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EDITORIAL

'Beware the Papacy of the Pastor' was one of the warnings sounded by John Stott during this year's Keswick Convention. He maintained that too many people in the Church behave as though they believe 'not in the priesthood of all believers but in the papacy of all pastors'.¹

In a recent book on leadership and ministry,² Andrew Clarke has described the various models of leadership from the first-century Greco-Roman and Jewish society. However, because these models were based on 'social values of honour and status'³ the Christian community chose to speak of their leaders in terms of 'service or ministry'.⁴

The model of the pastor as a servant leader has become increasingly popular within the life of the church and even our own culture.⁵ In a society which is often suspicious of authoritarian leadership, the theme of the 'servant' in Isaiah and the ministry of Jesus who came 'not to be served but to serve' provides a paradigm of a ministry which is motivated, not by the love of power, but by the power of love. In Philippians 2, Paul reflects on the person and work of Christ, and challenges the church to 'look not to their own interests but to the interests of others'.

Philippians is ordinarily seen as reflecting a warm relationship between Paul and the congregation, marred only by some petty bickering. Some commentators give the impression that Paul is writing out of a deep affection for the church and that the congregation has been a source of constant joy to the Apostle.⁶ However, more recently a number of

¹ *Baptist Times*, No 7828 (August 3, 2000), p. 1

² Andrew D. Clarke, *Serve the Community of the Church: Christians as Leaders and Ministers* (Cambridge, 2000).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 249. Clarke even questions whether Paul was willing to use the term 'leadership' and concludes that 'not only is the word "leader" avoided by him, but he also eschews the associated concepts of leadership.' *Ibid.*, p. 250.

⁵ Wesley Carr, *Handbook of Pastoral Studies* (London, 1997), pp. 187-90; Ray S. Anderson, *The Soul of Ministry* (Louisville, Kentucky, 1997), pp. 197-204.

⁶ Robert C. Swift, 'The Theme and Structure of Philippians', *Biblica Sacra* 141 (1984), pp. 234-54. Loveday Alexander proposes that Philippians

scholars have suggested that conflict underlies much of the letter and that disunity is a major theme of the epistle. D. A. Black speaks of a church 'diseased by strife and self-interest',⁷ even amongst leaders such as Eudia and Syntyche.

Many of us live and minister in churches where believers have set up rival groups and anathematised each other. There are far too many broken fellowships, broken hearts and broken lives. The breakdown in pastoral relationships between ministers and their people indicates that the issues with which Paul grapples in this section of scripture are not peripheral to the needs of the church as it ministers in the 21st century. As well as providing an example to all believers to live in harmony and fellowship, this section provides a paradigm of ministry for pastors who are called to do 'nothing out of selfish ambition' but in their service to 'look to the interests of others'. As pastors follow the example of Christ in Philippians 2 they will demonstrate a 'model of kenotic leadership which leads... for the sake of love, and not for any more complicated inner motive to do with the satisfaction of the exercise of power itself'.⁸

Paul is using this Christological hymnic passage to encourage the attitude of 'not looking towards one's own interests' and in v. 7 he tells us that Christ 'did not consider equality with God as something to be grasped'. Like other words and phrases in this passage, the Greek word *harpagmos* has been variously interpreted although R. W. Hoover's interpretation of 'taking advantage' of something that one already possesses seems to have become the most common understanding of the word.⁹ Thus N. T. Wright concludes that the passage means that 'the one who, before becoming human, possessed divine equality did not regard that status as something to take advantage of, something to exploit, but

bears striking similarities to the type of ancient letter which may be described as a 'family letter' that had the purpose of strengthening relationships between the writer and the addressees. 'Hellenistic Letter Forms and the Structure of Philippians', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 37 (1989), pp. 87-101.

⁷ D. A. Black 'Paul and Christian Unity', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 28 (1985), pp. 299-308 cited in Davorlin Peterlin, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians in the Light of Disunity in the Church* (Leiden, 1995), p. 6.

⁸ Richard Holloway, *The Divine Risk* (London, 1990), p. xvi.

⁹ R. W. Hoover, 'The Harpagmos Enigma: A Philological Solution', *Harvard Theological Review* 64 (1971), pp. 95-119. See also N. T. Wright, *Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh, 1991), pp. 82-6.

instead interpreted it as a vocation to obedient humiliation and death'.¹⁰ Paul is suggesting that just as Christ did not consider that being God meant having your own way, getting what you want, so the pastor, the servant-leader, will see Christ-likeness as giving and spending yourself for the sake of others, in selfless and sacrificial love.

Yet so often the temptations of 'office' and 'ordination' can lead us to use and abuse our position in the life of the church, to push ourselves forward and to claim certain 'rights'. At times, our responsibility of expounding God's word makes us touchy and defensive when people disagree with us and we find ourselves tempted to defend ourselves at every turn, never considering the possibility that we might be in the wrong in the leadership which we are giving to the church. In his ministry, our Lord knew who he was and he must have been tempted to 'reveal' his glory but he chose to 'conceal' it and not allow himself to exploit his status for his own ends. Perhaps this is why, in an age when management and professional models of ministry are emphasised, that the more mundane aspects of pastoral ministry such as routine pastoral visitation are no longer viewed as being important. Eugene Peterson suggests that the majority of pastoral work is similar to 'cleaning out the barn, mucking out the stalls, spreading manure' and he insists that 'if we expected to ride a glistening black stallion in daily parades and then return to the barn where a lackey grooms our steed for us, we will be severely disappointed and end up being horribly resentful'.¹¹

Evangelicals have rightly stressed the importance of preaching in the life of pastoral ministry and drawn on the examples of men like Robert Murray McCheyne and Richard Baxter as preachers of the word of God. However, they have not always remembered the priority which such men gave to 'assiduous pastoral visiting' as McCheyne 'worked his parish with devotion and zeal, sustained by a profound sense of responsibility to Christ'.¹²

Paul goes on to speak of the humanity of Christ in his humility as he calls his people to a life of service and suffering. Ray Anderson suggests that the way of kenosis 'is not... a self-emptying in the form of a renunciation of the nature of God himself, but is a self-emptying precisely because self-renunciation is the very nature of God himself. Here, self-renunciation must be understood in a positive, and not a

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

¹¹ Eugene Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant* (Grand Rapids, 1992), p. 16.

¹² James M. Gordon, *Evangelical Spirituality* (London, 1991), pp 123-4.

negative sense.... It is actually the dynamic dimension of love as activity.'¹³

Whereas the classical kenotic interpretation of this verse suggests that the eternal logos emptied himself of all the attributes of deity that were incompatible with his full humanity, some recent interpretations of the phrase argue that Paul is using the terminology of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53:12 who 'poured himself out unto death' in his sacrificial service for others, thus indicating that 'in his self-emptying the Son of God is most fully divine'.¹⁴

One thing which is crystal clear from this passage is the emphasis that Paul places on the true humanity of Jesus and the words 'form', 'likeness' and 'appearance' are used to reiterate the fact that the pre-existent Christ in his incarnation fully identified himself with humankind.

In his ministry our Lord became vulnerable.¹⁵ He was open to being wounded physically, emotionally and spiritually without protecting himself. He allowed his inner self to be seen by others, without being hidden behind a shell of professionalism, control, skill and technique. Herrick comments 'the vision is of a Christ who hangs naked before us, unafraid to be naked and vulnerable because he stands naked before the Father's love... to follow such a Christ is to allow God to strip you, to let him make you vulnerable to his love in your ministry'.¹⁶

To enter into the paradigm of Christ's servanthood is to enter into pastoral relationships with people and risk rejection, pain and suffering. Any concept of professionalism in pastoral ministry which promotes detachment seems far removed from the one who weeps along with and suffers for those whom he loves. This is not to say that we ought to be *professional* in the way in which we go about our ministry but not *professional* in the sense that we remain distant from the life situations of our people. Yet so often, particularly in the past, views of ordination were modelled upon other professions in which people develop 'practitioner/client' models in which we deal with people in 'a trustworthy, competent, controlled and emotionally neutral way'.¹⁷

¹³ Ray S. Anderson, *Theological Foundations for Ministry* (Edinburgh, 1979), pp. 242-3.

¹⁴ Gunton, *Christ and Creation* (Carlisle, 1992), p. 84.

¹⁵ See Vanessa Herrick and Ivan Mann, *Jesus Wept: Reflections on Vulnerability in Leadership* (London, 1998).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

Herrick suggests that 'rather than [even speaking] of *being* professional' (in ministry) we ought to speak about 'professional *being*'.¹⁸

So much of contemporary life manifests a scramble for power, every bit as deadly as Goldings' description in *Lord of the Flies*. Power struggles are not unknown with the community of faith. Over against the love of power, the exalted Jesus sets the power of love.

If 'God is Christlike and in him there is no un-Christlikeness' then Philippians 2 reveals a God of Trinitarian love who 'is not closed to us, for he has come to share with us the deepest movement of his divine heart... to share the weakness and sorrow and affliction of others and to spend himself in going to their relief and in saving them'.¹⁹ This is the paradigm of pastoral ministry which will view the life of service as being seen in the vulnerability of the one who offers herself as a channel of love for the needs of others.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

¹⁹ Thomas F. Torrance, 'Service in Jesus Christ' in *Service in Christ: Essays Presented to Karl Barth on his 80th Birthday*, edited by James I. McCord and T. H. L. Parker (London, 1966), pp. 4-5.

EVANGELICAL CONVERSION, c. 1740-1850

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At some point in the late eighteenth century a girl named Grace, then about eighteen years old, went to live in the village of Downton, about seven miles south-east of Salisbury.¹ She stayed with her uncle, a man called Budden, who served as the Baptist minister there. 'Soon after', according to the narrative in *The Baptist Magazine*,

thro' the ministry of the word, she was convinced of the evil nature, and fatal consequences of sin; and of the necessity of an interest in Christ for salvation. She had heard a sermon, by which it appeared to her that there was no hope of her own salvation, nor scarcely of any beside. But a considerable time after, she heard another sermon, by which all the obstacles to salvation were removed, and she was enabled to commit her soul into the hands of Christ, and rely on him as her all-sufficient Saviour.²

In many ways, though brief, this is a classic account of conversion. The subject is a teenager, the agency is preaching and there is more than one stage in the process. Supremely, conviction of sin is followed by the release of commitment to Christ. The instance of Grace, who went on to marry a man named Poore and died in 1809, may stand as typical of the subject of this paper, evangelical conversion. The aim is to examine the nature of 'the great change' as it was experienced in the evangelical movement between the middle years of the eighteenth century and the middle of the nineteenth.

Much of the evidence will be drawn from a sample of reports of conversions. Three periodicals have been used as sources for the sample.

¹ This paper was first delivered in a seminar held at New College, Edinburgh, on 3 December 1996, under the auspices of the North Atlantic Missiology project, co-ordinated by the University of Cambridge, and supported by a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts. The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of The Pew Charitable Trusts.

² *The Baptist Magazine* (hereafter *BM*), November 1809, p. 457.

One is *The Evangelical Magazine*, a Calvinist journal that filled the gap left by *The Gospel Magazine*, which had folded in 1784. Though rather less doctrinally rigid, *The Evangelical Magazine* was still definitely Reformed. In this periodical, according to the first preface in 1793:

the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel are elucidated and confirmed, misrepresentations exposed, errors refuted, and the lives and experience of eminent Christians faithfully recorded.³

The descriptions of religious experience are what is chiefly useful. Nearly every month the magazine carried obituaries which standardly recorded the conversions of their subjects. Rather like the Missionary Society, later the London Missionary Society, founded two years later, the journal was interdenominational but dominated by Independents. It therefore provides evidence for many denominations, even including a few Wesleyans who, in the eyes of their obituarists, subsequently saw the error of their ways and embraced Reformed belief; but a large number of cases are drawn from the Independent body. The second periodical is *The Baptist Magazine*, the organ of the mainstream Particular Baptists who had been drawn into the evangelical movement. Most of the obituaries commemorate members of that denomination, with its Calvinist piety, but there is also a smattering of individuals from other branches of the movement. The earliest volumes of both periodicals were selected for study, 1793 and 1794 in the case of *The Evangelical Magazine* and 1809 and 1810 in that of *The Baptist Magazine*, in order to obtain a sample of conversions going back to the earliest days of the Evangelical Revival around 1740. With the aim of including cases from later in the period, the 1850 volumes of both periodicals have also been scrutinised. Consequently some subjects died as late as 1850 itself. In order to give a fuller overview of the movement, the first volume of *The General Baptist Repository*, published in 1822, was also examined. The General Baptists of the New Connexion, whose official journal this was, were as strongly Arminian as the Wesleyan Methodists. The sample consists of all the obituaries in these issues of the journals, even brief ones, so long as they contain reference to conversion. A number of obituaries, including an entry for the Queen Dowager in *The Evangelical Magazine* for 1850,⁴ could more properly be described as death notices. Others again – as many as forty-one in the issues of the magazines under scrutiny –

³ *The Evangelical Magazine* (hereafter *EM*), 1793, p. 2.

⁴ *EM*, January 1850, p. 29.

incorporate fuller biographical detail but no information about conversion. But to the obituaries have been added all the memoirs and biographical accounts inserted in the same volumes if their subjects fall within the period and if the narratives include mention of their conversions. The resulting sample consists of 140 cases of conversion.

The group provides reasonable coverage of the period. Ninety-one of the narratives record conversions that can confidently be assigned to a twenty-five year time band. Of these, 8% took place before 1750; 16% in the years 1750-75; 35% in 1776-1800; 33% in 1801-25 and 9% in 1826-50. Over two-thirds therefore fall in the half-century around 1800. The sample cannot, however, claim to give a fair representation of the evangelical movement overall. Although two obituaries in the magazine issues explored deal with men originally identified with the Scottish Secessionists, neither mentions its subject's conversion, and so no recorded instance in the sample comes from Scotland. There is, however, a previously published article on the converts of the Cambuslang revival of 1742 to which occasional reference will be made.⁵ Although many individuals had an Anglican background, only five cases are of those who were converted in the Church of England rather than away from it. Anglican conversion narratives are, in fact, difficult to obtain in bulk. *The Christian Observer*, the premier Evangelical Anglican magazine launched in 1802, does include obituaries, but its ambitions to be a national journal of record meant that its first issue recounted the deaths of those remarkable only for social rank, public distinction, suddenness of death or prolongation of life beyond a century.⁶ The great majority of the sample analysed here, furthermore, were Calvinists. Only 15% in fact, concern individuals reaching mature faith within an Arminian body. This bias, however, has its uses. The two chief existing studies of evangelical conversions in England during this period deal mainly with those professing an Arminian theology. Julia Werner considers one hundred Primitive Methodist converts of the first generation and Michael Watts analyses 670 conversions in the Dissenting denominations during the years 1780-1850.⁷ Watts' large sample might be expected to be

⁵ T.C. Smout, 'Born Again at Cambuslang: new evidence on popular religion and literacy in eighteenth-century Scotland', *Past & Present* 97 (1982).

⁶ *The Christian Observer*, January 1802, pp. 78-80.

⁷ Julia S. Werner, *The Primitive Methodist Connexion: its Background and Early History* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1984), pp. 155-7. Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters: Volume II: the Expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 49-80.

representative of evangelicals outside the Church of England, but in reality most cases are drawn from Methodist periodicals, a few from *The Baptist Magazine* and others from separately published biographies. Only sixty-eight of his 670 individuals are Calvinists, and a mere thirteen are Independents. Hence a fresh sample leaning heavily in the Calvinist direction may help to redress the balance. The two groups, the one examined by Watts and the one considered here, may be regarded as complementary.

The sources for this study suffer from serious disadvantages for our purpose. In the first place, there is the problem of distortion. The accounts of the deceased were written for edification, not for record. Some obituaries are even cast in homiletic form, with three practical applications enumerated at the end. The briefest of notices are deeply influenced by the expectations of the times. The descriptions concentrate on standard features, particularly signs of piety displayed in the last few days of life. Other elements of a modern obituary, especially employment, are commonly passed over in silence. Even the date of birth and age at death are frequently omitted. Narratives are often framed in terms of conventions going back to Puritan hagiography that literary scholars have studied in some detail.⁸ Conformity to scriptural archetypes, for example, is one recurring motif. Our purpose, however, entails, in so far as it is possible, going beyond the narrative to what lay behind it in human experience. There is a series of other difficulties. Articles were commonly written by ministers whose knowledge did not encompass any detailed information about the start of their subjects' Christian pilgrimage. The sample is skewed by the factor of who troubled to send in narratives to the magazines. The assiduous John Giles, minister of Eythorne Baptist Church in Kent, for instance, contributed all five entries to the August 1810 issue of *The Baptist Magazine*.⁹ Other accounts were sent in by relatives whose nearness to the deceased affects the perspective. A poignant description of the death of a fourteen-year-old girl from typhus in 1850, for example, was composed by her father, the Independent minister at Petworth in Sussex. Inevitably in his grief he dwelt on her 'lovely temper', passing over any misdemeanours that may

⁸ For example, Daniel B. Shea, Jr., *Spiritual Autobiography in Early America* (Princeton, N.J., 1968); Patricia Caldwell, *The Puritan Conversion Narrative: the Beginning of American Expression* (Cambridge, 1983).

⁹ *BM*, August 1810, pp. 430-34. Frank Buffard, *Kent and Sussex Baptist Associations* (Faversham, Kent, 1963), p. 72.

have marred her life.¹⁰ Perhaps above all the people commemorated in the magazines were disproportionately individuals of standing in their denominations, often ministers, their relations, or those in whom ministers confided. Ordinary sitters in the pews were by no means excluded – recent converts were a favoured category – but there was a tendency for *The Evangelical Magazine* and *The Baptist Magazine* to concentrate on more prominent figures. *The General Baptist Repository*, like its Methodist counterparts, was less selective in its coverage, but the overall effect is to make the sample contain a larger number of the core and a smaller number of the periphery of the congregations that made up the evangelical movement. Allowance must be made for all these distortions. Yet in one sense the very features that cause such problems constitute an advantage for the historian. These obituaries, with all their conventional phrases and personal viewpoints, reflect the real world of evangelical Dissent. In these accounts we peer through the window of the meeting house to witness its authentic life.

A further problem, however, lies in the sheer imprecision of the many accounts. Two adjacent obituaries from *The Baptist Magazine* illustrate the point. Of John Goffe, a deacon of the second Baptist church in Brighton who died in 1850, all we are told about his life before he was baptised and joined Shipston-on-Stour Baptist Church in 1810, is that he was called at an early age to know the Lord. What is the early age? How was he called? Why did it happen? Virtually the only thing we learn is that he did experience conversion. Again, of Hannah, the wife of Robert Ellis, Baptist minister at Sirhowy, Gwent, who died at thirty-five in 1850, the only information about her conversion is that she professed Christ when young. There is in this instance not even a baptismal date to provide guidance about chronology. With that very scanty knowledge we have perforce to be content.¹¹ The terminology can also suffer from vagueness. Sometimes it is unclear whether or not the writers intended to convey that their subjects had been converted by a particular stage in their experience. The difficulty is particularly apparent in the use of the phrase ‘religious impressions’. At times it appears to mean only a sense of spiritual anxiety, and in some cases the reader is told that the phase was transient. Thus a girl who later became Mrs Elizabeth Tracey of Barrow-upon-Soar, Leicestershire, attended a Methodist Sunday School and there received ‘serious impressions’, but thereafter took up the vanities of the

¹⁰ *EM*, October 1850, pp. 535-7.

¹¹ *BM*, August 1850, p. 501.

world such as card playing before she was soundly converted.¹² In other cases, however, the phrase seems to imply vital religion, especially when the word 'permanent' is added. There is considerable scope for misinterpretation here when the context does not clearly point one way or the other. There is a further problem with the Baptists. Commonly the obituarist gives a date for the subject's baptism after the person's conversion. It would be helpful to be able to take the one as a surrogate for the other, but that would lead to serious misrepresentation since there was frequently a gap between baptism and conversion. George Osborn, for example, who was to become an itinerant preacher, was converted as a young man in about 1760, but was not baptised until the age of seventy-seven, nearly half a century later. Although Osborn's is an extreme case – a consequence of his having remained an Independent until his last years – other recorded instances of delay prevent the historian from treating conversion and baptism as being necessarily close in time. Lack of detailed information in each of these respects, however, does not prevent the set of obituaries in the periodicals from being a rich source for our understanding of spirituality in the period. They enable us to construct something approaching a prosopography of conversion.

What was conversion at this time? According to George Redford, Independent minister at Angel Street, Worcester, writing near the end of the period in a booklet issued by the Religious Tract Society, and therefore enjoying interdenominational endorsement, conversion

is a change, or a turning about of our mind or heart, and signifies a reversing of our moral and religious state, a complete transformation of the character – from irreligion to piety, from sin to holiness, from unbelief to faith, from impenitence to contrition and confession, from the service of the world to the service of God, from uneasiness to peace, from fear to hope, from death to life.¹³

It is not surprising that so drastic a change often entailed a crisis. A typical illustration is found in the experience of Elizabeth, who later married William Nichols, pastor of North Collingham Baptist Church, Nottinghamshire. There was a prelude. Elizabeth's brother died of tuberculosis in 1808, when she was twenty-two years old, and 'she discovered the depravity of her heart'. She went to visit relatives living

¹² *GBR*, April 1822, p. 139.

¹³ George Redford, *The Great Change: a Treatise on Conversion* (London, (1844?)), p. 1.

ten miles away and there meditated on the Bible and other devotional writings. Then came the turning point:

But one day walking alone in the fields... she was favoured with such a discovery of the Love of God in the gift of his Son, and the love of Christ in dying for the redemption of sinners, as filled her soul with joy unspeakable, mingled with godly sorrow for her past sins, so that for some time she was unable to leave this highly favoured spot, concerning which the words of Jacob might be adopted, *Surely God is in this place*.¹⁴

The time was distinct; so, clearly, was the place. Although Elizabeth did not dare speak of her enlightenment for some while, it was the decisive event of her short life. She, too, died of tuberculosis only two years later. A crisis similar to Elizabeth's can be attributed to a particular juncture in life for as large a proportion as 45% of the sample of individuals whose conversions are recorded, and must have been passed through by many others for whom insufficient details are supplied. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries sudden conversions were common.

Yet a decisive turning point was not considered essential. Thomas Reader, for example, who subsequently became an Independent minister, was brought up in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, before the Evangelical Revival had made its impact on the Old Dissent, but the comment of his biographer, writing in 1794 when the revival was in full flood, is highly significant: 'We do not recollect to have heard whether Mr. R. had dated his conversion to any particular time...'.¹⁵ Such a remark demonstrates that a datable experience was by no means thought indispensable. Of the subjects of the case-histories studied here, only 8% are actually stated to have undergone a gradual conversion rather than reaching a crisis. Of the unnamed future wife of another Baptist Minister, John Stock, for example, it is said that 'so early and gradual was the work of grace upon her soul, that she could never refer to any particular period at which she was conscious of its commencement'.¹⁶ Frequently, as in this case, those who had received a religious upbringing fitted this mould. Thus the process was so indiscernible for William Stanger, of Tydd St Mary, Lincolnshire, who as the grandson of a General Baptist minister had been given careful Christian nurture, that he seems to have found it difficult to assess whether he was qualified for baptism and so to

¹⁴ *BM*, July 1810, p. 392.

¹⁵ *EM*, November 1794, p. 443.

¹⁶ *BM*, January 1850, p. 129.

have deferred the event until late in life.¹⁷ A religious education, this and other obituarists noted, made it natural for the spiritual life to evolve gradually. Nevertheless that awareness did not mean conversion was supposed to be avoidable on a by-road to heaven. The observation of the biographer of Thomas Reader is revealing in this respect too: the implication of remarking that he was unaware whether his subject dated his conversion to any particular time was that, even if Reader did not, he had been converted. Whether sudden or developmental, conversion was regarded as the obligatory entrance on the Christian life.

Before the great change, there had often been a period of profligacy. There is frequently an understandable lack of precision on this topic. A woman in Kent was said to have been 'worldly', a London artist to have been marked by 'folly and vanity'.¹⁸ More specifically a copperplate printer in the city is reported to have been 'gay and thoughtless, excessively fond of Cards, the Theatre and gay Company'.¹⁹ On rare occasions more heinous sins were indicated. Before being converted at Norwich Tabernacle, one woman had been a London prostitute and subsequently contemplated murdering her husband.²⁰ However, it was not particular sins that constituted the kernel of the problem with which evangelists grappled. Rather it was conceived to be the innate fallenness of the human heart, the state of sinfulness rather than a series of individual sins. Hence many converts are described as having previously lived exemplary lives. Thus Catherine Anning, the daughter of a Devon farmer, was respected before her conversion 'for her amiable, industrious and prudent conduct, and especially for her dutiful behaviour towards her aged parents'.²¹ Likewise William Johnson, the son of a General Baptist couple at Sawley Cliff in Derbyshire, was 'very steady in his conduct, and obedient to his parents', but that was not the point: he was 'destitute of real religion' and so still had to pass through the wicket gate of conversion.²² Indeed, the great problem for many people was their virtue. Anne Prangnell, of Lockerly, Hampshire, for example, was 'very vain of her goodness'.²³ Evangelists had to knock away the 'false props' upon which such people rested before they could be induced to put their reliance

¹⁷ *GBR*, November 1822, p. 422.

¹⁸ *BM*, August 1810, p. 434. *EM*, October 1850, p. 532.

¹⁹ *BM*, June 1810, p. 320.

²⁰ *EM*, December 1793, pp. 265-6.

²¹ *BM*, February 1809, p. 65.

²² *GBR*, February 1822, p. 58.

²³ *BM*, October 1810, p. 519.

on Christ.²⁴ This type of legalism, the supposition by the subjects that they were capable themselves of fulfilling the obligations of the divine law, is mentioned as afflicting 9% of the sample. For them, as much as for flagrant sinners, conversion entailed a radical transformation of life.

What was the age of the subjects at conversion? Of the sixty-three who were converted at a particular age, 22% underwent the experience at 15 or below; 46% between 16 and 20; 14% between 21 and 25; 5% between 26 and 35; 6% between 36 and 65; and 6% at 66 or above. There were instances of the very young. Thus Master G.A.F. Barss, who died in 1793 at the tender age of four years four months, is presented as a converted character. He used to pray in imitation of his father and to prattle about having a 'good heart' and going to heaven.²⁵ Equally there were cases of the elderly. Christopher Hunter, who died in 1822 in Redburn, Lincolnshire, is a striking example. He lived as a stranger to godliness until his ninetieth year, but then a passing General Baptist evangelist exhorted a group of senior citizens about the way of salvation. Hunter found peace in believing and was immersed on Easter Tuesday 1820, at almost the end of his ninety-first year.²⁶ The very young and the very old, however, were the exceptions. The figures clearly demonstrate that adolescence was the peak time for conversion. Nearly half of them were between the ages of 16 and 20; and 82% of all conversions that can be assigned to a specific age took place at 25 years old or below. These proportions can be usefully compared with the results of other analyses. Werner's figures for Primitive Methodists are rather different: only 43% of their conversions took place under the age of 25, and nearly as many were aged between 25 and 34 as were between 16 and 24.²⁷ The discrepancy is explained by the fact that Werner is examining the first generation of Primitive Methodists. In the earliest wave of their expansion, a higher proportion of adults would be recruited. Again, in Smout's study of the Cambuslang converts of 1742 only 22% were 19 or under, probably because younger people were less free to travel to the communion season when the revival took place. Fully 75%, however, were 29 or under, a concentration of response in the early years of life very similar to the present findings.²⁸ In Watts' examination of evangelical Nonconformists the results were even closer: half the

²⁴ *BM*, February 1809, p. 68.

²⁵ *EM*, Supplement for 1794, pp. 549-50.

²⁶ *GBR*, November 1822, pp. 455-6.

²⁷ Werner, *Primitive Methodist Connexion*, p. 155.

²⁸ Smout, 'Born Again at Cambuslang', p. 116.

conversions were between 14 and 20 years old and 74% at 25 or below.²⁹ The tendency for the great change to take place early in life became even more marked as the nineteenth century wore on,³⁰ but it is evident that even before 1850 it was extremely likely to happen in a person's youth. Watts suggests that the explanation is in the rise of sexual fears, especially anxiety about masturbation, and cites one instance where that is a plausible interpretation.³¹ There is, however, no evidence to support that theory in the present sample. There are, on the other hand, different precipitants such as uttering an oath when casting a fishing net and recoiling in horror.³² We are, of necessity, largely in the dark about the motives hidden in the internal recesses of the soul, but it is likely that sexuality was only one element, albeit an important one, in the psychological *mélange* that adolescents experienced in orientating themselves for life. But what is clear is that there was a high proportion of youthful conversions in the evangelical world of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Another factor to consider is gender. The female proportion of the sample was 44%, a high figure considering the large number of male ministers memorialised. That, however, is a feature of the record rather than of what actually happened. The important question is whether women had the same experience of conversion as men. The accounts suggest that they did. There is for each sex the same normative pattern of early heedlessness, conviction of sin, acceptance of salvation and the discovery of joy and peace in believing. The issue can in some measure be tested by comparing the age distribution of women with that of the opposite sex. Of thirty women whose age at conversion is given, only four were 15 or under, by contrast with ten men, and that seems low. The numbers however, are so small as not to be statistically significant. More important, fifteen of the thirty, exactly half, were converted between 16 and 20; and 80% had the experience at 25 or under. This pattern is similar to the distribution for men: fourteen of the thirty-three, that is 42%, were between 16 and 20; and 84% were 25 or under. There is no major gender difference in the age structure at conversion. That is exactly what Watts establishes.³³ It tends to confirm the fundamental sameness of the

²⁹ Watts, *Dissenters: Volume II*, p. 57.

³⁰ K. D. Brown, *A Social History of the Nonconformist Ministry in England and Wales, 1800-1930* (Oxford, 1988), p. 54-5.

³¹ Watts, *Dissenters: Volume II*, pp. 49-50.

³² *EM*, September 1794, p. 381.

³³ Watts, *Dissenters: Volume II*, p. 57.

conversion experience for the two sexes. This appears to have been a long established feature, for C. L. Cohen remarks on the uniformity of phrasing between men and women in Puritan spiritual autobiographies of the seventeenth century.³⁴ The research of Linda Wilson on the spirituality of evangelical Nonconformist women between 1825 and 1875 reaches the same conclusion that there was no substantial difference between the religious experience of the two sexes.³⁵ It may well be that in a patriarchal society the evangelical insistence on the identical needs of men and women to enter by the straight gate was a major force tending towards gender equality.

Indications of status occur in only about a quarter of the cases in the sample. They arise chiefly through mention of the occupation of the subject or of the subject's father. It emerges that a few individuals enjoyed quite a high standing. There are men in business houses, one the son of a Sheffield master cutler. There are a ship's master, an affluent artist and several ministers who must have been reasonably well-to-do. A larger number, though less prosperous, were nevertheless, in the language of the time, highly respectable. There are a number of farmers and children of farmers, a yeoman, an estate steward, the son of a grocer, a draper and several clerks. These people were drawn from the ranks that later in the nineteenth century would have been called lower middle classes. There are also skilled craftsmen: a builder, a copper miner, a copper plate printer, a shoemaker, a coachman and a surgeon – who, as a manual worker then occupied a much lower status than his successors in the profession would enjoy. The strength of the group among the lower middle classes and the upper working classes might give the impression that evangelical Nonconformity was disproportionately drawn from these sections of society. That is the conclusion that, from similar evidence, historians have often drawn.³⁶ Recent research, however, has established that the extent of the involvement of the poor has been seriously underestimated. Labourers were numerous and increasingly represented in the meeting houses of the period.³⁷ The lower ranks of society are

³⁴ Charles L. Cohen, *God's Caress: the Psychology of Puritan Religious Experience* (New York, 1986), p. 222.

³⁵ Linda Wilson, 'Female Spirituality among Evangelical Nonconformists, 1825-1875', Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education, PhD in progress.

³⁶ For example, Alan D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England: church, chapel and social change, 1740-1914* (London, 1976), pp. 62-7.

³⁷ Watts, *Dissenters: Volume II*, pp. 303-27. Lilian M. Wildman, 'Changes in Membership Recruitment and Social Composition in Ten Rural Old

certainly to be found in the sample. There are a farm servant and a poor labourer, a factory worker, several common soldiers and an illiterate. Yet this handful of individuals is not proportionate to their strength among evangelical Nonconformists. It is in regard to status that the sample has been most distorted by the sieve of selectivity through which it has passed. Smout's Cambuslang converts, among whom two-thirds were from a background of small tenants or low-status craftsmen, and Werner's primitive Methodists, among whom more than half were servants, labourers or in poverty, were both of lower average status than the group chosen for insertion in *The Evangelical Magazine* and the two Baptist magazines.³⁸ But what is most significant for our purpose is that the poor as much as the prosperous were expected to pass through conversion. A man who 'moved in a humble sphere, labouring for the support of his family', for example, was in as much need of renouncing his pharisaic self-righteousness and of praying until he received saving grace as his social superiors.³⁹ The summons to repentance and faith was a great social leveller.

When the place of conversion is investigated, it turns out that, as might be expected, the great majority of the instances were in England. Most of the counties and all the regions appear in the sample, though, as is inevitable given the strength of the denomination in the region, the East Midlands are particularly strongly represented among the General Baptists. Wales contributed only a pair of sisters from Montgomeryshire and a married woman from Gwent. This paucity was no doubt chiefly a consequence of the language barrier that inhibited the transmission of information from much of Wales to English-language periodicals based in London, and was certainly not a reflection of the true distribution of conversions. Further flung instances, however, do have their own significance. One was from Ireland, where, in Limerick, a serving soldier was converted through the Methodists.⁴⁰ Another was from Newfoundland. A boy was sent out at the age of twelve to serve in a shop in the capital, St John's. When rather older, finding the Anglican church in the severe climate 'cold and dreary' but the Independent meeting house warmly heated, he was gradually illuminated as he was drawn into the

Dissent Churches in the South-east Midlands, 1718-1851', *The Baptist Quarterly* 35 (1994), pp. 343-5.

³⁸ Smout, 'Born Again At Cambuslang', p. 117. Werner, *Primitive Methodist Connexion*, p. 155.

³⁹ *BM*, August 1809, p. 372.

⁴⁰ *BM*, August 1810, p. 430.

worshipping congregation.⁴¹ These cases are reminders that evangelical conversion was the core of a movement that flourished beyond Britain, extending through the English-speaking world. Two subjects even responded to the gospel preached by missionaries. While serving with the forces of the East India Company, one was converted under the preaching of William Ward, Baptist missionary at Serampore.⁴² Again, a woman born of British parents in Sumatra, having been orphaned and then educated at the Serampore school, was converted under the ministry of a recently arrived missionary there in 1837.⁴³ The same experience was now as possible on the banks of the Ganges as on the banks of the Trent. Conversion was a bond that united a growing international movement.

Most of the sample naturally comes from the denominations whose journals have been examined. At least 44% were converted among the Particular Baptists, 22% among the Independents and 11% among the General Baptists. The lesser Calvinistic evangelical groupings are also covered: the Calvinistic Methodists and Lady Huntingdon's Connexion. There are also instances from the Church of England and the Wesleyans, and even a case – in fact the mother of William Ward of Serampore – who received her permanent religious impression in about 1773 through the preaching of a female member of the Society of Friends in Derby, though subsequently worshipping with the Calvinistic Methodists.⁴⁴ Mrs Ward had previously attended an Arian meeting, but that phase had not led her into the paths of salvation. There is no instance of conversion to vital religion among those professing an Arian or Socinian theology, whether of the English Presbyterian or the Old Connexion General Baptist variety. There is, however, an account in *The Evangelical Magazine* of 'The Conversion of a Socinian'. A Northamptonshire farmer was drawn away by reading Socinian authors from the ministry of his meeting house. The minister tried to bring him back, but for long there was no response. Only when the farmer was lying on his death bed suffering from tuberculosis, indeed only three days before his death, did he receive the joy of salvation.⁴⁵ This case is instructive because it is an instance of conversion not from nominal Christianity, the normal pattern, but from different religious opinions. Socinianism is presented as a non-Christian option. True conversions were not to be expected under its sway. The

⁴¹ *EM*, May 1850, pp. 226-7.

⁴² *BM*, July 1810, p. 389.

⁴³ *BM*, July 1850, p. 140.

⁴⁴ *BM*, November 1810, p. 575.

⁴⁵ *EM*, Supplement for 1793, pp. 293-4.

occurrence of authentic commitments to vital religion is reported only among denominations created, touched or transformed by evangelicalism. The experience was evidently regarded as unique to the evangelical movement.

A striking feature of the conversion narratives is therefore their association with aspects of evangelical religion. The prominence of the Bible, in the first place, is reflected in the sample. In 6% of the cases reading the Bible, as distinguished from hearing sermons expounding the scriptures, is mentioned explicitly as one of the factors leading to conversion, but that figure is misleadingly low. It is artificial to separate Bible reading from hearing sermons since preaching was so deeply rooted in scripture. Thus Anne Prangnell of Lockerly, Hampshire, recalled the texts of successive sermons as the milestones of her spiritual pilgrimage during the 1760s. Persuaded by her husband to attend the Baptist meeting, she first heard a sermon on Revelation 3:20 ('Behold I stand at the door and knock...'), and concluded that Christ was knocking at the door of her heart through her afflictions. Then she listened to an exposition of Colossians 3:3 ('For ye are dead, and your lives are hid with Christ in God'), inferring that she was entitled to believe. Finally she was established in her new found faith by a sermon on Hebrews 6:17, 18 (which refers to 'the immutability of his counsel').⁴⁶

The Bible as it was explained from the pulpit formed the guidance for her progress through a long drawn out conversion. Preaching by settled ministers is included as a cause of conversion in as many as 27% of the sample, and by evangelists or visiting preachers in another 14%. Preaching in fact, is by far the most important of the precipitating factors mentioned. The Bible, furthermore, shaped the language of those who subsequently testified to conversion. Thus John Dando of Dursley, Gloucestershire, having been affected by a sermon, declared that 'his soul became like the chariots of Aminadib'.⁴⁷ Moreover, absorbing the Bible was a consequence as well as a cause of conversion. Master Joseph Thornton of Market Harborough, for example, though dying in 1794 at the age of only eight, having been led to a change of disposition through a sermon on 'Search the Scriptures', afterwards read the Bible at stated hours every day.⁴⁸ Conversion, itself a defining characteristic of the evangelical movement, was intimately connected with biblicism, another.

⁴⁶ *BM*, October 1810, pp. 519-20.

⁴⁷ *BM*, May 1810, p. 301.

⁴⁸ *EM*, October 1794, pp. 429-30.

The heart of the evangelical doctrinal system was the atonement achieved by Christ on the cross. Consequently it features prominently in the conversion narratives. The cross is rarely isolated as a theme on which the subjects meditated before conversion, and so it cannot be identified as a statistically significant precipitant of the experience. Yet phraseology evoking the power of Christ crucified recurs frequently in the accounts, especially at the crisis of conversion. A young woman aged twenty-one of the name of Walker, who lived near High Wycombe, may be taken as an example. Having contracted a disease that would soon prove fatal, she became distressed over her sins. During December 1793, while she was sitting by the fireside bemoaning her situation, 'Christ manifested himself to her soul as a bleeding, dying Saviour, making atonement for sin, with surprising clearness, and sweetness of application.'⁴⁹ As in so many other cases, it is impossible to disentangle the language of the obituarist from the experience of the subject, but it would be hard to suppose that Christ crucified was not at the heart of Miss Walker's entry into faith. Likewise an anonymous living minister presenting his autobiography in the supplement to the first volume of *The Evangelical Magazine*, evidently as something of a model, describes how he sought liberty through Christ. 'I was led,' he recounts, 'to behold him as wounded for my transgression, and bruised for my iniquities.'⁵⁰ The atonement is by no means universally mentioned in the obituaries, but its common occurrence suggests that it was the doctrine most closely bound up with conversion.

An intense orientation towards practical effort to spread the gospel and its blessings was another fundamental characteristic of the evangelical movement. This activism was evident in the influence exerted by others to bring the subjects to a living faith. Mothers are sometimes named in this connection. Thus Thomas Reader, who, like another brother, became an Independent minister in later life, was sometimes taken as a boy by his mother into her room. Holding her son's hand, she would announce: 'My dear child, I cannot be at rest till I see a work of grace begun in your heart.' The boy, not surprisingly, would burst into a flood of tears.⁵¹ Yet in this sample the mother alone is mentioned as a significant influence on conversion in only 6% of the cases, a smaller proportion than the 9% which alluded to both parents or to the father alone. The mother is

⁴⁹ *EM*, July 1794, pp. 297-8.

⁵⁰ *EM*, Supplement for 1793, p. 271.

⁵¹ *EM*, November 1794, p. 443.

therefore relatively less prominent than in Watts' sample,⁵² perhaps because a significant number of the present group were children of the manse, where the religious authority of the father was reinforced by his role as a minister. But other relations also went out of their way to influence the subjects for Christ: brothers, sisters, a brother-in-law, a mother-in-law, an aunt, a son, even a granddaughter. Friends were often persuasive too: a girl friend, a boy friend, fellow clerks or 'Blind Sally' of Dover, one of those women who figure so largely in evangelical history as soul-winners. Though blind from birth, Sally Johnson spoke so winningly from texts of scripture that she was the means by which Elizabeth Wood was brought both soul concern and soul comfort.⁵³ All these friends and relations were active in the cause of the gospel, but so were the subjects once they had been converted. Andrew Kinsman of Tavistock, for instance, having laid to rest tormenting fears about his own salvation, 'was soon impressed with an ardent concern, to interest the attention of his relations to these important objects'.⁵⁴ One young convert gathered his friends for a weekly prayer meeting for the advance of the gospel, a factory lad was set delivering devotional addresses when he was only fifteen and one later minister heard the call to future service in the same sermon that led him into the way of salvation.⁵⁵ The quest for conversions was the spur to activity; and activism was the result of the dynamic released by conversions.

The narratives refer to a variety of other circumstances that preceded conversion. Devotional works, family prayers and hymns are mentioned: 'Jesu, lover of my soul' was the specific means by which the Norwich ex-prostitute first found rest, eclipsing both text and sermon.⁵⁶ A passage of scripture could be impressed on the mind of a person anxious for salvation in a way that might in a later day have been called a revelation.⁵⁷ And there were dreams. A dissolute man befuddled by drink is said to have dreamed of a nine-headed serpent ready to seize him during the night before an acquaintance asked him, without knowing of the dream, whether he would like to attend a meeting to hear a sermon on the old serpent; and the man's heart was duly changed.⁵⁸ Again, in 1804, a

⁵² Watts, *Dissenters: Volume II*, pp. 53-6.

⁵³ *BM*, August 1810, pp. 433-4.

⁵⁴ *EM*, August 1793, p. 45.

⁵⁵ *EM*, Supplement for 1850, p. 705; October 1850, p. 507; April 1850, p. 170.

⁵⁶ *EM*, Supplement for 1793, p. 267.

⁵⁷ *GBR*, April 1822, p. 140.

⁵⁸ *EM*, March 1794, pp. 116-7.

Liverpool clerk was awakened three times by a voice calling him, 'John! John! John!', and the following night he saw 'a most beautiful figure' who urged him to seek the Lord.⁵⁹ It was not only the Magic Methodists of Delamere Forest who in this period saw visions. Death and illness, however, formed the second most common precipitating factor after sermons: 13% of the sample included one or the other. Funeral sermons in particular, blending bereavement with proclamation, often provoked serious thought that led to change of heart. Watts draws attention to the importance of disease and death as causes of the fear that preceded conversion, but he lays most stress on the fear of hell.⁶⁰ The subject does occur in this sample too. Thus Ann Anderson, a seventeen-year-old in the last days of tuberculosis, was convinced that after death she would '*burn in hell for ever*'.⁶¹ Less vivid phrases such as 'endless perdition' crop up more frequently.⁶² But what was emphasised, in the obituaries and apparently in evangelical teaching, was not so much the prospect of future punishment as the guilt of the sinner before God. An article on 'Conviction of Sin' in *The Evangelical Magazine* for December 1793 distinguished delusive from real conviction. The first of the symptoms of the delusive variety was fear of the *danger* of sin; the contrasting attributes of real conviction were a sense of the *desert* of hell and of the *evil* of sin.⁶³ Sometimes, as in this article, it was insisted that conviction of sin is an essential preliminary to conversion, but at other times it was taught explicitly that never having felt the '*terrors of the Almighty*' was common among true Christians.⁶⁴ Terror 'from a fear of divine wrath' was deliberately played down in pre-conversion spiritual counselling in order to concentrate on human responsibility for sin and the kindly promises of the gospel.⁶⁵ Maria Prudence Brassington of Burslem was said to have been 'one of those who seem to be drawn by the cords of love rather than by the terrors of the law'.⁶⁶ The two approaches are treated as equally valid. Fear of hell was undoubtedly associated with conversion in many instances, but the evidence of this material would imply that it was not as prominent a factor leading to conversion as Watts suggests.

⁵⁹ *EM*, November 1850, pp. 567-8.

⁶⁰ Watts, *Dissenters: Volume II*, pp. 72-80.

⁶¹ *EM*, January 1794, p. 34.

⁶² *EM*, Supplement for 1850, p. 708.

⁶³ *EM*, December 1793, p. 233.

⁶⁴ *EM*, September 1794, p. 354.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 383.

⁶⁶ *BM*, July 1850, p. 436.

How did conversion change over time? The sample is too small to draw statistical conclusions about shifts in any of the areas that have been considered, but trends are nevertheless apparent in the material, especially when it is seen against the backdrop of the theological literature of the period. The fundamental change was in the understanding of the balance between divine and human agency. Theologically the point was explained by the relationship between regeneration and conversion. Puritan divines, to whom eighteenth-century evangelicals turned for guidance on the subject, distinguished between regeneration as the divine action whereby a person became a Christian and conversion as, in some sense, the human action which accomplished the same transition. John Rippon, the Baptist minister at Carter Lane, Southwark, included a valuable discussion of the subject in the 'Theological Dictionary' that he inserted in his *Baptist Annual Register* for 1801-2. Regeneration is defined as 'the MOTION OF GOD in the heart of a sinner'. Conversion on the other hand is 'the MOTION OF THE HEART of a sinner towards God'. 'In Regeneration,' he explains, 'men are wholly passive – in Conversion, they become active.' Here the distinction seems stark: conversion, by contrast with regeneration, is a solely human work. Yet Rippon has just defined conversion as consisting 'both of God's act upon men in turning them, and of acts done by men under the influence of converting grace: they turn, being turned'. Here the contrast is located within conversion: it is both a divine transformation and a human achievement. There is an ambiguity in Rippon's expression about whether or not the Almighty is at work in conversion. As though aware of his confusion, Rippon tries to illustrate his position by quoting a series of antitheses between regeneration and conversion from the 'most judicious' Puritan Stephen Charnock. Here again, however, there is ambiguity. In some of Charnock's axioms, conversion seems to be wholly human, but in others it is both divine and human. 'In Conversion,' the Puritan concludes, 'the sinner is active, but it is NOT FROM THE POWER of MAN, although it is from a POWER in MAN, not growing up from the FEEBLE ROOT of nature, but SETTLED THERE by the almighty spirit of God.'⁶⁷ In that complex statement the great change is twice said to be human, twice not human, and once divine. Both Rippon and before him Charnock were wrestling with an intractable problem in theology, the sense in which human autonomy is compatible with divine agency. The ultimate

⁶⁷ John Rippon, *The Baptist Annual Register for 1801 and 1802* (London, n.d.), pp. 664-5. I am grateful to Mrs Susan Mills of the Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford, for drawing my attention to this passage.

grounding of the problem is the issues of freedom against necessity. Eighteenth-century evangelicals such as Rippon were concerned to maintain the divine element even while admitting human freedom. The trend in the nineteenth century was for the human component to become exclusive so that divine participation in conversion tended to diminish. The structure erected by Rippon, perhaps inherently unstable, gradually disintegrated.

The change expressed itself, for one thing, in an increase of human planning. It was a hallmark of eighteenth-century evangelicals to believe that the Almighty and human beings both used what were called 'means', that is mundane instruments, to bring about conversions. The word *had* already been used in this sense by seventeenth-century Puritans such as William Ames,⁶⁸ but in stressing the concept, eighteenth-century evangelicals differed from their high Calvinist contemporaries, who believed that conversion happened as a result of an unanticipated exercise of divine sovereignty, a shaft from the blue. On the high Calvinist view, conversion had to be waited for rather than contrived. William Carey was attacking this position in his celebrated work, *An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen* (1792). There should be no delay until God was pleased to act because means, in this case a missionary society, ought to be used to fulfil the known divine purposes.⁶⁹ The word 'means' crops up in this sense in the obituaries. A woman among the General Baptists, for example, was stirred by the death of a friend in about 1815 to seek salvation and, as her memorialist puts it, 'in the use of means, she was enabled to trust in Christ as an all sufficient Saviour'.⁷⁰ The tendency over time was for the use of such means to increase. The process can be illustrated from the field of religious education. Traditionally the catechism had been taught to lay the foundations of Christian knowledge. An instance occurs in the obituary of Mrs D. Smith, born in 1747 the daughter of a Suffolk farmer:

Her father being a grave steady man, who kept up the old custom of catechising his children and servants, and praying with them on Lord's

⁶⁸ Cohen, *God's Caress*, p. 220.

⁶⁹ William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christian to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen* (London, 1961), sect. 1.

⁷⁰ *GBR*, April 1822, p. 139.

day evenings; some very serious impressions respecting soul concerns began in very early life.⁷¹

The expectation was that, as in this case, seeds would be sown that, under divine providence, might later germinate. Catechetical training was conceived as preparation of the soil, not as a forcing house for conversion. Very different, however, were the Sunday schools that first became popular in the 1780s and increasingly became associated with particular congregations during the nineteenth century. In the latter phase they generally aimed for conversions. Sunday schools constituted a means that could deliberately be used for that end. Thus four of the fifteen General Baptists in the sample were swayed by Sunday school. In a similar way other means were arranged to promote conversion. The sample includes instances of the phenomenon at a Sunday morning young men's prayer meeting in Market Harborough and at a Sunday evening cottage meeting in Fareham, Hampshire.⁷² In another case an experience meeting at Redruth Baptist Church in Cornwall was where a man was able to give vent to the anxiety of soul that preceded his enlightenment.⁷³ This gathering seems to be an example of the copying of a Methodist class meeting in the most Methodist of counties. The followers of John Wesley, with their itinerancy and their love-feasts, were long the exemplars of pragmatic innovation for the sake of the gospel, but by the 1830s and 1840s a school of 'instrumentalists' had arisen who copied the more elaborate American methods. The evangelists of the Baptist Home Missionary Society and their counterparts among the Independents both imitated the 'new measures' pioneered in the United States by Charles Finney, notably the protracted meeting at which burdened souls could be prayed through to the new birth.⁷⁴ There was a trend over time towards deliberately creating the most favourable circumstances for turning to God.

Human timing, like human planning, came increasingly into fashion. It was increasingly believed that the sinner did not have to wait until the moment of divine appointment for conversion. In the seventeenth century it had been common for conviction of sin to last for years before a soul found rest in believing.⁷⁵ As late as the end of the eighteenth century the

⁷¹ *BM*, September 1810, p. 122.

⁷² *EM*, Supplement for 1850, p. 708. *BM*, June 1810, pp. 346-7.

⁷³ *BM*, April 1809, p. 147.

⁷⁴ Richard Carwardine, *Transatlantic Revivalism: Popular Evangelicalism in Britain and America, 1790-1865* (Westport, Conn., 1978), ch. 2.

⁷⁵ Cohen, *God's Caress*, p. 205.

same pattern is clear in the experience of many Calvinists. In 1798 a man who was awakened by an Independent field preacher did not close with Christ immediately but rather spent 'considerable time' in conviction of sin.⁷⁶ In 1789 another continued for four or five months 'in the pangs of new birth'; and in 1795 a third occupied a full two years doubting his personal interest in redemption.⁷⁷ Among the Arminian General Baptists there was often much more Methodist-style earnest seeking after salvation, but, again, the time allocated to persevering prayer delayed the climax of conversion. Thus in around 1800 Mrs Elizabeth Johnson of Quorndon, Leicestershire, did not give up her heart to the Saviour until some years after marriage. 'In her first attempts, she was much perplexed with an evil heart of unbelief; but steadily pursuing the subject, her views became rectified, and she was enabled to say, "I know in whom I have believed."'⁷⁸ As the nineteenth century advanced, however, the approach to timing altered. Finney in the United States was once more the pace-setter, urging immediate surrender to Christ. His admirers in Britain during the 1830s and 1840s adopted the same technique. George Redford, a prominent Independent minister deeply influenced by Finney, issued a tract called *The Great Change* (?1844) in which a chapter is given over to 'Reasons why your conversion should take place now'.⁷⁹ Likewise James Morison, the founder of the Evangelical Union denomination in Scotland in 1843, argued that people were guilty of a very great crime if they did not believe immediately on hearing the gospel.⁸⁰ There could be no plea for a moment's delay. In progressive evangelical circles around the middle of the nineteenth century sinners were thought to be able to come to Christ at a time of their own choosing.

There was a similar development of opinion about human conviction. Expectations shifted about how confidently people could know that they had been converted. Reformed piety in the seventeenth century had deliberately fostered anxieties about whether or not a person was of the elect in order to ensure that each sinner persevered in ensuring that faith was real rather than counterfeit. Assurance of salvation was not regarded as a standard possession of the believer. The Evangelical Revival

⁷⁶ *BM*, March 1810, pp. 118-19.

⁷⁷ *EM*, March 1794, p. 117; March 1850, p. 114.

⁷⁸ *GBR*, April 1822, p. 141.

⁷⁹ Redford, *Great Change*, ch. 7.

⁸⁰ James Morison, *Saving Faith: or the Simple Belief of the Gospel* (Kilmarnock, 1842), p. 14.

encouraged greater confidence in one's eternal destiny as a result of stronger assumptions about the capacity of human beings to achieve knowledge.⁸¹ Yet the older Calvinist tradition still powerfully influenced late eighteenth-century evangelicals. John Newton, the slave-trader turned clergyman, insisted that assurance was not of the essence of faith and portrayed the earliest phase of Christian experience as typically lacking any certainty of salvation.⁸² Many Calvinist Dissenters continued to experience worries of the old type in the years around 1800. Thus Elizabeth Bowden, daughter of the Independent minister at Tooting, Surrey, fell seriously ill at the age of 17 in the early 1790s. Aware of her danger, she was anxious and despondent. 'I want more comfort in my soul...', she told her father, 'I want to *know* my interest in the *covenant*.'⁸³ Elizabeth evidently lacked assurance – though, since her last word as she died was 'Joys!', she presumably found it at the end. Comparable uncertainty about one's spiritual state occurs several times in the sample. If the piety shows the continuing legacy of the seventeenth century, the counselling given in such circumstances was now different. Puritan pastors would not readily have calmed the anxieties for fear of giving ungrounded hope. The newer attitude in such a case was expressed in an authoritative footnote to a spiritual biography in *The Evangelical Magazine* for 1794. The subject, not remembering the start of God's work in her soul, sometimes questioned whether she had been effectually called to Christian discipleship. To doubt the sincerity of one's religion because of inability to recall the circumstances of one's conversion, according to the weighty editorial opinion, was 'unreasonable and unscriptural'. Fears could safely be set aside.⁸⁴ It was no longer supposed to be beneficial to welter in uncertainty. Accordingly the obituaries in the sample discussing experiences after about 1820 reveal no such lack of confidence in the validity of personal faith. By 1842 Morison was teaching, like the early Wesley, that assurance is actually essential to faith. 'Every man who believes the gospel,' he asserted, 'knows that he believes it.'⁸⁵ Similarly the Independent R. W. Dale of Birmingham, when beginning his ministry in mid-century, had no qualms about the

⁸¹ D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: a History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London, 1988), pp. 42-50.

⁸² D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition between the Conversions of Wesley and Wilberforce* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 66, 251-2.

⁸³ *EM*, March 1794, p. 121.

⁸⁴ *EM*, September 1794, p. 354.

⁸⁵ Morison, *Saving Faith*, p. 11.

proper stance on the question of assurance: 'it should be the aim of the Christian teacher so to represent the power and grace of the Lord Jesus, and the unconditional freeness of His gospel, that the troubled and guilty heart, forgetting itself altogether, shall trust everything to Christ'.⁸⁶ There is now no need for introspection because confidence in one's spiritual state depends on Christ, not on one's response to him. The doctrine of assurance had become much more robust.

Alongside rising confidence in human conviction went a growing belief in human ability. High Calvinists of the eighteenth century taught that only God, by an irresistible exercise of his grace, can bring about the great change. The human contribution was minimal or non-existent. The evangelical mainstream, by contrast, learned from Jonathan Edwards to distinguish between natural and moral inability. Natural ability operated when human beings could not do what they wanted to do; moral inability operated when they did not do something because they did not want to do it. The latter was true of those rejecting the gospel, who therefore bore the culpability of their decision.⁸⁷ There was an obligation to believe, what came to be called 'duty faith'. This stance was shared by Andrew Fuller for the Baptists, Edward Williams for the Independents and Thomas Chalmers for the Presbyterians: it was the prevailing evangelical theology of the early nineteenth century. Thus John Angell James, Dale's predecessor at Birmingham, could write of avoiding the antinomianism of the high Calvinists as much as the Arminianism of the Methodists.⁸⁸ His version of Calvinism was in the middle between the two. In parts of England and Wales, especially in East Anglia, as in the remoter parts of the United States, the Baptists split on this issue. The high Calvinists became the Strict and Particular body while the bulk of Baptists followed Fuller. It was a topic of sufficient gravity to divide brethren into separate denominations.

What has been less noticed, at least for Britain, is that there was a further shift on the question of human ability during the early nineteenth century. In the United States, where the process is much better known, the change was expressed in the New Haven theology associated particularly with Nathaniel W. Taylor. Starting with the principle of duty faith that a person has an obligation to believe the gospel, Taylor applied

⁸⁶ R. W. Dale, *The Life and Letters of John Angell James* (London, 1861), p. 302.

⁸⁷ Hindmarsh, *John Newton*, pp. 153-4, offers a particularly clear exposition of the distinction.

⁸⁸ Dale, *James*, p. 283.

the Kantian maxim, 'No ought without can'. He inferred that all human beings have a free capacity to believe. Conversion was within the sinner's will. Taylor's theology, first extensively promoted in 1818, was to be the foundation for Finney's practice in revivalism, but it was stoutly resisted by the Old Presbyterians of Princeton as derogating from the divine prerogative.⁸⁹ The debate did not rage on the other side of the Atlantic, though it was known in Britain, for example by John Angell James.⁹⁰ There were, however, echoes of the controversy in discussions about the role of the Holy Spirit in conversion. John Howard Hinton, the son of the respected Baptist minister at Oxford, and himself at the start of a distinguished ministry, argued in a book of 1830 that human beings had power to repent without the aid of the Spirit.⁹¹ The contention found little favour, but Hinton was able to assume a leading place in his denomination without recanting. Finney accepted that the Holy Spirit is always at work in conversion, but only as a moral influence, that is merely in a persuasive role. The evangelist's major change in received theology was to collapse the distinction between regeneration and conversion altogether. Each term, according to Finney, described the same divine and human action, but the human being held the whip-hand. 'Neither God,' he wrote, 'nor any other being, can regenerate him, if he will not turn.'⁹² The prestige of the revivalist, who toured England in 1849-50, ensured his views a wide audience. In Scotland James Morison, who was deeply influenced by Finney, taught that there was nothing miraculous about conversion, 'for if turning to God be a miracle, it cannot be the duty of any sinner to turn himself from his evil ways'.⁹³ The intense moralism that was dominant in theology led to a minimising of the divine part in the transformation of sinners. It was such teaching that brought about Morison's condemnation by the United Secession Synod and his founding of the Evangelical Union. Here again was a theological disagreement about the balance of the divine and human in conversion that was capable of causing denominational division. Just as in the United States, a much stronger view of human ability entered

⁸⁹ Sidney E. Mead, *Nathaniel William Taylor, 1786-1858: a Connecticut Liberal* (Chicago, 1942).

⁹⁰ Dale, *James*, pp. 261-2.

⁹¹ John Howard Hinton, *The Work of the Holy Spirit in Conversion* (London, 1830). Carwardine, *Transatlantic Revivalism*, pp. 63-4.

⁹² Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Systematic Theology*, ed. George Redford (London, 1851), pp. 411, 407, 413.

⁹³ Morison, *Saving Faith*, p. 49.

British theology as the standpoint of revivalists who wanted to maximise conversions.

The prevailing trend in the understanding of conversion in the period therefore consisted in an elevation of the human element – in planning, timing, conviction and ability. The fine tension maintained by Charnock between divine and human activity was gradually relaxed. Why was the Puritan inheritance modified? All the changes may be traced to the spreading influence of Enlightenment patterns of thought, not external to the evangelical movement, but in and through it. Since the Enlightenment was the dominant cultural form, it necessarily shaped the appreciation of the gospel. Its typical motifs of progress, pragmatism and shedding the metaphysical obscurities of the past are evident in the processes of adaptation that have been discussed. Finney voiced many of its characteristic themes in the introduction to the British edition of his *Lectures on Systematic Theology* (1851). The gospel must no longer be hidden by a ‘false philosophy’; in this age of science the ‘spirit of enquiry’ demands theological reformulation; only so can there be ‘improvements’ suited to the nineteenth century.⁹⁴ As a result, conversion became a simpler, shallower experience, less a wrestling with the angel and more a scientific experiment. John Angell James described the British scene to an American correspondent in 1828. ‘Conversions,’ he wrote, ‘at least supposed conversions, are not unknown, nor unfrequent in many congregations, but the work, in most instances, is not of a decisive or impressive character.’⁹⁵ Quality, it might be said, was being sacrificed to quantity. This was the legacy transmitted to the later nineteenth century.⁹⁶

A number of overall conclusions can be drawn from this study. First, conversion, though not necessarily a crisis experience, was regarded as essential in the evangelical movement of this period. The situation of around the start of the twentieth century, when even candidates for the ministry were not necessarily expected to be able to testify to a great change of life, had not yet arrived.⁹⁷ The experience, secondly, was concentrated chiefly in a particular age group, those of twenty-five and

⁹⁴ Finney, *Lectures*, pp. vii, viii, x.

⁹⁵ J.A. James to Dr W. B. Sprague, 15 December 1828, in Dale, *James*, p. 250.

⁹⁶ Cf. Phyllis D. Airhart, ‘“What Must I Do to be Saved?” Two Paths to Evangelical Conversion in Late Victorian Canada’, *Church History* 59 (1990).

⁹⁷ Brown, *Nonconformist Ministry*, pp. 50-3.

under. Yet it was common to both sexes and widespread in terms of status, place and denomination. These findings correspond closely to those of Watts and others. Conversion, thirdly, was associated with the other main features of the evangelical movement, the Bible, the cross and activism. Although the prospect of hell was a stimulus to conversion, an awareness of guilt was more significant. Finally, the direction of change, under the influence of the Enlightenment's categories of thought, was towards stressing the human dimension of the experience rather than the divine. Conversion, even mass conversion, was increasingly being seen as a matter of free choice. Already by the mid-nineteenth century the evangelical movement had moved a long way towards the stance of some Nottingham Baptists who in the 1880s recorded the following resolution of church meeting: 'that after the Bazaar we go in for a revival'.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ D. W. Bebbington, *A History of Queensberry Street Baptist Church, Old Basford, Nottingham* (Nottingham, 1977), p. 17.

HOW MANY SEXUALITIES?: NORMS AND DIVERSITY IN ETHICS AND PASTORAL CARE¹

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I vividly remember the conversation with Claire (a pseudonym) in my vestry. She was a vivacious and professionally successful woman who had dramatically come to faith in a church service a number of years before as an undergraduate. She had grown quickly as a Christian and, after graduating, went overseas with an evangelical mission agency. It was whilst abroad that she first began to identify herself as lesbian. She formed a particularly close relationship with a female missionary colleague, but without any overt sexual expression. However, on returning to Britain and her home church she felt the need to be honest, and she pressed a question in a way I have never quite forgotten. She expressed her intention, by God's grace, to lead a life of abstinence, but then asked 'As a church, are you able not only to accept me but *to celebrate* the diversity that my sexual orientation represents in God's world?'

'How many sexualities?' is at once a flawed and a far reaching question. It is *flawed* to the extent that there is no such thing as 'free-standing' human sexuality (i.e. detached from the context of our biologically and emotionally differentiated lives) that can somehow be surveyed and classified as a sort of moral taxonomy.² It is *far reaching* in that this is exactly the pluralist way many in today's society view sexual ethics; namely that there are a number of equally morally-legitimate sexual lifestyle options, depending on our make-up. Given such an ambivalent attitude to the question, perhaps a more reliable way into this subject, therefore, would be to examine what is meant in today's

¹ Paper given at the Scottish Evangelical Theological Society on Thursday, April 6th 2000

² D. F. Wright; 'The Bible knows nothing of an undifferentiated, indeterminate sexuality, waiting, so to speak, to fix its sense of direction.' *The Christian Faith and Homosexuality* (Edinburgh, 1997), p. 12.

language and thought by ‘**sexual orientation**’; to look at how it is used in the contemporary ethical debate, and how biblically and pastorally we are called to respond. A significant amount of time will be spent reflecting on this issue theologically, with the double conviction that a non-strident, gentle and clear *apologetic* is an urgent need of the church, and a *renewed mind* is an urgent requirement of every authentic disciple of Christ.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION: SOME BASIC OBSERVATIONS

There are four initial observations over which a considerable degree of agreement can be assumed. First, the existence of different sexual orientations is *an empirical reality*. If the incidence of homosexual *behaviour* is notoriously difficult to quantify, the spectrum of sexual *preference* in our society is doubly difficult to map. This is further complicated, at a global level, by an uncertain degree to which the cultural context affects same-sex orientation and expression.³ It is now generally agreed, for example, that both the methodology and results of the famous American Kinsey report⁴ were seriously flawed. It has more recently been estimated that one percent of the female population and two percent of the male population are actively homosexual, as opposed to the often quoted ten percent.⁵ However, whatever the true demographic profile, no one doubts that there is a broad spectrum of sexual inclination in our society. This includes bi-sexuality and trans-sexuality.

Second, *sexual orientation of itself is not morally culpable*. As we shall see, this is not to say that any given sexual orientation is morally *neutral*, but it is to underline that homophile tendencies and preferences *per se* are not reprehensible. We did not choose our psycho-somatic

³ See Michael Vasey, *Strangers and Friends – a new exploration of homosexuality and the Bible* (London, 1995). This is the main contribution of his book, but in the end it appears that culture comes to take precedence over the creation order. Cf. David F Greenberg *The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago, 1988) for a more academic exposition of a non-essentialist view.

⁴ A. C. Kinsey, *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male* (Philadelphia, 1948). This report claimed that ten per cent of white American males were predominantly homosexual for up to three years between the ages of 16 and 65.

⁵ A. M. Johnson et al, ‘Sexual Lifestyles and HIV Risks’, *Nature* 360, (December 2nd 1992), pp. 410-12. Here 1.1% of men interviewed had homosexual partners in the previous year (3.6% ever).

make-up, but we do choose to think, fantasise and act in certain ways. This distinction between orientation and practice is fundamental, though by no means a tidy one; sexual behaviour is clearly far more than genital activity. However, some form of distinction can be made between erotic and non-erotic behaviour. The contemporary gay lobby seems keen to blur this distinction under the preferred theme of 'sexual identity'.⁶ To this issue we will return.

Thirdly, *the terminology of sexual orientation is relatively recent*. The emphasis of the biblical references to same-sex relationships is on *actions* and to ask the biblical text about orientation is anachronistic.⁷ Fourthly, *the aetiology of sexual orientation is still largely not understood*. The nature/nurture question, namely the extent to which sexual preferences are biologically determined or shaped by socialisation, continues to be debated. It is highly probable that, in fact, a number of factors contribute to our sexual orientation.⁸ What is important to stress, however, is that any *explanation* of a behaviour does not thereby constitute its *justification*.⁹

It is at this point that we leave the largely agreed, and enter into dispute, for it is clear that the notion of sexual orientation is used in the moral debate to imply very different things. We are going to examine *two* crucial aspects of this debate, both of which have profound implications for Christian pastoral care.

1. 'BE WHAT YOU ARE' – SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND THE MEANING OF 'NATURAL'

There is a widespread assumption abroad that sexual orientation is *de facto* a statement about our fundamental human nature. If we have same-

⁶ The gay activist Denis Almann: 'The greatest single victory of the gay movement over the past decade has been to shift the debate from behaviour to identity.' Quoted John C. Yates, 'Towards a Theology of Homosexuality' in *Evangelical Quarterly* 67:1 (1995), p. 71 fn. 1.

⁷ Some have argued on this basis (e.g. *Issues of Human Sexuality: A Statement by the House of Bishops*, London, 1991, Section 2.29) that the biblical evidence is therefore inconsequential. However, as stated above, the actual aetiology of homosexuality has no determinative bearing on its morality. Cf. M. Banner, *Christian Ethics and Contemporary Moral Problems* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 258.

⁸ See Schmidt, *Straight and Narrow? Compassion and Clarity in the homosexual debate* (Leicester, 1995), pp. 131-59.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

sex desires then that must be affirmed, and responsibly expressed, if we are to be true to who we are. Just as 'left-handedness' is a minority trait, but nevertheless a legitimate expression of the differentiation of human nature, to be encouraged not suppressed, so with our sexual orientation. Much counselling of gay people is therefore essentially a matter of affirming their sexual orientation. It is for this reason, too, that gay activists view opposition to same-sex behaviour as morally equivalent to racism and sexism, for it is seen as a fundamental denial of the right to human equality. As a chaplain at Napier University, let me quote from this year's student union handbook given to all freshers.

At school you may have learned that sex should only take place between a man and a woman within marriage, that masturbation is wrong and that homosexuality is unnatural. If you start to feel confused and think you may be gay, don't panic. Sexuality is not 'a choice' or 'a preference': it is simply who you are. The only choice is to accept homosexuality, and therefore yourself, or deceive yourself and those around you by 'pretending' to be heterosexual.

This logic is, of course, strengthened when articulated theologically. The point Claire was pressing was that her lesbianism was God's creative doing, and therefore to be celebrated as part of his good, multi-faceted creation.¹⁰

How are we to respond to this? Norman Pittenger insists that there are 'no external standards of normality or naturalness'¹¹ with which such assertions can be challenged. Likewise, J. J. McNeill, in his influential *The Church and the Homosexual*, argues that 'what it means to be a man or woman in any given society or culture is a free cultural creation';¹² and 'the only ideals involved in all questions of sexual orientation are the great transcendent questions of justice and love'.¹³ However, any serious

¹⁰ This is blatantly expressed by Matthew Fox, 'we can only conclude (from science) that homosexuality is indeed 'natural' for ten percent of the human race. Since grace builds on nature... then it is imperative that we let nature be active and let homosexuals be homosexuals. *Original Blessing* (Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1983), p. 269.

¹¹ N. Pittenger *Time for Consent* (London, 1976), p. 30.

¹² J. J. McNeill, *The Church and the Homosexual* (London 1977), p. 104.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

biblical and theological response must grapple with Romans 1:18-32,¹⁴ and this is where we will linger.

The context is that the Apostle Paul, having declared how we are made righteous by God (Romans 1:17), proceeds graphically to map out the rampant unrighteousness of a humanity in need of rescue. The essence of this unrighteousness is a displacing and dishonouring of God; a placing of our creaturely desires before the glory of the Creator (v.21). God's will for humanity has been made plain in creation (v.20), but this knowledge has been actively spurned. Paul's key point is that all human depravity flows from this fundamental idolatry, and is therefore an outworking of God's judgement which involves 'giving them up' (v.24, 26, 28) to the wrong choices and passions insisted upon. Here, observes Ernst Kasemann, 'Paul paradoxically reverses the cause and consequence: moral perversion is the result of God's wrath, not the reason for it.'¹⁵ Homosexual and lesbian activity is not being specifically addressed in this passage, but is seen as one telling illustration of the inevitable moral consequence of putting creaturely pleasure before the Creator's plan. As Richard Hays puts it 'The diseased behaviour of vv.24-31 is symptomatic of the one sickness of humanity as a whole.'¹⁶ Thus homosexual behaviour should never be isolated for particular condemnation.

There are two particularly pertinent observations that need to be made on this passage regarding our understanding of sexual orientation. Firstly, the determinative for sexual ethics is not the empiricism of our sexuality but the *moral order of God's creation*. Paul's references to creation unmistakably point us back to the creation accounts of Genesis 1 and 2. Hays points out that the words 'likeness' and 'image' of Romans 1:23 are 'explicit echoes' of the creation account.¹⁷ A true Christian ethic is thus never voluntarist, but ontologically grounded in the very pattern of creation. As Oliver O'Donovan has forcefully argued, this creation order has been decisively affirmed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ; God's redemption not being a redemption *from* creation but *of* creation.¹⁸ Of course, this order of creation can never be clearly discerned by mere observation, for our world is fallen and distorted. It can only be known

¹⁴ Richard Hays: 'this is the only passage in the New Testament that explains the condemnation of homosexuality in an explicit way'. *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (Edinburgh, 1996), p. 383.

¹⁵ Quoted in Hays, *Ibid.*, p. 385.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 404 fn. 21.

¹⁸ Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and the Moral Order, An Outline for Evangelical Ethics* (Leicester, 1986).

through a humble submission to God's revelation. It was this distinction between epistemology and ontology that lay at the heart of the famous Brunner-Barth debate on natural theology.¹⁹ The created order was made good, but this good cannot be naturally known. As Barth insists 'We do not understand it at all as an order that can be discovered by us, but as one which has sorted us out in the grace of God in Jesus Christ revealed in his Word.'²⁰

Fundamental to such a revelation is that the creation order for humanity involves both *sexual differentiation*, 'male and female he created them' (Gen. 1:27), and *sexual complementarity*, Eve being 'taken out of man' and then reunited in 'one flesh' (Gen. 2:24). There is thus a *fundamental sexual dipolarity for the purpose of a profound social and spiritual complementarity* built into the very constitution of humanity. "He" and "she" belong to the same theological dogma as *imago Dei*,²¹ however that is articulated.²² Some have wanted to argue that such a creation pattern simply argues for a co-humanity, where the focus is on the communion of two persons, irrespective of gender difference.²³ This argument fails to see that sexual dimorphism and personal complementarity are held together in the creation accounts, and it is precisely a flouting of this that leads the Apostle Paul to use homosexuality as an example of 'an exchange' of the Creator's plan with the creature's passion. As Henri Blocher tellingly describes it, 'The rejection of 'Other' leads to the rejection of 'other' in gender.'²⁴

We must linger over this first observation a moment longer, however, for it is being challenged in one particular respect; namely by our understanding of the *transsexual's* condition. Transsexuals are those who

¹⁹ E. Brunner and K. Barth, *Natural Theology*, trans. F. Fraenkel, (London, 1946).

²⁰ K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh, 1960), 3/4 p. 45.

²¹ R. S. Anderson, *On Being Human*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1982), p. 111.

²² Barth, famously, sees in the first creation account that sexual complementarity reflects the divine image of the trinitarian God. *Ibid.*, C.D 3/1 pp. 183-7 'the fact that [man] was created and exists as male and female will... prove to be not only a copy and imitation of his creator as such, but at the same time a type of the history of the covenant and salvation which will take place between him and his creator'. p. 186.

²³ L. Scanzoni and V. R. Mollenkott, *Is the Homosexual My Neighbour? Another Christian View* (London, 1978), p. 129.

²⁴ Cited by Christopher Townsend in 'Homosexuality: Finding the Way of Truth and love' in *Cambridge Papers*, vol. 3, no. 2 (June 1994), p. 3.

are psychologically unable to identify with the sex to which their bodies belong. They are to be distinguished from hermaphrodites ('inter-sex' persons) where there is an indeterminate sex distinction (such as an XXY sex chromosome configuration as opposed to the normal XY and XX), and whose condition can clearly be seen to be ambiguous and a tragic divergence from the norm. The transsexual requesting marriage would argue that the dipolar nature of the union is being honoured. What is in question is what it actually means to be 'male' and 'female'. Is our human sexuality to be understood as a continuum with a masculine and feminine pole and a wide range of variations in between? If we are a psycho-somatic unity as Hebrew anthropology emphasises, is there not a key place for our psycho-sexual perceptions?

Two responses can be made here. First, in understanding our human ontology, we are not free simply to ignore our biological differentiation. There is an obvious 'givenness' about our sexual morphology which is not necessarily true of our psychological make-up, and certainly our sexual self-consciousness cannot be isolated from biological realities. Second, it is important that we understand the created order teleologically. Our sexually dimorphically differentiated bodies have deliberately been made to achieve heterosexual union, and at least the possibility of procreation. Our sexual anatomy and the possibility of child-bearing are not without significance; neither is the serious health risk of homosexual genital activity.²⁵ As O'Donovan puts it, 'What marriage can do, which other relationships cannot do, is to disclose the goodness of biological nature by elevating it to its teleological fulfilment in personal relationship.'²⁶ These two responses are significant in that they underline the importance of both our biological differentiation and male-female complementarity.

The second important observation from Romans 1:18-32 is the way in which Paul uses the word 'natural'. He talks about exchanging 'natural' (*kata physin*) for 'unnatural' (*para physin*) relations (vv. 26, 27). For Paul 'natural' is not a question of simply reading off from the 'what is' of empirical anthropology to discover the 'what ought to be' for human behaviour. Rather, 'natural' means what is in accordance with God's intention for creation,²⁷ recognising the chasm left by 'the Fall'

²⁵ See Schmidt, *Straight and Narrow*, pp. 100-130.

²⁶ Oliver O'Donovan, *Transsexualism and Christian Marriage*, Grove Booklet on Ethics 48 (Nottingham, 1982), p. 6.

²⁷ C. E. B. Cranfield sees 'nature' to mean 'the order manifest in the created world'. *Romans* (Edinburgh, 1975), vol. 1, p. 125.

between God's original intention and the world as we experience it now, and therefore going back to God's revelation in Genesis. The revisionist argument that Paul was primarily referring to lustful and 'unnatural' sexual behaviour such as heterosexuals engaging in same-sex activity,²⁸ fails to acknowledge that Paul is not reflecting on individual choices but offering a creation/fall perspective relevant for all humanity. It is in harmony with the way the *kata physin/para physin* contrast was frequently used in Hellenistic-Jewish writings of Paul's time.²⁹

Both these observations from Romans are crucial in assessing the claim that homo-erotic activity is 'natural' when following the instincts of same-sex orientation. Same-sex erotic activity is viewed biblically as against God's will, and same-sex orientation, though not sinful in itself, is seen as a symptom of a morally disorientated world, and to this extent it is not morally neutral. It is for this reason that I had to resist Claire's request for the church to celebrate her lesbian orientation. What I did affirm, however, was that Romans 1:18-32 is about *all humanity*; in different ways all have exchanged the Creator's plan for personal desire.

2. 'DISCOVERING MYSELF' – SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND THE MEANING OF 'PERSON IDENTITY'

The second key area of debate regarding sexual orientation is the whole issue of *our human identity*. No one doubts that our sexual identity is a fundamental part of our personal identity, but it is the equation of the two that must be questioned.

The issue here must be seen against the much wider back-drop of our fragmented, post-modern culture, where confusion over personal identity is a major feature.³⁰ The politicising of the gay issue, and the emergence of an overt gay identity is to be taken very seriously. The painful experience of rejection and oppression of many gay people has led them, understandably, to seek dignity and respect by self-consciously defining themselves by their sexual orientation. In other words, it has often been the force of society's antipathy to homosexuality that has led gay activists to constructing a view of personhood primarily around the narrative of their perceived sexuality.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 62. See also John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality* (Chicago 1980), p. 107ff.

²⁹ See Hays, *Moral Vision*, p. 387.

³⁰ See J. Richard Middleton and Brian J. Walsh *Truth is Stranger than it used to be. Biblical Faith in a Post-modern age* (London, 1995), p. 58.

Only a response which is lived as well as expounded will be a truly Christian response. Essentially it involves reconnecting the biblical story with the ubiquitous human quest for self-understanding. This narrative involves the four-fold perspective of creation, fall, redemption and eschatology. Only in this way will it become plain that the *fallacy* of equating sexual orientation and essential being is also the *tragedy* of having a truncated and impoverished view of who we are. The primary reference point is our being made in 'God's image', to be understood both in terms of our distinctive creatureliness and our being relationally orientated towards God.³¹ We are both created and confronted by God; and here lies our human dignity and significance. But sin has disorientated us, leaving us distanced from God, distorted in our perceptions and disfigured in our living. The Christian gospel is that our true and intended identity can only be found through the grace of God in Christ, realised now in part (2 Cor. 5:17), one day to be enjoyed in glorious completion (Phil. 3:21).³²

In a recent issue of *Leadership*, the journal ran a profoundly moving autobiographical article by a pastor who had struggled for years with homosexual temptations, often resorting to gay pornography for sexual release. Eventually he sought help and experienced a considerable measure of freedom. He ended the article in this way:

I once believed I was homosexual because of my thoughts and desires. I believed I was stuck in that role and that I should see myself in that way. I have since come to know that God sees me in Christ as a new creation. I am not a homosexual. I am a Christian who struggles at times with homosexual thoughts that have diminished considerably. But that is just part of who I am. It is not my identity.³³

³¹ Colin Gunton, 'To be in the image of God is not to have some timeless quality like reason, or anything else, but to exist in a directedness, between our coming from nothing and our being brought through Christ before the throne of the Father.' *Christ and Creation* (Carlisle, 1992), p. 102.

³² The *St. Andrew Day Statement* puts it very well: 'At the deepest ontological level... there is no such thing as "a homosexual" or "a heterosexual"; there are human beings, male and female, called to redeemed humanity in Christ, endowed with a complex variety of emotional potentialities and threatened by a complex variety of forms of alienation.' *Churchman* 110 (1996), p. 104.

³³ 'My Secret Struggle', *Leadership* 20, no. 4 (Fall 1999), pp. 84-90.

Equally moving is the testimony of Alex Davidson, who describes in his book, *The Returns of Love*, the agonising struggle ‘between law and lust’ as he sought to live a celibate lifestyle. For him hope lies primarily in the eschatological reality.

Isn't it one of the most wretched things about this condition that when you look ahead, the same impossible road seems to continue indefinitely? You're driven to rebellion when you think of there being no point in it and to despair when you think of there being no limit to it. That's why I find it a comfort, when I feel desperate or rebellious, or both, to remind myself of God's promise that one day it will be finished.³⁴

It is at precisely this point of holding a biblical understanding of personal identity, however, that heterosexual Christians run the risk of gross hypocrisy. We cannot encourage those with same-sex orientation to define themselves more broadly, whilst at the same time not accept them on the basis of that fuller definition. All too often we become obsessed with someone's sexual orientation to the exclusion of all else. This leads us on to consideration of our pastoral response.

3. A COMMUNITY OF HOPE – SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND THE LOCAL CHURCH

Before we begin to profile what could be an appropriate Christian response, it must first be acknowledged that, at this point, we are in grave danger of gross self-deception. In spite of extensive writing on the subject of homosexuality and pastoral care, *the reality is* that very few churches have any overt, or at least thought-out, ministry to gay people. At best, it is left to discreet pastoral care by the minister, the professional counsellor, the chaplain to HIV victims or specialist para-church organisations such as ‘True Freedom Trust’. Even less available are role models of churches seeking to offer a compassionate Christian presence to the gay community. It is to be argued here that the most critical need is the existence of loving, accepting *Christian communities that imitate Christ*. Christ's acceptance and transformation of the woman of Samaria (John 4:4-26), his forgiveness – and call to holiness – of the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-12), and his welcome of a ‘sinful woman’ (Luke 7:36-39) stand as *the model* for ministry in this area.

³⁴ Alex Davidson, *The Returns of Love* (Leicester, 1970), p. 51.

A repentant community

It is a grave mistake to perceive the gay and lesbian community as a homogeneous grouping. Whilst there are some who are strident and combative, many people with a same-sex orientation suffer a huge amount of personal pain and anguish. Sharon Kyle, working with a Christian support group for people with a same-sex orientation, comments, 'In my experience, nobody is more aware of the need for forgiveness and the reality of the love of God than the Christian struggling with homosexuality.'³⁵ For many who are Christian, the church has simply added to this pain, often so caught up with defending biblical truth that it has been oblivious to personal need. Christians with same-sex orientation can all too easily have no home in either the gay community or the Christian community. John Stott concludes, 'I rather think that the existence of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement is a vote of censure on the church.'³⁶ Only the church that includes the issue of homosexuality in its prayers of *confession* as much as in its prayers of *intercession* will be in a position to offer effective help.³⁷

An accepting community

There are two fundamental ways the church is called to be accepting. First there is an urgent need to *accept the reality* that in almost every congregation and youth group there will be those struggling with the issue of their sexual orientation. We need to develop a culture of honesty, and through the preaching and teaching ministry of the church raise awareness and give permission for people to talk openly. In some of our churches there is simply no space for sexual issues to be aired, debated and acted on; a case not so much of homophobia as 'homoclaustrophobia'.

Secondly, there must be a genuinely warm acceptance of *those who admit to being of same-sex orientation and Christian*. They need to be affirmed through hospitality and friendship as brothers and sisters in Christ, members of the one Body. A major part of our problem is a lack of understanding of what God's grace really means. We cannot, however,

³⁵ Quoted in J. I. H. McDonald *Christian Values. Theory and Practice in Christian Ethics Today* (Edinburgh, 1995), p. 121.

³⁶ Quoted by John Stott, *New Issues Facing Christians Today* (Basingstoke, 1999), p. 417.

³⁷ Lance Pierson offers a very helpful liturgy of repentance in his booklet *No Gay Areas? Pastoral Care of Homosexual Christians*, Grove Books (Nottingham, 1997), pp. 7-8.

avoid the sharp question of the church's response to those who choose to be sexually active outside heterosexual marriage. Clearly, it is vital that there is no difference of attitude or policy between same-sex transgressions, heterosexual sins and any other unbiblical behaviour, be it gossiping, greed or gambling. We are all broken people seeking God's grace in a journey to wholeness in Christ. Different stances no doubt will be adopted here, but what must not be lost sight of is that the more missionary (and therefore biblical) a congregation becomes, the more there will be those on a genuine journey towards Christ, but who at a given point in time are living openly non-Christian lifestyles. Here there is wisdom in adopting the philosophy of being a church 'open at the edges but committed at the core'. Dave Andrews advocates churches moving from a 'closed-set-perspective' to a 'centre-set-perspective'. The centre is Christ, and more important than doctrinally policing the periphery is facilitating movement towards the Centre.³⁸ Put another way, what is of most importance pastorally is to discern the *orientation of heart*. If someone has a heart for God and therefore a willingness to obey him, then space should be given for that to happen, recognising there may well be times of failure.³⁹ For those determined to live in wilful defiance of biblical standards some form of church discipline seems sadly inevitable,⁴⁰ remembering that all discipline in scripture is meant to be redemptive.

An agape community

What is unacceptable is a Christian community that demands sexual abstinence outside of heterosexual marriage without offering realistic support. This will almost certainly be a costly and demanding experience, running the risk of misunderstanding and disappointment. But if there is any credence in Elizabeth Moberly's thesis⁴¹ that much same-sex attraction in adults is due to same-sex deprivation in childhood, then there is a real need for such deficiency to be made up in accountable, non-erotic

³⁸ Dave Andrews *Christ-anarchy – discovering a radical spirituality of compassion* (Berkhamsted, 1999).

³⁹ Michael Vasey, "The question becomes not "Have you crossed the line?" but "As one struggling sinner to another, are you making progress in your growth in grace?" *Strangers and Friends*, p. 61.

⁴⁰ Some advocate 'optimum homosexual morality', a reluctant acceptance of homosexual cohabitation which is permanent, seen as at least preferable to promiscuity.

⁴¹ Elizabeth Moberly, *Homosexuality: A New Christian Ethic* (London, 1983).

but close same-sex friendships. Mike Starkey calls our generation 'relationally stunted but sexually sated'.⁴² Time for friendship is greatly under-valued in many churches. The existence of accepting home-groups, youth groups and open Christian homes is vital. Churches are notoriously poor at supporting single people, and for most of them the opportunity of marriage lies before them. How much more do we owe support to those whose only prospect may be life-long sexual abstinence? The challenge of offering emotional fulfilment and intimacy within a context of sexual discipline is immense, but one we urgently need to tackle. Only when Christian communities become a genuine alternative to gay clubs will we see a major change, and that is some challenge! As Tom Schmidt pleads, 'It is not the nuclear family we need to promote but the hospitable family. We do not need people who love family values nearly as much as we need families who value love for people.'⁴³ We also must be careful to focus on the *gifts and contribution* of those with homophile tendencies rather than just their problems.

An apologetic community

There is a great need to offer clear teaching on sexuality; as Lance Pierson says 'to preach *about* homosexuality rather than *against* it'.⁴⁴ This is particularly important among our young people where there is so much confusion.⁴⁵ Michele Guinness, in an article entitled 'No sex please, we're Christians' says this:

To judge by many a church teaching programme, we tend to hope people will pick up our moral standards by osmosis! We leave them guessing, and what they tend to pick up are some very negative vibes.⁴⁶

The issue of the church as 'a moral community' is in need of urgent examination. Are there better ways of nurturing moral formation than just preaching the occasional sermon on sexual and social ethics? There is much scope for inter-active seminar-style and small group reflection. Above all, there needs to be an 'embodied apologetic' that both shapes

⁴² Mike Starkey, *God, Sex and Generation X* (London, 1997), p. 45.

⁴³ Schmidt, *Straight and Narrow*, p. 170.

⁴⁴ Lance Pierson, *No Gay Areas*, p. 8.

⁴⁵ In a survey I did with colleagues (Scottish Baptist ministers) only 34% said they had addressed the subject of homosexuality from the pulpit in the last three years.

⁴⁶ Michele Guinness, 'No sex please, we're Christians', *Anglicans for Renewal*, vol. 66 (Autumn 1996), p. 7.

behaviour within the community and offers an integrity to the world outside.⁴⁷ It has been well said that 'Post-moderns can best understand a holy, loving, just, forgiving, life-giving God of grace when they see a holy, just, forgiving, life-giving community founded on the grace of God.... The Church becomes the plausibility structure of the Christian world.'⁴⁸

A healing community

Much controversy still surrounds the issue of the extent to which those with same-sex orientation can expect to become heterosexual through the ministry of counselling and healing prayer. I Corinthians 6:11 implies radical transformation, but is silent on whether this means becoming ex-gay or fully heterosexual.⁴⁹ What is not in doubt is the Church's vocation to be a community of grace and a living anticipation of the future eschatological reality of God's renewal of all things. Only in the soil of forgiveness, acceptance and hope will any of us grow up to be more like Christ, which is the biblical definition of healing.

Soon after Claire had seen me she left the church and began cohabiting with a lesbian friend. Her failure is matched by my pastoral failure. As one struggling person to another, the hope of Christ still beckons us both.

⁴⁷ Stanley Hauerwas argues in his *A community of Character* (Notre Dame, 1981) that the primary ethical agenda of the church is not the betterment of society but the integrity of the church. 'For the service that Christians are called upon to provide does not have as its aim to make the world better, but to demonstrate that Jesus has made possible a better world' (p. 49).

⁴⁸ Dennis Hollinger, 'The Church as Apologetic' in *Christian Apologetics in a Post-modern World*, ed. Timothy R. Phillips and Dennis L. Okholm (Downers Grove, Illinois, 1995), p. 191.

⁴⁹ Paul K. Jewett has a very sobering footnote of the false claims of some respected (American) evangelical organisations claiming full healing of those with same-sex orientation: *Who are we: Our Dignity as Humans. A neo-evangelical theology* (Grand Rapids, 1996), p. 333 fn. 267.

TRINITARIAN ECOLOGY

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One of the major issues confronting the world in the twenty-first century is that of the environment. Human activity has been such that world ecology has been seriously affected, and all indications are that without determined action, concern will move to crisis. Questions of pollution, whether of land, sea or the atmosphere, of the depletion of resources, of the changing patterns of life and the extinction of many species, of erosion, of population growth and of poverty are each of major concern, and more so because they impinge upon each other. Although the disaster foretold by the study led by Meadows in the early 1970s¹ has not yet materialised, the problems addressed by the study have not gone away. Even if the crisis warned against has not yet come, it must be inevitable sooner or later unless there is concerted human action. There may of course be a major catastrophe, such as a meteorite impact or a nuclear war, or God may directly intervene in a dramatic way, but without these, which cannot be presumed upon, action must be taken.

THE NEED FOR MOTIVATION

The major problem here, however, is how such action is to be motivated. The average person is unaware of the wider picture,² is unaware of how personal lifestyle is impacting on the environment, and even if aware, is likely to need further convincing that action must be taken. When, as in the first world, life is comfortable, or, as in the third world, questions of immediate survival are pressing, it is hard to motivate action for the environment if this is seen to worsen the situation of the individual. It is the usual case that concern for self takes precedence over concern for others or for the world, and that immediate benefit outweighs benefit in the future. It takes a powerful motivation to overcome these.

¹ D. H. Meadows, *et al.*, *The Limits to Growth: a Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind* (London, 1972).

² J. Porritt, *Where on Earth are we going?* (London, 1990), p. 21.

Even when the problem of the environment is appreciated, not everyone is convinced that action for it should be taken. It has, for example, been suggested that evolution³ has proceeded as a result of environmental changes,⁴ and so that a stable environment would result in a stopping of the development of the species. Such a feeling must however be treated with caution; there are echoes here of Nietzsche and the Nazi attempt to promote the race by means of the Holocaust. In any case, it must be noted that even if the race were to develop, it would still need a liveable environment, and presumably would want a more pleasant one than would seem to be developing as a result of current human activity. It must also be stressed that the problem of environment is an immediate concern, while any process of evolution would be lengthy.

Furthermore, encouraging an interest in environmentalism is because the ecological crisis is a result of technical progress.⁵ It is because humanity has been successful in the scientific enterprise that the environment has suffered. Continued human progress has become an assumption, despite its cost to the planet and indeed to the quality of peoples' lives, which suffer due to the demands made on them. Industrialism can be dehumanising;⁶ Moltmann can even call progress a fate rather than a hope.⁷ However, the frequent hope is that continued scientific progress will solve the ecological problem without a detrimental effect on lifestyle. There is some substance in this, such as by radio and fibre optics reducing the dependence on copper, and the replacement of CFCs by less destructive alternatives. Nevertheless even this may cause its own problems, such as in regard to the moral propriety of the genetic manipulation of plants and animals for human benefit.⁸

³ This is not to accept the theory of evolution as proven, but to note the influence of a widely accepted theory. In fact, in addition to the problem of relating the theory to the Bible, which is however not insuperable, there are several other problems with it such as its relation to the idea of entropy, its possibility in the available timescale, and even the initiation of life and matter.

⁴ M. Nicholson, *The New Environmental Age* (Cambridge, 1987), p. xii.

⁵ S. McDonagh, *Passion for the Earth: the Christian Vocation to Promote Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation* (London, 1994), p. 159.

⁶ T. Cooper, *Green Christianity: Caring for the Whole Creation* (London, 1990), p. 77.

⁷ J. Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation* (London, 1985), p. 28.

⁸ McDonagh, *Passion for the Earth*, p. 24.

CHRISTIAN MOTIVATION

Many Christians are aware of the problems and are convinced that there must be changes in the way human life is managed. There has accordingly been a flood of books and articles addressing questions of ecology. Such are commendable, but what must be asked is how far such material is really Christian, but could, with minor modifications, belong to any religious tradition, or even to none. Is there such a thing as a distinctively Christian approach to ecology, based upon ideas unique to the Christian faith?

It would even seem to be the case that there are fewer Christians than people as a whole who are convinced that they need to act for the environment. Granberg-Michaelson cites a social study by Kellert of Yale which indicates that increasing commitment to Christianity is accompanied by a decreasing concern for the environment.⁹ There are several possible reasons for this. Firstly, it could well be felt to be an usurping of what is God's responsibility. He, after all, cares for the sparrows. Closely allied to this is the feeling that Christian concern should be relating to God, not the world, which would be paganism. Again, with a similar dualistic undertone, God is seen to give heaven to his people, so that this world does not matter. This is closely allied to the Protestant emphasis that God works primarily in the individual.

Again, the Protestant emphasis on *sola scriptura* must shoulder some of the blame. Where a reliance on the Bible as final authority just involves a demand for specific chapter and verse on every issue, some concerns, such as the ecological, and even doctrines such as belief in the Trinity, are difficult to justify. Indeed, it is noticeable that ecological concern has been more evident within the Catholic tradition. Here, on the one hand, it is true that the Bible indeed says little on the problem directly. There are a few exceptions, such as the action of Noah, Job 38f. and Psalm 104, but these are rare. Even Jesus says almost nothing; despite a rural setting and the use of nature in many parables, he says little about its care. On the other hand, the Bible is often accused of contributing to the problem in its record of the giving of dominion over nature to humanity (Gen.1:28), interpreted as permission to use and to exploit. This may be connected to a dualistic belief in that possession of the image of God, which gives that dominion, is often identified with the spiritual nature of humanity, which it is often felt only humans possess, and which alone is really important.

⁹ W. Granberg-Michaelson (ed.), *Tending the Garden: Essays on the Gospel and the Earth* (Grand Rapids, 1987), p. 3.

Each of these points has been challenged. Humanity was commanded to work in the garden, indicating the value of the physical, and also of ecological care. Moreover, dualism is frequently attacked as a vestige of a Greek worldview, the belief being that the Hebrew notion was more integrated. In keeping with this, it has been suggested that the idea of the resurrection indicates the survival and importance of the body, and that at the same time this world will be re-created, maintaining a measure of continuity, so that its present state is important. Such points naturally deserve more detail than is possible here.

Perhaps more important for motivation are direct biblical statements, and here it is crucial to point out that the Bible speaks in a world very different from the modern, where environmentalism was not a concern. In particular, the 'dominion text' has its own context, one of human impotence and under-population. At the same time, 'dominion' need not imply authority to use and abuse, but as that of a king, authority to be able to serve.¹⁰

Important though these are, it is hardly sufficient to answer critiques of a concern for the environment, but it is necessary to go a step further and to ask if there are positive reasons for Christians to act. Is environmentalism a necessary implication of the Christian faith, even if it may not be found explicitly in the Bible?

This again has several aspects, but of great importance is that common concern for the environment is felt to follow from the understanding of God as creator and sustainer.¹¹ God's love and care for the world should then be imitated by people. Thus McDonagh¹² stresses the significance of the first line of the creed, and Durrell¹³ wonders how Christianity, with such a belief, could have been so ecologically insensitive in the past. This can be developed further, as with Moltmann,¹⁴ who feels that the institution of the Sabbath, resting on creation, implies a command to care for the world. But valid though this is, is it really distinctively Christian?

There are several possible approaches to a really Christian ecology, which cannot be developed here. I have elsewhere tried to take the central

¹⁰ For a fuller explanation, and exegesis of the Genesis text, see my 'Fill the earth and subdue it (Gen. 1:28): Dominion to Exploit and Pollute?' *Scriptura* 44 (1993), pp. 51-65.

¹¹ E.g. F. van Dyke *et al.*, *Redeeming Creation: the Biblical basis for Environmental Stewardship* (Downers Grove, Illinois, 1996).

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 148.

¹³ L. Durrell, *State of the Ark* (London, 1986), p. 12.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 277f.

affirmation of the Christian faith, that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, and to suggest that such identification with humanity in incarnation must have ecological implications.¹⁵ As God incarnate, Jesus played a unique part in reconciling people to God; this can be related to ecological concerns. More than this however, the purpose of the incarnation was for salvation. This, as with the Greek word *sozo*, must include the nuance of preservation as well as of re-creation. The world, as well as people, will experience a transformation in continuity.

This can then be taken a stage further, because flowing from an affirmation of the deity of Jesus came the doctrine of the Trinity. Such does have some parallel in other religious traditions, but essentially it is a unique Christian teaching. Now this has been neglected for various reasons, but if God is indeed Trinitarian, this should impinge upon every aspect of belief, and affect every human activity, which will include attitudes to, and action connected with, the environment. It is striking that a major work on ecology from a Christian perspective, such as that of Santmire,¹⁶ contains almost no reference to the Trinity.

THE TRINITY AS GOD'S MODEL

It is perhaps significant that while Christianity has been accused of ignoring environmental concerns, even of causing ecological damage, this has usually been connected to a simple monotheism such as by Moltmann,¹⁷ who however suggests that a more accurate understanding of God as Trinity would not do this.

White¹⁸ is quite correct to suggest that monotheism drives a wedge between a transcendent God and nature, and so devalues the latter. However the basis of a Trinitarian view is that while transcendent, God involved himself fully in creation by sending his Son. This immediately gives a value to the world. It is also by God's immanence that we know that the Trinity exists, and then by our immanence to the world that care for it comes.

¹⁵ D. T. Williams, 'The Christian and the environment: prophet, priest and king', *Evangelical Quarterly* 66 (1970), pp. 143-58.

¹⁶ H. P. Santmire, *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia, 1985).

¹⁷ J. Moltmann, 'The ecological crisis: peace with nature?' *Scottish Journal of Religious Studies* 9 (1988), pp. 8,9.

¹⁸ L. White Jr, 'The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis', *Science* 155 (1967), p. 1205.

Some strands of Christian thought do relate God's action to the world in a Trinitarian way. Based upon texts such as Colossians 1:15f. or 1 Corinthians 8:6, it is possible to see God the Father as the ultimate source of all that is, and God the Son as the agent by which creation was enacted. Then to complete the Trinity, God the Holy Spirit may be viewed as the fount of life. Differences are found as to whether such belief is a real reflection of a division of labour in the Godhead, or whether, emphasising the unity of God, such are really just 'appropriated' to the three persons, and that all activity of God in the world is an undivided action of the entire Trinity.

What is clear is that the action of the Trinity, specifically in the incarnation, gives evidence for God's love and care of the world. God acts by participation as well as by command. 1 John 4:10 asserts that love for humanity is demonstrated by the sending of God's Son and by his death; the inference is that otherwise we could not be sure that God does in fact care for us. We could be dealing with a capricious God, delighting in the suffering and pain of humanity, even at the same time protesting his love. We could be dealing with an impotent God, really loving, but making empty promises that he is unable to fulfil. We could be dealing with a deistic God, happy to create and to do nothing more at all. It is the incarnation, so the Trinity, which gives evidence that this is not the case, and even that this love is not just to humanity, but is for the whole world (Rom. 8:22). Not that this latter can really be disputed; humanity is so much a part of the world that love for one cannot be expressed while ignoring the other. Such then gives a stronger motivation for love and care for the world by humanity than just an affirmation of creation.

Christian theology traditionally sees the purpose of the incarnation in reconciling people to God. If this is the case, it follows that it also enables reconciliation between human beings, harmony as God intended, and presumably then also with the rest of creation. If the biblical explanation for the environmental problem is human disobedience (as Genesis 3),¹⁹ dividing not just humanity from God, but humanity from humanity, and also from nature,²⁰ then the ultimate solution is by reconciliation with God.

This latter point is strengthened by the sending of the third Person, the Spirit, for it is by this power that peace and harmony is in fact

¹⁹ L. Osborn, *Guardians of Creation: Nature in Theology and the Christian Life* (Leicester, 1993), p. 88.

²⁰ F. A. Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man: The Christian View of Ecology* (Wheaton & London, 1970), p. 67.

achieved. The life-giving Spirit of God gives relationship in created things.²¹ A good example of this is in Christian healing, where the Spirit's action restores health and harmony to a diseased body. Likewise the action of the Spirit may be seen as giving life to a diseased creation. Such action is again evidence of God's desire for harmony within the wider creation, and again a motive for Christians, led by the Spirit, to do what they can to that end.

The doctrine of the Trinity however provides far more than evidence of God's care for the world, and a motivation of human care for it, however much this would otherwise be little more than empty hope. If the world is a creation of the triune God, what may be expected is that this trinity would be reflected in the way things are. Not only does God's action as the economic Trinity provide an example for human action, but God's very being as the immanent Trinity also has ecological implications. Such is not an unreasonable idea; if two people do one job, it will inevitably be done differently, and the difference can be related to the nature of those individuals. Who they are affects the nature of the work that they do. There is thus an ancient idea of the *vestigia Trinitatis*, a belief that vestiges or marks of Trinity should be visible in the world. Thus Bonaventure (1221-74), for example, sees a Trinitarian unity in the whole created order; creation reflects God throughout.²² Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) sees creation as a replica of the Trinity.²³ Several suggestions have been made in this regard, such as a tree being roots, trunk and branches, or water in a spring, river and lake, or the inherent threeness of dimensions or of the states of matter. The classic is of course the attempt of Augustine of Hippo in his *de Trinitate* to see the Trinity reflected in the human mind. This may be taken to imply that the actions of the Trinity in the world are like the workings of the mind, not visible; this is in keeping with the famous *opera Trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt* (external works of the Trinity are undivided). This would make the Trinity irrelevant to the world outside the mind.²⁴ The whole idea of the *vestigia Trinitatis* has quite naturally been severely criticised. For example, very often an artificial threeness has been forced, and if a desire

²¹ J. Moltmann, *The Spirit of life: A Universal Affirmation* (Minneapolis, 1992), p. 225.

²² Santmire, *The Travail of Nature.*, p. 100.

²³ E. J. Fortman, *The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, 1982), p. 289.

²⁴ C. E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh, 1991), p. 106.

had been to see a duality or a quaternity, such could equally well have been put forward. Certainly, as Barth stresses, it would seem to be illegitimate to use evidence of threeness in the world as evidence for belief in the Trinity. The doctrine has to have a different basis.

Yet even if it is not valid to deduce the doctrine from the world, it is acceptable to use the nature of the world to illustrate it. By all accounts, the Trinity is hard to understand, and illustrations from nature are of great value in aiding comprehensibility. More than with any other doctrine, except perhaps Christology, parallels and analogy are of great value, and are legitimate if God is the creator.

Now in this case, it is also valid to work in the opposite direction as well. If it is valid to see the way in which the world works as illustrative of the Trinity, then the idea of the Trinity may be used to deduce what the correct operation of the world should be. Thus as humanity is a part of the created order, it is likely to relate to that order in a way parallel to the relationships within the Trinity.²⁵ 'One has not to understand God from what he has done, but the things he has done, from God.'²⁶ Although humanity, more than the created world, is in the image of God, the world should still reflect the nature of the Trinity to some extent.

It is probably too much to expect to see every facet of Trinitarian belief as reflected in ecology. Nevertheless, the essential nature of the Trinity is to be found, and is indeed then valuable in understanding how the world should interrelate. The classic belief is that there is one God, who exists as three coequal persons; this essentially means that within the Godhead there is distinctiveness, but at the same time there is harmony, even unity. These are indeed to be found in the created world. Although, as is common in the West, emphasis has been placed on substantial pictures of the Trinity, the vestigia idea can also be applied dynamically or relationally. On the one hand the world is replete with the distinctions between what is living and what is not, between material and spirit, between different species, and so on. On the other these interrelate in a variety of ways. Life-forms depend on others, and on the inanimate world for their survival, and indeed there is a majestic unity to the whole of creation. As with the Trinity, both distinctiveness and oneness are essential, and neither may be affirmed at the expense of the other. It is this which lies at the heart of correct ecology.

²⁵ Cf. R. Elsdon, *Greenhouse Theology: Biblical Perspectives on Caring for Creation* (Tunbridge Wells, 1992), p. 45.

²⁶ E. Jüngel, *The Doctrine of the Trinity: God's Being is in Becoming* (Edinburgh & London, 1976), p. 6.

This essential point may well be stressed by reference to the great Trinitarian heresies. Heresy may be seen as good and valuable when it prompts the development of correct belief. This happened in the case of belief in God, and can be paralleled in the development of correct attitudes to the created order.

At the very crudest level, Trinitarian belief is then the affirmation of both distinctiveness and oneness. It is thus a rejection on the one hand of an excessive distinctiveness without oneness which manifests itself as tritheism, and on the other hand of an excessive oneness without distinctiveness, manifesting as belief in a simple monad. Both of those beliefs are present in the world and are rejected by Christians, and at the same time, the ecological parallels are present, and should then also be questioned from a Christian perspective.

TRINITARIAN INTER-RELATEDNESS

Tritheism is a lack of appreciation of inter-relatedness. The core reason for belief in the Trinity is the New Testament affirmation of the divinity of Jesus (and then of the Holy Spirit), but held in relation to his own affirmation of the Fatherhood of God. This however immediately gives a relationship between the divinity of Jesus and that of his Father, but the Old Testament insistence on monotheism means that there is a deep unity between the persons. If this is put into ecological terms, it means that the value of each living species is to be respected, and even that there is value in the inanimate creation as well. This is because the various forms of life and of the material environment have a deep interrelationship. Such relating may be seen as perhaps even more fundamental than being itself.²⁷ In fact this can be put even more strongly; the three persons of the Trinity do not just interrelate, but interpenetrate (*perichoresis*), a feature which may be understood as fundamental to correct Trinitarianism.²⁸ This is a participation in each other paralleled in the world.

This means that there must be extreme caution in human activity lest the very delicate interrelationships are damaged. When industry results in acid rain, or when the Amazon rainforest is felled indiscriminately, the effect on the atmosphere presents a danger ultimately to humanity itself.²⁹ A further example of this problem is the use of DDT to control

²⁷ Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 11.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

²⁹ See B. McKibben, *The End of Nature* (London, 1990).

insect pests, resulting in the build-up of the chemicals in other forms of life to their detriment, and ultimately to that of humanity.

It may also be noted that ecological damage may be traced to excessive human consumption. This has a variety of causes, but one major factor is excessive purchases beyond those required by need, often to impress others, so ultimately caused by a lack of correct relationships with others. Similarly pollution may occur due to a lack of concern for others. Although older societies sought equilibrium, those which strive for growth cannot avoid ecological damage, leading ultimately to their own destruction, a point applicable to modern socialism as much as to capitalism.³⁰

TRINITARIAN ONENESS

The opposite extreme to tritheism is so to affirm the unity of God that there is no distinction between the Persons. This is not an affirmation of God's oneness as in Judaism or Islam which then demands that Jesus is not divine, but is such a unity as is consistent with that divinity. It could well follow that all people, indeed all animals, plants and other material also manifest divinity to some extent. After all, even Jesus, quoting the Old Testament (Ps. 82:6), said that his hearers could be called gods (John 10:34). Is it possible that all are divine, and in this all is united? Such ideas are common, for example appearing in the modern New Age movement, a form of pantheistic monism, in which people seek to realise their inherent divinity to a greater extent.³¹ In this case there is no fundamental distinction between Christ and anyone, even anything else. Ecologically, this means that all is valuable, all is sacred, a short step to the veneration of sacred cows and, albeit a bit inconsistently, to vegetarianism. Concern for the environment, the protection and enhancement of life follows naturally from this view; each creature is of value.³² It is hardly surprising that much ecological concern comes from a pantheistic worldview;³³ sometimes the whole world is seen as an integrated, living organism, the *Gaia* hypothesis.³⁴ But if all are divine, or all are just material, the differences between individuals tend to be lost, especially where the stress falls on overall unity and harmony.

³⁰ Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, pp. 24, 28.

³¹ D. R. Groothuis, *Unmasking the New Age* (Downers Grove, Illinois, 1986), pp. 18, 22.

³² Osborn, *Guardians of Creation*, p. 58.

³³ Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man*, p. 23.

³⁴ Groothuis, *Unmasking the New Age*, p. 115.

However, Trinitarianism, while affirming the full divinity of all three persons, also distinguishes clearly between them. Jesus, while himself divine, could still refer to his Father as 'my God' (John 20:17). The Persons are each God, but they are not the same. Likewise a human being and other animals, even plants, all share life, and human beings, with all creation, share a material nature, even being made of the same essential elements, yet there is a distinction which must be made. People are not just animals, not just material, but in the very diversity is something of value. If all are divine to some extent, the implication may well be, not that each is valuable, but on the contrary, that specific individuals, even species, are expendable, as deity is also manifested elsewhere. As Schaeffer³⁵ points out, in pantheism the whole has meaning, but individuals lose value. But if diversity in itself is of value, people cannot be content to witness the extinction of species, currently running at about one per day,³⁶ or even worse, at another estimate, one hundred per day.³⁷ This means that whereas, to cite one example, it is hard to appreciate that rhinos have a great contribution to make to ecological relationships, it is still a tragedy when they are hunted to the brink of extinction for their horns. The rhino has value not just because it exists as part of an expression of a pantheistic 'one', not even because it was created and was good, but from the value of diversity. This point is well appreciated in the secular world: the 1982 UN World Charter for nature says that 'every form of life is unique, warranting respect regardless of its worth for man'.³⁸

INTER-TRINITARIAN RELATIONSHIP

Tritheism or pantheism, while they may be viewed as consistent with an affirmation of the divinity of Jesus, have hardly been a threat to Trinitarian doctrine, indeed they can hardly be viewed as Trinitarian heresy at all. Despite this, their ecological equivalents are present and need to be rebutted, although it may well be suggested that as with any 'Christian' tritheism or pantheism, adherence to them is not so much from a deliberate choice, but from a lack of a real consideration of the issues. Trinitarianism has however been threatened by two more significant

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

³⁶ R. Ambler, *Global Theology: The Meaning of Faith in the Present World Crisis* (London & Philadelphia, 1990), p. 44.

³⁷ Osborn, *Guardians of Creation*, p. 17.

³⁸ J. Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God* (London, 1981) p. 77.

heresies, and it would seem that these two also have ecological parallels that have had a much wider acceptance and thus need a more definite rebuttal. In the case of the Trinity, history witnessed a long battle against them, a battle which is by no means over, insofar as both constantly reoccur in various guises. The same is true with ecology.

Here the parallels between the Trinity and the workings of the world need to be expanded. It is really inadequate to speak of the Trinity just in terms of distinction and inter-relatedness without defining a little more closely how the relationships occur. Here Trinitarianism speaks of the generation of the Son from the Father and of the procession of the Holy Spirit. This means that the activity of both the Son and of the Holy Spirit is derived from the Father. The parallel to this is a common feature of the world, where every living being exists in a derived form, and even much inanimate material comes from other sources, deriving from them by chemical or nuclear processes. This dependence has other facets as well, such as dependence due to eating, of physical support such as in roots of trees, and then when the continued existence of an animal or plant depends absolutely upon the choice of another.

A further very significant factor is that the inter-Trinitarian relationships are stable and eternal. The world likewise should ideally be stable, with sustainable use of resources, and production of waste only at a level able to be absorbed by the ecosystem.

Inter-Trinitarian relationships are a process, and likewise ecological relationships. God is life, and in the world life depends on the constant cycling of resources. These are held in balance, with no Trinitarian Person being dominant; ecological problems arise due to lack of balance, resulting in lack, as when species become endangered, or excess, requiring culling or weed control.

ECOLOGICAL ARIANISM

Perhaps the major threat to orthodox Trinitarianism arose in the fourth century with Arianism, and lingers today in groups such as the Jehovah's Witnesses. Although this affirms the divinity of Jesus, its stress falls on the absolute monotheism so clear particularly in the Old Testament. The solution presented is that only the Father is God in the full sense. The divinity of the Son is not eternal, but is created and so derived from the Father, which means that the Son is inherently subordinate to the Father, so that his divinity is of a lesser degree. As is well known, the result of this was a protracted theological debate, intertwined with problems of language and of politics, until the Nicene affirmation that Father and Son

(and Holy Spirit) are of the same substance, so coequal and co-eternal, could be affirmed without denying a difference between them.

Ecologically, the Arian subordination of the Son to the Father is paralleled in the dominion of humanity over the rest of the created order. Just as the Son is always obedient to the Father (John 6:38), so humanity has authority over the rest of the created order. Warrant for this is usually seen in the 'creation mandate' of Genesis 1:28. This is often taken as divine sanction for human use of the environment, so permission to use and exploit, and even to abuse. The verse has also been taken as a divine command to breed as much as possible. Both aspects have had an obvious and enormous effect upon the environment.

Apart from the underlying philosophical ideas which prompted the emergence of Arianism, part of the justification for its system was the clear references to subordination in the New Testament. The classic text is John 14:28: 'the Father is greater than I', and there are several other texts commonly adduced. Not the least bit of evidence is the fact that the Son is called a 'Son', so logically less than the Father.

Ecologically also, the subordination of the rest of creation to humanity can also be justified by reference to humanity being in the image of God (Gen. 1:26). Other animals, and the rest of creation, not being in the image, are therefore subordinate.

Now the biblical references to the subordination of the Son can well be seen as consistent with equality of essence between Father and Son. In the incarnation, the Son assumed a state of humiliation in order to relate fully to the world (Phil. 2:7), but this need not be seen as an inherent subordination. As for the fact of his being a Son, this also is not inherent subordination; in the human case, a father and son are absolutely equal as regards their essence of humanity.

In the same way, humanity and the rest of creation indeed share an equality of essence. All are made of the same material elements, and all living things share life. This latter is particularly clear in that human beings, as other animals, must feed on life in order to survive. They cannot eat the inanimate, or even things that have been dead for too long a period of time. The only distinction here is that the Genesis account distinguishes the life of people from that of other animals and plants; whereas the account speaks simply of their creation in Genesis 1, which includes humanity, the account in Genesis 2 distinguishes between the material creation of the first man and the breathing into him of life (Gen. 2:7). This latter could however simply be an elaboration of

the general process, or could be interpreted as the giving of a spiritual capacity.³⁹

If there is this equality of essence, humanity should not be seen as enjoying fundamental superiority over the rest of creation but should again be conscious of interdependence. Schaeffer⁴⁰ thus distinguishes between sovereignty and dominion. It is perhaps significant that the dominion of Genesis 1:28 comes immediately after the implication of divine plurality, so interdependence, of Genesis 1:26. Dominion is to be seen, not in the sense of the rule of a superior over an inferior, but that of a state of service. This may indeed be seen when the first man exercised dominion; this was expressed in the naming of the animals (Gen. 2:19).⁴¹ A further example of this may be seen later in Israelite history. In contrast to the hegemony exercised by Mesopotamian and Egyptian kings, the Israelite king was appointed as a servant. It was not a case of the people existing to benefit the king, but the king to serve the people.

This point should be clear in reference to humanity being in the image of God. This does not mean a dominant position of superiority, but of service. The New Testament makes it plain that the image of God in the full sense is Christ; and certainly he did not come to dominate from a position of superiority, but on the contrary 'the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many' (Mark 10:45).

Perhaps part of the reason for the striking omission of the idea of the image of God after the three initial references in Genesis (1:26; 5:1; 9:6), was that the ancient near East in general applied it to the king,⁴² and that it was then interpreted as rule rather than service.

Thus far from a state of superiority, paralleled to the Arian heresy, the relationship of humanity to the rest of creation is that of orthodox Trinitarianism. Particularly if the plural 'let us make' in the context of the 'dominion mandate' (Gen. 1:26) is accepted as referring to the Trinity, then the exercise of dominion must be Trinitarian. Here there is an absolute equality in essence, but a distinction in role. Just as the Son was sent to do the will of the Father, and so serves the Trinity, and indeed the three Persons serve each other, so humanity and the rest of creation also

³⁹ H. Blocher, *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis* (Leicester & Downers Grove, Illinois, 1984), p. 77.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁴² D. J. A. Clines, 'The Image of God in Man', *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968), p. 83.

have an equality in essence, but a relationship of mutual service. Dominion is never arbitrary rule, but is given for the benefit of those 'dominated'.

ECOLOGICAL SABELLIANISM

Historically, whereas the fear of the Western church was always of Arianism, the Eastern church tended to be prone to this because of the fear of Sabellianism. Despite their fears, this latter was never such a challenge to Trinitarianism as was Arianism. The heresy of Sabellius was an attempt to safeguard the unity of God, and it did this by suggesting that the one God manifested himself in different modes at different times. God then effectively changes between modes, the Father becoming the Son and then becoming the Holy Spirit. The extreme implication of this is of patripassianism, which means that the Father himself suffered and died. Because of such difficulties, and because there are several clear biblical references, such as the baptism of Jesus, where the three persons occur together, Sabellianism only ever enjoyed limited support. It was never a real alternative to Trinitarianism.

The essential idea is one of single entity operating in various ways depending on the circumstances. This is quite attractive in an ecological context, where the occurrence of particular life forms is seen as dependent upon their suitability for a particular set of circumstances such as climate and availability of food. Less clearly the case, it has been suggested⁴³ that the very emergence of life was due to the occurrence of a favourable set of circumstances. Then the modern diversity is due to the changes due to changing environments. Obviously evolution is very consistent with this idea.

Quite naturally, the complementary idea is to change the nature of reality by changing the circumstances. Now this is what human activity does to a large extent. We plant seeds, irrigate and remove unwanted vegetation; we selectively breed animals to encourage desirable traits; even building houses can be viewed as local climatic modification. All these, and others, are done in response to the circumstances.

Now it would seem that God as Trinity has done something similar, acting in a way different from the Old Testament by the incarnation of the Son and in the sending of the Spirit. (Gal. 4:4).

Human activity has always to be relevant to circumstances. Technology, for example, has to be such as is appropriate to the setting;

⁴³ D. Bridge, *God of Science, God of Faith* (London, 1988), p. 49.

much modern equipment cannot work in the third world due to lack of the required infrastructure, such as the provision of trained personnel, availability of spares or even a stable power supply. A second very pertinent example is that the 'dominion mandate' of Genesis 1:26 is sometimes taken as a command to multiply. This may have been appropriate when the earth was empty, but surely not today. Moss⁴⁴ comments that the earth is now full, the command has been fulfilled.

Activity as relevant to circumstance does not mean that it is legitimate to take advantage of a situation for personal gain. Examples of this are legion, such as unloading banned or expired drugs onto a third world situation because they cannot be used in the first, or similarly of disposal of toxic waste in the third world. Most pertinently, Liberation theology has drawn attention to the exploitation of the poor, possible because of their circumstance, the lack of choice of alternatives. God's action, on the contrary, as in the incarnation, was of positive help even at great cost to himself. This change in God's activity, as others, was a response to circumstance.

However Sabellianism does not just say that God changes the way he acts in accordance with circumstances, but that he changes in himself. It hardly needs to be said that change is a major feature of the modern world. Particularly due to technological innovation, the modern world is very different from that of the last century and even of a few decades, even years ago. Now it is not this change that has generated the current spate of ecological problems, but the current state of the world which gobbles resources, generates pollution and erosion and stimulates growth in population; the modern, however, world effectively puts its faith in continued change which will then enable these problems to be overcome. There is some evidence for such a hope; towards the end of the last century a major ecological problem in large cities was the disposal of the droppings of horses used for transport. Then came the development of motorised transport, and with this change, the problem simply disappeared. It is then a hope that there will be continued change and problems such as the depletion of oil reserves, and the pollution of the atmosphere and of the oceans, will equally become irrelevant. The basic idea is that one situation can be changed to another. Ecological damage is then not serious. A similar hope as regards population growth is that the third world, where the great growth of population is being experienced, will also change its attitudes, and then experience the same demographic transition as has resulted in numerical stability in the developed world.

⁴⁴ R. Moss, *The Earth in our Hands* (Leicester, 1982), p. 38.

More than the hope of the world being based on continued change, its very ethos is similarly based. Much modern technology is based on the principle of planned obsolescence so that a particular machine is built for a specific life expectancy, with the intention that it be replaced by a newer model. Such a philosophy naturally compounds the ecological problem of resource usage, as rather than repair components, the whole machine has to be replaced. Similarly the capitalist economic system depends on continual change, especially expansion.

If the hope of the world is pinned so firmly upon change, then human effort is expended in order to promote such change. It is here that problems occur. Firstly of course the development of new technology in itself is liable to exacerbate existing problems or cause new ones. Examples of this are legion, such as the development of hybrid grain, which gives high yields, but is prone to disease and requires extra feeding, requiring the use of expensive and polluting chemicals. Secondly the temptation is to work for change in ways such as genetic engineering or more crudely in the removal of unwanted elements such as in the extermination programmes of Nazism.

The other side of Sabellianism is that of the unity of the Godhead. There is no divinity other than that manifesting at a particular time. The parallel to this is that outside of the ecosystem there is then no other reality; this would indeed be the prevalent modern assumption. This means that change is the only solution. In contrast, Christianity sees divine intervention, from 'outside' the world, as the solution to human problems. Thus God sent his Son to die and to rise to give salvation, the Holy Spirit is given to enable a relationship with the transcendent God. More pertinently, when Christ died, that was not deity in total dying, so that the world would still be maintained, and that God could raise Christ from death.⁴⁵ Patripassianism has always been a major problem for Sabellians!

Thus the Christian solution to ecology is not that of change as such, but of divine intervention. There is no solution in the world as such without God's action for it.

⁴⁵ Acts 2:24,32; Rom. 6:4,8:11; 1 Cor. 6:14; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20. Although a few texts, notably John 2:19 and 10:17, would appear to indicate that the resurrection was Jesus' own act, these must be read in the context of the others, and also of John 2:22 and 10:18. The resurrection could perhaps be seen as a joint act, but this would also then imply a distinct Father.

As with Arianism, there is a sense in which Sabellianism is correct. The Father may not change into the Son but he does impart his being to the Son. Life is transferred, the life of the Father is received by the Son, and likewise the Holy Spirit receives by procession. This however involves no loss to the giver. Likewise in the world, life is transferred and changed continually, usually by the process of eating. In the world this is, however, as in the divine prototype, part of the overall process of equilibrium. Life participates in food chains, but all, as species, survive. What Sabellius proposed is something different; the generation of the Son was at the cost of the being of the Father, so there was total loss. Sabellian ecology is also at the cost of total loss, and in that way it is wrong.

CONCLUSION

Arianism and Sabellianism parallel the commonest attitudes to the environment. On the one hand the attitude of domination and on the other the process of change are both in a sense valid but when taken to extremes are detrimental to the environment and so ultimately to human beings themselves. Schaeffer⁴⁶ significantly points out that much ecological damage is caused by human greed and haste; willingness to spend more money or take more time would solve many of the problems. It could well be suggested here that Sabellianism results from an incorrect view of time, while Arianism is a distorted view of value. A correct view of the Trinity gives a correct perspective on each and so when paralleled in the environment would benefit rather than harm it. Indeed, a Trinitarian attitude, respecting the value of every part of the environment, its diversity and interdependence, will benefit each part, and so ultimately humanity.

The challenge of the Trinity is not only of understanding it, which is ultimately impossible, but of ordering life and worship in a way consistent with it. So often in practice, as a doctrine it is ignored with its implications. The challenge for Christians is rather to work out the practice on the grounds of a Trinitarian understanding and so develop a distinctive approach to life and its problems.

⁴⁶ Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man*, p. 83.

EXTRATERRESTRIAL LIFE AND THE COSMIC CHRIST AS PROTOTYPE

MARTIN THOMSON, CHURCH OF SCOTLAND, KIRKOWAN AND
WIGTOWN¹

Whether or not we are alone in the universe is a question of ancient pedigree which has attained contemporary urgency. It has been restated more frequently during recent years, and the theological implications of the answer are not lost on many both within and outwith the domain of professional science. The physicist Paul Davies makes an attempt to address some of these issues in his book *Are we Alone?: Implications of the discovery of Extraterrestrial life*.² In the preface to his book he writes:

There is little doubt that even the discovery of a single extraterrestrial microbe, if it could be shown to have evolved independently of life on Earth, would drastically alter our world view and change our society as profoundly as the Copernican and Darwinian revolutions. It could truly be described as the greatest scientific discovery of all time.³

Similar sentiments concerning the profound impact the discovery of extraterrestrial life would have on humanity can be found expressed wherever they arise. Consider the following from an editorial in *The Economist*.

If life were found elsewhere, it would change humanity's view of itself forever. No longer the lone, brave experiment on a little planet, but a cosmic commonplace – and the ultimate knockdown. Copernicus told people they were not at the centre of the universe. Darwin told them they

¹ The author is grateful to John Jefferson Davies and Brian Stewart for their comments on an earlier draft of this essay.

² Paul Davies, *Are we Alone: Implications of the Discovery of Extraterrestrial Life* (London, 1995).

³ *Ibid.*, p. xi.

were not divine creation. Now the risen apes are hearing that the same evolutionary process that created them may have gone on elsewhere.⁴

Setting aside the journalistic manner in which this is expressed, the point remains the same, that there are profound philosophical and religious implications in the existence of extraterrestrial life.

Christians believe that humankind has a special relationship with God; we were fashioned in the image of God. The existence of alien beings of equal or superior intellect, capable of self-reflection and questioning their place in the cosmos, is seen by many to represent a challenge to that assumption. This challenge is made all the more acute when we relate it to the incarnation of Christ and to the doctrine of redemption. Christ became a man to save men and women, which fact appears to many thinkers unjustifiably to sideline extraterrestrial life (should it exist) and at the same time illegitimately and arrogantly place inequitable value on terrestrial life in general, and Homo Sapiens in particular. To put the issues succinctly, in the words of Ernan McMullin the philosopher and historian of science at Notre Dame University, 'Could one still take the Christian doctrines of incarnation and redemption seriously if there were millions of developed civilisations dotted throughout the universe?'⁵

Indeed McMullin believes that a failure properly to address these issues has serious implications for the credibility of the faith: 'a religion which is unable to find a place for extraterrestrial persons in its view of God and the universe might find it difficult to command terrestrial assent in the days to come'.⁶

The purpose of this article is twofold. First, by giving a sketch of the issues involved, to sponsor discussion and initiate some further thinking on the part of Christians. There is a danger that the theological outlook of evangelical believers is implicitly built on the assumption that human beings are unique and alone in the universe as intelligent creatures. This may well be the case, but if so it is surely important that we are clear why it is the case.

Secondly, it is not well known that in the 1830s, Thomas Chalmers published a collection of sermons under the title 'A series of discourses

⁴ *The Economist*, August 10 1996, p. 13.

⁵ Ernan McMullin quoted in John Jefferson Davis, 'Search for extraterrestrial intelligence and the Christian Doctrine of Redemption' in *Science and Christian Belief* 9, no. 1 (April 1997), p. 22.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

on the Christian revelation viewed in connection with the modern Astronomy'.⁷ Chalmers suggested that just as the effects of the cross were not diminished by time, neither are they restricted by space. Just as we, who live two thousand years from the cross, may be recipients of its redemptive power, so those who live two thousand light years away may be no less blessed. This thought has been further developed by John Jefferson Davis to whom we will later refer, and whose own ideas we hope to develop by reference to Christ as 'Prototype' in relation to humanity.

SCRIPTURAL SILENCE

It should be noted at the outset that there are no explicit references to extraterrestrial life within the pages of Scripture. However, it would be wrong to conclude that scriptural silence necessarily implies non-existence. There are many matters which do not fall within the orbit of immediate biblical concern, but whose existence is beyond doubt. Scripture was not written as a scientific encyclopaedia and should not be treated as such. In particular, we will refer later in this article to the creation of human beings in the image of God, taking the Genesis material as specifically relating human beings to God in the context of terrestrial life. It is not the burden of the Genesis narrative to deal with other life forms on other planets (should they exist), but the absence of that concern does not necessarily imply that the issues raised are 'non-questions' (though they may be). The opening chapters of Genesis are God-centred, presenting to us a personal, unique, perfect and self-revelatory God and revealing how he relates to the creatures he created in his image. Alien life is not a concern in Scripture but it would be a mistake to read any significance into the absence of reference to the existence and significance of life on other worlds. Arguments from silence are notoriously weak.

Marcus Dods in his commentary on Genesis, published in 1882, makes the following pertinent remarks on Genesis 1.

If any one is in search of accurate information regarding the age of the earth, or its relation to the sun, moon, stars, or regarding the order in which plants and animals have appeared on it, he is referred to recent text-books in astronomy, geology, and palaeontology. No one for a moment dreams of referring a serious student of these subjects to the Bible as a

⁷ Thomas Chalmers, *A Series of Discourses on the Christian Revelation Viewed in Connection with the Modern Astronomy* (New York, n.d.).

source of information. It is not the object of the writers of Scripture to impart physical instruction or to enlarge the bounds of scientific knowledge. But if anyone wishes to know what connection the world has with God, if he seeks to trace back all that now is to the very fountain-head of life, if he desires to discover some unifying principle, some illuminating purpose in the history of this earth, then we confidently refer him to these and subsequent chapters of Scripture as his safest, and indeed his only guide to the information he seeks.⁸

One would not look to the Bible for evidence of ET's existence. At the same time this is far from suggesting that Scripture is irrelevant. Indeed, the very opposite is the case for believers. Whilst Scripture cannot be expected to deal explicitly with the detail of each modern scientific discovery, it does provide us with relevant principles which, in turn, shed light on issues raised by that ongoing scientific endeavour. This then enables us to come to a Christian mind and view in connection with matters highlighted by each new discovery. In recent times the scientific enterprise has yielded some significant results in connection with the search for extraterrestrial life. To these we must now turn before we then search for relevant scriptural insights by way of response.

THE 1995 AND 1996 SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERIES

1995 and 1996 witnessed two areas of scientific speculation and discovery which have some bearing on the question as to whether we are alone in the universe and which have invested the issues arising with even greater urgency.

First, there was the evidence for the existence of Jupiter-sized planets circling other sun-like stars.⁹ On October 6, 1995, Michel Mayor of the Geneva observatory announced the discovery of a planet one-half to two times the mass of Jupiter orbiting very close to the star 51 Pegasi, a star found some 55-60 light years from our own sun (next door in astronomical terms). During subsequent months this discovery was verified and there have been an abundance of similar announcements. This evidence being genuine, and it appears to be accepted as such, the question as to whether our own planetary system is unique has been

⁸ Marcus Dods, *The Book of Genesis* (Edinburgh, 1882) p. 1.

⁹ For a more detailed account of the search for, and discovery of, such extra-solar planets see Ken Crosswell, *Planet Quest* (New York, 1997). Crosswell helpfully brings together much of the research from scientific journals in an accessible form.

answered – in the negative. There are apparently other planets orbiting other suns located in other corners of our galaxy; and if there are Jupiter-sized planets then there seems every reason to expect there to be smaller specimens comparable in size to our own.

In fact, smaller planets have already been detected orbiting pulsars. Pulsars are the dense remnants of ancient stars which, having completed their cycle, shed their atmosphere in a supernova, leaving a collapsed core. In 1991 Wolszczan and Frail announced the discovery of a planet 3.6 times the mass of earth orbiting a pulsar. The reason this, and similar discoveries of smaller planets orbiting pulsars, has been largely overlooked is because such planets have been irradiated by their sun going supernova, and are therefore not likely to harbour any surviving life.¹⁰ They are to be viewed more as astronomical fossils. However the existence of even the remnants of planets resembling the size of earth is further evidence that our own solar system is not unique.

Many astronomers believe that our solar system condensed from a dust cloud that formed, and then surrounded, our star in its youth. The colliding and coalescing of bodies in this cloud led to the emergence of planets. They speculate that similar dust clouds surrounding young stars elsewhere may well be the early stages in the formation of planetary systems. Examination of a composite image of the Orion nebula from the Hubble telescope suggested the existence of no less than 160 'new-born' stars possessing just such clouds. However, suggestive as such evidence is, it is not nearly as compelling as the direct claim to have detected planets themselves.¹¹

¹⁰ The strange neglect of the work of Wolszczan and Frail serves as an indicator of how much this field of research is driven, at least implicitly, by a search for extraterrestrial life.

¹¹ Such is the seriousness with which NASA has responded to these discoveries that it is planning what has been described as a 'squadron of space observatories' designed to detect and image earth-like planets. These include the Space Interferometer (SIM) scheduled for 2005 and the Terrestrial Planet Finder (TPF) in 2010. The latter will be designed to determine whether the chemical 'signature' of planets found by the former provide circumstantial evidence for the existence of life. NASA initially funded SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) by founding Project Columbus whereby thousands of radio telescopes around the world 'eavesdrop' on thousands of target stars in the hope of detecting radio signals of artificial origin. However NASA has since withdrawn from that project, which now continues independently as project Phoenix. NASA

The existence of such planets is an important step in the quest for life elsewhere in the universe. But even if this was a universe replete with billions of planets, this is not the same as there being life elsewhere.

Secondly, in August 1996 a group of scientists led by David McKay, of America's National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), suggested that a Martian meteorite found in 1984 in the Allan Hills of Antarctica carried evidence of extraterrestrial bacteria. NASA recognised the importance of this discovery and no less an individual than President Clinton made the announcement before the World's press. The President went on to remark that if this discovery proved genuine then humankind's relationship to the cosmos would be redefined.

It ought to be made clear that this evidence has been much disputed in the scientific press ever since, with no resolution to the controversy in sight. Many scientists believe that the meteorite holds no such conclusive evidence and they are quick to offer alternative explanations. The professional and popular scientific press have run many articles debating the pros and cons of the findings of McKay and his group.¹²

EVOLUTIONARY OPTIMISM

These two discoveries in late 1995 and 1996 certainly fuelled the interest in extraterrestrial life and its detection by scientific means. They added significantly to a growing expectation that such life will be discovered. However, there are certain philosophical assumptions which underpin that optimism and which ought not to be overlooked. It is widely, and erroneously, assumed that the Darwinian model of the evolution of the species has yielded a likely model and theory for the development of life. This is testimony to the extent to which Darwinism has become something of a cultural and intellectual icon in the modern world. Michael Denton has argued that, in the absence of verifiable evidence to substantiate its claims, Darwinism's highly theoretical and metaphysical nature has been forgotten. He describes how it has been elevated to the status of a self-evident axiom. He writes:

Once a theory has become petrified into a metaphysical dogma it always holds enormous explanatory power for the community of belief... The overriding supremacy of the myth has created a widespread illusion that

has stated that it is now focussing its efforts on its search for 'habitable planets'.

¹² Cf. Peter Bond 'Jury still out in case of the Martian meteorite', *Astronomy Now* (February 1999) pp. 24-5.

the theory of evolution was all but proved one hundred years ago and that all subsequent biological research – paleontological, zoological and in the newer branches of genetics and molecular biology – has provided ever-increasing evidence for Darwinian ideas. Nothing could be further from the truth. The fact is that the evidence was so patchy one hundred years ago that even Darwin himself had increasing doubts as to the validity of his views, and the only aspect of his theory which has received any support over the past century is where it applies to macroevolutionary phenomena. His general theory, that all life on earth had originated and evolved by a gradual successive accumulation of fortuitous mutations, is still, as it was in Darwin's time, a highly speculative hypothesis entirely without factual support and very far from that self-evident axiom some of its more aggressive advocates would have us believe.¹³

The acceptance of Darwinism as a dogma and its penetration into our thinking surely contributes to the optimism among many searching for extraterrestrial life. It is assumed that evolution explains how life developed on earth and supposes that the same processes are likely to have occurred elsewhere. That is to say, the theory of evolution is assumed to have validity far beyond anything Darwin conceived, and far beyond anything that is scientifically justifiable. Darwin certainly argued a theory purporting to explain how one species might, by process of mutation and natural selection, transmute into another species. However, Darwin himself appears to have been very aware that a theory for the origin of the species falls far short of explaining the origin of life. He recognised that his theory could not explain how life began in the first place, how the first living thing appeared. Darwin wrote: 'I have met with no evidence that seems in the least trustworthy, in favour of so-called spontaneous generation.' Darwin also commented 'You expressed quite correctly my views where you said that I had intentionally left the question of the Origin of life uncanvassed as being altogether ultra vires in the present state of our knowledge.'¹⁴ That situation has not changed. There is no known mechanism by which the chemical compounds of the so called 'primeval soup' could develop into the massively complex building blocks of life. It is noticeable that this yawning gap in established scientific theory is largely overlooked.

¹³ Michael Denton, *Evolution: A theory in crisis* (Maryland, 1986) pp. 76-7.

¹⁴ These quotations are found in Paul Davies, *Fifth Miracle: The Search for the Origin of Life* (London, 1998) pp. 40, 53.

It is necessary, at this point, to clarify some issues concerning how scientists understand life to have begun. It should be noted at the outset that scientists look for naturalistic explanations for the emergence of life. It is not the purpose of this article to enter into whether or not they are correct to do so. We are simply exploring some of the assumptions being made and avenues being explored in current research.

It has commonly been thought that life emerged totally by accident. The traditional biological view is that life is a complete freak, a surprising fluke. The traditional evolutionary understanding of the emergence of life views it as being the chance concatenation of molecules in the primeval soup to form the building blocks of life. The problem for this theory lies in its inherent improbability. The chances of complex molecules forming by chance have always been calculated as vanishingly small. The obvious conclusion is that life is a statistical fluke and that the universe, outside of our own planet, may well be utterly sterile.

By way of contrast, it is also commonly affirmed that since the universe is so vast, its enormity will overcome the improbability of the chance emergence of life. This is based on a misunderstanding and is wrong. It is certainly true that the universe is now perceived to be mind numbingly large. Our own immense Milky Way Galaxy includes over two hundred billion stars plus interstellar gas and dust, all revolving around the centre. The Milky Way Galaxy is about one hundred thousand light years across (one light year is practically 10 trillion km, or 6 trillion miles). The Milky Way Galaxy is only one of billions of galaxies that exist to the edge of the observable universe, some 15 billion light-years away. With such an enormous universe, so the argument runs, there must surely be the expectation that even a chance event could occur with some regularity. However, if the size of the universe is staggering, it is nothing to the odds against atoms coalescing in the correct manner to produce the building blocks of life. Life (or perhaps more correctly, terrestrial life) is based on very complicated molecules which have meticulously crafted structures. Even in the simplest of organisms the DNA contains millions of atoms, and those atoms are ordered in a very precise manner. Change that order only slightly and the organism is threatened.

To illustrate the problem, consider the hundreds of thousands of specialist proteins upon which life is based. The odds against producing just the right proteins by chance have been calculated to be $10^{40,000}$ to 1

against.¹⁵ In the light of this, the British astronomer Fred Hoyle once remarked that the odds against the chance and spontaneous assembly of life was as likely as a whirlwind sweeping through a junkyard and producing a fully functional Boeing 747.

Many scientists are therefore looking elsewhere in their search to explain the emergence of life. The recent developments in the mathematics of complexity theory have been deployed by those seeking to argue that complexity is a naturally occurring phenomenon. According to this theory there is an inherent tendency in the way of things to produce complexity. This being the case, life is likely wherever there are the conditions necessary. However, the 'laws of complexity' sought by some have not yet been articulated, but that has not discouraged those who are puzzled as to why the universe appears to have been programmed to produce life, perhaps from the very beginning.¹⁶

Notwithstanding the fact that, to date, there is no satisfactory theory explaining the emergence of life, there is a remarkable confidence among the scientific community at large that there exists life elsewhere in the universe. Not only are considerable private resources, not to say scientific careers, being deployed on Project Phoenix (the search for signals from other civilisations), but also a fundamental motivating principle of much of NASA's exploration of our own Solar System and beyond is geared towards the search for life.

This optimism rests on two assumptions. First, the false assumption that somehow Darwinism holds the key to understanding the emergence of life (an assumption which looks more religious than scientific), and second, that an alternative explanation is likely to be found, one which may rest on as yet to be formulated 'laws of complexity'. Indeed, for those scientists most aware of the gaps in our knowledge of how life began there is a hope that the discovery and study of extraterrestrial life may well provide clues as to how life began on earth.

CHRIST AS COSMIC PROTOTYPE

Turning now from science to theology, there are several points to make. First of all we ought to draw a distinction, so far blurred, between

¹⁵ I have depended on Paul Davies, *Fifth Miracle*, chapter 3 for these statistical odds.

¹⁶ Cf. John D. Barrow and Frank J. Tipler, *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle* (Oxford, 1986); and M. Michael Waldrop, *Complexity: The emerging science at the edge of order and chaos* (London, 1993).

extraterrestrial life and extraterrestrial intelligence.¹⁷ Microbes on Mars would not be as problematic for believers as would the arrival of intelligent interstellar spacefarers. If our own Solar System is found to contain primitive life forms, perhaps within a sub-surface sea on Jupiter's moon Europa or amidst the frozen organic wastes of Saturn's moon Titan,¹⁸ or were evidence for life to have previously existed on Mars to be confirmed, then Christians might regard such life as being embraced within the domain of stewardship bestowed on humanity by God following the creation.

It follows from the nature of humanity created in the image of God that it exercise dominion over the created order. There is no reason to imagine that the created order need be restricted to our home planet. It is following the declaration in Genesis 1 of the creation of man in his image that God then issues the command: 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'¹⁹ As a consequence of being made in the image of God humankind is to subdue the earth, and that not by brute force or tyranny but as God's steward. That dominion is expressed in Genesis 2:19-20 in the naming of the animals. Henri Blocher echoes the conclusion of many that in this we see the beginnings of science:

[T]he bestowal of names undoubtedly reveals at the same time the insight of knowledge. The man must in fact study the character of the animals which pass before him, in order to see whether any one of the birds or animals can bring him the company he desires. The name he gives summarises his conclusion.... The picturesque, almost humorous, scene suggests a rudimentary kind of science, the means of man's domination over nature. The French philosopher Condillac (1715-80) held that science was simply an advanced state of language. Language in any case is

¹⁷ This is not a distinction which will be recognised by many scientists. If an evolutionary model of life is accepted, then it will be assumed that the existence of microbial life holds forth the possibility of the evolution of higher life forms. Microbes on Mars would then be regarded as evidence making extraterrestrial intelligence more likely.

¹⁸ Two places concerning which there continues to be intense speculation as regards the possibility of their harbouring life.

¹⁹ Genesis 1:28, NIV.

the form and condition of science, and in language the act of naming is the first and indispensable operation.²⁰

To this last comment we may add that the language of science is largely that of mathematics, and one of the deeply perplexing mysteries confronting many scientists is the simple fact that the universe is so strangely susceptible to mathematical description. For example the much sought after 'theory of everything' which has become something of a 'holy grail' among physicists would be a mathematics which would effectively relate the geometry of space-time with the fundamental forces.²¹ Such mathematics would likely be unsurpassed in beauty and elegance. But the truly awe inspiring aspect of such a theory would be that it would further reveal the universe to be susceptible to mathematical language which human beings are capable of expressing and understanding. As John Polkinghorne has noted, 'Mathematics is the abstract key which turns the lock of the physical universe.'²² The intricate patterns freely invented by the minds of Pure Mathematicians are found to correspond exactly with the physical structure of the world. The intelligibility of the universe is something so familiar that we tend to miss its importance.

The intelligibility of the world calls for an explanation. Einstein said that the only incomprehensible thing about the world is that it is comprehensible. The explanation will not be given us by science, since science assumes the world's intelligibility as part of its initial act of faith.²³

Polkinghorne explores these issues as he pursues his thesis that science and theology are complementary explorations of reality. However, in the light of the Genesis revelation this intelligibility ought not to surprise Christians. It follows from our being made in God's image. It is our dominion exercised in 'naming' that which is around us.

This dimension to, and expression of, the nature of humankind created in God's image ought to make us excited about the exploration of space and what it may discover, rather than defensive and reactionary. If there is

²⁰ Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning* (Leicester, 1984) p. 91.

²¹ Perhaps the best known publication on this topic is Stephen W. Hawking, *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes* (London, 1990).

²² John Polkinghorne, *One World* (London, 1986). (See also his essay 'Rational discourse' in *Reason and Reality*, London, 1991, pp. 20-33).

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

primitive life out there then that may be taken to mean that there is more for us to 'name', and the dominion bestowed on us as a consequence of our nature as 'the image of God' is more spacious than we may at first have thought. Having said that, this hardly applies to extraterrestrial intelligence which, were it to exist, raises the very questions about incarnation and redemption with which we began this article. To this more refined possibility we now turn.

Secondly, if a more advanced form of life exists elsewhere in the universe then it falls into a different category to that discussed above. Human beings are distinctive because of our bearing the image of God. There has been some debate and even divergence over the precise meaning of the 'image of God'. Blocher helpfully summarises these as falling under four types.²⁴

First that the 'image of God' is a reference to our spirituality:

Mankind shares in the spirit as does God himself: that is the implicit point of the comparison. In the created spirit, the ancient writers make *reason* the 'hegemonic', or predominant part.²⁵

Sometimes this interpretation has also incorporated an alleged distinction in meaning between the word 'likeness' and the word 'image' in Genesis 1:26: 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness'(NIV). Such an interpretation often regarded 'image' as referring to natural qualities, such as reason and personality, whilst 'likeness' referred to the supernatural graces. Older commentators certainly acknowledged such a distinction, and thus Calvin writes 'The greater part, and nearly all, conceive that the word image is to be distinguished from likeness.' However he concludes, 'As for myself, before I define the image of God, I would deny that it differs from his likeness.'²⁶

Similar conclusions are reached by most modern commentators such as Kidner²⁷ and Wenham.²⁸ However, what remains of this line of reasoning is the conviction that something spiritual is meant, although, as Wenham notes, it is hard to pin down precisely what this means.

A second interpretation of the 'image of God' focuses on what we have already suggested follows from it, namely the exercise of authority

²⁴ Blocher, *In the Beginning*, ch. 4 and especially pp. 79-82.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

²⁶ John Calvin, *The Book of Genesis* (London, 1965; reprint of Calvin Society edition of 1847), p. 93.

²⁷ Derek Kidner, *Genesis* (Leicester, 1967), p. 50.

²⁸ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (Waco Texas, 1987), p. 30.

and dominion over the created order. The image is then the rule of God over his universe particularised through the rule of humankind. Wenham adds weight to this interpretation by his insistence upon interpreting the Genesis text in the light of ancient near eastern ideas. His book is an attempt to interpret the theological relationship between Genesis 1-11 and oriental ideas on the one hand and Genesis 1-11 and Genesis 12-50, the rest of the Pentateuch and modern thought, on the other. He argues particularly strongly that the oriental context to which the book first spoke crucially informs the original intention of the biblical writer, since what is offered is essentially an alternative world view:

An examination of the relationship between Gen. 1-11 and earlier oriental tradition sheds much light on the background to biblical thought and highlights the distinctiveness of its message. Though Genesis shares many of the theological presuppositions of the ancient world, most of the stories found in these chapters are best read as presenting an alternative world-view to those generally accepted in the ancient Near East. Gen. 1-11 is a tract for the times, challenging ancient presuppositions about the nature of God, the world, and mankind.²⁹

Wenham then applies this in interpreting the phrase 'image of God', for he notes that both Egyptian and Assyrian texts refer to the king as the image of God, a train of thought continued in Psalm 8. This lends weight to the understanding that what is intended is a view of man as God's vice-regent on earth.³⁰

Thirdly, Luther related the 'image of God' to the original righteousness that was lost at the fall. Thus, in Luther's understanding, the image would have been tarnished and shattered at the entrance of sin and exist now only in broken form. Redemption then effects a restoration of this image. This interpretation drives a wedge between the believer and the unbeliever, which Luther may himself have acknowledged when he distinguished a private image that was lost from a public image that was preserved.

Finally, Karl Barth makes a distinctive contribution to this debate when he asserts that the 'image of God' may be understood as referring to human sexuality. By this he means that:

it should be understood that the difference male/female calls humankind to a personal, face-to-face relationship, as God himself exists in face-to-face

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

relationship (hence the divine plural 'let us make'). The image of God is fulfilled, ultimately, only in Christ's face-to-face relationship with the church.³¹

Blocher suggests that we need not choose between these and provides an extensive discussion of how the image of God might embrace all these features. Wenham reaches a similar conclusion, although argues that the strongest case is made for the view that the divine image makes human beings God's representatives on earth, although he then perceptively adds, 'But this merely describes the function or the consequences of the divine image; it does not pinpoint what the image is in itself.'³²

Turning to the concept of extraterrestrial intelligence, we would imagine that such intelligence might conceivably carry many, if not all, of these characteristics. Any extraterrestrial civilisation found living on a planet orbiting another star would, as far as our imagination can conceive of such intelligent life, bear exactly the same characteristics in terms of spirituality, dominion, moral righteousness and sexuality.

The purpose here is not to explore exhaustively the varied nuances of interpretation associated with the 'image of God', but simply to illustrate that across the range of emphases presented by mainline theology, there is nothing to preclude the possibility of that image being manifest in alien life.

As already noted above, many believe that Christianity is particularly unable to accommodate the existence of extraterrestrial intelligence. This inability, it is said, centres on the incarnation whereby God became a man. If the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity was necessary to effect our salvation, what of extraterrestrial life – non-human, but intelligent life (bearing the characteristics listed above)?

This charge, I suggest, is based on a misunderstanding which effectively conceives God to be in the image of human beings, rather than the reverse. Scripture makes it clear that human beings were made in the image of God. But it is no less clear that Christ was the prototype of which human beings were the type. When Christ became a man he assumed the type of his own prototype. That is to say, for want of a better phrase, the priority of being lies with Christ.

This perhaps leaves the door open for the possibility of there being other 'types' derived from that single prototype. Whilst there is no

³¹ Blocher, *In the Beginning*, p. 81.

³² *Ibid.* pp. 31-32.

explicit reference to such life in Scripture, as we argued above, scriptural silence is not necessarily significant.

The description of Christ as 'prototype' is intended not to conjure images of his being one Platonic ideal of which we are imperfect replicates, but rather to reaffirm the biblical portrait of the unique, divine Christ as the eternal Word who is the agent of all creation and yet whose image is found manifest in humanity. That image may be uniquely reflected in men and women on our own planet but the suggestion being made here is that there appears to be no conclusive biblical evidence to preclude that same image being found in alien life. Far from undermining the Christian faith, such a possibility, neither supported nor precluded by Scripture, may be seen further to glorify Christ by revealing a universe teeming with life bearing his image. Christ is the original, unique defining prototype of which we are types, and of which, conceivably, ET may be a type.

Having argued thus, it should be emphasised that this is, for the moment, pure speculation. To date, there is absolutely no accepted and verifiable scientific evidence for the existence of any life outwith our own biosphere.

COSMIC CHRIST

It is in the light of this description of Christ as Prototype that we might draw attention to the suggestion made by Thomas Chalmers, and developed by John Jefferson Davis, of the cosmic Christ. Chalmers, as already noted, had no problem in regarding the terrestrial events of the incarnation and death and resurrection of Christ as having soteriological significance beyond this planet, and beyond the confines of the human race. Chalmers contested the view that the Christian Gospel need necessarily be terrestrially-bound:

The whole of the infidel difficulty proceeds upon the assumption, that the exclusive bearing of Christianity is upon the people of our earth; that this solitary planet is in no way implicated with the concerns of a wider dispensation; that the revelation we have of the dealings of God, in this district of his empire, does not suit and subordinate itself to a system of moral administration as extended as is the whole of his monarchy.³³

Chalmers argued that the revealed existence of angelic beings and their place in the divine plan and purpose of salvation is evidence that the

³³ Chalmers, *A series of Discourses*, p. 178.

saving significance of Christ's work is far wider in scope than to be merely terrestrial:

I have adverted, it is true, to the knowledge of our moral history, which obtains throughout other provinces of the intelligent creation. I have asserted the universal importance which this may confer on the transactions even of one planet, in as much as it may spread an honourable display of the Godhead among all the mansions of infinity.³⁴

Chalmers appears to suggest in some places that God may have come to independent arrangements in respect of his relationship to other beings in different corners of his universe,³⁵ a line of thought echoed in the writings of C. S. Lewis.³⁶ However, his more considered argument is more overtly biblical and regards humanity as the centre of a great cosmic conflict played out on the stage of this planet, the significance of which extends far beyond our home world.

Whilst Chalmers draws heavily upon biblical testimony to the conflict involving 'principalities and powers' and the role, and defeat, of Satan and his hordes, John Jefferson Davis develops the thought of events on earth having wider significance by drawing from Colossians 1:15-20.³⁷

Davis argues that Colossians 1:15-20 has received 'inadequate attention' in connection with these issues. It is a passage, after all, which portrays redemption as being cosmic in scope, with repeated and insistent use of the word 'all', 'all things' and 'everything'. Davis proposes that this alone is evidence that the

redemptive effects of the atoning sacrifice of Christ are not limited to humanity, but extend in some way to the entire created order. The apostle stresses in the most emphatic way the absolute supremacy of Christ in every realm of space, time, and human experience. This supremacy of Christ is asserted in creation (vv. 15,16), providence (v. 17), incarnation

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 183-4.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, from p. 186.

³⁶ C. S. Lewis, 'Religion and Rocketry' in *Fern-seeds and Elephants* (Glasgow, 1975). This essay was originally published in April 1958 in the *Christian Herald* under the title 'Will we lose God in outer space?'

³⁷ Davis, 'Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence'.

(v. 19), reconciliation (v. 20), resurrection (v. 18b), and in the church (v. 18a).³⁸

As we consider this passage it is obvious that it was written against the background of a society which was, from our perspective, 'pre-scientific'. The cosmic scope of the passage would embrace, in the minds of the original readers, principalities and powers. They had no concept of the vastness of the universe peppered with galaxies (a twentieth-century discovery). It might reasonably be questioned whether it is legitimate to take something written against the background of such a limited world view and apply it to a modern scientific world view. Can we take what was applied first to 'principalities and powers' and properly reach conclusions about possible extraterrestrials in far away galaxies? However, the thrust of this passage is the assertion that there is no domain over which Christ does not hold sway. There is no corner of reality left unaffected by the potency of his victory on the cross. It seems, therefore, perfectly legitimate to apply that principle to our modern, scientific view of reality and reach the conclusions Davis does concerning the cosmic scope of Christ's atoning work.

Davis then draws upon the concept of 'federal headship' as found articulated in traditional reformed covenant theology to provide a framework to understand how Christ's atoning work could be related to the reconciliation of any alienated extraterrestrials.³⁹ It is made clear in the Westminster Confession of Faith chapter 8 that the redemptive benefits of the death of Christ were not limited by time.

Although the work of redemption was not actually wrought by Christ till after his incarnation, yet the virtue, efficacy, and benefits thereof, were

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

³⁹ For the purposes of this article we set aside any discussion as regards the extent of the Fall and whether extraterrestrials might have maintained 'original righteousness'. Interested readers may wish to consult Polkinghorne's essay 'The fall' in *Reason and Reality* (London 1991) in which he argues 'on the view I am proposing, the whole universe is fallen physically but only part is fallen morally. If there are other life-bearing planets elsewhere in the cosmos it is conceivable that their inhabitants may be as innocent of moral evil as were the dwellers in C. S. Lewis's Perelandra' (pp. 100-101).

communicated unto the elect in all ages successively from the beginning of the world.⁴⁰

Equally, the Confession draws on the biblical emphasis of salvation being for the elect. That is, Christ's mediatorial work is effective for 'all those whom the father has given him'. Davis invites us to interpret this on a cosmic scale.

Davis concludes his argument:

the Pauline Christology of Col. 1:15-20 makes it unnecessary to postulate additional incarnations or atonements in order to conceptualise the possible reconciliation of any alienated extraterrestrials elsewhere in the universe. The once-for-all incarnation and death of Christ on the Cross has already provided the basis for such a reconciliation (vv. 19, 20).⁴¹

CONCLUSION

Drawing together the strands of the above arguments, we conclude that the concerns raised by the possible existence of extraterrestrial life need not be the insurmountable problems they appear at first, and certainly do not present the knockdown arguments against Christianity that some of the Faith's critics would have us believe. Perhaps 'our God is too small' and as a result we have lost sight of the cosmic Christ and thereby allowed the Christian faith to be portrayed as being vulnerable to scientific discovery of life elsewhere. Equally, we must recall to mind the supremacy of Christ in creation whereby he is the prototype and humanity the type. It is our all-too limited and anthropocentric view of Christ which requires challenging. Chalmers provided us, in a largely forgotten work, with a useful corrective to an earthbound theology, and Davis helpfully fills this out by reminding us of the remarkable cosmic dimensions of Christ's supremacy as expounded in the Christology of Colossians 1:15-20.

As history moves into the third millennium, it seems likely that human beings will be increasingly escaping beyond the confines of the earth. Scientific exploration of our solar system and beyond moves ahead apace. At the same time commercial exploitation of space is also proving to be an increasing driving force behind space science. We have noted

⁴⁰ Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), ch. 8.

⁴¹ Davis, 'Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence' p. 34.

above that 1996 proved to be a significant year in terms of scientific discovery. It was also a decisive year in terms of the economics of space, for in that year the world-wide commercial revenues in space transportation for the first time surpassed governments' spending.⁴² Space is now big business. The coming decades will likely see manned exploration and settlement upon Mars, driven not simply by scientific curiosity but by commercial necessity. The new century of technological advance and scientific discovery will open up a new set of theological and ethical issues which will demand a degree of both scientific and theological literacy. That agenda will be set by the world for the church, and it remains for the church to take up that challenge and do so in service of him who is, 'the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation'.⁴³

⁴² Tim Beardsley, 'The way to Go in Space' *Scientific American* (February 1999) pp. 61-77.

⁴³ Colossians 1:15, NIV.

REVIEWS

The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind

Mark A. Noll

IVP, Leicester, 1994; 274pp., £19.99; ISBN 0 85111 148 3

'The scandal of the evangelical mind seems to be that no minds arise from evangelicalism.' This startling censure emerges from Mark Noll's serious book and comes as a '*cri du coeur* on behalf of the intellectual life' by one 'who... still embraces the Christian faith in an evangelical form'. The book excels in tracing an evangelical intellectual history in the United States, with some useful sidelights on developments in Europe. Noll's argument is that, from the middle of the eighteenth century, American Evangelicalism has existed primarily as an 'affectional and organizational movement'. This great strength has also spelt doom to its intellectual power. The intellectual system which it did adopt in the following period had weaknesses, fatally overlooked because of the preoccupation with building a stable society. In due time the power of public finance, Darwinianism and scientific naturalism finally undermined the combination of faith, social idealism and 'common-sense Baconian science'. The flaw became an intellectual disaster with the arrival of fundamentalism and friends. These were mere survival strategies in the face of new crises and challenges. It became impossible to find strength and succour for the evangelical intellectual life in the 'self-assured dogmatism of fundamentalism'.

Noll's handling is surefooted, clear and balanced. He holds experience and intellect together but is concerned that the intellect is now the Cinderella of human values in Evangelicalism. Evangelicals seem to fare best in philosophy and politics but very badly in science. Where Christian thought has scored successes, it is more likely to have come from traditions other than evangelical.

Probes for a practical answer focus primarily on the state of the evangelical centres of scholarship in the United States. The critique is novel for tackling not just the evangelical hobby there of theology-bashing, but also the insularity of theology from other academic disciplines. However, he is over-generous to the British scene in comparing it favourably with his own. It is true, as he says, that theology

is often taught here in the universities and therefore in the physical presence of other disciplines. However, many evangelical theological scholars still work in the training colleges and in a manner not so different from that in the American seminary scene. There are only a few specialist postgraduate centres arising which are dedicated to the carrying of a Christian worldview into non-theological areas of learning. Noll's lament about the isolation of theological scholars from their evangelical counterparts in other fields applies in the United Kingdom. He can take little comfort or direction from us, though he is probably right to see in the highly independent Christian education scene in North America a major contribution to the insularity of many Christians there.

However, Noll thinks that the answer does not lie in solving a merely practical problem through such things as organising and fund-raising ('the sort of tasks that are the glory of the evangelical enterprise'). The main task is that of changing attitude. We need, Noll argues, to have the *intention* to use the mind for Christ.

True. But how will we bring about that key-shift in intention amongst enough people to make a difference, if not by long-term programmes dedicated to promoting it? Noll's book is a start, but a whole generation, or more, needs re-education and re-inculturation. It is going to be a long job, but the more people read books like this one, the more chance there is of at least beginning an intellectual renaissance in Evangelicalism. And, in any case, we shall have to break out of narrow evangelical sectionalism within world Christianity if we wish to see a revolution in the academy worthy of the depth and potential of Christian faith.

Roy Kearsley, South Wales Baptist College, Cardiff

Calvin and the Atonement

Robert A. Peterson, Sr

Christian Focus Publications, Fearn, 1999; 154pp., £9.99; ISBN 1 85792 377 4

This publication by Dr Peterson – a revised edition of his 1983 monograph on John Calvin's doctrine of the atonement – was written, he says in the preface, to fill a perceived gap in Calvin studies, being the first book to present that doctrine as Calvin did.

In the opening chapter Dr Peterson reminds us that Calvin traces the ultimate source of Christ's work to the eternal councils of the triune God, and to the free love of God in Christ Jesus. Subsequent chapters deal with the Incarnation, Christ's three-fold office of prophet, king, and priest, (the order in which the *munus triplex* occurs in *Institutes* 2:15) and the six

biblical themes of the work of Christ. These themes are: Christ the obedient second Adam, the victor, the legal substitute, the sacrifice, our merit, and an example in his death on the cross.

The *Institutes*, mainly Book 2, chapters 12-17, and his New Testament commentaries, are copiously cited in order to bring out the comprehensive nature of Calvin's teaching.

In this new edition Dr Peterson has taken into account the books and articles written on this subject between 1983 and 1999. That material has provided him with new insights which have been incorporated into the text, as well as causing him to rewrite the conclusion, in which he modifies his judgement as to Calvin's position on the extent of the atonement. Dr Peterson is not persuaded that it is proper to claim Calvin as an advocate of particular redemption, his conclusion being that it is uncertain what position Calvin would have taken if he had been living at the time of the debates over the extent of the atonement.

Each of the book's ten chapters are comparatively short and easily read, all of them carrying extensive foot-notes for those who wish to follow up any particular theme, and most of them having a final paragraph admirably summing up the topic dealt with. The theme 'Christ the victor' in Chapter 5, for example, is summed up in these words:

Calvin's second theme of the atonement portrays Christ as the divine-human victor who defeats sin, death, the world, and Satan chiefly through his death and resurrection and thereby gains a great victory for every believer.

Dr Peterson is a competent guide through Calvin's thought on the atonement, on the whole letting the great man speak for himself, and no doubt sending those who read this book back to the *Institutes* and the commentaries themselves.

In many ways it might be helpful if the last chapter of this book were read first. In it the author not only summarises Calvin's understanding of Christ's saving work, but in describing him as a pastoral theologian he is describing his own approach and the spirit in which he wrote this book.

Would that theologians today would use their academic tools to make God's Word serviceable to Christians. Too frequently theologians write only for other theologians and this is one reason why Christian book stores are stocked with books that are long on popular appeal but short on substance. Calvin calls us to both intellectual integrity and practical application.

Dr Peterson has both heard and heeded that call of Calvin in the writing of this admirable book.

John Scoales, Edinburgh

Augustine Through The Ages

Allan D. Fitzgerald (general editor)

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1999; il+902pp., £45; ISBN 0 8028 3843 X

As far as I am aware, this is the only encyclopedia devoted entirely to the teachings, writings and influence of Augustine of Hippo. Authored by an international team of some 140 Augustine scholars, the entries cover the following categories:

(i) Augustine's individual writings. The publicity material says that all of Augustine's works have an entry, although I have not verified this on account of the epic nature of such an exercise. I recently had to give a talk on Augustine's *City of God*, and certainly found the article on it extremely helpful. In the nature of the case, the quality of articles will inevitably vary in a work like this, but here at least is the student's opportunity to find out in summary form what Augustine says in his various writings – especially useful for those which have not been rendered into English. It seems incredible that there are still gems of patristic theology unavailable in English, not to mention many of the great works of 16th and 17th century Protestant theology written in Latin and as yet untranslated. Someone should set up a centre dedicated to abolishing this painful anomaly.

(ii) Augustine's relationship with the personalities, events and movements of the patristic era – entries, for example, on Monnica, Ambrose, Jerome, Manicheism, Novatianism, Pelagianism. Perhaps the most interesting are entries that deal with figures like Athanasius, with whom Augustine had no contact (indeed, the great bishop of Alexandria died 13 years before Augustine's conversion). What evidence is there that Augustine read the various writings of his various patristic predecessors? What did he make of them? How does their outlook relate to his? The encyclopedia offers much food for thought here.

(iii) Augustine's teachings on specific theological, philosophical, moral, political, aesthetic and other topics. Some of these are obvious; no doubt readers will quickly turn up the entries on the Trinity, original sin, grace and predestination. Others are less obvious and more intriguing: Augustine on abortion, contraception, friendship, imagination, marriage, memory, music, nature, prayer, preaching, society, time, war and women. Here is a cornucopia of patristic wisdom (and possibly folly, in some

respects). But then, even Augustine's follies can be more profound and fruitful than what usually passes for modern wisdom.

(iv) The relationship of the post-Augustine Church to Augustine. What did later generations do with the Augustinian legacy? This seems the weakest section of the encyclopedia. There are no articles, for example, on John Wycliffe or John Huss, two of Augustine's most ardent and influential medieval disciples, and (amazingly!) nothing on Puritanism or Jonathan Edwards. This may reflect a Roman Catholic bias in the encyclopedia. The Protestant Augustinian tradition fares badly in *Augustine through the Ages*, not really getting beyond a couple of (decent enough) articles on Luther and Calvin. This is irony at its richest, for where does Augustine's vision of sin and salvation live on most vibrantly? Not in the modern Roman Catholic Church, which since the Second Vatican Council has largely embraced a Semi Pelagian or Pelagian view of the nobility of fallen human nature and the possibility of anyone's being saved by their own sincerity. We must turn to conservative Lutherans and the Reformed tradition to discover living Augustinianism today.

This last criticism apart, I recommend this encyclopedia as an outstanding one-volume introduction to the life and work of the Western Church's greatest father.

Nick Needham, Highland Theological College, Dingwall

The Rhetoric of the Reformation

Peter Matheson

T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1998; x+267pp., £24.95; ISBN 0 567 08593 7

The Reformation was, among other things, a movement that relied upon an appeal to a wider public for support, thus making it as much a popular movement as an academic one. In this respect it is set apart from previous movements for reform of the Church (popular or otherwise), which – because of the inability to make such a broad appeal – were restricted to the place(s) wherein they had their origin and restricted as well in the breadth of their appeal. It goes without saying that the advent of the printing press was the decisive factor that accounts for much of the difference: the appeal for change could now be broadcast widely by means of the printed literature aimed at the popular level – pamphlets, broadsheets, and the like.

None of this is particularly new, but the implications of an appeal to a broader reading (or listening) public have yet to be fully explored, and the way in which writers of the printed literature intended for this audience pursued their goals remains to be thoroughly examined. Peter Matheson's work is a helpful (and very readable) contribution in this regard. His aim is

to consider the Reformation not as a theological phenomenon but rather as a literary one, and to consider its character as an appeal to 'public opinion' – a concept which he argues is a distinguishing feature and creation of the age. In view of the fact that only a small portion of this public could read, the majority relied on someone else to read out loud the pamphlets, and one of the features of this literature which Matheson underscores is the way in which it reflects spoken discourse, especially the sermon. It was addressed to its audience in a direct way, involving them as it were in the debates of the age and thus creating in them a sense of participation that was a key feature of its appeal and impact.

The heart of the book is securely grounded in the literature that Matheson sets himself to study, and provides access to figures that (apart from Luther) are not as well known as they deserve to be with respect to the subject under consideration. He confines his discussion to the 1520s, which was the heyday of pamphlet literature, and he selects for examination those writers whom he knows best – Martin Luther, Andreas Karlstadt, Thomas Müntzer, and Argula von Grumbach. As the translator of Müntzer and Grumbach, Matheson is eminently qualified to handle this material in particular and more broadly the German literature of this era. The strength of the book is in its attention to the language used by these writers in appealing to the broader public. He discusses in turn dialogues (a critically important form of literature for the early Reformation), the language employed by the writers he studies, the polemical aspect of the literature, and dialogue as a concept and tool for composing differences. Where the book focuses on the concrete aspects of the subject, it is at its best. The introductory chapters are less helpful (and tell us more about the present than the past), but nevertheless situate the book in reference to modern historiographical debates. Though aimed at a more specialist audience, Matheson's work is accessible to readers interested in the early Reformation and contributes to our understanding of a key aspect of this era.

N. Scott Amos, St Mary's College, University of St Andrews

The Doctrine of Sin in Reformed and Neo-Orthodox Thought

Iain D. Campbell

Christian Focus Publications, Fearn, 1999; 272pp., £10.99; ISBN 1 85792 438X

Books on the Doctrine of Sin are few and far between, so I was looking forward to reading this one by Iain Campbell, a minister of the Free

Church on Lewis. It comes in the Mentor series of studies and is aimed at pastors and students. I was disappointed, for while the main title is *The Doctrine of Sin* it is the subtitle that casts more light on the intention of the book – *in Reformed and Neo-orthodox Thought*. It is, in fact, a piece of polemic. There's nothing wrong in that of itself but polemic should be relevant to the times and often while reading it I felt I had entered a time warp somewhere in the 1950s or 60s.

Sin is taken as a case study in four parts, first in Scripture, then in the Reformed tradition from the Reformers to the twentieth century. Part three consists of chapters on Barth, Bultmann and Brunner, and the book concludes with a chapter on how Campbell views the relationship between Reformed and Neo-orthodox theology. Since the book is effectively around 250 pages of text, it can be seen immediately that Campbell has to cover a lot of ground in a reasonably short compass. For me, that is one of the weaknesses of the book, for each section is fairly skimpy in its coverage of the material, e.g., under fifty pages for the whole of the Bible.

But what of the substance of the material? Coming from his particular stable in the evangelical camp nothing that Campbell writes takes one by surprise. He makes no claim to originality but wishes to popularise the Reformed views expressed by others. In part three he presses home many legitimate points on both the theological method and detail of the three Bs he opposes. His main target is their underlying existential philosophy – subjective experience as truth emphasised over against objective reality. But Campbell overemphasises his point, for if the gospel does not address us existentially it does not address us at all.

Most of the literature in Campbell's bibliography dates from the 1940s through to the 1970s. He is heavily indebted to the trilogy of Dr Harold Whitney of Australia, a doughty opponent of Barth, and quotes him prolifically. Here is where one feels in the time warp. This is a book that is at least thirty years too late. It fights battles that are past and fails to speak to the present. Should a book about sin written on the threshold of the twenty-first century say nothing to us about sin in the systems fallen humans create, or the way in which we have failed to follow God's instruction to husband the earth's resources but instead have pillaged it? Subjectively speaking, I think it should.

Campbell, on the whole, fulfils the aim he set himself, although there are points on which one might demur. My biggest question is whether or not this is an aim worth achieving at this point in time. I would advise those seeking a straightforward and timely book on the Doctrine of Sin to look elsewhere.

Jared Hay, Newbattle Parish Church

Theology of the Old Testament

Walter Brueggemann

Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1997; 750pp., n.p.; ISBN 0-8006-3087-4

During recent decades, students of Old Testament theology have been indebted to Walter Brueggemann for some substantial books and for many a stimulating article on Old Testament themes. His treatment of the psalms has been particularly illuminating. Now we have a full-scale Old Testament Theology from him, every page of which is characteristically stimulating and provocative.

Without doubt this is an Old Testament Theology with a difference. The author abandons completely the older traditional approach, in which Old Testament themes are arranged in some system tending to be over-influenced by the motifs and structures of Systematic Theology. He is also critical of attempts to find an over-arching Old Testament theme after the fashion of Eichrodt or to place special theological emphasis on the acts of God, the approach favoured by Von Rad and Ernest Wright. He structures his book by using the metaphor of testimony in a court of law. He analyses Israel's testimony to its God, Yahweh, whose relations with this nation are unlike those to be found in any other religious literature.

In concentrating on Israel's testimony, he places his emphasis more on the word than the deeds of God. This stress on written verbal testimony will of course appeal to evangelical readers and yet they may well be uneasy about his tendency to regard questions of history as of little consequence. There is an important issue here.

He refuses to reconcile elements in the Old Testament that appear to be in tension and is provocatively critical of some traditional Christian concepts, especially in relation to the omnipotence of God. Prayer may really change God's mind. Yahweh is a God who is open to his people and open to the future. In this respect Brueggemann reminds the reader of Jürgen Moltmann. Israel is often seen to be trusting Yahweh and yet at other times the nation or individuals complain about his apparent inconsistency. Brueggemann shows passionate commitment to justice and he highlights this feature whenever he encounters it in the OT.

It cannot be easily used as a reference volume. The great Old Testament topics are all here, but they are often seen in a completely new light and always within the context of a total argument. The book has to be read through and the author has ensured that the interested reader will do this by the simple expedient of omitting a subject index. Neither has he provided an author index, but his work is replete with footnotes in which his theme

is related to many other disciplines, especially linguistic philosophy and the social sciences.

The book is well written and eminently readable. You will not be able to miss the fact that the author, with many years of OT study and teaching behind him, still finds the OT fascinating and exciting. Whether we agree with his thesis or not, this ought to challenge us all.

Geoffrey Grogan, Glasgow

The Anglican Evangelical Crisis

Melvin Tinker

Christian Focus Publications, Fearn, 1995; 222pp., n.p.; ISBN 1 85792 183 6

This is the second symposium which the former chaplain of the University of Keele, now vicar of St John's Newland, Hull, has produced. As in *Restoring the Vision*, Melvin Tinker has marshalled some of the leading conservative evangelical thinkers, this time confined to the Church of England, to reassert the primacy of Scripture within the church, arguing for correct interpretation and application to all ecclesiastical affairs. The essays do not escape the challenge of interpreting Scripture, but nonetheless they are meaty, well constructed and provocative of response, challenging Evangelicals in particular but also the church at large to consider whether their activities have warrant from the word of God.

The opening essay from David Holloway, vicar of Jesmond, Newcastle, a well-known spokesman for the conservative evangelical cause, argues that history and the canons establish the Bible as holding supreme authority in the Church of England, despite the attitudes of many members of the Synod. Its doctrine must remain credal, and the mission of the Church of England is to 'reform', 'influence', 'convince' and 'invite' the unevangelised. In doing so it must revoke many of its present-day stances and activities, including ecclesiastical centralisation, attitudes to homosexuality, and the ordination of women. The importance of Scripture as God's truth for the world, which offers the only solution to human slavery to sin and consequently liability to God's wrath, is powerfully presented by Mark Thompson, one-time lecturer at Moore Theological College in Sydney. Gerald Bray argues that *sola Scriptura* has given way to an inadequate '*sola exegesis*' and calls for a necessary restoration of systematic theology. Os Guinness in a provocative essay, 'The Word in the age of the Image', expresses his conviction that audio-visual presentation is no substitute for the spoken word.

Tinker himself marks out the trend of evangelical thinking at the moment and admonishes those who suggest that the kingdom of God is of this world and can be advanced by socio-political reform instead of by rebirth exclusively. He emphasises the importance of biblical doctrine which cannot be replaced by mere experiential religion. In a second essay he proposes a way forward toward an evangelical view of the church. Douglas Spinner, a retired professor of biophysics, makes a powerful argument against the ordination of women. It is not a question of women being liberated from an inferior status. Women are not inferior to men, but the two differ from each other and have different functions in both creation and the church.

J. I. Packer opens up the contemporary views of the 'comprehensiveness' of the Church of England, which leave it with a hotch-potch of ideas without consistent coherence. The Church must be true to its confession. John Woodhouse, a rector in Sydney, presents the case for lay presidency at the Lord's Supper, arguing that there is no theological reason against it. Nor can the Church of England be held to be bound to exclusively clerical administrators for ever. There are also essays by David Field on homosexuality, Rachel Tingle on evangelical social action and Peter Adam on preaching and pastoral ministry, all of them experts in their fields. The symposium is brought to a close by 'Observations from a Friend', Don Carson, with a critique of the papers and a comparison with a symposium from another group of Evangelicals who lay closer to being mainstream.

Peter Cook, Alston, Cumbria

The Nature of the Atonement

John McLeod Campbell

Eerdmans / Handsel Press, Michigan / Edinburgh, 1996; x+294pp., n.p.; ISBN 0 8028 4239 9 and 1 87 1828 07 4

This reissue of McLeod Campbell's famous book on the atonement will once again open up the theological debate which led, in 1831, to McLeod Campbell being deposed from the ministry of the Church of Scotland. This judgement of the General Assembly was based on the conviction that Campbell was preaching heresy, namely a universal atonement and that assurance was of the essence of saving faith.

One of the most helpful introductory sections in the book is a page written by the Revd Jock Stein, on the basis of information provided by Dr David Wright, outlining the various editions of this volume, together with reprints, resets, details of introductions, footnotes *etc.* It is very useful.

The only substantial difference between this volume and previous editions is an introduction by James B. Torrance (and some additional footnotes). This introduction is called a 'new introduction' which is something of a misnomer. Certainly it has never appeared before bound together with an edition of McLeod Campbell, but those who have read Torrance's published article(s) will find nothing new here. It is simply a rehearsal of some very old material. It also contains yet again the same tired series of undocumented allegations against federal theology (God had to be 'conditioned into being gracious'; confusion between 'covenant and contract'; radical dichotomy between the sphere of nature and the scheme of grace'; justice as the essential attribute of God while love is arbitrary *etc. etc.*). Despite the fact that these have been nailed to the wall time and time again in articles and books, Torrance continues to produce them as if they were demonstrably true and universally accepted.

Whether or not you agree with McLeod Campbell's book, it is certainly a most significant volume and would necessarily be included in any list of 'classic' works on the atonement. Having now read it three or four times one has to say that it does not become easier! The style is turgid and convoluted and it takes considerable time to absorb. Jock Stein has even found it necessary to 'break up some of the dense paragraphs to make them more readable'. It does repay careful study, however, if only to be brought face to face with many of the key elements in any doctrine of the atonement by a godly man whose primary concern was that his parishioners should understand the gospel. This pastoral concern stands out and is to be commended even if, like this reviewer, you remain unpersuaded by Campbell's core thesis.

That core thesis is that one's understanding of the nature of the atonement will determine one's view of its extent. On this basis, McLeod Campbell argues against the doctrine of limited atonement in favour of a universal atonement and seeks to demonstrate that only on the basis of such an atonement is assurance possible.

Interestingly, it is to Martin Luther that McLeod Campbell turns for inspiration. After a general chapter in which he explores some of the issues relating to the doctrine of sin and the need for atonement. Campbell turns in the second chapter to consider Luther's work. It is interesting surely that someone who stands in the Reformed tradition should opt to use Luther rather than Calvin as the model for this doctrine, albeit noting a few weaknesses in Luther's treatment of the subject. Indeed, there is no chapter on Calvin at all because Campbell goes straight from Luther into an examination of John Owen and Jonathan Edwards whom he regards as the key representatives of the Calvinist school of theology.

McLeod Campbell, in the chapters which follow, goes into great detail on such matters as imputation, the penal nature of the atonement, the question of Christ's pain and suffering, and the whole matter of substitution and representation.

His chapters on the intercession of Christ as an element in the atonement (chapter ix) and his chapter on how the actual course of Christ's life sheds light on the subject (chapter x) are particularly significant in understanding his theology. It is no coincidence that many of the issues he raises here have been taken up by more recent scholars, during the resurgence of interest in his theology.

Every theological student ought to read this book but the student should also read John Owen's *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* which McLeod Campbell himself recognises as the principal Reformed statement of the doctrine of the atonement.

A.T.B. McGowan, Highland Theology College, Dingwall

The Holy Spirit

Sinclair Ferguson

Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, 1996; 288pp., £14.99; ISBN 0 85111 895 X

The *Contours of Christian Theology* series, edited by Gerald Bray, is shaping up very well to be a useful theological collection in the evangelical tradition. Sinclair Ferguson's study on the Holy Spirit continues the tradition of uncompromising evangelicalism expressed in thoughtful, self-critical evangelical scholarship. Its fine qualities do not surprise those of us who know the author.

The first section discusses the doctrine of the Spirit in the Old Testament. The book does not slap new ideas on the reader at this stage but is a sound, comprehensive review of the issues. The New Testament material seems overdependent on Reformed writers and somewhat dated work at that. Although rightly celebrated, J. G. Machen's work on the Virgin Birth, written in 1930, surely needs supplementing. On the other hand, the author's treatment of the temptation of Jesus is especially helpful.

The author, however, has saved the best sections for later and there are many tasty morsels to relish. The whole book breathes a sane, mature, practical spirituality. But the author is also quite prepared to depart from standard 'reformed' quirks if he sees fit. Hence, he turns away from Louis Berkhof's somewhat wooden handling of regeneration and endorses a sense in which the Word *can* be the 'instrumental cause of regeneration, while the Spirit is the efficient cause'. Bold and well supported!

The section on the role of law in Christian life and thought is excellent and goes to the heart of a controversy in both church circles and scholarship. I should have liked it to go beyond the relation of the law to the Spirit into the allied question of the law and freedom, but I am probably just greedy. There is also a beautifully balanced account of the meaning of the 'seal of the Spirit'. Do not miss a first-class study on John Calvin and his teaching on the Holy Spirit, with a timely reminder that Calvin was primarily a theologian of the Spirit.

When he enters the dread arena of controversy on the baptism and gifts of the Spirit Ferguson moves with confidence and humility. This is the best case for a more conservative approach to the modern charismatic phenomenon that I have read for a long, long time. It is free of the usual sloganeering, negativity and doctrinal stiffness that often mars work from a reformed background. On its strong side, his account provides some formidable arguments that challenge the Leviathan of charismatic renewal, but also blends with its more eirenic writers. His treatment of 'tongues' is clear and highly competent, though perhaps incomplete. Ferguson is not afraid to bite the bullet on the key issue: *continuationism v. cessationism*. A more spirited rearguard action for 'cessationism' you will need to journey far to find. Many arguments now thought finished by the relentless wave of charismatic theology show themselves to be far from settled with finality.

But by the same token, they are not settled in favour of the reformed position by this book either – though it gives supporters of the 'charismatic' case a lot to think about. The fact is that there are few total cessationists or total continuationists about – fortunately. No charismatic Christians that I know are busily adding newly-minted letters to the New Testament canon. So that is one 'charism' gone. Equally I know no 'reformed' Christians who oppose intercession and petition. They presumably believe that God intervenes. Thank God for miracles. Once the slogans are removed even someone as confidently conservative as Ferguson is closer to an allegedly charismatic approach than first thought.

All in all this is a very good buy. One feature mars the book. It is a pity that a book claiming to avoid 'the extremes of academic style' should use off-putting language so often. We get the words 'desideratum' and 'desideration' in the first two pages (what has he got against 'desirable'?), as well as *adumbrate* (why not simply 'anticipate' or 'outline'?). 'Hypostatization', 'pericope' and 'hermeneutical' pop up without explanation. Worst of all, we meet many Latin expressions, often enough untranslated even if they are familiar to the theologian (*ex nihilo, de novo*). They add nothing to the, usually excellent, point being made and give an

impression of bookishness. Theology has to fight every inch of the way for readers today. It *is* possible to democratise without dumbing down and in the case of a book like this it is really worthwhile, because the church needs readable, biblically rooted books of this quality.

Roy Kearsley, South Wales Baptist College, Cardiff

Missiological Education for the 21st Century: The Book, the Circle, and the Sandals: Essays in Honor of Paul E. Pierson

Edited by J. Dudley Woodberry, Charles Van Engen and Edgar J. Elliston
Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, 1996; 335pp., \$15.00; ISBN 1 57075 089 0

This *Festschrift* brings together contributions from no less than 21 notable missiologists in honour of a former Dean of Fuller Theological Seminary's School of World Mission. In the Foreword, R. J. Mouw sets the scene with an emphasis on the need for academic reflection on mission as a support for the urgent missiological task of the church. C. Van Engen's Preface gives a valuable history of mission studies and their relation to theological study in the West before we come to the Introduction by J. Dudley Woodberry which sets out a conceptual framework based on the pattern of a mosque in an attempt to give the volume some cohesion. The subtitle, 'The Book, the Circle, and the Sandals' is used to express this and is linked to 'theory, reflection and experience' in educational processes and to 'word, world and church' in terms of the content in which missionaries should ideally exhibit competence. These links are not always clearly delineated in the text and there is a change from the Islamic model to an eschatological one in the Conclusion by Woodberry, where he highlights the tensions involved in missiological education. The 17 chapters are grouped under four Contexts – Historical, Ecumenical, Regional and Missiological. Then follow four chapters headed 'Future'. A chapter devoted to Paul Pierson himself precedes the Conclusion, and a very helpful Bibliography is appended.

Four chapters on historical considerations of missiological education and research by A. F. Walls, G. H. Anderson, P. G. Hiebert and K. Mulholland are fascinating, bringing us past history and present challenge. The next section on ecumenical contexts provides insights from four viewpoints. A Pentecostal charismatic one from L. Grant McClung, Jr is rather defensive but direct. An Ecumenical-Protestant one from J. D. Gort raises the question of how Christianity is to relate to other faiths

(theology of religions), while the Roman Catholic M. Motte is challenging on spirituality, and M. J. Oleska suggests the contribution which Eastern Orthodox theology brings to evangelical mission. Four chapters on regional aspects then follow. T. Tienou shows that preparation for work in modern Africa is not to be confused with training in charity work and suggests the kind of training now required. From Latin America Samuel Escobar distinguishes between the training of missionaries and missiologists in a convincing way. For Asia Ken Gnanakan emphasises the need for the 'formation' of the 'total' missiologist, while W. R. Shenk considers the training of missiologists for Western culture and reconsiders the Great Commission and the contextualization of training. The chapters on missiological context open up the value of behavioural studies (D. Whitemen), the fact of urbanisation (R. S. Greenway), a particular need to develop local Bible translators (P. C. Stine), specific training for working in Jewish contexts (S. Dauermann), with a thought-provoking article on various paradigms arising from the work of David Bosch, and a plea for the recognition of the importance of lay people by Ralph Winter. This leads on to the section on the Future. Woodberry starts this with a more detailed use of his Islamic conceptual pattern in an attempt to describe the chair in Islamic Studies. Then V. Sogaard suggests a system of decentralised partnerships for effective missiological education as a counterbalance to the individualistic trends of the West. This is followed by a detailed argument from C. Van Engen on the need for balance between specialization and integration, using relationships between the Institute of Church Growth and the School of World Mission at Fuller as historical background. Finally E. Elliston notices the need for diversity in training and identifies five distinct types of missiologists. D. Gilliland then gives a glowing appraisal of Paul Pierson. The volume is a mine of information and a wellspring of stimulation. Christian leaders and students would do well to read it. It is not easy with its diversity of content and styles but certainly worth the effort.

Ralph W. Martin, Hokkaido, Japan

Walking in the Ways of the Lord: The Ethical Authority of the Old Testament

Christopher J. H. Wright

Apollon, Leicester, 1995; 319pp., £15.99; ISBN 0 85111 444 X

This book is a valuable collection of previously published essays by the author relating to the application of the Old Testament to ethical issues,

with some editing to remove the most blatant areas of duplication. Given this, the book represents a surprisingly comprehensive treatment of the field, with historical overviews, consideration of methodology, and worked examples of a range of ethical issues.

One chapter provides an historical survey of the ways the church has understood the ethical authority of the Old Testament from the early church to the modern day, with another reviewing modern evangelical approaches.

A number of chapters address the issue of method. Broadly, Wright follows the widely used approach of seeking ethical principles (Wright calls them 'objectives') behind the laws and institutions of ancient Israel, and then applying these principles to current ethical issues. He wishes to avoid drawing such principles from any law or institution in isolation, preferring to construct a picture of how these worked together in Israel, so that Israel as a whole becomes a 'paradigm' or model that can be used to inform ethical decisions. There is some inconsistency whether this profile of Israel is the ideal one that would have arisen if the nation had truly lived in conformity with the laws and structures prescribed in the Old Testament, or the actual one reflecting Israel's rebellious nature.

Part of Wright's approach is to examine ethical issues in the light of each of the creation, the fall, God's redemptive activities and the new creation. This gives a healthy breadth of data upon which to construct ethical judgements, and avoids the dangers of making such judgements based upon individual verses or passages. He also constructs a framework for understanding ethics according to the Old Testament's own agenda. In this he sees the key importance in the Old Testament of earth / land and of humanity / Israel as well as of God himself. This classification proves useful, although it seems in part an artificial imposition on the text rather than arising naturally from it.

The author sees the purpose and destiny of Israel (from Gen. 12:2-3 onwards) to be the vehicle for blessing to the whole world of nations, and that Israel's contribution to this purpose would be through their ethical distinctiveness (drawn especially from a study of Ex. 19:3-6). The resulting cross-cultural concern is an ever present and helpful distinctive of Wright's approach, and the ethical function of Israel for the sake of the nations suggests to him that Israel is a paradigm of ethical relevance to society as well as to the church. It may be, however, that the challenge to other nations arising from Israel's ethical distinctives was to seek Yahweh rather than to reproduce their ethical distinctives in their own laws. If this is so, the application of Israel as a paradigm to secular societies may not be so clearly appropriate.

The last five chapters address five issues: land, Jubilee year, relations to the state, human rights, and the struggle against corruption, dishonesty and injustice. These provide case studies of Wright's methods, although, wisely, he applies his methods flexibly according to the nature of the available data. The ethical issues addressed are those concerning the social, economic and political realms, which are issues which the Old Testament directly addresses. It would have been useful to have explored the degree to which Wright's methods could be applied to issues such as abortion, euthanasia or IVF which the Old Testament does not directly address.

The author writes in a clear, non-technical, but well-informed manner approaching his subject in a sane and relevant manner. This is a readable, stimulating and useful book. I recommend it warmly as priority reading to any who wish to understand and apply the Old Testament in a mature and appropriate way to the problems of the modern world.

Edward D. Herbert, International Christian College, Glasgow

Liberation and Orthodoxy: the Promise and Failures of Interconfessional Dialogue

Yacob Tesfai

Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, 1996; 196pp., n.p.; ISBN 1 57075 088 2

In the preface to this book the author informs readers that 'it attempts to deal with the question of the relationship between the interconfessional dialogues and the Third World theologies and churches'. It immediately becomes clear that the word 'Orthodox' in the title is being used in a sense different from that usually taken for granted by readers of this journal. It does *not* refer either to the churches of the East, or to theologies concerned with doctrinal purity of a fundamentalist kind. The reference is rather to theological dialogues between denominations *within* the World Council of Churches; the author subjects these to critical analysis in the light of a concern for human liberation which is, he suggests, the central concern of non-Western churches.

There are two problems with this volume, one minor, the other substantive. The author assumes that his readers will be familiar with ecumenical jargon; different bodies within the World Council are referred to by their initials and while I could cope with WCC, constant reference to F&O, CWC's, LWF and even EATWOT had me turning repeatedly to the long list of abbreviations at the start of the book. More important than this stylistic blemish, the central thesis of the book involves a radical challenge to the entire Western theological tradition. The charge made here is that the search for visible unity on the basis of doctrinal agreement is

fundamentally misconceived and irrelevant to the central concerns of the churches of the poor in the Southern hemisphere. Evangelicals can hardly be comfortable with such a root-and-branch attack on confessional theology.

Despite this there are a number of very positive features in Tesfai's work. First, it is enlightening and informative in regard to the history of the ecumenical theological dialogues. Second, the book draws attention to the historical significance of the growth of Christianity in the non-Western world. Tesfai graphically illustrates the far-reaching changes which are occurring 'in the texture of the Christian Church in the contemporary world'. He argues that for the first time in its history, the Christian faith is becoming a 'non-western religion' and the majority of believers are found 'within the ranks of the poor'. Third, despite my reservations expressed above, the book is helpful in the way in which it brings into clear focus the issue how theology is to be done at the turn of the twenty-first century. Tesfai's questions are addressed to the ecumenical movement and Evangelicals are barely mentioned in this study, yet the fundamental issues discussed in this volume cannot be excluded from Evangelicals' theological agenda. We are likely to disagree with Tesfai's answers but it would be obscurantism of the worst possible kind to imagine that the questions have no relevance for us.

David Smith, The Whitefield Institute, Oxford

Why do Christians Find it Hard to Grieve?

Geoff Walters

Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 1997; 203pp., £12.99; ISBN 0 85364 787 9

'Good theology is, or should be, the soil in which good pastoral practice grows', writes Geoff Walters as he concludes his first-class treatment of grief and death. In his introduction, he explains how his theological concern arises within the context of pastoral ministry, where he has noted that Christian faith often leads to the added burden of denial and guilt rather than comfort and hope. This led him to write a Ph.D. thesis, which is here adapted especially for those in Christian pastoral care or anyone interested in relating theology to contemporary experience.

Walters begins by exploring grief in various Old and New Testament characters. With remarkable sensitivity and imagination, he brings to life Abraham, David, Jesus and others at the times when they faced the death of someone close and grieved freely. Part two looks at the lives and words of Plato and Augustine, to whose advocacy of immortality Walters attributes a considerable effect on subsequent confusion and the suppression of grief over the centuries. He claims that pagan philosophy

rather than biblical theology influenced the patristic writers and Augustine, by elevating the spirit/soul over the body, so that the afterlife was seen as triumphing over death and minimising it. Part three examines the concepts of immortality and resurrection, using three orientations towards death: death-accepting, death-denying and death-transcending. Walters examines the growth of the biblical doctrine of resurrection which he considers to be death-transcending, because it does not deny the reality of death as a loss, but gives hope in grief. Immortality, on the other hand, constitutes a denial of death, and may be detected through modern interest in reincarnation, spiritualism and near-death experiences, but also among many Christians through the emphasis on healing and the feeling that a funeral service must be a 'celebration' where genuine sadness is 'unspiritual'. Part four presents the contemporary psychological understanding of grief with its various phases, its healthy and unhealthy aspects, and some practical implications of this in helping the bereaved. The final part looks at popular (often autobiographical) Christian literature of today, including Billy Graham and C. S. Lewis, and assesses their understanding of immortality and resurrection, before concluding by answering the question set in the title of the book. The Notes give very full biographical details for information and further study.

This book is based on scholarly and extensive research, drawing together theology, psychology, church history and serious insight into biblical texts. However, it is certainly not difficult to follow: this reviewer was so gripped by its pastoral concern and the vivid portrayal of human beings, whether Jacob, the Thessalonians or Wolterstorff, that it was read in a day. Written with great insight and simplicity, Walters frequently summarises his points to ensure maximum clarity and to leave no doubt as to his conclusions. One point which some might consider a problem is that no mention is made of the after-life for those who are not Christians; heaven, annihilation and hell are never mentioned as factors which might affect the hope of grieving Christians. Notwithstanding, this is one of the most accessible and interesting, heart-warming and practical theological books this reviewer has read in a long time.

Fiona Barnard, St Andrews

But This I Know

George Austin

Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1996; 198pp., £7.99; ISBN 0 340 64210 6

From the pen of the controversial Archdeacon of York, well known as a broadcaster, and writer in several national newspapers, comes a kind of

popular, meditative, systematic theology written from a broadly traditional-catholic point of view. It reflects the depths of Austin's convictions and pastoral concern. The idea of the book came from a preaching week at the York diocesan retreat house, and was inspired by the hymn 'I cannot tell... but this I know'. The meditations follow the story of salvation through Jesus Christ in the Old and New Testaments. At their heart are the themes of faith, hope and love, coming glory and creation, creator and sin, God in Christ, God's call, faith and grace, judgement and love, and, in a very practical vein, death and life, cursing and cleansing, trials and temptations. The book is written in a popular style with study groups in mind, and as one may expect from the Archdeacon, it is not afraid to grasp nettles.

Peter Cook, Alston, Cumbria

God in the Wasteland: The Reality of Truth in a World of Fading Dreams

David F. Wells

IVP, Leicester, 1994; 278pp., £12.99; ISBN 0 85110 655 2

This book, a companion volume to the author's earlier *No Place for Truth* is about the pernicious influence of modernity on the evangelical mind. Modernisation (fuelled by capitalism, technology, urbanisation and telecommunications) has a far-from-subtle impact on the way we think and behave. Forces of modernisation create a vortex into which we are irresistibly drawn, and this vortex Wells calls 'modernity'.

Modernity marginalises God and elevates self. Indeed, 'fascination with the self is the calling card modernity leaves behind'. The result is an overemphasis on the immanence of God, with too little being said about his transcendence. Eventually theology is the loser, for 'the evangelical world has abandoned theology and is now running on the high octane fuel of modernity'.

What does the future hold for Evangelicalism? In answering this question, the author favours an analytical, rather than a conjectural approach. Students in seven representative evangelical seminaries were given questionnaires. Their responses provided the raw data for fifty-seven tables which are given as an appendix. A whole chapter of the book is devoted to discussion of the issues raised. The questions were wide ranging and covered background information on the students, perceptions of the future, views on evangelical theology in America, ethnicity, the meaning of life and much more. With fifty-seven varieties on the bill of fare, there is something for every palate.

Modernity is the target Wells has in his sights; it is modernity that has us by the throat. But have we not been led to understand that it is post-modernity that is tightening its grip on us? He scarcely uses that word for the main part of the book. Can one person's modernity be another's post-modernity? Is this a post-modern world or not?

This question lies unresolved until his last chapter in which he openly questions whether our present world is truly post-modern. 'We are living', he declares, 'not after the demise of modernity but at the peak of its ascendancy.' These insights could have perhaps been encountered more helpfully near the start of the book.

The author's case is well presented and cogently argued. Copious footnotes are provided. Not only does he write well, but many of his comments are quite memorable. A stimulating book.

Alex McIntosh, Falkirk

Calvin and the Calvinists

Paul Helm

Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1982, reprint 1998; 84pp., £6.95; ISBN 0 85151 750 1

The book under consideration is a timely reprint of an expanded article by the author, 'Calvin, Calvinism and the Logic of Doctrinal Development' which appeared in the *Scottish Journal of Theology* in April 1981. The author's intention in this small book is to provide a popular and readable response to R. T. Kendall's *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1979). Kendall's monograph is a slight condensation of his 1976 D.Phil. dissertation (Regents Park, Oxford), which was originally entitled 'The Nature of Saving Faith from William Perkins (d. 1602) to the Westminster Assembly (1643-9)'.

Central to Kendall's thesis is that archetypal Puritans such as William Perkins and William Ames, and even the whole assembly of Westminster divines, have been misinterpreted if understood as orthodox Calvinist theologians. He claims that they did not in fact derive their theology from the teachings of John Calvin, but rather from his successor in Geneva who pioneered a fundamental shift in his theology *viz.*, Theodore Beza. According to Kendall, Calvin did not teach limited atonement, but rather general or universal atonement. Further, he maintains that Calvin made a crucial distinction between Christ's death and his intercession. The mediatorial works of Christ, according to his reading of Calvin, are bifurcated in scope and efficacy. Beza, by abandoning Calvin's 'system', supposedly paves the way to Arminianism for voluntaristic Puritans riding

on a psychologized morphology of preparationist conversionism. As a result, the Puritan heritage of Calvinistic theology became 'virtually Arminian in many respects' (p. 6). Indeed, Kendall says that a 'crypto-Arminian doctrine of faith... pervades Westminster theology' (Kendall, 209; cited in Helm, 6).

Professor Helm concentrates his replication on two key considerations: (1) Did R. T. Kendall interpret Calvin fairly and accurately; and (2) Is Kendall correct in his assessment of Puritanism? The first question is answered in chapters two 'John Calvin's Position' and three 'The Death and Intercession of Christ'. In them Helm contextually examines Calvin's writings for evidence of Kendall's 'novel view'. Such confirmation is 'totally absent'. Kendall's ponderous citations are even shown to work to the disadvantage of his own claims. Ultimately Kendall's 'reinterpretation' of Calvin is proven to be 'without foundation'. Chapters four and five add an evaluation of Calvin and the Puritans on conversion, preparationism, and the *Westminster Confession* on salvation by works. In these chapters Helm exposes Kendall's failure to correctly comprehend fundamental differentiations within preparationism, the place of the will in conversion, and faith as a divine gift in Calvin *and* the Puritans.

Throughout the whole, Professor Helm responsibly unfolds a continuity of theology from Calvin, through Westminster while simultaneously exposing the illegitimacy of Kendall's reinterpretations. An excellent summary of five propositions corresponding to each of the five brief chapters concludes the discussion (p. 81).

Kendall's approach, however, is far from novel. W. H. Chalker, Holmes Rolston III, Brian G. Armstrong and Basil Hall all have recycled Perry Miller's dated contention of 'crypto-Arminian' Puritanism. Yet despite the overwhelming evidence provided by scholarship proving otherwise, this distorted and erroneous position continues to circulate. Agreeably, then, the reviewer echoes Richard A. Muller's sentiments that, 'One can only hope that the majority of those who have been subjected to Kendall's work will look to Helm's essay for a sound corrective.'

John J. Bombaro, Clementon, New Jersey

Light of Truth and Fire of Love. A Theology of the Holy Spirit

Gary D. Badcock

Eerdmans, Cambridge, 1997; 303pp., £12.99; ISBN 0 8028 4288 7

Surely, one of the most exciting and important aspects of Christian thinking in the late twentieth century has been the renaissance in attention

being given to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Admittedly, this interest covers a wide spectrum of issues. However, it is a long-awaited development within western theological circles. Therefore, it is not surprising that a number of books are appearing on the subject, Badcock's being one of the weightier ones.

In *Light of Truth and Fire of Love* Badcock addresses two fundamental aspects concerning our understanding of the Holy Spirit. First, the identity of the Spirit: in an age when Christians are increasingly confused about addressing the Spirit as 'he', or 'it', this is surely an important task. Secondly, Badcock rightly addresses an important caveat in contemporary western Christian living, namely, 'an incapacity to see the work of the Spirit where it exists and, in particular, an inability or an unwillingness to integrate that work of the Spirit into the basic structures of our theological thought'.

The author identifies two major areas for development. First, the Spirit's relation to Jesus Christ: for many there is little meaningful understanding of how Jesus Christ relates to the Spirit. After all, was not Jesus the Son of God? If he was divine, he did not really need the Spirit. God can, surely, do anything: he does not need the Spirit. Secondly, Badcock addresses the wider issue of the Trinity, locating the Spirit's place within the divine relations. By engaging with the major thinkers of the twentieth century light is thrown on this, the more difficult of theological issues.

The structure of the book is straightforward. The reader is taken from a biblical perspective of the Spirit through an historical account of the development of the doctrine, along with its problems, through to contemporary experience. The relation of the Spirit with Jesus is, strangely, kept to the end, but this does serve as a lead into two chapters on the Spirit and the Trinity before ending on a chapter that focuses the reader's attention on the Spirit as the Light of Truth and the Fire of Love.

It has to be said that this is not an easy read for anyone without some basic theological grammar. Latinisms are not translated and one is led into engagement with some of the great and profound thinkers of the day. In addition, practical connections are left to the part of the reader which is a pity given that Badcock highlights three key consequences of an inadequate pneumatology. However, given the academic tone and level of the book it may not have been in the author's mind to unpack the first consequence he highlights, namely, the divorce of the spiritual life from one's theological systems.

Badcock, however, does lead his reader into deep water in a clear and helpful way so that the book offers profound and challenging insights to those who read it.

We have been waiting a few years for an explicitly textbook update to Heron's *The Holy Spirit* and this is it. Put bluntly, if you do not buy this book, your theological library will be lacking.

Graham McFarlane, London Bible College

What Christians *Really* Believe and Why

Stanley J. Grenz

Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1998; 159pp., \$12; ISBN 0 664 25732 1

Recognising that Christianity is not particularly well understood and that there are signs in our secular age of a yearning for something to believe in, Stan Grenz has written this outline of basic Christian teaching in a more unusual format. His intention is to attract interest and readership by dealing with doctrine from the standpoint of answering life's basic questions: why believe at all? who am I and why am I here? are we alone in the universe? which God? who is Jesus and what did he do? what am I searching for and how do I find it? where is the universe... where am I... going? These are questions, he claims, 'each of us must come to grips with' some time. In taking these questions in turn, chapter by chapter, he unfolds as he goes the main tenets of the Christian faith.

He writes well and this is a worthy enterprise, to re-present solid Christian teaching from the standpoint of the searcher's perceived itches. However, while it is clear, good teaching, and while it is on more neutral territory with the seeker than many other doctrinal / apologetic works, I have my reservations. One, the identifying of the key questions is not entirely done by starting from general, prevalent questions in peoples' minds. People who are seeking in this new age / spirituality era may well ask whether we are alone in the universe, or which God, but will they ask who is Jesus and what did he do? Not many in my experience consider this a burning question. It is in here because we need to get round to it and we believe that people need to be brought round to it, not because it is in others' minds. Secondly the format of the book: you will have to be fairly interested or committed to plough through even these shortish chapters of uninterrupted text (apart from the end notes in each chapter). Not only should we be thinking hard about the writing of material like this, but also how it is published. People are used to much different presentation than

this. It is a shame that the publishers have not shown the same creative energy as the author in an attempt to put gospel material to a wider group.

The material in the book however is good stuff and could have a useful role in building up Christians who are seeking to make sense of their faith in this 'anything goes' world.

Gordon R. Palmer, Slateford Longstone Parish Church, Edinburgh

Faith Thinking. The Dynamics of Christian Theology

Trevor Hart

SPCK, London, 1995; 236pp., £15.99; ISBN 0 281 04870 3

Everyone interested in the status of Christian theology in the Church and the academy should read this book. The debate that the author enters continues as vigorously as ever. The UK's leading weekly on Higher Education recently ran a vehement debate on the question: does one need to believe in God to teach theology? Trevor Hart raises the stakes even higher. Does one need *faith* to do Christian theology? His uncompromising answer is that theology is 'faith thinking', of the book's title (borrowed from a saying of P. T. Forsyth).

The book's main thrust is that theology springs from a faith with passion and security, but also one of coherence and correspondence to reality. This means sketching 'an intellectual contour of reality as it appears from within the stance of a living and active faith in Christ'. The robustness of Hart's work emerges from unashamed embracing of a faith-commitment point of view on reality. Why is this alright in our hostile post-Enlightenment environment? Because that is what *all* disciples and perspectives are doing. It is impossible to seek an integrated view of reality without such a faith-commitment of some kind.

From this point on the author seeks to steer a path more fruitful than fossilised fundamentalism, dogmatic scepticism, or resigned pluralism. In fact he drives a convoy of horses and carts through all three. It is a dangerous illusion put around by secularists and 'liberals' that there is some sort of neutral standpoint from which to judge the various commitments. The author is especially anxious to remove the tyrannical, Cartesian standard of absolute mathematical certainty from tests of truth. This kind of certainty is available in nothing in this world, but neither is it needed for the getting-on with life.

The clearing-away process releases Hart to look candidly not so much at the status of the Bible as at its nature. The dynamic, ever-renewing nature of the biblical tradition presents one obstacle to dogmatic knowledge. The highly-personal and individual perception of its texts poses a further

obstacle. The author concludes a multi-plurality of perceptions with a strong element of continuity and contact between perceptions. But is the individuality of perceptions as acute as he makes out? Does he believe it himself? The retrieval of meaning from the texts, he says, is far more risky than the phrase 'what the Bible clearly teaches' allows (p. 137). But then, to buttress a point, he himself rests on the words 'as 2 Timothy 3.15-16 makes utterly clear' (p. 160). This only illustrates that we can get just too pessimistic about human minds sharing a universe of discourse. It shows that the scriptural texts, like other texts (such as the book *Faith Thinking*) are not always the mystery we are led to believe.

Much absorbing and crucial discussion follows with wise comment on the nature of the biblical narrative, the place of tradition, apologetics and reformation. Excellent stuff! However, questions remain, for instance about the justification of theology in the academy, of the range of faith-commitments which may be deemed viable (and why) and the place of Christian theology in a culture where Christianity has declined in numbers and influence. The style is full of unstuffy contemporary communication. I hope that no-one will be put off pressing on into a lively absorbing read by the more pedestrian style of the brief introduction. For this is a book that deserves a wide readership and a continuing influence.

Roy Kearsley, South Wales Baptist College, Cardiff

Spirituality and Theology: Essays in Honour of Diogenes Allen

Edited by Eric. O. Springstead

Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1998; 147pp., \$17;
ISBN 0 664 25741 0

Spirituality and Theology is an international, ecumenical and interdisciplinary *Festschrift* of ten essays in honour of Diogenes Allen (Stuart Professor of Philosophy, Princeton Theological Seminary) by a group of philosophers and theologians who have been shaped by and fundamentally share Allen's vision of the nature and tasks of Christian theology. Allen, who was influenced heavily by Oxford theologian Austin Farrer, adopts a version of the Augustinian-Anselmian *fides quarens intellectum* view of faith and reason that eschews the unwarranted scientific and epistemological imperatives of Enlightenment thought and their influence on theology, yet asserts the reasonableness of Christian faith and theology to the intellect that is spiritually attuned. The reasonableness of Christianity lies in its ability to meet human spiritual needs; its truth is demonstrated (not proved) by its maximal explanatory

power over the range of human experience. The kind of 'postmodern' theological reflection Allen's approach engenders is characterised by a dedication to defending Christianity as true on its own grounds, while realising its relevance to culture at large. Christian theology is an activity deeply entrenched in the spiritual engagements of Christian communities as the endemic religious needs of its members are met. *Spirituality and Theology* explores the thesis that Christian practice and spirituality is vital to understanding and performing the tasks of Christian theology. The essays do not so much explore Allen's work explicitly as they are variations on Allen's central themes.

The book is divided into two sections. Part one, 'Spirituality and the Nature of Christian theology', includes (among others) essays by Stanley Hauerwas (Duke University), David B. Burrell (University of Notre Dame), and Brian Hebblethwaite (Queen's College, Cambridge), and serves as a good introduction to the meta-theological issues which surround the orientation to Christian faith and reason taken by Allen and these scholars. One of the highlights of *Spirituality and Theology* is Burrell's wonderfully lucid and penetrating essay in this section, 'Friends in Conversation: The Language and Practice of Faith', in which he argues that human epistemic positions require of us a fallibilist epistemology with a philosophical and theological method that reflects a dynamic, inter-personal conversation grounded in a web of ethical commitments. To the credit of the editor, this section also includes Hebblethwaite's essay which is critical of Allen's general orientation away from natural theology, and finds particular fault in Allen's interpretation of the thought of Austin Farrer.

Part two, 'Spirituality Within Christian Theology', concentrates on the type of theology envisaged by Allen, and includes essays by Elena Malits (Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame), Daniel L. Migliore (Princeton Theological seminary), and Gerhard Sauter (University of Bonn). The essays in this section examine the nature of theological reflection in which spirituality is constituent of theological activity. The notable chapter in this section is Migliore's essay, 'Freedom to Pray: Karl Barth's Theology of Prayer'. Migliore provides a helpful and careful analysis of Barth's central teachings regarding the nature of and need for prayer as the fundamental activity in theological activity.

Spirituality and Theology is relatively short, not overly technical, and is generally well end-noted, with notes appearing at the end of each essay. Some of the contributions lack academic rigour, but it will be helpful to students and professionals interested in philosophical theology and the interface of faith and reason, particularly in the light of postmodernity.

Myron B. Penner, New College, Edinburgh University

Introduction to Biblical Studies

Steve Moyise

Cassell, London, 1998; 113pp., £9.99; ISBN 0 304 70091 6

This brief volume is the first in a series of texts (edited by the author) designed for students beginning a course in biblical studies.

The first chapter asks the question, What is the Bible for if it is 'the word of God?' After briefly discussing some of the options, Moyise concludes that the Bible 'reveals God' in the sense that 'these (very) human words are somehow able to mediate God's presence' (p. 6). There follows a brief personal account of the author's experience of 'Jesus calling me' through reading Luke's gospel, which appears to lie at the foundation of his theological convictions. He makes these convictions plain when he writes, 'I have come to believe that inspiration ("God-breathed") is more to do with what God does with the text than what it supposedly guarantees' (p. 8). Though it is refreshing to hear a biblical scholar speak of the life-changing effect of the text of Scripture, Moyise's view of inspiration leaves too many loose ends. These become even more prominent as the book progresses.

The following chapters examine significant methods of interpreting the biblical texts. Chapter 2 deals with historical criticism, with particular reference to the sources behind the biblical texts, while chapter 3 looks at redaction criticism. Chapters 4 and 5 deal with more recent approaches to reading the biblical texts and the effects of texts on their readers. The brief sixth chapter discusses the transmission and translation of the biblical text, and chapter 7 brings the book to a close with a discussion of biblical studies in a 'postmodern' context. Moyise frequently provides helpful examples from the biblical texts to illustrate what he writes.

Moyise is clearly sensitive to the ways in which the Bible has been used oppressively. This is particularly evident in the course of his discussion on feminist readings where he displays admirable determination not to abuse the biblical text. It is interesting to read, however, that 'Whatever the function of such biblical stories or statements in the past, if they promote or otherwise authorize the subjugation of women, they cannot be God's will' (p. 77). This statement, I believe, is the result of Moyise's view of inspiration. I think that he has misunderstood the difference between submission of one equal to another (as the Son submitted himself to the Father) and the abusive 'subjugation' that concerns him, but be that as it may, he believes that he is at liberty to declare what is the will of God on the basis of an authority outside of the biblical text to which the biblical text must then submit.

The 'Further Reading' guides at the end of each chapter are both up to date and, generally, useful to a new student. On a number of occasions, Moyise indicates reading materials that come from an evangelical perspective.

On the whole, this book is brief enough to be accessible for new students, it is written in an engaging style, and it is an accurate and contemporary guide to important approaches to biblical studies. I can commend it, but with a measure of caution, and would suggest that the novice evangelical student read it as all theological literature should be read – thoughtfully, critically, in conversation with other perspectives and subject to the evidence of the biblical text.

Alistair I. Wilson, Highland Theological College, Dingwall

Paul and the Parousia: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation

J. Plevnik

Hendrickson, Peabody, Massachusetts, 1997; 351pp., £19.99; ISBN 1 56563 180 3

This book is a thorough reworking of a doctoral dissertation written in 1971 under the directorship of Rudolph Schnackenburg. It is aimed at the academic world, and is intended to challenge those who, following Bultmann, wish to remove the idea of parousia altogether or reinterpret it. Plevnik also expresses the hope that it will be of some 'personal value' to the reader and preacher, and wishes to 'expose the spiritual riches and theological significance of the parousia for Christian existence'.

The book is divided into two parts: the first deals with the 'fundamental concepts and imagery in Paul's presentation of the parousia' and provides exegesis of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:23-28, 50-55 and Philippians 3:20-21. The second part deals with theological issues connected with the parousia.

Two chapters examine the background of the concepts, terms and imagery which Paul uses when he speaks of the Lord's coming. Plevnik concludes that the terms are Jewish in origin, rather than Hellenistic. Chapters 3 to 7 contain exegesis of the relevant Pauline passages. Inconsistencies and changes of emphasis in Paul's thinking on the parousia are to be explained by the apostle's particular concerns at the time of writing.

The second part of the book ('Theological Investigation') contains a thematic consideration of topics such as 'hope', the church, judgement and living with Christ for ever. Plevnik contends that the parousia should be

seen as the completion of Easter, and argues against the notion that there was a development of Paul's thought with regard to the nearness of the parousia.

Plevnik also aims to provide a critical analysis of the philosophical principles that guided Bultmann's investigation. Are they, he asks, adequate for the eschatological assertions made in the New Testament? Plevnik's eagerness to reassert the concrete nature of Paul's parousia hope leads him into an examination of modern hermeneutical method. Unfortunately, his treatment of this important subject is rather cursory, and merely whets the appetite. Had this been more fully investigated, his attempt to 'recast the apocalyptic language of Paul into more contemporary idiom without jettisoning the reality of the parousia' might have been stronger than it is.

Throughout the book, there is a disappointing failure to engage with more modern authors. The chapter on the parousia and judgement, for example, would have benefited from engagement with authors such as E. P. Sanders and Gundry Volf. Despite this, however, this book will be of personal value for the reader and preacher. Plevnik fulfils his aim of encouraging the church and facilitating an understanding of the hope that she has in Christ. His exploration of the relationship between the parousia and Easter is particularly useful. The book is a good resource for students of the eschatological passages in Paul, the chapters of exegesis being thorough and clear. The book is well presented and contains indexes of modern authors and ancient sources.

Marion L. S. Carson, International Christian College, Glasgow

Holiness

J. C. Ryle, abridged by Robert Backhouse

Coronet Books, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1996; 254pp., £6.99; ISBN 0 340 65632 8

This book – a collection of miscellaneous biblical texts relating to practical Christianity – was first published in 1877 as an antidote to the distinctive teaching of Keswick, and particularly the view of sin and sanctification promoted by the revivalism of the day. It was republished in 1952 with a preface by D. M. Lloyd-Jones at a time when he, Raymond Johnston, J. I. Packer and others were seeking to promote a more biblical theology (as they saw it) than was then generally favoured in IVF circles and in Evangelicalism as a whole. Bishop Pat Harris, who writes the foreword to this abridged edition, hopes that it will have an impact on the current weak church situation by promoting concern for biblical exposition

and doctrine practically applied. As with most abridgements readers of the original will not always share the judgement of the abridger. To this reader it seems inappropriate, given Ryle's concern to ground practice in doctrine, that his detailed strictures on the theological system which he believed was bringing the hearers of many evangelical preachers 'to miserable ends', and his exposition of the antidote to this, have been omitted. But this eminently readable book still contains much food for thought and should promote its original purpose.

Hugh M. Cartwright, Free Presbyterian Church, Edinburgh

Many Voices, One God: Being Faithful in a Pluralistic World

Edited by Walter Brueggemann and George Stroup

Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, 1998; 202pp., \$25; ISBN 0 664 25757 7

This volume of essays is published to honour Shirley Guthrie Jr, a teacher of theology at Columba Seminary for the past 40 years. The 13 contributions cover biblical studies, historical, theological and pastoral perspectives, all written in relation to the theme indicated in the title. The other common aspect of all these essays is that they are written within the Reformed tradition, so that there are frequent references to Calvin, Jonathan Edwards and Karl Barth.

A number of writers note the terminology now commonly used in regard to the discussion of religious pluralism: exclusivism, which stresses the uniqueness of Christ, inclusivism, which moves in the opposite direction and sees all roads leading to God, and pluralism, which is seen here as a mediating position involving openness to other faiths without compromising their particularity. It can be said that almost all the contributors to this book belong in the third category in that, while wishing to recognise God at work beyond Christendom, they clearly seek to be faithful to the unique message of the Bible.

Walter Brueggemann provocatively argues that the roots of religious pluralism can be traced back into the Old Testament in that other nations besides Israel knew the liberating activity of God in their histories. This claim is based on a single text (Amos 9:7) and although Brueggemann expounds this with typical brilliance it is hard to avoid the conclusion that one verse is being made to support an interpretative structure greater than it can possibly sustain. There is a fascinating discussion of 'Paul and Multiculturalism' by Charles B. Cousar, while Donald McKim (a name known to evangelicals) helpfully discusses pluralism in relation to the

classical Reformed tradition. The outstanding chapter in the book though is by Douglas John Hall under the title 'Confessing Christ in a religiously Plural Context'. This is a quite brilliant statement in which an attempt is made to move beyond all the categories mentioned earlier. Hall argues convincingly that a religiously pluralistic context is the normal situation for Christian faith and he suggests what it might mean to engage in faithful mission in such circumstances. There is a great deal in this book that is stimulating, but Hall's chapter is outstanding and probably worth the purchase price on its own,

David Smith, Whitefield Institute, Oxford

Augustine. His Thought in Context

T. Kermit Scott

Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ, 1995; 253pp., \$14.95; ISBN 0 8091 3566 3

T. Kermit Scott is a Professor of Philosophy with a long interest in the work of Augustine. It takes such a philosopher to represent the thought of the great master in a way that does not intimidate the ordinary reader with historical minutiae and lashings of Latin. Exposition of the theologian's thought is done lucidly and usually with well-chosen quotations. It is not surprising for a philosopher to come to the conclusion that Augustine does not succeed in holding together coherently the great theologian's core beliefs in God's absolute power and perfect goodness. There is no harder thesis in theology, and the problem is not confined, as the author sometimes seems to think, to 'Augustinians'. However in reaching this not very innovative conclusion, Scott presents a very illuminating background (the *Context* of the title) to Augustine's intellectual pilgrimage and the impressive, though surprising, reception of his ideas ancient and modern.

The section on history and social conditions is full of provocative and fruitful strands, setting out a much starker account of the growth of the Christian community than is usually heard. Perhaps too much is made of the slow conquest by the Christian 'ideology' in rural areas. Scott admits that rural outlooks tend to change more slowly. The claim that Christian numbers were low should be read against the number of them martyred or driven into various forms of exile and secrecy. Statistical study here ceases to be an exact discipline.

The main historical claim of the author is that Augustine moved from the 'original myth' about God, derived from the Old Testament, through Manichaeism and Plotinian myths to the 'imperial myth'. This imperial myth sprang from the victory of the Christian God in the courts of the

emperor and the resulting popular embrace of the faith. Because of it, Augustine put his faith in an ideology of God as omnipotent, requiring complete submission, surrender and faith. Along with lurking Plotinian leanings, Augustine, unawares, therefore gave support to the social order of the time with its inequalities and imperial domination. This fatal move received further stiffening from the emphasis upon the future life and the highly individualistic understanding of the human constitution. It is also to blame for the untenable doctrine of predestination.

I have given a highly compressed summary of the case. It has merits and demerits. It does seem to agree with other criticisms of Augustine for a view of God that reflects exaggerated individual autonomy, particularly in his treatment of the Trinity. The claim that Augustine's approach, and Augustinianism, tend towards support of *status quo*, also merits attention. However, it would be incorrect to think that Augustine was the first to stress the absolute omnipotence of God. Tertullian and others did this without the encouragements of the Constantinian revolution, and the view that God created everything from nothing was common amongst Christian writers long before Augustine. The author probably attributes too easily an unseemly triumphalism to Augustine, who, as Scott himself observes, took a very sceptical view of the pomp and splendour of empire.

The main contribution of the book is in its intellectual biography of, and background to, the great bishop and in its sympathetic, but discriminating, account of the reception and enduring magnetism of his thought. These alone make it worth the read.

Roy Kearsley, South Wales Baptist College, Cardiff

One Bible, Many Voices, Different Approaches to Biblical Studies

Susan E. Gillingham

SPCK, London, 1998; 280pp., £15.99; ISBN 0 281 04886 X

In the words of the author, 'The purpose and audience for this particular book is [*sic*] upper-sixth-formers, first- and second-year undergraduates, and adult students coming later in life to read theology' (p. xv). Also included in the intended readership are those 'for whom biblical studies is a relatively new discipline' (*ibid*). The Bible is approached from the viewpoint of an academic discipline and the assumptions of those from professional backgrounds are specifically excluded.

Part one of the book describes the disparate nature and forms of the biblical texts and seeks to trace how the texts evolved to their present form. Part two describes the variety of ways of reading biblical texts and

urges an integration of methods of reading the text so as to achieve a balanced reading. The author's favoured method of interpretation is what she calls 'the integrated literary approach', which she describes but does not define. The book concludes with an extended illustration of the author's preferred method of reading from the Psalter and from Psalm 8 in particular.

This is a useful book, with much background information about the Bible, its forms and supposed course of development and interpretation. The writer's style is lucid and free of jargon. The book has 40 helpful tables and figures and several good indexes. The first seven chapters (that is, all of Part one and all but the last two chapters of Part two) are a good introduction to biblical studies.

The author's thesis is that we need 'a pluralistic reading' (p. 5) of the Bible and 'a pluralistic understanding of the nature of biblical studies' (p. 4) because the Bible is 'a pluralistic text' (p. 3). The plea for such a reading comes from the author's intention to accommodate her work and findings to a post-modern understanding of the world and to avoid what she calls 'the ideology of control' (p. 246) when it comes to interpretation. Even so, she states that 'we should be as critical of pluralism *per se* as we should be critical of any exclusivist approach which assumes that it alone has the key control' (p. 247).

I am left with two observations about the author's thesis on pluralism. Two ideas are encompassed by what Gillingham means by pluralism. The first, as the subtitle to the book indicates, is the recognition of the diversity, complexity and variety both within the Bible itself (even particular books of the Bible) and of appropriate methods of interpretation. The second is the variety of approaches which there can be in reading a biblical text. Both ideas are unexceptional.

But Gillingham leaves us there – and offers no method of selecting interpretations so as to make sense of the text. By offering an uncritical accumulation of different readings of Psalm 8, as she does in Ch. 9, Gillingham leaves the reader wiser as to what the text *might* mean, but no wiser as to how to make an educated and critical choice or appraisal of what the text *does* mean. Her basic premise is 'the fact [*sic*] that the texts will always [*sic*] be something of a mystery' (p. 247). I for one was left bewildered as to what Gillingham thought Psalm 8 meant (I *am* interested in her view) and how she might persuade me of her view. Rather than offer nothing on her view of the meaning of the text, she should help her readers critically to appraise the variety of possible meanings of that text, so as to resist 'the ideology of control' which she rightly rejects. In the end, the plurality she offers – and invites us even to reject as an 'exclusivist

approach' – is the plurality of the supposed legitimacy of a variety of (sometimes competing or contradictory) values or views. To my mind, this is not so much a 'mystery' as cacophony.

Anthony Bash, University of Hull

Deuteronomy

Christopher Wright

Hendrickson, Peabody, Massachusetts, 1996; 350pp., £7.99; ISBN 0 85364 725 9

About to begin writing study notes on Deuteronomy, I began reading this commentary with high expectations. I was not disappointed. I can heartily endorse Gordon McConville's verdict: 'In Chris Wright, Deuteronomy has found an exponent who has shown its power and relevance to the modern world.' What is distinctive about this commentary? Again, Gordon McConville is right on the mark: 'His vigour of style and argument makes it more than mere commentary, but a work of theology itself.' Christopher Wright is the Principal of All Nations Christian College, Ware. The name of the College alerts us to the direction in which his exposition of Deuteronomy leads us. From the heart of Jewish religion, here is a Word from the Lord for all nations. Dr Wright spent five years teaching in the Union Biblical Seminary in India. In this commentary his missionary concern shines through again and again. He challenges the reader to think about Deuteronomy in terms of its significance for all nations in today's world. In his 'Introduction', he attunes the reader to this line of thinking by including a section entitled, 'Missiological Significance', to which he devotes more pages than to the rest of the 'Introduction'. This section on 'Missiological Significance' is like a starter. It whets the appetite for more. As well as a subject index and Scripture index, this book contains a long list of books and articles for further reading. This commentary is part of the New International Biblical Commentary: Old Testament Series, edited by Robert L. Hubbard Jr and Robert K. Johnston. While this particular contribution may have its own distinctiveness, it can hardly fail to stimulate interest in the whole series. If the rest of the series comes close to reaching the standard achieved by Wright, it will prove very valuable to those who share its goal of linking 'probing reflective interpretation of the text to loyal biblical devotion and warm Christian affection' (Foreword by the editors). Scottish readers may be interested to note that Iain Provan, late of New College, Edinburgh has contributed the volume on 1 and 2 Kings.

Charles M. Cameron, Castlemilk West, Glasgow

Hidden Sayings of Jesus

William Morrice

SPCK, London, 1997; 247pp., £14.99; ISBN 1 56563 289 3

As its subtitle explains, this book is an investigation of 'words attributed to Jesus outside the four gospels'. William Morrice gathers together a fairly comprehensive collection of sayings attributed to Jesus from a variety of sources – Pauline letters, Acts, gospel manuscripts, papyrus, the Nag Hammadi codices (with special attention to the Gospel of Thomas), apocryphal gospels, early Christian writers and Muslim writings. He translates each saying himself, prints it out in full, and evaluates its authenticity. This is measured on a scale of A-D, with those sayings least likely to be authentic being given a D and those most likely to be authentic receiving an A (for anyone used to the textual apparatus of the UBS text this is an easy scheme to get used to). Morrice clearly sets out his criteria for authenticity in Chapter 3, giving a history of research in the area and suitably noting its subjectivity.

The book as a whole is written for a general readership and begins with a useful survey of how the New Testament canon came into being. Morrice is to be congratulated on his ability to turn what could have been a difficult, jargon-ridden discussion into something which is clear, concise and eminently readable. Throughout, the material is divided into short sections and the tone is kept light (for example, the Nag Hammadi library is generally referred to as a 'load of old books'!). Yet scholarly integrity is never sacrificed and the endnotes are full of recent debate and further information.

A large section of the book is devoted to sayings from the Gospel of Thomas. This work, Morrice assures us, is not a gnostic gospel as is often supposed, but is a thoroughly orthodox product of Syrian Christianity, perhaps going back to an independent and early tradition. Several of the parables in particular are found to be similar to those in the synoptics and, as they are often free from later allegory, may well reflect earlier versions. It might have been useful if Morrice had provided us with a short chapter outlining recent debates on the relationships between the Gospel of Thomas, the synoptics and gnosticism at this point. Though many scholars would agree with his views, far from all would be convinced, preferring to see the Gospel as a late harmony composed for the needs of a gnostic community.

The survey shows that outside the New Testament relatively little of value survives, only a handful of sayings. The most important gain is with the Gospel of Thomas, which, if Morrice is correct, provides independent

versions of twelve well-known parables and three possible new ones. Morrice stresses that the picture of Jesus which emerges from these new sayings is broadly in line with the picture of him in other New Testament writings (though this is not particularly surprising since similarity with known sayings was one of the tests for authenticity). What Morrice's book does show is the unique value of the canonical gospels and forces us to reassess the value of the Gospel of Thomas as a source for genuine sayings of Jesus.

Helen K. Bond, New College, Edinburgh

Christ Triumphant: Biblical Perspectives on His Church and Kingdom

Raymond O. Zorn

Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1997; xvi+244pp., £12.95; ISBN 0 85151 696 3

In this rather untypical Banner book Zorn concludes that the Westminster Confession's identification of the visible church as 'the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ' is 'too narrow to do justice to the scope of New Testament teaching'. This updating of his *Church and Kingdom* (1962) aims at clarifying what he sees as the distinctiveness and relationship of church and kingdom and the scope of their activity. Although one may not accept his conclusions the work, in spite of an occasionally heavy style, provokes thought on a variety of related subjects. Material is presented in a scholarly manner, with regard for biblical authority and practical usefulness, on the relation between Israel and the New Testament church and between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of God, on the church's conflict with the powers of darkness, and on the church in relation to the individual, family, state including – inevitably? – 'another look at theonomy' and society. Sections deal with the eschatology of church and kingdom and the ultimate victory of Christ and there are brief treatments of subjects such as 'common grace' and church discipline. Sidelights are thrown on many biblical passages. The author acknowledges having 'warmed himself at the fires of various schools of thought'. The most influential of these are Dutch or American, associated particularly with A. Kuyper, H. N. Ridderbos and G. Vos. There is little evidence of interaction with Scottish theology. Such interaction would have been particularly useful in discussing the millennium and church/state relations, where Scottish history and theology make significant contributions, as indeed they do to ecclesiology in general.

Hugh M. Cartwright, Free Presbyterian Church, Edinburgh

Scripture in the Theologies of W. Pannenberg and D. G. Bloesch

Frank Hasel

Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 1996; 337pp., £36.00; ISSN 0721 3409/ISBN 3 631 49264 2 / US ISBN 0 8204 2968 6

There are really three themes here: Scripture, Pannenberg and Bloesch. The early part of the book is concerned with the history of the doctrine of scripture since the Reformation. This section would be of interest to the student of historical theology who may not be particularly interested in either Pannenberg or Bloesch. The remainder of the book – a Ph.D. thesis – is concerned with an exposition and evaluation of the teachings of Pannenberg and Bloesch regarding scripture. This is an interesting study. It is chiefly concerned with ‘whether the role of Scripture is to be determined ultimately “from below” or “from above”’. By focusing on ‘two contemporary, living theologians’, Hasel takes the reader into detailed discussion of current attempts to determine the role of scripture in theology. This is not a book for those who like light reading. If I had not been fairly well acquainted with the writings of Pannenberg and Bloesch, I think I would have been completely out of my depth rather than simply struggling at a number of points. The extent of Hasel’s reading is most impressive. On many pages, the footnotes take up more space than the main text. Reading the footnotes together with the main text makes for disjointed reading, but I would encourage readers not to gloss over the footnotes. That is where they will find some of the most interesting material. At the end of the book, there is a ‘Selected Bibliography’, which runs from pages 263 to 337!

Charles M. Cameron, Castlemilk West, Glasgow

The Concept of Equity in Calvin’s Ethics

Guenther H. Haas

Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 1997; xi+205pp., £19.99; ISBN 0 85364 842 5

In recent years there has been increased interest in Calvin’s ethics to which Guenther Haas usefully contributes by studying the topic through the lens of Calvin’s concept of equity. This is a scholarly volume which is nonetheless both readable and edifying being accessible to all with a basic knowledge of Calvin and the Reformation.

The first part explores the historical background to Calvin, examining the development of the concept of equity from Aristotle to Aquinas and in Calvin's contemporaries, humanists and reformers. These chapters clarify the different ways in which equity was understood.

The second part examines the concept in Calvin's ethics. Chapter 4, the central chapter of the book, relates equity to love and justice. 'Calvin views equity as the interpretative rule of love to effect justice in human life' (p. 63). Equity can only be practised by those who have curbed self-love by self-denial and who have love of God and neighbour in their hearts. This chapter sets out the fundamental principles which are applied in the specific areas examined in the remaining chapters.

Chapter 5 relates equity to law, both natural law and the moral law of scripture. Calvin viewed equity as the basic principle of natural law. Chapter 6 shows how Calvin emphasises the unity of Old and New Testaments. Chapter 7 examines in turn the commandments of the second table. The author shows that Calvin uses equity/natural law as a principle by which to criticise the commandments of the Pentateuch. He evaluates divine legislation by the standard of (natural) equity and finds it to fall short. In so doing he places the blame not on God's law but on the sinful obstinacy of the Jews. Chapter 8 applies the theme to church and state. Finally, chapter 9 shows how Calvin applied the principle of equity to the issue of usury, thus transcending a rigid biblical literalism and taking into account the social and economic realities of the day.

The author is not uncritical of the material that he is expounding and helpfully points to tensions in the thought of Augustine and of Calvin. Equity is certainly a fruitful theme in Calvin's ethics. One might even call it a theme of central importance, but the author does not (in my view) justify his claim that it is '*the* theme of central importance in Calvin's social ethic' (p. 2; my emphasis). The summary at the end of Chapter 6 is significant, where he acknowledges that equity is not mentioned in Calvin's account of the three principles for interpreting the Decalogue, but nonetheless claims that 'equity is the principal guide in interpreting the Second Table of the law' (p. 90). It surely cannot be argued that equity is a more important or more central theme or guiding principle than love.

The book is well set out with useful summaries at the end of each chapter. There is a succinct conclusion which summarises the book and points to two issues for further research. The eighteen-page bibliography is helpfully subdivided. There is an index of persons and another of words and phrases. But the layout contains one major blemish. Instead of footnotes there are endnotes, without even the assistance of stating at the top of each page of notes which pages or chapter of text are being covered. This puts

the reader to the continual inconvenience of having to keep the text open at two places. What possible justification can there be for this in the age of computers? Surely no reader who is frightened merely by the existence of footnotes is going to read a book like this. Any serious reader will at least sometimes wish to consult footnotes and will be put to unnecessary inconvenience – a blatant transgression of Calvin's principle of equity, fundamental to which is that one should do to others as one would have them do to you (p. 63).

Tony Lane, London Bible College

The Spirit of Buddhism

David Burnett

Monarch and ANCC, Crowborough, 1996; 288pp., £9.99; ISBN 1 85424 298 9

The achievement of this book is that complex belief, diverse practice and 25 centuries of unfamiliar history are brought together in a highly readable and informative manner. This does not mean that the difficult issues are left out. There is, for example, a short but helpful section on Nagarjuna, the second-century Indian scholar. Recognising relative and absolute truth Nagarjuna taught that the foundation of both is sunyata, or the emptiness of everything. The writer illustrates Nagarjuna's use of logic: x is y , x is non- y , x is both y and non- y and x is neither y nor non- y .

David Burnett is Director of Studies at All Nations Christian College. He is author of a considerable number of books, including *Clash of Worlds*, *Unearthly Powers* and *The Spirit of Hinduism*. His approach is non-polemic; there is no attempt to promote Christianity at the expense of Buddhism. Some readers may prefer a more comparative approach, focusing on guidelines for faith-sharing and redemptive analogies. Dr Burnett sets out his aim at the beginning – 'to give a study of the Buddhist tradition from a Christian tradition'. He justifies his approach as follows: 'Only as Christians understand the fascination of this unique religion will they be able to communicate meaningfully with those of the Buddhist tradition.'

Starting with the Indian context into which Gautama (the Buddha) was born, Burnett traces the enlightenment process and the middle path that the Buddha taught. He explains the four noble truths and associated beliefs, e.g. karma, re-incarnation, dependent origination, nirvana and the eightfold path. There is a helpful chapter on the Buddhist approach to meditation. 'The Buddhist tradition aims at detachment from the world of experiences, while the Christian seeks attachment to God. A central feature of Christian meditation is that the bible is regarded as the special revelation of God who

created all things.' Burnett explains how the Buddhist monastic community developed and looks at some rules that regulate monastic life. The councils and controversies in early Buddhism are clearly explained.

I think that there are two main strengths to this book. First, Tibetan Buddhism is well treated, its history is traced and there is a good introduction to tantric practice. This is particularly useful for readers living in Scotland where Tibetan Buddhism is particularly high profile. Secondly, the spread and development of the main school of Buddhism are set out to give us the overall picture from the early councils until the present day in the UK. Along the way we gain helpful insights into Pure Land, Zen, Nichiren, as well as the new movements of Soka Gakkai and Friends of the Western Buddhist Order.

This book will provide useful reading for religious education teachers and students. It will also prove helpful for those who wish to dialogue with both Buddhists (currently 23 different associations in Scotland) and the increasing number of Westerners interested in non-Christian spirituality.

Rory McKenzie, International Christian College, Glasgow

The Last Things: Hope for This World and the Next

Herman Bavinck

Baker Book House, Grand Rapids / Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 1996; 205pp., £12.99; ISBN 0 85364 761 5

The name of Herman Bavinck became well known to me during my Ph.D. studies in the writings of G. C. Berkouwer. Again and again in his *Studies in Dogmatics*, Berkouwer quotes from the works of Bavinck. Berkouwer also makes frequent reference to Bavinck in his book, *A Half Century of Theology*. Berkouwer (1903-1996), like Bavinck (1854-1921), served as Professor of Systematic Theology at the Free University of Amsterdam. The newly-formed Dutch Reformed Translation Society's first project is the definitive translation of Herman Bavinck's complete four-volume *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* (Reformed Dogmatics). This volume on eschatology is the first instalment of that project. The reasoning behind the selection of *The Last Things* may need some explanation. In his 'Editor's Introduction', John Bolt writes, 'Apocalyptic fever grows as we approach the year 2000 *anno domini*. One longs for a sane, biblical voice to guide the Christian church through the shoals of eschatological confusion'. Readers interested in reading more of Bavinck should look out for *The Doctrine of God* (Banner of Truth, 1977). Anyone interested in seeing how

Berkouwer built on Bavinck's theology of the last things should refer to his book, *The Return of Christ* (Eerdmans, 1972).

Since the first edition of Bavinck's *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* dates back to 1895, there may be a tendency to dismiss him as a name from the distant past. His influence on Berkouwer – listed by P. E. Hughes among the *Creative Minds in Contemporary Theology* (Eerdmans, 1996) – indicates something of the stature of this man whom William Hendriksen described as 'one of the greatest Reformed theologians'.

Charles M. Cameron, Castlemilk West, Glasgow

Evangelicalism in Britain 1935-1995: a Personal Sketch

Oliver Barclay

IVP, Leicester, 1997; 159pp., £8.99; ISBN 0 85111 189 0

It is important to note the sub-title to this volume, for this indicates both its value and its limitations. It is not intended to be a dispassionate account of the evangelical movement during the period in question but the personal reflections of somebody who was deeply involved in so much that he records. Dr Oliver Barclay's qualifications for being taken seriously could hardly be bettered. The UCCF (formerly IVF) is a movement of key significance for British Evangelicalism and he was very closely involved in its work almost from the beginning of the period he describes, and its General Secretary 1964-80 so that he was not only aware of what was happening but a major participant himself. Since then, he has kept abreast of developments within the evangelical movement, most notably through his editorship of IVP's series, 'When Christians Disagree'.

He distinguishes between Conservative and Liberal Evangelicals. His sympathies are with the position of the former, which he also calls 'classical evangelicalism', and he charts its remarkable growth over this sixty-year period. He also shows that Liberal Evangelicalism, which he regards as an unstable position, having experienced a period of decline, is now somewhat resurgent. Many movements such as Keswick, the Evangelical Alliance, the British Evangelical Council and Moral Rearmament appear in his pages and he seeks to show their relationships and indicate their significance. Often he assesses both the strengths and weaknesses of particular movements and emphases.

It is not surprising that he highlights particularly the IVF/UCCF itself, Tyndale House, the Billy Graham Crusades and the changing scene of theological education. The personal names in the index are almost a 'Who's Who' of British Evangelicalism during the period he surveys, with frequent mention of people like Martyn Lloyd-Jones, John Stott, Douglas

Johnson, J. I. Packer and John Wenham. Among Scots, there is surprisingly little on F. F. Bruce, but William Still is seen to have had a ministry of 'enormous importance'.

Dr Barclay lays much stress on scripture. In a particularly significant paragraph towards the end of the book, he says, 'There are two main streams emerging in the evangelical community, and this division may prove more fundamental in its long-term effects than any other. It runs right across denominational division and any special-interest and party groupings. It is between those who make the Bible effectively, and not only theoretically, the mainstay of their ministry, and those who do not.' He says that the former will produce strong realistic Christians while the latter 'are almost certain to produce vulnerable Christians or painfully dependent people, who dare not move out from the particular congregation where they have been supported unless they can go somewhere else where they will be equally propped up'. He is clearly disturbed by some contemporary trends and your reviewer is certain that many of the points he makes need to be taken very seriously.

Both Rutherford House and SETS receive honourable mention, as does this *Bulletin*.

Geoffrey W. Grogan, Glasgow

The Lambeth Articles

V. C. Miller

Latimer House, Oxford, 1994; 94pp., £3.50; ISBN 0 946397 415

This Latimer House monograph contains Latimer House Studies 44-45. It would do well to have a clearer extended title than 'Doctrinal Development and Conflict in 16th Century England'. The nine Lambeth Articles were concerned specifically with the doctrine of predestination and were altogether Anglican formularies. They were intended to clarify the doctrine as it is presented in Article 17 of the Thirty Nine Articles.

Predestination, hardly mentioned today in Anglican circles, was taken very seriously in the sixteenth century by Anglican divines as well as puritans, which V. C. Miller sets out to demonstrate in this study. Miller contends that Archbishop Whitgift and his advisors, who drew up the Articles in 1595, were seeking to promulgate a much more Lutheran concept of the doctrine than the tight and rigidly logical doctrine of Calvin and the Calvinists. The real importance of these Articles was to be the influence they were to have on the theology of Richard Hooker, which was to be at the very heart of Anglican thought. The Articles themselves in turn never became official, since Queen Elizabeth I did not like them, and

as head of the Church, rejected them. They were incorporated into Archbishop Ussher's Irish Articles of 1615, but replaced in 1635 by the Thirty Nine Articles.

Hooker and his precursors respected Calvin, but not as ardently as some of his puritan followers. Despite the disputes between Whitgift, and later Hooker on the one side, and the Calvinists including the Cambridge puritans on the other, Miller argues that there was far more common ground between them than has readily been accepted. The chief differences concerned predestination and the church, and whether predestination meant double predestination. The Anglicans sought to accommodate the doctrines of predestination and election in the concept of a national church, which by its very nature was broad in its membership, while the Cambridge Calvinists saw the doctrine as pointing towards a purist definition of the church.

On the extent of predestination Miller devotes her final and more lengthy chapter to Richard Hooker and the Lambeth Articles. Calvin held at least an implicit doctrine of double predestination, which was presented more explicitly by the Calvinist theologians Perkins, Zanchius and Beza. Hooker wanted to avoid double predestination implicitly, and explicitly to rest content with a 'tip of the iceberg' doctrine of predestination. The deep mysteries of predestination were not to be pursued. He sought to develop a doctrine of God who is beneficent and gracious, not of one who created mankind in order to predestine the greater part of it to hell.

Miller makes rather bold assumptions that the reader will be familiar with the characters to whom she refers. A dictionary of church history to hand will be useful.

Peter Cook, Alston, Cumbria

What Are They Saying about Scripture and Ethics?

William S. Spohn

Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ, 1995; 142pp., \$8.95; ISBN 0 8091 3609 0

In this second edition of a book originally published in 1984, Spohn provides a helpful, readable and updated introduction to a field where the sheer variety of approaches has bewildered many a newcomer and introductory surveys have sometimes become expositions of yet another approach. He soon identifies as key questions: what is the nature of the text, what is the ground for appealing to it and how may it be applied to the contemporary issue? Aiming to trace how Christian ethics have followed the wider shift in attention towards the contemporary significance of a text, the bulk of his book concentrates on the third question. Four

main chapters explore and comment on approaches which treat Scripture respectively as the command of God, as a reminder of our true humanity, as a call to liberation and as a call to discipleship.

Referring to selected leading proponents, Spohn exposes both the strengths and weaknesses of each approach. Thus the place of moral reasoning becomes a recurrent question for the 'command of God' model, as does the place of distinctively Christian input for that of 'moral reminder'. Is the liberation perspective self-limiting and lacking in further moral or religious content? Discipleship is seen as a form of apprenticeship through which the master's wisdom and example are but gradually absorbed into the life of the disciple, although the community dimension admits a place for rules and principles. At this point, Spohn seems to draw a needlessly stark contrast between the community and the private interpreter.

Considering the ethical potential and limits of the common Christian story in relation to the discipleship model provides Spohn with the springboard for a fifth main chapter in which he sets out his own approach, that of scripture as establishing the basis for responding love. Exploring this undoubtedly central biblical theme, morality for Christians is neither applying an abstract principle nor a question of simple imitation but the imaginative extension of the story to our new situations. So the story of Jesus – treated paradigmatically rather than iconically – illuminates which features of our situation are significant, how we are to act (even when precisely what we are to do is unclear) and what we are to become as people. Such an approach focuses on the agent rather than the act, it can inform the emerging stress on character and value, it establishes spirituality as the bridge between theory and action and it encourages us to face the radical imperatives of scripture squarely rather than just to make abstractions from them.

Spohn's examples and interests naturally reflect his own perspective and inevitably there are occasions where the demarcation between approaches seems to blur. But, given a generally objective stance and the underlying assumption that the alternative approaches are complementary, the result is an introduction which is more satisfying than many. A desire to treat scripture seriously only enhances this. That his own approach receives twice as much space as most of the others may come close to the 'yet another approach' trap mentioned above. Perhaps it did not need such a comparatively lengthy treatment and the more casual reader may well find parts of it tortuous, but, given the biblical importance and the integrative potential of his theme, allowances are surely in order. Spohn's style also allows the reader to come to his own conclusions, to bounce his own ideas, hence this little book may not only serve as an introduction to the

field but also stimulate the newcomer's further thinking or perhaps help the bewildered to organise theirs.

Frank Waddleton, Glasgow

The Christ of the Bible and the Church's Faith

Geoffrey Grogan

Christian Focus Publications, Fearn, 1998; 297pp., £9.95; ISBN 1 87592 662 5

Geoffrey Grogan, Principal Emeritus of International Christian College, Glasgow, has produced a fine volume on New Testament Christology with an interesting twist. The odd-numbered chapters in the book discuss theologically who Jesus was and is as one would expect in such a volume, covering matters such as the biblical evidence from both the New Testament and the Old, Christ in his humiliation, Christ in his exaltation, the deity of Christ. The even-numbered chapters, however, address issues more apologetical in character. Grogan helpfully discusses fundamental questions relating to history, theology, biblical interpretation, ethics, creeds, and the uniqueness of Christ in a world of religious pluralism.

In every chapter, Grogan demonstrates at once a grasp of the key issues, knowledge of a broad range of important literature and a firm commitment to a biblical perspective on the subject. The final chapter faces the reader with the personal implications of faith in this Christ, thus demonstrating the pastoral concern that lies at the heart of the author.

This is a wide-ranging book which will inform the believer, answer the enquirer, and challenge the faithless sceptic. Given that many of the topics covered have had whole volumes devoted to them, it will surprise no-one that theological students will need to supplement this book with other more narrowly-focused studies. However, Christians looking for a readable resource to inform their thinking or to give to friends or colleagues who are prepared to think seriously about Jesus need look no further than this volume. It is warmly commended.

Alistair I. Wilson, Highland Theological College, Dingwall

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