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# **THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE MESSIANISM OF THE BOOK OF ISAIAH\***

**The Finlayson Lecture for 1985**

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## **The Special Importance of the New Testament use of the Old Testament**

The contemporary interest in Biblical Hermeneutics shows no sign of abating. Those of us whose compelling interest is in evangelical Systematic Theology and its evangelistic and pastoral application ought to rejoice in this. We are concerned that our theology should be thoroughly based on the Bible. Between the Scriptures themselves and Systematic Theology lie a number of studies, including two vitally important disciplines, Hermeneutics and Biblical Theology. It is of great importance that evangelical Systematic Theology should constantly find enrichment and be willing to accept adjustment, if need be, from the insights of Biblical Theology. Biblical Theology in its turn rests on sound principles of Biblical Interpretation.

The use of the Old Testament in the New is a most important aspect of Hermeneutics. For evangelicals it is crucial, because we accept the authority of the whole Bible. This means that both the Old Testament writer who is quoted and the New Testament writer who quotes and interprets him are inspired and authoritative. It follows from this that Biblical interpretation is not merely a matter of subjective choice on the part of the interpreter. Not only is there a most important objective factor, but that factor is authoritative. It can then furnish an objective and authoritative basis for interpreting the Bible as a whole. The great value and importance of this quickly appears when we discover that the New Testament writers not only condemn rejection of the Scriptures but also their wrong interpretation,<sup>1</sup> and that they appear to have been guided in this by Christ Himself.<sup>2</sup>

## **The Modern Study of the New Testament use of the Old Testament**

Two names stand out in the modern study of this subject, Rendel Harris and C. H. Dodd. In 1916 and 1920, Harris published his two volumes entitled *Testimonies 1 and 2*.<sup>3</sup> In these works, he maintained that

\*Delivered at the 1985 Conference of the Scottish Evangelical Theology Society.

1. 2 Peter 3:15, 16; cf Acts 17:2, 3; 2 Cor. 3:16.

2. Matt. 19:3-9; Mark 12:18-27, 35-37.

3. Cambridge, 1916, 1920.

the early Church possessed a book or books of Old Testament quotations used mostly in apologetic against Jewish objections to the Christian message. These quotations were used with little reference to their Old Testament contexts and often quite arbitrarily.

In 1952, C. H. Dodd produced a new theory in his book, *According to the Scriptures: the Sub-Structure of New Testament Theology*.<sup>4</sup> He demonstrated that the Old Testament texts quoted and alluded to in the New Testament are not scattered throughout the pages of the Old Testament, but occur in groups in particular books and parts of books. Very often a quotation is intended to evoke, for the reader of the New Testament book, the context of the Old Testament passage as well as that passage itself.

Dodd's view carried conviction with most scholars and proved to be very fruitful in stimulating research. A number of valuable special studies on New Testament passages which employ the Old Testament were published, based on Dodd's view. *The Testing of God's Son*, by B. Gerhardsson,<sup>5</sup> examined the Matthaean temptation narrative, *Son and Saviour*, by E. Lövestom,<sup>6</sup> probed the background to the quotations in Acts 13:32-37, while *The Elect and the Holy*, by J. H. Elliott,<sup>7</sup> studied the contexts of the passages used in 1 Peter 2:4-10. Perhaps most valuable of all was B. Gärtner's masterly study of Acts 17, entitled "*The Areopagus Address and natural Revelation*",<sup>8</sup> in which he showed how close Paul kept to Old Testament thought even though, with this sophisticated and yet Biblically illiterate Greek audience, he never actually quoted from it. A number of other works, for example, *New Testament Apologetic*, by Barnabas Lindars,<sup>9</sup> and *Jesus Christ in the Old Testament*, by A. T. Hanson,<sup>10</sup> sought to understand the way the New Testament writers applied Old Testament material to Christ.

### **The Influence of Whole Old Testament Literary Units on New Testament Books**

Redaction Criticism has placed a welcome new emphasis on the unity of the Biblical books to which its methods have been applied. Even if source criticism had identified several different authors for different parts of one book, there was finally a redactor who gave the book the unity it now possesses. This ought to mean that we can now consider the influence of an Old Testament book as a whole on a New Testament book or books. The New Testament writers were quite as aware as we are that the Old Testament consisted of separate literary units. Is it not likely that a particular Old Testament book, as such, might have influenced a particular New Testament book?

It has long been assumed that the five-fold pattern of the Pentateuch

4. London, 1952.

5. Lund, 1966.

6. Lund, 1961.

7. Leiden, 1966.

8. Lund, 1955.

9. London, 1961.

10. London, 1965.

had an influence on later literature, such as the Book of Psalms, the Megilloth and the first Book of Enoch, and many have seen its influence in the five blocks of our Lord's teaching given in the Gospel of Matthew. It must, however, be said that such an influence would seem to be purely formal, for there are no real similarities between the contents of the five books of the Pentateuch and the five discourses given in the Gospel of Matthew.

In 1961, Simon Kistemaker issued his monograph, *the Psalm Citations In The Epistle To the Hebrews*.<sup>11</sup> In this work, he sought to demonstrate the great importance of the Psalter for the whole argument of Hebrews, and especially the fact that 4 Psalms, 8, 95, 110, and 40, interpreted Christologically, exercise a dominant influence on the whole Epistle. We need, though, to remember that the Book of Psalms is a collection of separate literary entities, even though there is some evidence in it of thematic arrangement.

The treatment of Psalm 110, however, by the Writer to the Hebrews, does hold special interest because he goes beyond the normal use of this psalm in the New Testament. Psalm 110: 1 has an honoured place in the New Testament, for it was interpreted Christologically by our Lord Himself at the close of the Day of Questions (Mark 12:35-37). Not surprisingly, quite a number of New Testament passages reveal its influence.<sup>12</sup> It is only the Epistle to the Hebrews, however, which applies the language of verse 4 to Christ, but this is done in a most detailed way in Hebrews 7:15-28, where the writer brings out different points about Christ's priestly ministry from different phrases in the verse. He has therefore learnt from the Psalm, not only the heavenly session of Christ as King, but also the eternal priestly ministry which then commenced. C. F. Evans, in a chapter entitled "A Christian Deuteronomy" in *Studies in the Gospels*, edited by D. E. Nineham,<sup>13</sup> dealt with Luke's Travel Document (Luke 9:51-18:14). He argued that "Luke has cast that section of his gospel which is made up of non-Markan material into the form of a journey to the borders of the promised land, a journey which follows that of Deuteronomy by way of correspondence and contrast".<sup>14</sup> This fits in with Luke's great interest in Jerusalem<sup>15</sup> as the place of destiny for Jesus. It would also make even more significant the fact that the temptation narrative in Luke (as in Matthew) is dominated by quotations from Deuteronomy, chapters 6-8.

Although there is material in Deuteronomy which could be thought of as having Christological bearing, dealing, for example, with the institution of the king, prophet and priest,<sup>16</sup> there is no integration of the material to furnish a Messianic programme.

There is, however, one major book of the Old Testament which makes

11. Amsterdam, 1961.

12. See especially Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42, 43, 1 Cor. 15:25, 27; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3, 13.

13. Oxford, 1957, pp. 37-53.

14. p. 51.

15. The name occurs 31 times in his Gospel.

16. Deuteronomy 17:14-18:22.

an outstanding contribution to the thought of the New Testament. This paper will argue that the Book of Isaiah has an importance for New Testament Christology which has not yet been adequately recognised that there are unusual features in its Christological contribution, and that there are quite a number of New Testament passages which reflect the influence of these unusual features.

### **The Special Importance of Isaiah in the New Testament**

This is not easily missed by the careful reader. Quotations and allusions from Isaiah are exceeded only by the Psalter, which is almost forty percent greater in length, and it is quoted in the New Testament nearly as often as all the other prophetic books put together. This is remarkable as the remaining prophets taken together occupy almost three times as much space as Isaiah.<sup>17</sup> J. A. Sanders, in an article, "Isaiah in Luke",<sup>18</sup> says that there are 590 references to 63 chapters of Isaiah in 23 of the 27 New Testament books, with 239 from Isaiah 1-39, 240 from Isaiah 40-55 and 111 from Isaiah 56-66. Sanders says, "Isaiah was apparently the most helpful single book of the Old Testament in assisting the Early Church to understand the sufferings and crucifixion of the Christ, but Isaiah also provided help in understanding nearly every phase of Jesus' life, ministry, death and resurrection. Isaiah was of service, too, in helping the early churches to understand who they were and what their role was as witnesses to the Christ event and as those who prepared for the eschaton's fulfilment by proclamation of what God had done in and through Christ. Christology and Ecclesiology were formulated in the early churches with the help of Isaiah.

It is widely recognised, of course, that the Fourth Servant Song has a special place of influence in the New Testament.<sup>19</sup> M. D. Hooker, in her book *Jesus and the Servant*,<sup>21</sup> challenged the view that Jesus saw Himself specifically as the fulfilment of the Servant passages in Isaiah.

She also maintained that many authors, in their preoccupation with the Servant Songs, have read their influence into a number of New Testament passages which, more objectively considered, are not really patient of any such interpretation.<sup>22</sup> Even if we accepted her thesis completely, it would still be true that the influence of these passages, and particularly of the fourth Song, on the New Testament writers, has been very considerable.

C. H. Dodd attached some importance to Isaiah, and he discovered that a number of passages within it were of considerable importance for the New Testament writers. The main passages were Isaiah 6:1-9:7; 11:1-10; 28:16; 40:1-11; 42:1-44:7; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:3-53:12; 55:3 and

17. See H. M. Shires, *Finding the Old Testament in the New*, Philadelphia, 1974, pp. 227-232.

18. *Interpretation*, 36, 1982, pp. 144, 145.

19. The maximizing view is well represented in V. Taylor, *The Atonement in New Testament Teaching*, London, 1940.

20. *op. cit.* p. 145.

21. London, 1959.

22. Her conclusions are summarised on pp. 101, 102, 126-128, 147-163.

61.<sup>23</sup> In its extent this goes far beyond material from any other Old Testament book. In view of this, it is surely legitimate for us to inquire whether the book as a whole may be regarded as providing testimony to Christ? It should be noted that in this list Dodd only brings together the main passages used, so that the list is by no means exhaustive.

### **The Messianic Teaching of the Book of Isaiah**

The Book of Isaiah is the longest single literary entity in the Bible. From a literary point of view, there is a great deal of beauty in this book. Indeed, the reader who has a strong aesthetic awareness needs to remind himself from time to time that the chief value of the book lies in its message, not in its purely literary qualities. It is good, however, to recall that our God is the God of beauty as well as of truth. Not the least aspect of its aesthetic qualities is its literary structure. A study of it makes it increasingly clear that the material has been carefully arranged.<sup>24</sup> It is worth our while to remember that, if the whole book is by Isaiah of Jerusalem, chapters 40-66 may never have been delivered orally at all, but put straight into written form, perhaps during the dark days of Manasseh.<sup>25</sup> It may well have seemed most appropriate, then, to put the other material into ordered sequence, with these chapters finding their place as the climax of the book.

Most conservative writers have maintained the unity of Isaiah in terms of its authorship.<sup>26</sup> Old Testament scholarship generally is far from accepting this, but the redaction critics now feel free to speak of "The Unity of the Book of Isaiah," as this was the title of a recent article by R. E. Clements.<sup>27</sup> Redactional unity is certainly not the same as authorial unity, but in terms of the interpretation of the book as a whole, it is a step in the right direction.

We propose to approach Isaiah's Messianic teaching in three ways, borrowing terms from music in order to do so.

**A. The Thematic aspect.** A marked feature of this book is the appearance of a number of great themes in it which develop and gather connotations as the book proceeds. These are not all Messianic at first, but they become so as the book proceeds. Some of the more important motifs which undergo this treatment are those of the branch, the stone, the light, the child, the king and the servant. This list is not exhaustive. We will briefly indicate something of the development of three of these. The theme of the branch, relates initially to the fruitfulness of the good land of Canaan (cf. Deuteronomy 11:8-12).

This good land had been judged and devastated through the Assyrians as a judgment from God (Isaiah 1:7-9) but once again one day the land would flourish under the blessing of God (4:2; 35:1ff:41:18,19; 55:12,13).

23. op. cit., pp. 107, 108.

24. See e.g., R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids, 1969, pp. 780-785.

25. Jewish tradition maintained that he was sawn apart by Manasseh, cf. Heb. 11:37.

26. There are some exceptions, e.g. D. F. Payne, "Isaiah", in *A Bible Commentary for Today*, London, 1979, pp. 763-765.

27. *Interpretation*, 36, 1982, pp. 117-129.

Not the land, however, but the people living in it were unfruitful and blessing on the land served to symbolise the judgment and blessing of the people who dwelt in it (5:1-7; 27:2-6). Although the people as a whole was to be judged, there would be life, with all the possibilities of fruitfulness, in the faithful remnant (6:13). Most of all, for true fruitfulness, God's people need the Messiah (11:1ff). If the King and Servant are one, it is clear that this fruitfulness can only come through the suffering and death of the Servant (53:2).

Isaiah had a very full experience of kings, with all their failures. Ahaz was a rebellious unbeliever (7:10ff), and although Hezekiah was more responsive to the word of God, even he sought alliances instead of God from time to time (e.g. 39:1ff). Perhaps it is particularly significant that it was in the year that King Uzziah died, that Isaiah saw the divine King (6:1ff). This vision is succeeded almost immediately by the promise of a child to the house of David (7:13, 14), and succeeding chapters depict the Messianic king of the future (9:6,7; 11:1ff; 7:32:1; 33:17). The picture of the Servant depicts him as having a ministry of unostentatious humility (42:2; cf. Zechariah 9:9), but there are definite suggestions of kingship also in the Servant Songs. His law will come to the remote coastlands (42:4; cf. 49:7ff), and he will be exalted to supreme sovereignty through his sufferings and death (52:13; 53:12). He therefore becomes "a leader and a commander for the peoples" (55:3).

The servant theme dominates much of chapters 41-53. The first of the Servant Songs (42:1ff) occurs in a context which speaks critically of Israel as God's blind and deaf servant. If we interpret the Servant Songs along the lines suggested by Delitzsch in terms of a pyramid, with the nation as the base, the faithful remnant as the centre and the unique individual Servant as the apex,<sup>28</sup> this is in fact in line with the general tendency of the book to develop themes from lowly beginnings to sublime conclusions. In this way, the reader is educated gradually by the prophet, so that he comes to see the principle of faithful servanthood focused on a person, in whom alone perfect service is to be found.

**B. The Contrapuntal Aspect.** The theme referred to above and others like them are not entirely discrete. Not only does the prophet develop each theme, but he interrelates them to a certain extent, after the fashion of musical counterpoint. The branch theme, for example, is related both to that of the king (11:1ff) and the servant (53:2), while the kingly and servant themes also engage with each other (42:4; 52:13; 53:12). There are many other instances of this phenomenon. It is interesting, and, probably, significant, to note that the same kind of thing occurs in the New Testament gospels. Note, for example, the way that the themes of the Son of Man, the Christ, the Son of God, and, probably, the Rock are brought together in Matthew 16:13-20.

The presence of this contrapuntal factor in the material strongly suggests that the prophet has no intention of presenting us with two or more figures who are to occupy the foreground of God's purposes in the

28. A more recent interpretation along similar lines may be found in W. S. La Sor, D. A. Hubbard, F. W. Bush (eds) *Old Testament Survey*, Grand Rapids, 1982, pp. 392-395.

future, but one only, in whom all these themes find their ultimate focus. C. **The Programmatic Aspect.** J. A. T. Robinson, in his work *Redating the New Testament*,<sup>29</sup> decided to try an experiment. He would assume that all the New Testament books were written before A.D. 70, and see if there was evidence sufficient to support this proposition. The result is now well-known. The present paper also presents a kind of experiment. Let us assume that the material which the New Testament relates to Christ was intended by the author himself to be an integrated whole, and see what is the result. It is interesting incidentally to note the comments of F. F. Bruce in his chapter "the Servant-Messiah" in his work, *This is That*.<sup>30</sup>

Writing about Isaiah 55:3,4, he says "the new leader and commander to the peoples in whom, as these promises imply the holy and sure blessings of David are to be fulfilled, may with high probability be identified with the Servant of the Songs".<sup>31</sup> Also, writing about Isaiah 61:1-4, he says, "while it is not usually reckoned among the Servant Songs proper, (it) breathes the same sentiments and almost certainly was intended by its author to express the mind and mission of the Servant of the Songs".<sup>32</sup>

Chapters 1-5 present God's people in all their spiritual need but with a great destiny, for Jerusalem is to be the centre of a worshipping, obedient and peaceful world. In chapter 6, the prophet is assured of God's holy rule and of the fulfilment of His purpose through a remnant of His people, but meantime the people will react to His word in blind unbelief. In chapter 7, God reveals Himself in the Child immanuel, whose coming is declared in the context of the unbelief of Ahaz. God will in fact show himself to be either a sanctuary or a stone of stumbling to his people, according to their reaction (chapter 8). Unbelief darkens the mind, but a day will come when light will shine again in Galilee. The Davidic Child, with Divine names, destined to rule the whole world in righteousness and peace (chapter 9), will be endowed with the Spirit of God in all His fulness (chapter 11) and God's people will proclaim His mighty acts to all the nations (chapter 12). Meantime these nations are in darkness and face judgment (chapters 13-23), and that judgment is seen to be universal, with Jerusalem as the one place of secure hope for the future (chapters 24-27).

Chapters 28-39 underline lessons already learned in earlier chapters. Chapters 28-33 remind us of Israel's blind unbelief and refusal to trust in the God who lays a foundation only in Zion (cf. 8:11-15). We are also to recall the King's beneficent rule and wide territory (chapters 32,33: cf. 9:1ff; 11:1ff) and (Chapters 34,35; cf chapters 24-27) the ultimate issues of God's plan in judgment and salvation. Chapters 36-39 also remind us, through Hezekiah's oscillation between faith and unbelief, of the need for a perfect King (cf. chapter 7). In chapter 40, the Lord's forerunner speaks and in chapters 42 and 49 the Lord's Servant views his

29. London 1976.

30. Exeter 1968.

31. p. 83.

32. op. cit. p. 84.

ministry both prospectively and retrospectively. This ministry will bring God's saving rule both to Israel and to the nations.

In it he glorified God, so proving to be the true Israel, over against empirical Israel which continues to be blind and deaf. Chapters 49 and 50 show men in unbelief rejecting and inflicting pain and shame on Him. His sufferings are presented as sacrificial and substitutionary (chapters 52, 53), and God will glorify Him through them. Now the joyous offer of pardon is made to the penitent (chapters 54-61), but the rebellious are warned of judgment. The Davidic King will rule all peoples (55:3-5), and all nations will be attracted to the light shining in Jerusalem (60:1ff).

The great prototype preacher (61:1ff) offers joy and liberty, but warns too of judgment, which is spelled out in Isaiah 63:1ff. The people are reminded of their past history and of His present grace (chapters 63-65) and the prophecy ends with a new creation, providing the setting for a joyous and peaceful Jerusalem. Rebels, however, are warned of awful judgment.

We see then, how Messianic teaching appears in the context of God's eschatological purposes, how the child of great promise becomes a man, and, after the voice of the Lord's forerunner is heard, the servant's ministry comes to a climax in death and exaltation, with the proclamation of glad tidings being succeeded by a new creation from which the unbelieving and impenitent, whose presence is never far away in the prophecy, are excluded.

### **New Testament Books in which this Programme is Reflected**

The thematic and contrapuntal aspects of Isaiah's Messianic presentation represent the background to the Messianic programme, as he presents this within the wide context of God's great purposes. The New Testament writers were convinced that in Christ the age of promise had been succeeded by the age of fulfilment.<sup>33</sup> Their constant use of Isaiah in their proclamation of Christ, and their exposition of the significance of the fact of Christ, would lead us to expect some trace, not only of particular Messianic passages from Isaiah, but also the Messianic programme itself, as there presented. We might also expect some recognition of the Messianic themes contained in Isaiah. We will only be able to take a selection from the material available.

**A. The Gospel of Mark.** Mark's Gospel delineates the ministry (i.e. the service) of Jesus, and does not begin with his childhood. It is therefore appropriate that the evocative word "gospel", (cf. Isaiah 40:9), should be followed immediately not with references to the Child born to be King, but with a reference to the forerunner (Mark 1:1-3cf. Isa. 40:3).

The Gospel goes straight on to His baptism by the forerunner and the descent of the Spirit, so often linked with Isaiah 42:1 because of the reference to the Divine pleasure (Mark 1:10,11). He is Christ, the anointed one (Mark 1:1), so we can perhaps see the baptism as inaugurating a ministry in which Isaiah 11:1ff; 42:1ff:61:1ff (in each of which there is a reference to the Spirit) are all fulfilled, but with special

33. e.g. Mark 1:15; Acts 2:16ff, 2 Cor. 1:19, 20; Heb. 1:1, 2; 1 Pet. 1:10-12, 20.

emphasis on the Servant. Then comes Christ's declaration of the good news (Mark 1:14,15). This proclamation was not always met with faith, as Isaiah was warned (Mark 4:13; Isaiah 6:9,10).

If the Christ and the Servant are one, it is no surprise to find Jesus teaching His disciples that the Christ should suffer many things and be rejected and killed (Mark 8:29,31; 9:12,13,31; 10:33,34). Scourging (Mark 10:34) recalls Isaiah 50:6; and a life given as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45; Isaiah 53:10-12). The longer ending gives the command of Jesus to preach the good news to the whole creation, and follows this with an emphasis on faith (so much stressed in Isaiah). This may well reflect the worldwide dimensions both of the Kingdom and of the Servant's ministry in that same book of Isaiah.

Mark then presents Jesus, preceded by his forerunner, anointed by the Spirit, experiencing rejection and scourging, giving his life for many, and in all this fulfilling His destiny as the Christ of God and establishing good news to be proclaimed everywhere so that the Servant/King may influence the whole world. Here then is a messianic programme following lines established in the prophecies of Isaiah.

**B. The Gospel of Matthew.** The use of material from Isaiah in Matthew is fuller than in Mark, and that prophet's delineation of the Messiah's programme finds more detailed mention. This is what we might expect, in view of the obvious interest of the author in structuring his material.

The first four chapters, which provide the introduction to the story of Jesus in Matthew, contain an exceptional amount of material from Isaiah. There are three formula quotations (Matthew 1:23; 3:3; 4:14-16) and, as we shall see, another which represents a theme which began in the prophecy of Isaiah (Matthew 2:23). Each of these is programmatic, referring to a different stage in the life of Christ. We have, in sequence, references to Bethlehem, Nazareth, John the Baptist's preparatory ministry, and the beginning in Capernaum of Christ's Galilean ministry. The quotation in Matthew 2:23 has long puzzled scholars.

It should be noted that it is the only Matthaean quotation attributed to prophets rather than a prophet. It could therefore sum up a theme of prophecy, and appears to relate to the Messianic branch (Hebrew *Nézer*), which is a title for the Messianic King in Isaiah 11:1. The Gospel itself opens with a reference to Christ as the Son of David and this emphasis is clearly important for the whole of the first chapter, as a glance at verses 1,6-11, 17-20, will reveal. The Immanuel Prophecy was, of course, given to Ahaz as the representative of the house of David (Isaiah 7:13,14).

Rather surprisingly, in view of the fact that Isaiah 53 normally relates to the atoning work of Christ in the New Testament, Matthew applies passages from the Servant Songs to the healing and teaching ministries of the Saviour. His somewhat flexible approach to fulfilment shows itself in the way he relates Isaiah 53:4 to the healing. Perhaps this reflects a sense that the saving work of Christ, to be effected once for all at Calvary, cast its shadow before it. After all, it may well be that many of the miracles recorded in the Gospels owe their place there to the fact that in them the gospel is so vividly presented in picture form. Matthew 12:17-21 gives an extended quotation from Isaiah 42, which certainly appears to be very apt

in the context of Christ's earthly ministry. It is worth noting that, almost immediately after giving this quotation, Matthew records the question of the people. "Can this be the Son of David?" Perhaps this is Matthew's way of underlining the identity between the Son of David and the Servant of the Lord. The probability of this is underlined when we discover that the reference to the Spirit in this quotation recurs in Matthew 12:28,31,32. In view of the Great Commission with which this gospel comes to its close, it is also worth noting that Matthew includes two references to the Gentiles in this quotation, and he could certainly have cut the extract short before the second of these. Isaiah 6:9-10 (Matthew 13:14-15) and 29:13 (Matthew 15:7-9) underline the unbelief and hypocrisy of those Jews who rejected Christ.

So Matthew picks up the theme of Jesus the Child as the Son of David and Jesus the Man as God's light and God's Saving Servant, with the virtue of his redeeming work being experienced during his early ministry, no doubt in anticipation of his death (Matthew 17:12; 20:28).

C. **Luke/Acts.** It has been long recognised that Luke had a special interest in Isaiah.<sup>34</sup> What we are concerned to establish is the fact that he treats that book's Christology programmatically. We cannot attempt a full study but will note several significant points.

Luke presents a picture of faithful piety among those who awaited the Messiah's coming. Clearly they had nourished their hope through the O.T. Scriptures, and each of the so-called hymns in Luke 1-2 shows the influence of Isaiah. There is one however which is just saturated with the language and ideas of that prophet, i.e. the *Nunc Dimittis*, together with its immediate context (Luke 2:25-35). I have tried to show this in detail in an article entitled "The light and the Stone".<sup>35</sup> Simeon was awaiting the consolation of Israel, apparently to be realised through the Lord's Christ, who is also God's salvation. He is the sign against which Ahaz spoke, He is the stone over whom many will stumble, although some initially stumbling would rise again in faith. He would suffer, and would bring light both to Israel and to the Gentiles. The phrase "according to thy word" (Luke 2:29) probably refers to the Book of Isaiah from which Simeon had learned so much of the messianic hope.

Luke places our Lord's sermon at Nazareth right at the forefront of his ministry (Luke 4:16-37), and it was based on Isaiah 61:1-2. So the good tidings are proclaimed first by God's unique Servant before, in the missions of the Twelve (Luke 9) and the Seventy (Luke 10), the apostolic preaching of the gospel after Pentecost is anticipated. Perhaps the commissioning of the 12 and the 70 relate to the involvement of the disciples in the mission of the unique Servant to Israel and to the Gentiles respectively. Isaiah 61 is also quoted at the beginning of a ministry which provides illustration after illustration of Christ's salvation both in His miracles and in His parables. In relation to the Acts of the Apostles, the Gospel records all that Jesus *began* both to do and teach (Acts 1:1) and he must be shown to be pre-eminent in gospel preaching as in all else.

34. Sanders op. cit.

35. In H. H. Rowdon (ed.) *Christ the Lord*, Leicester, 1982, pp. 161-167.

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Luke 24:44-49 refers to the encounter of the risen Christ with his disciples and the instruction he gave them from the O.T. The Book of Isaiah was probably prominent in this, for there the sufferings of the Christ are certainly declared. His resurrection is implied in the references to His exaltation in the Fourth Servant Song.

The preaching to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem, perhaps relates to Isaiah 2:1-5 and the reference to witness (cf. Acts 1:8) may recall Isaiah 43:8-12.

It is interesting to note the use of this by Peter in Acts 3:13,26; 4:27,30. This is the term used for the Lord's Servant in Isaiah and it can mean either child or servant. Its use may perhaps reflect the fact that, in Isaiah, the Messiah is presented as both.

Acts 13:47 is especially interesting as it shows Paul and Silas accepting as relevant to them the command to be a light to the Gentiles (cf. Isaiah 49:6). This must mean that they saw the primary fulfilment in Christ not as exhausting its significance, but as making way for a corporate interpretation, because Christians are in Christ. It also reminds us of the fact that in Isaiah the Servant Songs are set in the context of a wider servant theme, with Israel as the servant, and that Isaiah 49 itself could be understood of a faithful remnant with a mission to the whole nation and to the Gentiles. Acts 28:25-28 sets the Gentile mission in the context of Israel's rejection of the gospel and quotes Isaiah 6:9-10 in this connection. So in Luke/Acts these references seem to reflect an understanding of the prophecy as a whole, different parts and aspects of it being treated in an integrated way.

**D. The Gospel of John.** In Luke, an important quotation from Isaiah 61 sets the scene for the whole public ministry of Christ right at its beginning. In John two quotations are set in the context of the conclusion of his public ministry (John 12:37-41). Light is a great theme in Isaiah, especially in the Messianic passages. As the cross draws near, Jesus speaks to the people about the light of God, which shines in and from Him. The theme of light is found in diverse sections of the book and so it is appropriate that John should quote two passages about blind unbelief from Isaiah 53 and Isaiah 6 respectively.

**E. The Epistle to the Ephesians.** The theme of light is also important here (Ephesians 4:17,18; 5:7-17). In Ephesians 5:14, Paul says, "Therefore it is said,

Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead,  
and Christ shall give you light".

These words are often taken to be from a primitive Christian hymn.<sup>36</sup> The introductory phrase (οἷο λέγει) however, is one that is everywhere else used of Scripture and is translated, "it says" or "he says".<sup>37</sup> Awakening from sleep (Isaiah 51:17; 52:1), arising from the dead (Isaiah 25:8; 26:19) and receiving light from the Messiah (Isaiah 9:2; 42:6,7; 49:6; 60:1ff) are all Christological themes in Isaiah, and Paul probably had them in mind.

36. C. L. Mitton, *Ephesians*, London, 1973, in loc.

37. See especially B. B. Warfield, *Revelation and Inspiration* Grand Rapids, 1981, pp. 283-332.

**F. The First Epistle of Peter.** The use made of Isaiah in 1 Peter is most extensive. We cannot comment on everything but will seek to select material illustrating our main thesis.

Peter has a great interest in Isaiah 53, and the description of the patient sufferings of Christ given in 1 Peter 3:22-25 is saturated with language from that chapter (cf. especially Isaiah 53:5,6,9,11,12 and perhaps 50:7-9). In view of this and the many other Isaiah references in the letter, we should probably interpret the repeated phrase, "the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory" (1 Peter 1:11; 4:13; 5:1), chiefly in terms of the Fourth Servant Song. Peter also emphasises the identification of the Christian with Christ in this respect (1 Peter 4:13, 5:1,10). This means that even the Fourth Servant Song, presenting an unique atoning work, is a model for Christian living in terms of the spirit of obedience to death there manifested.

Peter employs the Isaianic word "gospel" (1:12,24) and, by the use of the stone prophecies of Isaiah 8:14,15 and 28:16, stresses the importance of faith in Christ, the corner-stone of the temple, in whom Christians become temple stones.

## **Conclusion**

We have surveyed enough N.T. material to arrive at certain fairly definite conclusions.

(a) The Book of Isaiah was a primary source for the N.T. conviction that the O.T. bears witness to Christ.

(b) The great Messianic themes of the book sometimes appear as themes in N.T. passages, e.g. the Branch in Matthew 2:23.

(c) The way these themes are linked together in Isaiah also appears in some N.T. passages — e.g. Ephesians 5:14.

(d) The Messianic programme delineated in Isaiah, with the Child's anticipation of world dominion, the forerunner's ministry of preparation, the compassionate and faithful ministry of the Servant, His sufferings and exaltation, and on the basis of this, the proclamation of salvation to the believer and judgment on the unbeliever, is reflected in many a N.T. passage, with a selection of material from the programme according to the need to be met by the N.T. book concerned. Not surprisingly, this factor is most evident in the Gospels.

(e) All this means that the N.T. writers reproduce not only the Messianic teaching of Isaiah but the forms in which it was given and the overall Messianic structure of the book.

(f) Their interpretation not only affected their understanding of objective Christianity, the person and work of Christ, but also of subjective Christianity, for they recognised that elements of the programme needed to be reproduced in the Church, which was to be identified with Christ in His obedience unto death. So the study of the book by a Christian believer should deepen his thankful awareness of what God has done for him in Christ and challenge him to accept the Divine pattern of death and resurrection in its application to his own life.

# THE CONTINUITY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD IN OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS\*

HOWARD TAYLOR  
INELLAN

The extraordinary history of the Jews down the ages together with the re-establishment of the state of Israel after immense suffering (seemingly fulfilling Biblical prophecy) has led many to think more deeply about the place of Israel and the Jew in God's purpose for the salvation of the world, and to ask the question as to the relationship of Israel to the Christian Church.

Two quite opposite theological points of view are united in stressing the discontinuity of the people of God in the Old and New Testaments. They are (a) dispensationalism and (b) the view that the Church as the New Israel has completely displaced Israel from its unique destiny as the Servant of the Lord to the world. I begin by summarising the two views.

(a) *Dispensationalism* goes back to J. N. Darby, founder of the Plymouth Brethren but now holds sway amongst most American fundamentalist churches. Most present day pre-millennialists are dispensationalists but that has not always been so.

Dispensationalism teaches that all Old Testament prophetic references to Israel, Zion and Jerusalem have no application at all to the Christian Church which is not the New Israel. Dispensationalists have always taught that God would one day re-establish the state of Israel and then after its near destruction by the world powers, during the seven year great tribulation, Christ would return literally to the Mount of Olives. Israel would then be converted to Him and He would rule the world through Israel for one thousand years.

According to dispensational belief, the Christian Church's existence is only an after thought, Israel having unexpectedly rejected its Messiah at His first coming. This meant a change of plan in which the heavenly gospel was preached to the Gentiles under an entirely different dispensation of grace.

The Christian Church's place in the conversion of Israel is merely one of a spectator watching God's different plans for Israel take place in fulfilment of prophecy. The Christian Church on earth won't even see the tribulation because it will be raptured to heaven before the tribulation starts.

Israel's destiny is a world wide earthly kingdom of God, whereas the Church's destiny is the Kingdom of *Heaven*.

(b) The other theology of *discontinuity* is the doctrine that the Church as the New Israel has completely displaced an unbelieving Israel which

\*A version of this paper was read at the 1985 Conference of the Scottish Evangelical Theology Society.

now has lost, for ever, its unique place in God's purposes for the world. All God's promises to Israel, Jerusalem and Zion have lost their literal or physical meaning and now only have a spiritual or heavenly meaning in their application to the Christian Church. Physical Israel's election is finished for ever.

### **A Brief Assessment**

'Israel of God'<sup>1</sup> and 'Jew'<sup>2</sup> are terms applied by the New Testament to the Church and the individual Christian, whether they be ethnic Jews or Gentiles. The deeper meaning and significance of this is spelt out over and over again in the New Testament, where prophecies regarding Israel, Jerusalem and Zion in the Law, the Psalms and the Prophets are seen as fulfilled in Christ and through Him to the New Testament people of God. This seems to knock out the dispensationalist view right away.

Superficial logic has continued to argue that there is no more uniqueness for the Jew and physical Israel. Since it is said Christ has broken down the barrier between Jew and Gentile,<sup>3</sup> Israel's election is finished. But this is not the logic of the New Testament. Although there is only one way of salvation for both Jew and Gentile, the New Testament teaches that the Jewish people do still have a unique place in the *historical* working out of God's redemption of the world in Christ. Although the Old Testament Prophecies regarding Zion and Israel do have a spiritual meaning this does not mean they have lost their literal meaning. The resurrection of Jesus (in a 'spiritual body') as fulfilling the Law, the Psalms and the Prophets<sup>4</sup> guarantees the prophecies continuing literal as well as 'spiritual' or 'Heavenly' application.

At the end of Romans 2, Paul argues that a true Jew is one who is one inwardly and circumcision is of the heart by the Spirit,<sup>5</sup> but immediately following at the beginning of chapter 3, he asks the question 'What then, is the advantage of being a Jew?' Superficial logic would answer 'None at all', but Paul's answer is 'Much in every way!'<sup>6</sup>

His next question asks whether Jewish unbelief means that God's promises to them do not apply anymore. His answer is 'It does not mean this at all'<sup>7</sup>. He goes on to imply that God actually needs Jewish unrighteousness for His greater purposes of glory. He will therefore still keep His promises to them.<sup>8</sup>

Romans 9-11 is an expansion of this argument. God has actually hardened Jewish people so that his mercy might reach the Gentiles just as in time past He hardened non-Israelites (e.g. Pharaoh)<sup>9</sup> in order to work deliverance for Israel. This process of election has continued down history with the ultimate purpose of blessing for all peoples (Jew and

1. Galatians 6:16.

2. Romans 2:29.

3. Ephesians 2:11-18.

4. Luke 24:27, 44-47.

5. Romans 2:25-29.

6. Romans 3:1-2.

7. Romans 3:3-4.

8. Romans 3:3-7.

9. Romans 9:14-18.

Gentile). The conclusion of Paul's argument is 'He has consigned all men to disobedience that He might have mercy on all.'<sup>10</sup>

Although Paul argues that God hardens because He needs men's sin to bring salvation from sin, the hardening is not permanent.<sup>11</sup> In Israel's case this means: 'As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and call are irrevocable'.<sup>12</sup> Their unbelief is actually 'on your account' — for the sake of the Church.

In what sense can unbelieving Israel still be considered 'The Servant of the Lord and the people of God?' In a mysterious yet wonderful and awesome way the History of the Jew (even in his unbelief) does bear witness to God and His grace. It shows the nature of human sin, the meaning of judgement and forgiveness, the nature of vicarious suffering, death and resurrection. The history of the Jew in a non-direct way therefore points to Christ Himself who is the fulfilment and hope of Israel. The climax of this, I believe, is seen in the holocaust and the re-birth of the state of Israel. A regathered Israel (even in its deafness and blindness) does bear testimony to the world of the faithfulness and ultimate victory of God's purposes in Christ. The conversion of Israel to Christ in the last days will be the consummation of Israel's testimony and will lead to life from the dead for the world. The Church, which will then in the one 'olive tree'<sup>13</sup> be re-united with Israel in Christ, will be able to bring blessing to all the earth. This will not only be a radical conversion for Israel but also for the Church.

I would rather the Church did not use the non-biblical term 'New Israel' to describe itself because its implication is that physical Israel is now finished and replaced by the Church, as if the first olive tree has been chopped down and replaced by a new one (*Discontinuity*). The picture of Romans 11 is of the Church ingrafted through Christ into the *one* olive tree. Although the tree has lost some of its old branches they will be ingrafted again to the original tree. Through Christ then, the Church belongs to the 'Israel of God'<sup>14</sup> (a New Testament term). It is not the 'New Israel.'

To understand more deeply the place of the people of God in the way of salvation let us start at the beginning and later expand on what has been said above.

### **The People of God in Creation**

God created the world of nature (plants and animals) and created man in His image.<sup>15</sup> All things were created through and for His beloved Son Jesus Christ.<sup>16</sup> God's great purpose for man was that he should have fellowship with Christ being adopted by the Spirit of God into the family

10. Romans 11:30-32.

11. Romans 11:11-12.

12. Romans 11:28-29.

13. Romans 11:24.

14. Galatians 6:15-16.

15. Genesis 1:1-27.

16. Colossians 1:15-17.

of God. God satisfies man's needs freely and man is to respond in loving trust and obedience. That is to say man's basic relationship with God in Christ is one of grace and faith. Man is to be God's *servant* in the world having authority under God over all of nature. He is to explore it to the glory of God (pure science) and subdue it for the benefit of all (technology).

Man is to serve God as his son in union with the Eternal Son Jesus Christ. The people of God are called from the beginning to be *children* of God and *servants* of the Lord.

### **The Fall of the People of God**

Man's fall was first to stop believing God's word<sup>17</sup> and this led to his rebellion making himself his own god.<sup>18</sup> The fall of man was the breaking of his relationship with God. He withdrew from His family and stopped serving Him. Unbelief and rebellion are the root cause of all human cruelty, violence, injustice and misery in the world. Until human beings are back in their proper place, suffering and pain affect not only mankind but God and nature as well.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Scope and Way of Salvation**

It follows then that salvation will affect God, man and nature. God will begin to accomplish this purpose by forging again that which was begun at creation. He chooses or elects to have mercy on all mankind and then elects one people, and one piece of nature (the promised land) so that through them He might reach out to all the peoples of the world, and all the world of nature in new birth and new creation. To do this God will need to draw out from man and Satan the sting of sin and evil. As man struggles against God's purpose and His way of salvation, sin and evil will gather in momentum and God, in union with man, will bear it all in Himself, dying in our place. This climax of the struggle will take place in the midst of one people and in one land, but its influence will be felt amongst all peoples and all the lands of the world. In God's gracious electing purposes in history, He will use the sin of mankind, hardening some peoples in their sin and having mercy on others with the ultimate purpose of bringing His mercy to all the peoples of the world.

### **Election of the People of God**

The story begins with the election of one man and one people namely Abraham and his descendants. God chooses or elects one land for this people (the promised land) and will fulfil His purposes in it. (It is significant, I believe, that this promised land lies at the junction of the three ancient continents of the world — Africa, Asia and Europe and therefore, in a real sense, can be considered the centre of the world.) However, there is to be an election within an election. The blessing is to come through one of Abraham's sons, Isaac and then a further election,

17. Genesis 3:1-5.

18. Genesis 3:5-7.

19. Genesis 6:5-6, 11-12 & Romans 8:22.

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as only one of Isaac's two sons (Jacob — renamed Israel) is chosen.<sup>20</sup> Israel is called by God to be His *son* and *servant*<sup>21</sup> which was God's original purpose for all mankind. Of the twelve tribes of Israel, only one is chosen, namely Judah.

Then he rejected the tents of Joseph,  
he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim;  
but he chose the tribe of Judah,

Mount Zion, which he loved. (Psalm 78: 67-68. N.I.V.)

It was this tribe of Judah, the Jews, that rejected its Messiah, handing Him over to the Gentiles to be crucified. Yet, in this very rejection, God fulfils His promise to Abraham, that through His seed blessing would come to the whole world. Jesus is this seed (singular)<sup>22</sup> and He is the elect one, fulfilling all of Israel's destiny. The process of election within an election among the people of God has brought the choice to just one Jew who was 'chosen before the foundation of the world'.<sup>23</sup> He is *the Son of God* and *the Servant of the Lord*, gathering up in Himself God's purposes for all Israel and all the peoples of the World.

The process of election and narrowing down is in God's purposes, but it is man who causes this narrowing down process through his struggle against God. (Israel means the one who struggles with God).

### The Ministry of the People of God

God's call to His ancient people, as His son and servant, is to the three fold office of Prophet, Priest and King. The world needs a Word from God to enable it to understand God and His purposes. This prophetic word is to 'go out from Zion'<sup>24</sup> to all the earth. The world needs a priesthood to minister God's forgiveness through sacrifice and so the people of Israel are called to be 'priests of the Lord'.<sup>25</sup> The world needs rule by God to bring peace and justice. Israel is to be a 'crown of splendour in the Lord's hand, a royal diadem in the hand of God'.<sup>26</sup> Israel itself as the Lord's anointed is given anointed prophets, priests and kings to enable it to understand its own mission in the world. and to point to the one Jew who was Himself *the Word of God, the Great High Priest and the King of Kings*. It is this ministry which is given to the New Testament people of God in very similar words.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Peter 2: 9-10. N.I.V.)

### The Struggle of the People of God

However, Israel struggles against God's purposes, preferring not to be

20. Romans 9:10-13.

21. Hosea 11 & Isaiah 49:3.

22. Galatians 3:16.

23. 1 Peter 1:20.

24. Isaiah 2:3.

25. Isaiah 61:6.

26. Isaiah 62:3.

the people of God, but to be like the other peoples of the world — worshipping their gods, trusting foreign military alliances and following all their abominable practices. But God does not let His people go and through their struggle, culminating in the crucifixion of Jesus, He reveals Himself even more deeply in judgement and forgiveness. Even in Old Testament times God used the sin of Israel to reveal Himself. The prophetic writings are written in the context of a sinful people.

Before the people of God first entered the promised land, Moses explained to them certain principals of God's dealing with them.

(a) His judgement would mean the scattering of the people from the land.

Then the Lord will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship other gods — gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known. Among those nations you will find no repose, no resting place for the sole of your foot. There the Lord will give you an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart. You will live in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day, never sure of your life. In the morning you will say, "if only it were evening!" and in the evening, "If only it were morning!" — because of the terror that will fill your hearts and the sights that your eyes will see. (Deuteronomy 28:64-67. N.I.V.)

(b) His forgiveness would mean regathering to the land.

. . . . then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the Lord your God will gather you and bring you back. He will bring you to the land that belonged to your fathers, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. (Deuteronomy 30:3-5. N.I.V.)

These are not mere prophecies dealing with this or that event in Israel's history, but principals laid down in the book of the law. They have been dramatically and literally fulfilled throughout Israel's history, on several occasions, even up to our present century.

Even before they enter the promised land, God tells Moses that He knows what in fact they will do in disobedience.

Then the Lord appeared at the Tent in a pillar of cloud, and the cloud stood over the entrance to the Tent. And the Lord said to Moses: "You are going to rest with your fathers, and these people will soon prostitute themselves to the foreign gods of the land they are entering. They will forsake me and break the covenant I made with them.

And when many disasters and difficulties come upon them, this song will testify against them, because it will not be forgotten by their descendants. I know what they are disposed to do, even before I bring them into the land I promised them on oath." (Deuteronomy 31:15-16, 21. N.I.V.)

But however disobedient they will be, God will not abandon them

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forever, but finally restore them to their land and forgive them.

I would have destroyed them completely,  
so that no one would remember them.  
But I could not let their enemies boast  
that they had defeated my people,  
when it was I myself who had crushed them.  
The Lord will rescue his people  
when he sees that their strength is gone.  
He will have mercy on those who serve him,  
when he sees how helpless they are.  
Then the Lord will ask his people,  
'Where are those mighty gods you trusted?  
You fed them with the fat of your sacrifices  
and offered them wine to drink.  
Let them come and help you now;  
let them run to your rescue.  
'I, and I alone, am God;  
no other god is real.

I kill and I give life, I wound and I heal,  
and no one can oppose what I do. (Deuteronomy 32:26-27, 36-39.

G.N.B.)

This process of scattering and regathering is likened to a wounding and healing, a killing and giving new life, and is reiterated over and over again throughout the Psalms and the Prophets. It bears witness to another great death and resurrection which fulfils Israel's destiny, spoken of in the Law, the Psalms and the Prophets.

Another theme of the prophets is that when the Promised Land, flowing with milk and honey, loses the people of God it will become a wilderness, but on their return the desert will bloom again.

### **The Struggle Against the People of God**

It is not only Israel that struggles against God. The Gentile nations rejection of God and His way of salvation is most dramatically seen in anti-semitism. The presence of the Jew with his amazing history has been a cause of superstitious fear in many people down the ages. The existence of the Jew is a constant reminder of the reality of God to mankind. Anti-God and anti-Christ forces express their hatred of God in persecution of His people, whether they be Jew or Christian. A Jew is a Jew by birth and upbringing, not choice, and therefore hatred of the Jew is often racial and religious. Hitler in his book 'Mein Kampf' (My struggle), saw the elimination of the Jew from the world as the final solution to the world's problems. Very similar language is used even today by many leaders of Islamic nations who have borrowed language from the Nazi era. Less vitriolic, but nonetheless real anti-semitism is now being used by the Soviet Union in its anti-Zionism, using classic anti-semitic propaganda.

A number of the Psalms (especially 44 and 69) interpret Jewish suffering as an indirect attack upon God ("It is for your sake we are being

killed all the time” — Psalm 44:22 and “The insults which are hurled at you fall on me” — Psalm 69:9).

### **The People of God and the Incarnation (Success out of Failure)**

In their hearts the Jews felt that they had failed to bring salvation and new life to the world.

As a woman with child and about to give birth  
writhe and cries out in her pain,  
so were we in your presence, O Lord.

We were with child, we writhed in pain,  
but we gave birth to wind.

We have not brought salvation to the earth;

we have not given birth to people of the world. (Isaiah 26:17, 18.

N.I.V.)

Like a woman in labour giving birth to nothing, so their struggles and suffering seemed in vain! Yet in the very next verses, the Lord re-assures them; they will live and He will not forget His purposes for them.

But your dead will live;  
their bodies will rise.

You who dwell in the dust,  
wake up and shout for joy.

The earth will disclose the blood shed  
upon her;

she will conceal her slain no longer.

In that day —

“Sing about a fruitful vineyard:

I, the Lord, watch over it;

I water it continually,

I guard it day and night

so that no-one may harm it.

I am not angry . . . .

. . . . In days to come Jacob will take root,

Israel will bud and blossom

and fill all the world with fruit. (Isaiah 26:19, 21; 27:1-4, 6. N.I.V.)

But how will Israel’s labour pains and struggles actually bear fruit? We turn to another prophet for a wonderful answer:—

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
though you are small among the clans  
of Judah,

out of you will come for me  
one who will be ruler over Israel,  
whose origins are from of old,  
from ancient times.

Therefore Israel will be abandoned  
until the time when *she who is in labour*  
*gives birth*

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and the *rest of his brothers return  
to join the Israelites.*

He will stand and shepherd his flock  
in the strength of the Lord,  
in the majesty of the name of the  
Lord his God.

And they will live securely, for then his  
greatness

will reach to the ends of the earth. (Micah 5:2-4. N.I.V.)

Mary's labour pains, the birth of Jesus, the restoration of Israel and the world-wide Kingdom of Jesus are brought together in these three verses from Micah. So Mary too, the humble Jewish girl and mother of our Lord has a great place in guaranteeing her people's destiny.

And Mary said:

"My soul praises the Lord  
and my spirit rejoices in God my saviour,  
for he has been mindful  
of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me  
blessed,  
for the Mighty One has done great things  
for me —

Holy is his name . . .

. . . He has helped his servant Israel,  
remembering to be merciful

to Abraham and his descendants for ever,  
even as he said to our fathers." (Luke 1:46-49, 54, 55. N.I.V.)

Mary and Israel are the womb in which the Saviour is born and as such have significance to the end of time.

### **The People of God — Death and Resurrection**

From the human side, it is the rebellion of both Jew and Gentile against God that causes the narrowing down of the people of God to the remnant of Israel. There are then two causes of Jewish suffering — Jewish rebellion against God, inviting His judgement in scattering throughout the world and Gentile anti-semitism.

Again, this is wonderfully fulfilled in Jesus who received the judgement of God upon our sins in our place and received in Himself the evil attacks from men (both Jew and Gentile).

It is the many Old Testament promises of restoration, healing, and new life to Israel that the New Testament sees as speaking of Jesus's own resurrection. Both Paul and Jesus refer to the resurrection as taking place on the 'third day according to the Scriptures'.<sup>27</sup> This must be a direct reference to Hosea 6:1 & 2 which describes the healing and new life to come to Israel which has been wounded under the judgement of God.

27. Luke 24:46 & 1 Corinthians 15:4.

“Come, let us return to the Lord.  
He has torn us to pieces but He will heal us;  
He has injured us but He will bind up our wounds.  
After two days He will revive us;  
on *the third day* He will restore us,  
that we may live in His presence.” (Hosea 6:1-2)

It is the interpretation of this point that, in his excellent book “Whose Promised Land”, Colin Chapman makes his most fundamental mistake. He says that because the death and resurrection of Jesus fulfils the destiny of Israel, that there is therefore no more unique place for Israel in God’s plan of salvation. But in fact the very reverse follows: If Jesus’s death is the fulfilment of the scattering of Israel (and in A.D. 70 they actually are scattered) then His resurrection means that one day they will be revived and restored. Jesus’s resurrection was a bodily resurrection; therefore the promises to Israel cannot be merely spiritualised. The scattering and regathering in Old Testament time was only a foretaste of their longest ever estrangement from their land after their rejection of Christ, and their final regathering to the Promised Land towards the end of time, before their conversion to Christ. The resurrection of Jesus was in a “spiritual body” which means that the wonderful destiny of Israel has both a spiritual and literal fulfilment. The Church shares in their spiritual fulfilment now, but when the promised day comes when “all Israel is saved” (Romans 11:26) then the literal and spiritual will be brought together in one.

Again I ask, Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring! . . . . .  
. . . . . For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world what will their acceptance be but *life from the dead*?  
. . . . . I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved . . . . . (Romans 11:11, 12, 15, 25, 26. N.I.V.)

Note that Paul applies the concept of resurrection to the conversion of Israel. This cannot take place apart from Israel’s return to the Promised Land, because, as seen above, the land and the people of God are so bound together in God’s purposes. The redemption of nature is caught up with the redemption of man. Thus the Scriptures emphasise over and over again the return to the land after a time of great suffering.

It is this suffering of the Servant of the Lord which is the theme of Isaiah 52 and 53. The Servant Songs of Isaiah identify the Servant explicitly with Israel<sup>28</sup> and yet sometimes mysteriously they seem to point to one who transcends mere Israel.<sup>29</sup> In their deepest meaning they point to Jesus *the*

28. Isaiah 43:3.

29. Isaiah 49:6.

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suffering Servant of the Lord. This vicarious suffering of the People of God testifies to the nature of sin and the way in which their prophetic, priestly and kingly ministry will be accomplished. Thus the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus is bound up with the suffering and restoration of Israel. Our Lord's cry from Psalm 22 — "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" finds an echo in the Jewish cry "Where was God in the holocaust?" Both Jew and Gentile will be amazed when they see God's purposes throughout history finally revealed.

The Lord says,

"My servant will succeed in his task;  
he will be highly honoured.

Many people were shocked when they saw him;  
he was so disfigured that he hardly looked human.

But now many nations will marvel at him  
and kings will be speechless with amazement.

They will see and understand  
something they had never known." (Isaiah 52:13-15. G.N.B.)

The climax of the song of the suffering Servant in Isaiah 52 & 53 is followed by Isaiah 54 — a song of restoration for Israel, from shame and suffering.

### **The Deaf and Blind Servant**

It may well be asked how can Israel be a witness and servant to the Lord in their unbelief and continuing conscious rejection of Jesus as their Messiah. But it is Isaiah in the Servant Songs who says 'Who is more blind than my Servant and more deaf than the messenger I send'.<sup>30</sup> Indeed it is the very unbelief and unrighteousness of Israel that enables God to reveal Himself in them. This is Paul's point in Romans 3:3-5.

Israel's election as God's covenant people does not mean they make a conscious witness to God, but that in their history God bears witness to Himself — His grace, mercy, judgement and forgiveness. Even in Old Testament times the great prophetic writings could only have been written in the context of an unbelieving and stiff necked people. God needs the sin of man to fulfil His purposes and therefore in history works out his purposes of hardening and showing mercy.

### **God Hardens and Shows Mercy in Sovereign Grace to all Peoples**

This is the theme of Romans 9 to 11:

"I speak the truth in Christ — I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit — I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen. It is not as though God's word had

30. Isaiah 42:18-20.

failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, 'Through Isaac shall your offspring come.' In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring. For this was how the promise was stated: 'At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah shall have a son. 'Not only that, but Rebecca's children had one and the same father, our ancestor Isaac. Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad — in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls — she was told, 'The Older will serve the younger.' Just as it is written: 'Jacob I loved, Esau I hated.' 'What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: 'I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.' Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden. One of you will say to me: 'Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?' But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? 'Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?' Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath — prepared for destruction? What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory — even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?" (Romans 9:1-24. N.I.V.)

In order for God to redeem mankind from sin he needs the sin of man in order to eventually destroy it. God chose Israel and not the other nations (such as Egypt led by Pharaoh or Esau and his descendants) in order to eventually bring blessing and mercy to all. He needed the hardness of heart of Pharaoh to work his redemption on Israel. He even used Pharaoh's sin and 'hardened Pharaoh's heart'. But even within Israel he made a further election (an election within an election) until as we saw in the beginning God narrowed down His choice to Judah until he reached the real Elect One — Jesus Himself. Using the sin of man God, as it were, hardens the hearts of the wider Israel.

"Moses summoned all the Israelites and said to them: 'Your eyes have seen all the Lord did in Egypt to Pharaoh, to all his officials and to all his land. With your own eyes you saw those great trials those miraculous signs and great wonders. *But to this day the Lord has not given you a mind that understands or eyes that see or ears that hear* ' " (Deuteronomy 29:2-4 N.I.V.)

Also when Jesus taught in parables He explained the reason for the parables in this extraordinary way:

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“He told them, ‘The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that, ‘they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!’ ” (Mark 4:11-12 N.I.V.)

God’s hardening and softening process works throughout history on both Jew and Gentile, so as to bring out of mankind the sting of sin and evil which He Himself will bear in Himself.

God’s ultimate purpose in leaving at first some, then later others as prisoners of their own disobedience is so that His mercy may reach to all mankind. The final purpose then of God hardening Esau and Pharaoh whilst being merciful to Israel, and then later hardening Israel and being merciful to the Gentiles is that His mercy might reach all. The conclusion of Paul’s argument, begun in Romans 9 (quoted above) is as follows:

“As for you Gentiles, you disobeyed God in the past; but now you have received God’s mercy because the Jews were disobedient. In the same way, because of the mercy that you have received, the Jews now disobey God, in order that they also may now receive God’s mercy. *For God has made all people prisoners of disobedience, so that he might show mercy to them all.*<sup>31</sup> How great are God’s riches! How deep are his wisdom and knowledge! Who can explain his decisions? Who can understand his ways? As the scripture says, ‘Who knows the mind of the Lord? Who is able to give him advice? Who has ever given him anything, so that he had to pay it back?’ For all things were created by him, and all things exist through him and for him. To God be the glory forever! Amen. (Romans 11:30-36. G.N.B.)

### **Conclusion — Israel and the Christian Church**

The Christian Church is the People of God through its spiritual union with Jesus Christ as it bears conscious witness to Him. Israel retains its status as the people of God in its physical union with Christ and unconsciously bears testimony to Christ in its history. The Church, as the community of the children of God, shares in Israel’s ministry through Christ in being the Lord’s servant in the world. As such it may be called to share in the suffering of Christ (Mark 8:34-35 and Colossians 1:24) as it bears its kingly, priestly and prophetic ministry to mankind.

Through the Holy Spirit it takes the kingly authority of Jesus to proclaim the gospel; the priestly authority to pray for the forgiveness of men and the prophetic ministry to being the Word of God to bear upon the affairs of the nations.

In all this it must not forget that it has been grafted into the olive tree whose roots are God’s ancient people Israel. If it forgets this then its faith in Christ will be deficient and its theology shallow, having no real root. It

31. This does not mean every individual human being will be saved. It does mean that God’s mercy will reach all mankind. Similarly the New Testament hope that ‘all Israel will be saved’ does not mean that every individual Jew will be saved but that Israel as an entity will acknowledge Jesus as its Messiah.

will either ignore the Old Testament, or treat it as a mere picture book of exciting stories each with its own moral or lesson. Instead of its theology taking it ever deeper into the wonder of the grace of God in Christ, it will get stuck in a groove of pointless liberalism, other worldly pietism, or arid conservative scholasticism. Its testimony to the world will be weakened as it splits into numerous groups or denominations. This is the church as it is today. In Jewish eyes the 'Church' bears the guilt of many millions of Jews killed in Europe in the name of Christianity, even before the advent of Adolf Hitler.

The Church must see as a priority its mission to Israel to bear witness to Christ in love, prayer and repentance and be prepared to stand by God's ancient people who live in a hostile world that would snuff out their very existence.

Only in the re-union in Christ of the people of God of the flesh and the people of God of the Spirit will the Church be fully healed and be strong in the Spirit to bring blessing to all the earth.

# ANCIENT ISRAEL: A MODEL FOR TODAY?\*

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The old-fashioned school copybook had a proverb in copperplate as top line to each page, then about a dozen practice lines below. Notoriously the standard of writing kept deteriorating as it descended the page — the child was then imitating, not the excellent original, but his own very imperfect imitation of that original. The Jew possessed the perfect oracles of God, but Targum, Talmud, Midrash, all the cabbalistic literature intervened — tragically he began to imitate the copies, forgetting the divine original. But what exactly was the top line he should have continued to copy? Where do we find in a nutshell the very quintessence of Old Covenant teaching? Surely the answer is the Decalogue, those Ten revealed Commandments, which epitomise the whole duty of man, Godwards and manwards, and require his total obedience I Sam 15:12-23; Is 1:19-20; Jer 35. Originally a Sinai covenant or *foedus* between Yahweh and His ancient Jewish people, this marvellous Decalogue has an ethical and spiritual scope which is universal, it is a top line, a *norma*, a prescriptive pattern for all humanity to copy.

The Book of the Covenant (Exod 20-23) begins with the Ten Commandments, goes on to a midrashic exposition of them. The Commandments are repeated, with minor variations, in Deut 5. Our basic Hebrew source here is Exod 20:1-17. Here is the golden thread, the revealed guideline, which declares to man: Here is the way, walk ye in it!"<sup>1</sup>

We assume confidently that the Decalogue was divinely revealed to Moses, that we need not expend precious time on destructive Wellhausian criticism. The pronouns and suffixes in Exod 20 are consistently masculine singular — incredibly, Gerhardus Vos terms them feminine singular (p. 131), but this must surely be a printer's error. Each Commandment is addressed in the first instance to the nation Israel in the context of the miraculous recent Exodus; in the second instance, individually and personally to every human being of every age who comes within the sound of Jewish or Christian teaching. Thou and its concomitant forms are needed to bring this out properly — our language is stupidly impoverished, in liturgy, theology and daily conversation, by

\*A version of this paper was read at the 1985 Conference of the Scottish Evangelical Theology Society.

1. Is. 30:21. Suggested reading: IBD arts. 'Ten Commandments', 'Book of the Covenant', pp. 1533 ff, 331 f; John Calvin, *Institutes*, II.viii. 1-59, 1559; Puritan Thomas Watson, *The Ten Commandments*, 1692, rep. 1970; Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. III, 1880, pp. 259-465; Gerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 1948, rep. 1975, pp. 129-143.

the YOU cult. THIS oldster might have made a good Quaker — at least in the civilized use of the personal pronouns. The range and comprehensiveness of the Decalogue is a perennial marvel. We miss its searchlight power if we restrict ourselves to its external precepts — these, as Calvin points out, require not merely “outward decency”, but also “inward spiritual righteousness”, “purity of heart”. He adds: “The murder which the soul commits is wrath and hatred; the theft, covetousness and avarice; and the adultery, lust”. Every prohibition of a vice presupposes the firm inculcation of its opposite virtue. Certainly you must not push a man into the river to drown. But if he is in already, and you are a good swimmer, you must rescue him. The Decalogue, properly interpreted, becomes like the Sermon on the Mount in anticipation. There was a literal house of bondage in Egypt, there is a spiritual house of bondage for every sinning child of man. The Commandments reveal our sin, pinpoint our continuing need. Antinomianism in any shape or form remains a detestable heresy.

We deal here, all too briefly, with three topics: (1) What is the Hebrew text of the Decalogue saying to us today? This includes selective illustration of the Commandments from parallel Scriptures, particularly of the Old Testament — ancient Israel did not always copy the top line too well. This will be our longest section — it really includes two intertwined themes, which cannot readily be separated. (2) How far is the Decalogue a model for the Christian today, who claims grace as well as law? (3) Who were, who are now, the Church, the people of God? How do we relate Jews of the Old Covenant to Christians of the New? What, if any, are their common factors?

I. Turning to the Commandments, the First runs literally in Hebrew: There shall not be to thee — to anybody, that is — another God before My face. Jehovah claims absolute, exclusive loyalty. The Jewish cult was monolatry, with the underlying assumption of monotheism, this Commandment forbids polylatry. But surely we are not pagan polytheists, worshipping multiple deities? Be assured that if a child, a sweetheart, a political or religious leader, any thing or person whatsoever, becomes adored more than God, this is culpable polylatry, we become breakers of the Commandment. Roman Mariolaters, Protestant doctrinaires, must both beware.

Puritan Thomas Watson remarks that the First Commandment forbids worshipping a false God; the Second forbids worshipping the true God in a false manner. The Hebrew text of the Second clearly forbids the manufacturing of any idol or image (*pesel*), or of any likeness or semblance (*temurah*) of Deity. (Commemorative statues of famous mortals are not forbidden, only pictorial representations of Deity.) The supreme sin of ancient Israel was the golden calf, *Exod 32*. The Roman Church has a guilty conscience here — you need but glance into one of her sanctuaries to perceive innumerable images. That is why she drops the Second Commandment, and subdivides the Tenth, to keep the number right. But this is tampering with the Word of God. Like the Jews after the Babylonian Captivity, we may eschew crude physical idolatry, yet there are subtler substitutes we must beware. The Sacraments, Church

membership, good works, become idols, when we depend on them for salvation. We have a jealous God — *qannàh* is the Hebrew term — who will not give His glory to another. The Song of Solomon properly understood, allegorically, that is, deals with the marriage relationship between God and Israel, Christ and the Church or individual believer. The jealousy reflected is of a conjugal character, a fierce resentment of that spiritual adultery which is idolatry in any form. This Commandment reaches further, and bites deeper, than we think.

The Third Commandment forbids invoking God's Name unto emptiness, vanity, falsehood — Hebrew *saw* — forbids ALL careless or profane use of that Name. Millions of times do Frenchmen say *Adieu*, Britishers *Goodbye*, forgetful that they thereby invoke their Maker. Perjury is the main point here — calling God to witness to a deliberate lie, whether the oath be assertatory or promissory. There is no need to outlaw all oaths, like the Reformation Anabaptists — some are right and proper, but they should never be trivial or colloquial. An interesting point: How can an atheist, without blasphemy, give testimony on oath in a lawcourt? The Jesuit practice of uttering oaths with mental reservations was utterly abominable. Jephthah and Herod should have broken their crazy oaths, they sinned more grievously in fulfilling them. Vos associates this Commandment closely with pagan name magic, execration and adjuration — into that field, we cannot enter here.

The Jewish Sabbath commemorated Creation, rested the body, promoted worship, communion and spiritual instruction, constituted a perpetual covenant sign between God and His people (Exod 31; Ezk 20:12). Psalm 92 reflects Jewish sabbatarian devotion in its finest flower. For extreme severity, even to the death sentence, see Num 15:32-36; for eloquent blessing, Is 58:13-14; for commination and promise combined, Jer 17:20-27. The Fourth Commandment binds the Christian also, though the day of the week, the particular emphasis, have changed, Christ's Resurrection is now commemorated. The Lord's Day becomes more rounded and explicit in the Apostolic Fathers, our earliest Patristic texts in Greek. Yet the canonical authority is ample — see Rev 1:10, and the records of our Lord's post-Resurrection appearances to the disciples; also the solemn and explicit words of Westminster Confession XXI.vii,viii.

In the Fifth Commandment — first of the Second Table, first with promise — we note that "parents" may be political (kings and magistrates); those venerable by seniority; spiritual fathers; natural parents. These must be disobeyed ONLY if they command what contravenes God's Law. Such was the severity of the Mosaic Law that a chap could be stoned to death for cursing a parent (Ex 21:17).

The Sixth Commandment forbids murder. Justly administered capital punishment is not murder — neither is the soldier's hateful task on the battlefield, however abhorrent this may be to his normally compassionate instincts. Nothing whatsoever can justify those once fashionable duels, arising from trivial quarrels — they were murderous, sacrilegious and abominable. Watson is fascinating on this Commandment. He lists twelve means of murder: the hand; the mind — i.e. malice, or murder of the heart; the tongue; the pen; plotting; poison; witchcraft; intention (cf.

Matt 2:13); consent — cf. Saul watching Stephen's death; failure to hinder or intervene; judicial failure to enforce capital punishment where this is richly deserved. If, says Watson, a felon commits six murders, the judge who had power to condemn him to death the first time, and failed to do so, is guilty of five of them. Suicide also is a crime of the first magnitude. Any wilful murder destroys the image of God in a man — that is what makes it so heinous, that is why the abolition of the death penalty within living memory is so unscriptural, and so wicked.

Fornication is a serious sin, especially if it leaves an unmarried mother callously abandoned. The adultery specifically forbidden in the Seventh Commandment is more serious, it criminally smashes up one or two existing and sacred marriage contracts, often cruelly wronging innocent parties, for the mere indulgence of lust. If two married couples engage by quadripartite agreement in the dirty game of "wife-swapping", then four people have committed adultery, even though there was no complication of deceit. A society which winks at such things is approaching the decadence of Imperial Rome. In the days of the death penalty, there was considerable sympathy for the husband who slaughtered the adulterous wretch who had violated his wife — this rested on natural jealousy, with extreme provocation, and was felt to fall short of fully culpable murder. Marriage is man's normal estate, and absolutely exclusive. Celibacy may be advisable if there is a legacy of insanity, or of transmissible disease. In 1 Cor 7:26 Paul is not advocating universal celibacy, he is offering practical advice for "the present distress". The nearest modern parallel, familiar here in the early 'forties, may be a soldier on embarkation leave, rushing into marriage with a girl he may not see again for years, if ever. The human situation evokes much sympathy — yet such marriages produced a vast crop of young widows, with a fatherless child. They were not immoral, but were they well-considered? Marriage is not a sacrament, it does not, as Rome falsely maintains, confer grace — there is no perfect world yet, despite abundance of marriages! In circumstances of serious distress or incompatibility, chaste separation is a viable alternative to divorce, especially if there is hope of ultimate reconciliation. Divorce becomes doubly ugly when it is obviously intended to facilitate re-marriage. Our Lord interprets the Seventh Commandment in Matt 5:27-32, requiring purity, not merely in act but also in the less easily controlled areas of word and thought. Adultery of the eye is sin in God's sight — who then is guiltless down here?

In the Prophets physical adultery is frequently linked with the spiritual whoredom of idolatry, which breaks the mystical marriage relationship between Yahweh and Israel. In the heathenish practices of Canaan, as in Israel's decline, idolatry and adultery frequently went together. See for example Is 57:3-12; Jer 3:1-4; and the scorching contempt of Jer 5:8.

Whilst all property rights cease with death, the Eighth Commandment, Thou shalt not steal, is a necessary provision for the fair and peaceful ordering of interim mortal society. Thieves, Watson declared, are the "caterpillars of society" — especially those actuated, not by need, but by greed, or by sheer bone laziness. Theft, the "daughter of avarice", usually springs from covetousness. The highly respectable, Churchgoing,

merchant, who adulterates his milk or cheese, or who grossly overcharges on false pretences, may be as great a thief as the felon in jail. Income tax returns, the use of time within which we are paid for services, call also for scrupulous honesty.

The Ninth Commandment enacts: Thou shalt not witness any testimony of deceit against thy neighbour. The primary reference is juridical. A dishonest advocate may bear false witness, may even incriminate innocent persons, to manipulate an undeserved reprieve for his evil client. The commonest form of perjury is false witness against an innocent person, to incriminate him, to gain some legal advantage for oneself or another — this is criminal in the highest degree. Of course OUR consciences are clear! WE would not do anything so outrageous! We forget that we break this Commandment every time we repeat a malicious, unchecked story against another person, or belittle his character. Such is what Calvin called that “odious crimination which springs from malicious and petulant love of slander”. Watson designates three fences to keep our unruly tongues in order — the lips, the teeth — and the Ninth Commandment!

Unlike the others, the Tenth Commandment, Thou shalt not covet . . . , looks right inside the heart, penetrates to depths where only God can see, depths of which we are but imperfectly conscious ourselves. Covetousness is the mother sin, the radical vice, which unchecked can lead to the transgression of all the Commandments. See 1 Tim 6:10. Some have argued from Rom 7:7 that Paul is confessing to covetousness as his personal and besetting sin. I have my doubts, this may be reading too much into the verse. Unquestionably this sin stems from greed, envy, deeply engrained self-love, no human being is entirely free from it, though some control or conceal it better than others. Despite its ugly cynicism, there is irrefutable truth in the pungent remark of Montesquieu: “Every man has a secret satisfaction even in the misfortune of his dearest friends”. The temptation to covet may come unexpectedly. Suppose you are browsing in your friend’s library. You spot a book in Latin, a book you happen to want very much for some particular research you are doing. You know your friend cannot read Latin, the volume is a piece of junk to him. What are you to do? Drop crude hints? No, no, a thousand times no! Just say very firmly inside yourself: Thou-shalt not covet!

II. How does law operate in the realm of grace? That is our second topic.<sup>2</sup>

The modernist is usually antinomian at heart, airily quoting the second half of Rom 6:14, not under law, but under grace. Law is tedious and old-fashioned, emancipated man should be free from its shackles. Even gross sins of the flesh may be discounted, under the umbrella of misnamed love. We have only to look at the soaring divorce rate, abortion, illegitimacy, the stockpiling menace of venereal disease, to see where permissive antinomianism has led us. That leaves unmentioned

2. See further Westminster Conf. XIX; Larger Cat. Qq. 93-99; R. L. Dabney, *Systematic Theology*, 1878, rep. 1972, pp. 351-357; John Murray’s address, “The Sanctity of Moral Law”, in *Claims of Truth*, 1976, pp. 193-204; etc.

drink, drugs, gambling, the thievery and sharp practice that is steadily corroding our national integrity. But what about the first half of the verse? Sin is not to reign, tyrannize, over the believer — Paul never suggests, here or elsewhere, that sin will ever completely die in this mortal life. Antinomian or orthodox, we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, where our human smokescreens and pretences will be ruthlessly torn from us. Expositor Shedd remarked to comfort us that “sin in fragments is weaker than holiness in mass”. Nevertheless holiness requires to be organized and exercised!

Of course the Decalogue is absolutely binding on the Christian, but it cannot save him, because he cannot perfectly keep it (Gal 2:16; Jas 2:10). The opening verses of Rom 8 and countless other Scriptures pinpoint the only hope for sinner man, the atonement provided for him by Jesus Christ. Yet our Lord’s counsel to the Rich Young Ruler is full of the Decalogue — likewise Paul’s pastoral advice in 1 Cor 6:9-11. 1 Cor 8 is motivated by compassion for the weaker brother who might, through the stronger brother’s “liberty”, become tempted to break the Second Commandment. In exact parallel, the self-controlled Christian minister who takes the occasional glass of wine at a wedding reception may do HIMSELF no harm — but what of the watching teenager, who assumes that his minister’s example must be reliable, and follows it with ultimately disastrous results? We heartily agree with John Murray’s declaration, that “the directing principle of love is objectively revealed statutory commandments” — again when he says “Abolish or abrogate law, and you deny the reality of sin” — in other words, you enthrone antinomianism.

It is customary to distinguish three uses of the law or Decalogue: (1) The *usus politicus*, which amounts to the restraint of sin in unredeemed humanity by common grace. Certain Calvinists deny the reality of common grace — the Hoeksemas, for example — but would you like to live in a world where unredeemed man’s sin went to its worst excesses without divine restraint?

(2) The *usus pedagogicus* reveals to man his sin, convicts him of it, and acts as a schoolmaster to Christ.

(3) By the *usus didacticus*, commonly called the *tertius usus legis*, the law becomes a rule of life to the believer. This salutary effect is denied by antinomians — but then, they don’t know any better!

The relationship of law and grace is admirably summed up in the Westminster Confession, Chapter XIX, where the Decalogue is described as a perfect rule of righteousness, binding upon all, including those already justified. It is not a covenant of works — emphatically not! — it is a rule of life, informing us of the will of God, discovering to us the pollution of our nature. All this is substantially repeated in the Larger Catechism, Qq. 93-99. We note there (Q.96) the alternative uses of the law to unregenerate men — either “to awaken their consciences to flee from the wrath to come”, or else to “leave them inexcusable”. Q.99 enacts eight detailed and excellent rules for the application of the Decalogue, some of which we have encountered already. These are superbly applied by our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount (notably in

Matt 5:17-48), and elsewhere. The searching words of the Catechism, “to require the utmost perfection in every duty, and to forbid the least degree of every sin”, might fill us with blank despair, had we not a Saviour to whom we may turn. The Rich Young Ruler said concerning the Commandments, and with all outward sincerity: All these have I kept from my youth up. How little he had grasped of their inwardness! And how little he knew his own heart!

III. Our third topic might be encapsulated: For whom was the Decalogue intended? We have already answered: For all mankind, in potential. But there are untold millions of Moslems, Buddhists, Confucians, Communists, Western pagans . . . who remain totally ignorant of the Decalogue. In practical terms this divine Law was meant for the Church. But what do we mean by the Church? This links with the broad theme of the Conference.<sup>3</sup>

The word *ekklesia*, the called-out body, has three successive historic meanings: (1) An assembly of public-minded citizens in a free city state of ancient pagan Greece. (2) The nation of Israel in religious assembly — cf. Deut 31 and 1 Kgs 8. (3) The Church of Christ, the new Israel of God — cf. Gal 6.16. The Belgic Confession, Art. 27 proclaims “one catholic or universal Church, which is a holy congregation of true believers, all expecting their salvation in Jesus Christ, being washed by His Blood, Sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit . . . spread and dispersed over the whole world; yet joined and united with heart and will, by the power of faith, in one and the same Spirit”. The other Reformed symbols are in broad agreement with this. This Church has four cardinal, intrinsic characteristics: (1) unity — in Christ, that is, not in any manmade ecumenical federation; (2) catholicity — that is, a world spread, transcending all racial, national and social barriers; (3) holiness — again in Christ, and notwithstanding much earthly unholiness; (4) apostolicity — in foundational reference, that is, not in dubious succession claims. Added to these are three distinguishing marks: the preaching of the Word; the proper administration of the Sacraments; and discipline. Calvin emphasised the discipline so sharply that some of his successors have preferred to modify or forget it. Once again the Reformed symbols are fairly unanimous, we pass over an extensive field in brief compass. There is an ancient adage, *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. Whilst God has called some in solitary or otherwise extraordinary circumstances, redemption is usually attained in association with those whom God has already redeemed. That remains the best place to look for it — Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds’ tents (Cant 1:8).

The Israelites, the ancient covenant people of God, were certainly intended to keep the Decalogue, however clearly the prophetic denunciations show up their many lamentable failures. Some undoubted-

3. Suggested reading: arts. ‘Church’, NIDCC and rev. ISBE, Vol I; John Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, esp. first twelve chapters; Herman Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1966 and later reps., pp. 561-726 (esp. first five chaps. of this section) — too supralapsarian for me, but a fine book; Stephen Benco, *The Meaning of the Sanctorum Communio*, Studies in Historical Theology, 1964.

ly made a better approximation than others, as Mal 3:16-18 clearly reveals. Indeed there was always a faithful remnant, just as there is always an election of grace under the New Covenant. I believe that these two groups, the redeemed Jews of the old dispensation, converted Gentiles of the new, are all God's children, they possess a continuity, the Ten Commandments are quite specifically addressed to both. There is a sense in which the true Church of God has enjoyed an unbroken history, at least from Abraham down to the present day, a sense in which the patriarch and the modern Christian both look to the same Christ, though the modern Christian possesses a fuller revelation of His Person (John 8:56). One would like to be more precise here — but that would take us right into the disputations of amillennialists and premillennialists, Zionists and anti-Zionists. The tangled realms of controversial eschatology do not fall within our immediate remit.

One last thought, on the Christian side: What precisely is the communion of saints? The Greek phrase, *koinonia tōn hagiōn*, and the Latin *sanctorum communio*, are both inescapably ambiguous, the genitive plurals could be either masculine or neuter. The communion of saints naturally requires the masculine, with a personal interpretation; the neuter suggests the sacramental or eucharistic view, associating the phrase specifically with the bread and wine of Holy Communion. Stephen Benco, with great linguistic and Patristic learning, argues the sacramental view — yet one feels, reading through his monograph, that he rather flogs the side which suits his theology. John Owen (Vol. I, p. 492) defines the communion of saints as “an holy conjunction between all God's people, wrought by their participation of the same Spirit, wherein we are all made members of that one Body whereof Christ is the Head”. This union he goes on to describe as “spiritual and internal . . . external and ecclesiastical in the same outward ordinances” (cf, also Vol. IX, p. 266). This is predominantly the personal interpretation, with subsidiary acknowledgment of the sacramentarian view. This allows operation between Christian and Christ; between Christian and fellow Christian; possibly more widely — but excluding such heretical notions as prayer for the dead — between the Church militant and the Church triumphant. The Westminster Standards take much the same line as John Owen — it is sufficient here to compare *Confession XXVI* with *Larger Catechism* Q. 168. Another Puritan, preaching on the Lord's Supper about 1554, said, long before Owen's time: “The Supper used to be called of the Fathers *eucharistiam*, a thanksgiving. This is the communion of saints which we believe in our Creed, which hath waiting on it remission of sins, resurrection of the flesh, and life everlasting” (John Bradford, *Works* Vol. I, p. 107).

Summing up, we can concede that Benco cannot be condemned outright, that thoroughly evangelical sources give him a measure of support. Nevertheless we feel that, of the two grammatically possible interpretations of the phrase *sanctorum communio*, he has unduly exalted the one of minor importance, that the phrase is much more meaningful in its English form, as reflecting particularly the company of God's people on earth.

# INCARNATION AND INSCRIPTURATION: THE CHRISTOLOGICAL ANALOGY IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT DISCUSSION

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## Introduction

Christian theology is accustomed to using the phrase 'word of God' in two distinct and important senses, to refer to the Son of God, and to the Bible.<sup>1</sup> Unless these two are considered — which plainly they are not — to be identical, or unless 'word of God' is considered as a mere homonym with two independent significations, we must hold that some kind of analogical relationship exists between the two usages, and, therefore, between the two *loci* to which the term 'word of God' refers. This observation is the point of departure for the discussion which follows, since it inevitably raises questions concerning the extent, status and usefulness of the analogy.

There can be no doubt that some such analogy is widely presumed to operate. As one recent writer has it, 'frequent appeal' is made to such a parallel.<sup>2</sup> It is, as we shall see, a major theme of the neo-orthodox school, and it is also plainly important amongst conservative evangelical writers, though it must be said that it is very much more frequently assumed or referred to in passing than it is actually addressed.<sup>3</sup> In the Roman Catholic Church, too, it is seen as possessing great significance. So Pope Pius XII wrote:

Just as the substantial Word of God became like to men in all things, sin excepted, Heb. iv.15, so the words of God, expressed in human language, became in all things like to human speech, error excepted.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, some have explicitly denied the analogy, while

1. It is also, of course, used of preaching; and of this three-fold significance Barth has made much.
2. J. H. Crehan, "The Analogy Between *Verbum Dei Incarnatum* and *Verbum Dei Scriptum* in the Fathers", *JTS*, 6:87-90. Thus Berkouwer speaks of a "frequent, vague and inarticulate use of this analogy", *Holy Scripture*, p. 199.
3. P. R. Wells offers as his interpretation of the work of James Barr that "It can be considered as an ongoing critique of the christological analogy as imposing on interpretation and on views of the status of Scripture", particularly as "it applies to the two movements where interpretation and the doctrine of Scripture have been most influenced by considering the divine and the human in Scripture, namely, the near orthodox "Biblical Theological movement" and the conservative Fundamentalist positions. For both these cases the character of the human element in Scripture in relation to the divine is problematic." *James Barr and the Bible*, p. 9.
4. *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, C.C.H.S. para. 36J, cited J. K. S. Reid, *The Authority of Scripture*, p. 111.

others have remained lukewarm about its significance. Generally the rejection of the analogy has not been total, but rather a judgement that its extent is limited or its discernment so subjective that, although there are indisputable parallels between the Bible and the Incarnation, it is not helpful to construe them in strictly analogical terms. When — as in one case we shall discuss — a wholesale rejection of the divine-human mode of understanding Scripture has been suggested, a similar repudiation of the Christology of Chalcedon may follow.

### Recent discussion of the analogy

We begin by surveying some recent references to the analogy, before moving on to attempt some analysis of the question. As will soon become evident, most of these discussions focus to a greater or lesser extent on the degree to which the infallibility of Scripture may or may not be upheld on the ground of its analogy with Christ's sinlessness.

H. D. McDonald, in his survey of thinking about revelation, typically remarks that the 'mechanical dictation' conception of inspiration was, by analogy, 'Apollinarian . . . with regard to the agents of the divine revelation. Its advocates saw the human element, as it were, "reduced" and the deficiency made up by the presence of the Spirit.'<sup>5</sup> Such an understanding, McDonald suggests, was adopted to defend the inerrancy of Scripture; but in fact it sacrificed its humanness, whereas 'the Divine moulds the human to its ends, and in the result God's strength is perfected in human weakness'.<sup>6</sup> By contrast, the opposing liberal view tended toward a Nestorian position, with the human and divine divided from one another. McDonald asks, 'Does this hold in the case of Christ . . . ?'<sup>7</sup> A. G. Hebert offers a similar analysis of the debate. The 'liberals' he too terms Nestorian, though he is meaning the Liberals of the early twentieth century, and not the lesser liberalism of his own position. For he continues: 'We who are not liberals must acknowledge our debt to the liberals', particularly for their fight 'against the Monophysite heresy, with its denial of the true humanity of our Lord'.<sup>8</sup> He quotes R. H. Fuller to the effect that 'Fundamentalism' (in the context in which Hebert wrote, conservative evangelicalism) 'denies the reality of the Bible as a human book'.<sup>9</sup> In other words, not merely in its more extreme forms, but in itself, it is Monophysite. As Hebert writes elsewhere of the 'dictation-theory of inspiration' (which he equates with the infallibilist position) it is 'pure Monophysitism'.<sup>10</sup>

James Packer takes issue with Hebert in his *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*, published originally by way of reply. 'Insofar', he claims, as the analogy 'is valid, it confirms the evangelical view of Scripture as against' that of Hebert and others. Packer offers four comments in

5. H. D. McDonald, *Theories of Revelation 1860-1960*, p. 257.

6. *Ibid.*, citing James Orr, *The Faith of a Modern Christian*, p. 16.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 258.

8. A. G. Hebert, *Fundamentalism and the Church of God*, p. 77.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 78, citing R. H. Fuller in the *Religious Book Club Bulletin*, No. 110, Jan. 1956.

10. A. G. Hebert, "The Bible and Modern Religions: Fundamentalism", in *Interpretation* 11, p. 195.

support. First, the analogy is 'at best . . . only a limited one'; in other words, we must be wary of pressing it. Secondly, if the analogy is seen as limited simply to the fact that Scripture contains divine as well as human qualities, Hebert's thesis is too detailed. Thirdly, if however we are to carry the analogy further, and take it as indicating something about the character which the human element has by virtue of its conjunction with the divine, we must say that it points directly to the fact that, as our Lord, though truly man, was truly free from sin, so Scripture, though a truly human product, is truly free from error.

That is the force of the analogy.

Finally, if we are to carry the analogy further still, and take it as indicating something about the reality of the union between the divine and the human, we must say that it is in fact the approach of the Evangelicals to Scripture which corresponds to Christological orthodoxy, while that of their critics really corresponds to the Nestorian heresy, since they divide 'the Bible as a human book' and 'the word of God that is in it.' He adds:

Incidentally, once we see this, we see why they are so ready to accuse Evangelicals of Monophysitism; for Nestorians have always regarded orthodox Christology as Monophysite.<sup>11</sup>

It is important to realise that Packer does take up Hebert's argument *ad hominem* and with some reluctance, despite the fulminations which James Barr (as we shall see) pours upon the Evangelical use of the analogy. Warfield (whom Barr also indicts) is very cautious indeed about it. 'It has been customary', he writes, 'among a certain school of writers to speak of the Scripture . . . as a Divine-human book, and to appeal to the analogy of Our Lord's Divine-human personality to explain their peculiar qualities . . . .' The analogy 'holds good a certain distance', but 'it may easily be pressed beyond reason', since 'there is no hypostatic union between the Divine and the human in Scripture'. He continues: We cannot parallel the 'inscripturation' of the Holy Spirit and the incarnation of the Son of God. The Scriptures are merely the product of Divine and human forces working together . . . the human forces . . . under the initiation and prevalent direction of the Divine.

By contrast,

the Person of Our Lord unites in itself Divine and human natures, each of which retains its distinctiveness while operating only in relation to the others. Between such diverse things there can exist only a remote analogy.

More precisely, 'the analogy in the present instance amounts to no more than that in both cases Divine and human factors are involved, though very differently'. Yet he avers that from 'even so distant an analogy' one may 'recognize' the parallel between Christ's real yet sinless humanity and the real yet errorless humanity of Scripture.<sup>12</sup>

T. F. Torrance, reviewing the republication of Warfield's volume on Scripture, is more enthusiastic about the analogy. 'There is no question',

11. J. I. Packer, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*, pp. 82-84.

12. B. B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, p. 162.

he claims, 'that a proper doctrine of Scripture must be grounded analogically' upon the incarnation; but 'we must take seriously the fact that the Word has assumed our fallen humanity, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh'. Two points of clarification are added: first, that while Jesus Christ was sinless, 'even in Holy Scripture we see through a glass darkly, not yet face to face. . . . Meantime we have the Word only in conditions of imperfection and limitation'. Secondly, there can be no parallel to the unique act of Incarnation. 'Here in the doctrine of Holy Scripture there is no incarnation, even though it is grounded in the unique relation of the God-man.' Torrance adds: 'the basic error that lurks in the scholastic idea of verbal inspiration [*sc.*, in Warfield] is that it amounts to an incarnation of the Holy Spirit'.<sup>13</sup>

We turn now to Karl Barth, with the acknowledgement that in the compass of this survey we can only touch on his theological scheme in which this analogy plays a central part. Barth openly avows its importance, concluding a discussion of the two natures of Christ with this sentence: 'When we necessarily allow for inherent differences, it is exactly the same with the unity of the divine and human word in Holy Scripture.'<sup>14</sup> Barth, of course, holds the analogy side by side with a frank disclaimer of Biblical infallibility:

within certain limits . . . they [*sc.*, the Biblical writers] are all vulnerable and therefore capable of error even in respect of religion and theology. In view of the actual constitution of the Old and New Testaments this is something which we cannot possibly deny if we are not to take away their humanity, if we are not to be guilty of Docetism.<sup>15</sup>

That is to say, fallibility is required if Scripture is to be fully human. Klaas Runia discusses Barth's position. He is in agreement with Barth when he says that "all Docetism (or Monophysitism) is entirely objectionable in the doctrine of Holy Scripture". He goes so far as to admit that orthodox theology, in particular, must always be aware of this danger.<sup>16</sup>

And he maintains:

Undoubtedly nothing can save us better from such docetic tendencies than a good apprehension of the parallel between the incarnation and inscripturation. For this parallel says more clearly than anything else: The Bible is on the one hand fully divine, it is God's Word; but it is at the same time fully human, written as it is by truly human beings with all their peculiarities.<sup>17</sup>

Yet Barth goes beyond this to see fallibility as involved in humanity, and to claim that every denial of fallibility 'brings us back into the shadows of Docetism'. This move Runia claims to have 'no adequate grounding', since human activity under the operative guidance of the Holy Spirit is a matter distinct from human activity alone. The parallel

13. T. F. Torrance, Review of Warfield, *op. cit.*, *SJT* 7 (1954) pp. 106, 7.

14. K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I:2, p. 499.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 510.

16. K. Runia, *Karl Barth's Doctrine of Holy Scripture*, p. 72.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

with the sinlessness of Jesus Christ suggests rather the Spirit's prevention of error. If error is present, 'the only thing that is left is a purely human book which can be used by God to communicate His divine message, but which as such *is* not the message.' Such a stance either overthrows the analogy or undermines the very doctrine of the incarnation.<sup>18</sup>

G. C. Berkouwer subjects the analogy to a critique. He notes its very widespread use, and in particular that

a certain conclusion to this argument should be noted along with others, namely, that a parallel exists not only in general between incarnation and inscripturation, but also between Christ's sinlessness and the infallibility of Scripture.<sup>19</sup>

But the essential difference between Scripture and the 'personal union' in Christ 'has always led to a delineation of the boundaries of this analogy'.<sup>20</sup>

It is noteworthy in all this that the analogy is first relativized because of the absence of the 'personal union,' while later the analogy is used as an apologetic with reference to the parallel between sinlessness and inerrancy. Yet these are comprehended on such different levels that they can surely not be used convincingly to clarify the infallibility of Scripture.<sup>21</sup>

Berkouwer continues his critique by asking not — as others have — whether the analogy does not demean the hypostatic union in Christ, but whether, conversely, the analogy can do justice to Scripture:

'Sacred Scripture *is* the Word of God' . . . this confession does not say that Scripture originates from a union of divine and human factors, but points to the mystery of the human words *as* God's Word. The approach of Scripture, which points to men moved by the Spirit (II Pet. 1:21), is quite different from that of a 'mysterious' union (as it is often called), which could be paralleled with the personal union.

Moreover, such a 'union' would be 'something truly quite different from the "from God,"' so decisive for the confession of the God-breathed character of Scripture'.<sup>22</sup>

James Barr, as we have suggested, vigorously rejects the analogy, since he regards it as liable to falsify the truly human character of Scripture. He regards the conservative evangelical espousal of it as a necessary element in the defence of the doctrine of inerrancy, but believes that, in a curious way, it leads them to a Christology that is less than orthodox. So he writes:

I do not believe that either Packer or Warfield have taken this stand about the person of Christ [*sc.*, on the divine authority of the teaching of Jesus] but for the pressure of the issue of biblical inerrancy. That is the obvious and only motivating power for the argument they present . . . . Christological doctrine has to be so defined as to give the

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 77, 8.

19. G. C. Berkouwer, *Holy Scripture*, p. 200.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 201.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 202.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 203, 4.

maximum possible shelter to inerrancy.<sup>23</sup>

Paul Wells comments:

According to his analysis, the Barthian analogy of Christ and Scripture becomes in the hands of theological conservatism a boomerang in which Christ actually becomes analogous to inerrant Scripture.<sup>24</sup>

In fact, as we have seen, both Warfield and Packer take up the analogy only with much reservation, Packer treating of it wholly *ad hominem*. One wonders whether Barr, in alleging this impropriety in their theological method, has given any consideration to their actual discussions. Barr's interest is in moving away from static and ontological notions of Christ and Scripture towards so-called dynamic and relational ones, so that he can suggest that 'the true analogy for the Scripture as the Word of God is not the unity of God and Man in the Incarnation; it is the relation of the Spirit of God to the People of God.'<sup>25</sup> It then becomes possible to re-think inspiration in purely human terms, free from the pressure of Chalcedon, such that the concept may be 'purified from all suggestion of inerrancy and infallibility, and from all teaching that identified the production of the Bible with the revelation of God'.<sup>26</sup>

### The Nature of the Analogy

A major defect of the generally occasional or controversial nature of references to the Christological analogy in recent writing emerges in an almost total failure to attempt a definition of the terms involved. As we began by stating, there is inevitably *some kind* of parallel or analogy between the 'Word of God' in Christ and in Scripture, unless they are either identical or unrelated; the question is, *what kind* of analogy. We turn to a recent discussion of the idea of analogy as such to gain an understanding of the options that are open to us, before moving on to apply the idea to the question in debate.

John McIntyre instances our particular analogy as one example of common theological use of the concept.<sup>27</sup> The value of the concept is that it has suggested new things to say on certain subjects. By using the analogy of the hypostatic union in reference to Scripture, or to the Church, we establish access to a whole new range of descriptions of these two subjects.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore,

In opening up a new range of possibilities, the analogy also exerts a controlling influence on the possibilities. It becomes determinative of the kind of thing we may say on the subject, and exclusive of the kind of thing we may not say. For that reason, many of our disagreements in theology are not differences over minutiae of exegesis, or details of historical occurrence, so much as radical conflict over the proper analogies to use in our exegesis or historical judgments.<sup>29</sup>

23. J. Barr, *Fundamentalism*, p. 172.

24. P. R. Wells, *James Barr and the Bible*, p. 17.

25. Cited *ibid.*, p. 39.

26. Cited *ibid.*, p. 41.

27. J. McIntyre, "Analogy", *SJT* 12 (1959), pp. 1-20.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

29. *Ibid.*

There are several kinds of analogy. *Analogy of inequality* involves the participation to differing extents of a number of terms in some one concept. *Analogy of proportion or attribution*, writes McIntyre, is applied to those entities which, while different in other respects, are the same in that they are all related, even by different relations, to one identical thing. This one thing is predicated of them analogically.<sup>30</sup>

A third type is termed *analogy of proportionality*. McIntyre writes: Different things are said to be 'good' proportionately, not because of their dependence upon a first principle, or their extrinsic relation to a prime analogate, but in virtue of a goodness inherent in them. Thus sight performs the same function in relation to the body as intelligence does to the soul. Sight is as good proportionately as intelligence is to the soul. The structure of analogy of proportionality is A:B::C:D.<sup>31</sup>

A further example is given to make the matter clearer: 'God's Essence: God's Intelligence::Man's Essence: Man's Intelligence.' That is, 'Man's Intelligence is determined by Man's Essence in a manner proper to humanity; so God's Intelligence is determined by God's Essence in a manner proper to Deity.' 'In this analogy', McIntyre adds, 'the similarity lies not in the attributes of the terms, but in the relations that hold between them.'<sup>32</sup> It would seem that the analogy with which we are concerned is an analogy of this type. A passage from the conclusion to McIntyre's article bears closely upon the discussion which follows. 'My dilemma', he writes,

with the use of the analogy of the *unio hypostatica* is as follows. On the one hand, it proves to be a most effectively sharp theological tool when it is used as an analogy of inequality, the secondary analogates being regarded as particular instances of the prime analogate — in which case, however, analogy of proportionality is violated. On the other hand, when it is really treated as an analogy of proportionality, it tends to break in our hands, for it gives no criteria for distinguishing the ways in which the secondary analogates resemble and differ from the primary.<sup>33</sup>

That is to say, it is by no means clear how *precisely* the sinlessness of Jesus, let alone the complexities of *en* and *anhypostasia*, effect how we understand the Biblical documents. This is no doubt the major factor behind the occasional or merely assumptive use of the analogy in recent theological writing.

McIntyre has earlier suggested that in fact Thomas' *analogia entis*, when taken in the context of his doctrine of creation, is not unacceptable, the latter providing the relation in which the analogates are to be set. Now he writes:

just as in St. Thomas analogy of proportionality requires to be taken with the doctrine of Creation, so in the Reformed use of the *unio hypostatica* it is necessary that some indication of the relation of the prime analogate to the secondary analogates be given beyond that

30. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 10.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

stated in the proportionality. The point is perfectly clear in symbolics. The formula  $A:B::C:D$  is inadequate without some indication of how  $A$  is related to  $C$  and/or  $B$  to  $D$ . The use which L. S. Thornton makes of the analogy of the *unio hypostatica* [*sc.*, a use very like that in conservative evangelicalism] in relation to the Bible is vitiated, partly at least, by his failure to relate the human nature in Christ to the human element in the Bible. In other words, because the analogy of proportionality is an analogy of *relations*, it requires to be supplemented by some form of analogy which relates the *terms* of the analogy.<sup>34</sup>

Paul Wells, in his study of Barr, follows McIntyre with much the same criticism of the Christological analogy. He writes:

The fundamental difficulty in the use of the analogy of the *unio hypostatica* with Scripture appears to be that when such an analogy is constructed in terms of attribution or proportionality there lacks the ontological underpinning necessary to support the analogy. To provide such an ontological foundation to the analogy Christ-Bible it would be necessary to consider the secondary analogates as being a particular instance of the prime analogate. In this case another different analogy would be appealed to — the analogy of inequality. Here an ontological foundation for the analogy is furnished, but the principle of the analogy of proportionality is put aside. Where the analogy of proportionality which claims resemblance of relation or properties is appealed to, there lacks a real link between the *analogans* and the *analogatum*.<sup>35</sup>

Wells adds to this further and equally fundamental criticisms of the use of the analogy, and we shall return to them and profit from them below. This question, however, must now be met. Is it in the nature of the case that the Christological analogy of Scripture is untenable because it is limited to proportionality?

### The Analogy and the Teaching of Jesus

In response we may turn back to the work of James Bannerman. Bannerman's massive work on inspiration contains a full exposition of the Christological analogy as a buttress to his infallibilist thesis. He points out — as we have earlier suggested — that

the circumstance that the same term, *the Word of God*, is used in Scripture to denote both the Eternal Son and the revelation contained in the Bible, is itself sufficient to call attention to the analogy.<sup>36</sup>

There are, of course, 'points of obvious distinction' between the two, notably that the one is personal, the other impersonal. The Incarnate Son was 'a Person to whom belonged all the proper attributes and distinctive character both of God and of man', whilst 'in the case of the manifestation of the eternal wisdom in human language,' to the written word 'beyond all the real attributes and distinctive properties of the word of God and of the

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 14. McIntyre regards proportionality as lying behind the analogy of being.

35. P. R. Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

36. J. Bannerman, *Inspiration: the Infallible Truth and Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures*, p. 465.

word of man.<sup>37</sup> That is to say, the objection — repeated by Wells among others — that the *unio hypostatica* cannot be paralleled in a book rests on a failure to recognise the proper nature of analogy of proportionality. 'It is not necessary', writes Bannerman, 'to assert that the mode in which it was effected or exemplified was the same. It was personal in Christ; and it was verbal in Scripture.'<sup>38</sup>

But Bannerman goes further, and though we might not wish to follow him in the expression he gives to his argument, his essential thesis is suggestive of a real answer to the objections of McIntyre and Wells to which we have referred. Bannerman concentrates his attention not on the Incarnation as such, but on its fruit in the teaching of Jesus. So he affirms:

The personal union was one that stands alone and unparalleled, and to which we have no analogy that answers. But the verbal union, seen in every word that He uttered, has its parallel in the word which His own Spirit put into the lips of His inspired servants, and enabled them infallibly to record. The spoken word of Christ, and the written word impressed by His Spirit upon the pages of Scripture, are exactly alike, in that they are both to be received as equally the word of God and the word of man.

The analogy to this extent is complete, and affords a sufficient answer to those who allege that the union of the divine and human elements in inspiration is an impossibility.<sup>39</sup>

It would seem that Bannerman does not hold — despite his earlier statements — to a full analogy of the person of Christ and Scripture, or holds one only by extension or implication. In any event, his concentration upon the teaching of Christ is enough for his purpose of providing an *ad hominem* case for the possibility of the infallible inspiration of human words. 'All Christ's words were, in the highest and strictest sense of the terms, the words of God, and no less the words of a man.'<sup>40</sup>

The suggestion we would make is that in the teaching of Jesus Christ we have that connexion between the prime and the secondary analogates which McIntyre and Wells have requested, such that the analogy is not so subjective in its application to Scripture as they would suppose.

There are of course other questions involved here which we cannot now discuss. It is, it would seem, hard to avoid the conclusion that the teaching of Jesus presented to us in the Gospel narratives is intended to be regarded as wholly authoritative. The exegetical case for this position has been well made.<sup>41</sup> Further, though the inter-connexion of the sinlessness of Christ and infallibility in Scripture may depend upon the efficacy of the analogy, that between his sinlessness and the infallibility of his own teaching does not. Klaas Runia touches upon the subject:

The question may be asked, of course: what does this sinlessness of Jesus mean? How far does it go? Does it refer only to His spiritual

37. *Ibid.*, p. 466.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 467.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 468.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 467.

41. E.g., in J. W. Wenham, *Christ and the Bible*.

relation to the Father and His moral relation to His fellow men? Or also to His *knowledge*, so that we must say: there was *never one error* on the part of Jesus?<sup>42</sup>

He calls in evidence James Orr, who rightly points out that anyone who says that Jesus was subject to 'illusion' or 'false judgement' must realize the consequences. Illusion and false judgment are not isolated processes of the mind, but the basis for subsequent actions. Jesus, then, would be subject to sin. . . . But since He was sinless, we must conclude that He was infallibly preserved from all error in all that He revealed as the One sent by His Father.<sup>43</sup>

At all events, we see that the teaching of the Incarnate Son, itself recorded for us in Scripture and thereby taking upon itself the character of Scripture too, provides a point of contact between relations in the two parts of the analogy. The hypostatic union in Jesus Christ gives rise to and is itself analogically related to the teaching of the God-man, in which human words are pressed into divine service. If the consequence of Incarnation is to bring about infallibility in the human language of the Incarnate One, infallibility will be the inevitable product of an analogous divine-human book. In McIntyre's symbolic terms of A:B::C:D, we see that the teaching of Jesus Christ brings about just such a relation as he requires between B and D on the human sides of the prime and secondary analogates to such a degree that it is actually subsumed under D: it is contained within the divine-human corpus of Scripture. If the teaching of the God-man is infallible teaching, the analogous teaching of the divine-human book will be infallible too. The divine-human principle evident in the *unio hypostatica*, when giving rise to human language, gives rise to language which is infallible.

### The Analogy of Revelation

That brings us to a further question, which takes us behind the particular discussion in which we have been engaged, and seeks the factor which unites these two aspects of revelation and explains their relationship to one another. We may speak of it as the analogy of revelation. It has of course been common to speak of the Incarnation itself as the controlling principle of revelation. Paul Wells, in his study of Barr, reacts against the placing of an Incarnational strait-jacket on theological discourse to such a degree as to label talk of the divine-human nature of Scripture 'dualistic', and to accept in essence Barr's critique of the analogy while dissenting from his own alternative position. Wells suggests that the real duality in Scripture is not between divine and human, but between obedience and disobedience. He writes,

the fundamental perspective of Scripture is not centred on man as finite and God as infinite, on the human and the divine, but on the contrast between man in covenant community and man in covenant-breaking sin.<sup>44</sup>

42. Runia, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

44. Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 354.

It is, therefore, 'sinfulness, not finitude, which separates the creature from the Creator', though he is careful to admit the 'distinction between Creator and creature'.<sup>45</sup> But the root problem is ethical and religious, and without that problem the metaphysical distinction between God and man would be no barrier to communion between them.

That this, thus boldly put, is something of an over-reaction to the Incarnational hegemony of recent thought Wells implicitly admits. But in giving the priority to moral and religious questions rather than to ontological (and, by implication, to Atonement rather than to Incarnation) there can be no doubt that he is seeking to redress a balance. Yet there is no reason why this recognition should rule out an analogy of revelation which will subsume both Christ and Bible without giving a false priority to metaphysical concerns. For it is, of course, in the nature of man's createdness that knowledge of God must be revealed to him, whether in general or special revelation, whether before or after the Fall. Revelation in the context of sin must needs be appropriate to the condition of man to whom it is made.

If revelation is to take place at all, its content must be both a faithful declaration of the message or person of the revealer, and in a form capable of apprehension and comprehension by the intended recipient. These are *conditiones sine qua non*. It follows that when revelation comes to man it must come in a manner suited to his ignorance and his essential inability to judge of things divine. An ambiguous revelation, whether personal or propositional, in which elements of revelatory truth are combined with other elements which do not reveal but which obscure and mislead, can be no revelation at all. Only to a super-human recipient already possessed of knowledge and judgement in the truth of God could such a 'revelation' reveal. Its deficiencies as revelation to man as he is go wider and deeper than may appear. For, though only ten per cent, let us say, of the *prima facie* revelation (whether the actions of Jesus Christ or the propositions of Holy Scripture) may be in error (moral in the one case, factual in the other), that will be sufficient to undermine the revelatory character of the whole, since *which* ten per cent misleads and *which* ninety per cent reveals is not apparent. An appearance of ninety per cent revelation resolves into one hundred per cent failure. The entire medium, personal or propositional, is seen to be questionable. However much actual truth it may contain, that truth remains hidden. Revelation, in the logical sense of successful revelation, wholly fails to take place.

The analogy of revelation dictates otherwise, with a whole revelation and a revelation wholly authoritative for rational but creaturely and fallen men. Kuyper addresses this question, subsuming the two analogates of Christ and Scripture under the third of revelation itself:

If man is created after the Image of God and thus disposed to communion with the Eternal, then this *Word of God* [*sc.*, the revelation] also must be able to be grasped by man; and even after his fall into sin, this Word of God must go out to him, though now in a way suited to his condition. This takes place now, since man has received

45. *Ibid.*, p. 355.

*being and consciousness*, in two ways. In the way of the *esse* by the *incarnation* of the Logos, and in the way of consciousness as this self-same Logos becomes embodied in the Scripture. Both are the spoken Word (Λόγος προφορικός); but in the one case it is the Word 'become flesh' (σάρξ γενόμενος), in the other 'written' (εγγράφος), and these two cover each other. Christ is the whole Scripture, and the Scripture brings the *τό esse* of Christ to our consciousness.<sup>46</sup>

Kuyper goes on to trace out the parallel of the transcendent/immanent nature both of Scripture and of Christ, a duality required by their revelatory role and manifest in the 'servant form' taken by them both.

### In Conclusion

We suggest, therefore, that the analogy of Christ and Scripture may be sustained. It has, like every analogy, clear limits; and, in particular, is governed by proportionality and not by inequality. It may stand, therefore, without prejudice to the unique hypostatic union or to the equally special manner of Biblical inspiration, both modes of revelation appropriate to the natures of the media concerned. At the same time, both lie under the analogy of revelation, which must govern all the relations of God and his creatures, since it arises out of the nature of the distinctions, moral and metaphysical, which separate them.

In the teaching of Jesus Christ we see the production of human language as the fruit of the *unio hypostatica*, and we find a point of contact between the human side of both prime and secondary analogates: both analogous relations bring about human speech, and the speech of Jesus Christ is in part incorporated within the speech which makes up Holy Scripture. The two are therefore comparable, and free the analogy from the charge of helplessness in actual theological questions. If the teaching of Jesus Christ is infallible, then so must be the teaching of Holy Scripture. The question of the infallibility of Holy Scripture takes on a distinctly Christological significance.

46. Abraham Kuyper, *Principles of Sacred Theology*, pp. 476, 7.

# THE LOGIC OF LIMITED ATONEMENT

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John McLeod Campbell's book *The Nature of the Atonement* (1856, 4th Edition, 1873) contains a vigorous attack upon the doctrine of limited atonement. According to the Reformed Churches, that doctrine is central to a proper understanding of the biblical view of the atonement. It states that while Christ's atonement was, objectively considered, of sufficient worth to redeem the whole human race, (indeed, human races of an untold number), nevertheless Christ intended, in accordance with the will of his Father, to die for a definite number of people, and fully carried through that intention. The biblical basis of such a view was not only the explicit teaching of Scripture in such places as John 6:37 and John 10:15, but also a number of more general considerations to do with the nature of Christ's satisfaction for sin, divine election, and the harmony and unity of the divine purposes.

It has never been part of the doctrine of limited atonement to state that such and such a proportion or percentage of humanity was atoned for at Calvary. Rather it has cut short such questionings by citing the biblical words about the innumerable company of the redeemed, and the danger of speculating about and attempting to pry into what has not been revealed. It has added that all those who are objects of Christ's atoning work shall, in the words of *The Westminster Confession of Faith* be called 'out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ' (X.1.).

In this brief article consideration will be given to two objections that McLeod Campbell had to limited atonement. They both arise from the attributes or character of God. These objections could reasonably be left to lie in oblivion were it not for the fact that they have recently been dusted off and endorsed by Professor J. B. Torrance in the course of his critique of the Calvinistic theology of the *Westminster Confession*. Professor Torrance has this to say:

The doctrine of the Covenant of Works (whose conditions Christ fulfils for the elect) implies that God is a contract-God, and denies that God is related to all men in Love (Agape). John Owen and Jonathan Edwards took this to its logical conclusion that Justice is the essential attribute by which God is related to all as Judge, but the love of God is arbitrary! But what doctrine of God is that? It is a concept of God derived from 'reason', 'the light of nature' and Western notions of 'natural law' and 'the law of contract' and read back into the Bible. But it is not the biblical view that God is Love (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) in his innermost Being, and that his Being is manifested in all his activities, in

Creation, Providence as well as Redemption.<sup>1</sup>

Professor Torrance states this view again

Jonathan Edwards in New England took this (the priority of law over grace) to its theological conclusion in teaching that Justice is the essential attribute of God, but the Love of God is arbitrary. God is related to all men as contracting sovereign and judge, but only to some men in grace. This may be the logical corollary of federal Calvinism but it is not true of the New Testament.<sup>2</sup>

And more recently

It is precisely this kind of Aristotelian logic which led the later Calvinists like John Owen to formulate a doctrine of 'limited atonement'. The argument is that if Christ died for all men, and all are not saved, then Christ died in vain — and *a priori*, because God always infallibly achieves his purposes, this is unthinkable. Where does this same argument lead us when we apply it to the doctrine of God, as John Owen and Jonathan Edwards did? On these grounds they argued that justice is the essential attribute of God, but his love is arbitrary. In his classical defence of the doctrine of a limited atonement, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, in Book IV John Owen examines the many texts in which the word 'all' appears, saying that Christ died 'for all' and argues that 'all' means "all the elect". For example, when he turns to John 3:16, he says 'By the "world"', we understand the elect of God only . . . . .' (p. 209). What then about 'God so loved . . . .'? Owen argues that if God loves all, and all are not saved then he loves them in vain. *Therefore he does not love all!* If he did, this would imply imperfection in God. 'Nothing that includes any imperfection is to be assigned to Almighty God. In terms of this 'logic' he argues *love is not God's nature*.<sup>3</sup>

Although McLeod Campbell is not mentioned in these extracts it is nevertheless clear that Professor Torrance is endorsing his position. For McLeod Campbell wrote, in the course of his chapter criticising the views of Edwards and Owen

The conception of the nature of the atonement on which the system of Owen and Edwards proceeds; and the reasonings in relation to the Divine Attributes by which they attempt to lay a deep foundation for is in the reality of what God is, present this — I may surely say — startling — result, that, while they set forth justice as a necessary attribute of the divine nature, so that God must deal with *all men* according to its requirements, they represent mercy and love as not necessary, but arbitrary, and what, therefore, may find their expression in the history of *only some men*. For according to their system justice alone is

1. 'Strengths and Weaknesses of the Westminster Theology', in *The Westminster Confessions in the Church Today* ed. Alasdair I. C. Heron (Edinburgh, 1982) p. 48.
2. 'Calvin and Puritanism in England and Scotland — some basic concepts in the development of "Federal Theology"' in *Calvinus Reformator* (Potchefstroom, South Africa, 1982) p. 273.
3. 'The Incarnation and "Limited Atonement"', *The Evangelical Quarterly*, Vol. LV, No. 2, April 1983, pp. 84-5.

expressed in the history of all men, that is to say, in the history of the non-elect, in their endurance of punishment; in the history of the elect, in Christ's enduring it for them. Mercy and love are expressed in the history of the elect alone. Surely, not to enter into the question of the absolute distinctness of the Divine Attributes, or their central and essential unity, if any one attribute might be expected to shine full-orbed in a revelation which testifies that 'God is love', that attribute is love.<sup>4</sup>

The substance of this charge is that in their formulations of the doctrine of limited atonement Edwards and Owen do not do justice to the biblical emphasis upon the centrality of the love of God. In particular, while they make justice a necessary attribute of God, love is made arbitrary, and so not central and essential to the divine character. God judges all men according to his justice, either in themselves or, if they are among the number of the elect, in their substitute, Christ. God's love and mercy, on the other hand (leaving aside the question of common grace) are known only by the elect, in their conversion, sanctification and glorification in Christ. God's justice is general, 'necessary', while his love and mercy are particular, 'arbitrary'. In this way, it is claimed, the Calvinistic presentation of the atonement cannot do justice to the biblical idea of the love of God according to which 'God is love in his innermost being'.

However, it is a misunderstanding of the doctrine of the atonement to suppose that according to it God deals with all men in justice but with only some in mercy. For according to the doctrine of limited atonement the elect do not experience God's justice as it concerns them, for it is satisfied by the atonement of Christ for them. All are liable to punishment for their sin, but only some are punished since the elect are 'punished' in Christ their substitute. So it is not that some experience both love and justice while some experience justice only. It is rather, according to the doctrine, that some experience love, some justice, neither both and each one or the other. The inequality is thus symmetrical, and the incidence of divine love and justice does not provide the least reason for supposing that those who hold this view hold that justice is essential to God while love is arbitrary, nor the slightest reason for thinking that they are committed to such a view.

So the problem is not that of explaining how all men can experience God's justice and only some his love and mercy. Nor is it the problem of explaining how God is able to waive his justice and show mercy in the case of some and not of others. Nevertheless, even allowing for this misunderstanding of the nature of divine justice and mercy a problem over the fact that some experience God's love in Christ and others do not remains to be explained. How can God consistently with his character accept Christ's satisfaction for some and not for others? And here, it seems, we hit our heads against the ceiling. The only satisfactory answers to such a question are those provided by Paul, 'Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why has thou made me thus?' (Rom. 9:20) and by Christ,

4. *The Nature of the Atonement* (4th edition, 1873), p. 54.

'Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight' (Matt. 11:26). Why has God chosen as he has? Because he is God and that is his choice.

We shall now try on behalf of Owen and Edwards to rebut the claims of McLeod Campbell and Professor Torrance with two arguments. The first has to do with the nature of mercy. The second will attempt to show that the argument of McLeod Campbell and Professor Torrance, if applied consistently, would lead to a *reductio ad absurdum* of their position.

First, the nature of mercy. Granted that there cannot be mercy without need, how can it be that there is mercy for some of the needy and not for others? I take this to be a question not about the morality of what God is alleged by Owen and Edwards to do, but about the logical possibility of his doing such. If it were only a matter of God's morality, then as we have noted it would be satisfactory to meet the point in terms of Paul's unanswerable questions in Romans 9. But how is the logical objection to be met?

McLeod Campbell's contention involves a misunderstanding of the logic of mercy understood as 'undeserved love'. What is essential to such love is that it could, consistently with all else that God is, be withheld by him. If God cannot but exercise mercy as he cannot but exercise justice, then its character as *mercy* vanishes. If God has to exercise mercy as he has to exercise justice then such 'mercy' would not be mercy. For the character of mercy is such that each person who receives it is bound to say 'I have no right to what I have received. It would have been perfectly consistent with God's justice had I not received it'. And so in this respect the logical character of mercy is vastly different from that of justice. A justice that could be unilaterally waived would not *be* justice, and mercy which could not be unilaterally waived would not be mercy. As John Owen puts it:

To prove mercy to be an essential property of God, it is sufficient that he exercised it towards any . . . . God is bound to exercise mercy to none, but (that) he cannot but exercise his justice towards sinners (provided he be inclined to be just), if he would preserve his natural right and dominion over his creatures, and the holiness and purity of his nature uninjured and entire.<sup>5</sup>

An employee who thought that because his employer owed him wages he also owed him a gift as well would reveal that he had not properly understood what a gift is.

It is made evident in Christ the Son, how and by what means God, infinitely merciful and infinitely just, — acting on the principles of strict justice with some, and of mere grace with others, but in exercising both the one and the other, both justice and mercy, in and through the Mediator, the one, indeed, in his own proper person, and the other towards those for whom he was surety, — hath declared himself.<sup>6</sup>

Could God have had mercy on all? Perhaps he could. Certainly there is nothing in the idea of supreme justice alone, or of infinite mercy alone, which precludes this. It cannot be validly inferred from the fact that God

5. *Works* ed. W. H. Goold X.581.

is supremely just or infinitely merciful that God could not have had saving mercy on all. But nor does the possession of these attributes entail that God should have mercy upon all.

But even if this reasoning is correct, and God could have exercised mercy upon all had he chosen to do so, it is important to see that this fact would make God's mercy on all as 'arbitrary' as his choice to exercise mercy only upon some.

It might be objected that if God could not have had saving mercy upon all, but had to have saving mercy upon only some, then those on whom he exercised mercy could have expected mercy had they known, and even more so if God *had* to exercise mercy upon certain particular individuals. But what makes mercy to be mercy in the case of those who are saved is the fact that it is undeserved. The fact that others similarly placed to themselves are not saved, is further evidence that the mercy received by the saved has come not as a result of merit or desert. So that even if God could not but save some particular, nameable individuals the description of that salvation as 'undeserved mercy' is not compromised.

In brief, if mercy is an act of the divine will, then it is equally 'arbitrary' whether that mercy is particular or universal. If on the other hand mercy is part of the divine nature, necessitated by who God is, whether that mercy is particular or universal its character as mercy is not compromised. For mercy is characterised by favour that is not undeserved, even though that undeserved favour is expected, or even guaranteed.

But is there an overriding objection to considering God's choice to be "arbitrary"? In an article already referred to Professor Torrance says

(according to Owen) there is no 'natural affection and propensity in God to the good of his creatures'. 'By love is meant an act of his will (where we conceive his love to be seated . . . .)' God's love is thus assigned to his *will* to save the elect only. It seems to me that this is a flagrant case where a kind of logic leads us to run in the face of the plain teaching of the Bible that God is agape (pure love) in his innermost being.<sup>7</sup>

Whatever the scope of divine love, in assigning that love to the will of God does not Owen make it essentially arbitrary or capricious? There is some misunderstanding here. When Owen said that love in God is not an affection, he means that love is not something that *happens* to God, or that disturbs him.

Consider what is the eternal love of God. Is it an affection in his eternal nature, as love is in ours? It were no less than blasphemy once so to conceive. His pure and holy nature, wherein there is neither change or shadow of turning, is not subject to any such passion; it must be, then, an eternal act of his will, and that alone.<sup>8</sup>

So when Owen assigns God's love to his will and not to a supposed affection, he is making an important but rather technical theological

6. *Works* ed. W. H. Goold X.582.

7. 'The Incarnation and "Limited Atonement"', p. 85.

8. *Works* ed. W. H. Goold, X.275.

distinction. Assigning God's love to his will does not mean that it is capricious or without reason, or an act of 'pure will' in the Scotist sense, but simply that the origin of God's love is not in time. It is not due to his reaction upon learning of human sin and misery, but it is 'an eternal act of his will', a determination of his will which is wholly in accord with his character. This emphasis is important for other reasons, but by itself it has no bearing at all upon the *scope* of divine love. God's love is, as Owen says, his 'purpose, good pleasure, a pure act of his will'.<sup>9</sup> To put the point in different words, according to Owen God is not moved to love by the plight of the creature, he determines to love by an eternal purpose. Furthermore, 'every eternal act of God's will is imminent in himself, not really distinguished from himself; whatever is so in God is God'.<sup>10</sup>

So far we have tried to show that it is a mistake to suppose that the Calvinistic doctrine of limited atonement carries with it the idea that justice is essential to God's character whereas love is arbitrary. Whether or not mercy is exercised upon all must involve the divine will, since to exercise mercy is to act. And so such an exercise is, in a technical sense, 'arbitrary' but it is not arbitrary in the sense of being capricious, irresponsible, or irrational.

But now let us leave this issue to one side and consider the logical argument which McLeod Campbell presents on its own merits. He appears to wish to maintain that

- (1) Each of God's attributes e.g. his love and his justice, is necessary to God.

That is, each of God's attributes is possessed essentially by God; if God lacked any of these attributes he would not be God just as if I lacked the attribute of being a person I could not be me. Lurking behind (1) is the further claim that God is simple, that

- (2) Each of God's individual essential<sup>11</sup> attributes is identical with each other of his individual essential attributes.

If God is simple then divine love *is* divine justice, divine justice *is* divine wisdom, and so on. While (1) does not require (2), clearly enough (2) requires (1), and McLeod Campbell seems to favour (2) even if he does not explicitly commit himself to it. In addition, as we have seen, he does commit himself to the following:

- (3) The unequal exercise of distinct attributes can only be the result of arbitrariness.

And so, on the assumption that arbitrariness in God is undesirable (and indeed logically impossible if divine simplicity is true, since freedom from arbitrariness in the exercise of any attribute must entail freedom from arbitrariness in the exercise of any other, since each attribute *is* the other) McLeod Campbell regards (4) as true:

- (4) Any attribute necessary to God is necessarily exercised by God on

9. *Works* ed. W. H. Goold, X.276.

10. *Works* ed. W. H. Goold, X.275.

11. By an individual essential attribute or property is meant a property without which God could not be God and which God alone can have.

all creatures on whom it is logically possible to exercise it.<sup>12</sup> Thus, if infinite love and infinite justice are essential attributes of God, it would follow from (4) that God's love is exercised on exactly the same number of people as his justice. If his justice is experienced by all then so must his love be.

So far so good. It is a fact about logic, however, that one cannot call a halt to an argument when one pleases. Adopting an argument is not like calling a taxi. And while the argument which we have traced so far may seem to carry conviction, and to carry unwelcome consequences for the doctrine of limited atonement, it can be shown that such an argument has unwelcome consequences for McLeod Campbell's own view.

The logical problem for McLeod Campbell's view is as follows. (4) entails that God's love and justice are to be exercised upon all. But it also entails (5):

(5) Any attribute necessary to God is necessarily exercised by God *equally* on all on whom it is logically possible to exercise it.

What (5) says is that not only if arbitrariness is to be avoided must the divine attributes be exercised on all, they must be exercised *equally* upon all. For if there is the least deviation then this signals inequality of treatment, and this in turn signals an unequal exercise of the divine attributes, and any such unequal exercise must be arbitrary.

It can be seen from this that the so-called 'scandal of particularity' is not only a so-called scandal about God's redemption of sinners, it is also a so-called scandal about his creation of the universe. Why is it that a God who is loving and wise, and necessarily loving and wise, should ordain a universe with manifest angularities? Why is it that some are strong, some weak, some male, some female, some healthy, some diseased, and so forth?

On McLeod Campbell's view God could not ordain such a universe, since for God to have created a universe in which one person was differently placed from another in some respect would have been for God's attributes to have been differentially exercised with respect to those two people, and according to McLeod Campbell such a state of affairs is an impossibility, because 'arbitrary'.

Faced with this consequence, it is possible to respond to it in one of two different ways. One way is to recognise the manifest angularities of the universe and, accepting (4), to conclude that the universe is not the creation of God. This consequence would obviously not be attractive to McLeod Campbell. The second way to respond would be to argue that since God exists and is the creator of the universe it must be possible to have such a universe consistently with the character that God is known to have, or believed to have. But if it is possible for there to be differentiations in the created universe that are consistent with the attributes of God then it is presumably possible for there to be differentiations with regard to God's redemptive purposes which are entirely consistent with the divine attributes. This alternative would also

12. This principle has universalistic implications, or at least (if it is held that the exercise of God's love can be decisively thwarted by his creatures) it has Arminian implications.

seem not to be an attractive one for McLeod Campbell. So neither alternative is attractive to him. But is there a third possibility?

So the argument of McLeod Campbell and Professor Torrance takes on the form of a *reductio ad absurdum*. It carries the absurd consequence for any theist who takes the idea of divine creation seriously, that God could not have created a universe in which people were significantly different from each other, or in which anything was significantly different from anything else. Such a consequence is sufficient to show to us that something, somewhere has gone wrong in the argument. The natural suspect is (4) and what it appears to entail, (5).

It is open to someone to claim that while God can be arbitrary or particular with regard to, say, sex, hair-colour, and I.Q. he cannot be arbitrary or particular over any person's eternal salvation. But how would such a claim be argued? Does not any distinction between God's non-redemptive purposes, in which arbitrariness is permissible, and his redemptive purposes in which it is not permissible appear to be an arbitrary distinction?

One possible reaction to this argument is to dismiss it as logic-chopping. One might expect this to be the reaction of Professor Torrance for he has a distrust of what he calls 'Aristotelian logic', 'reason' and 'the light of nature'. But the price that is paid for such a dismissal is a very high one, too high for most of us. For if we dismiss this argument because it is an exercise in 'logic' then we dismiss all argument out of hand, including the argument of McLeod Campbell and Professor Torrance against limited atonement. For it must not be forgotten that an argument that dismisses a theological view as the product of Aristotelian logic is still an argument, and if we throw out all argument we throw out that argument as well.

In this article we have tried, on behalf of theologians such as John Owen and Jonathan Edwards, to defend the Calvinistic doctrine of limited atonement against certain moral and logical objections which have had an appeal to certain writers in the past and which still have an appeal. We have argued that to suppose that the doctrine makes the action of God arbitrary in an objectionable sense is to misunderstand both the nature of divine mercy and the nature of the divine will. We have further argued that McLeod Campbell's claim that all divine attributes must be exercised by God on whom it is logically possible to exercise them proves too much and the claim reduces to absurdity. But it must be stressed that in attempting these tasks we have not tried to provide the biblical warrant for the doctrine of limited atonement any more than we have attempted to answer every objection that might be levelled at that doctrine.<sup>13</sup>

13. Thanks are due to Professor William Young for comments on an earlier version of this article.

# HAVE MIRACULOUS GIFTS CEASED?

## A Review Article

JOHN J. MURRAY

OBAN

*Counterfeit Miracles*<sup>1</sup> by B. B. Warfield contains the Thomas Smyth Lectures for 1917-18 delivered at the Columba Theological Seminary. First published in New York in 1918, it was reprinted under the title, *Miracles Yesterday and Today: True and False* by Eerdmans in 1953. When the Banner of Truth Trust reprinted it in 1972 they returned to the original title. The present volume, with a picture of Lourdes on the cover, is the third printing from the Edinburgh-based publishing house.

B. B. Warfield (1851-1921) was latterly Professor of Didactic and Polemical Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary (1886-1921). He was the best known opponent of the rationalism and anti-supernaturalism which threatened the life of the Church in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. His work presently under review has long been regarded as the classic Reformed expression of the view that the extraordinary spiritual gifts of the New Testament Church have ceased. The six lectures that make up the work are 1. The Cessation of the Charismata; 2. Patristic and Medieval Marvels; 3. Roman Catholic Miracles; 4. Irvingite Gifts; 5. Faith Healing; 6. Mind Cure.

I will attempt to give an outline of Warfield's argument, paying special attention to the opening chapter, and then seek to make some critical assessment of the work.

### Review

Warfield begins by defining the charismata as 'the extraordinary capacities produced in the early Christian communities by direct gift of the Holy Spirit'. They were part of the credentials of the Apostles as the authoritative agents of God in founding the Church. Their function thus confined them to distinctively the Apostolic Church, and they necessarily passed away with it. In support of this plea Warfield adduces two arguments: 1) the testimony of later ages as to the cessation of the charismata 2) the teaching of the New Testament as to their nature and origin.

In dealing with the first argument the author instead of offering direct proof examines the chief views which have been held favourable to the continuance of the charismata beyond the Apostolic age. He quotes Conyers Middleton as saying 'The most prevailing opinion is that they subsisted through the first three centuries, and then ceased in the

1. Republished by the Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 328 pages, pbk, £2.95.

beginning of the fourth, or as soon as Christianity came to be established by the civil power'.

'The facts', says Warfield 'are not in accordance with this'. The writings of the early Fathers contain no clear and certain allusion to miracle-working or to the exercise of the charismatic gifts, contemporaneously with themselves.

The theory behind the view that they continued is that they were needed throughout the period of the Church's weak infancy, being, as Fuller calls them, 'the swaddling-clothes of the infant churches'. Warfield refutes this and shows that the charismata were given not to establish the Church but to authenticate the Apostles as messengers from God. They belonged in a true sense to the Apostles and constituted one of the signs of an Apostle. Miracles and miraculous gifts are the marks and credentials of revelation. They belong to revelation periods, like the founding of the theocracy under Moses and the inauguration of the prophetic era in the ministry of Elijah. 'Their abundant display in the Apostolic Church is the mark of the richness of the Apostolic age in revelation; and when this revelation period closed, the period of miracle-working had passed by also, as a mere matter of course'.

In turning, in chapter 2, to 'Patristic and Medieval Marvels' Warfield observes that when we pass from the literature of the first three centuries into that of the fourth and succeeding centuries, we leave at once the region of the indefinite and undetailed references to miraculous works said to have occurred somewhere or other, and come into contact with a body of writings simply saturated with marvels. The marvels are recounted by scholars, theologians and preachers. Even the great Augustine is rather confusing on this matter. Warfield attempts an assessment of these marvels: 1) they do not seem to have met with universal credence when first published; 2) sometimes rather with definite disbelief; 3) the very fathers who recorded these marvels betray a consciousness that miracles had ceased; 4) a great mass of the wonders had been wrought in interests of grave errors; 5) these ecclesiastical miracles differ fundamentally from Biblical miracles; 6) they represent an infusion of heathen modes of thought into the Church.

It is this last point that Warfield takes up in chapter 3 in connection with Roman Catholic Miracles. The Church of Rome has refused to free itself of the accretions which had attached themselves to Christianity during its long struggle with invading superstition. The whole religion of the heathen world turned on miracles. Belief in miracles was involved in belief in the gods. There is a sense in which the saints are the successors of the gods. The great majority of miracles of healing wrought throughout the history of the Church have been wrought through the agency of relics of the saints. The use of relics is at bottom a species of fetishism.

The cult of relics, says Warfield, has one rival which threatens to regulate it to the background — the cult of the Virgin Mary. There follows an examination of the claims made in connection with her shrine at Lourdes. The author does not wish to suggest that the cures at Lourdes are not in the main real cures. 'We cannot pretend to a complete knowledge of all the forces which may work toward a cure in such

conditions as are present at Lourdes'. However there is the principle that no event can be really miraculous which has implications inconsistent with fundamental religious truth: 'Even though we should stand dumb before the wonders of Lourdes, and should be utterly incapable of suggesting a natural causation for them we know right well they are not of God . . . . their ultimate connection with a cult derogatory to the rights of God who alone is to be called upon in our distresses, stamp them, prior to all examination of the mode of their occurrence, as not from God'.

In chapter 4 Warfield turns his attention to Protestantism. The claim to the possession and exercise of miraculous powers by individuals has always been received in Protestant circles with a suspicion which experience has only too completely justified. He illustrates this with the history of the Irvingite movement. Edward Irving predicted the immediate advent of Christ and proclaimed the restoration of the extraordinary offices and gifts of the Apostolic age, along with an elaborate church organization in preparation for His coming. 'Never have pretensions to gifts and powers of a supernatural order suffered more speedily and definitely the condemnation of facts. The predicted coming of the Lord did not take place: the "Apostles" appointed to receive Him at His coming were gradually called to their eternal home, and still He came not; the pretenders to supernatural gifts one after another awoke to the true state of the case and acknowledged themselves deluded'.

The fifth lecture by Warfield is on 'Faith-Healing'. Although the 'gifts' of the Apostolic age form so clearly connected a body that it would be difficult to separate them from one another, some attempt this and, discarding or reflecting the other gifts, contend vigorously that the gift of healing is a permanent one. For his treatment of this view Warfield selected a book *The Ministry of Healing, or Miracles of Cures in All Ages* by A. J. Gordon. He takes Gordon to task for not defining a miracle at the outset of his book. This leads to confusion by obscuring the lines which divide miracles from the general supernatural. He deals with the three passages on which Gordon rests his argument for faith-healing. He dismisses Mark 16. 17-18 as spurious. James 5. 14-15 gives no indication that 'a peculiar miraculous faith' is intended; the emphasis falls on the official intercession of the Church and the use of means. The use of Matthew 8. 17 in support of healing confuses redemption itself which is objective and takes place outside of us, with its subjective effects which take place in us. Warfield sums up the matter in this way.

'The question at issue is distinctly whether God has pledged Himself to heal the sick miraculously, and does heal them miraculously on the call of his children — that is to say without means — any means — and apart from means and above means; and this is so ordinarily that Christian people may be encouraged, if not required, to discard all means as either unnecessary or even a mark of lack of faith and sinful distrust, and to depend on God alone for the healing of all their sickness'.

In the final chapter of the work, Warfield examines the subject of 'Mind-Cure'. He admits that in doing so he oversteps the limits of his subject. By virtue of the fact that some mental act or state is held to be

producing cause of the healing, it makes no pretence to miraculousness. Nevertheless its relation to faith healing is so close, confusion with it is so common and the lessons to be learned from it so instructive that he could not overlook it. Mind-healing is practised in a variety of forms in Christian Science, Mesmerism, Spiritualism and Faith-Healing. He deals in particular with Christian Science which teaches that 'matter and mortal body are the illusions of human belief, which seem to appear and disappear to mortal sense alone. When this belief changes as in dreams the material body changes with it going wherever we wish, and becoming whatever belief may decree. . . . 'Besiege sickness and death with these principles and all will disappear'.

### **Assessment**

This is a valuable work and reveals the breadth of scholarship that we have come to associate with the name of B. B. Warfield. It is interesting to consider that the notes to the lectures make up about one third of the pages of the book. The subject has been well-researched and carefully documented.

The book performs two valuable functions:

1. It states very clearly the classic Reformed position that miracles are bound up with the giving of revelation. Warfield quotes Calvin to the effect that it is unreasonable to ask miracles — or to find them — where there is no new Gospel. 'By as much as the one Gospel suffices for all lands and all people and all times, by so much does the miraculous attestation of that one Gospel suffice for all lands and all times, and no further miracles are to be expected in connection with it'. What is at stake in this issue, according to Warfield, is the uniqueness and finality of Apostolic Christianity.

2. It gives, a broad-ranging survey of the counterfeit. How vital it is to 'test the spirits to see whether they are from God because many false prophets have gone out into the world' (1 John 4. 1)! Even godly men have been deceived. The Evangelical Church today suffers from a lack of historical perspective. Many of the claims to miraculous powers in our day bear striking similarity to what has been proved false by history. Warfield brings together in this volume much that would be otherwise inaccessible to the general reader.

Apart from these things, the book may not be found all that helpful to those who are seeking to counteract the claims of the Charismatic Movement of today. It is unfortunate that the opening — and basic — chapter of the book is entitled 'The Cessation of the Charismata'. Warfield does acknowledge that the name 'charismata' is broad enough to include the non-miraculous gracious gifts as well as the miraculous ones. But surely all the gifts are gracious, coming from God's unmerited love to us? Many of the gifts have not ceased. We play into the hands of Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostals if we identify charismata with the gifts of 1 Corinthians 12. 8-10.

When Warfield delivered his lectures the Pentecostal movement was in its infancy. The issue has been complicated still further by the phenomenal growth of the Charismatic Movement since the early 1960s.

## HAVE MIRACULOUS GIFTS CEASED?

There needs to be a very careful examination of the list of gifts mentioned in the New Testament and of the relation of gift to office. We must try to establish what is meant by each gift. Are all the gifts of 1 Corinthians 12. 8-10 miraculous ones? Do they all have to do with revelation? If not, should some of them be known in the Church today?

A more recent work that deals helpfully with these questions is *Perspectives on Pentecost* (N. T. Teaching on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit) by Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. His approach is exegetical. Warfield on the other hand tends to be dogmatic, without revealing the exegetical foundation for his conclusions. Historians tend to disagree on the evidence for the cessation of the charismata in the early Church. Michael Green in *Evangelism in the Early Church* differs from Warfield. Can the issue of cessation be resolved by an appeal to history? Are we not likely to get more light from a thorough and careful exegesis of 1 Corinthians 13. 8-13?