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suffer as human suffering the evil of the world. If that is myth, not fact, then the cross has less to say about the problem of suffering than it might. p. 11

The Fundamentalism Debate: A Survey of Reviews of James Barr's Fundamentalism

by A. N. S. LANE

List of Reviews[1] (followed by abbreviations used in this article)
J.R.W. Stott, *All Souls Magazine* Sept–Oct 1978, pp. 12f. (AS) (also repeated, in an abridged form, in *Church of England Newspaper* 22.9.1978, p. 7 and, in a slightly modified form, in *Christianity Today* 8.9.1978, pp. 44–6
G. Whitefeld, *The Ampleforth Journal* 83, 1978, pp. 67f. (AJ)
L. Misselbrook, *Baptist Times* 28.7.1977 (BT)
M. Wadsworth, *British Book' News* November 1977 (BBN)
A. N. S. Lane, *Christian Graduate* 30, 1977, pp. 77–80 (CG)
J. Goldingay, *Churchman* 91, 1977, pp. 295–308 (Ch)
D. L. Edwards, *Church Times* 15.7.1977 (ChT)
D. Williams, *Crusade* October 1977, p. 49 (Cr1)
P. Cousins, *Crusade* October 1978, pp. 32f. (Cr2)
B. C. Farr, *Digest* April 1978, p. 5 (Dig)
D. W. Cartwright, *Elim Evangelical* 30.7.1977, pp. 8–10 (EE)
A. S. Wood, *Epworth Review* 5, 1978, pp. 123f. (ER)
R. M. Horn, *Evangelical Times* November 1977, p. 7 (EvT)
C. S. Rodd, *Expository Times* 88, 1977, pp. 353–5 (ExT)
L. Jacobs, *Jewish Chronicle* 5.8. 1977, (JC)
D. R. Hall, *Methodist Recorder* 3.11.1977 (MR)
Anon, *The National Message* June 1978, p. 185 (NM)
M. Warren, *New Fire* 4, 1977, pp. 456–9 (NF)
H. Dean, *The Officer* September 1977 (Off)
P. Wells, *Revue Reformee* 29, 1978, pp. 85–94 (RR) p. 12
G. W. Anderson, *SOTS Booklist* 1978, p. 84 (SOTS)
D. F. Wright, *Themelios* 3, 1978, pp. 86–9 (Them)
K. Ward, *Theology* 81, 1978, pp. 145–7 (Theol)
P. Helm, *Third Way* 14.7.1977, pp. 17f. (TW)

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[1] I am indebted to the SCM Press for supplying copies of some of the reviews. Since I have often been dependent upon copies I have not always been able to supply full details of volume, page, etc. The reviews are listed in alphabetical order of periodical. A chronological study might reveal some interesting unacknowledged borrowing, but this task I will leave to the literary critic. I have sought as far as possible to let the reviews speak for themselves and so have quoted freely. In giving short quotations there is always the danger of misrepresentation. I have sought to the best of my ability to avoid this but I apologise for any instances where I may have failed.

J. Negenman, *Tijdschrift voor Theologie* January 1978 (TvT)
C. Longley, *The Times* 5.12.1977, (Ti)
W. Edgar, *Westminster Theological Journal* 40, 1977, pp. 154–6 (WTJ)

INTRODUCTION

PROFESSOR JAMES BARR'S *Fundamentalism*,[2] published in July 1977 has provoked a number of responses but so far there is no sign of anything like a controversy. This is unlikely to occur since one of the striking features of the informed reviews of *Fundamentalism*, whether by conservative evangelicals[3] or others, is the wide measure of agreement between them.

A number of reviews confine themselves almost exclusively to giving a brief summary of the contents of the book, whether without comment (AJ), with praise (BBN, Off, SOTS, TvT) or with criticism (MR, TvT). As these reviews offer little more than a summary of the book they merit no further mention.

There can be said to be a general consensus among reviews by conservative evangelicals: *Fundamentalism* makes some important points that need to be headed but it is marred by serious inaccuracies.

> I sincerely hope that evangelicals will not imagine that Barr's blemishes exempt them from taking him seriously. He makes many points of substance and hits his target often enough and accurately enough to leave the evangelical thinker with plenty of food for constructive thought (CG 78).
>
> In summary, then, Professor Barr's analysis and critique of the fundamentalist cast of mind is frequently compelling, though sometimes misled and often overstated, over one particular and p. 13 theological issue (the doctrine of inspiration/infallibility itself) unsatisfactory (Ch 307).
>
> The general flavour and gross simplifications of the book are regrettable for the further supremely important reason that they may hinder evangelicals from taking to heart its *many* valid criticism of evangelicalism (Them 88).

Only two of the evangelical reviews can be described as uncompromisingly hostile (EL, Cr2).

Non-conservative reviewers do not go into the same detailed criticism as the evangelical reviewers (which is not surprising since their knowledge of the subject is presumably indirect and less detailed) but the same essential points of criticism are found. It is for this reason that a new 'fundamentalism controversy' is unlikely—there is not sufficient disagreement in the assessment of *Fundamentalism* to make a controversy.

CRITICISMS

1) Approach

Professor Barr maintains that his goal is to understand 'fundamentalism' (pp. 8f.). But the most common criticism of *Fundamentalism* is its polemical approach.

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[2] James Barr, *Fundamentalism* (SCM, London 1977, 379 pp. £3.95). Dr. Barr is Oriel Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture at Oxford University.

[3] Throughout the article the terms 'conservative' and 'evangelical' may be taken to mean 'conservative evangelical', except where the context clearly indicates otherwise.

> Some explanation is certainly needed why a book which sets out to analyse and understand (p. 9) becomes a hatchet job. Like a child with the pile of wooden bricks on the cover, Barr is bent on demolishing evangelicalism. A sympathetic reviewer in *The Scotsman* called him 'ruthless', and so he is. It will be no surprise if the book embitters relations between different kinds of Christians (Them 86).

This fault is not one to which evangelicals can plead innocent and John Stott indicates the appropriate response:

> *Fundamentalism* has increased my own determination in all religious debate to respect the other person, listen carefully to him, and struggle to understand him. For there can be no understanding without sympathy and no dialogue without respect (AS 12).

Those whose beliefs are under fire will naturally tend to view their antagonist as polemical and their judgement may be considered partial. Indeed Barr has sought to preempt such charges by prophesying that any critical appraisal of fundamentalism will p. 14 be branded as a distortion and a caricature (p. 325)[4]. But similar complaints are also made by non-conservative reviewers:

> He writes without sympathy, and it is this lack which makes his understanding incomplete (ExT 355).
> Had Professor Barr been less consistently polemical, and shown more understanding of the positive values of conservative evangelicalists (sic) his book would have been more balanced and more effective (MR).

One evangelical reviewer uses an interesting illustration to make this point:

> Today, students who wish to understand a living society and its religion immerse themselves in that society and try to understand it sympathetically from the inside. Professor Barr seems not to have tried to do this with fundamentalism (Ch 297).

This illustration is taken up by a later, non-conservative, reviewer.

> He begins by avowing his own belief that Fundamentalism is a pathological condition of Christianity, that it is incoherent and completely wrong; yet he wishes to understand and expound its intellectual structure. The programme is rather like that of early anthropologists who, in expounding the nature of religion, were really trying to explain how such gross superstitions could ever come to be held by rational beings. Such an attitude is not conducive to understanding, and it does not produce very much of it in this case (Theol 145).

2) Selectivity

Another criticism of *Fundamentalism* is its Selectivity. This appears in three different ways. First, the author claims to have 'worked through the morass of British conservative evangelical literature' (p. 223) but his reviewers are not convinced. His reading is limited in scope and, more seriously, dated (AS 12, CG 77, Cr1, ER 123, NF 458, RR 90f., 93, Them 86, WTJ 155).

> Some of Dr. Barr's own attacks also show that his research into what Evangelicals are actually saying has not been sufficiently comprehensive to be worthy of what is, on the face of it, a p. 15 major book by a major scholar (ChT).

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[4] One reviewer chooses to judge Barr's case by the reception it has received and concludes from the moderate tone of the review in the *Churchman* that Barr's charges 'cannot be true of the whole movement even if they have substance in some cases' (Ti).

Secondly, Barr makes no mention of a number of evangelical bodies and events such as the Tyndale Fellowship, the Shaftesbury Project, Latimer House, NEAC (Keele, 1967) and the 1974 Lausanne Congress (CG 77, Them 86, 88 Cr1). Had these been included in his research the picture would have been very different, e.g. in connection with social attitudes or self-criticism.

> Thirdly, it is argued that there is no need for these gaps.
> Professor Barr speaks of what fundamentalists 'probably' think or what they 'possibly' believe. His uncertainty is strange: could he not get such points elucidated by his conservative evangelical colleagues at Manchester (where the bulk of the work was presumably done)? As it is, the probablys and the perhapses make the work sometimes reminiscent of a study of Israelite (or Ugaritic or Babylonian) religion, where such uncertainties have to remain unresolved because Cyrus or Zechariah are not available for comment (Ch 298).

A similar charge is made by a non-conservative reviewer of parts of the book:

> 'These sections, I fear, are little better than armchair sociology, without benefit of statistical research or convincing citation' (Theol 146).

At this stage a word about Professor Barr's own past is appropriate.

> A quarter of a century ago he was president of the Christian Union at Edinburgh University (Them 86).

This partly explains the dated nature of *Fundamentalism:*

> 'His general experience of evangelical religion is dated in the 1950s, a period when some things were said and done which should make us all bow our heads in shame' (Cr1).

3) Inaccuracies

Some major lapses must be mentioned. The very title of the book has been questioned. Although Barr theoretically distinguishes between conservative evangelicalism and fundamentalism the whole thesis of the book is that conservative evangelicals are fundamentalist. This objection does not simply arise from evangelical hyper-sensitivity, as is shown by David Edwards:

> Dr. Barr attacks positions which are being quite rapidly abandoned, and he insists on applying this emotionally loaded word p. 16 'fundamentalist' to teachers who have publicly abandoned those positions. Many who, like this reviewer, are not markedly 'conservative' will ask whether this is a fair method of debate (ChT).

The objection to Dr. Barr's use of the name 'fundamentalist' is not a purely semantic matter. There has been a genuine change in the conservative evangelical movement in recent years which Barr does not recognise.

> On a host of issues he is unaware of the strong winds of change blowing through the movement (Them 87, cf. Ch 307).
> He seems generally reluctant to differentiate between an indefensibly inflexible literalism and what in recent years has developed into a much broader conservative evangelicalism…. The consequence is that the majority of the newer conservatives Would find themselves in agreement with many of Professor Barr's strictures (ER 123).

The same point is made more forcefully by non-conservative reviewers.

> He is simply wrong not to do justice to a movement of Evangelical liberalisation that in its own way is quite as remarkable as the *aggiornamento* among Roman Catholics (ChT).

Equally misleading is Professor Barr's neglect of the genuine diversity that exists within the conservative evangelical fold. He devotes some space to consider the differences within conservative evangelicalism (especially Ch.7) but reviewers agree that he seriously fails to recognise the extent of diversity (CG 77, Cr2 32, RR 90, Them 87). One reviewer notes that there is almost as great a theological difference between Packer and Hal Lindsey, say, as between Packer and Barr (RR 90).
This failure to acknowledge the extent of diversity is not incidental to the thrust to *Fundamentalism*.

> The point is, he cannot face both ways at once. Either fundamentalism is a closely-knit structure in which the party line has to be toed at whatever cost, an 'intellectual sect', as Barr calls it, or it is not. If it contains elements of both then no general criticism can be made of it. This is not merely to make the point, not sufficiently noted by Barr, that any grouping is a coalition of interests, and that it is likely to be very difficult to say something that is going to be generally true of all members p. 17 of such a group and at the same time worth saying. It is rather that the range and inconsistency of the criticism Barr makes imply a defect in his method (TW 17).

The same point is made by non-conservative reviewers.

> The truth is, the argument of this book makes no distinction between polemicists, and believers who tend to be literalist out of simplicity, and believers profoundly concerned about Christian life in the world, who want to witness to their Faith but tend to be conservative through genuine perplexity. It is faulty analysis to confuse all these under the title 'Fundamentalist' (NF 459).
> Professor Barr lists three characteristics of fundamentalism:

a. a very strong emphasis on the inerrancy of the Bible, the absence from it of any sort of error;
b. a strong hostility to modern theology and to the methods, results and implications of modern critical study of the Bible;
c. an assurance that those who do not share their religious viewpoint are not really 'true Christians' at all (p. 1).

These are noted by a large number of reviewers. Many of the conservative evangelical reviewers protest that if these are the marks of fundamentalism they are not fundamentalists and, conversely, if Barr is describing British conservative evangelicalism, as he professes, he is not being fair (AS 13, BT, CG 78, ER 123, Them 86, WTJ 154). Barr's understanding here is due to his failure to acknowledge either the extent of the diversity within evangelicalism or the changes that have taken place. None denies that these three characteristics have been or still can be found within British conservative evangelicalism. What is disputed is Barr's claim that they still are the dominant characteristics of mainstream British conservative evangelicalism today.

The late Canon Max Warren, brought up as a 'fundamentalist' and became a 'liberal evangelical', offers a different account of the essence of fundamentalism.

> "Here I stand I can do no other" … remains the classic religious response of the man or the movement which believes that something fundamental is at stake about which a protest must be made. Surely this response must find its place in all religions, other than the Laodicean; in all philosophies; in all sciences, p. 18 indeed wherever the mind of man is active. In all these instances it is a profoundly religious response…. Have we not to recognise that all fundamentalisms, in so far as they relate to religion, have as their

> essential characteristic the response of men of what to them appears to be an attack on truth as they understand it.... There is no hope of beginning to understand fundamentalism of any kind without the recognition of this deeply religious dimension (NF 456f.).

Canon Warren refers to 'brash and over-confident and intolerant young conservative Evangelicals', like himself over fifty years ago.

> *Behind* their militancy was not, and is not, a rigid belief in the inerrancy of the Bible. Rather it was, and is, a deep personal commitment to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, and a consequent dedication to witness and evangelism.... It was, I think, Coleridge who said, "The Bible finds me". That is the 'hard core' of Evangelical belief. I am no fundamentalist in Professor Barr's sense, but that is as true for me today as it was when I was an undergraduate (NF 457f.).

One of the criticisms of British conservative evangelicalism in *Fundamentalism* is 'its quite total complacency and lack of selfcriticism' (p. 162, cf. 163, 222f, 338). This description has triggered off considerable response. Most striking is that of David L. Edwards.

> A few words contain the substance of this attack on fundamentalism.... 'They must therefore acknowledge with deep shame that their treatment of Scripture seldom coincides with their view of it.... They are sometimes slovenly, sometimes simplistic, sometimes highly selective and sometimes downright dishonest.' These strong words, however, do not occur in Professor Barr's polemic. They are quoted from ... the Rev. John Stott (ChT, quoted in Ch 306, cf. NF 459).

The review in the *Times* repeats Canon Edward's point and concludes that 'refusal to be self-critical is not therefore a charge that can be made to stick'. The same point is made by evangelical reviewers, citing NEAC and the Lausanne Congress (CG 77, Them 86).

4) Dr. Barr's Alternative

Professor Bart claims that 'the concept of heresy has ceased to p. 19 be functionally useful for the evaluation of present-day theological opinions' (p.197) and several reviewers have commented on this (NM, RR 93). They also ask what alternative Barr has to offer to the 'fundamentalism' of his opponents (CG 79, EvT, NM, RR 94, WTJ 154). Some of the non-conservative reviewers comment on the same point.

> What he never comes to grips with is the real difficulty a conservative evangelical has in seeing where a firm basis for faith can be found, if not in the literal truth of the Bible (Theol 146).

Barr's position is unlikely to appeal to 'fundamentalists' since, as Max Warren argues, the essence of fundamentalism is the willingness to stand up and be counted for one's convictions (NF 456f.).

5) Conclusion

It would be unfair to leave the reader with the impression that *Fundamentalism* can be written off as hopelessly inaccurate. While the approach is defective there remains much in the book that is challenging. The major evangelical reviews all acknowledge important lessons to be learnt from *Fundamentalism*. Happily, the evidence is that *Fundamentalism* is leading not to another sterile 'fundamentalism controversy' but to renewed self-examination and self-criticism by evangelicals.

CHALLENGES

The serious evangelical reviews all recognise that *Fundamentalism* poses important challenges that need to be faced by evangelicalism.

1) Inerrancy

Undoubtedly the major issue raised by Professor Bart is the inerrancy of Scripture. Here he has the support of the non-conservative reviewers.

> The claim that Holy Scripture is 'infallible' or 'inertant' is intellectually indefensible, and the attempts that have been made to defend it since the rise of modern scholarship deserve all the adjectives which Mr. Stott piles up…. Dr. Barr is surely correct to suggest that fundamentalists have lived in this intellectualism p. 20 with consequent damage to their mental health (ChT).

But the main conservative reviewers defend the concept of inerrancy.

> It is not dishonest, in the face of apparent discrepancies, to suspend judgement and continue looking for harmony rather than declare Scripture to be erroneous. On the contrary, it is an expression of our Christian integrity (AS 13).
>
> Is the teaching of different parts of the Bible ultimately compatible or not? If it is, as evangelicals affirm, we are committed to an exegesis that accepts it all—perhaps synthesis is a better word than harmony, because it is important that each part be allowed to speak for itself. If there is no ultimate compatibility, as Barr affirms, we are forced to pick and choose. If Paul and James, say, are *ultimately* incompatible, we can be even-handed only in rejecting both; otherwise we must choose one or the other (CG 78).
>
> I shall prefer not to get into an argument over inerrancy, because the framework of thinking it may suggest can be inappropriate; but if someone insists that I declare whether I think Scripture is inerrant or not, I will be willing to affirm that belief, reckoning this to be less misleading than to deny it (Ch 301).

One reviewer offers some helpful clarifications of the meaning of the term.

> Barr never defines inerrancy but makes no distinction between 'No part of the Bible errs' as a methodological principle and as something that dictates exegetical conclusions, despite the fact that such a distinction is widely made in the literature he consulted…. Because he fails to appreciate the methodological character of the fundamentalists' commitment to biblical inerrancy it is not surprising that he cannot make up his mind whether commitment to inerrancy involves a recognition of different literary types in Scripture or the interpretation of all biblical texts as involving 'correspondence to external reality' (TW 18).

Another reviewer criticises Barr for 'his fastening on the formally negative, technical concept of inerrancy as the most significant feature of the evangelical view of Scripture. In reality, the divine authority of the Bible, which is a positive theological principle, p. 21 is of far greater importance' (Them 87).

Some of Barr's sternest criticism is reserved for those who appeal to Jesus' teaching in support of the doctrine of biblical inerrancy. Here two reviewers draw a careful distinction between Jesus' passing references to Moses, Daniel, etc. and his 'attribution of religious authority to the Old Testament Scriptures', his acceptance of them as "the authoritative Word of God" (Ch 300f., CG 79).

It might be imagined that by remaining firm on these two points the evangelical reviewers are simply confirming Barr's contention that they are fundamentalists. But they seek to make a careful distinction between 'fundamentalism' and 'conservative evangelicalism'. John Stott does this as follows:

> The fundamentalist emphasises so strongly the divine origin of Scripture that he tends to forget that it also had human authors who used sources, syntax and words to convey their message; whereas the evangelical remembers the double authorship of Scripture…. On the one hand, God spoke…. On the other hand, men spoke…. This double authorship of Scripture naturally affects the way the evangelical reads his Bible. Because it is God's Word, he reads it like no other book, praying humbly to the Holy Spirit for illumination. But because it is also men's words, he reads it like every other book, paying close attention to the context, structure, grammar and vocabulary (AS 13).

Others draw a similar distinction.

> There is also the distinction between the purely dogmatic approach to Scripture, working simply from the doctrine of Scripture even if the conclusions are then defended by the use of historical argument, and the conservative approach which seeks to give weight to both historical criticism and the doctrine of Scripture (CG 78, cf. TW 18).
> I believe we have to hold on to the doctrine of inspiration, but also to seek to treat Scripture historically…. Conservative evangelicals who want to practise historical criticism have hard work to do in working out a coherent understanding of both how the Bible can be God's word if it is also a fully human book, and how they can use the historical method on a book they believe came about by God's providence (Ch 304).

Two reviewers cite a seminal article by Dr. Packer which argues p. 22 the need for constant interaction between our doctrine of Scripture and the empirical evidence (CG 78, TW 18).

Dr. Barr is aware of the difference between modern conservative biblical scholarship and traditional fundamentalism but he attributes this to inconsistency and/or dishonesty. He has a surprising ally in one of the more conservative reviewers. Robert Horn, in the *Evangelical Times*, cites Barr with approval as a further confirmation of his fears concerning the course of modern conservative biblical scholarship. Dr. Barr and Mr. Horn share a common presupposition—that there is no real *via media* between 'fundamentalism' and 'liberalism'. Yet this is precisely what is affirmed by those who seek to follow the path outlined in the previous paragraph—they seek *both* to hold to a firm doctrine of Scripture and *also* to be open to the use of the historical critical method. Those who stand between fundamentalism and liberalism need not be inconsistent or dishonest but may be acting according to firm principles. *Fundamentalism* never really considers this possibility.

Barr sees B. B. Warfield's doctrine of Scripture as the basis of fundamentalism, although it has been wrenched from its context in the process. Some of the details of Barr's argument here have been faulted (EvT, NF 458, RR 91–3, TW 18). But Warfield's doctrine has been criticised by conservatives in the past (RR 93) and is recognised as inadequate by some of the evangelical reviewers today.

> One of our most urgent unfinished tasks is the elaboration of a satisfactory doctrine of Scripture for an era of biblical criticism. The development of critical, *i.e.* literary and historical, study of the Bible constitutes one of the great divides in Christian history; there can be no turning the clock back. We cannot afford to rest on Warfield's laurels, but must meet the challenges of today (Them 88, cf. CG 79).

One evangelical reviewer passes beyond defense of the conservative position to a challenge to liberalism.

> Is there a danger of 'liberalism' failing to be self critical? I put it in this way because this is exactly the criticism Professor Barr makes of conservative evangelicals…. But is this not exactly the danger of 'liberalism' too? It is, of course, *internally* self critical in a rigorous way: within the critical framework it is thoroughgoing in its willingness to commit itself

> to historical p. 23 investigation, to admitting that particular critical positions were wrong, to abandoning cherished answers and leaving questions open, and so on. But to be truly self critical would involve distancing oneself from this stance and asking whether it is adequate (Ch 304f.).

He cites the work of Gerhard Ebeling and others in support and his argument is quoted with approval by the *Times* reviewer. At this point there is room for fruitful dialogue between the two sides 'if only both parties could be brought to meet' (NF 457).

2) Interpretation of Scripture

Professor Barr argues that evangelical exegesis follows a 'completely unprincipled—in the strict sense unprincipled, because guided by no principle of interpetation—approach, in which the only guiding criterion is that the Bible should, by the sorts of truth that fundamentalists respect and follow, be true and not in any sort of error' (p. 49). The reviewers do not agree.

> Many evangelical scholars would agree with the charge that evangelical exegesis and hermeneutics leave a lot to be desired, but I doubt whether 'completely unprincipled' even begins to be fair. It is noteworthy that Barr's bibliography contains only a very few evangelical commentaries and not one that is recent and substantial (CG 78).
> Quite a few Conservative Evangelical scholars have adopted the 'new hermeneutic'. This is the method of asking how a passage, given its cultural conditioning, plays its part in the witness of Scripture as a whole—which alone is finally authoritative. (ChT).

But this does not mean that there is no need to learn from Barr at this point.

> We evangelicals have always been much better at defending the authority of the Bible than at wrestling with its interpretation. Dogmatic assertions about infallibility and inerrancy are no substitute for conscientious, painstaking studies (AS 13, cf. CG 78 (quoted above), Ch 299f., EvT).

3) Rationalism

Dr. Barr discerns a rationalistic tendency in the treatment of miracles by evangelicals. The overriding concern is to preserve the historical accuracy of the text, even if this involves emptying p. 24 it of all supernatural content. The truth in this charge is noted by some reviewers (Ch 300, Them 88, WTJ 155f.) though there are qualifications to be made (Them 88, TW 18). Related to this is a rationalistic tendency in terms of 'a pre-Kantian empirical or rationalist bias behind their thinking' (WTJ 156, cf. Ch 300, ER 124).

> Unfortunately, much of this is all too true. While Barr is not attuned to the complex philosophical questions surrounding the proper versus the improper uses of reason by Christian and non-Christian, he has certainly exposed a weakness in much of contemporary evangelical apologetics (WTJ 156).

4) Tradition

Professor Barr makes the serious charge that biblical authority is a form rather than a reality in evangelical thought (p. 11). The real normative authority is evangelical tradition and the Bible is simply used to support this (pp. 37f.). Those reviewers who discuss this point all agree.

> We do sometimes use our venerable evangelical traditions to shelter us from the radical challenges of the Word of God (AS 12, cf. EvT).

It is the perennial danger of all authorities, whether religious or otherwise, to resort to dishonest means to suppress valid criticism, but this must be resisted.

> Evangelicals can be in a position quite analogous to that of those religious groups in the gospels who emphasise the Scriptures but are indicted for their lack of scriptural understanding. Psychologically, those who believe that their faith is biblical, that they have responded to the biblical message, can by that very conviction be hindered from hearing aspects of that message. What they have already grasped provides the framework of reference for understanding the Bible as a whole and also the means of gagging those parts of the Bible that do not fit with this framework. And their theological commitment to Scripture can make them assume that they would not do such a thing (Ch 296f.)

5) Evangelical Theology

Dr. Barr is very critical of evangelical theology and his criticisms p. 25 are accepted by the evangelical reviewers, though with qualifications (Them 87). First, he charges that evangelical theology is fossilised and inactive. 'Within true fundamentalism there is no real task for theology other than the conservation and reiteration of a tradition believed to have existed in the past and in any case now taken as immovably fixed' (p. 162). Compared with evangelical scholarship 'practically all they say about theology or philosophy can only be described as abysmally poor in comparison' (p. 160). It is acknowledged that there is much truth in Barr's criticism but not that it is universally true. The situation is much better in Holland or the U.S.A. than in England. The neglect of theology proper in England is not confined to evangelicals but has deep historical roots. In recent years there has been a recognition of the need and steps have been made by the Tyndale Fellowship to encourage more theological scholarship though there is still, as Barr shows, a long way to go (AS 12, CG 79, TW 18).

Secondly, Barr states that 'nowhere in the conservative evangelical literature have I found evidence of any serious attempt to understand what non-conservative theologians think' (p. 164).

> While this statement must be taken as further evidence for the narrowness of Barr's reading it must be admitted that much evangelical polemic completely bears out his point (CG 79, cf. TW 18).

6) Continuity with the Past

Professor Barr claims that it is 'liberals' not 'fundamentalists' who stand in continuity with the church of past centuries. This point is not conceded by the reviews.

> His attempt to show that the line of continuity from Luther and Calvin runs down to, let us say, *The Myth of God Incarnate*, rather than to evangelicalism is myopic. Barr is clearly not at home in historical theology; he discounts an Athanasian Christology (p. 171), and twice misconstrues the Westminster Confession (pp. 261ff. 294) (Them 87 cf. CG 80).

But while the point has been overstated, it remains true that:

> Evangelicals generally lack a satisfactory understanding of doctrinal development. As a consequence, theology is rarely seen as a constructive and creative task (p. 223), and the most overtly developed Christian doctrine, that of the Trinity, enjoys p. 26 little more than formal recognition in much evangelicalism (pp. 176–177) (Them 88).
> Some evangelicals too glibly refer to 'historic Christianity' when they are in fact referring to a section of the post-Reformation Protestant tradition (CG 80).

7) Conclusion

There remains much of significance in *Fundamentalism* which has received no mention. This is partly because of the nature of the book.

> I found the book's exposition of its care diffuse; it offers not so much an unfolding argument as a series of essays on various aspects of the topic (Ch 296, cf. TvT).

This diffuseness does not make for a good book but it means that there is a considerable wealth of material scattered throughout its pages. The discussion within the reviews and this survey has not exhausted the interesting and stimulating material to be found in *Fundamentalism*. p. 27

Questions Concerning the Future of African Christianity

by DICK FRANCE

A FEW years ago I found myself the only white man in a crowd of several hundred marching along a road in a new suburb of the ancient city of Ife, Nigeria, lustily singing 'Onward, Christian Soldiers' in Yoruba. We were marching to lay the foundation stone of a new church, the 13th congregation in Ife of that one denomination, founded only 40 years before; they had already outgrown their 400-seater church building. Usually such a procession in a Nigerian city draws a huge crowd. That day it did not, for the very good reason that practically all the population of the area was already in the procession. Christianity is on the march in Africa.

That was the Christ Apostolic Church, one of the larger of the hundreds of independent churches which have sprung up in the last half-century across Africa, particularly in South Africa and Nigeria. Usually beginning as breakway movements from the mission-founded churches, they have developed their own leadership, their own forms of worship, and often their own theology, recognisably Christian but sometimes disturbingly unfamiliar to a western visitor. Dreams, visions, fasts and prophecy are prominent; physical healing, exorcism and protection against witchcraft are major concerns, and western medicine is suspect if not positively forbidden.

The remarkable success of these independent churches is largely due to their ability, too seldom shared by the missionary, to scratch where it itches. It is they who are in the forefront of the spectacular statistical growth of Christianity in most of Africa south of the Sahara, causing statisticians to predict a predominantly Christian continent by the end of the century.

But the missionary-founded churches are also growing, governed in most areas now by national leaders. Missionaries must increasingly, even if sometimes reluctantly, stand back and watch p. 28 the juggernaut which they have launched gather speed. It is certainly out of their control—but is it out of control altogether? Some of them think so, and so they try to keep a hand on the wheel. Particularly among the evangelical missions there is a reluctance to let go, and so powerful African voices have been raised calling for a complete 'moratorium' on missionary involvement in Africa. 'Moratorium' implies a limited period,