

EDITORIAL

There are many joys in preaching to Christian undergraduates in St Andrews and near the top of the list is their concern to be readers of the whole Bible. For them intertextuality is cool.

One aspect of that is especially important. As soon as they are shown that Christ walks through the whole of his Word, lights go on in rooms that were previously viewed in some gloom. They can never read the Book in the same way again and they search its pages expecting Christ to show them how everything belongs to his story.

When you are given the key to any story you can never reread it except in the light of the disclosure. There is a 'Why didn't I see it that way before?' about subsequent encounters. This is a common enough experience in fiction and film.

Consider an analogy from fiction. The crime novel with the usual suspects, James, Rendell/Vine, Dexter, Rankin, McDermid and the rest, has been an interest of mine for many years (more recently supplemented by fascinating developments of the genre). The best of these books will have a varied cast of characters and an array of settings, with a complex plot of sub-stories and a set of puzzles to tease even the great investigator. But the narrative will move to a climax in which it is made clear that there has actually been one story unfolding all the way through, though it only becomes unmistakable late in the tale. That story is now very evidently what the whole thing has been about all along and a host of details make perfect sense when they are seen in its context. Contrary to myth these books are worth rereading, for the pleasure of seeing things one had missed or misunderstood click into place. Everything is now seen in the light of the *dénouement*.

Or to choose an analogy from film, take M. Night Shyamalan's ghostly drama *Sixth Sense*. Bruce Willis plays a child psychologist who is attacked by a disturbed ex-patient on the same night he receives a prestigious award. A little later he takes on the case of a young boy, the excellent Haley Joel Osment, who claims to see dead people 'all the time'. It's fun to watch it again, and especially with someone who hasn't seen it before, both for the pleasure of their reaction to the surprise and for the fresh perspective we now have on the unfolding details. What is not such fun is having mature Christians one remembers raving about this

'amazing' film, now insisting they saw through it within minutes on their first viewing. Above all others on earth, the graced should be willing to admit surprise. We for long failed to see the obvious.

But now we do see the obvious, as privileged readers of the last days, in the Christotelic narrative that makes sense of the whole Bible. In a favourite student word, Scripture is not 'random'. There is one Author and one Story and one Hero, and everything coheres around the Christ whose saving story is the narrative engine driving the plot. So this Book is worth daily reading and multiple rereadings for a lifetime, because new insights and interconnections are always waiting to be discovered in the infinite riches of Holy Scripture.

Those who teach Scripture to the people of God have a responsibility to help them read the Book effectively, providing tools for the task, so that all might be good readers of the whole Bible. Of course, spiritual interpretation depends on the ministry of the Holy Spirit, but he uses human agents to give readers and hearers helps for understanding. That has come home to me recently during a brief foray into the world of the threefold office of Christ, the Anointed, as prophet, priest and king.

The insights of Calvin's mature theology are familiar to all of us and we also know how they have been reworked in various ways through the riches of subsequent reflection. But to young Christians who had never heard it before, the model of the triple office was 'magic', 'brilliant' or 'awesome', depending on their provenance. Suddenly they had yet another way of reading the whole canon and soon nimble young Christian intellects began to see a thousand new connections. Let people explore the possibilities of Scripture and see texts travelling on surprising but biblical trajectories (as I have suggested to the students of St Andrews, they can learn to *Bend It Like Bauckham*).

Having ambled onto the theme of the threefold office, perhaps I can apply that in a general way to all our theology before I lay down my editorial responsibilities. Think with me of theology's humility, dignity and responsibility.

All true theology will be marked by humility, because it is done *for the Anointed*. The theologian can speak because the Prophet has spoken and it is his revelation that forms the subject-matter of theology. The theologian works under the grace of the Priest, focussed on his sacrifice and dependent on his intercession, so that all theology is eucharistic. And this theologising is under the King, Christ the Lord, who is King of kings and Theologian of theologians.

Theology will also affirm its own dignity, as done *by the anointed*. Every theologian is chrismed as prophet, priest and prince, and should

enjoy an anointed self-consciousness. In prophetic service you speak to church and to world. In priestly service you present your best in sacrifice and ask him to make that still imperfect offering acceptable before the throne. In royal service you claim intellectual territory for him, planting the flag of the kingdom. In this, men and women are equally anointed for Christian scholarship, so every Christian woman engaged in theology will be welcomed as a prophetess, a priestess and a princess.

And theology will remember its responsibility, as done *for the anointed*. At Pentecost the Church is baptised by the Baptised, given his Spirit to walk in his footsteps. If the people of God are prophetic, priestly and royal too, and will be so for ever, then theology should aim to help all the anointed exercise their vocations. Usually that will be done indirectly, as theologians feed those who then feed others in the churches. But sometimes they need to write directly for the people. I think here, for example, of Darrell Bock, Ben Witherington and others helping us respond to *The Da Vinci Code*, a real page-turning novel of cryptology and conspiracy, but one that turns the truth on its head, heresy masquerading as history.

Multitudes now believe the so-called Holy Grail to be the Holy Bloodline. The gaping lack of physical evidence is offered as triumphant proof that the Church suppressed the truth! Others still search for the Grail of legend, the cup or platter of the Last Supper or the cup in which Joseph of Arimathea caught the blood and water that flowed from Jesus' side at Golgotha. The students of St Andrews need the scholars' help here, as do the other readers of the novel and the viewers of the inevitable movie. Thus we ask theologians to be ready to help us refute popular error and defend basic truth, so that the Christ of biblical history might be the personal Jesus of faith, commended to the hearts and minds of our own day.

May the Grail quest recede into Arthurian and other mists and may the symbolism of the divine cup be seen in all its true horror and glory. The Saviour drank the cup of anguish and astonishment to its dregs so that we might drink the cup of salvation now and forever as beneficiaries of the glorious exchange. Of course, to understand cup language in that way simply reaffirms the basic point that to read Scripture intertextually and Christologically is to get the point.

And may *SBET* always point to him.

Alasdair I. Macleod

In this number

We have four articles to offer in this number.

First, we are delighted to publish the 2004 Finlayson Memorial Lecture, which was delivered by Professor David Bebbington of the University of Stirling at the Scottish Evangelical Theology Society Conference, Edinburgh, on 31 March 2004. Many readers will already be familiar with Professor Bebbington's work on the history of evangelicalism, and in this paper he discusses 'Evangelical Theology in the English-Speaking World during the Nineteenth Century' with typical clarity.

Our second article by Professor Christopher Seitz of the University of St Andrews is the published version of his Rutherford House 21st Anniversary Lecture, delivered in Edinburgh on 24 June 2004. As the introductory comments to the article make clear, this work on the canonical shaping of the 'Minor Prophets' or the 'Book of the Twelve' is part of a larger project and we are grateful to Professor Seitz for this opportunity to have our appetites whetted for his forthcoming book.

In the third article, Professor Donald Macleod of the Free Church College, Edinburgh continues vigorously to engage issues raised by various representatives of the so-called 'New Perspective on Paul', this time addressing the meaning of the term *dikaios*.

Finally, I offer an article from the perspective of a self-confessed music lover, which seeks to provide a starting point for reflection on song, not simply as an aspect of services of Christian worship but as a good gift from our Father. I trust that it will help readers to be both appreciative and critical of the songs we hear and sing.

I must also draw our readers' attention to a correction. Stephen Williams has kindly drawn my attention to the fact that, in his article in Volume 22, Number 1 (Spring 2004), line 9 of paragraph 3 on page 45 should read: 'But I certainly shall not drink cocoa at *t*.' Perhaps if the Editor had had another strong cup of coffee he might have noticed this slip!

Good reading!

Alistair I. Wilson