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A table of contents for *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* can be found here:

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CONTENTS

ARTICLES

- 1 **MIRACLES AND THE 'LAWS OF NATURE',**
The Revd Dr John C. Sharp, South Church of Scotland, East
Kilbride.
- 20 **JOSEPH HART AND HIS HYMNS,**
The Revd Peter C. Rae, Beath Parish Church, Cowdenbeath.

BOOK REVIEWS

- 40 Thomas F. Torrance (ed.): *Theological Dialogue between
Orthodox and Reformed Churches*, by The Review Editor.
- 41 Carsten Peter Thiede: *Simon Peter: From Galilee to Rome*, by
Richard Bauckham, University of Manchester.
- 43 George Carey: *The Meeting of the Waters*, by Charles M.
Cameron, St Ninian's Parish Church, Dunfermline.
- 44 Geerhardus Vos: *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testament*,
by G.W. Grogan, Bible Training Institute, Glasgow.
- 45 Stephen H. Travis: *Christ and the Judgment of God: Divine
Retribution in the New Testament*, by John Barclay, University
of Glasgow.
- 47 Paul Helm: *The Beginnings: Word and Spirit in Conversion*, by
Alasdair I. Macleod, Free Church of Scotland. Muir of Ord.
- 48 Watson E. Mills (ed.): *Speaking in Tongues: A Guide to
Research on Glossolalia*, by Max Turner, University of
Aberdeen.
- 49 Hans Schwarz: *Divine Communication: Word and Sacrament in
Biblical, Historical and Contemporary Perspective*, by David
F. Wright, New College, Edinburgh.
- 50 Thomas F. Torrance: *Reality and Scientific Theology*, by John
C. Sharp, South Church of Scotland, East Kilbride.
- 51 Hughes Oliphant Old: *Worship (Guides to the Reformed
Tradition)*, by Jock Stein, Carberry Tower, Musselburgh,
Midlothian.
- 53 Bruce J. Nicholls (ed.): *The Church: God's Agent for Change*,
by Colin A. M. Sinclair, Newton-on-Ayr Church of Scotland,
Ayr.
- 54 Dietrich Bonhoeffer: *Spiritual Care*, by James Taylor, Stirling
Baptist Church.
- 55 Alan Kreider: *Journey Towards Holiness: A Way of Living for
God's Nation*, by James Taylor, Stirling Baptist Church.
- 55 Robin Gill: *A Textbook of Christian Ethics*, by John Barclay,
University of Glasgow.

- 57 Tatiana Goricheva: *Talking about God is Dangerous*, by Jenny Robertson, Edinburgh.
- 58 Iain H. Murray: *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography*, by Paul Helm, University of Liverpool.
- 59 James D. Tracy (ed.): *Luther and the Modern State in Germany (Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies, 7)*, by James Atkinson, University of Sheffield.
- 60 William R. Estep: *Renaissance and Reformation*, by R. Tudur Jones, Bala-Bangor College, Bangor.
- 61 Richard B. Sher: *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Moderate Literati of Edinburgh*, by D. E. Bebbington, University of Stirling.

MIRACLES AND THE 'LAWS OF NATURE'

JOHN C. SHARP
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It is often assumed as a starting point for debate that miracles are a setting aside of the laws of nature. I too start at this point. But I will endeavour to argue that this is an erroneous starting point. The definition of a miracle as a violation of a law of nature is of the essence of the Humean view. Hume asserted that:

A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle . . . is as entire as any argument from experience can possible be imagined.¹

This definition, while plausible and popular, needs to be rejected. Hume was assuming laws of nature as a body of positivistic knowledge based on experience – a view stemming from a Newtonian determinism. Quite why theology has allowed Hume to dictate so much of the discussion ever since I am not quite sure.

Certainly there have been objections to this view. Indeed there has been a long running tension at this point. Augustine, for instance, objected to the idea of law being violated or set aside, for if the physical laws of the universe are but expressions of the will of God, then they can hardly be set aside, much less violated.²

Yet this standard view is deeply ingrained – even with orthodox theologians. Charles Hodge defined a miracle as 'an event, in the external world, brought about by the immediate efficiency, or simple volition of God.'³ He divided events into three classes: (a) those due to the ordinary operations of secondary causes; (b) events due to the influence of the Holy Spirit, such as regeneration; and (c) events which belong to neither of the above. Then, noting the objection of Augustine, he goes on to argue that:

The form in which the objection is presented by those who make nature the will of God, is answered by saying that nature is not the will of God in any other sense than that He ordained the sequence of natural events, and established the laws of physical

1. David Hume, *Hume on Religion*, London, 1971, p. 210.
2. Cf. Augustine, *The City of God*, section 21:8.
3. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, Edinburgh, 1960, p. 618.

THE SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

causes by which that regular sequence is secured. This relation between God and the world, assumes that nature and *its laws* are subject to Him, and therefore liable at any time to be suspended or counteracted at his good pleasure.⁴

The premise here seems to view God in a Cartesian manner, indeed in terms of the Deistic clockmaker. Thus, while accepting that the absolute immutability of natural law is a gratuitous assumption, Hodge goes on to point out that God is not subject to the laws of the universe, but is absolutely independent in all his works. It follows that God can set aside the laws of nature. The problem is that Hodge is locating law 'in nature', rather than 'in God' and thus grants an effective autonomy to nature.

The Westminster Confession of Faith also seems caught in this when it states that: 'God in his ordinary providence maketh use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them, at his pleasure.'⁵

The whole issue of the relation of miracles to science seems to focus in two common pronouncements about this relationship: (a) In miracle God works against or contrary to the laws of nature. This may even be formulated as God works against or contrary to his laws in nature. (b) In miracle God works in conjunction with his laws in nature.

I shall seek to establish that this view is suspect. The problem being located, not so much within our concept of biblical material itself, but in our understanding of the status of what are called 'laws of nature'. The two statements I have just made confer autonomy to 'nature'. And autonomy that must be questioned. In recent literature many warning notes are sounded, but again and again ground is surrendered by failing to break the stranglehold that the concept of 'nature' seems to exert. Let me give one example from the field of popular evangelical writing:

Yet, all around us Nature is ever-mindful for the needs of even the most seemingly insignificant creature. (Day and night, summer and winter, Nature is guarding and sustaining every living species).

When we reflect on the intimate care that Nature gives these myriad creatures, we ought to give some thought to us humans and the way God, our Creator, provides for us.⁶

Let me make four statements by way of introduction.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 620, emphasis mine.

5. *Westminster Confession of Faith*, V.3.

6. R. Keith Fraser, *The Heavens are Telling*, Aberdeen, 1976, p. 29.

MIRACLES AND THE 'LAWS OF NATURE'

(a) *Science exists within a framework of law.* Science is dependent on the concept of law, of underlying patterns and order in the universe which the scientist seeks to uncover. Indeed without this initial assumption of uniformity science becomes impossible. As an assumption it is, however, in need of examination. The assumption of order is basically an article of faith. A. N. Whitehead noted:

Science is founded on the notion of Law – Laws of Nature . . . the restless modern search for increased accuracy of observation and for increased detailed explanation is based upon unquestioning faith in the reign of law. Apart from such faith, the enterprise of science is foolish, hopeless.⁷

(b) *The idea of law in science is a biblical concept.* Science as we know it arose within the context of a Christian world-view that stressed the reality of the Creator who had formed the universe within the framework of law. Thus one contemporary philosopher of science, writing of the Reformation, says:

The intellectual power of man was being rediscovered, but in a new context – that of Christianity. This religion involved a belief in a governing *Lord*, leading directly to a belief that there were governing *laws*.⁸

(c) *The idea of 'laws of nature' is a confusing concept.* Today the phrase – 'laws of nature' – is often used with strong honorific intent but little precision. It is not a technical term peculiar to a particular science, but a generic term present from the start. Is it descriptive – explanatory – or causative?

(d) *Some miracles 'appear' to impinge on the ordinary patterns of creation, or laws of nature.*

Historical Review of the Concept of 'Laws of Nature'

Of necessity this will be rather sketchy, but it is important I think in orientating ourselves within our topic.

1. *Two Basic Sources.* It has been suggested that there are two basic sources for our idea of 'laws of nature'. The first is from an analogy based on the practise of civil government by statute law introduced by the absolute monarchs of the 16th and 17th centuries. The second is from the Jewish-Christian conception of a law-giving God.

7. A. N. Whitehead, *Adventure of Ideas*, Cambridge, 1947, p. 51, 173.

8. J. T. Davies, *The Scientific Approach*, London, 1975, p. 31.

2. *The Reformation Influence.* The Middle Ages, as far as I can determine, saw no real emphasis on the term and the concept really comes to the fore from the 16th century onwards. Remember we are thinking about 'laws of nature' and not 'natural law' referring to realms of justice and morality. It can be argued that the term is an inheritance to science from the Reformation period. One science historian, Steven Mason, after having reviewed Zilsel's attribution of the origin of law to sources in civil law and the thought of Bodin, goes on to suggest that:

Perhaps it was not also a matter of chance that some forty years before Bodin another Frenchman, John Calvin, in the field of theology, was working towards the conception of God as the Absolute Ruler of the universe, governing by laws decided at the beginning.⁹

Certainly it is hard to deny that through the 17th century creation's laws were seen as testimonies to the wisdom and providence of God by theologian and scientist alike.

3. *The Absolutization of Law.* Descartes was crucial in the development of the concept of law, effectively marking a clear break from the Reformation idea of the term. The Reformation world-view envisaged no autonomous law, but Descartes identified the so-called 'laws of nature' with the principles of mechanics. Hence in the Cartesian dualism which was to be so influential, events were seen as determined by the mechanical law of the universe and not by divine action.

There was some, though little, resistance to this emancipation of the concept from its religious origins in the providence of God. More conservative thinkers such as Robert Boyle became increasingly unhappy with the concept of 'laws of nature', seeing the term as 'an improper and figurative expression.'¹⁰ However, by the time of Newton the concept was in general, if not widespread, use in a manner that would gather strength as an autonomous principle of law.

This led into the autonomous principle of law in the Deists. They, along with the men of the Enlightenment, were the twin forces which enthroned the autonomy of reason above God and revealed religion. Interestingly it is with the Enlightenment that the phrase 'laws of nature' seems to become extensive in literature as something determinate and objective – nature being compelled to follow the laws that govern it. Berkouwer notes that:

9. S. Mason, *A History of the Sciences*, London and New York, 1973, p. 173-4.

10. R. Boyle, quoted in Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

MIRACLES AND THE 'LAWS OF NATURE'

In the 19th century, nature became via positivism and materialism, just 'nature' as such; the closed world of mechanical casuality. Nature was isolated from God.¹¹

Contemporary Review of the Status of 'Laws of Nature'

The root of our contemporary problem would appear to be that our thought forms are still constrained by the old mechanistic concepts of the universe derived from Descartes and Newton, and mediated to us via the Enlightenment – however much we protest otherwise. There is much talk about having left mechanistic concepts behind – but the prevalence of the unconscious acceptance of a determinate nature that operates in some independent manner betrays the grip the old framework still has. The old dualism still holds sway as Professor Torrance spells out very sharply in *Transformation and Convergence in the Frame of Knowledge*. Torrance notes the problem of miracle where much of the discussion still operates in a dualistic framework between so-called 'laws of nature' and 'acts of Divinity'.

Torrance's critique is a welcome voice in the current situation. He calls to his cause philosophers of science such as Polanyi, Kuhn and Popper – noting how they have radically dismantled the old framework, and opened the door to a converging appreciation of the traditional sides of dualistic thinking. In science there are the sides of theory and empirical data; while in theology there is the dualism of God and nature. But the old dualism has given way in an epistemological revolution where the empirical and theoretical are interwoven. Using the dualism of historical and biblical Jesus, of natural and supernatural, as a backcloth Torrance asserts:

It can hardly be insisted strongly enough, however, that, at least so far as pure sciences are concerned, this whole way of thinking has collapsed, for the dualist principles of knowledge upon which it rested have had to give way in a profound epistemological revolution to another and more concrete way of thinking in which empirical and theoretical components are found to be inextricably interwoven from the very bottom.¹²

No longer is there a hard dichotomy between science and theology for both are now seen to rest ultimately on faith. Much of the confusion in modern theology is that it does not seem to appreciate the nature of science and scientific activity regarding the status of laws of nature – from within the secular realm.

11. G. C. Berkouwer, *General Revelation*, Grand Rapids, 1971, p. 133.

12. T. F. Torrance, *Transformation and Convergence in the Frame of Knowledge*, Belfast, 1984, p. 247.

THE SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

It is popularly said that scientists discover 'laws of nature'; that orderliness implies some rule of law, and that the scientist uncovers the complexities of phenomenon, thus exposing the underlying regularities to reveal natural laws. It is obvious right away that this viewpoint rests on an out-dated essentialist view of science – for if laws were truly discovered in this fashion they would endure for all time. But the history of science indicates that it would appear to be the fate of scientific laws to be amended or refuted.

As the 20th century has progressed and world-views become steadily distanced from Christianity, a certain ambiguity has arisen. The whole idea of law is not conducive to much modern philosophy; further it has come under attack from those who see science based, at a fundamental level, on disorder, chance, randomness. Many are therefore unhappy about the use of the term 'law' in reference to the world of science. Rom Harre actually complains: "The term "law" is a survival in this use of a certain theory about nature, in which there was a law-giver . . . I do not hold this theory."¹³ This statement is revealing. It confirms the roots of the law-idea in the Christian world-view and the reality of God. But further it creates a dilemma for Harre. Although he does not want the term, and refuses to accept the world-view from which it comes, he is nevertheless forced to use the phrase 'law of nature' albeit 'as little as possible.'¹⁴ I in fact wish to go a step further, for different reasons, and refrain from any use of the term 'law of nature'! But take law away from science and there is no scientific enterprise.

Karl Popper claims that laws of nature are laws in that the more they prohibit the more they say (*cf.* civil law); and that the search for law is equivalent to a search for casual explanations which can never be ultimately accomplished.¹⁵ Despite this, in opposition to Heisenberg, he states that laws are precise even if we cannot reach them; and we can never know if we have finally reached a law because it is always of the nature of a hypothesis. For Popper a law of nature is really more consistent with a 'law of science'.

In contrast to Popper, Stephen Toulmin asserts that as far as laws of nature are concerned the words 'true' and 'probable' have no application. Here hypotheses yield laws in terms of fruitfulness. A law of nature is neither true nor false, but a statement about a range of application.¹⁶

The basic perception of science is therefore crucial – and it is naive to assume, as theologians often seem to do, that there is one single

13. R. Harre, *An Introduction to the Logic of the Sciences*, London and New York, 1967, p. 107.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 107.

15. *Cf.* K. Popper, *Logic of Scientific Discovery*, Hutchinson, 1972, p. 41, 61.

16. *Cf.* S. Toulmin, *Philosophy of Science*, London, 1967, p. 70.

MIRACLES AND THE 'LAWS OF NATURE'

framework which can be labelled the modern view of science. In reality there are many perceptions. Toulmin is working out of an instrumentalist concept of science; whereas Popper is prepared to see that laws must be either true or false even if we can never be sure. It would seem reasonable to me to concur with Davies, a disciple of Popper, that laws are simple well tested general theories about our universe that can be disproved.¹⁷ But now we are talking about scientific formulations which can be amended and refuted. We are no longer talking about some intrinsic law of nature *per se*.

In yet another view Holton writes:

Although laws of nature are usually called inexorable and inescapable, probably because the word erroneously suggests analogies with divine and judicial law, they actually are humanly formulated generalisations that are neither eternally true nor unchangeable.¹⁸

Here 'laws of nature' have in effect been defined as 'laws of science'. We are not talking about some objective reality which has been discovered, but rather about alterable equations that man has drawn up.

It seems to me that we are needing to make a clear and careful distinction between certain different concepts. Just as we have to be careful to distinguish between Scripture and our interpretation of it – so also with the created order. We need to distinguish between (1) an autonomous concept of laws of nature which would locate independence within that which is relative, namely creation; (2) the laws of science as they may be formulated at any given period; and (3) the laws of God over his creation. Three distinct concepts – laws of nature; laws of science; laws of God.

That, in brief, is how some see laws of nature – as the unknown objective after which the scientist strives; as mere ordering tools to make predictions; as in effect laws of science. But let me turn to some discussion of this within Christian literature.

Christian Viewpoints

Let me first give some examples of the basic problem which I see as a conscious or unconscious acceptance of the autonomy of law and the attendant independence of something called 'nature'. Secular writers are untroubled with the autonomy of nature; while Christian writers find themselves poured into a tension between such autonomy and the sovereignty of God.

17. Cf. Davies, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

18. G. Holton & D. Roller, *Foundations of Modern Physical Science*, London, 1958, p. 259.

1. *Charles Hodge*. Hodge is hardly contemporary on scientific issues. Yet in my doctoral thesis I drew heavily on him for a doctrine of creation as I could find no better source. The debate over the 'reign of law' was prominent in the evolutionary debate of the 19th century, and Hodge wrote extensively on this in his *Systematic Theology*. It should be noted that Hodge deals with this topic in terms of the providence or government of God and not with respect to creation alone. Nevertheless he seems occasionally caught in the autonomous principle of the Enlightenment and drawn into ambiguous statements. He asserts that there is in Scripture the recognition of an external world, a material universe, and that in this universe matter is active.¹⁹ This, however, leads him on to what seems an autonomous statement of the principles of law when he writes: 'These physical forces act of necessity, blindly and uniformly. They are everywhere and always the same.'²⁰

He maintains that the 'reign of law' gives laws which are immutable, uniform in operation, and which cannot be disregarded.²¹ He is thus caught in a curious tension between the concept of autonomous law prevalent in his day, and the sovereign providence of God. The tension is well displayed in the following lengthy quotation:

The phrase 'Laws of Nature' is . . . generally used in one or the other of two senses. It either means an observed regular sequence of events, without any reference to the cause by which that regularity of sequence is determined; or it means a uniformly acting force in nature. In this last sense we speak of the laws of gravitation, light, heat, electricity, etc. . . .

The chief question is, In what relation does God stand to these laws? The answer to that question, as drawn from the Bible, is First, that He is their author. He endowed matter with these forces, and ordained, that they should be uniform. Secondly, He is independent of them. *He can change, annihilate, or suspend them at pleasure*. He can operate with them or without them. The Reign of Law must not be made to extend over Him who made the laws. Thirdly, As the stability of the Universe, and the welfare, and even the existence of organised creatures, depend on the uniformity of the laws of nature, God never does disregard them *except* for the accomplishment of some high purpose. He, in the ordinary operations of his Providence, operates with and through the laws which He has ordained. He governs the material, as well as the moral world by law.²²

19. Hodge, *op. cit.*, p. 606.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 606.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 609.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 607, my emphasis.

MIRACLES AND THE 'LAWS OF NATURE'

The tension is, I believe, clear. Hodge grants too much autonomy to law. It thus becomes a third realm. There is God, nature – and in between law! There is an autonomous realm of law which God can set aside or violate to achieve his high purpose. But surely the law is the law of God? Therefore to annihilate his own law is to work against himself. Perhaps to redress the balance and sharpen the tension note the following from Hodge:

It is manifestly inconsistent with the idea of an infinite God, that any part of his works would be absent from Him, out of His view, or *independent* of His control. Though everywhere thus efficiently present, his efficiency does not supercede that of his creatures. It is by a natural law, or physical force, that vapour rises from the surface of the ocean, is formed into clouds, and condenses and falls in showers upon the earth, yet God so controls the operation of the laws producing these effects, that He sends rain when and where He pleases.²³

2. *Henry Stob*. Stob writes an article on 'Miracles' in *Basic Christian Doctrines* – a work edited by Carl Henry. Now while this article has much to commend it – it seeks to distance itself from the extreme dualism of the Deistic position – it nevertheless does not break out of the tension between a sovereign God and an apparently autonomous realm of nature. In an otherwise excellent article we find: 'On the existence of *nature* the scientist quite understandably insists. A wise scientist will acknowledge God, and if he is also a Christian, he will acknowledge miracle, but he will not, therefore, part with nature.'²⁴

Now I have a problem here. I do want to part with nature. I do not know what nature is. It seems to me to be a metaphysical concept that has usurped the concept of creation. I would venture to suggest that everywhere we come across the word 'nature' we can replace it with either 'creation' or 'God'!²⁵

3. *Iain Paul*. Let me now turn to a recent work: *Science and Theology in Einstein's Perspective* – volume 3 in the series 'Theology and Science at the Frontiers of Knowledge'. The general editor for the series is Professor T. F. Torrance. Dr Paul has doctorates in both science and theology and has studied under Professor Torrance.

In this work Paul seems to present an absolute concept of laws of nature. Again and again he writes of: 'the invariant determinate laws

23. *Ibid.*, p. 608, my emphasis.

24. H. Stobb, in *Basic Christian Doctrines*, C. Henry (ed.), Grand Rapids, 1979, p. 85.

25. The OT has no word for nature *per se*. In the NT there are a few instances of the word 'nature' but they are mostly in reference to the moral order in man.

of nature.²⁶ This phrase 'the invariant determinate laws of nature' is oft repeated and would seem to form for Paul an absolute datum for all scientific thinking. This leads to a tension between the realm of 'nature' with its own 'invariant and determinate laws' and the realm of 'grace' where God is free to act however it pleases him. Thus we are forced into seeing the world two ways – as scientist and as Christian. Faith sees the world one way; science another. I would question this sharp division and ask why it is not possible to bring together Christian and scientist in a symbiotic unity. The radical separation which Paul develops is all the stranger in the light of his own insistence on the foundation of faith for scientific activity itself. Yet he keeps insisting: 'The objective laws of nature are determinate.'²⁷

In chapter seven Paul talks of 'Universal Authority' and here I believe his dualistic tension is clear:

The Word incarnate is the Alpha and the Omega of the creation, but the universe has the first and last word in scientific research. It has unique authority, but that authority is inseparable from the universe itself. Nor is the authority of God separable from God himself. Indeed, the universe exposes for science the falsity of all abstract notions of authority. Such abstractions are as fundamentally opposed to the structure and harmony of the universe as they are to the nature and revelation of God. By setting themselves above either the rule of natural law or the reign of divine love, these pseudo-authorities deny themselves any basis in reality.²⁸

Here we have two authorities – God and the universe. Let me continue this quotation:

The authority of the universe resides in the power of natural law. The unity of the natural order exists amidst a variety of scientific theories. The interplay of non-external theories and invariant laws of nature enables scientists to discover and to move beyond the inadequacies of current achievements. These laws are contemporaneous with every scientific age. They represent the order that exists in the external world, and their rationality is the source of all that is meaningful to scientists. In them, the authority of the universe becomes visible and active as enriching and enlightening power. By them, the universe sets the limit of all that is possible, including chaotic abstractions.²⁹

26. I. Paul, *Science and Theology in Einstein's Perspective*, Edinburgh, 1986, p. 38, 39, etc.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

28. *Ibid.*, pp 64-65.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

MIRACLES AND THE 'LAWS OF NATURE'

Now this seems to me to absolutize the universe, nature, in an unacceptable manner. Further on Paul talks of how the universe guides scientists in an intuitive manner and notes: 'this guidance cannot possibly be an accident since it conforms to the laws of nature that exhibit invariance.'³⁰ Over the page from this last quotation we find the following: 'the book of nature written by the universe with binding authority on scientists.' The very language used is exclusive of God. Surely the 'book of nature' comes from the hand of God, not from 'the universe'?

4. *C. S. Lewis*. Over the years I have become increasingly unhappy with Lewis' book *Miracles*. He begins chapter two with these words: 'I use the word miracle to mean an interference with Nature by supernatural power.' He admits that theologians might not agree with this, but posits it as a popular understanding of miracle. But in a book that deals with the crucial area of presuppositions, Lewis has already conceded to the Humean position – that a miracle is somehow a violation of the laws of nature!³¹

5. *Robert Boyle*. Let me now turn to a writer I find helpful, Robert Boyle – regarded by many as the father of modern chemistry, and ardent Puritan. I find it intriguing I have to go back to Boyle to find the note I seek. But it is in Boyle I believe that we see the redressing of the balance of the dualistic tension we have been noting.

Boyle perceptively saw the great danger of the phrase 'laws of nature'. Useful though this term might be, he perceived that it opened the door to the autonomy of nature. The argument of Boyle was that the natural world was God's creation. The idea of nature was a mere notion. He took as an absolutely basic presupposition that apart from creation, nature was nothing. He writes: 'And indeed the world is the great book, not so much of nature, as the God of nature.'³² And again: 'I call the creatures I admire in the visible world, the works of God, (not of nature) and admire rather him than her, for the wisdom and goodness displayed in them.'³³

The realm of law belongs to God – not nature. Thus he writes: 'the ascribing to nature, and some other being, (whether real or imaginary) things, that belong but to God, have been some, (if not the chief) of the grand causes of the polytheism and idolatry of the gentiles.'³⁴

30. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

31. C. S. Lewis, *Miracles*, London, 1960, p. 9.

32. R. Boyle, quoted in Klaaren, *Religious Origins of Modern Science*, Grand Rapids, 1977, p. 114.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 151.

Has not Boyle put his finger on the critical factor? Is not nature in reality become an idol – personified, given power over man, seen as autonomous, and ultimately worshipped? Nature is given by man in our day the attributes of deity – just listen to any 'good' natural history programme, or Walt Disney production!

This brief overview indicates some of the problems in the concept of 'laws of nature'. The basic problem is that of the pretended autonomy of law, and perhaps it would be better from a biblical point of view if the phrase 'law of nature' was abolished. We can legitimately talk of the 'law of God' or indeed of 'the apparent laws of scientific research', even of the 'laws of science'. But to talk of 'laws of nature' is implicitly to grant autonomy, if not deity, to a metaphysical concept called 'nature'. The idea of 'laws of nature' contains an inbuilt assumption of a property 'of' nature; an autonomous 'nature' existing in and of itself – instead of existentially dependent upon God.

Preliminary Conclusions

At the heart of my preliminary conclusions lies the assertion that there are no such things as laws 'of' nature. Laws of God – yes! Laws of creation – yes! Scientific laws that approximate in some way to the laws of creation – yes! But not laws of an independent something entitled 'nature'.

It is evident that there is uncertainty and confusion surrounding the term 'law of nature'. Indeed Toulmin, in noting this, concedes that most text-books used to start by trying to define the concept, cleared their throat, forgot about their attempt, and got on with it by simply assuming that laws were there to be uncovered. Modern text-books often do not even make this attempt! Let me give a modern dictionary definition of 'nature': 'a creative, controlling agent, force, or principle, or set of such forces or principles, operating or operative in a thing and determining wholly or chiefly its construction, development, well-being, or the like.'³⁵ Another dictionary definition is: 'Creative and regulative physical power conceived of as immediate cause of phenomena of the material world.'³⁶

Surely this grants autonomy to nature. Indeed nature and God would seem interchangeable terms in many cases. But God alone is responsible for natural phenomena. There is no law inherent in something called 'nature' for law is over 'nature'/creation. Natural phenomena, like man himself, are subject to God.

There is no dichotomy in the Christian perspective between nature and grace. Such dualistic thought is prevalent in our modern world for the two realm *a priori* of humanism drives a wedge between fact

35. Second Edition, *Merriam-Webster Unabridged Dictionary*.

36. *Chambers Dictionary*.

and value, theory and practice, mental and physical, freedom and authority, faith and science, church and world. A modern philosopher writes that: 'the cause of this dualism lies in the exiling from our concrete and daily activities, of faith in God as Creator of heaven and earth.'³⁷

But are the 'laws of science' then something imposed on creation by man, or simple definitions, or descriptions? Depending on the particular philosophy embraced scientists make their choice. Simple discovery is mitigated by there being no uninterpreted facts; simple definitions are inadequate in the face of the history and practice of science; while impositions on nature by man tend to idealism.

My tentative suggestion is that the laws of science, not nature, are impositions mixed with discovery; or man-made representations of the normal patterns of God's rule. The laws that science formulates should be true to the reality of the external world as far as possible; they should tend to form one non-contradictory web of truth. But our equations come inevitably short of reality. They come from our definitions and biases and not from external reality alone.³⁸ In the final analysis the basic laws are those which describe that which determines the structure and behaviour of different aspects of being. Yet we must ever remember that creation is never absolute and independent, but relative and dependent!

Let me draw a seed thought from Herman Dooyeweerd. Law originates from the sovereign God and constitutes the boundary between God and his creation, a boundary between the origin of creation (God) and the meaning of everything created as subject, in subjection to law.³⁹ Final meaning and comprehension is found only in Christ; in him the heart confesses God as Creator and bows under the law as the boundary between Creator and creature. We must take far more seriously Christ's claim: 'I am the truth.'

But care is needed here for the idea of God being enclosed by a boundary has been attacked with certain validity.⁴⁰ However Dooyeweerd is at pains to draw out the point that his boundary is merely a mark of the essential distinction between God and man; as Lawgiver and subject, in their relation to the Law. God is never subjected to, or limited by law; while man is always under it.

It follows that law is not 'of' temporal reality, but rather is a law 'for' it prescribed by God. The law is not a boundary for God, but for the creation. This idea of boundary does not, of course, mean that we

37. J. Dengerink, *The Universal Reality of God's Kingdom*, International Reformed Bulletin No. 69, p. 12.

38. Cf. N. Feather, *Matter and Motion*, Harmondsworth, 1970, p. 14.

39. H. Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, Phillipsburg, 1969, Vol. 1, p. 108.

40. Cf. J. Frame, *The Amsterdam Philosophy, A Preliminary Critique*, Harmony Press, pp. 27-32.

have a third area between God and creation, for the law is ultimately co-terminal with the character and being of God.⁴¹ In the religious fullness of meaning there is but one Law of God; but under the boundary this law separates into a rich diversity of aspects of meaning. Just as all truth is one in Christ, but yet there is a diversity of truths within creation. Dooyeweerd illustrates this by reference to the way in which a prism breaks up one beam of light into the different colours of the spectrum.⁴²

A scientific law, then, never controls events in that it is a human means correlating experiments to a pattern which is built up round concepts. Our scientific laws therefore do not prescribe what must happen, but represent what has happened and allow predictions to be made. The so-called 'laws of nature' are in reality scientific laws. Additionally we might say that when true they conform to the ordinary patterns of God's will which science seeks to reflect in its formulations. But they must never be associated with any sort of Kantian *ding an sich*. Scientific laws are to be seen as man-made representations in word and mathematical symbol of the personal God's consistent patterns of operating his creation.

The hypotheses and laws dealt with in science are essentially special cases of theories which may be true or false in their reflection of the patterns of God. In the final analysis there is a personal God-Creator who is in control of all things. It seems to me that we are needing to recover in our day something of the force of the reality and doctrine of creation, and the need to integrate all thought in God.

Thus we are in a better position to understand the nature and status of our scientific laws. Paradoxically much of modern science has been forced by the reality of God's creation to a position that is not altogether hostile – even if it appears so in the popular mind. Modern science has arrived at a position wherein it seems to me that we are aided in distinguishing reality and man's representations of it – scientific laws are symbolical approximations but, hopefully, can reflect a degree of truth. Yet the true law which our constructions seek to reflect is not the property of an autonomous nature, but the objective and regular pattern of operation by which God sustains and controls his creation. These laws, that is the normal operations of God, are not alterable by man, though man's approximations are. It is also important to see that the law-structured creation provides laws for all aspects of reality and not just for a mathematical-physical realm.

The foregoing is meant to undermine the idea of miracle as a violation of a law of nature – inasmuch as there is no such thing as an autonomous law of nature.

41. Dooyeweerd, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 101.

The Doctrine of Law

God in his Word gives no direction as to the detailed scientific structure of the universe, nor should we look for that there. Certainly where the Scripture touches on matters of history and science it is accurate and reliable as the Word of God – but it is not a scientific text-book. As Kepler said: 'Scripture is there to tell us how to go to heaven, not to tell us how the heavens go!' God's Word is concerned with the special revelation of his plan of salvation. Nevertheless we do not have to choose between God and some 'natural law', for the laws we live under are the laws of the Creator. Scripture sees neither man nor cosmos depersonalised before the Creator. But modern science tends to exclude the *who* of God in its disciplinary thought and therefore the *why* loses significance and integration. Thus in a sense we are today, when caught in an atheistic concept worse off than the ancients whose *how* was quite wrong, but yet recognised the existence of the *who*.

1. *The Biblical Doctrine of Law.* We are still thinking of the law vis-à-vis the realm of scientific inquiry. A consistent philosophy of creation will include the biblical data and the data available from the various branches of science. These two features will interact with each other and will need to be consistent. The status of the biblical material is particularly interesting as the Bible, unlike other fields of investigation, has total authority over the researcher.

(a) *Nature is Creature.* The first feature of the biblical view of what is commonly called 'nature' is the frank creationism presented. In the created order all things are in a unity of creatureliness before the Creator. God is nowhere equated with his creation or seen as contained within it, nor is there any division into realms of spiritual and material, nature and grace. All is creaturely. It follows that no aspect of created being is to be worshipped or absolutised (idolised). Torrance, writing of the famous Scottish physicist James Clerk Maxwell, notes the following:

That nature is essentially contingent and not necessary in its inherent relations and that scientific truths themselves, therefore, are contingent and not necessary in character, had become one of the established tenets of Scottish realist philosophy and its account of 'natural philosophy' or physics, but that view owed not a little to the influence of Reformed theology in the Scottish Universities.⁴³

43. Torrance, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

Nature as creature is always relative and never absolute. Let me quote from G. C. Berkouwer's *General Revelation* where he is dealing with the 'Nature Psalms': 'in the light of his universal power as Creator, all things are revealed in their *absolute creatureliness*. Everything which is able to impress us deeply partakes of *this* creatureliness. All variations of nature do not cancel the common denominator: *creature*.'⁴⁴

As Psalm 50: 10-11 has it: 'For every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine.' Berkouwer later notes: 'the entire realm of nature remains 'undeified' and are considered *as creature* over against all glorification of nature.'⁴⁵

(b) *Creation is Ordered*. It is evident that the biblical record recognises order and regularity within the created realm. However the number of references that might pertain to a modern concept of law in science are few in number.⁴⁶ Certainly none of the biblical material contains the idea of autonomous laws of nature – for the emphasis falls on the existential divine control and sovereignty. There is therefore no regularity of independent operation within the realm of creation which God might, or might not, act into but rather the continuous upholding power of God ordaining certain normal regularities within his creation.

Certainly we need to distinguish between primary and secondary causation. Scripture, however, clearly declares that the secondary level of causation (what we are pleased to call 'natural' and where scientific inquiry operates) lies also under God's control. God causes the mists to rise, the lightning to break forth, the rain to fall, the winds to blow (*cf.* Jer. 10:33). He makes the grass to grow and feeds the fauna (*cf.* Ps. 147:8-9). He sends snow, frost, hail and warm winds (*cf.* Ps. 147:16-18). In the New Testament we find the same – God sends his rain upon the earth, and lets his sun shine (*cf.* Matt. 5:45). He feeds the birds and clothes the flowers (*cf.* Matt. 6:26-30). It is God alone who gives life and breath that we might exist (*cf.* Acts 17:25). It is the upholding power of the Word of Christ that allows being to exist at all (*cf.* Col. 1:16-17. Jn. 1:1f).

(c) *Law Reveals God*. Law derives from God and behind it stands all the divine glory and majesty. It is the function of the law to reveal and serve the divine majesty. This moves us into the whole area of general revelation.

44. Berkouwer, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

46. *E.g.*, Gen. 8:22; Jer. 5:24; Job. 28:26; 38:33-34; Jer. 31:35-36; 33:25f; Neh. 9:6.

MIRACLES AND THE 'LAWS OF NATURE'

2. *Law and Providence.* We affirm that existence depends on the will and word of God. This undercuts any concept of self-existence or attempt to elevate science into a self-existent arena of autonomous neutrality. Autonomy and providence are mutually exclusive concepts. Under the providence of God there can be 'no law of a self-existent or self-sustained operation.'⁴⁷ While in practice this might not obviously affect a particular part of scientific research, it should affect our overall understanding of the universe. There is a decided attitudinal difference between the Christian and the non-Christian. The Christian believes that the regularity of the relations he perceives and seeks to unfold are preserved by the constancy of God. It is only in the continued upholding of the universe by God that creation is law-structured and sustained. It is necessary for the Christian view that God be seen everywhere and not just brought in as an added, superfluous benediction, to an essentially autonomous science. Professor Donald MacKay notes:

The essential point made in the Bible, and in a sense, I think, the key to the whole problem of the relation of science to the Christian faith, is that God, and God's activity, come in not only as extras here and there, but everywhere. If God is active in any part of the physical world, he is in all. If the divine activity means anything, then *all* the events of what we call the physical world are dependent on that activity.⁴⁸

MacKay continues his argument by pointing out that in the Christian view, laws of nature, are 'not alternatives to divine activity but only our codification of that activity in its normal manifestation.'⁴⁹

The idea of God as the celestial mechanic or craftsman has long since been dispensed with as lacking any relevance in terms of the providence of God. Another analogy has been that of God as creative artist which lays more stress on the immanence of God but still leaves much to be desired.⁵⁰ Probably no model can ever be satisfactory, but MacKay has given a useful extension of the 'God as Artist' model where he makes use of modern technology. Instead of an artist using oils and canvas he uses a television screen to display his creation, using the transmitting station to generate whatever he wishes to display on the screen. Here the picture continues to exist by the will of the artist; it continues to have form only as long as the artist

47. R. J. Ream, *A Christian Approach to Science and Science Teaching*, Phillipsburg, 1972, p. 45.

48. D. Mackay, *The Clockwork Image*, Leicester, 1974, p. 57.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

50. Cf. M. Jeeves, *The Scientific Enterprise and Christian Faith*, London, 1969, p. 24.

continues to generate the programme. When he stops generating the picture ceases to exist! Thus the continuing activity of the artist is highlighted, though this still leaves the participation of God in his creation to be accounted for – the Christian God is more than Creator, he is Creator-participant. However, the thrust of the analogy is that nothing continues to exist except under the existential activity of God. Thus it is meaningless to ask if the laws of nature leave room for the activity of God. Professor M. Jeeves notes:

How could they *leave room* for God's activity, since God's activity is present all the time? Or again how could God *intervene* and *suspend* His laws from time to time, since He is there all the time upholding everything in existence? In what sense could God *use* natural laws, since natural laws are only our way of summarising our experience of the regular occurrence of events in the creation which God holds in being all the time.⁵¹

As H. van Riessen pictures it: 'law is the sceptre in the hand of God by which He rules the universe.'⁵²

3. *Law and Chance*. The concept of chance is often used in an ambiguous way to mean simply an unexpected incident; or incident whose immediate cause is unknown. But the specific scientific formulation of chance as an assertion that events can occur which are absolutely uncaused and unconditioned would seem to be unbiblical. We need to reject both hard determinism and strict indeterminism as formulated at present, for in all things the Christian is called to be aware of the hand of God underlying the secondary level of imminent experience. As Calvin notes: 'what is commonly called "fortune" is also ruled by a secret order, and we call a "chance occurrence" only that of which the reason and cause are secret.' (*Institutes* 1:16:8) Or as Proverbs puts it: 'The lot is cast into the lap, but the decision is wholly from the Lord' (Prov. 16:33).

Even secular authorities claim that mathematically there is no way to define a completely random series.⁵³ In other words there is no chance behind God. Law, not chance, is the basic presupposition of science and it is theistic in character. Ream contends therefore that: what we call chance and what we call accident are in fact neither

51. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

52. H. van Riessen, quoted in L. Kalsbeck, *Contours of a Christian Philosophy*, Beaver Falls, 1975, p. 75.

53. M. Gardiner, 'The Meaning of Randomness and Some Ways of Achieving It', *Scientific American* Vol. 219, No. 1, July 1968. Also Nagel, *The Structure of Science*, Boston, 1974, p. 333f.

chance nor accident but actually God working in His world and unfolding history.'⁵⁴

Conclusion

The problem revolves not just round the question of 'law' and 'nature', but also around the word 'miracle'. We have seen something of the problem connected with the former – but the latter is also used loosely. Miracle is derived from words with associations of wonder, sign, token and power. It can be seen as simply designating any extraordinary event which arouses wonder and evokes attention. In the Scriptural usages the several words used indicate the intention/design of the event rather than the nature of the event.

Abraham Kuyper considered that a miracle was 'nothing more than that God at a given moment wills a certain thing to occur differently than it had up to that moment been willed to occur.'⁵⁵ If the laws which are observed in creation are not independent autonomous functions of some self-existent machine, but the operating patterns of God, then it follows that a miracle is not a violation of these laws, but simply an unusual operation of God. Scripture itself nowhere presents the miraculous as antithetical to a self-contained universe, and the whole idea of miracles working against laws of nature implies a strong allegiance to an idea of the self-sufficiency of reality and its laws. Perhaps we are still suffering from the mechanistic self-sufficiency of the Newtonian era; but the modern autonomy of chance is no better.

Ultimately the question is not as to the miraculous but as to how it is that the world is as regular as it appears to be. This is the assumption of science, but it can only be justified from the theistic aspect of the personal faithfulness of God. It is God's world, not nature's, and all things from the Scriptural viewpoint have a rationale in the will of the Creator. Let me finish by quoting some words from Professor MacKay:

The biblical claim is that wherever God did 'work' or 'bring into being' an event which we call a miracle, whether or not it broke with scientific precedent, he did it because in the overall pattern of his drama it made *more* sense at that point: because his total plan and purpose for our world would have been *less* coherent had it not occurred in the way it did.⁵⁶

54. Ream, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

55. A. Kuyper, quoted in Ream, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

56. MacKay, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

JOSEPH HART AND HIS HYMNS*

PETER C. RAE
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Dear Hart, as Joseph Hart was often affectionately called, has regrettably passed into obscurity. It is only in the last thirty or forty years that his hymns have not been in print, although one can find most of them in Gadsby's hymnbook which is used by the Gospel Standard Strict Baptists. The present Baptist church hymnbook contains none of his hymns, whereas C. H. Spurgeon's *Our Own Hymnbook* contained 17. Perhaps more significantly, Spurgeon quoted from Hart a number of times in his sermons, especially in the last few paragraphs when he was applying the message, and pleading with his hearers to commit themselves to Christ. His own favourite hymn of Hart's was 'Come ye sinners', which, for instance, appears in his sermon on Hebrews 7:25 in Exeter Hall on Sunday June 8th 1856. He also quotes a number of verses of Hart's hymn 75 on Gethsemane in his exposition on Psalm 40 in the *Treasury of David*.

The most well-known of Hart's hymns are: 'How good is the God we adore'; 'O Holy spirit come'; and 'Come ye sinners, poor and wretched'. In contrast with the modern tendency, the hymns of the 18th century revival are Christ-honouring, expressing the depth of atonement. Although they too were children of their age – an age of controversy concerning grace – their hymns are experimental and doctrinal. We could apply G. W. Anderson's comment on the psalms to Hart: 'His was a faith sung and not signed.'¹ John Langley (1753-1792) in the preface to his hymnbook which is dedicated to the Countess of Huntingdon, gives his opinion of some of the hymnwriters he has read:

Dr. Watts whose sweetness and beauty heightens with their use, and Mr. Hart's so laden with experience, that like a tree whose Top reaches heaven, yet its fruit bends its branches to the Earth.

* Many editions of Hart's hymns are available at second-hand theological booksellers. The one used in this essay is Palmer's edition of 1863 which includes the author's 'Experience', a Memoir, and the Supplement and Appendix to the hymns. A biography of Joseph Hart by T. Wright was published in London in 1910.

1. G. W. Anderson, 'Israel's Creed sung not signed', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 1963, pp. 277ff.

And there is also Mr. Cennick's, whose life and evangelical turn of mind must recommend him to every child of God.²

It is true of the hymns of Hart, and the theology contained within them, that he believed that the heart of Christian experience was not merely the acceptance of certain doctrines or a system of dogmatics, but a living and vital relationship with the Lord. So aware was he of what God had done for his soul, that he expresses this awareness in joy and praise as he composed his hymns. Because he is not regarded by historians as a major figure in the 18th century revival, that does not mean that his memory should be left unsung. There are many whose names have been forgotten, but who were faithful and used by God in their generation. This Independent preacher in London is such a one.

Joseph Hart was born in London, about 1712. He had believing parents, who attended the ministry of George Whitefield at the Tabernacle in Moorfields, where they also heard those who supplied for Whitefield when he was away, including Andrew Kinsman of Plymouth, who became a staunch friend of young Joseph, and also John Cennick and Joseph Humphreys. Hart was given a classical education, and finally became a teacher of the ancient languages. After reaching the age of 21 he became concerned about his spiritual state, and the record of his spiritual journey is given in the *Experience* which forms the opening pages of his hymnbook. He challenged Wesley's doctrine as given in the famous sermon on Romans 8 and took the side of Whitefield in the controversy that ensued. Around this time, at the age of about 32, he published translations of some Greek classical texts. In 1751 he began to reform and lead a more orderly life. In 1755 he besought the Lord to reveal himself to him, waiting and longing for a vision of the Lord. In the week before Easter in 1757 his prayer was answered, and he says: 'I had such an amazing view of the agony in the Garden as I know not well how to describe. I was lost in wonder and adoration, and the impression it made was so deep, I believe, ever to be obliterated.' Although Hart had been attending the Tabernacle at Moorfields, and the Chapel in Tottenham Court Road, it was at the Fetter Lane meeting of the Moravians that he was finally delivered from his sense of condemnation. His 'vision' of the suffering of Christ in the Garden found a ready appreciation at the Moravian meetings, whose emphasis on the sufferings of Christ is well known.³

As soon as he found peace with God, Hart began to write hymns. The hymnbook, the first edition of which came out before he began

2. John Langley, *Sacred Hymns for the Children of God*, 1776, p. vii.

3. Manuscript Diaries of the Fetter Lane Meeting of Moravian Brethren in the Moravian Church House, Muswell Hill, London.

his public ministry in the Jewin Street Independent Chapel, consists of 119 hymns arranged to accord with what we now call the Church Year. For an independent minister this would be unusual, and it indicates that Hart owed much to the Moravians. The Moravians had a simple yet effective means of personal devotion in which a Bible text and verse of a hymn were set for each morning and evening; and their sermons and church services were based on these 'Watchwords', as they called their devotional exercises. It has not been possible to see any close correlation between the subjects of Hart's hymns and the Watchwords of the years 1757-9 when he would have been attending the Fetter Lane meeting as well as writing hymns. Hart's hymnbook was first published in 1759, and a year later he became a minister of the Jewin Street Chapel. It was owing to Hart's reputation through the publishing of the hymnbook and his verve as a preacher of the Gospel, that he attracted large congregations. Not long after his settlement as a minister he began to write other hymns, which are contained in what is known as the 'Supplement', and some of the subjects indicate a pastor's need for suitable hymns for the regular public worship and the pastoral needs of a settled congregation. For instance, the Supplement contains 20 hymns on the Lord's Supper, hymns on death, sickness, and the second coming. He also includes hymns on baptism, the settlement of a minister, and a section of doxologies. Thereafter he added some hymns which appear in later editions as an Appendix. His ministry was abundantly blessed by God, and his congregations were numerous.

His ministry was terminated by an apparently lingering illness, and he died on the 24th May, 1768. The funeral oration was given by Andrew Kinsman of Plymouth, and his body was interred in the Bunhill Fields burying ground in London. It is said that some 20,000 people attended his funeral, a manifest proof that he was held in high esteem. During the years of his ministry he was well-known as an evangelical preacher, acquainted with not only John Gambold and Andrew Kinsman, but also Howell Harris, Whitefield, and the Wesleys, as well as William Romaine, the saintly Anglican who maintained the evangelical witness in the established church in London.

Hart sums up his faith in the conclusion to his *Experience*:

I am daily more and more convinced that the promises of God to his people are absolute; and desire to build my hopes on the free electing love of God in Christ Jesus to my soul before the world began, which I can experimentally and feelingly say, He hath plucked me from the lowest Hell. He hath plucked me as a brand out of the fire! He hath proved Himself stronger than I, and his goodness superior to all my unworthiness. He gives me to know and to feel too, that without Him I can do nothing. He tells me

(and enables me to believe it) that I am all fair, and there is no spot in me. Though an enemy, He calls me his friend; though a traitor a child; though a beggared prodigal, He clothes me with the best robe'; and has put a ring of endless love and mercy on my hand, and though I am sorely distressed by spiritual and internal foes, afflicted, tormented and bowed down almost to death, with the sense of my own present barrenness, ingratitude and proneness to evil, He secretly shows me His bleeding wounds; and softly and powerfully, whispers to my soul: 'I am thy great salvation.' His free distinguishing grace is the bottom on which is fixed the rest of my poor weary tempted soul. On this I ground my hope, often times when unsupported by any other evidence, save only the Spirit of adoption received from Him. He hath chosen me out from everlasting, in whom to make known in inexhaustible riches of his free grace and longsuffering. Though I am a stranger to others and a wonder to myself, yet I know Him, or rather I am known of Him. Though poor in myself, I am rich enough in Him. When my dry empty barren soul is parched with thirst, He kindly bids me come to Him, and drink my fill at the fountain head. In a word He empowers me to say with experimental evidence, 'where sin abounded, grace did much much more abound.' Amen and Amen.

Hart's same faith comes out in the formal wording of his will:

I commit my soul to Almighty God, in good and firm hope that He will save it from perdition, in and through the merits of His dear Son, in whom I have believed and do still believe that through Him I shall receive the full remission of all my sins.⁴

It has not been possible (despite an extensive search by the present writer) to locate Hart's church books, or any other writings of his, and one must presume that they are lost. Thus the only bequest he left to posterity are his hymns, but they have a spiritual quality all their own. As Gadsby says, 'Hart and Berridge are the sweetest and greatest experimental writers that have left any hymns on record'.⁵ And S. M. Houghton comments that 'he has a spirit of poetry in him which, linked with an amazingly deep knowledge of matters spiritual guarantees him a permanent niche in the affections of such of the Lord's people as value experimental theology'.⁶ Hart's hymnbook became famous, as Dr Johnson's anecdote shows: 'Easter Day, 1764 I went to church. I gave a shilling and seeing a poor girl at the sacra-

4. Manuscript in Probate Office, Public Record Office, London.

5. Preface to Gadsby's *Hymnbook*, 1838.

6. S. M. Houghton, *Bible League Quarterly*, 1979, p. 299.

ment in a bedgown, gave her privately a crown, *though* I saw Hart's hymns in her hand.⁷

Most of the truths of the Christian faith are covered by Hart. However, one cannot claim that he rises to the sublimities of Wesley or Watts. Despite that, the reader can 'warm to his treatment of the suffering of Christ, the vicarious sacrifice of the Redeemer, and the priestly office of the Saviour.'⁸

Many of his hymns reflect his spiritual pilgrimage. Grace was, for him, God stretching out his hand to a helpless sinner. He looked back on his conversion experience and his 'reconversion', which he called the 'Whit Sunday episode', in the light of what God had done for his soul. He retains though the warmth and consideration for others and their spiritual need in his gospel hymns. Often regarded as a hypercalvinist, his hymns of Gospel invitation are some of the richest in the English language.

Between Hart's death and the present, different groups have used Hart's hymns almost exclusively. William Huntington (1745-1831) used many, as did the Revd A. J. Baxter minister of Cavendish Place Chapel in Eastbourne. This Mr Baxter established a magazine entitled the *Gospel Advocate*, in which he wrote a notable series of articles expounding Hart's hymns. There were 142 of Hart's hymns used in that chapel.⁹

In Bunhill Fields, London, there is an obelisk erected over his grave quoting from hymns 51, 100 and 119 in his book.

The Hymns: Influences

Before distilling some of the more important doctrines in the hymn-book, we may note some striking resemblances with the writings of John Cennick (1718-1755). It is doubtful whether Hart met Cennick since the latter died before Hart became a Christian in 1757, but one supposes that Hart knew of Cennick's published hymnbooks and sermons. Both men began their hymnbooks with an account of their spiritual pilgrimage and conversion in what is entitled *Experience*. We know that Hart attended the Fetter Lane Chapel, and Moorfields where Cennick had been engaged as preacher. Cennick is reported to have been the first to introduce in to English hymnody the metre 8.3.3.6.¹⁰ Hart uses this metre in a special series of four hymns (65-68 in his hymnbook) which deal with the spiritual progression of the soul: Man's Righteousness, the Linsey-Woolsey Garment, Christ's

7. *Ibid.*

8. B. Knopp, *History of Cavendish Place Chapel*, Eastbourne, pp. 12, 13.

9. Frank Baker, *John Cennick: a Handlist of his Writings*, Wesley Historical Society Publication No. 5, 1958, p. 5.

10. Samuel Johnson, *Works, Prayers and Meditations*, Murphy's Edition, 1823, Vol. xi, p. 492.

Righteousness, and the Saint's Inheritance. The unusual second title happens also to be the subject of a sermon by Cennick based on Deuteronomy 22:11, preached in Antrim in 1754. Many of the 18th century evangelicals wrote hymns to illustrate their sermon material, and help the congregation to remember the message. When Hart wrote his hymnbook, he was not yet a preacher. His hymns might well have reflected the messages he heard, as well as illustrating his own personal devotions.

Subjects in the Hymns

i. In common with many of the 18th century revivalist hymns, Hart stresses the *wretchedness* of sinful souls. He indicates the parlous state of the soul without Christ. When he realises the vileness of the unredeemed soul, and thereafter discovers the possibility of newness of life through conversion, this leads him to wonder and praise. The first hymn in the book describes the universal nature of the sin which Christ bore. Sin repeats itself in 'each sin infected sire'. (Hymn 38 v. 2) Although he acknowledges the nature of sin, he is not slow to confess his own personal sinfulness, *e.g.*,

And dost thou still regard,
And cast a gracious eye
On one so foul, so base, so blind,
So dead, so lost as I?

Hymn 10 v. 6.

This accords with a phrase in his *Experience* where he describes himself as 'feeling leprous from head to foot'. The words 'leprous' and 'wretched', occur often, *e.g.*,

Leprous soul, press through the crowd
In thy foul condition;
Struggle hard, and call aloud
On the great Physician;
Wait till they disease he cleanse,
Begging, trusting, cleaving;
When, and where, and by what means,
To his wisdom leaving.

Hymn 18 v. 6.

JOSEPH HART AND HIS HYMNS

Hymn 106, based on Romans 7:24, has this plea:

How sore a plague is sin,
To those by whom 'tis felt!
The Christian cries, Unclean! Unclean!
E'en though releas'd from guilt.

O wretched, wretched man!
What horrid scenes I view!
I find, alas! do all I can,
That I can nothing do.

Hymn 106 vv. 1,2.

If 'wretched' and 'loathsome' are not enough to describe the unredeemed soul, Hart adds a further expressive word, 'vile'.

Not so the needy helpless soul
Prefers his humble prayer;
He looks to Him that works the whole,
And seeks his treasure there.

His language is, 'Let me, my God,
On sovereign grace rely:
And own 'tis free, because bestow'd,
On one so vile as I.

Hymn 113 vv. 5,6.

Hart's view of man is that in his unregenerate state, he is without beauty and there is nothing that could possibly attract the divine mercy, except by grace.

ii. This leads us to consider the next theme, that of *grace*. Grace is paradoxical, and Hart suggests the reason why a sinner refuses it:

What makes mistaken men afraid
Of sovereign grace to preach?
The reason is (If truth be said)
Because they are so rich.

That is very telling, and penetrates the self-righteous heart. Hart is quick to declare that the sinner abuses grace when he sins and turns his back on mercy. In the hymn based on the story of the Prodigal:

The prodigal's return'd;
The apostate bold and base;

That all his Father's counsels spurn'd,
And long abus'd his grace.

Hymn 71 v. 2.

How is grace revealed to sinners? Hart finds grace primarily in the wounds of Christ, and in Christ as the Lamb of God:

Breathe on these bones, so dry and dead;
Thy sweetest, softest influence shed
On all our hearts abroad;
Point out the place where grace abounds;
Direct us to the bleeding wounds
Of our incarnate God.

Hymn 6 v. 2.

And in the hymn entitled 'The Author's Confession':

But Oh, the goodness of our God!
What pity melts his tender heart!
He saw me weltering in my blood,
And came and eas'd me of my smart.

I would object; but faster much
He answer'd, *Peace!* What, me? - *Yes, thee*
But my enormous crimes are such -
I give thee pardon full and free.

. . . He said. I took the full release:
The Lord had sign'd it with his blood!
My horrors fled; and perfect peace,
And joy unspeakable, ensued.

Hymn 27, vv. 13,16 & 19.

Grace comes to mankind through the blood of Christ:

Lamb of God! we fall before thee,
Humbly trusting in thy cross;
That alone be all our glory,
All things else are dung and dross;
Thee we own a perfect Saviour,
Only source of all that's good;
Every grace and every favour
Come to us through Jesus' blood.

Hymn 17 v. 1.

JOSEPH HART AND HIS HYMNS

Grace is the keynote of Hart's teaching concerning God's dealings with wretched sinners. Grace is free:

Good God, are these thy ways?
If rebels thus are freed,
And favour'd with peculiar grace,
Grace must be free indeed.

Hymn 71 v. 7.

One cannot but notice the strength of Hart's faith not only on God's grace but also in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and especially his sufferings in Gethsemane and on the Cross. Nowhere is this love seen to full effect than in another of Spurgeon's favourite hymns:

There my God bore all my guilt:
This through grace can be believ'd:
But the horrors which he felt,
Are too vast to be conceiv'd;
None can penetrate through thee,
Doleful, dark Gethsemane!

Hymn 75 v. 13.

If grace be the basis of Hart's doctrine of salvation, then it underlines his concern that salvation is through Christ alone. In his writings, grace and Christ are almost synonymous. For it is only through faith in Christ that the sinner will know freedom from sin.

Only by faith in Jesus' wounds
The sinner gets release;
No other sacrifice for sin
Will God accept but this.

Hymn 8 v. 7.

Throughout the hymnbook, faith in Christ brings freedom from sin, cleansing, forgiveness, peace with God, and a whole salvation. How the following words bring joy to a believer's heart:

The chief concern of fall'n mankind
Should be to gain God's favour:
What safety can the sinner find
Before he find a Saviour?

This Saviour must be one that can
From sin and death release us,
Make up the breach 'twixt God and man;
Which none can do but Jesus.

Mercy and love, from Jesus felt,
Can heal a wounded spirit;
Mercy, that triumphs over guilt,
And love that seeks no merit.

Then kiss the Son, for from his wrath
No wisdom can deliver;
Close in with Christ by saving faith,
And God's your friend for ever.

Hymn 112 vv. 8, 9, 12 & 13.

In some places the cross and the blood almost are like grace in that they become synonyms for Christ himself.

This section can be suitably concluded with two verses:

Jesus is the chiefest good;
He hath saved us by His blood;
Let us value nought but Him;
Nothing else deserves esteem.

Jesus therefore let us own.
Jesus we'll exalt alone.
Jesus has our sins forgiven.
Jesus' blood has bought us heaven.

Hymn 11 vv. 1 & 4.

iii. The last hymn quoted leads us to the main doctrine of the evangelical faith: *the atonement*. Herein, the blood of Christ, his sufferings, and his vicarious sacrifice are given their rightful place in the hymns of Hart. In his *Experience* he describes his state before conversion:

The blood of Christ was not yet effectively applied to my soul. I looked on Christ's death indeed as a grand sacrifice for sin, but did not see the inestimable value of His Blood and Righteousness clearly enough to make me abhor myself, and count all things dung and dross.

JOSEPH HART AND HIS HYMNS

He admits and confesses later on in the same *Experience* that the 'blood of the Redeemer, applied to the soul by His Spirit is the one thing needful'.

a. The blood of Christ cleanses from sin:

Blessed are they whose guilt is gone
Whose sins are wash'd away with blood,
Whose hope is fix'd on Christ alone,
Whom Christ hath reconcil'd to God.

Hymn 103 v. 1.

b. Unbelievers do not only refuse to believe the message of the Gospel, but trample and despise the blood of the lamb:

And why, dear Saviour, tell me why
Thou thus would'st suffer, bleed, and die?
What mighty motive could thee move?
The motive's plain – 'twas all for love!

For love of whom? Of sinners base;
A harden'd herd, a rebel race;
That mock'd and trampled on thy blood,
And wanton'd with the wounds of God!

Hymn 1 Part 2 vv. 1 & 2.

c. Hymns like the following indicate that Hart recognises that it was the love of God that brought forth the blood of the Son to ransom the repentant sinner:

Love to Jesus Christ and his,
Fixes the heart above;
Love gives everlasting bliss;
But who can give us love?
To believe's the gift of God;
Well-grounded hope he sends from heaven;
Love's the purchase of his blood,
To all his children given.

Hymn 64 v. 2.

d. The blood of Christ is the object of the faith of the believer:

Whoe'er believes aright
In Christ's atoning blood,

THE SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

Of all his guilt's acquitted quite,
And may draw near to God.

Hymn 53 v. 1.

e. The work of the Spirit is to apply the power of the blood of Christ to cleanse and save. The hymns agree with Hart's *Experience* where he suggests that 'the sprinkling of the blood of the Crucified Saviour on the conscience by the Holy Ghost, sanctifies a man, without which the most abstemious life and rigorous discipline is unholy'.

The Father's love in this we find,
He made his Son our sacrifice;
The Son in love his life resign'd
The Spirit of love his blood applies.

Hymn 47 v. 3.

f. Grace and the blood of Christ are linked together in:

Breathe on these bones, so dry and dead;
Thy sweetest, softest influence shed
On all our hearts abroad;
Point out the place where grace abounds;
Direct us to the bleeding wounds
Of our incarnate God.

Hymn 6 v. 2.

g. Hart underlines the idea of the ransom price of salvation being the blood of Christ:

Then let us rejoice,
And cheerfully sing,
With heart and with voice,
To Jesus our King;
Who thus far has brought us
From evil to good;
The ransom that bought us
No less than his blood.

Hymn 19 v. 4.

h. The blood of Christ brings to believing hearts new birth, salvation, reconciliation and redemption. For instance, the hymn entitled 'Saving Faith' begins:

The sinner that truly believes,
And trusts in his crucified God,

JOSEPH HART AND HIS HYMNS

His justification receives,
Redemption in full through his blood.

Hymn 88.

Without quoting further examples at length, we may note that Hart covers ideas inherent in atonement such as the incomparable nature of the blood of Christ, and how men are bought with such a price. There are solid riches found in the blood of Christ which brings union with the Lord. The blood of Christ gladdens the heart of the believer, and signals the wisdom of God's mercy.

The God I trust
Is true and just;
His mercy hath no end:
Himself hath said,
My ransom's paid;
And I on him depend.

Then why so sad,
My soul? Though bad,
Thou hast a friend that's good;
He bought thee dear;
(Abandon fear!)
He bought thee with his blood.

So rich a cost
Can ne'er be lost,
Though faith be tried by fire;
Keep Christ in view;
Let God be true,
And every man a liar.

Hymn 99, based on Romans 3:4.

iv. Possibly because of his contact with the Moravians, through John Gambold and others, Hart took into his thinking an interest in the wounds and sufferings of Christ. The whole of hymns 1 and 75 describe and expound the meaning of the pain and suffering of the Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane, although verse 1 of hymn 36 is typical:

Come, poor sinners, come away;
In meditation sweet;
Let us go to Golgotha,
And kiss our Saviour's feet!
Let us in his wounded side
Wash, till we every whit are clean;

THE SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

That's the fountain open'd wide
For filthiness and sin!

Apart from the influence of Moravian piety, Hart remembers the spiritual experience he had just before he yielded to the claims of Christ. He writes in his *Experience*:

The week before Easter 1757, I had such an amazing view of the agony of Christ in the garden as I know not well how to describe. I was lost in wonder and adoration; and the impression it made was too deep, I believe ever to be obliterated.

Such an experience remained with him, so that in hymn 62 he writes:

Behold the darling Son of God
Bow'd down with horror to the ground,
Wrung at the heart, and sweating blood,
His eyes in tears of sorrow drown'd!

See how the victim panting lies,
His soul with bitter anguish prest!
He sighs, he faints, he groans, he cries,
Dismay'd, dejected, shock'd, distrest!

But it was not just the fact of such pain and misery that touched Hart, for he continues:

Deep in his breast our names were cut:
He undertook our desperate debt:
Such loads of guilt were on him put,
He could but just sustain the weight.

There are a number of hymns specially written for Good Friday, in which the death of Christ is described as effecting holiness, peace with God, and showing forth the love of God:

When the blessed Jesus died,
God was clearly justified;
Sin to pardon without blood
Never in his nature stood.

See the suffering Son of God,
Panting, groaning, sweating blood!
Brethren, this had never been,
Had not God detested sin.

Hymn 40 vv. 4 & 6.

The descriptions of the agony of the Saviour sometimes indicate his dependence on the Moravians. Some of the early hymns are very explicit about the physical nature of the wounds, while others describe the spiritual nature of his sufferings:

With thorns his temples gor'd and gash'd
Send streams of blood from every part;
His back's with knotted scourges lash'd,
But sharper scourges tear his heart.

Nail'd naked to the accursed wood,
Expos'd to earth and heaven above,
A spectacle of wounds and blood,
A prodigy of injur'd love!

Hymn 63 vv. 3 & 4.

and:

Oh, that closer we could cleave,
To thy bleeding dying breast!

Hymn 74 v. 3.

v. Such sentiments are typical of the 18th century hymnwriters, especially those who at the beginning of the revival were still in fellowship with the Moravian believers. That is the intimacy of the relationship between the believer and the Saviour. The warmth and closeness of such a relationship counteracts the more intellectual, and theoretical discussion of theology. The 18th century establishment had discussion of an abstract religion, and the revivalists sought to give the common people a faith that warmed the heart.

This occurs in two ways in Hart's hymns. First, the use of names of Christ, especially the endearing nature of such nomenclature; and secondly, the longing for a closeness, a striving and longing for Christ himself, and the realisation of union with the Saviour.

The emphasis on the sufferings of Christ and Calvary is seen in the phrase 'Lamb of God', used at least 32 times in his hymns. Sometimes adjectives are used like Pascal Lamb, dying Lamb, bleeding Lamb. The Lamb of God is meek and lowly, harmless, slaughtered, as well as holy. He also uses the word Saviour a number of times, and Immanuel twice. Terms of endearment also occur, including a reference to the 'darling Son of God', hymn 62 v. 1. Endearment leads to the desire for Christ. So in the *Experience* he describes the joy of his conversion: 'Thenceforth I enjoyed sweet peace in my soul; and had such clear and frequent manifestations of his love to me, that I longed for no other heaven.' And later he says:

Though an enemy He calls me friend; though a traitor, His child.
And though I am often sorely distressed by spiritual and internal
foes, afflicted, tormented, and bowed down almost to death, with
the sense of my own present barrenness, ingratitude, and proneness
to evil, He secretly shows me His bleeding wounds; and softly but
powerfully, whispers to my soul, 'I am thy great salvation'.

His longing for a close relationship with the Saviour and a deepening
sense of his nearness also appears :

Nothing but Jesus I esteem;
My soul is then sincere;
And everything that's dear to Him,
To me is also dear.

Hymn 101 v. 3.

Then with single eye,
I took to Christ alone;
And on His righteousness rely,
Though I myself have none.

Hymn 107 v. 3.

This theme is repeated in the following lines:

Oh that closer we could cleave,
To thy bleeding dying breast! . . .
Make our union with thee clear;
Perfect love, and cast out fear!

Hymn 74 vv. 3 & 5.

vi. Next, we notice Hart's concern to give due weight to the Holy Spirit. No doubt this is due in part to his desire to commemorate the day on which he was converted, namely, Whit Sunday. Five hymns, at least, are devoted mainly to the Holy Ghost and his work, *i.e.* 4, 5, 6, 45 and 116.

In hymn 4, the Holy Spirit dispels darkness, points to Jesus and his blood, frees men from bondage and brings them to sweet communion with the Lord. The Holy Spirit, according to hymn 6, points the sinner to Calvary, and helps him meet the Saviour. Hart believes that the Holy Spirit is responsible for salvation and the application of the merits of the Saviour to the seeking soul:

That blessed Spirit omits to speak
Of what Himself has done;

JOSEPH HART AND HIS HYMNS

And bids the enlighten'd sinner seek
Salvation in the Son.

Hymn 116 v. 2.

Again:

The Holy Ghost will make the soul
Feel its sad condition:
For the sick, and not the whole,
Need the good Physician.

Hymn 89 v. 4.

vii. Finally, we have the *evangelistic* or missionary hymns. Hart is often wrongly accused of being an extreme Calvinist, but he has a well-developed sense of the need to invite sinners to accept Christ and close with the offer of salvation. The facts of the Gospel are well documented, and fully declared, and yet also there is a strong sense of pleading with the sinner to repent and accept the gift of eternal life through the merits of the crucified and risen Saviour. For example:

Come then repenting sinner, come;
Approach with humble faith;
Owe what thou wilt, the total sum
Is cancell'd by His death.

Hymn 7 v. 5.

Come, cease your backslidings,
And once more return;
Receive the glad tidings,
A Saviour is born!

Hymn 13 v. 5.

Come needy, come guilty,
Come loathsome and bare;
You can't come too filthy -
Come just as you are!

Hymn 86 v. 7.

And in the most famous of all his hymns:

Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore,
Jesus ready stands to save you,
Full of pity join'd with power;

THE SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

He is able, he is able, he is able;
He is willing; doubt no more!

Ho! ye needy, come, and welcome;
God's free bounty glorify:
True belief, and true repentance,
Every grace that brings us nigh,
Without money, without money, without money,
Come to Jesus Christ and buy!

Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness he requireth
Is to feel your need of him:
This he gives you, this he gives you, this he gives you;
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam.

Come, ye weary, heavy laden,
Bruis'd and mangled by the fall;
If you tarry till you're better,
You will never come at all!
Not the righteous, not the righteous, not the righteous;
Sinners, Jesus came to call.

View him grovelling in the garden;
Lo! your Maker prostrate lies;
On the bloody tree behold him,
Hear him cry before he dies:
'It is finish'd!' 'It is finished!' 'It is finished!'
Sinner, will not this suffice?

Lo! the incarnate God, ascended,
Pleads the merit of his blood;
Venture on him, venture wholly;
Let no other trust intrude;
None but Jesus, none but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good.

Saints and angels, join'd in concert,
Sing the praises of the Lamb;
While the blissful seats of heaven
Sweetly echo with his name;
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Sinners here may sing the same.

Hymn 100

Most of the main doctrines of the Christian evangelical faith are represented in the hymns. We have selected a few, and let Hart speak for himself. Hart observed in his *Experience*:

that no righteousness besides the righteousness of Jesus is of any avail towards acceptance. That to be a moral man, a zealous man, a devout man, is very short of being a Christian. That the eye of faith looks more to the blood of Jesus than to the soul's victory over corruptions. That the sprinkling of the blood of a crucified Saviour, on the conscience by the Holy Ghost sanctifies a man, without which the most abstemious life and rigorous discipline is unholy. Lastly that faith and holiness with every other blessing are the purchase of the Redeemer's blood.

Although the objective doctrines of the faith are evident, the subjective necessity of taking those doctrines into the very heart and life of the believer are never lost. Hart continually stresses the need to *feel*, e.g. in the very first verse of the entire hymnbook:

Come all ye chosen saints of God,
That long to feel the cleansing blood;
In pensive pleasure join with me,
To sing of sad Gethsemane.

The Holy Spirit's work is to pray that the sinner might know in his experience the merits of the blood of Christ:

Teach us for what to pray, and how;
And since, kind God! 'tis only thou
The throne of grace canst move,
Pray thou for us; that we through faith,
May feel the effects of Jesus' death:
Through faith that works by love.

Hymn 6 v. 5.

and again, in a hymn on 'Faith and Repentance',

'Tis a safe though deep compunction
Thy repenting people feel;
Love and grief compound an unction,
Both to cleanse our wounds and heal;

THE SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

Balm is useless to the unfeeling;
And repentance without faith
Is a sore that, never healing,
Frets and rankles unto death.

Hymn 54 v. 4.

Such a sense of the feeling of God's nearness, and the experience of the benefits of the Saviour's death and resurrection might well have come from his involvement at the Fetter Lane Meeting. The church records of the Moravian meetings on Good Friday, April 18th 1757 run like this:

All the congregation and society met, and heard the history of Our Saviour's crucifixion read out of St Matthew's Gospel, and we sung Amen, Hallelujah, and at singing of that awful thrust which the soldier's made we all kneeled down, and overwhelming feeling of Grace and our Saviour's nearness

and on the following Easter Day, 'Bro. Frederick, recited Jesus' High Priestly Prayer John 17, with an extraordinary feeling.'¹¹

The mere record of that Holy Week at Fetter Lane, at which Hart was presumably present, gives some indication of the atmosphere that burned into his soul. Erik Routley concludes an article on Hart's hymns with this comment:

His hymns are those of an educated convert, a man who combines a clearly rational outlook, with a passionate zeal both for Christ and souls. This is what makes him unusual even amongst hymn-writers of that age of zeal and rationalisation.¹²

Are evangelical sentiments more winsomely or gently expressed than in Hart's hymns? Hart's hymns have drawn many to a believing knowledge of Christ, and inspired a longing for more of what the nearness of the Lord can give us.

11. Manuscript Diaries of Fetter Lane Meeting (see note 3).

12. Erik Routley, *Bulletin of Hymn Society of Great Britain*, Vol. 2, January 1951, p. 208.

REVIEWS

Theological Dialogue between Orthodox and Reformed Churches

Thomas F. Torrance (ed.)

Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh, 1985; 158pp., £10.50;

ISBN 0 7073 04369.

This is by all accounts a tome of weighty theology. It represents something of a tour de force on the part of Professor Torrance, whose initiative it was that led the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to propose 'structured conversations' between representatives of the Orthodox and Reformed Churches and who, as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1977, personally conveyed the invitation to the Patriarch of Constantinople, as well as visiting other heads of the autocephalous Orthodox Churches. The six papers in this book were produced for the three series of consultations that resulted, at Istanbul in 1979 and Geneva in 1981 and 1983. Apart from a very brief essay on authority (of the Church and in the Church) by Hans-Helmut Esser, all the contributions from the Reformed side are by T. F. Torrance – two memoranda on Orthodox/Reformed relations and a lengthy paper on the Trinitarian foundation and character of faith and authority in the Church. He is also the author of an introduction surveying the course of this sequence of Orthodox/Reformed theological engagements, and he drafted their 'concluding affirmation', entitled 'Agreed Understanding of the Theological Development and Eventual Direction of the Orthodox/Reformed Conversations Leading to Dialogue'. There were two contributors of papers from the Orthodox side.

Although to most Reformed churchmen, Orthodoxy is more unfamiliar than any other major Christian tradition, there is something particularly appropriate about these conversations. Reformed theology, not least through the massive influence of Barth, retains in the late twentieth century a firmer grasp on credal orthodoxy than, say, Anglican theology. John Calvin was more deeply indebted to the Greek Fathers than any other major Reformer (although the extent of his indebtedness, e.g. to Cyril of Alexandria, requires further research. Torrance is inclined to overstate it. The question is of sufficient intrinsic interest, to say nothing of its bearing on Orthodox/Reformed interaction, to merit careful historical examination.) Furthermore, in both traditions, authority in the Church is exercised synodically, although this statement conceals profoundly different understandings of the standing of councils and courts in the Church's life. At any rate, Reformed Christians who identify with a conservative credal and confessional theology may well be advised to look to the common interests shared by Orthodox and Reformed, e.g. in World Council of Churches 'faith and order' discussions.

At the same time, it is important that the Orthodox should get an accurate picture of Reformed thought. Future, more formalized 'dialogue' must surely involve a broader base on the Reformed side, for by no means all Reformed theologians share Professor Torrance's very high estimate of the Nicene Creed, which at times comes near to making it a hermeneutical norm for

interpreting apostolic Scripture. Nevertheless, the question of the nature of the special status to be accorded to the early creeds is a critical one for evangelical theology, not only in grappling with liberalism in the Churches but also in confronting ecumenically Churches such as the Orthodox which place greater weight on tradition.

On other issues, too, Tom Torrance may not find the whole Reformed family following in his foot-steps. He and Esser both eschew not only a hierarchical but also a democratic approach to authority in the Church, and one wonders where the congregationalists in the WARC are hiding their light. To insist that the (ordained) ministry is to be understood "from above and not from below", as deriving from Christ . . . and not from the membership of the Church', is surely to fall into an unnecessary dualism - as though the whole membership of the Church *and all their ministries* were not also 'from above'. The way forward on this issue lies rather in distinguishing within the one Spirit-given ministry of the Church the special role of the ordained. Again, has an emphasis on 'the succession of bishops/presbyters' in the mediation of ordination from generation to generation really been distinctive of the Reformed tradition? On this question Esser's greater reserve is preferable.

Yet though one might differ on this and that, how infinitely superior is Torrance's relentless overdrive theology, with its magisterial word-heavy sentences, to the remarkably insular efforts of the Orthodox spokesmen! The former does not spare the Eastern tradition, especially in those phases of thought most deeply damaged by Neoplatonism, but no less does he spare the medieval West and much that flowed from it, in and after the Reformation, within and beyond the Reformed fold. But on the Orthodox side, self-criticism is barely discernible, and engagement with other major theological currents minimal. One almost gets the impression, fostered, for example, by the esteem accorded to the Fathers of Greek Church, of the Reformed paying court to the Orthodox. But the venerable immobility of Orthodoxy, standing by the old paths, commands its own respect in a day when theological flux reigns in other confessions. *Lux ex oriente?*

The Review Editor

Simon Peter: From Galilee to Rome

Carsten Peter Thiede

Paternoster Press, Exeter, 1986; 272pp., £7.95, paperback;

ISBN 0 85364 386 5.

It is probably true to say that in Protestantism the significance of Peter for the early development of Christianity has been considerably overshadowed by that of Paul. The unique role which Matthew 16:18 gives him has been played down for polemical reasons, and in recent times doubts about the reliability of the sources for reconstructing Peter's career have led to a situation where scholarly studies of the historical Paul far outnumber those of the historical Peter, though interest in the use of the *figure* of Peter in early Christian literature has recently been growing. Thiede is intent on redressing the balance - both in favour of Peter himself, as a uniquely important person in the early church, and in favour of the historical reliability of the New

Testament sources for our knowledge of Peter, including both Petrine letters, whose authenticity he defends. (By a curious slip, the index actually adds '3 Peter' to the usual 1 and 2!) As well as the New Testament sources, he also makes use of archaeology, for here at least Peter has the advantage over Paul: both Peter's home in Capernaum and his grave on the Vatican Hill have been excavated and identified with some probability. Thiede discusses both: he could perhaps have made more of the implications of the former. As for extra-canonical literary sources, there is a good deal of purported information about Peter. Thiede relies on the Fathers with, in my view, too much confidence, but makes too little use of the (in most cases earlier) traditions in the apocryphal literature. (For example, the earliest clear evidence of Peter's martyrdom in Rome under Nero is in the Ascension of Isaiah and the Apocalypse of Peter. Thiede merely refers to the former in a footnote and not at all to the latter.)

This is fundamentally a narrative biography of Peter, in which all discussion occurs within the narrative framework. This makes for an accessible book, from which the general reader can benefit - though he will run into some relatively technical discussion from time to time. The method does, however, limit severely the extent to which he is able to argue his case for interpretations of the evidence which are often quite controversial. Since opposing views are not set out and discussed, but only mentioned in passing, the general reader may be too easily persuaded of Thiede's interpretation. For example, the strong arguments against Petrine authorship of 2 Peter - including those from the literary form of the work, which Thiede, who claims to approach his subject as a 'literary historian', ought to feel obliged to consider - are never presented. Moreover, one would have liked something more in the way of an overall assessment of the significance of Peter's role in the history of Christian origins.

The book is equally divided between Peter's life before and after the Ascension. In the first half, the Gospels are treated as strictly historical reporting. No doubt many readers, tired of the more sceptical approach of most New Testament scholars, will welcome this. But the scholars will not be convinced, because, although Thiede claims to approach the material simply as an historian, the *methodological* issues are not discussed. For example, that the four Gospels corroborate each other, as he claims, is not a valid historical argument *unless* their sources and literary relationships are established, but it is by no means clear how far Thiede differs from the common views on these matters.

One of the most striking features of his reconstruction of Peter's career after Pentecost is that he accepts the patristic tradition of a twenty-five year episcopate in Rome (though with some of this period away from the city). He is not the only modern scholar to do so, though most have allowed Peter to reach Rome only towards the end of his life. However, there are two novel features of Thiede's argument: 1) He argues not only that the 'other place' to which Peter departed, according to Acts 12:17, in A.D. 41/42, was Rome, but also that Luke's phrase is actually a cryptic expression for Rome (from Ezekiel 12:13, by way of the equation of Rome with Babylon, as in 1 Peter 5:13). 2) He argues that Mark's Gospel - a record of Peter's preaching - was written in Rome between A.D. 44 and 46, after Peter's first departure from the city in

A.D. 44. This remarkably early date for Mark's Gospel is based partly on Thiede's claim (argued elsewhere) that a papyrus fragment from Qumran should be identified as part of Mark. But the precise date is based on Irenaeus' statement that Mark wrote the Gospel 'after the *exodos* of Peter and Paul', which Thiede takes in the literal sense of 'departure' as a reference to Peter's departure from Rome in A.D. 44. But this cannot have been Irenaeus' meaning since he refers to the *exodos* of *both* Peter and Paul. The obvious explanation of Irenaeus' statement is that it is based entirely on Papias' information about the writing of Mark and on an interpretation of 2 Peter 1:15 as a reference to Mark's Gospel (an incorrect interpretation, in my view, but correct in Thiede's view). Irenaeus correctly understood *exodos* in 2 Peter 2:15 as a reference to Peter's death, and knew the well-attested tradition that Peter and Paul were both put to death in Nero's persecution.

This is not the only weak argument among the more unusual aspects of the historical reconstruction. It will be obvious that I have numerous reservations about the account of Peter's career in this book. Thiede is currently working on a study of 2 Peter which will no doubt help to substantiate some of the opinions for which he is unable to argue fully in this book. But for the general reader who realises that historical reconstruction is often necessarily tentative, this book offers a rare attempt at an overview of the life of Peter, informed by solid and up-to-date scholarship and throwing light on a whole series of biblical passages.

Richard Bauckham
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The Meeting of the Waters

George Carey

Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1985; 188pp., £4.95, paperback;
ISBN 0 340 37379 6.

Despite the reference to water in its title, this book is not about baptism! Bearing the sub-title, 'A balanced contribution to the ecumenical debate', it is presented by its author as 'a book about Protestant-Catholic relationships from an evangelical perspective' (p. 9). Hoping 'to suggest a way forward towards genuine dialogue and resolution of conflict' while 'not arguing for unity at the expense of truth' (pp. 9-10), Carey expresses the 'hope that the waters of the two great Western traditions may one day meet in spirit and in truth' (p. 11). He uses the imagery of water in his chapter-titles: *The Reservoir of Rome; Protestant Wellsprings of Faith; All at Sea?; Harbour in Sight?*

Carey's book is a strong, personal statement, 'not written for theological pundits but for average Christians' (p. 11). Since Carey is dealing with such a sensitive subject, it is inevitable that his interesting and readable book will, in places, prove to be provocative. Different readers will assess the book's importance differently. Some will be enthusiastic. Others will be more appreciative of his realism.

A short review such as this can hardly begin to evaluate this wide-ranging book. The most that can be done here is to highlight some of Carey's key emphases.

(a) Carey emphasizes the importance of the Bible, stressing that both Protestants and Roman Catholics must face the tough question: 'is your faith biblical?' (p. 21). Concerning Scripture and tradition, he writes, 'it is one thing to recognise that Scripture derives in part from tradition and quite another to conclude that other traditions are on a par with it. As the apostolic witness to Christ, the New Testament is unique and therefore normative for all other traditions' (p. 65).

(b) He insists that 'We must be careful not to allow our view of Catholicism to be coloured by its sixteenth-century appearance' (p. 33). While maintaining that 'we are not as far apart as some people make out' (p. 67), he points out that 'It would be wrong to suggest that somehow we are just the same. But there has been a true growing together nevertheless' (p. 43).

(c) In seeking a way forward, Carey intends 'not to suggest that truth is not important, nor yet to suggest that all the problems that remain will be solved through a loving attitude alone', but to affirm 'that without love for one another we will never resolve our differences' (p. 92). Quoting Moltmann, he emphasizes that this love for one another must be grounded in Christ's love: 'The nearer we come to Christ's cross, the nearer we come together' (p. 159).

(d) Carey concludes by stressing that we must be 'people of prayer' and 'people of truth' (p. 180). He insists that prayer is not 'an inactive thing: as the history of revivals and renewals shows, prayer is crucial' (p. 180). Concerning truth, he writes, 'Truth and the essentials of the faith would suffer if dialogue among the denominations ended up as a mishmash of uncertainties and vague beliefs. Hard questions must be put to one another, but how they are put will greatly affect the outcome. If history has taught us anything, we will not retreat into polemics. Beware of the polemic preacher; he is half-blind to truth because he fails to see that love must be part of the truth of Christ. Followers of Christ will always do their talking in the light of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Where he is central, not much divides' (p. 180).

Though Carey writes for 'average Christians', his sources are carefully stated in 120 notes (pp. 182-188).

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Biblical Theology: Old and New Testament

Geerhardus Vos

Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1985; 425pp., £5.95;
ISBN 0 85151 223 2.

This work was originally published by Eerdmans just a year before the author's death at 87 years of age, in 1949. It is an important book of abiding value, and the Banner of Truth edition improves its readability by dividing long paragraphs, introducing sub-headings, and supplying much more detailed contents pages.

Vos was born in the Netherlands, but emigrated with his parents to the U.S.A. when he was 19. During his period of theological study he visited the Netherlands again and came under the powerful influence of Kuyper and Bavinck. His determination to master not only Greek and Hebrew but also the

wider Semitic field showed that he had a strong interest in exegesis as well as theology.

These two interests came together when, early in his lecturing career, he was appointed to the newly created chair in Biblical Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary. The subject had been developed with rationalistic presuppositions in the 18th century, and, for this reason, there was little sympathy between evangelical systematic theologians and those liberal scholars who pursued biblical theology. The former, quite understandably, viewed the latter with distrust, for their work so often undermined the authority of the Scriptures. Abraham Kuyper, for example, rejected biblical theology as it was then understood. The authorities at Princeton however rightly saw that the challenge, represented at that time by C.A. Briggs at Union Seminary in New York, needed to be met, and that Vos was the man to meet it.

The book is the fruit of his study of the subject over many years. It is immensely stimulating, but there is one major disappointment. It closes with the ministry of Jesus. This is all the more disappointing because his other works on Pauline theology, especially his Pauline Eschatology are of such a high quality. No doubt his original intention was to include the whole of N.T. theology.

The book is divided into three sections, devoted respectively to the Mosaic and Prophetic epochs of revelation, and to the New Testament. The first of these opens with questions of subject-definition and methodology, in which he is really establishing biblical theology as an evangelical discipline.

The whole work is distinguished by reverence for Scripture, clarity of thought, and courteous treatment of those whose views are different from his own.

The back cover records the judgement of John Murray (a student of his at Princeton) that Geerhardus Vos was the most incisive exegete of the English-speaking world in the twentieth century. This volume provides evidence for this, for his biblical theology was based on painstaking work on each biblical passage handled. On Genesis 22, for example, he shows how important it is rightly to understand the passage because of its substitutionary implications.

His influence has been great, not least on systematic theologians like Murray and Berkhof. We may learn from him that systematic theology has everything to gain from the insights, and even the criticism, of a biblical theology based on the authority of God's Word.

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Christ and the Judgment of God: Divine Retribution in the New Testament

Stephen H. Travis

Marshall Pickering, Basingstoke, 1986; 214pp., £9.95, paperback;
ISBN 0 551 01358 3

There are few, I imagine, who would relish writing a book on divine judgment, but we can be grateful that Stephen Travis, who lectures at St John's College, Nottingham, here presents an extensive study of some New Testament

evidence, based on his Cambridge Ph.D. As the sub-title indicates, he has a specific question in view: what place does the notion of 'retribution' hold in the NT view of God's judgment? After surveying some Jewish material, Travis restricts his study to Paul (who takes up the bulk of the book) and the Gospels; the witness of other parts of the NT (e.g. Hebrews and Revelation) is not discussed. The notion of 'retribution' is explored in relation to a number of themes: God's wrath, ideas of reward and punishment, the *lex talionis*, judgment by works, the possibility of losing salvation and the eternal fate of unbelievers. All the major references to such entities within the Pauline and gospel corpora are discussed and the thesis which Travis advances is that, although some retributive terms and concepts are used, Paul and the gospel writers (and Jesus) primarily viewed God's judgment in terms of 'relationship' not 'retribution': God does not pay people back for their deeds but allows them to reap the consequences of their own choice to enter, or refuse to enter, a relationship with him (see pp.124, 152).

It is apparent even from this summary that 'retribution' is a loaded term in this book as in most modern discussions of the matter, and the way that Travis defines his terms in the introductory chapter is clearly of crucial importance. Unfortunately, however, his definitions are not as clear or fully discussed as we might have hoped. The whole direction of the thesis is determined by the statement that 'retribution . . . operates on a less than fully personal level, and it deals with externals' (p.5; the footnote here and remarks elsewhere make clear Travis' dependence on the work of C.F.D. Moule and G.W.H. Lampe). Even if this statement is true it requires much fuller substantiation, because it forms the basis of a host of subsequent judgments that, because Paul or the Gospels are concerned with character, personal relationship with God and the whole direction of a person's life, they cannot be charged with presenting God's judgment in a 'fully' or 'strictly' retributive sense.

A related aspect of Travis' definition of retribution is that it is 'inflicted from outside' or 'extrinsic'. Thus when he finds many indications, especially in Paul and John, that our fates at the judgment are the inherent consequences of our decisions for or against God (we reap what we sow), he concludes that this 'intrinsic' view of judgment is a long way from 'retribution'. And yet, as he rightly acknowledges, the NT writers still insist that it is *God* who metes out judgment (the wrath is not impersonal but God's). Travis clearly feels a tension at this point which might have been eased if he had dropped (or more carefully defined) the terms 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic'.

Nonetheless, Travis' general point is, to my mind, convincingly established, at least in relation to most of the passages he discusses. Since he writes as a committed evangelical, the thrust of his book could act as a valuable corrective of a tendency by some evangelicals to emphasise the concept of retribution when discussing the final judgment. It also has important implications for a doctrine of atonement and it is a pity that Travis never broaches these, or allows himself to discuss at any length the wider theological issues he touches on of human responsibility, the love and sovereignty of God and the problems of holding *either* a universalist doctrine *or* the conviction that God's purpose to save all will ultimately be defeated. Although his book comes in a series entitled 'Foundations for Faith. An Introduction to

Christian Doctrine', Travis sticks very much to his NT material. The result is a book replete with exegetical details on a large number of scattered NT texts and consequently rather hard going for the reader, but nonetheless providing essential groundwork for a wider and most important theological debate.

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The Beginnings: Word and Spirit in Conversion

Paul Helm

Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1986; 141pp., £2.25, paperback;
ISBN 0 85151 470 7.

This book is about the spiritual and theological framework of Christian conversion, an experience which is analysed in terms of three essential elements or structural principles: conviction of sin, repentance and faith. Helm carefully defines each of these in the light of Scripture, and illustrates their authentic content from biblical narratives. This question of authenticity is crucial to the book's purpose: 'it has to do with the question of how a person who is inclined to respond favourably to the gospel message may be helped to recognise whether or not God is truly at work in him.' As the subtitle indicates, there is also a stress throughout on the conjoint operation of Word and Spirit in true conversion.

While he insists that these structural principles are essential in making up what conversion means, Helm is concerned that we do not absolutise a specific, rigid pattern in Christian experience. This is why he uses the language of 'strands' rather than steps or stages. He recognises conceptual and logical priority, so that saving faith arises out of conviction, and repentance is the consequence of faith, but he is clear that to firm the elements into an invariable order would be unevangelical and legalistic. He adds that the language of strands rather than stages also has the advantage of demonstrating that these are conditions in the logical rather than the causal sense.

The final two chapters deal with 'Problems' and 'Consequences'. Helm faces some of the objections brought against the theology for which he has argued, such as the charge that irresistible divine sovereignty means impersonal and mechanical grace. He argues that divine grace actually restores human personality and freedom. When he turns to the implications which a proper understanding of conversion must have for the life of the church, he has a particularly helpful focus on the kind of piety that results from authentic conversion, a piety that is God-centred, moral, culturally aware, and directed to the end-time.

The importance of our language is a recurring theme. Helm regards the need for our ideas about conversion and the whole course of Christian experience to be gained from and controlled by Scripture as one of the most pressing of the day. He pleads for a restoration of the basic biblical categories of law and sin, of grace and forgiveness, and of penitence and saving faith. 'It is because of the close way in which experience and scripture are and ought to be intertwined that the language that is used in worship, in preaching and in

all other forms of Christian communication, ought to be chosen with great care'.

There is a lot here in brief compass, and the arguments are presented with clarity. The work will be especially useful to all who strive for increasing biblical fidelity in gospel proclamation. It includes General and Scriptural Indexes.

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Speaking in Tongues: A Guide to Research on Glossolalia

Watson E. Mills (ed.)

Paternoster Press, Exeter, 1986; 537pp., £22.20, paperback;
ISBN 0 8028 0183 8.

This large volume is essentially a collection of twenty-seven reprinted essays on the subject of glossolalia with an Introduction and a Survey of Literature by the editor, whose own (unpublished) doctoral dissertation (Southen Baptist Theological Seminary, 1968) was on the theological interpretation of tongues in Acts and in 1 Corinthians, and who has published several works pertinent to the theme since.

The aim of the collection is not to provide a unified perspective on the subject but to illustrate the diversity of approaches and methods that have been used in assessing the phenomenon. Accordingly the book has five parts devoted respectively to exegetical, historical, theological, psychological and sociocultural studies; and the contributors range from those who are sharply critical of tongues speech to those who all but explicitly advocate it.

The section on exegetical studies is unfortunately not a good advertisement for New Testament scholarship. With the exception of Harrisville's lexicographical study (*Cath. Bibl. Quart.*, 1976), and John Sweet's careful analysis of Paul's attitude to tongues (*New Test. Studies*, 1967)), the contributions are evidence that the best minds in New Testament research have not considered the theme worthy of especially detailed analysis: silence or mere survey and generalising comments are considered to suffice. Both May's essay on glossolalia and related phenomena in non-Christian religions (which does not rightly belong in this section as it is almost entirely devoted to modern religious phenomena) and Bunn's study of 'Glossolalia in Historical Perspective' provide instructive examples of the misuse of parallels!

The section devoted to historical studies offers only five essays; one general but balanced discussion of the 'Significance of Glossolalia in the History of Christianity'; another on 'The Place of Glossolalia in Neo-Pentecostalism' (actually a theological evaluation and advocacy of the gift), and then three essays only marginally related to glossolalia: on Catholic and Black Pentecostalism and on the Holiness Movement in Southern Appalachia. Perhaps as disappointing was part three - 'Theological Studies': it comprises one NT essay (J. Massyngbaerde Forde) with little more evaluation than already offered in the earlier exegetical section; a most tentative theoretical essay on the problem of applying N.T. advice on glossolalia to today (E. Best);

an attempt to find a common factor in Quaker silence, Catholic liturgy and glossolalia (R. Baer; they each allow the querulous rational mind to rest, and the spirit to respond), and an eirenic and pastoral summary and reappraisal (by Mills).

The last two parts, while containing some thoughtful essays (e.g. that by Vern Poythress), ably demonstrate that the behavioural sciences are no more rigorous, and no less divided on the subject, than their more theological colleagues. The editor did not have available to him Malony and Lovekin's work (1985) which eclipses all previous study.

On the whole we must be grateful to Mills for a useful and representative guide to research on glossolalia, which we must hope will serve to stimulate more rigorous work in the future. The essays are relatively untechnical, and so readable, and there is a fairly lengthy (but by no means complete) bibliography. The reviewer was surprised to find no reference at all to the approaches of Gunkel and Leisegang, even more so to find not a single reference to either of the major works (*vis-a-vis* baptism in Holy Spirit, Pentecostalism and the gifts of the Spirit) by Professor J. D. G. Dunn (he should certainly have appeared on p. 30 instead of Hoekema, who popularises him), and astonished to learn (also p. 30) that F. D. Bruner's *The Theology of the Holy Spirit* is a classic example of biblical exegesis from the Pentecostal point of view (Bruner opposes precisely such)! Perhaps most surprising of all was to find the editor defining glossolalia as 'a purely ecstatic utterance that represents no human language' (p. 2; contrasting it with xenolalia). This is an unforgivably question-begging definition when what little access we have to the psychological state of prophecy and tongues in the NT suggests it was at most partially dissociative (not ecstatic: see Aune and Grudem), and when most modern tongues-speech is decidedly *not* ecstatic (as at least some of the essays in the volume point out).

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Divine Communication: Word and Sacrament in Biblical, Historical and Contemporary Perspective

Hans Schwarz

Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1985; 162pp., £10, paperback;
ISBN 0 8006 1846 7

The author is Professor of Protestant Theology at Regensburg, a Lutheran with an ecumenical orientation. His concern in this book is to survey both historical differences and current understandings of the main observances of the Church's worship, in order to measure progress towards agreement. In relatively short compass he provides a handy guide to mainstream approaches to the word of God, baptism and the Eucharist (to follow his and many writers' questionable discrimination in the use of capitals).

The word of God covers everything from God's 'self-disclosive', history-making word, finally expressed in Jesus Christ, to the preached word, the word as guidance (involving penance), the 'dialogical word' of prayer and liturgy, and the 'empirical word' of miracles - in the Bible, not in the contemporary

world. One might have expected some discussion of Scripture as God's word, but this kind of professional theology has still to recover from the strongly anti-propositional prejudice of a couple of decades ago.

Infant baptism is defended, but the presentation ultimately lacks consistency. On the one hand a theology of baptism must begin with the baptism requested by the convert, on the other hand, 'we do nothing in baptism; God does everything'. Although Schwarz engages with Barth's assault on infant baptism, his own position shows how deeply the passivity of the infant in baptism (which must be judged quite incidental and theologically indifferent, since it is absent from the baptism of those who come voluntarily) continues to influence baptismal theology.

Tagged on to the final chapter on the Lord's Supper is a brief section on ordination, which in turn discusses women's ordination in the last paragraph. Partly because past divisions have run so deep, a greater degree of convergence is evident on the Supper, although Schwarz does not shrink from pointing to areas of continuing disunity - include communion in both kinds. Individual cups are found to be symbolically deficient, but no word of criticism is directed to wafers or pre-diced bread. Surely 'one loaf' is no less biblically demanded than 'one cup'?

Those who want to know the state of play in contemporary inter-confessional reflection on these topics will find this book informative.

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Reality and Scientific Theology

Thomas F. Torrance

Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh, 1985; xvi + 206 pp., £10;

ISBN 0 7073 0429 6.

This book - which is volume one in a series entitled 'Theology and Science at the Frontiers of Knowledge' - explores the links between science and theology. It is a revised form of the Harris Lectures, given in the University of Dundee in 1970. Professor Torrance develops the theme he has explored in other places, that there is no inherent contradiction between science and theology.

Chapter One investigates different approaches to knowledge, contrasting a classical, objective idea of knowledge with a modern constructivist approach that sees science no longer dealing with truth *per se*, but simply formulating mechanisms by which to achieve certain ends (instrumentalism). Torrance notes the danger of scientists' abstracting an aspect of reality (their field of study) and then trying to absolutise that abstraction and understand all on that basis.

Chapter Two examines the status of natural theology. Torrance desires to retain natural theology, not in the traditional sense with some independent status but in a bipolar relationship with revealed theology.

Chapter Three seeks to open up 'The Science of God'. Drawing on Einstein, Torrance indicates how scientific concepts are not arrived at by simple logical inference from sensory experience. There are intuitive elements, which for the theologian must be controlled by the Word which needs to 'become interiorised in our understanding' (p.85).

Chapter Four begins by noting the simple fact that our knowledge is socially, culturally and historically conditioned, and ends with a series of helpful propositions which remind us of the need to relate theology to a living community of faith and also to the scientific world in which we live.

Chapter Five argues that knowledge is not all on the flat, at one level, but multi-dimensional, and the final chapter places everything within a Trinitarian structure - 'the basic grammar of theology' (p.161).

So much for the general content of this book, which is written in Torrance's usual complicated style which unfortunately precludes popular consumption. Several basic criticisms may be made. Is it true to say that it is no longer philosophy but science which drives our culture (p.ix), when it is remembered that it is difficult to separate science from its philosophical foundations? One thinks of Heisenberg's *Physics and Philosophy*, in which he freely indicates that he is pursuing an epistemological programme. Nor is it helpful to characterise the modern field of science in such a uniform manner as Torrance seems to indicate.

Professor Torrance gives the impression of a romantic view of the scientific enterprise. He writes of scientists 'in their service of truth' (p.109), 'for the scientist has no romantic interest in expressing his own individuality or asserting the place of his own personality in knowledge' (pp. 111-112). A few years ago the *New Scientist* ran a series of articles on 'Cheating in Science', while a recent book by Broad and Wade on the sociology of science (called *Betrayers of the Truth*) examines cheating and fraud within science!

Furthermore when Torrance steps out of the rarified academic atmosphere into the practical world of technology we find phrases such as: 'we must also reckon with the cybernetic thrust of the technological society . . . which threatens the purity and objectivity of science' (p.151). This seems to verge on a philosophical Ludditism as regards technology.

Despite these criticisms this is a useful and stimulating contribution to our understanding of theology and science. The book has extensive footnotes at the end of each chapter but could have benefitted from both a general and a name index.

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Worship (Guides to the Reformed Tradition)

Hughes Oliphant Old

John Knox Press, Atlanta, 1986; 202 pp., £6.50, paperback;
ISBN 0 8042 3252 0.

This book not only perfectly fulfils the aims of the series, but can stand on its own as a first-rate scholarly and practical book on worship. In the best Reformed tradition, it expounds Scripture and surveys Church history, especially the early fathers, before explaining what the Reformers did and why they did it. Old understands that it is not enough to assert the authority of the Bible, it is necessary to see how it has been interpreted by the great scholars of the past. And when he comes to the Reformation itself, he knows that the Reformed tradition is collegial, and so we find Bucer and Bullinger, Luther

and Zwingli, Vermigli and Knox alongside Calvin. The author deserves in this review a summary of what is covered, after an opening chapter on *principles*: Christian worship is according to Scripture, in the name of Christ, in the body of Christ – 'Worship is the work of the Holy Spirit, in the body of Christ, to the glory of the Father'. The service of God and the service of neighbour must go together.

On *baptism*, Old stresses the primary meaning of washing, in the context of covenant theology, so that we are justified by faith, not by either our baptism or our decision. There follows a discussion of how the Jewish Sabbath relates to the *Lord's Day*, and the importance of the book of Revelation for understanding the latter.

The chapter on *praise* is one of the most interesting. The psalms are good for praise, prayer, teaching and self-expression. 'It is when there is a dynamic relation between [hymns and psalms] that Christian doxology is best served.' He points out that the Huguenot Psalter was better poetically and musically than the Scots Psalter some are so keen to retain. He speculates when he argues that 'spiritual songs' in Colossians 3.16 cannot be simply 'songs inspired by the Spirit', on the grounds that these early Christian hymns 'simply disappeared' or were 'taken over by the Gnostics'. This seems as weak as the Pentecostals' opposite argument that 'spiritual songs' must simply be singing in tongues.

The chapter on *preaching* is rich, studying scriptural patterns, Jesus' method, later developments so that (a) the preacher began also to preside at the eucharist and (b) prophecy became the prerogative of the preacher. He notes the change during Augustine's time from continuous to selective exposition. The Reformers themselves stressed simple preaching, and tried to hold together a unity between word, prayer and sacrament which the Puritans later lost. After looking at *prayer* in the Bible, and how the early Church continued much Jewish practice, Old notes how prayer forms break down and go stale, and how the Reformers tried to restore true public prayer in a balance between set forms and extempore prayer which is much needed today.

With the *Lord's Supper*, Old seeks to show how a biblical and Reformed approach avoids the twin dangers of sacramentalism and nominalism. He advocates the common cup and single loaf. He explains Calvin's doctrine of Christ's presence at (not on) the Table, to restore our humanity, and expounds Vermigli, a little known Oxford theologian who in turn used the ideas of Hilary of Poitiers. He comments on Knox's liturgy and the common design of Scottish churches to let the congregation sit round three sides of the Table.

The Reformers restored the Jewish and early Christian practice of *Daily Prayer*, with a morning service (one or two psalms, prayer, sermon, intercessions and blessing) and evening service. In the 17th century this became daily family prayer, and later just individual prayer. Especially with the number of single people in churches, we need to recover daily worship in congregations, and set our counselling ministry in that context. There follows a chapter on alms and the importance of the diaconate.

The final chapter is irenic, noting that we cannot put back the clock, and that we have still to practise some of the things the Reformers failed to - such as weekly communion! And a final lesson from the Reformers: their prayers

were not 'so obsessed with walking the tightrope of theological formulation that they lost the doxological spirit'.

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The Church: God's Agent for Change

Bruce J. Nicholls (ed.)

World Evangelical Fellowship Theological Commission, Paternoster Press, Exeter, 1986; 299pp., £7.95, paperback; ISBN 0 85364 444 6

In an age of conferences experience suggests that the majority make an impact that is immediate but short-lived. This collection of essays demonstrates how exceptional the 1974 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelisation has proved to be. For the Lausanne Covenant which emerged from that Congress has proved, ten years later, to be central in setting the agenda not only for the thinking of Evangelicals, but also for determining their approach. This book is an edited selection of materials originally presented in 1983 at Wheaton College, Illinois. The subject is the nature and mission of the local church. The themes round which the book is built emerge straight from the Lausanne Covenant: the biblical foundations for the Church; the place of the Church in relation to the Kingdom of God; the twin responsibilities of the Church to evangelise and work for social change; the fact of suffering and the call to renewal. So too does its spirit, recognising the importance of repentance and rejecting all temptations to triumphalism.

In the introductory essay the book is described frankly as 'bewildering and enriching' and indeed, that may be an accurate assessment. It is bewildering in that there is an unevenness to the handling of the eight themes. Some of the contributions are light-weight, others have had their readability affected by the editorial pen. Yet for the Christian, concerned to see the state of Evangelical thinking and practice in the 1980s, this book can also be enriching. Over two thirds of the essays and reports come from the Third World or from Eastern Europe. That in itself is a reminder of the way that the centre of Christianity has shifted from the West. It also allows us to listen to the authentic voice of the Church around the world, thinking, feeling, planning, praying, working, suffering. In the theological essays that introduce most sections we have helpful summaries of contemporary Evangelical thinking on key issues concerning the doctrine of the Church. These papers provide the meat of the book, and are well within the scope of the interested church member. They also provide a framework for reflection on the papers that follow. Half the chapters - 14 out of 31 - are case studies, where local churches throughout the world relate their experience as a demonstration of how the Church actually practises its beliefs. For those concerned with church leadership, seeing how others do it, and why, is always constructive. The book itself is written under the belief that Evangelicals, concerned as they are with the priority of personal faith, continue to have a 'blind spot' in terms of their doctrine of the Church. This is no new criticism, as it is voiced by those in the High Church in the 19th century. It was Christ the King who said 'I will build my Church' (Matt. 16:18) and the New Testament sees the Church as a

gathered community which has a sending mission to the world. By worship, witness and service it is to be involved in the work of world evangelisation, in concern for human justice, and in responding to human need. By doing so it seeks to fulfil Christ's mission of redemption and liberation while pointing forward to his coming reign as Judge and King. Yet the Church too often has been characterized, despite its growth and activism, by fragmentation, disunity, paternalism, insensitivity and the abuse of power. Recognising where the Church has failed to fulfil its high calling, the papers in this book call Christians and local churches to examine afresh their attitude to the Church, the relationship between churches and para-church agencies, and the importance of creating a Christian counter-culture in a non-Christian world. This is an interesting book to dip into, to test the temperature of the worldwide evangelical community.

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Spiritual Care

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1985; 93 pp., £4.75, paperback;
 ISBN 0 8006 1874 2.

In 1935 Dietrich Bonhoeffer was appointed Principal of the clandestine seminary of the German Confessing Church at Finkenwalde, one of five such preachers' seminaries to be established. He saw his task to be the training of pastors as 'theologians, preachers, pastors, teachers and administrators under the Word of God, persons who lived as "committed disciples"'. *Spiritual Care*, after a long introductory essay by Jay C. Rochelle, consists of Bonhoeffer's lectures to his students on the pastoral process by which a person is introduced to a meeting with Jesus Christ. He considers how the gospel message, which is essentially that of forgiveness, can be brought to people in the midst of their personal lives. After a long, and valuable, chapter on law and gospel in spiritual care he looks at the practical situations people face - temptation, weddings, funerals, sickness, and considers the pastor's role and message in them. The central emphasis is that the pastor is not a psychotherapist, but a man of God, called and sent by his Lord to his flock, not even to befriend them, but to be to them the agent of spiritual care. The pastor must not draw attention to himself, allow his own weaknesses and unworthiness to obstruct or make himself out to be someone whom you can trust. His task is to lead sinners to Jesus Christ, the source of forgiveness and salvation. Bonhoeffer's total emphasis is much needed today and deserves, in an age of counselling and pastoral techniques, to be given a hearing.

Jay C. Rochelle's long introduction rather tends to invite us to read *Spiritual Care* as an example of Bonhoeffer's early thought rather than for its own sake. The eleven pages of notes and the bibliography of works by and about Bonhoeffer all contribute to this impression. That is a pity as *Spiritual Care* deserves to stand by itself and make its own impact.

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Journey Towards Holiness: A Way of Living for God's Nation

Alan Kreider

Marshall Pickering, Basingstoke, 1986; 252pp., £4.95, paperback;
ISBN 0 551 013621.

This is an invigorating, refreshing and stimulating book. It would be a mistake to lump it with the multiplicity of current calls for a simple life-style for Christians and for protest against social injustice and the nuclear folly. It is that, but much more. Just as Kreider calls for distinctive living so there is something basically distinctive about the book. The author begins with God and ends with a call to godly holiness. Holiness he sees as a living force, God on the move, and the 'geyser' of spiritual energy. Holiness is separation with a God-reflecting quality. God, being holy, calls Israel, and then the Church, not only to be holy but also to take part in holy action. The author traces this call through the phases of Israel's history, dealing perceptively on the way with the issue of the just war, stressing the importance of the manna principles of sufficiency and equality and highlighting the Jubilee as the central theme of Old Testament economics. Kreider believes that in Luke 4:18-19 our Lord inaugurated the Jubilee. He then called his own to display a social holiness which will affect every area of life. The Church is called to practise Jubilee economics and will deal with enemies, not by killing them, but by loving them. Kreider complains that many contemporary Christians apply holiness mainly to things, have replaced sufficiency with unrestricted growth, have ignored the principle of equality and are prepared to go to unholy lengths, through militarism, to satisfy their need of protection. He insists that the only separateness which has anything to say to our age is one that is a reflection of God. Our contemporaries assert their own strength and security while God calls his people to trust him while acknowledging their own powerlessness.

Kreider encourages us not to start our thinking with bombs, economics, social injustice and the like. Our starting point is God and his holiness and his call, fulfilled in Jesus, to his people to be holy. Not surprisingly, therefore, the book is full of hope and confidence.

It is difficult to fault the argument. Instead of looking for weaknesses in the author's case the reader begins to sense the inadequacies of his own defences. The book is compelling reading.

James Taylor
Stirling Baptist Church

A Textbook of Christian Ethics

Robin Gill

T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1985; 571 + xiii pp., £9.95, paperback;
ISBN 0 567 29127 8.

This is a 'Textbook' in an unusual sense of the word. It is not so much a straightforward description of the main issues of Christian ethics, as a book of texts, ranging from Augustine to Miranda, which discuss problems in Christian ethics and illustrate some of its most essential characteristics. Gill divides his texts into four main sections, entitled 'Methodology', 'Politics and Social Justice', 'War and Peace' and 'Human Life and Interpersonal

Relationships', and in each section he provides a 'Text' from Augustine, Aquinas and Luther followed by six or seven 'Extracts' from twentieth-century authors of Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Reformed, Lutheran and Quaker backgrounds. As well as an Introductory chapter, he provides an introduction to each section and to each Text or group of Extracts. Here he introduces his sources with an analysis of their Background, Key Issues, Ethical Arguments, Bases of Christian Ethics, Social Determinants and Social Significance. And at the end of each subsection he provides a brief critique weighing up the strengths and weaknesses of the texts under discussion. The result is an extremely valuable perspective on the complex issues of Christian ethics, demonstrating above all the great *variety* of Christian viewpoints which have been and continue to be propounded.

Obviously the worth of a book such as this depends entirely on two factors: the selection of texts and the critical acumen with which they are introduced and commented upon. It is fascinating to see, side by side, Augustine's struggle to express the relation between the earthly and heavenly cities, Aquinas' assumption that God designed the church to rule the state, and the very different perspectives engendered by Barth's neo-orthodoxy, Temple's Christian socialism and Miranda's liberation theology. Gill has deliberately chosen texts which illustrate the diversity in Christian ethics - the range of different theological starting-points and the bewilderingly different conclusions. The latter is particularly well exemplified in the section on 'War and Peace' where we have the full range from Aquinas' 'Just War' theory to Raven's Christian pacifism, taking in, on the way, Ramsey's theory of the justifiable bluff in nuclear deterrence and a fascinating United Reformed Church paper on non-violent action. My only criticism of Gill's selection would be (a) that he sticks too rigidly to his trio of 'classics' (Augustine, Aquinas and Luther): surely Calvin should be included somewhere; and (b) that he sometimes tries to cover too broad an area. In particular, the last section on 'Human Life and Interpersonal Relationships', is really too disparate, since it covers sexual ethics, racism, abortion, euthanasia, suicide and feminism. It would have been better to stick to just one or two of these areas.

As regards Gill's introductory comments and critiques, one may say that he has helpfully highlighted the different theological traditions evidenced in his sources, e.g., the Catholic accent on 'natural law', the Lutheran emphasis on man's fallenness, and the 'personalist' stress in modern situation ethics. He also points out the very varied uses of the Bible and is particularly helpful in demonstrating the influence of the writers' social contexts on their ethical presuppositions and conclusions. It is only a pity that, sometimes, Gill's comments are not as crisp and incisive as they might have been; the discussion of 'Key Issues' is never more than a *précis* of the relevant document(s) and the Critique could have been usefully sharpened by enumerating the most important unresolved or unanswered questions. However, there are times when Gill is admirably perceptive and employs his wide-ranging knowledge to good effect. Certainly this book will prove to be a very useful 'primer' for many students of Christian ethics, both in formal education and in private reading. Gill's broad selection of materials and his overall conclusion, that there are some crucial and creative tensions built into Christian ethics, will

undoubtedly correct those who approach the subject (or a particular modern ethical dilemma) without a proper sense of its history and complexity. In other words, this book is well suited to fulfil its aim, 'to contribute to a more mature understanding of Christian ethics' (p. xii).

John Barclay
University of Glasgow

Talking about God is Dangerous

Tatiana Goricheva

SCM Press, London, 1986; 103pp., £3.95; ISBN 0 334 01582 0.

Students of religious life in modern U.S.S.R. agree that the continued life of the Orthodox Church is nothing short of a miracle. Archaic in its liturgy, hamstrung by pressures Westerners can hardly conceive of, the Orthodox Church continues to be a vehicle of salvation, renewal and rebirth.

Tatiana Goricheva's book, *Talking about God is Dangerous*, describes one woman's pilgrimage from atheism to faith. It gives a clear inside view of Orthodoxy, with fascinating portraits of monks and laity, as well as an immigrant's view of the West.

John Bowden is to be commended for his flowing translation. Tatiana Goricheva, a philosopher 'of great promise', co-founder of the Leningrad Christian Seminar and the women's movement known as the Maria Club, begins her book with the appearance of the K.G.B. 'I sat down at my desk and began to read Karl Rahner's *Foundations of Christian Belief*', she writes, and describes how she confronts her questioners with silence sustained by prayer.

She describes her conversion ('My life only began when God found me') via the saying of the Lord's Prayer as a yoga exercise. 'I was suddenly turned inside out. I understood, not only with my ridiculous understanding, but with my whole being - that he exists . . . the old me died . . . my heart was also opened.' Evangelicals will be familiar with this, but when Goricheva writes about her confession, her visits to the monastery, I would urge readers: not to be disturbed by a spirituality which is so unfamiliar to many Scottish Christians. Goricheva's lucid mind, her converted heart go to the essences: 'Today the time has dawned in Russia in which the truth is being revealed, in all its force, that says of Christ, "He is the life".'

Personal though this testimony is, it is also the story of Russia, its peasantry, its elders, who officially no longer exist, its 'martyr children' who 'bravely bore the torments - and indeed the blows'. We witness the fervent prayer of Russian Baptists, and we see the church of the West, where Goricheva now lives in enforced exile. Banal and boring, on the one hand, 'steeped in emptying' on the other, the church here, says Goricheva, has failed to understand the strength of hiddenness and the conquering power of the cross. It is here in the West that 'Talking about God is dangerous', because too many words trivialise and too few are authentic. This is a book to ponder. It will be welcomed by the many hungry souls in our satiated society who reach out to God in hidden ways.

Jenny Robertson
Edinburgh

Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography

Iain H. Murray

Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1987; 503pp., £10.95;
ISBN 0 85151 494 4

This is a handsome, and, for those with any interest in Jonathan Edwards, an enthralling volume, in which scarcely a leaf or a stone has been left unturned in an effort to provide an attractive portrayal of Edwards, his family and his pastoral ministry. Reading it prompted three lines of thought.

The first is that Iain Murray portrays Edwards chiefly as a pastor and family man. He maintains that all that Edwards did was subservient to gospel preaching. As a consequence only a few lines are devoted to those writings of Edwards which were not concerned either with revival or with more general issues of Christian spirituality. There is scarcely a word on *The Freedom of Will* or *Original Sin*. Such an emphasis hardly corresponds to that of Edwards himself, and does scant justice either to his metaphysical appetite or to the legacy of writing which he has bequeathed. Edwards himself had a much broader view of 'divinity' than that implied here.

Secondly, the book focusses upon the Great Awakening and then upon the troubles at Northampton which led to Edwards' dismissal from the pulpit. The juxtaposition of the glories of the one and the shame of the other cries out for comment and analysis, but receives none. Can it be that the very same congregation which received such benefits of revival in 1740 and subsequently, unceremoniously bundled Edwards and his family out in 1750? Where were the fruits of revival? Had they completely vanished? Among the possible answers to these questions are that the effects of the revival were transient, or that Edwards' dismissal was due to the actions of an influential and unrepresentative minority. Murray opts for the second explanation without even considering the first. But could it be that the popular idea that revival is a panacea needs serious qualification?

There is another plausible explanation of Edwards' dismissal, that the people had by 1750 had more than enough of their pastor's aloof and austere ways and were glad to see the back of him. Such an explanation is not even hinted at in the book, much less seriously considered.

This leads me to my third line of thought about Murray's biography. It is an example of a familiar and popular genre, the Protestant life of a saint. In its attention to detail Murray's book has some of the features of a modern critical biography, say Ben Pimlott's recent study of Hugh Dalton, but it is not *critical*. The materials which Murray uses come from this Protestant hagiographical tradition and he endorses it. There is scarcely one adverse comment on Edwards between the book's elegant covers. There is no assessment, no analysis. Why is there this perfectionism among the Reformed? Where are the warts and the skeletons which, the apostle Paul tells us, afflict and haunt even the most eminent believer until his death?

Paul Helm
University of Liverpool

Luther and the Modern State in Germany (Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies, 7)

James D. Tracy (ed.)

Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, Kirksville, MO, 1986; 108 pp., \$25;
ISBN 0 940474 07 7

There is a feeling abroad that German history has trodden a path different from that of the French or English pattern since the Renaissance (its *Sonderweg*), a path which culminated in the disastrous wars of Kaiser Wilhelm and Hitler, a path which in some vague way originated with Luther. This idea has been perpetuated by otherwise reliable authorities, e.g. William Temple and Bonhoeffer, or earlier writers such as Weber or Maritain. It is this 'Luther-to-Hitler' legend which is handled by these essayists at a high, scholarly level. Though learned and authoritative, the essays are readable, fresh and informative, well illustrated from sources, annotated and documented.

The essayists bring fresh light and informed argument into a complex and controversial area of thought. Heinz Schilling gives an account of the Reformation and the rise of the early modern state, and argues trenchantly that, to make Luther responsible for the German political thinking of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is dead wrong. He brings in the new point of the importance of the rise of confessionalism – Lutheran, Calvinist and Post-Tridentine Catholic. He points out the significance of the rise of independent territorial states, as well as the complexity of factors which produced the sacralisation of the prince and his government in modern Germany. He bluntly (and rightly) argues that Luther never started this and never upheld it. T. A. Brady writes a highly readable essay on Luther's teaching in its social setting, and how Luther's prestige and the weight of history were brought in to support ideas which could not otherwise bear examination. (This is exactly how the reviewer remembers the Hitler regime in his studies in the Nazi Germany of 1936-7.) Eric Gritsch gives a straightforward account of Luther's teaching on the state. He dissociates Luther from Lutheranism in this respect, and also sixteenth-century politics from those of the modern state, now secularised, which, contrary to all Luther stood for, defines everything in terms of human need and human purpose and not in terms of God's demands. He shows how twentieth-century Lutheranism has lost this dimension altogether, and not only this, but also Luther's two-kingdom ethic. Karlheinz Blaschke contributes a specialist study of the rise of Albertine Saxony, showing how the state as state was obliged to support Protestantism in order to exist at all, which in turn enriched the state, and further, how the territorial state was the only power able to reconstruct a new church order: being Protestant became virtually a state duty. He stresses the importance of the administrative bureaucracy, which provided an institutionally unified state Church, which was no Protestant movement as such, but which equally characterised Catholic powers such as Spain and Austria. He cannot see all this as a consequence of the nailing up of the 95 Theses in 1517. The final essay by Brent O. Peterson handles the story of Luther scholarship in East Germany. In a commanding grasp of the material he shows how the modern state of the DDR seized on Luther for political

ends, and how, by and large, German scholars stood up to the state, and in turn have discovered the ambiguity of Luther and his refusal to be measured by, or limited to, any political, social or even theological preconceptions.

This collection of essays is a work first of demolition and then of reconstruction. They serve to remove prejudice and ignorance and restore sound, historical judgment. Some general conclusions emerge. First, the ghost of the 'Luther-to-Hitler' legend is now finally laid. Secondly, the complexity of historical movements is demonstrated, and with that, the danger of making facile and simplistic judgments. Thirdly, the story of the Marxist historiography reminds us how an historian's judgment, even when informed, may be crippled by a wrong starting point. Fourthly, the stern lesson that when all the political, social and cultural factors are assessed, neither singly nor collectively do they constitute a true approach to Luther, nor a profitable analysis, for the simple reason that one can only begin to understand Luther when seen in the divine dimension, i.e., a prophet from God to the whole people of God.

James Atkinson
University of Sheffield

Renaissance and Reformation

William R. Estep

William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, and Paternoster Press, Exeter, 1985; 331pp., £19.50, paperback; ISBN 0 8028 0050 5

About one third of this book by the Professor of Church History at Northwestern Baptist Theological Seminary is devoted to the background of the Reformation. Although the emphasis, as the title would suggest, is on the Renaissance in Italy and northern Europe, useful sections are included on the character of medieval life and upon previous reform movements in the Church, especially those connected with Wycliffe, Huss and Erasmus. But the greater part of the book is devoted to the Protestant Reformation. Quite detailed accounts are given of the contributions of Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, the Anglican Reformers and the Anabaptists. Events in France, Spain, the Netherlands and Scotland are recounted more briefly. The volume concludes with a chapter on 'The Catholic Revival' and an 'Epilogue', entitled 'Reformation and Revolution'. There is a substantial but selective bibliography of works in English, German, Latin and Spanish. There are numerous illustrations and the maps are to be commended for their clarity.

Professor Estep is an attractive writer and the book is elegantly produced. The specialist will find it satisfying because it is based on extensive but unobtrusive scholarship. At the same time, the book should find grateful readers amongst students and the general public.

The author defines his standpoint in the 'Prologue'. He declines to accept the view that the Reformation was a rejection of the Renaissance and prefers to see it as a movement that learnt from the Renaissance how to return in a scholarly way to the Bible so that it could once again 'hear the voice of the apostles - and of God'. He insists, however, that there was much more to it than an academic revival. He declines to follow those historians who seek to interpret the Reformation 'in terms of Marxist paradigms', as well as those

social historians who interpret it 'in terms of the economic, political and social changes' of the period. In Dr. Estep's opinion both groups fail to do justice to the religious, theological and philosophical aspects of the Reformation. He therefore seeks to redress the balance - and he succeeds. Insofar as the Reformation inspired a re-examination of the gospel itself, it led to a new and creative appreciation of the revelation of God in Christ.

The author's own special emphasis, as one would expect after reading his previous studies of Anabaptism, is that the Reformation eventually led to a flowering of the voluntary principle and this, with the passage of time, made freedom one of the cardinal elements in Western society. Nevertheless, Dr Estep, although he is particularly enlightening on the Anabaptists, is warm and judicious in his appraisal of the work of the magisterial Reformers, and has a special admiration for Martin Luther.

In short, we have here an admirable study, to be welcomed and commended.

R. Tudur Jones
Bala-Bangor College, Bangor

**Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment:
The Moderate Literati of Edinburgh**

Richard B. Sher

Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1985; xix + 390 pp., £30;
ISBN 0 85224 504 1

The second half of the eighteenth century in Scotland witnessed an efflorescence of cultural activity that has attracted the label 'The Scottish Enlightenment'. Its prevailing tone, unlike that of its French equivalent, was neither anticlerical nor critical of the established order. Dr Sher, who teaches humanities at New Jersey Institute of Technology, shows that the explanation lies in the prominence within its ambience of ministers of the Church of Scotland. He has selected for detailed study five approximate contemporaries, born about 1720, each of whom contributed significantly to what he calls 'the culture of the literati of eighteenth-century Scotland'. They are William Robertson, equally outstanding as historian, principal of Edinburgh University and manager of ecclesiastical affairs; Adam Ferguson the social analyst and moral philosopher; John Home the dramatist; Hugh Blair the preacher and professor rhetoric; and Alexander Carlyle, noted chiefly for the pungent autobiographical account of his career. All were Moderates in church politics. They believed that the choice of parish ministers should be in the hands not of the people, but of the landed proprietors. It was through the patronage of the great that they rose to positions of influence, a process skilfully dissected in this book. By analysing their writings and the controversies in which they engaged, Dr Sher goes on in the greater part of the volume to lay bare their assumptions.

The Moderates, it is insisted, were orthodox. Nevertheless they conspicuously avoided what a contemporary Evangelical called 'the peculiar doctrines of Christianity'. Rather than dwell on the person of Christ, the atonement, justification and sanctification, they characteristically devoted their attention to commending moral behaviour. Their ethics, derived through Francis

Hutcheson from the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, were ultimately inspired by Stoicism. Virtue, they contended, consists in a steadily benevolent disposition. Even in adverse circumstances, such as poverty, this quality could be sustained. Hence there was no reason for doubting that the lower orders could possess a virtuous contentment. The principle of subordination was the capstone of a conservative socio-political theory that proved entirely acceptable to Samuel Johnson. The rebellion of the Americans was consequently anathema; conversely the Scottish nation needed to defend its existing happy state by employing a militia, an expression of public virtue. Pride in Scotland's standing induced the literati, and especially Hugh Blair, mistakenly to believe in the authenticity of the poetry of Ossian. Tolerance led them to wish to concede fuller civil rights to Roman Catholics. Moderatism, the author concludes, was a blend of Presbyterianism, Scottish nationalism, Stoicism, civic humanism, conservatism and enlightenment.

What picture emerges of the Evangelicals in the Kirk? Although they are not the subject of the monograph, a large number of incidental references build up a substantial body of information. It is evident, for instance, that the traditional image of the Evangelicals as inveterate opponents of the Moderates in the church courts possesses a large measure of truth. There were clashes over patronage, Catholic relief, the American war and many other issues. In this area, however, a reservation may be registered on a point of Dr Sher's interpretation. He argues that the Inverkeithing patronage case of 1752-53 injected disputes of principle, as opposed to squabbles over political management, as a new element into the Kirk. But dissension on points of principle - doctrinal principle - had already broken the peace of the church. In 1743-44 for instance, a disputed election to the Glasgow chair of divinity had divided Evangelicals from proto-Moderates, and there had been discernible similarities in the earlier Marrow and Simson affairs. So there was probably more continuity between the two halves of the century in ecclesiastical partisanship than is here contended.

Further, the Evangelicals possessed within their ranks much more culture, decorum and 'politeness' than is suggested in this work. Dr Sher points out that there is evidence of the shedding of narrowness by Evangelicals later in the century, but in fact some of their leading figures assimilated novel intellectual influences at exactly the same time as their Moderate contemporaries. John Erskine was at Edinburgh in the 1730s with Carlyle and Robertson, imbibing the same spirit of inquiry, an identical love of literature and (to quote Erskine's biographer) a comparable 'active solicitude to promote the best interests of mankind'. The circle round Erskine corresponded with Jonathan Edwards, concurring in the philosophical views of John Locke that he expounded. As much as their ecclesiastical opponents, they were men of the Enlightenment. Their objection to Roman Catholicism was not a sign of intolerance but premised on the belief that Roman Catholicism was itself intolerant. Erskine and his friends actually called themselves 'moderate'. The party label 'Moderate' was fixed to the advocates of patronage by one of the Evangelicals, John Witherspoon, as an exercise in irony. Their rigid imposition of ecclesiastical authority, according to Witherspoon, was to be censured precisely because it was not moderate. This is not to suggest that all Evangelical ministers were polished, urbane and highly educated, far from it.

THE SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

But it is to propose that another dimension of the church would amply repay study by specialists in the Scottish Enlightenment.

Dr Sher's book will be the starting point for such study. It is primarily a work for scholars, replete with notes at the foot of the page that bear testimony to painstaking research and critical appraisal. Yet it is extremely readable and will serve a much wider public on account of the admirable bibliographical essay that provides detailed guidance about the literature on Scotland and its Enlightenment. This volume takes its place as by far the most valuable published work on eighteenth-century Scottish church history.

D.E. Bebbington
University of Stirling

Faith Theology and Imagination

John McIntyre

The Handsel Press, Edinburgh, 1987; 176 pp., no price;

ISBN 0 905 312 65 1.

I have long suspected that the Reformed tradition has neglected the realm of imagination. But, so I believe, imagination is part of our humanness and is a gift of God.

So I welcomed this book by the Professor Emeritus of Divinity at Edinburgh University. As he tells us, he has thought long on the use of imagination, and he is obviously aware of the problems of the subject. His aim is 'Not to invent some new theology which is designed to replace the old, but rather, by using the concept of imagination to work over much of the familiar theological material, to view it from a different angle, in the hope that we would gain fresh understanding of our faith' (p.4). In the Introduction Professor McIntyre briefly discusses why imagination has been suspect. He then considers an essay by George MacDonald: 'The Imagination: Its Function and its Culture'. This little known essay raised questions which have been largely ignored. This book is a response to some of MacDonald's ideas.

In an examination of the biblical material there is an interesting chapter on 'The Parabolic Imagination'. It concentrates mainly on the Gospels and, obviously, the parables and images used by Jesus. There can be no doubt that Jesus stimulated the imagination, and challenged the hearts of his hearers, with his parables. The same is true of his enacted parables which are described as 'Realistic Imagination'. I found some fresh insights in this chapter.

In discussing 'Imagination as a Theological Category' Professor McIntyre shows how imagination can help our understanding in many areas of our faith, including the attributes of God, creation, incarnation, atonement and the Holy Spirit.

Imagination is then considered in the 'Ethical Dimension'. An imaginative approach can help in the tensions which our ethical principles hold, such as those between persons and principles, freedom and necessity, and authority and freedom.

Then there is imagination in the 'Philosophical Dimension'. This chapter gives a helpful outline of various views on imagination and what can be learned from them. Philosophers discussed include Plato, Hume and, among the more modern, Sartre, Collingwood, Warnock and Murdoch. I found this to be a helpful summary of various philosophical viewpoints. This is then carried into a chapter on methodology and epistemology. The final chapter summarises the characteristics

of imagination and images. In all this, Professor McIntyre sees imagination, not as one specific part of the mind but 'the whole mind working in identifiable ways' (p. 59).

I found this an interesting and stimulating book. It reinforced my suspicions that 'whether we acknowledge it or not, we have been employing imagination in our religion and in our theology, ever since we first became involved in these practices' (pp. 175f.).

It is a book of scholarship, as we would expect, and not for light reading. There are areas where I would tend to differ and, as we need our minds renewed, I would have liked something on the question of sanctified imagination. But, on the whole, I found it a challenging and thought-provoking book.

*John Wilson
Motherwell*

God and Science: The Death and Rebirth of Theism

Charles P. Henderson Jr.

John Knox Press, Atlanta, 1986; 186pp., £10, paperback;
ISBN 0 8042 0668 6

This book seeks to trace the rise and fall of scientific atheism, attempting to invert the major arguments against religion and use them to defend God. In pursuit of this objective Henderson examines the work of Einstein, Freud, Darwin and Marx and seeks to develop what he calls a 'new biblical theism'. Central to his thesis is the argument that the historical dualism between fact and faith is no longer tenable in the light of contemporary science. This is helpful but needs to be much more clearly developed than it is here. The last chapter - 'Towards a New Theism' - reviews the work of Tillich, Küng, Macquarrie and Torrance, with the last taking us full circle back to Einstein. In earlier chapters the author sees a real reconciling of science and God in the work of Tillich and Teilhard de Chardin. There is an adequate index and bibliography.

I found this a puzzling book because the central thesis often disappears under irrelevant biographical cameos. Chapter One is entitled: 'Albert Einstein - New Proof for the Existence of God.' But Einstein's thought is not explored in any depth and we are treated to a history of twentieth-century physics - in which Einstein certainly played a critical role. Similarly in the third chapter, on Darwin, we find ourselves more caught up in a discussion of Paley. This chapter assumes that the Bible is inaccurate and evolution true. It is also puzzling to learn that de Chardin and Tillich are the theologians who have rescued God from the clutches of scientific atheism. Overall the work lacks an awareness of contemporary philosophy of science - an area one would have thought essential in a work of this nature. Indeed apart from a few references to Torrance and Küng this book is curiously out of date.

Finally, in a book concerned with the rebirth of theism the concept of God is crucial. In the end the fusion Henderson achieves between God and science is with the God, not of the Bible, but of Tillich. With approval he notes that Tillich 'concedes that the concept of a supernatural being who intervenes in history and interferes with natural events is incompatible with science' (p.126). The word 'G-o-d' is seen as simply a 'papier mache' symbol of deeper reality. On p.137 Phil.2:6-7 is used to negate any idea that God rules over his creation - surely a

strange extrapolation from a passage dealing with the humiliation of our Lord Jesus! In fact God is not even lawgiver: 'as we reflect back upon the biblical roots of western theism, we know that God is not fundamentally a lawgiver at all' (p.150).

This is an intriguing and easily read book. It is intriguing because of the puzzling characteristics I have hinted at, and the sweeping way in which the Bible is assumed to be inaccurate. It is easily read, however, and there are some interesting details concerning the lives with which it deals.

John C. Sharp
South Church of Scotland, East Kilbride

Transforming Economics. A Christian Way to Employment

Alan Storkey

SPCK, London, 1986; 212pp., £5.95, paperback; ISBN 0 281 04225 X

Alan Storkey examines three explanations of unemployment and the remedies each implies: designated briefly as the monetarist, the Keynesian, and the Marxist and Socialist alternatives. Each is found to be wanting. Storkey shows that even mechanistic models of the economy cannot dismiss institutional influences and values and goes on to provide a Christian alternative, which substitutes 'our stewardship of God's creation' for the 'dominant attitude today' of self-interest. Its consequences are worked out in critical evaluations of several institutions - the financial world, joint-stock companies, professional organisations - and lead to a series of recommendations for changes in policy.

The main thrust of the study, brought out in the final section, that economics will be transformed only by the prior transformation of the values of those who make economic decisions, is commendable, but some reservations must be expressed on its detailed application to economic affairs. Some follow the inevitable brevity of the exposition. It would not be easy to recognise from the references to Adam Smith's advocacy of self-interest that he stressed also the influence of sympathy in human motivation. More serious is Storkey's emphasis in his evaluation of contemporary institutions. How accurate is the conclusion of the chapter on financial institutions that 'While the temples to money soar in the City, factories are flattened in the provinces'? Are 'bankers, capitalists and many Conservatives' alone in British society in having an ideology which gives a low priority to the consumer? Is less than one page given to trade unions out of 13 devoted to the 'Professional Closed Shop' a balanced presentation? Should the 'greed and status-maintenance of some consultants' be isolated as widely responsible for subverting the National Health Service? Such views are too complex for sweeping condemnations; still more so are the consequences of implementing the long lists of radical changes in policy which are suggested.

Storkey does great service by drawing attention to the influence of institutions and values in economic decision-making and by insisting that Christians must adopt Christian values. Unfortunately he gives inadequate recognition of how some of those who would agree with his exposition of the biblical principles involved can still reach different conclusions on their application in economic life. They are matters about which Christians may disagree. Even acceptance of his leading principle of stewardship may include the application of some of the objectives he castigates at the end - efficiency, growth, competition, profit,

consumption, pleasure and technology - to promote economic prosperity, without which many of the laudable objectives of improved conditions of life are unobtainable. Storkey's objection is to the sin of making such objectives the goal of economic activity, but there is a danger, especially among the economically less well-informed, that their legitimate, though supporting, role within the greater principle of stewardship may be neglected. Such objectives are certainly not man's chief end; they may still be, in the words of the Larger Catechism, 'lawful means' to be used to 'enjoy a competent portion' of 'the outward blessings of this life'.

There is much to be said in favour of Storkey's objective of encouraging Christians to be aware of the implications of their beliefs in economic life, but those who do so should also stress the practical difficulties. Storkey does not underestimate them in his general emphasis on the need for transformed values, though his book would have gained from more emphasis on the difficulties of the detail. The danger is that some of the less perceptive among the wider readership at whom the book is aimed will think the solutions are easier than they are.

*R. H. Campbell
Newton Stewart*

Empathy and Confrontation in Pastoral Care

Ralph L. Underwood

Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1986; £6.50, paperback;

ISBN 0 8006 173 1

Every counsellor will welcome a discussion of the subject of this book. For many years non-directive counselling was in vogue with a concomitant stress on counselling as empathy. Many would have seen confrontation as a major indiscretion in counselling. Others, however, most notably Jay Adams, have argued that confrontation is not only a legitimate strategy in counselling but the only authentic biblical strategy. Underwood sets out to explore the issue in depth and see if they can be seen in a reconciled relationship to each other rather than in contrast.

In a complex opening chapter he discusses the proliferation of techniques which are current in counselling and sets out his understanding of ministry as communication. This he develops by using the root metaphor of the 'ministry of the word' as the basic imagery behind ministry. He believes the time is ripe for this perspective to assume greater prominence in ministry. 'Pastoral care is the communication of the gospel verbally, dynamically, and symbolically in interpersonal relationships that refer however implicitly, to the community of faith.' After fully expounding his definition, he uses it in the second chapter to offer a critique of other theories of communication in pastoral care. Here he fairly assesses the approach of Thurneysen, Ruel Howe, whose work was inspired by Buber, Faber and van der Schoot and Paul Johnson.

After his two theoretical chapters, which would make some demands on the average pastor, he turns to the application of his perspective to the question of empathy and confrontation. Both approaches are fully set out and any pastor would benefit from his exposition of them. Throughout these chapters he illustrates his argument by quoting snatches of pastoral conversations, many of which strike very close to home.

THE SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

But how do empathy and confrontation relate? Empathy refers to one's ability to take in another's viewpoint, to understand their outlook, holding one's own views in check, whilst maintaining one's viewpoint. In confrontation one is challenging the person to be open to another view - a fresh perspective is being introduced. The pastor is saying, 'Having gained some understanding of you, I now trust you to deal openly with some things you have not considered'. There is no fundamental contradiction between the two approaches, Underwood argues, so long as there is respect. Both stem from the ministry of the Word and both, when sound in spirit, are expressions of respect.

This is a worthy addition to the 'Theology and Pastoral Care Series'. It is a work of scholarship, but deals with a very real tension that many ordinary pastors face, and does so in a way which is balanced and perceptive. To a great extent it is convincing in its attempt to resolve the tension between empathy and confrontation and would liberate many a pastor from unnecessary conflicts of interest in their counselling.

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God's Action in the World

Maurice Wiles

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Professor Maurice Wiles fully justifies his decision to break with recent tradition and retain the original form of his Bampton lectures for publication rather than revising and expanding them. The book, as we might expect, is a model of jargon-free clarity with an absorbing intellectual appeal to a wide variety of readers. The work is also freer from the *spirit* of studied iconoclasm than Wiles's previous radical writings, *The Remaking of Christian Doctrine* and *Working Papers in Doctrine*.

The radical revision of traditional notions of divine providence remains, however, in response to the old problems of reconciling divine providence and human freedom and of knowing 'what sense to give the concept of an arranged contingency' (p. 19). The difficulty, he rightly adds, is not confined to Calvin's followers but inherited by the whole Western Christian tradition. It is highlighted every time God is petitioned to act in the human situation.

Wiles retains the anchor doctrine of the *creatio ex nihilo*, but goes on to argue that God has voluntarily qualified his omnipotence by conferring on parts at least of his creation a genuine independency. The revised view of God's action which follows is far-reaching. Divine action, consisting simply in (continuous) creation, is only 'in relation to the world as a whole rather than particular occurrences within it' (p.28). But the original dilemma has not here been solved but merely bundled into one package instead of many. The problem now is: how can God's one act of creation fulfil the divinely intended purpose if in its deepest reaches it involves independent beings? Wiles is admitting the difficulty when finally he reduces the prospect of fulfilment to no more than this: '... the work of that creation will not come to an end unless or until it is fulfilled' (p. 52). The 'unless or' is revealing. Perhaps the work of creation will *not* come to an end. The old

REVIEWS

dilemma of divine sovereignty and human freedom is in fact 'solved' here only by the old-fashioned remedy of making the divine will hostage to human choice and God's enabling or 'grace' into little more than a reassuring presence external to the specifics of human life. The result resembles a quasi-deism.

As Wiles recognises, the chief problem of the Christian faith is the existence of evil, and this difficulty, he acknowledges, remains even under his own radical reconstruction. It all seems meagre gain for a costly surrender by reductionism of such key Christian convictions in their traditional form as the incarnation and resurrection, the believer's strengthening by the Holy Spirit, answers to prayer and all miracles. Moreover it is achieved by a very selective recognition of biblical material, uncongenial texts being seemingly dismissed on the basis of no established objective criteria and a mass of material, say on prayer, being ignored.

It is impossible in a brief review to do justice to such an ambitious and accomplished piece of work but Wiles's satisfaction on the last page that his scheme's problems are not as severe as those contained in other accounts of divine agency will not be shared by all.

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