Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:

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

SCOTTISH
BULLETIN
OF
EVANGELICAL
THEOLOGY

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

The Death of a Prince: The Revd William Still
Scarcely a couple of months after he retired from the ministerial
charge of Gilcomston South Church of Scotland in Aberdeen, which
he had held for fifty-two years, William Still died on July 29, 1997 in
his eighty-seventh year. The style of ministry that he promoted, which
has had such a wide influence within and beyond the Church of
Scotland, was one that perhaps did not readily suggest the honorific
'prince'. He did not court eminence or recognition, was no world-
traveller, built no mega-church, whether of people or plant. Indeed,
one of his boldest distinctives insisted on stripping away many of the
accretions of congregational life which turn it into a something-for-
everybody religious multiplex, and stripping it down to the God-given
essentials, which for him reduced to two or perhaps three – expository
preaching, prayer and the church as a single worshipping family. In
the ministerial tasks on which he concentrated, supremely the
expounding of the Word and pastoral care, he most surely displayed
princely gifts. Tributes to him by those who knew him best have used
other language beloved of our forefathers: 'we shall not see his like
again'.

This *Bulletin* has special cause to record with thanksgiving the
remarkable impact of William Still's ministry in the growth of
conservative Evangelicalism within the Church of Scotland. One of its
outcomes and organs was the Crieff Fellowship, which since 1970 has
gathered like-minded ministers (and some elders) two or three times a
year for encouragement, challenge and reflection. Even as it grew in
size and embrace, so that latterly many have come from furth of
Scotland, participation remained at William Still's invitation, thus
continuing as it had begun.

Rutherford House, Edinburgh, which co-publishes this *Bulletin* with
the Scottish Evangelical Theology Society (formerly the Scottish
Tyndale Fellowship, which produced its predecessor, the *Scottish
Tyndale Bulletin*), was another initiative of the strategic vision of
William Still. In part its formulation was a response to the need felt
within the Crieff brotherhood for a resource centre to support and
strengthen the increasing ranks of evangelical ministries in Scotland.
Mr Still presided from the outset, and was the indispensable channel
of the princely generosity which set it on its feet. It stands and serves
as a solid material memorial to his passion for an evangelical
testimony in the life of the Kirk.

Theologically William Still moved over a number of years from
the Arminian tones of his Methodist and Salvation Army upbringing to

Reformed convictions. Within the bounds of Reformed theology he identified his most salient emphasis as the three distinct dimensions of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as dealing victoriously not only with guilt but also with the indwelling strength of sin and with Satan and the powers of evil. His book *Towards Spiritual Maturity* provides an early exposition of these themes. How characteristic that his doctrinal heart should home in on the very centre of the good news of Jesus Christ! It coheres exquisitely with his single-minded simplification of congregational activities and structures to the core essentials. Together they must count among his most abiding lessons for the church in post-Christian Scotland – and the West in general.

One of the most seductive temptations for a declining church is to seek a role for itself in terms that a secularising society still finds appealing – as a human rights pressure group, a humanitarian agency, a purveyor of social-welfare services, a dispenser of healing therapies, and many another worthy or not-so-worthy cause. If William Still's long-lived and magnificently focussed ministry speaks any message to the successor generation it must be a recall to the unique dimensions of the church's vocation – what it has to say and do that nobody else in the world can say or do. And most if not all of this will be found in the burden of that princely apostle which William Still made so much his own – 'Jesus Christ and him crucified'.

The Death of a Princess: Diana, Princess of Wales

It rarely makes sense for a six-monthly journal like this one to serve up editorial comment on current events. It is likely to taste mustily stale by the time readers come to consume it. On this ·occasion, however, I am certain that the reverberations of the death of Diana (how many other contemporaries of ours need globally no other identification than their first name – itself not an uncommon one?) will still be rippling through at least British society long after this *Bulletin* has come and gone. Her death – understood here as encompassing a popular response unprecedented in its extent and intensity – has invited Christian reflection on a number of counts.

Most obvious, perhaps, has been the quasi-religious, or even quasi-Christian, flavour of the effusions of grief and affection. The vocabulary has been inescapable: goddess, icon, angel, saint, AD (=After Diana), queen of heaven (move over Mary! Oh the irony, since early devotion to Mary fed off the cult of Diana of the Ephesians!), scapegoat (the paparazzi, or the Al Fayeds, or the royal family), shrine, cult, pilgrimage, *etc.* These are not all exclusively Christian terms, to be sure, but it is difficult not to discern in this massive wave of emotion what will remain a marked feature of post-

94

Christian society for some time to come, namely, its misuse, ranging from the innocently dubious to the flagrantly offensive, of Christian language and symbols. In a myriad ways they surface from the subconscious of folk Christianity.

Roy Clements commented, on visiting Kensington Gardens during the week between the death and the funeral, that no 'previous experience had ever brought home to me quite so poignantly just how radically the erosion of our Christian heritage has affected our national consciousness' (*Evangelicals Now*, October 1997, p. 2). Other estimates of the countrywide outpouring of emotion, which left few of us, however much bemused or questioning, unmoved, have judged it more authentically Christian, and been impressed by the tenacity of religious instincts in finding expression on such an occasion. To some it has at least exposed widespread spiritual hunger. Rather than entering into this debate, I wish to focus on one major aspect of the event and to pose one question for readers' consideration.

Several commentators have characterised the episode as a defining moment in the development of our society. Opinions have varied enormously on what that definition amounted to, and for several it was less revolutionary in itself than revealing of how much we had already changed. The death of 'the people's princess' exposed the ascendancy of populism; ours is predominantly a pop-culture, in which heart prevails over head, sentiment over reason. (Diana herself had little time for books.) For some interpreters, the episode disclosed the feminisation of society, for others it announced the 'unbuttoning' of Britain – an advance to frankness and radicalism which 'did not so much proclaim the birth of a new order as illustrate how unconcerned we were with the old one'.

So close to the happening it should not surprise us if endeavours to make sense of it have arrived at no hard consensus. Yet running through many of them has been a recognition that it laid bare the ineffectiveness, almost irrelevance, of the old dominant 'official' culture. An obvious casualty was a central bastion of that established order, the royal family. Another, we may well judge, were the churches – their services corralled for ends determined by popular pressure more than by the commission of Christ. (The character of the Westminster Abbey service will undoubtedly increase demands on local ministers for similarly secular contents in funeral services.) A parallel comment is probably merited on the BBC's handling of the episode. So long a citadel of the British establishment, the week opened another window on its losing struggle to resist the down-drag exerted by the more populist broadcasting media. Surviving unscathed, after an initial scare, were the unrivalled shakers and movers of our corporate moods and passions – the popular papers.

Coming out of it fairly buoyantly was our relatively new government, which has courted something of the character of a populist administration.

Those reading this editorial may fasten on other, perhaps conflicting, facets of the amazing public response to Princess Diana's death. But since, like no other event in living memory for most of us, it revealed the kind of people and society and culture we have become, no Christian teacher or theologian who is called to write or speak God's Word to men and women here and now can afford not to grapple with its significance, however disturbing and dislocating that may be. I wonder how many pastors and preachers on that fateful Sunday (or the following Sunday) directly helped their congregations to make Christian and biblical sense of it all? One cannot imagine one of the Old Testament prophets passing up the opportunity or the challenge! None of us may be a prophet, but we may need to balance the obvious benefits of preaching through books of the Bible with a deliberate recovery of topical preaching, especially in response to happenings like Diana's death which so possessed the feelings and thoughts of a whole nation for days on end.

A larger question arises here, in connection with the creeping secularization of life in Britain. Are we unwittingly colluding with it by our failure to help Christian folk make Christian sense of it? We cannot share the national enthusiasm for the lottery, we deplore the transformation of Sunday into a day for anything and everything except worship, we shudder at the prevalence of drug-taking (on which populism will surely frustrate any hard moral or penal line), we condemn the trivialization of all-powerful TV, we draw in our skirts at the advancing sexual free-for-all – indeed, we feel more and more alienated from the dominant mores of our God-forsaking society. But is that the sum total of the Christian sense that we make of it – that it is God-forsaking?

Applied theology is not a strong suit among Evangelicals today, and reasons are not far to seek. It is surely easier to lambast and write off than to understand and interpret. And straight biblical and theological exposition is less taxing than fashioning out of the resources of Bible and theology a Christian wisdom for living through such discouraging times. This requires sharper reflection – for Scripture nowhere touches explicitly on so many regnant features of our world, like TV and the tabloids and pop music and sport and holidays and so on. Do we as a consequence never say anything about them from the pulpit or in the study group or in our magazines? If we keep our silence, we unconsciously aid and abet the onroads of secularization, that is, of society's emancipation from God; we foster an understanding of life which to an ever-increasing extent seems

beyond the scope of the Christian mind, and we risk retreat into an evangelical cultural ghetto.

In particular, how should Reformed Christianity, which has placed a higher premium on sound learning than most traditions, address a predominantly populist society? Preaching is seen as speaking chiefly to the mind, and may often convey the sense of belonging to a bookish culture. What of the mass of the population who believe and act more out of sentiment than principled reasoning, and whose grasp of reality is fashioned by snappy one-liners, fleeting sound-bites and short-lived visual images? How would we respond if these were the dominant shapers of culture in a far-off 'missionfield' where God called us to serve? Why should we respond any differently in mission to Scotland today?

The challenge thrown up by the national spasm of emotion over Diana's death thus ranges more widely than coming to terms with the event and its immediate aftermath. Does a public world seemingly in headlong flight from the old order in which the faith and practice of the church still carried weight leave us tongue-tied, speechless, even mindless? How do we re-learn the skills of application to the present day in our teaching and preaching? How do we make sense of vast reaches of contemporary experience which Scripture nowhere directly addresses? The opening up of an unbridged gulf between church on Sunday and the whole of the rest of our life is a sure recipe for the progressive marginalization of church.

THE METAPHORICAL IMPORT OF ADOPTION: A PLEA FOR REALISATION II: THE ADOPTION METAPHOR IN THEOLOGICAL USAGE

TIM TRUMPER
NEW COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

In this second article our attention is turned from the biblical to the theological use of the adoption metaphor.[1] When we set both usages in juxtaposition a threefold importance of the metaphor can be discerned. Having already shown from the Bible adoption's unique importance, we now proceed to show the intrinsic and primary import of the metaphor in its theological usage. In doing so we are conscious both of the complexities that have so often hidden the distinctiveness of adoption from view and also of the care needed in claiming recognition for the distinctive worth of the metaphor.

I. The Intrinsic Importance of the Adoption Metaphor
The mere fact that Paul thought it appropriate to write of God's love for sinners in terms of adoption is itself a pointer to the concept's intrinsic metaphorical importance. As we shall see, it communicates something significant to us. We are not, of course, saying that adoption is the only soteriological metaphor used in Scripture at large or by Paul in particular,[2] or even that it is used more than any other metaphor; but the fact that he used it at all is indicative of its essential significance as a way of conveying something of the import of the gospel itself. To unpack this thought we need to consider the very nature of metaphors in relation to their potential and actual employment. We are helped to this end by Eberhard Jüngel's insights

---

[1]   See 'The Metaphorical Import of Adoption: A Plea for Realisation I. The Adoption Metaphor in Biblical Usage', *SBET* 14 (1996), pp. 129-45.

[2]   Gunton writes: 'All the main ways of spelling out the saving significance of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus contain a considerable metaphorical and imaginative content, drawing, as is often remarked, from a number of human institutions: notably the legal system, the altar of sacrifice, the battlefield and the slavemarket.' C. E. Gunton, *The Actuality of the Atonement: A Study of Metaphor, Rationality and the Christian Tradition* (Edinburgh, 1988), pp. 17-18.

into Aristotle's reflections on metaphorical usage.[3] From these we derive a number of significant factors that inform our discussion.

1. The Metaphor's Power

First of all, a metaphor – originally defined by Aristotle as 'a short form of comparison'[4] – enables us to go 'beyond actuality without talking around it. Precisely in going beyond actuality, it gets to grips with it.'[5] The actuality is that we exist here on earth, and that God – presupposing he exists – is other than what we are. Therefore, to talk of God we have to go beyond actuality as it is now perceived, and by so doing we must begin to use the language of faith. 'Because the Christian faith has to talk about God if it wishes to speak the truth, it has to say more that the actuality of the world is able to say'; or, as George Chrysides has put it: 'The theory that religious language is irreducibly metaphorical... does not entail that God is *unknowable*, but rather that his nature is *unstatable*, at least at a literal level.'[6] That said, it is important not to overstate the case, for metaphors do not enable us to say *everything* that can be said about God. Gunton writes: 'Metaphor claims only an indirect purchase on reality, bringing to expression some, but not all aspects and relationships...to which it is directed.'[7]

As much as any metaphor, adoption enabled Paul to write about God and his redemptive activity in a way which otherwise would have been impossible. In writing of adoption Paul moved beyond actuality,

---

[3]   See E. Jüngel, *Theological Essays* (Edinburgh, 1989), pp. 16f., and *Gott als Geheimnis der Welt* (Tübingen, 1978), pp. 357-408. Aristotle remains of seminal importance for the discussion of metaphor. Of particular importance are his works *The Art of Rhetoric* and *Poetics*.

[4]   See Jüngel, *Theological Essays*, p. 47. Gunton notes Dalferth's *Religiöse Rede von Gott* (Munich, 1981), which lists 125 definitions of metaphor (*The Actuality of the Atonement*, p. 27). As for Gunton he defines a metaphor as 'a term belonging somewhere else [which] is used in an unusual context' (*op. cit.,* p. 28). In spite of the numerous definitions of metaphor there exists a widely shared perception of what 'metaphor' is about; *cf.* J. McIntyre, *Theology after the Storm: Reflections on the Upheavals in Modern Theology and Culture,* ed. Gary D. Badcock (Grand Rapids, MI, 1996), p. 270.

[5]   Jüngel, *Theological Essays,* p. 16.

[6]   G. Chrysides, 'Meaning, Metaphor and Meta Theology', *SJT* 38 (1985), p. 145.

[7]   Gunton, *The Actuality of the Atonement,* p. 34.

which according to Jüngel 'represents being only in time', to describe God whose love is as that of a father, who in Christ has adopted and given us an elder brother, and through faith in whom we have a membership in the household of God (*cf.* Ephesians 2:19). Were such a picture not a metaphor, argues Jüngel, it would be a lie! God has not actually, in the literal sense of the term, adopted us. Rather, Paul has used what Aristotle described as 'the application of an alien name by transference'[8] in order to describe God's love in redemption.

2. The Metaphor's Faithfulness
Secondly the question arises to whether metaphors give a faithful picture of reality. The mere fact that Paul used adoption to convey God's saving activity (and in so doing went beyond actuality in order to get to grips with it) does not mean that the metaphorical usage of adoption necessarily presents a faithful picture of God's salvific accomplishment. To answer this query, Jüngel points the reader to the two characteristics given by Aristotle which identify a metaphor. In metaphorical usage two things are in common – the name (*to onoma*) and the conceptual nature of the comparison – the word of substance (*logos tes ousias*). Without these characteristics there ceases to be a metaphor.

The question we need to ask then is whether adoption as a metaphor displays these characteristics. Certainly it is possible to list three points of contact between the reality of God's redemptive activity and the metaphor of adoption: (i) in both cases the adopted receive a loving Father; (ii) in both instances the adopted receive the status of sonship or daughtership (*cf.* 2 Corinthians 6:17-18); (iii) in both cases, it is usual that the adopted are introduced into a family that includes brothers and sisters. As Marchel surmises: 'Cyprian's old saying: "He who is not able to have God for a Father, cannot have the church as mother", can in the language of the New Testament perhaps be better formulated: "He who is not able to have God for a Father, cannot have [his] neighbour as a brother".'[9]

Hence the situation arises in which a 'metaphor deviates from the truth by remaining within the bounds of truth'.[10] Consequently, it is clear that a paradox lies at the heart of metaphorical usage. By presenting salvation in metaphorical terms, *i.e.* other than the way it really is, Paul actually presents the reality of major aspects of salvation. Willi Twisselmann's view of New Testament sonship in

---

8   Cited by Gunton, *ibid.*, p. 28.

9   W. Marchel, *Abba Vater! Die Vaterbotschaft des Neuen Testaments* (Düsseldorf, 1963), p. 125.

10   Jüngel, *Theological Essays*, p. 25.

general is also true of adoption in particular: 'Sonship[*Gotteskindschaft*] is...a reality. It is not only a title which really is not correct, but a new existence. But it is not something physical...The nature of mankind remains. It is not deified.'[11] For Paul the reality of adoption lies not in a new existence but in a new filial liberty: 'it is the communicator', writes McIntyre, 'who has received the insight into reality in terms of the metaphor in the first place, or alternatively, to whom reality so revealed itself, and who then imparted it in these terms to the person listening or reading.'[12]

3. The Metaphor's Acceptance
Thirdly, we need to consider the way in which a metaphor is chosen. What is the process in which a metaphor can be adapted and 'accepted by everyone in ordinary linguistic usage'? 'A metaphor', writes Jüngel, 'gets itself adopted, either by being accepted by its hearers or by being repeated in speech.'[13] We assume that the adoption metaphor underwent this process. No doubt Paul was prone to use it in his discussions of the gospel and also in his sermons. However, the process of acceptance was accelerated once Paul had incorporated the metaphor into several of his epistles. When we examine these epistles it is possible to trace something of this process of acceptance.

As far as can be told from his extant writings, Paul first used the term *huiothesia* in Galatians. According to the 'South Galatian Theory' he wrote the Epistle probably as early as 49 A.D., but even if we assume the correctness of the 'North Galatian Theory', Paul's use of *huiothesia* in Galatians is still earlier than that in Romans. This significance of adoption in Galatians apart, the Epistle is also important because it contains the *locus classicus* of the biblical doctrine of adoption (Galatians 4:5). Later, when he wrote to the church at Rome (probably around 57-59 A.D.) he was writing to a church he had not founded or even visited, and in all probability many there had not heard him preach. Yet, it is in this Epistle, generally regarded as his *magnum opus,* that he used the metaphor on three occasions (8:15, 23; 9:4). Two of them are in the climax of his unfolding of the gospel in chapter 8.[14]

---

[11] W. Twisselmann, 'Die Gotteskindschaft der Christen nach dem Neuen Testament', *Beiträge zur Förderung Christlicher Theologie* 41 (1939), p. 100.

[12] McIntyre, *Theology after the Storm*, p. 274.

[13] Jüngel, *Theological Essays*, p. 36.

[14] The coherence of Paul's argument in Romans is sometimes set against the contingency of his circumstances. We are working from the premise that whatever Paul's situation, it gave rise to

Thus in the years separating the writing of the two Epistles the metaphor became established in Paul's explanation and understanding of the gospel. 'The use of *Huiothesia* in Rom. 8:15, 23', writes Scott, 'clearly builds on that in Gal. 4:5, for once again those who receive adoption as the sons of God participate in the sonship of the messianic Son based on the 2 Sam. 7:14 tradition (*cf.* 2 Cor. 6:18). Yet Rom. 8 also emphasises a *future* aspect of *Huiothesia*, a point which, although adumbrated in Gal. 4: 1-7 by the equation *Huios Theou = kleronomos = kurios panton,* is more fully and explicitly developed in Romans.'[15]

Furthermore, when we reflect on Ephesians we find the adoption metaphor further developed. As in Galatians there is just the single use of *huiothesia* (1:5), and yet we find the doctrine highly and widely developed in terms of its cognate themes – predestination (*proorisas hemas eis huiothesian,* 1:4-5), assurance (*esphragisthete to pneumati tes epaggelias,* 1:13), inheritance (*arrabon tes kleronomias hemon,* 1:14,18), membership of the household (*oikeioi tou theou,* 2:19) and, indirectly, ultimate redemption (*en ho esphragisthete eis hemeran apolutroseos,* 4:30).

On the other hand, the denial of Pauline authorship of Ephesians makes no difference to our case. In fact it is strengthened in two ways. First, since on this reckoning Ephesians was written later, perhaps c. 100 A.D., it would mean that by the end of the first century the metaphor was well established in the early church as a means of understanding the gospel. It has to be remembered that, on this view of its authorship, the composition of Ephesians was dependant upon Colossians and other Pauline epistles but especially, and most significantly, Romans. Secondly, as is widely acknowledged, the Epistle was not written only to the Ephesians, but to the Christians in general in Asia Minor.

This then in all probability was how the adoption metaphor received acceptance in the early church. However, the question as to why this happened remains unanswered. To that end we return to Jüngel's understanding of Aristotle. He points out that the success of a metaphor relies upon 'the strangeness of a strange word, which is intrinsic to

---

his coherent presentation of the gospel, and did not detract from it. See J. Christiaan Beker, *The Apostle Paul* (Edinburgh, 1980), particularly pp. 23-37; and N. T. Wright's reflection on Beker's case in *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh, 1991), pp. 259f.

[15]   J. M. Scott, *Adoption as the Sons of God: An Exegetical Investigation into the Background of Huiothesia in the Pauline Corpus* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2 Reihe; Tübingen, 1992), p. 221.

metaphor'.[16] The strangeness normally lies not with the word itself but in its analogical application. It is argued that in the later rhetorical tradition metaphor was used solely for the purpose of transference of meaning. Hence, Jüngel provides us with a clue to the reason for the success of Paul's adoption metaphor. He picked up on a known custom and applied it to God's redemptive activity. The oft-debated question which custom Paul had in mind (Graeco-Roman or Semitic)[17] does not interest us here. Rather, the fact of Paul's application of the term used for an adoption custom to soteriology is our sole concern. Such an employment was lent weighty theological credence by Paul's apostolic status.

The intrinsic importance of the use of adoption as a soteriological metaphor lies in the fact that had Paul, or any other biblical author for that matter, not used metaphors, then his communication of the gospel would have been at worst impossible, or at best, impoverished by extraordinary dullness. In the event, Paul used the metaphor so as to be neither silent nor dull. This is confirmed by McIntyre's assessment of metaphorical usage: it 'creates the possibility of "epistemic access" to the outside world, the events that happen in it and the persons who live in it. These subjects are characterised in ways that would be impossible in flat, literal descriptions.'[18] Applying this principle of metaphorical usage to adoption we can begin to see the doctrine's intrinsic importance. It enabled Paul to embark on a powerful act of communication.

Having taken hold of a familiar Hellenistic term, Paul applied it in an unfamiliar theological context. He did so circumspectly, for on the one hand he needed to use the term sufficiently to ensure that the metaphor gained acceptance, but on the other hand, sparsely enough to

---

[16]   Jüngel, *Theological Essays*, p. 36.

[17]   For some sample opinions see A. Mawhinney, '*Huiothesia* in the Pauline Epistles: Its Background, Use and Implication' (Ph. D thesis, Baylor University, 1983); F. Lyall, 'Metaphors, Legal and Theological', *SBET* 10 (1992), pp. 94-112 (especially pp. 105-6) (Roman); J. M. Scott, *Adoption as the Sons of God* (OT/Jewish); Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (London, 1977), pp. 197-8 (OT); William H. Rossell, 'New Testament Adoption - Graeco-Roman or Semitic?' *Journal of Biblical Literature* 71 (1952), p. 233 (Semitic); M. Vellanickal, *The Divine Sonship of Christians in the Johannine Writings* (*Analecta Biblica, Investigationes Scientificae in Res Biblicas*, 72; Rome, 1977), pp. 69 (OT/Jewish), 71 (Roman).

[18]   McIntyre, *Theology after the Storm*, p. 271.

preserve its potency. Therein lay Paul's success. He used *huiothesia* on as many as five occasions to ensure the metaphor gained acceptance, but only on those occasions and no more in order to retain the metaphor's power by guarding it from over-exposure. Seen in this light the fact that *huiothesia* is used on only five occasions becomes one of the most telling arguments in favour of the metaphor's significance.

4. The Metaphor's Christocentricity

Fourthly, Jüngel says that 'Every theological metaphor must be compatible with the cross of Jesus Christ.'[19] The centrality of the cross is, of course, the great discovery of Christianity. The metaphors which in turn describe the cross are 'the articulation of discoveries'.[20] They always succeed the discoveries or, as Gunton more precisely puts it: 'It is not that metaphor *precedes* discovery, helping to make it possible, but rather that new language and discovery happen together, with metaphor serving as the *vehicle* of discovery.'[21] The central discovery unearthed by Christianity is the significance of the cross of Jesus Christ. It is accompanied by huge implications for both the church and the worlds, and is expressed metaphorically.

While theological metaphors are to stop short of Christomonism, they should promote Christocentricity. This should be as true of the adoption metaphor as of many others and it is. While one cannot understand adoption other than in a Trinitarian manner, nevertheless the doctrine is definitely Christocentric for it is only in Christ that adoption is effected. It is only through participation in Christ's Sonship that we come to a knowledge of God the Father, just as it is only in possession of the Spirit of Christ that we can call upon God as our Father (Galatians 3:26-8, 4:6).

This Christocentricity can first of all be seen in the context of the Fatherhood of God. Galatians 3:26-4:7 tells us that it is the Father who sends the Son, yet it is only in union with the Son that adoption is received. Only once adopted can we call upon God as 'Abba, Father!' (*Abba ho pater*).[22] What is fascinating in the prayer of the newly

---

19 Jüngel, *Theological Essays,* p. 65.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 51.

21 Gunton, *The Actuality of the Atonement*, p. 31.

22 *Die Bibel nach der Übersetzung Martin Luthers* (Stuttgart, 1984) captures the emotion with which the redeemed cry *Abba ho pater* on each of the 3 NT occasions when the phrase is used: (i) Mark 14:36 - Abba, mein Vater...! (Abba, my Father...!); (ii) Rom. 8:15 and Gal. 4:6 - Abba, Lieber Vater! (Abba, dear Father!).

converted, is that being in possession of the Spirit of Christ they address the Father in exactly the same way as Christ did in the garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:36).[23] Again in Romans 8:15 we find that the adopted are freed from the 'spirit of bondage again to fear' (*pneuma douleias palin eis phobon*), and consequently, having the Spirit of adoption can cry (*krazomen*) *Abba ho pater*! Yet, the extent of the Christocentrictity of this latter text may be queried, for Paul jumps from the spirit of bondage to the Spirit of adoption without even mentioning the work or person of Christ. However, Vellanickal points out that while the emphasis of Paul's terminology in Romans 8 differs from that in Galatians 3-4 the meaning is the same. Whereas in Galatians 3-4 the emphasis is more upon faith (3:23), through which the adopted are liberated from the law (3:26), the object of faith being Christ,[24] in Romans 8 the emphasis is upon the Spirit through whom we have become sons of God. Yet, as Galatians 4:4-6 makes clear, it is through the sending by the Father not only of the Son into the world but of the Spirit of his Son into our hearts that we are enabled to cry *Abba ho pater*! We must remember, therefore, that there is a correlation between the Pauline uses of *pistis* and *pneuma* as the means of adoption. When considered by means of the *analogia fidei* it is clear that Paul understood adoption Christocentrically, but always – whether explicitly or implicitly – in the context of the Trinity.

In Ephesians 1:5 the same pattern emerges. From verse 3 following the emphasis falls upon the phrase 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ'. He is the one who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies. Yet all these blessings come to us 'in Christ'. Numbered among these blessings is that of adoption to which we have been predestined or pre-horizoned (*proorisas*), but only through Jesus Christ (v. 5).

This Christocentricity, however, manifests itself not only in the context of the Fatherhood of God but also in the context of the work of the Holy Spirit. As already alluded to, through the redemption that is in Christ we receive his Spirit which enables us to pray to the Father in the same way as Christ did (Galatians 4:4-6; *cf.* Mark 14:36). This is what Paul calls the Spirit of adoption (*pneuma huiothesias*). It is the

---

[23]   Vellanickal, *The Divine Sonship of Christians in the Johannine Writings*, pp. 74f.

[24]   *Ibid.*, p. 83. We are not ignoring the fact, as Vellanickal shows, that in Gal. 5:18 Paul also writes of the Spirit liberating us from the law. It is this very verse which provides the grounds upon which to argue that Paul perceived both *pistis* and *pneuma* as the means of adoption.

Spirit who bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God (Romans 8:14-15).

It is, however, particularly in Ephesians 1 that adoption is dealt with in connection with the Spirit's work. Paul's doxology teaches that it is in Christ that we have redemption, that is, 'through his blood'. Consequently, those who have believed are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise who is the down payment of the inheritance (1:13-14). Or, as Paul puts it in Romans 8:23 the adopted already have in the present 'firstfruits of the Spirit' (*kai autoi ten aparchen tou pneumatos echontes*), but at the great consummation they shall receive the full harvest of the Holy Spirit's work, *viz.*, the eschatological adoption, the redemption of the body.[25] While we confess that the Christology of Romans 8 is implicit rather than explicit (especially vv. 3 and 11), nevertheless we cannot understand the chapter's pneumatology without the Christological background.[26] Indeed, we may argue that Christocentricity is so central to an understanding of adoption that in Romans 8 Paul takes the liberty of presupposing it. Nevertheless, if we desire a more explicit treatment of adoption in relation to Christology a return has to be made to the earlier Galatian epistle.

Consequent upon what we have said above, we may conclude that the adoption metaphor does point us to the cross but not at the expense of either the incarnation (Galatians 4:4-6) or a comprehensive Trinitarian understanding of the gospel. As the old Princetonian A. A. Hodge remarked: 'Adoption proceeds according to the eternal purpose of the Father, upon the merits of the Son, and by the efficient agency

---

[25] It is important to note Brendan Byrne's point that it is only in 8:22-23 that adoption is actually defined. He draws a comparison between 8:15 and 23: in the former text Paul writes of receiving not so much *huiothesia* as the *spirit* of *huiothesia*, in the latter of *huiothesia simpliciter*, but only in 8:23 does *huiothesia* actually receive definition. See B. Byrne, *Sons of God - Seed of Abraham: A Study of the Idea of the Sonship of God of All Christians in Paul Against the Jewish Background (Analecta Biblica, Investigationes Scientificae in Res Biblicas. 83;* Rome, 1979), pp. 109-10.

[26] Byrne makes the important observation that Romans 8 does not spell out the '"mechanics" of redemption *effected by Christ*' (italics inserted), but rather emphasises the elimination of the key problem (sin in the flesh) and its positive results. Says Byrne, 'Only in the phrase..."in the likeness of sinful flesh", does Paul hint at what might be termed the inner workings of redemption' (p. 94).

of the Holy Ghost.'[27] In relation, then, to the intrinsic importance of the adoption metaphor it is sufficient now to recognise that adoption grants us a facility of enquiry into God's redemptive activity. The extent to which this is so can be illustrated from Calvin who, in addition to following the contours of Paul's thought in specific regard to adoption, also used adoption as an epithet descriptive of salvation in general. He went as far as to describe adoption as bestowing 'salvation entire'.[28] The fact that adoption has been put to use at all, let alone to two uses in Calvin's case, illustrates the worth of the adoption metaphor as a conveyor of significant elements of God's redemptive activity.

II. The Primary Importance of the Adoption Metaphor

For all that we have said, the argument that adoption possesses intrinsic importance does not actually reveal much of its importance in comparison with other biblical and, more especially, soteriological metaphors. While they are all significant in the language of faith, they do not all grant the same power and enabling to speak of God. It ought not then to be unthinkingly assumed that all metaphors possess complete parity. That being so, it must be noted that adoption has, to use Max Black's terminology, been wrongly assumed to be a 'subordinate metaphor'.[29] One may be initially forgiven for numbering John McIntyre among those who play down the importance of the adoption metaphor by virtue of his silence in *The Shape of Soteriology*. There he lists thirteen models or metaphors which are descriptive of the death of Christ.[30] Given what we have already said of adoption's Christocentric credentials, for reasons that will be explained, we might have expected adoption to have at least merited a mention.

In spite of McIntyre's silence, with his personal help we are able to put forward a cogent argument in favour of adoption's primary importance. It is his opinion that adoption is not a subordinate metaphor, but a 'second-order' soteriological metaphor: 'I have not

---

[27]   A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (London, 1886), p. 519. For similar examples of Christocentricity within a Trinitarian framework see T. A. Smail, *The Forgotten Father* (London, 1980), pp. 145-6.

[28]   *Tracts and Treatises*, translated by Henry Beveridge. (ed. T. F. Torrance, Edinburgh, 1958), vol. III, p. 275, from Calvin's *True Method of Giving Peace to Christendom and Reforming the Church*.

[29]   M. Black, *Models and Metaphors, Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY, 1962), pp. 42-3.

[30]   J. McIntyre, *The Shape of Soteriology* (Edinburgh, 1992), pp. 26-52.

used Black's term "secondary metaphors", preferring the "second order" description. In my view a second order metaphor is not necessarily of "secondary import" or "importance"...it is of primary importance in certain references.'[31] Three factors determine the worth of a metaphor. First comes its place in Scripture and whether it has been accorded major consideration in the history of doctrine. As we are discovering with adoption, however, the scriptural status .of a doctrine does not always lead to its recognition in subsequent theological discussion. The second is, whether it has been recognised in the church's credal formulae. Thirdly, and more relevant to the second-order metaphor, McIntyre applies the term 'to a concept which requires for its full implementation and understanding some other, some basic concept.'[32] Given the overlooked place of adoption in Scripture, its neglect in the history of doctrine, its scant treatment in a handful of creeds, and the way it completes redemption as a first-order metaphor we concede that adoption is best understood as a second-order metaphor, but only on condition that McIntyre's caveat is taken to heart: that to view adoption as a second-order metaphor 'is [not] an obstacle to the assertion of its primary importance.'[33] We would put it more constructively. There are positive grounds for arguing that adoption, although a second-order metaphor, is nevertheless of primary import.

1. A Worthwhile Claim
Our first line of argument is that there exists a deficiency in the very definition of a soteriological metaphor. As a result of this we are sceptical of the current assumption that adoption is of secondary import. To put the matter differently, to assume that adoption is not a primary metaphor does not mean that the assumption is true!

Adoption is not alone in having suffered great theological neglect. The whole field of soteriology has, in general, suffered likewise. McIntyre helpfully highlights this. He notes but three eras of church history in which theological consideration of soteriology has been to the fore: the Anselmic, the Reformation and the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Compare the protracted Trinitarian and Christological debates! While acrimonious to the extreme they still

---

[31]   J. McIntyre, personal correspondence dated 2 February 1995.
[32]   The first two factors are derived from what McIntyre says of the concept of revelation in *The Shape of Soteriology*, pp. 49-50. The third is provided by McIntyre in the correspondence mentioned above. Of this last factor he says it is 'the most important of the three'.
[33]   *Ibid.*

produced some much needed fine-tuning of the doctrines in question. In regard to soteriology, however, McIntyre has said that 'the church has not sought to canonise any specific *theory* of the death of Christ'.[34] We are therefore justified in asking whether, given a fully matured definition of soteriology, adoption would rank as a second-order metaphor, let alone a second-order metaphor deemed also to be of secondary importance.

2. A Feasible Argument
Secondly, the feasibility of and justification for assuming the primary import of the adoption metaphor are supported by its close relationship with redemption, a first-order metaphor.[35] McIntyre conveys the importance of redemption when he writes that the model 'has become almost the universally accepted interpreter of what was effected by the death of Christ'.[36] The fact that adoption is so closely connected with redemption is therefore most important. The nature of this connection is most clearly seen in Galatians 4:5:

> but when the fullness of time was come, God sent his son,
> made of a woman, made under the law, in order that he
> may redeem the ones under the law, that [*hina*] we may
> receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons God
> has sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts crying, 'Abba,
> Father'.

The nexus between redemption and adoption takes on real significance when we bear in mind that McIntyre describes redemption as an 'incomplete symbol'.[37] It cannot, he says, answer the question as to what was given and what was received in return at Calvary. If the cross is perceived solely in terms of redemption the question arises

---

[34]   McIntyre, *The Shape of Soteriology*, p. 1. For all that we must not forget Brevard Childs' comment: 'The importance of soteriology for the intellectual and spiritual life of the church is too obvious to belabour. Unfortunately, in the history of the Church some of the most bitter controversies have erupted within this area.' B. S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (London, 1992), p. 523.

[35]   While McIntyre prefers to call them models, nevertheless redemption is the second of the 13 models of the atonement that he lists. *The Shape of Soteriology*, pp. 32-3.

[36]   *Ibid.*, p. 32.

[37]   *Ibid.*, p. 33.

what status was secured for those looking to it for redemption.[38] While the Bible as a whole provides a multi-perspectival answer, Paul's main response was to present adoption as that gained by Christ's redemptive death. In Galatians 4:4-6 he writes that God sent his Son that we might be redeemed from under the law. That is the negative aspect, but there was also a positive or prospective end in view – 'in order that we might receive the adoption (*hina ten huiothesian apolabomen*)'! This *hina* clause is all-important. Scott is right to say in relation to Galatians 4:5 that 'redemption is not an end in itself; the goal is rather redemption *to* a relationship with the Father established by "adoption"'.[39] Thus, Paul draws an arrow linking Christ's redemptive work on the cross with the adoption of the sons and daughters of God. Although adoption is primarily attributed to God the Father he did not act alone. As we have seen already, the adoption of his sons and daughters was dependant on the redemption that is in and through Christ.

It is important to notice from the passage in Galatians 3-4, and 4:1-7 in particular, that adoption is dependent upon union with Christ.[40] It is especially in this passage (as also in Romans 9:4) that Paul sets *huiothesia* – a Hellenistic term – against an Old Testament /Jewish background. Says Scott, 'the Hellenistic *meaning* of the term must be

---

[38]   It is important here to bear in mind Scott's comment that *exagorazein* occurs in the *Corpus Paulinum* only in Gal. 3:13 and 4:5 (*Adoption as Sons of God*, p. 172). He says that the consensus viewpoint is that the use of *exagorazein* in· Gal. 4:5 is better understood as 'to redeem' rather than the usual and simple infinitive 'to buy'. Whatever the meaning, the incompleteness of the redemption symbol remains. If *exagorazein* at root means 'to buy', we have to ask what was purchased. On the other hand, if *exagorazein* means 'to redeem', we have to ask what we were redeemed from.

[39]   *Ibid.*, p. 174 (italics inserted). See also John Murray's comment that 'Redemption contemplates and secures adoption as the apex of privilege', *The Collected Writings*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh, 1977), p. 228. The closeness of the connection between redemption and adoption is also seen in Ephesians 1:6-7.

[40]   For the exegesis that follows we are indebted primarily to Scott, with whom we concur. See Scott, *Adoption as the Sons of God*, particularly chapters 3 and 4, most notably pp. 145f. Space allows us to give only a summary of his summary of the exegesis.

distinguished from a Hellenistic *background* of the term'.[41] The use of *huiothesia* in a redemptive-historical perspective of the Old Testament is the key to a clear understanding of the connection between redemption and adoption as displayed in both the first and the second exodus.

Israel, argues Scott, is described by Paul in Galatians 4:1-2 as *nepios* during their sojourn in Egypt. As *nepios* Israel was a slave under Egyptian officials (4:1b, 2a) which is probably an allusion to the taskmasters. As such, Israel was little more than a minor whose experience under the oppression of the Egyptian officials, in spite of all their potential, differed little from that of a slave. Israel's potential was based upon the nation's covenantal status. As Yahweh's son, Israel was the collective heir to the Abrahamic promise (*cf.* Romans 4:13; the promise to Abraham and his seed stated that he would be heir of the world, *to kleronomon... kosmou*).[42] The state of bondage for the children of Israel lasted for 430 years (Galatians 3:17; Exodus 12:40; the problem of dating does not concern us here), until the time of Israel's redemption (v.2b; *cf.* Exodus 2:23-4). The redemption was activated by God's calling Israel out of Egypt and into a relationship of sonship (*cf.* Hosea 11:1). This then was the first exodus and included the two significant theological elements: redemption *from* bondage and adoption *to* sonship (Romans 9:4).

However, when we come to Galatians 4:3-7 Paul begins to write of the second exodus as the antitype of the first. This comparison between the type (vv.1-2) and the antitype (vv.3-7) can be seen at several points. First, in v.3 he compares Israel's historic period of bondage in Egypt with the former spiritual bondage of both the Jewish and the Gentile Christians of Galatia. Whereas Israel had been under the taskmasters of Egypt, contemporary Jewish and Gentile Christians were under *ta stoicheia tou kosmou*. Scott says that *ta stoicheia* meant for Jewish Christians the Torah (*hupo ta stoicheia tou kosmou* parallel to *hupo nomon*, v.5),[43] while the Gentile Christians would have understood by *ta stoicheia tou kosmou* the non-Christian deities (v.8). Whereas the Jewish Christians had recently come out from under the Torah as taskmaster, the Gentile Christians had recently come out of

---

[41]   *Ibid.*, p. 267. Scott here argues against the *opinio communis* that 4:1-2 refers to a hypothetical illustration drawn from Hellenistic or Roman law of testamentary guardianship.

[42]   *Ibid.*, pp. 248f.

[43]   *Ibid.*, p. 158. To be under the elements or the material system of the world was, then, to be under the Mosaic covenant; *cf.* H. K. Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1978), p. 238.

bondage to polytheism. God had intervened through the ministry of his Son and redeemed his believing Jewish and Gentile people from their respective forms of slavery. He was sent in the fullness of the time, being made of a woman (*genomenon ek gunaikos*), having been born under the law (*genomenon hupo nomon*) with the express purpose of redeeming both Jews and Gentiles from their bondage.

It is in the manner of God's intervention that we find the second parallel between the first and the second exodus. Just as the first came at 'the time before appointed of the Father' (*tes prothesmias tou patros*, v.2), so the second came in 'the fullness of time' (*to pleroma tou chronou*, v.4). Whereas prior to the first exodus God had promised beforehand to Abraham that Israel would be redeemed from bondage in Egypt, in the second exodus God sent none other than his Son in the fullness of time to effect the eschatological redemption. Thus Scott writes that 'both the redemption of Israel and the redemption of believers proceeded according to God's own timetable and promise'.[44]

Thirdly, there is the parallel between Moses, the leader of the first exodus, and Christ (*ho huios theou*, Gal. 4:4b), the leader of the second. Scott points to the Jewish tradition originating with Deuteronomy 18:15,18, the Fragment-Targum reference to Exodus 12:42 and the cross reference in 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 as supporting the expectation of a second Moses. This last reference is of particular importance for the prominence of the Moses/Christ parallel. Just as Moses led the exodus through the Red Sea – signified as their baptism (*eis ton Mousen ebaptisthesan*, 1 Cor. 10:2) – so Christ led the second exodus, in which the participators are 'baptized into Christ'(*eis Christon ebaptisthete*, 3:27). Thus it is no surprise that the verb used of the sending of Christ (*exapesteilen*, 4:4b) is also used most frequently in the LXX together with *apesteilen* for the sending forth of a prophet, most notably Moses.

In the fourth parallel, we draw nearer our main point when we remind ourselves that 'the Father who redeemed Israel as his son in the first exodus at the appointed time is the Father who redeemed mankind as his son in the second Exodus at the fullness of time'.[45] This was accomplished by the Father in one single determinative act: he sent his Son into the world as a curse for us (*huper hemon*, Gal. 3:13). In obedience to the Father's will Christ died a substitutionary death thereby accomplishing both redemption and adoption for the Father's sons. If the atonement then is to be regarded as finished work it can only be so when both aspects of Christ's accomplishment are kept in view: a 'redemption from' or an 'adoption to'. The completion and

---

[44]   J. M. Scott, *Adoption as the Sons of God*, p. 165.
[45]   *Ibid.*, p. 173.

perfection of Christ's work exhibits the unbreakable connection between redemption and adoption.

Fifthly, there is a climactic parallel between vv.1-2 and v.5. The latter verse is introduced by a *hina* clause – '*that* we might receive the adoption as sons'. This, as we have stated, is the antitype of the earlier type. However, in both cases redemption is not an end in itself, but finds its completion in a relationship with the Father.

3. A Logical Deduction

Thus it is clearly both possible and plausible to argue for adoption's primary importance, given both the close and indissoluble connection in Paul's mind between redemption and adoption and, in any case, the incompleteness of redemption, a first-order metaphor, when considered without adoption. We can deduce then that adoption ought to be considered as a primary metaphor as much as redemption, especially given that adoption, in completing redemption, serves as its climax or apex. While adoption always presupposes redemption, we cannot fully understand Paul's view of redemption without bringing in adoption as its climactic element. As John McIntyre puts it: 'the adoption presupposes the redemption, and it would not have meaning without it.'[46] We have no qualms in asserting then that the direct link between the two concepts has too often been severed. This has frequently left the doctrines of redemption and adoption unhealthily separated. They should rather consolidate each another as Gunton's description of atonement shows, albeit in more general relational terms:

> The central focus of the proclamation after Easter was that the events of Jesus' history and particularly of the Easter period, had changed the status of believers, indeed of the whole world. The metaphors of atonement are ways of expressing *the significance of what had happened and was happening. They therefore enable the Christian community to speak of God as he is found in concrete personal relationships with human beings and their world.* Language that is customarily used of religious, legal and commercial and military relationships is used to identify a divine action towards the world in which God is actively present remaking broken *relationships.*[47]

For all the exaggerated estimates of the theological stature of John McLeod Campbell, it is in this context that his work is of greatest

---

[46]   Private correspondence.
[47]   *The Actuality of the Atonement*, p. 46 (italics inserted).

significance.[48] While he owned that the atonement possessed a retrospective aspect (that is, what we are saved *from*) he stressed that it also had a prospective element (what the Christian is saved *to*).[49] Although the importance of redemption can never be overstated, the attention the doctrine has received appears inordinate when compared to the neglect of adoption. The solution is not to place less emphasis on redemption, but urgently to heighten the profile of adoption in order to complement the church's understanding of redemption, thereby encouraging a more balanced perception of salvation.

III. Conclusion
In this and the preceding article we have sought to persuade the reader of the importance of adoption. Our argument has been but a partial one. We have proffered only a brief survey and then only of the metaphorical arguments. We hope at some point in the future to supplement these with what we may call the connectional reasons. We would propose to show the significance of adoption as seen from the doctrine's connection with (i) biblical theology (particularly its redemptive-historical model), (ii) its contextual usage (related to protology, covenant theology, soteriology, pneumatology and eschatology), and (iii) Christology. There is far more to say of the significance of adoption than we have said in the course of these two articles.

These two articles are submitted in the hope that we may begin to appreciate, whether as theologians or preachers, more of what adoption is and to explain more fully to the church what it means to be in possession of the Spirit of adoption. The time has arrived for our theology of adoption to catch up our experience of it. It is our belief that a more comprehensive theology of adoption cannot but have a positive effect on the deepening of our filial experience of salvation. After all, the very purpose for which Paul wrote of adoption was for the comfort of the early Christians.[50] Has the church managed so well without a fully developed doctrine of adoption so as to make its belated recovery superfluous? Are our circumstances, as those living

---

[48] For a critique of McLeod Campbell in this regard see my forthcoming dissertation 'The Good News of Adoption: A Comparative Study of Calvin and Nineteenth-Century Scottish and American Calvinism', ch.6: 'Fighting for Fatherhood'.

[49] J. McLeod Campbell, *The Nature of the Atonement*, new edit. (Grand Rapids, MI, and Edinburgh, 1996), particularly chapters 1 and 7.

[50] A. T. Lincoln and A. J. M. Wedderburn, *The Theology of the Later Pauline Letters* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 83, 88.

on the brink of the third millennium, so different as to make such a spiritual comfort surplus to our requirements? A thoroughgoing theology of adoption is long overdue. In spite of all the moves toward a relational understanding of the gospel that have taken place since the early nineteenth century, a consideration of adoption has been largely left out, and to this day the doctrine remains out in the cold. Only time will tell for how much longer.

'A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT' – AND A STREAM OF CALVINISM, TOO?

FREDERICK HALE, SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA

A Post-Reformed Society?

The extent to which the Reformed tradition has influenced American culture – and by extension that of many other countries – has been repeatedly questioned in recent decades. Critics representing many points of the theological and denominational compass have contended that Congregational, Presbyterian, and other historians of Puritanism long overestimated its subsequent sway while failing to give most other Christian streams in the great confluence of North American religious life their due. In any case, rampant secularism allegedly eroded what little remained of this once powerful legacy by the middle of the twentieth century. More specifically, Calvinism, some grudgingly concede, saw its final noteworthy cultural expressions in the age of Woodrow Wilson before giving up the public ghost, yielding to various forms of so-called 'fundamentalism', neo-orthodoxy, liberalism, Pentecostalism, revivalism, and other more subjective manifestations of Christianity, as well as the behaviourist school of psychology, individual narcissism, and cultural nihilism in our ostensibly post-Protestant age. To the argument that no-one bothered to inform the Reformed Church in America, the Christian Reformed Church, some of the more conservative Presbyterian denominations, and other bearers of the Calvinist tradition that they had been eclipsed, pundits could reply that those groups had effectively been marginalised and no longer wielded the authority they once did.[1]

---

[1] The scholarly literature pertaining to the influence of the Reformed tradition on American culture and the debate over the decline of this influence is extensive. For a representative sample of older and more recent considerations, see Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (New York: 1939); Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge, MA, 1953); William A. Clebsch, *From Sacred to Profane America: The Role of Religion in American History* (New York, 1968); Robert T. Handy, *A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities*, rev. ed. (New York, 1984); Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (New York, 1965); Daniel Callahan (ed.), *The Secular City Debate* (New York, 1966); Martin E. Marty, *Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America* (New York, 1970); Martin E. Marty, *The Pro & Con Book of Religious America: A Bicentennial Argument* (Waco, TX, 1975); George Marsden (ed.),

A Film with Calvinist Underpinnings
 Undeniably, there is at least a kernel of truth in all these assertions. What is striking, however, is the endurance of culturally embedded Calvinism in American life as the supposedly post-Calvinist world sprints towards the end of this millennium. Even in the medium of popular film it continues to send ripples across the silver screen. One recent manifestation of this staying power is the internationally acclaimed motion picture *A River Runs Through It*, which the perennially venerated actor Robert Redford directed in 1992. This relatively low-budget production surpassed many sceptics' initial expectations and quickly gained transatlantic popularity while receiving generally laudatory reviews. Critics variously hailed it as an elegy to the symbiotic relationship between humanity and nature, a cinematic hymn to family unity in the face of tribulation, and, given Redford's prominent profile as a conservationist, a masterpiece of propaganda for ecological movements. Generally overlooked in evaluations of the film, however, though not entirely in reviews of the book which inspired it, was the unmistakable – and on the surface quite ironic – hand of Calvinism in shaping this masterpiece. At first blush, this appears to be limited to the spiritual tenor of the Reverend John Maclean, a Presbyterian minister and father of two sons whose early lives form the dyad of lifestyles and personalities which structure the film. Yet in a muted form which the Genevan Reformer might not readily have recognised, its influence runs much deeper to mould the ideational core of *A River Runs Through It*.

In the present article I shall take steps towards redressing this *lacuna* in the pertinent scholarship by describing Norman Maclean's perspective on his spiritual upbringing, particularly his memory of paternal influence on this formation, analysing certain biblical allusions and themes in both the screenplay and visual aspects of the film, and tracing how the journeys of the Maclean brothers on widely divergent paths are employed to underscore certain theological presuppositions in *A River Runs Through It*.

By Hollywood standards, this film is reasonably faithful to the text on which it was based, namely the memoiristic title novella in

---

Norman Maclean's *A River Runs Through It and Other Stories*,[2] which he wrote immediately after retiring from a lengthy if not particularly distinguished professorship in English at the renowned University of Chicago in 1973. It should be said at the outset that Maclean (1902-90) would have shuddered at the thought of being classified as a Calvinist. As a young adult he left behind the preponderance of his familial religious tradition and never returned to it or became a practising adherent of it or any other formal expression of the Christian faith. Maclean took his spiritual cues in large part from dozens of summers in the wilds of Montana, to which he returned annually after receiving his professorship, and from nineteenth-century English romantic poetry, not least that of Wordsworth, on whom he became an internationally known authority. Nevertheless, the stamp of his boyhood religious life was virtually indelible and continued to shine through his adult impiety and scepticism. Against this background, Maclean's secondary interest in theology in the absence of a commitment to any orthodox doctrinal system is readily comprehensible. The Calvinism of *A River Runs Through It* is thus refracted in the first instance through the prism of his partially post-Calvinist mind as he recalled his formative years in the high country of western Montana. Complicating matters further, the well-known screenwriter Richard Friedenberg took certain liberties with Maclean's novella which in places embellish the religious element of the text but in others sacrifice nuances in it. That having been said, it is striking how unmistakably the Calvinist legacy emerges in the film.

Maclean's memory of his father as both minister and parent underlies the creative effort, of course, and various sources shed light on the paternal relationship. In *A River Runs Through It and Other Stories*, one finds diverse anecdotes about the elder Maclean, tales which his son supplemented with the same disregard for systematisation and chronological sequence in a lengthy interview which he granted for a special issue of *The TriQuarterly* in 1984.[3] What emerges from these accounts is a sketchy portrait which highlights both the cleric's stern demeanour and his harmony with nature, a combination which the retrospective son perceived as rare but nonetheless entirely plausible. The Reverend John Maclean was a well-read Scottish Canadian who served Presbyterian churches in several towns in the United States. The opening line of the novella,

---

[2] Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976. All subsequen references are to this edition.

[3] William Kittredge and Annick Smith, 'The Two Worlds of Normar Maclean: Interviews in Montana and Chicago', *TriQuarterly* 6((1984), pp. 412-32.

repeated in Redford's sonorous first-person voice-over narrative in the film, sets the tone: 'In our family, there was no clear line between religion and fly fishing.'[4] Indeed, much of what Maclean recalled about his father in that text is innocuous, benevolent and uplifting. He and his brother Paul, three years his junior, were regularly required to study the Westminster Shorter Catechism on Sunday afternoons, an otherwise pleasurable time sandwiched between their father's morning services at the church and his evening preaching to the members of the Christian Endeavour Society. Inevitably he quizzed them about its contents, rarely going beyond the first question, 'What is the chief end of man?', to which they were pleased to respond, 'Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.'[5]

In harmony with this conviction, Maclean introduced his sons at an early age both to angling and its cultural matrix, though warning them that the seventeenth-century Royalist and biographer Izaak Walton, now remembered chiefly for his *The Compleat Angler*, was 'not a respectable writer. He was an Episcopalian and a bait fisherman.'[6] This symbiotic linkage of spirituality and the outdoors life, Professor Maclean believed, was the enduring and ultimately most nourishing and restorative element of his family's religious heritage, and it provides narrative and ideational underpinnings for the film. All in all, he insists, the result was virtually a model of Christian charity. On the wall of the Sunday school room were the words 'God is Love,' a phrase which as a child he assumed was an encapsulation of his family's domestic tranquillity – notwithstanding his occasional fisticuffs with Paul, about which he wrote freely.[7]

To be sure, the picture of Maclean senior which emerges from the candid interview his son granted in 1984 is decidedly less appealing and more austere. The retired professor admitted at that time that his childhood environment was not a cornucopia of affection: 'My family, which was British and Scotch [*sic*] and reserved in the expression of its emotions, especially in any emotions about loving, didn't talk about how much we loved each other. It would have been unthinkable.' His father appears to have governed this lack of display: 'My father did not allow me to start elementary school but taught me himself. . . . He was a very stern teacher, very harsh.' Professor Maclean recalled incidents in which his father would command him to compose essays, then tear them up and insist without explanation that his lachrymose son rewrite them at half their original length. Such

---

4   Maclean, *A River Runs Through It and Other Stories*, p. 1.
5   *Ibid.*
6   *Ibid.*, p. 5.
7   *Ibid.*, p. 7.

pedagogy apparently was not embittering or ineffective, however; Maclean insisted that 'most everything crucial that happened to me since has been influenced by his teaching'.[8]

Foundational Christian Motifs

Interweaving quotations from Maclean's book and striking visual imagery, Redford establishes certain Christian, though not explicitly Calvinist, motifs at the outset of the film. The first image on the screen is of water flowing over the rocky bottom of a shallow stream, presaging what on a larger scale would become a recurrent theme in *A River Runs Through It*. The significance of this is not immediately apparent but emerges unmistakably from the text a few minutes later. In the meantime, waves of evocative biblical motifs roll by as sequels to this initial allusion to creation. A succession of sepia photographs appear on the screen depicting the Maclean family and a nascent frontier town in Montana during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, one of which features a white frame chapel looming above the horizon. Redford voices Maclean's memory that in the Missoula of his boyhood 'Indians still appeared out of the wilderness to walk the honkytonks and brothels of Front Street.' This symbolic representation of the penetration of Christendom into the wilderness will not be lost on any viewer with even a rudimentary cognisance of the 'New Israel' theme which had been a hallmark in the Reformed tradition in North America since the arrival of Puritans in New England in the early 1630s. Whatever subtlety all of this has dissipates when the first scene after the credits depicts Maclean preaching austerely from his pulpit while his wife and sons sit in the congregation. 'The poor without Christ are of all men the most miserable, but the poor with Christ are princes and kings of the earth,' he proclaims. Echoes of the theocratic motif which from time to time has burdened the Reformed tradition, not least in the legacy of English and American Puritanism, resound in this homiletical snippet.

No less significantly, the biblical emphasis bridges what the elder Maclean preaches from the pulpit and the message he proclaims outdoors. Wearing his clerical collar, this bespectacled parson strolls with his young sons along the banks of the Big Blackfoot River where, in Norman Maclean's words again voiced by Redford, 'he felt his soul restored and his imagination stirred.' The cleric informs his progeny that water is the primary element in creation and declares that it contributed to the formation of minerals. When Maclean surveys the river bed and pronounces that 'Beneath the rocks are the words of

---

[8] Kittredge and Smith, 'The Two Worlds of Norman Maclean', pp. 413-14.

God,' he and his sons hear the sound of water running, another instance of this recurrent, vital theme. Norman remembers that 'If Paul and I listened very carefully, all our lives we might hear those words.' His final line in the film would recall this memory.

The allusions to Hebrew Scripture then yield briefly to Christian doctrine in an explicitly denominational guise. Norman Maclean's memory of his father's Calvinist theological underpinnings come to the fore: 'As a Presbyterian, my father believed that man by nature was a damned mess, and that only by picking up God's rhythms were we able to regain power and beauty. To him, all good things, trout as well as eternal salvation, come by grace, and grace comes by art, and art does not come easy.' A pivotal manifestation of this conviction is in angling, specifically in accord with the elder Maclean's passion for fly fishing: 'So my brother and I learned to cast Presbyterian-style, on a metronome.'

If John Maclean is a stern fisher of men as well as of fish, as a parent he is no less austere. Norman's words underscore the severity of this Calvinist man of God as he relates how he received much of his primary education. While his friends learnt to read and write elsewhere in Missoula, 'Each weekday while my father worked on his Sunday sermon, I attended the school of Reverend Maclean.' His paternal teacher did not spoil him with kindness. As in the book, Norman relates how his unsmiling father would criticise versions of his essays repeatedly before soberly pronouncing his judgement: 'Good. Now throw it away.'

Afternoons offered more liberty in a way analogous to natural theology complementing revealed doctrine. 'There was a balance to my father's system,' Maclean relates. 'Every afternoon I was set free, untutored and untouched, till supper, to learn on my own the natural side of God's order.' As Redford pronounces these words, visual images of Edenic mountain beauty dominate the screen. A large river coursing through the centre of the landscape is featured.

Against this pristine backdrop, however, fallen human nature becomes apparent, and Paul and Norman Maclean set out on their dichotomous journeys through life. There are raucous scenes of debauchery in Missoula. Crude men spout vulgar language, and the Maclean brothers view the exterior of a house of prostitution. This Sodom and Gomorrah of frontier Montana remains undestroyed, and the Macleans participate in its violence by engaging in fisticuffs with older boys. 'I knew I was tough, because I had been bloodied in battle,' says Norman, who subsequently boxed during his undergraduate years at Dartmouth College. The roots of his brother's penchant for mischievous behaviour are more enigmatic: 'Paul was

different. His toughness came from some secret place inside him. He simply knew he was tougher than anyone alive.'

Two Divergent Paths

Much of the rest of *A River Runs Through It* is a development of this fundamental bifurcation as Redford traces the two routes which these apparently unequally blessed brothers follow on different though occasionally intersecting paths through life, one to a gratifying academic career, the other to a vocation as a journalist whose alcoholism and compulsive gambling eventually make him a victim of murder. In Friedenberg's adaptation of Maclean's book this duality is not presented as a Manichaean polarity; the sins of both brothers are apparent. Nevertheless, from the outset Paul is portrayed as having much more volatile and unrelentingly self-destructive traits in his personality. Concomitantly, he seems unable to accept assistance from others or allow the healing of either humankind or nature to arrest his downward spiral into his personal abyss.

Rebelliousness against both God and humankind appears early in Paul's worldly sojourn. As a young child, he is depicted refusing to eat his oatmeal, an act of defiance which angers his father who, however, in his role as a vicar of God, eventually forgives and pronounces the word 'grace' at the table, on which the uneaten bowl of porridge still stands. This symbolic incident, apparently contrived by Friedenberg, foreshadows numerous instances of flouting authority. Moreover, underscoring the fundamental difference between the two young brothers, when they discuss possibilities for their careers, Norman states that he will become either a minister or a boxer, while Paul declares his desire to be either a fly fisherman or a boxer. He dismisses laughingly his older brother's query about entering divine service.

The contrast between both lads' participation in religious life and their private behaviour as teenagers is also highlighted early in the film. In a brief scene, their father leads the congregation, which as always includes his faithful wife as well as his sons, in singing 'Be Thou My Vision'. Immediately thereafter, we see Paul and Norman climbing out of a second-storey window of the manse to join a group of their peers in a night of drinking and vulgar discourse which ends when they steal a boat and destroy it in an incredibly mindless attempt – made at Paul's behest – to ride in it over a waterfall.

In a series of scenes interrupted by Norman's narrative of his successful sojourn at Dartmouth College and return to Missoula in 1926 after earning his baccalaureate degree, Paul's moral descent becomes increasingly apparent. He imbibes illegally possessed liquor frequently during Prohibition and becomes heavily indebted while

playing in an extended poker game in a neighbouring village. In one of his unsuccessful attempts at fraternal salvation, Norman dutifully responds to a call to a gaol where Paul and his Native American paramour are incarcerated in a state of inebriation after Paul has assaulted another drinker who has insulted her. The young journalist's downward spiral is akin to the fate of the protagonist in a classical Greek tragedy; viewers gradually realise that owing to a flaw in his character he is on a collision course with disaster. When Paul finally reaches that fateful juncture and dies a violent death, there is little if any element of surprise, and Norman accepts his brother's death with seeming equanimity.

The Font of Salvation in an Edenic State?
What is emphasised just as clearly in *A River Runs Through It*, however, is the title motif of the film. After each instance of self-destructive conduct, the Maclean boys are temporarily rescued and restored to a Edenic state by their keen interest in fishing the Big Blackfoot River, usually accompanied by their father, whose part in nurturing this therapeutic exercise viewers are not allowed to forget. In the water all are joyful and successful anglers, and the superiority of Maclean senior is again accented. When his contending sons compare the size of the trout they have caught, he lays his own, even longer, catch next to theirs before walking away, coyly flashing one of his rare smiles.

Norman Maclean, to be sure, is no paragon of piety in *A River Runs Through It*. His sins are not limited to excessive pugilism. On the one hand, his nickname 'Preach' suggests that in the eyes of his friends he bears the stamp of organised religion. Yet like his brother, he imbibes illegal alcohol freely in 'speakeasies', is addicted to nicotine, and emits profane expletives unnecessarily. Whatever salvation he finds in life is not through works, as he perhaps comprehends in the end after realising that his brother's self-destruction could have been his own had there not been some elements of restraint in his more reserved personality.

Gradually Norman overcomes his own minor rebelliousness and, while never evincing a commitment to Christian orthodoxy, is able to appreciate more fully his father's insights into divine grace and human resistance thereto. This is made explicit in the final sermon which he hears the elder Maclean preach, wisdom in which he homiletically expresses his ongoing grief. 'Each one of us here today', he tells his congregation in Missoula, 'will at one time in our lives look upon a loved one who is in need and ask the same question: We are willing to help, Lord, but what, if anything, is needed?' He confesses that 'we can seldom help those who are closest to us. Either we do not know

what part of ourselves to give, or more often than not the part we have to give is not wanted. And so it is those we live with and should know who elude us.' Yet he does not despair, admonishing his flock instead to be vehicles of charity: 'But we can still love them. We can love completely without complete understanding.'

In the closing scene, the elderly Norman Maclean is fishing in a much more tranquil river than that depicted earlier. It is the evening of both the day and his life. Much of the Calvinist legacy of this non-theist has apparently disappeared from his consciousness, but his understanding of God's grace is now manifested in a pantheistic faith in which something akin to a Hellenistic cyclical understanding of the world's meaning has replaced the Judaeo-Christian concept of God acting lineally in history. No longer does a transcendent deity bestow his favour upon the world from on high; Maclean believes that grace, by whatever name it is to be called, such as a renewal or reinvigoration of humanity, is inherent in the natural order. 'Eventually all things merge into one, and a river runs through it. The river was cut by the world's great flood and runs over rocks from the basement of time. On some of the rocks are timeless raindrops,' he professes. This is, of course, a fundamental departure from what his Calvinist father would have said. Yet the senior Maclean's influence still makes ripples in his son's perception of the relationship of humanity, God, and the cosmos. Echoing a theme from the opening minutes of the film, Norman concludes that 'under the rocks are the words, and some of the words are theirs'. His final line is appropriately cryptic as he ponders the mystery of life in the light of his faith – apparently living in creative tension with his intellectual doubt – which is derived from nature, not a theological treatise: 'I am haunted by waters.' His beloved Wordsworth, that brooding 'Nature's Priest' of English Romanticism, could have written similar words.

Biblical Water Imagery

The central title metaphor which the creators of *A River Runs Through It* employ with such great effect gives this film much of its depth. The image of God acting in or through water, especially moving water, is among the most persistent in the Bible, occurring initially in Genesis 1 and making its final appearance in Revelation 22. The Spirit of God hovers over the waters at the beginning of creation. The Psalmist compares the panting of his soul after God to the panting of the hart after the water brooks in Psalm 42. Justice flows down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream in Amos 5. Healing waters flow from the temple in Ezekiel 47. The metaphor courses through the New Testament as well, particularly in the Johannine literature. Jesus offers living water in John 4 and 7. An angel shows the author of Revelation

'the river of the water of life'. For nearly two millennia Christian writers have interpreted these biblical metaphors as symbols of, *inter alia,* faith, hope, the gospel and, not least – particularly in the words of Calvin – grace. In *A River Runs Through It,* as we have argued, the Big Blackfoot flows constantly as an unfailing sign of divine forgiveness and the potential renewal of fallen men and women.

Unequal Fraternal Blessings

The other underlying major theme, that of two brothers seemingly destined to follow widely divergent paths to worldly blessing or destruction, also echoes a recurrent biblical motif, though one whose place is limited to Hebrew Scripture. The most apparent fraternal pair are obviously Cain and Abel, but others add complementary dimensions to the larger theme. Isaac becomes a patriarch while Ishmael, though also blessed, remains outside the covenant and is sent into the wilderness. In the next generation the skilled hunter Esau despises his birthright, which his twin brother Jacob acquires as part of his role in the line of patriarchs.

Within a Calvinist context, of course, the routes which the Maclean brothers follow through life strongly hint at the central doctrine of election, although this is not explicitly mentioned in *A River Runs Through It.* Nothing in the fragments of John Maclean's sermons which he delivers in the film is a reflection of this teaching, but it unmistakably underlies the behaviour of his sons, despite their similar upbringing. The handsome and talented Paul, as indicated earlier, shows signs of rebellion against his godly father while a young child and subsequently of being bound for at least worldly perdition, and neither the stern nor the gentle efforts of his concerned parents can save him from the ruin which he seems intent on bringing upon himself. His father's frequent acts of restoring him to the Big Blackfoot River, the metaphoric locus of grace, have only short-lived effect.

The imagery reaches its zenith late in the film, after Paul has wandered far on the path of self-destruction. On the last fishing expedition which he takes with his brother and father, a large fish seizes his fly and pulls him into the swift current. Truly in his element, Paul is temporarily immersed in the river in what might be an allusion to a natural baptism in the living water. Indeed, after he surfaces with his catch and submits to being photographed by Norman, his brother recalls that at this intensely joyous instant Paul seemed 'suspended above the earth, free from all its laws, like a work of art'. Having witnessed so much of his brother's recurrent debauchery, however, Norman understands 'just as surely and just as clearly, that

life is not a work of art, and that the moment could not last'. Something defying natural explanation continues to condemn Paul.

Norman, by contrast, seems inexplicably chosen for a vastly more elevated life, notwithstanding his obvious foibles, some of which mirror those of his profligate brother. The divergence resists logical explanation, thus mirroring Calvin's insistence that the doctrine of election could rest only on biblical revelation and that 'to seek any other knowledge of predestination than what the Word of God discloses is not less insane than if one should purpose to walk in a pathless waste, or to see in darkness'.[9]

Conclusion

The present article begins with the question of the enduring vitality of Calvinism in American culture, specifically as represented in *A River Runs Through It*. Our consideration of that powerful film suggests that a meaningful answer to this question in its twentieth-century historical context must take into account such factors as the ongoing evolution of the Calvinist legacy in a pluralistic modern society, one in which a humanist such as Norman Maclean had been subjected to countless other theological and secular schools of thought during a half-century of academic life before he wrote the memoiristic piece on which the film is based. By his own account, as an adult Maclean was not an outwardly religious man in any conventional sense. Nevertheless, in this film – certainly more so than in the novella of the same title – muted Calvinist and other Christian doctrines are unmistakable, such as the implicit doctrine of election. Among the other emphases, one finds divine sovereignty, the transcendence and immanence of God, original sin, grace, salvation, forgiveness, natural revelation, and the centrality of charity in Christian discipleship. The failure of most reviewers to consider them can perhaps most reasonably be attributed to a lack of theological sophistication on their part. To the theologically attuned Christian viewer, however, the divergent destinies of Paul and Norman Maclean, particularly the unstoppable decline of the former into debauchery and ultimately death, under the preaching of their conservative Presbyterian father, and the evocative symbolism of the grace-filled and ever-flowing river offering the waters of life, can leave little doubt about the spiritual depth of this work of cinematic art.

---

[9] *Institutes* 4:21:2.

JONATHAN EDWARDS' ACCOUNT OF ADAM'S FIRST SIN
JOHN KEARNEY
ST JOSEPH'S UNIVERSITY, PHILADELPHIA

For Jonathan Edwards the issue of sin's entrance into the world is complex and involved since Edwards claims that Adam was created in a state of perfect innocence or perfect righteousness.[1] Why did the inclination to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil arise in an originally sinless Adam? Clyde Holbrook, in his Introduction to the Yale edition of *Original Sin* states Edwards' problem:

> Once having established Adam's original righteousness, how could he explain the take-over of the lower faculties? The withdrawal of the supernatural principles followed and did not precede or cause the fall itself. Whence then arose Adam's inclination to sin, since, by Edwards' own oft-repeated thesis, a cause must be found for every act? (*OS*, p. 51)

There is a consensus among several scholars that Edwards fails to provide an adequate account of the origin of sin.[2] The thesis of this

---

[1] 'Adam's sin, with relation to the forbidden fruit, was the first sin he committed. Which could not have been, had he not always, till then, been perfectly righteous, righteous from the first moment of his existence; and consequently, created or brought into existence righteous. In a moral agent, subject to moral obligations, it is the same thing to be perfectly innocent, as to be perfectly righteous.' See *Original Sin (OS)*, edited by Clyde A. Holbrook (New Haven, CN, 1970), p. 228.

[2] In *Tragedy in Eden: Original Sin in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Lanham, MD, 1985), C. Samuel Storms writes that 'there is nothing in Adam causally sufficient to explain the effect (which is his sin). If by creation he is in such a condition that, antecedent to God's withdrawal of divine influence, he necessarily sins, then God is most certainly the efficient and morally responsible cause of the transgression' (p. 223). In his review of Storms' book in *Westminster Theological Journal* 48 (1986), Samuel T. Logan Jr. agrees that 'Edwards' scheme fails to answer definitely the problem of the origin of Adam's original sin but, of course, Edwards is not alone in his failure. No one has yet solved this problem logically without implicating God in Adam's guilt. Perhaps the flaw in Edwards' approach (and in the approach of most theologians) was his assumption of too much psychological continuity between the pre-fallen Adam and the post-Fall mankind'

paper is that this view is mistaken. I will argue that Edwards does provide a coherent and adequate account of Adam's fall. It is an account made up of three major parts: (i) the distinction between 'sufficient' and 'efficacious' grace, (ii) the 'perversion' of Adam's rational will, and (iii) Adam's imperfection as a creature.

Sufficient and Efficacious Grace

Edwards' account of the origin of Adam's first sin is based in part on a distinction between two kinds of grace, viz., 'sufficient grace' and 'efficacious grace'. Edwards claims that 'God gave our first parents sufficient grace, though he withheld an efficacious grace, or a grace that should certainly uphold him in all temptations he could meet.'[3] The term 'sufficient grace' (the grace of 'original righteousness') seems to have at least two meanings for Edwards. In *Original Sin* Edwards says that Adam was created with the obligation to be inclined to act rightly.

> Adam was brought into existence capable of acting immediately as a moral agent; and therefore he was immediately under a rule of right action: he was obliged as soon as he existed, to act right. And if he was obliged to act right as soon as he existed, he was obliged even then to be inclined to act right. (*OS*, p. 228)

The 'rule of right action' in question was the precept about not eating the forbidden fruit. God commanded Adam to obey this precept. No one can sin without an inclination to sin; likewise no one can obey a rule without an inclination to obey a rule. From the beginning Adam was 'inclined to act right' and he possessed 'a virtuous and holy disposition of heart' (*OS*, p. 229). Thus, from the moment he was created to the moment he first sinned, Adam was perfectly righteous, *i.e.* there were no sinful inclinations in him and his actions conformed to God's law. This is the first meaning of 'sufficient grace', viz., that Adam was created with an inclination to act rightly.[4] This is why

---

(p. 402). As we shall see, Clyde Holbrook, the editor of the Yale edition of *Original Sin,* and the respected Edwards scholar John Gerstner also believe that Edwards has failed to give an adequate account of Adam's 'first sin'.

[3] *The Miscellanies (M)*, edited by Thomas A. Schafer (New Haven; 1994), p. 485 (*M* 436). In *M* 290 Edwards employs the terms 'original righteousness' and 'confirming grace' (p. 382).

[4] Some have interpreted Edwards to be claiming that Adam's original righteousness is the equivalent of absolute moral perfection. Arthur Crabtree writes that 'in his claims for the perfection of Adam's will, however, Edwards went beyond anything affirmed by Augustine, Calvin, or Catholic theologians.

Edwards calls sufficient grace the grace of 'original righteousness'. Morally speaking, God, from the beginning, pointed Adam in the right direction.

In *M* 436 Edwards spells out a second meaning of 'sufficient grace':

I say, this must be meant by his having sufficient grace, viz. that he had grace sufficient to render him a free agent, not only with respect to his whole will, but with respect to his rational, or the will that arose from a rational judgment of what was indeed best for himself. (p. 485)

Edwards clarifies what it means for Adam to be free with respect to his 'whole will' and his 'rational will' by examining the relationship between the 'rational will' and 'appetite' in fallen humanity:

Now, man has as it were two wills; he has a will against a will. He has one will arising merely from a rational judgment of what is best for him; this may be called the rational will: he has another will or inclination, arising from the liveliness or intenseness of the idea, or sensibleness of the good of the object presented to the mind, which we may call appetite; which is against the other,

---

Augustine had asserted the ability of Adam to do right (*posse non peccare* [able not to sin]). Edwards asserts the necessity of Adamic righteousness (*non posse peccare* [not able to sin])…. This unprecedented doctrine of necessary goodness undoubtedly safeguards the absolute perfection of creation, but it renders a fall impossible, as the Arminians were quick to see.' See *Jonathan Edwards' View Of Man: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Calvinism* (Wallington, 1948), pp. 22-3.

Others have interpreted the Mosaic account of the fall to imply that Adam was created free of any guilt but not in a state of holiness. Arthur Pink claims that 'in unfallen Adam the will was free, free in both directions, free toward good and free toward evil. Adam was created in a state of innocency, but not in a state of holiness, as it is so often assumed and asserted. Adam's will was therefore in a state of moral equipoise: that is to say, in Adam there was no constraining bias in him towards either good or evil, and as such, Adam differed radically from all his descendants, as well as from "the Man Christ Jesus".' See *The Sovereignty of God*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids, 1994), pp. 134-5. Edwards, on the other hand, holds that Adam's will was not originally in a state of moral equipoise but was created with a bias towards good, but not a constraining bias that would prevent him from sinning on every occasion.

rational, will, and in fallen man in his natural state overcomes it, and keeps it in subjection. (*M* 436, p. 484)

A fallen human being has a bifurcated will, 'a will against a will'. When his rational will comes into conflict with and is overcome by appetite, the rational will becomes its slave. Such slavery does not mean or imply that a fallen human being lacks freedom. Although the rational will is a slave to appetite, yet with respect to 'his whole will, compounded of these two (either arising from the addition of them together when they concur, or the excess of one above the other when they are opposite)', a fallen human being 'is always a free agent' (*M* 436, p. 484). He is still free to do as he pleases, to act on his desires, to execute his 'whole will', in the absence of any external constraints or hindrances. But 'with respect to his rational will, or that part of his inclination which arises from a mere rational judgment of what is best for himself, he is not a free agent, but is enslaved; he is a servant of sin' (*M* 436, p. 484). On the other hand, Adam's rational will was not a slave to appetite. He was free both with respect to his 'whole will' and his 'rational will'. This is what it means for Adam to have sufficient grace and it is in this sense that Edwards can claim that 'Adam's will was free in a sense that ours since the fall is not'(*M* 436, p. 484).[5]

---

[5] John Gerstner believes that Edwards has not accounted for a genuine difference between unfallen and fallen man: 'The difference that seems to Edwards to obtain between unfallen and fallen man in this regard is that unfallen man had sufficient grace to choose according to his mere rational judgment while fallen man does not. It comes down to this: unfallen man could have been inclined to choose according to his rational judgment and fallen man cannot.' See *The Rational Biblical Theology of Jonathan Edwards,* vol. II (Powhatan, VA, 1992), p. 308. Gerstner thinks that fallen man can and often does 'choose according to his mere rational judgment'. For example, 'do some sinners not abstain from alcohol, which they like, because, and only because, they judge it not to be for their later good?' (p. 305).

I think Edwards would agree that sinners often make rational judgments about what they think is best for themselves and then choose and act in accordance with these judgments. For Edwards what characterizes a fallen human being is not the failure ever to make a rational judgment about what is best for himself (as previously stated, he thinks that, in a fallen human being, the 'whole will' involves either concurrence of reason and appetite, subordination of reason to appetite, or subordination of appetite to reason). Rather what characterizes a fallen human being is the

When Edwards claims that Adam was created with 'sufficient grace' or the grace of 'original righteousness' I take him to mean, then, that (i) Adam was created with an inclination to act rightly (a bias toward good), and (ii) Adam was originally a free agent with respect to his 'whole will' (he was able to do as he pleased) and his 'rational will' (his rational will was not a slave to appetite).

Granted that Adam was given sufficient grace, then what made the first sin possible? The question of the very possibility of Adam's sin would seem to be logically prior to the question of how and why he sinned. Edwards replies that 'if it be inquired how man came to sin, seeing he had no sinful inclinations in him', the reason is that 'he sinned under that temptation because God did not give him more' (*M* 290, p. 382). For Edwards the 'more' is God's 'efficacious' or 'confirming grace', that grace which is given now in heaven, such grace as shall fit the soul to surmount every temptation' (*M* 290, p. 382). What made the first sin possible, then, was the absence of efficacious or confirming grace. Adam was given grace sufficient to incline him to obey God's law and enable him not to sin. But this grace did not ensure that he would always act on this inclination.[6]

John Gerstner takes issue with Edwards' distinction between sufficient and efficacious grace. Gerstner believes that Edwards 'has a distinction here without a difference'. He claims that 'if the grace is

---

disposition to sin that arises from a wicked heart. It is in this sense that a fallen human being is a slave to appetite. Admittedly, I may refrain from abusing alcohol, lying about my neighbour, and stealing my neighbour's goods because I rationally judge that these acts of omission serve my short-term or long-term interests. Not all sinners abuse alcohol, lie, or steal. I think Edwards would agree that a sinner's rational will can reject this or that appetitive desire and follow reason's lead. But to say that on this or that occasion, a sinner's appetite is subordinate to reason does not imply that, in general, appetite is subordinate to reason. As a result of the fall reason became the slave of appetite in the sense that human beings with wicked hearts became prone to habitual sin. Edwards never denies that sinners make rational judgments and act on them, but he affirms that all sinners are habitual sinners, even if their sin is the sin of unbelief. On the other hand, Adam and Eve, prior to the fall, had no disposition or inclination to sin, either to habitual sin or to occasional sin.

[6] It must be remembered that Edwards believes that God decreed the fall and that what God decrees must occur. Thus, the necessity of the fall is at odds with Adam's possession of efficacious or confirming grace.

131

truly sufficient it must be efficacious; if it is not efficacious it is not sufficient'.[7] He cites *M* 501 where Edwards says that 'Adam had sufficient assistance of God always present with him to have enabled him to have obeyed if he had used his natural abilities in endeavoring it.' Gerstner thinks that unfallen Adam is in the same boat as fallen human beings. Both have the natural ability to obey God's will. However, it is not their natural ability that is in question but their inclination to obey. Gerstner does not think that the grace Adam possessed before the fall was sufficient to prevent him from falling. It was not sufficient conditionally, *i.e.*, subject to the use of natural ability; and it was not sufficient in itself. It could not be 'conditionally sufficient for unless the grace was actual which it was not, it never could be sufficient, for unless a man had efficacious grace he would not utilize his natural ability, to call on his "sufficient grace"'.[8] And it could not be sufficient in itself for 'if Adam had efficacious grace he would not need sufficient grace and if he did not, sufficient grace would be insufficient'.[9] According to Gerstner, then, the distinction between sufficient grace and efficacious grace is a distinction without a difference. Sufficient grace 'is a contradiction in terms; sufficient grace is insufficient. Only efficacious grace is sufficient.'[10]

I believe there are several reasons for questioning Gerstner's view. First, Edwards makes it clear that God was under no obligation to create Adam with 'efficacious grace'. In *The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners* he says:

> That such is God's sovereign power and right, that he is originally under no obligation to keep men from sinning; but may in his providence permit and leave them to sin. He was not obliged to keep either angels or men from falling. It is unreasonable to suppose, that God should be obliged, if he makes a reasonable creature capable of knowing his will, and receiving a law from him, and being subject to his moral government, at the same time to make it impossible for him to sin, or break his law.[11]

Edwards repeats the same point in the sermon *All God's Methods Are Most Reasonable* when he says that 'God is in no way obliged to afford his creature such grace and influence as shall render it

---

7   Gerstner, p. 306.
8   *Ibid.*
9   *Ibid.*
10   *Ibid.*, p. 307.
11   Edwards, *The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners*, reprinted in *Jonathan Edwards, Representative Selections, With Introduction, Bibliography, and Notes*, ed. by Clarence H. Faust and Thomas H. Johnson (New York, 1969), p. 117.

impossible for him to sin. God is not obliged to make the creature unchangeable and at first to be in a confirmed state of holiness, so that it should be impossible for him to be otherwise.'[12] Thus, it is unreasonable to suppose that God is obligated to create Adam subject to a moral law while at the same time making it impossible for him ever to break the law. If God, by reason of his 'sovereign power and right', is not so obligated, then to Adam presumably belongs *posse peccare* and *posse non peccare*. If *posse peccare* (able to sin), then there is no guarantee that Adam will stand his ground in the face of every temptation. In short, he possesses sufficient grace but he lacks efficacious grace.

Secondly, Edwards also claims that the precept forbidding the eating of the forbidden fruit 'was given for the trial of Adam's obedience' (*M* 322, p. 403). The presence of efficacious grace is inconsistent with Adam's being on trial or probation. If Adam is on trial the assumption is that he can fall. If he has efficacious grace, then he cannot fall. In addition, Edwards claims that efficacious grace is given as a reward for having fulfilled the covenant, not as a reward for being created.

> When he thus confirms a creature, whether angel or man, it is by way of gracious reward for their having fulfilled his covenant. 'Tis only in a state of retribution that God is pleased graciously to oblige himself always to afford such grace that shall at all times either prevent or conquer all temptation; but he is in no way obliged to afford such grace in the state wherein he is created.[13]

In short, if Adam had fulfilled the covenant of works, then he would have been rewarded with efficacious or confirming grace, and from that moment on he would be incapable of sinning. But he had no title to efficacious grace when he was first created.

Thirdly, Edwards describes sufficient grace as an inclination to act rightly, not as an inclination always to act rightly.

> God created man in a state of innocency, and gave him such grace that he was perfectly free from any corruption or sinful inclinations; nor did he take away that grace from him. But neither did he oblige himself to give him more, so as certainly to prevent him from giving way to any temptation: that was to be given to

---

[12] See *All God's Methods Are Most Reasonable* in *Sermons and Discourses, 1723-1729*, edited by Kenneth P. Minkema (New Haven, 1997), p. 167.

[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 167-8. In *M* 290 Edwards says that efficacious grace 'was the grace Adam was to have had if he had stood, when he came to receive his reward. This grace God was not obliged to grant him' (p. 382).

him when his time of probation was over, if he had continued innocent during that probation.[14]

An inclination is a volitional tendency or disposition to act in a certain way. But there is nothing in the notion of an inclination which entails that the person possessing the inclination will always act in a certain way. I may have an inclination to laugh when someone is deliberately being facetious, but if I am in a sour mood I may not laugh at all. Sufficient grace is a tendency or inclination to act rightly. It is a bias toward good, not a compulsion to act rightly. It is not a grace that will prevent a person 'from giving way to any temptation'. Thus, it does not follow, as Gerstner alleges, that 'if the grace is truly sufficient it must be efficacious'. There is a sense in which sufficient grace is, as Gerstner alleges, insufficient. It does not enable a person to refrain from sin on every occasion. Admittedly, if grace is efficacious, then it must be sufficient. But it can be sufficient without being efficacious.

Fourthly, if God had created Adam not only with the grace whereby he was inclined to act rightly but, in addition, the grace whereby he was able to surmount every temptation, how could Adam be meaningfully subject to 'commands, laws, promises or threatenings'?[15] God threatened Adam with death if he should sin. The threat is empty if Adam is unable to sin. And if God had created Adam with efficacious grace, this would have placed him on a par, morally speaking, with Christ himself, the 'second Adam', the only man who was able to surmount every temptation. Adam would have been both created and sustained as a morally perfect being. It seems reasonable, then, that Adam's inclination to act rightly (which God implanted in him) was an inclination to act rightly, a bias toward good, not an inclination always to act rightly. In short, sufficient grace is not efficacious grace.

The Perversion of Adam's Rational Will

Why, then, did Adam sin? Edwards claims that Adam sinned because his rational will became 'perverted'. Adam's judgment was deceived because what he thought was best for himself was, in fact, not best for himself.

Therefore man, having that sufficient grace as to render him quite free with respect to his rational will (or his will arising from mere judgment of what was best for himself), could not fall without having that judgment deceived, and being made to think that to be best for himself which was not so, and so having his rational will perverted (*M*

---

[14] *All God's Methods*, p. 168.
[15] *The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners*, p. 167.

436, pp. 485-6). Adam judged that by eating the forbidden fruit he and Eve would become like gods and that what God had threatened was not true. Though these were erroneous judgments, they were still rational judgments. Adam and Eve had a reason for making them. In *M* 173, Edwards notes that, according to the Genesis account, Satan chose the serpent to be the instrument of temptation 'because of his subtlety' (*M* 173 p. 324). The serpent lacked speech but 'pretended he had gotten it by eating the fruit of the forbidden tree' (*M* 173, p. 324). Eve surmised that if eating the fruit of the forbidden tree turned the serpent into a rational being with speech, then eating the fruit would enable her and Adam to be 'as gods knowing good and evil' (*M* 173, p. 325). By pretending to be concerned about her welfare, by describing the positive effects that eating the forbidden fruit would have on her, the serpent 'easily gained Eve's belief' (*M* 173, p. 325). Eve's judgment was erroneous but it was still a rational judgment about what Eve thought was, at that moment, best for herself. Eve believed that by eating the forbidden fruit she was acting in her rational self-interest.

Edwards maintains, however, that the perversion of Adam's will did not blind his conscience. Adam still knew that it was wrong to violate the precept about the forbidden fruit.

> Though he might sin without being deceived in his rational judgment of what was most lovely in itself, or (which is the same thing) without having his conscience deceived and blinded, might rationally know at the same time, that what he was about to do was hateful, unworthy, *etc.*; or in other words, though he might know that it was what he ought not to do. (*M* 436, pp. 485-6)

Edwards distinguishes between a person's 'judgment of what is best for himself' and a 'judgment of what is best absolutely, and most lovely in itself' (*M* 436, p. 485). He says that what is best absolutely or what is absolutely lovely directly influences only the will of appetite but can indirectly influence the rational will (when the person judges that what is best absolutely is also best for himself). But a person may also judge that what is best absolutely is not best for himself. When this happens the judgment of the rational will is deceived. A person 'with respect to his rational will, may be perfectly free, and yet may refuse that which he at the same time judges to be in itself most lovely and becoming, and will that which he rationally knows to be hateful' (*M* 436, p. 485). Thus, Adam judged that something that was in itself most lovely and becoming (obeying God's law) was not best for himself and so he chose to sin and break God's law (something he knew was hateful and wrong). Thus, he was not deceived about the wrongness of disobeying God's law, though he was deceived when he believed that disobeying God's law was best for

135

himself. This latter belief reflected an erroneous (though rational) judgment, but not one that blinded his conscience. In short, the serpent did not cause Adam and Eve to cast doubt on what God had commanded, only on what they judged to be best for themselves.

In *M* 437 Edwards describes the situation of Adam and Eve when tempted by the serpent. In order for them to have 'grace sufficient to their being free with respect to their rational will, and in order to their being without habitual sin', they must have a 'sense of spiritual excellencies and beauties' (*M* 437, p. 486). Here Edwards is referring to a 'sense' of duty to God and love of duty to God. These are the superior or supernatural principles God implanted in Adam and Eve when he created them and which God withdrew when the fall occurred (*OS*, p. 381). What ruled the natural appetite and rational will of Adam and Eve, then, was the 'sense' of duty to God or 'holy inclination to obedience' (*M* 437, p. 486). As stated earlier, Adam was created with an inclination to act rightly, with a bias toward good. The lower appetites and the rational will fall under the inferior or natural principles God implanted in Adam and Eve and which remained with them after the fall. Before Adam and Eve sinned the inferior principles were subordinate and served the superior principles: 'These superior principles were given to possess the throne, and maintain an absolute dominion in the heart: the other, to be wholly subordinate or subservient' (*OS*, p. 382). After the fall 'the inferior principles of self-love and natural appetite, which were given only to serve, being alone, and left to themselves, of course became reigning principles; having no superior principles to regulate or control them, they became absolute masters of the heart' (*OS*, p. 382).

When Adam's rational will was 'perverted', the erroneous judgment concerning what was best for himself combined with his natural appetite, and the two, acting in concert with one another, overcame the 'holy inclination' to obey God's precept.

> The case must be thus, therefore, with our first parents, when tempted: their sense of their duty to God and their love to it must be above their inferior appetite, so that that inferior appetite of itself was not sufficient to master the holy principle; yet the rational will, being perverted by a deceived judgment and setting in with the inferior appetite, overcame and overthrew the gracious inclination. (*M* 436, p. 487)

Natural appetite by itself was insufficient to account for the first sin, for God had created Adam with 'sufficient grace' or the grace of 'original righteousness', a grace that made it possible for Adam's rational will to have dominion over appetite. But natural appetite found a welcome ally in the erroneous judgment that resulted from the perversion of Adam's rational will. Together they (natural appetite and

an erroneous judgment) 'overthrew the gracious inclination'. The superior principles helped Adam's rational will keep appetite in check. But Adam was not created with 'efficacious' or 'confirming grace', the grace necessary to surmount every temptation. He was created holy, but not in a confirmed state of holiness. Since he lacked confirming grace, 'the disposition of heart to do the right thing the first moment of his existence' did not guarantee his doing the right thing every moment of his existence.

In *Original Sin* Edwards claims in a footnote that 'although there was no natural sinful inclination in Adam, yet an inclination to that sin of eating the forbidden fruit, was begotten in him by the delusion and error he was led into; and this inclination to eat the forbidden fruit, must precede his actual eating' (*OS* pp. 228-9). Clyde Holbrook, in his Introduction to the Yale edition of *Original Sin*, claims that Edwards is engaged in the aforementioned footnote in circular reasoning. 'How,' Holbrook asks, 'could a delusion be "begotten in him" or how could he be "led into" delusion without presupposing a sinful propensity to which the temptation could appeal?' (*OS,* p. 51).

I do not think Edwards is engaged in circular reasoning. If by 'a sinful propensity to which the temptation could appeal' Holbrook means a fixed tendency or settled disposition, then Edwards is not engaged in circular reasoning for he makes it very clear that a single sinful inclination does not presuppose or imply a fixed or settled disposition to do wrong.

'Tis true, as was observed before, there is no effect without some cause, occasion, ground or reason of that effect, and some cause answerable to that effect. But certainly it will not follow, from thence, that a transient effect requires a permanent cause, or a fixed influence and propensity. (*OS*, p. 191)

Edwards clearly regards the 'first sin' as a transient effect.

And however great the sin of Adam, or of the angels, was, and however great means, motives and obligations they sinned against; whatever may be thence argued concerning the transient cause, occasion, or temptation, as being very subtle, remarkably tending to deceive and seduce, or otherwise great; yet it argues nothing of any settled disposition, or fixed cause at all, either great or small; the effect both in the angels and our first parents, being in itself transient, and for aught appears, happening in each of them, under one system or coincidence of influential circumstances. (*OS*, p. 193)

There was no 'settled' disposition, then, at the root of Adam's inclination to commit the first sin.

If by 'sinful propensity to which the temptation could appeal' Holbrook means not a fixed or settled disposition to do wrong but

simply an individual desire or inclination to do wrong, then I think Edwards would say that Adam's rational will could have been deceived without presupposing the presence of such a propensity. The first sinful inclination was begotten in Adam by reason of a 'coincidence of influential circumstances', viz., an erroneous judgment about what was best for himself finding a welcome ally in the natural appetite. This is how the first sinful inclination came about. A sinful action presupposes a sinful inclination but a sinful inclination does not necessarily presuppose a sinful heart (except in fallen human beings). Just as one can acquire bad habits, one can acquire bad inclinations. But acquiring a bad inclination does not presuppose already having a bad inclination.

Imperfection in the Creature

In *Freedom of the Will* Edwards claims that sin comes into the world 'from the imperfection which properly belongs to a creature, as such', that 'if sin had not arose from the imperfection of the creature, it would not have been so visible, that it did not arise from God, as the positive cause, and real source of it.'[16] Holbrook regards this as 'a damaging concession, inasmuch as imperfections in the creature as created would redound only to the discredit of the Creator' (*OS*, p. 51). Gerstner agrees:

Edwards is speaking of man as created good. He is also saying that man cannot stand on his own moral feet. It is a case of *posse peccare* only; there is logically no room for *posse non peccare*. Unless God overcomes this imperfection; it cannot be overcome by the man himself because it belongs to his very nature as a creature.

Augustine does not escape this either and perhaps no profound Christian thinker can.[17] Once again I must disagree. If Adam is created such that he is determined to hold his ground in the face of every temptation, then it is as if he has been programmed by God to be always inclined to do the right thing. In the abstract it is logically possible for God to create a being who is always so inclined, but in the context of Edwards' theology, where God is absolutely sovereign and human beings are utterly dependent on him for their very existence, being a creature means having imperfections, one of which is a mutable will. God cannot create beings exactly like himself lest the creator / creature distinction collapse entirely. If Adam is forever a morally perfect being, then it stands to reason that his descendants are

---

[16] *Freedom of the Will*, edited by Paul Ramsey (New Haven, 1957), p. 413.

[17] Gerstner, p. 314.

morally perfect beings and there is no need for a redeemer, no need for the cross, no need to demonstrate God's justice and mercy. It is difficult to see why it discredits God if he creates Adam with sufficient grace while at the same time withholding efficacious grace.

Holbrook further contends that Edwards attempted another explanation of the origin of the first sin when he identified original righteousness with innocence (which Holbrook equates, I believe mistakenly, with ignorance). He quotes Edwards as saying that the serpent led Adam and Eve to believe 'that their disobedience should be followed with no destruction or calamity at all to themselves (and therefore not to their posterity) but on the contrary, with a great increase and advancement of dignity and happiness' (*OS*, p. 193). Adam and Eve were ignorant of the ultimate consequences of eating the forbidden fruit and so their sin can be traced to ignorance on their part. Holbrook maintains that if the first sin is due to ignorance, then Edwards is faced with a dilemma. Either his position leads back to the 'contention that the original parents sinned in the same manner in which all men do, by errors of judgment made in ignorance of consequences, and with free exercise of choice; or it leads to a condemning of God's creatorship, since he knew beforehand that ignorance would lead to this disastrous consequence' (*OS*, p. 52).

I think this interpretation also misses the mark. First, it is not entirely evident that all men and women sin because they make errors of judgment based on ignorance of the consequences of their acts. I think Edwards would say that all natural human beings sin because they have a wicked heart. Secondly, while Edwards does say that Adam and Eve were ignorant of the ultimate consequences of their sin, viz., death to themselves and their posterity, he also claims that the Mosaic account of their temptation reveals that they were only initially deceived. Their temptation was 'so contrived by the subtlety of the tempter, as first to blind and deceive 'em' (*OS*, p. 193). But they were not victims of a total or lasting deception. It does not follow from their initially being deceived that their sin was totally and completely the result of ignorance. As previously stated Adam was not deceived in his judgment about what was 'best absolutely', viz., obeying God's law. He was only deceived when he believed that disobeying God's law was 'best for himself'. The perversion of his rational will did not blind his conscience.

Adam and Eve were certainly taken in and led astray by the serpent but they still experienced an obligation to obey the precept about not eating the forbidden fruit. Their being deceived did not remove their culpability. They still knew it was wrong to eat the forbidden fruit. They may have been ignorant of the ultimate consequences of their sin but they were not ignorant of their obligation

139

to obey God's law. A child may be ignorant of the consequences of breaking one of his parents' rules but he still knows it is wrong to break the rule. If Adam and Eve were not ignorant of their obligation, then God had foreknowledge that they were not ignorant and thus it is difficult to see how God's creatorship can be condemned. In Edwards' view, tracing the first sin to ignorance does not provide an adequate explanation of sin's entrance into the world.

Conclusions

I believe Edwards' account of the origin of Adam's first sin is coherent and adequate. God created Adam with sufficient grace, the grace of original righteousness, which inclined him to act rightly and enabled him to keep appetite subordinate to the rational will. But God withheld efficacious grace, which he was not obligated to bestow upon him, and which, had he granted it to him, would have made Adam a morally perfect being able to withstand any and every temptation to sin. The absence of confirming grace accounted for the possibility of the first sin.

Edwards' account rests on the belief that God created Adam as a free agent not only with respect to his 'whole will' but also with respect to his 'rational will'. Adam sinned because his rational will became 'perverted' when he made an erroneous judgment about what was 'best for himself'. This judgment found a natural ally in the lower appetite and, acting together, they overcame and overthrew the 'holy inclination' to obey God's precept. The first sin entered the world, then, as a result of the alliance between an erroneous judgment and the natural appetite.

In Edwards' view the disobedience of Adam was ultimately a function of his imperfection as a creature, yet the first sin was not entirely the result of ignorance. Adam's rational will became 'perverted' but his conscience was never blinded, since from the moment he was created he experienced the obligation to obey God's commands.

Finally, Edwards believes that, in the larger scheme of things, from the point of view of God's overall designs and purposes, the first sin, however evil when considered in itself, reflects the goodness of God, occasioning as it does a more intimate relationship between God and humanity and a greater manifestation of God's love for his people than would have occurred had Adam not sinned.

If man had never fallen, God would have remained man's friend; he would have enjoyed God's favor, and so would have been the object of Christ's favor, as he would have had the favor of all the persons of the Trinity. But now Christ becoming our surety and Savior, and having taken on him our nature, occasions between

ADAM'S FIRST SIN

Christ and us a union of a quite different kind, and a nearer relation than otherwise would have been. The fall is the occasion of Christ's becoming our head, and the church his body. And believers are become his brethren, and spouse, in a manner that otherwise would not have been. God now manifests his love to his people, by sending his Son into the world, to die for them. There never would have been any such testimony of the love of God, if man had not fallen. Christ manifests his love, by coming into the world, and laying down his life. This is the greatest testimony of divine love that can be conceived. Now, surely, the greater discoveries God's people have of his love to them, the more occasion they will have to rejoice in that love. Here will be a delightful theme for the saints to contemplate to all eternity which they never could have had, if man had never fallen, viz., the dying love of Christ.[18]

Better for Adam to have fallen than for human beings to have missed the chance of experiencing 'the greatest testimony of divine love'. Edwards is clearly in that tradition of Christian theologians who adhere to the doctrine of the *felix culpa.*

---

[18] See *Wisdom Displayed in Salvation*, reprinted in *The Works of President Edwards,* vol. IV (New York, 1881), pp. 154-5.

THE *FILIOQUE* CLAUSE: EAST OR WEST?
NICK NEEDHAM, CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH,
WALTHAMSTOW, LONDON

In this essay, I intend to examine the *Filioque* clause and its underlying theology from a historical and scriptural angle. For those not familiar with the debate, *Filioque* is Latin for 'and from the Son', and refers to a contentious point of Trinitarian doctrine, on which the Eastern and Western branches of the church went different ways, namely: in the ontological Trinity (the Trinity in its eternal relationships), does the Holy Spirit proceed from the Father alone (the Eastern view), or both from the Father and from the Son (the Western view)?

Historical Developments
Augustine of Hippo (354-430) was the originator of what Eastern Orthodox call 'Filioquism' – the theology expressed by the *Filioque* clause in the Western version of the Nicene creed. (When I refer to Filioquism, I do so simply as shorthand, without any pejorative connotations.)

Prior to Augustine, the general tendency of patristic theology – especially in the East – was broadly to conceive of the oneness of God primarily in terms of God the Father.[1] According to the maxim of Greek patristic theology, 'There is one God because there is one Father.'[2] It is easy for those reared in Western Trinitarian thinking to misunderstand this. To say that God in his oneness is primarily the Father does not, for the anti-Arian church fathers, mean that the Son and the Holy Spirit are any less divine than the Father. It means that the Father is the 'fountain of deity', the principal possessor and source of the divine essence. The Father, in other words, possesses the divine essence in and from himself alone, whereas the Son and the Holy Spirit possess it from the Father. In that specific sense, the oneness of God rests primarily in the Father. The being of the Son and the Holy Spirit is indeed fully and truly divine – but for this very reason, that it is the Father's true being communicated to them by the eternal begetting of the Son and the eternal procession of the Spirit. The Son's deity, invisibility, immortality and eternity are precisely the Father's own deity, invisibility, immortality and eternity, truly possessed by the Son through his eternal generation from the Father.

---

[1] See, for example, Gregory Thaumaturgus' *Confession of Faith* and Cyril of Jerusalem's *Catechetical Lectures* 4:4-8.

[2] See Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, (London, 1957), ch.3, especially p. 58.

The subordination involved is not an ontological subordination of essence, but a relational subordination of Persons (hypostaseis), referring not to the divine essence itself, but to the manner or mode of possessing it. The Father is God *simpliciter*; the Son is 'God from God', *theos ek theou*, as the Nicene creed states, God proceeding forth out of God by eternal generation. Likewise the Holy Spirit is 'God from God', God proceeding out of God by eternal spiration ('breathing forth').

We should note this important point in the pre-Augustinian understanding: the being of God is precisely identical with the being of the Father. There is no being of God which can – either really or conceptually – be distinguished from the Father's being. One cannot, as it were, dig beneath the Father's essence to uncover some more fundamental and generalised essence of God. Thus, in the old pre-Augustinian understanding, the Father constitutes the source and bond of unity in the Trinity. The Father binds together all three Persons or hypostaseis as one God because the essence of God is, principally, the Father's essence. The one God, who is the Father, begets from himself the one God who is the Son, and breathes forth from himself the one God who is the Spirit, like an eternal fountain with two eternal streams. All three are equally God; but the Father is necessarily 'first' Person of the Trinity, because he is the fountain of deity, communicating his entire essence to the Son by eternal generation, and to the Spirit by eternal procession or spiration.

Augustine
When we come to Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity, we find an important shift of basic emphasis. For Augustine, the oneness of God does not rest primarily in the Person or hypostasis of the Father; the oneness of God resides primarily in the divine essence itself. As Augustine says in his *De Trinitate* 1:8:15, 'The divinity, or to express it more precisely, the Godhead itself, is the unity of the Trinity.' Hence the maxim of Western Augustinian theology, 'There is one God because there is one divine essence' (as contrasted with the Eastern maxim, 'One God because one Father'). Augustine has – conceptually at least – distinguished between the Father's essence and the essence of God, in the sense that he no longer sees an exact and unbreakable equivalence between the two. Augustine is happy (if I may so express it) to separate out the divine essence from the Person of the Father, and to treat the essence itself – 'divinity, the Godhead' – as the all-pervading source of oneness in the Trinity. The shift in theological nuance is from Person to essence: from the Father as hypostatic bond of unity, to the essence as non-hypostatic bond of unity. As Eugene Portalié says, for Augustine 'God did not mean

directly' Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but 'the more general notion of the Godhead, conceived concretely and personally no doubt, [but] not as any one Person in particular'.[3]

Having said all this, let us be very clear that Augustine did not wholly abandon the older way of thinking. His dominant focus on the divine essence was novel; but as soon as he conceived that essence as existing personally in the Father, he then continued to regard the Father as the 'fountain of deity', at least as far as the Son was concerned. The problem arose over the way Augustine related the Father's 'fountain of deity' role to the Holy Spirit, as we shall see. The point I am making here is simply that Augustine did introduce into the still fluid state of Trinitarian theology this new 'colour' – the divine essence as itself the non-hypostatic foundation of the Trinity's unity – which had the effect of shifting the theological emphasis from the Persons to the essence.[4]

---

[3] Portalié, *Guide to the Thought of St Augustine* (Norwood, 1975), pp. 130-31.

[4] Some extreme Augustinians, as if hypnotised by the glories of the 'one essence', try to deny all subordination between the Persons within the ontological Trinity. Let it be clear that Augustine himself never denied the personal subordination of the Son to the Father, not just in the incarnation, but from all eternity. As W.G.T. Shedd notes in his introductory essay to Augustine's *De Trinitate*: 'He [Augustine] maintains, over and over again, that Sonship as a relationship is second and subordinate to Fatherhood; that while a Divine Father and a Divine Son must necessarily be of the very same nature and grade of being, like a human father and a human son, yet the latter issues from the former, not the former from the latter. Augustine's phraseology on this point is as positive as that of Athanasius, and in some respects even more bold and capable of misinterpretation. He denominates the Father as the "beginning" (principium) of the Son, and the Father and Son the "beginning" (principium) of the Holy Spirit…. "In their mutual relation to one another in the Trinity itself, if the begetter is a beginning (principium) in relation to that which he begets, the Father is a beginning in relation to the Son, because he begets him." V. xiv. 15.' Shedd, 'Introductory Essay' to the *De Trinitate* in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, vol. 3, pp. 4-5. Augustine's innovation did not involve any denial of the 'fountain of deity' role of Father in relation to Son, but lay in his assertion (which we will soon examine in the main body of the essay) that the divine essence common to Father and Son acted as a single non-personal 'fountain of deity' in relation to the Holy Spirit. This was made

Flowing from this subordination of the divine Persons to the divine essence, Augustine then argued that the Persons of the Trinity existed only relatively to each other. They were concretised as Persons, and distinguished one from another, only by their relations with each other – what Thomas Aquinas was to call 'relations of opposition', *e.g.* the relationship 'Father-Son', where each term is purely relative to the other.[5] The East was always to reject this way of thinking as being modalistic in tendency; the Persons of the Trinity were indeed distinguished from one another by their differing relationships, but this did not mean that one could (so to speak) strip them of their concrete individuality by making them just relationships of the essence with itself. In Aquinas this came perilously close to sheer modalism, as far as the East was concerned, when Aquinas actually defined the Persons of the Trinity as relationships – that is, a divine Person was basically an internal relationship within the all-dazzling essence. The East shook its head sadly; a Person has relationships, exists in the context of relationships, but cannot be reduced to a relationship.[6]

According to Augustine, the Father and Son are constituted as personally concrete, and clearly distinguished from each other, by virtue of the Person of the Father being the cause of the Person of the Son, in the act of eternal generation. The Father is also the cause of the Holy Spirit, in the act of eternal spiration. Now if the Father as Father causes the Son, and if the Father as Spirator ('breather-forth') causes the Spirit, there are two 'relations of opposition' – generation (Father-Son) and spiration (Spirator-Spirit) – clearly to distinguish Father and Son from each other, and Father and Spirit from each other.

---

possible by Augustine's structural shift of emphasis from Person to essence in the Trinity.
5   By 'relations of opposition', Aquinas means corresponding opposites, as in 'Father-Son'. The term 'opposition' here does not signify antagonism but inter-related correspondence.
6   Bernard Lohse notes in *A Short History of Christian Doctrine* (Philadelphia, 1985), 'Augustine felt strongly the inadequacy of the term *persona*. He always used it with hesitation, and as a rule substituted for it the concept of *relatio* (relation). The three co-called Persons, he said, are not something different, each in himself. They are different only in their relation to each other and [therefore] to the world.' (p. 68). Aquinas says, 'As the Godhead is God, so the divine paternity is God the Father, Who is a divine Person. Therefore a divine Person signifies a relationship subsisting [in the divine essence]' (*Summa Theologiae*, part 1, q.29, art. 4).

But what clearly distinguishes the Holy Spirit from the Son? Where is the 'relation of opposition' to constitute them as two distinct Persons in relation to each other? Why here: the Holy Spirit is caused by the Son as well as by the Father. So we have the uncaused Father, the Son caused by the Father, and the Holy Spirit caused jointly by the Father and the Son. There, in a nutshell, is the *Filioque* clause: the Holy Spirit being caused by, proceeding from, being spirated from, the Father and the Son. It is the double procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son which decisively distinguishes the Spirit from the Son who proceeds singly from the Father alone.[7]

Here is Augustine on the double procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son:

> Because it is most difficult to distinguish generation from procession in the co-eternal, equal, incorporeal, ineffably unchangeable and indivisible Trinity, let this suffice.... The Holy

---

[7] Thomas Aquinas puts it like this: 'It must be said that the Holy Spirit is from the Son. For if the Spirit were not from the Son, he could in no way be personally distinguished from him.... The divine Persons are distinguished from each other only by their relations. Now the relations cannot distinguish the Persons unless they are relations of opposition. This appears from the fact that the Father has two relationships; by one of these he is related to the Son, by the other to the Holy Spirit. But these two relationships [generation and spiration] are not relations of opposition [to each other], and therefore they do not make two Persons, but belong only to the one Person of the Father. So if in the Son and the Holy Spirit there were two relations only, by which each of them was related to the Father, these relations would not be relations of opposition between Son and Spirit.... It would follow from this that since the Person of the Father is one, therefore the Persons of the Son and the Holy Spirit would be one Person, because their two relations of opposition [Sonship and Spirithood] would only be with the Father's two relations [generation and spiration]. But this is heretical; it destroys faith in the Trinity. Therefore the Son and the Holy Spirit must be related to each other by relations of opposition' (*Summa Theologiae*, part 1, q.36, art. 2). The Eastern position is simply that the Son and the Holy Spirit are two Persons, not one, because they derive from the Father in mysteriously different ways – the Son by generation, the Spirit by spiration/procession. One cannot help suspecting that if the apostles had heard Aquinas propounding the mind-boggling dialectics above, they would have asked each other, 'What is he talking about?'

Spirit certainly proceeds from him [the Father] from whom the Son derived his divine nature, for the Son is God from God. The Son also has it from the Father that from the Son too proceeds the Holy Spirit. And hence the Holy Spirit has it from the Father himself that he should proceed from the Son also, just as he proceeds from the Father. Here too in some way may it also be understood (as far as it can by us) why the Holy Spirit is not said to be begotten but to proceed. For if he too were called a Son, he would certainly be called the Son of both [Father and Son], which is most absurd (*De Trinitate* 15:27:48).

To Augustine, then, the procession of the Spirit 'from the Son also' was important to safeguard the distinct identity and personhood of the Spirit – to prevent him being another Son. This, of course, created tension with the pre-Augustinian understanding of the Father as fountain of deity, for in the case of the Spirit, we now seem to have Father and Son as double fountains, double spirators. This was to be an oft-repeated Eastern objection: how can there be two sources of the divine essence? Does this not split apart Father and Son into two Gods? For Augustine it did not, because he had already relocated the unity of God away from the Person of the Father to the divine essence itself. Therefore Augustine argued that it was the divine essence common to Father and Son which acted as single source of the Spirit. Augustine puts it like this:

It must be admitted that the Father and the Son are a single source of the Holy Spirit, not two sources; but as Father and Son are one God, one Creator and one Lord, in relation to creation, so are they one source in relation to the Holy Spirit (*De Trinitate* 5:14:15).

Eastern theologians never ceased to attack this 'collapsing' of Father and Son back into the divine essence in order to be the single source of the Spirit. They pointed out that it conflicted with traditional Trinitarian theology, as wrought out in the fourth century by Athanasius and the Cappadocian fathers. If the divine essence was the source of an act not peculiar to one of the Persons, it was shared by all three Persons, not just two of them; whereas if there was any act not shared by all three Persons, that act constituted a peculiar property of one of the Persons, belonging to his particular hypostasis and distinguishing him from the other two. Augustine had violated both rules. First, he had postulated an act of the divine essence – spiration – shared by two of the Persons to the exclusion of the third. Second, he had ascribed the peculiar hypostatic property of 'spiration' to the hypostaseis of Father and Son alike; and this, according to traditional Trinitarianism, ought to have compressed them into a fourth divine hypostasis, a sort of Siamese Father-Son twin, with a

147

new single personal identity (God the Spirator) in relation to the Holy Spirit.

Augustine's use of the concept of causality in his understanding of the double procession of the Spirit was (perhaps rather oddly) something he shared with the Arians. They had used it as a standard argument against the deity of Christ that the Father caused the Son, whereas the Son did not cause the Father, and as causality was a primary attribute of deity, it followed that the Father was God, but not the Son. Augustine accepted the premises but not the conclusion. Yes, he said, causality is a primary attribute of deity; but the Son does possess this attribute, for he causes the Holy Spirit who is a divine Person. Therefore the Son who causes the divine Spirit must be truly God. Here, I think, lies the theological heart of Filioquism: the anti-Arian zeal to assert the equality of the Son with the Father. What better way of spotlighting that equality than to affirm that Father and Son are equal as the one common fountain of the Holy Spirit?

The philosophical argument, however, becomes slightly complex here. In this Augustinian scheme of things, with its employment of causality as proof of deity, one wonders how the Holy Spirit can be God – he causes neither the Father nor the Son, nor yet does he cause some fourth divine Person. In other words, if one argues for the deity of the Son because he is equal with the Father in causing the Spirit, how does one then argue for the deity of the Spirit, who causes no divine Person? Augustine solved this problem by maintaining that the Holy Spirit was in effect the divine essence, because he was the love by which Father and Son loved each other. 'God is love' referred to the Spirit. In Augustine's words:

> Whether the Spirit is the unity of both [Father and Son], or the holiness, or the love, or whether he is the unity because he is the love, and the love because he is the holiness, it is manifest that he is not one of the two [Father and Son], because he is the one through whom the two are joined, through whom the Begotten is loved by the Begetter, and loves him who begot him, and through whom... they are 'keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace', which we are commanded to imitate by grace, both towards God and towards each other.... And therefore they [the Persons of the Trinity] are not more than three: One [the Father] who loves him [the Son] who is from himself, and one [the Son] who loves him [the Father] from whom he is, and Love itself [the Spirit]. And if this last one is nothing, how can God be love? If this last is not substance, how can God be substance? (*De Trinitate* 6:5:7).

In other words, just as everything starts from the divine essence, which for Augustine has a certain priority over the divine Persons, so

everything ends where it began, with the divine essence, love, the Holy Spirit – the process is complete. As Thomas Aquinas was to put it, 'the cycle is concluded when by love it returns to the same essence from which the proceeding began' *(Summa Contra Gentiles* 4:26:6). Once we have the lover (the Father), the beloved (the Son), and the love that unites them (the Holy Spirit), there is no more room for a fourth Person in the Godhead. The cycle is complete even though the Spirit causes no other Person, thus lacking the causality which proves Father and Son to be God. Augustine was so sure he could identify the Holy Spirit with the divine essence as love that he even argued that the entire Trinity was in a sense the Holy Spirit. 'Because the Father is spirit and the Son is spirit, because the Father is holy and the Son is holy, since the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one God, and God is holy and God is spirit, therefore, the Trinity can also be called Holy Spirit' *(De Trinitate* 5:11:12). The Holy Spirit as a distinct Trinitarian Person was a sort of concentration or summing-up of what the entire Trinity was in its shared essence – spirituality and holiness. (For Augustine, love was the essence of holiness.)

This quasi-identification of the Holy Spirit with the divine essence as love was a strange reversal of pre-Augustinian theology, which had identified the Father with the divine essence (in the sense of being its primary possessor and source). This was accompanied by yet another strange reversal. As a corollary of the pre-Augustinian view, we remember, the Father was the bond of unity in the Trinity; but for Augustine, it was the Holy Spirit who was the bond of unity – not because the Spirit was the fountain of deity, but because for Augustine (as we have seen) the Spirit was the love with which Father and Son loved each other – the 'bond of love' *(vinculum caritatis)* binding Father with Son together in their eternal communion of love:

> Scripture teaches us that he is the Spirit neither of the Father alone, nor of the Son alone, but of both; and so his being suggests to us that mutual love by which Father and Son love each other *(De Trinitate* 15:17:27).

After Augustine

Augustine's dominating influence on Western theology meant that his understanding of the Trinity became the unchallenged view of the Western church. How the East would have responded if it had known Augustine's writings we may infer from Theodoret of Cyrrhus, the fifth-century champion of Antiochene theology. When Theodoret's arch-enemy Cyril of Alexandria seemed to imply – possibly by careless language – that the Spirit proceeded from the Son as well as from the Father, Theodoret pounced on Cyril with all the ruthless

fervour of a politician whose opponent has made a gaffe: 'If Cyril means that the Holy Spirit has his existence from or through the Son, we repudiate this as irreligious blasphemy. We believe in the Lord's own words that the Spirit proceeds from the Father.'[8]

Tensions between East and West over Filioquism did not arise until the West started tampering with the Nicene creed. This was the most revered creed in Christendom, promulgated by the second of the ecumenical Councils, the Council of Constantinople, in 381, marking the conclusive defeat of Arianism in the church. The section on the Holy Spirit declared, 'I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and the Life-giver, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son is together worshipped and together glorified, who spoke through the prophets.' From the sixth century onwards, many Westerners added the words 'and from the Son' (in Latin *Filioque*), so that the Western creed now said, 'I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and the Life-giver, who proceeds from the Father *and from the Son.*' This seems to have begun in Spain; the Spanish council of Toledo added *Filioque* to the creed in 589. Other parts of the Western church followed their example. This caused great controversy between East and West. The East protested that the Western church had no authority to alter one of the ecumenical Creeds, and that in any case this particular alteration was false – the Holy Spirit does not proceed from the Son, but from the Father alone.

The defining moment in the growing *Filioque* controversy came with Charlemagne and the Carolingian Renaissance in the West in the eighth and ninth centuries. Charlemagne's theologians, such as Alcuin of York and Theodulph of Orleans, defended the *Filioque* clause with a passion. Despite the veto of pope Leo III, Charlemagne personally supported the insertion of the *Filioque* clause in the Nicene creed. Pope Leo agreed with the Western position theologically, but opposed the actual insertion of the *Filioque* clause into the creed. Charlemagne, however, ignored Leo's protests, and gave the imperial sanction to the *Filioque* clause at the council of Aachen in 809. Thus the newly-born Holy Roman Empire committed itself theologically to Filioquism – a fateful step.

The next phase of the controversy came through the intensely personal conflict between pope Nicholas I (pope from 858) and patriarch Photius of Constantinople (patriarch from 858). We need not go into the complex background of this conflict. Suffice it to say that it came close to open war through the passionate rivalry between Western and Eastern missionaries in Bulgaria. The two rival groups of

---

[8] Quoted by H. Bettenson, *The Later Christian Fathers* (London, 1970), p. 275.

missionaries began attacking each other on every issue on which East and West differed – and the quarrel came to focus on the *Filioque* clause. Photius responded to Western attacks on the East's rejection of the *Filioque* clause by writing in 867 an encyclical letter to the other Eastern patriarchs, in which he denounced the *Filioque* as heretical. Photius also summoned a church council in Constantinople which excommunicated pope Nicholas, who had already excommunicated Photius in 863. The event is known as the 'Photian schism'.

At this point the chances and changes of Byzantine politics suddenly toppled Photius from the patriarchate (although he came back in 877). The downfall of Photius restored political peace and ecclesiastical fellowship between Rome and Constantinople. The theological dispute over the *Filioque* clause, however, was by no means dead. Photius' encyclical letter of 867 had made it a central and burning issue in the frictions between East and West. Photius also wrote a highly influential book on the subject, his *Treatise on the Mystagogia of the Holy Spirit*, which scholars regard as Photius' theological masterpiece. In the *Treatise*, Photius states with clarity, vigour, invective and enduring impact all the Eastern objections to the *Filioque* clause.

By the time the Eastern and Western branches of the church conclusively separated into two in the great schism of 1054, the *Filioque* clause was the chief source of theological dissension between them. The papacy had finally given official approval to the insertion of the *Filioque* into the Nicene creed sometime early in the eleventh century – we are not sure exactly when. Since the West excommunicated the East in 1054 for everything in which it differed from Rome, this meant that the *Filioque* lay at the doctrinal heart of the schism. Whenever East and West negotiated about the possibility of reunion (prior to the advent of modern ecumenism), the *Filioque* was always the biggest theological hurdle, although the Western doctrine of purgatory and indulgences also caused much boggling among Easterners. The development of scholastic theology in the West made the gulf over the *Filioque* still deeper, as the great schoolmen, notably Aquinas, refined the arguments for the *Filioque* clause to new levels of subtlety and sophistication.

When the Reformation brought about the secession of half Western Europe from its papal allegiance in the sixteenth century, one might have thought that the Reformers would look again at the *Filioque* debate. After all, they were not bound by what Rome had done in 1054, and Eastern Orthodoxy was a potential ally in the struggle against the papacy. Amazingly, however, the Reformers did not re-examine this issue. They took over, lock, stock and barrel, the pre-

Reformation Western concept of the Trinity, and reproduced it. This can perhaps be explained by the Reformers' loyalty to Augustine, who was the fountainhead of Filioquism. In the *Institutes*, Calvin simply says, as though it were virtually self-evident, 'The Son is said to come forth from the Father alone; the Spirit, from the Father and the Son at the same time' *(Institutes* 1:13:18). By and large, this Protestant acceptance of Filioquism has remained the case to the present day; with rare exceptions, Protestant theologians have championed the *Filioque* clause and its underlying concept of the Trinity (apart, of course, from those who have stopped believing in the Trinity altogether). All you have to do to see this is to look at almost any Protestant systematic theology. For all his defects, Karl Barth was the greatest Protestant systematic theologian of the twentieth century, and he zealously defended the *Filioque* clause. So does Wayne Grudem in his recent popular tome of *Systematic Theology.*

Let me just mention two notable exceptions to the almost universal Protestant endorsement of the *Filioque* clause. The exceptions are both nineteenth-century American Southerners – the Baptist James Pettigru Boyce (1827-88), and the Presbyterian Robert Lewis Dabney (1820-98). In Boyce's *Systematic Theology*, he expresses considerable scepticism about the traditional Western arguments for the eternal procession of the Spirit from the Son.

> Would it not be a more exact statement of the Scripture teaching to say that the Son, or Christ, sends the Spirit, and gives the Spirit, which is his, because the right to bestow it is his, either essentially, or as given him in his office as Messiah, and that the Spirit thus sent forth proceeds from the Father? In this event the Father would be the source of the procedure, and the Son the agent in sending it forth.[9]

However, having virtually embraced the Eastern position, Boyce then suddenly seems to draw back at the last moment saying:

> These points are presented for consideration, while it is admitted that the assertion that the Spirit proceeds also from the Son is less objectionable than the denial. The Scriptures seem to leave it so doubtful as to forbid any positive statement about it. But the preponderance of evidence is in favour of a procession from both Father and Son.[10]

Boyce's approach as he stands on the threshold of the *Filioque* clause looks like some sort of bizarre theological hoky-koky: in, out, in , out,

---

[9]   Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology* (Louisville, KY, 1882), p. 152.

[10] *Ibid.*

shake it all about, and end up neither out nor fully in. Still, at least he was prepared to question it.

Fortunately Robert Lewis Dabney was much more lucid than Boyce. Dabney's view of the East-West controversy was as follows:

To the dispassionate mind, the dispute cannot but appear of small importance, and the grounds of both parties uncertain.... [He dismisses as inconclusive the traditional Western arguments, then continues:] And hence it appears to me that this is a subject on which we should not dogmatize. Should it be that the Son does not share with the Father the eternal spiration of the Spirit, this would no more imply an essential inferiority of the second Person than does his filiation. Enough for us to know the blessed truth that under the Covenant of Grace, the Divine Spirit condescends economically to commit the dispensation of his saving influence to the Son as our king.[11]

Dabney, then, rejects Filioquism, although not out of a positive commitment to the Eastern alternative – rather from a conviction that Scripture simply does not provide adequate material to assert the Spirit's eternal procession from the Son, so that a reverent agnosticism is the best attitude. All we can definitely affirm, Dabney says, is an economic mission of the Spirit from the Son as Messiah to the church, in the administration of salvation, rooted in the Spirit's committal of his 'saving influence' to the Son. There is Scripture proof of this, but not of an eternal procession from the Son in the ontological Trinity.[12]

---

[11] Dabney, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (r.p., Grand Rapids, 1972), pp. 198-9.

[12] The Northern American Baptist, Augustus H. Strong (1836-1921), also rejects the *Filioque* in his *Systematic Theology* (r.p., London, 1981), but in a very perfunctory manner: 'The Greek church holds that the Spirit proceeds from the Father only; the Latin church, that the Spirit proceeds both from the Father and from the Son. The true formula is: The Spirit proceeds from the Father through or by (not "and") the Son.' (p. 323). Despite this brusque repudiation of Filioquism, the general patterns of Strong's Trinitarian thought remain Augustinian, notably in his overriding stress on the divine essence. The great Anglican evangelical bishop, J.C. Ryle (1816-1900), also expresses grave scepticism about the *Filioque* clause in his commentary on John 15:26, but Ryle's scepticism takes the form of questioning whether anyone can really know which side is right, East or West. He thinks that as far as human argument goes the Western position is probably better, but then dismisses the whole subject with, 'Let us take care that we ourselves have the

The Teaching of Scripture
What is the Scriptural basis for the Eastern view of the Trinity, in relation the Holy Spirit's eternal procession from the Father alone? Let me outline how I myself came to be persuaded from Scripture of the Eastern view. For many years I held the Western view out of a sort of geographical loyalty. Then, as critical reflection displaced loyalty, for a good number of years I sat uncomfortably on the fence. What finally brought me off it on the Eastern side? What it boiled down to was the connection between the ontological Trinity and the economic Trinity – that is, the eternal relationships between Father, Son and Holy Spirit, irrespective of creation and redemption, and those relationships as we see them played out in creation and redemption. Does the economic Trinity reflect and reveal the ontological Trinity? This had previously been for me a crucial question when I was pondering the debate over the eternal Sonship of Christ. In that debate, it seemed to me that if what we see in the incarnate Jesus is meaningfully to constitute divine revelation, a genuine revealing of what God is really like, then the filial relationship, the filial communion, between Jesus and his heavenly Father must be an enfleshing of an eternal reality. Deny this, and the whole doctrine of the Trinity is undermined. The second Person of the Godhead ceases to be eternally Son, the first Person ceases to be eternally Father, and we are left with an economic Trinity which bears little or no relation to what God actually is in the depths of his being.

I eventually concluded that the same reasoning had to apply to the *Filioque* question. The relationships between Father, Son and Holy Spirit which we see in incarnation and redemption must reflect and reveal the ontological Trinity. So, what do we see? One of the traditional Western arguments for the *Filioque* was that, in the economy of salvation, Christ bestows the Holy Spirit on his disciples. The Spirit flows from Christ, not just from the Father. Therefore, the argument ran, in the ontological Trinity, the Son must be equal with the Father as a common source of the Spirit. But surely, I thought, in the New Testament Christ bestows the Holy Spirit on his church for a particular reason: namely, that as Head of the church, the Father has first bestowed the Spirit on Christ. It is not a case of a common source; it is a case of the Spirit flowing from the Father to the Son. I thought of the Father's bestowal of the Spirit on Christ at his baptism. I recalled the old Nicene retort to the Arians: 'If you wish to see the

Holy Spirit in our hearts; and when we die we shall know all about the point in dispute' (*Expository Thoughts on John's Gospel,* r.p., Welwyn, 1977, vol. 3, p. 128).

Trinity, go to the river Jordan.' That made sense in Eastern terms: one goes to the Jordan and sees the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father to the Son. But how did this make sense in Western terms? Then I thought of how this came across still more strongly in Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost: 'therefore, Jesus being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he poured out this which you see and hear' (Acts 2:33). Here was the same pattern of movement: the Holy Spirit flowing from Father to Son, then overflowing from the Son to the church. Surely, I thought, the Western appeal to the economic Trinity to defend the *Filioque* clause is suicidal. It proves the opposite. It establishes the Eastern view.

I then looked afresh at the classic text over which East and West had fought for centuries, John 15:26: 'When the Paraclete comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will testify of me.' The East has constantly pointed out that a procession of the Spirit from the Father is here clearly spoken of, but not from the Son – 'the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father'. The Western counter-argument was that Jesus also says that the Holy Spirit is he 'whom I shall send to you'. Ergo, Father and Son are a common source. But was that what the text said? I looked again. Jesus said of the Spirit, 'whom I shall send to you from the Father'. Not, 'whom I shall send to you from myself', or 'from us', but 'from the Father'. So again, there was this pattern of movement: the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father to the Son, and then from the Son to us. Christ sends us the Spirit from the Father.

Next I considered the traditional Western argument that the New Testament titles 'Spirit of Christ' and 'Spirit of the Son' proved that the Son was a common source of the Spirit together with the Father. In the light of what I had already seen, these phrases seemed to me to prove nothing of the sort. Surely the Holy Spirit could very properly be called 'Spirit of Christ' and 'Spirit of the Son' because the Spirit rested on the Son, abiding in him. I reflected that there were two ways in which one thing could belong to another: by original possession and by being bestowed. If I earn a fortune by hard work, the fortune is mine by original possession. If I marry, that fortune is now my wife's too – really and truly hers, but by being bestowed in the marriage bond. If the economic Trinity is truly grounded in the ontological Trinity, could we not say that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father by original possession, and the Spirit of the Son by an eternal proceeding of the Spirit to the Son from the Father, so that from all eternity the Spirit rests on the Son and abides in him – that the Son is the eternal abode, the timeless holy temple, of his Father's Spirit?

And by taking flesh in the incarnation, the Son has now sanctified humanity in himself to be the Spirit's earthly temple. I perused some Eastern writings and found, to my amazement, these hesitant thoughts of mine set forth by Eastern thinkers. For instance, I read this in John of Damascus' *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*:

> We must contemplate him [the Spirit] as an essential power, existing in his own proper and peculiar subsistence, proceeding from the Father and resting in the Logos [the eternal Son], and showing forth the Logos, capable of disjunction neither from God in whom he exists, nor from the Logos whose companion he is.[13]

And this in Photius' *Treatise on the Mystagogia of the Holy Spirit*:

> The true prophet of the Word [John the Baptist] cried out, 'I saw the Spirit descending as a dove and abiding on him' (John 1:32). The Spirit, coming down from the Father, abides on the Son and in the Son (if you will accept this latter phrase).... The prophet Isaiah, the expounder of almost equal oracles, says of Christ's Person, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me' (Isa. 61:1). Now, having already heard that the famous Gregory and Zacharias [Gregory the Great, and Zacharias, pope 741-52] said, 'The Spirit abides in the Son' (for perhaps your lack of shame has dissolved into fear), why do you not in this respect instantly think of Paul's statement, 'the Spirit of the Son'?.... Is this not the proper meaning of the statement 'the Spirit of the Son'? I am convinced that the reason why Scripture says the Spirit is 'of the Son' is perfectly certain – and Scripture does not say it for the reasons you say it in your violent crime [of altering the Nicene creed]. Scripture says 'Spirit of the Son' because the Spirit is 'in the Son'. Which statement gives the meaning closest to the apostolic statement: 'The Spirit abides in the Son', or 'The Spirit proceeds from the Son'?[14]

Photius' argument from Isaiah 61 opened up another line of thought. The very name Christ, Messiah, meant the Anointed One – anointed with the Holy Spirit. Here was that movement again, of the Spirit from

---

[13] John of Damascus, *Exact Exposition* 1:7, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 9, p. 5.

[14] Photius, *Mystagogia* 84, tr. J.P. Farrell, *Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit*, Brookline, MA, 1987. Or as the Eastern liturgy for vespers on the feast of Pentecost says: 'Holy and immortal, Paraclete Spirit, proceeding from the Father and resting on the Son'. Seraphim of Sarov (1756-1833) puts it like this, 'Our Lord God the Holy Spirit, Who proceeds from the Father and rests in the Son and is sent into the world for the Son's sake' (from Seraphim's celebrated conversation with N.A. Motovilov).

the Father to Jesus. Did this not reflect something in the eternal relations of Father with Son? Could we not say that in some sense the Father has always, eternally, been anointing his Son with his Holy Spirit? This is really to say no more than John of Damascus and Photius say, that the Spirit eternally rests and abides in the Son, except that we are now describing this as 'anointing'. And when the Son became flesh, this relationship was then inserted into, and enacted within, the Son's humanity.[15]

I then examined what the West seemed to consider its most crushing rebuttal of the Eastern view: namely, that if the Son were not equal with the Father as source of the Spirit, it undermined the full deity of the Son. This seemed to me to be no argument at all. The Eastern riposte was valid: namely, that on such reasoning, it would also undermine the full deity of the Holy Spirit, if the Spirit were not equal with the Father as source of the Son. No-one accepted the latter; why should we accept the former? The West's anti-Arian enthusiasm to assert the Son's equality with the Father had unwittingly led to an argument which, if accepted, led logically to the downgrading of the Spirit to a second-class member of the Godhead. According to the Western view, the Son's equality with the Father means equality in spirating the Holy Spirit; indeed, the Son's spiration of the Holy Spirit proves his equality with the Father; but no such considerations (it seemed) applied to the Spirit himself in his relationship with the Father. He was not equal with the Father in begetting the Son; therefore one could not prove the Spirit's equality with the Father by pointing to any shared role in the Son's generation. How then could one argue (as the West did) that the Son's equality with the Father demanded that the Son be a common source of the Spirit when the Spirit's equality with the Father – for the Spirit too is truly God – did not demand that he be a common source of the Son? The whole argument self-destructed in futile inconsistency. If taken seriously, the Western view could lead only to a denial of the Spirit's equality with the Father, undermining the Spirit's deity: the very crime the East was accused of perpetrating against the Son! The Western pot was calling the Eastern kettle black.

With this, as it seemed (and still seems) to me, the Eastern case is complete. Scripture points positively to an eternal procession of the

---

[15] I do not mean that at Christ's baptism the Spirit anointed him as God. In the river Jordan, it was as man that Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit. This is the primary reference of the title 'Christ'. I am suggesting that Jesus' anointing as man and Messiah is an 'enfleshing' of the eternal resting and abiding of the Spirit in and upon the eternal Son within the Trinity.

Holy Spirit from the Father, but not from the Son too. Still further, it points to a procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father to the Son, so that the Spirit eternally rests on the Son and eternally abides in him, shining forth from him. These eternal relationships within the ontological Trinity are then fleshed out in the economy of salvation – grafted into human being and life through the incarnation of the Son. The Holy Spirit proceeds economically from the Son as Messiah to the church, but only because the same Spirit has proceeded first from the Father to the Son – both economically and ontologically.

Practical Implications?
Everyone these days wants to know what practical difference a doctrine makes. I distrust an overemphasis on this tendency as human-centred. There are probably all kinds of subtle long-term differences which believing a doctrine has on us; we cannot necessarily see what they are at the time, if ever. If we are always hastening to ask, 'How will this doctrine edify us?' or 'How does this affect our outlook in life, society, politics, art?', we open ourselves to the serious danger of losing our passion for truth itself. Our real centre of interest has become humankind and his world; we are concerned about divine truth only so far as it has a human interest. Or that is the peril. A sad day has come for the church when the fact that a doctrine is true is no longer a good enough reason to believe it, or not the most relevant reason. Perhaps our motto – not exclusively, but more often – should be, 'Make sure you believe the truth, and let consequences look after themselves.'

Still, one cannot deny that it is an interesting question: what are the differences in practice which are produced by the Eastern and Western views on the *Filioque* ? To be honest, I am not entirely sure. For me it was always genuinely a question of truth – which view was true? – rather than a question of practice. I wanted to know what this Trinity whom I worshipped was like ('my Trinity', as Gregory of Nazianzus said). As for practical consequences, sweeping claims have certainly been made by both East and West, each attributing all that it finds most vile in the other's piety and practice to its acceptance or rejection of the *Filioque* clause. I have yet to be persuaded that these claims have, on the whole, been anything but alarmist propaganda – from both sides. However, let us look for a moment at a cluster of Western claims. The most common, repeated *ad infinitum*, most recently in Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology*, is that the Eastern rejection of the *Filioque* clause 'breaks the bond' between the Son and the Holy Spirit, leaving the Spirit as a sort of

free-floating entity, and thus encouraging a non-Christ-centred mysticism.[16]

I have never been convinced that this style of polemic does much service to theology. Ironically, the accusation itself bowls a pyrotechnic googly at fundamental Trinitarian doctrine, and incidentally reveals an unfortunate absence of acquaintance with Eastern spirituality (which, admittedly, seems almost universal among us Westerners, especially Protestants). First, it sets up a theological 'straw man' which one cannot help thinking is authentically strange coming from the champions of Western 'essence-is-everything' Trinitarianism. The charge is that a denial of the Spirit's procession from the Son breaks the bond between Son and Spirit. But are not the Son and the Holy Spirit one God? Do they not possess the self-same divine essence? There is indeed only one divine essence, communicated in all its absolute fullness and numerical oneness by the Father to both the Son and the Holy Spirit. So how has any bond between Son and Spirit been broken by the Eastern view? Son and Spirit are united by the closest bond conceivable, the ontological bond of being the same God. Just as the Father is the same in essence (*homoousios*) as the Son, and the same in essence as the Spirit, so the Son and Holy Spirit are the same in essence as each other. Indivisible numerical oneness of essence between Son and Spirit – here is a bond which, for deep and literally ·'essential' unity of being, infinitely transcends anything in the created realm.

Furthermore, it misrepresents the Eastern view to think that it leaves the Holy Spirit and the Son unrelated as Persons in their specific personhood (putting aside their complete ontological unity of essence). As far as their peculiar personal relationship is concerned, the Spirit rests upon and abides in the Son; or in John of Damascus' phrase, the Spirit is the Son's eternal companion. It may suit Western polemics to picture the East as having the Son fly off from the Father in one direction, and the Spirit in the opposite direction as fast as his wings will carry him; but you do not need a degree in Freudian or Jungian psychology to suspect that that says rather more about a Western imagination in wish-fulfilment mode than it does about actual Eastern theology.

As for non-Christ-centred mysticism, it ought to be a well-known fact that Eastern 'mysticism' has always been so Christ-centred that a better accusation might be a tendency to downplay the Father. At the heart of Eastern mysticism, such as it is (the term being nefariously nebulous), lies the 'Jesus prayer' – 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' The prayer should not be uttered

---

[16] Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Leicester, 1994), pp. 246-7.

mindlessly, but with an intense and loving concentration on what each word means – *i.e.* it presupposes a sound knowledge both of the Gospels and of theology. We Westerners (especially we Reformed) may indeed be unhappy with various aspects of this Eastern practice of the Jesus prayer, but it seems massively untrue and unjust to stigmatise the 'mysticism' of which it is the heart as somehow 'non-Christ-centred'.[17] And has not mysticism flourished extensively also in both the Roman Catholic and the Protestant West? Why did Filioquism not prevent it? It is arguable that the real mystical trap actually lies in a preoccupation with 'the one Godhead' behind or even beyond the Trinitarian Persons, a mysticism of the divine essence, such as we do indeed find in great Western mystics like Meister Eckhart. This is something no Easterner would dream of; it is ruled out by the overwhelmingly Person-oriented structure of Eastern Trinitarianism.

As for Eastern spirituality in general, my reading of Eastern devotional literature and my experience of meeting Orthodox folk do not lead me to believe that the Holy Spirit acts as a competitive rival to Christ in their piety (more a problem for Western 'Holiness movements', Pentecostalism, and charismaticism, I would have thought). There is a distinctive flavour and ambience in Orthodox spirituality; but it is hard to articulate precisely what forms it. My strongest impression is that it revolves around a more vividly pervasive sense of the deity of Christ than is usual in Western spirituality, accompanied by a deep reverence for his Person untouched by the gushing sentimental feeling so often encountered among us. How this relates to the Eastern rejection of the *Filioque* clause is not presently apparent to me.

And so we could go on. But it would probably turn into a slanging match. And I would probably have to concede that I am almost as unimpressed, broadly speaking, with Eastern arguments about all the horrors that flowed forth in the West through its Filioquism, although I

---

[17] Besides, such accusations sound a bit Monty Pythonesque in the mouth of Wayne Grudem, well known for his own espousal of precisely that kind of 'charismatic' pneumatology which has left the church defenceless against the 'Toronto Blessing' – an apotheosis of Christless mysticism, if ever there was one. Western Filioquism did not stop that. But just think what anti-charismatic Filioquists would have said if the Toronto Blessing had originated within Eastern Orthodoxy! 'There you are, the fruit of denying the *Filioque* clause.' Alas, it originated resolutely in the West, infecting most Western churches, including Rome, but leaving Orthodoxy comparatively unscathed.

incline to feel in certain moods that there may be slightly more to the Eastern case in this respect – see below.

Let us be positive. Perhaps I can best and most fruitfully answer the question about the practical consequences of the Eastern view by sketching two differences it seems to have made to me since adopting it.

First, and generally, embracing the Eastern view has led to a renewed emphasis on the concrete reality and individuality of the three Persons of the Trinity in my theology and spirituality. I have acquired a new instinctive tendency to see the activity of all three Persons in every area of the divine economy – creation, providence, incarnation and redemption. I shudder when I see Western systematic theologies discussing 'God' as an abstract unity for reams of pages – the existence of 'God', the nature of 'God', the attributes of 'God' – before finally arriving at a (sometimes brief) consideration of the fact that this God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Then, when one passes on to consider creation, providence, ethics, we are back to 'God' again. What has become of 'my Trinity' in all this? Is my God not Father, Son and Holy Spirit when I discuss his existence, his nature, his attributes, his creation, his providence, his moral values?[18] Ingrained in the Western doctrinal psyche seems a tendency to conceptualise these things, and interpret their significance, in terms of God's oneness – *e.g.* most strikingly, God in relation to ethics and moral values ('rarely rises above a moral monarchy', as Jürgen Moltmann commented on the Western attitude to God and morality).[19] This may well flow from the Augustinian preoccupation with the 'one essence'. Its drift, I fear, is to dislodge the doctrine of the Trinity from its proper centrality both for theology and for spirituality.[20] I

[18] Compare this with John of Damascus' *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith.* His opening treatment of God's incomprehensibility, unutterability, existence, nature and unity (1:1-5) are permeated by Trinitarian references and thinking. Book 1: 6-10, where John deals explicitly with the Trinity, are twice as long as the first five chapters.

[19] Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (London, 1974), p. 236.

[20] I am conscious that Augustine himself tried to find 'footsteps of the Trinity' in triadic patterns which he discerned in the created order. But his famous examples – understanding, memory and will in the human soul, and the lover, the beloved and love – have themselves an inbuilt 'oneness' ethos. Understanding, memory and will are the threefold psychological activity of a single person. The love that unites lover and beloved is not a person, but an internal disposition within the person of the lover and the person of the

sometimes think that the Eastern observation may be right: popular Western piety has powerful Sabellian modalistic tendencies, evidenced by the way many evangelical folk confuse the Persons of the Trinity in their prayers, thanking the Father for dying for us and the Son for sending himself. Is this perhaps the long-term fruit of an Augustinian fixation on the one single simple divine essence? I am not sure. But I do testify that I feel far freer of that tendency now than I ever did before.

Secondly, and strangely, the Eastern view has ushered me into a deeper appreciation of the Son as the one through whom the Holy Spirit comes to believers – the Son as 'Spirit-bestower'. Somehow, when I held the Western view, I simply bracketed the Son with the Father as the one source of the Spirit – Father and Son shimmering and blending into one (theologically, collapsing back into the divine essence), so that I had no real or vital sense of the Son as a distinct agent in the Spirit's bestowal. But now, having adopted the Eastern view, I see the Son as distinct from the Father in the giving of the Spirit, in that the Holy Spirit flows to us ultimately from the Father as fountain, but through the Son as the Father's medium and channel. So the distinct place of the Son in the Spirit's bestowal has been impressed on my mind and my prayers. O Christ, eternal Son of the eternal Father, give me to share in your Father's Spirit!

Yes, I think it is time for us to do what the Reformers failed to do, and re-examine the *Filioque* clause. It would be a betrayal of the Reformation if Protestant tradition forbade us to do this, or anathematised those who tried.

---

beloved (a perilous thought, when one considers that Augustine regarded the Holy Spirit as the love which united Father and Son: evidence, arguably, of how Filioquism tends to downgrade the Spirit).

REVIEWS
Text and Theology: Studies in Honour of Prof. Dr. Theol. Magne Saebø
Edited by Tangberg Verbum, Oslo, 1994; 381pp., n.p.; ISBN 82 543 0647 8

This is a collection of twenty-one studies in honour of Dr. Saebø, Professor of Old Testament at the Norwegian School of Theology, Oslo, by colleagues, former students and four non-Scandinavians (including R.E. Clements). A number of the essays are in English and German; those in Norwegian have an English or German summary.

The title of the volume acknowledges Dr. Saebø's interest in theology as well as Old Testament, and consequently, while a number of articles are on technical Old Testament topics *(e.g.* Jörg Jeremias, Hosea's influence on Jeremiah; H. Barstad, Akkadian loan-words in Isaiah 40-55), others are of broader interest (*e.g.* K. Berge's evaluation of C. Westermann's promotion of the 'blessing' as a key category in Old Testament theology), and indeed other areas of theology are also represented. O. Skarsaune's well-documented article 'Kodeks of kanon' (Codex and canon) makes an interesting correlation between the codex form of the Christian Old Testament and the popularization of the 'larger' canon. Two articles are in the area of Jewish-Christian theology and dialogue (one on translating the New Testament into Hebrew, by O. Chr. M. Kvarme, which makes important general points about translating the Bible). And there is an interesting account, by D. Rian, of the 'conversion' of S. Mowinckel from historian to theologian, indicating how his work on the Old Testament was affected by this.

The volume is a warm tribute to the scholar who is honoured, and also contains a number of articles which make valuable contribution in their own right to the study of theology

Gordon McConville, Wycliffe Hall, Oxford

Letters of Samuel Rutherford
Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, r.p. 1996; 206pp., £2.50; ISBN 0 85151 163 5

Here we have a selection comprising 69 of the 365 letters brought together in Andrew Bonar's 1891 edition of Rutherford's *Letters*. From the first edition (Rotterdam, 1664, within three years of his death) until 1891 no less than 29 editions appeared. The 1891 edition has

been through several reprints. These numerous editions testify to the esteem with which the *Letters* have been held through many generations. Those responsible for the selection have given us a well-balanced collection: letters in chronological order from different periods in Rutherford's life, to the wide variety of folk with whom he corresponded, individuals, young and old, ministerial colleagues, fellow sufferers for the truth, ordinary people, nobility, and also letters addressed to groups. As in Bonar's edition, the majority are from the 1636-38 period when Rutherford had been banished to Aberdeen because of his defence of Presbyterianism and non-conformity to Episcopacy. His 'dumb Sabbaths' there greatly grieved him but through his letters he ministered to many.

In the 1891 edition a brief biographical sketch of the person addressed is given, where the information was available. In this edition brief but helpful notes on the correspondents are collected at the end of the volume, with a helpful outline of Rutherford's life.

Rutherford was a scholar and a profound theologian. His learning and scholarship were motivated by the knowledge of God in his soul. His scholarship was recognised beyond Scotland. More than one university in Holland was anxious to have his services. His ability showed itself in a special way in his participation in the Westminster Assembly of Divines. In matters of theology, church order and church/state relationship he did not hesitate to engage in controversy and we see that also in his letters. He needed a great deal of persuasion to accept appointment to the chair of Divinity at St Andrews in 1638, not because he despised learning but because he was at heart a pastor. In his letters we meet particularly with the pastor.

When he was pastor in Anwoth it was said of him that 'He is *always* praying, *always* preaching, *always* visiting the sick, *always* catechising, *always* writing and studying.' (He is said to have risen at 3.00 a.m. each day.) Wherever he is, whatever his circumstances, to whomsoever he is writing he is yearning for Christ, pouring out his love for Christ. He welcomes persecution and trials of all sorts if only they bring Christ with them. His letters are full of Scripture and he obviously expected those to whom he wrote to be familiar with Scripture also. His use of Scripture may at times seem strange and his allusions obscure, but what is not obvious at first will become clear if we stop to ponder.

Rutherford's English style, figurative language and use of Scottish and old English words and phrases, though undoubtedly presenting problems for some, should not put prospective readers off. Bonar in his day recognised the language problem. His 1891 edition has a 12-page glossary. However, most readers will require only limited help.

Nevertheless, if a reprint is contemplated, a glossary, not necessarily as long as Bonar's, would be of real value.

A.C. Boyd, Free Church College, Edinburgh

God and Freedom: Essays in Historical and Systematic Theology
Edited by Colin E. Gunton
T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1995; 137pp., £16.95; ISBN 0 567 09725 0

The question of freedom is never far from the centre of modern theology. It dominates the contemporary intellectual landscape, affecting not only our understanding of human nature and human nature in relation to God, but also a variety of modern doctrines of God. Yet the idea of freedom is seldom discussed analytically or critically in theological literature. What it is and what it entails is far too commonly just assumed, whether in the form of the social freedom of the many varieties of liberation theology, or of the existential freedom more common to modern Protestant and Catholic thought.

This book of essays, which is loosely arranged around the theme of freedom, goes some way towards plugging this hole in scholarship. Its main contribution, arguably, is to help to show how multi-faceted the question is. There are contributions on everything from Milton on freedom of expression (Brian Horne) to the problem of grace and freedom (Stewart Sutherland), a treatment of Dorothy L. Sayers on Dante (Ann Loades), a study of Paul (Francis Watson), together with wide-ranging essays on divine freedom (Alistair McFadyen) and on freedom and the *imago Dei* (Christoph Schwöbel). The last three of these are of special interest. Watson attempts what has now become for New Testament scholarship generally a rare move into theology on the basis of recent developments in the exegesis of Paul on law and gospel; McFadyen argues that out of the divine freedom, freedom is given to what is other; and Schwöbel presents the outline of a comprehensive theological vision that merits more sustained development in a complete dogmatics. In addition to all of this, Colin Gunton supplies an introduction and a stimulating, concluding essay.

The list of contributors is impressive, and the standards of scholarship are high. The book is accessible in its approach, and takes up questions of culture as well as theological matters. Nevertheless, as is often the case with such volumes, the reader can be left with a sense of disappointment with this book. It is rather diffuse in its focus, saying much about specialist areas of interest and too little concerning what are really the core issues for anyone wishing a

grounding in the theological aspects of freedom. Specialists will certainly welcome particular contributions, and those undertaking research in the general area would find much in the book that is very helpful, but a better basic orientation to the central issues can be found elsewhere. For this, I would myself recommend selected essays by the Catholic theologian Walter Kasper, in his book *Theology and Church*.

Gary D. Badcock, University of Edinburgh

From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Main Themes of the Pentateuch
T. Desmond Alexander
Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 1995; xxv + 227pp., n.p.; ISBN 0 85364 647 3

Alexander's stated aims are to a) focus on the actual content of the Pentateuch as it has been received, rather than on hypothetical sources, b) draw on the best insights of recent research into Hebrew narrative techniques regarding the meaning of the text, and c) be as straightforward as possible in presentation, without being non-academic in substance. In these objectives, he is clearly successful, although a price has necessarily been paid. Thus, whilst he avoids the danger of over-concern with issues of authorship, one might consider the one sentence on this matter, which merely notes that there are differing views, to be a corresponding under-emphasis. Likewise, the simple and highly readable presentation is sometimes achieved by passing over substantial areas of scholarly debate without comment, or presenting the author's own view as though it were not disputed. Nevertheless, it is to no small extent due to these 'failings' that it is so successful in providing a well-informed, wide-ranging, and highly readable introduction to the whole of the Pentateuch. Of particular value is the book's broad focus whereby all major aspects of the Pentateuch are addressed, including both narrative and law, and including significant treatments of such topics as the genealogies in Genesis, the tabernacle and holiness.

In a brief introductory chapter, Alexander argues that the Pentateuch, in its present form, should be seen to be a unified work, both in its narrative plot and in its theology. This is followed by fifteen chapters which helpfully divide the Pentateuch into themes that are broadly but not rigidly in the order of the text itself. Thus, for instance, the three chapters on Leviticus are entitled 'Be holy', 'The sacrificial system', and 'Clean and unclean foods' respectively. The concluding chapter summarises the plot and themes of the Pentateuch in the light

of the preceding discussions, focusing on the function of Israel vis-à-vis the nations, or, more specifically, Israel as a light to the nations, and a royal descendant of Judah as the mediator of future blessings to the nations. Alexander finishes by noting that the Pentateuch is also ordered towards the future, since key promises to Abraham remain largely unfulfilled by the end of Deuteronomy. Each chapter is broken up by helpful subheadings, including a one-paragraph summary of the chapter at the beginning and a 'New Testament Connections' section at the end. As a thematic and theological introduction to the content of the Pentateuch, this book is highly recommended.

Edward D. Herbert, Glasgow Bible College

The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann
Richard Bauckham
T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1995; 276pp., £12.95; ISBN 0 567 29277 0

The author is an acknowledged leader in presenting and expounding Moltmann to the theology-reading public. In this book he builds on his earlier work, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making* (1987). He revisits the earlier period of Moltmann's work (to 1978) by way of review and comprehensively examines the period up to 1993. The author makes it clear that his aim in writing the earlier book was to explain influences upon Moltmann, to analyse his thought and to expound systematically the central ideas of his theology. Here, however, he wishes to do that and more: he intends to engage also in evaluation and criticism. However, he concedes from the beginning that the overall evaluation is going to be very positive. This explains why many readers will be disappointed. Criticism is not so slight as to be tokenist but nor is it particularly sustained. This means that Moltmann remains insufficiently tested in the crucible in this country. Some have detected in Moltmann's latest work a degree of romanticism. There seems a fine line between his eco-theology and a sentimental view of nature and humanity. This book would have been a good place to raise critically the underlying philosophy and not just the weaknesses of detail in this development. At the same time Richard Bauckham can offer surprising and useful criticism as, for instance, on Moltmann's view of the *Filioque* and the notion of the Spirit as female.

Most of the book consists of sympathetic, careful and lucid exposition. In this regard it is first-class. Teachers of Moltmann's theology should be grateful. A prolific writer like Moltmann can receive only selective treatment in the classroom but this book places

a reliable and readable overview in the hands of students to read for themselves. It also focuses and thematises Moltmann's work for all who are interested in theology, including academics. The examination of particular themes such as political theology, ecclesiology and mysticism brings an integrated and stimulating angle to the subject.

The book aims to lead readers into study of the great German theologian's own writings and it should surely succeed. However, human nature being what it is, most first-timers will approach Moltmann through a secondary source. For English speaking readers, this is definitely the secondary source to choose. Simply do not go anywhere else.

Roy Kearsley, Glasgow Bible College

God the Almighty: Power, Wisdom, Holiness, Love
Donald G. Bloesch
Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 1995; 329pp., n.p.; ISBN 0 85364 593 0

This book, the third in his series of Christian foundations, is, according to its author, possibly the most important. It is clearly written with warmth, compassion and firmness. It provides good, up-to-date summaries of important debates. It can be bold (Gordon Clark on God as the creator of sin is dismissed as 'heterodox') while remaining conservative and attempting to import Scripture into the argument. Just occasionally this comes across as proof-texting (and one thinks of the texts that could be used against him), but there is a familiarity with biblical scholarship and biblical theology that often backs him up.

The main concern of the book is set out at p.16: the enemy is 'Platonism and Neoplatonism, which from my point of view stand in diametrical opposition to the insights and affirmations of biblical faith'. The confidence with which he engages with these systems of thought as they impact upon theology (particularly through 'the mystical tradition') is impressive and heartening.

There are places where readers of this *Bulletin* may think he has fudged the issue, as where he tries to say that he is neither Arminian nor Calvinist on the question of God's sole responsibility for individual salvation, but does this by painting Arminianism in very extreme terms which makes it look more like a deistic Pelagianism. His own position is closer, I would hazard, to that of the historical Arminius. The five pages given to the authority of Scripture do not fit in too well and one wishes he had simply referred the reader to his volume on Scripture.

But these are minor quibbles: there is an enticing section on God as having a spiritual *body* (with Luther, but also Tertullian?) and therefore being finite as well as infinite in his being (taking the best from Barth – and as so often with Barth it is very good). God's 'immutability' is reclassified in moral terms as 'steadfastness'. The mystical tradition is attacked for making God remote yet near by our likeness to him – a dangerous half-truth – thereby missing the point of the incarnation and the ministry of the Spirit. Process theologians are equally censured for leaving us with a concept of a God who has no more power than persuasion and has only a vague idea of what the future outcomes will be. He gives some approval to Tillich's view that our destiny is 'myself as given, formed by nature, history and myself'. The fear is of necessity but also of a lack of ultimate necessity or meaning to my existence; if everyone has free will, then none of us has very much.

There then follow chapters on God's power, wisdom, holiness and love. This approach to God's morality does well, much better than most on the first three, but stumbles (like so many before him) at the last. Forests have been shredded to define the relationship between *eros* and *agape*. The key for Bloesch seems to be that the latter is a gift which descends and makes *us* descend to act for the loveless which is more than compassion. Lutheran Romanticism is not a bad place to start, given the prevalence of other views, but the assassination of humanitarian love and the exaltation of Christian love leaves a taste of exclusiveness that is a little smug.

In the chapter on the Trinity there are some excellent summaries of modern positions. Bloesch is less strong on the nuances of the earlier theologians (especially Origen and most Greek theology which he accuses of subordinationism and of conceiving a causally related Trinity, the very thing the East criticises in Western theology). His own conclusions are that the three Persons are three agencies of relation in God, or three foci of consciousness with one overarching consciousness, and that the Father has existential but not ontological priority, in a concept of equality in which there is reciprocity such that the Son and the Spirit 'free' the Father. God, Bloesch thinks, is actually unipersonal (God can be envisaged as both one Person and three Persons) but relates himself to us as Father, Son and Spirit. 'The Father has a certain priority in that his creative action anticipates the creative and receptive activity of both Son and Spirit', but this does not help very much. We can thus pray to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; to pray only to the Father means risking figuring God to be patriarchal. This does not seem convincing ground for invoking the three. It is perhaps better to dwell on the prayers of the Bible: 'Come, Lord!' (1 Cor. 16:22) does not seem to be invoking the Holy Spirit.

The Fall is presented as an historical event, not for positive reasons, but on the grounds that the alternative is that sin is a necessary part of human being. The presentation of such alternatives is thought-provoking, but simplistic. There is occasional misrepresentation of modern spiritualities (*e.g.* the straw man of Greek Orthodox 'deification', and the attribution to Thomas of nature perfecting free will), an over-reliance on Reinhold Niebuhr's analyses (while alleging that Niebuhr did not always escape the Platonism he attacked, since he imported it in his 'Renaissance-flavoured Reformation theology'), a Lutheran coolness towards engagement – even though activism by Christians as what focuses on changing attitudes is right and well-put – if it includes our own. There is a lack of engagement with 'post-modernity' and even a refusal to acknowledge it as a separate phenomenon (merely as 'hypermodernity'). The last part of the book is engrossed with the struggle with North American Process theologians and the authors of *The Openness of God*, notably David Basinger.

My main criticism is of a formal nature: much of the book is more about anthropology rather than theology. Of course the two reflect each other. But it is not always clear that this is happening: something is said about the human condition, then something else is said about God. It also means that too much is attempted in one volume. However in a book of such richness, which is written from a committed standpoint, yet gives much to ponder from diverse sources of theology, and furthermore, analyses and discerns between them, perhaps that is a small fault.

Mark W. Elliott, Glasgow

Homosexuality and the Bible
Mark Bonnington and Bob Fyall
Grove Books, Cambridge, 1996; 28pp., £1.95; ISBN 1 85174 326 X

At first sight, a 28-page booklet might seem like an insult to the complex and emotive subject of homosexuality and the Bible. Already there are too many short sharp knee-jerk reactions, especially from evangelical preachers.

This little book, which is part of the Grove Biblical Series, is different. Written by Old Testament and New Testament specialists, in six short chapters the moral, ethical and theological issues are raised and considered with integrity and thoughtfulness. A variety of relevant scriptures are explored, not as isolated instructions, but as part of the biblical teaching on humanity. These include the place of

creation in sexuality, the call to holiness, the significance of Jesus' friendship with sinners and the texts in Paul.

Different views and conclusions from the traditional ones to which they come, are described briefly. Footnotes give scope for readers to follow up these and other writers.

The booklet serves not only to sketch traditional evangelical thinking on the subject, but to plead for pastoral care and support for those affected more directly by homosexuality. They conclude, 'Our discussion of gay people in the Church is not a call for a witch hunt but for the Christian community to help one another to "lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called" (Eph. 4:1).'

Fiona Barnard, St Andrews

The Australian Dictionary of Evangelical Biography
Edited by Brian Dickey
Evangelical History Association, Sydney, 1994; xxi+417pp., n.p.; ISBN 0 646 16625 5

Some might be forgiven if they expect a work by this title to be just a leaflet or a paperback at best. Surely the evangelical heritage of a two-hundred-year-old country which began as a penal colony and has experienced no major revival is none too illustrious. In fact the volume was written to begin to correct such perceptions, which are all too common. The evangelical component to Australian history has for too long been ignored, removed and, at times, slandered, even · by Australian historical scholarship. The editor and the Evangelical History Association, the sponsoring body, are convinced that 'the most powerful Christian tradition brought by the first white settlers to Australia in 1788, and a tradition which remained creative, energetic, dedicated to self-propagation and to the transformation of Australian society through the next two centuries, was evangelical Protestantism'.

The *Dictionary* covers almost 700 individuals who achieved some degree of distinction in Christian ministry, mission or influence in Australia. David Bebbington's definition of Evangelicalism is adopted (four characteristics: conversionism, activism, biblicism and crucicentrism), and only the dead are included. The broad range of denominations are covered (29% Anglican; 13% Presbyterian; 22% Methodist; 13% Baptist, *etc*). Of the entries, 251 were born in England and 219 in Australia. The next biggest country of origin is Scotland with 88 (13%). Only 11% are women and less than 10 are aboriginals, both of which reflect historical reality of the period in

view (if only official leadership is in focus) rather than a bias on the part of the editor.

While the editor saved himself many headaches by not including the living in the *Dictionary*, it must be said that the survey is thereby greatly diminished. The last fifty years are effectively excluded, which is fully a quarter of Australian history. This is compounded by the fact that in the first quarter there were very few Australians, let alone evangelical Christians. It is like painting a portrait of an individual only up to their chest. For example, one cannot gain an understanding of the Anglican church in Sydney, the most evangelical Anglican diocese in the world, without reference to Marcus Loane, Donald Robinson, Peter and Philip Jensen and John Chapman. The editor is of course aware of this shortcoming and admits that the 'volume contributes only residually to the study of contemporary Australian Christianity of the 1990s. It is very much an historical project.'

Nonetheless, the volume has many worthwhile stories to tell and does so in good style. Most of the biographies are 600 words or less, with a few extended pieces (Howard Mowll, R.B.S. Hammond, Florence Young, Samuel Marsden *etc.*). Indexes according to denominational affiliation and membership of missionary societies make it possible to trace the history of a particular group or organisation. The connection between Australia and the Chinese missions, the eagerness of the early Baptists and Methodists, the fortunes of the Presbyterians, and many other paths can be profitably followed.

One can read of Richard Johnson and Samuel Marsden, the first two chaplains to the colony, both of whom were influenced by William Wilberforce and Charles Simeon. In virtually unprecedented and very difficult ministries both achieved a great deal, but were not free from severe opposition and controversy. Johnson is noted not only for his gospel priorities but for his concern for the education of the children of the colony and with the welfare and evangelisation of the aborigines. Marsden was the more dynamic figure, whose influence extended to promoting mission to the Maoris in New Zealand.

The story of Florence Young also stands out. Young started a faith mission to the Pacific Islanders working in Queensland when she was thirty years of age, in part inspired by George Müller, the Queensland Kanaka Mission. She remained active in her direction and support for fifty years. Bible classes were conducted in Pidgin English and the first twenty-five years saw almost 2,500 converts baptised. When in 1901 the Immigration Control Act led to the islanders being sent home the mission adapted its strategy and supported the repatriated plantation workers in the task of church planting in their homelands.

The mission's objective was to 'bring into being churches which from the outset were self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating'.

D. Broughton Knox, the highly influential principal of Moore Theological College (1958-85), also appears. Knox was an early participant in the Tyndale Fellowship, along with F.F.Bruce, Stuart Barton Babbage and Douglas Johnson, and in his retirement, after four more years of lecturing, helped establish the George Whitefield College for the conservative Church of England in South Africa. It is also worth reading of John G. Ridley, the tireless twentieth-century Baptist itinerant evangelist and pastor, after whom the church in Sydney where this reviewer was a member is named.

The Australian Dictionary of Evangelical Biography is a valuable reference work. I hope it will supply the basis for further historical work which will accord evangelical Christianity in Australia its rightful place. The editor is a scholarly historian of Flinders University in Adelaide. As Owen Chadwick concludes in his review in the *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*: 'this is a serious contribution both to church history and to the general history of Australia'. For Australian Evangelicals today, it is of great value in enabling them to obey the injunction of Hebrews 13:7, 'Remember your former leaders... and imitate their faith'.

Brian Rosner, University of Aberdeen

Jesus And Israel – One Covenant Or Two?
David E. Holwerda
Apollos, Leicester, 1995; xi+193pp., £12.99; ISBN 85111 439 3

In this very well-written, readable and thoroughly Christian book, David Holwerda gives, in this reviewer's opinion, the right answer to the question posed in the title. He clearly shows that there is only one covenant and that is found in the person and work of Christ. The book is then, in part, a response to (a) dispensationalist theology which denies that the church is the Israel of God, and holds to two quite separate purposes for the church and Israel, and (b) certain liberal theologies which see Judaism as a valid response to God without the need, at present, for Jesus. Nevertheless, although Holwerda clearly rejects a two-covenant theology, he does argue from Romans 11 that 'Jewish Israel' still has a place in God's final purposes. However, although he believes that the restoration of the Jews to the Promised Land in the twentieth century is a good thing and is even used by God, he rejects the belief that this is a fulfilment of prophecy with theological implications.

His first chapter is a very helpful discussion of many and various attitudes that the church has had to Israel. So we get a useful summary of Justin Martyr's, Luther's and Calvin's, as well as Barthian and liberal Protestant, convictions about Israel.

By far the largest part of the book is an excellent study of the relationship of Jesus to Israel dealing with the questions of 'Identity', 'the Temple', 'Land', and 'Fulfilment'. He skilfully and movingly shows us, through illuminating biblical exposition, that Jesus *is* Israel and Israel *is* Jesus who gathers up in himself Israel's destiny. Preachers who want to show how the Old and New Testaments bear witness to one another as they bear witness to Jesus will find much to help them in these main central chapters of the book. Readers who believe in the essential unity of the Word of God will find much to strengthen and deepen their conviction.

Superficially this position would lead to the conclusion that Jewish Israel has no further unique place in God's purposes. However, Holwerda's fine exposition of Romans 11 will not allow him to reach this conclusion. He points out that the seeming final judgement on unbelieving Israel in the Gospels and Acts is only a judgement on that *present* generation. He notes that there may be hints in the gospels of a final restoration of Jewish Israel (*e.g.* Luke 21:20-24), but Romans is the only New Testament book that deals theologically with the *future* of Jewish Israel.

However, in spite of my high opinion of this book, I wonder whether Holwerda has really thought out the eschatological implication of his 'Jesus is Israel' theology. For if the death of Jesus means the death of Jewish Israel, will not the resurrection of Jesus guarantee the resurrection of the people who died? That resurrection cannot merely be the New Israel, because in the prophets it is the very people who are judged that are finally restored. God cannot let them go because in his predestinating will they were disobedient so that the world might be saved through the cross of Jesus. They were disobedient for our sake and this was God's purpose of mercy for Jew and Gentile alike. Surely it is the very incarnation and atonement in God's eternal purposes that lies behind Paul's theology in Romans 9-11. Further, since the whole of Scripture teaches us that nature as well as humankind is the creation of God and the object of redemption, it seems clear to this reviewer that if we grant that this representative people still have a unique destiny to fulfil this cannot finally be separated from that land that represents all lands in God's purposes. In short, just because the final fulfilment of prophecy in Jesus has a universal fulfilment in all the earth, that does not mean that particular fulfilment in one people and one *land* has lost its place in God's purposes.

This does not mean that there are two covenants, for both the destiny of New Israel and that of Jewish Israel cannot be understood apart from that one incarnation and atonement accomplished in Christ. As the new Israel bears conscious witness to the death and resurrection of Jesus, so Jewish Israel bears unconscious witness to the same Jesus in its long and mysterious story.

I certainly recommend this book, most of all because of its profound biblical insights into Israel's destiny as found in Christ alone. Whether the author has fully drawn out the eschatological implications of the relationship between the particular fulfilments of prophecy in a *continuing* Jewish Israel and the universal fulfilments in the whole earth I am not so confident.

Howard Taylor, St David's Knightswood and Glasgow Bible College

When God's Voice is Heard. Essays on Preaching Presented to Dick Lucas
Edited by Christopher Green and David Jackman
IVP, Leicester, 1995; 187pp., £9.99; ISBN 0 85110 656 0

This collection of essays was produced to mark Dick Lucas' 70th birthday. John Stott gives a personal tribute in his foreword, which is followed by Christopher Green's potted history of Dick's life and his work at St Helen's and the Proclamation Trust. The entire book is a fitting tribute to a man who has done much to encourage the growth of expository preaching.

The book is in three sections. These deal with the Word, the preacher and the audience. Peter Adam considers the preacher's authority in terms of the sufficiency of Scripture. The doctrine is defined, and its basis in Scripture shown. This is followed by an interesting discourse by John Woodhouse on 'the preacher and the living word'. One would like to hear him develop his thoughts on the Spirit's use of the Word as the essence of Christian experience: 'the fundamental Christian experience is experience of the Word of God.' The third contribution is Peter Jensen's advice on how to preach from the whole Bible.

Section two begins with a description by James Packer of the place of theology in the life and study of the Christian, especially the preacher. Then come articles by Roy Clements and Edmund Clowney on the preacher as 'prophet' and pastor respectively. They have telling comments on the spiritual experience and orientation required for gospel work.

Two chapters each on preaching for the church and for the world make up section three. Frank Retief uses lessons from people like

Ryle, McCheyne and Spurgeon in describing the character and work of a preacher who 'grows the church'. The type of changes required in a church are outlined by Philip Jensen, who relates them to preaching that is predictable (because faithful to the Word), and also unexpected (because such faithfulness cuts across the agendas of fallen – even Christian – human beings). Preaching in relation to the world is dealt with first by Don Carson. He takes pains to show how every preacher needs to understand the diversity and changes in society; but emphasises that a correct understanding comes only from a biblical perspective. John Chapman concludes with a study of evangelistic preaching. The book is concluded by David Jackman with a thought-provoking article on training for the ministry, and the centrality of the Word in that activity. One sees here the thoughts that influenced the development of the Cornhill training programme.

As one would expect in a collection of this kind there is a variety both of style and compactness of material. But it is well-constructed and presents its theme clearly (note the appropriate title). This is a book that integrates theology and practice in a satisfying way. There is nothing that a busy preacher would find unnecessary; and the preaching task receives theological direction and support. The passages dealing with the preacher's spiritual condition are searching. It is well referenced, allowing for further study.

Archibald N. McPhail, Campbell Street Church, Oban

The Problem of Polarization: An Approach based on the Writings of G.C. Berkouwer
Charles M. Cameron
Edwin Mellen Press, Lampeter, 1992; 597pp., n.p.; ISBN 0 7734 1633 1

In this exposition of the theology of G.C. Berkouwer, Dr Charles Cameron approaches the subject in a way which is quite distinctive in relation to previous studies in the work of Berkouwer. He does not attempt a systematic overview of Berkouwer, nor does he centre on one particular doctrine. Rather, he seeks to show that Berkouwer has been able to pioneer a biblical understanding of the relationship between God and humankind (the central feature of any theology) by avoiding the twin pitfalls of objectivism and subjectivism. Berkouwer has thus, argues Cameron, produced a balanced theology which is able to guide us through difficult waters without the polarisation and confrontation which have been the hallmark of so much theology over the centuries.

Cameron argues that much of this polarisation has taken place because of a faulty objectivity-subjectivity contrast based on the 'competition motif'. In developing this argument he deals with the Calvinist-Arminian debate by way of background before going on to discuss the pietism-scholasticism divide. The main focus of the work is to show how Berkouwer steered a course between existentialism on the one hand and scholasticism on the other, while retaining his evangelical identity.

This contrast between 'polar opposites' is the central, recurring feature of the book. For example, he contrasts humanism and existentialism, critical rationalism and conservative rationalism, and Reformed scholasticism and universalism. In each case Cameron demonstrates how Berkouwer avoided the dilemma and refused to be drawn into a stark polarisation. Berkouwer's approach, argues Cameron, excludes the way of authoritarianism, the way of rationalism and the way of mysticism. Those whose own reading of Berkouwer has already led them to the conclusion that Berkouwer stands mid-way between Barth and mainstream Evangelicalism, offering a challenge to both, will have that instinct verified and documented.

As the thesis is developed, the central doctrine of revelation is discussed. The debate on natural theology is well handled, and Cameron does helpfully draw out the differences between the position Berkouwer takes and that of others, including the careful distinction between Barth's denial not only of natural theology but also of general revelation and Berkouwer's affirmation of general revelation. A summary of the Barth-Brunner debate is helpfully included.

It is, however, in the extended discussion on revelation and Scripture that the most significant challenge to traditional evangelical orthodoxy is posed. Cameron discusses Berkouwer's contribution to the role of Scripture in evangelical theology and interacts with deism, biblicism and Christomonism. Having disposed of the deist position he then focuses on the difference between Barth on the one hand and with those he calls 'scholastics' or 'biblicists' on the other. In one sense this is the axis around which the whole book revolves, with the constant reminder that Berkouwer avoids such polarisation. In this respect Cameron's argument bears comparison with the Rogers-McKim hypothesis, although Rogers and McKim perhaps ended up a little closer to Barth than Cameron does. This section of the book does raise major issues, however, not least because of the categorisation of the 'Warfield' view as biblicist or scholastic and the suggestion that it is not truly evangelical.

At the end of the book, when one has ploughed through the argument and the 223 pages of notes, there remains a sneaking

opinion that one could take almost any theologian and demonstrate the way in which he was able to avoid the extremes on either side of his own position. To argue that this is signally and distinctively true of Berkouwer is a difficult case to argue although Cameron does so with real conviction. What is certainly true is that one understands Berkouwer far better at the end of the book because, whatever one makes of the overall argument, Cameron is most certainly a fair and judicious interpreter of the great Dutch theologian.

A.T.B. McGowan, Highland Theological Institute

Evangelizing the Culture of Modernity
H. Carrier
Orbis, Maryknoll, NY, 1993; 168pp., $18.95; ISBN 0 88344 898 X

Orbis Books has been a boon to theologians and theological teachers wishing to widen horizons beyond the narrow world of western critical philosophy. It has published works which engage with world-wide cultures and has claimed the leading edge of Catholic thought. Its writers have not been afraid of iconoclastic prophecy and the breaking of new ground. This book certainly falls within the Orbis orbit. But it is an unusually safe and predictable orbit. It begins with a careful appeal to Vatican II and, more dubiously, further back, to justify the very exercise of engaging culture. Paul John II's pronouncements pop up frequently. It gives the impression of a book written for internal consumption. The result is a message to the author's own context which has long been heard outside of it, a sense of the true but commonplace. Moreover, there seems to be little recognition of the concept of 'post-modern' culture, notwithstanding the argument as to whether it is just a phase of modern culture. A book as current as this should at least have noted the issue.

Much of what the author says, after the initial review of Vatican II, focuses on western culture. It is familiar stuff to Evangelicals, who have long had the incisive analysis of Os Guinness and others to wake them up if they were not yet fully comatose. However, it invites the interesting question of whether thinking evangelical lay people have, surprisingly, been better briefed culturally than their counterparts in Catholicism and whether Carrier's book is meant to bring his constituency up to speed. Prophetic glints do shine through in places, particularly where Carrier highlights the impersonal and inhuman results of a society striving for a fully rationalised and impartial system. He gives a chilling and accurate account of modern pluralism. It removes, he argues, all common culture and delivers power into the

hands of researchers, media and educators. The agnosticism of this group is more pronounced than that found amongst its consumers, the population as a whole, and the result is profound tensions in society. Carrier should be ringing alarm bells here for Catholics and Evangelicals alike.

Other sections deal with inculturation, addressing non-western cultures, and the relation of science and religion. There are many useful quotations and worthy observations but the whole is mainly a respectable Catholic version of issues which have been raised by evangelical apologists for a long time. However, if the author succeeds in taking the Catholic conservative forces with him down the road of cultural engagement, the resulting openness in world-wide Catholicism may bear welcome fruit in ongoing dialogues. One of the many worthwhile quotations summarises the book's message: 'a faith which does not become a culture is a faith which has not been fully received, not thoroughly thought through, not faithfully lived out.' John Paul II said it.

Roy Kearsley, Glasgow Bible College

The Principle of Mercy. Taking the Crucified People from the Cross
Jon Sobrino
Orbis, Maryknoll, NY, 1994; 199pp., $16.95; ISBN 0 88344 986 2

Jon Sobrino is one of the most influential and perceptive of the first-generation liberation theologians in Latin America. In this book he maintains his high standard of integrity, humanity and passion, once again to recall theology back to the task of proclamation and healing in the world. Moving from Spain, his country of birth, to live in El Salvador as a Jesuit novice did not in itself transform his outlook. In a valuable autobiographical cameo, Sobrino traces his awakening from 'dogmatic slumber'. This process began with seeing the poor, continued with the reading of Rahner and Moltmann, but became decisive only when he realised that he had to learn from the poor. Then he knew that he had to 'Salvadorize Rahner and Moltmann' rather than 'Rahnerize or Moltmannize the people of El Salvador'. The humility and challenge of this awakening breathe through the whole book.

The book begins with two challenges. First, it questions the 'triumphant naiveté' of western individualism which, contrary to its boasts, 'has not humanized anyone or become more human'. Second, theology can do its work only in the presence of the 30 million

179

starving people in the world today. This means that it must move from the principle of 'faith seeking understanding' to that of 'love seeking understanding'. If suffering constitutes the fundamental reality of our world then theology must be one of liberation. Sobrino works this out throughout the book, falling again and again upon the criterion of the 'principle of mercy' to test the church's thinking and doing. In the process he analyses 'the crucified reality of the third world' and applies it all to our standards of priesthood and solidarity. He succeeds in his aim to make mercy a rugged, as well as gentle, quality and he packs the book with incisive, critical observations which in a good sense are *without* mercy – to the complacent and the morally blind! There is no hiding place for quietism, Eurocentricity or super-spirituality.

Any traditional Christian can benefit richly from this work so long as it is recognised that the book aims to reach the parts we had rather not know about, rather than to provide a theology of everything. It is written from deep compassion for the poor and their unremitting, chronic and unrelieved situation. In Sobrino's view the time is long spent (500 years!) and it is the moment for change. Where might we find Christian theology in this crisis? Sobrino draws on Latin American experience but makes it powerfully familiar and relevant in a Europe where the number of poor is quickly growing. Moreover, every section is diffused with a practical spirituality and compassion. True, it could say more about the evangelical transformation of individuals that can release justice for the poor. But we have heard all that often enough and the poor (with whom Jesus was preoccupied) do not seem to profit so very much from it. Could plain disobedience here be why the 'spiritual' blessing Christians often seek is either withheld or transient? The reason why Evangelicals should read this Catholic liberation theologian is simple: if they do not take seriously the issues raised here, their generation, or the one that follows, may wake up one day and find Christianity almost extinct – blessings, hallelujahs and all.

Roy Kearsley, Glasgow Bible College