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EDITORIAL

BAPTISMAL TRENDS

This time the Bulletin takes the form of a symposium on the issue of baptism. The two main papers which follow were both read at a joint meeting of the Doctrine and Biblical Theology Group of the Tyndale Fellowship, meeting at Tyndale House, Cambridge, in July 1988. David Wright, chairman of the Doctrine Group and Review Editor of the Bulletin, supplies an editorial.

DAVID F. WRIGHT
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

Hard on the heels of Michael Green's *Baptism: Its Purpose, Practice and Power* (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1987) comes another evangelical Anglican contribution, *Believing in Baptism*, by Gordon Kuhrt (London, Mowbray, 1987; 186 pp., £5.95; ISBN0 264 67088 4). From this careful and irenical survey, which interprets baptism in covenantal terms, I learned that 'far more adults (i.e. those over 18) are being baptised each year in the Church of England than in the Baptist Union of Churches [in England]' (p. 6). This piece of information prodded me to unearth the Scottish statistics, which present a similar picture. In the last few years roughly 1600 adult baptisms have taken place annually in the Church of Scotland, while about half that number of believers have been baptised in Baptist churches. It would not be too wide of the mark to claim that national churchmen in both England and Scotland have a greater interest in believers' baptism than their Baptist brethren – for it cannot be denied that adults baptised on profession of faith are baptised as believers.

There is more to this curious statistic than a predictable consequence of the much greater size of each national church than the corresponding Baptist Union. For baptism, however understood and administered, holds a place never far from the cutting edge of the church's impact upon the wider community. In a society like Scotland in which a steadily declining proportion of the population has been baptised in infancy, the number of believers or adults being baptised is one critical measure of the Kirk's success in winning people to faith and membership later in life. The statistics are worth a closer look.

Baptisms in the Church of Scotland have decreased alarmingly, from 49,607 in 1957 to 42,720 ten years later, 22,545 in 1977 and 18,794 in 1987, although a decline in the birthrate partly accounts for the slide. In recent years roughly 8 per cent of the total baptismal count have been adult baptisms. This percentage is approximately double that of the 1930s when baptisms year by year totalled about twice the present number and adult baptisms about the same. But if we compare the recent position with the 1950s – the high-water mark for the Kirk in the

twentieth century – a different story emerges. During that decade, adult baptisms averaged well over 10 per cent of the total, which itself averaged over 45,000 annually. In 1955 very nearly 15 per cent of baptisms were of adults baptised on profession of faith. They numbered 7,490 – a figure not too far short of half of all baptisms in 1987.

The baptismal statistics for the 1950s remind us that a large number of people currently outside the Church of Scotland were once baptised. In those ten years almost half a million persons were baptised in the Kirk, over a tenth of them on profession of faith. The other 90 per cent will now be in their thirties, and the majority of them will be unchurched. Does their baptism constitute a hopeful point of contact in our attempts to win them back or, on the contrary, does it count only negatively? Will it have effectively immunised them against a genuine mature encounter with the Christian faith?

An urgent plea for discrimination in administering baptism is part of Gordon Kuhrt's message. This aspect of baptismal practice is one in which the magisterial Reformation did little to correct, and perhaps too much to reinforce, a centuries-old tradition. The literature of the recently formed Movement for the Reform of Infant Baptism (M.O.R.I.B.) unhesitatingly identifies indiscriminate infant baptism in past decades in the Church of England as one of the gravest contemporary obstacles to the evangelisation of England. (It also carries helpfully honest accounts of the costly transition to a disciplined baptismal policy in some rural Anglican parishes.) Viewed from this perspective the fall in infant baptism in the Kirk may be read as a healthy trend, but a surer sign of a reform to ecclesiastical health will be an upturn in the number of people being baptised on coming to faith in adult years. For this statistic is a clear pointer to the church's ability to reach the increasingly unbaptised mass of the population with the gospel.

If at the same time requests for rebaptism increase, we could do worse than note Kuhrt's firm but not neurotic approach to it. I would class as neurotic the New Zealand Presbyterian Church's authorisation of a (non-baptismal!) rite of washing or immersion as a 'confirmation' of an earlier baptism for those who find the latter difficult to acknowledge as their true baptism. This is territory in which the sixteenth-century Reformers have little direct guidance to offer us. Indeed, it has taken four centuries for the churches to begin to recover from the baptismal polarisation bequeathed to Protestantism by the Reformation disputes. If *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (World Council of Churches, 1982) may be faulted for bridging 'the waters that divide' too easily, it surely points in the right direction. As Kuhrt notes, 'the Church of England does not insist on its members baptising their infants'. He seeks a higher profile for the present availability of two different patterns of baptismal administration, broadly along lines suggested by *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. On this occasion the Kirk would be wise to learn from her southern sister.

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO BELIEVER'S BAPTISM (FROM THE ANABAPTISTS TO BARTH)

JOHN COLWELL
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As is customary within this study group I must begin with an apology for the vagueness of the title. When I was asked to prepare the paper it was not really possible to be more specific. Moreover, since this is the only paper included that explicitly represents those views that oppose the theology and practice of infant baptism, it was necessary to offer a paper that at least attempted to summarise the arguments of more than one writer.

I could not pretend for a moment that anything I have to say presses the frontiers of historical research nor can I claim that my treatment of any one writer is in any way comprehensive. My aim is rather to draw out the central themes of an argument as expressed by quite different writers, in different eras, and coming from vastly different backgrounds.

Predictably, I want to begin with the Continental Anabaptists (so called: since they, of course, would reject the title) and specifically with the writings of Pilgrim Marpeck¹ from whom comes probably the fullest account of the arguments common among the main streams of Anabaptist thought.

Marpeck was born to a prominent family in the city of Rattenberg though the date of his birth remains unknown. He joined the guild of mining workers in 1520 and was appointed to the office of mining magistrate in 1525, though he resigned this office in 1528 under pressure to collaborate with the authorities in the apprehension of Anabaptists in Schwaz.

We do not know how or when Marpeck came under the influence of Anabaptist teaching but soon after his arrival in Strasbourg we find that an Anabaptist meeting is being held in his house and that he is recognised among the leaders of the Anabaptists who are granted a hearing before the city council. The leaders of the Reformation remained relatively tolerant of the steady flow of Anabaptist leaders who spent some time in the area and, although some were imprisoned, no Anabaptist was ever executed in the city for his faith in the city.

1. His name has sometimes been spelt 'Marbeck' though he signed himself 'Marpeckh'; cf. *The Writings of Pilgrim Marpeck*, trans. and ed. William Klassen and Walter Klaassen, Scottsdale, 1978, p. 567.

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While at Strasbourg, Marpeck served the city as an engineer with responsibilities for mining, the provision of wood and the building of a water system (a most appropriate occupation for an Anabaptist leader). The toleration Marpeck enjoyed at Strasbourg may in part have been due to his technical usefulness though both Bucer and Capito write warmly of him despite their opposition to his teaching on baptism and his opposition to the oath of allegiance. Matters reached a head towards the end of 1531 and, after a series of debates with Bucer and with the city council, Marpeck was finally banished from the city early in 1532.

Little is known of Marpeck's life until we find him employed as an engineer by the city of Augsburg in 1544. Despite warnings from the Augsburg authorities to cease holding religious meetings he appears to have been left to write unhindered until his death in 1556.²

It is almost certain that Marpeck never received any formal theological training yet he is unquestionably one of the most important and perceptive of the early Anabaptist writers. Klaassen comments that, although Marpeck was not a trained theologian he 'nevertheless often penetrated more deeply into theological issues than university trained leaders. . . .'³ In January 1532 Marpeck presented a confession of faith to the Strasbourg city council which he had prepared during the December of the previous year.⁴ Central to the argument of this 'Confession' is the rejection of the opinion that infants ought to be baptised 'on the basis of the figure or analogy of circumcision'.⁵ His point is not that there are two distinct covenants of which circumcision and baptism are the respective signs since there is ultimately but one covenant which is fulfilled in Christ. Rather circumcision must be understood not as the covenant itself but as a symbol (*Zeichen*) given to Abraham and indicative of a promise and a hope that were yet future. Water baptism, on the other hand, is the external witness (*Zeugnis*) of this one covenant which is now fulfilled.⁶ Circumcision was given as the sign of God's promise and of the demands of the law which, prior to the Spirit of Christ, man had no possibility of fulfilling. Water baptism is the external witness to an inner baptism of the Spirit of Christ which 'springs from faith', 'demands nothing but love', and 'adds power and action to the desire'.⁷ The children of the 'old covenant' were therefore children of promise. The new 'birth' which is the result of inner baptism was not mentioned in the Old Testament since it has only now become a possibility in Christ.⁸ Similarly the sin which occurred during this Old Testament period 'under the patience of God' is only now forgiven since

2. This outline of Marpeck's life is based upon the account in Klassen and Klaassen's 'Introduction', *Writings*, pp. 15-41.

3. *Anabaptism in Outline: Selected Primary Sources*, ed. Walter Klaassen, Scottdale, 1981, p. 119.

4. 'Confession of 1532' in *Writings*, pp. 107-157.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 117f., cf. p. 107.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 109f.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

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it has now been 'carried' by Christ.⁹ Circumcision was a symbol of that which was not yet, but water baptism is a witness of what already is, a witness 'to the inner conviction that one's sins are forgiven'.¹⁰ This is the reason that Paul, in Colossians 2:11f, compares baptism, not with outer circumcision but with the circumcision of the heart which 'proceeds from faith in Christ' and which 'infant baptism cannot accomplish'.¹¹

Referring to John 3:3 Marpeck argues that the birth of the Spirit must precede water since the earthly elements such as water are themselves witnesses to the Spirit of God. For the water to precede the Spirit is to treat the Spirit as a secondary witness.¹² It therefore must be illegitimate to administer the earthly witness of water baptism prior to the inner baptism of the Spirit.¹³ Earlier Marpeck had made a similar point in a booklet in which he challenged the 'quietism' of Caspar Schwenckfeld though here his primary concern was to urge the appropriateness and importance of water baptism.¹⁴ He speaks of water baptism as a 'prescribed witness' and rejects the extreme that regards all outward ceremonies as unnecessary.¹⁵ But here again he sees water baptism as the outward witness of an inner baptism:

If one is previously baptised by Christ, by the kindled fire of the Holy Spirit in fire and spirit, then one may also make a testimony concerning the forgiveness of sins by the sprinkling of the baptismal water, which follows the belief in the outward preached Word.¹⁶

In his 'Confession' Marpeck also responds to those who argue that they are 'free to baptise before or after the presence of faith' since they are not 'bound by time or age'. While this may be true for God himself it is certainly not true for 'people and creatures' who still have 'beginning, middle, end, order, and time'. If the infant were not bound by time or age it would be free to respond to the Word of God. Since this does not occur we must not anticipate it but must proceed in a proper order and time, witnessing in baptism to the inner working of God.¹⁷

Not only can no-one confess faith on behalf of another,¹⁸ no-one is free to consign another to death without their consent. This is the inner

9. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 153; cf. p. 107.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 138.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 143: In a letter to the Swiss Brethren Marpeck speaks of an 'ignorant baptism' without 'true, revealed, personal faith whether in children or adults' (Judgement and Decision' in *Writings*, pp. 309-361, p. 333).

14. 'A Clear and Useful Instruction' in *Writings*, pp. 69-106.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 83f. Similarly in a tract refuting Hans Bunderlin, Marpeck affirms the importance of external baptism: 'Whoever has been inwardly baptised, with belief and the Spirit of Christ in his heart, will not despise the external baptism and the Lord's Supper which are performed according to Christian, apostolic order; nor will he dissuade anyone from participating in them'. ('A Clear Refutation' in *Writings*, pp. 43-67, p. 65.)

16. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

17. 'Confession of 1532' in *Writings*, pp. 143f.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 146.

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meaning of water baptism and it renders infant baptism 'a sacrifice to Moloch, an apish copying, a serpent sign'.¹⁹

To those who would argue that unbaptised children are condemned Marpeck replies in two ways. In the first place he simply affirms that they are accepted on the basis of the promise of Christ rather than on the basis of personal faith and external baptism:

Christ has accepted the children without sacrifice, without circumcision, without faith, without knowledge, without baptism; he has accepted them solely by virtue of the word: 'To such belongs the kingdom of heaven'.²⁰

In the second place (and more problematically?) he argues for the 'innocence' of the child since the sin of Adam consists in the 'knowledge of good and evil'. Only when a child attains such knowledge do 'sin, death, and damnation begin.' Only then does one need to become a child again through faith in Christ:

All true simplicity of infants is bought with the blood of Christ, but without any law, external teaching, faith, baptism, Lord's Supper, and all other Christian ceremonies, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven without admonition to change. But to those who claim to know good and evil . . . the Lord says: 'You must become as children.' He is condemned who is not born again through faith and baptism for the forgiveness of sins, and who is not born again into the obedience of faith, the simplicity and innocence of the child.²¹

Since children are to be 'received' Marpeck urges that they should be 'named before a congregation'; that 'God should be duly praised' that he 'has also had mercy' on them and 'assured them of the kingdom of God'; and that prayers should be said for them:

We admonish the parents to cleanse their conscience, as much as lies in them, with respect to the child, to do whatever is needed to raise the child up to the praise and glory of God, and to commit the child to God until it is clearly seen that God is working in him for faith or unfaith. Any other way is to be like thieves and murderers and to be ahead of Christ.²²

'The Admonition of 1542', which is the fullest statement of the Anabaptist understanding of baptism, was attributed to Marpeck by

19. *Ibid.*, p. 141.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

21. 'Judgment and Decision', p. 337; cf. 'Confession', p. 130ff.

22. 'Confession', p. 147.

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Caspar Schwenckfeld in a letter to Helene von Freyberg dated May 27, 1543.²³ Although this 'Admonition' (*Vermanung*) was based on a previous work by Bernhard Rothmann (*Bekkenntnisse van beyden Sacramenten: 1533*) the text has been extensively amended and sufficient new material added to increase its overall length by approximately 50%. Marpeck and his colleagues clearly viewed this amended text as wholly representative of their own viewpoint and purged of its former Munsterite errors.

The booklet discusses the meaning of the term 'sacrament' which it understands as an act commanded by Christ in which both the content and the action take place in the context of a commitment to a holy covenant.²⁴ It then considers the practice of baptism and the Lord's Supper at great length. In terms anticipating Barth it notes that all Germany boasts of the gospel yet nowhere is the church as the holy community of God to be found. The root of the fault is the misuse of baptism:

when this entrance has been destroyed, and almost everybody is confused about it, the holy church has also been desecrated and disrupted. It is to be assumed that the holy church will never come to its holiness unless this entrance to the church will again be rebuilt, reinstated, and cleansed of all infamy.²⁵

The 'Admonition' takes as its starting point that Christian baptism can only be considered valid if it occurs according to the command of Christ. Thus, contrary to the arguments of Zwingli,²⁶ Christian baptism must be distinguished from John's baptism since the words spoken by John were: 'I baptise you with the water of repentance', while the words commanded by Christ are 'baptise them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit'²⁷ (previously Marpeck had mistakenly distinguished John's baptism from Christian baptism on the grounds that the former was not a baptism for the remittance and forgiveness of sin).²⁸ Moreover, this command of Christ's suggests an ordering in which baptism is both preceded and followed by instruction.²⁹

Turning to I Peter 3:21 the 'Admonition' further notes that true baptism must include within it a 'certain assurance of a good conscience with God, a removal of the old being, a shedding of sin and the lust of the flesh, and the intention henceforth to live in obedience to the will of

23. 'The Admonition of 1542 in *Writings*, pp. 159-302; cf. p. 571.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 169ff.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 201; cf. pp. 259f.

26. Ulrich Zwingli, 'Refutation of the Tricks of the Baptists' (*In catapaptistarum strophas elenchus: 1527*) in *Selected Works*, ed. Samuel Macauley Jackson (Univ. of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 1972), pp. 123-258.

27. 'Admonition', pp. 172-177.

28. '... Instruction', p. 88; cf. Luke 3:3 and Acts 2, 38.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 182ff.

God'. Only in this conscious union of the believer with God can baptism be said to 'save'. According to Paul it is the power of faith rather than the act of baptism which accomplishes new birth.³⁰

Baptism is an immersion or *sprinkling with water* desired by the one who is being baptised. Baptism is received and accepted as a sign and *co-witness* that he has died to his sins and has been buried with Christ; henceforth, he may arise into a new life, to walk, not according to the lusts of the flesh, but obediently, according to will of God. Those who are thus minded, and confess this intent, should be baptised. When that is done, they are correctly baptised. Then in their baptism, they will certainly attain forgiveness of sins and thereby, having put on Jesus Christ, they will be accepted into the communion of Christ. The one who is thus baptised experiences this communion, not through the power of baptism, nor through the word that is spoken there, and certainly not through the faith of the Godfathers, the sponsors; as his fleshly lusts depart and he puts on Christ, he experiences it through his own knowledge of Christ, through his own faith, through his voluntary choice and good intentions, through the Holy Spirit.³¹

Baptism is therefore misused whenever unwilling or innocent people are brought to it or when someone of 'a false impure heart' desires to be baptised.³² Whenever a sponsor makes promises on behalf of a child he puts himself in God's place by promising that which God alone can give.³³

Once again we find the argument that children ought not to be baptised since they are 'innocent': 'they have not yet been perverted by their own fleshly mind and thus, do not know the difference between good and evil . . . original sin is inherited only when there is a knowledge of good and evil'.³⁴ Therefore 'God is merciful toward the infants because of their ignorance and genuine innocence; to others, he is merciful because of their faith and repentance'.³⁵

As before a lengthy section of the 'Admonition' is given to a 'rebuttal' of the argument that water baptism has simply replaced circumcision.³⁶ Again it is affirmed that there is indeed only one true covenant of the 'promise and command of God' which includes both Abraham and all true believers. But this is no ground to equate circumcision and baptism.³⁷ The 'old' covenant was a covenant of promise; a 'prediction . . . pointing

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 185ff.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 197f.: the words in italics are those considered by the editors of the text to be additions to the original 'Confession' by the 'Marpeck group'.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 202f.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 214.

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 204ff.; cf. pp. 245ff.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 252.

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 221ff.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 222ff.

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forward to a new beginning in Christ Jesus'. The 'true circumcision of the heart', the 'renewal of regeneration' which believers now experience was not received under this promise of the covenant.³⁸ The true church of Christ was prefigured in the 'old church' of Abraham's physical seed, sealed with physical circumcision, and receiving a physical promised land – all indicative of the promise of God yet to be fulfilled.³⁹ This 'ancient church' had no authority to forgive sins nor had it received the Holy Spirit.⁴⁰ Yet this which was a matter of hope and promise in the past is a present reality for those who have now received pardon and forgiveness of sin, who 'unlike the ancients . . . never lack the glory of God.'⁴¹ Here again Marpeck notes that it is not external circumcision but the inner circumcision of the heart that is related to baptism. The true children of Abraham are children of promise rather than those born 'according to the flesh'.⁴²

Marpeck also rejects the view that the baptism of infants can be based upon an 'inner, hidden, unrevealed, and future faith'. If this should be true of the external witness of baptism why is it not equally true of the external witness of communion? If the biblical requirement of belief can be set aside in the case of baptism why cannot also the biblical requirement that a man should 'examine himself' be set aside in communion?⁴³

The 'Admonition' disputes the assertion that infant baptism had been continuously practised since the apostles but notes in any case that many false teachings and practices were introduced at an early date. Similarly it rejects the inference that 'household' baptism would have included infants.⁴⁴ Although God *could* give faith to the child there is no basis for saying that he *does* so; rather his power is 'placed in the order of His Word and will'.⁴⁵

The key themes of Marpeck's understanding of baptism are common to most of the major Anabaptist writers. The distinction between the external baptism of water and the inner baptism of the Spirit of which the former is a witness had previously been stated by Balthasar Hubmaier who also distinguished three forms of baptism: '. . . that of the Spirit given internally in faith; that of water given externally through the oral confession of faith before the church; and that of blood in martyrdom or on the deathbed'.⁴⁶ This threefold distinction is repeated by Hans Hut.⁴⁷

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 224f.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 227.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 231f. Marpeck refuses to limit the reference in John 7:39 to the 'gifts' of the Spirit and to 'apostolic office': 'It is clear from the writings of the apostles and of the New Testament that the Spirit was not there . . . (*sic!*)'.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 237.

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 238f.

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 247ff.

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 253ff.

45. *Ibid.*, pp. 255f.

46. Balthasar Hubmaier, 'A Short Justification' (1526), quoted in *Anabaptism in Outline*, pp. 166f.; cf. 'A Christian Instruction' (1526-1527), quoted in *Anabaptism in Outline*, p. 167.

47. Hans Hut (1527), quoted in *Anabaptism in Outline*, p. 169.

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In his letter to Thomas Muntzer, Conrad Grebel also relates the 'age of discernment' in children to a 'knowledge of good and evil' and speaks of them as 'surely saved by the suffering of Christ, the new Adam', without either faith or baptism.⁴⁸

Dietrich Philips similarly relates the 'age of discretion' to the ability to 'distinguish good from evil' and speaks of children being received through the promise of Christ without either faith or baptism. In fact, he takes a further step by speaking of the death of Christ as the payment for original sin 'to the degree the children may not be judged and condemned on account of Adam's transgression'. While children have a 'tendency' toward evil this 'does not damn them', by the 'grace of God' it is 'not accounted as sin to them'.⁴⁹

In the second place, and more briefly, I want to turn to the English baptist, John Bunyan. It is highly unlikely that any of the material we have so far considered was either known or even available to Bunyan, though he had certainly heard of the Munster debacle and refers to Jan van Leyden.⁵⁰

Of course, it is even disputed as to whether Bunyan was, in fact, a baptist.⁵¹ Both baptists and congregationalists claim him as their own. During Bunyan's life the Bedford congregation remained 'open' both in communion and membership: believers were received on the basis of authentic repentance and a knowledge of salvation (even today the 'Bedford Meeting' remains in membership both with the United Reformed Church and with the Baptist Union). There appears to be no record authenticating the tradition of Bunyan's baptism by Gifford in the River Ouse and baptism is only mentioned twice in the *Church Book* of the Bedford Meeting during the years 1650-1690.⁵² His second daughter, Elizabeth, was 'baptised' as an infant in 1654 (though it is possible that his wife, who remained an Anglican, may have insisted on this). In 1672 a 'Joseph Bunyan', 'son of John Bunyan' was 'baptised in the Parish Church of St Cuthbert in Bedford (though it is disputed as to whether this was a son or a grandson of *the* John Bunyan).⁵³ Certainly Bunyan was 'Calvinistic' in theology. His understanding appears to be that which we refer to as 'federal Calvinism'. He was certainly no 'general baptist'. Perhaps the best way of describing his position is as an 'open and

48. Conrad Grebel and Friends, 'Letters to Thomas Muntzer', in *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, ed. George Hunston Williams and Angel M. Mergal, Philadelphia, 1957, pp. 73-85 (p. 81).

49. Dietrich Philips, 'Christian Baptism' (1564), quoted in *Anabaptism in Outline*, p. 187; cf. p. 185, and 'Regeneration and the New Creature' (1556) quoted in *Anabaptism in Outline*, pp. 63ff.

50. John Bunyan, 'Differences in Judgment about Water Baptism, no Bar to Communion' in *The Whole Works of John Bunyan*, ed. George Offor, London, 1862, pp. 616-642 (p. 622).

51. Cf. Joseph D. Ban, 'Was John Bunyan a Baptist? A case-study in historiography' in *The Baptist Quarterly*, vol. XXX (1910-11), pp. 367-376.

52. For these details of Bunyan I am grateful to Revd Robert Archer whose extensive research is, as yet, unpublished.

53. Cf. W. T. Whitley, 'The Bunyan Christening 1672 in *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society*, vol. II (1910-11), pp. 255-263.

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particular baptist' as distinct from a 'strict and particular baptist'.⁵⁴ The implications of this 'openness' will be the focal point of our attention.

In 1672 Bunyan wrote a tract entitled *A Confession of my faith*⁵⁵ in which he referred to baptism and communion as not to be counted among the 'fundamentals of our Christianity'. This tract brought a critical response from William Kiffin who, as a 'strict and particular baptist', believed that valid water baptism was a necessary condition for the receiving of believers both at the Lord's Supper and into membership of the church. Bunyan replied to Kiffin's criticisms in 1673 with a further tract entitled *Differences in Judgment about Water Baptism, no Bar to Communion*.

Bunyan begins by making it plain that he does not deny the ordinance of baptism itself.⁵⁶ What he denies is that 'differences in judgment' concerning it should be a bar either to communion or to membership of the church. He maintains that Kiffin and others have turned water baptism into a 'wall of division' to 'separate the righteous from the unrighteous'. A believer should be received simply on the basis of faith and holiness.⁵⁷

I do not plead for a despising of baptism, but a bearing with our brother, that cannot do it for want of light. The best of baptism he hath, viz the signification thereof: he wanteth only the outward shew, which if he had, would not prove him truly a saint; it would not tell me he had the grace of God in his heart; it is no characteristical note to another of my Sonship with God.⁵⁸

According to Bunyan water baptism is not an 'initiating ordinance, nor a 'sign' making the believer a 'visible saint' before the church. It is rather a confirming sign to the believer himself. A man can certainly be a 'visible saint' without yet having received 'light' concerning the matter of water baptism.⁵⁹

Both here and in his previous 'Confession' Bunyan argues that the baptism spoken of in Ephesians 4:5 is a baptism *by* the Spirit (which he distinguishes from a baptism *with* the spirit). It is this baptism which joins us to the church.⁶⁰ That which really matters is that which baptism signifies. The true believer may not yet have received light concerning water baptism but he already has the 'doctrine' of baptism by virtue of his

54. Cf. D. M. Lloyd-Jones, 'John Bunyan: Church Union' in *Light from John Bunyan and other Puritans*, London, 1978), pp. 86-102 (p. 92).

55. John Bunyan, 'A Confession of my faith, in *Works*.

56. 'Differences . . .', p. 617.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 618f.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 627.

59. *Ibid.*, pp. 619ff.

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 623f.

faith, repentance and holiness of life.⁶¹ That which he lacks is an 'outward ceremony the substance of which he hath already'.⁶²

Bunyan's use of Scripture is less than convincing (at one point he even questions whether every saint in the primitive church would have been baptised with water).⁶³ Yet his motive in seeking to maintain unity among believers who differed in judgment has commended itself to subsequent generations. By far the majority of Baptist churches are 'open' in membership and communion (would that they were also, like Bunyan, 'particular' in theology). Martyn Lloyd-Jones speaks warmly of Bunyan's openness in a paper read at the 1978 Westminster Conference, and concludes:

what we must never do, surely, is to divide and separate and to make that which John Bunyan regarded as secondary, central and all important and a cause for breaking or refusing communion.⁶⁴

But the question here is whether water baptism ought to be regarded as a secondary issue. It is one thing to seek unity with all those who are truly joined to Christ by faith. It is quite another thing to imply that differences of opinion over the issue of water baptism are secondary and of little consequence. While Bunyan's desire for unity is commendable that which separates him from Marpeck is the latter's recognition of the consequences of maintaining the practice of infant baptism. At issue is not merely an outward ceremony but all that it implies concerning the reality of spiritual rebirth and the composition of the church. In his controversial sermon on the theme of baptismal regeneration C. H. Spurgeon exposes the implications of this different opinion concerning water baptism:

We meet with persons who, when we tell them that they must be born again, assure us that they were born again when they were baptised. . . . How can any man stand up in his pulpit and say 'Ye must be born again' to his congregation, when he has already assured them, by his own 'unfeigned assent and consent' to it, that they are themselves, every one of them, born again in baptism. What is he to do with them? Why, dear friends, the gospel then has no voice; they have rammed this ceremony down its throat and it cannot speak to rebuke sin. The man who has been baptised or sprinkled says: 'I am saved, I am a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. Who are you, that you should rebuke me? Call

61. *Ibid.*, pp. 624f.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 627.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 623.

64. 'John Bunyan: Church Union', p. 102.

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me to repentance? Call me to a new life? What better life can I have? For I am a member of Christ – a part of Christ's body. . . .⁶⁵

Probably Karl Barth remains the best-known twentieth century questioner of infant baptism. Even in the first volume of his *Dogmatics* in response to comments by Karl Heim he speaks of the 'certainty of faith' being grounded not on 'grace confirmed by baptism' but on nothing other than the 'certainty of faith itself'.⁶⁶ In 1943 Barth spoke to a gathering of theological students in Swatt on the theme of baptism and in 1947 an edited version of this lecture was published in the series *Theologische Studien*, with the title *Die Kirkliche Lehre von der Taufe*.⁶⁷ As in the *Dogmatics* Barth's opening statement summarises his viewpoint:

Christian baptism is in essence the representation (*Abbild*) of a man's renewal through his participation by means of the power of the Holy Spirit in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and therewith the representation of man's association with Christ, with the covenant of grace which is concluded and realised in him, and with the fellowship of his church.⁶⁸

Baptism portrays the truth of Romans 6:1f; the truth of the Christian's participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; the truth that these events of a 'particular time and place' are also events that are the truth concerning the Christian's existence.⁶⁹ Since it is the Holy Spirit who effects this union with Christ that which occurs in baptism is really 'baptism with the Holy Spirit'. Water baptism is the witness to this 'baptism of the Spirit'.⁷⁰

Baptism is a 'sign, symbol, type (*Entsprechung*) and representation' (*Darstellung*).⁷¹ It is part of the church's activity of proclamation and is therefore 'plainly a human act'.⁷² It has no independent power of its own but its power depends upon Christ himself.⁷³ Barth refers to Acts 19:1ff. as a warning 'against any view which would ascribe to the baptismal water . . . relatively independent power of action'.⁷⁴ This power of Jesus Christ, which is the power of baptism, is not itself dependent upon baptism:⁷⁵ ' . . . we must not think of the operations of the covenant of grace as being in any sense dependent on the sign which seals it.'⁷⁶

65. C. H. Spurgeon, 'Baptismal Regeneration: A Sermon, in *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (1864), pp. 313-328 (p. 321).

66. Karl Barth, *C. D. 1 2*, pp. 205f.

67. Karl Barth, *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism*, trans. Ernest A. Payne, London, 1948.

68. . . . *Baptism*, p. 9.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

70. *Ibid.*, pp. 12f.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

73. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

74. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

75. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

76. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

Moreover, the power of Christ in baptism is not 'causative or generative' but is 'cognitive' in its aim.⁷⁷

Barth makes a number of comments on the nature of the church in which baptism ought properly to take place but his comments concerning the person baptised are our primary concern. Barth notes that in the 'sphere of the New Testament one is not brought to baptism; one comes to baptism'.⁷⁸ The person being baptised cannot be a 'merely passive instrument' but is an 'active partner' and plainly no infant 'can be such a person'.⁷⁹

Barth briefly rehearses the usual arguments in favour of infant baptism: the interpretation of I Corinthians 7:14; the meaning of 'you and your children' in Acts 2:39; and the meaning of I Corinthians 15:29. The only 'thread of proof he knows within the New Testament for infant baptism are the references to the baptism of 'households' but, given the invariable 'sequence' of word, faith, baptism in these passages, he 'wonders whether one really wants to hold to this thread'.⁸⁰

Of particular interest are Barth's comments on Colossians 2:11f. where baptism is called 'the circumcision of Christ'. But merely from this comparison it cannot follow that 'baptism like circumcision is to be carried out on a babe'. Circumcision was the sign of Israel's election which achieved its goal with the birth of Christ. Thus circumcision as a sign has now lost its meaning. To be a part of the church cannot be dependent upon racial, family or national succession; it is faith in the name of Jesus that gives power to become a child of God.⁸¹

Barth also considers the 'doctrinal' arguments for infant baptism and particularly the argument concerning the 'free antecedent grace of God'. Yet Barth supposes that the real and underlying reason for the retention of infant baptism is a reluctance to renounce the concept of the national church (*Volkskirche*):

does not the unmistakable disorder of our baptismal practice show at once just this: that there is a disorder in the sociological structure of our church, which perhaps must still be endured for a long time, but which can in no case be cited as a serious argument against the better ordering of our baptismal practice?⁸²

However, despite his recognition of the weakness of the case for infant baptism, Barth continues to affirm its validity:

77. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

79. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

80. *Ibid.*, pp. 43ff.

81. *Ibid.*, pp. 43f.

82. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

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'Baptism without the willingness and readiness of the baptised is true, effectual and effective baptism, but it is not correct; it is not done in obedience, it is not administered according to proper order, and therefore it is necessarily clouded baptism.'⁸³

Indeed, for Barth the best thing that can be said of the practice of infant baptism is precisely that it makes it visible that 'both Hitler and Stalin, both Mussolini and the Pope stand under the sign'. The hope that the Christian has, and which is signified by baptism, he cannot deny for even the 'most desperate cases among these others'.⁸⁴ Baptism is an 'eschatological sign' of the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection. Of itself it 'avails a man nothing', its meaning must be 'apprehended' by faith, but it remains a sign of the promise that Christ died and rose again for this man also.⁸⁵

Paul Jewett comments that 'one cannot say a real "no" to infant baptism and at the same time affirm that it is objectively and essentially valid'; just 'as King Agrippa was almost persuaded to be a Christian, Barth is almost persuaded to be a Baptist'.⁸⁶

But it is precisely in this hesitation that we encounter the enigma that pervades Barth's entire understanding of salvation. All men are ontologically defined as elect in Christ. On this basis we must 'hope' for all men. But are all men ontologically elect?⁸⁷ Does Barth yet grant full integrity to the inner work of grace producing faith in the life of the particular individual? If Barth's theology were not characterised by such reticence at this point would he not have pressed further in his questioning of infant baptism? At one point Barth asserts that our baptism 'is no more the cause of our redemption than is our faith'.⁸⁸ Objectively this may be true but one is left asking whether Barth's understanding of election, at this stage of his thinking, takes full account of the actuality of the work of the Spirit and the gift of faith in the life of the individual.

Cullman found Barth's treatment of the relationship between circumcision and baptism wholly unsatisfactory,⁸⁹ but it was a theme to which Barth returned with the completion of III 2 of the *Dogmatics* in early 1948. The new 'birth' of the Christian life 'signifies a direct relationship of the individual Christian to Jesus'; it is not based upon a birth by 'blood' or 'the will of the flesh'; it is not created by 'parents, family or nationality'. John 1:11f. and Colossians 2:11-12 preclude the possibility of equating baptism with circumcision but draw 'a radical

83. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

84. *Ibid.*, pp. 60f.

85. *Ibid.*, pp. 62ff.

86. Paul K. Jewett, *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace: an appraisal of the argument that as infants were once circumcised, so they should now be baptised*, Grand Rapids, 1978, p. 211.

87. Cf. C. D. III 2, pp. 585ff.

88. ... *Baptism*, p. 27.

89. Oscar Cullman, *Die Tauflehre des Neuen Testaments*, Zwingli-Verlag, Zurich, 1948, p. 51.

distinction between them'.⁹⁰ Again in IV 3, while speaking of the 'event of vocation', Barth writes:

It is the perverted ecclesiastical practice of administering baptism in which the baptised supposedly becomes a Christian unwittingly and unwillingly that has obscured the consciousness of the once-for-allness of this beginning, replacing it by the comfortable notion that there is not needed any such beginning of Christian existence, but rather that we can become and be Christians in our sleep, as though we had no longer to awaken out of sleep.⁹¹

In VI 1 Barth returns to the issue of the relationship between the church and the state implicit in the practice of infant baptism by posing the question 'who are the true Christians?' He speaks of the 'absurd result' of infant baptism by which 'whole countries have automatically been made . . . the holy community'; by which the 'spiritual mystery' of the community of the church has been 'replaced and crowded out by an arrogantly invented sacramental mystery'.⁹²

Barth's final and most thorough comments on baptism are the theme of the 'fragment' of his final part of *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*. In the 'Preface' to this 'Fragment' he admits that, since the publication of his earlier lecture on baptism, he had 'come to rather a different view of the matter'.⁹³ He refers to a book by his eldest son, Markus Barth, the exegetical conclusions of which had forced him 'to abandon the "sacramental" understanding of baptism' which he 'still maintained fundamentally in 1943'.⁹⁴

Barth's concern in challenging the practice of infant baptism so totally is a concern for the church, that the church should become again an 'essentially missionary and mature' church. But how can this be 'so long as it obstinately, against all better judgment and conscience, continues to dispense the water of baptism with the same indiscriminating generosity as it has now done for centuries?'⁹⁵

In distinction to the earlier lecture on baptism Barth's final approach to the subject radically divides baptism with the Holy Spirit (which Barth understands as the 'awakening, quickening and illuminating power' which initiates the new beginning of the Christian life) from baptism with water (which he now recognises as the human response of obedience and faithfulness to God as a prayer for God's continuing grace).⁹⁶ Baptism with the Holy Spirit is not identical with baptism with water.⁹⁷

90. *C. D. III 2*, pp. 585ff.

91. *IV 3*, pp. 517f.

92. *C. D. IV 1*, pp. 695f.; cf. *IV 3*, pp. 872ff.

93. *IV 4*, p. ix.

94. *Ibid.*, p. x; cf. Markus Barth, *Die Taufe ein Sakrament?* 1951.

95. *Ibid.*, p. xi.

96. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

97. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

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Christian life can only be possible and actual in union with Christ himself who is its origin. For this union to take place requires an 'inner change' whereby a man 'becomes a different man'. This change actually occurs both because something happened *extra nos* and because something happens *in nobis*. If that which happened *extra nos* was all that happened, albeit that it also happened *pro nobis*, then all anthropology and soteriology would be 'swallowed up' in Christology and Barth would indeed be guilty of the 'Christomonism' with which he has so often been charged. Similarly if that which happened *in nobis* was all that happened then all would be subjectivism and anthropology. But what occurs does so both *extra nos* and *in nobis*. The once-for-all events of Crucifixion and Resurrection are not merely past or transient history but history that is present to all times and which is 'cosmically effective and significant'.⁹⁸

In the work of the Holy Spirit the history manifested to all men in the resurrection of Jesus Christ is manifest and present to a specific man as his own salvation history.⁹⁹

Baptism with the Spirit is effective, causative, even creative action on man and in man. It is, indeed, divinely effective, divinely causative, divinely creative. Here, if anywhere, one might speak of a sacramental happening in the current sense of the term.¹⁰⁰

This emphasis upon the *in nobis* in correspondence to the *extra nos* is taken up and developed by Eberhard Jungel not only in his essay on Barth's doctrine of baptism but as a key theme of his own theological thought.¹⁰¹ It certainly is not the case that this emphasis is totally lacking in the early volumes of the *Dogmatics*. It is rather that here Barth is less reticent than usual concerning the reality of the work of the Spirit, in relation to the work of Christ, creating faith in the life of the individual. It is therefore no coincidence that the moment of Barth's least reticence concerning this inner work is also the moment of his deepest unease with the practice of infant baptism.

It is the reality of this baptism with the Holy Spirit that makes possible and demands baptism with water. Similarly baptism with water 'is what it is only in relation to baptism with the Holy Spirit'. The one is the action of God. The other is the action of man in response to the action of God. As such water baptism is the beginning of Christian ethics.¹⁰² Water baptism is a human decision. The 'Yes' of the individual

98. *Ibid.*, pp. 17ff.

99. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

100. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

101. Eberhard Jungel, 'Karl Barths Lehre von der Taufe', in *Theologische Studien* (1968), pp. 3-55 (p. 18; cf. p. 38).

102. *IV 4*, p. 41; cf. Jungel, p. 44.

to the grace of God. A first step of free obedience to God's grace.¹⁰³ Its basis is the command of Christ which relates to the institution of baptism already effected by his own baptism in the Jordan by John.¹⁰⁴ The goal of baptism is eschatological. It is a promise pointing towards Jesus Christ himself as the future fulfilment of the kingdom of God, the judgment of God, and the grace of God.¹⁰⁵

Within the context of this passage on the goal of baptism Barth discusses the relation between John's baptism and Christian baptism in a manner that falls somewhere between the views of Marpeck and Zwingli. Put briefly John's baptism shares the same goal as Christian baptism but differs from it inasmuch as the final fulfilment of that goal is already anticipated in the history of Christ.

In a much longer section Barth turns to the meaning of water baptism and, after considering various New Testament passages at some length, concludes that, while some of the passages could be interpreted sacramentally, none of them demands such an interpretation.¹⁰⁶ The meaning of baptism is therefore to be 'sought in its character as a true and genuine human action which responds to the divine act and word'.¹⁰⁷

Barth's remaining discussion of the meaning of baptism focuses on the freedom of the act both on the part of the Christian community and the individual baptised. Water baptism is a confirmation of human conversion to God, an act of hope, a prayer, an act of free obedience in response to God's grace.¹⁰⁸ Given that baptism is a response of obedience to a command of God Barth finds it difficult to conceive of anyone being called a Christian, in the fullest sense, without being baptised. There may be highly abnormal situations where this occurs but from such situations one ought not to deduce a general principle.¹⁰⁹

At this point Barth turns to the question of infant baptism:

theology today is confronted by the brute fact of a baptismal practice which has become the rule in churches in all countries and in almost all confessions, and in which that which ought to be regarded as self-evident is not only no longer self-evident but has been forgotten and even intentionally ignored.¹¹⁰

In Barth's opinion one can find no genuine *doctrine* of infant baptism until the time of the Reformation and then the 'apologetic and polemical character' of the arguments used in defence of the practice reveal that such

103. *Ibid.*, pp. 42ff.

104. *Ibid.*, pp. 50ff.

105. *Ibid.*, pp. 68ff.

106. *Ibid.*, pp. 100ff.

107. *Ibid.*, p. 128.

108. *Ibid.*, pp. 130ff.; cf. pp. 195ff.

109. *Ibid.*, pp. 155ff.

110. *Ibid.*, p. 165.

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arguments 'are later explanations, reasons and vindications'.¹¹¹ Again Barth ponders the possibility that the motivation for maintaining the practice of infant baptism at the time of the Reformation was the motivation for maintaining the concept of a state church but he concedes that this is merely 'historical conjecture'.¹¹²

In Barth's view the Reformers failed to demonstrate the necessity of infant baptism; failed to 'present and support' the matter calmly; failed to keep to the premises with which they began their arguments; and failed to prove what needed to be proved (too often what they actually proved was not the rightness of infant baptism but something else; e.g. that God's grace embraces children also).¹¹³

Turning to the arguments presented in defence of infant baptism Barth notes that, while there is no 'express prohibition' of infant baptism within the New Testament neither is it anywhere 'permitted or commanded'. That children respond to Christ in childlike ways does not constitute the beginning of Christian life. Even for children of Christian parents there can be no 'cheap grace':

The Christian life cannot be inherited as blood, gifts, characteristics and inclinations are inherited. No Christian environment, however genuine or sincere, can transfer this life to those who are in this environment.¹¹⁴

Neither is Barth impressed by arguments in respect of 'vicarious faith' or the reality of the faith of an infant. That such views cry out for the supplement of 'confirmation' is their greatest criticism:

the personal faith of the candidate is indispensable to baptism. He is not asked whether his faith is perfect. But he is asked concerning his faith, however feeble.¹¹⁵

The strongest argument in favour of infant baptism, in Barth's view, is that it represents a 'remarkably vivid . . . depiction of the free and omnipotent grace of God', a depiction 'even more dramatic the more boisterously many of the infant candidates behave at the ceremony'.¹¹⁶ But excellent though such a depiction may be it is not the proper meaning and reference of baptism.

Barth concludes his discussion of infant baptism with an appeal both to theologians and to Christian congregations and their pastors to

111. *Ibid.*, p. 167.

112. *Ibid.*, p. 168.

113. *Ibid.*, pp. 169ff.

114. *Ibid.*, p. 184.

115. *Ibid.*, p. 186.

116. *Ibid.*, p. 189.

abandon this 'profoundly irregular' practice.¹¹⁷ But, although he speaks approvingly of the baptismal practice of Baptists and Mennonites,¹¹⁸ he never retracts his rejection of 'rebaptism' in the 1943 lecture, nor does he deny the validity of infant baptism despite the fact that it cannot fulfil to any degree the meaning of water baptism as he understands it. There are few references to Anabaptist writers in Barth's *Dogmatics* and those that there are suggest that Barth had never actually read any of their writings. Indeed, his knowledge of them appears to be limited to his knowledge of Zwingli's rejection of their supposed teachings.¹¹⁹ Yet Barth's conclusions are not at all dissimilar to those of Marpeck particularly in the recognition by both writers of the disastrous consequences of the practice of infant baptism for a proper understanding of the nature of the Christian and the nature of the church. Certainly for Barth and Marpeck, in distinction to Bunyan, the issue of baptism is no secondary concern.

However, the ultimate issue at stake, which is faced by Marpeck but evaded by Barth,¹²⁰ is the question of whether infant baptism can be counted as valid baptism and, in consequence, whether 're-baptism' is indeed 're-baptism'. The usual 'ecumenical compromise' suggested is, in effect, no compromise at all since it requires those who reject the validity of infant baptism to suppress their conscience in the matter by refraining from 're-baptising' those who were previously 'baptised' as infants. Bunyan's 'openness', for all its belittling of the importance of baptism, at least has the merit of being a genuine 'compromise' in which each individual believer is granted the freedom to follow his own conscience until such time as the church as a whole reforms its practice.

117. *Ibid.*, p. 194.

118. *Ibid.*, p. 193; cf. p. 189.

119. *Ibid.*, p. 128; cf. I 2, p. 668 and IV 1, pp. 56f.

120. Cf. also Moltmann's 'suggestions for a new baptismal practice': Jurgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, trans. Margaret Kohl, London, 1977, pp. 240ff.

BAPTISM IN THE WRITINGS OF THE REFORMERS

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The baptismal theology of the Reformers was worked out in controversy. Firstly, there was conflict with the doctrine of sacramental efficacy of Rome as it came to expression in the role accorded to baptism as an instrument of justification. Secondly, thereafter the Reform faced the threat posed by the anabaptists' rejection of infant baptism, based on a radically different view of baptism, the sacraments and the church. It was this second front that was to occupy most of their energies after the initial skirmish with Rome.

I. The conflict with Rome: Luther and Zwingli.

a. The position of Rome 1520-1550

The position of Rome can be summarised as follows. The seven sacraments work *ex opere operato*. They contain and confer grace unless an obstacle is placed in the way. Thus, all who receive the sacraments receive grace by virtue of the act of reception. In baptism the guilt of original sin is removed with the consequence that there is nothing in the baptised that God hates. Moreover, an ineradicable spiritual quality, a *character indelebilis*, is imparted to the baptised, a spiritual mark which renders the sacrament incapable of repetition. Baptism was seen as the instrumental cause of justification and thus as indispensable to salvation. Therefore, the baptism of infants was essential; for if a child were to die unbaptised he would be in a state of condemnation. Under circumstances imperilling a child's life it was therefore permissible for the sacrament to be administered by laymen or women such as midwives. At root, therefore, baptism was dependent on Rome's doctrine of church and sacraments. It was closely connected with its doctrine of justification. It was part of the framework whereby soteriology was under the dominance of ecclesiology, with grace conveyed by sacramental channels. This structure became enshrined at *The Council of Trent* as official dogma.¹

Nevertheless, there were dissentient voices raised. The nominalist theology of Gabriel Biel maintained that baptism was not absolutely necessary to salvation. Underlying this denial was a different underpinning to its soteriology. Not the church but the decree of God was

1. Phillip Schaff (ed.), *The Creeds of Christendom*, Baker, 1983, 2. 89-95, 118-124.

the basis of its view of salvation. God who, according to his *potentia absoluta* could do anything, had freely bound himself according to his *potentia ordinata* and had established that he would by *pactum* save man who did his best (*facere quod in se est*). Due to the prevailing effect of God's decree, the elect might not therefore coincide with the church and so the role of the sacraments as the absolute *indicia* of salvation was undermined. It is important to realise two things. First, this did not receive the official stamp of approval by the church. Second, the theology of Biel and his disciples was the milieu from which Luther emerged in his evangelical breakthrough.²

b. Luther 1519-1520

Luther describes his position on baptism in *The holy and blessed sacrament of baptism* (1519). It is a sign in which we are thrust into the water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It denotes dying to sin and a resurrection in the grace of God. The old man is drowned, the new man rises. Therefore immersion is the most appropriate mode, a plunging completely into the water until completely covered. The infant or whoever 'should be put in and sunk completely into the water and then drawn out again'. This form is demanded by the nature of baptism. It signifies that the old man is to be wholly drowned by the grace of God. 'We should therefore do justice to its meaning and make baptism a true and complete sign of the thing it signifies'.³ There are limits to the analogy. The sacrament is quickly over but the reality lasts a lifetime. The baptised is sacramentally pure and guiltless (he has died and risen again) yet the work of the sacrament will be lifelong since the flesh remains and is wicked and sinful. God has allied himself with the baptised in a covenant and he begins from that hour to make him a new person.⁴ Faith is necessary. We must believe all this, that the sacrament signifies death and our resurrection at the Last Day and that it achieves it, establishing a covenant between us and God, we pledging to fight sin and he committing himself to be merciful to us. In this way in baptism we become pure and guiltless yet full of sinful inclinations.⁵ It was views such as these, together with his opposition to "that heretical but usual opinion which says that the sacraments of the new law give justifying grace to those who put no obstacle in the way"⁶ that brought on Luther's head the Papal Bull *Exsurge Domine* (June 1520) excommunicating

2. See Alister E. McGrath, 'Mira et Nova definitio iustitiae: Luther and scholastic doctrines of justification', *ARG* 74 (1983), 37-60; Heiko Augustinus Oberman, *The harvest of medieval theology: Gabriel Biel and late medieval nominalism*, Grand Rapids, 1967.

3. *Luther's Works* (ed. Jaroslav Pelikan; St Louis, 1961), 35, 29-30. Hereafter = *LW*. Also *LW* 36, 67-68.

4. *LW* 35, 32-33. Also *LW* 36, 69-70.

5. *LW* 35, 35.

6. *LW* 31, 106-107.

him.⁷ His reply came in his *Defence and Explanation* (September 1520). Faith and repentance are necessary to a true participation in baptism, he insists. According to Paul, whatever does not proceed from faith is sin. Christ himself put faith before baptism. Where there is no faith, baptism does no good. The Bull teaches instead that faith and repentance are not requisite. As Augustine, it is not the sacrament but faith in the sacrament that makes us righteous and saves us. It is not the sacraments that grant grace. Rather, it is faith in God's word.⁸ Luther's epistemological departure from Rome is clear. Not the church doctrine of sacramental efficacy nor an ecclesiological qualified soteriology now governs baptism but, instead, a theology grounded on the Word of God with the command and promise of God paramount, in turn both eliciting and requiring faith in that Word of promise.⁹ Moreover, his discovery of justification by faith also has an important bearing on the controversy. Since baptism was an instrument of justification in the Roman scheme, Luther's insistence on the sole instrumentality of faith serves to detach baptism from a central place in the *ordo salutis*. It also qualifies his view on the relation of baptism to sin. Whereas Rome taught that the evil which remains after baptism is not itself sin since the sacrament has occasioned remission, Luther argues that while the baptized is pure in a sacramental sense, yet sin remains. Sins are forgiven but sin is still present. Justified man is *simul iustus et peccator*.¹⁰ In this clash it is clear that Luther's evangelical breakthrough on justification and his corresponding theology of the Word serves as the focus for his realignment of his baptismal theology.

One other point is of interest. Luther's training in nominalism also had a bearing on the stance he adopts. We have seen how Biel had a framework which challenged that prevalent in the hierarchy, one which undermined the idea of the necessity of baptism to salvation. Luther's own struggles with the nominalist doctrine of the *pactum dei* had been the occasion of his realisation of the soteric nature of the *iustitia dei* in Rom 1.17.¹¹ May it not be that this perception of reality consisting in the particular encouraged a detachment in his thought from the all-embracing umbrella of the church that was the controlling feature of the soteriology and sacramental theology of Rome?

c. Zwingli

For Zwingli, the medieval doctrine of sacramental efficacy is also unacceptable, but for quite different reasons. Baptism for him is not a sacrament but an initiatory sign. He is unable to accept that God's grace

7. See B. J. Kidd (ed.), *Documents illustrative of the Continental Reformation*, Oxford, 1911, pp. 75f.

8. *LW* 32. 14-18. See also *LW* 36. 65-67.

9. See Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, Philadelphia, 1966, p. 345f.

10. *LW* 32. 19-28.

11. See McGrath (1983), n. 2.

can be conveyed by material means. Therefore, Zwingli adopts a sharp distinction between the *signum* and the *res*. Baptism is not a means of grace but a sign. Before 1523, it is a sign by which God assures us. Then he understands it as a sign by which we pledge to others that we will live the Christian life. From 1525 both elements are present. Baptism does not give faith (here he parts from Luther as well as Rome) but it confirms a faith already present.

The reasons for this are not hard to find. Zwingli's theology is strongly based on the sovereignty of God. The doctrine of election is right at the heart of his thinking.¹² Consequently, he wishes to preserve the freedom of the Holy Spirit to give grace and does not want to restrict it to the sacraments. We do not read in Scripture of any channel or conduit for the Holy Spirit, whose actions are ineffable.¹³ Moreover, if grace is given to those who prepare themselves to receive it then either they are able to prepare themselves and prevenient grace is nothing or else and the Spirit prepares them and grace is given prior to and apart from the sacrament. If, in turn, the sacraments mediate this preparatory grace then an infinite process is set in chain whereby the sacraments prepare us for the grace of the sacraments. Hence, Zwingli concludes that baptism and the Supper are simply testimonies of grace given beforehand.¹⁴ They cannot convey grace since spiritual realities cannot be conveyed by physical means nor can we be made clean by an external thing.¹⁵ The word *sacramentum* means an oath or pledge. Therefore, baptism is a pledge. As a man wears a white cross to indicate he is a confederate so a man who receives baptism proclaims his willingness to listen to God.¹⁶ Baptism is merely a covenant sign. The error, Zwingli thinks, is to ascribe to the sign the reality it signifies with the result that it ceases to be a sign.¹⁷ Its significance is simply to pledge us to a new life before God, immersion in water signifying the death of the old man while emergence from the water signifies the resurrection of Christ.¹⁸

With Zwingli we note a radical separation of sign and reality. The background is his concern for the sovereign freedom of God, that his grace be not tied to a temporal channel. However, more far reaching still

12. Robert W. A. Letham, 'Saving faith and assurance in Reformed theology: Zwingli to the Synod of Dort' (Ph.D thesis: University of Aberdeen, 1979), 1. 17-22. Gottfried W. Locher, *Zwingli's thought: new perspectives*, Leiden, 1981, pp. 121-141. W. P. Stephens, *The theology of Hildrich Zwingli*, Oxford, 1986, pp. 86-107.

13. In his *Fidel ratio* (1530) he writes: 'Dux autem vel vehiculum spiritui non est necessarium: ipse enim est virtus et latio qui cuncta feruntur non qui ferri debeat: neque id unquam legimus in scripturis sacris, quod sensibilia, qualia sacramenta sunt, certo secum ferrent spiritum; sed si sensibilia unquam lata sunt cum spiritu: iam spiritus fuit qui tulit, non sensibilia'. Huldrich Zwingli, *Opera* (ed. Melchioro Schulerro et Io. Schultessio; Zurich, 1841), 4. 10.

14. *Ibid.*, 4. 10-11.

15. Zwingli: *On Baptism*; Library of Christian Classics, London, 1953, 24. 130.

16. *Ibid.*, 24. 131.

17. *Ibid.*, 17.

18. *Ibid.*, 24. 150-152.

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is his dualistic world view which forbids him from recognising that spiritual grace can be conveyed by physical means. We shall note how this Nestorian view of the sacraments weakens his defence of infant baptism when faced by the challenge of the anabaptists. The conflict with Rome is relatively short-lived and superficial. The new threat is to consume the energies not merely of Zwingli but of all the Reformers.

II. The anabaptist challenge

Considerations of time forbid us from giving more than a brief overview of the anabaptists' main lines of attack on the Reformers' position on the nature and subjects of baptism. There were, of course, a variety of baptismal theologies among the early anabaptist groups.¹⁹ We shall summarise the main features of the views of Menno Simons, since these are representative of the main arguments the Reformers felt obliged to address. His works *Christian Baptism* and *The Foundation of Christian Doctrine* were both published in 1539.²⁰ In the first of these, Simons explains why his colleagues practise believers, baptism only; it is on the grounds of the command of Christ,²¹ the teaching of the apostles²² and the practice of the apostles.²³ This is foundational to the structure of Simons' whole argument. The point of interest is that this is an exclusively New Testament framework. It enables Simons to claim that since there is no explicit New Testament command to baptise infants therefore infants should not be baptised. Subordinate arguments follow from these premises. Thus he insists that faith precedes baptism in the New Testament and so, since they cannot believe, infants should not be baptised but should wait until they can hear the gospel and respond to it.²⁴ So baptism is a token of a person's obedience, which proceeds from faith. It is proof to the church and before God that he truly believes. It is the testimony of a good conscience.²⁵ Those who baptise infants are misguided in that they suppose that baptism admits the child into the covenant of grace. Instead, it is solely by the election of grace that this takes place. 'They baptise before the thing which is represented by baptism, namely, faith, is found in us' thus putting the cart before the horse.²⁶ Therefore, Simons self-consciously operates from a principle of

19. See George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, Philadelphia, 1962, pp. 300-318

20. In *The complete writings of Menno Simons c. 1496-1561*, ed. John C. Wenger; Scottsdale, Pa, 1956.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 237-243.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 243-275.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 275-282.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 238-241.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 244-247.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 259. See also p. 131, where he makes the same mistake in his *Foundation of Christian doctrine*.

individualism for 'the candidate for baptism must believe for himself,'²⁷ and so the household baptisms are interpreted in terms of an aggregate of believing individuals, no infants being recorded as present, rather than in terms of the corporate nature of the household as such.²⁸ Again, the hermeneutic of exclusive reliance on the New Testament requires explicit New Testament sanction for the practice of baptism and consequently an express command is needed to justify the baptism of infants. Since there is none, the practice is invalid.²⁹ The charge of rebaptism levelled at Simons' colleagues is a *non sequitur* since the baptism of infants is no baptism and, in any case, the apostles baptised the twelve disciples at Ephesus (Acts 19) although John had previously baptised them, since his baptism and theirs were not the same.³⁰

Simons' discussion demonstrates features that are present throughout the anabaptist case. First, there is the hermeneutical issue of an exclusive reliance on the New Testament in severance from its context in the ongoing history of salvation that lay behind it in the Old. Flowing from that commitment is the use of the New Testament as a regulative principle by which only what is explicitly commanded is permissible in the church. Second, the anabaptists' individualism may owe much to nominalism and its insistence that reality is to be found exclusively in the particular. Third by making baptism to be dependent on something present in man an anthropocentric doctrine is seen to emerge, a kind of primitive proto-Arminianism or proto-pietism that prescind from an objective view of the sacraments and instead is grounded on a subjective inner change in man. Baptism is a testimony to one's faith. Fourthly, Simons misunderstands his opponents. He views them through the lens of his own hermeneutic. He regards the exponents of the covenant argument to teach that a child is introduced into the covenant of grace by baptism. This, we shall see, is a serious error. In making this elementary mistake, Simons has misunderstood what his opponents consider the nature of baptism to be. As a result, they will be talking largely at cross purposes.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 254.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 277-281.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 263.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 277.

III. The response (development from tentative beginnings to greater sophistication and complexity)

a. Luther and Melanchthon

Luther

Luther's first major treatment of infant baptism occurs in *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520), written before the anabaptist crisis had begun. He unfolds his teaching that the sacraments are dependent on the word of promise and are only fulfilled when faith is present in the recipient. He then indicates baptism to signify death and resurrection, or complete justification. While it is correct to say that it is a washing away of sins, by itself this is too weak an expression to bring out its full significance. That, again, is why immersion is the most complete sign since the sinner needs not so much to be washed as to die.³¹ Since it signifies resurrection its effect is lifelong and is only fully realised when we rise on the last day.³² Since faith is necessary how do infants fit in? The faith of the church avails for them. The Word of God has power to change a godless heart and so 'through the prayer of the believing church . . . the infant is changed, cleansed, and renewed by inpoured faith'.³³ He hints that the faith of the sponsors may also suffice,³⁴ and in the *Defence and Explanation*, also written in 1520, he makes this explicit.³⁵ However, later he changes his ground. In his *Concerning Rebaptism* (1528), designed expressly to counter the anabaptists, he argues that infants themselves have faith. First, he points out that it cannot be proved from Scripture that they do not have faith. Then he indicates biblical passages that tell us that children can and do believe. However, the main thrust of his argument is that the claim that infants cannot believe is false since John the Baptist believed, although he could neither hear nor understand. Consequently, to hold that a child believes is not contrary to Scripture. Therefore, to claim infants cannot believe is unscriptural.³⁶ Luther answers other anabaptist arguments too, although he acknowledges his contacts with them to be minimal, so that his knowledge of their teachings is vague.³⁷ He points to the inevitable uncertainty that will arise if the basis of baptism is the faith of the one baptised. We can be certain of no-one's faith, child or adult. People can deceive. We might then be led to repeated baptisms as we became in turn

31. *LW* 36. 65-68.

32. *LW* 36. 69-70.

33. *LW* 36. 73.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *LW* 32. 14.

36. *LW* 40. 241-242.

37. 'I am not sure as to the ground and reason of their faith, since you do not tell me . . . My answer cannot be very definite'. *LW* 40. 230. See also *Ibid.*, 40. 261-262.

uncertain and then sure of our own faith. 'You think the devil can't do such thing? You had better get to know him better. He can do worse than that, dear friend'.³⁸ Christ commands us to bring the children to him. They did not bring the humble to him, but children. He blessed children, not the humble.³⁹ He hints at an argument based on the covenant, already used by Zwingli, Bullinger and others.⁴⁰ In response to the claim that Christ has not specifically commanded the baptism of children, he counters by pointing out that he requires the baptism of the Gentiles and that children are a great part of the heathen, that the apostles baptised households, that John writes to little children that they know the Father and that God's Word spoken in baptism will not be void but will bear fruit in due course.⁴¹ If faith appears years after baptism, there is no more need for rebaptism than for a fresh engagement and marriage should a girl gain affection for her husband two years after the wedding. Are the Ten Commandments to be replaced because some do not understand or obey them? '. . . verily baptism can be correct and sufficient even if the Christian falls from faith or sins a thousand times a year'.⁴² It is evident that Luther regards the validity of baptism to reside in the command of God. It has an efficacy that comes from God and is consequently not dependent on the state of the administrator. After all, he claims, how can you be sure of the baptiser's faith?!⁴³ Faith is required by baptism. Baptism is not dependent on faith. To make baptism depend on faith is idolatry. It is dependence on a gift of God, not on God's Word alone.⁴⁴ As a parting shot, he points to the practice of infant baptism in the church since the time of the apostles. If the practice was wrong, for a thousand years there would have been no true baptism in the church, a state of affairs impossible to contemplate.⁴⁵

While Luther's defence of infant baptism is interesting throughout, its weaknesses are fairly evident. He hints at baptism being the New Testament successor of circumcision, but it is questionable whether he gives adequate expression to the underlying unity between the Old and New Testaments. He tends to stress the elements of discontinuity and antithesis rather than of comparison and development. While this contrast is seen mainly in soteriological terms, as man's reception of the Word of God as law or as grace, rather than in a redemptive-historical sense, and while his prevailing Christocentric exegesis of the Old Testament provides unity to both yet even this discussion of the connection between

38. *LW* 40. 240.

39. *LW* 40. 243.

40. *LW* 40. 244.

41. *LW* 40. 245-246.

42. *LW* 40. 246-248.

43. *LW* 40. 250-252.

44. *LW* 40. 252.

45. *LW* 40. 254-260.

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circumcision and baptism is couched in terms of separation and contrast. There is the covenant of circumcision and in addition the covenant of baptism. The former is rooted in the faith of Abraham, from which those circumcised were descended, while the latter is grounded on the merit of Christ to whom the children are brought.⁴⁶ Hence, he is not able to mount a radical challenge to the anabaptists' hermeneutic. His position under the patronage of his Elector shields him from the need to confront the anabaptists in practical conflict. He is consequently not fully aware of their teaching. Moreover, he shares the same tendency to individualism as they. There is no sense of the corporate dimensions either of baptism itself or of the household unit to which infants belong. He regards them purely as individuals. His nominalistic training may be influential here. It is this perspective that leads him towards infant faith.

We should note that Luther has restructured the basis for infant baptism. Whereas Rome maintained that infants are to be baptised because without it they cannot be saved, Luther argues that it is the command of God that validates it and faith that fulfils it. The domination of soteriology by ecclesiology in Rome is ended. Justification by faith alone now requires that baptism, as the entire doctrine of the church, be based on the Word and received in faith.

Melanchthon

Much of what Melanchthon says of baptism bears close resemblance to Luther. For instance, in his *Loci Communes* (1521 edition) he describes the sacraments as signs and seals reminding us of God's promises and testifying his goodwill towards us. Thus, baptism as immersion into water signifies a work of God 'as definite as if God himself should baptise you . . . so you shall consider this immersion as a sure pledge of divine grace'.⁴⁷ A transition from death to life is signified, the submersion of the old Adam into death followed by a revival of the new man. Like Luther, he sees its efficacy as continual and lifelong. Not until our own resurrection is its significant role exhausted. No more effective consolation to the dying can exist than to remind them of their baptism.⁴⁸ The baptism of John the Baptist was different from Christian baptism, since John baptised with respect to grace that was to come later whereas now baptism is a pledge and a seal of grace already conferred. So those baptised by John had to be rebaptised to be certain they had received remission of sins.⁴⁹ How Melanchthon has to rue this rash admission when the anabaptists appear on the scene! He has stressed the discontinuity of Old and New Testaments. The law has been completely

46. *LW* 40. 244.

47. *Philip Melanchthon: Loci Communes Theologici*; Library of Christian Classics, Philadelphia, 1969, 19. 133, 136.

48. *Ibid.*, 19. 137.

49. *Ibid.*, 19. 138-139.

annulled (*abrogatio*) in all respects by the New Testament. There is a relation of promise and fulfilment, a soteriological unity throughout, but the contrast is paramount, which accounts for the discrepancy between the two baptisms.⁵⁰ By the 1522 edition he tones this down. *Abrogatio* becomes *mutatio*. The anabaptists will force him to reconstruct the relationship. By the 1555 edition he will insist that there is, after all, no distinction between them. The difference consists simply in that between John and Jesus and what they did.⁵¹ In fact, the anabaptists destroy the meaning of baptism by claiming that the sacraments are only signs of good works, baptism indicating that we are to suffer much. There is nothing in their thinking on baptism directing us to the promise of God which baptism attests.⁵² In fact, 'anabaptism is a frightful, evil error and blasphemy of the divine name' for in their baptism they break the third commandment by taking the name of God in vain.⁵³ They are heretics, for they have rejected the baptism of the church. Infant baptism has been practised since the early, pristine church as Origen, Cyprian and Augustine maintained. Consequently, they have introduced a novelty without testimony in the early Christian Church.⁵⁴ The promise of God relates to children. To whom the promise belongs the sign is to be administered. Children need forgiveness but outside the church there is no forgiveness. Therefore they are to be brought into the church by baptism so as to receive forgiveness. Infant baptism fulfils the law of circumcision and, since baptism is commanded for all without distinction, it should be given to children. The anabaptists oppose this saying that since infants have no faith their baptism is useless. But they forget that God is active in the young only if they are brought to him in baptism. Christ tells us that children in the church are saved. No such grace occurs in the children of the heathen. So, because children are certainly saved in the church we should baptise them, for God then accepts them and gives them the Holy Spirit who is active in them according to their capacity.⁵⁵

There are hints here of Luther's discussion of infant faith, although for Melancthon this appears to follow from baptism itself rather than being something which may be present in the child already. In summary, the anabaptists view baptism as a covenant obligating us to kill evil lusts and to suffer, something which children can neither understand nor do. For Melancthon, however, baptism is first and foremost a testimony of

50. *Ibid.*, 19. 120-130.

51. *Melancthon on Christian Doctrine: Loci Communes 1555*, ed. Clyde L. Manschreck; Grand Rapids, 1982, p. 207.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 203.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 207.

54. *Ibid.*, pp. 209-211.

55. *Ibid.*, pp. 211-215.

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God's grace towards us, a covenant through which he promises us his grace.⁵⁶

While there is in Melancthon a developing appreciation for the underlying continuity between the Testaments, still he bases baptism not on any redemptive-historical ground but on an assortment of somewhat lightweight arguments. As with Luther, he has not fully grasped the corporate dimension of baptism and instead still grounds it in an individualistic sense. As such, he is not fully equipped to do battle with the hermeneutic of the anabaptists. His theme is that baptism incorporates into the church. We incorporate infants into the church by baptism. We do so because we are commanded to do so. Are we justified again in seeing an underlying impact of nominalism?

b. Zwingli and Bullinger: the beginnings of the covenant argument

Zwingli

Zwingli's thinking on baptism and the sacraments undergoes change in the course of his short career as a Reformer. Before 1523 he sees the sacraments as signs of the covenant by which God assures us of his grace. However, he does not say much about baptism at this time and is unwilling to use the word *sacramentum*, as we noted. He focuses more on faith than on baptism. Thus, in the *Sixty Seven Articles* (January 1523) while he stresses that the covenant of grace in Christ is God's pledge to us, and while he relates the covenant integrally to the Lord's Supper, nevertheless he does not say anything about its connection with baptism and has little of any significance on infant baptism.⁵⁷ The anabaptists have not yet surfaced. In 1524, however, he makes a sharp turn in his thinking. The sacraments in general, and baptism in particular, are now simply pledges which we give to others. This is his thesis as the new controversy begins. He will not be able to sustain it for long, for it will offer no defence for infant baptism. In *A commentary of true and false religion* (January 1525) there is little on the relation of the covenant to the sacraments. The stress is on the discontinuity between Old and New Testaments. The sacraments are the oath of a Christian to Christ and to other believers. Baptism is simply an initiatory sign by which a man proves to the church that he aims to be a servant of Christ. It cannot cleanse the conscience. Infant baptism is permissible.⁵⁸ In

56. *Ibid.*, pp. 215-216.

57. Kidd (1911), pp. 411-415. See Stephens (1986), pp. 180, 194-195; Jack W. Cottrell, 'Covenant and baptism in the theology of Huldreich Zwingli' (Ph.D dissertation: Princeton Theological Seminary, 1971), pp. 36-58.

58. 'Sic sunt ceremoniae exteriora signa, quae accipientem aliis probant eum se ad novam vitam obligavisse, aut Christum confessorum esse etque ad mortem'. *Opera*, 3. 773. See Stephens, p. 198.

Those who give cause for tumult he argues that the absence of a record of a baptism of an infant in the New Testament should no more prevent us from baptising infants than an absence of a record of a baptism in Calcutta prevents the church from baptising there.⁵⁹ Then in May 1525 he launches a major work, *Concerning baptism*, which follows along similar lines but which focuses obviously on baptism itself. It is directed against Rome's doctrine of baptismal efficacy,⁶⁰ but principally against the rising anabaptist sects. The stress is still on *discontinuity* between Old and New Testaments. He does accept similarities, so that baptism is the fulfilment of circumcision with an identity of meaning between the two, but there is no awareness of covenant unity.⁶¹ Moreover, baptism is still a sign of willingness by those who receive it to amend their lives and to follow Christ.⁶² There is nothing novel in Zwingli's treatment except his insistence on the identity of the baptism of John the Baptist and that of the apostles, a theme which was to become dominant thereafter. The twelve disciples at Ephesus in Acts 19 had not been baptised before their encounter with Paul but had simply received John's *teaching*. There was no question of their having been rebaptised.⁶³

However, Zwingli is about to make another alteration in his baptismal thought. At the moment he is unable to defend infant baptism. He is groping for an answer. Unfortunately for him, he shares many of the assumptions of the anabaptists; their stress on discontinuity between Old and New, their dualism between nature and grace, their focus on man's response rather than what God does in baptism. It is in his *Commentary on Genesis* (March 1527, but written from June 1525) that the change is first evident. Here he stresses *covenant unity* for the first time. There is but one faith and one church in all ages, the one covenant finding its unity in Jesus Christ. This covenant is God's promise to be our God. So, since the children of believers received the sign in the former era, so they are to receive baptism in the latter era.⁶⁴ Then, in his *Reply to Hubmaier* (1525) he applies this new-found theme of covenant unity to baptism in greater detail. The covenant is *God's* covenant and it is one. Our children have the same privileges as Israel's since they are in the same covenant. He provides a tabular comparison of the Abrahamic and the New covenants and indicates that the differences are purely relative to the degree of revelation given at the respective times. The new is the fulfilment of the Abrahamic and both are set in contrast with the Mosaic law. Baptism is now a sign of our belonging to God's covenant, not a

59. Stephens, p. 197.

60. *LCC* 24. 122-123, 127, 130f.

61. *Huldreich Zwinglis Samtliche Werke*, eds. E. Egli, W. Kohler und G. Finsler; Berlin, Leipzig, Zurich, 1905-, 4. 317f, 326-333. Hereafter = Z. See also Cottrell (1971), pp. 160-166; Stephens (1966), pp. 199-203.

62. *LCC* 24. 122-123, 127, 130f.

63. *LCC* 24. 161-174.

64. Cottrell (1971), pp. 179-184.

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pledge relating to our covenant. Baptism shows that our children belong to god's people no less than the children of the Jews.⁶⁵ This is to be the thrust of his teaching for the rest of his short life. He will oppose Luther's idea of infant faith.⁶⁶ He will write a further reply to Hubmaier, his *Refutation of anabaptist tricks* (July 1527), in which he will argue that infant baptism dates from the time of the apostles,⁶⁷ and will again major on the unity of the covenant as its ground.⁶⁸ He will berate the anabaptists because 'you reject the whole Old Testament.'⁶⁹ He concludes that since there is only one immutable God and testament, we who trust God are under the same testament as Abraham and Israel. Therefore since children were circumcised in the old covenant they are to be baptised in the new. Since Abraham's faith included the Hebrew children in it, not only believers but their children also are in the church and consequently ought not to be deprived of the covenant sign.⁷⁰ He was to progress no further than this.

Zwingli has advanced significantly on Luther in theological terms. He has discovered the hermeneutic principle of covenant unity that was to be developed further by others.⁷¹ He is therefore able to ground infant baptism on the covenant promise of God rather than, as Luther, on something in infants themselves or in the church. To do this he has escaped from the theme of discontinuity that the anabaptists were exploiting. To be sure, he recognises the differences between Old and New. However, he sees them as existing within an overriding unity and continuity. Unless he had done that he would never have been able to suggest a radical challenge to the anabaptists' hermeneutic. Not that this challenge spawned the theme; it was suggested independently and prior to the conflict. Instead, the conflict provided the occasion for it to be brought into prominence.⁷²

Nevertheless, Zwingli's constructions are bedevilled by serious structural weaknesses. His radical nature-grace dualism he shares with the anabaptists. He cannot regard baptism as a means of grace. The soul cannot be affected by what is bodily. The consequence is that baptism

65. Huldrych Zwingli, *Opera* (Zurich, 1545), 2, 29b, 112. See Cottrell (1971), pp. 194-212; Stephens (1986), pp. 206-209.

66. In his *A friendly exegesis* (Feb. 1527), Z 5, 649-650.

67. In *Selected writings of Huldreich Zwingli* (ed. S. M. Jackson; Philadelphia:, 1901), pp. 131-166, 247-251. Hereafter = *SW*.

68. *SW*, pp. 219-235.

69. *SW*, p. 179.

70. *SW*, pp. 235-236.

71. It is evident that Zwingli was the first to utilise the theme of covenant unity. Heinrich Bullinger acknowledged that this was so; see Cottrell (1971), p. 338. Cottrell produces extensive evidence to refute the claim of Schrenck that the anabaptists were the first to use the concept and that Zwingli simply responded; pp. 296-374. See Gottlob Schrenck, *Gottesreich und bund im alteren Protestantismus*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967 (1923), pp. 36-37. J. Wayne Baker, *Heinrich Bullinger and the covenant: the other Reformed tradition*, Athens, Ohio, 1980, pp. 1f, supports Cottrell.

72. See Cottrell, 1971, p. 212.

(and the Eucharist) cannot be integrated satisfactorily into his soteriology. There are loose ends that must be tied together before a coherent theology of baptism can be produced. His successor at Zurich, Heinrich Bullinger, will make an attempt at this.

Bullinger

With Bullinger lies the distinction of having written the first treatise specifically devoted to the covenant. His *De testamento seu foedere Dei unico and aeterno brevis expositio* (1534) sets out his thinking at length.⁷³ As the title indicates, his theme is the unity of the *one* covenant of God. In the same year he also expounded the covenant in his *Antiquissima fies et vera religio*.⁷⁴ These were no novelties for him, for he had followed the theme since Zwingli had introduced it.⁷⁵ For Bullinger, God made the covenant with Adam after the fall. God's grace has been expressed in unbroken unity in all ages of redemptive history. Since there has only ever been one covenant of grace, infants are to receive the sacrament now as they did before Christ came. His explicit hermeneutic is that of the unity and continuity of the covenant. However, he differs from Zwingli in his definition of covenant. Whereas with Zwingli covenant, while a theme of importance, is not central and is subordinate to his strong doctrine of election and to his Christology. Bullinger places it right at the heart of his theology. His is a more redemptive-historical treatment. He is concerned for history, for the ongoing revelation of covenant in the flow of the biblical record. Correspondingly, he does not share Zwingli's interest in predestination and election. Indeed, these matters are very much in the background in Bullinger's thought. This has an impact on his view of what the covenant actually is. Whereas Zwingli had construed it as primarily a one-sided, unilateral action of God,⁷⁶ Bullinger takes a different position. For him, the covenant is bilateral. It is conditional. God has established it out of mere grace, it is true, but at the root the pattern is one of mutuality. God makes certain promises. At the same time, he has placed on man stipulations he is to observe. In turn, man promises allegiance to God.⁷⁷ The decalogue is a summary of the conditions God requires man to fulfil. The Mosaic covenant is crucial, in unbroken harmony with the rest of God's covenants, in contrast to Zwingli who had set it apart from the Abrahamic, which latter was fulfilled in the new covenant. For Bullinger, this underlies covenant conditionality. Baptism is a condition

73. Heinrich Bullinger, *De testamento seu foedere Dei unico & seterno brevis expositio*, Zurich, 1534. An English translation is available as an appendix in Peter A. Lillback, 'The binding of God: Calvin's role in the development of covenant theology' (Ph.D dissertation: Westminster Theological Seminary, 1985).

74. Heinrich Bullinger, *Antiquissima fies et vera religio* (Zurich, 1534).

75. Baker (1980), *in passim*.

76. Lethan (1979), 1. 21-22; 1980, pp. 14-16.

77. Bullinger, *De testamento*, pp. 4-6.

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of the covenant required of man by God. The anabaptists have neglected this condition. They cannot therefore expect to receive the promises.⁷⁸

In an earlier work of 1531, translated into English in 1551 as *A most sure and strong defence of the baptism of children against the pestiferous sect of the anabaptists*,⁷⁹ Bullinger writes against the anabaptists. The work takes the form of a dialogue between Simon the anabaptist and Joiada the true Christian. Covenant unity is again the basis for baptism. From the Abrahamic covenant it is clear that God has included infants in his covenant. Believers' infants are in the covenant. This covenant still stands, or God would not be our God as he says he is in it. Thus, in the New Testament the faithful are called the children of Abraham. Christ receives young children. Paul writes of the children of Christians that they are clean. How can this be unless by the mercy and promise of God?⁸⁰ Simon replies that this makes carnal birth the key to belonging to the church, in conflict with John 1:12-13. Joiada's reply is that it is the promise of God that is the ground for membership of his church.⁸¹ He rehearses a range of arguments for infant baptism, largely supplementary to this main one, some of which he will repeat in his *Decades*. The crucial point is that the infants of the faithful are not baptised so as to belong to the covenant. They are baptised because they are in the covenant and are members of the church already. Moreover, this status is grounded not on anything in them as infants or in the relationship they sustain to their parents but rather on the promise of God's grace. Bullinger then turns his guns on the opposition. He attacks the naturalistic fallacy that pervades their reasoning, *is therefore ought*. 'We may never . . . make our argument, *a facto ad ius* . . . baptisme ought not to be denied unto infantes on the grounds that we do not read expressly that the apostles baptised infants'. They may have done so but it is not written. No man's facts, still less things left undone, should prejudice the law. Christ did not baptise; does that mean we should not baptise? If the apostles did not baptise infants, yet they baptised lawfully. Therefore we shall baptise infants lawfully. 'Bring ye therefore any lawe ye forbiddeth to baptise children'. The foundation for our practice is that which is lawful according to God's word not whether a thing was done or left undone.⁸² Finally, he highlights a deep hermeneutical clash. Simon retorts, 'Why dost thou take all thinges out of the olde Testament?', to which Joiada responds, 'I know what the matter is, ye cast away the olde Testament'. Why did Christ and the apostles defend their teaching from

78. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-12.

79. *A most sure and strong defence of the baptisme of children, set forth by that famous Clerke, Henry Bullinger: & now translated out of Laten into Englysh by John Deron (sic), Seno noys Worcester, 3 Apr 1551.* Hereafter = SSD. The original was *Von dem unverschampten . . . leeren der selbgesandten Widertouffern*, Zurich, 1531.

80. Bullinger, SSD, pp. c. v. a-b.

81. *Ibid.*, p. C. vi. a.

82. *Ibid.*, pp. E. viii. a-b.

the Old Testament? Why do you blame us if we follow the example of Christ?⁸³

Later in his career, Bullinger turns his attention to baptism during the course of a series of fifty sermons, divided into five sets of ten and correspondingly known as the *Decades* (1549-1551, first published 1552). The sacraments, he states, are signs given to us by God representing his promises and thereby strengthening the faith of those who receive them. He likes Calvin's definition which has regard more to what God does than to man.⁸⁴ Thus, baptism is a sign involving water which signifies remission of sins, everlasting life, fellowship with Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit.⁸⁵ The Word is necessary to accompany the sign, since it is by the Word that God testifies to us his will.⁸⁶ A likeness exists between the signum and the res, 'a most apt and very near affinity between themselves'⁸⁷ but they must not be confused (an attack on the Roman Catholic teaching).⁸⁸ They do not give grace but rather confirm or testify the truth to us.⁸⁹ They are seals, baptism sealing to us that God certainly cleanses us from sin and makes us heirs of eternal life,⁹⁰ signifying and representing to us this cleansing as we have water sprinkled or poured on us and, as we have been dipped we are taken out of the water, that we are buried with Christ and raised to newness of life.⁹¹ Baptism is a dipping or plunging,⁹² although the apostles have not bound us 'so that it is free either to sprinkle or to dip'.⁹³ Only an ordained minister ought to baptise. Midwives are not permitted to do so, since Scripture forbids women to teach.⁹⁴ Baptism is to be administered to all whom God declares to be his; either those who profess faith or those who are acknowledged by God's promise to belong to his people. The infants of the faithful God reckons among his people. Therefore they are to be baptised.⁹⁵ So much is clear from God's covenant promise in Genesis 17 to be the God of Abraham and his seed throughout their generations. It is evident in Jesus' reception of the children that he had not come to abrogate this promise. That infants belong to the church is not grounded simply on a birth connection but upon the promise of

83. *Ibid.*, pp. E. v. a-b.

84. *The Decades of Henry Bullinger*, ed. The Revd Thomas Harding; Cambridge, 1849, 4. 233-234. Hereafter = *D*.

85. *D*, 4. 250.

86. *D*, 4. 254; see also 4. 272.

87. *D*, 4. 280.

88. *D*, 4. 266-279. See also 4. 286, 328.

89. *D*, 4. 299-311.

90. *D*, 4. 316-323.

91. *D*, 4. 328-331.

92. *D*, 4. 352.

93. *D*, 4. 364.

94. *D*, 4. 369.

95. *D*, 4. 382-383.

God.⁹⁶ 'Letting pass these brainsick, frantic, and foul-mouthed railers', God has commanded that all nations be baptised and infants are part of all nations. The *res* is greater than the *signum*, and since infants are not debarred from the *res* neither should they be from the *signum*. Women are not to be excluded from the Lord's Supper although there is no explicit command to admit them. All who receive the Holy Spirit are to receive baptism; the kingdom of heaven is for infants; no-one enters that kingdom who is not a friend of God; children are therefore friends of God and so have God's Spirit; who, therefore, can forbid baptism?

Circumcision was given to infants; the universal opinion of the fathers is that it has been replaced by baptism; therefore baptism is for infants. The apostles baptised whole households; children are the greatest part of the household; therefore the apostles baptised children; even if no infants were present in the households whose baptism is recorded, if there had been any they would have been baptised due to the household unit being the significant frame of reference for the baptism. Infant baptism, moreover, has been practised from the time of the apostles until now, as is witnessed by Origen, Jerome, Cyprian, Cyril and Augustine.⁹⁷ Consequently rebaptism is a defilement of the name of God. No-one in the Old Testament was ever circumcised twice. The twelve in Acts 19 had already been baptised but now received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁸ In these sermons, the link with the covenant is more implicit than expressed. It is nevertheless obvious that it lies in the background. The most striking and important comment that Bullinger makes is to ground baptism in the promise of God. This obviates any counter-claim that the practice of infant baptism is based simply on birth. It is an assertion that God himself has a claim upon the child according to his gracious covenant, a claim that outweighs and predates any purely human connection that may obtain.

A further advance has been made. Going beyond Zwingli, Bullinger has made covenant unity explicit and has used it consistently in his baptismal theology. He has a closer relationship between *signum* and *res* than did his predecessor. If Zwingli's sacramentalism (or non-sacramentalism) can be seen as Nestorian in its radical separation of the two, and if Rome is virtually Eutychian in its view of the transubstantiation of the elements, Luther also leaning in that direction, Bullinger's is a mediating position. This better fits him to expound and defend his application of baptism to infants and to see it in a covenantal light, in which the relation of grace to the sacrament is neither automatic nor absent. Grace is not dispensed automatically to all, rendering faith superfluous, nor is it abstracted from the elements making faith ultimate.

96. D. 4. 383-388.

97. D. 4. 388-392.

98. D. 4. 394-396.

However, Bullinger's weak doctrine of election wedded to a conditional covenant may have been the achilles heel of his formulation. The prospect of baptism being more our response to God's grace, rather than something which God does for us, could be seen to follow from his idea of baptism as a condition of the covenant which we are to fulfil. If so, we are back with the anabaptist concept of baptism as a badge of our faith. However, the Reformed doctrine of baptism was soon to mature.

c. Bucer, Calvin and Vermigli

It is with Martin Bucer and the two most prominent of those in some way associated with him that we find the mature flowering of the Reformed doctrine of baptism. In this case, so close are their baptismal theologies that we will consider their contribution as a whole rather than as separate units. Bucer's major thought on baptism occurs in his commentary on the gospels, *In sacra quattuor evangelia enarrationes* (1530); in a treatise on infant baptism written to Bernard Rothmann, leader of the radical evangelicals at Munster, *Quid de baptisate infantium* (1533); in *excursus* in his Romans commentary, *In epistolam D. Pauli apostoli ad Romanos* (1536); and, more questionably, in the posthumous lectures on Ephesians edited by Tremellius from oral lecture notes, *Praelectiones doctiss, in Epistolam D. P. ad Ephesios* (1551). For Calvin we have concentrated on the first edition of his *Institutes* (1536), compiled before his sojourn in Strassburg, and the final edition of 1559. In addition, there is his *Brief instruction for arming all the good and faithful against the errors of the common sect of the Anabaptists* (1544), and a series of letters dating from 1554 to 1559. The principal works in which Vermigli discusses baptism are his Romans commentary, *In epistolam ad Romanos* (1558) and his commentary on I Corinthians, *In priorem epistolam ad Corinthios* (1562). Both latter men spent important formative years with Bucer at Strassburg. Calvin's thought shows definite changes during his stay there and is thereafter set on course for development but not for divergence. It is not without reason that both Calvin and Vermigli have been seen as Bucerans.⁹⁹

Bucer, Calvin and Vermigli are in agreement on the nature of baptism, viewing it as a sign of God's promise attesting his good will toward us. As Calvin puts it, it is 'an outward sign by which the Lord seals on our consciences the promises of his good will towards us'.¹⁰⁰ It exhibits

99. Joseph C. McLelland, *The visible words of God: an exposition of the sacramental theology of Peter Martyr Vermigli AD 1500-1562*, Edinburgh, 1957, pp. 272-281; D. F. Wright (ed.), *Common places of Martin Bucer*, Appleford., 1972, pp. 17, 53.

100. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian religion*, 4. 14. 1. Hereafter = *Institutes*. See also *Ibid.*, 4. 15. 1, 4. 15. 4, 4. 16. 2; *Institutes* (1536) = *Institution of the Christian religion*, trans., Ford Lewis Battles; Atlanta, 1975, p. 118. Hereafter = *Institutes* (1536), pagination referring to the 1975 edition. See also Peter Martyr Vermigli, *In epistolam S. Pauli apostoli ad Romanos* (Basel, 1558), p. 202; Martin Bucer, *Quid de baptisate infantium* (Strassburg, 1533), pp. A. vi, A.

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what it signifies, for it is no bare sign but has sacramental relation to that which is signified. 'We should see spiritual things in physical, as if set before our very eyes'.¹⁰¹ Hence, baptism as a sacrament is a seal of our salvation, sealing our regeneration and union with Christ in his death and resurrection,¹⁰² our cleansing from sin,¹⁰³ mortification of sin and renewal through union with Christ.¹⁰⁴ In contrast to Rome it is simply a sign, for it does not convey of itself what it portrays. In opposition to the anabaptists, it exhibits and seals what it signifies, for it is more than a simple memorial or badge of human profession. Consequently, both Bucer and Vermigli are fond of citing Augustine's dictum, that baptism is a visible word of God.¹⁰⁵

All three are quick to point out that the foundation of baptism is God's covenant with Abraham in Genesis 17. The chief thing in baptism, says Bucer, is the covenant of salvation. It is an instrument of the divine mercy.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, the principal point is what God does, not what we do, for the church baptises in the name of God, not of ourselves.¹⁰⁷ For Calvin too the covenant undergirds baptism. Circumcision in the Abrahamic covenant has yielded to baptism in the new covenant.¹⁰⁸ The Abrahamic covenant is no less in force today than with the Jews. There is an essential continuity in the covenant in all ages. The divine promises before Christ were spiritual. Christ has not abrogated them.¹⁰⁹ Vermigli insists that circumcision confirmed the promise of God to be God of Abraham and his seed, a promise applying to soul as well as body.¹¹⁰ Thus Bucer can reject the anabaptists' basing of baptism on the faith of the one baptised. 'Vide, frater. Baptisamur, non baptismus: baptisamur in mortem Christi, consepelimumur, rescuscitamur, vivificamur: non sepelimus, nos, resurgimus, vitam arripimus. Omnia fiunt nobis, nos nihil facimus. Ipse elegit, assumitque nos, non nos illum'.¹¹¹ Calvin is prepared to recognise that baptism is also a confession before men, but only in a strictly subordinate and secondary sense.¹¹²

viii; *In epistolam D. Pauli apostoli ad Romanos*, Basel, 1562 (Strassburg, 1536), pp. 195, 321, 323.

101. Calvin, *Institutes*, 4. 15. 4.

102. Vermigli, *ad Romanos*, p. 202.

103. Calvin, *Institutes*, 4. 15. 1-4.

104. *Ibid.*, 4. 15. 5-6.

105. Bucer, *Quid de baptisate infantium*, pp. A. vi, A. viii, B. i; *ad Romanos*, pp. 195, 321, 323; Vermigli, *ad Romanos*, pp. 199-202; McLelland, 1957, pp. 129, 140-145.

106. Martin Bucer, *Praelectiones doctiss. in epistolam D. P. ad Ephesios*, Basel, 1551, p. 146.

107. Bucer, *Quid de baptisate infantium*, p. A. viii. b.

108. Calvin, *Institutes*, (1536), p. 138. See also *Institutes*, 4. 16. 5-15.

109. Calvin, *Institutes*, 4. 16. 5-15.

110. Vermigli, *ad Romanos*, p. 204.

111. Bucer, *Quid de baptisate infantium*, p. C. i.

112. Calvin, *Institutes*, 4. 15. 13.

In terms of the efficacy of baptism, all three acknowledge the need for faith.¹¹³ They see baptism as confirming faith.¹¹⁴ For Calvin, it has an objective efficacy such that it is lawful to baptise the children of excommunicates or idolators providing there are sponsors belonging to the church, for God's covenant promise is to be faithful to the offspring of believers to thousands of generations. It is impossible that the impiety of successive generations can obstruct the promises of God. If three hundred or more years ago God had thought an ancestor worthy of adoption, the child today is due the privileges of the church, for baptism is grounded not on the basis of one of his parents alone but on the perpetual covenant of God. Since faith is required, a believing sponsor must be available to undertake instruction of the child.¹¹⁵

The uniform thinking on the mode of baptism follows the customary preference for immersion, while accepting that providing water is used, the precise manner in which it is applied is not of primary importance.¹¹⁶

It is in their defence of infant baptism that Bucer, Calvin and Vermigli are able to develop the covenant argument further.

Infants are to be baptised since the covenant is one and baptism replaces circumcision, which has been administered to infants before the coming of Christ.¹¹⁷ So much has been argued before. The testimony of the fathers to the apostolic origins of infant baptism had also been deployed in support of the practice.¹¹⁸ Each makes distinctive contributions of his own. Bucer argues in support of the unity and continuity of the covenant by indicating that the change in sacraments from circumcision to baptism occurred in terms of the *modum revelationis*, circumcision belonging to a time in which revelation was more obscure, in which the Spirit of Christ had not been made known fully and Christ had only been promised, whereas baptism belongs to a time which regards Christ as having already come.¹¹⁹ By this means he

113. Bucer, *Quid de baptisate infantium*, p. E. vii. See also Calvin, *Institutes*, 4. 14. 15.

114. Bucer, *ad Romanos*, p. 321.

115. John Calvin, 'Letter to John Knox (1559), in *Selected works of John Calvin: Tracts and Letters*, eds. Henry Beveridge and Jules Bonnet; Grand Rapids, 1983 (1858), 7. 74-75. Hereafter = SW.

116. Bucer, *ad Romanos*, p. 321; Calvin, *Institute*, 4. 15. 20 (although he insists that neither the unordained nor women can administer baptism, *Ibid.*, 4. 15. 21-22); Vermigli, *ad Romanos*, p. 199; McLelland, 1957, p. 140.

117. Bucer, *Quid de baptisate infantium*, pp. B. ii-iii, A. vi; *ad Romanos*, p. 331; Calvin, *Institutes* (1536), p. 138; *Institutes*, 4. 16. 5-15; SW, 6. 282-283; Vermigli, *ad Romanos*, pp. 115-116, 204. See also John Calvin, *Brief Instruction* (1544), in *John Calvin: Treatises against the anabaptists and against the libertines*, ed. Benjamin Wirt Farley; Grand Rapids, 1982, pp. 46-49; Peter Martyr Vermigli, *In selectissimam D. Pauli apostoli priorem ad Corinthios epistolam*, Zurich, 1579 [1562], p. 93.

118. Bucer, *Quid de baptisate infantium*, pp. D. v. b-D. vi; *ad Romanos*, p. 329.

119. The Old Testament sacraments were limited in their rôle of exhibiting Christ by the current *modum revelationis*. With the coming of Christ a change in the sacraments was therefore necessitated. Covenant history was a progressive revelation and the sacraments exhibited the promise of Christ. So when the promise had fully come a vehicle suitable to exhibit the fullness of the covenant was needed to replace that which had signified it in part. 'Cum itaque sacramenta

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safeguards the continuity while allowing for distinctive differences of administration. He also talks of baptism as a natural remedy, by which bodily health can be maintained, its efficacy residing in its conjunction with the Word of God, the latter providing the powerful sanitising effect on the physical constitution of the elect, thereby capacitating them to appreciate better the numerous benefits of God given in baptism.¹²⁰

Perhaps the anabaptists should have seen the doctor! Bucer rejects anabaptist arguments with vigour. From the fact that those who sought baptism and confessed faith were baptised it does not follow that only those who make confession are to be baptised. The anabaptists are guilty of selective exegesis. The passages they use relate to some aspects of baptism, not to all. Moreover, Luke in Acts intends to show the power of the apostles' preaching, not to construct a complete theology of baptism. He does not record all those who were baptised.¹²¹ Calvin had followed Luther and allowed for infant faith in the 1536 edition of the *Institute*.¹²² After moving to Strassburg in 1538, he drops the idea. Instead, infants of believers are part of the church and are to receive baptism on that basis. Because the covenant promise is for them, they belong to the church. Baptism is therefore the consequence of the status they enjoy and not its cause. If a convert is made 'at the time his posterity is made part of the family of the church. And for this reason infants of believers are baptised by virtue of this covenant, made with their fathers in their name and to their benefit'.¹²³ Hence, infants are not baptised in order to become sons and heirs of God but because they are already considered by God as occupying that place and rank. Because the covenant of salvation which God enters into with believers is common also to their children they are already of the family of God. If this promise had not been given it would be wrong to confer baptism on them.¹²⁴ But if they participate by God's grace in the reality, why should they be deprived of the sign? Since the sign is inseparable from the Word, if the sign is withheld, Word and sign are severed. Moreover, the grace of the new covenant would be more restrictive than that of the old.¹²⁵ Vermigli says the same.¹²⁶ But how can we give the sign if we are uncertain whether the infant will himself eventually believe? This problem is no different from that which obtains with adults professing faith. They can mislead us. We cannot judge of their election, for that is

unam redemptionem Christ promittunt & adducunt, & spiritum Christi exhibent'. Bucer, *ad Romanos*, p. 324.

120. Bucer, *ad Ephesios*, p. 146.

121. Bucer, *ad Romanos*, pp. 326-328.

122. Calvin, *Institutes* (1536), p. 138.

123. Calvin, *Brief Instruction*, in *Treatises*, p. 47.

124. Calvin, Letter to John Clauburger (1556), in *SW* 6. 282-283. See also *Ibid.*, 7. 74-75; *Institutes*, 4. 15. 22.

125. Calvin, *Institutes*, 4. 16. 5-6.

126. Vermigli, *ad Romanos*, p. 203, 115.

hidden from us. We follow the *indicia* which we have; thus adults confess faith in words and infants are offered to the church.¹²⁷ Perhaps Vermigli's most significant contribution is his discussion of the holiness of Christian children in his commentary on I Corinthians. The children of Christians belong to the church in exactly the same way as did the children of the Jews belong to God's people. God promised to Abraham that not only he but his seed also were included in the covenant of God. Therefore our children are members of the church. In this way the apostle calls them holy. They are able to have the Spirit and grace of Christ. Not that natural propagation is the basis of this status. Our free salvation is ultimately grounded on the election and mercy of God. But we ought not curiously to inquire into the hidden depths of God's election but rather attend to his promise, which is made on the basis of family lines. We thereby regard the children of the saints as holy, not excluding them from the church but hoping well of them.¹²⁸ Thus the promise of God comes first, by which our children are graciously included in the covenant and declared to be living members of the church of Jesus Christ. As circumcision, so baptism does not precede the promise. It follows.¹²⁹

For all three, Bucer, Calvin and Vermigli, it is the promise of God, and not physical propagation *per se*, which is the basis of baptism. It is this unbreakable promise which constitutes an adult or infant part of God's covenant. If this reality and status is thereby given, the sign must follow. Together, their predestinarianism is stronger than Bullinger's. So also they each regard the covenant as something God has made and which Christ has fulfilled for us, rather than as a bilateral construction the stipulations of which are to be fulfilled in and by us.¹³⁰ In this, they are better able to preserve a focus on the sovereign and gracious promise of God, on 'Christ clothed with his gospel'. Together with the parallel redemptive-historical setting in which covenant unity can find expression they have succeeded in bringing to full development the Reformation thinking on baptism.

IV. Conclusion: the hermeneutical issues

The differences that existed between the Reformers and anabaptists were not such as could be resolved purely by biblical exegesis. A vast chasm lay between them. It was a clash of world views. As the professor of philosophy remarked to two women he saw having a flaming row while each polished her doorstep on opposite sides of the street, 'It's no use,

127. Vermigli, *ad Romanos*, pp. 115-116.

128. Vermigli, *In priorem ad Corinthios*, p. 92a.

129. *Ibid.*, p. 93b.

130. Lethan (1979), 1. 79-80, 101-103, 119-122. Bucer, *ad Romanos*, pp. 440, 518; *ad Ephesios*, pp. 75-79; Vermigli, *ad Romanos*, pp. 167, 1167-1168; Calvin, *Institutes*, 2. 6. 3-4, 2. 10. 8, 3., 2. 32, 3, 14, 6, 3. 17. 2, 5-6, 4. 14. 6.

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you'll never come to an agreement; you're arguing from different premises'. The following are principal areas of conflict at the hermeneutical level.

a. Continuity/discontinuity between Old and New Testament

For the anabaptists an explicit New Testament command was necessary to justify infant baptism. Lacking such a command, the practice was deemed unlawful. Hence, the New Testament as such was seen as the handbook for church practice, taken in isolation from the Old Testament. The tendency was therefore to see the covenants more in discontinuity. The Reformers, on the other hand, viewed Old and New Testaments, for all the differences in administration, as in essential continuity and thus took a canonical approach to baptism seeing its theological roots in the Abrahamic covenant.

b. Corporate/individual

For the anabaptists each individual must believe for himself before he can be baptised. The focus was on the individual. Was this perhaps related in some way to late medieval nominalism, which denied the reality of universals and insisted that only the particular was real? For the Reformers, the corporate unit had priority. Certainly, individual responsibility was vital. However, the individual was seen to find his place in the group. The household had been adopted by God as the vehicle for covenant administration.

c. Unitary/dualist

The anabaptists posited a radical separation between nature and grace. God's grace was regarded as essentially spiritual, abstracted from the physical realm. Thus, objectively efficacious sacraments in which spiritual grace was conveyed by means of material objects found scant support. Some reformers, such as Zwingli, had sympathy for this position. However, for Luther, on the one hand, and Bucer and his friends on the other, there was no problem in conceiving of sacramental grace in which the Spirit worked in conjunction with physical elements. The doctrines of creation, incarnation and resurrection underlay such thinking. If, however, sign and reality were seen as radically separate, then the theological weight in the doctrine of baptism would automatically fall on the spiritual condition of the baptised rather than on the exercise of grace by God.

d. Theocentric/anthropocentric

For the anabaptists, baptism was to be administered on the basis of something present in the one baptised. Consequently, baptism was

viewed as a testimony to the baptised's own faith. It was a badge of his Christian commitment. For the Reformers, baptism was regarded as based on the promise of God given in his covenant. Therefore, baptism was seen to refer to what God does for us, not to what we do in return. This was true, irrespective of whether the baptised was an adult or an infant. But a believing adult and a believer's child were in God's covenant already, baptism signifying and sealing what he had done for them.

e. 'Calvinist'/'Arminian'

In terms of the relation between baptism and faith, the anabaptists exhibited what we could term a *proto-Arminian* or *proto-pietist* order. At heart, baptism was regarded as relating to the faith that precedes. First there is faith, then baptism follows. The stress is on what we do, on something present in us. For the Reformers, baptism was seen as related more to the faith which follows, placing on the baptised a continuing and ongoing responsibility for commitment to God's covenant. Baptism was seen as exhibiting and sealing God's grace. This grace correspondingly had precedence over man's response of faith. This was a *proto-Calvinist* order. The anabaptists alleged that this opened the door to impiety and moral laxity. The Reformers countered by arguing that the anabaptists made faith a work and so encouraged legalism.

No amount of purely biblical exegesis could solve these differences. Mutually incompatible worldviews were at war. Both could not be correct. Compromise and agreement could only take place by at least one side abandoning its worldview. Today such agreement could conceivably occur. Yet it would not be an agreement between the *weltanschauungen* of the anabaptists and the Reformers.

REVIEWS

Quadrilateral At One Hundred: Essays on the Centenary of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral 1886/88-1986/88

J. Robert Wright (ed.)

Forward Movement Publications, Cincinnati, and Mowbray, Oxford, 1988; ix + 229 pp., £17.50; ISBN 0 264 671 78 3

This is a book that called to mind the late Ian Henderson, Professor of Systematic Theology in the University of Glasgow and the author of *Power Without Glory. A Study in Ecumenical Politics* (London, 1967) and *Scotland: Kirk and People* (Edinburgh, 1969). Henderson's speciality was a mordant critique of what he conceived to be Anglican ecumenical imperialism, especially of the North American Episcopal kind. For this collection of anniversary essays alerts the reader to the remarkable fact that, as early as the Lambeth Conference of 1888, international Anglicanism endorsed a list of four items as a non-negotiable starting-point in any quest for reunion.

This Lambeth Quadrilateral was a revised form of the version approved by the American Episcopal bishops in 1886, which in turn derived from 'the quadrilateral' of pure Anglicanism' spelt out in 1870 by William Reed Huntington, a rector in Worcester, Massachusetts. In all its forms, and however glossed, its four sides are the Scriptures, the early Creeds, the dominical sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and the historic episcopate.

And so a generation before the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910, at which the modern ecumenical movement may be said to have been launched, Anglicans had specified their essentials for church unity. No other worldwide confessional tradition can hold a candle to Anglicanism's preparedness for the ecumenical era in church history. Other confessions have never attained the clarity of conviction about their own ecumenical essentials that the Anglicans reached in 1888. The Roman communion, of course, had in those days no notion of reunion beyond reabsorption into its own fold. A Roman Catholic contributor acknowledges that it was not until Vatican II's 'Decree on Ecumenism' in 1964 that her church 'gave its statement of vision and commitment within the ecumenical movement', comparable to the 1888 Quadrilateral.

The sorry tale of modern Anglican-Presbyterian union negotiations, which Ian Henderson so caustically analysed, may easily blind us to the minimal character of the Quadrilateral. Most readers of this *Bulletin* will have no difficulty with three of its four legs:

(a) The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as 'containing all things necessary to salvation' and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.

(b) The Apostles' Creed, as the Baptismal Symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.

(c) the two Sacraments ordained by Christ himself – Baptism and the Supper of the Lord – ministered with unailing use of Christ's words of Institution, and of the elements ordained by him.

If its fourth leg, 'the historic episcopate', is more controversial (as the preoccupation of these essayists bears out), it might still appear to 'drip moderation', to hold out the prospect of communion at 'a bargain-basement price', as Henry Chadwick puts it in his survey of 'The Quadrilateral in England'. The

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Quadrilateral itemises things rather than doctrines – 'only the external forms of catholic tradition, without a theological statement of their traditional content, without much that was characteristic of, and to Nonconformists (as to some Anglican Evangelicals) objectionable in, *The Book of Common Prayer* and Ordinal'. Not even the baptism of *infants* is specified, let alone priesthood or apostolic succession or eucharistic sacrifice.

What is included is an insistence on the use of 'the elements ordained by [Christ]', in what is called (*nota bene*) 'the Supper of the Lord'. This merits some comment, because 'Communion in both kinds' was an absolutely central demand of the Reformation to which recent ecumenical documents, such as *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, pay no attention. The wording of the Quadrilateral might have led one to expect the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission to deal with the issue in its eucharistic statement for, in my experience, the withholding of the cup from the congregation is still normal Roman Catholic practice. Sophisticated debates about the mode of Christ's presence in the Supper can only be an indulgence when agreement is still lacking about the basic conformity to Scripture involved in the use of 'the elements ordained by [Christ]'. But none of these commemorative essays touches on this point.

Nor does any of them draw attention to the irony of the Quadrilateral's *episcopal* origins. It was a gathering of *bishops* that declared 'the historic episcopate to be one of the four essentials of Anglicanism! This is not merely a quirk of history, but draws attention to the curiosity of the Lambeth Conferences which are attended solely by bishops. It is odd that, in an age of synodical government among the Anglican churches – involving laity as well as non-episcopal clergy, the Lambeth episcopal closed shop has not been subjected to sharper questioning. Perhaps this will come only with a fuller engagement of Anglican churches with non-episcopal traditions. It is disappointing to find no such input in this volume. The only non-Anglican respondents to the keynote essay by the editor belong to other episcopal communions – Roman Catholic, Methodist, Lutheran.

Nevertheless, that here lies the Quadrilateral's Achilles heel becomes clear enough, as a succession of contributors worry over the bone of 'the historic episcopate'. As Henry Chadwick recognises, the absence of a theology of episcopacy may be beside the point; the offence is given merely by placing it on a par with Scripture and the dominical sacraments – although the creeds soften the contrast as a second post-biblical leg. For myself, the elusiveness of the word 'historic' is not laid to rest. None of these writers satisfactorily engages with its meaning – how it differs from 'historical', for example, and why the episcopate needs such a qualifier at all, to say nothing of whether women may, after twenty centuries, now be thought eligible for it. 'Historic' seems to imply continuity, but whether this can be predicated of more than the word *episkopos* itself is highly doubtful. As the Roman Catholic writers argue, standard Anglican apologetic for the episcopate may also entail a universal primacy.

But the *exposition* of the Quadrilateral is not this symposium's concern. Hence its internal coherence is not closely examined: the Nicene Creed is declared to be 'the sufficient statement of the Christian faith', yet the Quadrilateral includes items not in the Creed. How is this *sufficiency* related to the Scriptures' 'containing all things *necessary* to salvation', and is the lack of a connection between the third and fourth elements significant?

These essays' strength lies in plotting the background, origins, fortunes and potential of the Quadrilateral. Their tone is celebration without triumphalism, felicitation without self-satisfaction. They worthily dignify a noteworthy Anglican ecumenical demarche, which helps to explain why Presbyterians so often find themselves on the ecumenical defensive. The Anglicans got their act together by 1888. Their success in setting the ecumenical agenda is undoubted, nor will it significantly change – rather the increasing ecumenical activism of Catholicism and Orthodoxy will reinforce it. Reformed churchmen need a sober realism – and an agreed strategy for a Reformed *episcopate*, in the hope, late in the day though it may be, of avoiding having to take 'the historic episcopate' into their system.

The Review Editor

Christianity and the Rights of Animals

Andrew Linzey

SPCK, London, 1987; 198 pp., £5.95; ISBN 0 281 04290 X

This book sets out to be a discussion for the general reader of animal rights and what Christianity has to say to it.

The Introduction describes the contemporary scene and the poor Christian witness on the issue. There are seven chapters and then an appendix of church statements, notes, guide to further reading and an inadequate index.

The first two chapters lay the theological foundation under the headings 'Blessing and Curse', and 'Dominion and Covenant'. God's blessing gives creation its intrinsic value; through the Fall creation is devalued and in bondage to decay. We are responsible to revere life for itself, not for its usefulness to us. Linzey lists those who have sinned (Origen, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Barth) and those who have done well (Francis of Assisi, Chrysostom) on this criterion. Human dominion has been interpreted so as to permit tyranny. If cruelty to children betrays the call to protect 'the least of these', the more so does cruelty to animals. God's covenant is not with humanity alone but with all creation. We should see all other creatures as brothers and sisters; we share one Spirit with them and cannot deny they have souls.

Chapter three deals with the themes of sacrifice and peace. Linzey claims that sacrifices were not substitutionary and Jesus declared himself against them. Christian sacrifice is loving service of the animal as well as the human world. God is for non-violence and this includes peace with creation.

Chapters four and five refute five religious arguments used to justify the abuse of animals and argue for the term 'animal rights'. Chapter five clarifies which species Linzey is concerned about. He weighs up whether to include all vertebrates or just mammals and opts for the latter: 'mammals so clearly live Spirit-filled lives which are analogous to human beings, that it is plainly inconsistent to deny them a fundamentally similar status'.

The final two chapters are entitled 'Ways of Liberation'. Linzey wants five liberations for animals: from wanton injury (hunting, performing animals in circuses, wildfowling), institutionalised suffering (intensive farming, painful experimentation, fur-trapping), oppressive control (captive wild animals, much pet-keeping, most culling), primary products of slaughter (respect for animal life justifies Christian vegetarianism), and by-products of slaughter (beauty without

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cruelty). Let us seek to 'anticipate, if not actually realise, the future joy of all God's creatures'.

This book is a helpful introduction to the issues: well laid out with the considerations clearly distinguished. Linzey's most useful contribution is his explication of 'Theos rights'. One could wish, however, that the good here was better packaged. The language is not entirely for the general reader. Some biological terms are used incorrectly; insects are denied classification as animals. Linzey's exegesis and theology are repeatedly flawed. It is regrettable that those whom Linzey condemns will only find negation of, not help in thinking through, their situations: for example, the preservation of species when attempts to save their habitats have failed; happy budgies and their elderly owners; intensity in animal husbandry; humane experimentation in clinical work not yet patient of in vitro alternatives. Some of the most up-front issues of the moment, notably the extraordinary ethical difficulties arising from genetic engineering, are not even mentioned. Let us hope this ground will soon be trodden better and from a theological stance less eccentric.

And yet much of the ethical underpinning of reverence for animal life is admirable and much of what Linzey pleads for is morally imperative. Our multiplied abuse of animals is horrifying. The facts should be better known and Linzey is to be thanked for his part in their dissemination; consent to his basic concern urgently needs to be more widespread and we are in his debt.

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The New Eve in Christ: The Use and Abuse of the Bible in the Debate about Women in the Church

Mary Hayter

SPCK, London, 1987; £6.95, paperback; ISBN 0 281 04262 4

It is Mary Hayter's view that when Scripture is misunderstood, misappropriated or misused, then not only 'The full involvement of women in ministry is impeded but the balanced and integrated re-expression of the doctrines of God, man, church and ministry of our age is also jeopardised'. In the light of these convictions she has written this very well researched and annotated book, in which she examines the debate surrounding women's ministry under two main headings.

Part One is a scholarly and balanced treatment of four major issues. Under the heading of 'Sexuality in God and the Nature of Priesthood, she deals with God's sexuality, Imagery, Yahwism and Priestesses, and the status of women in the Old Testament. She argues convincingly that the God of the Bible uniquely transcends all sexuality and should be addressed as 'Father' in its scriptural non-sexist sense, and having examined thoroughly the reasons for the absence of priestesses in Yahwism, finds no precedent for the linkage of maleness of priesthood with maleness of God. In Part Two she examines 'Women's Status and Function in Ministry' and in a further four chapters deals with sexuality and the Imago Dei, the Yahwistic Narrative in Genesis 1-3 and female subordination, the Pauline passages in the Epistles on subordination and equality, and Scriptural Tradition and Interpretation. Interestingly she refers throughout to subordination rather than submission and makes no reference of the Son's subordination to the Father. She finds that Paul 'reacted to the Corinthian situation by retreating into a traditionally

Jewish understanding of the place of women as taught by the law'. Having drawn this conclusion it is inevitable that she should conclude that 'those who assert that female subordinationist teachings are binding on the Church today reach their conclusions by minimising critical methods or using them erratically'.

This is a book which every well-informed layman as well as professional clerics ought to read, for it will do much to clarify and order their thinking on this matter and do much to challenge their assumptions. The excellent bibliography will provide further stimulus, for the last word in this contemporary debate has not yet been heard or written.

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Reading the New Testament: Methods of Interpretation

Christopher Tuckett

SPCK, London, 1987; 200 pp., £6.95, paperback; ISBN 0 281 04259 4

The aim of this book is to give an introductory, yet at the same time a critical review of the various methods used in New Testament study to elucidate 'what is meant'.

The first chapter, 'Scripture and Canon', examines the question why we study the NT at all. After offering critical objections to the view that the writers are all apostolic, and having pointed out that some non-canonical writings such as *Didache* and *I Clement* were possibly earlier than some NT writings (Pastorals and 2 Peter), he opts, nevertheless, to retain the normativity of the ancient canon. He does so on the twin basis that some of the writings are the earliest witness to Jesus and that the NT writings alone are the starting point of all subsequent Christian tradition. This is not, of course, to say they have absolute authority, merely that they should continue to be given first place and serious hearing in theological reflection.

After a difficult discussion of textual criticism, two chapters deal with 'Problems of Introduction'. The first looks at the way NT meaning is related to more general cultural factors. When Jesus speaks of 'the kingdom of God' and Paul of 'righteousness' we need to know both the contemporary linguistics of the terms (e.g. that the Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic words for 'kingdom' can as easily mean 'reign' as 'realm'), and the relevant conceptual worlds (e.g. that in Judaism people hoped for the imminent irruption of God's reign to destroy evil and recreate the world). To fail to take account of these factors would be to tear Jesus (or Paul) out of his historical, linguistic and cultural setting. But there are also the opposing dangers of either making the parallels a Procrustean bed for Jesus' meaning, or, worse, interpreting (e.g.) Paul against the wrong background, and so misinterpreting them. Tuckett gives a balanced account of the issues at stake.

The second of these chapters deals with what is usually called 'New Testament Introduction'. This is not an attempt to provide an introduction to each of the NT books, but to introduce some of the relevant questions about that task, and to illustrate the significance of the enterprise for our interpretation of the documents themselves and for our attempt to understand Christian origins and theology. Tuckett evidently does not think that Paul wrote the Pastorals (for example), but nor does he think that a non-Pauline authorship robs the letters of their authority

for us today. As in most of the chapters, Tuckett concludes by applying the discussion to Mark 3: 1-6, and to its parallels in Mt and Lk.

The final three look at 'new' approaches. Chapter 9 analyses the contribution of sociology to NT exegesis, and chapter 10 considers structuralist analysis of narrative. With respect to both, Tuckett is judiciously cautious. Of the former he observes that where sociology encourages analysis of the social history in which the NT documents were written it is to be welcomed (and often leads to important results), but it must be recognised that methodologically such sociological study, far from being innovative, barely goes beyond what has been undertaken for years as part of the NT Introduction. And we need deliverance from (rather than the help of) those kinds of 'sociology' which tell us (e.g.) that the story of Jesus' failure to communicate with Nicodemus indicates that John's community felt alienated from its world, and from approaches which, at bottom, merely impose sociological stereotypes on the NT material. Similarly, with respect to structuralism, Tuckett feels that where it is useful is perhaps in elucidating the mechanics of how texts have the meaning they have for us. He does not, however, expect it to offer much new insight into the meaning itself; and he considers much of its elucidatory function already to have been anticipated in form criticism.

A final chapter introduces and criticises Brevard Childs' 'Canonical Criticism' and other literary approaches to the NT texts which seek to elucidate their 'meaning' primarily in terms other than that of the author's intended meaning. He clearly feels the first of these is a papering over of cracks (and once again we are told the eschatology of Ephesians 3: 21 is incompatible with Paul's – but on the [I think] mistaken assumption that that verse speaks of an everlasting earthly church. The one *ekklesia* of Ephesians is a heavenly entity of which the earthly congregations are merely a historical manifestation). And on literary approaches, Tuckett appears least confident: there is no real struggle with the relation of discourse meaning to contemporary significance(s). Even still he rightly warns against reinterpretation which loses contact with the original author's meaning, whilst claiming in some way to retain the ancient writer's authority (e.g. sermons on Mt 25: 31-46 which reapply a parable about how people respond to representatives of Jesus ['these my brothers' of v. 40] by turning it into one about giving to needy humanity in general).

It will be obvious that Dr Tuckett does not hold the view of biblical authority shared by most readers of this *Bulletin*. But it would be a great pity if, for that reason, his introduction went unread by them. It is certainly the most lucid of its genre, and the most even in its coverage of issues. It is also fresh in its presentation and perceptive in its criticisms and judgements. In this reviewer's view, Tuckett's is one of the best single books of introduction to NT method, at this level, at present in print.

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The Doctrine of Endless Punishment

W. G. T. Shedd

Banner of Truth, Edinburgh, 1986; 201 pp., £4.95, hardback;
ISBN 0 85151 491 X

W. G. T. Shedd (1820-94) was Professor at Union Theological Seminary, New York, when he published this book in 1885. He set out to defend the Reformed doctrine against two alternative views of human destiny which were then beginning to gain ground. These were universalism (the belief that God will ultimately save all people) and conditional immortality or annihilationism (the belief that those condemned at the final judgment will cease to exist, rather than continue to exist in endless torment).

The book has three parts. Chapter 1 gives a brief historical survey on the doctrine. Chapter 2 presents the biblical evidence for eternal punishment. Here it is argued that already in the Old Testament Sheol sometimes denotes a place of punishment even though more often it is a neutral description of the grave or the world of the dead. When the New Testament evidence is presented, it is for the most part simply stated. There is little discussion of the precise meaning of the texts, or of whether there might be good reason to take a text more figuratively than Shedd himself takes it.

Chapter 3 defends the doctrine against arguments of a rational or speculative character. For example, he argues that in the human sphere punishment must be retributive rather than reformatory or deterrent, and assumes (without argument) that the same is true in divine punishment. Then since guilt remains for ever once an evil deed is done, so punishment must continue for ever. Punishment is for the purpose of satisfying the broken law.

Among these stern arguments for a solemn doctrine are some more hopeful notes. By God's grace some of his elect people are among the unevangelized heathen, and it is wrong to imagine that the number of the saved is fewer than those who are damned. Hell is 'only a spot in the universe of God' and its inhabitants are few compared with the countless multitude of the saints in heaven (pp. 109, 115, 159-61). This is challenging material. But it cannot cover up the fact that Shedd's argument is addressed to a nineteenth-century context. He offers no detailed discussion of key New Testament texts or arguments against alternative explanations of them. He offers no clear defence of belief in the natural immortality of the soul – a doctrine widely questioned by evangelicals as well as by other twentieth-century biblical scholars. He does not tackle the theological problem that the everlastingness of hell implies an eternal cosmic dualism, whereby God can hardly be said to be 'all in all' (1 Cor. 15: 28). Most revealing is his statement: 'Notwithstanding all the attack made upon the tenet in every generation . . . , men do not get rid of their fear of future punishment' (p. 144). Sadly, we now live in an era when the prospect of future punishment is not feared by many people, because the reality and Lordship of God is not acknowledged. Although there is value in this book, it is more convincing in its refutation of universalism than of conditional immortality. If belief in endless punishment is to be defended in the later twentieth century, it needs a treatment sensitive to today's questions and today's scholarship.

Stephen Travis, Nottingham

The Sacrifice We Offer

David N. Power

T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1987; 224pp., £12.95; ISBN 0 567 09445 6

Dr Power is Professor of Systematic Theology at the Catholic University of America, Washington. His intention is to contribute to the current ecumenical discussion on the nature of the eucharist. The documents which he has in view are the Roman Catholic and Lutheran World Federation Report, *The Eucharist* (1980); the *Final Report* (1982) of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission; the Lima document of the World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (1982); the Denver Report on the conversations between the Methodist Church and the Vatican Secretariat (1984). He has only a passing reference to the Reformed-Roman Catholic conversations.

Although the book is of real interest to Protestants, it is aimed primarily at Roman Catholics. The main theme is the dogma relating to the mass defined by the Council of Trent and the author gives most attention to those points where sharp differences have emerged between Protestants and Roman Catholics. Firstly, in what sense, if at all, is the eucharist to be understood as a sacrifice? Secondly, how is the role of the ordained priest to be understood in view of the quite considerable Protestant opposition to the Roman doctrine? Thirdly, how is the notion of the *ex opere operato* efficacy of the mass to be understood? Fourthly, are the benefits of the mass confined to those partaking of communion or do they avail for others, both living and dead, and for sins and satisfactions?

The sub-title of the book is 'The Tridentine Dogma and its Reinterpretation'. This is fitting because chapters 2, 3 and 4 are devoted to an analysis of the deliberations and definitions of Trent on the mass. They are based on intimate familiarity with the Council. The treatment brings out with clarity the variety of views that were expressed and the subtle differences of emphasis which can be discerned in the final texts. The Council was by no means of one mind on all points.

The author relates his analysis to his ecumenical concern by asserting that at several crucial points Trent has not condemned views such as those held by Protestant participants in ecumenical discussions about the eucharist. Close study of the text in the light of the Council's debates may well convince Protestants and Catholics that Tridentine dogma can accommodate Protestant views. This logic is not unfamiliar. Behind it lies the presupposition that Protestant teaching is not so much wrong as incomplete. The fullness of Christian truth is located in the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church while other churches have but a portion of it.

Dr Power writes in an irenic spirit but he is too conservative a Catholic to admit the need for any substantial compromise. He stands by Trent. What then did it teach about the mass? Dr Power's conclusions are that it held the mass to be a true and proper propitiatory sacrifice. It was instituted by Christ at the Last Supper. On that occasion he offered himself to the Father under the species of bread and wine. At the same time he instituted the Christian priesthood because the command to his apostles, 'Do this in remembrance of me', meant ordaining them and authorising them to offer the sacrifice of the mass. And the mass, as a

propitiatory sacrifice, can be offered for the living and the dead, 'for sins, satisfactions, punishments and other necessities'.

On the face of it, such a dogma does not seem a promising doctrine to provide a convergence of views between Roman Catholics and Protestants. The author argues, however, that if Protestants can be satisfied that the eucharistic sacrifice is a sacramental one and that it is dependent upon the sacrifice on Calvary and that the anamnesis – the memorial element in the liturgy – is essential to the sacrament, their views are well within the parameters defined at Trent. Again, if Protestants (as the reports of some of the inter-confessional reports suggest) are prepared to understand propitiation in terms of intercession, they will not be in conflict with Trent. Nor again if Protestants prefer to speak of the eucharist as a sacrifice of praise are they at odds with Trent because the Council did not define the relationship between propitiation and thanksgiving.

Nevertheless, Dr Power thinks that ecumenical agreement will not easily be achieved on the question of the role of the priest in offering the mass. For Trent, the mass meant specifically the sacrifice offered by a validly ordained priest. Because of his ordination and the fact that his priestly authority derives ultimately from the action of Christ at the Last Supper, he is set apart in a fundamental way from the Christian community. Indeed, Dr Power asserts that the liturgical changes introduced by Vatican II in order to make room for the active participation of the faithful in the sacrament have led in practice to 'an even stronger sacralisation of the priesthood than one finds in the teachings of the Council of Trent'.

Chapter 5, 'Dogma and its Interpretation', seeks to come to grips with a question that is a much more sensitive one to Roman Catholics than to Protestants. To what extent are dogmas, such as those defined by the Council of Trent, immutable expressions of divine truth? How does one make allowances for those social, linguistic and historical influences that qualified the definitions of a sixteenth-century council? And how should we understand them in our own very different culture? How is it possible for us to interpret the teaching without betraying the essential truth contained in them? If the church conceives of itself as *semper eadem* and endowed with the grace of infallibility, it cannot confess to changing its mind. The only realistic possibility is to reinterpret the text. The author believes that this can be done and, indeed, must be done, if the ecumenical process is to continue. But a Protestant must be pardoned for feeling that this is a very laborious way of evading the implications of doctrines about the nature of the church which can hardly be justified on scriptural grounds. It seems much less trouble to confess that one has changed one's mind.

This book is aimed at Roman Catholics who are nervous about any modification of doctrine that will tarnish the reputation of the Council of Trent. Nevertheless, it is an important book for Protestants, too, because it provides a vivid insight into the workings of the Catholic mind. It is lucid and well-meaning. But what is strange about it is that although the author writes with such authority about Catholic thinking in the sixteenth century, he does not (on the evidence of this book) have the same familiarity with the thinking of John Calvin and his colleagues. After all, to seek to bring the statements made in a handful of recent ecumenical documents into alignment with the dogmas of Trent without a glance at the thinking of the Protestant theologians who were immediately

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concerned with what was going on at Trent is, to put, mildly, a very curious procedure.

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Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture

Lesslie Newbigin

SPCK, London 1986; 156 pp., £3.95, paperback; ISBN 0 281 04232 2

In 1983, Bishop Newbigin published *The Other Side of 1984*, a summons to the churches to take on for Christ our regnant post-Enlightenment culture. The present work is its sequel, further developing some of its themes. Both can be commended to all Christians who want to think seriously about our missionary encounter with Western culture for their force, clarity, breadth and patent conviction that the church's abiding message is the unqualified need of the world.

In this work, Newbigin countenances neither reduction of the gospel message nor laziness in working out its relation to our distinctive culture. The gospel summons us to total conversion to Christ who is definitively the Lord. What marks our culture? Newbigin's thesis is that since the Enlightenment we have succumbed to a fatal separation of spheres: the public realm of facts, commanding the allegiance of all and a private realm of opinions and values, strictly optional. Religion gets slotted into the latter so that every schoolboy should know about DNA but that we are created to glorify God is just a matter of opinion. Newbigin holds science, the 'intellectual core of our culture', historically responsible, for this so he attacks its past record of trading in the notion of purpose in its search for bare description. The scientific developments of our century have in any case forced us to think of the universe as rational and contingent and to ask inevitably about the ultimate ground of its intelligibility. In politics, rejection of the private/public split entails affirming the church's responsibility in the political sphere. Yet Newbigin insists here on a Christocentricity that refuses to identify with either capitalism or socialism as such. These discussions of science and politics are framed by equally important chapters on the Bible and the church. Working through some current hermeneutical options, Newbigin argues that Scripture must have its independent sovereignty in shaping our thought but that it cannot be isolated from the broad rationality which appears when we view the world in its light. The church, grounded in the immutable dogmas of Trinity and incarnation, must today challenge public life with a strengthened eschatology, notion of freedom, lay theology, critique of denominationalism and trans-cultural awareness, unashamed in her faith, unceasing in her praise.

Newbigin discusses all this clearly, freshly and compellingly. If indeed we can be assured that this is not just the marriage of theology to a transient scientific world-view then we must hearken closely to the swelling chorus of recent years that insists on the possibilities of interaction between science and theology. We glimpse in the treatment of politics the possibility of a committed yet non-partisan political stance, submitted to the king who reigns from a tree yet unwilling to condemn a sensitive use of the principle that Christians exercise public power. Total agreement with a work that touches on so much would

scarcely be possible but Newbigin is never trivial or shallow, his truth never half-hearted nor apologetic, so we do well to heed his instruction throughout the book.

Yet one might have wished for the more explicit inclusion of another dimension. Newbigin emphasizes that conversion is a matter not only of will and feelings, but mind. True, but the intellect is propelled in its devices and decisions by the will. How can we reach that? Newton may merit the stick administered in this book but like Descartes and Locke (who is not mentioned) he was a theist of a kind. Something happened to the will, not just the intellect, in the eighteenth century, for God was eventually ushered off the stage, which takes more than a logical manoeuvre. Alongside and even underneath the clash between religion and science one gets, for example, the clash between religion and passion or sensibility from the early seventeenth century onwards, as historians have pointed out. So one is reminded that what was folly to the Greeks was the cross, whose deepest power, for all its intellectual implications, is to regenerate the will. In the context of this, Lesslie Newbigin's proposals must surely occupy us, but without it, the regenerated intellect will avail but little.

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The Making of a Contemporary Translation. New International Version.

Kenneth L. Barker (ed.)

Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1987; 222 pp., £7.95;

ISBN 0 340 40263 6

This symposium, prepared in memory of Edwin H. Palmer (1922-80), the co-ordinator of NIV translation work, is a faithful reflection of NIV itself. It is serious, moderate, evangelical, scholarly and balanced.

Further than that, it is difficult to generalise, because the contributions range from general surveys, such as Earl S. Kalland's and Larry L. Walker's papers on the Hebrew text underlying NIV, and Ralph Earle's cogent 'Rationale for an eclectic New Testament text', to detailed discussions, such as those by R. Laird Harris and the editor on the translation of Sheol and of YHWH Sebaoth respectively. Some of the articles are concerned with down-to-earth procedural matters: Burton L. Goddard explains the NIV footnoting system (no mention of Isa. 7: 14!); Donald J. Wiseman, the only non-American contributor, describes with modest understatement how much was achieved, in far too little time, to produce the British edition. Other papers go beyond NIV itself to deal with matters of interest to any translator of the Scriptures: Calvin D. Linton offers a learned historical account of style in English Bible translation, with lessons for today; Ronald F. Youngblood has an informative discussion of Old Testament quotations in the New Testament; John H. Stek examines the structure and translation of biblical poetry; and Herbert M. Wolf cites many cases 'when "literal" is not accurate' – to which Edwin Palmer's posthumous 'Isn't the King James Version good enough?' forms a lively and sometimes humorous complement.

Of particular interest are contributions in which questions of significant detail broaden out into discussions of principle. Richard N. Longenecker's 'The One and Only Son' argues convincingly that the Johannine *monogenes* 'is an adjective

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connoting quality, which should be translated in a manner signalling primarily uniqueness, and that *huios* as a christological appellative . . . connotes primarily divine nature' (p173).

More problematical is Bruce Waltke's conclusion that in Psalm 2, 'although on the historical level one might rightly opt for rendering the references to the king by lower case, on the canonical level one rightly opts for upper case' (e.g. 'Anointed One', 'my King', 'kiss the Son', NIV text). 'By using upper case in Psalm 2 the NIV translators expose their orthodox views not only of inspiration but also of christology' (p125). Is the matter really so clear-cut for evangelicals? On an *ad hominem* level, one wonders why, in that case, NIV has (unorthodox?) notes giving the first two phrases, though not the third, with lower case initials. Theologically, one might argue that the translator should at all costs, and in every detail, preserve the historical nuances of individual texts, as the foundation on which a truly biblical doctrine of canonicity can be most securely built. 'A high view of the text's inspiration by one Author' (p119) cannot, in the end, exclude a clear view of the differences between the many authors, in many situations, through whom that Author spoke.

Welcome is Kalland's defence of NIV's conservative approach to the Massoretic Text, coupled with Walker's discussion of 'How the NIV made use of new light on the Hebrew text', including interesting fresh data on the cultural setting of the Old Testament. Welcome also would have been fuller discussion of the application to Bible translation of the insights of general linguistics. For example, the translator's task is not necessarily complete when he has recognised that a given passage is poetic, and has decided in what poetic form to cast his translation: he must also ask the prior question whether, in the receptor culture, the content of the passage is most naturally expressed in poetry at all. Similarly, it is not enough for the translator to recognise that he must 'occasionally move away from a literal translation' (p177): he must recognise that 'grammatical correspondence' (p176) is in principle quite distinct from semantic equivalence, and that he cannot serve two masters.

Surface flaws are remarkably few for such a varied collection. For 'dramatic equivalence' read 'dynamic equivalence'; note that it has nothing to do with 'colloquial informality' (p26); and for 'Marcuse' (p38) read 'McLuhan'.

To sum up, then: this symposium is a valuable companion to NIV; it contains much useful information about the Bible and its background; but, like NIV itself, it leaves a number of basic translational questions in suspense.

Paul Ellingworth
Aberdeen

Themes in Theology: The Three-Fold Cord

Donald M. Mackinnon

T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh 1987; 243 pp., £14.95; ISBN 0 567 09446 4

Etienne Gilson once remarked that the thinker who had once stepped into the enchanted world of Aquinas would never want to step out of it again. Professor Mackinnon's work has long evoked that kind of reaction in many readers. His intellectual omnipresence and brand of probing imagination are *sui generis*. This volume of essays written between 1975 and 1984 nicely helps us to limn some of the main contours of his intellectual endeavour. This is not a book for theological

laymen or for pastors on the whole and not a book for intellectual sluggards at all. Nor is it for someone who wants to see theological citadels stormed instead of careful reconnaissance; in this respect, the essays remind one more of the prowling troops of Midian than the hit squad of Gideon. For some, this will amount to a value-judgement.

Two concerns predominate in a superficially loosely-related collection of essays on philosophy, politics and theology. The first is the nature and limits of our discourse about God. Here, the author seeks an idiom which fuses the ontological and the dramatic in a way shaped by and appropriate to the figure of Jesus Christ. The second is the need to harness this to our political understanding. It is the political, as well as religious, scandal of a crucified revealer that informs us of the power of God in a world armed for its own destruction. The philosophical essays are tentative, much inspired by Kant's reminder about a telling element of agnosticism in our talk of God. The political essays are perhaps less tentative, but nevertheless indirect, pleading for a rigorous and desperately important self-scrutiny as we brandish the nuclear weapon in the name of *raison d'état*. The theological essays move towards a reconstruction of the doctrines of Trinity and incarnation materially embodying an understanding of divine kenosis, formally attending to the relation of time to eternity. Space and time; metaphor and inexpressibility; continental statesmanship of the past and political realities of the present; British idealism; Schillebeeckx, Teilhard and Edwyn Hoskyns – these and much else receive their inimitable treatment in pursuit of Professor Mackinnon's objectives.

This reviewer is certainly persuaded on at least two scores: first, the need to grasp Western political history to understand what we badly need to understand, namely the significance of the present juncture of world history on which theological judgement should be delivered; secondly, the need to think through a Christological critique of the notion of God in his power that can retain the ontological commitment of Christology in the very process of assimilating the portrait of the historical Jesus. Of course, there is plenty of fuel for theological quarrel too. Mackinnon is well-disposed toward Schillebeeckx' first massive essay in Christology; quite lenient in criticism of *The Myth of God Incarnate*. He is kinder to Moltmann than to Barth, to von Balthasar than to Rahner on the given issues. Kant's instincts and intentions (whatever the inconsistencies and inadequacies) appear to have survived such typical remonstrations as those of Barth or Thomists. (Note that we should presumably read Augustine for Aquinas on pp. 156f). So there are contestables. But if anyone will teach us vigilance here, it is Donald Mackinnon. It is a salutary lesson.

Stephen Williams
Aberystwyth

Men, Women and God

Kathy Keay (ed.)

Marshall Pickering, Basingstoke, 1987; 304 pp., paperback;

ISBN 0 551 01501 2

As communications secretary for the Evangelical Alliance, Kathy Keay ran the original Men, Women and God Conference in 1985 and later founded the MWG Trust. The contents of this book include material which formed the basis for the Conference addresses and workshops, with other chapters added subsequently. The aim of the Trust is to take the biblical view that 'regardless of sex, women and men are called to discover their gifts in order to be more responsible servants in the church and the world'. The starting point for this symposium, which has 17 contributors, is the important question: how in today's world and in today's church can men and women live and work together in a way which reflects their creation in the image of God? (p. xii).

The book then attempts to cover in three sections a wide range of issues which are pertinent to the feminist debate. In section I, 'Women and the Church', I found the first two chapters by far the best and the meatiest. In chapter 1 Elaine Storkey points out that, outside Christian circles, the gospel is under attack because of what it seems to be saying about women. Whatever our instinctive response to the very word 'feminism' we dare not dismiss a remark like that without further thought and study if we have any concern for the spread of the gospel. Some of the theological questions raised are: Is it true that we are actually worshipping a male deity? Is Christianity patriarchal? Is it true that within Christianity 'there is a legacy of strong negative views about women?' Interestingly, the second chapter, entitled 'Theology from a Feminist Perspective', is written by a man, Andrew Kirk! He claims that feminist theology is posing major questions on how we interpret and apply the Bible today. After examining briefly some of the NT problem texts about women, Kirk makes the vital point: 'We have to decide which text we are going to use as hermeneutical keys and which as secondary commentaries on them'. Our decisions on these lie at the heart of the disagreement among Evangelicals over the 'women question'.

In the first section chapter 6 is perhaps the most intriguing as it is written by Dave Tomlinson, a leader in the House Church scene, as a confession of his changed attitude towards women, resulting in his willingness to have women in leadership and teaching roles. Unfortunately, he does not really tell the reader how his views changed!

In section II, 'Men and Women in Society', the chapter on equal opportunities in education came over as particularly challenging, being written by Jill Mowbray, who has done much research into 'anti-sexist education'. Other topics in this section are women and work, politics, the media and racism.

By the time the reader reaches the third section, entitled 'Is Biology Destiny?', the sheer breadth of the coverage of issues begins to deter further thought, and that is unfortunate because the subjects are very far from being unimportant, viz., the future of the family, the 'breadwinning role', the single person, rape, lesbianism and AIDS. In a book of this length the examination of such topics can only end up being frustratingly brief and it might have been better to have omitted them altogether.

Men, Women and God is clearly intended to be used for group discussion by both men and women, and many of the questions posed at the end of chapters are excellent. However, I feel it would be a brace group which would tackle all 17 chapters consecutively. Topics could be selected and good use made of the bibliographies at the end of each chapter to facilitate further study.

Shirley A. Fraser
Edinburgh

New Testament Theology

Leon Morris

Academie Books (Zondervan), Grand Rapids, 1986; 368 pp., £13.25, hardback; ISBN 0 310 45570 7

Leon Morris has produced a stream of articles and books on New Testament themes, over more than thirty years. Most significant have been his books on the atonement, and his major commentary on John's Gospel. He has been consistently conservative and evangelical, while maintaining a high standard of academic scholarship.

In the latest work he claims, 'I have not gone deeply into the controversies that interest the scholarly world, though I hope I have written with reasonable awareness of what scholars are saying. I have simply tried to set out the principal theological teachings of the books of the canonical New Testament . . .' (p. 7).

Morris has succeeded in his aim. He has gathered, arranged, and discussed the biblical material in such a way as to make clear the major theological beliefs and claims of the New Testament authors. Sometimes he has argued a controversial point at length where that argument has served to expose the theology of the N.T. author concerned; elsewhere he has dealt briefly with scholarly disputes in a footnote.

The various authors are treated separately, with major sections on Paul, Luke (with Acts), and John, substantial treatments of Mark and Matthew, and short chapters on the General Epistles. Morris's earlier work is reflected at various points: John's Gospel receives particularly thorough treatment; I appreciated the substantial discussion of Luke's atonement theology, which has sometimes been regarded as almost non-existent; the short chapter on Revelation gives a context for reading the Apocalypse and grasping, amid all the mystery, the reality and relevance of God's ultimate victory. But there is solidity and strength in all the main sections of the book.

As a full New Testament theology, this is intentionally fairly short: a little more than half the length of G. E. Ladd's treatment, and about a third of D. Guthrie's. It is meant as a work of introduction to the subject, for students or interested lay people.

However, it is not primarily an introduction to the academic discussion of New Testament theology, of background, development, context, authenticity, and so on. It provides a conservative perspective on some of the debates, but it lacks any systematic survey or bibliography of current scholarship. It will be most helpful to readers who want to handle the New Testament as a revelation of the great truths of our faith. 'In the New Testament it is plain that there are some permanently valid facts about God, about Christ, about the Holy Spirit, about sinful mankind, about the church of God, and about the kind of service the

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redeemed should render. Such teachings are the common stock of the Christian Church . . . and these teachings must be held as firmly in this century as in any other' (pp. 332f). Readers, and preachers, who share that conviction will find valuable material here, to inform and to inspire.

The subject index is helpful for locating particular discussions in the body of the text.

John Proctor
Cambridge

The Marrow Controversy

David C. Lachman.

Rutherford House, Edinburgh, 1988; £29.50, hardback, 508 pp.,
ISBN 0 946068 33X

Rutherford House is now publishing two series of volumes on Historical Theology and Contemporary Theology respectively. This book by Lachman is the first in Series One and is his Ph.D. thesis which was submitted to St Andrews University. It is, essentially, the original typescript, with an index added.

In the early part of the eighteenth century a book called *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, written by E. F. (normally believed to be Edward Fisher), found its way to Scotland. Thomas Boston was soon recommending it to his friends. James Hog had it reprinted, and soon there was trouble. Some believed that it was the best exposition of the gospel of God's grace which they had ever come across, and others believed it to be heretical.

Those who were in favour of the book included some (now) famous names, like Thomas Boston and the Erskine brothers. Those who opposed the book were in the ecclesiastical 'establishment' and were led by Principal Hadow.

Three main issues were at stake: first, the nature of the covenant of grace; second, the extent of the gospel offer; and third, the doctrine of assurance. Obviously many other issues derived from these, particularly the nature and extent of the atonement.

Was the covenant of grace absolute or conditional? Were faith and repentance conditions of salvation in the covenant? And what about the gospel offer? In the *Marrow* a universal offer of the gospel was made which led Hadow and others to conclude that a universal redemption was necessary in order to make this possible. For Hadow, the gospel could only be offered to the elect. As to the doctrine of assurance, the issue was this: is assurance part of saving faith?

Lachman unravels these issues in a detailed and scholarly way, and comes to certain conclusions. He says that the *Marrow* was not in conflict with the Westminster Confession of Faith, that both sides in the controversy held to federal theology, and that the *Marrow* was more true to the theology of the Reformation than were Hadow and his associates. Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of Lachman's argument is his assertion that there took place a change in the doctrine of assurance in the middle of the seventeenth century. His dating of this change is most specific: he suggests that it happened somewhere between Rutherford and Durham.

He says that the reason why the *Marrow's* doctrine of assurance was not acceptable to Hadow and others was because it was written before the change took

place. In other words, in 1645 it was held by orthodox divines that assurance was of the essence of saving faith but by 1720 this was not the case.

This reviewer is reluctant to accept Lachman's argument at this point. The flaw in his thesis is his attitude to the Westminster Confession of Faith. He says that it takes no clear stand and wanted to allow room for both points of view. bBBt it, too, was written (or at least begun) in 1645, and a reading of chapter 18 (together with question 81 of the Larger Catechism) and a perusal of the Minutes of the Sessions of the Westminster Assembly of Divines does not seem to support Lachman. Rather one is led to the conclusion that the Westminster divines did not believe that assurance was of the essence of the faith. Further, Lachman's quotations from Luther and Calvin do not seem to be substantive in proving his case that they did hold assurance to be of the essence of saving faith.

In short, the evidence Lachman produces could equally well be used to support the proposition that the Reformers believed both in objective and subjective assurance but did not spell out either in great detail. Gradually the doctrine was spelled out but sometimes with more weight being given to the one side and sometimes to the other.

Whichever view one comes to in this and other matters, one cannot but conclude that this is a valuable book for anyone who is interested in the development of Scottish theology. It is well documented and very readable. It is clearly going to be the standard work on this controversy.

A. T. B. McGowan
Glasgow

Jesus and the Ethics of the Kingdom

Bruce D. Chilton and J. I. H. McDonald

SPCK, London, 1987; 148 pp., £7.95, paperback; ISBN 0 281 04305 1

The relationship between the teaching of Jesus on ethics and on the kingdom of God, particularly the importance of eschatology, has long occupied scholars. Two very able scholars tackle it again in this volume, though from an untraditional perspective. Anyone turning here expecting a treatise on New Testament ethics, or the kingdom, may be surprised. The authors approach their subject from a linguistic and literary standpoint, exploring the themes of metaphor and performance, and thus attempt to reconcile Jesus' ethics with his eschatology, subjects which scholars have often put poles apart. The reason why this has happened, say the authors, is that scholars (e.g. Jeremias) have too often read their Christology into the sayings of Jesus, something which this book avoids. Instead, the kingdom must be seen as the basis of ethics (p. 38f).

Previous work is engaged with briefly and critically, and a survey of the idea of kingdom in the Old and New Testaments is given. Considerable attention is paid to the parables, studying them especially as metaphor and symbol. The result is a dynamic (as opposed to Christological or propositional) understanding of the kingdom, in which response and not simply assent is important. Eschatology and ethics are both regarded as part of God's operation in the world, and should not be divided.

Both authors provide us with quite different material in their respective chapters, yet the book has a theme – the 'performance' approach (of motifs and

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themes) to the subject. Linnemann's concept of 'language event' provides some material for this, though the concept of 'decision' is played down, as is the emphasis on Christology. However, it would be interesting to know where Christology does fit into this scheme.

Though not an easy book, it is worth persevering. As the reader progresses, they will find the initial, apparently diverse, themes of the book coming together, and the latter section (e.g. on the praxis of the kingdom) is quite stimulating.

*David J. Graham
Glasgow*

Lord of the Years: The Story of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship, Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship 1928-88

Geraint Fielder

Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, 1988; 256 pp., £4.95, paperback;
ISBN 0 85110 831 8

This is a book to be appreciated on different levels. It can be read as an engrossing story of what God has been doing, and continues to do, by bodies of young people affiliated to the I.V.F./U.C.C.F. The author goes back to the beginning, to that little band of men with a vision for what should be done, with a faithfulness to the truth and a passionate desire to win their fellow students for Christ. The book shows how all this spread from the main centres in London, Cambridge and Oxford to involve universities and, later, colleges throughout the land. Personalities inevitably tend to dominate the story from 'D.J.' onwards. The value of Christian writing is well proved and its ministry over the years well documented. Stories of student conversions abound and make encouraging reading.

As a record of a past and continuing work of God this book is to be welcomed. It is sad, however, to draw attention to its flawed account of the difficulties faced by the Edinburgh C.U. in the early fifties. The account given is obviously based on the memories of the senior observers of that time. The memories and records of those involved, including two former C.U. committee members, one now an Edinburgh solicitor and the other the present reviewer, differ. The Scottish conference did not meet in these days at Bonskeid but at Auchendennan. The tensions were not between the theologs and the medics. Senior members of the C.U. who were New College theologs certainly 'wavered from the truth' but there were also theologs, including John Balchin, who remained rock solid. Few medics were involved on either side. The C.U. was disaffiliated only after a group had withdrawn, formed the Evangelical Union, adopted the I.V.F. Doctrinal Basis, and applied for affiliation. The problem facing the I.V.F. student executive was what to do about a C.U. which did not subscribe and an E.U. which did. The C.U. did not revert to the truth; it disappeared and the

A future edition of the present volume, and any forthcoming more detailed history of the C.U.'s in Scotland, should go back to the original sources, many of which lie in an Edinburgh filing cabinet!

There is a deeper level to be enjoyed. The book is a description of the reaction of evangelical Christianity, within the university scene, to the changing cultures and customs of history. The author shows how the first leaders, refusing to compromise the truth, nevertheless sought to reach the students of the post-World

War 1 culture for Christ. The same pattern has been constantly repeated. I.V.F./U.C.C.F. has consistently, through its leadership and literature, attempted to analyse the prevailing culture of the day and point the way to an uncompromising witness to the truth. Those to be reached are culturally a 'moving target' whose books date, whose idioms change and whose areas of debate and questioning are constantly taking fresh forms. Sensitivity to all this could, so easily, have led to modification and compromise. That the temptation has been resisted so firmly is a matter for profound praise.

It is easy to look at the present situation in the C.U.'s and tremble just a little. Can we see, in the chorus-singing ranks, the successors to the giants of the past, with their deep love for revealed and objective truth and passionate zeal to win student contemporaries for the Lord? '... the big question mark over this generation of C.U. members is whether they have the appetite to take in enough solid food to build up a good base for life'. The value of Geraint Fielder's book is that, though it will fascinate those who have in some way been involved in the story, it will challenge present-day students to 'walk the Way, talk the Truth, and live the Life'.

*James Taylor
Stirling*

Symphonic Theology

Vern S. Poythress

Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1987; paperback, 128 pp., n.p; ISBN 0 310 45221 X

Vern Poythress is Associate Professor of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, U.S.A. In this book he argues the case for what he calls 'Symphonic Theology', namely that to understand Christian theology it is necessary to look at the subject from a number of different perspectives, for example the 'ethical' or 'doctrinal' or 'devotional', rather than from the standpoint of one overarching theme or motif. Only when any given subject has been viewed from a number of such perspectives can one say that it has been explored properly and adequately.

This means that the kind of 'forcing' of texts and subjects to fit one perspective is no longer required, and indeed is seen to be harmful and damaging.

In a useful example, Poythress says that acceptance of 'covenant theology' should not prevent us looking at things through the perspective of dispensationalism. Although the covenant perspective is useful, its proponents may still overlook something in the Bible. Similarly, dispensationalism emphasises dispensations (distinctive epochs in God's rule) and the distinctive role in history played by the Jewish people. Those perspectives are stimulating, whether or not dispensationalists are correct about details (p. 31). His application of this theme to ethics (pp. 32-41) deserves serious consideration.

It might be argued that this approach underplays the value of truth and objectivity, but Poythress does not agree: 'The use of a multiplicity of perspectives does not constitute a denial of the absoluteness of truth. Rather it constitutes a recognition of the richness of truth, and it builds on the fact that human beings are limited. Our knowledge of the truth is partial. We know truth,

but not all of the truth. And someone else may know truths that we do not' (p. 45).

Poythress goes on to expand upon his theme and defend his thesis in a number of areas including language and philosophy. In the philosophical area he reveals his dependence upon Van Til and Frame (both formerly of Westminster). Next he gives 12 'maxims' of symphonic theology (pp. 69-91). Finally, he applies the whole concept to the test case of 'miracles'.

I found this book very challenging and interesting, although I was tempted to wonder if this was not what every conscientious scholar has always done, namely, to look at his subject from a range of perspectives. It does speak very clearly, however, to those who imagine that a single perspective is sufficient. I am left at the end not entirely persuaded by the author's insistence that there is no diminution of truth involved in his approach.

*A. T. B. McGowan
Glasgow*

Jesus and the Kingdom of God

G. R. Beasley-Murray

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids/Paternoster, Exeter, 1986; 446 pp., £12.95, paperback; ISBN 0 85364 394 6

This mammoth treatment of the subject (with 71 pages of footnotes and 14 pages of bibliography) takes as its starting point 'the coming of God'. This theme is explored in the Old Testament, Jewish apocalyptic literature, and the teaching of Jesus. In the last section, by far the largest, the writer concentrates on the sayings and parables of Jesus, and gives a thorough exegesis of these, referring to a wide variety of scholars on the way.

A conservative treatment is given, which is critical of the views of scholars such as Dodd, Bultmann and Perrin. The author is very cautious about accepting symbolic or mythical language in Jesus' sayings, preferring to explain Israel's understanding of the reign of God by their historical experience in the desert. A section on the son of man suggests that, as a representative figure, a messianic interpretation of the phrase is possible.

Although Greek is in transliteration, this is not a book for the fainthearted. It will probably serve best as a resource for the exegesis of the texts referred to. A section on the rest of the New Testament would have rounded off the subject well, and a subject index would make it easier to use. The activity of Jesus, such as his fellowship with sinners and his exorcisms, is largely ignored for the sake of his teaching – unfortunately, since what Jesus did tell us as much about the kingdom as what he said.

The weakness of the book is that it concentrates on sayings material, but that is also its strength, depending on how the reader wants to use it.

*David J. Graham
Glasgow*

**The Making and Unmaking of an Evangelical Mind:
The Case of Edward Carnell**

Rudolph Nelson

Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987; xiii + 252 pp., £27.50, hardback; ISBN 0 521 34263 5

Edward Carnell was a tragic figure. The author of an influential *Introduction to Christian Apologetics* (1948), while still a research student, one of the founding faculty members of the path-breaking Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California, and a fine teacher, he reached the summit of his career when, at the age of 35, he delivered his inaugural address as president of Fuller on 'The Glory of a Theological Seminary'. Was there a touch of hubris about this statement? It was censured by the more conservative of his colleagues, fissures widened within the faculty and he soon found the burdens of office insupportable. He resigned in 1959, before he was 40, endured a form of psychological shock treatment that ruined his memory, and died of an overdose of barbiturates in a hotel room at the age of 48. Although it was probably not suicide, the coroner returned an open verdict. The high hopes that he would embody a triumphant fusion of intellect and orthodoxy that would draw America back to gospel truth were shattered. By alienating sections of evangelical opinion through successive writings and statements that seemed to concede too much to liberalism, he did much to fragment the forces he had aspired to lead. Pathos surrounds the story.

Rudolph Nelson's study is divided into two sections, the first on Carnell's career, the second on his writings. Nelson is sympathetic to the life of his subject, but cannot avoid the obsessive dimensions of his personality. Carnell wore nothing but dark, formal clothes; he resisted intimacy; and he would walk to the seminary with a dictionary under his arm trying to memorise fresh words to add to his vocabulary. There are already three favourable published evaluations of Carnell's apologetic, and in this area Nelson is less well disposed. He criticises the *Introduction to Christian Apologetics* for an over-cerebral propensity for reducing all questions to issues of either/or. The remainder of Carnell's oeuvre is depicted as a gradual retreat from a rationalistic defence of the faith towards something more heartfelt and yet, ultimately, it is said to founder as a failure of imagination. This judgment reflects the author of the study as much as its subject. Nelson was formerly and evangelical, but has broken (as he explains) with credal and institutional Christianity and is now a professor of English at the State University of New York, Albany. His literary bent is evident in a sensitivity to metaphor and a range of allusions; his pilgrimage away from orthodoxy makes him suppose Carnell's whole apologetic venture was in vain.

It is essential for evangelical Christians in other parts of the world to appreciate the recent trajectory of their co-religionists in America, and this book will help them. But a safer guide would be George Marsden's study of Fuller Seminary, *Reforming Fundamentalism* (Eerdmans, 1987). Unlike Nelson, Marsden shows that, in counterpoint to the personal failure of Carnell, there was a remarkable degree of success in the institution over which he so briefly presided.

*D. W. Bebbington
Stirling*

Call Me Blessed: The Emerging Christian Woman

Faith Martin

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1988; 180pp., paperback

ISBN 0 8028 03024

After the initial rather negative reaction to both the cover and the title and subtitle, I quickly discovered that these are misleading, for here is a book of very real value. Faith Martin is an active laywoman in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America and she aims to re-examine the Bible's teaching on the role of woman. 'Not another' some may groan; but this is not a run-of-the-mill survey. Mrs Martin's treatment is scholarly, drawing on both biblical research and contextual studies. She writes in a very lucid style, with excellent use of analogies from her own family life. It is refreshingly free of polemic, whilst seeking to re-examine translations and the traditional interpretation of passages used to establish women's place in the church.

Looking first at the OT origins of male authority, Mrs Martin states that patriarchy came in after the fall but was not God's original plan. Nor was it peculiar to the Hebrew people, because it was the economic, legal and social system of the pagan world. She maintains that the 'patriarchal mentality was absorbed into the veins of the church (p.50). In a moving chapter entitled 'Sorrow' she looks at women's social vulnerability because of the fear of male violence; female circumcision in African cultures, and the diminished chances which women have for actual survival in some societies.

Her chapter on the theology of the 'Image of God' is fascinating. Is woman different? Theologians may now accept that women too bears the image of God - but with one exception : woman is spiritually equal to man in everything but authority, and so 'the discovery of women's spiritual equality remains a hallow victory' because that equality is not allowed to have practical significance for women in the church. Using an intriguing term, 'Hormone Theology', Mrs Martin looks at our cultural presuppositions about maleness/femaleness, masculinity/ femininity, assertiveness/passivity and the traditionally accepted interpretation of 1 Cor 11:7. In considering our perception of God, she shows how we make him in our (sexual) image, and yet she believes that sexuality as a reflection of the divine Person is not taught in the bible- it is an ancient pagan belief !

It is the close exegeses contained in the last three chapters which I found the most valuable feature of the book. Mrs Martin is able to look freshly at texts like Gen 2:18 ('ezer kenegedo) which she would than translate as 'a power equal to man'; at the references to women in the OT and then in Paul's writings. Here the reader will immediately want to see what she makes of the usual key passages like 1 Tim 2:11, 12 (on hesuchia and authenteo) and 1 Cor. 11:3-16 (on exousia and kephale). I find her exegesis convincing and would encourage you to buy the book to discover what it is! However, it is disappointing that she did not touch on 1 Cor 14:34,35, and this book would have been improved by the addition of an index and a bibliography, though references are clearly cited throughout the chapters.

This book is not a challenge to Scripture, and for that one is grateful, but rather a challenge to the traditional interpretations of the Scripture which are the products of a male-dominated culture. It makes one think.

*Shirley A. Fraser
Edinburgh*

Science and Theology in Einstein's Perspective

Iain Paul

Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh, 1986; 107 + xiv pp., £10.50, hardback; ISBN 0 7073 0449 0

This book is by a research scientist who is now a parish minister. It explores the epistemological relationships between natural science and theology, using the Einsteinian perspective as a datum for what is said about science, and on the theological side drawing heavily upon Athanasius. The aim is to 'dismantle inbuilt prejudices of scientist against theology and of theologians against science' (p.xi). This is done by attempting to show that science and theology have large areas of mutual interest.

Many helpful insights are given concerning the relationship between science and theology. The foundational nature of faith for both the scientist and the theologian is noted: 'every scientific effort is bound up with an act of pre-reflective faith in the rationality of the universe . . . Basically, faith motivates scientific research . . . A history of science reconstructed apart from scientific faith cannot represent the foundations of that faith' (p. 11).

An interesting parallel is drawn between the scientist before the universe, and the theologian before the revelation of God. Both must seek to submit to the objective reality that is there; the one to the truth of the universe, the other to the truth of the Word (p. 28f).

However, some disquieting thoughts arise. In setting out the scientific enterprise on the one hand, and the theological on the other, a dichotomy is embraced. This could be because the author is presenting Einstein's viewpoint, which is obviously not that of Christian theism. In which case the work lacks a constructive criticism of the Einsteinian position. On the other hand this dichotomy could be the author's own view. Such is the reliance on Einstein it is difficult to disentangle one from the other!

Whatever the case, a dichotomy remains. Large sections of the book are taken up by the approach: 'By faith Christians . . . By faith science . . .' (e.g. p.48). But what about the person who is both a Christian and a scientist? What is their viewpoint?

The division is highlighted when Dr Paul talks of the 'rule of natural law or the reign of divine love' (p. 65). He goes on to talk of the 'authority of the universe' residing 'in the power of natural law', within the context of science; and then switching to the theologian and the 'power of love' as 'the ordering power that unifies the creation' (p. 66). Later we are told of 'the book of nature written by the universe' (p.78). And again: 'the universe speaks . . . the universe mysteriously impinges on scientists . . . the universe co-operates with scientists in their discovering' (p. 86). One wonders if the universe has become a scientific synonym for God, or whether we are being led into a subtle pantheism!

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The 'universe' and 'laws of nature' are granted too much personality, too much authority, too much independence. Dr Paul talks of the 'invariant and determinate laws of nature' (pp. 22, 54, 38, 39, 77 etc.). This elevates nature and serves to enforce the dichotomy between science and Christianity - which deepens the divide instead of building bridges. I felt I needed to remind myself of the words of Robert Boyle, a father of chemistry: 'I call the creatures I admire in the visible world, the works of God, not of nature, and praise rather him than her . . . the ascribing to nature things that belong to God, have been some (if not the chief) of the grand causes of the polytheism and idolatry of the gentiles.'

One other strange notion is the idea of the writer that we can negate world-views. We are told that 'modern science is essentially free in regard to all world-views.' This I find an extraordinary claim!

This is, however, a work with many worthwhile and stimulating ideas. The presentation is clouded in places by unnecessary jargon (how many theologians are at home with 'hysteresis loops?'), and what I presume to be printing errors that render a few sentences nonsensical (e.g. p. 89).

The title of the book is *Science and Theology in Einstein's Perspective*. I am left wondering what science and theology in Dr Paul's perspective might be.

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