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**SCOTTISH
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SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

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EDITORIAL

A CRISIS IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION?

Few things about the Church of Scotland, the country's national Church, are so distinctive as the provision it makes for the training of its ordained ministry – distinctive, that is, within the United Kingdom, and also when set against most churches through the world. Indeed, the phrase 'the provision it makes' is almost a misnomer, for its distinctiveness lies largely in its making little or no provision of its own, but in relying on the departments or faculties of Divinity of the four older Scottish universities. It is in one of these, and not in a Church of Scotland seminary or theological college, for none exist, that ministerial candidates receive all their institution-based education for ministry.

There are, to be sure, good historical grounds, and reliable constitutional grounds too, for regarding these Divinity departments and faculties as more than units within universities, as in fact also having an identity as Church of Scotland colleges – the Church's theological halls, as they were long called. This second identity is to most observers an elusive one, to some wholly illusory. This is not the occasion to explore its subtleties.¹ If its most substantive continuing manifestation is found in the Church's nominating half the members of the boards that appoint professors in Divinity, it has other embodiments of importance, such as the senates of three of the colleges (St Andrews being the exception) which are presided over by principals or masters appointed by the Church's General Assembly. The senates' responsibilities include the stewardship of the colleges' financial endowments. Real money is at issue here, and it must be theoretically possible for the General Assembly through one of the boards or committees to require these senates, or at least their presiding heads, to give an account of their stewardship.

That this does not happen, at least in any publicly reported manner, is but one measure of the extent to which these Divinity faculties have ceased to be in practice colleges of the Church. In staffing, a Church which does not pay the piper cannot expect to call the tune. (In respect of professorial chairs, Church representatives have no say in decisions to leave any of them unfilled, or in the filling of newly established chairs, or in appointments to personal chairs

¹ They are explored from different angles in *Disruption to Diversity: Edinburgh Divinity 1846-1996*, ed. David F. Wright and Gary D. Badcock (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1996).

whose holders tend naturally to do duty for non-existent occupants of established professorships.) If one looked for evidence of control by the Church to put flesh on the constitutional bones of this Church-college identity, one might hope to discern it, in a financially-strapped Church in an age of all-pervasive post-Thatcher accountability, here, in an examination of its colleges' books. For they record resources which, unlike most of the collegiate patrimony of the Church – most concretely, buildings and library holdings, have not been formally ceded to university ownership.

These and many other reflections have been prompted by *Crisis in the Church. The Plight of Theological Education* by John H. Leith, long-time professor at Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, one of the seminaries of the Presbyterian Church (USA).² The crisis in question has been in the making for at least three decades. In a nutshell it consists in seminaries such as John Leith's beloved Union in Richmond having in large measure ceased to represent and serve the Presbyterian Church (USA). They have grown away from their constituency in that Church, so that their teaching staff increasingly lack pastoral-ministerial experience, are appointed almost exclusively for their academic prowess, no longer for the most part come from a seminary's own former students, and own no apparent allegiance to the defining beliefs of the Church. Another dimension of the crisis is the misuse of the considerable endowments these seminaries possess – a misuse, that is, that fails to honour the clear intentions of the original benefactors. The crisis has been able to develop because the governing bodies of the seminaries are more and more filled by persons unrepresentative of their Church and seminary constituencies, but chosen 'to meet requirements of political correctness, or of current advocacy movements, or because of wealth'.

This is a depressing book. Leith recognizes that the crisis in the seminaries is coextensive with the crisis in the Church. His diagnosis wields statistics to good effect, and deploys a wide and deep familiarity with Presbyterian theology and church life in the States over a century and more. The alarm it sounds is nevertheless not meant as a death-knell, for the author is passionately and irrevocably committed to his Church.

The dominant criterion his analysis applies is effectiveness of ministry. Do the seminary faculties include professors with proven track-records as builders of congregations?³ Is the teaching and

² Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, KY, 1997; 125pp., ISBN 0 664 25700 3.

³ 'Every faculty should include a few professors who through their own efforts have brought into the life of the church a sufficient *net*

training they give similarly geared to produce pastors with the abilities and vision to lead in the growth of the local church? Do trustees, boards and professors cordially confess the central doctrines of the Christian faith which alone can sustain such pastoral and evangelistic effectiveness?

John Leith is wise enough to know that there are no simple fixes for such a crisis. But at least recovery lies in the Church's own hands. Can the same be said of the very different situation of theological education in the Church of Scotland? The answer must be: 'Certainly, at least in part'. New initiatives are not lacking. A reshaped degree of B.D. (Ministry) will shortly come on stream which will incorporate within it as part of its assessed requirements periods of fieldwork intercalated with university courses. More focused concentration on post-ordination training will include universal provision for annual study leave. 'Education for the Ministry' has been shunted from Education to Ministry in the Church's departmental structures, and Ministry's empire expands with new appointments.

Yet one wonders whether the diagnosis has penetrated deep enough. If John Leith's controlling criterion is applied, the question cannot be indefinitely deferred whether our progressively more secularized universities are the proper contexts in which to train effective builders of congregations. To raise this question is viewed in influential circles in the Church of Scotland as doubting an almost unquestionable article of faith, namely, that the intellectual openness and freedom of the university is the absolutely correct setting for the formation of ministers in today's world. The tenacity with which this conviction is maintained bespeaks at times a truly fundamentalist myopia. Perhaps the financially unthinkable – the prospect of the Church having to make its own provision for the training of its ministers – decrees the intellectually unthinkable. Meanwhile the mismatch between university faculty and Church college grows apace. The recent calamitous collapse in recruitment for ordained ministry is exacerbating the marginalization of the Church of Scotland community in the faculties – which the introduction of the new B.D. (Ministry) will further exacerbate as an unanticipated by-product. As a shrinking minority it cannot hope to be more than (to coin a phrase) a *collegiolum in collegio*. University Divinity increasingly overshadowed by its younger partner Religious Studies, has no choice but to service a predominantly non-ministerial market. What price then preparation for effective ministry that can defy inexorable decline and build congregations again?

number of persons whose contributions would pay their salary and expense accounts' (p. 5).

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Scotland is not the USA, nor the Church of Scotland the Presbyterian Church (USA). John Leith would be the first to recognize the differences. Yet uncanny similarities persist, *mutatis mutandis*, between the picture he paints and the situation in Scotland. This editorial cannot open up the nest of issues at stake with the thoroughness they deserve. The pages of this *Bulletin* will gladly play host to the discussion that must take place. It extends to such broad themes as the relationship between the church of Christ and the culture and society within which it is set. Over-reliance on university theology, which is bound to reflect the dominant pluralist or secularist assumptions that shape its intellectual and institutional context, is unlikely to provide the new generation of church evangelists that mission to Scotland will require in the next century. Above all, one longs to see the kind of robust, courageous exposure of the Scottish scene that John Leith has given of his patch in *Crisis in the Church*.

THE SECOND DISRUPTION: THE ORIGINS OF THE FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF 1893

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Introduction

In May 1893, Scotland experienced a Second Disruption when two ministers, Donald Macfarlane of Raasay and Donald Macdonald of Shieldaig, left the Free Church of Scotland. They were followed by a hand-full of students who had been intending to enter the Free Church ministry, as well as a considerable number of Free Church members and adherents. Within a short period of time the new Church which they founded had come to be known as the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.¹ Another Scottish denomination had been born.

There were many reasons why the Free Church, itself the product of the Disruption of 1843,² split again in 1893; why a Church which was once 'so happily united that you have no right hand and no left in that place'³ became one of the most bitterly-divided denominations in the Protestant world. Within the confines of this paper, though, these reasons will be divided into four basic areas. It will commence with a section which emphasises those aspects of the changing world which,

¹ For the background to the Free Presbyterian Disruption of 1893, see James Lachlan MacLeod, 'The Origins of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland' (Ph.D. thesis, Edinburgh University, 1993). The standard accounts of Free Presbyterian history can be found in the following: Donald Beaton, (ed.), *History of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 1893-1933* (Glasgow, 1933); *Memoir, Diary and Remains of the Rev. Donald Macfarlane, Dingwall* (Inverness, 1929); *Memoir, Biographical Sketches, Letters, Lectures and Sermons (English and Gaelic) of the Revd Neil Cameron, Glasgow* (Inverness, 1932); and Donald Macfarlane, *Memoir and Remains of the Rev Donald Macdonald, Sheildaig, Ross-shire* (Dingwall, 1903). The most recent is D. B. MacLeod *et al*, (eds), *One Hundred Years of Witness* (Glasgow, 1993).

² For changing historical views on the Disruption of 1843, see S. Brown and M. Fry, (eds), *Scotland in the Age of the Disruption* (Edinburgh, 1993) and Donald Withrington, 'The Disruption: a Century and a Half of Historical Interpretation', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* [hereafter *RSCHS*], 25: 1 (1993), pp. 118-53.

³ Patrick Carnegie Simpson, *Life of Principal Rainy*, 2 vols (London, 1909), 1, p. 166.

directly or indirectly, most affected the Free Churchmen who left at the Free Presbyterian Disruption; the second section will examine the bitter divisions engendered in the Free Church by one of the most significant currents of change in the nineteenth century – biblical criticism; the third section explores the central issue of the division within the Free Church between the Highlands and Lowlands; and the fourth and final section is a survey of the movement towards revision of the Westminster Confession which was to be the official justification for the Free Presbyterian Disruption. But it is with a brief examination of the wider situation which produced the Free Presbyterian Church that this paper commences.

1. The Changing World

On examination of the process by which the Free Church became sufficiently divided for another disruption to take place, it becomes clear that the general air of uncertainty created by the changing world played an important part. One example was the industrialisation and urbanisation of Scotland, which by the late nineteenth century was posing serious questions to churchmen. Many within the Free Church were immensely worried by Scotland's sprawling urban areas, containing some of the worst slums in Europe. But while some Free Churchmen undoubtedly saw themselves as having a divinely ordained duty to do their best to help the poor in their midst,⁴ others felt that their duty as a Church was not to involve themselves in political and social issues but to concentrate on the preaching of the gospel.

This was complicated by the fact that the Free Church was, in the Lowlands at any rate, becoming more of a middle class church; S. J. Brown said of the years after 1843 that 'the Free Church became an increasingly middle class body, with a membership proud of their strict work ethic and social status'.⁵ When even a relatively enlightened Free Churchman like W. G. Blaikie could express the view that the vast majority of the population were destined to be

⁴ See e.g. J. M. E. Ross, *Ross of the Cowcaddens* (London 1905); G. F. Barbour, *Life of Alexander Whyte* (London, 1923); D. H. Bishop, 'Church and Society – a Study of the Social Work and Thought of James Begg, D.D. (1808-1883)...' (Ph.D. thesis, Edinburgh University, 1953), pp. 1-104; S. J. Brown, *Thomas Chalmers and the Godly Commonwealth in Scotland* (Oxford, 1982), chs. 3-5.

⁵ Brown, *Chalmers*, pp. 345-6.

'hewers of wood and drawers of water',⁶ and that the churches' role in helping the working classes out of their depressed state was 'to stand by and to shout encouragement to them',⁷ it should perhaps not be surprising that the Free Church did not do more to respond to the problems of urbanisation. It is clearly a complex issue but it is evident that the urbanisation of Scotland, with all its attendant social problems, was a vexing backdrop against which the Free Church had to work out its position. Disunity was probably always the most likely consequence.

At the same time the Free Church – a denomination which was proportionally better represented in the north than in the south of Scotland – had to grapple with the many problems faced by its Highland people. The picture was extremely complex, as the combined factors of emigration, Clearances, new technology and economic pressures on both tenants and landlords all contributed to the difficulties in the region. Earlier conflicts in the Highlands over the Clearances – which, whatever their origins,⁸ had left a legacy of helplessness and intense resentment throughout the Highlands – gave way in the later part of the century to bitter confrontation over the land laws, the legislation governing land-holding in the Highlands.⁹ The church often found itself forced either to get involved or face the consequences of unpopularity. The grim example was the Church of Scotland, which had been all but deserted in the Highlands in 1843 partly as a result of Highland antagonism over the Church's lack of activity at the time of the Clearances.¹⁰

⁶ Quoted in D. C. Smith, *Passive Obedience and Prophetic Protest. Social Criticism in the Scottish Church 1830-1945* (New York, 1987), p. 193.

⁷ D. J. Withrington, 'The Churches in Scotland, c.1870 - c.1900: Towards a New Social Conscience?', *RSCHS* 19 (1977), p. 164.

⁸ 'Mass eviction', said T. M. Devine, 'was the culmination of the interplay of powerful demographic, economic and ideological forces' (*The Great Highland Famine. Hunger, Emigration and the Scottish Highlands in the Nineteenth Century*, Edinburgh, 1988, p. 189).

⁹ For the conflict over the Highland land laws see M. Lynch, *Scotland A New History* (Edinburgh, 1991), pp. 375-7, I. M. M. MacPhail, *The Crofters' War* (Stornoway, 1989) and I. F. Grigor, *Mightier Than A Lord. The Highland Crofters' Struggle For the Land* (Stornoway, 1979).

¹⁰ This is certainly the view of James Hunter in his seminal *The Making of the Crofting Community* (Edinburgh, 1976), e.g. p. 95.

When it came to the 1880s the religious input to the struggle was much more overt – the Land Laws campaigner Henry George saw the land campaign as ‘essentially a religious movement’¹¹ – and again the churchman had to ask himself if it was possible and, if so, practicable to turn a blind eye to the issue, saying that his ‘kingdom was not of this world’. This subject is worthy of a paper in its own right, but what is important to bear in mind here is the existence of this exceedingly controversial issue within the Free Church at exactly the same time as many other church issues were beginning to come under review. When considering the religious conflicts in the Highlands which characterised the latter years of the nineteenth century, it seems almost impossible to ignore the extremely traumatic reconstruction which had racked the region throughout the century. It was, indeed, a time of transition, with conflict all but inevitable and schism an ever-present prospect.

There were naturally many other factors which contributed to the changing world of nineteenth-century Scotland – the decline of traditional sabbatarianism and the increasing Roman Catholic population to name but two. Taken as a whole, the social turbulence of the late nineteenth century threw up profound challenges for churchmen. Highlanders of theologically conservative views found themselves in a rapidly changing world, and this exaggerated the apparent threats posed by change within the Church. Of course this turbulence alone did not produce the Free Presbyterian Disruption, but in varying ways it was transforming the world in which the men who were to form the Free Presbyterian Church lived and worked. In many ways their self-perception as a small group of the righteous facing an alien and hostile world is a direct, if not inevitable, product of the times which moulded them.

2. Biblical Criticism

In an age of change and development, almost every accepted religious theory was being tested in what the Free Church professor Marcus Dods described as the ‘crucible’ of criticism. People were being confronted with what has been called ‘the riddles to which the spirit of a new age was demanding a solution from every thinking man’.¹²

¹¹ J. D. Wood, ‘Transatlantic Land Reform; America and the Crofters Revolt, 1878-1888’, *Scottish Historical Review* 63, (1984), p. 79.

¹² M. Dods, *Recent Progress in Theology. Inaugural Lecture at New College, Edinburgh, 1889* (Edinburgh, 1889), pp. 9-11; J. Strahan, *Andrew Bruce Davidson* (London, 1917), p. 102.

In the memorable words of one moderator of the Free Church General Assembly as he looked back over the developments of the nineteenth century:

There has been no lack of scrutiny. Every question connected with the Faith has been placed under the microscope; everything sacred, whether book or doctrine, has been called on to show its credentials. Science, philosophy, criticism, history, have each been led forward to take part in the testing process.¹³

In the minds of conservative churchmen in general and of the Free Presbyterian founders in particular, perhaps the intellectual movement which did most to cast doubt on the veracity of 'the Old Paths' during the nineteenth century was biblical criticism. This is not the place to visit the history of biblical criticism,¹⁴ but it is important to understand how the Free Church of Scotland responded to this vital area of nineteenth-century thought. And it is quite evident that the Free Church did not make a unified response to developments in biblical criticism; indeed these different responses produced a lasting bitterness which ultimately contributed to the splitting of the Free Church in 1893.

On one side the Free Church had some of the most celebrated biblical critics in Britain. One such was William Robertson Smith, the brilliant young academic appointed a professor in the Free Church in 1870 at the age of twenty-three, whose writings accepted many of the most far-reaching conclusions of continental (especially German) biblical criticism.¹⁵ While men like A. B. Davidson, Smith's teacher at the New College in Edinburgh, played a vital part, it is widely acknowledged that it was Smith who did most to make the critical movement visible, with his popular writings in such places as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and his much publicised heresy trials in the

¹³ W. R. Taylor, Moderator's Address, *Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland* [hereafter PDGAFC], 1900, p. 3.

¹⁴ See e.g. N. M. de S. Cameron, *Biblical Higher Criticism and the Defence of Infallibilism in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Lewiston, NY, 1987).

¹⁵ The Smith controversy has been much discussed in recent years, but for the most interesting near-contemporary accounts, see J. S. Black and G. W. Chrystal, *The Life of William Robertson Smith* (London, 1912) and Simpson, *Rainy*. See also J. H. Brown, 'The Contribution of William Robertson Smith to Old Testament Scholarship, with Special Emphasis on Higher Criticism' (Ph.D. thesis, Duke University, Durham NC, 1964).

late 1870s and early 1880s. Smith's role, perhaps, was to take his various mentors' ideas further than they had been taken before from within the pale of a Church which considered itself fairly rigidly Calvinist. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century the doctrines of biblical higher criticism had very much 'arrived' in the Free Church of Scotland, where they were preached with vigour by some of the leading men of the Church, such as A. B. Bruce, Henry Drummond and Marcus Dods. Dods, in fact, once described biblical criticism in the following terms:

Criticism is not a hostile force hovering round the march of the Christian Church, picking off all loosely attached followers and galling the main body; it is rather the highly trained corps of scouts and skirmishers thrown out on all sides to ascertain in what direction it is safe and possible for the Church to advance.¹⁶

Many others in the Church would have agreed with this view.

The problem for the Free Church, however, was that it also contained within its ranks some of biblical criticism's fiercest adversaries. One of the first Free Presbyterians, Neil Cameron, for example, referred to the men responsible for making 'the absolute infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible, as being the Word of God...become a thing of the past' as 'traitors to God and men', while referring to the changes which were taking place in the Free Church as 'this flood which Satan was casting out of his mouth in order to carry [the Free Church] away completely'.¹⁷ Professors Davidson and Dods were two of the principal enemies of all that these conservatives held dear, but Cameron's colleague Donald Beaton did see a distinction:

[Davidson's] great gifts were used in administering the higher critical poison in small doses. It was done cautiously, but none the less effectively.... Dr Dods was not quite so cautious; he poured out glassfuls where Davidson administered drops, but both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament studies the deadly poison was instilled into the minds of students....¹⁸

The integrity of Scripture was such a central tenet of the Free Church conservatives that the idea of interfering with it filled them not only

¹⁶ M. Dods, *The Bible Its Origin and Nature* (Edinburgh, 1905), p. 168. An excellent summary of the controversial aspect of Dods's career is found in S. J. Edwards, 'Marcus Dods: with Special Reference to his Teaching Ministry' (Ph.D. thesis, Edinburgh University, 1960), esp. pp. 108-80.

¹⁷ Beaton (ed.), *Cameron*, p. 20.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-4.

with anger but also with horror. The sermons of many of the early Free Presbyterians were heavily peppered with quotations from Scripture; in some sections of their sermons, every second line is a portion of Scripture, reeling off parts from various books of the Bible to make and prove virtually every point. It is this love of, reverence for and familiarity with the Bible that must be borne in mind when considering the Free Presbyterian opposition to the higher critics. They believed that the Bible was absolutely infallible and verbally inspired and they believed that those who accepted biblical criticism were denying these crucial doctrines.

There can be little doubt that the Free Presbyterian Church's founding fathers viewed higher criticism as a development which denigrated the Bible, and as such something which had brought nothing but shame to the Free Church – shame which would have to be shared by all those who had not separated themselves from the polluted Church. This would seem to be the crucial point and it is worth repeating; the Bible was of such importance to all those who left in 1893 that the perceived attacks upon it from the higher critics were themselves sufficient justification for separation. The Bible meant almost everything to these men, and their whole attitude to the higher critics was shaped by that Bible-centred perspective. Conflict between the biblical critics and their opponents was unavoidable, given the sheer scale of the divide between the opposite ends of the Free Church spectrum on this key issue. The statements of a man like Marcus Dods on the literal integrity of Scripture could hardly have been further from those of Donald Macfarlane or Neil Cameron, despite the fact that all claimed loyalty to the Free Church of the Disruption and all were professedly trying to do God's work in their own way. Dods would have considered himself to be as much a 'believer' as he was a 'critic', but despite the evidence for this, to those who left at the Free Presbyterian Disruption of 1893 the phrase 'believing critic' was a palpable nonsense. Separation seems to have been inevitable.

3. The Highland-Lowland Divide

A third reason why the Free Church split in 1893 was because of the presence of a fault line which had existed within the denomination for decades. During the fifty years between 1843 and 1893 an increasingly obvious divide had come to exist in the Free Church between the Highland and Lowland congregations. On most of the issues which disrupted the unity of the nineteenth-century Free Church, the Highlanders and the Lowlanders were on opposite sides. This was particularly so on issues such as biblical criticism and revision of the Westminster Confession of Faith, with the Highlanders tending to be

opposed to ecclesiological or theological change. On the religion of much of the Highland Free Church, with this implacable opposition to religious innovation of any kind, the Southern part of the Church looked with bewilderment, ignorance and exasperation.¹⁹

At the same time the language of the Highland Free Church, Gaelic, was under sustained attack. From the early modern period onwards, 'both the Gaelic language and its speakers were to be equated with backwardness and incivility'.²⁰ English rapidly advanced to become, in the words of Charles Withers, 'the language of gentility, of status, and as the medium of progress and the yardstick of cultural acceptability'. 'There has', he said, 'been a particularly long-standing antipathy towards the [Gaelic] language and its culture.'²¹ Gaelic came to be perceived as an inferior language, an obstacle to advancement, and the sooner that it was replaced by English then the better it would be for everyone. It has to be stressed that Gaelic was overwhelmingly the language of both the preachers and the congregations who stood out against the new ideas of the young, liberal and Lowland Free Church. The Gaelic language, Highland religion and resistance to theological change tended to be closely tied

¹⁹ A great deal has been written on the distinctive nature of Highland religion; for contemporary accounts see e.g. J. Kennedy, *The Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire* (Edinburgh, 1861); A. Auld, *Ministers and Men in the Far North* (Wick, 1896) and *Life of John Kennedy D.D.* (London, 1887); J. Macleod, *By-Paths of Highland Church History* (Edinburgh, 1965); K. Macdonald, *Social and Religious Life in the Highlands* (Edinburgh, 1902); A. T. Innes, 'The Religion of the Highlands', *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, 21 (July, 1872), pp. 413-46. More recent delineations of the distinctions are found in such works as John MacInnes' brilliant *The Evangelical Movement in the Highlands of Scotland* (Aberdeen, 1951); 'The Origin and Early Development of "The Men"', *RSCHS* 8 (1944), pp. 16-41; 'Religion in Gaelic Society', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 52 (1980-82), pp. 222-42; A. I. MacInnes, 'Evangelical Protestantism in the Nineteenth Century Highlands' in G. Walker and T. Gallagher, (eds.), *Sermons and Battle Hymns. Protestant Popular Culture in Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1990); K. R. Ross, *Church and Creed* (Edinburgh, 1988), pp. 238-48.

²⁰ C. W. J. Withers, 'The Scottish Highlands Outlined; An Assessment of the Cartographic Evidence for the Highland-Lowland Boundary', *Scottish Geographical Magazine* 98, (1982), p. 143.

²¹ C. W. J. Withers, *Gaelic in Scotland 1698-1891* (Edinburgh, 1984), p.1.

together. It was not a combination on which the Lowland Free Church looked with much relish.

There was, however, an even more sinister side to the divide between the two regions of Scotland. The mid-to-late nineteenth century was a time when racism was rife in the British Isles, having been given the spurious camouflage of pseudo-science. This pseudo-scientific racism created a structure of races which sought to place everyone in their appropriate place in a grand hierarchy. One of the foremost proponents of 'scientific racism' was Robert Knox, whose infamous 1850 work, *The Races of Men*, is accepted as 'one of the most articulate and lucid statements of racism ever to appear'.²² While it is mainly studied because of its stance on the differences between the White and the Coloured races, it also contains important references to the Celt.

What this book and many other examples of mid-Victorian race theory make clear is that the Celt was considered an inferior being, possessing an inferior culture and speaking an inferior language.²³ It was a view which was widely popularised throughout the nineteenth century, not least by the fashionable Oxford School of historiography of men like William Stubbs, Edward Freeman and John Richard Green, writers whose influence went far beyond academia. By the later part of the nineteenth century most of Britain's leading historians were advocates of what has been called Anglo-Saxonism, stressing the over-riding importance of race, and believing that all that was good in English history was as a result of Teutonic origins.²⁴

It can hardly be stressed enough that these views were being put forward by some of the brightest and most progressive minds in Britain – by an intellectual elite. That they had an impact on the liberals in the Lowland Free Church seems to be almost a certainty, and for evidence it is necessary to look no further than their own words. Time and again the leaders of the liberal or progressive side of the Free

²² M. Banton, *Race Relations* (London, 1967), pp. 28, 29.

²³ E.g. R. Knox, *The Races of Men: A Philosophical Enquiry into the Influence of Race over the Destinies of Nations*, 2nd edn (London, 1862), pp. 12, 14-15, 18, 26, 320, 322, 327, etc. See also two important books by L. P. Curtis; *Anglo-Saxons and Celts. A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England* (Bridgeport, CT., 1968) and *Apes and Angels. The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (Newton Abbot, 1971).

²⁴ T. F. Gosset, *Race: the History of an Idea in America* (Dallas, 1973), p. 98.

Church resorted to crude racial generalisations to explain away Highland opposition to their plans.

One racial slur, for example, that the Highlanders followed their leaders blindly and unhesitatingly,²⁵ was repeated frequently by the Lowland Free Church in the later nineteenth century. Norman Walker, in speaking of the Free Presbyterian Disruption of 1893, said that the Highlanders displayed a 'tendency to move in masses...the habit of following leaders [is] a remnant of the old feeling of loyalty to the chiefs'. Indeed, he had even managed to discover that 'individuality is less common in the Highlands than in the Lowlands'.²⁶ A. T. Innes, a prominent Edinburgh lawyer and Free Church layman, wrote that 'The process of independent thought...is far less popular among serious minds in the North than it is with the corresponding class in the South'.²⁷ At almost every point of division between the Highland and Lowland viewpoint in the late-nineteenth century Free Church, the disparity was explained in terms of the Highlanders being, in Patrick Carnegie Simpson's words,

a people impressionable, not always informed, and already, by racial differences of temper and habit, inclined to look strangely and even suspiciously across the Grampians.²⁸

Statements such as this would be remarkable if it were not for the fact that they were so common, not only from secular sources but also from religious writers. There are dozens of examples of this kind of language being used by Lowland Free Churchmen. Indeed, taken individually, statements like these from Walker, Simpson and Innes might be explained away as aberrations, or simply as the products of frustration over ecclesiastical opposition from men of perceived lower intellect. But when put alongside one another they rapidly begin to add up to evidence that the racist ideology of the nineteenth century was being used by the Free Church's Lowland intelligentsia when it suited them so to do. Race became the key whenever the Highlanders acted in a way which the Lowlanders in the Free Church could not explain.

That said, it has also to be stated that there was precious little Christian love and brotherly understanding flowing south from the

²⁵ See e.g. E. Burt, *Letters from a Gentleman in the North of Scotland to his Friend in London*, 2 vols (1754; 5th edn, London, 1818), I, pp. 2-3.

²⁶ Norman L. Walker, *Chapters from the History of the Free Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1895), p. 132.

²⁷ Innes, 'Religion of the Highlands', p. 433.

²⁸ Simpson, *Rainy*, I, p. 441.

Highland part of the Free Church. The Highlanders felt themselves both beleaguered and wronged, facing what they considered to be the virtual tyranny of the majority. This helped to produce what can be called a 'laager mentality'. The situation worried the Highlanders, but they were either unaware or unconcerned that their own attitude, of holding what they had at all costs, was contributing in large measure to the impending rupture in the Free Church. Ultimately, if the price for maintaining the status quo was to be the splitting up of the Free Church of Scotland, it was to them a price worth paying.

Thus it can be seen that the pressures for division in the Free Church were coming from both sides of the Highland Line. This mutual antagonism may not have alone splintered the Free Church, but it has been ignored far too often in the past, and deserves to be given careful consideration, both now and in the future.

4. Revision of The Westminster Confession of Faith

Although the factors already discussed were critical to the Free Presbyterian Disruption, in the eyes of those who took part in it there was one consideration which outweighed all others – the framing and passing of the Declaratory Act, the Act by which the Free Church qualified its commitment to the Westminster Confession of Faith. The conservatives in the Free Church were undeniably extremely gloomy about the developments which were taking place both within and without the Church; crucially, however, the position of the Free Church of Scotland remained *formally* unchanged until 1892. The final and formal act which eventually forced them to make their decision to split the Free Church came with the passing of the Declaratory Act.²⁹ 'The Declaratory Act', commented one Free Churchman to the General Assembly in 1894, 'had provoked the flower of the Church into secession'.³⁰

There can be little doubt that the Free Church of 1843 was a church which broadly adhered to the Westminster Confession; it seems fair to say that in its early years there were relatively few Free Churchmen who would have disagreed radically with Dr Buchanan's claim in the 1843 General Assembly that they were

teaching the pure doctrines of the Scriptures as embodied in the Confession of Faith.... We do not separate from the Confession of

²⁹ 'Introductory', *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* 1:1 (May, 1896), p. 3.

³⁰ McNeilage, in *PDG AFC*, 1894, p. 87.

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Faith, which we do truthfully and assuredly regard as the sound and scriptural exposition of the word of God.³¹

As Kenneth Ross has perceptively observed, although there might have been disagreement among the Disruption Fathers as to what precisely was implied by Confessional subscription, 'it was not pressed, since all were equally warmly attached to the Calvinism of Westminster'.³²

With the passing years, however, things changed, and by the 1880s movements to revise the Confession were in existence in many parts of the world, including the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Scotland was no exception, with the United Presbyterian Church, in many ways the sister church of the Free Church, passing their Declaratory Act in 1879. Although the movement within the Free Church to revise the Westminster Confession clearly emerged out of a growing disquiet with the doctrines that it contained, it also has to be placed in the context of the growing movement in the Free Church that favoured Union with the United Presbyterian Church. There had been prolonged and determined efforts to secure Union in the 1860s and 1870s, with many of the brightest lights in the Free Church heavily involved.³³ At that time one of the main obstacles to Union had been the fact that the United Presbyterians were Voluntaries while the Free Church was not; in other words, one Church favoured the Establishment principle while the other favoured Disestablishment. Over the course of the 1870s and the 1880s, however, the Free Church, led by Robert Rainy, itself came increasingly to favour Disestablishment, and by the 1890s that subject was no longer a source of serious disagreement between the two denominations.³⁴ Also by then, as has been seen, the United Presbyterian Church had qualified its terms of subscription to the Westminster Confession, and so a desire on the part of the Free Church to do something similar can be seen in the context of desiring to remove one last key difference between the two Churches in order to facilitate Union. It is perhaps significant that within eight years of the passing of the Free Church Declaratory Act, Union with the United Presbyterian Church took place. The first overture to the Free Church General Assembly on the subject of Confessional revision appeared in 1887; by the summer of 1889, the trickle of overtures regarding the Confession of Faith had been transformed into a deluge. The General Assembly of that year

³¹ *PDG AFC*, 1843, pp. 26, 27.

³² Ross, *Church and Creed*, p.196.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-29.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 119-28.

received no fewer than thirty-three of them. About one third of these were in favour of retaining the present relationship between Church and Confession but, significantly, all of the rest betrayed more or less hostility towards Westminster.³⁵

After much discussion and a great deal of contentious debate, the Free Church passed its Declaratory Act on 26 May 1892 by a majority of 346 to 195. The Act sought to make subscription to the Westminster Confession easier by qualifying it in various ways, stressing the centrality of the love of God, playing down some of the implications of the Calvinist doctrine of the divine decrees and wrapping up the whole package by declaring that 'diversity of opinion is recognized in this Church on such points in the Confession as do not enter into the substance of the Reformed Faith'.³⁶

Those who left the Free Church in 1893 believed that the Declaratory Act fundamentally altered the Church; they believed that 'a modified acceptance of Confessional doctrine' now prevailed in the Church, and that 'in fact a new standard of doctrine has been set up... This change of standard we hold is an obvious change in the constitution.'³⁷ Believing as they did that the Free Church was now a different denomination, those who disagreed with the Declaratory Act had few options left. In the words of Neil Cameron,

When [the liberals] had filled the Church with the flood of heresies, carnality in worship and practice, the infamous Declaratory Act was duly passed into 'a binding law and constitution in the Church.' This meant that all the innovations contained in that Act were to be bound on all who would continue in future fellowship with that Church. We refused to put our necks under this Satanic yoke, so we separated in 1893 in order...to continue the existence of the Free Church of Scotland as that Church was settled in 1843.³⁸

The Free Presbyterians, then, believed that dissociation from a flawed denomination was their only scriptural option, and in May 1893, on

³⁵ *Free Church of Scotland Assembly Papers, No 1*, 1888, pp. 329-46. For a more detailed analysis of the background see MacLeod, 'Origins of the Free Presbyterian Church', ch. 4.

³⁶ 'Act anent Confession of Faith (No. 8 of Class II.)' (*Acts of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, 1889-1893*, p. 479).

³⁷ 'The Declaratory Act', *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* 1:2 (June, 1896), p. 42.

³⁸ Cameron, 'New Year's Day Lecture, 1926', in Beaton (ed.), *Cameron*, p. 174.

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the ratification of the Act by that year's General Assembly, Donald Macfarlane tabled his protest and severed his connection with the Free Church. Not for the first time in the history of the Scottish church and, sadly, not for the last time, disagreement had led to Disruption.

**CALVIN AND BASEL: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF
OECOLAMPADIUS AND THE BASEL DISCIPLINE
ORDINANCE FOR THE INSTITUTION OF
ECCLESIASTICAL DISCIPLINE IN GENEVA**

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'It seems to me, that we shall not have a lasting church unless the old, that is apostolic, church discipline is in its totality reinstated – which is needed in many respects among us.' So John Calvin wrote to Zurich's Bullinger in 1538.¹ Calvin's verdict seems to echo the words which the Basel Reformer John Oecolampadius had written some thirteen years before. 'As far as I can see', he had confessed in his defence against Jaques Masson, 'it shall never be well with us unless excommunication is maintained according to the apostolic and evangelical rule in the churches.'² For both Reformers, the issue of church discipline was of fundamental importance for the reformation of the church. But while his early and untimely death in 1531, only two and a half years after the city of Basel had officially embraced Protestantism, prevented Oecolampadius from completing his reform work in this respect, Calvin was the one to succeed and establish what the former had in mind. It is well known that, concerning church discipline, the Reformers of Basel and Geneva basically thought along

¹ Calvin to Bullinger, February 21, 1538 (*Ioannis Calvini Opera*, vol. 10/2, Nr. 93, p. 154).

² See Jaques Masson and John Oecolampadius, *Iacobi Latomi theologiae professoris de confessione secreta. Ioannis Oecolampadii Elleboron, pro eodem Iacobo Latomo* (Basel, 1525), fol. H3^v. For the life and thought of John Oecolampadius see my forthcoming study, Olaf Kuhr, 'Die Macht des Bannes und der Busse': *Kirchenzucht und Erneuerung der Kirche bei Johannes Oekolampad (1482-1531)*, Basler und Berner Studien zur Historischen und Systematischen Theologie (Berne: Peter Lang, 1998); also Ulrich Gäbler, 'Oekolampad', *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol. 25 (Berlin, New York, 1995), pp. 29-36 (literature!); Hans Rudolf Guggisberg, 'Johannes Oekolampad', *Gestalten der Kirchengeschichte*, vol. 5: *Die Reformationszeit I*, ed. Martin Greschat (Stuttgart, 1981), pp. 117-28; less valuable but still the only essay of some length in English that is easily accessible, Gordon Rupp, 'Johannes Oecolampadius: The Reformer as Scholar', *Patterns of Reformation* (London, 1969), pp. 3-46.

the same lines.³ For both, the power to excommunicate rests with the church and should be exercised independently of the secular authorities.⁴

However, in spite of the ecclesiological similarities between the two Reformers, modern research has only occasionally touched upon the issue of a possible influence of Oecolampadius on Calvin. While

³ Cf. e.g. Paul Wernle, *Calvin und Basel bis zum Tode des Myconius, 1535-1552* (Basel, 1909), pp. 3-11; Walther Köhler, *Zürcher Ehegericht und Genfer Konsistorium*, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1942), pp. 505-19, 555-61, 673; Akira Demura, 'Church Discipline According to Johannes Oekolampad in the Setting of his Life and Thought' (unpublished PhD Diss.; Princeton, 1964), pp. 161-80; Uwe Plath, *Calvin und Basel in den Jahren 1552-1556* (Zürich, 1974), pp. 17-22; J. Wayne Baker, 'Christian Discipline and the Early Reformed Tradition: Bullinger and Calvin', in *Calviniana: Ideas and Influence of Jean Calvin*, ed. Robert V. Schnucker (Kirksville, 1988), pp. 107-19.

⁴ For Calvin's concept of ecclesiastical discipline see R. N. Caswell, 'Calvin's View of Ecclesiastical Discipline', in *John Calvin*, ed. Gervase E. Duffield (Appleford, 1966), pp. 210-26; Wilhem H. Neuser, 'Dogma und Bekenntnis in der Reformation: Von Zwingli und Calvin bis zur Synode von Westminster', *Handbuch der Dogmen- und Theologiegeschichte*, vol. 2: *Die Lehrentwicklung im Rahmen der Konfessionalität*, ed. Carl Andresen (Göttingen, 1980), pp. 165-352, at 265-8 (lit.); Robert White, 'Oil and Vinegar: Calvin on Church Discipline', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 38 (1985), pp. 25-40; Richard R. De Ridder, 'John Calvin's Views on Discipline: A Comparison of the Institution of 1536 and the Institutes of 1559', *Calvin Theological Journal* 21 (1986), pp. 223-30. For the institution of the Consistory and the practice of discipline in Calvin's Geneva, see Robert M. Kingdon, 'Calvin and the Establishment of Consistory Discipline in Geneva: The Institution and the Men who Directed it', *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis / Dutch Review of Church History* 70 (1990), pp. 158-72; *id.*, 'Social Control and Political Control in Calvin's Geneva', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte, Sonderband: Die Reformation in Deutschland und Europa: Interpretationen und Debatten*, ed. Hans R. Guggisberg and Gottfried G. Krodel (Gütersloh, 1993), pp. 521-32; *id.*, *Adultery and Divorce in Calvin's Geneva* (Cambridge, MA, 1995); E. William Monter, 'The Consistory of Geneva, 1559-1569', Monter, *Enforcing Morality in Europe* (London, 1987), pp. II 467-II 484; still valuable is Köhler, *Ehegericht*, vol. 2, pp. 504-652.

scholars generally agree that the Basel Reformer and the disciplinary system he helped to institute in his city should be seen as a potential if not probable source for Calvin's thought in this matter,⁵ a detailed study comparing the two Reformers and their respective systems of discipline is still lacking. This paper will investigate the relation of the Geneva model to its Basel predecessor and re-examine the question how far an influence of Oecolampadius and his ideals on Calvin's concept of church discipline is discernible. To this end we shall, in addition to looking at Calvin's first systematic statements concerning discipline, examine in particular the *Ordonnances Ecclésiastiques* which were drawn up by Calvin in 1541 and revised several times down to 1561.

The First Edition of the *Institutes*

Already in the first edition of the *Institutes* (1536) Calvin emphasized the benefits as well as the necessity of church discipline: 'It is all to the good that excommunications have been instituted by which all those should be expelled and banished from the fellowship of believers who...are nothing but a scandal for the church and therefore unworthy to pride themselves on the name of Christ.' For Calvin, the benefits are threefold. First of all, excommunication prevents the name of God from being insulted and his holy church from being brought into disrepute. Secondly, the ban averts the danger that through bad example other Christians might be corrupted. Finally, it is designed to bring shame on the culprits and thus lead them to repentance.⁶ Calvin was convinced that, as in all human societies, so in the church, too, there was a need for an order which, under the preservation of the law, would ensure the peace and unity of the community. Such laws he

⁵ Paul Wernle (*op. cit.*, pp. 3-11) was the first to point out that concerning ecclesiastical discipline the Reformer of Geneva might have received some fundamental insights during his first stay in Basel (see also Plath, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-22). Without convincingly substantiating his thesis, Akira Demura (*op. cit.*, pp. 161-80) claimed a direct influence of Oecolampadianism on Calvin (see also Demura, 'Calvin's and Oecolampadius' Concept of Church Discipline', *Calvinus ecclesiae Genevensis custos*, ed. Wilhelm H. Neuser [Frankfurt a.M., 1984], pp. 187-9). More recently J. Wayne Baker, 'Christian Discipline and the Early Reformed Tradition: Bullinger and Calvin', pp. 110f., argued that an influence of Oecolampadius on the Reformer of Geneva had to be seen as a real possibility.

⁶ *Ioannis Calvini Opera Selecta* [= OS], 5 vols., ed. Peter Barth *et al.* (Munich, 1926-52), vol. 1, pp. 89f.

compared with the sinews by which the body is held together. Without them the church is bound to lose its structure and disintegrate.⁷ Although, in his first edition of the *Institutes*, Calvin did not explicitly use this metaphor with regard to ecclesiastical discipline, he nevertheless spoke out the fundamental conviction which henceforth would lie at the heart of his understanding of discipline.⁸

It might not be a coincidence that Calvin's first systematic comments concerning church discipline date back to the days when, as a refugee, he had sought a safe haven in the city of Basel. Presumably in January 1535 he had come there to live the quiet life of a scholar under the pseudonym of 'Martianus Lucianus'. Calvin stayed for about a year in Basel.⁹ The preface of the *Institutes*, in which he dedicates his work to Francis I of France, dates from August 23, 1535. When the book appeared in spring of the following year, Calvin had already left the city. The further circumstances of the drafting of the first edition remain in the dark and it is not known which parts were written in Basel. Therefore, we have to leave open to what extent his remarks about church discipline were influenced by what he might have observed and learned concerning the ban there. Only very little is known about Calvin's first sojourn in Basel. It seems that his social intercourse was largely restricted to the scholarly world. He was in contact with Simon Grynaeus and Sebastian Münster, who were professors of Greek and Hebrew at the university, as well as with the well-known humanist and professor of law, Boniface Amerbach. At the same time, he apparently remained a stranger to the leading men of the Basel church. When the first edition of the *Institutes* appeared in 1536, Markus Bertschi, at that time parish minister of St. Leonhard, called Calvin only 'a certain Frenchman'.¹⁰

The Articles concernant l'organisation de l'église et du culte of 1537

However, we have reason to assume that Calvin watched the ecclesiastical situation in Basel very closely. A first indication that the model of the Basel church possibly had some influence on the Reformer of Geneva is found in the *Articles concernant l'organisation de l'église et du culte* which, in the name of the Genevan ministers,

⁷ OS 1, pp. 255f.

⁸ Cf. OS 1, p. 479 (*Ad Sadoleti epistolam*, 1539); OS 5, p. 212 / *Inst.* 4:12:1 (1559).

⁹ For Calvin's first visit to Basel, see Wernle, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-8; Plath, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-22.

¹⁰ Wernle, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

Farel and Calvin submitted to the city Council in January 1537.¹¹ The *Articles* are, to a large extent, the work of John Calvin who, when passing through Geneva in the summer of 1536, was urged by Farel to stay and to help carry through the reformation of the Genevan church. They were not written as a draft church ordinance but rather as a theological opinion in which the Genevan ministers submitted various recommendations concerning the reorganization of the church to the city Council. In the *Articles*, the Reformers called for a more frequent celebration of communion, the exercise of excommunication, the introduction of congregational psalmody, compulsory catechetical instruction for the young, and the creation of a secular matrimonial court. Furthermore, all residents of Geneva were to sign a common declaration of faith.

When, shortly before, the city had associated itself with the Reformation, Geneva had also accepted the Bernese communion ordinance which prescribed that the Eucharist should be celebrated only four times a year. Although the Genevan ministers judged weekly communion to be desirable, they were prepared to make concessions because of the 'great weakness of the people'. Therefore they suggested a monthly communion service which should alternate between the three main parish churches of the city. It is possible that this proposal was inspired by Basel's eucharistic ordinance. The *Reformation Ordinance* of 1529 laid down that the Lord's Supper had to be celebrated in Basel each Sunday, alternating between the four city parishes.¹² Furthermore, concerning the call for a mandatory common profession of faith, the introduction of psalmody and the religious instruction of children, one can also point to the model of the Basel church. In 1534, the city Council and all guilds had to sign the Basel Confession, which had been drawn up by Oecolampadius' successor, Oswald Myconius. Following the example of the Strasbourg church, psalm singing had been common in Basel since 1526, and the *Reformation Ordinance* made it a duty of all parish ministers to instruct the young in the Christian religion.¹³

¹¹ OS 1, pp. 369-77; Eberhard Busch *et al.* (eds), *Calvin Studienausgabe*, Band I/1 (Neukirchen, 1994), pp. 114-29 (for the question of authorship see Peter Opitz, *ibid.*, pp. 109f.).

¹² OS 1, pp. 370f.; cf. *Aktensammlung zur Geschichte der Basler Reformation in den Jahren 1519 bis Anfang 1534 [=AGBR]*, 6 vols., ed. Emil Dürr and Paul Roth (Basel, 1921-50), vol. 3, Nr. 473, p. 395.

¹³ See Karl Rudolf Hagenbach, *Johann Oekolampad und Oswald Myconius, die Reformatoren Basels: Leben und ausgewählte Schriften* (Elberfeld, 1859), p. 353; Ernst Staehelin, *Das*

The most striking parallels between the Genevan *Articles* and the Basel church, however, are to be found in the area of church discipline. The issue of excommunication receives the most detailed attention in the theological opinion of the Genevan ministers. According to the *Articles*, Christ instituted the measure of the ban with the intention that 'the holy eucharist should not be soiled and tainted', and to this end one had to pay attention with the greatest of care. If one were really to fear God, then one had to heed the instructions of the Bible also in Geneva.¹⁴ Following, partly verbatim, the respective paragraphs in Calvin's *Institutes*, the necessity of excommunication is seen to be threefold: it prevents the name of Christ from being insulted, leads the culprit to repentance, and ensures that other Christians are not being corrupted by bad example.¹⁵ The reason for the misuse of the ban by the medieval church is seen in the fact that the bishops usurped the power to excommunicate which rightly belongs to the whole fellowship of believers. Since the ban is of a fundamental importance for the church, which 'cannot be in a right order without taking seriously the instructions of the Lord', the *Articles* demand that some men of moral integrity should be appointed from the congregation to be in charge of disciplinary measures together with the ministers. Each one of these 'commissioners' (*deputez*) will be assigned to a particular quarter of the city where it will be their responsibility to keep watch over the moral life of the people and report misdeeds to the ministers. The *Articles* leave open the question who is to reprimand the delinquent in private or how often this might take place. However, for the Genevan theologians church discipline concerns not only ministers and 'commissioners' but also parents and neighbours, whose duty it is likewise to reproach evildoers privately before reporting them to the ecclesiastical authorities. Should the warning of the offender be without any success, the minister has to make his or her name known to the congregation. Only after this measure has also proved to be ineffective should the delinquent be excluded from communion. The *Articles* state explicitly that 'beyond this reprimand' the church has no further authority. The magistrates, however, should consider whether excommunicates may go unpunished for their 'contempt of God and his gospel'.¹⁶

theologische Lebenswerk Johannes Oekolampads (Leipzig, 1939), pp. 443-6; *AGBR* 3, Nr. 473, pp. 389f. For a comparison of Geneva and Basel see also Wernle, *op. cit.*, pp. 10f.

¹⁴ *OS* 1, p. 371.

¹⁵ *OS* 1, p. 372; *cf.* *OS* 1, pp. 89f.

¹⁶ *OS* 1, pp. 373f.

The disciplinary system which the *Articles* propose shows some remarkable parallels to the Basel Discipline Ordinance and to Oecolampadian ideals. First of all, it must be stressed that a direct involvement of ordinary lay persons as well as the creation of a mixed ecclesiastical court for the exercise of church discipline, a court which would comprise representatives from both congregation and ministry, was a characteristic feature in Oecolampadius' plan for the introduction of church discipline.¹⁷ In his programmatic speech *Oratio de reducenda excommunicatione* before the Basel magistrates in May 1530, he had already proposed in some detail a disciplinary system similar to the *Articles*. According to Oecolampadius, the power to excommunicate rests with the church as a whole. Ecclesiastical discipline, therefore, should not be the sole responsibility of the ministers but also involve members of the laity so that both could act for and on behalf of the whole church. For this reason, the Basel Reformer had proposed the creation of the new ecclesiastical office of the 'censor' who would be in charge of discipline together with the minister. Like the 'commissioners' of the *Articles*, Oecolampadius' *censores* were representatives of the congregation. Both the Basel Reformer and the *Articles* also introduce their call for a more active participation of lay persons by pointing out that the misuse of the ban was largely due to the unlawful usurpation of the disciplinary powers by the bishops. Another parallel between the *Articles* and Oecolampadius is that the latter, too, had proposed that a delinquent should first be privately admonished by individual members of the congregation before taking the matter to the 'censors'. And, finally, the plan to assign each 'commissioner' to a particular district of Geneva was already practised in Basel, where the four city parishes each had their own disciplinary court.¹⁸

¹⁷ The *Articles* of the Genevan ministers implicitly called for the creation of a new ecclesiastical court similar to the model which had already been established in Basel. The *desputez* clearly parallel Oecolampadius' *censores*, as we shall see. Thus, Alister McGrath is slightly mistaken when, by pointing to the absence of the *seniores* from the 1537 *Articles*, he says: 'The articles for the organization of the church at Geneva...anticipate virtually every aspect of the *Ordonnances Ecclésiastiques* of 1541 – with the notable exception of the Consistory' (Alister E. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin: A Study in the Shaping of Western Culture* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA, 1990), p. 113; see also *ibid.*, p. 295, n. 25).

¹⁸ For a comparison with Basel see: *Briefe und Akten zum Leben Oekolampads [= BrA]*, ed. Ernst Staehelin, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1927-34), vol. 2, Nr. 750, pp. 452-7; *AGBR* 5, Nr. 76, pp. 60-62.

It should be said, however, that concerning the suggested discipline ordinance, the Genevan *Articles* of 1537 remain, on the whole, rather general and avoid going into much detail. Therefore, in spite of the parallels that have been noted, we cannot unequivocally answer the question whether and to what extent Oecolampadian ideals and, in particular, the Basel Discipline Ordinance had an effect on the theological opinion of the Genevan ministers. Taking into account that parallels to Basel are also found in the other sections of the *Articles concernant l'organisation de l'église et du culte*, as we have seen, it nevertheless seems to be very probable that Calvin received some fundamental impulses from his first visit to Basel which he soon and independently developed further.¹⁹

Calvin's Eucharistic Liturgy

In contrast to the 1537 *Articles*, we are able to identify in Calvin's eucharistic liturgy of 1542 a distinct influence from Basel at one characteristic point: the solemn excommunication by which the 'unworthy' were declared to be banned from the communion table without being named. Although the Genevan ordinance does not give a verbatim translation of the respective section in the Basel liturgy and also places the excommunication at a later point in the order of service, it is evident that the latter has been a source for Calvin's communion ordinance. This can be seen not only from the formal pronouncement of the ban, which had been a special characteristic of the reformed Basel liturgy since 1526, but also from a list that follows and which specifies the various groups of persons who are considered to be excommunicated. The list reveals exactly the same structure as we find in the Basel communion ordinance. Also in its contents, there are several parallels.²⁰

The Ecclesiastical Ordinances of 1541

While in 1537 Calvin did not succeed in his attempt to introduce reforms in Geneva according to the *Articles concernant l'organisation de l'église et du culte* and had to leave the city in 1538, the situation had changed when he returned to Geneva in September 1541.

¹⁹ Cf. Wernle, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

²⁰ Cf. OS 2, pp. 46-7 with: (a) *Form und gestalt wie der kinder tauff, Des herren Nachtmahl, und der Krancken heym süchung, jetz zü Basel von etlichen Predicanten gehalten werden* (Basel, 1526), fol. B1^v-B2^r; (b) *AGBR* 3, Nr. 473, p. 394. For the origin and the sources of Calvin's Geneva liturgy see Markus Jenny, *Die Einheit des Abendmahlsgottesdienst bei den elsässischen und schweizerischen Reformatoren* (Zürich, 1968), pp. 125-30.

Immediately after his arrival he began to draft a new church ordinance. After the *Petit Conseil* as well as the Council of Two Hundred had demanded several changes, the revised *Ordonnances Ecclésiastiques* were finally adopted by the *Conseil Général* on November 20, 1541. With this church ordinance Calvin not only established the four ministries within the church – *pasteurs, docteurs, anciens* und *diacres* – which became a characteristic of his ecclesiology, but also created the *Consistoire*, a new ecclesiastical court for the enforcement of ecclesiastical discipline, comprising both ministers and lay persons. We shall now turn to these *Ordonnances Ecclésiastiques* and investigate the relationship between Calvin and the Genevan disciplinary system on the one hand and Oecolampadius and the Basel Discipline Ordinance on the other.²¹

While the *Articles* of 1537 had been a mere theological opinion containing a series of proposals for a fundamental reform of the Genevan church, Calvin presented, with the *Ordonnances*, a comprehensive church ordinance in which nearly all recommendations of the *Articles* were embodied. However, the *Ordonnances Ecclésiastiques* are more than just a realization of the reform principles laid down in 1537. At the same time they betray a further development in Calvin's thought and reveal how his ecclesiological concepts have become more specific. This applies in particular to the issue of church discipline. For the *Articles*, the 'Commissioners' had just been representatives of the congregation carrying out a specific duty. In the *Ordonnances*, however, they become bearers of one of the four offices in the church which Christ has instituted. As elders, it is their responsibility to watch over the moral life of the parishioners and 'to admonish amicably those whom they see to be erring or to be living a disordered life'. In such a case the matter has to be referred to the Consistory in which it is collectively decided if and what further steps should be taken. The number of the elders is limited to twelve of whom two are to be elected from the *Petit Conseil*, four from the Council of Sixty, and six from the Council of Two Hundred. The candidates are suggested by the *Petit Conseil* who, however, first have to consult the ministers. The election of the elders needs to be

²¹ For the text of the Ordinances see *OS* 2, pp. 325-89; see also François Wendel, *Calvin: The Origins and Development of his Religious Thought* (London, 1965), pp. 69-81; McGrath, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-14. The most thorough analysis of the Ordinances and in particular its excommunication ordinance is given by Köhler, *Ehegericht*, vol. 2, pp. 555-68. The following discussion of the Ordinances is based exclusively on the revised version which was adopted by the *Conseil Général* in November 1541.

approved by the Council of Two Hundred. The Council has to decide annually whether an elder should remain in office for another year or someone else is to be elected in his place.²²

Notwithstanding the election of the elders by the secular authorities, the *Ordonnances Ecclésiastiques* unambiguously characterize their office as being merely ecclesiastical. Even more so, it is a ministry instituted by Christ. It is this theological argument which is new here and in which Calvin clearly goes beyond Oecolampadius. For the latter, the idea of representation was central: the 'censor' was a representative of the congregation and, together with the minister, of the whole church. For Calvin, he was not just an ecclesiastical office-bearer in charge of disciplinary matters but the *presbyter* of the New Testament. The concept of representation is here, in contrast to Oecolampadius, only subordinate.²³

The *Ordonnances Ecclésiastiques* do not only contain regulations concerning the four ministries of the church but also include a detailed excommunication ordinance. Its instructions oblige the elders to convene each week in order to discuss disciplinary matters together with the ministers. To the sessions of this disciplinary court the Consistory may summon all persons they wish to reprimand. Since they do not possess any coercive power to enforce a summons, council servants have to cite the incriminated persons to appear before the Consistory.²⁴ The excommunication ordinance distinguishes two categories of offences, each of which requires a slightly different

²² OS 2, pp. 339-40.

²³ For a comparison with Oecolampadius' programmatic speech *Oratio de reducenda excommunicatione* see BrA 2, Nr. 750, pp. 454-7. By this speech and the subsequent Basel Discipline Ordinance of December 1530 the Basel Reformer created the new office of the church elder who, as a lay person, was in charge of church discipline (see also Staehelin, *Lebenswerk*, pp. 511f.). For Oecolampadius, however, the New Testament served only as a model for the new office of the *censores*. Calvin, by contrast, identified the *anciens* with the Bible's *presbyteroi*. While the Reformer of Geneva had not been the first to introduce the office of church elder, he was the first to connect it directly to a New Testament office. Although for Calvin the idea of the divine institution is clearly central, it cannot be said that the concept of representation is completely absent. This can be seen in particular from the selection mode for the *anciens* which requires the elders to be chosen from all three Councils.

²⁴ OS 2, p. 358. As in Basel, the weekly sessions of the Consistory were to take place on a Thursday.

procedure. The first category comprises public teaching against the received religion (*dogmatise contre la doctrine receue*) as well as negligence in regular church attendance due to open disregard of the church ordinances. Persons guilty of these offences should be excluded from taking communion, after being repeatedly admonished or instructed without success and, furthermore, be reported to the magistrates.²⁵ The second category covers all moral offences. In contrast to Basel, it is explicitly mentioned that even hidden or secret sins are subject to ecclesiastical discipline. However, they should not be reported to the Consistory unless the delinquent had been repeatedly admonished in private and had proved to be 'recalcitrant'. Offences that are publicly known are further classified as trespasses, which the church must reproach, or as criminal acts, which need to be punished by the magistrates in addition. In the first case the delinquents are to be cited before the Consistory and reprimanded. Should a culprit not reform his or her life, this procedure is to be repeated as often as it is judged necessary. Only after the failure of these disciplinary actions has become evident, is it to be announced to the delinquent – not, as in Basel, to the public – that as a 'despiser of God' he must abstain from communion until he has reformed his life. In the case of a criminal offence, however, the delinquent has to be banned immediately. According to the gravity of the crime, a fixed time has to be determined in which the culprit is barred from the sacrament. The ministers are explicitly given the right to reject all who in defiance of an excommunication sentence seek to receive communion.²⁶

A comparison with the Basel Discipline Ordinance reveals that the *Ordonnances Ecclésiastiques* establish a new disciplinary system that is largely independent of its Basel predecessor. A marked difference is the 'casuistic' structure of the Genevan discipline ordinance. According to the nature and the seriousness of the offence different disciplinary procedures are given. Also, the admonition by the elders always has to take place before the whole Consistory and can be repeated at will, a feature which is reminiscent of Martin Bucer and

²⁵ OS 2, p. 358. Neuser (*op. cit.*, p. 266) leaves one with the incorrect impression that Calvin, in contrast to Oecolampadius, included the supervision of doctrinal matters in the discipline ordinance. However, also in Basel offences of a distinct religious character like 'blasphemy', 'contempt of the sacraments' or failing to attend church on a Sunday had to be punished by the *censores* just like moral offences (see e.g. AGR 5, Nr. 76, pp. 60-62 = BrA 2, Nr. 809, pp. 536-8).

²⁶ OS 2, pp. 358-9, 360.

his Ulm Church Ordinance of 1531.²⁷ A catalogue of offences, in which particular sins are listed according to the Ten Commandments, as found in the Basel Discipline Ordinance and other southern German church ordinances, is missing. In Geneva all trespasses are in principle subject to ecclesiastical discipline so that even secret lapses could be publicly disciplined provided a culprit was judged 'recalcitrant'. Criminal acts cause immediate excommunication without prior admonition. Another difference is that in Geneva the ban is announced only to the delinquent, while in Basel it was also heralded from the pulpit.²⁸ Although the Genevan discipline ordinance is anxious to point out that everything should be carried out in moderation so that no one should be burdened with unnecessary hardship,²⁹ it has to be said that, on the whole, the *Ordonnances* present a stiffer disciplinary system than the one which had been instituted in Basel. The Genevan discipline ordinance can be seen as the visible expression of Calvin's understanding of ecclesiastical discipline according to which all aspects of private and public life need to be subject to Christ's government in and through his church.

Notwithstanding the differences between Geneva and Basel, the fundamental ideals of Oecolampadius concerning ecclesiastical discipline had been realized by the *Ordonnances Ecclésiastiques*. Here one only has to point to the institution of the Consistory. While for political reasons Oecolampadius was unable to establish a central disciplinary court for the whole church (instead, each city parish had its own), Calvin did succeed. As in Basel, it was a mixed ecclesiastical body comprising both ministers and lay members. In spite of the fact that in both cities the Council was in a position to exercise political control over it, the disciplinary courts of Basel as well as the Genevan Consistory were, in principle, simply ecclesiastical institutions. Beyond the formal admonition of a delinquent and the pronouncement of excommunication they had no further powers. Neither for Oecolampadius nor for Calvin did the ban itself have any immediate legal effects outside the church.

The Struggle to Introduce Ecclesiastical Discipline

The disciplinary system instituted by the *Ordonnances*

²⁷ Cf. Robert Stupperich *et al.* (eds.), *Martini Bucerii Opera Omnia*, Series I: *Deutsche Schriften* (Gütersloh/Paris, 1960-), vol. 4, pp. 394-5.

²⁸ Cf. *Basler Chroniken*, vol. 8, ed. Paul Burckhardt (Basel, 1945), pp. 144f. (= *BrA* 2, Nr. 854, p. 596); see also *AGBR* 5, Nr. 80, pp. 67f. (= *BrA* 2, Nr. 852, pp. 593f.).

²⁹ *Os* 2, pp. 360-61.

Ecclésiastiques, however, was not as unambiguous as it might appear at first sight. Since the Council had insisted on several changes, it was also a document of compromise containing the seed of further conflict. It was certainly not an insignificant alteration of Calvin's draft ordinance when the Council added to the designation of the office of the Elders the phrase that the *anciens* were also 'commissioners of the Council' (*comys ou deputes par la seigneurie*). Strikingly, *anciens* in the draft discipline ordinance was replaced by *comys* in the approved text. The amendment of the draft shows that the Council was determined to define Calvin's Elders, against the Reformer's theological intention, primarily as representatives and agents of the magistrates. Another detail that would allow conflicting interpretations of the discipline ordinance was the fact that the Consistory is nowhere given the *explicit* right to pronounce a ban. The word *excommunication* is conspicuously absent from the text. Instead, the text states only generally and without further explication that a particular person should be informed that he or she was to abstain from communion.

That the Council was not yet prepared to concede any legal powers, ecclesiastical or secular, to the Consistory or to the ministry, can be seen from a paragraph that was appended to Calvin's draft ordinance. It was declared there that the clergy should not possess any *jurisdiction civile* but have only the spiritual sword of the divine Word. The authority and jurisdiction of the Council was not to be impaired by the Consistory in any way.³⁰

As far as church discipline was concerned, the *Ordonnances Ecclésiastiques* were by no means unambiguous, nor did they settle the issue of who would be in control of the power of excommunication. The opposing interpretations to which the Ordinances gave rise soon led to further conflict.³¹ It was not until fourteen years later that the battle was finally decided. When the opponents of Calvin, led by Ami Perrin, obtained political control of the Council in the annual elections of February 1553, the smouldering conflict re-erupted with full force. In a dramatic move against Calvin, and as a direct challenge to his ecclesiastical authority, the Council openly denied the Consistory the right to excommunicate. However, the embittered battle that ensued led eventually to the complete political victory of Calvin and his followers in 1555. Perrin and his party had to leave Geneva.³²

³⁰ OS 2, p. 361.

³¹ Cf. Wendel, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-4. The ambiguity of the *Ordonnances* in this respect was overlooked by McGrath (*op. cit.*, p. 110).

³² Wendel, *op. cit.*, pp. 93, 98-101; McGrath, *op. cit.*, pp. 110, 121-3; see also Baker, *op. cit.*, pp. 113-19; J. W. Baker, 'Christian

Five years later, on February 9, 1560, the Council of Two Hundred passed a resolution that marked the end of the long struggle over the nature of the Consistory. It was made unmistakably clear that it belonged to the church and not to the state. Any mayor of the city, it was decreed, who at the same time was also a member of the Consistory, had to leave his staff of office at the doorstep whenever he would lead the church together with the other elders and the ministers.³³ By this instruction it was spelt out unambiguously that, although secular and ecclesiastical government might be interwoven as far as individuals were concerned, church discipline was not subject to the magistrates. It had to be exercised independently. Church and state were two separate entities. Calvin had finally secured what Oecolampadius had always envisaged but could not realize.

Conclusion

This essay has drawn attention to the several parallels and similarities which can be observed to exist between Calvin and the Genevan order of ecclesiastical discipline on the one side and the Basel Discipline Ordinance and its intellectual father, John Oecolampadius, on the other. The nature as well as the limitation of the available source material, however, does not allow a definite verdict whether the ideas and concepts of the Basel Reformer exercised a direct influence on Calvin. The outright dependence of the latter on the former cannot be established beyond doubt. Nevertheless, the overall evidence of the consulted sources points clearly to a distinct influence. The similarities and parallels we have noticed make it highly probable that Oecolampadian ideals and, in particular, the order of ecclesiastical discipline, which Calvin came to know during his stay in the city of Basel, made a lasting impact on the Frenchman. While the precise extent of this impact cannot be ascertained, its factuality should not be doubted.

Oecolampadius was certainly not the only Reformer of the first generation to influence the development of Calvin's ecclesiological thought. In this respect, the role of the Strasbourg Reformer, Martin Bucer, has already been brought to our attention.³⁴ From 1538 to

Discipline, Church and State, and Toleration: Bullinger, Calvin, and Basel 1530-1555', in *Reformiertes Erbe: Festschrift für Gottfried W. Locher zu seinem 80. Geburtstag*, vol. 1 (= *Zwingliana* 19/1), ed. Heiko A. Oberman *et al.* (Zürich, 1992), pp. 35-48.

³³ OS 2, p. 362.

³⁴ Jacques Courvoisier, 'Bucer et Calvin', in *Calvin à Strasbourg 1538-1541: Quatre Etudes* (Strasbourg, 1938), pp. 37-66; Wendel,

1541, much longer than in Basel, Calvin stayed in Strasbourg where he ministered a congregation of protestant refugees from France. Although the influence Bucer had on Calvin should not be overestimated, it is clear that the Strasbourg experience, and Bucer in particular, served as a source for his ecclesiology.

While Calvin never met Oecolampadius, he had worked alongside Bucer for three years. However, the shadow of Oecolampadius reached far beyond the city of Basel in which the Frenchman had sojourned only a short while. During the summer months of 1531 the Basel Reformer, together with his colleague, Martin Bucer, helped to introduce the Reformation in the southern German imperial cities of Ulm, Memmingen, and Biberach. Initially, Bucer had been highly critical of Oecolampadius' plans to institute autonomous ecclesiastical discipline.³⁵ It therefore proved to be a significant success for the spread of Oecolampadian ideals that, while working on the Reformation of the church in Ulm, the Strasbourg Reformer was won over by his colleague from Basel. The Ulm Church Ordinance, drafted largely by Bucer alone, shows just how much he had learned from Oecolampadius. If thus one is to estimate and compare the significance of both Reformers for the development of Calvin's ecclesiological thought and, in particular, for the institution of discipline in Geneva, we have to take into account that not just Calvin but Bucer, too, were among those who learned from the Basel Reformer.

op. cit., pp. 137-44; on Bucer and Calvin see also: Gottfried Hammann, *Entre la sect et la cité: le Projet d'Église du Réformateur Martin Bucer* (Geneva, 1984), *passim*; Martin Greschat, *Martin Bucer: Ein Reformator und seine Zeit* (Munich, 1990), pp. 157f.; Amy Nelson Burnett, *The Yoke of Christ: Martin Bucer and Church Discipline* (Kirksville, 1994), pp. 206f.

³⁵ On this and the following, see Kuhr, *op.cit.*, chapter IV. 3. b.

THE STORY AND THE MYTH

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The Story is the story of the birth, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as told in the four Gospels. The Myth is the illusion that in the nineteenth century the churches in Britain were full. Both story and myth lie at the heart of the crisis confronting our churches. For throughout the twentieth century the churches have subverted the story and believed the myth. Through this perverse pattern of behaviour they have contributed significantly to their own decline.

This is the thesis which emerges from juxtaposing two recent books: *Telling the Story* (1996) by Andrew Walker of King's College, London, and *The Myth of the Empty Church* (1993) by Robin Gill of the University of Kent.¹ Both books are immensely stimulating and have a great deal to say to all sections of the church.

Gill's Thesis

Gill's basic thesis is four-fold. First, on the basis of close analysis of church-going statistics he demonstrates conclusively that Victorian churches overall were never regularly full. In fact in many communities throughout Britain there were more church seats than inhabitants!

Second, he challenges the widely accepted view that people have stopped going to church 'largely as a result of secularisation'. While not discounting that the process of secularisation has had a negative impact, Gill maintains that churches have declined primarily for social reasons rooted in extraordinary over-building by the Victorians. This meant that many churches were from their inception relatively empty and, therefore, uninviting. 'Empty churches foster decline', says Gill. They send negative signals to the community about the church and Christianity.

Third, Gill believes that there is nothing inevitable about continuing church decline. He argues that religion can survive, even thrive, in a secularised society. As evidence, he quotes the resurgence of fundamentalism – Christian and non-Christian – and the strength of many churches in the USA.²

Fourth, Gill argues that social reasons are as important in the growth as in the decline of the church. He believes many people come

¹ Walker, *Telling the Story. Gospel, Mission and Culture* (London, 1996); Gill, *The Myth of the Empty Church* (London, 1993).

² Gill examined church growth theory in his earlier work *Beyond Decline: A Challenge to the Churches* (London, 1988).

to church out of a desire to belong, and that often this desire precedes the desire to believe. John Finney's research on why people come to faith tends to confirm this, as does also the fact that many flourishing churches in America have an extensive supportive social infrastructure in the form of schools, counselling services and interest groups.³

Walker's Analysis

The strength of Walker's book is his penetrating analysis of how the Christian Story has come to be replaced in both church and culture, and his conviction that today we have a *kairos* opportunity to reinstate the Story.

According to Walker, the Story has lost ground for three main reasons. First, the church, bowing to the rationalism of the Enlightenment, allowed the forces of critical rationality to unravel the story by replacing the obligation to proclaim it with the right to discover historical information about Jesus of Nazareth. This created a 'hermeneutical oppression whereby the story – now fragmented and disconnected – has had to await authentication from the critics in order to be told' (p. 57).

Second, secularisation produced alternative metanarratives to which people turned to help them interpret life. Perhaps the most prominent, at least until recently, is the scientific world view – sometimes called 'scientism'. Scientism, Walker argues, is much more than the acceptance of the efficacy of science. 'In its weak form, it claims that science is superior to all other methodologies and philosophies; in its stronger form it claims exclusive rights to understanding reality' (p 57). Scientism owes its popularity not to large numbers of people becoming scientifically informed, but to the wonder induced by machines, medicine and engineering. 'Mastery over nature induces awe and trust. Labour-saving devices, transport inventions and technological innovations of all kinds lead to thanksgiving, not intellectual curiosity' (p 57).

The third factor in the subversion of the Story is consumerism. With the American dream – which Walker identifies as another competing metanarrative – as its rationale, and the spread of television in the 1950s and 1960s as its launch-pad, consumerism ruthlessly and successfully built on the self-expression fad which came into its own in the 1960s after decades of Enlightenment teaching on individualism in popular education at all levels. Consumerism appealed to the 'felt needs' of the new electronically created mass market – which Walker

³ This part of Gill's thesis is developed more fully in his later and much smaller book *A Vision for Growth. Why Your Church Doesn't Have to be a Pelican in the Wilderness* (London, 1994).

perceptively suggests are more often 'implanted wants', unknown before the advertisers got to work on us! The focus moved from what a product is itself to what it can do for its purchasers.

The impact of consumerism on the Story is not simply that it contradicts the Story by preaching self-indulgence over against the self-denial demanded by Jesus of his followers. It also corrupts the Story because consumerism has been allowed to invade the church. Here, claims Walker, the blame lies, not with liberals, but with Evangelicals. Following James Davison Hunter, Walker alleges that 'Modern evangelicals have unwittingly adapted to the privatized, individualist and subjectivist strains of structural pluralism and recast Christianity not as an inculturated grand narrative for the modern world, nor even as a domesticated sitcom for the local churches, but as therapy for the lost and sick, the unhappy and the repressed' (pp. 119f). He goes on to observe that the grand narrative has been interiorised to the point of disappearance, theology transformed into therapy, the language of Scripture into psychological discourse, stories into prescriptions, the concept of redemption into wish-fulfillment for self-satisfaction.

The strength of Walker's book is that it is more than analytical. It points to opportunities to recover the Story as well as probing the reasons why it has been lost. He argues strongly that the current recovery in the West of the art of storytelling is presenting the churches with a *kairos* moment to communicate the Story successfully to a generation which until now has dismissed it on the grounds that it is unfashionable rather than untenable. If the church can exploit the present popularity of story telling we may discover that people are surprisingly open to hearing the biblical message despite having closed their minds to it in other forms.

Both books are quite independent of each other: *The Myth* adopts a sociological framework and makes relatively few explicit theological value judgments on the current state of the British church. *Telling the Story* concerns itself with the church, but with its spiritual state rather than its statistical strength or weakness. And yet they are clearly related because Gill describes the context in which the Story is to be recovered and retold. And Walker underlines the vital role the Story must play in the life of the church if it is to recover its inner strength and attract new worshippers.

However, before we tease out the implicit links between the two books and the lessons they hold for the British church at the end of the twentieth century, it will be instructive to examine Gill's thesis in greater detail.

Debunking the Myth

Gill's mission is to debunk the consensus among sociologists of religion and social historians which explains the decline in church attendance in the context of an overall process of secularisation. Gill condenses this 'myth' into ten propositions which he claims do not bear up in the face of hard facts. The propositions and Gill's responses can be summarised as follows:

- **Myth:** Before the First World War a majority of churches in Britain were full.

Fact: By 1901, despite some middle-class pockets of high rates of church going, a considerable excess of church seating existed over the rural population, and urban churches were only one third full.

- **Myth:** The Victorians built extra churches to meet the demands of rapidly expanding urban and rural populations.

Fact: In the second half of the nineteenth century a vigorous church building and restoration plan was carried out in rural areas despite a rapidly declining population. And in the major urban areas the English Free Churches built so vigorously that their chapels were more empty in the 1880s than they were in 1851.

- **Myth:** Competitive church building between denominations raised the general level of churchgoing throughout the nineteenth century.

Fact: This was true only for the first part of the century. From mid-century on competitive church building increased the number of empty churches in both rural and urban areas, despite a rise in the overall attendance of the Free Churches.

- **Myth:** Urban church building never quite kept pace with late nineteenth century urban population growth resulting in significant sections of the urban working classes being excluded from church.

Fact: There was always more than adequate church accommodation across the denominations for the urban working classes, but neither the Anglicans nor the Free Churches were able to fill it.

- **Myth.** Churchgoing started to decline generally in proportion to the population only after the First World War.

Fact: Attendance in the Church of England had been declining since 1851 and in the Free Churches since the 1880s.

- **Myth:** Disillusionment resulting from the War was a significant factor in causing this decline, especially among urban working-class men.

Fact: The study *The Army and Religion* (1919) suggests that, if anything, the First World War fostered among fighting soldiers vestigial beliefs in God, prayer and the afterlife. Some confirmation of this may be found in the slight increase in

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suburban churchgoing during the decade following the Second World War. Also relevant is the mass-observation study (1947) in a London semi-suburban community which discovered that, while the Second World War had reinforced the trend away from religion among those with no previous pronounced belief, only a very small number – between 1 and 4 per cent – felt they had *lost* their faith.

- **Myth:** Secularisation – the product of nineteenth century developments in science and rational thought which spread in the twentieth century through better education – has proved to be the most abiding factor in church decline.

Fact: Opinion polls suggest that the decline in conventional Christian belief followed, rather than preceded, the decline in churchgoing. Furthermore, the suburban middle classes, who were the earliest to be affected by secularisation, were the last to be affected by churchgoing decline.

- **Myth:** Urbanisation – involving the breakdown of rural communities upon which churches thrive – has also contributed significantly to church decline.

Fact: Some urban areas in the eighteenth century recorded significantly higher churchgoing rates than those in the surrounding countryside. And areas of middle class urban churchgoing persisted with very high levels well into the twentieth century.

- **Myth:** Twentieth century leisure activities – cars, radios, televisions, etc. – have also contributed to church decline.

Fact: The urban churchgoing decline in Britain pre-dates the technological developments of the twentieth century. And in the United States churchgoing has remained relatively strong in the face of such activities.

- **Myth:** An accumulated result of these various external factors is that British churches (with the significant exception of competitive evangelical churches) have recently become secularised and increasingly empty.

Fact: It is the Roman Catholics, not the Evangelicals, who have consistently maintained full churches. One reason for this is that Catholics have never provided seating for more than 50% of their average attendance.

Causal Factors in Church Decline

From his examination and evaluation of churchgoing statistics in a variety of parishes in England and Wales, with a few passing glances at Scotland, Gill identifies five 'causal factors in church decline'. These are:

1. **Church closure.** Communion roll statistics of individual attendances reveal the impact of church closing. 'Characteristically, membership and attendance diminish rapidly as closure nears; only half of the remaining members actually transfer to a neighbouring church after closure; and these transferred members are significantly less regular in their attendance at the new church than they were at their old one' (p. 39).
2. **Church debt.** Churches were frequently closed because of congregational debt. 'Individuals who may well have been debt-free in their private lives were caught up in the growing debts of their own chapels. It is not difficult to understand from this their reluctance to join a neighbouring chapel once their own had closed' (p. 40).
3. **Multiple charges.** Gill quotes Leslie Francis' research (1989) to show that ministers with three or more churches become significantly less effective and their congregations reduce accordingly.
4. **Conspicuous churchgoing.** Small, and increasingly elderly, congregations in large, empty church buildings are off-putting to marginal and would-be churchgoers who normally prefer to attend church without feeling too conspicuous.
5. **Disillusionment.** Gill quotes Jeffrey Cox's study of the churches in Lambeth from 1870 to 1930: 'The empty church is the single most important piece of evidence brought forth by people who argue that religion has become unimportant' (p. 41).

In view of his earlier pastoral and teaching ministry north of the border, it is surprising that Gill pays so little attention in *The Myth* to Scotland. But this by no means renders the book irrelevant to Scottish churches, for the pattern of decline in England and Wales is reflected in Scotland from the end of the Second World War onwards, and probably from much earlier. The proportion of the adult churchgoing population in Scotland fell from 28% in 1959 to 17% in 1984 and then to 14% in 1994.⁴ In addition, one suspects that Gill's five causal factors operate just as strongly in Scotland as in England. Nevertheless, the book's usefulness would have been considerably increased by the inclusion of at least one in-depth case study from a Scottish parish.

⁴ Peter Brierley and Fergus Macdonald, *Prospects for Scotland 2000. Trends and Tables from the 1994 Scottish Church Census* (Eltham and Edinburgh, 1995).

Towards a Better Future

In his last chapter, entitled 'The Future of the Churches', Gill identifies eighteen broad proposals – borrowing to some extent from Leslie Paul's *The Deployment and Payment of the Clergy* (1964) – on which the church might build a new strategy. These are:

1. Subsidise mission, not maintenance.
2. Use subsidies as seed corn to promote mission.
3. Carefully monitor growth and decline area by area.
4. Deploy the most talented clergy in areas of mission.
5. Discourage duplication across denominations.
6. Make deaneries (or their equivalents) the primary management units of the church.
7. Introduce regular, caring appraisal of all clergy.
8. Give all stipendiary extra-parochial clergy charge of a small parish.
9. Use the non-stipendiary ministry more effectively.
10. Make rural deaneries (or equivalents) budget holders.
11. Recognise that single-staffed, multiple charges lead to disaster.
12. Limit rural subsidies to innovative experiments.
13. Make urban deaneries (or equivalents) wedge-shaped to incorporate a balanced mixture of urban priority areas and suburban parishes.
14. Make urban deaneries (or equivalents) budget-holders.
15. Make carefully planned mission a priority in urban areas.
16. Give the diocese (or equivalent central body) a crucial role in planning and feedback.
17. Carefully monitor all urban subsidy.
18. Encourage deaneries and local groups to assess area needs for provision and use of church buildings.

I must confess that I found this last chapter a bit of an anticlimax. The eighteen proposals seem to be statements of the obvious rather than pointers to a new future. The chapter contrasts markedly with the earlier analytical case studies which I found quite fascinating. However, on reflection, this is probably too harsh a judgement. The writer deliberately limited his study to the *physical* factors of church growth and decline, and, therefore, consciously chose to look for ways forward which are more mundane than spiritual. And there is some merit in restating the obvious when you are able to support it by a mass of evidence, if only because churches so often refuse to heed the obvious! In addition, Gill is to be respected for being rightly wary of 'building too many arguments upon short-term trends' (p. 210).

On the other hand, Gill's proposals undoubtedly suffer from being stated in isolation from both the sweeping changes taking place in late twentieth century British society and the crisis of identity occurring in

many local churches. Will Storrar has recently argued that the Church of Scotland is declining not so much because of internal failures, but much more because modernity is declining.⁵ I strongly suspect that this thesis is almost certainly also true for all other British denominations. Storrar argues convincingly that the Kirk has been built over the years, by Moderates and Evangelicals alike, into an essentially modern institution characterised by central planning, topdown organisation, uniform methods, expectation of lifetime commitments and formal membership, all of which in today's *post-modern* world are making the Kirk increasingly unworkable. I suspect Storrar would regard most of Gill's proposals as almost classic evidence of his charge that the church is 'largely wedded to modern methods to address post-modern problems'.⁶

But the crisis of the British churches is deeper than their losing touch with their context. They have also lost their identity. I have argued in *Prospects for Scotland 2000* that we urgently need a new paradigm of the church, for most churches tend to think of themselves in terms of business models rather than biblical models. Finance has replaced faith as their operational principle and the idea of each local church being primarily Christ's church, part of the people of God and a servant community, is scarcely reflected in decision-taking processes. In this sense modernity has affected the church profoundly.

Will Storrar also stresses the need for a new sense of church identity. 'The Church is more than a social institution caught up in the sweep of historical change. It is also the Body of Christ called to faithfulness and continuing reformation within the loving purposes of God for the world. The Kirk has been too preoccupied with the fruitless search for modern methods to reverse institutional decline and insufficiently committed to theological reflection on the nature and mission of the church in a post-modern world.'

It is precisely at this point that Walker's book is relevant, because the church's identity is forged as it hears (and practises) the Story and rejoices in it, and also because storytelling is providing the church with a new frontier to speak to an age which is turned off by institutions. If they can rediscover both the Story and storytelling there

⁵ 'The Decline of the Kirk' in *University of Aberdeen Divinity Alumni Association News*, No. 18, Autumn, 1997.

⁶ In passing, it may be worth noting that Gill's work is a good example of the impossibility of value-free analysis. He studiously avoids making theological judgements on the data under review, presumably in an attempt to be objective, but his proposals are in fact based on the philosophical values of modernity.

is a strong possibility that the churches will find both inner renewal and external relevance.

Four Questions for Evangelicals

Traditionally Evangelicals have been characterised as having a very high commitment to both believing the Story and telling it to others. Andrew Walker, who belongs to the Orthodox tradition, questions whether this is true. I believe we ought to listen seriously to what Walker is saying because, if he is right, the evangelical revival of recent years could, like Soviet Communism, collapse overnight. More importantly, a vital *kairos* to renew the churches and reverse their decline will be lost.

I suggest that we can best respond to Andrew Walker's challenge by asking and answering four key questions concerning our contemporary evangelical evangelism and spirituality.

1. Are Evangelicals telling the Story?

Walker emphasises that the gospel is both the Story and its telling. Given his Orthodox churchmanship, he understandably lays great stress on 'dramaturgy', but he also recognises the vital importance of both preaching and witnessing. One of the key challenges of Walker's book is whether we truly tell the Story by communicating biblical ideas and concepts. The ideas rise out of the Story and are part of the Story, but they are not the core of the Story. There is a danger that we dehydrate the gospel from being a living story about real people and real events into a theological prescription ('Four Things God wants you to know', etc.) which impacts our audience at purely an intellectual level and fails to engage them experientially with the Story of what God has done! Doctrinal preaching is vitally important, but it will be arid if it is not exegeted from the text of the Story.

2. Are Evangelicals corrupting the Story?

Walker contends that too often evangelicals corrupt (you could say 'modernise') the gospel by reducing evangelism to a matter of technique. He quotes Charles Finney's infamous remark: 'A revival is not a miracle, or dependent on a miracle, in any sense. It is purely philosophical results of the right use of constituted means as much as any other effect produced by the application of means' (p.72). Coming nearer to today, Walker expresses concern that courses on evangelism sometimes so concentrate on 'the demographics and psychometrics of Church Growth methodologies, that they have little to say about the content of the gospel – the Story – to be proclaimed' (p. 53). I think the problem here is that perhaps too often we allow the tail to wag the dog! The gospel should influence our choice of methods and the way

we use them rather than the methods change the shape of the gospel to fit them. While we must use 'all means', we ought to do so in ways which are worthy of the gospel and do not distort it. Paul's observations in the opening chapters of 1 Corinthians on his use of public speaking (or preaching) are instructive. He used public speaking (the principal medium of communication in his day), but he studiously avoided employing it in the manipulative ways of the Sophists.⁷

3. Are Evangelicals miniaturising the Story?

Another implication of Walker's thesis is that too often Evangelicals shrink down the grand narrative of the Christian Story to a fraction of its true stature. This, he suggests, happens in two ways:

First, by using music in worship to decorate the Word rather than to reinforce it (p. 37). If church music is allowed to take on a life of its own it will lead the Word rather than follow it and fashion will take over from meaning. As a result the Story is belittled.

Second, by reducing the gospel to a remedy for felt needs. It becomes a therapy which facilitates self-fulfillment, rather than Good News which puts us right with God and our neighbour and calls us to take up our cross and follow Christ. A by-product of the gospel is presented as its end-product.

While gospel shrinking may be a besetting sin of Evangelicals (and others), we must be careful lest, in seeking to correct it, we lose vital points of contact with unbelievers. Christian music must resonate with the contemporary culture as well as reinforce the Word. For example, one of the great challenges facing us today is to find an appropriate musical idiom which will best help to communicate the variegated spirituality expressed in the poetry of the Psalms, which resonates so much with the mood of many post-moderns. And we dare not ignore genuine felt needs. Identifying them enables us to relate the Story to where people are. The danger is that we stop at the initial point of contact, rather than helping people to see that their felt needs are symptoms of a greater need – the need of redemption.

4. Are Evangelicals indwelling the Story?

Walker makes the perceptive observation that since the eighteenth century Protestant religious experience has tended to be enthusiastic rather than mystical (p.63). This observation is, I think, true. What it identifies is probably a result of the influence of the scientific rationality which was the hallmark of modernity. But today in a post-modern world, enthusiasm is not enough. Post-modern people have set

⁷ See 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, 2:1-5.

out on a quest for spiritual reality which is taking them into oriental mysticism, New Age therapy and neo-pagan ritual. Why are these spiritual refugees from modernity by-passing the churches? The answer, I fear, is that the churches they know and the Christians they meet have more rationality than spirituality. As a result, unlike Paul's 'outsider' visiting the church in Corinth, searching post-moderns are unable to say to us: 'God is really among you' (1Cor. 14: 25).

So, in the post-modern world enthusiastic worship and seeker-friendly services will be seen as superficial, unless they help people to indwell the story and become holy. Unless our congregations become holy communities they will be neither living the story nor attracting people to it. It is only as we live the story, on Mondays as well as on Sundays, that our congregations will become, in Lesslie Newbigin's phrase, 'the hermeneutic of the gospel' and catch the attention of the growing number of modern pilgrims in search of spirituality.

Conclusion

Gill's books describe the churches' plight: they are disillusioned, aged and dwindling. Walker outlines the wider context and highlights the remedy: Storytelling with a capital 'S'. But can telling and indwelling the Story in its fullness turn churches and nations around?

There are two answers to this question, one from Scripture, the other from history. The testimony of Scripture is that the Story as it is told is the power of God. And the witness of history is that it is precisely when a society has lost its way that mass movements into the Christian faith are most possible.

PATHWAYS TO FAITH: REFLECTIONS ON CONGREGATIONAL EVANGELISM

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Some years ago, the missionary theologian Lesslie Newbigin wrote an article entitled, 'Evangelism in the Context of Secularisation'. In it, he reflected on the way in which unbelievers come to faith as follows:

All the statistical evidence goes to show that those within our secularized societies who are being drawn out of unbelief to faith in Christ say that they were drawn through the friendship of a local congregation.¹

A statement like this takes us near to the centre of Newbigin's missionary thesis that it is the 'local congregation' that constitutes what he calls 'the hermeneutic of the gospel' – that is to say, it is the local congregation which is the incarnational interpreter of what the gospel of Jesus means. It is within the local congregation and by contact with its members that the good news of Jesus Christ is most clearly understood and apprehended by those who are not yet Christians.

A statement like this is easily passed over. It seems rather obvious at one level. Yet on closer reflection, I believe that these words provide some of the keys to effective ways of strategic thinking and action about evangelism in our churches today. Four observations from my own work as an evangelist would seem to illustrate different facets of it.

1. In planning our evangelistic programmes, we need to take more seriously the stories of people who describe the way in which they came to faith.

I have come to the conclusion that we often act pragmatically on a *misreading* of the evidence about 'conversion'. It is easy to assume for example that people come to faith by some process of intellectual enquiry and discovery. The conversion process by this way of understanding is the end result of a critical enquiry and investigation in which certain logical steps of understanding and acceptance are built upon each other until the point is reached at which capitulation is inevitable and a person becomes a Christian. Doubtless there are those for whom this sort of process is true. But the majority seem to describe their conversion stories in somewhat different terms – not in ways which *exclude* intellectual categories, but in ways which are fundamentally *inclusive* of other categories as well.

¹ Lesslie Newbigin, 'Evangelism in the Context of Secularization' (1990). Reprinted in *A Word in Season: Perspectives on Christian World Missions*, ed. E. Jackson (Grand Rapids/Edinburgh: Eerdmans/Saint Andrew Press), 1994, pp. 148-57, at 153.

Very few Christians who are new to the faith actually describe a process in which they reasoned their way to faith. On the other hand, what does seem to figure again and again in the testimonies of new Christians is the kind of language and reflection which arises from a wider relational process. The intellectual aspect is present, but is part and parcel of a wider inter-personal 'dialogue' in which the intuitions gained and insights obtained are as often subliminal as they are liable to conscious articulation. It is often within this process of what we might call 'relational dialogue and witness' that the real work of evangelism takes place.

What does this look like? Usually, the perceptions by which a person comes to faith are described in ways which suggest that it has been the overall impact of the lives of Christians (as coherent wholes) which have spoken more powerfully than simply words. The outsider has gradually come to see both the authenticity and integrity of a Christian outlook on life, evidenced by an individual or a group – or in many cases both. This process leads under God to the gradual desire for a change of outlook and perspective, in which the non-Christian begins to want to transfer allegiance and desire to live from the kind of spiritual perspective that has been seen modelled and incarnated in the life of Christian friends. Over a period of time this new outlook is taken in and adopted, so that it becomes part of the framework in which the new believer begins to act and think. But even at this juncture the 'adoption' of a Christian world-view (described here in terms which might imply a conscious moment in time) is usually described in terms which imply that the recognition of any sort of 'conversion' experience is more easily seen in retrospect than it is at any particular moment in time. This may seem rather clumsily put, but it catches the kind of language so often used. And, of course, it raises some very significant issues for evangelism.

In the first place, the way in which we gear our churches for evangelism often reflects an understanding of witness which is too exclusively cerebral and intellectual. We certainly need to 'persuade' people and get them to hear the message. But when we hear of people converted through an Alpha course for example, we may tend to put the emphasis upon the intellectual persuasion that must have gone on in the mind of the enquirer rather than on the inherent evangelistic value of the social context in which the course takes place – where the presence of believers and the creation of 'community' relationships over the length of the course provide key elements which are vital to the process of spiritual discovery and conversion in the life of the enquirer. It is often this 'relational dialogue' which counts as much as the actual words spoken. Thus, the effectiveness of the spoken word is rightly and inevitably set alongside the wider witness of the Christian community.

This in turn leads to a second implication. It is the obvious one that the process of evangelism that I have been describing takes time. The Billy

Graham organisation some years ago reckoned that most of those who responded at its crusades had been exposed to the life and witness of a Christian community for an average of 18 months before coming to a conscious response of faith. John Finney's more recent research in Britain amongst over 500 people from across the denominations who had come to conscious faith commitments during 1990-91 showed that the average time taken to get to this point was much longer. Finney concludes:

The gradual process is the way in which the majority of people discover God and the average time taken is about four years: *models of evangelism which can help people along the pathway are needed.*²

The research showed that where people had come to a sudden moment of conversion it was usually amongst those who were older.

This 'process' understanding of conversion (as contrasted with 'crisis' models) is not a new phenomenon in church thinking. Yet still many church programmes are structured and organised as if the way to 'do' evangelism is more influenced by the 'crisis' than by the 'process' model. It is reflected in strategies which revolve around the organisation of periodic guest services, with perhaps a mission once every three years, and the encouragement to get people to bring their friends along. What these events usually show is that whatever interest is shown by outsiders is nearly always embryonic and needs to be nurtured and fed. Based – as they often are – upon a *crisis* approach to conversion rather than a *process* one, most churches do not have the wherewithal to take people on from this point, and therefore the issue of evangelism tends to go onto the backburner until the next event comes along. Cycles of evangelistic strategy like this tend to confirm patterns of failure in evangelism which are difficult to get over. Where churches are wedded to a crisis approach to evangelism, and where such an approach evidently fails to work, congregations often experience disappointment and demotivation – and even resistance to the idea of evangelism when the next occasional foray into some specific evangelistic activity is suggested.

The whole process approach to evangelism – of which Alpha is one example – is more akin to the kind of model that we need to develop in different contexts. What is needed are more long-term and relational models in which word and life are bound up together. These could function at the level of activities designed for Christians to bring non-Christian friends to which need not necessarily involve any element of up-front proclamation. At one church I was involved with it was the first Saturday of the month Rambling Club which produced the relational context in which most outsiders found their way into more overtly church activities. For it was via this group that people made the Christian

² John Finney, *Finding Faith Today: How Does it Happen?* (Swindon, 1992), p.25 (emphasis mine).

friendships which were the human stepping stones to something more overtly evangelistic. As Emery White puts it:

Effective Churches will create a context for (an) adoption process to take place in the lives of nonbelievers. The 'event' of coming into a personal relationship with Christ as Lord and Saviour is but the culmination of a spiritual pilgrimage as a 'seeker'.³

Furthermore, where verbal proclamation is planned as an integral part of an evangelistic event, we need to think harder about providing opportunities which will enable enquirers to go further in terms of helping the process of exploration and dialogue which we have been describing. Too many of our evangelistic events are in effect one-offs which do not envisage this sort of follow-on process. They often arise out of an evangelism = reaping rather than an evangelism = sowing mentality.

The observations above may seem to imply that I am downgrading the importance of words and proclamation in evangelism. I do not mean to do so at all. I am fully committed to it. But I do mean to emphasise that we cannot think properly about the whole process of evangelism when we separate out the words and think they are the all-important parts which can function apart from the wider context of relationships and lives. Words and life are inextricably linked witnesses in the process of evangelism.

This connection is also of course profoundly biblical in its orientation. Whilst there is comparatively little in the New Testament about an encouragement to verbal evangelism, there is a great deal about an encouragement towards a growing Christ-likeness in the lives of believers – both corporately and individually. In this context it is significant that most of the opportunities for verbal evangelism in the New Testament seem to be expected to arise out of the witness of the daily lives of Christians, and that the nature of the words most usually used by Christians will come as a result of a desire on the part of the seeker to have answers to the questions that this different way of living raises.⁴ 'I cannot hear what you say because of the way you live', is a rather too uncomfortable criticism of much Christian witness in our own day.

2. We are in danger of losing the art of friendship

This second observation builds naturally from the first. For inevitably the kind of process evangelism which we have been describing depends on

³ Quoted in David Hilborn, *Picking Up the Pieces: Can Evangelicals Adapt to Contemporary Culture?* (London, 1997), p.175.

⁴ E.g., 1 Peter 2:11-12, 3:15, Col. 4:6 etc. On the issues that this sort of observation raises, see Peter O'Brien, *Gospel and Mission in the Writings of Paul: An Exegetical and Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids, Carlisle, 1995).

whether or not Christians can actually form and maintain real friendships outside the Christian circle.

It has become axiomatic to me as a visiting evangelist that those churches which will be most effective in reaching those outside their own circle with the gospel are those whose members have been able to make genuine and effective friendships within the local community, and who have then been giving themselves to pray for these friends. By contrast, those churches which will always struggle evangelistically are those which have not.

The actual statistics bear out this fact rather forcefully. Finney's research showed that amongst those coming to faith, nearly half said that the friendship of another Christian (or other Christians) was one of the most significant factors leading to conversion.⁵ Alongside this should be placed the observation that new converts quite rapidly face the danger of losing contact with non-Christian friends.⁶

This could be explained by a number of different factors, but one of the most significant of these is that for the new Christian the available resources of leisure time will with increasing likelihood be taken up by church-connected activities. To an extent this is both natural and healthy. There is both a desire amongst new converts to spend time with newly found Christian friends, and also the appetite (and real need) to explore the Christian faith and to learn to grow and mature in Christian knowledge. But the downside of this evangelistically, is that church quite quickly becomes the centre of this new use of leisure time. Sundays and some weekday evenings begin to revolve around church activities, and with growing maturity in faith comes an ever-increasing range of opportunities for service and – in due course – responsibility within the church context. As leisure time is re-allocated, new Christians find that any left-over available time is spent catching up with other relational obligations, usually family ones. As priorities are thus reassigned, it is usually the case that the area of non-Christian friendships is the one that is neglected.

This sort of pattern is reproduced over and over again in churches up and down the country. What happens in effect can be put quite simply: the most likely source and mode of evangelistic effectiveness through friendships with non-Christians is that which most churches find it hardest

⁵ Finney, *op. cit.*, pp.43f.

⁶ I was told a few years ago that research had been done which established that within two years of a profession of faith, a new Christian was likely to lose 75% of his or her non-Christian friendships. I have not been able to track down this research, but the findings would certainly be close to the reality observed in many church contexts.

to reproduce in practice. It takes a proactive strategy to counter this sort of trend, and, as such strategies are very seldom initiated or thought about, the painful truth is that the church's circle of evangelistic influence is progressively and effectively being reduced and marginalised.

But to move further with this challenge, what has been striking me more recently is that people actually need *help* in the art of making friends. I can well remember one of the first missions that I led with theological students. It was not a long event: just three days. We visited a team ministry with four churches, ranging in style from traditional Anglican through to what was really an Anglican house church. The team took part in around fifteen different events in different locations during the course of the weekend, from meetings in local pubs to a rather formal musical evening in a fifteenth century church building. I took about a dozen people with me, the majority of whom were training for the ordained ministry. During the week after the mission we sat down and talked through our experiences, sharing lessons learnt and challenges faced. I asked them each to say what was the most difficult thing that they had come up against during the weekend. The result was quite striking. I had expected problems along the lines of 'How do you begin to answer particularly difficult questions? What do you do when confronted with a pastoral situation which clearly needed more professional counselling? How do you begin to say something Christian in a secular environment?' and so on. In fact, the biggest problem faced by three quarters of the team was simply this. How do you begin to talk to someone you have never met before – about *anything*? The challenge we began to address with the team was therefore not so much to do with any specifics of apologetics and evangelism, but rather with the issue of inter-personal conversation: about how to take an interest in someone else and begin to talk to them at even the most simple level. It was really the issue of how to be human.

I am coming to believe, therefore, that one of the challenges facing our churches today is simply the question of how to help people to be human in their relationships with other people. And if what we are saying about evangelism through friendships is true, we need to be seriously addressing the issue of how to start and develop such friendships. For some the need is to discover (or rediscover) the motivating, empowering, and risk-taking love of God which leads us away from ourselves and our own concerns, and out towards other people; for many others it is the need at the level of the practical know-how through example, experience, advice, and apprenticeship.

This was confirmed for me recently. During some mission preparation meetings at two churches I focused amongst other things on this need for the nurturing of friendships outside the church circle. But instead of assuming that everyone would (a) instinctively know that this was needed, and therefore (b) re-double their efforts to make sure that it was

happening, I decided to acknowledge the difficulties in the deceptively simple business of making friends. What followed was akin to a corporate sigh of relief. At last we were addressing a very real – but often guilt-inducing – issue. From this point, the meeting took a very different, and quite unexpected course, but a very fruitful one. We began to discuss this whole area and the implications it had for the structures of church and personal life, and we spent some time sharing ideas and experiences at a very practical level, admitting failure, asking questions about time and priorities, reviewing church structures and expectations and ways of opening up friendships in the local neighbourhood, using homes, how to speak to a neighbour who had effectively been ignored for years, practical ways of praying, and so on.

Our contemporary society is one in which the basic nourishment of human relationships is under threat from many different directions. We have mentioned the pressures of time already, and how the church might – inadvertently perhaps – be becoming a partner in such pressures. But there are other major players. Perhaps some of the greatest threats are coming by courtesy of the digital revolution which brings with it enormous benefits, but enormous challenges. Rightly, the changes we are living through are being compared with the greatest revolutions in the past, and the implications for society are just as profound. What concerns me at this point is the relational impact of such changes. For the increasing drift of society towards more individualistic, introverted and passive forms of entertainment and socialising (nearly all fed by the latest technologies) is reaping its own harvest in the decline in human relationships.

At one level, such changes have been around for a while. On a recent mission, for example, a lady quite openly explained to me that nearly all the relationships which were real to her were those which she lived out through television soaps. In a quite literal sense, these characters were her friends. She knew them and loved them. Viewing figures for television soaps suggest that our addiction to such programmes represents something more than simply that they are good television. There are emotional attachments being made here which are sometimes pursued and valued because of their absence in real life.

But in addition, many of us are now being increasingly wedded to various forms of artificial and information media through which we are either forced, or tempted, to live out our daily lives. At work things get done through computers, modems, faxes, video-conferencing. At home we become addicted – in a parallel way – to personal computers, personal stereos, playstations, the television, and so on. The phrase ‘Virtual reality’ is more than simply a description of a digital realisation. For some, the reality which is thus digitally engendered is coming close to being the sum total of reality that there is.

In his book *The Road Ahead*, Bill Gates (the founder of Microsoft) who is reputedly the world's richest man and certainly one of its most influential, sets out his vision of a world completely harnessed by computer technology. He describes, for example, a period in his life when he was dating a woman who lived in a different city.

We spent a lot of time together on e-mail. And we figured out a way we could sort of go to the movies together. We'd find a film that was playing at about the same time in both our cities. We'd drive to our respective theaters, chatting on our cellular phones. We'd watch the movie, and on the way home we'd use our cellular phones again to discuss the show. In the future this sort of 'virtual dating' will be better because the movie watching could be combined with a videoconference.⁷

What he describes in the book is at one level a technological marvel – a world in which your house is programmed to do everything for you; from automatically turning on your favourite music when you enter the room, to bringing up your favourite picture on a giant screen. But at a far more important level it represents something quite different. As one writer put it in the preface to his review of Gates' book, 'Take a deep breath and a stiff drink before daring to enter Microsoft Bill's nightmarish vision of a technological future.'⁸

But this sort of thing is not that far off in certain spheres. A recent TV documentary introduced the prospect of the 'virtual reality' office, where people no longer need even to go to work, but can do everything through a computer screen from home. There is nothing it seems that can not be done for you. But there lies the problem. It even replaces human contact and relationships with silicone substitutes.

All this presents peculiar challenges in the area of human relationships – both now and in the near future, not least for the church. But – putting it positively – it also presents real possibilities. For even politicians are finding in the word 'community' the description of a reality which they know communicates to our contemporary society. Perhaps one of the main reasons for this is that it communicates to an awareness that any real sense of community seems to be slipping away. The increasing desire for expressions of human 'community' in our society means that our opportunities for creating real relationship bridges are all the greater.

All this takes us back therefore to the need to develop friendships and to be involved in the wider sense of community outside the church context. At a simple practical level, this is where the sort of community projects in which many Christians are involved are so important: school

⁷ Bill Gates, *The Road Ahead* (New York, 1995), p. 206.

⁸ Quoted from a review in *The Ecologist* (July/August, 1997) in *R Briefing* 16 (1997).

PTAs, action for local issues, legal advice, and so on. These are not just means to an end of making friends. They are authentic expressions of what it means to live out the gospel in all areas of life. As we have seen, the very credibility of the message in the world's eyes is so often dependent upon such action and activity. But in the particular context of friendship, it is often those Christians who are involved in projects outside church territory who have least difficulty in bridging the friendship gap.

3. Ordinary church worship is an evangelistic opportunity

Another facet of this idea that evangelism is essentially a relational process which involves dialogue is the observation that though we often focus all our attention as churches upon certain set-piece evangelistic events, it is very often meetings and events which are not specifically intended as evangelistic which are sometimes more significant in bringing outsiders to faith.

Judging from my own experience of church practice generally, the traditional approach tends to be some variation on a guest service strategy. Perhaps once every three months or so, the preacher (often a visiting evangelist) is invited in to preach with outsiders particularly in mind. Leaving aside the success or otherwise of such invitations in terms of numbers of real outsiders, I am interested in their evangelistic effectiveness at a communicational level.

To use the jargon, the form of communication being directed to the outsiders at such events is most definitely hot. They will understandably feel that everything has been put on just for them. The service is more than usually outsider- or seeker-friendly, so that, when it is done well, outsiders will feel welcomed rather than ostracised by what goes on. The hymns will be more generalised in address, picking up themes which are factual and third-person, rather than second person (e.g., 'I love you Lord...') where such language implies a relationship with God which does not as yet exist. The sermon then addresses the outsider. As a means of communication it is straight, and aims to persuade the mind and move the heart, and maybe even bring to the point of commitment.

I have no intrinsic problems with this, and have preached at hundreds of services like it. But the point I want to reflect on in this context is that for many new Christians, the route to faith came via the ordinary non-guest services. It was during the week-by-week ordinary church services that the gospel had been heard and assimilated and that the evangelising of the outsider had actually taken place.

My hunch is that the reasons for this are in line with the relational factors that we have been considering throughout this article. We could put it this way: in an ordinary church service, intended primarily for Christians, the outsider's question is not so much, 'How am I responding to all this overtly evangelistic stuff which is coming thick and fast at me?',

but 'What's in it for *them*? Why is it that these Christians seem to believe what they're singing about, and why is it that this Christianity thing seems to be meeting them at their points of need and helping them to live?' This, therefore, brings us back very much to the relational-dialogue mode of evangelism. It raises the issue of the truth and trustworthiness of the gospel not directly as a head-on intellectual encounter about which a decision must be made, but rather in a more tangential way by means of raising questions in the mind of the perceptive non-Christian outsider. But my point is that these questions are nonetheless evangelistic. 'Am I in the position of faith which is being demonstrated and heard here? How do I respond to this way of thinking? Does this Christianity help them to live, and might it not be in a position to help me?', and so on.

From an apologetic point of view, one could argue that the same thing is being communicated in both cases. But it is being communicated in rather different ways. In the one, it is predominantly via the sung, spoken, and preached Word aimed at the outsider, whilst in the other, it is via the worshipping community as it dwells in its own confession, drawing near to God, confessing its failings, responding to forgiveness, and feeding on God's Word for its teaching, benefit and further discipling. As a means of evangelism, both have their place. But where we often assume that it is the first approach which constitutes proper evangelism, it may be the second which is more productive evangelistically. In a cultural context in which no Christian background can any longer be assumed, and in which the process of evangelism will involve nearly always a lengthy dialogue between mutually exclusive views about the nature of reality, the second approach, tangential as it is, may have a lot to offer. It raises the worldview question without seeking some sort of immediate, crisis, personal response to what is being offered. Once again of course it is congregationally driven, for it lives and breathes by the testimony of the gospel incarnated in the lives of the worshipping Christian community.

It is not surprising that Finney's survey referred to earlier found that one of the most effective evangelistic questions is simply 'Please will you come to Church with me on Sunday?''⁹

4. Churches usually under-equip their lay people for evangelistic opportunities at their place of work

In beginning to explore this final reflection, it is appropriate to quote a second time from Lesslie Newbigin's article referred to at the start of this article. In commenting on the location of God's activity through his people in the world, he says: 'The primary action of the Church in the world is the action of its members in their daily work.'¹⁰

⁹ Finney, *op. cit.*, p.79.

¹⁰ Newbigin, *op. cit.*, p.154.

In answer to the question, 'Where does the church operate?', the instinctive answer 'On Sundays at...' is revealed by this quotation as being rather badly flawed. Such a reductionist understanding is also – more importantly – very much less than properly biblical. Peter, for example, has no hesitation in his First Epistle in instructing the church in the same breath both about its nature and calling as God's people and about the location of that calling in the non-Christian world. After all it is here – 'living such good lives amongst the pagans'¹¹ – that most day-to-day opportunities for evangelism will actually take place.

This broader understanding of where the church properly functions as the Church is greatly needed today. Many biblical perceptions of the church and its calling are systematically deconstructed and curtailed by ways of thinking which are either geographically or functionally inadequate. And both misunderstandings arise out of an inadequate theology of the church as God's missionary people. As a result, many church evangelistic strategies seem to stop psychologically at the church porch. The assumption is either that congregational evangelism has to happen in church buildings, or that God's missionary people stop being his missionary people when they are not there.

Where, therefore, many evangelistic strategies fall short is in failing to help lay people in their witness at the work place. Here after all is the context in which many people develop significant and important friendships. Yet so often the idea of sharing the gospel in the work context is alien to most Christians' experience. This is not because they do not want it to happen. Far from it. It is rather because up-front evangelistic opportunities simply do not often arise in the normal course of business. Yet many Christians in the workplace are made to feel guilty because of a kind of evangelical expectation that this is the kind of evangelism which should be happening. This sort of pressure can force the issue of evangelism either into a kind of proclamation which becomes almost Martian in its inappropriateness, or else tends to force the whole issue of speaking about God at work onto the backburner.

I was recently talking to a Christian who had come to the point of feeling guilty that he did not match up to the sort of expectations in evangelism that his teaching from Church seemed to be laying upon him. He did not seem to encounter the conversational openings which he expected. No-one seemed on the surface to be remotely interested in talking about God or sin or salvation. As a result he was sensing failure as a witness, and carried around a de-motivating sense of guilt as a result.

In response to this type of experience it is of course appropriate to emphasise what we have been saying about relational dialogue. As in other areas of witness, it is the life of the Christian which will count in

¹¹ 1 Pet. 2:11-12.

support of, or in contradicting, any specific words used. At this level the issues of respect for other people, personal loyalty, honesty, and the use of time will always figure prominently in the dialogue – even when no words are used.

But as far as words themselves are concerned, what I believe we need to work at more realistically in this whole area is the task of making connections between the gospel and the place of work. As the person mentioned above began to reflect on his experience, he began to discover that he *was* in fact getting opportunities for evangelism, but these were not arising in contexts where specifically religious subjects were being spoken of, but rather in conversations about ethical and moral issues which arose out of the concerns of the business itself.

I believe that work-related questions and issues like these will increasingly be the major entrance point for talking about faith at work. This is partly because we can no longer rely (could we ever?) on a residue of Christian consciousness to fuel day-to-day conversations upon more overtly religious themes. (In this respect, the expectations implied by some evangelistic training schemes that such conversations will be the norm strike me as being depressingly unrealistic.) We will often need to find ways of entry via other routes. But the other reason why such ethical and moral work-related issues become so important is that even in our radically secularised society, in which ‘religion’ has effectively been marginalised, many people are discovering that some sort of moral and ethical framework is still needed to handle life. Morality keeps slipping in via the back door just when some were saying that we did not need it any more. Significantly then, many of today’s very public political and social debates (in which people express their need for answers) are actually debates about right and wrong. They are moral debates.

How then do we begin to explore these connections? Such a process will most helpfully involve a two-way process of reflection in the light of experience. In the first place, ministers need to learn from lay people the points of contact between what they do at work and what they hear on Sunday which might helpfully inform the ways, for example, in which the Bible is taught from the pulpit and applied to the congregation. What tends to happen all too often is that the preached word on a Sunday simply fails to connect with the issues and realities of the wider world of Monday morning. Applications from the pulpit even tend towards serving and preserving a church culture by giving the impression that the gospel applies only to church matters (*e.g.*, the need for more commitment; the need to give; the need to service the various activities of the congregation through leadership and stewardship, and so on) rather than by making dynamic links with the world outside and its affairs. This is, of course, a denial of the very nature of the gospel itself, but we know all-too-well how easily this impression is created and sustained. Church by this route

too easily becomes a culture of its own – almost hermetically sealed – with its own mores and cultural norms.

Secondly, lay people might be encouraged to explore the biblical connections which arise from the issues which they engage with day-to-day. Sometimes this is most helpfully done by means of peer group meetings (maybe at the workplace itself) where the issues which arise at work might be identified and explored for the light which the Bible sheds on them.

A heightening of awareness and insight in this area of interface between work issues and gospel issues may lead us into more realistic and positive attitudes towards the kind of evangelism which is appropriate and possible in the workplace. Alongside the witness of life, it could usefully lead us to further reflection upon the kind of conversational evangelism so frequently demonstrated by Jesus in his encounters in the Gospels. It is often the case, for example, that his conversations arose out of quite secular and seemingly mundane concerns which are taken to the more spiritual level in the process of dialogue.¹² Jesus certainly knew how to start where people are. We too need to learn more about how to say something spiritual in the context of the seemingly mundane and worldly. Perhaps also, we need to learn more about the art – which Jesus demonstrates so tellingly – of raising the right kind of questions in our hearers' minds, as well as trying to supply answers.¹³ It is often in this way that significant headway is made in evangelism – often through what we have been calling relational dialogue. Skills like these depend upon a process of reflection which involves a deeper awareness of how the good news that we bring relates to the concerns and issues which people face. They bring us back once more to the vital context of ongoing friendships, characterised by the love of God, in which such evangelistic dialogue finds its truest and most fruitful outworking.

¹² *E.g.*, the sublime teaching of Jesus that he is the one through whom men and women will worship the Father 'in Spirit and in truth' begins with a request for a drink (John 4:7ff.); the provocative story about the Rich Fool begins with a legal wrangle about inheritance (Luke 12:13ff.), *etc.*

¹³ *E.g.*, Mark 8:27, 29 (par.); 10:17ff. (par.); Matt. 12:10-11; John 6:5-6, *etc.*

REVIEWS

Ayrshire and the Reformation: People and Change, 1490-1600

Margaret H.B. Sanderson

Tuckwell Press, East Linton, 1997; 193pp., £14.99; ISBN 1 898410 91 7

The study of the Scottish Reformation in the latter half of this century has undergone numerous revisions, among the foremost being the shift to localised studies, called for in 1978 by Ian Cowan. Since this challenge was issued, several such studies have appeared, three in book form. Margaret Sanderson's new volume is the most recent addition to this collection, and it proves again the value of the exercise. Ayrshire was, without question, of immense importance in the Scottish Reformation, and Sanderson skilfully charts the ways in which local traditions of religious dissent made an impact upon the region, and indeed the country as a whole. Utilising her surpassing talent for chasing down family connections – which were of tantamount importance in sixteenth-century Scotland – Sanderson demonstrates that those Ayrshire dissenters known as the 'Lollards of Kyle' were followed by children and grandchildren who continued this tradition in their localities. Moreover, they contributed to a developing Protestant network in the 1540s and 1550s, and played key roles in the Reformation Parliament of 1560 and subsequent religious settlements.

The volume begins with a detailed description of Ayrshire parish life before the Reformation, emphasising the social impact of both the strengths and weaknesses of the late-medieval church in Scotland. There follows a detailed account of the Lollards of Kyle, including important scholarly interaction with older historiography (D. E. Easson) and significant new information about family connections. The subsequent chapters offer a chronological narrative of the growth and development of Protestantism in Ayrshire, from its underground beginnings to the formation of 'privy kirks' or conventicles, to the establishment of the new church. A focus throughout is the way in which the church – Roman Catholic and Protestant – ministered to the people.

Sanderson also describes the involvement of Ayrshire natives in the activities of the Lords of the Congregation at a national level, though the account is by no means limited to figures of national renown; it is replete with cameos of everyday life gleaned from extensive research into burgh records. This breadth lends the study a

healthy balance, and consequently a fuller understanding of how lay people supported their church, and how it ministered to them.

Sanderson has managed well the difficult task of writing for a mixed audience. Those acquainted with Scottish Reformation scholarship will find both new information and fresh analysis, the latter suggesting some qualifications to recent revisionist interpretations. While the footnotes are limited, they offer important references to primary sources, and the same may be said for the bibliography. Also useful to the scholar is a revised *Fasti* of ministers, exhorters, and readers in Ayrshire 1559-1600, appended to the text. But the reader less familiar with the field should have no difficulty following either the narrative or the interpretative matter. Sanderson has taken care to explain the terminology of the sixteenth-century Scottish church, from 'benefices' to 'readers', and she introduces the structures of Ayrshire society, both rural and urban.

This excellent study will be of interest to scholars and others interested in the history of the Scottish church. Tuckwell Press is to be commended for including this volume in its vigorous programme of Scottish academic material, and for making it available in paperback.

Martin H. Dotterweich, New College, Edinburgh

Princeton Seminary: Faith & Learning 1812-1868

David B. Calhoun

Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1994; xxvi+495pp.,
£17.95; ISBN 0 85151 670 X

In today's climate of almost ritualistic debunking of anyone or anything historical, it is refreshing to find an openly sympathetic account of the early years of Princeton Seminary. While one would expect this from a Banner of Truth publication, the reader will not be deprived of insightful criticisms of the Princetonians by its author, David Calhoun. Reflecting careful and extensive interaction with original sources and current literature, this volume, the first of two, covers the first fifty years of the Seminary's history. Written by a church historian with a keen understanding of Reformed theology, the book's balanced portrayal of 'events, people and thought' will provide edifying reading for historian and theologian alike.

Those accustomed to thinking of the Princetonians as stodgy intellectuals intolerant of other theological positions will be pleasantly surprised with the men they encounter in the pages of this work. Though intellectuals of unusual depth (Joseph Addison Alexander, for example, could read at least seventeen languages when he became Associate Professor of Oriental and Biblical

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Literature), the Princeton professors were as thoroughly committed to piety as they were to scholarship. The 'Plan of a Theological Seminary', written for Princeton prior to its founding (and included as a valuable appendix), called for the professors 'to encourage, cherish, and promote devotion and personal piety among their pupils'. This they did in the classroom, in private conversation, and in the celebrated Sabbath Afternoon Conferences in which students and professors met weekly for singing, prayer, and a discussion of 'experimental or practical religion'. The piety instilled in the lives of the students was both devotional and active. Seminarians were expected to engage in private and corporate worship and were taught to consider evangelism 'as their highest honour and happiness'. Princeton Seminary considered evangelism so crucial to its philosophy of ministry that in 1836 it became the first school in the world to employ a professor of missions. Fully one-third of the students who attended the seminary during its first fifty years later served in a missionary setting, ministering to American Indians, slaves and peoples in numerous foreign countries.

The author's colourful portraits of the Princeton professors present not only their considerable attainments and dual commitment to scholarship and piety but reveal the gracious humanity typical of these men. It was not unheard of for Charles Hodge to present 'tearful, wide-open eyes' to his class as he spoke of 'the love of God to lost sinners'. Nor was it unusual for Archibald Alexander to spend half of his day in private conversation with his students. While the Princetonians espoused a 'sturdy Calvinistic theology', they benefited from, respected, and aided other traditions. J.A. Alexander exhorted his students to learn from the linguistic research of the European critics (though of course he disagreed with their presuppositions and conclusions). Charles Hodge, while studying in Germany, regularly shared fellowship and interacted with a group of men and women from different churches, including Roman Catholics. And Samuel Miller 'gladly contributed to a fund for constructing an Episcopal church across the street from the seminary'. When the duty of controversy proved inevitable, these defenders of the faith attempted to hold the truth, yet to do so in love.

There are aspects of this volume which will appeal to readers of varied interests: the influence of the Scottish church on Princeton Seminary; intellectual movements such as the Enlightenment, Romanticism, and the democratization of American Christianity in the Second Great Awakening; the formative influences on Charles Finney's theology and the contrasting theologies of Princeton, New England (Samuel Hopkins), and New Haven (Nathaniel Taylor); abundant and descriptive historical detail; and warm anecdotes of

family life. The consistent theme, however, of 'faith and learning' is so prevalent throughout that all readers will find it difficult not to be both humbled and motivated by the example of the Princetonians. This reviewer wholeheartedly commends this first volume and eagerly awaits the arrival of the second.

Michael W. Honeycutt, New College, Edinburgh

Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909-1936

Bruce L. McCormack

Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1995; xiv+499pp., £50; ISBN 0 19 826337 6

In recent years a variety of new perspectives have been offered on Barth by works such as: George Hunsinger's *How to read Karl Barth* (Oxford, 1991), Nigel Biggar's *The Hastening that Waits: Karl Barth's Ethics* (Oxford, 1993), Graham Ward's *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology* and John Webster's *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation* (both Cambridge, 1995). To this list may be added Bruce McCormack's book, which in my estimation is one of the most significant studies of Barth, within the English-speaking world, to emerge for a generation.

The book is a revised version of his doctoral dissertation *A Scholastic of a Higher Order: The Development of Karl Barth's Theology, 1921-1931* (Princeton Theological Seminary, 1989), and McCormack's intention is quite simply to overthrow the paradigm which has dominated our understanding of Barth's development for a generation or more. Further, McCormack intimates that the present work is the first half of the project through which he will establish his new reading of Barth. The subsequent volume will offer an analysis of Barth's Göttingen lectures (from the period 1924-25) which were significantly influenced by his adoption of the Christological model unveiled to him through his reading of Heinrich Heppes's *Reformed Dogmatics*.

In plotting the overthrow of this paradigm, he seeks to counter the picture of Barth's development which was established by Hans Urs von Balthasar's *The Theology of Karl Barth* (1951), and maintained in works such as T.F. Torrance's *Karl Barth: An Introduction to his Early Theology, 1910-1931* (1962). For von Balthasar and Torrance *et al.*, the defining moment in that development occurs about 1931 when Barth's engagement with Anselm's *Prologion* led him radically to reformulate his theological method, and effectively discard his

previous theological endeavours. The result of this radical reformulation was the *Church Dogmatics*.

McCormack's contention is, quite simply, that von Balthasar and Torrance have misread Barth, with their focus on theological method being effectively shown as inappropriate. According to McCormack, it is theological *content* and not theological method which is central. The tenor and intention of his book is evident in the following programmatic statements, wherein he suggests that

The central goal here will be to demonstrate that the 'turn' to a 'neo-orthodox' form of theology which is usually thought to have taken place with the *Church Dogmatics* in 1931-2 is a chimera. There was no such turn. Subsequent to his break with 'liberalism' in 1915, Barth became what we shall call a critically realistic dialectical theologian – and that is what he remained throughout his life.... The fruit of this genetic-historical work is nothing less than a completely new way of reading Karl Barth's theology.... His mature theology is best understood as a distinctive form of 'dialectical theology'.... Where that has not been grasped, virtually the whole of Barth's theology has been read in the wrong light.

The radical nature of McCormack's proposal is undoubtedly clarified by these statements, and those familiar with the received paradigm may require a little time to recover their composure before attempting to come to terms with the implications of his work.

The attempt so to do is undoubtedly a rewarding experience, with new light being thrown, at every turn, upon the most significant Reformed theologian of the twentieth century. No-one who wishes to engage with Barth and with Reformed theology can afford to ignore this book which will quickly establish itself as required reading for those so interested.

The old paradigm may not yet have succumbed to the new, but battle has now been joined.

John L. McPake, Newtongrange

The Search for God – Can Science Help?

John Houghton

Lion Publishing, Oxford, 1995; 224pp., £6.99; ISBN 0 7459 3305 X

Sir John Houghton was formerly Professor of Atmospheric Physics at Oxford and now, among distinguished pursuits, is co-chairman of the Science Assessment Working Group of the Intergovernmental Panel

on Climate Change. He was recently awarded the Gold Medal of the Royal Astronomical Society.

When twentieth-century scientific enquiry gets to grips with fundamental questions of existence, such as: 'How did the universe begin?' (cosmology), 'What is the natural world made of?' (Quantum theory), 'What is space – time?' (Relativity theory), 'What is life?' (DNA, *etc.*), 'What is human consciousness?' (Quantum theory and Chaos theory), it cannot fail to raise questions that border on philosophy and theology. This is evident in the writings (from many diverse points of view) of scientists working in these areas.

John Houghton is one of several writers who, like John Polkinghorne, write from a position of clear Christian conviction. Far from merely putting the case that there must be a Designer, the author takes us into the Judeo-Christian world-view of the Bible, using his scientific knowledge to illuminate such subjects as the 'Hiddenness of God', the 'Personality of God', 'Prayer' and 'Incarnation'. The book is well written and should certainly be readable by an intelligent non-scientist. Even his extra 'boxes' giving further insight for the scientifically trained are not difficult to follow. For those who have read other authors in this general area there will still be much in this book to give further insight.

Like the works of other Christians who are scientists, Houghton's writing is kind to his atheistic opponents such as Richard Dawkins. This reviewer believes the time is far overdue for a much stronger rebuttal of the all-pervasive materialism that is the hidden unfounded assumption of so much modern scientific writing. Nevertheless, John Houghton has given us a very helpful book that is certainly to be recommended to all who are interested in how a scientist who is a Christian reacts to the great questions of humankind about origins, meaning and final purpose.

Howard Taylor, St David's Church of Scotland, Knightswood, Glasgow

Out of Contradiction. Meditations Towards a Contemporary Spirituality

Patrick Grant

Pentland Press, Edinburgh, 1994; x+64pp., £5.50; ISBN 1 8521 220 0

This book provides penetrating insights into the relationship between God and his creation and at the same time shows unexpected ways of looking at old and familiar themes. The book is learned and scholarly, aiming to explore a personal response to various traditional Christian ideas, especially as encountered in a modern world of deep

scepticism and uncertainty. Patrick Grant defines contradiction as 'the discovery of an immediate negative contrast to a hoped-for good'. The author says that we begin with hope and are soon confronted with the contradiction that the flawed world is not as we hoped. Moreover, reflection shows that nature prevents us realising some of our deepest hopes, for instance to live without separation, pain and loss. We then pierce contradiction with love which bears faith. The author suggests that language can penetrate only so far in understanding but that the act of will we call love will take us deeper.

The first brief chapter gives an overview to spirituality setting out basic ideas, the emphasis being on the term *humanum* which indicates 'the condition of being in-process from past to future which is basic to what it means to be a person'. The author acknowledges that the Spirit moves in different ways and that there are many fashions in spirituality. He proposes a skeleton for the meditations and the spirituality they explore which is arranged in the second section in parts under the umbrella of 'The Threefold Humanum' using vivid metaphors in the shapes of crystal, cross and dove (or matter, imagination and spirit) standing broadly in 'a polar relationship' to the ideas propounded in the first section. A third section keys New Testament texts to the main topic of the previous section and a final section links notes to the whole book. This is a book which should be read and re-read, time being taken to ponder so that its richness can be enjoyed.

Janet L. Watson, Glasgow Bible College

The Servant-Son

Donald Coggan

SPCK, London, 1995; 144pp., £4.99; ISBN 0 28104 802 9

Donald Coggan says that the purpose of this book is to help us meet Jesus, 'know him and see him more clearly as he was – the Servant-Son of God – and as he is now, today and always'. He sets out to do this in nine chapters based on Jesus' life with a set of Bible references at the beginning of each chapter. They range through from Formative Years, Baptism, Temptation, Suffering Servant, First Sermon, Minister of Health, to Dramatist. These are chapters on Jesus as a human being and give a brief insight into Jesus the man. There is then a chapter on Servant-Son-Church which talks of Jesus as the Messiah, the one anointed by God to fulfil a certain task. This he did by being the Servant-Son even to death; 'As the Father sent me, so I send you'. Dr Coggan faces us with the fact that the church is here to continue the task, though in different circumstances and under different

conditions. In the final chapter – ‘Jesus Then and Now’ – he poses the question, ‘What is our attitude to Jesus *now*? – Thanks for the memory!’ If there is more to Jesus than that, what does the ‘more’ consist of? He uses different methods in each chapter, some meditative, some reflective, some prosaic to enable any group studying this to gain greater insights. Each chapter is followed by questions aimed to elicit further thought and there are prayers at the end of each chapter to make the point that Bible study not accompanied by prayer is a ‘poor thing’. There is a bibliography at the end of the book followed by an index to Scripture references. This is a powerful little book which Bible study groups would find a great enabler for Christian growth.

Janet L. Watson, Glasgow Bible College

The Funeral Service: A Guide

David Saville

Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1996; 128pp., £6.99; ISBN 0 340 65183 0

This is an unusual and possibly unique book. The author himself describes it as ‘very much a popular “consumer guide” to funeral services’. His aims are to help people plan and prepare for a service for a close relative or friend; to help people plan their own funeral service; to help people explore the meaning and significance of a Christian funeral service.

His method is to follow the pattern of a typical funeral service, explain the different parts and along the way deal with issues of general concern. As he is an Anglican minister, there is a bias towards his own tradition although reference is made to the United Reformed Church and Methodist Service Books as well as the Roman Catholic Liturgy and the funeral service prepared by the Joint Liturgical Group.

Helpful comments are provided on appropriate Scripture readings, popular funeral hymns and the place of the sermon or ‘homily’. With regard to the latter, it is encouraging, not to say challenging, for ministers to know that in a survey of bereaved people in Sheffield it emerged that the ‘address’ was what people remembered most clearly and was the part of the service which gave most comfort.

‘Postscripts’ appended to various chapters seek to open up related issues like hell, the nature of heaven and the increasingly pressing question of whether reincarnation can be accommodated within the Christian faith. The nature of the book precludes detailed theological discussion of these but with admirable sensitivity the author argues for orthodox Christian positions.

David Saville has obviously reflected deeply on his own pastoral practice and experience and has provided a valuable resource for the whole Christian community.

Fergus C. Buchanan, Milngavie St Paul's Church

Ordinary Mysticism

Dennis Tamburello

Paulist Press, New York, 1996; 160pp., \$12.95; ISBN 0 8091 3634 1

This primer on mysticism is intended to open our eyes to the fact that mysticism was not just for the medieval mystics but is relevant for our world today. Dennis Tamburello challenges misconceptions about mysticism in a direct and thought-provoking way, showing why mysticism should be an important part of all Christians' lives. Tamburello draws our attention to the fact that mysticism was constructed by the Fathers of Eastern Christianity and is the common heritage of all Christians across denominations from Eastern Orthodox to Presbyterian.

The first chapter describes the many meanings of mysticism. The following chapters offer insights from key mystics on topics relevant in today's society such as Christian life as process, contemplation and action, and union with God. The book draws on the works of Bernard of Clairvaux, Julian of Norwich, Francis of Assisi, Teresa of Avila, Meister Eckhart and others, showing that the core of mysticism does not refer to 'ecstatic experiences, unusual visions, miraculous powers and psychosomatic gifts (although some mystics have enjoyed these)'. Intimacy with God, and a connection between mysticism and everyday life, should be the foundation of Christian living. Mysticism should integrate action and contemplation of both love of God and love of neighbour and enrich our understanding of God.

I found this book an easy read yet enlightening in the way that Tamburello encourages the reader to ignore twentieth-century society's suppression and denial of things mystical. Instead *Ordinary Mysticism* gets to the heart of this tradition of Christian experience. Tamburello stresses how important it is for Christians to claim everyday experiences as mystical, recognising them as an integral part of our intimacy with God and one another. It is good to know that by doing so it is possible to develop a spirituality that is contemporary yet rooted in tradition.

Janet L. Watson, Glasgow Bible College

The Rough Places Plain. Anglican Evangelical Conclusions, 1995

Latimer House, Oxford, 1995; 128pp., £3.50; ISBN 0 946307 466

This Latimer double monograph is a very valuable document indeed, and ought to be carefully read by all who are concerned with where Evangelicalism is, and where it is going, at least in one of the most influential denominations in Great Britain, the Church of England. In effect it consists of expanded conclusions of the working parties commissioned by the Anglican Evangelical Assembly of 1994 and agreed the following year. They represent the 'unfudged' agreement of representatives of the whole spectrum of Anglican Evangelicalism from classical to radical – which is no mean achievement.

Each of the groups pursued a particular track, Truth, Ministry, Church, Mission, Worship and Learning. Each track attempts to make a clear and concise assessment of the present scene in which the Church finds itself, making recommendations for forward-looking action both at national and local levels. Thus the Truth track, co-ordinated by the Reverend Wallace Benn, Vicar of Harold Wood, representing the more conservative wing, and Graham Cray, Principal of Ridley Hall, Cambridge, representing the more radical, focuses its attention on the authority and interpretation of Scripture, and encourages Evangelicals of all shades to study Scripture *together*, and to debate critical issues relative to its nature and interpretation, an exercise worth pursuing across the wider evangelical movement.

The Ministry track addresses itself to the overall question of ministry, both lay and ordained, and queries the nature of the ordained, whether office or function. The training of ordinands is discussed especially with respect to mission and evangelism in what has become a missionary church in this country. The Church track makes a critical assessment of the Church of England, a mixed denomination in which evangelical involvement is steadily growing. This is one the meatiest sections of the monograph. It urges Evangelicals to work for greater trust and better communication among themselves, and to continue their involvement in the structures of the Church of England – a stance 180 degrees at variance with the call for Evangelicals to come out of the Church of England thirty years ago.

The Mission track sees the Church as the agent of mission, engaged with the rapidly changing culture of the late twentieth century (culture is defined as 'the way we think without thinking'). Justice, especially for the poor and oppressed, is seen as an integral

part of mission. Finally, the Worship and Learning track calls for a full recognition of different aspects of worship unfolded in Scripture, and the need for different kinds of services from traditional to seeker, as well as a well worked-out strategy for adult learning.

The monograph also contains a dialogue between Benn and Cray on 'Truth and Biblical Hermeneutics', an address by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the sermon by Sir Fred Catherwood, President of the Evangelical Alliance, urging Anglican Evangelicals to exploit the many great opportunities afforded to an established church in a country of such great moral and spiritual need.

Peter Cook, St Andrew's, Cheadle Hulme

Atonement Today: A Symposium held at St John's College, Nottingham

Edited by John Goldingay

SPCK, London, 1995; 285pp., £17.99; ISBN 0 281 04894 0

This work, a collection of fifteen essays by thirteen people (the editor and Christina Baxter each contribute two), arises out of discussions and investigations among the staff at St John's College, Nottingham, and associated people. It is a good example of the tensions within part of the Christian world (*i.e.* Evangelicals) provoking debate and arguments which could then be proactive for those for whom the atonement may not be at present a live issue.

The work intends to move from a grounding in the biblical theology of the atonement to viewing it from models offered by contemporary experience. However, it is questionable how far one can move when the description of what the atonement was or is within theological understanding remains contentious. John Goldingay's essays are models of clarity and succinctness (a useful by-product of the 'contributing essays' format). Christina Baxter offers a sympathetic account of the attempts by Calvin, Warfield and Stott to insist on a penal aspect to the cross as well as its effects on God's anger. The problems with this (is God divided between Father and Son? is God really temperamental?) and its substitutionary implications (why should Christ be caught between us and God?) are spelled out with particular reference to the work of Frances Young. Baxter resolves some of the problems by exulting in the paradox of 'the cursed beloved': God himself paid the penalty.

The necessity for theology to avoid so-called legal metaphors is, as in Gunton's 1988 work, *The Actuality of the Atonement*, a motto for Goldingay. The atonement may be better viewed as something which is personal, but does that rule out using the legal metaphor to gain

insight, especially if it is understood as one model among others, and if it seems to be there in both Testaments? Surely there are elements of the personal in the legal, even if the atonement is understood as a matter of public (*i.e.* criminal) and not private law. A basic anthropological understanding shows that, where matters of ritual are involved, it is hard to separate the religious and the personal from the corporate and quasi-legal. Goldingay also wants Christ's death to be understood as representative:

this relationship in whose context Christ's offering took place is an already existing one. It is not the case that people were unable to relate to God before Jesus' act of self-offering to the Father. It is precisely because they were in relationship to God that there needed to be an offering of themselves to God in appreciation, gratitude, joy, commitment, hope, penitence, and recompense, expressed in the self-offering which characterises Christ's life as a whole.

Isaiah 53 is about restitution rather than purification (so-called guilt-offering rather than sin-offering), although purification, not punishment, did happen too. Leviticus is not about (God's) wrath, but about (our) disgust at failing him; Paul is not thinking in OT terms (but presumably inter-testamental ones) when he refers to the *orge theou*.

For Steven Travis, writing specifically about Paul, judgement is to do with the unfolding of the consequences of the sinful deed – not a punishment imposed extrinsically by God. He by-passes the question of whether *hilasterion* should be considered a place or the offering itself but argues that the penal substitutionary language of Maccabees should not be the background for Paul's usage.

Tom Smail asserts what is implicit in many of the contributions, that to talk of penal substitution does not connect with people today. He observes that, as preachers, 'we speak much more with Moltmann of Christ's justifying God to us by sharing on the cross our suffering and God-forsakenness than of Christ's justifying us to God by bearing our sins'. Too much is made of the alienation, sense of desolation, and too little of God's view of human sinfulness. 'Stories about judges coming down from the bench to pay fines or even face the death sentences they have imposed only serve to make the whole process more unreal and indeed unjust,' as Socinians thought even four centuries ago. In my view this seriously compromises what might be called the 'Barthian' view which informs Baxter's essay, and even John Stott's *The Cross of Christ*. Smail finishes his analysis with the wry comment: 'It might perhaps be just as well that others are not listening if we ourselves do not know what to say.' Christ's double identification of nature and love is helpful; the love or divine part of

Christ has the power to recreate. But Smail wants to avoid any notion of vicarious repentance or satisfaction of God's wrath and replace it with 'he was fulfilling and renewing the covenant'. There was no transaction, but rather a relational and *thus* 'transformational' justice (following Gunton). A humanity is provided which is close to our situation of ruin and which in rising makes heaven available. Jenny Sankey's essay which follows restates participation in Christ's humanity as mediated or at least encouraged by the eucharist; it is a bit anecdotal and magpie-like in its drawing of ideas from a variety of places and finishes with the curious statement, in the context of what 'satisfaction' means: 'To learn what it takes sexually to satisfy another human being is very close to learning what it means to satisfy God.' In other words God remains to be pleased by us: the atonement was just a start.

In the second part of the book, Christina Baxter wonders just *how* female humanity has been saved in Christ. Perhaps the very question illustrates some of the limitations of too strong a participative model. 'What is not assumed is not redeemed' was used by Gregory of Nazianzen with reference to Christ's having to have a human mind if human minds were to be saved. 'Behind the theory lay ideas to which our world no longer adheres, about the solidarity of the human race and about the possibility of one acting for all.' The rather obvious point is that Christ's maleness was necessary in order for him to be human, rather than saying anything about the superiority of males over females. Presumably non-human creation is also affected and yet that was hardly assumed. I think Baxter goes the wrong way here. As in a number of these essays, soteriology is left behind in favour of a wander into Christological territory (*i.e.* more who Christ was/is than how he did what he did). Sally Alford affirms that the feminist critiques should make us pause before giving too much universal weight to the particular. But, as with Baxter, she takes a long time to get to the crucial point (humans are as much different as they are shot through with a common nature), and again she strays from the central theme, only to return to it in the last few pages to state that self-sacrifice is not a helpful image for women, unless it is self-giving which is genuinely chosen, as it was in the case of Christ.

George Bebawi's piece on Athanasius, Anselm and Islam starts well, but this reviewer admits to finding himself lost after three pages, having by then already smelled a few over-generalisations. The essays of Michael Alford and Colin Greene share the conviction that the cross is meaningless for humans today because anthropological self-understanding no longer has a place for sin. To speak of the cross in terms of God's identification with suffering may be too much like cultural accommodation. Greene makes some telling points (sin could

be redefined as 'the failure to adhere to our God-given destiny and vocation'), before seeing its effects rather timelessly in the sense of cosmic change (aeonic, new age instigation). Alsford's essay is disappointing because it never gets to grips with the topic, no matter how useful a potted history of epistemology since Descartes he provides: his notion of humans as essentially 'coadunate' (roughly, relational) is insufficiently content-full to be useful. Gordon Oliver introduces Don Browning's model for psychotherapeutic care which is based on the *Christus Victor* model of the atonement. David Atkinson provides something a little more nuanced, by showing how forgiveness of the cross could be applied to four positions, thus providing a fourfold reading of the atonement – mistrust, shame, guilt, conflict: the watchword throughout his wise contribution is 'comprehensiveness' – of vision.

This is a mixed bag which perhaps works best when the contributors, in part, by-pass the tricky question of what the atonement was/is. Certainly the theological foundations are not dug anything like deeply enough. There would have been benefit from dialogue with traditions more conservative – the Pontifical Catholic, or Stuhlmacher and the (newer) Tübingen School, or with Leon Morris and his successors in the Tyndale Fellowship (a position expressed in the M. Selman-R.T. Beckwith volume which would have come too late for consideration), or with the North American Neo-Calvinists, or with Richard Swinburne. Behind the collection there stand the books of Gunton, Fiddes and Aulén. The writers are to be thanked for moving away from Moltmann's concerns towards considering what the atonement might mean for human beings' guilt. But I am not sure they have made as much progress as might have been expected.

Mark W. Elliott, Glasgow

The Bible as a Whole

Stephen Travis

Bible Reading Fellowship, Oxford, 1994; 280pp., £7.99;
ISBN 0 7459 2527 8

The Bible is now available in many contemporary translations, yet on every hand we meet profound ignorance of its contents and not only among non-churchgoers. A preacher I know shook hands at the church door with a member of the congregation who said he had been fascinated by his sermon on Amos as the only Amos he had ever heard of featured in a soap opera. He had no idea there was an Amos in the Bible! Some earlier writers have sought to address this problem by producing 'A Short Bible' or a 'Bible designed to be read as

Literature'. Stephen Travis takes a somewhat different path by making a selection of 130 passages of Scripture and providing a commentary on each, with chronology of event rather than of authorship determining the order. This is neither an anthology of favourite passages, nor a selection majoring in Bible books regarded as great writing by literary experts. For instance, there is nothing from the Epistle to the Hebrews. A reviewer is prevented from quibbling too much over the choices by the thought, 'What would I have omitted and how would reviewers see *my* selection?'

The book's aims govern its principles of selection, and these are threefold: to introduce the habit of regular Bible reading, to enable readers to see that the Bible is a coherent whole and to introduce the main themes of Christian belief and the main aspects of Christian discipleship. On the whole, this reader's verdict is that these aims have been achieved. There are eight chapters, four on each Testament, although the average length of those on the New is shorter than those on the Old. 'Beginnings', which takes the story as far as Judges, starts, in line with the principle of chronological arrangement and with real theological appropriateness, not with Genesis 1 but with John 1. There is little on Isaac and Jacob but much on Joseph – puzzling perhaps but wise, as this gripping story might be recalled by those who attended Sunday School in childhood, thus providing, quite early in the volume, welcome contact with the familiar among much that would be unfamiliar. As the arrangement is chronological, the author could have given a lot of passages from the historical books in his second chapter. There are some, of course, but also some helpful brief historical summaries, so that he can include more passages from the prophets, from Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. 'Life and Worship' looks at Israel as a community and shows the godly realism of the writers of the Wisdom books and the great diversity of experience with God touched in a well-selected group of seven Psalms. Issues of date, authorship, *etc.* are handled only in so far as they affect the actual aims of the selection. Not surprisingly, they figure rather more in the chapter 'Exile and After'. The writer's comments on Jonah and Daniel, in particular, will not be acceptable to all.

How difficult to make a brief selection from the four Gospels! Stephen Travis solved the problem by concentrating on the Gospel of Luke, which has been described as the most biographical of the four. This is understandable, but it is a pity that at least the flavour of the other three could not have been briefly conveyed. The next chapter consists entirely of selections from Acts. To read through these passages from Luke's two books therefore means that the reader has not only gained a grasp of the story of Jesus and the early Church in

chronological sequence but also has had major contact with the mind of one great biblical writer. Chapter seven focuses on the Epistles and gives passages from 1 Corinthians, Romans, 1 Thessalonians, Ephesians, 1 Peter and James, plus the whole of Philipians. This is good, as it was important for the reader to appreciate one New Testament letter in its wholeness. The brief closing chapter on Revelation wisely attempts no overall interpretation.

This book could be helpful not only to new Christians but to many more mature ones who, even after years in the faith, still do not feel they have a grasp of 'the Bible as a whole'.

Geoffrey Grogan, Glasgow

Readings in 1 Kings: An Interpretation Arranged for Personal and Group Bible Study with Questions and Notes

Ronald S. Wallace

Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh, 1995; xvi+174pp., £7.00; ISBN 0 7073 0751 1

This is a useful aid to the study of 1 Kings, aimed at the pastor or interested lay person, especially those who lead Bible Study groups. A brief introduction outlines the movement of God's plan of salvation both within 1 Kings and in the wider historical context of which this book is part, mentioning authorship and links with Deuteronomy in the briefest of terms. In the body of the book, Wallace breaks the text of 1 Kings into sixteen sections, each of which is considered in a chapter of his book. In each of his chapters, he provides an introductory paragraph that summarises the substance of the narrative, and then considers the circumstances suggested by the text in more detail and its theological implications under three or four sub-headings. Each chapter concludes with discussion questions that aim to help readers to think through the implications of the text for today, and brief 'notes' on topics of relevance to the chapter, *e.g.* 'Solomon as a type of Christ', 'Almug wood', 'the factual difficulties in this chapter', *etc.* The format is accessible and easy to use, the discussions of the text clear and theologically helpful, and the questions for discussion are appropriate for group study, being sufficiently open-ended and yet also sufficiently directional for that context.

Edward D. Herbert, Glasgow Bible College

Forbidden Revolutions: Pentecostalism in Latin America and Catholicism in Eastern Europe

David Martin

SPCK, London, 1996; 96pp., £7.99; ISBN 0 281 04999 8

This short but scholarly book is a slight revision of lectures delivered on several occasions in the early 1990s. Its aim is to understand the massive recent expansion of evangelical religion in Latin America and to highlight the neglected role of churches in the astonishing political and economic revolutions of 1989 and 1990 in Eastern Europe.

David Martin is a retired professor of sociology at London University, well known for his earlier critical work on the theory of secularisation, that is, the decline of religious institutions in Western Europe. Given his background, the author writes from a sociological rather than a theological perspective. Indeed the book appears to be primarily intended for the specialist or the sociologically literate rather than for a general audience. However, this is not a dry academic treatise. It remains sufficiently discursive and illustrative for the main ideas to be accessible to those not initiated in the language and concepts of sociology.

The central claim of the book is that, though the Christian religion and those who practise it may seem to lie at the margins of society, the church remains a powerful vehicle of political, social and personal change on at least two continents.

The first chapter is quite technical and difficult in places, sketching out some of the main theoretical ideas. The second chapter, however, is much easier reading, focusing on the dramatic growth of Pentecostalism in Latin America and its extraordinary cultural impact. Using a rather fragmentary combination of anecdotal evidence, personal observation and social analysis, Martin seeks to explain the appeal of Pentecostalism, especially among the poor and marginalised. The knock-on effects for Roman Catholicism are also considered. Similar expansions in charismatic Christianity are identified and briefly discussed in the cases of China, India and Zimbabwe among others.

With regard to Eastern Europe, the third and final chapter adopts a country-by-country case-study approach, describing in sequence the recent history of Poland, East Germany, former Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Romania and Hungary. Although Communism suppressed and infiltrated the churches in Eastern Europe, it failed to prevent religion becoming a major channel of symbolic opposition to the prevailing regime. Martin describes how churches, cathedrals and

individual priests acted as rallying points, powerfully signifying alternatives to the existing order and fostering the revolutionary impetus. The argument is forceful but not overstated. The explosive discord arising from the collision of distinct religious and ethnic identities in Yugoslavia, Georgia and the Baltic Republics is fully recognised.

In summary, this is a fascinating, informative and wide-ranging text. Unlike many social scientists, David Martin adopts a sympathetic attitude towards religion and its social impact. Indeed, his tone becomes enthusiastic in the description of the Romanian revolution. For the Christian reader, the book provides a message of encouragement and hope in its demonstration that though the church can at times seem inconsequential, with little public influence, this impotence is deceptive. For those with eyes to see, contemporary history has proved that the perceived social irrelevance of the church is illusory.

Ian Smith, St Andrews

Where Do We Go from Here? The Case for Life Beyond Death

David Winter

Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1996; 99pp., £4.99; ISBN 0 340 65635 2

Twenty years on from his best-selling book *Hereafter*, David Winter takes up the question of life after death for the current generation. He notes that the 1970s' interest in 'spirituality', which made the book so popular, has now given way to cybernetics and technology, but also to scepticism and a lack of meaning. Even the church is unsure about the issues. Thus, this book takes the themes of *Hereafter* to argue that there is no need to doubt the reality of life after death, and indeed, that such belief transforms attitudes to the whole of life as well as death.

Winter begins by making very helpful theoretical and philosophical points. Having introduced death as an 'unknown' which he parallels to the experience of an unborn child in relation to the outside 'still-to-come' world, he defines death as an end of life, a disintegration. While referring to Jung's belief that immortality therapeutically enables people to live and die with dignity, he insists that it is truth which is important. In an excellent chapter headed 'Spirit, soul, self', which begins with the views of Plato, Aristotle and Aquinas, he makes the important point that humans do not have souls: they are souls, which he defines as an awareness of self. In this way,

they are in the image of God, who himself cannot cease to exist. To great effect, he borrows the illustration of the self as computer software, and the body as the hardware.

Moving on to evidences for *post mortem* survival, Winter adduces the many similarities in near death experience accounts, as well as the universal longing for immortality throughout history and the world, though these points are unconvincing. The greatest evidence, however, is the resurrection of Jesus, and arguments are given to support the truth of the claim.

Lastly, Winter addresses various questions which arise about 'practicalities'. To the concerns 'What kind of body?' and 'What is heaven like?', he both destroys myths and demonstrates how eternal life is good news, as the personality 'flowers to be like Christ', free from the encumbrances of time and space. The final question 'Who goes there?' raises issues of universalism, judgement and hell, and is perhaps the least satisfactory chapter of the book on account of its brevity. As these are huge contemporary discussions, a fuller treatment would have been helpful.

However, as a short book written in a popular style, it achieves a great deal. It is well argued, with good examples and quotations. It is meant to be read rather than studied, but does provide an appendix with relevant Bible passages and information for further reading. It would be acceptable to Christians, and also to non-believers, and could indirectly serve as comfort to those facing death.

Fiona Barnard, St Andrews

The Apostles' Creed. A Faith to Live By

C.E.B. Cranfield

T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1993; 68pp., £5.95; ISBN 0 567 29227 4

At a time when in some circles the Apostles' Creed is classed as 'baggage not needed on the voyage' of the contemporary church, where do younger Christians learn of, and learn, the Creed today? It is surely regrettable if they never come to own it as an historically significant confession of the faith of the church universal with which they identify themselves. Its disuse in public worship can only fuel the prejudice against it as 'surplus baggage'. If we followed the example of the Reformers, it would have a central role in catechesis – the preparation of those seeking baptism, admission to the Lord's table or membership on profession of faith.

Charles Cranfield's short exposition is designed precisely with such uses in mind, as well as for 'church members who feel a need for a

more definite and coherent faith'. It is a very timely book, confident in affirming the faith of the Creed and apologetically sensitive to the challenge of believing in a sceptical age. And it helpfully adopts the modern version of the Creed produced by the International Consultation on English Texts – which reads 'the living' in place of 'the quick' and 'He descended to the dead' instead of 'He descended into hell', but is otherwise close to the traditional rendering.

The book will not prove easy reading for some who are learning their way into the church, but it will help many to a firmer grasp of the apostolic faith today.

David F. Wright, New College, University of Edinburgh

Hell on Trial: The Case for Eternal Punishment

Robert A. Peterson

P&R Publishing, Phillipsburg, NJ, 1995; xi+258pp., available from Evangelical Press £9.95; ISBN 0 875523 722

In the last decade, the doctrine of eternal punishment has become a focal point for disputes within Evangelicalism, with a significant number of leading preachers and scholars aligning themselves with views which, to a great extent, break with traditionally accepted church teaching in this area. Of course tradition must never be the ultimate criterion for judging the validity of a particular doctrine, but when breaks with tradition are suggested and even encouraged, it is vital that Evangelicals make sure that such changes are required not simply on the grounds of expediency but also on the grounds of fidelity to Christ.

This book is a popular attempt to present many of the issues regarding the afterlife to a wide evangelical audience. In a series of chapters, the author outlines the current controversy, details the biblical teaching on the issue, traces the historical traditions, examines a number of alternatives to the traditional position, and then stresses the importance of the doctrine. The book is, in effect, a restatement of the traditional evangelical understanding of hell as a place of eternal (*i.e.* everlasting) torment. As such it offers a relatively good overview of the issues.

At times, the author's enthusiasm for his subject drives him to make statements that are not entirely well-founded. For example, his hatred of the Enlightenment leads him to claim that John Locke denied the deity of Christ. I would argue that Locke's position on this doctrine, while lacking the clarity of his Puritan forbears, is not quite as black and white as Peterson makes out. Also there is little discussion of the abuse of the doctrine of eternal punishment over the

centuries, abuse which, while not in itself making the rejection of the doctrine correct, at least makes it understandable. If now is a time when God as unconditional love is an idea being pushed to unbiblical extremes, it must not be forgotten that there have been periods in the church's history when God as unremitting justice has also been proclaimed in just as unbiblical a fashion.

Such a popular treatment of such a complex issue inevitably contains a number of problematic areas. First, there is no real attempt to grapple with the problem of the nature of biblical language about hell, and yet the question of the degree to which the language of physical torment is literal or metaphorical is crucial to an understanding of the biblical teaching in this area. Second, there is no discussion of the nature of eternity, the author apparently assuming a view of eternity as endless duration of time. In this, he opts for a position which can scarcely be regarded as typical of orthodox theology, from Augustine and Boethius onwards. Indeed, when he criticises F.J.A. Hort and F.D. Maurice for separating ideas of eternity from duration, he apparently fails to realise that such a separation is, in principle at least, entirely orthodox. More detailed study of the medievals may have helped at this point.

A third problem is the choice of modern opponents. John Stott is obvious; as the most significant evangelical leader to reject the orthodox position, his views are no doubt the most influential. But the selection of John Hick seems somewhat bizarre. Hick's views are more famous for their radical nature than for their theological or philosophical coherence, and he has, I suspect, little influence in circles where evangelical theology is esteemed. Far more significant would seem to be the views of Karl Barth, Jürgen Moltmann and others who, while not being evangelical themselves, have provided rich theological resources for evangelical theologians, and yet whose works also exhibit powerful universalist tendencies. Addressing the issue as raised by these giants would be of more value to the evangelical world at large than dissipating time and effort on a character such as Hick.

Despite these weaknesses, the book should feature on the bibliography of anyone wishing to lead a church study group on the issue. The matter is important, and the erosion of orthodoxy on such a crucial issue is a matter for concern to all who seek to witness to the full counsel of God.

Carl R. Trueman, University of Nottingham

You Have Stept Out of Your Place. A History of Women and Religion in America

Susan Hill Lindley

Westminster / John Knox Press, Louisville, 1996; 384pp., \$35; ISBN 0 664 22081 9

In this first narrative history of women and religion in America, Susan Hill Lindley has tried to span a wide range of American women's religious experiences and contributions presenting the story from the colonial period through to the mid-1990s. She cites the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church as the catalyst which urged men and women members of religious orders to return to the teaching of Christ and the gospel and to find their roots. This influenced American women, Protestants, Jews and Catholics, who, prompted also by the resurgence of the women's movement in the early 1960s and 1970s, set out on a path of liberation. The result was an explosion of research and publications about women and their roots. This work is an attempt to draw together some of the results of that scholarly explosion, highlighting the two-sidedness of women's lives over four centuries. Lindley demonstrates sensitively how, just as religion in the traditional sense has influenced the lives of American women through its institutions, values and sanctions, so women themselves have significantly affected American religion. The experiences of feminist-minded pioneer women who led the way out of women's culturally subordinate roles are interweaved with those of 'ordinary' women, who in their roles in their homes, churches and social communities were equally important. We are given an account of ethnically diverse female experience in various geographic, racial and denominational backgrounds. *You Have Stept Out of Your Place* shows how twentieth-century feminist women have found a new freedom through gradual change but still encounter opposition about religious leadership. The book also shows how American women have come to appreciate what women through the centuries accomplished through traditional roles. Susan Lindley has depicted this changing role of women over four centuries with great thoroughness. This is a book which captures the imagination so that one looks forward to seeing how women's role will further metamorphosise, as Lindley forecasts.

Janet L. Watson, Glasgow Bible College

Suspicion and Faith: The Religious Uses of Modern Atheism

Merold Westphal

Eerdmans, Michigan, 1993; 304pp., \$19.99; ISBN 0 8028 0643 0

This study of Freud, Marx and Nietzsche is one of the most original, thought-provoking and disturbing books I have read for a long time. Its central thesis is that 'we should listen carefully and humbly to three of the Christian church's most formidable foes'. The author even ventures to suggest that we should read them as an exercise for Lent 'with an eye towards repentance and renewal rather than refutation'. Read in this way these anti-Christian authors may be used by the Holy Spirit as 'instruments for self-examination and sanctification'.

Westphal argues that there are two kinds of atheism: the atheism of scepticism and the atheism of suspicion. The former is sceptical about the *evidence* for God and seeks to discredit *it*, while the latter (taking scepticism for granted) is suspicious of the *motives* of believers and seeks to discredit *them*. If the evidence is insufficient, why do people turn to God and religion? They do so, argued Freud, Marx and Nietzsche, for suspicious reasons of hidden self-interest of which they are often totally unaware due to the human capacity for self-deception.

These two kinds of atheism, argues the author, demand different Christian responses. We may respond to scepticism by seeking to refute it and showing that the evidence is sufficient, but we should respond to atheism of suspicion, not by refuting them and discrediting them, but by 'acknowledging that their critique is all too true much of the time'. 'We should take them seriously and examine ourselves personally and corporately.'

Westphal devotes a section each to Freud, Marx and Nietzsche. Here the book can be heavy-going, but the writer is probably as lucid as any author could be given the difficulty of the material. At times the insight of these three thinkers into our self-deception and disguised self-interest is quite devastating. All too often God can be a mechanism for dealing with all sorts of hidden, competing psychological drives, of most of which we are blissfully unaware (Freud). He can be an opium to kill the pain of the suffering of the oppressed and the guilt of the oppressors (Marx). He can be the instrument by which those who are 'weak and inferior' gain an imagined superiority (Nietzsche).

Westphal sees much of the criticisms of these atheistic philosophers as 'deeply biblical in spite of their own unbelief',

describing them as 'the great modern theologians of original sin'. After all, they were far from being the first to realise that 'religion can be a work of the flesh'. 'The Bible', writes the author, 'is surely the most anti-religious of all the world's scriptures.' He even accuses Marx of plagiarising Amos! As for Jesus' condemnation of the Pharisees, it is more damning than anything in Freud or Nietzsche.

Life would have been much easier if I had not read this book! Having read it, however, I must go to work on some of the areas of self-deception in my own life, bearing in mind that the 'atheists of suspicion' are only confirming that 'the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked;' and that 'all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags'. While Freud, Marx and Nietzsche probe the depths of our depravity and deception, they rob us of a solution in the God of grace: he does not require us to be free of all self-deception before he accepts us.

Brian Maiden, Stockport

Augustinian and Pauline Rhetoric in Romans Five: A Study of Early Christian Rhetoric

Marty L. Reid

Mellen Biblical Press, Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter, 1996; 216pp., \$89.95; ISBN 0 7734 2367 2

Intended for the scholarly market, this book seeks to provide an alternative to Augustine's rhetorical analysis of Romans 5. The author draws on the rhetorical critical methods of G. Kennedy, aligns himself with the 'new perspective' on Paul, and hopes to add to our understanding of the purpose of Romans.

Reid first outlines Augustine's hermeneutical principles – *e.g.* his use of rhetorical tools, and his preference for the allegorical method. He then describes Augustine's exegesis of Romans 5:1-11, focusing on his understanding of the phrase *caritas Dei* in 5:5 as an objective genitive, and his argument for infant baptism from 5:6. Romans 5:6-11 portrays Christ as reconciler between God and humanity. He examines Augustine's idea of original sin as disseminated throughout the human race by means of sexual lust, and the concomitant necessity of grace (5:12-21).

Next, Reid gives his own rhetorical analysis. Augustine had failed to see that 5:1-5 and 5:6-11 should be taken together as a coherent argument. The whole is a well-crafted text presenting a christological proof that 'reconciliation between God and man was made possible because of Christ's faithfulness'. Reid argues against the view that an *anacolouthon* governs 5:12-21 and against the traditional

anthropological (individualistic) interpretation of these verses. Rather, they continue the christological proof commenced in 5:1-11. By developing the dissimilarity between Adam and Christ, Paul substantiates the superior consequences of Christ's faithfulness.

Reid then attempts to relate his analysis of chapter 5 to the overall argument of the letter, whose rhetorical *topos* is 'mutuality'. Paul is seeking to establish mutual relationships between himself and the Roman community (1:11-12), and within the congregation itself. Romans 5 shows that a covenant exists because of God's faithfulness exemplified through Jesus. Each believer has his or her own position within that covenant, and consequently, no group should consider itself superior to or boast over another, as is happening at Rome.

The book is well produced: footnotes are at the bottom of each page, bibliography and indexes are clearly set out. The style of writing is fairly clear, with useful summaries at the end of each chapter. The description of Augustine's methods and interpretation is interesting and informative. While it would have been helpful to have had some background information on the controversies behind the exegesis, such as Pelagianism and Manichaeism, this is a stimulating introduction to Augustine's treatment of the text and to the interpretative ideas which held sway for so long.

Unfortunately, Reid's own exegesis is disappointing. His rhetorical analysis is conscientious and thorough, but he takes certain ideas for granted (e.g. the Messiahship of Jesus and the 'faithfulness of Christ'), without acknowledging the associated problems. Similarly, his attempt to relate the rhetoric of chapter 5 to that of the entire letter falls short because of inadequate discussion of the situation Paul might be addressing. It is good to see the christological interpretation of Romans 5 supported by rhetorical criticism, but scant engagement with other aspects of contemporary Romans scholarship lets the book down rather badly.

Marion L.S. Carson, Glasgow

Is the Bible Male? The Book of Ruth and Biblical Narrative

Richard Bauckham

Grove Books, Cambridge, 1996; 24pp., £1.95; ISBN 1 85174 331 6

Grove booklets 'aim to make the best in current evangelical thinking about the Bible and its application available and relevant for those teaching and preaching in the local church'. Specifically, Bauckham wants to read Ruth as a story subversive of simplistic androcentrism.

Sadly his analysis of the narrative gets the most basic story-structure question – ‘Whose story is it?’ – badly wrong. He thinks the story is Naomi’s; ‘the story begins and ends with Naomi’; this confuses a framing device, a relatively superficial element of structure, with the main plot.

Tradition is right; the story is Ruth’s. Her decision to stick with Naomi sets the drama rolling; she is the one who risks most (rejection as an alien in Israel; molestation, when she goes gleaning; rejection and disgrace when she approaches Boaz at night). The book’s two biggest scenes (Ruth and Boaz at the threshing floor; the scene at the city gate) hinge on Ruth and Boaz, not Naomi. If it were Naomi’s story, then what is mainly at stake might be the economic security which Bauckham sees as central. If it is Ruth’s story, then the desire for a child moves into the centre. If there is any doubt which of these themes is primary, look at Boaz; no economic insecurity there, but there is (unspoken until the end) the simple human longing for a child.

Ironically, Bauckham’s mistake obscures precisely the balance in the text which he wants to assert. There *is* a balance, right at the heart of the big scene at the gate, between formal, public androcentrism (Boaz doing the legal business) and a more subtle gynocentrism. Amazingly, Bauckham misses it. The scene shows Boaz as a skilful negotiator: Boaz plays his kinsman beautifully, recognising the man’s greed and offering him what seems like an excellent investment. The kinsman, mouthing rectitude, takes the bait. Then Boaz introduces Ruth. On the face of it, this does not make sense. The kinsman should say, at least to himself, ‘So I get to sleep with this young woman, too? Great!’ To make sense of Boaz’ strategy we have to take account of a woman who is never mentioned, yet who determines the scene’s outcome, *viz.* the kinsman’s wife. Imagine the kinsman’s homecoming. Wife: ‘What did you do today?’ Man: ‘I bought a field.’ Wife: ‘Good, something for my son the doctor to inherit.’ Man: ‘Ah well now... there’s this Moabite girl... I have to sleep with her, and her son gets the field.’ Cut to wife’s wrath. Boaz, wisely, has seen it coming. Bauckham misses it completely.

Bauckham undervalues the characters of Ruth and Boaz. He misses their dignity and courtesy. He misses the book’s humour. He misses the balance between the two big scenes – the intimacy of the scene at the threshing floor, the public character of the scene at the gate – and the way that both scenes conduct an astute and gracious negotiation between masculine and feminine worlds. As a result, the true and good things Bauckham wants to say about androcentrism and gynocentrism are only weakly tied to the text of Ruth, and preachers looking for help in reading biblical narrative are poorly served.

Harry Smart, Montrose

In the light of the vigour of the criticism in the above review, the Editor invited the author to respond. The reviewer subsequently declined to take the debate further in this context.

The editor has kindly allowed me to respond to this review of my booklet. Readers of it will have very little idea of what my short book is all about: they will not understand at all how I propose we should read Ruth, and they will certainly not guess that actually a third of the booklet is not about Ruth but about the general issue of androcentrism in biblical narratives and about the possibilities of identifying women's perspectives in them – for example, in the Gospels. Nor will they be able to see that, even if one were to accept Smart's major disagreement with me about the story in Ruth, most of my argument in the booklet would be untouched. If they are not aware of the nature of the issue of androcentrism and gynocentrism in the Bible, the review will give them no reason to think it important, even though the reviewer appears to agree with me that it is.

Smart is obviously bursting to tell us his own ideas about Ruth and so fills the review with them. They are both naive in their cultural assumptions and ignore the plain evidence of the text. For example: (1) Only in modern western society do people want children out of 'the simple human longing for a child'. In peasant societies like ancient Israel, the natural desire for children is always overlaid with social and economic needs. Boaz wants a child because he needs heirs to continue his line and that of his kinsman Elimelech: this is obvious in the text (4:10-12). Ruth, like every peasant, wants children to support her in her old age, just as Naomi needs Ruth's son as a surrogate son for her own support (4:15). Any pre-modern reader would take this for granted. In such a society, even people who own a lot of land need sons to manage and to work it if they are to continue to benefit from it in old age. Ruth, I stress in the booklet, is an economically realistic narrative, not the Hollywood romance Smart imagines. (2) Whether the story is primarily Naomi's (and of course I do not deny that it is *also* Ruth's) is arguable, but at least this view reflects real features of the text. Smart's little fantasy about the kinsman's wife has no basis in the text at all. The kinsman states quite clearly why he does not want to take Ruth with the land (4:6): he is thinking of his heirs, not his wife, which is exactly what one would expect in this thoroughly androcentric scene at the city gate where male interests predominate on all sides. The text gives no warrant for introducing the wife at all. But even supposing it did, Smart can only call his idea gynocentrism because he has not begun to understand what gynocentric narrative is. Even if what he suggests is really implied in 4:6, that could not make 4:6 a narrative conveying

a women's perspective. At best we have the kinsman's (implicit) idea of what his wife might think. Androcentric literature is full of men's ideas of what their wives think! In gynocentric literature we really hear from the wives.

The conclusion is clear: the things Smart 'wants to say about androcentrism and gynocentrism are only weakly tied to the text of Ruth, and preachers looking for help in reading biblical narrative are poorly served' by this little exercise in eisegesis.

Richard Bauckham, St Mary's College, St Andrews

The Reality of the Kingdom

Paul Rowntree Clifford

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI / Cambridge, 1996; 133pp., \$12.00; ISBN 0 8028 0867 0

Paying Attention to People

Vernon White

SPCK, London, 1996; 199pp., £10.99; ISBN 0 281 04988 2

The Empowerment Process

Mary Ellen Durbin *et al.*

Paulist Press, New York, 1994; 127pp., \$12.95; ISBN 0 8091 3478 0

How relevant is Christianity to a secular world? The question is highlighted by Paul Rowntree Clifford, former president of the Selly Oak Colleges, in *The Reality of the Kingdom*. He is no Evangelical but accepts that the New Testament writers recorded what they thought they saw and heard. They understood the life, words, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to be relevant to all times and all cultures and hence to have meaning for today. Clifford rejects a Christianity which withdraws into a holy huddle and argues powerfully that 'the kingdom of God has to do with the whole created order: with our stewardship of material resources, with all forms of life on this planet, as well as with the structures of human society. Christianity is not just the promise of salvation to the individual'. Evangelicals will add that the promise of salvation must not be neglected. One of the issues with which Evangelicals are now grappling concerns the wholeness of the gospel, how we express God's concern for all the needs of his creatures alongside the call to individual conversion.

It is the concept of the individual which provides the starting point for Vernon White, the Chancellor of Lincoln Cathedral, in *Paying*

Attention to People. Historically, the notion of 'the individual' has gained predominance only in recent centuries. White moves deftly between Locke, Mill, Kant and other giants to show how they developed ideas of individual autonomy, self-realisation, human rights and obligations.

By the second half of this century, individualism is accepted as a central concept. Rightly so, for, as White explains, a belief in the value of every individual is a bulwark against soviet-style regimes which would subject individual liberty to the might of the state. And not just the state. White notes the work of Alasdair MacIntyre who attacks 'bureaucratic individualism' in which large-scale private corporations use individuals as no more than economic units. Yet there are dangers in individualism. Over the last twenty years, economic and political individualism has become dominant, culminating in Mrs Thatcher's famous statement, 'There is no such thing as society, only individuals.' This glorification of individualism has led to personal greed, selfishness and a disregard for others. Will Hutton – who is one author not cited by Vernon White – adds that economic individualism has allowed the reign of an economic system which widens inequalities while political individualism creates a political mind which does not care about the disadvantages suffered by those at the bottom of the pile (*The State We're In*, 1995).

What has Christianity to contribute to this analysis? White explains that God created people with an individuality that lasts beyond death. Individuals are precious to God. They should also be precious to each other for they are all equal before God, they are kin, and hence have obligations to share the resources of God's earth. This relational aspect of individuals is confirmed by the actions of Jesus who depended upon, loved and served others. Individuals are not meant to be egoistical selves. White sums up: 'we have been given a tradition of belief in which individual persons are essentially and divinely constituted to flourish by belonging to others in *particular* communities as well as to God'. In short, our individuality is partly defined by our relationships.

One of the important conclusions, from this erudite book, is that Christians have a responsibility to build communities in which individuals can flourish. However, White has little practical advice for those Christians struggling at the hard end where gross inequalities continue to restrict individual choice. In my recent *FARE Dealing. Neighbourhood Involvement in a Housing Scheme* (Community Development Foundation, 1997), I point out that local neighbourhood action, both Christian and secular, is emerging as a force. White does not consider its role in strengthening communities and individuals.

By contrast, *The Empowerment Process*, by Mary Ellen Durbin and her colleagues, is wholly practical. It is a manual which provides knowledge, tips and exercises aimed at recruiting and empowering local volunteers to parish activities. It is Catholic and American but can be applied by Christians of all denominations in the United Kingdom.

Bob Holman, Easterhouse, Glasgow

Prophets and Poets: A Companion to the Prophetic Books of the Old Testament

Edited by Grace Emmerson

Bible Reading Fellowship, Oxford, 1994; 301pp., £8.99; ISBN 0 7459 2599 5

Sowers and Reapers: A Companion to the Four Gospels and Acts

Edited by John Parr

Bible Reading Fellowship, Oxford, 1994; 446pp., £9.99; ISBN 0 7459 2531 6

These two attractively produced volumes are not commentaries in the traditional sense but are designed to help those who wish to read the Bible with greater understanding. They are composed of material previously published in the BRF's *Guidelines* Bible reading notes augmented by fresh introductory articles. Anyone who regularly uses the *Guidelines* notes may find much of the material is not new, but it is helpful to have the material on these two groups of texts brought together and presented in such a usable way.

The introductory articles in both volumes are very useful. In *Prophets* we are introduced to the role of the prophet, the poetic character of much of their preaching, the use of the prophets in the New Testament and the problems of translating the prophets, with their rich use of Hebrew idioms and word plays, into English. In *Sowers* John Parr gives us a helpful and constructive introduction both to the Gospels as witness to Jesus and also to the current work on the 'Historical Jesus'. It is refreshing to see a healthy respect for the Gospels as reliable witnesses to the historical figure of Jesus. When it comes to the notes on the biblical text the two volumes have somewhat different approaches. While *Sowers* follows the text of the four Gospels and Acts through consecutively, *Prophets* tends to treat the prophetic books more thematically and so there is a significant amount of jumping back and forth, particularly in the longer prophets

like Isaiah and Ezekiel. This is not a complaint, in that detailed consecutive commentary on all the prophetic books of the Old Testament would have turned the book into something completely different. It can, however, be a bit disorientating for those used to following the biblical text as it stands. The minor prophets are dealt with in the more traditional manner. The comment on the New Testament books is considerably more detailed than that on the prophets, making *Sowers* quite usable as a basic commentary.

The aim of these volumes is to bring the results of biblical scholarship to the Christian who reads his or her Bible in order to hear God's voice in daily life. They therefore are towards the 'heavy' end of the reading-note spectrum, yet there is an obvious concern that the Bible be brought to bear on contemporary life. There are often contemporary references in the notes themselves, there are regular questions for thought at the end of the sections and there are occasional hymns and prayers to encourage meditation on the biblical text. The various authors are well qualified to transmit the results of biblical scholarship to others, most being academics, yet they do so without jargon or intimidating language. What is noticeable is that many contributors belong theologically to the mainstream of critical scholarship. This is particularly so in the Old Testament volume. The books in the short lists of suggestions for further reading are not generally those most familiar or most acceptable to an evangelical reader, and occasionally comments appear to reflect 'critical orthodoxy' more than the concerns of the text itself. Discussion of 'Trito-Isaiah' or the authenticity of a text may come as a shock to someone who is used to other well-known Bible-reading notes. On the other hand, there are often excellent theological comments on the text which get right to the heart of the matter.

To bring the positive results of biblical scholarship into the sphere of day-to-day Bible reading is surely an aim to be applauded. Someone looking for a new approach to try in their Bible reading or for a relatively brief orientation to the texts dealt with will find either of these volumes stimulating.

Alistair I. Wilson, Free North Church, Inverness

Social World of Ancient Israel 1250-587 BCE

Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin

Hendrickson, Peabody, MA, 1993; xxiii+327pp., \$24.95;
ISBN 0 913573 89 2

This book provides a profile of each of eighteen main roles within village life (e.g. father, mother, farmer, host, widow) and at the state

level (*e.g.* monarch, prophet, priest, slave). The authors sometimes generalise from limited data or play down the undoubted diversity within each role. Nevertheless, it is a clearly-written, well-informed and accessible introduction to the social world of pre-exilic Israel and successfully illuminates much in the Old Testament that seems alien to modern Christians.

An Introduction to the Old Testament Historical Books

David M. Howard Jr.

Moody, Chicago, 1993; 395pp., \$21.99; ISBN 0 8024 4127 0

This is a clearly-written, well-informed and useful conservative evangelical introduction to the historical books, which generally reaches predictable conclusions (fifteenth-century Exodus, *etc.*). Following a twenty-five page introduction to historical narrative, there are chapters on Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah and Esther. For each of these, topics include authorship, date, historical and cultural context, place in canon, special issues, theology and outline.

Old Testament Introduction (IBR Bibliographies II)

Edwin C. Hostetter

Baker, Grand Rapids, 1995; 106pp., \$7.99; ISBN 0 8010 2017 4

This book (one of fourteen such bibliographies planned by the Institute for Biblical Research, the sister organization in the USA to the Tyndale Fellowship) lists 500 bibliographical items categorised under Criticism, Ancient Texts and Versions, Language, Cognate Literature, and Environment. Within each classification items are listed in date order and include a brief description. Selections are wide ranging, but with some key omissions, and with many descriptions strangely uninformative.

Old Testament Evangelistic Sermons

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Banner of Truth, Edinburgh, 1995; xxiii+268pp., £12.95; ISBN 0 85151 683 1

This volume comprises twenty-one evangelistic sermons of Lloyd-Jones (seventeen previously unpublished). The majority were from his early years (at Aberavon), and were preached from a wide range of

SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

Old Testament texts. This is preceded by a twenty-six page introduction by Iain Murray, the authorised biographer of Lloyd-Jones.

Preaching Old Testament Narrative (Grove Biblical Series 4)

Bob Fyall

Grove Books, Cambridge, 1997; 23pp., £2.25; ISBN 1 85174 346 4

A practical, clearly written and helpful booklet that shows how to identify and preach the narrator's emphases in a way that reflects the narrative's place within the overall Old Testament narrative. Fyall also underlines the necessity of relevant and appropriate contemporary application. He illustrates his approach by constructing a series of ten sermons on 1 and 2 Kings and giving more extensive details of two of these.

Ezekiel, Westminster Bible Companion

Ronald E. Clements

Westminster John Knox, Louisville, KY, 1996; x+211pp., \$17.00; ISBN 0 664 25272 9

This commentary series aims to provide 'a guide to Christian faith and practice' for laity. Clements provides a helpful (non-evangelical) non-technical but scholarly theological commentary. The approach is section-by-section rather than verse-by-verse, addressing only issues relevant to the theological interpretation of the Book.

Edward D. Herbert, Glasgow Bible College

Women Before God

Lavinia Byrne

SPCK, London, 1995; 111pp., £7.99; ISBN 0 281 04827 4

This book is a classic of its kind. This revised edition has a new introduction which comments on the changing attitudes of and towards Christian women since the first edition in 1988. Lavinia Byrne says that her desire is for women to come alive in their personal faith because only then will they be able to fully give of themselves in a faith community. The first part of this book is designed to be the catalyst for this and an enabler for people to grow in the knowledge and love of God. The second half of the book develops this debate further, moving 'beyond a sacred / secular divide, beyond the thinking

behind our use of the expression “having a vocation” and beyond questions raised by the movement to ordain women’ into personal spiritual development, prayer and the presence of Christian women in the world and in the churches, continually acknowledging tradition but looking forward. I read this in the linear way that Lavinia Byrne suggested and found the book inspiring, exciting and full of hope that there is a groundswell across denominations that suggests we are now living in a time when God’s image will be recognised fully in both man and woman.

Janet L. Watson, Glasgow Bible College

Revival Year Sermons

C.H. Spurgeon

Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1996; 96pp., £2.95; ISBN 0 85151 703 X

This selection of five sermons preached during 1859 (from Psalm 44:1, Heb. 13:20, Ezek. 36:27, Rom. 8:30 and Acts 20:26, 27) illustrates Spurgeon’s conviction that the preacher must faithfully proclaim all biblical truth, even that to which the unregenerate are hostile. It shows his manner of doing so. While the publishers’ claim that ‘in them will be found the cause of the phenomenal success which attended his ministry’ needs some qualification, they illustrate the fact that when such truth is owned of God it is the means of humbling sinners before his throne of grace. Spurgeon lived for another thirty-two years and matured in his thinking through experience and controversy but he claimed that he saw no reason to amend his earliest doctrine, and these sermons, typically Spurgeonic in their freshness, liveliness and theology, introduce a new generation of readers to his doctrine and style.

Hugh M. Cartwright, Free Church College, Edinburgh