBET*. It has been pointed out to me that in the earliest years of a church plant, the Free Church normally requires the minister to give up external commitments, 'so that he may devote his whole time' to the new work. In trying to respect the undoubted wisdom of that legislation, but also to be fair to *SBET*, all concerned have agreed that I co-edit the *Bulletin* with someone else. We are delighted that Alistair Wilson of the Highland Theological College has agreed to become Editor from this issue, and he and I have been left to divide up the various editorial tasks and committee responsibilities in a way that suits us both.

It is also a privilege to introduce the rest of the new team. Bob Fyall joins the Editorial Board in his capacity as the Director of Rutherford House. He has a hard act to follow, but in the kind providence of God the House has found the ideal successor to David Searle. Readers of the *Bulletin* will already know the names of Iain D. Campbell and Lynn Quigley, and they are now responsible for our Book Reviews. Two young biblical scholars have agreed to lend their expertise to the Board: Nathan Macdonald lectures in Old Testament at St Andrews, and Simon Gathercole lectures in New Testament at Aberdeen. Simon is also our new Chairman. At the time of writing, only Bob and I cannot be described as twenty-something or thirty-something, so remember us both as we offer the wisdom of the years for the guidance of the young. We are in the process of approaching other scholars who will serve as Consulting Editors.

I am sure you will benefit from this issue. It is important to note the two hundredth anniversary of the birth of Jonathan Edwards, surely America's profoundest theologian, and so we include an article on Edwards

which draws lessons for today. The other four articles are based on papers given at the 2003 Conference of the Scottish Evangelical Theology Society, and they are a good sample of the quality and variety on offer there each year. Please note the advert for the 2004 Conference on the back of this issue, and make every effort to be there if you can. *SETS* provides perhaps a unique opportunity in Scotland to bridge church and academy, and these conferences have proved enormously stimulating over the years.

In the next issue, we hope to have two articles from leading systematic theologians, one on 'The New Perspective on Paul' and the other on 'Open Theism' (another paper from the 2003 Conference). Future issues will carry articles from biblical specialists, on 'Matthew's Wisdom Christology' for example, and we have some broader biblical-theological work promised, on subjects as diverse as 'Land' and 'Mission'. There are also articles being written on Scottish theologians, including George Smeaton, Fraser of Brea and Samuel Rutherford. Plenty to be going on with there!

I need to close with a correction. IVP(UK) have pointed out an error in the last issue, in footnote 30 on page 42, in the article on 'Open Theism'. They ask us to be careful to distinguish between IVP in this country, based in Leicester, and IVP in the USA, based in Downers Grove. *The Openness of God* was published by IVP(USA), but not by IVP(UK). *God's Lesser Glory* by Bruce Ware was published by IVP(UK), but not by IVP(USA). The two publishers do sometimes co-publish individual titles and multi-volume series, but they did not co-publish either of these books and we were wrong to accuse them of inconsistency. I take personal responsibility for this editorial oversight, and offer my sincere apologies.

COOL KERYGMA
MAKING PREACHING RELEVANT IN THE
TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY
(FINLAYSON MEMORIAL LECTURE, 2003)

FERGUS MACDONALD, EDINBURGH,
FORMERLY GENERAL SECRETARY, UNITED BIBLE SOCIETIES

Early in 2003 I undertook some field research on religious and spiritual attitudes of students in the University of Edinburgh. I found that almost half (49%) of the students surveyed think of the churches as old-fashioned. Yet 44% regarded the churches as friendly, 37% viewed them as welcoming to strangers, and one in five (20%) thought of them as enjoyable. On the other hand, over one quarter (27%) thought the churches to be boring, and 20% felt they were depressing. Only 8% found them lively, although 20% thought they were challenging. (A multiple choice was permitted in the question on the churches, so the percentages quoted do not total 100.)

These figures come from a survey undertaken immediately before and after a series of focus groups set up to explore whether the contemporary interest in spirituality might provide new avenues for engagement with the biblical text by young adults. Most of the sixty-one students who participated in the survey did not have a viable connection with a local church, although a majority appear to have had some church links in the past, and indicated that their religion is Christian. One fifth of the informants professed to have no religion, and 7% belonged to non-Christian faiths.

When asked about the Bible, not a single respondent thought the Bible to be no longer relevant to our culture, although over a quarter (27%) felt it contained only moral tales or nice stories. The most popular view of the Bible – representing just over half (51%) of the respondents – was that it is part of our cultural heritage (like Shakespeare). This was significantly higher than the proportion regarding the Bible to be a holy book like others (41%). 28% thought the Bible to be the unique Word of God.

In the course of the focus groups, when participants were asked to indicate how important they felt it is for young adults to find some measure of spiritual fulfilment, 74% said this was either very or somewhat

important. One in six indicated that they viewed this as slightly important, and only one in ten thought it not at all important.

The relative smallness of the sample and the 'elite' bias inherent in its composition of university students caution us against extrapolating definitively from these results for the general population. Nevertheless, I believe the results can be interpreted as tentatively indicative of some significant trends in the society in which the churches are seeking to communicate their message and fulfil their mission. It is for this reason that I am using the figures cited to help delineate the context in which we are called to preach today.

These results point to the following scenario. The churches are currently working in a society whose characteristics include the following features:

- A large majority – perhaps as many as 90% of the population – acknowledge that finding a measure of spiritual fulfilment is important.
- The great majority have a positive perception of the Bible and appear to think the churches are welcoming and friendly.
- Yet the most widespread impression of the churches is that they are old-fashioned.

This scenario suggests that society may be much more open to the Christian message than is often assumed, but that the churches urgently need to demonstrate the relevance of their message and the plausibility of their *raison d'être* in light of widespread popular perceptions of being old-fashioned and boring. The fact that the churches appear to be widely regarded as friendly and welcoming gives them a key advantage in setting out to convince people of the significance of their message for life in the twenty-first century.

Sociological statistics like these require to be interpreted in the light of popular trends in western media and in western culture generally. The multiplication of electronic media, with the preponderance of visual communications, undoubtedly raises acute challenges to the churches which, by and large, still use verbal monologue as their preferred and principal medium of communication. And the appearance of post-modernism as a significant force in our ever-evolving western culture is tending to lodge suspicions in the popular mind about the churches (and, indeed, about all institutions), as well as casting doubt on both the value of the Bible as a metanarrative and on the churches' text-oriented approach

to it. On the other hand, both the media explosion and the emergence of postmodernism are not without advantages to the communication of the Word of God. The rapid increase in personal participation on the world wide web, and the growing popularity of radio, are signs that the electronic media are perhaps becoming more verbally focused. In addition, postmodernism – in virtue of the high value placed on personal relationships, as well as its strong suspicion of scientific historical criticism – is creating new popular avenues through which the churches can both reach people outside their membership and lead them into a creative interaction with the literature of the Bible.

In this paper I intend to explore ways and means of making our preaching relevant so that we might be better equipped to grasp effectively the undoubted opportunities facing the churches in the early twenty-first century. My assumption in making this exploration is that the gospel is relevant, but that much of our preaching is not!

I wish to begin the exploration reviewing what appear to me to be some of the most commonly followed models in contemporary preaching against the background of examples of apostolic preaching found in the New Testament. This background is important! For if Christian preaching is to be authentic, it needs to be biblical as well as contemporary.¹

PROFESSOR RATHER THAN PRESENTER

The first model is that of the preacher as a theological expert whose primary task it is to clarify the Scriptures to a theologically illiterate laity. The preacher either assumes or is accorded a place ‘six feet above contradiction’, often becoming the all-encompassing authority figure in the congregation. Sermons resemble lectures more than communiqués, as the preacher puts in order theological ideas that the Bible has got jumbled up.

John Carrick’s recent book on preaching² provides an informative résumé of recent debate in the United States about ‘redemptive-historical’ preaching. This school of preaching traces its origins to Klaas Schilder (1890-1952) and B. Holwerda (1909-52), and today it is perhaps most

¹ See John Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait* (London, 1961), p. vii: ‘We need to gain in the Church today a clearer view of God’s revealed ideal for the preacher, what he is and how he is to do his work.’

² J. Carrick, *The Imperative of Preaching: A Theology of Sacred Rhetoric* (Edinburgh, 2002).

energetically represented by Sidney Greidanus³ and articles published in *Kerux: A Journal of Biblical Theology*. Carrick offers a robust critique of redemptive-historical preaching; it is, he claims, 'a *genre* of preaching all too often characterized by objectivism, intellectualism, and scholasticism'.⁴ In addition, it tends to exclude the exemplary element in the biblical text. On this last point Carrick cites John Frame: 'Some redemptive-historical preachers seem to have an antipathy to the very idea of application.... I get the impression that some who stress redemptive history really want to avoid "practical" application. They want the whole sermon to focus on Christ, not on what works the believer should do.'⁵

Later in this paper I will advocate that something akin to a redemptive-historical approach to preaching is urgently required in this and other countries outside Holland and North America. So perhaps at this stage I ought to make clear that my advocacy will not be for an uncritical importation. The model I wish to commend will seek to reflect the balance between thematic and exemplary interpretation of sacred history which we find in Scripture itself, notably in the historical psalms and I Corinthians 10.

There appears to be a degree of consensus that some forms of redemptive-historical preaching are open to the charge of being more academic and theoretical than popular and practical. Such expressions of this theological approach provide us with a preaching model that is less than helpful. Of course, we need to remember that the tendency to convert the church sanctuary into a theological classroom is not by any means the sole preserve of redemptive-historical preachers in Holland and America. One suspects that if Thomas Chalmers were still with us, he might well be moved in a variety of situations to reiterate his famous critique of 'Moderate' preaching: 'A Moderate's sermon,' he wrote, 'is like a winter's day: short, clear and cold. The brevity is good; the clarity is better; the coldness is fatal.'

All brands of effete preaching contrast markedly with preaching as we detect it in the New Testament. There the preacher is a *keryx* or herald, an announcer of good news, not a sophist, philosopher or any other member of the intelligentsia. In the ancient world the herald was a relatively lowly placed servant of the king. He did not speak in his own right. As John

³ See his *Sola Scriptura: Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts* (Toronto, 1970); and *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids, 1988).

⁴ Carrick, *The Imperative*, p. 113.

⁵ Carrick, *The Imperative*, pp. 118-19.

Stott says in the chapter on 'A Herald' in *The Preacher's Portrait*, 'As the mouth-piece of his master he dare not add his own interpretation.'⁶ One of several biblical examples of heralds quoted by Stott is that of those sent by Pharaoh to precede Joseph's chariot and to cry before him 'Bow the knee!'⁷ Evidence from the ancient world suggests that the equivalent of a herald in our modern society might be an official spokesperson at a government news conference or a news presenter in the media.

EXCAVATOR RATHER THAN EXPOSITOR

In the second model preachers tend to treat Scripture in somewhat the same way as archaeologists approach long-buried ancient cities. Preachers of this type take their cue from the activities of historical-critical scholars, which Robert Alter describes as *excavative* 'either literally, with the archaeologist's spade and reference to its findings, or with a variety of analytic tools intended to uncover the original meanings of biblical words, the life situations in which specific texts were used, the sundry sources from which longer texts were assembled'.⁸ The truth lies under the surface of the text, and can be recovered only after a great deal of digging which the preacher undertakes on behalf of the congregation. Thus the true meaning of Scripture is seen to lie behind the text, rather than in it, and the task of the preacher is to search for this buried meaning, discover it and then exhibit it for the benefit of the assembled congregation.

Kevin Vanhoozer contends that 'interpretations that substitute a description of events behind the text for a description of what the texts are actually saying generally teach only religion, not theology'.⁹ According to Vanhoozer, it is the study of the text itself, rather than the study of the revelatory events or religious experiences to which it witnesses, that will lead to discovery of its theological message. The implication for preaching is that excavation of the context – however fascinating – is no substitute for exposition of the text.

Certainly the preachers of the New Testament were expositors. The gospel they preached was 'according to the Scriptures'.¹⁰ Peter's sermon at Pentecost was substantially an exposition of the prophet Joel (2:28-32) and two Psalms (16:8-11 and 110:1). When Paul visited the synagogue in

⁶ J. R. W. Stott, *Portrait*, p. 32.

⁷ Gen. 41:43, Stott, *Portrait*, p. 32.

⁸ R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York, 1985), p.13.

⁹ 'Exegesis and Hermeneutics' in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, T. D. Alexander and B. S. Rosner (eds), (Leicester/Downers Grove, 2000), p. 57.

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 15:3.

Thessalonica, we read that 'on three sabbath days [he] argued with them from the scriptures explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and to rise from the dead'.¹¹ Although the text does not explicitly state that Paul's intervention on that occasion took the form of public speaking, the assumption of F. F. Bruce is that in all probability this was the case, as it had previously been in Pisidian Antioch.¹² We learn from his reported speeches in Lystra and Athens¹³ that, when speaking to audiences who were unaware of the Old Testament, Paul did not customarily expound these Scriptures while presenting the gospel for the first time to Gentiles. But the presence of some 250 express citations from the Old Testament in the New Testament documents¹⁴ suggests that, however 'light' the initial apostolic approach to Gentiles may have been in terms of Old Testament quotation and exposition, Gentile converts were very quickly encouraged to use the Scriptures as key equipment for the Christian life (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16f.).

MEDIATOR RATHER THAN MESSENGER

A third popular model sees the preacher as a priestly mediator between God and congregation. In a fascinating study of the minister as outlined in twentieth-century Scottish literature, William Storrar – taking his cue from John A. Mackay's magisterial work *The Other Spanish Christ* – claims that the Scottish presbyterian minister has become a Christ substitute. 'As so many Scottish writers have recognised, the minister in the pulpit is the Calvinist Crucifix, the Presbyterian icon of Christ.'¹⁵ Storrar's argument is that the docetic strain, which T. F. Torrance has highlighted as being endemic in Protestantism, has obscured the empathetic priestly agency of Christ, resulting in 'an inevitable substitute priesthood' in which 'the minister in the pulpit, so much a part of Scottish religious experience and folklore, becomes the mediating figure between the believing, worshipping community and its God.'¹⁶

¹¹ Acts 17:2-3, NRSV.

¹² F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids, 1988), p. 322ff.

¹³ Acts 14:15-17; 17:22-31.

¹⁴ E. E. Ellis, 'Quotations in the New Testament', *New Bible Dictionary* (London, 1996), p. 995.

¹⁵ 'The Other Scottish Christ: Preaching as Crucifixion in the Scottish Novel', in *Globalisation and Difference: practical theology in a world context*, P. Ballard and P. Conture (eds), (Cardiff, 2001).

¹⁶ William Storrar's conclusion that 'the minister in the pulpit is the visual and dramatic representation of the Scottish Christ' is drawn from Lewis

In order to demonstrate that this mediatorial model of the preacher exists in fact as well as in fiction, allow me to share with you an anecdote I heard some thirty years ago during a visit to the Isle of Skye. An event had been recently organised by Portree High School at which senior pupils had opportunity to ask questions of a panel of clergy representing the main denominations on the island. One of the questions raised by the young audience was this: 'What must I do if I want to be converted?' According to my informant, one of the replies from the platform was the telling one-liner: 'Telephone the nearest Free Church minister'!

A somewhat similar attitude lies behind the misunderstanding still prevalent in some conservative Reformed circles that preaching from the pulpit is the divinely ordained means of salvation, thus unwittingly elevating the preacher towards some kind of mediatorial role. This conviction about preaching results from the unfortunate translation of 1 Corinthians 1:21 found in the King James Version: 'it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe'. Modern translations rightly recognise that the Greek term here is *kerygma* (in its genitive singular form) – i.e. the reference is to the message proclaimed. It is not *keryxis* – the act of proclamation, which would be required to justify the KJV rendering.

In passing, it may be observed that the mistake of the King James translators in taking 1 Corinthians 1:21 to refer to the preaching method, rather than to the message preached, may sadly have deprived countless churches of both the vision to train and mobilise the whole people of God as heralds of the good news, and the capacity to grow, under God, by geometric progression. One is tempted to ask whether this translation, which became so embedded in the presbyterian psyche, is one of the reasons why, for the year 2000, there were reckoned to be almost twice as many Baptists in the world as Presbyterians and almost three times as many Pentecostals.¹⁷

We do well to recall that the Grimm-Thayer *Lexicon* defines *keryx* as 'a herald, a messenger vested with public authority who conveyed the official messages of kings, magistrates, princes, military commanders, or who

Grassic Gibbon's *Scots Quair* trilogy, Fiona MacColla's *And the Cock Crew*, and Robin Jenkins' *The Awakening of George Darroch*. See also Storrar's *Scottish Identity: A Christian Vision* (Edinburgh, 1990), pp. 86-109.

¹⁷ *World Churches Handbook*, P Brierley (ed.), (London, 1997). The respective membership totals are given as: Presbyterians, 24 million; Baptists, 43 million; Pentecostals, 63 million.

gave a public summons or demand.’ This surely suggests the preacher is a messenger rather than a mediator.

ARTIST RATHER THAN AMBASSADOR

Yet another model becoming popular today is to minimise the importance of the sermon by seeing the whole worship service as a communication event. Expository preaching is regarded as a hangover from Enlightenment rationalism, and is viewed as a western, individualistic and, indeed, chauvinistic model of communicating the good news. The postmodern ‘pick and mix’ mindset, it is argued, calls for a more anecdotal and less cerebral approach, involving drama, mime, dance, movement and colour. In his book *Picking up the Pieces*, David Hilborn seeks to answer the question he poses in his subtitle: ‘Can Evangelicals Adapt to Contemporary Culture?’ He observes that ‘The expository model is being overthrown by alternative worshippers keen to return to a “pre-modern” emphasis on ritual, mystery and communality in worship.’¹⁸ In this model the pastor is more artist than ambassador, more choreographer than preacher.

There is little doubt that both Old and New Testament practices suggest that occasions of worship are, indeed, intended to be communication events (e.g. Neh. 8; 1 Cor. 14). But it does not follow that preaching is secondary! In a survey of worship in church meetings in the New Testament, Howard Marshall concludes that instruction and teaching were of great importance. ‘From the New Testament it is plain that Christian meetings were occasions for instruction of the congregation.’ Marshall goes on: ‘to think of Christian meetings in terms primarily of our worship of God is to put what should be secondary into the primary position, and, as we have seen, to create the danger that the Word and action of God may be lost from sight or at least thrust into a corner. To think of a Christian meeting in terms of worship is to stifle the voice of God. Surely our Christian meetings should be patterned on the fundamental drama of redemption in which God acts and we respond: God speaks through his human agents and then the congregation respond to his Word.’¹⁹ Certainly Paul viewed the preacher as an ambassador, not an entertainer.²⁰

¹⁸ D. Hilborn, *Picking up the Pieces: Can Evangelicals Adapt to Contemporary Culture?* (London, 1997), p. 151.

¹⁹ I. H. Marshall, ‘Worshipping Biblically’, *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 20 (2002), pp. 154-5. W. Storrar, *Scottish Identity*, sees the Church as ‘the new acoustic community of all nations’, pp. 118-24.

²⁰ 2 Cor. 5:20; cf. 1 Cor. 2:1-5.

Undoubtedly preachers in the twenty-first century can learn from the dynamics of, say, a TV variety show, or the sound bite culture of local radio. But if such learning means that preaching is dumbed down to chat show level, or relegated to a liturgical corner, the heart of New Testament worship will be lost.

MARKETER RATHER THAN MIDWIFE

Finally in this review of contemporary models of preaching I want to look at a model that owes much to the consumerism of western culture. We have already looked at a preaching model that seeks to help the audience identify the significance of the Bible with what lies behind the text. This fifth model, in contrast, focuses the attention of hearers on what is in front of the text. In it the preacher encourages listeners to discover their own meaning in the biblical text. The text, the preacher explains to the congregation, contains an infinite range of options. Members of the congregation are then urged to discover the option which means most to them. The congregation are regarded as consumers; the object of the preaching is to help each member of the audience create and appropriate a meaning in the biblical text which will help them maximise their potential for fulfilling themselves.

Such postmodern approaches to the text are tersely assessed by Vanhoozer: 'every attempt to describe "what it meant" is in fact only an assertion of *what it means to me*, or worse, *what we will it to mean*'.²¹

But does not this fostering of Narcissism stand rather uncomfortably alongside Christian nurture as we detect its practice in the early church? The great objective of primitive Christian nurture was articulated by Paul writing to a group of churches which, having started their Christian lives in the Spirit, were trying to become perfect by their own human effort. With deep emotion the apostle writes: 'Now it's wonderful that you are eager to do good, and especially when I am not with you. But oh, my dear children! I feel as if I am going through labor pains for you again, and they will continue until Christ is fully developed in your lives.'²² The focus here is not on maximising our sense of consumer fulfilment, but on the conceiving of the Christ life within us. Leonard Sweet challenges contemporary preachers to confront consumerism rather than hitch a ride from it. 'Like the church of the first century, the twenty-first-century

²¹ 'Exegesis and Hermeneutics' in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, T. D. Alexander and B. S. Rosner (eds), (Leicester/Downers Grove, 2000), p. 55.

²² Gal. 4:18-19, NLT; cf. 3:3.

church must measure success not by the size of bank accounts or biceps but by the strength of brains and birth stools. In the midst of a consumer culture that is built on earnings, yearnings, and bottom lines, the church must be a conceiving culture that is built on God's grace where the "top things" and "top of the lines" in life are given freely, tended and tilled conservatively and distributed liberally. If conception doesn't replace consumption as the primary GNP in the church first, it never will in the wider culture.²³

This quick review has taken in five contemporary models of preaching: the preacher as professor rather than presenter, as excavator rather than expositor, as mediator rather than messenger, as artist rather than ambassador, and as marketer rather than midwife. It has sought to set each of these models against the backcloth of preaching as evidenced in the New Testament documents. One inference of the review is that the apostolic preacher of the good news was essentially a communicator with words. This inference is confirmed by John Stott's well-known word study of five common terms employed in the New Testament to describe the preacher and the preacher's task.²⁴ These terms are: *steward*, *herald*, *witness*, *father* and *servant*. It is clear from Stott's study that, although some of these have strong pastoral overtones, all are employed to describe the preacher as communicator.

I now wish to pause in this brief appraisal of preaching and its relevance, to consider the preacher's message. I have said earlier that I believe this message is already relevant. It, therefore, follows that I am persuaded that we don't need to *make the kerygma* relevant. And clearly the implication of my opening contention that the church is regarded as old-fashioned, is that it is the *keryxis* – the act or method of proclamation – that requires to be made relevant. Allow me now to proceed to state why I believe the biblical *kerygma* is relevant in the twenty-first century. The *kerygma* undoubtedly *is cool!* But I wish to contend that the *keryxis* is not! Later I plan to return to the *keryxis* to suggest some ways in which it might become more relevant.

NARRATIVE AS MATRIX

I wish to give the term *kerygma* in the title of this lecture the broad sense of the entire biblical message, rather than the narrower connotation of 'the public proclamation of Christianity to the non-Christian world' taken by

²³ L. Sweet, *Postmodern Pilgrims* (Nashville, 2000), p. xxi.

²⁴ *Portrait*.

Dodd when he popularised the Greek word as a theological term in the English language.²⁵ I hope you will agree that this enlarged sense is permissible in this context. Stott, following Robert Mounce, argues that Dodd's rigid distinction between *kerygma* and *didache* ought not to be overpressed. The verbs *keryssein* and *didaschein* are used interchangeably in the gospels.²⁶ The Scriptures as a whole can, I believe, be described as kerygmatic in that they over-arch all the themes of the Christian proclamation. We read in 2 Timothy 3:15ff. that the Holy Scriptures are able to impart the wisdom that leads to salvation, and that 'all Scripture' is 'useful for teaching', etc.²⁷ For these reasons, this paper is treating the terms canon and *kerygma* as, in a sense, coextensive.

What is the profile of this macro *kerygma*? Well, the Bible is fundamentally a story, a story that begins with the creation and ends with the consummation. This is to say that both Old and New Testaments have a narrative shape. That shape is reflected in the Old Testament psalms known as 'creedal recitals' which follow the biblical storyline up to the time of their composition. And the earliest examples of Christian preaching are similarly a simple narrative of God's dealings with Israel finding its culmination in the mission of Jesus.²⁸ True, the Bible exhibits a variety of literary *genres* – poetry, law, gospel, epistle, parable and more – as well as narrative. But there is little doubt that the narrative storyline of God's dealings with his world and people acts as the matrix that holds the biblical texts together.

In a paper published in 1975 entitled 'Bible Stories: Message and Matrix',²⁹ Jacob Loewen relates how the recognition of this narrative shape of Scripture by those leading a translation project for the Choco people of Panama, and the subsequent reflection of it in their publishing plan (which, incidentally, employed voice rather than print), led to much greater comprehension by the Chocos of both the meaning and the relevance of the biblical texts. Loewen relates how in the 1950s and 1960s translators working on tribal languages in Central America reacted to problems caused

²⁵ C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments* (London, 1936).

²⁶ Examples of this inter-changeability cited by Stott are: Matt. 4:23 (teaching) = Mark 1:39 and Luke 4:44 (preaching); and Mark 1:21, 22, 27 (teaching) = 1:38 (preaching). *Portrait*, p. 33 n.

²⁷ 2 Timothy 4.15f, GNB.

²⁸ See Acts 2:14-36; 7:1-53; cf. 1 Cor. 15:1-11.

²⁹ In *Culture and Human Values: Christian Intervention in Anthropological Perspective* (Pasadena, 1975), pp. 370-76.

by the 'negative restructuring'³⁰ of biblical information gleaned from early translations of Bible stories by various indigenous peoples in Central America. To illustrate the main points of the gospel, Loewen and others identified a series of twenty-six stories that could be told as a sequence. In this sequence, major gaps were bridged by such phrases as 'after a long time,' 'much later,' and the like. Loewen informs us that this core of Bible stories provided a framework which enabled the Chocos and others tribes to make sense of the message of the stories.

'We soon realized,' he wrote, 'that sequence was as important as were the truths contained in the stories.'³¹ In his article he argued that the gospel begins to make fundamental changes only 'within the framework of a fuller understanding of the program of God and not on the basis of a few isolated truths'. Loewen went on: 'In the light of this conviction, we would like to assert that over and above form, point of contact, emphasis, or even the meeting of felt need, the individual parts of the message need a matrix, a setting, which will meaningfully relate them to a whole and which will provide somewhat of a barrier against negative restructuring.'³²

I now want to take you back from the premodern cultures of Central America to the postmodern world, a transition that may not be as difficult as we might imagine. In what has turned out to be a seminal paper given in the London Bible College as The Laing Lecture for 1989, on the subject 'How can the Bible be authoritative?',³³ N. T. Wright observes that the scriptural writings are mostly narrative, and he asks 'how can a story, a narrative, be authoritative?'³⁴ The answer proposed is to construe the biblical narrative as an unfinished drama script of five acts. Middleton and Walsh have adapted Wright's five biblical acts into a six-act dramatic structure in which each act contains a multiplicity of scenes.³⁵ Middleton and Walsh's six acts are as follows:

³⁰ Among examples of such restructuring, Loewen cites polygamists among the Lolo people reinterpreting church membership of first wives as eternal security for husbands, and church members among the Kaka people restructuring communion as magic to circumvent punishment in analogy to one of their traditional ceremonies.

³¹ 'Bible Stories', p. 373.

³² 'Bible Stories', p. 373.

³³ *Vox Evangelica* 21, (1991), pp. 7-32.

³⁴ 'How can the Bible be authoritative?', p. 18.

³⁵ J. R. Middleton and B. J. Walsh, *Truth is stranger than it used to be* (Downers Grove/London, 1995), p. 182.

- Act I Creation. The Author's plot intentions are initially revealed.
- Act II Fall. The first major incursion of plot tension.
- Act III The story of Israel
- Act IV The story of Jesus. This is seen as the decisive, pivotal act which begins to unravel the plot conflict at its deepest roots.
- Act V The story of the church
- Act VI The *eschaton* or consummation.

A critical point in this schema is that the script breaks off in the midst of Act V, resulting in a gap between Act V, scene 1 (the story of the early church) and the grand finales of Act VI. And it is precisely in this gap in the unfinished drama that we find ourselves. Our task is to tell God's story as outlined in Acts I to V and to let that story exercise its power in the world. We are not only to tell it, but also to carry the story further forward toward its eschatological goal, by working out in our own lives and in our own generation the current scene in the Fifth Act. Middleton and Walsh see this type of response to Scripture as the essence of Christian living; they call it 'faithful improvisation' in which obedience to the Word of the Lord is rendered in creative, innovative and flexible ways. Such faithful improvisation is possible only as we immerse ourselves in Scripture through serious, passionate Bible study and as we are guided by the Holy Spirit sent to us by the primary Author of the Story.³⁶

Wright's thesis is that it is precisely at this point that God invests the church with that divine authority of which Scripture is both a witness and a vehicle. Wright's key question is: how may we 'be able to stand humbly in the councils of God, in order then to stand boldly in the councils of men?' The answer, he says, is: 'By soaking ourselves in scripture, in the power and strength and leading of the Spirit, in order that we may then speak freshly and with authority to the world of this same creator God.'³⁷

At this point, the emphases of Wright on the one hand and Middleton and Walsh on the other appear to differ slightly. Wright focuses on the church being able to speak authoritatively, Middleton and Walsh on the church being able to live faithfully. But both agree that the church's telling (and living) of the story involves inviting those to whom it is told to enter into it. The story which the Spirit sends us out to tell the world, says Wright, 'is the story which breaks open all other world-views and, by so

³⁶ *Truth*, pp. 183-5.

³⁷ 'How can the Bible?' pp. 22-3.

doing, invites men and women, young and old, to see *this* story as *their* story'.³⁸

The key point to make here is that writers like Loewen, Wright, Middleton and Walsh enable us to see more clearly that Scripture has a God-given narrative shape. Our task as preachers is essentially to tell and retell the Bible's story as summarised in Middleton and Walsh's six acts. The creed of ancient Israel was the story of Yahweh's dealings with his people and is powerfully articulated in the historical psalms.³⁹ The Pentecost preaching of Peter in Acts 2 and the apologia of Stephen in Acts 7 are both a retelling of that story together with an affirmation of its fulfilment in the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. Paul's summary of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15 is cast in narrative form, as is also the Apostles' Creed.

Rousas John Rushdoony sees this emphasis on historical narrative as constituting the uniqueness of Christianity: 'The faith of all other religions is in a *body of ideas or claims concerning reality*.... The Apostles' Creed is radically different: it offers a synopsis of history, created by God the Father Almighty, requiring salvation by Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, who entered, lived, died, and was resurrected in history. His holy congregation is operative in history, which culminates in the general resurrection and everlasting life. The whole creed therefore is a *declaration concerning history*.'⁴⁰

Surely, therefore, the telling and the retelling of this metanarrative – this biblical master-story – ought to be at the heart of our preaching. I believe that we do the Bible a grave injustice if we regard and preach it as a book of ideas, a book containing 'the four things God wants us to know' of the Scripture Gift Mission, or 'the four spiritual laws' of Campus Crusade. Ideas there are, of course – great and wonderful ideas! But these ideas are living, not abstract; they emerge from the story, rather than being illustrated by it. I fear we help to detract from Scripture, and to desiccate theology, if we allow a wedge to be driven between biblical narrative and biblical theology. My plea, therefore, is for a recovery of that which might appropriately be called 'narrative preaching'.

³⁸ 'How can the Bible?', p. 24.

³⁹ Psalms 77, 78, 105, 106, 136.

⁴⁰ R. J. Rushdoony, *The Foundations of Social Order: Studies in the Creeds and Councils of the Early Church* (Fairfax, 1978), quoted in Carrick, *The Imperative*, p. 14.

NARRATIVE AS GENRE

The swing of the pendulum in recent decades from a historical-critical approach to the Bible to a literary approach has highlighted the importance of narrative as one of the most important – perhaps the most important – of the many literary *genres* identified in the biblical literature.

In contrast to the historical-critical approach, literary study of the Bible tends to be holistic in recognising the literary integrity of the canonical texts. ‘Modern biblical criticism,’ says Vanhoozer, ‘while professing to study the text scientifically, in fact approached the text with the anti-theological presuppositions of secular reason and hence with a bias against the unity of the text and an anti-narrative hermeneutic. Perhaps nothing is so typical of the historical-critical method than its tendency to fragment the text. By contrast, the most exciting developments in biblical theology are those that approach the texts with a sense of their literary integrity, a sense that stems from a postcritical hermeneutic which is open to being shaped by Christian perspectives.’⁴¹

Vanhoozer points out that the later approach seeks to interpret biblical texts on their own terms rather than fragmenting them by undertaking a minute study of sources. The frameworks through which texts are interpreted are constructed less from the norms of modern historiography and more from criteria commonly employed in literary analysis and appreciation.

A number of the leaders in this field are Jewish scholars, notably Robert Alter, Meir Sternberg and Shimon Bar-Efrat. Others include Stanley Hauerwas, David Gunn and Danna Fewell, and Edgar McKnight. Some of these write from a postmodern reader-oriented viewpoint. Notable contributions from an evangelical perspective have come from Kevin Vanhoozer, Philips Long, Francis Watson and others.

Some contend that narrative prose was first used by the ancient Israelite writers. Alter doubts this, but contends that these writers rejected epic (the prevalent literary form of religious texts in the ancient near east) because it was inseparable from myth and, therefore, unsuitable for historical writing. Alter views Hebrew narrative writing as ‘fictionalized history’, although, rather confusingly, he also describes it as ‘historized fiction’ and ‘prose fiction’. But he is of the opinion that ‘the historical impulse’ lying behind Hebrew narrative disqualified the epic *genre* from becoming its medium. Sternberg accords a greater degree of historical ‘happenedness’ to Hebrew Bible narrative, and helpful evangelical evaluations of the debate on history

⁴¹ ‘Exegesis’, p. 58.

versus fiction in biblical narrative have been made by Craig Blomberg⁴² and Philips Long,⁴³ to mention only two.⁴⁴

In his Grove Booklet *Preaching Old Testament Narrative*,⁴⁵ Bob Fyall demonstrates just how helpful for expository preaching are the insights from the current literary treatment of biblical narrative. Fyall emphasises the importance of noting in preaching how the biblical writers develop plot, how they portray characterisation, and how they deploy the range of literary devices available to them. He illustrates from a series of ten of his sermons on 1 and 2 Kings how an understanding of such literary features enables the biblical text to speak today in new and exciting ways.

The literature in this area constitutes, I believe, a veritable gold mine for preachers. Robert Alter is not alone among these literary critics in illustrating his appreciation of Hebrew narrative prose by exegeting passages from the Joseph story, the David cycle, the Book of Judges, etc., as he goes along. Such exposition is holistic, and draws out a host of fascinating thematic insights and nuances which many historical-critical commentaries miss through their focus on minutiae. While the historical-critical approach helps us to recognise the trees, the literary approach enables us to see the forest.

NARRATIVE PREACHING

Having looked at biblical narrative as matrix and as *genre*, it is now time to face the question: How will acknowledgement of the narrative shape of Scripture and recognition of the literary devices of narrative prose help to make preaching relevant in the twenty-first century? Allow me to offer the following answers to this question:

First, narrative preaching is relevant because it is biblical. It is precisely because the Word of God is living and enduring,⁴⁶ that it is applicable in all ages. So to be relevant, preaching needs not only to be contextualised in today's culture, but also to be anchored in Scripture. And narrative preaching is, as we have already sought to demonstrate, the principal model of preaching found in the Bible. The narrative shape given to biblical preaching is seen in the farewell discourses of Moses (which

⁴² C. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (Leicester, 1987).

⁴³ V. P. Long, *The Art of Biblical History* (Grand Rapids, 1994).

⁴⁴ I. H. Marshall's *I Believe in the Historical Jesus* (London, 1977), which has made a key contribution to understanding the historiography of the Gospels, was re-published in a new edition in 2002.

⁴⁵ B. Fyall, *Preaching Old Testament Narrative* (Cambridge, 1997).

⁴⁶ 1 Pet. 1:23.

constitute most of the Book of Deuteronomy), the four Gospels and the examples of apostolic preaching recorded in the Book of Acts. It is true, of course, that large parts of the Old Testament are prophecy rather than narrative. It is also the case that in my Good News New Testament the epistles and the Book of Revelation between them cover 144 pages, or 44% of the whole. But the message of the prophets is directed to the events related in the narrative, and, indeed, parts of the prophetic writings are in narrative form (e.g. Hosea). The message of the epistles is consequent on the events recorded in the Gospels and Acts. The preaching of both prophets and epistles is dependent on the narrative storyline and, therefore, in a secondary sense, might be described as narrative preaching.

Second, narrative preaching is relevant because it resonates with where many people are. That is, it is 'cool' today. It is important to recognise that it is 'cool', not because it is new, but precisely because it is old! There are many links between postmodernity and premodernity; one of these is a fascination with traditions. It is significant that in the United States some younger Christians are reacting against attempts to dumb down preaching and to convert the church sanctuary into a TV studio set. They are moving to churches with a high liturgy. In some cases 'low' churches are becoming 'high' churches. Leonard Sweet reports that an entire charismatic network in Southern California has converted to Orthodoxy, forming the Antiochian Orthodox Church.⁴⁷ One of the attractions of liturgy is its dramatic re-enactment of the redemptive story. Similar moves in the UK are not impossible, perhaps not improbable; Paul Thompson, who works with the Oasis Project of the Edinburgh West End Churches among clubbers, has told me that when he has opportunity to introduce young adults to the Bible, they quickly want to move into the Old Testament. 'They're looking for roots,' he explained.

Third, narrative preaching is relevant because people today are captivated by stories. While it is true that many with a postmodern mindset are suspicious of metanarratives, they are, nevertheless, intrigued by stories in general – even big stories. Witness, for example, the extraordinary success of the Lord of the Rings films. In the light of this, I believe it is likely that people today will engage with the biblical story if we present it to them as it is, i.e. as a story, rather than as a set of abstract ideas. In my current research I hope to investigate the possibility of the contemporary interest in spirituality becoming an entry point to the Bible for postmoderns. In particular, I want to investigate whether the Old Testament Psalms might be the gateway to the gospel for this generation.

⁴⁷ *Postmodern*, p. 72.

Fourth, narrative preaching is becoming increasingly relevant because today human consciousness is recognised as having a narrative structure. According to Stephen Crites, human consciousness 'is itself an incipient story'. The 'form' of consciousness, which allows for 'coherent experience' is, he claims, in a 'rudimentary sense narrative'.⁴⁸ Crites argues that without memory, human experience would have no coherence at all.⁴⁹ This fresh awareness that each individual person conceives his or her life as a story surely provides us with a key 'point of contact' as we seek to tell 'the old, old Story' in the early twenty-first century.

Fifth, narrative preaching is relevant because it encourages the congregation to engage with the biblical story. It is here that both preacher and people must learn to use imagination much more than is our wont in the context of worship. I suspect that rather too much preaching – and I include my own preaching here – short circuits the narrative with its atmosphere, its details, its colours and its smells, in an attempt to get to the meaning of the story as quickly as possible. But such short-circuiting deprives the congregation of the right to engage with the text for themselves. We challenge them to engage not with the text, but with our 'take' of the text. The implications of this are very serious. We may be robbing our hearers of having a personal, naïve, raw interaction with the Word of God straight, by providing them with a substitute in the form of the Word of God mediated through a homiletic package.

I am convinced that narrative preaching calls for a much greater use of imagination by both preacher and congregation than either currently appears to give it. This will require effort, for we have inherited a religious tradition which has generally frowned on the use of imagination in worship, and we live in a society dominated by visual media which tend to atrophy human imagination. The recovery of a sanctified use of imagination will not be easy. But it is essential, for without the renaissance of Christian imagination for which John McIntyre,⁵⁰ Trevor Hart⁵¹ and others are pleading, we will be unable to speak one of the key 'languages' used and understood by postmoderns.

⁴⁸ Stephen Crites, 'The narrative quality of experience', in *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology*, S. Hauerwas and L. G. Jones (eds), (Grand Rapids, 1989), p. 72, quoted by Gerard Loughlin, *Telling God's Story: Bible, Church and Narrative Theology* (Cambridge, 1999).

⁴⁹ 'The narrative', p. 73.

⁵⁰ J. McIntyre, *Faith, Theology and Imagination* (Edinburgh, 1987).

⁵¹ T. Hart, *Theology and Imagination*, audio tape course, Vancouver, 1997.

Sixth, narrative preaching is relevant because it helps us see both forest and trees. One of the disadvantages of expository preaching as traditionally practised is that it allows the congregation to get lost in detail. The preacher focuses so much on the trees – perhaps on only one branch, or even one leaf – that the congregation loses sight of the forest! Of course, narrative preaching in its concern to provide a panoramic perspective of the forest, must be careful to avoid neglecting the trees, as some redemptive-historical preaching is accused of doing. The Dutch speak of preaching as ‘bicycling through the Bible’.⁵² Narrative preaching will seek to do this, but it must also provide opportunities to dismount and take in the scenery at particular points of the journey.

Seventh, narrative preaching is relevant because it enables the preacher to present the truth claims of the gospel out of the biblical context in which these claims were first made. Donald Bloesch takes to task narrative theologians who downplay the truth of the story in its telling. ‘The proclamation of the church consists of more than telling a story,’ he says. ‘It involves proclaiming the divine commandment as well as celebrating the divine promise.’⁵³ Narrative preaching will seek to be faithful to the text, recognising that the biblical narrative includes divine claims, commands and promises. These claims, etc., are embedded in the story, or are inferred from it. Perhaps Gerard Loughlin can help us here. In a footnote he reacts to John Millbank’s refusal of the Gospels as realistic narratives and of Jesus as a character within them, on the ground that metaphors of Jesus as way, word, truth, life, water, bread, vertically invest universal significance in Jesus. Loughlin sees these ‘vertical’ metaphors as ‘closely folded within the “horizontal” narratives’.⁵⁴ The preacher must take care to proclaim the ‘vertical metaphors’ as well as expound the ‘horizontal narratives’ in which the metaphors are ‘folded’.

Eighth, narrative preaching is relevant because the preacher challenges his hearers to incarnate the story and carry it forward towards its *telos*. The preacher will help his congregation understand Christian obedience to Jesus Christ in terms of contextualising the biblical story first within their own personal story and then within their own involvement in the wider story of society and of the world. Having invited the congregation to enter the biblical Story – to linger in it, to absorb it, to revel in it, to give God thanks for it – the narrative preacher will then call on the congregation to

⁵² Carrick, *The Imperative*, p. 115.

⁵³ D. G. Bloesch, *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration & Interpretation* (Carlisle, 1994), p. 213.

⁵⁴ G. Loughlin, *Telling God’s Story* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 76 n. 58.

look out on the world through the lens of the biblical Story, seeking to understand their humdrum, every-day existence in terms of the world-view they have just discovered or rediscovered. The preacher will then urge the congregation on leaving public worship to return to the world determined to work out for themselves the next scene in the fifth act of the drama. Middleton and Walsh remind us that this 'improvisation' of the next scene must be 'faithful to the thrust, momentum and direction of the biblical story. Any action (whether that be adopting a moral stance, responding to postmodernity or making cultural-political decisions) that is inappropriate to this story (for example, sexual promiscuity, entrenched denial of the force of the postmodern critique or rabid cultural-political nationalism) must be judged in the light of the story. But if our praxis is to be faithful to the story, this requires taking the risk of improvisation that is creative, innovative and flexible.'⁵⁵

Ninth, narrative preaching is relevant in that it provides us with a model for evangelism that is at one and the same time both dominical and contemporary. This form of evangelistic preaching tells the biblical story, inviting hearers to enter that story and make their own discoveries within it. This is how Jesus told his parables; he appears seldom to have interpreted them; rather he invited his hearers to make their own discovery of the good news they contain. Such an approach today would deliver us from stereotyping evangelism into four rigid steps which leave little room for the idiosyncrasies of the individual and the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit. Ought we not to trust the Word more to do its own work?⁵⁶ Did not Luther say that, as we enter the Scriptures, Jesus will step out of the text and meet us? The theological inadequacies of stereotype evangelism apart, stereotyping is distinctly unpopular today. Postmoderns prefer to buy products that are customised to their own requirements. I suggest that narrative evangelistic preaching creates space for the Holy Spirit to customise the gospel to the particular needs of individuals. This is not to say that the 'Four Things God wants You to Know' or the 'Four Spiritual

⁵⁵ *Truth*, p. 183.

⁵⁶ Cf. Loewen, 'Bible Stories': The language of a primitive people presents fewest difficulties to the narrative form of address; a very simple man can understand a story. And, lo, the teller of Bible stories discovers that a new religious world is dawning upon the heathen through the simple narration of what God has done for men; that these stories are better fitted than any well thought-out address for making blinded idolaters acquainted with the living God; that the simple telling of what God has done in the course of human history makes his image plastic to them and himself, no longer a bloodless idea, but an acting, thinking, feeling person.' (p. 371).

Laws' ought to be dispensed with. But they may be better used as a checklist after encountering the gospel rather than as a list of steps leading to salvation.

To think of narrative preaching as simple storytelling is to misunderstand it. It is much more. Narrative preaching is interpretive preaching; it will help the hearers to make sense of the passage. It will also be expository – although to capture quickly the 'big picture' of a biblical book, the exposition might sometimes be by paragraph, rather than by verse. Narrative preaching will also be theological preaching, as the preacher draws from the text teaching about God, his purposes and his promises. It will be ethical preaching, highlighting the divine standards and sanctions as they come to light in the text. It will be challenging preaching, calling on congregations imaginatively to enter the world of the text – interacting with its situations and characters – so that they might faithfully live the text in the everyday world of Monday to Saturday. This interpretive, expository, theological, ethical and challenging preaching, I call *narrative* preaching simply because the preacher will seek to set every sermon in its place in the matrix of the biblical storyline, and in exposition will draw as appropriate upon the literary features of narrative prose.

CONCLUSION

For all of these reasons I believe the Christian *kerygma* is 'cool' in our postmodern age, as, indeed, it has also been cool in previous eras. In my view, we do the *kerygma* a disservice if we dumb it down to make it more acceptable to the tastes of our age, for in so doing we run the danger of robbing it of its power. The *kerygma* is cool! The *kerygma* is powerful! Let us all – preachers and congregations – tell it enthusiastically! Let us proclaim it creatively! Let us contextualise it meaningfully! And let us pray, and let us expect, that our postmodern contemporaries may, indeed, come to recognise and experience this message as the very power of God!⁵⁷

⁵⁷ 1 Cor. 1:18.

THE CROSS AND SUBSTITUTIONARY ATONEMENT

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INTRODUCTION¹

A paper about the atonement should need no justification. If the doctrine is under attack (as it frequently is) then there is a need to expound and defend it biblically against its cultured despisers. Even if it is not explicitly under attack, the centrality of the atonement to Christian doctrine requires that we continue to preach it and teach it. So, whether in season or out of season, we all need to be theologians of, and preachers of the atonement.

The focus here will be on the aspect of the atonement usually termed 'substitution', for which Robert Letham's and Karl Barth's definitions are helpful:

Christ himself willingly submitted to the just penalty which we deserved, receiving it on our behalf and in our place so that we will not have to bear it ourselves.²

In His doing this for us, in His taking to Himself – to fulfil all righteousness – our accusation and condemnation and punishment, in His suffering in our place and for us, there came to pass our reconciliation with God.³

Although these definitions understand substitution in terms of substitutionary punishment, the issue of penalty will not be treated here below.⁴ I intend in this paper simply to answer three questions in

¹ This paper arose out of an invitation to speak on this subject to the Scottish Evangelical Theology Society in April 2003. I am grateful to the committee for this invitation, and to the members of the society for their incisive questions. I should also thank Garry Williams and Stephen Catto for their very helpful comments.

² R. Letham, *The Work of Christ* (Leicester, 1993), p. 133.

³ Barth, CD IV/1, p. 223.

⁴ I have discussed it elsewhere, in my 'Justified by Faith, Justified by his Blood: The Evidence of Romans 3:21-4.25', in D. A. Carson, P. T.

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connection with substitution. First, *is substitution still important?* Second, *is substitution still alive?* Third, *is substitution still biblical?* The aim of this third section will be to sift the evidence which has traditionally been used, but also to offer two suggestions of new areas of biblical material which might usefully be taken on board in future discussions of substitution.

I. IS SUBSTITUTION STILL IMPORTANT?

When does a gospel become a false gospel? Paul knew a heresy when he saw it in Galatia, but Galatians gives us no hard and fast principles to define the limits of acceptable doctrine. This question of where lines should be drawn has become an issue much discussed currently in the USA with the rise of openness theism, a controversy which seems to have aroused much more than common discomfort. The most recent book on the subject is entitled *Beyond the Bounds*, which as the title suggests, argues that openness theism is not only wrong but dangerously wrong.⁵ In this volume, there is a useful essay by Wayne Grudem which is not focused specifically on the issue of openness theism, but attempts to tackle more widely the problem of heresy. He gives, among other things, some helpful general criteria to assess what constitutes false teaching: for example, under the heading of 'Effect on personal and church life', he asks questions such as, 'Will this false teaching bring significant harm to people's Christian lives, or to the work of the Church?'⁶ This question is significant for our consideration of the *status* of the doctrine of substitution.

The principal reason for this is that it seems to be logically impossible to have true assurance of salvation if we do not accept that Christ died in our place. The problem with logic of course is that people are not always so consistent that they will inevitably be so logical. But it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that if we do not believe that Christ has in *his* death exhausted the punishment that *we* would otherwise face, then we cannot be certain of escaping the consequences of our sin. Assurance is no optional add-on to the gospel, or something reserved for senior saints: the New Testament constantly asserts or presupposes that assurance of future salvation in Christ is part and parcel of the Christian life. Romans 8:31-39

O'Brien, M. A. Seifrid (eds), *Justification and Variegated Nomism. Volume II: The Paradoxes of Paul* (Tübingen/Grand Rapids, 2004).

⁵ J. Piper, J. Taylor, P. K. Helseth (eds), *Beyond the Bounds: Open Theism and the Undermining of Biblical Christianity* (Wheaton, 2003).

⁶ W. Grudem, 'When, Why and for What Should We Draw New Boundaries?', in Piper *et al.* (eds), *Beyond the Bounds*, p. 363.

is one of the most well-known expressions of Christian assurance, in which Paul exhorts his readers: 'For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.' The ultimate basis for salvation and assurance in Romans 8 is elaborated at the beginning of the chapter: Christian believers have passed *from* being bound to the Law of sin and death *to* the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ (8:2). Hence, 'there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus' (8:1). This is grounded in the atoning work of Christ, in which through the punishment of sin in his flesh, the goal of the Law is reached. Passages such as John 10:11-18 and 1 Peter 1:3-9 are clearly written with a similar aim of instilling assurance. The New Testament, then, assumes that the believer should be able to sing Daniel Webster Whittle's close paraphrase of 2 Timothy 1:12:

I know Whom I have believed,
And am persuaded that He is able
To keep that which I've committed
Unto Him against that day.

There are two contrasting possibilities if one rejects substitution. The first and more obvious consequence of abandoning assurance rooted in the cross of Christ is presumably insecurity at the prospect of judgement. Calvin brings out this point with his characteristic clarity:

We must specially remember this substitution in order that we may not be all our lives in trepidation and anxiety, as if the just vengeance, which the Son of God transferred to himself, were still impending over us.⁷

Calvin rightly recognizes that no doctrine is an island, and sees clearly the practical, pastoral relevance of substitution.

The alternative to this 'trepidation and anxiety' is that rejection of substitution leads to a *false* assurance, as a person is led to rely on something *other than the cross*, whether that be confidence in doctrinal orthodoxy, in membership of the correct ecclesiastical party, or in one's moral calibre.

The integral connection between substitution and assurance is one principal reason, I think, for defending the doctrine of substitution so

⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, II.xvi.5. Quoted in M. Davie, 'Dead to Sin and Alive to God', *SBET* 19 (2001), p. 162.

vehemently. As Fitzsimmons Allison argued in his instructively titled book *The Cruelty of Heresy*, one of the central aspects of false teaching is that it has pastorally disastrous consequences.⁸ It is very difficult sometimes to argue that some doctrines are heretical because they detract from God's glory, or even in some cases, that they are inconsistent with Scripture. In the case of substitution, however, it seems that the combination of the Bible's clarity on the issue (as we will see below) and the fact that it is an essential requirement for assurance means that it is not a legitimate area of disagreement among Christians.

2. IS SUBSTITUTION STILL ALIVE?

A REVIEW OF RECENT LITERATURE BY LETHAM, PETERSON AND TIDBALL

At the present time we are actually extremely well served with good literature on the subject. There is of course a lot of bad literature on the atonement, but three recent books in particular are excellent examples of both polemical (in the good sense) defence of the faith, and constructive exposition of doctrine according to its inner logic. The three books are Robert Letham's *The Work of Christ*,⁹ *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet*, edited by David Peterson,¹⁰ and Derek Tidball's *The Message of the Cross*.¹¹ All three defend the classic doctrine of penal substitution.

Letham

Robert Letham's *The Work of Christ* has the advantage of not being a book about the cross *per se*; rather it follows the pattern of the traditional taxonomy of the work of Christ as the threefold office: Christ as *prophet*, as *priest*, and as *king*. As one might expect, the account of the atonement comes under the second head, as part of Christ's priestly work. He expounds the doctrine of the atonement principally in terms of *penal* substitution. The Levitical sacrificial system, he argues, provides evidence of the penal doctrine in the OT, and Letham's exegesis is generally maximalist in its interpretation of OT texts in penal-substitutionary terms.

⁸ C. F. Allison, *The Cruelty of Heresy* (London, 1994).

⁹ R. Letham, *The Work of Christ* (Contours of Christian Theology; Leicester, 1993).

¹⁰ D. Peterson (ed.), *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet: Proclaiming the Atonement Today* (Carlisle, 2001).

¹¹ D. Tidball, *The Message of the Cross* (Bible Speaks Today Bible Themes; Leicester, 2001).

Corresponding to this are the key NT passages such as 2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 Peter 3:18, and so on. Relying on Leon Morris, Letham sees the principal argument for substitution in the preposition *for* (Christ dying *for* us), and in the famous reference to propitiation (*hilastērion*) in Romans 3:25. (We will be returning to these biblical passages later.) He goes on to *defend* the doctrine of penal substitution, arguing both against theological objections, and the caricature of the penal doctrine as ‘stock exchange divinity’. This is an image drawn from Edward Irving via Colin Gunton, parodying penal substitution as a kind of mechanical commercial transaction.¹² Letham comments: ‘Talk of penal substitution as “stock exchange divinity” is simply a coded message; its author means “I do not like it”.’ (p. 137).¹³ The distinctive emphases of Letham’s book are a welcome integration of the cross into the work of Christ as a whole, and an emphasis on the death of Jesus in the wider context of his earthly ministry. He notes the way in which penal substitution does not push aside other models of the atonement. While Letham provides an elegant exposition of the doctrine in itself and in the face of critics, it is a shame that the section ends with the rather damp squib of some reflections on Anglican and Roman Catholic dialogue. Again, much of the theological meat of Letham’s discussion about the atonement comes in an appendix on limited atonement at the end of the book. But these are rather superficial criticisms of a book full of excellent theological exposition.

Peterson et al.

The book *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet* is a multi-authored work, but all the chapters really provide a justification for the ongoing importance of penal substitution today. Editor David Peterson contributes two chapters on the biblical evidence (‘Atonement in the Old Testament’ and ‘Atonement in the New Testament’). Garry Williams’ chapter is entitled ‘The Cross as Punishment for Sin’, and there are essays by M. Ovey (‘The Cross, Creation and the Human Predicament’) and P. Weston (‘Proclaiming Christ Crucified Today’). All the contributors are, or at least were, lecturers at Oak Hill Theological College, a Church of England training institution.

The various chapters make some points which emerge again and again. The biblical section of the book focuses rightly on the scapegoat part of Leviticus 16, rather than on the offerings whose blood is sprinkled in the

¹² See C. Gunton, ‘Two Dogmas Revisited: Edward Irving’s Christology’, *SJT* 41 (1988), p. 367.

¹³ Letham, *Work of Christ*, p. 137.

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Holy of Holies. Peterson and Williams identify the phrase 'bearing the sins' as tantamount to 'bearing punishment', and assert that the scapegoat does both: they argue for the penal dimension in that the goat goes to its death,¹⁴ and to an *eretz gezerah* ('place of cutting off') in Leviticus 16:22.¹⁵ Then the book argues that the motif of substitution comes to a high point in Isaiah 53, where Israel's salvation is connected very directly with the servant, who is identified as a scapegoat.

Peterson's first chapter helpfully picks up the observation in the Isaiah commentary of John Oswalt, which points out that the emphasis in Isaiah 53:4 is on 'he' who does something for *us*. (This is a point which we will stress further later.) The observation is of 'the repeated contrast within the Song between what "he" the Servant does or endures and the "we", "us" or "their" group'.¹⁶ The substitutionary aspect is particularly clear in the emphatic language of 53:11, which Oswalt renders as 'it is *their* iniquities that *he* carries'.¹⁷ Isaiah 53:4 could also be said to make a similar point: 'our sicknesses *he* carried'.¹⁸ The emphasis in *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet* is on the way in which this is taken up in 1 Peter. And we shall see later the same pattern in numerous Pauline statements.

The final chapter of the book does not follow the general approach of *defending* the doctrines of penalty and substitution. Nevertheless, it provides some very salutary points which should influence the way in which we reflect on, and preach substitution. The general focus of the chapter is on the need for us to trust the biblical narratives in our preaching and not be over-reliant on illustrations. In particular, we should not use illustrations primarily to 'clinch' the argument. Moreover, Weston also observes how a number of illustrations of substitution popularly used can actually have very unhelpful theological implications. The example which he takes is the often-used illustration of substitution from *The Bridge over the River Kwai*, where the Japanese prison camp officer finds a shovel missing and threatens to execute all the prisoners if nobody owns up to the theft. One person steps forward to confess, and is executed, although later

¹⁴ Williams notes that one meaning of *azazel* is 'complete destruction'.

¹⁵ The jury is still out, however, on whether this is the correct interpretation, as the phrase could simply mean a distant place. Wenham, however, lists both options as possibilities without adjudicating between them. See G. J. Wenham, *Leviticus* (Grand Rapids, 1979), pp. 233-5.

¹⁶ Williams, 'Cross as Punishment for Sin', p. 80.

¹⁷ J. Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66* (Grand Rapids, 1998), p. 388, cited in Williams, 'Cross as Punishment for Sin', p. 81.

¹⁸ Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, p. 386, cited in Williams, 'Cross as Punishment for Sin', p. 80.

it is discovered that due to a miscount, there had not in fact been a missing shovel. But the innocent man had died as a substitute for the many. Weston objects that over-use of emotive illustrations often leads the hearer away from the biblical text, and to focus more on the illustration. What he is equally concerned about, however, is the portrait of *God* which such an illustration paints. Weston's chapter rightly calls for a properly trinitarian understanding of the atonement, wherein God himself undertakes to receive the penalty for sin on our behalf. All talk which carries the implication of a divine punishment on a third party needs the corrective of the theology of the 'self-substitution of God' (Stott) or 'the judge judged in our place' (Barth).

Tidball

Derek Tidball's *The Message of the Cross* is organised principally around passages of Scripture, rather than around the components of the doctrine of the cross. If Letham's book has the merit of setting the theology of the atonement within the wider area of Christ's work more broadly, then Tidball sets it within a wider New Testament theology of the cross. Themes such as the folly of the cross in preaching (pp. 200-215), the ministry of proclaiming reconciliation (pp. 225-6), and 'a cruciform way of life' (p. 232) also occupy a key place. These sections constitute the theological meat of the book, but in general there is an excellent devotional tone, as the book begins with a review of the understanding of the cross in evangelical history and spirituality, and ends with the great hymns of praise in Revelation.

The middle part of the book deals with the four Gospel narratives. Here, Tidball holds back from seeing substitution here and propitiation there, and instead allows the narrative power of the accounts to shine through. Tidball defends the view that Jesus identifies himself as the suffering servant of Isaiah 52-53, but does not theologize much beyond that here.

Perhaps the most interesting section of the book is the first, which deals with Old Testament anticipations of the cross. He affirms quite rightly the clear presentation of substitution in the Passover, and in Isaiah 52-53, and also deals with Genesis 22 and Psalm 22. In his treatment of Leviticus 16, Tidball focuses on the blood sprinkled in the Holy of Holies, and only devotes a sentence to the scapegoat, which is more clearly substitutionary. He contends that substitution underlies the presentation of the sacrifices in the Levitical system here, which is a fair position to argue. The problem, however, comes when he responds to those who are reluctant to understand the slaughtered offerings in Leviticus 16 in substitutionary terms. He comments: 'The sophisticated objections of

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contemporary men and women sometimes seem to arise more from pride than from anything else. They stand against the long and forceful current of the church's history' (p. 77). The problem with the argument here is not so much with the content: when it comes to the clear depiction of substitution in Isaiah 53 and in the NT, I would be tempted to agree. The problem is more with applying this, as Tidball does, specifically to the Levitical system. Leviticus 16 is extremely complicated, and Tidball does not show his usual care here in dealing with the different scholarly interpretations.

He is on much more solid ground in his treatment of Isaiah 53. Interestingly, he highlights the connection between the 'suffering servant' and the scapegoat, rather than with the sin offerings and the burnt offering. Here, Tidball's criticisms of Paul Fiddes hit the nail on the head. Comments of Fiddes such as 'if the cross of Christ has power to turn the sinner towards good, we may truly say that it wipes away sin' and 'the Song of the Suffering Servant SHOWS us the power of sacrifice to transform other human lives'¹⁹ receive this response: 'to conclude that the full extent of God's purpose was to bring sinners to repentance by influencing them through the example of the servant is grossly deficient' (p. 108). His explanation of the substitutionary character of Isaiah 52-53 echoes what we noted in *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet*, a point which Tidball makes extremely well: 'the emphatic nature of the interplay between HE and OUR in these verses suggests that substitution... is in mind' (p. 107).

With this observation in mind, we can turn to a reassessment of some of the biblical evidence. But I hope that it is also clear from a brief overview of these books that reports that penal substitution is dead (whether from triumphalistic liberals or over-anxious evangelicals!) are greatly exaggerated.

3. IS SUBSTITUTION STILL BIBLICAL?

Tidball's remark on Leviticus 16 above indicates the need to be clear about where substitution is in the Bible, and where it is not. Whatever position one takes on Leviticus 16, what should be avoided is the sense one gets from Tidball's exposition that in denying that substitution is in a particular part of the Bible is to deny that it is in the Bible at all. I will attempt here, then, to provide something of an analysis of what I perceive

¹⁹ P. S. Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation: The Christian Idea of Atonement* (London, 1989), pp. 79-80.

has been helpful and unhelpful in wider biblical scholarship on this question.

The basis of substitution should, in my view, begin with Genesis 1-3, and the understanding that sin leads to death. In Genesis 2, God issues the threat of death for sin: 'you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die' (Gen. 2:17). In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve receive the penalty of death for their sin (Gen. 3:22-23) and this is maintained in the continual references in the OT to the fact that one dies because of sins, usually one's own. To take one example, in 1 Kings 16:18-19, Zimri 'died for the sins which he had committed in his evil-doing before the Lord'. The NT formulae subvert that expectation of dying for one's own sins in saying that Christ died. Christ had no sin, and yet died for sins. We are sinners, and yet will not die for our sins. We can see very clearly the point about the pattern 'he... for us' or 'he... for them' in the following examples:

Christ died for the ungodly (Rom. 5:6)

Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8)

Christ died for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3)

he made him who knew no sin to be sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21)

who gave himself for our sins (Gal. 1:4)

who gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20)

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us (Gal. 3:13)

who gave himself as a ransom for all (1 Tim. 2:6)

and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45)

the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep (John 10:11)

Christ suffered for you (1 Pet. 2:21)

He himself bore our sins in his body (1 Pet. 2:24a)

By his wounds you have been healed (1 Pet. 2:24b)

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous (1 Pet. 3:18)

These examples constitute a significant number of cases of the 'he... for us', or 'he... for them' pattern. However, it is not the case that all statements about Christ's death '*for us*' require the meaning 'in our place': the meaning of 'for' can be 'for the benefit of'. Nevertheless, the fact of the interchangeability of statements about Christ's death *for sins* and Christ's death *for us* indicates a substitution. If the statements were limited to talk of Christ's death 'for us', then it is possible that the continual implication was of Christ's death *for our benefit*, rather than *in our place*. Statements

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about Christ's death *for our sins*, on the other hand, mean *taking the consequences of our sins*. The biblical assumption is that death is the consequence of sin, and therefore Christ takes that consequence even though the sin is not his own. In his death, Christ receives the penalty that was due to us.²⁰ While it would in theory be possible to develop this in a non-penal way, in fact it is at this point in the logic where substitution and penalty become very difficult to prise apart.

In my view, this kind of evidence is much more compelling than complex arguments about the identification of the *hilastērion* in Romans 3:25. It also has the advantage of being very much easier to explain in the pulpit. If we are to assess in retrospect the significance of the Dodd-Morris debate over expiation and propitiation, it is Morris's arguments more broadly for a proper understanding of divine wrath which have survived the exegetical test.²¹ Dodd's frankly feeble arguments for the immanent character of divine wrath simply do not work for Romans 1-2, which is precisely where they need to work if his argument about expiation in Romans 3 is to be believed. On the other hand, Morris's arguments for a clear meaning of 'propitiation' from *hilastērion* in Romans 3:25 are not straightforward either, as they rely on pagan Greek parallels to counterbalance the fact that the OT evidence points in a different direction.²² A growing number of evangelical and non-evangelical commentators tend to view the reference to Jesus as *hilastērion* much more in terms of the *mercy-seat* of Leviticus 16, where the term *hilastērion* clearly does mean 'mercy-seat'. The idea of propitiation is much better derived from the flow of the argument more broadly, and the idea of specifically *penal* substitution perhaps comes more easily from Romans 8:3 than from Romans 3.²³

²⁰ Similarly, *ransom* has to imply substitution, although the dominant image is of *price*, rather than of *place*.

²¹ Leon Morris's main works here are *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (London, 1965) and *The Cross in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1965).

²² Morris's argument that *hilastērion* cannot refer to the object of the mercy-seat on the basis of the absence of the article must now be considered invalid on linguistic grounds. Since *hilastērion* is the *complement* in the sentence, one would not expect an article. The propitiation view (not necessarily based on Morris's old linguistic evidence) is still followed however by D. J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, 1996), esp. pp. 234-6, and Peterson, 'Atonement in the Old Testament', pp. 41-2.

²³ However, the demonstration of the divine justice in Rom. 3:25-26 does, in my view, point to a penal understanding of Christ's death. (See my forthcoming essay, 'Justified by Faith, Justified by his Blood: The

Similarly, when one looks at the sacrificial system, there is additional complexity there. Part of the problem is that in German scholarship there is considerable support for the idea of substitution, but not substitution (let alone *penal* substitution) in the sense in which Anglo-American theologians would generally understand it.²⁴ The view of scholars such as Gese is that in bringing the sin-offering, the worshipper is making an offering which by its death represents the total dedication of the worshipper. Although this may well not be right, the issues surrounding the debate are difficult. Despite the fact, then, that some evangelicals have traditionally invested a lot in the sin-offerings, and the *hilastērion*, I would suggest caution here. This is by no means to say that these are ruled out as evidence, but I would be inclined to encourage more boldness in the 'death for sins' formulae than in some of these other images.

TWO PROPOSALS

Finally, it may be stimulating to consider two themes which are not ordinarily employed in expositions of substitutionary atonement.

The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).

The first is the idea of ransom in Mark 10:45.²⁵ A point which surprises me in the three books I have mentioned is that they focus (rightly) on the Isaiah background to Mark 10:45, but not on the legal background in Exodus, which probably provides clearer evidence of substitution.²⁶ This mirrors a strikingly consistent pattern in the commentaries. They mention

Evidence of Romans 3:21-4:25', in Carson, O'Brien, Seifrid (eds), *Justification and Variegated Nomism. Volume II: The Paradoxes of Paul.*

²⁴ See for example H. Gese, 'Atonement', in *Essays on Biblical Theology* (Minneapolis, 1981), pp. 93-116. This line of thought has had an enormous influence in Germany on both OT and NT scholars, such as Bernd Janowski and Peter Stuhlmacher.

²⁵ France defines *lutron* ('ransom') as 'deliverance by payment of an "equivalent"': R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids/Carlisle, 2002), p. 420.

²⁶ Peterson, 'Atonement in the Old Testament', p. 30, following C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel according to St Mark* (CGTC; Cambridge, 1959), p. 342, attempts to include the ransom language as part of the Isaiah background by arguing that *lutron* is a possible rendering of *asham* in Isa. 53:10, but this is difficult, as *lutron* language never translated *asham* in the LXX.

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Exodus in passing if at all, and then proceed immediately to a long discussion of the apparently far more interesting material in Isaiah. This is true of the commentaries by Cranfield, Lane, Evans and France.

In Mark 10:45 here, Jesus will 'give his life', a phrase clearly meaning to die. The sense of the term 'ransom' is not immediately obvious. In the modern context, it evokes the image of the kidnapper who abducts, for example, a child, and then communicates with the parents in order to procure the payment of a price, on condition of which he will set the child free. Nor is the general OT language of Israel's national restoration particularly closely related to Mark 10:45.²⁷ The closest parallel to the language of Jesus here in fact comes in the Old Testament judicial law. In Exodus 21, the judicial principles are explained, according to which any who commit murder are themselves subject to capital punishment: 'Anyone who strikes someone a fatal blow shall surely be put to death' (Exod. 21:12). The chapter delineates what the fair ways are to restitute losses, when one has incurred them at another's expense. The same chapter contains the classic expression of measure-for-measure restitution, *an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth*: 'If there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.' (Exod. 21:23-24).

A few verses later is the case of the goring bull. If a bull gores a person to death, the bull must be stoned (21:28). However, if it emerges that the bull has a track record of goring, then the owner of the bull is held responsible for not restraining the bull properly. In this case, the owner is liable for the death penalty:

If, however, the bull has had the habit of goring and the owner has been warned but has not kept it penned up and it kills a man or woman, the bull must be stoned and the owner also must be put to death (21:29).

There is a codicil added to this clause, however. It is possible for the owner to escape death by paying (presumably to the family of the victim) whatever they ask:

However, if payment is demanded, the owner shall give a ransom for his life, whatever is demanded (21:30).

²⁷ See for example, M. D. Hooker, *Not Ashamed of the Gospel: New Testament Interpretations of the Death of Christ* (Carlisle, 1994), p. 55, following her earlier work.

Similar language is used later on in the book of Exodus, where during the course of the census, each Israelite must pay the Lord with an offering, in order that he might not receive judgement:

Then the Lord said to Moses, 'When you take a census of the Israelites to count them, each one must give the Lord a ransom for his life at the time he is counted. Then no plague will come on them when you number them'. (Exod. 30:12).

These passages each share in common with Mark 10:45 a connection between 'giving', 'ransom' and '(his) life': the idea of payment (as in Jesus *giving* his life) to avoid legal retribution, or to avoid the punishment of plague. This is achieved by Jesus' paying his own life. All three (four, including 'his') terms in Mark 10:45 are the same as those used in Exodus 21:23 where the person who has killed must pay a ransom for the victim. The language which Jesus uses, then, envisages his own life as a 'price' which is paid for human sin.

He asked them again: 'Whom do you seek?' And they said, 'Jesus of Nazareth'. Jesus answered, 'I told you that I am he. So if you seek me, let these men go.' This was to fulfil the word that he had spoken: 'Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one.' (John 18:7-9).

Secondly, John 18:9. This is the famous incident with which John's account of the trial and death of Jesus (and consequently also Bach's *St John Passion*) begins. The officers and soldiers ask for Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus replies 'I am he', and then says 'So if you seek me, let these men go'. So far we see a demonstration of Jesus' charity, as Tidball puts it, 'showing evidence of the remarkable care for others that would be evident throughout'.²⁸ However, the Gospel-writer John sees far more than this in Jesus' statement. As he puts it: 'This was to fulfil the word that he had spoken: "Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one."' (18:9). The key aspect here is that if the reference is simply to the physical security of the disciples, the author's explanation is an extremely odd one. The message is much more likely to be that Jesus' death which he must face *alone* as the 'lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world' is the guarantee that not one of the disciples will be lost and perish in eternity. It

²⁸ Tidball, *Message of the Cross*, p. 170; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge, 1991), p. 579, provides a more nuanced account.

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is the fact that Jesus dies alone and thereby guarantees rescue for the disciples that implies substitution here.

These are brief expositions which would require further strengthening, but they are offered here as suggested material (in particular the judicial language from Exodus) which future discussions of substitution could beneficially utilise.

CONCLUSION

All that remains is briefly to summarise. We saw first with a little help from Calvin and Grudem that substitution is indeed a central Christian doctrine, the rejection of which will be pastorally (and theologically) disastrous. This requires that we engage with the text of Scripture ourselves, not to see substitution everywhere, but to defend the doctrine vigorously by paying attention to the numerous places in Scripture where it clearly does stand out prominently. This may seem a daunting prospect, but we have, to accompany us in this task, three fresh expositions of the historic doctrine. Letham, Tidball, and the staff of Oak Hill Theological College have put us all in their debt by the lucid defences which their volumes provide. This is one debt, however, which can be repaid, by the ransom price of our attentive (and critical) reading of their books.

JONATHAN EDWARDS' *RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS* AS A PARADIGM FOR EVANGELICAL SPIRITUALITY¹

IAIN D. CAMPBELL, BACK FREE CHURCH, ISLE OF LEWIS

If justification is needed for the appearance of an article on an American theologian in a Scottish journal, then the fact that 5 October 2003 marks the three hundredth anniversary of the birth of Jonathan Edwards is probably sufficient. Lloyd-Jones' assessment that Edwards 'stands out... quite on his own among men'² is itself an indicator of his stature and significance. Indeed, for Lloyd-Jones, 'no man is more relevant to the present condition of Christianity than Jonathan Edwards'.³

Paralleled with this is the fact that America's premier theologian was not American at all but, as George Marsden is at pains to point out, 'an elite male colonial British citizen'.⁴ Living in pre-revolutionary New England, Edwards' interest in British affairs was the interest of a member-citizen in his own country. Indeed, it is arguable that he regarded Scotland with particular affection. When his supporters in Scotland discussed with him the possibility of a Scottish pastorate in 1750, there is every indication to suppose that he found the prospect inviting.⁵

But the Scottish connection goes deeper. Both during and after the Great Awakening of 1740-44, contact between Edwards and Scottish ministers – not least over the contents of the *Treatise Concerning the Religious Affections* – was frequent. Among his correspondents was the Revd William McCulloch of Cambuslang. In a letter from 1743, Edwards was urging continued dialogue across the Atlantic:

¹ I am grateful to Dr Samuel T. Logan, President of Westminster Theological Seminary, and acknowledged expert on Edwards, for comments and suggestions on this paper.

² D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans: Their Origins and Successors* (London, 1987), p. 355.

³ Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans*, p. 367.

⁴ George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, 2003), p. 259.

⁵ Marsden, *Edwards*, p. 362.

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I should be glad, dear Sir, of a remembrance in your prayers, and also of your help, by information and instructions, by what you find in your experience in Scotland. I believe it to be the duty of one part of the church of God thus to help another.⁶

There was good reason for such dialogue, not least the fact that 'during the 1740s both New England and Scotland underwent religious awakenings with all the attendant excesses, controversies and eschatological interpretations'.⁷ The spiritual experiences which attended such awakenings were similar in both countries. Edwards shares the following observation with the Revd James Robe of Kilsyth regarding such experiences:

Many among us have been ready to think that all high raptures are divine; but experience plainly shows that it is not the degree of rapture and ecstasy (though it should be to the third heavens), but the nature and kind that must determine us in their favor.⁸

Common to both Edwards and his Scottish colleagues was a conviction that genuine piety must be distinguished from its counterfeit. If it was true that 'Edwards and his Scottish company... presupposed the primacy of the heart' in religion,⁹ then such a distinction was necessary. The observation that the heart of man is deceitful (Jer. 17:9) is frequently noted by Edwards, both in his personal diary¹⁰ and in his sermons.¹¹ Not least does the *Religious Affections* warn about the deceitfulness of the heart:

⁶ JE to William McCulloch, 12 May 1743, printed in S. E. Dwight's 'Memoir of Jonathan Edwards', edited by E. Hickman, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (London, 1840), Vol. 1, p. cxv.

⁷ H. P. Simonson, 'Jonathan Edwards and his Scottish Connections', *Journal of American Studies* 21 (1987), p. 355.

⁸ JE to James Robe, 12 May 1743. This letter was first printed in J. Robe (ed.), *The Christian Monthly History*, Vol. 5, No. 5 (Edinburgh, 1845), pp. 126-31. The quotation is taken from the version of the letter which appears on the CD, *The Jonathan Edwards Collection* (NavPress software).

⁹ Simonson, 'Scottish Connections', p. 364.

¹⁰ Cf. Diary entry for 9 January 1723: 'How deceitful is my heart! I take up a strong resolution, but how soon doth it weaken.' Dwight, *Memoirs*, p. lxvi.

¹¹ Cf. the sermon on Acts 17:31, entitled *The Final Judgement*: 'Let us pray that he would search us, and discover our hearts to us now. We have need of divine help in this matter; for the heart is deceitful above all things', Hickman, *Works*, Vol. 2, p. 200.

So it is with Christian virtues and graces; the subtlety of Satan, and men's deceitful hearts, are wont chiefly to be exercised in counterfeiting those that are in highest repute.¹²

For this reason, the theme of authentic spirituality occupied both Edwards and his Scottish contemporaries, the latter of whom frequently expressed gratitude for Edwards' contribution. But the Scottish debt was acknowledged long after Edwards' own time. Professor G. D. Henderson, writing on 'Jonathan Edwards and Scotland' cites Thomas Chalmers who, some eighty years after Edwards' death assessed the *Religious Affections* as 'one of the most correct and instructive works in the *Therapeutica Sacra* which has ever been published'.¹³

But if the tercentenary and the Scottish connections are not sufficient to establish a reason for re-visiting Edwards, perhaps another consideration might be suggested. At a remove of three centuries from the context in which Edwards and his Scottish ministerial colleagues lived and worked, the issues facing preachers today are very different to theirs. Contemporary postmodernism means that we have reached a metaphysical point quite unknown to Edwards. To use David Wells' metaphor, the Enlightenment experiment has 'miscarried'.¹⁴ Prior to what Wells calls 'Our Time' was a time of the intellect:

This was a time in which ideas counted. In Our Time they do not. What shapes the modern world is not powerful minds but powerful forces, not philosophy but urbanization, capitalism and technology. As the older quest for truth has collapsed, intellectual life has increasingly become little more than a gloss on the processes of modernization. Intellectuals merely serve as mirrors, reflecting what is taking place in society.¹⁵

Wells might well be describing the difference between Edwards' world and ours. The Great Awakening was a spiritual movement driven by the impulse of great ideas. But our contemporary context devalues great ideas

¹² *Religious Affections*, Part 2, Section VI, in *Select Works of Jonathan Edwards* (London, 1961), Vol. 3, p. 74. Subsequent citations from the *Treatise* will be taken from this Banner of Truth Trust edition.

¹³ G. D. Henderson, *The Burning Bush: Studies in Scottish Church History* (Edinburgh, 1957), p. 159.

¹⁴ David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth, or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Leicester, 1993), p. 61.

¹⁵ Wells, *No Place for Truth*, p. 61.

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and universal truth; having done so, 'Our Time' is searching for a suitable replacement.

As Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Gordon-Conwell Seminary, Wells is writing from the same geographical locus in which Edwards lived and worked three hundred years ago. On both sides of the Atlantic, Reformed evangelicalism once again finds that it is waging a war on a common front, and it is still the duty of the church in one part to help the church in another.

The literature on evangelical responses to postmodernism is growing rapidly. Edwards' 'great ideas' may well be inimical to postmodernity, but in at least one area he may provide us with a door of opportunity for witnessing to our contemporary world: the area of spirituality.

The reason for this is not hard to find. In an age when absolute truth means nothing, personal experience means everything. And in its efforts to evangelise the world, the evangelical church is increasingly noting that the spiritual element of biblical religion may well prove to be an avenue for approaching contemporary postmoderns. For example, in a recent edition of *Christianity Today*, Professor Alister McGrath answers a question about witnessing to postmodern culture by drawing attention to 'two emphases that postmodernity finds particularly attractive – personal experience and telling stories'.¹⁶ Similarly, theologian Douglas Groothuis speaks of postmodernity's interest in 'spiritualities' as providing a point of contact for evangelism, although he warns that 'a Christian apologetic should emphasize spirituality as set within a framework of objective truth'.¹⁷ D. A. Carson makes the same caveat:

If spirituality becomes an end in itself, detached from the core, and largely without biblical or theological norms to define it and anchor it in the objective gospel, then pursuit of spirituality, however nebulously defined, will degenerate into nothing more than the pursuit of certain kinds of experience.... Spirituality must be thought about and sought after out of the matrix of core biblical theology.¹⁸

Bearing this in mind, it is possible that for today's Scotland, as well as for today's America, a *radical* spirituality – that is, one whose *radix* is

¹⁶ A. E. McGrath, 'The Real Gospel', *Christianity Today*, December 9, 2002, p. 59.

¹⁷ D. Groothuis, *Truth Decay: Defending Christianity against the Challenge of Postmodernism* (Downers Grove, 2000), p. 165.

¹⁸ D. A. Carson, 'When is Spirituality Spiritual?', Appendix to *The Gagging of God: Christianity confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids, 1996), p. 567.

grounded in Scripture – may well be a means for the evangelism of our contemporary (postmodern) world.

All of which brings us to a convenient place in which to bring Edwards into play. His *Treatise Concerning the Religious Affections* was nothing if not an attempt to have authentic spirituality rooted in biblical theology. We will look, first, at the context in which this work was written, then the content of the treatise, and finally the paradigmatic element – what the *Treatise* can teach the contemporary evangelical church about *true* spirituality, in a world which is content with *any* kind of ‘spiritual experience’.

CONTEXT

The context of the *Treatise* was the Great Awakening of the early 1740s; the text arose out of a series of sermons preached by Edwards between 1742 and 1743, with the work appearing in its first edition in 1746. As Iain Murray comments,

While the concerns which gave rise to the book are patently rooted in the Awakening the standpoint in time has changed; it is no longer ‘the present revival’ but ‘the late extraordinary season’ or ‘the late great revival’.¹⁹

And by any measure the recent ‘season’ had been extraordinary. Edwards’ account of the revival in Northampton to a minister in Boston still makes thrilling reading:

The months of August and September were the most remarkable of any this year for appearances of the conviction and conversion of sinners, and great revivings, quickenings, and comforts of professors, and for extraordinary external effects of these things. It was a very frequent thing to see a house full of outcries, faintings, convulsions, and such like, both with distress, and also with admiration and joy.²⁰

The whole movement was, according to Edwards, ‘a glorious work of God’, and was attended by phenomena which Edwards knew to be of God’s Holy Spirit.

¹⁹ Iain H. Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography* (Edinburgh, 1987), p. 251.

²⁰ *An Account of the Revival of Religion in Northampton in 1740-42 as communicated in a letter to a minister of Boston*, published in J. Edwards, *A Narrative of Surprising Conversions* (Lafayette, 2001), p. 101.

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But in many ways that was the problem. On the one hand, Edwards knew that the opponents of the revival – such as the Revd Charles Chauncy of First Church, Boston – were putting such experiences down to ‘excesses and extravagancies’, and claiming that much in the Awakening was ‘a dishonour to God’.²¹ On the other, he knew that friends of the revival could be deluded into thinking that the presence of these phenomena was sufficient to count as a genuine work of God, and that all that was required to maintain and promote the revival was to encourage the experiences. As a sensitive pastor, as well as a penetrative theologian, he sought to steer his people through these extremes. He had no wish to downplay the significance of spiritual emotions; but at the same time he did not wish anyone to assume that all experiences in times of spiritual awakening were spiritual experiences, nor that it was enough that they were there at all. So the preface to the *Treatise* sets his agenda:

What are the distinguishing qualifications of those that are in favour with God, and entitled to his eternal rewards? OR, which comes to the same thing, *What is the nature of true religion?* And wherein do lie the distinguishing notes of that virtue and holiness that is acceptable in the sight of God?²²

Realising that ‘it is by the mixture of counterfeit religion with true, not discerned and distinguished, that the devil has had his greatest advantage against the cause and kingdom of Christ all along hitherto,’²³ Edwards is at pains to explore the parameters of authentic spiritual life. Neither the revival nor the effects of the revival could ever be normative for Christian experience; the Bible needed to measure both. For that reason, the whole *Treatise* is an extended treatment of 1 Peter 1:8 – ‘Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.’

As Stephen Nichols writes, one of the reasons why the *Treatise* is a classic is because ‘it addresses numerous problems that, generation after generation, plague Christians and the church’.²⁴ Where is the locus for the emotions in biblical religion? What are the tell-tale signs of genuine religious experience? How can we test whether our religion is true? I suspect that Edwards’ main concern in the *Treatise* was not the opponents

²¹ Marsden, *Edwards*, pp. 269-71.

²² *Treatise*, p.15. (Emphasis mine.)

²³ *Treatise*, p. 17.

²⁴ Stephen J. Nichols, *Jonathan Edwards: A guided tour of his life and thought* (Phillipsburg, 2001), p. 107.

of the revival, but those who defended it precisely on the grounds that there was evidence of extraordinary spiritual experience. For this reason it is important to note the change evident in Edwards' analyses of the Awakening. The *Narrative of Surprising Conversions* (1737) was a very enthusiastic and uncritical summary of the effects of the revival. His work *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England* (1742) offers responses to the critics of the revival, calls on men to promote it (not least on the grounds that the latter-day glory, in Edwards' view, would break forth in the American colonies first of all²⁵), and shows that it is possible for supporters of the revival to be misguided in their promotion of it.

By the time the *Treatise* appears, Edwards has been giving careful consideration to the potential for harm which lies with the supporters of the Awakening. The *Treatise* was not just another round in the debate with Charles Chauncy but it did provide a refutation of the primacy which Chauncy gave to the intellect. Professor Marsden is correct to say that

Even though the whole treatise was a refutation of Chauncy's premise of the priority of reason over the affections, Edwards was nearly as critical of the turn the awakening had taken as was the Boston pastor and often in nearly the same ways.²⁶

The cumulative effect of Edwards' analyses is to highlight for us that neither description of heightened spiritual experience, nor promotion of spiritual revival, is sufficient to authenticate religious experience. These things are good, Edwards wishes to tell the church, but they are not enough. And for our postmodern culture, they are not enough either. That is why we need to hear Edwards' mature concerns about the 'nature of religious affections'.

CONTENT

The framework of the *Treatise* is simple: Part 1 explores the meaning of the affections and their importance in religion; Part 2 looks at elements which cannot be taken as a sure sign that affections are genuine or not; and Part 3 looks at elements which demonstrate the genuineness of spiritual experiences.

²⁵ Hickman, *Works*, Vol. 1, p. 383.

²⁶ Marsden, *Edwards*, p. 290.

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On the basis of 1 Peter 1:8, Edwards reasoned that 'true religion largely consists in holy affections'.²⁷ This was in part a declared opposition to rationalism²⁸ as much as an exegesis of the New Testament, but his point is clear nonetheless: 'religion is not primarily an affair of the intellect, but an affair of the heart'.²⁹ It was a point which later scholars within the American evangelical tradition would question; according to Professor Brooks Holifield, Charles Hodge, for example, 'felt wary of the assertion – characteristic of Edwards – that religion consisted in holy affections'.³⁰ But Edwards realised (as indeed, Hodge did also), that it is possible both to have an intellectual grasp of the truth of the gospel, accompanied by experiences and stirrings of a 'spiritual' kind, and at the same time have a heart which has not been genuinely changed and renewed. From that perspective it was true of Edwards that 'only in the heart and will could he locate a kind of religious experience involving both a supernatural transformation and holy action'.³¹ For Edwards, the heart of the matter was the matter of the heart.

Yet it is too simplistic to say that Edwards is dealing here with 'heart religion' versus 'head religion'. In exploring the nature of religious affections, Edwards does distinguish between the intellect (the faculty by which the soul 'is capable of perception and speculation'³²) and the will (by which the soul 'is in some way inclined with respect to the things it views and considers; either is inclined *to* them, or is disinclined and averse

²⁷ *Treatise*, p. 23.

²⁸ Cf. the comment by Helen Westra that Edwards 'was using every available opportunity to restrain rationalist and Arminian views that he feared detrimental to the orthodox Protestant position that humans cannot attain salvation through their own capabilities', 'Jonathan Edwards and "What Reason Teaches"', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 34 (1991), p. 496.

²⁹ Ola Winslow, *Jonathan Edwards 1703-1758: A Biography* (New York, 1940), p. 232.

³⁰ E. Brooks Holifield, 'Hodge, the Seminary, and the American Theological Context', in J. W. Stewart and J. H. Moorhead (eds), *Charles Hodge Revisited: A Critical Appraisal of his life and work* (Grand Rapids, 2002), p. 108. Although cf. Hodge's assertion that 'the faith which is connected with salvation is not merely an intellectual exercise, but an exercise of the affections as well', E. N. Gross, *Charles Hodge: Systematic Theology, Abridged Edition* (Grand Rapids, 1988), p. 448.

³¹ W. Breitenbach, 'Piety and Moralism: Edwards and the New Divinity', in N. O. Hatch and H. S. Stout (eds.), *Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience* (Oxford, 1988), p. 184.

³² *Treatise*, p. 24.

from them'³³). Edwards acknowledges that he is struggling with language, but wants to identify the whole man with the heart, which is characterised both by the ability to consider certain things and to be either drawn to them or repelled from them. As John Smith puts it in his introduction to the Yale Edition of the *Treatise*,

The essential point is that the affections manifest the center and unity of the self: they express the whole man and give insight into the basic orientation of his life.³⁴

Edwards recognises a fundamental continuity between the role of the affections in the matters of everyday life and their role in the supreme matters of religion. They become 'very much the spring of men's actions',³⁵ we apprehend certain things, and we are either drawn to them or away from them. We cannot remain indifferent. Religion is the same; and with a myriad Scripture quotations, Edwards demonstrates that

they who would deny that much of true religion lies in the affections, and maintain the contrary, must throw away what we have been wont to own for our Bible, and get some other rule, by which to judge of the nature of religion'.³⁶

And on this basis he makes three fundamental inferences: that to discard all religious affections as insubstantial is a great error, that our desire ought to be for the things that will move our affections, and that we should be ashamed at how few true religious affections we so often have.

The second part of the *Treatise* is a development of the first. In demonstrating that religion consists largely of spiritual affections and inclinations, Edwards was aware of the temptation to conclude that all such experiences were positive signs. But he insists that

as we ought not to reject and condemn all affections as though true religion did not at all consist in affection; so, on the other hand, we ought not to

³³ *Treatise*, p. 24.

³⁴ J. E. Smith (ed.), Editor's Introduction to *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 2 (New Haven, 1959), p. 14.

³⁵ *Treatise*, p. 29.

³⁶ *Treatise*, p. 35.

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approve of all, as though every one that was religiously affected had true grace.³⁷

So Edwards adduces twelve points which may well be true in human experience, but which of themselves demonstrate neither that these affections are gracious, nor that they are not. This is a ground-clearing exercise, an attempt to pave the way for a discussion of the characteristics of genuine religious experience in Part 3. To summarise, Edwards is saying that it is possible for all the following to be true of us, without any of them being a sure guarantor that our heart is right with God:

1. Our experiences may be very great and our affections very 'high';
2. They may have physical manifestations;
3. They may cause us to speak much about religion;
4. They may have a cause external to ourselves;
5. They may be accompanied with texts of Scripture;
6. They may lead to feelings and expressions of love;
7. They may be very varied;
8. They may follow a particular order;³⁸
9. They may lead to much zeal in the performance of our duties;
10. They may lead to praise and worship;
11. They may produce great assurance;
12. They may lead to many interesting and moving testimonies.

Edwards is not saying that the presence of any of these phenomena demonstrates the invalidity of our experience. His point is that they may be present as a result of genuine spiritual experience (and often are); but

³⁷ *Treatise*, p. 54.

³⁸ Edwards concedes that true conversion experiences usually do follow a particular order of conviction followed by conversion followed by assurance, but his point is that 'as a seeming to have this distinctiveness as to steps and method is no certain sign that a person is converted, so a being without is no evidence that a person is not converted' (*Treatise*, p. 88). It is going too far to say with Smith in the Yale edition that 'Edwards is denying the validity of many Puritan descriptions of salvation as involving a sequential process' (Yale edition, Vol. 2, p. 20). On the contrary; his discussion of Part 2 assumes the validity of this position and raises the possibility that it may be counterfeited in human life. The sequentiality of the process may or may not be a sign of the genuineness of the affections (as with all the other signs in this section).

they may also be present as a result of other factors. So, for example, regarding the third of the points above, Edwards says:

that persons are disposed to be abundant in talking of things of religion may be from a good cause, and it may be from a bad one.³⁹

The abundance of the talk of spiritual things is in itself neither a positive nor a negative sign. The genuineness of the true religion requires to be tested by some other standard. So Edwards wishes to press the point that there is all the difference in the world between the confidence of the 'evangelical hypocrite' and the assurance born out of true grace. And, interestingly, he argues that the former may be more immovable than the latter; Christians may lose their assurance from time to time, but hypocrites rarely lose their misplaced confidence. This, as Stephen Nichols puts it, is not a call for 'an attitude of suspicion', but simply a reminder 'of the difference between *professing* Christ and *possessing* Christ'.⁴⁰

The third, and most extended part of the *Treatise*, concerns the positive signs of genuine gracious affections. As in Part 2, so here, he lists twelve different elements. John Smith is correct to point out that Edwards does not make it clear whether every gracious affection exhibits all twelve of these signs, or what the relationship between them is; the common ground which they all occupy is simply the saving work of the Holy Spirit in the heart: 'all signs as positive indications of gracious affections point back to the saving operation; if this indwelling fails to take place, no genuine signs can appear at all'.⁴¹ What Edwards does is to caution the reader against imagining that he – or anyone else – is qualified to make a definitive judgement on the true state of those who profess the faith. Nor is it possible for backslidden Christians to discern their true condition from the signs he gives (since they are genuinely regenerated although fallen into sin). And nor will his list of signs shake certain kinds of hypocrites out of their false confidence. Permeating the list of signs which distinguish genuine spiritual affections are the caveats of earlier Parts of the *Treatise*.

The twelve signs are worth pondering in turn.

1. Gracious affections are from divine influence

That is to say, they are 'spiritual', simply because they are the product of the saving activity of the Holy Spirit. Edwards places this in apposition to

³⁹ *Treatise*, p. 63.

⁴⁰ Nichols, *Edwards*, p. 118. My italics.

⁴¹ Smith, Yale edition, Vol. 2, p. 24.

what is 'natural' and to what is 'carnal'. The principle on which Edwards operates is that the Holy Spirit both *resides* in the heart of the true believer, and *influences* the heart of the believer:

From hence it follows, that in those gracious exercises and affections which are wrought in the minds of the saints, through the saving influences of the Spirit of God, there is a new inward perception or sensation of their minds, entirely different in nature and kind from anything that ever their minds were the subjects of before they were sanctified.⁴²

Closely related to this is Edwards' insistence on the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures. Again Edwards has to proceed cautiously, since many can claim to have heard Scripture words speaking to them who have never been truly born again. But, according to Edwards, 'God's manner is not to bring comfortable texts of Scripture to give men assurance of his love and of future happiness, before they have had a faith of dependence'.⁴³ When the Spirit works through the truth, the words of Scripture become the foundation of the hope. The genuineness of spiritual experience can be tested, in Edwards' view, by whether or not it is oriented to one's dependence on the Word of God. 'Spirituality' is not enough.

2. Their object is the excellence of divine things

For Edwards, neither love of self, nor love of the benefits of Christ's salvation, are sufficient in themselves to validate our spiritual experience. The hallmark of genuine spirituality is its discovery of how excellent God is in himself: 'the first foundation of a true love to God is that whereby He is in Himself lovely, or worthy to be loved, or the supreme loveliness of His nature'.⁴⁴ Whatever advantages the gospel may yield are secondary in consideration: it is God's intrinsic perfections that are the object of genuine religious affections. The hypocrite's source of love and joy is self-love, while the true believer finds in God himself reason enough to love him.

This has important consequences for any spiritual experience. The authenticity of such experience is grounded for Edwards not in its ecstatic nature or even in its therapeutic qualities. It is grounded in what is *objective*, rather than in what is *subjective*; in what it *seeks* rather than in what it *gains*.

⁴² *Treatise*, pp. 132-3.

⁴³ *Treatise*, p. 150.

⁴⁴ *Treatise*, p. 168.

3. They are founded on the moral excellency of divine things

At first glance this seems to be simply a restating of the previous sign, except that an aesthetic element is introduced. A positive response to the things of God comes from an appreciation of their innate beauty and loveliness. Further, Edwards is widening his circle: it is not simply God in himself and his own innate perfections that is regarded as attractive, but the holiness that attaches to all that is his – his angels, his saints, his Word, his law, his gospel.

The reason for this attraction is a change of appetite on the part of the renewed man – ‘there is given to those that are regenerated a new supernatural sense, that is as it were a certain divine spiritual taste’.⁴⁵ If the Bible is true in stating that natural man sees no beauty in God to desire him (Isa. 53:2), then the regenerated man, having been changed from within, has a holy love which focuses on holy objects. Edwards thus makes it clear that it is possible for the majesty of God to impress itself in various ways on those who are not born again; but once again he insists that such effects are no sign that hearts have been changed. Changed hearts are characterised by a love for the things of God, in the absence of which the spiritual experience is demonstrably deceptive.

4. They arise from divine illumination

Or, in Edwards’ words, they are not ‘heat without light’.⁴⁶ The illumination and enlightenment of the Holy Spirit are necessary if we are truly to experience the excellence of God for ourselves. Ignorance is no barrier to strong affections; but the affections of which Edwards is speaking do not arise from ignorance, but from a supernatural knowledge supernaturally given. This is not to be equated merely with the imparting of new information or doctrine, nor with a new explanation of Scripture passages, nor with a new insight into Bible types and allegories. ‘It is possible’, after all, ‘that a man might know how to interpret all the types, parables, enigmas and allegories in the Bible, and not have one beam of spiritual light in his mind’.⁴⁷ The evidence of a true spirituality is a new manner by which the Scripture comes to the mind:

Spiritually to *understand* the Scripture, is to have the eyes of the mind opened, to behold the wonderful spiritual excellency of the glorious things contained in the true meaning of it, and that always were contained in it,

⁴⁵ *Treatise*, p. 185.

⁴⁶ *Treatise*, p. 192.

⁴⁷ *Treatise*, p. 204.

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ever since it was written; to behold the amiable and bright manifestations of the divine perfections, and of the excellency and sufficiency of Christ, and the excellency and suitableness of the way of salvation by Christ, and the spiritual glory of the precepts and promises of the Scripture, etc., which things are, and always were in the Bible, and would have been seen before, if it had not been for blindness, without having any new sense added, by the words being sent by God to a particular person, and spoken anew to him, with a new meaning.⁴⁸

For all of Edwards' anti-rationalism, he never decries the use and place of the mind in spiritual life and experience. He disclaims rationalism precisely because it is the philosophy of a dead and darkened mind; what he urges is the need for a renewed and enlightened mind. His perspective is anti-rationalistic, but not non-rational; his purpose was 'to retain understanding in religion as furnishing a rational criterion... a *sensible* light involving direct sensible perception and the inclination of the heart'.⁴⁹

5. They are attended with a conviction of certainty

Edwards adduces certain Scriptures to demonstrate that authentic spirituality is characterised by 'a conviction and persuasion of the truth of the things of the gospel'.⁵⁰ In analysing this proposition, Edwards argues that it is possible for someone to be convinced that the Scripture is true, but only because he accepts those passages which seem to confirm his own security. The kind of affections Edwards is speaking about are willing to embrace the veracity of the whole Scripture.

But the conviction of which Edwards writes is not merely an assent to the truthfulness of the Bible; it is also the persuasion of its historical outworking, and, indeed, of the historicity of God's work in the church, through the gospel, in successive ages. Such a perspective is necessary if we are to 'venture our all' on the persuasion that the Bible is true. Thus it is not simply a new view of things; it is a persuasion that the truth of the Christian faith deserves the response of whole-person commitment.

6. They are attended with evangelical humility

Here Edwards wishes to contrast 'legal humiliation' – which he says has in it 'no spiritual good'⁵¹ – with 'evangelical humiliation', whose essence is 'such humility as becomes a creature in itself exceeding sinful, under a

⁴⁸ *Treatise*, p. 206.

⁴⁹ Smith, Yale edition, Vol. 2, p. 33.

⁵⁰ *Treatise*, p. 219.

⁵¹ *Treatise*, p. 238.

disposition of grace'.⁵² God's gracious provision is, says Edwards, *calculated* to produce such humility. It cannot sit easily with pride or self-satisfaction. The practical point is that genuine spiritual experience is intimately related to the 'Christian duty of self-denial', which for Edwards consists of two principal elements: 'first, in a man's denying his worldly inclinations, and in forsaking and renouncing all worldly objects and enjoyments; and, secondly, in denying his natural self-exaltation and renouncing his own dignity and glory'.⁵³

It is impossible, therefore, to speak of genuine experiences of God's grace which are not in some way related to the awareness of sin and corruption in the heart. Indeed, Edwards says, the increase of grace tends 'to cause the saints to think their deformity vastly more than their goodness'.⁵⁴ Any religious experience which leaves a person content that his sin is gone is, for Edwards, highly spurious.

7. They are attended with a change of nature

'All spiritual discoveries are transforming',⁵⁵ Edwards says. This point is obvious both from what he has already said about changed hearts, perceptions and inclinations, and also from what he will say at last, that the great mark of genuine spirituality is habit, practice and tendency of life. But this seventh sign is a treatise on conversion, which is defined as 'a great and universal change of the man, turning him from sin to God'.⁵⁶ Edwards, with the insight of a pastor, concedes that man's pre-conversion inclinations may trap him subsequently; but having become a new man in Christ, the natural temper of his soul comes under the modifying and correcting influence of grace.

8. They beget and promote the temper of Jesus

Following from this is the fact that conversion leads to Christlikeness. Edwards picks up on the Bible's teaching that the Spirit transforms us into the image and likeness of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18), and demonstrates that whatever else genuine spirituality does, it leaves us walking in the footsteps of 'our great Leader and Example'.⁵⁷ Throughout there is the insistence that genuine religious affections are characterised not by feelings

⁵² *Treatise*, p. 238.

⁵³ *Treatise*, p. 241.

⁵⁴ *Treatise*, p. 252.

⁵⁵ *Treatise*, p. 267.

⁵⁶ *Treatise*, p. 267.

⁵⁷ *Treatise*, p. 278.

of wellbeing or self-assurance, but by a particular lifestyle which mirrors that of Jesus.

9. *Gracious affections soften the heart*

This, again, is a development of points 7 and 8, and arises out of the Bible's distinction between hearts of stone and hearts of flesh. Hard hearts are characterised by spiritual sloth and self-assurance; flesh hearts are characterised by quietness and tender consciences. The greater our 'holy boldness', the less we will have of self-confidence, and the greater will be our modesty.⁵⁸

10. *They have beautiful symmetry and proportion*

While hypocrites are like meteors which flash across the sky, momentarily dazzling in their brilliance, true believers are like the stars which are firmly fixed in the firmament, and radiate their beauty.⁵⁹ Just as Edwards raises the aesthetic excellence of divine things in point 3, so now he argues that the experiences and affections of the true believer are proportioned and ordered. How can they not be when there is always 'symmetry and beauty in God's workmanship'?⁶⁰ While hypocrites may have a confident hope, they are lacking the reverence and caution that characterise genuine spiritual experience. That is, there is a disproportion to their attitudes and experiences.

There is an implicit reference to the Great Awakening in this discussion, not least in the charge that some who have made great noises about the way the gospel has influenced them, have at the same time failed to be strict concerning their duties towards their neighbours. Related to this is the symmetry which Edwards observes must be present between public and private religion:

If persons appear greatly engaged in social religion, and but little in the religion of the closet, and are often highly affected when with others, and but little moved when they have none but God and Christ to converse with, it looks very darkly upon their religion.⁶¹

⁵⁸ *Treatise*, p. 292.

⁵⁹ *Treatise*, p. 300.

⁶⁰ *Treatise*, p. 292.

⁶¹ *Treatise*, p. 302.

11. False affections rest satisfied in themselves

The more spiritual experience a person has, the more he longs after God. Edwards' language is very careful here; he does not say that increased spiritual sense and experience leads to a longing for more such experience, but for more of God. It is characteristic of the false emotionalism that he is distinguishing from the true that it is content with itself and content with the enjoyment of the experience. Edwards concludes: 'this is the nature of spiritual affections, that the greater they be, the greater the appetite and longing is after grace and holiness'.⁶² Undergirding this is a suspicion that those who felt that continued heightened experiences were a sign that the revival was ongoing may well have been deceiving themselves. Such experiences are good, but if our desire is simply for 'spirituality', of whatever form, then it is insubstantial. Genuine spirituality produces a thirst for God.

12. Religious affections have their fruit in Christian practice

Edwards reserves the largest space for this final sign. The chief characteristic of genuine spirituality is continued Christian practice and a habitual Christian lifestyle. The spirituality of which Edwards has been speaking is born out of a new relationship with Christ, whose presence in human life is motivating, energising and encouraging. 'Christ is not in the heart of a saint as in a sepulchre, or as a dead Saviour that does nothing; but as in His temple, and as One that is alive from the dead.'⁶³ On the other hand, 'false discoveries and affections do not go deep enough to reach and govern the spring of man's actions and practice'.⁶⁴ This leads to an extended discussion on the saints' perseverance and their life of fruit bearing.

Equally important is his reference to backsliding. Although Edwards consistently applies the principle that grace is never inactive, he knows that sin is not inactive either. And while consistent Christian practice remains a sign both to ourselves and others that we have the life of God in our soul, it is still possible for Christians to slip into ways of sin and worldliness. This, however, has to be contrasted with the hypocrite who may follow the things of religion for a little while, then fall away permanently. Where genuine spirituality exists, it co-exists with sin. There may be times when 'universal obedience' to God is lacking, but the falling

⁶² *Treatise*, p. 305.

⁶³ *Treatise*, p. 315.

⁶⁴ *Treatise*, p. 315.

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away can never be so permanent as to lead to a habitual neglect and dislike of true religion.

For the true child of God, therefore, it is not enough that religious life be couched in negatives. Christians are to be exemplary in the positives of Christian service as well. Such practice, says Edwards, 'is the greatest sign of grace'.⁶⁵ In John E. Smith's words, Edwards 'was taking a long look at Protestantism's sacred domain – the inner life – and demanding that it be subjected to a public test'.⁶⁶

PARADIGM

Is there a paradigm here for evangelical spirituality? I think there is, and I think that Edwards' discussion directs us in this whole area. That is to say, Edwards' discussion is as relevant for our contemporary church in its contemporary cultural context.

First, we might note Edwards' insistence throughout the *Treatise* on the use and place of the mind. It is true, as the *Treatise* makes plain, that Edwards rejects both a rationalistic basis for religion and an intellectualism that does not move the heart. His insistence is on a whole-person transformation by grace, and a whole-person consecration to Christ. For that reason, he also remains suspicious of a spirituality which does not engage the mind. As Samuel Logan puts it,

Edwards sought more than anything to make Christ a totally engaging Person for his people. But this is not to say that Edwards repudiated logic or that he ignored the importance of propositional understanding. Again the *Religious Affections* serves as a model. Carefully reasoned and rigorously logical, Edwards therein presents a full-blown analysis of an essential part of the Christian life, a part which must be thoroughly and propositionally known if the individual's spiritual life is to be full, complete, and true.⁶⁷

The role of the mind is twofold. First, it receives the propositional truth of the gospel, and second, it measures experience against that truth. In neither case is experience sufficient. If there are religious affections at all, then they are inextricably linked to the truth of the gospel, and they are subject to scrutiny and testing by the Scriptures themselves. They are never self-validating.

⁶⁵ *Treatise*, p. 327.

⁶⁶ Smith, Yale edition, Vol. 2, p. 43.

⁶⁷ S. T. Logan, Jr, 'The Hermeneutics of Jonathan Edwards', *Westminster Theological Journal* 43 (1980), p. 91.

Any 'spirituality' which fails to engage the mind fails to engage the whole person, and anti-intellectual spirituality is as inimical to the evangelical church as to the postmodern world. David Wells is right: 'meaning is what religion is about'.⁶⁸ For that reason, his call to ministers is to place theology, and not spirituality, at the core of the Church's life and work. Wells contrasts an older model of ministry, rooted in Reformed and Puritan ideology (which saw the whole of Church life as a theological practice) with a newer model in which theology and practice have been disengaged. If we are to avoid the trap of merely using evangelicalism as a guise with which to pander to the requirements of religious consumers,⁶⁹ then we need to bring an evangelical mind to bear on all our spiritual experiences. Perhaps the greatest service we can do our postmodern society is to remind it that all spirituality is vacated of meaning the moment it is divorced from the life of the mind.

Second, we ought to note Edwards' insistence that it is possible to have heightened, prolonged and enjoyable spiritual experiences that are not genuine. Postmodernism operates on the assumption that all experience is equally valid (which is the very kind of absolute statement that is anathema to postmodernism!). But even granting the validity of making the assumption, is it true? Does it matter what kind of experience I have, as long as I have experiences of some kind? And if, within the evangelical church, I have unusual experiences, is this not a sign that the Holy Spirit is at work? The Reformed church has for long faced the issue raised by the charismatic movement: do not the presence of signs and wonders evidence the presence of the Holy Spirit, and at the same time evidence the deadness of the older Reformed orthodoxy?

Edwards' point is that no religious affection is genuine simply because it is a religious affection. No experience, or gift, or miracle, or wonder is genuine *simply because* that is what it is. It is, after all, possible to go to Christ on the day of judgement with a list of accomplishments which may be true and yet may also accompany a complete ignorance of Christ as Saviour (Matt. 7:21-23). Such phenomena may well accompany the work of God in human life, but must never be necessarily equated with it.

To summarise: 'Edwards insists that being part of the elect can be determined by ascertaining that our religious emotions, producing Christian graces and good works, have their origin in God.'⁷⁰ If God's

⁶⁸ Wells, *No Place for Truth*, p. 253.

⁶⁹ See Wells, *No Place for Truth*, p. 256.

⁷⁰ R. E. Diprose, 'Grace: What it is, and How it has been understood by the Church', *Emmaus Journal* 10 (2001), p. 266.

A PARADIGM FOR EVANGELICAL SPIRITUALITY

grace in our heart is our point of departure, and the development of Christian graces in our life our goal and purpose, then we can measure the genuineness of our spirituality. But no spiritual experience can ever be regarded as genuine unless we have been drawn to God and motivated to live for him. The beauty of Christ must remain the anchor of all our experiences and the practice of our life their test. Otherwise spiritual experience will drift in the cross-currents of self and subjectivism. We are to test the affections as we are to test the spirits.

Third, we ought to note Edwards' insistence that genuine religious affections are accompanied by a profound lack of self-trust. The irony of contemporary postmodernism lies in its insistence on spirituality as a basis for self-confidence and self-trust. Yet the *Treatise* might also legitimately be regarded as an expansion of Paul's rhetorical question: 'Where is boasting then? It is excluded' (Rom. 3:27).

For Jonathan Edwards, our religious affections not only require to be tested by the standards of Scripture, but they also require to turn us away from ourselves to the objective reality of what has been done for us in Christ. For today's evangelical church, which has lost its moorings in a sea of contemporary philosophies, as well as for today's postmodern world, roots are desperately needed. The church cannot pride herself in her spirituality any more than the world can. The moment we lose confidence in ourselves, our methods, our programmes, our management, our professionalism, is the moment we begin to engage with what is genuinely 'spiritual', that is, of the Holy Spirit of God. And the moment the postmodernist turns away from imagining that spirituality is enough, is the moment he or she can anchor confidence in something lasting.

CONCLUSION

Some have read the *Treatise on the Religious Affections* as a tacit admission that the Great Awakening had been one gigantic failure. Edward H. Davidson, for example, described the *Treatise* as 'a narrative of Edwards's mind seeking to discover why God had not fulfilled his purposes, at least as those purposes had loomed so brightly a mere four or five years before'.⁷¹ On this reading, the *Treatise* was reduced to being 'a mournful epilogue to the Awakening'.⁷² This is a classic *modernist*

⁷¹ E. H. Davidson, *Jonathan Edwards: The Narrative of a Puritan Mind* (Cambridge, MA, 1968), p. 133.

⁷² Davidson, *Edwards*, p. 133.

approach to the *Treatise*, which fails to appreciate Edwards' spiritual concern for his people.

To be sure, the *Treatise* was an analysis of the Awakening; but Richard Lovelace is correct to state that Edwards, rather than mournfully wondering why the movement had failed,

spent the 1740s basically responding to the awakening in two ways: defending its genuine center against the attempts to discredit it through guilt-by-association with aberrant forms, and co-opting, improving and intensifying Chauncy's critique of its weaknesses in order to purify the movement.⁷³

God's glorious work had not miscarried just because there were aberrations in the movement, any more than religious affections are to be judged spurious just because of the presence of sin in the life. The *Treatise* was an attempt to weigh up the truth of biblical Christianity, both by answering those who said that the phenomena discredited the revival and those who said that they necessarily validated it.

For the evangelical church of our own day, again labouring in similar circumstances in modern Scotland and contemporary New England, Edwards' response is worth careful consideration. In a world chock-full of spiritual experiences, there is always the danger of assuming too much and assessing too little. Edwards is simply engaging us with, and calling us to, the truth of Scripture. Postmodernism neglects that truth at its peril, as does the evangelical church. While we do not want a dead orthodoxy (there *are* genuine religious affections after all), nor do we wish to dress our orthodoxy in the garments of spurious experiences. Some experiences may give the impression that all is well; but if they are self-centred and self-focussed they are a sign of illness, not of health. Both our culture and our churches need Edwards' penetrating insights into what it is that constitutes a valid spiritual experience, as we need to follow his example of putting biblical theology at the heart of all our practice.

⁷³ R. F. Lovelace, 'Evangelical Revivals and the Presbyterian tradition', *Westminster Theological Journal* 42 (1979), p. 140.

THE MINISTRY OF ROBERT LEIGHTON, AN APPROACH TO CHRISTIAN UNITY

BOB HALLIDAY, CREIFF

Robert Leighton was a minister in the Scottish church who began his ministry as a Covenanter and ended it as the Archbishop of Glasgow in the Episcopal Church of the Restoration. His character and worth have been assessed from very different points of view. Butler cites Professor Flint who wrote of Leighton, 'A purer, humbler, holier spirit never tabernacled in Scottish clay.'¹ Hewison described him as, 'a miserable invertebrate, whom ill health, largely due to his habits, kept shivering on the boundary line between what he styled as "this weary, weary, wretched life" and death, a mere reed piping with every wind over the bog he could not purify'.² Cowan, in more moderate terms, speaks of his capacity for survival and self advancement and concludes, 'Whether his lack of worldliness to which many contemporaries attest can be deemed a sufficient excuse for his apparent lack of principle, must remain doubtful.'³

It is more than probable that Leighton was in fact a sincere minister of the gospel with a great burden for the healing of a torn and divided church in seventeenth-century Scotland. He was compelled, however, to exercise his ministry under enormous political pressure, and to function in any sense at all as a spiritual leader he had to try to walk a very fine line, not always successfully, between flexibility and submission. He had to respond to the claims of the gospel but he had to work out that response within limits set by his political masters. He tried and failed in his attempt to unite the church and so the value of his ministry lies more in his motivation and his vision than his achievements.

¹ D. Butler, *The Life and Letters of Robert Leighton* (London, 1903), Introduction.

² J. Hewison, *The Covenanters, a History of Scotland from the Reformation to the Revolution*, 2 (Glasgow, 1908), p. 139.

³ I. Cowan, *The Scottish Covenanters, 1660-1688* (London 1976), p. 74.

PARISH MINISTER AND UNIVERSITY PRINCIPAL

Robert Leighton was born in 1611 and spent his first sixteen years in London where the dominating influence in his life was that of his father, Alexander Leighton. Alexander was a Puritan minister who seemed to be incapable of expressing himself except in the most extreme terms. He outraged Archbishop Laud by the language he used to describe the reintroduction of episcopacy to the church. For Alexander Leighton, it was not simply an inappropriate form of church government. It was the judgement of an angry God permitting 'the stinking carkasse of the interred whore to be raked out of the grave, and the frogs of Aegipt to swarm in Goshen'.⁴ His comments on the marriage of the future Charles I to a Roman Catholic princess amounted to a public and personal attack on the heir to the throne. At the age of 16 his son Robert left home to be educated at Edinburgh but by the time he had graduated in 1631 he had seen his father exiled more than once. Alexander had been arrested. He escaped and was re-arrested. He was tortured, branded, mutilated and imprisoned until he was released by the Long Parliament in 1641 as a sick old man.

Robert Leighton spent the period of his father's imprisonment studying and travelling on the Continent, but in the year of his father's release he returned to Scotland to be ordained as minister of the parish of Newbattle. He found the Scottish Covenanters divided into moderates and extremists. The moderates hoped an agreement with Charles I to recognise the Covenant might unite the Scottish Church and nation; but when the civil war in England took place and the king became the prisoner of the English parliamentarians, a Scots army which marched into England to rescue him was defeated by Cromwell and the execution of Charles left Scotland in the control of the more extreme Covenanters. The treatment of the moderates at the hands of the extremists in power led to further division, and the crowning of Charles II at Scone in 1651 amounted to a declaration of war against England. Cromwell's forces were victorious in that conflict and Scotland became a subject nation. There is no doubt that Cromwell's administration genuinely would have approved of a Scottish Church united in service to the Christian gospel but what he found was a spiritual body weakened by self-inflicted wounds. Attempts to find some way of compromise between the moderate Resolutioners and the extreme Protesters at the General Assembly of 1653 were unsuccessful and so that body was forcibly dissolved until further notice.

⁴ S. Foster, *Notes from the Caroline Underground* (Hamden, 1978), p. 25, citing A. Leighton, *Speculum Belli Sacri*.

All through this period, while Leighton was at Newbattle he tried to keep out of political controversy as much as possible, although there can be little doubt where his sympathies lay. He wanted to live at peace with all men and he could never be comfortable with quarrels in the church and revolution in the state. He preached and taught the Word of God faithfully. He wrote biblical commentaries. He exercised pastoral care over the flock. This, however, was not the common perception of a good Covenanter. He was publicly rebuked at Synod because his sermons were not political enough. When he was urged to spend more energy in preaching up the Covenant he replied that since everybody else seemed to be doing that, could he not be allowed to preach up Christ?⁵ The historian Burnet said, 'He soon came to see into the follies of the presbyterians and to hate their covenant.'⁶ However, this seems to be the prejudiced view of hindsight because Leighton administered the covenant to every new communicant and he emphasised covenant obligations especially at the celebration of the sacrament. There is no reason to suppose that he signed and swore the covenant insincerely.

What troubled him most was that it was forced on a number of people, many of whom, he was convinced, had very little understanding of it. It seems most likely that Leighton could live quite comfortably with The National Covenant as a statement of faith and order, but that what he objected to was what he called 'the illegal and violent ways of pressing and prosecuting it'⁷ as a mark of political orthodoxy. His unease was expressed in a fairly lengthy speech made to the Presbytery of Dalkeith in which he sought to be excused from being a member of Commissions or General Assemblies. After the speech one of the older men present, whose deafness prevented him from following Leighton's words, asked the Moderator to repeat what Leighton had said. The Moderator replied that Leighton sought to be eased of his charge. 'Ease him! Ease him since he desires it,' said the old presbyter, 'for I am perswaded he will leave us and prove very troublesome to this poor church.'⁸

In 1653 Leighton's problems as a parish minister came to an end. It was part of Cromwell's policy to control the universities. Oxford and Cambridge had already been purged of men who were politically unsuitable and in 1652 four assessors arrived in Scotland to form a judgement about the Scottish scene. Cromwell was wise enough to avoid any harsh

⁵ Butler, *Life and letters*, p. 147.

⁶ G. Burnet, *History of His Own Time*, 1 (London, 1724), p. 241.

⁷ J. Aikman, *Works of Archbishop Leighton* (London, 1868), p. 637.

⁸ R. Wodrow, *Analecta*, 3 (Edinburgh, 1842), p. 297.

measures, but when Edinburgh University was seeking a new principal the appointment required his approval. Leighton was chosen because of his moderate and tolerant approach to the controversial issues of the day. If he was a Covenanter, he was less of one than most of his colleagues, many of whom, in fact, disapproved of his appointment. As Principal of Edinburgh University, he found a liberty in dealing with students that he had not enjoyed as a parish minister. He was free to conduct worship daily and preach every Sabbath. He remained a presbyterian and he administered the covenant to his students but the emphasis of his lectures was on Christian character. He believed that ministers in training were being taught to dispute rather than to feed the flock of God. Henderson comments, 'Robert Leighton at Edinburgh University avoided the "dictats" and gave eloquent lectures of his own, calculated to stimulate thought and piety. He blamed the "disputations" for the sects and factions in the church.'⁹ Leighton urged his students, 'Fly, if you have any regard to my advice, fly from that controversial contentious school divinity which in fact consists in fruitless disputes about words.'¹⁰ It is possible that Leighton was more at ease as Principal of Edinburgh University than he was at any other time in his ministry. However, in 1660 the exiled Charles II returned to the throne. 1661 brought the undermining of a presbyterian church and 1662 the establishment in law of a church governed by crown-appointed bishops.

BISHOP OF DUNBLANE

Leighton had already been to the Court of Charles II as the agent of his friend the Earl of Lothian. He was marked as a moderate who had taken no part in the quarrel between the Resolutioners and Protesters. He also had a brother at court called Elisha who was a convert to Roman Catholicism, and for that reason, according to the historian Burnet, 'no man had more credit with the King'.¹¹ It was Elisha who introduced Robert Leighton to Charles II, at whose command a reluctant Leighton became the Bishop of Dunblane.

Many colleagues saw his acceptance of the bishop's office as being motivated by personal ambition and even some of his closest friends felt he had surrendered something important. He defended himself in a letter to the Earl of Lothian by saying he hoped 'to turn the zeal of men from all the

⁹ G. Henderson, *Religious Life in Seventeenth Century Scotland* (Cambridge, 1937), p. 122.

¹⁰ Aikman, *Works*, p. 622.

¹¹ Burnet, *History of his Own Time*, 1, p. 242.

little questions about rites and disciplines to the great things of religion'.¹² He wrote to a disappointed friend that his intention was to 'reconcile the devout on different sides and enlarge those good souls from their little fetters'.¹³

The sincerity of his motives need not be questioned. Like the 'Aberdeen Doctors' he accepted that episcopacy and presbytery were both valid. He did not see either as being the only divinely ordained form of church government.¹⁴ From the Reformation until Leighton's time there remained in Scotland a considerable number of ministers that would have conformed either to presbytery or to episcopacy. He accepted that there were times when one form might be more suitable for the church than the other, provided it was subject to the authority of God's word. However it is possible that what Leighton did not realise were the implications of being a servant of the crown as well as a servant of the church, nor did he appreciate how much his ministry would be shaped by politicians.

Leighton and three others were compelled to be reordained in Westminster Abbey. They were ordained as deacons, then as priests, then as bishops. To his credit James Sharp, who was one of the four and who became Archbishop of St Andrews, showed greater resistance than the others to reordination because the question of the validity of presbyterian orders had been settled in 1610 when James VI had restored episcopacy to the Scottish Church. At that time the question of reordination for new Scottish bishops had been raised, but the English bishops accepted their presbyterian ordination as valid. This was the precedent on which James Sharp based his objection to his own reordination in 1661. Leighton, on the other hand, said it was merely ordination to a different church, and that he would be willing to be ordained every year if necessary. This statement must seem to be, at best, naïve when the political significance of the event is considered. The service was conducted by the Bishop of London, rather than the Archbishop of Canterbury, to avoid the implication that the church in Scotland was subject to that in England, but the form of ordination could hardly have been more distant from the day in Newbattle when Leighton was first ordained as a minister of the Word of God. At Westminster, readings were from the Book of Common Prayer. The Oath

¹² 'Letter to Lord Lothian, Dec. 23, 1661', cited in Butler's *Life and Letters*, p. 337.

¹³ 'Letter to James Aird', cited in A. Knox, *Robert Leighton, Archbishop of Glasgow* (London, 1930), p. 178.

¹⁴ D. Stewart, *The Aberdeen Doctors and the Covenanters*, RSCHS 22, p. 44.

of Supremacy acknowledging the royal authority was tendered to the Scots on their knees before the altar. Having kissed the Prayer Book they continued to kneel as the English bishops laid hands on their heads, one by one. After receiving communion the new Scots bishops went towards the altar, bowing as they went, and kneeling down, laid the offering upon it.¹⁵

It was April 1662, when the party returned to Scotland. Sharp intended their arrival to be an occasion of great ceremony and celebration and provided a new coach for this purpose, but Leighton had no appetite for it. He left the official party at Morpeth and travelled alone to Edinburgh, arriving quietly before the others. Shortly after his return he dined with Sir James Stewart who greeted him with the words, 'Welcome Robin! You have loved gauding about too much; you have the fate of Dinah, Jacob's daughter for now I may say the Schekamites have catched and defloured you.'¹⁶ Coltness was less jocular about the matter. He noted, 'there is a wo pronounced against him by whom offences come and Mr Leighton could not but be aware that his taking priest's and deakon's orders at London as if he had none formerly, was a villifying his former ordination... all that was done had a tincture of perjury'.¹⁷

The first major problem to meet the new Scots bishops was a shortage of parish ministers mainly in the south-west of Scotland. By the new regulations, ministers were now required to have presentation from the patron of the charge and collation from the bishop. Many of them simply ignored this and by an Act of the Privy Council in Glasgow in October 1662 they were ejected from their churches. Leighton saw the ejection of these men as one of the main reasons for the failure of the Scottish Restoration Church. He said, 'Our desperate fall... that I fear we shall never recover was the fatal Act of Glasgow, laying so great a tract waste to make it quiet and stocking again that desert with a great many owls and Satyrs.'¹⁸ He agreed with the general opinion that the men brought in to fill the vacancies were far from suitable as ministers of the gospel. His own diocese of Dunblane was not affected as badly as the area further southwest, but he did have to fill some of the charges made vacant by the Glasgow Act. We find him giving pretty stern warnings at Synod against

¹⁵ 'Excerpta ex adversariis Reverendi Jacobi Bruni', published in *Analecta* by R. Wodrow and cited in Knox, *Robert Leighton*, p. 176.

¹⁶ J. Dennistoun (ed.), *The Coltness Collection, 1608-184* (Edinburgh, 1841), p. 22.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

¹⁸ 'Historical MSS Commission, 11th Report, Appendix to Part VI', in Knox, *Archbishop Leighton*, p. 208.

men who enter the ministry because 'They are insufficient for all other employments', and who are less industrious for God than the agents of the Prince of Darkness are for their master.¹⁹

Leighton was Bishop of Dunblane for nine years, and it was a comparatively quiet and fruitful ministry. The prevailing form of worship was very similar to that of the pre-restoration church and the relative freedom from disputes about form and ritual allowed him to give greater attention to the training of ministers to be pastors to the flock. His concept of the Christian ministry was rooted in the convictions he had formed in his own earlier years. At Newbattle he had written,

The calling of prophets and apostles and evangelists, and the ordinary ministry of the gospel by pastors and teachers, tend to that great design which God hath in building his Church, in making up that great assembly of all the elect, to enjoy and praise him for all eternity, Eph. iv. 11. For this end he sent his Son out of his bosom, and for this end he sends forth his messengers to divulge that salvation which his Son hath wrought, and sends down his Spirit upon them that they may be fitted for so high a service.²⁰

There was an emphasis on personal holiness and prayer. Preaching had to be shaped to the 'enforming of the people's myndes'. Sermons had to be 'for the plaine and practical explacacion of the great principles of religion'.²¹ Teaching of the Word of God on Sabbath days was reinforced by regular catechetical instruction at home. When it came to the supervision of the congregations, Leighton went out of his way to recognise the authority of Presbytery. He did not act as moderator. Ministers were elected to that office for a period of six months. At an ordination, candidates were ordained by the hands of bishop and presbytery together, and in at least one case of discipline Leighton insisted that an offending minister be dealt with by presbytery in his absence, and their decision in the matter was final.²²

Leighton's attitude of moderation and respect for presbytery fitted in well with government policy of the time. Lauderdale, the Scottish

¹⁹ Butler, *Life and Letters*, p. 395.

²⁰ R. Leighton, *A Practical Commentary on the First Epistle of St Peter* (New York, 1995), p. 245.

²¹ Butler, *Life and Letters*, p. 382.

²² 'Minutes of Presbytery Meeting at Blackford', cited in Butler, *Life and Letters*, p. 391.

Secretary of State, tried to avoid repressive measures in dealing with the dissidents in an attempt to unite moderate presbyterians with the royalists and to marginalize the extremists in the south west. There was a series of indulgencies which were not without effect. There were over 900 parishes in Scotland and 274 of these had been made vacant by the Glasgow Act. However, the first two Acts of Indulgence brought 120 dissidents back into the fold, so the great majority of Scottish ministers before the Restoration continued in their ministry, and those ministers who were wooed back into their parishes by the Acts of Indulgence were allowed to function as presbyterians, as long as they kept the peace. They continued to refuse collation from a bishop and did not attend synods or presbyteries where the bishop was moderator but they were allowed to exercise their ministry. A number of restrictions had to be accepted by the restored men but it was nevertheless a real and substantial step towards the unification of the church. Understandably the tolerance of what was virtually a church outside of episcopal authority brought protests from the bishops. Sharp, the Archbishop of St Andrews, objected to the latest indulgence on the grounds that the 1662 Act required the king and the bishops to act jointly in matters of church government and this had not been done. Burnet, the Archbishop of Glasgow had been unsympathetic towards Lauderdale for some time and permitted a Remonstrance to be issued by the Glasgow Synod in September, 1669, which not only opposed the indulgence but also criticized the lack of progress towards church unity that had been achieved by Lauderdale. For Charles and Lauderdale, such criticism was not to be tolerated. Opposition to government policy, whether from presbyterian ministers or bishops, was equally unacceptable. Burnet narrowly escaped being accused of sedition, and his resignation was forced through in December. Lauderdale wanted to be sure that Burnet's successor would be a man who could help him control and unite the church and Leighton was the obvious choice, although the appointment has been described as that of an unwilling agent in a system of terrorism.²³

ARCHBISHOP OF GLASGOW

For years the Bishop of Dunblane had been identified as someone who could be relied upon to follow government policy. He had appeared twice before at Court to plead for moderation and conciliation in solving the problem of the divided Church, so in 1670 Leighton became the new

²³ This is discussed by W. C. Mackenzie in *The Life and Times of John Maitland, Duke of Lauderdale* (London, 1923).

Archbishop of Glasgow. His primary task was to heal the wounds in the Scottish Church. Leighton had already been talking about retirement before he left Dunblane and how the burden of responsibility was crushing him, but he cannot be accused of not trying hard enough to succeed in his new role.

He became Archbishop of Glasgow with the firm promise that a scheme for unity on which he had been working for some time would become official government policy. His scheme, which came to be known as 'The Accommodation', built on the foundation of men like Richard Baxter and Archbishop Usher before him. There were two objectives. Leighton hoped to modify the office and function of a bishop to make it compatible with presbyterianism, and he further hoped to convince moderate presbyterians that his scheme was not inconsistent with loyalty to The National Covenant. As he saw it, three of the main problems which divided the presbyterians from the episcopalians were dealt with by his proposals. Firstly, ministers would be tested by presbytery and ordained jointly by presbytery and bishop. Secondly, decisions at church courts would be by majority vote, and the bishop would have no veto. And thirdly, no minister would be obliged, under law, to recognise bishops.

Even in 1661, at the feast to celebrate their consecration, Leighton had tried to discuss with Sharp the scheme for unity between presbyterians and episcopalians which Usher had formulated. Sharp however had nothing to say in its favour. Leighton was building his hopes on a return to the Pauline concept of a community of elders responsible for doctrine, sacrament and discipline in the church. The articles of The Accommodation are noticeably brief and were presented to a small group of five moderate presbyterian ministers at Holyrood House on 9 August 1670. The practical outcome would be that the dissenters could attend presbyteries and synods without denying their own convictions. While ministers entering a new charge would still be presented by the patron, they would be tried by presbytery and ordained jointly by presbytery and bishop. They would be established by law and free from prosecution. What Leighton proposed was virtually the pattern he had established at Dunblane, and Lauderdale's acceptance of it represented a fairly substantial concession on the part of the government. The Secretary of State hoped that it might succeed in uniting the church and remove his greatest political headache by silencing his critics.

The meeting at Holyrood House was only the opening gambit. There was a further conference in Paisley with a greater number of ministers, and a third in Edinburgh in January 1671. As the details of the scheme began to circulate, Leighton published separate pamphlets dealing with the nature

of a bishop's office and loyalty to the National Covenant. He argued that his proposals were acceptable both to Scripture and the primitive church. He appealed to tradition and argued that his bishops were no higher than the "Visitors" of the Reformation period. The scheme would command the largest support of Scottish Christians and involve no change in doctrine or worship. It was acceptable to their fellow-presbyterians in England, and made possible a harmony between Christian holiness and Christian discipline in the church. He took two further steps to gain the co-operation of the dissidents. He began to purge from his diocese those ministers who had some kind of moral or spiritual scandal attached to them, and he sent six preachers known as 'Leighton's Evangelists' round the parishes of the south-west to plead the cause of unity.

In spite of all the energy he put into the project, Leighton's scheme failed. Part of the reason for this was because he was battling against a resistance created by the severe measures urged by Sharp and Burnet against the dissidents. However, by far the greatest barrier to the scheme was the fact that the episcopal church was by this time hopelessly linked to the issue of Royal Supremacy, and this was a matter about which neither king nor government would compromise. Leighton's scheme simply ignored the subject. He could not justify it theologically and he could not oppose it legally, so he ignored it. Indeed Leighton seemed for some years to misunderstand it. His earlier public utterances on the matter are either the result of amazing naivety or a decision deliberately to misunderstand it in order to gain an objective. In May, 1662, Leighton had become, like the other bishops, one of the Lords of the Articles. However, he only attended Parliament to deal with ecclesiastical business, and in fact his first appearance was to defend nine ministers charged with preaching against episcopacy and thereby royal authority. They were required to take the Oath of Allegiance and Supremacy. This they agreed to do, but also demanded to be allowed to give their interpretation of the term 'supremacy'. In their defence, Leighton argued that they had acknowledged the king's lawful supremacy as civil governor, 'and in this sense, the king himself acknowledges the oath, for he must either be supreme civil or ecclesiastic governor, but this last he is not: ergo, only civil he must be'.²⁴ However, by the time Leighton was trying to persuade presbyterians to accept The Accommodation, Charles and Lauderdale had made it plain beyond doubt that the royal authority was not to be limited to civil rule.

²⁴ W. Row, *Autobiography and Life of Robert Blair* (Edinburgh, 1848), p. 409.

Lauderdale boasted to the King about how he had forced through the Act of Supremacy in 1669, and had frightened the opposition into surrender. He wrote to Charles, 'This Church can never trouble you more... unless you please. Never was King so absolute as you are in poor old Scotland.'²⁵ Lauderdale also provided for an army of 20,000 infantry and 2000 cavalry to reinforce the royal authority. The political aim was the union of Scotland and England, and for that to succeed the king had to be above both parliament and church.

It was this above all that the presbyterians could not accept, and so the scheme failed. The bishops disliked it because it undermined their authority. The presbyterians rejected it because they saw it as a trick to bring them under episcopal rule. From this point onwards Leighton had little more to offer. His letters show a willingness to accept that those who would not be persuaded would have to be punished. He began to look for a way out. He succeeded in retiring in 1674, but shortly before he did so produced a report which acknowledged his personal failure and the failure of the Restoration Church to achieve unity. He summarized the Acts of Parliament which had discharged Kirk Sessions, restored bishops, outlawed the covenants and ejected the dissidents, as unhappy mistakes. He even suggested to the king that episcopacy be abandoned altogether.²⁶

CONCLUSION

It is possible that the failure of Leighton was not one of integrity but of judgement. He once told the clergy of Dunblane that in the ministry they had to become practised in the use of 'holy guile' and that their hearts had to be the dwelling place of both the dove and the serpent.²⁷ What he seems to have forgotten is that this council was given to martyrs, not to ministers trying to work inside a flawed system. One historian summed up his life in the following words, 'He made himself unpopular with his fellow bishops and with their presbyterian adversaries and this unpopularity is the best tribute that could be paid to the scrupulous fairness with which he endeavoured to deal justly with both sides.'²⁸ In part at least, his failure was in fact a victory of Christian character over the temptation to succeed at any cost.

²⁵ O. Airy (ed.), *Lauderdale Papers*, 2 (London, 1884), p. 163.

²⁶ Butler, *Life and Letters*, p. 474.

²⁷ Aikman, *Works of Archbishop Leighton*, p. 678.

²⁸ Mackenzie, *Life and Times of John Maitland*, p. 372.

In November 1669, Leighton preached before the Scottish parliament, and conscious of the turmoil to be caused by the Act of Supremacy, he chose as his text the Gospel of John, chapter 21, verse 22: 'what is that to thee? Follow thou me!' He warned those politicians of the folly in allowing their zeal to 'run out from the excellent things in religion to the matters which have little or no connection with them'. He urged that it was more godly to be calmly and meekly wrong than to be 'stormy and furiously orthodox'. He pointed them towards heaven and threatened them with hell. He declared that if he had a voice like a trumpet, 'I would sound a retreat from our unnatural contentions and irreligious strivings for religion. Oh what are the things we fight for compared to the great things of God!' It was hardly the voice of a reed piping with every wind. In the times in which Leighton ministered, it is more than possible that his failure to unite the church speaks more commendably than any success his political masters might have wished him to achieve.

THE DIVINE SPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE¹

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INTRODUCTION

There are many difficult issues to which Christian theologians must give attention but it seems to me that, at the present time, none is more vital than the doctrine of Scripture. I say this because what we believe about Scripture determines what we believe about everything else. If we take the view that the Scriptures are God given and without error then our views on every other subject will be determined with reference to Scripture. It stands to reason that, if God has spoken and if what he said has been written down under the supervisory action of the Holy Spirit, then the Scriptures become the final authority for decision-making and the ultimate arbiter of truth. If, on the other hand, we believe that the Scriptures are simply an interesting record of what Jews and Christians have believed over the centuries but that these beliefs are not binding upon believers today, then we may reach quite different decisions in respect of doctrine, ethics and the life of faith.

Over the past 150 years, the churches have been deeply affected by types of theology which do not accept the orthodox doctrine of Scripture. The dramatic changes in philosophy and theology in the years since the Enlightenment have brought the doctrine of Scripture into very sharp relief. There is a sense in which one of the early Church Fathers, together with one of the sixteenth-century magisterial Reformers and, for example, a seventeenth-century Scottish minister, might happily have agreed together on the doctrine of Scripture. That harmony and unity has all been changed by the Enlightenment, the birth of Liberal Theology, the philosophical influence of existentialism and, even more so, by the recent advent of such views as postmodernism and relativism.

It is no longer even possible to take it for granted that those who call themselves 'evangelical' or 'Reformed' will hold to the same position on Scripture that was held by those who were described in this way even forty years ago and this should give us real cause for concern. No wonder, then, that Francis Schaeffer's last book was called *The Great Evangelical*

¹ Publishers' names are included in bibliographical information in the footnotes of this article at the author's request.

*Disaster*² in which he argued that evangelicals had abandoned a truly evangelical view of the Bible and were giving way to existentialist and neo-orthodox views. In that book Schaeffer said that our view of the Bible is the 'Watershed of the Evangelical World'. In other words, it is a defining position, such that our view of Scripture determines whether or not we are truly evangelical.

RECONSTRUCTING THE EVANGELICAL DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

With these concerns in mind, for some time now I have been working on a book on the doctrine of Scripture. This paper, which in an earlier form was part of a lecture given at the 2003 Scottish Evangelical Theology Society conference, is a summary of the main themes being developed in that book. In seeking to re-state and defend the orthodox doctrine of Scripture at the beginning of the twenty-first century, I hope to show that several key aspects of the doctrine of Scripture can be approached in a different and more theologically productive manner.

Principally, my argument is that we need to focus much more on the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to Scripture. This is best achieved, I will suggest, by a recasting of the vocabulary used in our construction of the doctrine of Scripture. First, I will argue that we should cease to use the word 'inspiration', both on exegetical grounds and because of the confusion which arises through modern English usage of the word. My suggestion is that we replace it with the expression 'divine spiration'. Second, I will argue that we should cease to use the word 'inerrancy' as the primary expression of our defence of the authority of Scripture, using instead the word 'veracity', although retaining 'inerrancy' as a useful limiting concept. Third, I will argue that we should cease to use the word 'illumination', because it is open to misunderstanding, opting instead for the words 'recognition' and 'comprehension'.

It would be a brave scholar who would argue that evangelicals have always brought clarity to discussions on the doctrine of Scripture. Through a failure to understand the differences between evangelicalism and fundamentalism,³ through a failure to engage with biblical scholarship and sometimes through sheer obscurantist and anti-intellectual approaches, evangelicals have often damaged rather than helped the case for the

² *The Complete Works of Francis Schaeffer* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1982), Vol. 4, 301-405.

³ See my forthcoming essay 'Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism', *Reformed Theological Journal* 20 (2004).

authority of Scripture. As evangelicals, we must argue for our position on biblical and theological grounds, rather than falling back upon tradition or fundamentalism. We do not properly state and defend the evangelical doctrine of Scripture by retreating into an untenable ghetto mentality, ignoring genuine matters of concern. Rather, we must engage with those who take a different position and we must do so graciously.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

It is my view that, although evangelicals have spoken about the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to Scripture, there has been insufficient emphasis upon this theme. My recasting of the vocabulary of the doctrine seeks to place the emphasis where it rightly belongs. When the apostle Peter addressed himself specifically to the question of the origins of Scripture, his answer focussed on the Holy Spirit. He wrote, 'knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit' (2 Pet. 1:20-21 ESV). Let us be very clear about what is being taught here: Peter is saying that the writers of the Bible did not simply sit down one day and decide to write something for posterity. Rather, they were under the constraint of the Holy Spirit. They could do no other! In other words, Peter is here testifying to the divine origin of the Bible in the work of God the Holy Spirit. As we shall see later, the work of the Holy Spirit is also the key both to recognising Scripture *as* Scripture and also to understanding its meaning and significance. With that in mind, let us recast some vocabulary!

1. Divine Spiration

The use of the word 'inspiration' in relation to Scripture is problematic for two reasons. The first problem is that, as a translation of the Greek word *theopneustos*, it is exegetically inaccurate. In our English language translations of 2 Timothy 3:16, until the New International Version was published, the Greek word *theopneustos* was routinely rendered as 'inspired' but this is not a good translation. The word *theopneustos* literally means 'God-breathed' (as in the NIV) and the word 'inspiration' does not adequately and clearly convey this meaning.

The second reason for saying that the word 'inspiration' is problematic is related to modern English usage. Today, when people say that a poet, or an author, or a musician or a painter was 'inspired', they mean that there was a remarkable heightening of that artist's natural powers, enabling the

completion of a work of genius. There is normally no suggestion that this work of genius originated in the mind of God! Unfortunately, there is a tendency among those who write on the doctrine of inspiration to assume precisely the same meaning of 'inspired' when speaking about the authors of Scripture.⁴ Over against this, we must affirm exegetically that *theopneustos* is not speaking about the authors of Scripture but of the Scriptures themselves. In other words, the claim is not being made that the authors were 'inspired' but rather that the Scriptures were 'God-breathed'.⁵

For this reason, I propose that we abandon the word inspiration. When I initially reached this conclusion, I thought that we should use the word 'expiration', because that clearly has the connotation of 'breathed out'. Unfortunately, as my colleague Dr Alistair Wilson pointed out, it also has the connotation of a *final* breathing out, indeed a terminal breathing out! I then reached the conclusion that we should use the word 'spiration'. When I shared this idea with Alistair he wanted to know if it was in the dictionary – although he graciously conceded that to invent a word was acceptable! My decision to opt for this word was helpfully supported when I went to the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* where the word 'spiration' appears.⁶ It is defined there as, 'The creative function of the deity conceived as the action of breathing.'⁷ Professor David Wright later expressed the view that an adjective was needed⁸ and so I intend to speak of 'divine spiration'.⁹

⁴ In the book I am writing there will be a chapter comparing views on inspiration from a range of writers, including J. K. S. Reid, G. C. Berkouwer, Donald Bloesch, I. H. Marshall, W. J. Abraham and Peter Jensen.

⁵ I fully understand that these claims are related but they are, nevertheless, quite distinct.

⁶ It is not in every dictionary, not even in every version of the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

⁷ *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1959 reprint).

⁸ In private correspondence following a discussion at the SETS conference.

⁹ I am still pondering the interesting suggestion of my colleague Dr Nick Needham, who says that this expression might have other beneficial consequences by anchoring the work of the Spirit in relation to Scripture in a trinitarian ontology. In trinitarian theology, spiration refers to the action of the Father, who eternally spirates – breathes forth – the Spirit. Could one say that the spiration of Scripture is also an action of the Father through the Spirit? For example, when we breathe, breath (spirit) is not necessarily all that comes out. Our breath can also form a word. Could it be that the Father breathes out (spirates) the Word through the Breath (Spirit)?

As I indicated earlier, by using the expression 'divine spiration' instead of the word 'inspiration', we can emphasise more clearly the action of God the Holy Spirit in producing the Scriptures. We are affirming that the Scriptures had their origin in the mind and action of God and that they constitute a revelation from him. God the Holy Spirit is the Person within the godhead who enables this revelation to take place.

2. *Veracity*

Having argued that we should speak of 'divine spiration', rather than of 'inspiration', it is now necessary to consider another difficult word, namely, 'inerrancy'. Given the sensitivity which often surrounds the use of this word, particularly in the USA (less so in Europe) and given that it has often become a test of orthodoxy, we must begin by setting the use of the term 'inerrancy' in its historical and controversial context.

The doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture became a rallying point for those evangelicals who were opposed to 'Modernism', the name given to post-Enlightenment views, the theological expression of which was Liberal Theology. It is still a key word today in identifying a community of believers and scholars who share a worldview in which the teaching of Scripture is the final determining factor in all of our theological, ecclesiastical and personal decision-making.¹⁰

Classic expression was given to the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture by B. B. Warfield and A. A. Hodge, professors at Princeton Theological Seminary, in an article entitled 'Inspiration', first published in 1881.¹¹ In that 1881 article, Hodge and Warfield gave expression to the doctrine of inerrancy, although without using that word. As Roger Nicole points out, 'the words *inerrant* and *inerrancy* do not occur, although the terms *errorless* and *without error* are repeatedly used by both writers and the whole intent of the article is to make it clear that the superintendence of God in Scripture guarantees the errorless infallibility of all scriptural affirmations'.¹² They argued that the *autographa*, that is, the original manuscripts of the biblical books as penned by the authors, were entirely without error.

¹⁰ For example, it is required for membership in many organisations, not least the Evangelical Theological Society in the USA.

¹¹ 'Inspiration', *Presbyterian Review* 2 (1881), pp. 225-60. This article was more explicit than but not contrary to, the views earlier expressed by Charles Hodge in his own article of the same name: 'Inspiration', *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 29 (1857), pp. 660-98.

¹² A. A. Hodge & B. B. Warfield, *Inspiration* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), p. xiv.

Warfield went on to write a great deal on the doctrine of Scripture.¹³ Indeed, the subject was of primary concern to him, not least because of the battles raging within the Presbyterian Church over this very issue.¹⁴ In particular, he responded to those who argued for a 'Limited Inspiration' view, notably Henry Preserved Smith who was found guilty of heresy because of his views on Scripture, which he made public in defence of Charles Briggs.¹⁵ It also became a distinguishing mark of the theological position held by those who taught at Princeton Theological Seminary.¹⁶

Hodge and Warfield did not imagine that they were saying anything new, merely spelling out the orthodox doctrine of Scripture in order to resist the encroaches of a more Liberal position. As far as they were concerned, this had always been the position of Reformed theologians and indeed of the whole Christian church, until relatively recently. The historian Mark Noll agrees,

¹³ The first volume of the Oxford edition of Warfield's collected writings and the first volume of the later Presbyterian & Reformed edition of Warfield's collected writings were both devoted to the doctrine of Scripture: *Revelation and Inspiration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1927); *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1948). See also the 1979 reprint of the 1881 article on 'Inspiration' in a volume edited and with an introduction by Roger Nicole. This volume contains a number of useful bibliographical and other appendices: A. A. Hodge & B. B. Warfield, *Inspiration* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979). For a more complete list of Warfield's writings see J. E. Meeter and Roger R. Nicole, *A Bibliography of Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, 1851-1921* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1974).

¹⁴ Professor Charles Briggs of Union Theological Seminary, New York, who was found guilty of heresy due to his denial of the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture and suspended from the ministry of the Presbyterian Church in 1893, was co-editor with Warfield of the *Presbyterian Review*. For an analysis of the Briggs case, see Lefferts A. Loetscher, *The Broadening Church* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1954), pp. 48-62.

¹⁵ See Henry Preserved Smith, *Inspiration and Inerrancy: A History and a Defense* (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke & Co, 1893). Warfield's response to Smith, entitled 'Professor Henry Preserved Smith, on Inspiration', was originally published in the *Presbyterian and Reformed Review* in January 1894. It was more recently published, with an introduction by J. Marcellus Kik, as: B. B. Warfield, *Limited Inspiration* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1962).

¹⁶ M. A. Noll (ed.), *The Princeton Defense of Plenary Verbal Inspiration* (New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1988).

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Most Christians in most churches since the founding of Christianity have believed in the inerrancy of the Bible. Or at least they have believed that the Scriptures are inspired by God, and so are the words of eternal life. The term *inerrancy* was not common until the nineteenth century. But the conviction that God communicates in Scripture a revelation of himself and of his deeds, and that this revelation is entirely truthful, has always been the common belief of most Catholics, most Protestants, most Orthodox, and even most of the sects of the fringe of Christianity.¹⁷

There were, of course, some who rejected this doctrine of inerrancy, despite being close to Hodge and Warfield on other doctrines. James Orr, the Scottish theologian who contributed to *The Fundamentals* and who, as editor of *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*,¹⁸ invited Warfield to contribute the article on 'Inspiration', nevertheless, rejected Warfield's doctrine of inerrancy. He spelled out his opposition to this doctrine in his book *Revelation and Inspiration*.¹⁹ Orr held a high view of the inspiration and authority of Scripture but did not believe that it was wise, or even possible, to speak of inerrancy. His own view was that inspiration must be set and understood in the context of revelation, whereas he understood the inerrantists to be arguing that you must first prove inspiration and then go on to talk about revelation. He notes,

It is urged, e.g., that unless we can demonstrate what is called the 'inerrancy' of the Biblical record, down even to its minutest details, the whole edifice of belief in revealed religion falls to the ground. This, on the face of it, is a most suicidal position for any defender of revelation to take up. It is certainly a much easier matter to prove the reality of a divine revelation in the history of Israel, or in Christ, than it is to prove the inerrant inspiration of every part of the record through which that revelation has come to us.²⁰

He was particularly concerned that, if someone should choose to use the term 'inerrancy', they should not regard it as being of the very 'essence' of the doctrine of inspiration. He writes,

¹⁷ Mark Noll, 'A Brief History of Inerrancy, mostly in America', in *The Proceedings of the Conference on Biblical Inerrancy 1987* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), pp. 9, 10.

¹⁸ 'Inspiration', in James Orr (ed.), *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (Chicago: Howard-Severance, 1915).

¹⁹ J. Orr, *Revelation and Inspiration* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), pp. 197-9.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.197-8.

such 'inerrancy' can never be demonstrated with a cogency which entitles it to rank as the foundation of a belief in inspiration. It must remain to those who hold it a doctrine of faith; a deduction from what they deem to be implied in an inspiration established independently of it; not a ground of belief in the inspiration.²¹

Orr was also very reluctant to use the expression 'verbal inspiration', noting that it 'is one to which so great ambiguity attaches that it is now very commonly avoided by careful writers'.²² While recognising the problems caused by this ambiguity, he does recognise the positive value of what is normally being affirmed when the phrase is used:

It opposes the theory that revelation and inspiration have regard only to thoughts and ideas, while the language in which these ideas are clothed is left to the unaided faculties of the sacred penman. This is a defective view. Thought of necessity takes shape and is expressed in words. If there is inspiration at all, it must penetrate words as well as thought, must mould the expression, and make the language employed the living medium of the idea to be conveyed.²³

Nevertheless, he goes on to say,

'Verbal inspiration', however, is often taken to mean much more than this. It is apt to suggest a *mechanical* theory of inspiration, akin to dictation, which all intelligent upholders of inspiration now agree in repudiating. In the result it may be held to imply a *literality* in narratives, quotations, or reports of discourses, which the facts, as we know them, do not warrant.²⁴

In illustrating this point, he treads a difficult route, which seems almost to contradict what he has already said about inspiration extending beyond the ideas of Scripture to the very words themselves. He writes, 'It is well known that in the reports of Christ's words in the Synoptic Gospels there is often a very considerable variation in expression – a difference in phraseology – while yet the *idea* conveyed in all the forms is the same. At most one side or another of the truth is brought out with slightly different emphasis.'²⁵

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 209.

²³ *Idem.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

²⁵ *Idem.*

Recently, however, some have gone even further in their criticism of Warfield's position and argued that the doctrine of inerrancy, far from being the historic position of the Reformed church, was, in fact, a creation of Warfield's or that of his contemporaries. Professor Ernest Sandeen, for example, argued strongly that inerrancy originated with Warfield and certain other nineteenth-century theologians.²⁶ The most significant proponent of this view has been Jack Rogers. In his doctoral thesis, written under the supervision of G. C. Berkouwer, he argued that the *Westminster Confession of Faith* ought not to be interpreted as teaching the doctrine of inerrancy.²⁷ This was followed by a much more sustained attack on the doctrine of inerrancy, from an historical basis, in a book co-written with Donald McKim.²⁸ In this book they argued that there could be traced a 'Central Christian Tradition' concerning the doctrine of Scripture which was held by all major theologians, including the Early Church Fathers and the Reformers and which was contrary to the doctrine of inerrancy. This 'Central Christian Tradition' stands between the extremes of rationalism and mysticism, which have been seen in every age of the church. In this 'Central Christian Tradition', the Bible is to be accepted by faith and not by rational proofs; it is not to be regarded as authoritative in matters of science or on other subjects but rather as a means of salvation. The Bible must be viewed also in terms of the concept of 'accommodation', that is, the affirmation that God has spoken to us in ways which we as sinful human beings can understand. Therefore, to 'erect a standard of modern, technical precision in language as the hallmark of biblical authority was totally foreign to the foundation shared by the early church'.²⁹

They argued that Barth, Berkouwer and the 1967 Confession produced by the United Presbyterian Church in the USA, are the true representatives of this 'Central Christian Tradition' and therefore the true successors of Calvin and the Reformed tradition. The principal argument of Rogers and McKim is that, in the nineteenth century, Princeton Theological Seminary

²⁶ Ernest R. Sandeen, 'The Princeton Theology: One Source of Biblical Literalism in American Protestantism', *Church History*, Vol. 31 (1962), pp. 307-21; and Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism 1800-1930* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970).

²⁷ Jack B. Rogers, *Scripture in the Westminster Confession: A Problem of Historical Interpretation for American Presbyterianism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967).

²⁸ Jack B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xxii.

(described as 'old Princeton' to distinguish it from the post-1929 institution, after J. G. Machen and others had departed to form Westminster Theological Seminary) developed the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture. It did so, we are told, for two principal reasons. First, because it used Francis Turretin's *Institutio Theologiae Elencticae* as its textbook in systematic theology; and second, because the philosophical basis for its theology was the Scottish philosophy, often called 'Common Sense Realism'.³⁰

Specifically rejecting the doctrine of inerrancy as taught by Hodge and Warfield, they write,

If evangelicalism is to be a creative and renewing force in American life, it must come to historical clarity concerning the authority and interpretation of the Bible. Until now, the heavy hand of the Princeton theology has prevented that from happening. Because of its pervasive influence in American evangelical theology, few have dared to challenge the Princeton theology's post-Reformation scholastic theory concerning the Bible. Those who self-consciously hold to the old Princeton position continue to assert that it is the historic Christian, and Reformed approach. The large majority of evangelicals are far from the Princeton position in their actual use of Scripture. Most thoughtful evangelicals, for example, accept the usefulness of responsible biblical criticism. But because they have no alternative theory, they continue to hold to the Hodge-Warfield apologetic, which was designed to deny any scholarly contextual study. Evangelicals are often reminded of the dangers of liberal subjectivism. In a sincere desire to avoid that extreme, they claim the rationalistic scholasticism of old Princeton as their theory, even though their practice is far from it.³¹

The notion that Warfield, of all people, was against scholarly contextual study is an astonishing claim given his continued and vigorous engagement with the scholarship of his day and his promotion of solid academic study of the Scriptures.

The Rogers/McKim view has been challenged by those evangelicals who are committed to the doctrine of inerrancy.³² The most significant volume published in response to Rogers and McKim came from John

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. xvii.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 460, 461.

³² Randall H. Balmer, 'The Princetonians and Scripture: A Reconsideration' *WTJ* (1982), pp. 352-65. Also, John D. Woodbridge and Randall H. Balmer, 'The Princetonians and Biblical Authority: An Assessment of the Ernest Sandeen Proposal', in D. A. Carson & John D. Woodbridge (eds.), *Scripture and Truth* (Leicester: IVP, 1983), pp. 251-79).

Woodbridge.³³ He argues against the Rogers/McKim proposal on two grounds. First, he says that Rogers and McKim have partly misunderstood and partly misrepresented the history of the doctrine of biblical authority. His historical analysis is very persuasive and those points where he demonstrates that Rogers and McKim have quoted inaccurately, incompletely or out of context, are well made.

His second main argument is that Rogers and McKim, far from putting forward the historic Reformed position, were rather proponents of a particular theological perspective, namely, the theology of Berkouwer. On this point, Woodbridge writes,

Nevertheless, it is not an adequate survey of the history of biblical authority. Rather it constitutes a revisionist piece of literature that apparently attempts to interpret the history of biblical authority with the categories of the later Berkouwer. Because those categories do not find antecedents in large tracts of the history of the Christian churches, Rogers and McKim's own proposal becomes forced and not very reliable.³⁴

One of the aspects of the Rogers/McKim proposal which Woodbridge did not deal with in any great detail, was the argument that the Princeton theologians developed a doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture because, *inter alia*, they built their theology on the Scottish philosophy of Thomas Reid (1710-1796), often called Common Sense philosophy or Common Sense Realism.³⁵ There is no doubt that the Princetonians were indebted to Common Sense Realism and used it as a basis for some of their thinking.³⁶ Were Rogers and McKim correct, however, in arguing that it played a major part in determining their theological system and, more specifically, in providing the basis for their doctrine of inerrancy?

³³ John D. Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority, A Critique of the Rogers/McKim Proposal* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.151.

³⁵ For a detailed study of Common Sense Realism see: S. A. Grave, *The Scottish Philosophy of Common Sense* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960).

³⁶ See Paul Helm on the Common Sense Philosophy in Hendrik Hart, Johan Van Der Hoeven, and Nicholas Wolterstorff (eds.), *Rationality in the Calvinian Tradition* (Lanham, Md: University Press of America, 1983). For its impact on one Princetonian see: James McCosh, *The Scottish Philosophy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1890).

Dr J. Ligon Duncan III has responded to this argument and demonstrated cogently that it is not substantial.³⁷ Interestingly, he demonstrated that Common Sense Realism was also the philosophical basis for the theologians at Yale, Harvard and Andover, who certainly did not teach inerrancy.³⁸ He also pointed out that Thomas Reid himself was a 'Moderate' Church of Scotland minister who would have had little sympathy for the Princeton school of theology. Duncan examines four nineteenth-century American Presbyterians: two Princeton theologians, Charles Hodge and B. B. Warfield and two southern presbyterian theologians, Robert Lewis Dabney and James Henley Thornwell, all of whom believed in the inerrancy of Scripture. His intention was to examine what influence Common Sense Realism had upon their theology. He concluded that Common Sense Realism cannot be regarded as the source of the doctrine of biblical inerrancy. He writes, 'Common Sense Philosophy's greatest contributions to nineteenth-century American Presbyterianism were in language, epistemology, apologetics, and methodology. At the same time, Realism contributed little to their theology or their view of Scripture.'³⁹

Duncan sets his response to Rogers and McKim in the overall context of this examination of these four presbyterian theologians. He outlines nine propositions, drawn from Rogers and McKim, in relation to the influence of Common Sense Realism on Princeton theology in general and the doctrine of inerrancy in particular.⁴⁰ Having concluded his case studies of the four theologians, he responds to the nine propositions point by point.⁴¹ He then concludes that,

³⁷ J. Ligon Duncan III, *Common Sense and American Presbyterianism: An Evaluation of the Impact of Scottish Realism on Princeton and the South* (MA Thesis, Covenant Theological Seminary, 1987). Compare another shorter study on this area: D. Clair Davis, 'Princeton and Inerrancy: The Nineteenth-Century Philosophical Background of Contemporary Concerns', in John D. Hannah (ed.), *Inerrancy and the Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984), pp. 359-78.

³⁸ This is to say nothing of the fact that some common sense realists were not Protestants at all. For example, see the fascinating study comparing Thomas Reid and the French Jesuit philosopher, Claude Buffier: Louise Marciel-Lacoste, *Claude Buffier and Thomas Reid, Two Common Sense Philosophers* (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1982).

³⁹ Duncan, *op. cit.*, p.109.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 109-13.

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Almost all the problems in the Rogers and McKim interpretation of Common Sense's influence at Princeton can be traced to their unhistorical approach to the subject. They are not primarily interested in understanding Common Sense Philosophy's influence, but in securing a polemic against the Princeton doctrine of Scripture. This deficient approach is reflected in some of the characteristics of Rogers and McKim's analysis.⁴²

It was precisely to answer the Rogers/McKim proposal and similar questions that the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy was set up. In October 1978, under the auspices of the Council, 300 theologians and church leaders met at Chicago to affirm their position. They produced *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy*⁴³ and that statement remains today the position held by many evangelicals. The strength of the statement was that it not only said what its authors believed about inerrancy but also noted what they did not believe, in a series of Articles of Affirmation and Denial.

Personally, I am very happy to affirm my belief in the inerrancy of Scripture as defined by the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy but I increasingly feel that the term is more useful as a limiting concept than as the main vehicle for defining what we believe about Scripture. My proposal is that we use the word 'veracity' on most occasions when we might otherwise use 'inerrancy' and that we retain the word inerrancy for discussions about the *autographa* and as a boundary marker. My intention in this is to emphasise that the content of Scripture is truth given by the Holy Spirit. The word 'inerrancy' often leads to somewhat sterile discussions about *autographa*, texts and versions and misses the main point, which is that the Scriptures are true because they have come to us from God the Holy Spirit. Also, 'inerrancy' refers only to the *autographa*, which we do not possess, whereas 'veracity' can be used to refer to the Bible versions we *do* have, given a proper understanding of inerrancy and of the providence of God.

There are many evangelicals who believe in the authority of Scripture but who are not prepared to use the word inerrancy. Often these evangelicals have a 'high' view of Scripture but they are not persuaded that we ought to speak of inerrancy. James Orr was in this category, as we have seen. Some have concerns about the *term* inerrancy and others about the *concept* of inerrancy. These evangelicals give a range of reasons for their unwillingness to use the word or concept of inerrancy.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁴³ The statement is found in various places including: J. I. Packer, *God has Spoken* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1965), pp. 139-55.

Those who are unhappy with the *term* inerrancy use the following arguments:

1. It is not a biblical word.
2. It is not required by the *Westminster Confession of Faith* nor by the other main confessional statements in use in the churches.
3. It is not used in the famous A. A. Hodge/ B. B. Warfield article on 'Inspiration', which many evangelicals affirm as representing their view of Scripture.
4. Its use is relatively recent in origin.

Those who are unhappy with the *concept* of inerrancy use the following arguments:

1. If textual inerrancy is so vital, why did God not preserve the *autographa* or precise copies?
2. If inerrancy only applies to the *autographa* (which we do not have) then surely it is a somewhat irrelevant issue?
3. If it takes about fifteen pages for the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy to state and defend the meaning of the word 'inerrancy', then surely there must be a question over its usefulness?
4. In defending inerrancy, how do we deal with the Synoptic Problem and other similar issues?
5. The amount of time, energy and writing which is required to defend the inerrancy of biblical statements which appear to conflict with geographical, historical and scientific facts is neither justified nor productive.
6. If God is able to use the errant copies (manuscripts and translations), which we actually have, why do we invest so much theological capital in hypothetical originals which we do not have?

These are all important questions and we must either find cogent answers to them or we must revisit our use of the term 'inerrancy'. There are, of course, good arguments put forward in favour of the term 'inerrancy'. Essentially, these arguments fall into two categories. There are those who believe that the doctrine of inerrancy is directly taught in Scripture and there are those who believe that inerrancy is a necessary implicate and

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consequence of believing that the Scriptures are God-breathed. Inerrantists themselves can be divided into three groups. First, there are those whom we might call 'Fundamentalist Inerrantists', who reject all textual criticism, are largely anti-academic, sometimes tend towards dictation theories and usually argue that the *King James Version* of the Bible is the only legitimate version. Second, there are those whom we might call '*Textus Receptus* Inerrantists', who offer a detailed textual argument in favour of the view that the *autographa* are accurately represented by (and only by) the so-called *Textus Receptus*.⁴⁴ Third, there are those whom we might call 'Chicago Inerrantists', being those who can affirm the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy as produced by the International Council for Biblical Inerrancy.

In my view, the position held by the Fundamentalist Inerrantists is not tenable. We cannot bury our heads in the sand and ignore the fact that the Bibles we use are translations, which are based on Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic texts and that these texts themselves vary considerably. For example, no two manuscripts of the New Testament, of which we have around 5000, are identical. Scholars are forced to compare texts and decide on the 'best and most probable' reading. The Fundamentalist Inerrantist often gives the impression that the Bible fell down from heaven intact and that no textual criticism has been necessary.

Another problem with the Fundamentalist Inerrantist is a tendency to choose a position because it is convenient and not because it has been proven. For example, it is certainly true that the hypothesis of an inerrant *KJV* makes life easier for the believer but that does not mean it is true. Some of the epistemological arguments seem to be based on the following argument: Without inerrant truth we can never have certainty; it is vital that we have certainty; therefore our English translation of the Bible must be inerrant. This argument falls down when we recognise that it is grounded upon our need for certainty rather than upon any objective truth which God has revealed. In any case, why should it be that one seventeenth-century translation of the Bible, into one European language, by a group of Anglican scholars should somehow be the only inerrant text of the Bible available to humanity? Why should it be the case that only the

⁴⁴ See, for example, T. P. Letis (ed.), *The Majority Text: Essays and Reviews in the Continuing Debate* (Philadelphia and Edinburgh: The Institute for Renaissance and Reformation Biblical Studies, 1987); and T. P. Letis, *The Ecclesiastical Text: Text Criticism, Biblical Authority and the Popular Mind*, 2nd Edition (Philadelphia and Edinburgh: The Institute for Renaissance and Reformation Biblical Studies, 2000).

manuscripts available to those scholars at that time and in that place were supernaturally preserved by God in an inerrant condition?

For similar reasons, I am not persuaded by the *Textus Receptus* Inerrantists. The idea that only one manuscript tradition is authentic and that all of the other manuscripts are inauthentic does not stand up to close scrutiny and is very difficult to sustain. The scholarly debate on these issues is much more complex than some of the *Textus Receptus* Inerrantists allow and the literature is both important and demanding.⁴⁵

The most significant argument for inerrancy, in my view, comes from the Chicago Inerrantists. Indeed, this is the position which I have held for many years. This group defines inerrancy with extreme care and they make clear what they *do not* mean as well as what they *do* mean when using the term. There are still very real problems which have to be addressed but I believe the arguments they present to be essentially sound. Despite that, however, I still believe that the word 'inerrancy' is not an ideal word, precisely because it requires so much qualification and interpretation.

Given, then, that the word 'inerrancy' has to be very tightly defined in order to serve its purpose in relation to the Scriptures; given that it has been used (and abused) in different ways; and given that it is not a biblical word and hence we are under no obligation to uphold it, should we not seek an alternative word in order to express what Scripture says about itself? I believe that the word 'veracity' is more constructive and, at the same time, focuses much more on the work of the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 2:13,14, Paul says that God communicates to us 'in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual'. Instead of trying to safeguard the Scriptures by arguing that the *autographa* (which we do not possess) are verbally inerrant, I believe it would be more productive to emphasise that the Scriptures are spiritual and true, given to us by the Holy Spirit.

⁴⁵ Two standard introductions to the discipline are: Kurt and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism*, 2nd Edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989); Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 3rd Edition (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). See also the important *Festschrift* for Bruce Metzger: Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes (eds), *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

3. Recognition and Comprehension

This brings me to my third suggestion for new vocabulary, namely, that we replace the word 'illumination' with two words: recognition and comprehension. I make this suggestion because the word illumination has sometimes been used in such a way as to imply that the Scriptures need to have light shed upon them before they can be understood. The real problem, however, is in the human mind and not in the Scriptures. The Scriptures do not need to be illuminated but rather the human mind, which has been damaged by the noetic effects of sin, needs to be given understanding. Only when the Holy Spirit enables, can these spiritual words and spiritual truths be identified as Scripture and properly understood.

If we consider the true condition of the unregenerate mind, as taught in Scripture, then we shall see the need for the Holy Spirit to enable us to recognise the Scriptures. For example, in Romans 1:18-25, Paul says some quite startling things. He says that:

- Every human being possesses true knowledge of God (v.19);
- This knowledge is of such clarity that human beings have absolutely no excuse if they deny that they know God (v.20);
- Sinful human beings deliberately suppress this knowledge and this truth (v.18);
- Such human beings have exchanged truth for lies (v.25);
- As a result the thinking of these human beings has become futile (v.21);
- Human beings who deny God are fools (v.22).

The implications of this teaching are of considerable importance. We are being told that every human being, without exception, has a true knowledge of God at some level of their being but that they deliberately suppress this knowledge because of their sinful condition. That sinful condition originated in Genesis 3 when our first parents opted to live self-centred rather than God-centred lives. The mind of an unregenerate human being, then, is twisted and perverted. Instead of holding to the truth, it deliberately suppresses it, and instead of worshipping and serving God, it prefers lies and foolishness.

There is, then, a real difference between believers and unbelievers when it comes to the mind. Paul expressed it like this: 'For those who live

according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot' (Rom. 8:5-7 ESV). That is to say, unbelievers have a 'mind-set' which is opposed to God. They are enemies of God in their *minds* as well as in their wills (see Col. 1:21). That is why Paul can say that 'In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God' (2 Cor. 4:4 ESV). Only if we recognise the true condition of the human mind can we then properly understand the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the mind and the discovery of truth.

The best writers on the doctrine of illumination have always taken this position and emphasised that the problem of incomprehension relates to the human mind and not to the Scriptures but many others have not.⁴⁶ It seems to me that, if we use the words 'recognition' and 'comprehension', we can deal with some of the confusion and ambiguity which can arise from the word 'illumination'. In order to see the value of the proposal, we must ask the most significant question of all, namely, on what basis do we believe that the Scriptures are the Word of God? The answer, following Calvin,⁴⁷ is that such belief is only possible by the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. In other words, he enables us to 'recognise' the Scriptures as the Word of God.

This, however, is not the end of the story because the same Holy Spirit who gives us that 'recognition', also communicates the truth of the Scriptures to us in propositional revelation, such that we have 'comprehension'. In this way, God the Holy Spirit enables us to understand the meaning of the Scriptures, through the enlightening of our minds. This notion of the human mind receiving enlightening from the Holy Spirit is found in many places. For example, Paul says that 'The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned' (1 Cor. 2:14 ESV). The same idea is found in Jesus' answer to the question as to why he spoke in parables, in Matthew 13:11: 'And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given...".'

⁴⁶ In my view, much of the difficulty posed by Karl Barth's doctrine of Scripture arises out of a confusion between *theopneustos* and illumination.

⁴⁷ *Institutes* I.vii.1-5.

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From these passages and others, it is clear that someone who is not a Christian can read and intellectually engage with the words of Scripture but cannot properly understand the Scriptures without the work of the Holy Spirit.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

Let me now try to draw the threads of this proposal together. My argument is that first, the Scriptures came into being through the *divine spiration* of the Holy Spirit. Second, that they have *veracity* because they consist of spiritual truth expressed in spiritual words given by the Holy Spirit. Third, that they can only be identified as the Word of God through the *recognition* given by the Holy Spirit. Finally, that they can only be understood through the *comprehension* given by the Holy Spirit. Thus their origin, their nature, their identification and their interpretation are all intimately connected to the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

REVIEWS

Jonathan Edwards: A Life

George Marsden

Yale University Press, New Haven, 2003; xx+615pp., £25; ISBN 0 30009 693 3

Professor George Marsden's long-awaited critical biography of Jonathan Edwards, published to coincide with the 300th anniversary of Edwards' birth, is set to become the standard intellectual biography of America's premier theologian. All the epithets apply: this book is erudite, readable, scholarly, thorough. It tells a great story, and it tells it well.

The author's intention and purpose appears in the closing paragraphs of the text: 'one of my hopes is that this book may help bridge the gap between the Edwards of the students of American culture and the Edwards of the theologians' (p. 502). While admitting that his own approach is the former, Marsden states that he has his eye constantly on the theological issues.

Indeed, this particular biographer is at pains to set Edwards' works not only within the context of Edwards' own life, but within the nexus of ideas and the intellectual milieu of Edwards' eighteenth-century world. Marsden views Edwards' thought at one level as 'a post-Newtonian statement of classic Augustinian themes' (p. 504); but he is also aware of 'Edwards' sense of the direction that Western thought, culture and religion were heading' (p. 438). It is precisely by addressing his biblical Calvinism to a contemporary worldview that Edwards stands as a great exemplar in the practice of theology. The great biblical themes are everywhere present: the sovereignty of God, original sin, the supremacy of grace. But they are present in order to be re-cast, in order 'to frame an old debate in a new context' (p. 439). Marsden is skilful in the art of contextualisation of Edwards.

In possibly the greatest understatement in the work, Marsden states that 'Edwards' life did not lack for drama' (p. 432), and the dramatic element is never far away. The stories of Edwards' formative experiences, his donning, then discarding, the mantle of his grandfather in Northampton, his engagement with Arminianism, his relation with Whitefield and the Great Awakening, his role in the communion controversy and subsequent removal from Northampton, his tragic death so soon into his Princeton

Presidency – all these are woven into the narrative with the consummate skill of the storyteller. This is a massive volume that is ‘unputdownable’.

Not that it is entirely felicitous – Marsden’s favourite adjective of the young Edwards is ‘precocious’ – which appears several times in the opening pages to the point of being irksome. He also accuses Edwards of playing fast and loose in his editing of Brainerd’s diary, subjecting the Brainerd story to a controlling principle of spirituality. Marsden may be correct to state that ‘the *Life of Brainerd...* is *Religious Affections* in the form of a spiritual biography’ (p. 331), but one wonders whether Edwards’ editing was as severe as Marsden suggests.

The use of the term ‘revivalist’ is also an interesting one. That there were *revivals* under Edwards’ preaching is incontrovertible; but whether Marsden is correct to use phrases such as ‘supreme revivalist’ (p. 244) in describing Edwards is questionable. There were, no doubt, various factors feeding into the Great Awakening: but Marsden’s caution that we ought not to overlook social and political factors, or even the relation of theological controversies to the Awakening, tends to reduce the revival to a social, man-centred movement. Edwards himself would not have looked on the Awakening in that way; and probably would have difficulty in calling himself a revivalist, as if he helped to orchestrate the movement. And is it true that ‘the awakenings were... notable means of gaining control over parishioners’ (p. 209)?

Marsden’s work will inevitably invite comparison with other biographies. Iain Murray’s 1987 biography of Edwards is dismissed as being ‘uncritical’, while Perry Miller’s earlier work suffers, in Marsden’s view, from the creative imagination of the author. Paralleling the ongoing Yale project to publish Edwards’ works, this biography builds on a generation of scholarship. This is reflected in the footnotes; unfortunately there is no bibliography. All of which begs the question: where is the Jonathan Edwards in today’s Yale or Princeton?

Despite one or two minor misprints, this book is a great read. Above all, it is refreshing to be reminded of the fact that America’s premier theologian was, well, not American after all, but ‘an elite male colonial British citizen’ (p. 259), who used the term ‘our nation’ not of America, but of Britain (p. 467). Marsden’s work will prove indispensable for modern study of Edwards, not least in its attempt to find a centre for Edwards’ thought. Perhaps one sentence, tucked away on page 479, brings us close to that centre, as Marsden reminds us that, for Edwards, ‘all reality was of one Christological piece’.

Iain D. Campbell, Bach, Isle of Lewis

Counted Righteous in Christ

John Piper

IVP, Leicester, 2002; 141pp., £6.99; ISBN 0 85111 991 3

This is a good book. In the long perspective, it may come to be seen as the best book that John Piper has written to date.

In the past, I have had reason to be cautious about certain aspects of John Piper's teaching and ministry (I've never been convinced of 'Christian hedonism'). With *Counted Righteous in Christ*, however, no such caution is necessary. Piper has given us here a sound, well-argued, accessible vindication of the traditional Protestant doctrine of Christ's imputed righteousness. In his sights is the 'New Perspective' on the apostle Paul. Seemingly integral to New Perspective thinking, at least among its more evangelical practitioners, is its denial of the traditional evangelical doctrine of imputed righteousness. (Non-evangelicals have little reason to deny it, as it is of no real interest to them.) As Piper makes clear, this isn't some side issue in theology, but a revisionism of huge dimensions. If we listen to the New Perspective on this particular matter (on other matters, its exponents can be illuminating thinkers and authors), we will be abandoning something that lay at the heart of the Reformation understanding of salvation, and to which forceful testimony is borne by the great Protestant confessions of faith, such as Westminster and the 1689 Baptist Confession. As Piper convincingly demonstrates, we will also be dealing falsely with Scripture, which the Reformers and the confessions faithfully reflected.

Robert Gundry of Westmont College is the thinker with whom Piper chooses to interact in this book. This is partly because Piper is more familiar with Gundry than with other New Perspective writers, partly because Gundry has perhaps been more uncompromising than others in the clarity of his antagonism to traditional Reformation teaching. Gundry says:

I join the growing number of biblical theologians, evangelical and non-evangelical alike, who deny that Paul or any other New Testament author speaks of a righteousness of Christ (whatever it might include or exclude) that is imputed to believing sinners.

In its place, Gundry teaches that our own faith is our righteousness before God: that is, he substitutes our faith for Christ's righteousness, and argues that faith *per se* is the righteousness that justifies in God's sight. Exactly *why* faith (imperfect faith, coexisting with much unbelief and disobedience) should constitute justifying righteousness before God does not seem so

evident in Gundry. Faith itself clearly is not righteousness; at most, it could be seen as a seed from which full-bodied righteousness will eventually grow. But Gundry appears to hold that God simply chooses (sovereignly?) to regard faith *as if it were* righteousness, the righteousness that avails before him unto justification and salvation. Those who have browsed in the fields of historical theology will recognise in Gundry's view a rehash of the older Arminian and Neonomian doctrine so consistently rejected by our Reformed forefathers, and indeed very explicitly rejected in the Westminster Confession. Westminster says that God declares believers righteous

not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience, to them as their righteousness, but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them (11:1).

The flaw in the scheme adopted by Gundry is that it depicts God slackening his standards, and settling for something less than real righteousness as the basis of justification. Apparently God declares that sinners have kept his law and are righteous, on the ground of something that (painfully obviously) is not genuine law-keeping, viz. our own imperfect faith. This is tantamount to saying that God imputes righteousness where there is no righteousness to impute.

Piper takes us through key passages of Scripture to demonstrate that Gundry is incorrect. God declares sinners righteous, not by deciding to accept their own faith as if it were righteousness, but by imputing Christ's righteousness to them: the real righteousness of the Son's perfect obedience. This is a perfection whose apex was the cross, where Christ's endurance of the law's curse (his passive obedience) and his holy self-surrender to the Father's revealed will (his active obedience) coincided in a single and climactic expression of complete righteousness. In other words, if I'm asked what constitutes my saving righteousness before God, on the basis of which I'm justified, my reply is not, 'My own faith', but, 'Jesus Christ Himself, obedient unto death'. Faith is not in itself justifying righteousness, but the instrument by which we receive Christ and his justifying righteousness. Indeed, if we regard our own faith as our justifying righteousness, there seems little real difference between that and the Roman Catholic view propounded at the Council of Trent in response to the Reformation, that our own inherent righteousness, infused into us by grace, is our justifying righteousness before God. It would be a strange paradox if New Perspective evangelicals ended up aligning themselves with Trent against Luther and Calvin!

The richness of Piper's book lies in its exegesis, which forms the core of the work. Piper carefully examines Romans 3:20-26, Romans 4 (a key chapter with its sustained language of imputation), Romans 5:12-19, Romans 10:1-10, 1 Corinthians 1:30, 2 Corinthians 5:19-21, Philippians 3:8-9, and in general the phrase 'the righteousness of God'. On the whole, I believe his case is cogent and persuasive that these passages lay a genuine and firm foundation for the traditional Reformation doctrine of imputed righteousness.

Mostly the present reviewer was both impressed and stimulated by Piper's exegesis. The only area where I sensed a slight weakness was in Piper's treatment of aspects of Romans 4, where I think he lays too much stress on Paul's statement that righteousness is 'imputed' to Abraham, which Piper argues must necessarily be something external to Abraham. But surely the 'righteousness' of justification (a righteous *status*) is always an external reality imputed by God, under any scheme. The question is, on what *basis* does God credit this status? For Gundry the basis is our own faith. For Piper, and the Reformers, it is Christ himself and his perfect obedience, with faith as the appropriating instrument rather than the inherent basis. But I do not think the mere statement that 'God imputed righteousness to Abraham' proves that the imputation was based on something external to Abraham. Other good arguments, however, are to hand. For example, in Romans 4:6 Paul says that the imputation of righteousness involves the non-imputation of sin. But how can our faith in itself be the basis of the non-imputation of sin? Faith is not sinless! If (to adopt Paul's imagery) God looks at faith and logs it in his judgement-book as 'no sin', there must be some other cause than faith itself for this reckoning, since faith in itself does not constitute 'no sin' in the believer.

Allied to this, I felt that Piper made slightly heavy weather of the apostle's teaching in Romans 4 that 'faith is imputed for righteousness'. Gundry builds on this language as the strong foundation of his own view. Piper struggles rather laboriously to overthrow it. Surely the most simple and most fitting response to Gundry is to ask *why* faith is imputed for righteousness? Gundry can give no coherent answer. The biblical and Reformational answer is that faith is imputed for righteousness because faith is the vessel that receives and contains Christ's righteousness. 'Faith imputed for righteousness' is a case of the instrument being treated as the cause, owing to the deep and inseparable connection between the two. Paul can jump from one to the other, saying now that faith is imputed to our account, now that righteousness is imputed. God can be envisaged as writing either 'faith' or 'righteousness' against our names in his judgement-book. Why? Because it is precisely the faith that results in the

righteousness, as the latter's sole and indispensable instrument. It is parallel with 'justification by faith': we are declared righteous by our faith, not because our faith is itself righteousness, but because our faith is the instrument of union with Christ the Righteous.

Ultimately it is union with Christ that is at stake in this debate. If we are truly one with Christ, then when God looks at us, he sees his Son. In terms of that union, we *are* Christ. Why then should there be any difficulty about God crediting Christ's righteousness to our account? The believer is so intimately one with Christ that Christ's righteousness becomes as much the believer's as it is Christ's: just as the believer's sin becomes as much Christ's as it is the believer's. This 'wonderful exchange', the double imputation of our sin to Christ and his righteousness to us, forms the bedrock of Reformation teaching about salvation. Strangely, Gundry does hold to the imputation of our sin to Christ. Quite why he stops short of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us remains a baffling mystery both to Piper and to the present writer.

John Piper has produced a most succinct and helpful defence and exposition of imputed righteousness, and a very pointed critique of the New Perspective on this issue. There can be little doubt that all those interested in this debate should read and ponder this book.

Nick Needham, Highland Theological College, Dingwall

God and the Crisis of Freedom

Richard Bauckham

Westminster John Knox, Louisville, 2002; 221pp., £12.99; ISBN 0 664 22479 2

Some of the material in Richard Bauckham's latest work may be familiar to readers, having been collected from various tracts and articles he has written over the years. In the present work, however, that material has been brought together to form an important and insightful discussion of the 'crisis' facing the contemporary world, namely the widespread pursuit of freedom outside of the context of a glad submission to authority and of a sense of community and mutual interdependence.

The book opens with a discussion of the biblical concept of freedom, a concept founded on the key Old Testament image of the Exodus and on the extensions of this image into the New Testament. Bauckham highlights the importance of the notion of *dependence*, both on God and on one another, and of a *glad submission to authority* as fundamental aspects of the biblical notion of freedom. The second chapter contrasts this with the

concept of freedom that characterises contemporary society, a concept founded on the libertarianism of John Stuart Mill and seen particularly in the all-pervasive consumerism of the modern west.

Having established the biblical concept of freedom and demonstrated how sharply this differs from contemporary notions of freedom, Bauckham addresses the question of *authority*, discussing this in relation to Scripture, morality and tradition (the chapter on 'Authority and Morality' is essentially a discussion of Richard Holloway's *Godless Morality*). These chapters are followed by an examination of the Christian understanding of the role of humanity, and particularly its authority, *vis-à-vis* creation. This chapter demonstrates that the biblical teaching regarding man's authority over creation only became truly destructive when married to Renaissance humanism and Francis Bacon's vision of scientific progress.

The book is then brought to a close with a 'critique from within' as Bauckham uses Michel Houellebecq's novel *Les Particules élémentaires* as a springboard into an analysis of the inherent flaws in the modern pursuit of freedom. This analysis is followed by a discussion of the centrality of the Trinity to a proper attainment of freedom, a discussion both indebted to, and critical of, the theology of Jürgen Moltmann.

The great quality of *God and the Crisis of Freedom* is that while drawing upon Bauckham's immense erudition, it succeeds in dealing with its subject matter in a way that never loses sight of where the ordinary believer is located in the world. It manages to be, therefore, a book that is of equal relevance to both the academic and the lay person. For the same reason, it also succeeds in being both insightful and challenging (disturbing, even) in a way that few other books could match. The discussion of consumerism and Thatcherism in chapter 2, for instance, is both a powerful critique of the world and an unnerving insight into the extent to which the church is stained with worldly values.

At certain points in the book, Bauckham uses language that evangelicals may be uncomfortable with. Notably, in his discussion of the relationship between authority and tradition in chapter 5, he speaks of the church 'creating fresh meaning' from Scripture in each generation, language that some may see as postmodern and others may see as charismatic. When Bauckham's arguments are understood, however, such interpretations of his words can be seen to be inappropriate; his argument in chapter 5 is that *tradition*, the believing community's understanding of what Scripture is saying to the world, can never be static, even though there may be certain elements of continuity through the ages. I stress this point because it would indeed be a great shame if readers failed to grasp the real importance of what the writer is saying because of instinctive reactions

against his language. Indeed, it is at those points where Bauckham's language is at its most controversial that the book contains some of its most important insights.

Grant Macaskill, St Mary's College, St Andrews University

The Provocative Church

Graham Tomlin

SPCK, London, 2002; 176pp., £9.99; ISBN 0 281 05476 2

Every so often comes a book to sell your shirt for. Simple, thoughtful, passionate, written by someone who knows their subject and communicates clearly. One that you can read, or give to your group leaders, or even (as a colleague of mine has) make into a Homegroup course. This is one of those books, as Graham Tomlin reflects on what it means for our churches to become once again provocative churches.

What he means is what Paul means in Colossians 4:5-6, and what Peter means in 1 Peter 2:12. He means churches that make people long for God. He goes so far as to say that the Christian God can only be found by those who desire him. 'One of the key themes of this book is that unless there is something about church, or Christians, or Christian faith that intrigues, provokes or entices, then all the evangelism in the world will fall on deaf ears. If churches cannot convey a sense of 'reality' then all our 'truth' will count for nothing.... Churches need to become provocative, arresting places which make the searcher, the casual visitor, want to come back for more.' (p. 10f.).

He begins with Derek Draper, one-time Labour spin-doctor. At a time of personal crisis he was told he needed some spirituality to balance his life. He happened on a provocative church. 'What appealed to him was the practical *wisdom* of the teaching of Jesus' (p. 6) which offered him a much better and less superficial way of life.

The key question is, how can my church be like that? Tomlin shows you. Two brilliant chapters setting out Jesus' agenda for his people in their world are followed by two more that deal with the realities: 'Evangelism makes me feel guilty' and 'Is my church worth going to?' Here's a flavour: 'Evangelism sometimes is portrayed as the kind of thing that only those with a couple of theology degrees, an extrovert character and the emotional constitution of a rhinoceros would try. And because most of us aren't like that, we slink away, a little embarrassed, but greatly relieved' (p. 72). And this: 'The kingdom of God and the lordship of Christ [are] key themes, which lie at the heart of the theology of the church. The two come together

when we grasp that it is life under the kingdom of God that provokes the questions of the curious and even the uninterested' (p. 73).

Particularly helpful is his little section on the power of goodness, demonstrating the lavish generosity of God. So next time you're in the drive-thru' McDonald's, why not pay for the folks behind as well as your own meal? It'll certainly leave them with questions (though I couldn't quite work out how they'd ever know *why* you did that).

The last three chapters major on being and leading the kind of church that provokes questions. What he describes is what I've come to call 'closing the circle'. Think of churches that employ youth workers: they're very glad they're there, and working away on their behalf. But how many of us have 'closed the circle' and allowed the ministry of the youth worker to change the church? So Tomlin describes the Christian who stumbled by mistake into an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, and was given a sudden and startling glimpse of how church should be. Struck by the depth of commitment to one another and the openness of their sharing, he realised 'They were desperate and wanted to change' and that 'church was intended to be a transforming community' (p. 106).

This is thorough theology worked out in practice. Tomlin shows us how Christians are intended to live, in the public domain. Alongside, we're called to tell personal stories of the Lord's transformation of our lives. And then, yes, we work on providing settings to tell the Christian gospel to those who are asking questions, whom we may invite.

So away and sell your shirt and buy this book!

Mike Parker, General Secretary, Evangelical Alliance Scotland

Ministering Like the Master: Three Messages for Today's Preachers

Stuart Olyott

Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 2003; 86pp., £4.50; ISBN 0 85151 830

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The three chapters in this book were originally three addresses given at the Leicester Ministers' Conference in 2000. The author, Stuart Olyott, formerly pastor of Belvidere Road Church in Liverpool, is currently Pastoral Director of the Evangelical Movement of Wales as well as a lecturer in preaching at the Evangelical Theological College of Wales.

Although (as the subtitle implies) this is a book aimed primarily at preachers, it is far from being a mere exercise in homiletics. There is much in it which the general reader may appreciate and enjoy, not least the warm

devotional spirit with which the author approaches his task. It may be a comparatively short volume but the lifetime of pastoral and preaching experience which Olyott has gained is evident on every page.

In chapter 1, 'Our Lord was not a Boring Preacher', he works his way through the Sermon on the Mount, showing the Lord's use of a clearly identifiable teaching method of state-illustrate-apply in his preaching. The aim here is to emphasise how the Lord used ordinary words, short sentences, rhetorical questions, and repetition to state his message. His illustrations were drawn from the home, the church and the everyday experiences of his hearers. The application of the message took account of the diversity of his auditors. Following this approach, Olyott affirms, will prevent 'boring' preaching.

In chapter 2, 'Our Lord was an Evangelistic Preacher', Matthew 11:20-30 is used to illustrate the evangelistic nature of the preaching of Jesus.

'It gives us a clear idea of how to do it, and this teaching can be summarized under three headings: "Point your finger", "Bend your knee" and "Open your arms"' (p. 35). Olyott is careful to distinguish between the words evangelical and evangelistic:

When I say that I am an evangelical I am referring to what I believe; I believe that God speaks in the Bible, everywhere in the Bible, only in the Bible, and nowhere outside the Bible. Evangelical is a word that refers to my personal convictions. Evangelistic does not refer to my convictions but to my practice. It explains what I do with the Bible; I preach from it with a view to the immediate conversion of every single person in front of me (p. 34).

Later in this same chapter, in connection with Matthew 11:28, the author briefly, but emphatically, points up the freeness of the gospel offer:

The Lord Jesus Christ invites everyone who is weighed down with a crushing burden to come to him. That, frankly, is everybody. The invitation is not to stay away, not to keep your distance, but to come. – The invitation is not to come to Christianity, and not even to come to any church or its activities, but to come to Christ! (pp. 57-8).

In the third chapter, the whole of Mark 1 is used as the basis for the theme that 'Our Lord was not just a preacher.' Ministering like the Master means following his example as he identifies with sinners, undergoes temptation, makes disciples by personal conversation, personally confronts evil, cares for the sick, maintains a life of secret prayer, and touches the untouchable.

All in all, although this is a comparatively short book and can be easily read in one sitting, it will leave the reader (preacher or not) much which can be profitably pondered.

John Scoales, Edinburgh

Recovering Mother Kirk: The Case for Liturgy in the Reformed Tradition

D. G. Hart

Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, 2003; 261pp., \$24.99; ISBN 0 8010 2615 6

Intended to serve the Reformed and Presbyterian confessional heritage, Hart's work will be a real stimulus to fresh thinking for all standing within this tradition, but may prove of little interest to a wider readership. Accessible to all serious readers, it will be especially valuable for those in pastoral ministry, as they seek appropriately to lead the praises of the sanctuary. A work composed of several articles published in various journals over the period 1993-2000, it covers a wide field of concerns, and as a consequence sometimes has the feel of a loose collection of articles rather than a single integrated work. Nevertheless the volume is unified by a common set of presuppositions regarding the nature of the church, the role of the liturgy in shaping and nurturing Christian discipleship, and the distortions that have crept into contemporary expressions of the Reformed faith, as much through evangelicalism as through theological liberalism.

Its subtitle notwithstanding, this is *not* primarily a volume about the Liturgy of the church, however. It *is* a powerful argument for a return to an 'older' form of Christian spirituality. Throughout, Hart specifically rejects modern evangelicalism's approach to worship as overly individualistic, an error he traces back to Puritanism and Pietism, from which sprang the eighteenth-century revivals. It is to these revivals that we must point as the true culprits in destroying the churchly piety and liturgical traditions of the Reformed churches. Hart here seems deliberately to reject the usual Reformed distinction between 'true revival' and what has come to be called 'revivalism'. It is as much the fault of Whitefield, Tennent, and Edwards, as it is of Finney, that preaching has been divorced from the liturgy, that Christian experience has been emphasized over covenant membership, that the individual's psychological condition before God has become primary, rather than their place within the covenant community (outside of whose embrace there is 'no ordinary possibility of salvation' WCF XXV:ii). When Hart goes on to reject the contemporary Church Growth

ecclesiology, with its liturgical ally, the 'Praise and Worship' movement, he is simultaneously rejecting the whole trajectory of revivalist evangelicalism that, he argues, lies behind them. Few Reformed and Presbyterian today would wish to disavow the Calvinistic revivals of the past as a major positive factor in shaping their own heritage. This, however, is exactly what Hart does. It is not the era of revival, nor that of the Puritans that Hart calls the church to renew its appreciation of. It is to the Reformation with its high view of the church, of 'office', and of the sacraments we must turn. It is a recovery of the corporate, liturgical, and educational character of the Reformation vision of the Christian life Hart seeks to restore. In short, the 'Truly Reformed' of the contemporary Reformed scene should beware of finding in Hart another ally. In agreeing with him in his repudiation of the broad evangelical piety and liturgy of much of today's church the 'Truly Reformed' might find Hart an uncomfortable bed fellow when he goes on to advocate what he calls 'High Church Presbyterianism', drawn, not from Canterbury, Rome or Constantinople, but from Geneva, but no less High Church for all that!

Much of this analysis is welcome. For too long those of us committed to the historic Reformed and Presbyterian tradition have been more influenced by a piety and liturgical 'style' not our own. Having become divorced from our own liturgical heritage we have been set adrift in a sea of influences. When confronted with the excitement of latest trends in church culture, we respond with either an embarrassed confession that we are still stuck with 'outmoded' forms of liturgy and must struggle on unhappily, or with a wholesale abandonment of such forms in favour of something more 'contemporary'. Hart's demand that we proudly restore our own heritage is a much-needed 'third way'. Reinstating the 'order of service' of Knox, Bucer, or Calvin would undoubtedly refresh (reform?) our practice immensely.

On the other hand, Hart's analysis of the causes of liturgical decline will not find universal acceptance. While lauding the Calvinism of many of the leaders of the First and Second Great Awakenings, and while affirming with them the need for 'conversion' at an individual level, Hart is highly critical of the crisis-oriented theology that prevailed among these evangelicals. Citing John Williamson Nevin (pp.192ff.), Hart highlights what can only be called a paradigm shift in Reformed piety during the era of the Great Awakening, away from the 'nurture and admonition of the Lord' under which Presbyterian and Reformed children were raised as 'heirs of the covenant', towards an approach where, in Nevin's words, 'all this must pass for nothing, and I must learn to look upon myself as an outcast from the family and kingdom of God, before I could come to be in either in

the right way.'(p. 193) So great an emphasis is placed, even to this day, upon the need for a crisis conversion experience, that the churchly and educational model of Christian nurture has been almost totally forgotten, argues Hart. While this may not sit comfortably with many, it is difficult fully to repudiate. The impact of 'revivalism' on the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland in the wake of the campaigns of such evangelists as D. L. Moody, for example, is unquestionable. High Church Presbyterianism as Hart defines it, with its emphasis on the liturgy of the Reformation, is now a relic of the past for all of the strictly evangelical Presbyterian denominations of Scotland, and can be found only among the High Churches of the Church of Scotland, an irony not lost on Hart who points to the same phenomena in the American Presbyterian situation (e.g. pp.179ff.). Why, he asks, should the theologically conservative churches be the most liturgically ignorant? Ought they not to display a conservative liturgical tradition to parallel their theological convictions?

Hart brings a wealth of historical knowledge and a deep love for the Church of Christ to bear on a series of controversial and hotly debated subjects. As he does so he guides us through them in a most stimulating and at times provocative manner. While readers will not agree with Hart in many of his perspectives, the importance of reading set prayers in worship, the culpability of 'revivals and revivalism' for liturgical decay to cite only two, he *will* provoke us to rethink our view of Christian piety, and perhaps even lead us towards a more corporate, churchly and, dare I say it, Biblical and Reformed view. This volume is to be warmly commended to a wide readership.

David Strain, Cole Abbey Presbyterian Church, London

The Next Christendom. The Coming of Global Christianity

Philip Jenkins

Oxford University Press, New York, 2002; x+270 pp., £20; ISBN 0 19 514616 6

Those familiar with the teaching and writing of Andrew Walls will already be receptive to the thrust of this work, but it is good to find his diagnosis and prognosis of world Christianity being published here also. In essence Jenkins' argument, buttressed by plentiful statistics and demographics, is that within half a century the vast majority of Christians will be non-White, living in Africa, Latin America and Asia, counting among the poor of the world and often suffering for their faith, and in churchmanship predominantly pentecostal or Catholic. Not only is the centre of world

Christianity decisively 'going South', but its strength will be found in countries whose population growth will far outstrip that of Christianity's old homelands in the West. Not all such countries will, on present projections, enjoy a strong Christian presence, but it seems certain that among the most populous nations by mid-century only the USA will represent the earlier Christendom, with the place of Russia, Japan and Germany giving way to Tanzania, Turkey, Philippines, Mexico, Ethiopia and even Yemen.

These massive shifts have huge implications for Christian leadership in the West today. The liberal establishment will increasingly experience Rowan Williams' frustrations with the biblical conservatism on moral issues of African, Asian and Latin American church statesmen. Yet by no means all will be comfortable for western evangelicalism, which is likely to find its strongly Reformation-based assumptions, already threatened by burgeoning Pentecostalism and charismatic-type congregations, further overwhelmed by the more enthusiastic, popular and 'pentecostal' ethos of 'the next Christendom'.

In some respects this is a deeply heart-warming book. I had never previously linked the impressive rise in the proportion of Christians in the South with a relative population growth far in excess of the diminishing West (except for the USA). In terms of forecast numbers and proportions, 'the next Christendom' is an appropriate title, so long as the state-church implications of the phrase are pruned off. But in other respects, Jenkins must make a disturbing read especially for Western Christians (and there are plenty in Scotland) who still talk of 'the mission field' as where it ever used to be, have not retooled to tackle the mission field round the corner, and would not welcome less well-educated and embarrassingly vibrant Christians from Africa or Latin America to help them in their local task. The worst outcome would be if our cerebral Reformed tradition, with the boast of a learned, professionalized ministry, and a bookish Bible-centredness, were to insist on damping down the simple gospel zeal of mission partners from, say, Zambia or Brazil. The serious risk of such a response, redolent of a patronizing imperialism, to the rise of 'the next Christendom' far from enlightened Europe was lamentably exposed in Richard Holloway's fit of pique when the bishops of the Anglican South at the last Lambeth conference decisively refused to approve of homosexual conduct. Evangelicals must rejoice that the coming global Christianity will be of *that* ilk.

D. F. Wright, Edinburgh

God and Design: The Teleological Argument and Modern Science

Neil A. Manson (ed.)

Routledge, London, 2003; 376pp., £15.99; ISBN 0 415 26344 1

The teleological argument moves from the seemingly purposeful features of the observable world to posit a supernatural designer. Chiefly associated with William Paley, it was thought well buried after Hume and Kant. However, the recent emergence of the Intelligent Design (ID) movement in the United States has fuelled fresh debate into its legitimacy.

Neil Manson is visiting assistant professor of philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond. He was formerly the Gifford Research Fellow in Natural Theology in Aberdeen University. *God and Design: The Teleological Argument and Modern Science* contains articles taken from the Gifford Bequest International Conference held in Aberdeen in May 2000. Other articles, not from that Conference, are included in the book for the sake of completeness and fairness. Professor Manson is to be highly commended on the breadth of contributors he has attracted.

God and Design contains scholarly discussion of the principles involved in design arguments. It is divided into four sections. Section one is entitled *General Considerations* and covers philosophical arguments. I would particularly commend Elliot Sober's all-too-brief article in this section. Entitled 'The Design Argument', it both educates concerning and engages with Paley's Design Theory and its modern sibling as espoused by the Intelligent Design movement. Sober's critique of Richard Swinburne's popular 'firing squad' approach to the anthropic principle is especially worth reading. Using Bayes theorem, Sober distinguishes between the probability of an event, such as the development of this universe just for us, and its likelihood. This may sound like statistical chicanery to some, but held together with what we know of the Observational Selection Effect (OSE), Sober's article packs a logically powerful punch.

Section two deals with physical cosmology and the anthropic principle. The anthropic principle, as originally formulated and coined by Barrow and Tipler, points out that our universe appears to be fine-tuned for human existence. In his article, Robin Collins gives six examples of such fine-tuning. Given that the approach of the anthropic principle presents the most promising way ahead for both design theorists and proponents of the cosmological argument (i.e. William Lane Craig), this section is indispensable reading for any interested party.

Section three discusses the highly controversial multiple universes alternative to cosmological design. Great Britain's Astronomer Royal,

Martin Rees, proposes the case for a multi-universe scenario. Such a situation, if correct, would go some way to negating the anthropic principle, since out of the infinity of possible universes, it was impossible that there should not have been one like ours. However unlikely the hypothesis sounds, the multiple universe alternative is still in its infancy and deserves a respectful hearing.

Section four deals with aspects of biological design. I would particularly recommend Michael Ruse's well-written article as an example of scholarly balance. Within this section, we find a fruitful exchange between Professor Michael Behe of Lehigh University, Pennsylvania, and Professor Kenneth Miller of Brown University, Rhode Island. Author of *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*, Behe defines and develops the concept of *irreducible complexity* to show that notable biochemical cascades and molecular machines display specified complexity and therefore could not have developed by stepwise Darwinian evolutionary processes. In his article, Miller seeks to debunk Behe. The exchange is fascinating and can be followed through the relevant bibliography.

Whilst dialogue is most welcome in the controversy surrounding design, I found the article (pp. 88-104) by Jan Narveson, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Waterloo, Ontario, out of step with both the spirit and content of the symposium. I believe his article is deficient in five key areas. First, as a philosopher he seems unaware of advances in other areas of science. For example, in a response to Professor William Lane Craig (p. 90) he writes seemingly unaware of quantum gravity. Secondly, whilst accusing proponents of intelligent design (IDers) of metaphysical bias, for no apparent reason other than metaphysical bias he comments, 'no explanation at all is surely preferable to such proposals' (p. 90). This is hardly a ringing endorsement either for his spirit of scientific exploration or for academic fairness. Thirdly, he misunderstands and therefore consistently misrepresents intelligent design as an argument from ignorance. IDers are at pains to state that design is attributed to a system not from a position of ignorance, but from the positive claim of specified complexity. Fourthly, he infers that design cannot be attributed in the absence of evident purpose and writes, 'the world has no evident purpose' (p. 91). However, the Bible is clear that the world does have a self-evident purpose – the declaration of the glory and handiwork of God (Ps. 19:1-6). Furthermore, humankind is aware of such purpose but holds the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18). The problem is not one of lack of data or self-evident purpose. It is one of unrighteousness. Lastly, he ignores special revelation. The Bible is needed to complete the coherence of the

Christian worldview. If the stories of the Bible are belittled as 'inventions... of believers' (p. 100) it is not surprising that the whole revelation – both general and special – is disregarded. Such articles as Professor Narveson's generate much heat but little light, and do nothing to foster dialogue. It is no wonder such polarisation takes place given his further comments on religion as a social phenomenon.

The breadth and depth of scholarship of those contributing to this book is breathtaking, as is their collective reputation. It is probably true that never before have the writings on the teleological argument of such a plethora of talent been collected together in one volume. It makes surprisingly easy reading, although a piece of paper and a pencil may come in handy when authors are discussing Bayes probabilities. The book is also easy to use; both notes and references are included at the end of each article.

In conclusion, *God and Design* represents a significant forward step in the Science – Religion debate. It brings together academics from both perspectives and encourages the fruitful exchange of ideas that are sometimes not as far apart as we think. Read and enjoy!

Colin Dow, St. Vincent Street Free Church of Scotland, Glasgow

The Pentateuch. An Annotated Bibliography

Kenton L. Sparks

Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, 2002; IBR Bibliographies No. 1. 160pp., \$16.99; ISBN 0 8010 2398 X

In this annotated bibliography of the Pentateuch, Kenton Sparks provides brief abstracts for over seven hundred monographs and articles (but not commentaries). This material is organized into ten chapters. Five cover the books of the Pentateuch. Three preliminary chapters deal with 'Text and Versions', 'Introductory Works' and 'Composition, Authorship, and Context', while a brief final chapter is entitled 'Other Studies'. An additional chapter – 'Prolegomenon to Exodus-Deuteronomy' – precedes the section on Exodus.

Each of the five chapters on the individual books of the Pentateuch has an introductory section on 'general issues', followed by a list of works dealing with problems of composition and authorship specific to the book. Further subdivisions deal with the interpretation of specific texts and more or less follow a general outline of the biblical book. In the case of Exodus, for example, there are three such sections: 'From Slavery to Sinai: Interpreting Exodus 1-18', 'The Sinai Pericope: Exodus 19-24' (including a subsection on the Book of the Covenant) and 'The Tabernacle of God:

Exodus 25-40'. Within each of these sections and subsections, the bibliographic entries are chronologically arranged.

So vast is the corpus of scholarly reflection on the Pentateuch, that even the choice of several hundred works requires a high degree of selectivity. So it helps to know the criteria that guided Sparks in his selections. The first is a commitment to include 'classic' works – books and articles that have 'profoundly shaped present readings of the Pentateuch'. This explains the emphasis on historical-critical issues and especially questions of composition and authorship. This topic was, after all, the primary focus of Pentateuchal scholarship over the last century. This emphasis will be especially helpful for newcomers to the study of the Pentateuch. In addition to the seminal works of giants like Wellhausen, Gunkel, von Rad, H. H. Schmid, Rendtorff, and Van Seters, more conservative voices – for example, W. H. Green, Cassuto, Allis, Rendsburg – are given their space, so that readers are left with a well-rounded picture of a classic debate. This balance is typical of the bibliography as a whole: both critical and more conservative scholarship are well represented throughout the book.

A second criterion more than balances the focus on classic works. Sparks also seeks to give 'the most up-to-date picture of the debate' on a particular topic. Accordingly, almost half of the bibliographic entries date from 1990, and another quarter from the 1980s. This is one of the strengths of the book. While summaries of 'classic' works provide readers with the highlights in longstanding debates, the emphasis on recent works contributes most at the very point where students and teachers are likely to have lost track of the discussion.

Another criterion is 'breadth of subject matter'. The entries are broken down into more than sixty different topical headings, which ensures a good general coverage of wide range of topics related to the Pentateuch. Finally, Sparks has found room for 'innovative' and 'promising readings'. Obviously, this entails a degree of subjectivity, but his choices are consistently judicious. It should be noted, however, that few entries reflect approaches to interpretation that have emerged in more recent years (e.g., interest in early Jewish and Christian interpretation, postmodern approaches, etc.) but this is primarily due to the focus on classic historical-critical scholarship.

While Sparks is obviously very familiar with non-English language works and the more important of these – mostly in German – are included, over ninety percent of the works referred to are in English. This is not a criticism, rather an indication of the intended audience.

In summary, this book should prove to be a valuable resource for anyone interested in the academic study of the Pentateuch.

Douglas J. Green, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia

The Problem of War in the Old Testament

Philip Jenson

Grove, Cambridge, 2002; 28pp., £2.50; ISBN 1 85174 509 2

Jenson's *The Problem of War in the Old Testament* addresses a subject of urgent interest both as a theological as well as a contemporary ethical issue. The theological problem has long been felt: How can a loving God engage in such a violent activity, particularly one that might be construed as genocidal as directed toward the ancient Canaanite population of Palestine?

Jenson has thus done an important service by raising the topic for our consideration. The treatment, according to the constraints of the series, is brief. The choice of texts is illustrative and far from exhaustive. He chooses four texts and a topic before summarizing with a chapter on a biblical theology of war. The four passages are Exodus 15, a hymn celebrating God the warrior's victory over the Egyptians at the Red Sea, Deuteronomy 20, which contains legislation concerning the proper waging of warfare, 1 Samuel 17, an individual holy war combat, and Jeremiah 21, which anticipates God's warfare not for, but against Israel.

There is much that is admirable about his treatment of the sensitive subject of warfare in the Old Testament. The first is that he avoids the easy way out, which would involve some kind of denigration of the Old Testament (as recently illustrated by the Marcionite tendency found in C. S. Cowles' contribution to *Show Them No Mercy: 4 Views on God and Canaanite Genocide* [Zondervan, 2003]). He further warns us against reading the Old Testament in the light of modern individualistic, Western democratic ideas. He points out, for instance, that the survival of a nation in the ancient world would be short-lived if that nation were slow to retaliate and defend itself (though here we could argue that the same is true for a modern nation). Jenson also helps us see positive moral characteristics of the so-called ban (which prohibits individuals from keeping the plunder as well as calling for the destruction of all the P.O.W.s). He rightly points out that such a provision, at least concerning the plunder, does not allow for individuals, whether soldiers or king, personally to gain from the warfare.

On the other hand, I would take issue with Jenson on a handful of matters. However, for reasons of space, I will concentrate on only one. I am not sure that it is right to say that 'the OT approach to war is deliberately complex, ambivalent, conditional, and incomplete' (p. 5). Warfare in the Old Testament is an instrument of God's judgement. When Israel is commanded to go to war by God, that means the enemy is an object of God's warfare, and provided Israel is obedient, their warring act is holy and they win. If they are disobedient or they wage war against a foe of their own choice, then they lose. God uses another nation (Babylon) in order to fight Israel. The Old Testament ends with Israel living under oppression but with the sure hope that the divine warrior will come again and defeat their enemies (Dan. 7; Zech. 14). When Jesus comes, John the Baptist expects a violent Messiah, but Jesus wages spiritual warfare, dying to defeat Satan and his hordes. However, this victory is not the final battle. That is still to come, according to the apocalyptic portions of the New Testament, Jesus will return to wage a final war against his spiritual and flesh-and-blood enemies (Rev. 19).

In my opinion, it is Jenson's narrow focus (demanded by the series) on a small number of texts that makes the picture more obscure than it really is. Even so, this is an excellent and interesting starter book on a very important topic.

Tremper Longman III, Westmont College, Santa Barbara

The Westminster Confession into the 21st Century

Volume I

J. Ligon Duncan III (ed.)

Mentor, Fearn, 2003; xxii+440pp., £22.99; ISBN 1 85792 862 8

This is the first in a projected three-volume study of issues relating to the Westminster Confession of Faith. The past decade has witnessed three significant '350th' anniversaries connected with the Westminster Assembly: its session in 1643, its final meeting in 1649 and its dissolution in 1652. This volume is the fruit of research into the Confession of Faith, the magisterial product of the Assembly, and is a landmark study of the Confession and its significance.

Dr Ligon Duncan has made an impressive collation of studies from a formidable range of scholars. This is very much an international project, which looks at the significance of the Westminster Confession from historical, theological and ecclesiological perspectives.

The fourteen studies in this first volume represent a broad sweep of themes. David Hall provides an interesting background study in the history of Westminster commemorations. Four studies (Wayne R. Spear on 'Word and Spirit in the Westminster Confession', O. Palmer Robertson on 'The Holy Spirit in the Westminster Confession', Morton H. Smith on 'Theology of the Larger Catechism' and Richard B. Gaffin on 'Westminster and the Sabbath') look at various theological and doctrinal issues. There are two articles relating to baptism, one by Timothy George looking at 'Baptists and the Westminster Confession' and one by David Wright on 'Baptism at the Westminster Assembly'.

The other essays in this volume have in common the relation of the Westminster Confession of Faith to historical traditions. A.T.B. McGowan looks at the relation between the Confession and Scottish federal theology, W.D.J. McKay at the Scottish contribution to Westminster, Stewart Gill at the Australian connection, Mark Dever at the connection with Calvin, James L. Macleod at the Declaratory Act of 1892, Michael Horton at the attacks on the Confession by Charles Finney, and William Barker at the development of church/state relations.

It may seem strange that the bulk of the material in a volume on *The Westminster Confession into the twenty-first century* should be devoted to historical treatments of the Confession in past centuries, but no study of the present significance of Westminster can afford to ignore the historical outworking of its magisterial theology. Professor McGowan's argument for a natural evolution from the Scots Confession to Westminster is an important defence of Reformed federalism against the neo-Barthian approach of Tom Torrance, while Mark Dever cogently demonstrates Westminster's pastoral concerns particularly in the debate over assurance.

Dr Macleod's analysis of the Declaratory Act controversy of 1892 in the context of the origins of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland is also an important contribution. It hardly does justice, however, to the position of those who defended the Confession while refusing to join the new denomination; those who remained with the Free Church of Scotland in 1893 did so because they insisted that the Declaratory Act was a piece of incomplete legislation. Do such bypaths of Scottish church history matter now? Perhaps they do as explanations of past movements; whether they are valid reasons for denominational separation over a century later is debatable. At any rate, the discussion is valid in the twenty-first century if only because there are denominations whose commitment to the Westminster Confession of Faith is compromised by Articles Declaratory still.

The doctrinal studies are engaging and challenging. Professor Robertson's concern to demonstrate the pneumatology of the Confession is an important rebuttal of the charge that the great omission of the document was a chapter on the Spirit. In particular, he brings out the importance of the *filioque* (p. 73) and double procession. No less vital is Professor Gaffin's discussion of the Confession's insistence that the Lord's Day is the Christian Sabbath, and that the strictures of the fourth commandment are still relevant for new covenant believers. He also raises important issues concerning the need to live all our lives before the face of God while maintaining the distinctiveness of the Lord's Day.

This is a helpful collection of essays of varying degrees of usefulness. One looks forward to the next two volumes in this commemorative series, trusting that it will inspire confidence in the robust federal Calvinism of Westminster, and lead to an increasing appreciation of Westminster theology.

Iain D. Campbell, Bach, Isle of Lewis

Rome in the Bible and the Early Church

P. Oakes (ed.)

Baker / Paternoster, Grand Rapids / Carlisle, 2002; xvii+166pp., \$17.99; ISBN 0 8010 2608 3

These six papers were originally presented at the 1999 meeting of the New Testament Study Group of the Tyndale Fellowship in Cambridge. They have been gathered together in this slim volume so as to make the fruit of the research more widely accessible, but the essays still bear all the marks of technical scholarship, including untranslated Greek script and full footnoting. These essays will, therefore, be of interest to theological students, teachers and ministers primarily.

After an initial orientation to the volume provided by the editor, Steve Walton provides a substantial essay which surveys scholarship on Luke's purpose in writing Acts, with particular reference to his attitude towards Rome. He concludes that Luke writes with a clear purpose, namely to present a model of Christian discipleship in relation to Rome, but that his writing displays several diverse perspectives on Rome, depending largely on Rome's dealings with particular Christians, which cannot easily be boiled down to a single attitude. Ultimately, claims Walton, Luke seeks to declare the supremacy of Jesus over Caesar through the use of the terms 'Lord' and 'Saviour'.

The next essay, by Conrad Gempf, employs a literary approach to the narrative of Paul in Rome which is found at the close of Acts in chapter 28. He argues that Luke intends to present the Jews rejecting the preaching of Paul.

Next, Bruce Winter examines Paul's engagement with aspects of Roman law in chapters 12-15 of his letter to the Romans, indicating that Paul's ethical instruction challenged much that lay at the heart of Roman culture.

Andrew Clarke's chapter is a study of Romans 16 in the light of Galatians 3:28, in which he argues that Paul's greetings in Romans 16 provide evidence of the outworking of the principle of 'social inclusion' declared in Galatians. He draws attention to the presence of names and expressions which suggest that Paul considered Jews and Greeks, male and female, slaves (or those who were once slaves but have now been freed) and freeborn people of some status as all part of the Christian community.

Peter Oakes' paper emphasises Paul's confidence in God's (and indeed Christ's) sovereignty, as expressed in his letter to the Philippians. Thus, regardless of the circumstances in which Paul himself or the Philippian believers find themselves, the Philippians are to remain steadfast in contending for the gospel.

The final paper moves beyond the NT documents, as Andrew Gregory evaluates recent scholarship on the dating of two documents among the writings of the 'Apostolic Fathers', *I Clement* and *the Shepherd of Hermas*. Gregory's main emphasis is a call for methodological care in treating early Christian writings: to consider documents on their own terms and not to move too quickly to draw 'trajectories' between one and another.

Each paper concludes with a helpful bibliography. These will prove useful to students and teachers as they seek further discussions of a particular topic. There are no indexes and so the reader really has no alternative but to work through the essays systematically.

Alistair I. Wilson, Highland Theological College, Dingwall

The Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus: Volume 1.1

Robert Webb (ed.)

Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, Jan. 2003; 127pp., ISSN 1476 8690

As Robert Webb makes clear in his editorial comments, this journal is intended to provide, for the first time, a dedicated home journal for historical Jesus research, an area that until now has simply been discussed

within the more general New Testament theology and exegesis journals. Given the tension that has often held sway in academic circles between the 'historical Jesus' and the 'Jesus of faith', readers may be inclined to avoid such a journal, fearing that its content may be inimical to biblical orthodoxy. A glance at the editorial board listed on page 5, however, would challenge such a prejudice: with members such as Craig Evans, Darrell Bock, Richard Bauckham and Rainer Riesner alongside unorthodox writers like Marcus Borg, we may be reassured that the conservative – indeed, evangelical – voice will be heard as loudly as the liberal.

In fact, an examination of the content of this first volume shows that, surprisingly, the conservative voice is quite considerably louder than the liberal. Two of the articles – Richard Bauckham's development of Byrskog's work on oral tradition and Graham Twelftree's article on the miracles of Jesus – explicitly defend conservative convictions regarding the reliability of the gospel accounts. A further two articles – Dale Allison's discussion of the continuity between Jesus and John (in which he questions the tension held to exist, by John Dominic Crossan and others, between the two biblical characters) and Kathleen Corley's article defending the authentic core of the stories in which Jesus is anointed by a sinful woman – more cautiously challenge assumptions often seen in academic discussions of their subject matter. Even the remaining article by Scot McKnight, discussing whether Jesus would have been regarded as a *mamzer* (illegitimate child) by his contemporaries, and how such a status would have affected him psychologically, does not seem to argue that Jesus *was* illegitimate; only that he may have been *regarded* so. It serves, therefore, as a stimulating discussion of Jesus' background and context, even if an openly speculative one (being largely reconstructed from later rabbinic discussions).

The obvious question that should be asked of such material is whether it will serve a purpose outside of academic circles. The answer to this should be a positive one: as Webb says on page 3, 'the investigation of the historical Jesus is a legitimate and worthy endeavor in and of itself, but from a Christian perspective, it should also have an impact on the faith and life of those professing to be followers of Jesus'. This hope is borne out by the material in the first volume of the journal. The article by Bauckham is perhaps the most significant of all, making a huge contribution to the apologetic issues surrounding the reliability of the Gospels by highlighting evidence for the role played by eyewitnesses in compiling the Gospel material. Twelftree's article is also of apologetic significance, challenging approaches to the historical Jesus that fail to take into account the centrality of Jesus' miracles to his ministry. Both of these articles

deserve to play a significant role in apologetic discussions of the Gospels. The articles by Corley and Allison contain important exegetical discussions that may be important apologetically, but will also prove helpful in sermon preparation. McKnight's article, properly understood and digested, may well provide helpful background material for sermons and for personal study of the Gospel texts.

In short, then, the first volume of *The Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* is both surprisingly orthodox and surprisingly practical. Without compromising academic quality, it provides accessible and stimulating articles of benefit to both academic and lay communities. With a diverse editorial board, future editions will almost certainly contain material that evangelicals will find difficult or disturbing. But we may also look forward to a range of articles to which we will be able to cry, 'Amen!'

Grant Macaskill, St Mary's College, St Andrews University

Turning the Tide: The challenge Ahead – Report of the 2002 Scottish Church Census

Peter Brierley

Christian Research & the Church of Scotland, Edinburgh, 2003; 167pp., £7.99; ISBN 1 85321 148 6

At the press conference launching these statistics, the final question came from the Newsnight man. It was impatiently put: 'What would it take for you to admit that no-one wants your product any more?' In just eight years since the last survey in Scotland, one in five no longer attend our main churches. Those groups which showed some growth in 1994 are now struggling. If the numbers are projected – well, you know how it goes.

What do these sobering numbers represent? First and foremost, they are, as Chair of the steering group Colin Sinclair said, a wake-up call to the churches. Christian leaders and congregations must face them, and they are hard to face. We are clearly growing older together, and at one level seem disconnected from our contemporary society.

For some, no explanation is needed: it's quite simple. Were we not always called by God to be a remnant, a minority in a hostile or at least preoccupied culture? What has been unusual historically is a christianised culture such as ours. The Lord is now shaking us to remove those who simply attend our churches because it was the thing to do. At least those who do meet now are more likely to be convinced believers. And although our culture knows increasingly little of the true Jesus Christ, our sadness

is matched by a sense that this is a real opportunity to start from scratch again.

Nonetheless, the trends suggested by Peter Brierley's careful survey are worth further reflection. They do show that Scottish church attendance remains considerably higher than England (11.2% compared to 7.5%). They show that the further north and west you go, the higher the continuing commitment to church life. They also show that although the mainline denominations are mostly in considerable decline, some of our smaller church groups are growing.

My own view is that a number of trends are revealed by the survey. First, the statistics reveal a shift from institutional to independent church life. There is massive decline on the one hand, and some small growth on the other; these are not the same people, but indicate a growing impatience with structured ways of being church and a preference for flexibility. It seems to reflect the well-observed shift from formal to informal in our culture (just watch the TV news – BBC & ITV still have a desk, but it might be see-through; and on C5 they sit on it or dispense with it altogether).

This is no surprise, as it is going on massively around us. All our institutions, including government, are struggling to maintain their place in an increasingly individual and independent culture. Yet it is not the whole story. Alongside it is a massive tightening of legislative frameworks. These are biting particularly hard in the voluntary sector, as we grapple with child protection, health and safety, disabled access and other issues.

Whilst there is some evidence of growth in centres of traditional and formal worship – English and one or two Scottish Cathedrals – it is mostly evangelical groups who have shown a little growth. These take the Bible as the central place where God is known through Jesus Christ; pray as if their lives depended on it; seek to serve their communities; and network with other similar groups, not only locally but internationally.

The second shift revealed by the statistics is from Sunday to midweek. Peter Brierley recognises the decline in Sunday numbers, but points to growing numbers of people who also attend midweek Church activities – and around 200,000 who attend only midweek activities. Even accepting these may have slight connections with the 'main' life of the congregation, this is a remarkable change.

Alongside it is a move from Church premises to other places. Churches are now meeting in hotels, schools, community centres, theatres, pubs and clubs, as well as standard church buildings. And 'standard' church buildings are changing. There are striking examples of renewed and remodelled church

premises across the country, built both to last and to serve local communities at every level.

My guess is that some of the growing churches do not even appear in this survey. The response rate of 52% was very high in the survey game, and Brierley makes very carefully controlled assumptions in order to include those who did not reply. Some of the newer churches would have been quite difficult to contact, and probably think life's too short to fill forms in anyway. These may have an office somewhere, and maybe a web page; but you meet them through individual networks and special events rather than in obvious premises.

The survey threw up some other intriguing trends. Evangelical congregations were allowed to self-select – reformed, mainstream, charismatic. Only those describing themselves as mainstream showed any growth, with others now declining. The number of leaders in a church turned out to be significant: those with smaller leadership teams (under 15 in number) were more likely to have grown than those with larger groups. One response in mainline denominations has been to re-organise leadership teams themselves into teams, and to recognise the difference between pastoral and strategic or decision-making leaders.

Finally, for the first time the survey took a measure of hopes and fears for the future. Urgent action is clearly needed to face the very considerable decline and to respond to the shifts it reveals. Yet one-fifth of churches responding said they expected to grow by 2010; and another two-fifths reckoned they would remain stable or see small growth. That is a remarkable indication of Christian confidence. The question remains whether it is borne out. My own early experiences of energy and commitment across the country and across the church spectrum in Scotland suggest it might.

Mike Parker, General Secretary, Evangelical Alliance Scotland

Paul: A Short Introduction

Morna D. Hooker

Oneworld Publications, Oxford, 2003; 160pp., £10.99; ISBN 1 85168 314 3

This introduction to Paul is a reflection of Hooker's astute and trenchant treatment of the extensive and oftentimes labyrinthine issues in Pauline studies through the years. The book does exactly as the title suggests – it introduces Paul (the man and his beliefs) who shaped Christianity significantly in its nascent years. While the book is aimed at the

introductory level, Hooker aptly and honestly covers the relevant issues needed for understanding the depth of Paul's theology.

The first four chapters explore the introductory issues: 1. Paul's gospel and its relationship with tradition; 2. reliability of Lukan accounts; 3. authorship and the situational nature of Paul's letters; and 4. the theological background (Old Testament) of Paul's gospel. In each chapter, Hooker moves effortlessly from the contemporary issues and questions, which may be raised by the modern reader to the context of first century.

Chapter 5 assesses the distinctiveness of Paul's gospel and his conversion from Judaism to Christianity. The remaining chapters explore the individual aspects of Paul's theology: the identity of Jesus (Chapter 6); grace versus law (Chapter 7); sin (Chapter 8); atonement (Chapter 9); ethics (Chapter 10); community life (Chapter 11); and eschatology (Chapter 12).

The following features of this book may be highlighted. First, the book is extremely readable. The technical jargon of biblical scholarship, which oftentimes hinders the reader from further investigation, is absent. Second, while the book is readable, it is by no means 'light reading'. Hooker has canvassed simply and directly the depth of Paul's theology and the wide range of issues concerning Paul and his gospel. Third, Hooker not only addresses the contemporary issues and questions of the modern-day reader but frequently links these issues back to the first century. For example, under the subject of 'sonship', the contemporary issue of sexist language is not only identified as a modern day issue but more importantly, Hooker emphasizes the significance of Paul's language applied to women as well as men. The language of 'sonship' conveys not the exclusion of women but the remarkable inclusion of women within the context of first-century patriarchy (p. 55). And fourth, Hooker's treatment of Paul's theology is executed with simplicity without sacrificing the deep significance of the weighty issues (grace, sin, redemption, ethics, etc.). Each chapter is packed with years of study and reflection on these matters: she offers valuable insight to Paul's theology.

This brief introduction to Paul will not only be beneficial for many students of the Bible but also for the lay people who crave answers concerning not only Paul but the gospel which we have inherited from him: both will find satisfaction and encouragement for further exploration of not only Paul but the entire Scriptures.

M. Sydney Park, University of Aberdeen

Arius. Heresy and Tradition

Rowan Williams

SCM Press, London, 2001; xiii+378pp., £16.95; ISBN 0 334 02850 7

This masterpiece on Arius, from Rowan Williams, now archbishop of Canterbury, first came out in 1987. It is still a formidable classic of detail and argumentation. It is also an obligatory starting point for all serious work in the field. Moreover, no rival treatment of the subject seems in sight. This edition is enhanced by the author's response to criticism from various luminaries including G. C. Stead and M. F. Wiles.

The book has become the definitive theological introduction to Arius in English and sixteen years later its value is undiminished. The author's introductory chapter shows his hand very early on. He believes that orthodoxy is not a concise deposit of doctrine, the clear-cut triumph of light over darkness and conveniently firmed up for posterity for ever. Orthodoxy develops – and is still developing. Orthodoxy succeeds by deepening whatever images and concepts are valid in so-called heresy, 'the detailed reworking and re-imagining of... formative conflicts'. So today's 'orthodoxy' is conditioned by the past. And there is also such a thing as a future 'orthodoxy'. Such claims do not, the author believes, commit him to an unrelenting relativism. In the newly written appendix to this edition, the author repeats this view. Nicaea's contribution was still critical and made it impossible merely to 'think of God as an individual' – a massive legacy to the present. For those anxious, the archbishop is loyal to Nicaea. However, he thinks Nicaea itself warns against 'canonizing in theology the tempting idioms of human personal interaction'. It is therefore also vital to show how complex are the formative forces around Arius and how misleading is the term 'Arianism', prompting a question mark against seeing only a clearly defined orthodoxy over against a clearly defined heresy.

These points are well made. All the same it is not easy to see in the re-evaluation made by this book just by what road we may come to venture such commitment to Nicaea's wisdom as the Archbishop embraces? How do we know that we are at least on the track of truth and not in a relativistic quagmire? And how is it that the test of time has revealed such a resilience in Nicaea? Can such enduring value really be reduced to the history of power struggles in the church?

Whatever the answers are, if unspoken here, the reader can always expect value for money in the republished chapters of the book. There are many rewards: an unrivalled, penetrating analysis of Arius himself; masterly investigation of the role, even psychology, of Bishop Alexander

and the Alexandrian church; and a *tour de force* mapping of the philosophical background to the dispute and the various postures adopted – especially that of Arius. The new edition allows us to discern that the author's mantle of authority in this field remains firmly round his shoulders and is likely to stay there for a while yet.

Roy Kearsley, Cardiff University/South Wales Baptist College

Divine Discourse: The Theological Methodology of John Owen

Sebastian Rehnman

Baker, Grand Rapids, 2002; 215pp., \$19.99; ISBN:0 8010 2501 X

This book, a revision of the author's DPhil thesis, is a study of the approach to theology exhibited in the writings of the great English Puritan, John Owen (1616-1683). As such it is a welcome addition both to the growing number of works on Owen himself and to the field of studies in post-Reformation Reformed dogmatics.

In a series of chapters, Rehnman examines Owen's thought on the concept of theology, the relationship of natural and supernatural knowledge of God, the nature of theology, faith and reason, belief and evidence, and the organization of theology. The work is densely footnoted and will prove an invaluable tool for anyone who wishes to get to grips both with Owen's intellectual context and the sources of his thinking.

A number of points emerge very clearly from Rehnman's work. First, the sheer sophistication of Owen's approach to theology renders any attempt to reduce his thinking to the level of the crude soundbite to be woefully misplaced. This is a theologian as familiar with Augustine as with Thomas, with Aristotle as Maimonides. As much a figure of the Renaissance as of the Puritan movement, Owen cannot be discussed in terms which are not sensitive to the subtlety and care of his own method of argument.

Second, and more theologically, the catholic bent of Owen's thinking is proved time and time again, as any glance at the footnotes will demonstrate, putting to death any notion of Puritan theology as obscurantist or inherently sectarian. Those who wish to deal with Owen in terms of bald, undifferentiated categories such as 'scholasticism' or 'Aristotelianism' are dealt with by Rehnman who implicitly demonstrates the simplistic and banal nature of such categories when used in this field.

Third, the eclectic nature of the metaphysics of Reformed thinking is demonstrated so clearly in Rehnman's volume. Recent attempts to reduce

Reformed Orthodoxy to a Protestant form of Scotism notwithstanding, Rehnman's Owen emerges as a thinker who borrows from all manner of sources and offers what is essentially a Thomistic metaphysics modified in a distinctly Scotist direction at certain points. The details are arguable, depending to a certain extent on how one defines the essence of Scotism and how one constructs the relationship between Thomism and Scotism. I myself would want to argue that Owen's Scotism is, in fact, increasingly negligible as his theology develops; but Rehnman's basic thesis is sound: the philosophical approach of Reformed Orthodoxy is eclectic and variegated, reflecting the complex relationship between Protestantism and the theology of the Middle Ages.

Fourth, Rehnman shows quite clearly the close relationship that existed between a theology pursued in terms of analytical rigour with a theology developed along covenantal lines. The clichéd distinction often drawn between the Voetian and Cocceian approach has in recent years been shown to be massively overdrawn; Owen's fusion of metaphysical and covenantal theology is one more piece of evidence that the old approach was built upon a basic category mistake.

Rehnman, himself trained as an analytic philosopher, has produced a delightful if dense monograph which will serve as one important starting point for all future studies of John Owen.

Carl Trueman, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia

The Systematic Theology of John Brown of Haddington

Joel R. Beeke & Randall J. Pederson

Reformation Heritage Books, Grand Rapids & Christian Focus

Publications, Fearn, 2002; xxii+576pp., £19.99; ISBN 1 892777 66 5

At the request of theological students, John Brown produced his 'Compendious View of Natural and Revealed religion' in 1782. It is this book, set out in seven 'books' and 24 chapters which is reprinted here together with a comprehensive introduction to the life and writings of John Brown who was converted in his teens whilst working as a shepherd, and who shepherded his own flock as minister of the Associate congregation in Haddington, East Lothian from 1751, when Brown was aged twenty-nine, until his death 36 years later.

The contents of the book are set out clearly chapter by chapter with a comprehensive word index to each subject covered, although there is no subject index, which might have made it easier to navigate its subject matter. It is both a profound and clearly expressed systematic theology of

the Westminster Confession. Brown's style and scriptural references make it useful to ministers and students of theology.

Each book is clearly laid out in chapters and sub paragraphs, beginning often with a single sentence summary of the doctrine, followed by a full exposition, with every point reinforced from Scripture. There are over 26,000 proof texts in less than six hundred pages. Following his own interpretation, Brown takes leading objections to the doctrine (for example five objections to election and predestination) and answers each one with full scriptural references. Ever the pastor, each section concludes with a reflection. On 'Effectual Calling' his reflection begins, 'Have I indeed been called of God with this holy, this high and heavenly calling, and spiritually united to the all precious Redeemer? Can I appeal to himself, that he is my Beloved, and I am his? – God, forbid that I should profess, should preach a Jesus Christ, that is not my own' (p. 357).

We may feel that we know the theology that we can expect from such a volume, and already have made up our minds which parts we wholly endorse and which we would take issue with. John Brown's desire was that he would make the reader think, and by thinking prayerfully, come to a deeper biblical and personal understanding of his or her faith. To this extent his Christ-centred approach challenges us to understand our theological position, its scriptural basis and how we address objections to it, within the context of our relationship to Christ. 'Let us, therefore, begin all things from Christ; carry on all things with and through Christ; and let all things aim at and end in Christ.' This quotation is from Brown's 'Address to Students of Divinity' which is also included in the book. Reading the book and applying its probing questions to our faith might lead to fewer candidates for the ministry, but we would be assured of a high quality of understanding, faith and service from those who did respond.

Students of history can find in Haddington John Brown's manse (now a private dwelling house), his Church (now a flatted dwelling house in which one of our weekly study groups meet), and his saddle and communion vessels on display in St Mary's Church. He preached three times every Sunday and visited and catechised his flock during the week. He left behind eight children, a pious and loving congregation, a wealth of literature including his famous 'Self-Interpreting Bible', and many ministers and students inspired by his teaching. This reprinted edition of his systematic theology can only further inspire such devotion in others.

Jim Cowie, St Mary's Parish Church, Haddington

Readings from the Ancient Near East

Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer (eds)

Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, 2002; Primary Resources for Old Testament Study. 240pp., \$21.99; ISBN 0 8010 2292 4

The goal of this book is to provide undergraduate students with 'a basic collection of the ancient Near Eastern texts that most closely parallel or complement the biblical text'. I should say from the outset that this volume achieves this goal admirably and in so doing meets the need for an introductory anthology of primary sources from the world surrounding ancient Israel.

Ninety-one texts are organized into eighteen broad genre categories (e.g., 'Royal Records', 'Hymns and Prayers', 'Prophecies, Divinations and Apocalyptic', etc.). Each category is in turn connected to a section of the canon (Pentateuch, Historical Books, Poetic Books and Prophetic Books) 'at the point of closest correspondence'. For example, thirty-eight texts are connected to the Pentateuch under the headings 'Creation and the Flood', 'Tower of Babel', 'Ancestral Customs', 'Epic Literature', 'Covenants and Treaties', 'Law Codes' and 'Cultic Texts'. Given the intended audience, this is probably a helpful method of organization because it implicitly guides readers in making comparisons between the ancient Near Eastern texts and the Bible.

This guidance is made more explicit in the editors' brief introductory comments on each text. In addition to providing helpful background information and a synopsis, these introductions also alert readers to specific comparisons that can profitably be made with the biblical texts.

It should be noted that *Readings* offers no new translations but is instead an eclectic collection of previously published translations, 'smoothed' slightly for the sake of uniformity and readability. No fewer than thirty-five different sources are employed and the inclusion of translations by such worthies as Jacobsen (Sumerian), Lichtheim (Egyptian), Grayson (Assyrian), Gibson (West Semitic) ensures that solid scholarship stands behind this work. Somewhat disappointing, however, is the heavy reliance on Pritchard's now-dated *Ancient Near Eastern Texts (ANET)*, which is the basis of almost a third of the translations.

Also a little disappointing is the minimal use of translations from Volume 1 of Hallo and Younger, *The Context of Scripture (COS)*. (Obviously, Volumes 2 and 3 were published too late to be used.) Only three translations from this recently published collection of translations appear in *Readings*. Perhaps factors beyond the editors' control prevented them from making more use of this volume, but it is a pity that readers

will encounter classic texts like *Enuma Elish* and Gilgamesh through Speiser's *ANET* translation rather than Benjamin Foster's more recent and more elegant rendition in *COS*. I would hope that future editions of *Readings* will make more use of *COS*, which will surely become the standard reference work for English translations of ancient Near Eastern texts related to the Old Testament.

In an introductory textbook, editors face difficult decisions about which texts to exclude. One can always quibble about where the line should be drawn. For example, I was a little surprised at the omission of the Tell Fekheriyeh Bilingual inscription, a text that not only sheds light on the meaning of the word 'Eden' but also aids in understanding the concept of the image of God. Nevertheless, the editors should be commended for their judicious selection of texts. In addition to obvious choices like Atrahasis, the Mesha Stela, the Siloam Tunnel Inscription, and the Baal Cycle, Kirta and Aqhat from Ugarit, the inclusion of a selection of covenants and treaties will assist readers in understanding the important biblical concept of covenant.

If texts only make sense in context, then the study of the literature of the ancient Near East needs to keep playing an important role in Old Testament interpretation. Arnold and Beyer's informative book contributes to both disciplines by encouraging a new generation of students to explore the thought world inhabited by the ancient biblical writers.

Douglas J. Green, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia

St Augustine

Serge Lancel

SCM Press, London, 2002; xviii+590pp., £25; ISBN 0 334 02866 3

Serge Lancel is Emeritus Professor of Latin Literature and Roman Civilization at the university of Grenoble, and this work was first published in French in 1999. The English translation, which reads smoothly, is by Antonia Nevill.

Lancel has written here a massive biography of Augustine, which – while by no means neglecting theology – concentrates somewhat more on Augustine's life story in its ancient classical setting. As such, I recommend it to all students of Augustine and the early church fathers. I am not sure that it will or should replace Peter Brown's magisterial tome, written back in 1967, but it can certainly stand alongside it as a companion volume. Their intellectual and literary styles are sufficiently different to exclude any sense of pointless reduplication, and Lancel spends more time

depicting Augustine's context in the empire of his day. If we have three Synoptic Gospels, why not two modern masterpieces on Augustine?

The most enduring impression on the reviewer's mind was the dark, sickening violence of the Donatist controversy. This was perpetrated by both sides, although the Donatists seemed to me to come across as a more bigoted and unsavoury bunch than their Catholic opponents. If we are tempted to think that (for example) the sectarian conflicts of Northern Ireland are somehow peculiar, Lancel's graphic account of fourth- and fifth-century North Africa paints a picture that surpasses anything in contemporary Protestant-Catholic animosity for its sheer brutality, intensified by a depth of religious and ecclesiastical passion that makes the beatings and the murders all the more grim. Surely those Christians of the patristic era were no sweetness-and-light saints.

I doubt whether I gained any new theological insights into Augustine from Lancel's account, but it succeeded in communicating a portrait, instinct with life, of Augustine the human being, throughout the different phases of his pilgrimage. The sheer length of the work, however, will inevitably mean that its readership will be restricted to scholars and enthusiasts.

A very few mistakes and infelicities have crept into the text. On page 66, the year 395 should be 385. On page 427, Prov. 8:3 should be Prov. 8:35. On pages 164 and 445, Lancel speaks anachronistically about 'celebrating mass'. And on page 470, he writes rather disparagingly of God in the Old Testament as 'the terrible Yahweh'. No more 'terrible', surely, than the Jesus of the New Testament as depicted in its descriptions of final judgement?

I commend this work warmly.

Nick Needham, Highland Theological College, Dingwall

Newman and The Word

Terrence Merrigan and Ian T. Ker (eds)

Peeters Press & Eerdmans, Louvain, 2000; 260pp., \$30; ISBN 90 429 0921 8

John Henry Newman was Britain's most famous convert to Roman Catholicism in the nineteenth century. This publication is a collection of nine papers presented at the Second Oxford International Newman Conference held in August 1998. These conferences aim to reflect on the continuing significance of the work of Newman in relation to

contemporary developments in religion, theology, philosophy and literature.

A variety of theologians, philosophers, historians and literary scholars write on a range of subjects associated with Newman and perhaps the best way to review this book is to give some flavour of the topics covered.

Terrence Merrigan of the Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven, compares Newman's views on the nature of Christian faith in the incarnate Word with the pluralist ideas of the contemporary philosopher of religion, John Hick.

The paper by Ian Ker of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Oxford examines Newman's challenge to the Roman Catholic Church's traditional distinction between clergy, religious and laity, and reflects on this in the light of new movements within that church.

R. H. Hutton, the joint editor and part owner of the *Spectator*, was one of Newman's first biographers and had close associations with Unitarianism. His relationship with Newman is examined by Sheridan Gilley, Reader in Theology at the University of Durham, who analyses this in terms of Newman's understanding of the church and particularly with relation to Trinitarianism.

The importance of the Bible for Newman is stressed in the paper by Terence R. Wright, Professor of English at the University of Newcastle, who explores Newman's position against the background of contemporary Higher Criticism. He draws a parallel between Newman's attitude to the Bible and some aspects of postmodernism, concluding that Newman 'sees that the Church needs both to engage freely and imaginatively with its foundational texts and to impose certain limits upon this freedom in order to maintain its living tradition'.

An examination of the contribution made by Newman and the Catholic Modernists to the theology of revelation is the subject dealt with by Gabriel Daly of Trinity College, Dublin.

In a different vein is the paper by Fergus Kerr, Regent of Blackfriars, Oxford. He reflects on Newman as a philosopher and examines the lack of recognition accorded to him as such. Louis Dupre of Yale University investigates Newman's debt to the Neoplatonic tradition while William Myers of the University of Leicester assesses his economical principle.

For those attracted to a highly significant and controversial figure of the nineteenth century, this will no doubt prove to be an interesting volume, but it is questionable if it will demand a wide readership. On the whole the papers are mildly critical and largely adulatory. One significant exception is the contribution by Alister E. McGrath, Principal of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, who takes Newman to task for his presentation of Luther's

doctrine of justification. His concluding sentence probably reflects the attitude of most Evangelicals to Newman. 'I still sing his hymns; I am, however, a little more hesitant when it comes to singing his praises.'

John W. Lockington, Larne

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version

Crossway Bibles, Wheaton, IL, 2001; xiii+1328pp., £15.99 hbk, £11.99 pbk; ISBN 1 58134 316 7.

The 'English Standard Version' is the latest in a recent string of new or revised translations of Scripture. The last few years have seen, among others, the inclusive language revision of the NIV (the NIVI) in 1996; the New Living Translation in 1997; and another revision of the NIV in 2002 (the TNIV). Also available gradually over this period was the NET (New English Translation) Bible, produced specially for free access over the web, but also now available in book form. Now, the ESV boasts having had more than a hundred people on the publishing team, including fourteen members on the (rather unfortunately named!) 'Translation Oversight Committee'. It cites its translation philosophy as follows: 'As an essentially literal translation, the ESV seeks to capture the precise meaning of the original text and carry over the full range of meaning into our own language.' At the same time it attempts to do full justice to the range of literary diversity in the canon. There is also a very useful CD-ROM which comes free with some editions.

There are considerable advantages to the translation. For one, it maintains the logical connections between sections when these are sometimes omitted from the NIV, which is clearly its major competitor. So for example, it has 'So if there is any encouragement in Christ' (Phil. 2:1); the connecting 'so' is omitted in the NIV. It is also more helpful in supplying notes which indicate other meanings, so for example one can link up Paul's references to 'flesh' in Romans 3:20, 8:3, and 8:7. On the other hand, what the ESV gains in literalness, it loses in readability. To take one example: 'Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges...' (Rom. 2:1). This is simply a direct translation of Greek idiom which in this reviewer's judgement, at least, leads to a rather wooden result: the transition from 'O man' to 'every one of you' does not really work in English.

Overall, the translation is good and usually clear, and perhaps most importantly, it does live up to its claim to be more accurate than the NIV. However, I have some reservations. I do not want to belittle the labour of

those who have put a good deal of work into the translation, or to dampen the enthusiasm of those who have received it enthusiastically. But it does seem necessary to raise the question of whether we really need yet another English version of the Bible. This question becomes especially pointed when we consider how many people in the world are still without any translation of Scripture. Western Evangelicalism perhaps needs to pause before it considers itself in need of yet more precise (or more colloquial) a rendering of God's Word, especially considering the amount of scholarly hours which goes into such a process.

Simon Gathercole, University of Aberdeen

Encountering the Book of Romans. A Theological Survey

Douglas J. Moo

Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, 2002; 230pp., \$24.99; ISBN 0 8010 2546 X

This commentary by Douglas Moo, the Blanchard Professor of New Testament at Wheaton College Graduate School, is part of the Encountering the Bible series which is targeted at the American college level. The fact that the series has been developed for a particular American constituency does not mean that the individual books would not be useful in a British situation. The format is attractive: guidelines at the beginning of each chapter guide the reader as to what is expected of him, and the summaries, sidebars, and charts which appear alongside the main text help bring about that end. The author points out at the beginning the influence that the new perspective on Paul has had on the interpretation of Romans and interacts with aspects of it throughout his commentary. As he works his way through the book he highlights important themes and explains difficult passages.

It is Moo's third commentary on Romans in recent years, which reveals his ability to write in an appropriate way for different audiences. Of the other commentaries, one is included in the New International Commentary series (published by Eerdmans) and the other is in the NIV Application Commentary series (published by Zondervan). The first of these is most useful for theological students and the second is also of great help to preachers, which raises the question as to who would benefit most from this recent work. This third commentary is not merely a repetition of the previous two, but neither is it written at the same level. It is certainly constructive to read the commentary in order to gain an overall impression of the contents of Romans. It also would give to readers an introduction to

some of the debates that concern Romans today. The inclusion of study questions at the close of each chapter indicates its usefulness as a means of deeper study in the doctrines and issues raised in Romans. Such groups that come to mind are church leaders (a kirk session or set of leaders could work through the commentary together); theological students who are beginning study of the New Testament, and Christians who want to probe and discuss a biblical book at a deeper level than is usually possible at congregational Bible studies.

Malcolm Maclean, Inverness

Theology of Hope. On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology

Jürgen Moltmann

SCM Press, London, 2002 (1st edition 1967); xix+327pp., £12.95; ISBN 0 334 02878 7

One of the most significant books of modern time, *Theology of Hope* went through six impressions from 1964 to 1966. Geiko Muller-Fahrenholz judged in 2000 that the book now seemed dated by millennium postmodernism and individualism but for that very reason desperately deserved renewed attention in this generation. No better comment of brevity could be passed. Richard Bauckham provides a valuable introduction to this new edition, from the perspective of Moltmann's completed project. A placing of the book in the present time would have enhanced the edition further.

Roy Kearsley, Cardiff University/South Wales Baptist College

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