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## SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

The scope of the *Bulletin* is broadly defined as theology, especially Scottish and Reformed, whether biblical, systematic-dogmatic, historical or practical, and Scottish church history. Articles submitted for publication should be sent to the Editor, books for review to Rutherford House (see below).

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## EDITORIAL

The decline of Christianity in Britain is obvious with only about eight per cent of the population ever attending a service regularly. Churches are being converted into restaurants, book shops, public houses and homes. Britain is one of the most secular societies in the western world.

In *The Death of Christian Britain*,<sup>1</sup> Callum G. Brown challenges the generally held view that secularisation has been a long and gradual process beginning with the Industrial Revolution, and instead proposes that it has been a catastrophic short-term phenomenon starting with the 1960s. Brown demonstrates that during the early nineteenth century, evangelical religion flourished and that there was an almost unprecedented growth of institutional religion in Britain between 1945 and 1958.

Brown argues that the decline, when it began in the 1960s, was due to the huge transformation of the role of women. He shows how piety had become feminised during the nineteenth century and that masculinity was regarded as increasingly incompatible with faith. Brown argues that the post-war resurgence of traditional family values created a climate conducive to religious revival. But the liberation of women, along with the sexual emancipation of the 1960s, led women to turn their backs on the Christian religion, with the result that many men 'no longer had to "keep up appearances" in the pews' and this was followed by the 'alienation of the next generation of children'.<sup>2</sup>

Brown's book has received widespread comment within the secular press. Professor Niall Ferguson in a 'Start the Week' broadcast on Radio 4 spoke of it as 'a tremendously impressive book and wonderful social history'. The *Irish Times* felt that 'Church leaders should not ignore this book.' *The Independent* said that 'This book should be read by anybody who cares about the future of religion. [Brown's] statistics are convincing and disquieting. The personal testimonies he quotes are moving and revealing. He shows clearly that Christianity, as we have known it in this country, is in its death throes.' Antonia Swinson in *Scotland on Sunday* spoke of it as 'A very brave, readable book, and a marvellous social history lesson.... Brown has a wonderful final sentence: "Britain is

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<sup>1</sup> Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000* (London, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p 192.

showing the rest of the world how religion can die.” I hope for all our sakes he is wrong. But this is a powerful wake-up call.’

Brown’s thesis may be inspired less by a passionate concern for Christianity than by a desire to trounce academic rivals, but this book should be read by anybody who cares about the future of religion. His statistics are convincing and disquieting. Brown argues that within a generation Christianity will merely be a minority movement. Organised religion is on the decline in Britain, many denominations are short of recruits to the ministry, and many people continue to believe without belonging. Brown’s conclusion is that although churches will ‘continue to exist in some skeletal form with increasing commitment from decreasing numbers of adherents... the culture of Christianity has gone in the Britain of the new millennium’.<sup>3</sup>

The challenge that such a book has on the Christian Church will cause some people to bury their heads even deeper in the sand and bemoan the state of society, without asking serious questions about what it means to be church in the twenty-first century and how we can engage with our contemporary culture in mission and evangelism.

We must take account of the impact of economic and cultural change in our personal and corporate lives as Christians, in our homes and families, at work and in the local community, and in the beliefs and values of society at large. Our mission must be engaged with the social realities of Scottish society, and not be culturally wedded to a Scotland now largely gone. We need a careful and considered assessment of the conditions of our society and the way in which we can minister the love of God to a lost world.

The Special Commission on Review and Reform, set up by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1999 to look at the ‘primary purposes of the church and the shape of the church as we enter a new millennium’ will bring ‘proposals for continuing reform’ to the General Assembly in May 2001.

Peter Neilson, author of the new report, commented in an article published by the *Scotsman* newspaper on 14 March 2001 that ‘Change is in the air. Across the country the people of the Church are restless. There is a deep feeling that things are not as they should be.... New styles of churches are being given the space to grow without being pressed into a template of a previous generation... some churches are getting on with the job of being the Church for a new society.’ Sadly ‘there is another side. Youth initiatives are often starved of money and support. Worship

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 198.

can be a bore and a chore. Pews are treated with the reverence of ancient idols. There is a massive absence of passion for mission and evangelism. Fear dresses up as caution.... Risk is a stranger.'

Yet as well as contextualising our message, we need to rediscover a fresh confidence in the good news of God's love for humankind and in the power of the Spirit to renew his Church. Although there are several dangers involved in looking to revival as the answer to all our problems, the conviction is spreading that only an experience of revival can touch the needs of the churches of today and of our society. Jim Packer defines it as 'God visiting his people, touching their hearts and deepening his work of grace in their lives'.<sup>4</sup>

As we face the 'Death of Christian Britain' may God give us the courage to change. May he give us the conviction that as churches we have often been more concerned with our survival than catching the missionary heart of our God. May he fill us with a confidence to cry out in prayer for the outpouring of his Spirit on the lives of our congregations.

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<sup>4</sup> Article on Revival in *New Dictionary of Theology* (Leicester, 1988), p. 588.

# EVANGELISM AND MISSION – WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?<sup>1</sup>

JOHN M. HITCHEN, FORMER PRINCIPAL, BIBLE COLLEGE OF NEW ZEALAND

## INTRODUCTION

We could approach our topic in many ways – from defining the terms, to debating their inter-relationship, to analysing their modern-day usage. Our approach shall be: to survey factors leading to doubt and uncertainty about evangelism; to note some recent definitions of the terms, and then to look, again, at aspects of the biblical understanding of the gospel, because of its importance for charting the way ahead in evangelism and mission today.

## MISSION AND EVANGELISM IN THE FIRING LINE

‘The Christian Mission – at least as it has traditionally been interpreted and performed – is under attack not only from without but also from within its own ranks’, warned David Bosch.<sup>2</sup>

We do well, therefore, to commence with an overview of some aspects of this attack which has left uncertainty and differences of thinking about evangelism and mission today.

### *The Post-Christian context in the West*

Bosch listed a series of changing attitudes in Western society in the twentieth century which have questioned the validity of Christian mission in our modern world.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A revision of a paper presented to Mission and Message, the Conference on Evangelism organised by the Evangelism Workgroup of the Conference of Churches of Aotearoa, New Zealand, 2-4 June 1995 at Wellington, New Zealand.

<sup>2</sup> In what has become a classic study of our topic: David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (American Society of Missiology Series, No. 16, Maryknoll, N.Y., 1991), p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

- Scientific and technological advance, with its associated secularisation, appear to make God redundant.
- The de-christianising of the West – which is itself now a pagan mission-field – numbs the incentive for mission to other parts of the world.
- The globe no longer falls naturally into ‘Christian’ and ‘non-Christian’ territories. With migration of peoples of many faiths and the decline of Christianity in the West, proximity demands a review of attitudes to those of other faiths. Their devotees are often more active and more aggressive advocates for a faith than so-called Christians.
- The acute sense of guilt about previous exploitation of other peoples by the West leaves Western Christians unable or unwilling to testify to their faith.
- Economic divisions internationally between the rich and poor, with the rich being seen as Christian, cause anger in the poorer nations or embarrassment in the West.
- The fact of younger churches demanding ‘autonomy’, with their own theologies and priorities, implies Christian missionaries from the West are redundant.

To Bosch’s list we could add the resurgence of other major world religions; the renaissance of traditional spirituality amongst indigenous peoples world-wide; the demise of the communist bloc; and the appeal of New Age teachings displacing respect for Christianity in the West. Each of these has brought a fresh challenge to traditional mission methods. And each questions whether mission is necessary today.

### *Conflicting motives and methods*

Bosch also suggested the traditional foundations and motives for mission have been proven inadequate or at least ambiguous in the twentieth century. As that century opened, James Dennis, like his fellow-supporters of global mission, felt it only appropriate to celebrate the supposed superiority, adaptability, achievements and strength of the Christian religion. The achievements of Christian missions in education, cultural preservation, linguistics, literacy, health, medical progress, political development, social welfare and even in the contributions of missionaries

to scientific endeavour were massive by any standard.<sup>4</sup> But the expectation pervading Dennis's three volumes, that other religions would soon collapse under the advance of Christianity, was ill-founded. As the twentieth century progressed, such false confidence withered, and with it much popular support for the missionary cause.

Moreover, various motives for mission have been tried and found wanting. Academic studies of nineteenth-century mission, Bosch pointed out, have found imperialist, cultural, romantic, and ecclesiastical-colonialist motives undergirding much missionary effort. Some more religious motives, while better, are still ambiguous. The desire for conversions, while leading to personal commitment, has often also restricted the breadth of the biblical meaning of the reign of God. The eschatological motive, wanting to fulfil the task and hasten the return of the King, easily led to fixing eyes on heaven but ignoring the needs of this present world. Even the motive of church planting was conceived as if the church was co-terminus with the Kingdom of God. Again, the philanthropic motive often tended to equate God's reign with an improved society.<sup>5</sup> Bosch did not mention the even more trenchant critique from the antipodes. Neil Gunson seriously suggested the motive for mission was the desire for personal social advancement. Nineteenth-century missionaries, who came largely from lower middle class or middling class families, Gunson claims, found that by dominating a tribal group through missionary service, they could, on their return to Britain, win the acclaim of the upper classes and thereby ensure their own personal social advancement.<sup>6</sup> The net result of such questioning is doubt about the validity and uncertainty about the practice of mission today.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> James S. Dennis, *Christian Missions and Social Progress: A Sociological Study of Christian Missions*, vols 1-3 (Edinburgh & London, 1897, 1899, 1906).

<sup>5</sup> Bosch, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>6</sup> Neil W. Gunson, *Messengers of Grace: Evangelical Missionaries in the South Seas, 1797-1860* (Melbourne, 1978). Gunson's thesis has deeply influenced writings emanating from the Australian National University's School of Pacific Studies in recent years. See for a rejoinder, J. M. Hitchen, *Training Tamate: The Formation of the Nineteenth Century Missionaries' Worldview...* (University of Aberdeen PhD Thesis, 1984), pp. 144-70.

<sup>7</sup> For an important assessment of the net result of these changing attitudes as expressed in local church views on evangelism and mission in Australasia, see the National Church Life Survey reports edited by Peter Kaldor et al., listed in our bibliography below.



*Tensions in globalising the mission*

Part of our problem is the global nature of the worldwide mission today. The church is present in every part of the world. Mission from and to any part of the world today, therefore, by definition involves the churches closest at hand as well as those at a distance. Moreover, the trends in thought and practice disseminated from influential global centres reach to every corner of our global village.

Perhaps some of the issues facing New Zealand's national game in this age of World Rugby Cup competitions may provide an analytical analogy to throw some light on the situation.

## COMPETING CODES

Somewhat like the Union versus League conflict of rugby codes, on the global scene we have competing approaches to the tasks of mission and evangelism. We have a series of almost mutually exclusive approaches to mission, with little trust and only partial understanding between them. An observer could be forgiven for suggesting our different church groupings are promoting rival 'codes' of missionary outreach.

1. The Mainline churches have produced a mammoth amount of reflection and analysis in the four decades since the International Missionary Council amalgamated into the World Council of Churches at its New Delhi Assembly in 1961. Many evangelicals perceived this watershed event for the conciliar approach to mission as the hi-jacking of missionary effort by those who had little commitment to it. For those within the movement it was a clear statement, and re-instatement, of 'the missionary nature of the Church'.<sup>8</sup> Since 1961, thinking about evangelism and mission in mainline churches has been largely determined by the programmes and consultations of the World Council of Churches, particularly through its Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, and its secretaries for evangelism. The WCC Assemblies – especially Uppsala 1968, Nairobi 1975, and Canberra 1991 – have issued key statements and the Assemblies of the CWME have stimulated and guided the debate. The themes at Bangkok, 1973, *Salvation Today*, and

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<sup>8</sup> To use the title of Johannes Blauw's almost prophetic book which delineated the issues which have dominated conciliar discussion ever since: Johannes Blauw, *The Missionary nature of the Church* (London, 1961).

Melbourne, 1980, *Your Kingdom Come* encapsulated the central issues at stake in their respective decades.

From an outsider's perspective (and for much of the time since New Delhi evangelicals were made to feel themselves as outsiders) the 1960s' decisions to 'let the world set the agenda' left the conciliar movement's debates subject to the fickle whims and fads of international economic, environmental and political developments. Evangelical critique of these Assemblies has lamented the concentration on such themes – albeit couched in terms of 'salvation for social structures', 'liberation theology', 'preferential options for the poor', 'concern for the integrity of creation' and the like – with the resultant neglect of the personal salvation of the unevangelised, and loyal obedience to the Great Commission.<sup>9</sup> The popular debate has concentrated on the more radical, and usually politically left-wing, programmes and pronouncements of WCC Assemblies and staff.

However, other more central streams have influenced the formal statements of the movement. From the late 1970s sincere attempts have been made to present more broadly representative and balanced statements. This is evident, for instance, in the definitive summary found in 'Mission and Evangelism – An Ecumenical Affirmation'.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, the regular letters of Raymond Fung while secretary for evangelism of WCC have shown a respect for the concerns of those previously ignored in the earlier debate.<sup>11</sup> As we move into the twenty-first century deep differences persist, as the CWME Assembly in Canberra indicated. But now there is a willingness to take differing views more seriously.

The present challenge is for WCC central programme and staff pronouncements to be brought into closer harmony with member church convictions if the conciliar movement is to continue its influence.

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<sup>9</sup> For this critique see, e.g., Rodger C. Bassham, *Mission Theology 1948-1975: Years of Worldwide Tension, Ecumenical, Evangelical, and Roman Catholic* (William Carey Library, Pasadena, 1977); Peter Beyerhaus, *Missions: Which way?: Humanization or Redemption* (Grand Rapids, 1971); P. Beyerhaus, *Bangkok '73: The Beginning or End of World Mission?* (Grand Rapids, 1973); Bruce Nichols and Bong Rin Ro (eds), *Beyond Canberra: Evangelical Responses to Contemporary Ecumenical Issues* (Oxford, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> *International Review of Mission*, vol. LXXI(284), Oct 1982, pp. 427-51

<sup>11</sup> Raymond Fung, *Evangelistically Yours: Ecumenical Letters on Contemporary Evangelism* (Geneva, 1992).

2. Meanwhile equally massive discussion, debate and rethinking have taken place in the Evangelical camp. The key movements developed from two consultations in 1966. One, initiated by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, was the Berlin Congress on Evangelism.<sup>12</sup> The other was a joint gathering of the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association and the Interdenominational Foreign Missions Association, the two largest North American missionary sending associations, at Wheaton Illinois.<sup>13</sup> After a series of regional consultations,<sup>14</sup> the momentum gathering from these 1966 consultations received fresh impetus on a global basis at Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1974.<sup>15</sup>

The resulting Lausanne Covenant has proved a watershed document committing evangelicals to a holistic understanding of mission and evangelism. Its section headings have defined the agenda for evangelical discussion and praxis since 1974: *The Purpose of God, The Authority and Power of the Bible, The Uniqueness and Universality of Christ, The Nature of Evangelism, Christian Social Responsibility, Evangelism and the Church, Partnership in World Evangelisation, Culture and Leadership, Conflict and Persecution, and The Power of the Spirit and the Return of Christ.*<sup>16</sup> Subsequent conferences have significantly advanced the discussion, particularly regarding the relationship of evangelism and social justice.

From the early 1980s, parallel groups such as the World Evangelical Fellowship have brought wider representation to the discussions. The key gatherings or reports have included: The Willowbank (Bermuda) Report: Gospel and Culture, 1978; The Simple Lifestyle Conference, High Leigh (England) 1980; The *Thailand Statement* from the Pattaya Conference, 1980; The Consultation on the Relationship Between Evangelism and Social Responsibility, Grand Rapids, 1982; and The Consultation on the Church in Response to Human Need with its *Wheaton '83 Statement*.

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<sup>12</sup> See Carl F. H. Henry and W. Stanley Mooneyham, *One Race, One Gospel, One Task*, World Congress on Evangelism, Berlin 1966: Official Reference Volumes (2 vols) (Minneapolis, 1967).

<sup>13</sup> See Harold Lindsell (ed.), *The Church's Worldwide Mission* (Waco, Texas, 1966).

<sup>14</sup> E.g., W. Stanley Mooneyham (ed.), *Christ Seeks Asia: Official reference Volume, Asia South Pacific Congress on Evangelism, Singapore, 1968* (Hong Kong, 1969).

<sup>15</sup> J. D. Douglas (ed.), *'Let the Earth Hear His Voice': International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne, Switzerland* (Minneapolis, 1975).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*; See also, John R. W. Stott, *The Lausanne Covenant: An Exposition and Commentary* (Minneapolis, 1975).

The global meeting in Manila, July 1989, produced the *Manila Manifesto: Calling the Whole Church to take the Whole Gospel to the Whole World*, clarifying the themes of the world-wide debate to that point in its twenty-one succinct affirmations and twelve elaborative sections.<sup>17</sup>

However, at Manila differences which had been held in creative tension since Lausanne showed signs of splintering, as we shall see. The more recent DAWN (Discipling a Whole Nation) and *AD 2000 and Beyond* movements leading up to the *Global Consultation on World Evangelisation '95 Declaration*, published from Seoul, Korea, in May 1995 show important reversals. The focus has returned to practical strategies rather than depth of understanding and application of missionary theology. The series of Billy Graham Evangelistic Association sponsored consultations on evangelism in Amsterdam in 1983, 1986, and the largest of all these evangelical meetings, 'Amsterdam 2000' have highlighted, but not resolved, the differences within the evangelical camp.<sup>18</sup> The evangelical emphases are under internal pressure – but the commitment to both evangelism and mission is still strong and central.

3. In the Roman Catholic camp also the changes have been deep and broad since Vatican II. This 'Second Ecumenical Council' of the Roman Catholic Church, meeting between 1963 and 1965 transformed Catholic attitudes to the understanding and methods of mission. Those of us in a missionary situation like Papua New Guinea in the 1960s and 1970s saw the changes unfolding before our eyes. The open and often bitter confrontations between Catholic and Protestant missionaries before Vatican II have given way to sincere efforts towards cooperation, understanding and respect.

The Vatican II documents, particularly *Ad Gentes* (Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity), *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), and *Nostra Aetate* (Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions), have redefined the ground rules for Catholic approaches to evangelisation and mission. More recent papal statements have confirmed and clarified these changes,

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<sup>17</sup> Lausanne Committee on World Evangelisation, *The Manila Manifesto: An Elaboration of the Lausanne Covenant Fifteen Years Later*, 1989.

<sup>18</sup> See the *Amsterdam Declaration* published at *Amsterdam 2000*, and my comparison of its emphases with the Lausanne Covenant, in *New Slant*, March-April 2001.

especially *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI, 1975). For evangelical observers, particularly significant have been the rediscovery of Bible study and the place of the laity in the *Base Ecclesial Communities* and other parish renewal movements worldwide. These have already changed Catholic grassroots thinking about the church in the world and have potential for even greater change in the coming decade. In a recent survey of 'nine breakthroughs' in Catholic missiology in the period 1965-2000, the Maryknoll priest William Frazier suggests there is no previous parallel in Catholic history to the developments of these thirty-five years. He concludes his survey with the 'hope that this period of growth will not come to an end with the new millennium'.<sup>19</sup>

4. The political collapse of communism and the opening of the Eastern Bloc countries to the West have opened the way for a fresh contribution from the Orthodox family of churches. They bring distinctive emphases on ritual, liturgy, community and the sacraments in mission and evangelism. Their depth of penetration of the popular culture of the societies they serve, and their fresh emergence from seventy years of communist persecution, mean the Orthodox are a force to be reckoned with on the global mission stage.

I discovered this dramatically at a consultation convened to inaugurate Dudley Woodberry as the new Dean of the School of World Mission of Fuller Theological Seminary, in November 1992. One plenary speaker at this *Consultation on Missiological Education for the 21st Century* was Michael Oleska, an American missionary of the Russian Orthodox Church, based in Alaska. A brilliant communicator, he began his message on, 'The Historical Christian Mission of the Orthodox Church', with the quip, 'Yes, we have one!' He outlined the centuries-long work Orthodox churches have put into evangelising and contextualising the gospel in the countries in which the Orthodox church is dominant. He suggested they had devoted eight centuries translating the gospel into the culture of Greece. In-depth mission, he warned, always takes centuries and the Orthodox have been doing it since Pentecost. He made a plea for Western nations to appreciate the depth of the sufferings of the church in Russia over the past seventy years. He pointed out that when, through those hard times, only two or three aged widows turned up for daily Eucharist each carrying a basket full of little loaves for the priest to

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<sup>19</sup> William B. Frazier, MM, 'Nine Breakthroughs in Catholic Missiology, 1965-2000', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, vol. 25(1) January 2001, pp. 9-14

bles, such a small turn out did not mean the church was dead. Far from it, each loaf represented a whole family standing true to Christ despite the fact that each one could name a father, brother or cousin who had been physically persecuted or imprisoned for their faith. Oleska pointed out that such suffering teaches vital lessons about mission. The Orthodox churches have matured and deepened their faith through these years. He concluded with a timely reminder to the largely evangelical audience that they cannot lay exclusive claim to the missionary task, or to the title 'evangelical': 'At last the Orthodox are able to make their contribution – which is clearly needed – to the rest of the church and to the whole world. May this evangelical mission have free course in the third millennium. Maranatha.'

The world-wide church needs the Orthodox perspectives for a full-orbed grasp of both the gospel and our mission in today's world.

Clearly, the approaches to mission and evangelism in these camps are different. We dare not gloss over the variations in theology, methodology or practice. We need, however, to move beyond this clash of the codes to a new understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each of our differing approaches to mission and evangelism.

### CONVERGING CONCERNS

In their converging training methods, increasing professionalism, new marketing techniques and promotional activities, Rugby League and Rugby Union become more like each other by the day. So too, during these years since 1961, significant forces have brought increasing convergence regarding key aspects of mission and evangelism amongst the different church groupings.

1. The Charismatic Renewal Movements have meant a rediscovery of the personal presence and power of the Holy Spirit for mission and evangelism in our contemporary world. By reinvigorating Catholic, mainline Protestant and evangelical congregations alike the Charismatic movement has created a new surge of global concern to share the faith with others. Moreover, the Charismatic movement has brought the larger Pentecostal churches, such as the Assemblies of God and Apostolics, each with significant global mission involvement, back into the main stream of Christian awareness. We are still probably too close to these movements to appreciate the breadth or depth of their contribution.

2. Rediscovery of Holistic mission. Since the mid-1970s particularly, we have seen a fresh convergence of thought about the integral inter-relationship of evangelism and social action in the Church's mission. After outlining the changes historically, Bosch sums up:

By the early 1980s, then, it seemed a new spirit was establishing itself in mainstream evangelicalism.... They had no doubt that they were called to a ministry proclaiming Christ as Saviour and of inviting people to put their trust in him, but they were equally convinced that sin was both personal and structural, that life was of a piece, that dualism was contrary to the gospel, and that their ministry had to be broadened as well as deepened. ... Today both evangelicals and ecumenicals grasp in a more profound manner than ever before something of the depth of evil in the world, the inability of human beings to usher in God's reign, and the need for both personal renewal by God's Spirit, *and* resolute commitment to challenging and transforming the structures of society. ... A similar convergence of ideas is witnessed in Catholicism. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, in particular, underscores the important advance in Catholic thinking that took place since Vatican II....<sup>20</sup>

We must not underestimate the continuing differences. National and local centres have some way to go to catch up with the implications of these more formal statements embracing a holistic understanding of the church's task which are being promulgated by their grouping's international centres. However this convergence has removed one of the previous causes of division between the various camps in their approaches to mission.

3. Significant inter-confessional discussion in recent years has also brought some important clarifications of understanding. As just one example we should mention the discussion between Roman Catholics and evangelicals in both Britain and the United States. Under the leadership of Basil Meeking (since returned to New Zealand) and John Stott, points of catholic-evangelical agreement and difference were thrashed out in the 1980s. From 1992-1994 similar US discussions involved notables such as Charles Colson, Richard Neuhaus, John White and Kent Hill on one side, and Frs Juan Diaz-Vilar, Avery Dulles, S. J. and Bishop Francis

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<sup>20</sup> Bosch, *op cit.*, pp. 407-8

George, OMI, for the Catholics. Their final statement does not gloss over the differences, but presents an impressive listing of common ground.<sup>21</sup>

4. We are also seeing new patterns of interaction and communication transcending previous confessional divisions. Witness the changes in editorial policy of major international mission journals, and in the patterns of operation of the societies which sponsor them. Whereas once you could expect a clearly confessional or partisan list of contributors and could predict the likely emphases of each issue, these days you never know whether ecumenical, evangelical, Catholic or Orthodox contributions will predominate in any one issue of *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*; *Missiology*; *Missionalia*; *Mission Studies*; or even in *International Review of Mission*.<sup>22</sup> To only a slightly lesser extent, this diversity also increasingly characterises major book publishers in the evangelism and mission fields – with Orbis and Eerdmans as prime examples.

These strands of new openness and convergence are perhaps a predictable partial response to the increasingly anti-Christian context of our modern world. Whether they prove a force for strengthening the task of global mission depends upon how we develop them.

#### RECOGNISING AND SELECTING ALL THE PLAYERS

In our Rugby analogy the crucial point of conflict is in selecting the players and their coaches. Can we, or should we, regard all rugby union and rugby league players as a single pool of potential contributors for either code, or do we need to erect increasingly secure fences between the codes? Likewise for the coaching and training skills – should Frank Endacott and John Graham, or their successors on the Rugby League scene, become All Black coaching consultants for future Rugby Union World Cups?

Certainly in our mission and evangelism camps we are still very selective about which players or coaches we regard as appropriate for our different confessional teams. When constructing our training curricula

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<sup>21</sup> See, Charles Colson, Fr Juan Diaz-Vilar et al., 'Evangelicals & Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium', *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life*, 43, May 1994, pp. 15-22.

<sup>22</sup> Although a case could possibly be put for suggesting that the *International Review of Mission*, the professedly most ecumenical journal, has been the most predictably partisan in its editorial (though never in its bibliographic) policy in the past two decades.



often we ignore available input from those of another church grouping. When evaluating the progress and problems in fulfilling the task we tend to overlook all the participants who do not conform to our particular approach. We are also good at acting as if we are the only ones on the field and in the team.

The problems this causes become evident in various ways. Since Bosch can be applauded as more comprehensive and inclusive than almost all his predecessors, perhaps it is not too unfair to point out some of his continuing narrowness of perspective:

- Several writers have noted that Bosch omits adequate reference to the role of women in mission history and in recent times.<sup>23</sup>
- Chris Sugden suggests he gives inadequate attention to 'the growth of the Pentecostal Movement especially in Latin America where consensus among observers is that Pentecostals are achieving among the poor at least as much if not more than Liberation theologians and activists whom Bosch discusses at length'.<sup>24</sup>
- When discussing developments in ecumenical thinking in the nineteenth century, Bosch overlooks the fundamental contribution to ecumenicity in mission of the faith missions such as the China Inland Mission. When discussing the same issue in the twentieth century, again the faith missions are ignored and their ecumenical organisations, such as IFMA and EFMA, receive no mention.<sup>25</sup>
- The selectivity is all too often evident in scholarship about mission. Not only for Bosch but for all scholars it is too easy to take a nationally selective perspective. This is evident, for instance, in Bosch's discussion of missionary motivation referred to above. The wealth of British and Australasian scholarship in this area, such as in Gunson, Piggis, or even Hitchen, receives no mention.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> See Willem Saayman and Klippias Kritzing (eds), *Mission in Bold Humility: David Bosch's Work Considered*, Maryknoll (N.Y., 1996), *passim*.

<sup>24</sup> Christopher Sugden, 'Placing Critical Issues in Relief: Response to David Bosch', in Saayman and Kritzing, *op cit.*, p. 148f.

<sup>25</sup> Bosch, pp. 458-61

<sup>26</sup> See, e.g., Neil Gunson, *Messengers of Grace*, *op. cit.*; Stuart Piggis, *Making Evangelical Missionaries 1789-1858: The Social background*,

These examples illustrate the difficulty, even for the most globally-minded of scholars, of fairly representing the full range of contributors when discussing the global missionary task. Our parochialism hinders the depth of our grasp of the issues – and of appropriate solutions to problems.

Selectivity of viewpoint becomes a special problem in mission when defining those who are the object of mission. From within the different theological and ecclesiastical camps the position looks different. Even in David Barrett's massive attempts statistically to survey the church's global mission it has proven difficult to define acceptably the 'Christian' and 'non-Christian' constituencies around the globe. For many evangelicals, if Catholicism has become formal or syncretistic in one place then that is reason enough to regard that area as 'unreached' and in need of the gospel. 'Nominal' Christians are regarded as a significant part of the 'mission field'. For Catholics, however, 'evangelisation' based on such thinking is nothing more than proselytism and is greatly to be deplored. The issues of nominalism and proselytism, flip sides of the same coin depending upon your perspective, present a major problem in defining the task, in agreeing about methodology, and in shaping inter-confessional relationships. These are not new issues – as the only limited success of attempts at 'comity' in mission have proven. Even movements which have brought people together across denominational boundaries in one place, have, in other settings, undermined hard-won inter-church cooperation, and brought a new generation of inter-church rivalry. The charismatic movements that brought many together in New Zealand in the 1980s, brought new divisions in Papua New Guinea during the same period.<sup>27</sup>

Whom to recognise as fit for inclusion in 'our' team is a continuing problem in global mission.

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*Motives and Training of British Protestant Missionaries to India* (Abingdon, England, 1984); John M. Hitchen, *Training Tamate...*, op. cit.

<sup>27</sup> The writer can document cases from Papua New Guinea in the mid-1970s where similar effects have followed the globalisation of some para-church evangelistic agencies. They have often insisted on retaining their own name and identity over against the established churches, even when those churches have opened doors for their specialised ministries to be incorporated within the regular life and structures of the churches themselves.

## WHOSE RULES?

Few international rugby fixtures avoid tensions over the refereeing. Variations in the rules, or at least of their interpretation, are always seen as factors in the success or failure of some teams. Several major areas of debate about the 'rules' are evident in global mission today.

*Ultimate authority*

The place we turn for our final decisions on faith, life and action controls both our theory and practice in mission. David Evans suggests that when we refer to Scripture, Tradition, and Reason as if they are alternative authorities, we are actually embracing a kind of Enlightenment 'folk religion'. He calls us to heed the return amongst both Catholics and Protestants to 'the ancient and normative single source of Scripture'.<sup>28</sup> Even Lesslie Newbigin, who has drawn swords with evangelicals most often over his own caricatures of their appeal to scriptural authority, can be quite outspoken on this issue:

[T]he gospel can only be communicated to our pluralistic society by communities that take the Bible as the fundamental framework of their thinking, as the way they understand the world and the human story.... To live in the world of the Bible, with all the tensions that are within the Bible story, to take it as the framework within which we try to understand and find our way through the perplexities of living now, is to be embarked on a journey with the confidence that we have a reliable clue for our exploration – not that we know the whole truth.<sup>29</sup>

Agreement that the Bible is indeed the normative authority for mission is an essential starting point for moving forward on an adequate basis for global mission.

*Heeding the Third World voices*

Since the beginning of the modern missionary movement Westerners have assumed the right to make the rules and appoint the referees in the global missions effort. But that prerogative has been questioned in our generation. We could demonstrate the problem in each of the confessional

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<sup>28</sup> David Evans, 'Evangelism with Theological Credibility', in Christopher Wright and Christopher Sugden (eds), *One Gospel – Many Clothes: Anglicans and the Decade of Evangelism* (Oxford, 1990), p. 30, citing the approach of Vatican II and official Anglican statements.

<sup>29</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *A Word in Season: Perspectives on Christian World Missions* (Grand Rapids and Edinburgh, 1994), p. 165.

'camps'. Two examples will suffice. Western evangelical missiologists struggle to respect input and critique from their Third World counterparts. Ghanaian Presbyterian, Kwame Bediako, traces the developments in evangelical thinking since Lausanne 1974 in his article, 'World Evangelisation, Institutional Evangelicalism and the Future of the Christian World Mission'.<sup>30</sup> Bediako documents the impact of Third World evangelicals in shaping the Lausanne Covenant so that:

It represented and demonstrated a fundamental truth of really authentic mission throughout the whole of mission history, namely, that mission has to do not with triumphalism, but with travail; that travail in mission has to do with more than the expending of resources, finance and personnel; it is the expending of life itself, for the sake of more life and for the overthrow of sin, evil and death in every manifestation of these.<sup>31</sup>

He goes on, however, to show how in the 1980s an influential North American group of missionary activists ignored these Third World emphases and returned to a narrow triumphalistic understanding of the gospel. He also challenges the way the social sciences dominate Western missiology and proposes:

There is a viable alternative to the dominant anthropology-based missiology. ... A more helpful approach to understanding and engaging in Christian mission is through exposure to Christian mission history itself. ... The coming of the Gospel to Africa, Asia and Latin America is not at its deepest level the history of the meeting of these continents with Western values and ideas. Instead we have to do... with Christ... conversing with the souls of Africa, Asia and Latin America, as has been the case with the coming of the Gospel also to the peoples of Europe in earlier centuries. Therefore through exposure to these 'histories' within Christian mission history, it should be possible to appreciate and understand some of 'the essential urges of Christianity' as these have manifested themselves in the different cultural contexts of mankind.<sup>32</sup>

Bediako's concern is that if the mission task is rightly understood in these terms then it is dangerous to return to triumphalistic and pragmatic strategising such as has regained the ascendancy in much evangelical

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<sup>30</sup> In Vinay Samuel and Albrecht Hauser (eds), *Proclaiming Christ in Christ's Way: Studies in Integral Evangelism* (Essays Presented to Walter Arnold on the Occasion of his 60th Birthday; Oxford:, 1989), pp. 52-68.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65, citing John Foster's telling phrase.

missionary thinking in the past decade. This kind of Third World critique of Western missiology is timely, but demands such a massive reorientation of effort and priorities that it may be all too easy simply to ignore it.

Unfortunately this is not only an in-house evangelical problem. Christopher Sugden documents how even such an ecumenically-minded missiologist as David Bosch was selective about which Third World missiological voices he chose to heed. He recognised those from further afield, but on some issues found it difficult to recognise those in his own backyard, especially if they came from a different confessional team. At points he attributed to Western missionaries ideas which derived from Third World missiologists from his own region.<sup>33</sup> Our point is not to undermine the value of Bosch's work, but to indicate how difficult it is for the best of us to change our mind-set and genuinely to respect the insights of those from a different background – particularly when their critique is penetrating enough to challenge the rules by which we operate.<sup>34</sup>

We are in a climate in which we must allow coaches and players from every corner of our globe to help us clarify and define our global mission and methodologies. No one cultural group can any longer assume ownership of the rule-making task.

### *Pragmatists or thinkers*

Kwame Bediako's critique also highlights another crucial tension in present-day mission and evangelism. We face a growing divide between our theoreticians and practitioners. In tertiary education an increasingly clear distinction is being drawn between 'missionary training' and 'mission studies'. This is potentially dangerous at precisely the point when missionary skills training needs to be informed by careful study of mission history and theory, and when missiology needs to be constantly in touch with the realities of mission practice.

Enthusiasm, commitment and personnel resources are not lacking in evangelical commitment to global evangelisation today. The zeal is exemplary and stands in sharp contrast to the lethargy in some sections of

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<sup>33</sup> Sugden, 'Placing Critical Issues in Relief...', op. cit., pp. 142ff.

<sup>34</sup> Harold Turner assures the present writer that if I knew the local political and ecclesiastical relationships existing between Bosch and local evangelical and African missiologists I would be less critical of Bosch. I readily accept that warning, but it only confirms my point about the difficulty of breaking out of our own presuppositional frameworks.

the church. Nevertheless we are concerned about the overly pragmatic emphases and the neglect of missiological lessons evident in some evangelical quarters such as the popular programmes associated with the *AD 2000 and Beyond* movement. In the decade following Lausanne evangelicals sought to work out the implications of understanding mission as 'the whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world'. In the more recent movements we appear to have reverted to assuming that centralised agencies, or internationally representative committees, have the right to determine evangelistic strategies for all the different people groups around the world. 'Global strategizing' has the potential to usurp the responsibility of local churches to determine their own evangelistic patterns. The current tendency to focus on the '10/40 window' (the area ten to forty degrees north of the equator from West Africa to East Asia), as the 'target' for global evangelism could easily reintroduce the old and inappropriate geographical understandings of 'mission fields'. We are in danger of neglecting basic lessons of missiology and of reinstating questionable pragmatic methodologies in an effort to complete the task of global evangelism in line with our own timetables. While applauding the practical enthusiasm we long to see it expressed through missiologically sound methods.

### *Hesitant or triumphalist*

The tensions outlined thus far have left some in serious doubt about how to proceed with the mission of the church. They call for caution and expect only slow steady work. The questions, critiques and conflicting recommendations have led to what Max Warren called, 'a terrible failure of nerve about the missionary enterprise'.<sup>35</sup> Others are impatient with such temerity and claim the finished work of the resurrected Christ and the living presence of the Holy Spirit as more than adequate provision to forward the task aggressively. They call for a more active confrontation of rival religious claims and the powers of evil. As Bosch pointed out, for many of these: 'It is "business as usual" as regards the continuation of one way traffic from the West to the Third World...'.<sup>36</sup>

With each of these tensions the issue is: which group should determine the rules for mission and evangelism? The challenge before us on both the global and local scenes is to overcome these polarising tendencies. The task is so crucial we need both First and Third World insights harnessed cooperatively. We must bring together both the

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<sup>35</sup> Cited in Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

theoretical and pragmatic insights in patterns of evangelism and mission which deeply impact our modern world. We must free the disillusioned from their doubts and harness the triumphalist enthusiasm into channels cut by sensible and serious reflection. The call is to listen to each other long enough to develop an effective partnership better to achieve our common goal – a goal which makes striving for possession of a Rugby World cup for a few years pale into insignificance.

#### DIFFICULTIES OF DEFINITION

If nothing else, the survey above has confirmed both the importance and difficulty of defining mission and evangelism. Bosch warns that, 'Ultimately, mission remains undefinable; it should never be incarcerated in the narrow confines of our own predilections.'<sup>37</sup> In recent debate, 'Broadly speaking, controversy prevails in two areas: the differences (if any) between "evangelism" and "mission", and the scope of evangelism.' Bosch shows how each conceivable relationship between mission and evangelisation has been espoused by some proponent, and the terms themselves have been used with wide diversity of meaning.<sup>38</sup>

With those caveats in mind we need only refer to a number of tentative attempts at definitions. The following excerpts from Bosch's 'interim definition' of mission are helpful:

The Christian faith... is intrinsically missionary.

Christian mission gives expression to the dynamic relationship between God and the world, particularly as this was portrayed, first, in the story of the covenant people of Israel and then, supremely, in the birth, life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus of Nazareth... the church begins to be missionary not through its universal proclamation of the gospel, but through the universality of the gospel it proclaims....

*Mission...* refers primarily to the *missio Dei* (God's mission), that is, God's self-revelation as the One who loves the world, God's involvement in and with the world, the nature and activity of God which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church is privileged to participate. *Missio Dei* enunciates the good news that God is a God-for-people.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., pp. 409-20.

The missionary task is as coherent, broad and deep as the need and exigencies of human life....<sup>39</sup>

Mission is thus the broader term embracing all that God the Father sends his Son and his Spirit to achieve in and through the world. This clarifies the more distinctive task of evangelism:

Mission includes *evangelism* as one of its essential dimensions. Evangelism is the proclamation of salvation in Christ to those who do not believe in him, calling them to repentance and conversion, announcing forgiveness of sin, and inviting them to become living members of Christ's earthly community and to begin a life of service to others in the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>40</sup>

The Lausanne Covenant states it thus:

To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gift of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. Our Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelism, and so is that kind of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively in order to understand. But evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Saviour and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God. In issuing the Gospel invitation we have no liberty to conceal the cost of discipleship. Jesus still calls all who would follow him to deny themselves, take up their cross, and identify themselves with his new community. The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his church and responsible service in the world.<sup>41</sup>

William Abraham, seeking to build on the recent recovery of the importance of the inauguration of the Kingdom of God as central in Jesus' life and ministry, and in an attempt to correct what he sees as a false emphasis on mere proclamation as the essence of evangelism, suggests:

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., pp. 8-10.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp. 10-11.

<sup>41</sup> John R. W. Stott, *The Lausanne Covenant: An Exposition and Commentary* (Minneapolis, 1975), p. 20



We can best improve our thinking on evangelism by conceiving it as that set of intentional activities which is governed by the goal of initiating people into the kingdom of God for the first time.<sup>42</sup>

This is a helpful emphasis, provided the balance of the Gospel writers is conserved in our understanding of the Kingdom of God. Each of the Gospel writers makes the death and resurrection of Christ the culmination and the interpretive crux for the meaning of the Kingdom in the ministry of Jesus. Abraham pays only passing attention to this and focuses instead on the earthly life and pre-crucifixion ministry of Jesus to determine the essence of the Kingdom. This distorts the biblical message and can therefore distort both our understanding of the gospel and the way we conduct the evangelistic task. When the crucifixion and resurrection are given their central place in understanding the Kingdom of God, then Abraham's definition is useful as it avoids the danger of assuming everything the church does can be called evangelism.

Both our survey of trends in recent approaches to evangelism and mission, and these sample definitions point us to the importance of the third part of this paper.

#### 'THE EVANGEL THAT DETERMINES OUR EVANGELISM'<sup>43</sup>

Positive forward steps in both mission and evangelism demand a clear grasp of our message. Clarifying our definitions, reaching common ground across the methodological, ecclesial and world-view divides, and regaining lost confidence and nerve will all depend upon our answer to the question, 'What is our Gospel?'<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> William J, Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, 1989), p. 95. Bishop Peter Atkins, Dean of St John's College, has popularised Abraham's definition, and expounded it, in his *Good News in Evangelism: A Study Guide to the Issues During the Decade of Evangelism* (Auckland, 1992).

<sup>43</sup> This section heading is borrowed from Darrell L. Guder, 'Evangelism and the Debate over Church Growth', *Interpretation*, vol. XLVIII(2), April 1994, p. 147.

<sup>44</sup> On Definitions, David Evans notes, 'evangelism must... be defined in terms of the message', in 'Evangelism with Theological Credibility', in Chris Wright and Chris Sugden, *One Gospel - Many Clothes: Anglicans and the Decade of Evangelism*, p. 33. On Methodology, Daryl Guder identifies one problem in the Church Growth Movement as their failure to address 'the central theological issue.... That issue is the basic question:

This is therefore the focus of the rest of this paper as it has been in two earlier articles.<sup>45</sup> In our *New Vision New Zealand* chapter we answered this 'What is our Gospel?' question by affirming the gospel is God's power in action; it announces and explains God's action in Christ for us; and the gospel summons us to enjoy the benefits of this action. Exploring the theme in *The Vision New Zealand Congress* volume we focused on the uniqueness of the historic evangel. We surveyed the current relevance of the range of biblical terms identifying the gospel, the dynamic word-pictures explaining it and the distinctive features characterising the gospel of Christ. We concluded by spelling out some methodological implications for evangelism today.

We all long for simple summaries of crucial realities. Some of my colleagues suggested encapsulating the essence of the gospel in words such as:

- God rules here and now (– and everywhere and for keeps)!
- God loves ratbags!
- God's liberating power in action in Christ!

Others suggested we cannot improve on key texts such as :

- 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself' (2 Cor. 5:19)
- 'God so loved that he gave...' (John 3:16)

or the Apostle's own summary:

- 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures...' (1 Cor. 15:1-5)

But no single formula adequately identifies the essence of the gospel. Even in Jesus' own preaching we find him using a series of different, but

What, in fact is the gospel we proclaim?', 'Evangelism and the Debate over Church Growth', *Interpretation*, vol. XLVIII(2), April 1994, p. 147.

<sup>45</sup> See my two contributions to the Vision New Zealand Congress, January 1993, in Bruce Patrick (ed.), *New Vision New Zealand: Calling the Whole Church to Take the Whole Gospel to the Whole Nation* (Auckland, 1993), pp. 146-57; and, 'The Gospel for Today's New Zealanders', in Bruce Patrick (ed.), *The Vision New Zealand Congress: Waikanae, New Zealand, January 1993* (Auckland, 1993) pp. 29-44, republished in John Crawshaw and Wayne Kirkland (eds), *New Zealand Made: Perspectives on Mission in Aotearoa* (Wellington, 1994), pp. 7-24.

closely related and overlapping terms to identify his message and mission. Jesus' encounter with the rich man and the evangelist's related comments as recorded in Mark 10:17-34 offer a way into a clearer grasp of the Christian gospel.<sup>46</sup>

Both the opening question (v.17), and Jesus' concluding summary (v.30) focus on 'eternal life'. This is the basic theme. But in the course of the incident Jesus uses three other terms and Mark's comments introduce a fourth descriptive term to discuss the same reality. Mark immediately follows the incident with a further explanatory paragraph. These terms and explanations offer complementary insights into the nature of the gospel.

When asked how to inherit eternal life (v.17), Jesus, on checking the man's sincerity, looked at him and loved him (v.21), then effectively answered, 'come follow me' (v.21). When the man refuses this invitation Jesus comments to the disciple how hard it is to 'enter the Kingdom of God' (v.23). The disciples respond by asking, 'Who then can be saved?' (v.26). Mark concludes the incident by noting that Jesus was leading his followers up to Jerusalem where he would be condemned, die and rise again (vv.32-34).

No one of these terms is sufficient on its own to identify the essence of the gospel. All of these key terms are needed. 'Being saved' is, in this conversation, directly parallel with 'entering the Kingdom', 'commencing the journey with Jesus' and 'inheriting eternal life'. What is more, for Mark, discussing these ideas is closely related both to the love of Jesus and to his death and resurrection. Each of these phrases brings together a whole cluster of concepts describing the Christian Good News.

Receiving Eternal Life speaks of experiencing the new dimensions of life characteristic of 'the age to come'. It takes for granted the reality of another realm of existence beyond our time-space boundaries. It assumes a worldview in which time has a purpose and future culmination. It makes the astounding claim that the realities of the future age of consummation can commence in this present life and continue beyond it into the next. For first-century hearers the phrase conveyed eschatological significance. Jesus is the one in whom the long awaited age of fulfilment is inaugurated. Knowing and relating to him is the way into this quality of life. The rest of the New Testament will fill out the breadth of meaning inherent in 'eternal life' with its development of the whole

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<sup>46</sup> This section develops the discussion in *The Vision New Zealand Congress*, pp. 31-3 and in *New Zealand Made...*, pp. 10-12.

family of spiritual realities associated with new life, new birth, growth, and family relationships.<sup>47</sup>

The possibility of inheriting this kind of life – and all the associated relational realities flowing from it – is dramatic good news for modern Westerners whose mind-set is ingrained with the idea that reality is embraced by time and space categories alone. Such news undermines the common assumptions that meaning, value and enjoyment depend on the measure of our grasp upon present pleasures. It gives the lie to conceiving the Christian experience as a mere existence or legalistic bondage. The life of the long-awaited age offers purpose and personal significance.

Jesus looked at and loved him confirms that God takes the initiative in meeting our needs. The love of God in Christ is the driving force behind our gospel. In sheer grace Christ reaches out to establish personal relationships with us humans. He is moved by our need. He becomes involved at the point of our weakness and helplessness. His compassion embraced this man even before he made any response to Jesus – and despite the fact that he would not accept the invitation.

Again, this brief note of Jesus' love will blossom in other scriptures into the central aspect of the evangel. In his letter John will put love as the essence of God himself and as the motivating power for sending Christ to bring us life, to die as our representative and to become our Saviour (1 John 4:8-14). The possibility of personal relationships – costly, self-surrendering relationships – offered to the rich man in that loving look are deeply intertwined with the gospel language of this passage.

Commencing the Journey with Jesus is another provocative aspect of the gospel offered to the rich man. This call to follow is prefaced by a command to go and sell, and then to turn and come after Jesus. Life has a destination and goal. Many have lost their way. The true pathway is orientated towards the future. But starting on this pathway involves options, choices, and a turn around which changes our values. Repentance, costly self-denial and a new commitment to others in their need – these are the essential starting points on 'The Way'. Christianity is primarily a way of life. Following – becoming disciples – is essential. It means meeting and committing yourself to Jesus. Companionship is needed, and available, on this Way alongside Jesus and as part of his travelling band. Our Lord is not an absent landlord but a present, involved fellow traveller.

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<sup>47</sup> See *The Vision New Zealand Congress*, p. 37f.; *New Zealand Made*, p. 17.

But this discipleship imagery goes further. Disciples follow their Teacher in order to learn, to live out and to pass on his teaching. The One who is the Way is also the Truth. He demands the obedience of the mind as well as the modelling of the life-style according to his teachings.<sup>48</sup> Settling down or turning back are occupational hazards for the Christian.

Ray Muller confirms the relevance of such powerful imagery for moderns. In New Zealand a 'search for meaning and purpose in life' ranks high amongst the reasons given for turning to the gospel.<sup>49</sup>

Entering the Kingdom. The gospel is not merely a foretaste of the future or a pioneering adventure. It involves new loyalties to a new ruler. It means joining a new community. The News is that the true Ruler of the universe has never abdicated. Rather, the long-awaited King has arrived. He has inaugurated his reign on earth. The earthly ministry of Jesus demonstrates the good news that the kingly rule of God has come. True, the final consummation is still future, but the Kingdom is already a reality for those who respond aright to the king.<sup>50</sup> With infinite mercy the king invites rebel subjects to return to their intended status and role as citizens in his Kingdom. At last there is a way for humans to act responsibly within a properly ordered society where justice, love and peace are in control. As with 'eternal life', 'entering the Kingdom' involves a taste of the values of the future Kingdom by participating in God's reign here in the present day. This involves sharing in the new societal life of the king's loyal subjects. Shared life within the church becomes a sign and a foretaste of the greater Kingdom reality of the coming age.

But this Kingdom experience also includes a dimension of fulfilment. The hopes and yearnings of an oppressed and hurting nation were encapsulated in the idea of the Kingdom. The pain and waiting can have an anticipatory experience of relief and fulfilment within the Kingdom of God.

Again, the good news of the Kingdom speaks directly to the disillusion and hurts documented for New Zealand in Norman Brookes' list of 'Trends in the Nation'. The message of the Kingdom offers another

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<sup>48</sup> See Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 81 for this aspect of discipleship; cf., Darryl Guder, 'Evangelism and the Debate over Church Growth', *Interpretation* vol. XLVIII(2) (April 1994) pp. 148-9.

<sup>49</sup> Ray Muller, 'Who responds to the Gospel', in Bruce Patrick (ed.), *New Vision New Zealand*, pp. 205-7.

<sup>50</sup> For William Abraham this is the aspect of the gospel which has been overlooked and which needs to be recaptured for effective evangelism today, *The Logic of Evangelism*, pp. 17ff.

kind of welfare state based on surer foundations than those found wanting in the past two decades.<sup>51</sup>

**Being Saved.** The next term in Mark 10 speaks of wholeness and wellness in the midst of danger and disease. Salvation in scripture has a wide range of meaning. It addresses the realities of human failure, deprivation and addiction in every realm of life – moral, social, spiritual, and environmental as well as personal – and announces a way to restored health and wholeness. But, with biblical realism it also points to the costliness of such an accomplishment. It cost Christ sorely to achieve the needed renewal. Only his crucifixion and resurrection could accomplish the necessary rescue to answer the needs of humanity. This salvation, as Jesus explained in this Mark 10 passage, brings both a present and future impact (Mark 10:26-30).

Jesus foretells his death and rising again. We suggest that after such a concentrated discussion of gospel terminology it is not at all surprising that Mark next records Jesus resolutely leading his followers towards Jerusalem and explaining to them about his forthcoming death. Eternal life, the love of Christ, becoming disciples, entering the Kingdom, and being saved are all unattainable apart from the reality of the crucifixion and empty tomb.

We find this same range of terms and explanations brought together in other key passages. The final chapter of Acts links salvation (28:28); proclaiming the Kingdom (v.31) and discipling (instructing) about the Lord Jesus (v.31). John chapter three links new birth (vv.3-6) with seeing the Kingdom (vv.3, 5), with eternal life (vv.15-16) and again with being saved (v.17). When seeking to identify the essence of the gospel the scriptures require a range of key concepts. The reality is far more glorious than any single humanly appreciated concept can represent.

### *Experiencing our gospel*

The Mark's Gospel narrative sets the foundation for an adequate understanding of the gospel. The features of the Good News outlined there determine both the message we proclaim and the methods we adopt in making it known. As the rest of the New Testament builds upon that foundation we note other distinctive features of the way we experience the evangel.

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<sup>51</sup> Norman Brookes, 'Trends in the Nation', in *New Vision New Zealand*, pp. 74-80.

- The gospel brings a living experience of the Triune God. God is personally involved in offering the experience of new life. Our new wholeness comes from God the Father, through God the Son, by a personal encounter with God the Spirit.
- The gospel of the living God focuses on the uniqueness of Jesus Christ in a pluralistic world. Christianity is not merely another one of the many religions of human contrivance. It is God breaking onto our human scene live in the Person of his Son to offer us an intimate relationship with him as a daily reality. The challenge before contemporary mission and evangelism is so to present Christ that his uniqueness is not compromised by our cultural, ecclesiastical, or methodological accretions in the process of presentation.
- The transforming relationship with Christ is accessible by straightforward personal faith. God himself has achieved and freely offers the restoration to wholeness we need. We simply respond to his action on our behalf. A trusting commitment is the way to actualise in personal experience what Christ has accomplished for us. This is a humbling way of access to God. None of our status-gaining achievements are necessary or of value in this transaction. Thus it is equally accessible for every person – whatever their supposed standing according to human criteria. This is good news indeed for those who know they fall short of God's expectations.
- While based on a personal act of faith, our experience of the gospel is worked out within the new community of the church. The gospel of Christ is not at home with the individualism of modern Western society. Christ creates community. To be in him is to be in relationship with each other. According to Jesus the depth of our experience of the Good News can be measured by the way unselfish love increasingly regulates our behaviour (John 13:34-35).
- A valid experience of the gospel of Christ is all-embracing. He redirects the believers' life-styles and values systems. We discover that the personally present Friend and Counsellor is also the reigning Lord over the whole created cosmos. We begin to discover his handiwork in every part of the universe – whether in its physical, psychological, societal or more distinctively spiritual aspects. His constructive purposes for the environment and for the eco-systems of our planet bring a personal dimension and depth of meaning into the technological and scientific realities that surround us in our contemporary worlds. Even the darker side of

life with its suffering, inexplicable pain and death, takes on productive significance in the light of the resurrection and coming return of Christ. Not that the mystery or the enmity are removed, they just become tinged with hope.

- The flip side of Christ's all-pervading Lordship is that all of life becomes a responsible stewardship. We discover through Christ's liberation an enriching and deeply fulfilling sense of accountability. Our choices and decisions take on eternal significance. God treats us as responsible humans with the capacity either to refuse or accept him. That is the ultimate in proving human dignity – and welcome Good News in a nihilistic age.
- Finally, a genuine experience of the gospel transforms us to become other-centred and globally concerned. We are saved not only from self-centredness, but for service. We become caught up in God's ongoing purposes for the whole world. The evangel begets evangelism. To experience the *missio Dei* is to enlist in the ongoing *missio Dei*.

To understand and experience the Good News aright, then, is its own best defence and confirmation. Uncertainties about the need and validity of mission and evangelism today are best dealt with by a fresh experience of the Christ who is at their centre.



# TRINITY AND DIVINE PASSIBILITY IN MARTIN LUTHER'S 'THEOLOGIA CRUCIS'

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## INTRODUCTION

Luther was certainly aware of the dictum of the Athanasian Creed: 'Whoever wants to be saved should think thus about the Trinity.'<sup>1</sup> The doctrine of the Trinity is indispensable to an understanding of the economy of salvation. This paper begins with an account of the doctrine of the Trinity, which Luther had received from the church, with a view to establish a conceptual framework for his understanding of God's suffering. It must be borne in mind that we are dealing with Luther who wrote in the sixteenth century, that is, at the time when the doctrine of justification by faith had become central to the Christian faith. The doctrines of the Trinity, Christ and salvation constitute the major constituents of Luther's *theologia crucis* in that none of them can be viewed independently of the others. Just as Luther developed his Christology in view of the doctrine of justification by faith, he also developed his doctrine of the Trinity with the work of the triune God upon us. It will be made clear that by God's 'suffering' Luther means the suffering which God undergoes by becoming a 'human sinner', dying on the cross. That is why Luther said that the Father does not suffer, only the Son does. But of course the Son, too, is God. That is how Luther affirmed Theopaschitism, but repudiated Patripassianism as the early Church did. The distinctiveness of the Father from the Son, according to Luther, allows the Son to suffer and die under the Father's judgement and abandonment. Yet the shared deity of the three Persons means no less that God suffers and dies for us in the Son, and no less than God lives in us

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<sup>1</sup> This article, now in a modified form, originally appeared as chapter five in *The Suffering of God According to Martin Luther's 'Theologia Crucis'* (Bern/New York, 1995). The primary source for this study is the critical edition of Luther's work, the *Weimar Ausgabe*, most of which have been translated into English. The English translation of Luther's works, abbreviated as *LW*, will be used in this presentation. References from the original language, abbreviated as *WA*, will be made where helpful.

by his Spirit. Since Luther's *theologia crucis* is about God's saving relation to us, not about how God might be in and for himself, the economic Trinity is the conceptual framework from which the reformer began to conceive of God's suffering in and through the incarnate and crucified Christ. Though Luther distinguished the immanent Trinity from the economic Trinity, because of his insistence of the unity of God, the suffering of Christ touches the immanent Trinity as well as the economic Trinity.

### LUTHER'S TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

The doctrine of the Trinity, mysterious as it is, is not an outgrowth of metaphysical speculation but of revelation. For Luther, it is an *articulus fidei*, confessed by biblical writers, uninvented but uncovered by later Creeds and historians.<sup>2</sup> Because it is an article of faith, Luther said: 'Here the whole grammar must adopt new words, if it speaks of God.'<sup>3</sup> 'Through philosophy and reason one can say and believe nothing correctly concerning these things of the Divine Majesty; however, through faith one can say and believe everything correctly.'<sup>4</sup> His intensive preoccupation with the old ecclesiastical theology of the Trinity is evident in his *The Three Symbols* (1538), *On the Councils and the Churches* (1539), and *On the Last Words of David* (1543).<sup>5</sup>

Luther offered a long excursus on the doctrine of the Trinity in his *On the Last Words of David*. In it the starting point is Psalm 33:6 wherein three Persons are named: the Lord, his Word and his Spirit; and yet David did not acknowledge more than one Creator.<sup>6</sup> 'The Lord does not do His own work separately, the Word does not do His own work separately, and

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia, 1966), p. 200. For a detailed study of Luther's doctrine of the Trinity, see Reiner Jansen, *Studien zu Luthers Trinitätslehre* (Frankfurt, 1976).

<sup>3</sup> See WA 39<sup>2</sup>, 303, 12ff. (*Promotionsdisputation von G. Major und J. Faber*, 1544).

<sup>4</sup> See WA 39<sup>2</sup>, 340, 12ff.

<sup>5</sup> See LW 34, 199ff.; WA 50, 262-83 (*The Three Symbols*); LW 41, 3ff.; WA 50, 546, 12ff. (*On the Councils and the Churches*); LW 15, 265ff.; WA 54, 28-100 (*On the Last Words of David*). These texts are dealt with by Klaus Schwarzwäller, *Theologia Crucis: Luther Lehre von Prädestination nach De Servo arbitrio*, 1525 (München, 1970).

<sup>6</sup> LW 15, 302.

the Breath does not do His work separately.<sup>7</sup> In all his trinitarian remarks, Luther neither separated the single Divinity nor mingled the three persons. He followed the premise of the Creed of Athanasius which declared: 'This, however, is the real Christian faith, that we honor one single God in three Persons and three Persons in one single Godhead.'<sup>8</sup> This premise prohibits the assignment of a work to each Person in the exclusive sense that the other two Persons have nothing to do with it, for then God's unity would be given up. In order to avoid tritheism, Luther affirmed Augustine's principle that the works of the Trinity in relationship to all that is outside the Trinity remain inseparably one. God acts in full unity with himself. It follows from this principle, '*opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*' that the three persons are one Creator.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, the difference among the three persons in the Godhead must not be obscured in order to prevent mingling the three Persons into one person, as Sabellius, the Arians, Macedonians, the Jews and the Moslems did, each in their own way.<sup>10</sup> Luther remained, as Lienhard notes, faithful to the thought of Augustine when he spoke of the immanent relationships within the framework of which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit must be distinguished, while at the same time the persons must not be separated in their economic action towards the creature *ad extra*.<sup>11</sup> In God's own life, the persons are distinguished, not separated. So, too, in his action with us the persons are distinguished, not separated. Luther distinguished the persons by saying

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> LW 34, 205. See also Ian Siggins, *Martin Luther's Doctrine of Christ* (New Haven, 1970), p. 226.

<sup>9</sup> LW 15, 302. See also 'The Smalcald Articles, 1537' in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. & ed. by Theodore Tappert (Philadelphia, 1959), p. 291, where Luther made similar statements.

<sup>10</sup> LW 15, 303. Cf. LW 37, 361 (Confession concerning Christ's Supper, 1528), where Luther made his confession of faith in the 'sublime article of the majesty of God' (i.e., the Trinity).

<sup>11</sup> Marc Lienhard, *Luther: Witness to Jesus Christ*, trans. J. A. Bouman (Minneapolis, 1982), p. 322. Bernhard Lohse, in his *Martin Luther: An Introduction to His Life and His Thought*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia, 1986), p. 166, also asserts that Luther, following Augustine, expressed strong reservations about the concept of 'person', preferring the concept of 'relationship'.

[W]hen I go beyond and outside of creation or the creature and move into the internal, incomprehensible essence of divine nature, I find that Holy Scripture teaches me – for reason counts for nought in this sphere – the Father is a different and distinct person from the Son in the one indivisible and eternal Godhead. The difference is that He is the Father and does not derive His Godhead from the Son or anyone else. The Son is a Person distinct from the Father in the same, one paternal Godhead. The difference is that He is the Son and that He does not have the Godhead from Himself, nor from anyone else, but the Father, since He was born of the Father from eternity. The Holy Spirit is a Person distinct from the Father and the Son in the same, one Godhead. The difference is that He is the Holy Spirit, who eternally proceeds both from the Father and the Son, and who does not have the Godhead from Himself nor from anyone else but from both the Father and the Son, and all of this from eternity to eternity.<sup>12</sup>

Luther grounded the real difference between the three Persons not in their *opera ad extra*, but rather in their *opera ad intra*, the inner-trinitarian relations.<sup>13</sup> Thesis 40 of his *Disputation on The Divinity and Humanity of Christ* (1540) also affirms the interdependence of the three Persons in Incarnation.<sup>14</sup> To clarify this point, Luther gave a crude illustration used by the Scholastics, particularly Bonaventure.

If, for example, three young women would take a dress and clothe one of them with this dress, then one could say that all three were dressing her; and yet only one is being attired in the dress and not the other two. Similarly we must understand here that all three Persons, as one God, created the one humanity, clothed the Son in this, and united it with His Person, so that only the Son became man, and not the Father or the Holy Spirit. In the same way we should think also of the dove which the Person of the Holy Spirit adopted and of the voice which the Person of the Father adopted.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> LW 15, 303.

<sup>13</sup> Jansen, *Studien zu Luthers Trinitätslehre*, p. 197: 'Damit hat Luther dargelegt, daß der reale Unterschied zwischen den drei göttlichen Personen nicht in ihren *opera ad extra*, sondern nur in ihren *opera ad intra*, den inter-trinitarischen Relationen, zu finden ist.'

<sup>14</sup> WA 39<sup>2</sup>, 95, 19-21: 'Eadem ratione haereticum esset vulgatum illud: Tota trinitas operata est incarnationem filii, sicut duae puellae tertiam induunt, ipsa simul sese induente.'

<sup>15</sup> LW 15, 306.

If the differentiation among the three Persons lies in their immanent-trinitarian relations with one another, then why are the peculiar and distinctive works assigned externally to each Person by way of differentiation? God wants to be known by us as one God in three Persons. So that we know God as such, he reveals himself accordingly in his Word and in Holy Scripture. 'By ourselves we could not ascend into heaven and discover what God is or how His divine essence is constituted.'<sup>16</sup> For this purpose, the triune God must use visible creatures for his revelation, accommodating himself to human capacity so that we may understand that which is to be revealed. Following Augustine, the word 'creature' for Luther must be viewed in two different ways: (i) absolutely – how it is in itself as a creature or work, *per se*, of God. In that sense, 'all creatures are God's work', the one work of all three persons 'without distinction'. (ii) relatively – how God uses the creature(s) toward us. 'Here distinctive images, forms, and revelations of the three distinct Persons come into being'.<sup>17</sup> This is concretely seen in the story of Jesus' baptism. God employs the 'dove' as an image or revelation, of the Holy Spirit. 'This is a distinctive image, which does not portray the Father or the Son but only the Holy Spirit.' All three Persons want the dove to depict and reveal distinctively only the Person of the Holy Spirit, so that we become certain that 'God's one essence is definitely three distinctive Persons from eternity.'<sup>18</sup> The same point is made about Jesus' humanity, which reveals to us the Son alone. Though the form of humanity is the 'same creation of all three Persons', it is the 'peculiar and special' form or revelation of the Son alone. 'For thus it has pleased God, that is, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that the Son should be revealed to and recognised to humankind in this form or figure of humanity as a Person apart from the Father and the Holy Spirit in one eternal essence of divine nature.'<sup>19</sup> In like manner the Father is revealed to us in the form of the 'voice', a distinctive revelation of him alone in the one, indivisible divine essence. For Luther, Augustine's theory of the distinction between reality and sign can be applied to the Trinity only in a modified sense: 'But here in this sublime subject it means more. For

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<sup>16</sup> LW 15, 397.

<sup>17</sup> LW 15, 308. Luther quoted favourably Augustine's distinction between *res* and *signum*, especially from his work, *Christian Doctrine*, I.1. He illustrated this as follows: 'Smoke is a reality, a thing *per se* and at the same time a sign of something else, something which it is not but which it indicates and reveals, namely, fire.'

<sup>18</sup> LW 15, 307.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

the humanity of Christ is not a mere sign or a mere figure, as the dove and the voice also are not empty figures or images. No, the humanity in which God's Son is distinctively revealed is reality, it is united with God in one Person, which will sit eternally at the right hand of God.<sup>20</sup> God reveals himself as Father by the sign of a voice, and as Spirit by the sign of a dove. But these signs occur in a singular, passing event, while Jesus' humanity is eternally bound to the Son of God. Here it becomes clear how much Luther's view of the incarnation affects his understanding of the Father and of the Holy Spirit, as he said, 'the Father is not known except in the Son through the Holy Spirit'.<sup>21</sup> The sign of the voice and the sign of the dove are recognised only as they are related to the sign-reality of the incarnation.

The guiding concept for the unity of operations of the Godhead, for Luther, is 'appropriations', which appears in his creedal explanations.<sup>22</sup> Father, Son and Holy Spirit are, at the same time, Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier even though the Trinity functions *ad extra* as one.<sup>23</sup> *Communicatio operationes* is a development of the doctrine of the economic Trinity. But Luther in his use of it never neglected to insist that God is inseparably one *ad extra*. In his commentary on Genesis 1 and John 1, he followed the ascriptive patterns of Augustine and Hilary by associating the articles on the Father, Son and Holy Spirit with creation, redemption, and sanctification respectively.<sup>24</sup> He stressed the unity of the works of the Godhead: 'Nor is it possible in this manner to divide God subjectively, for the Father is not known except in the Son and through the Holy Spirit.'<sup>25</sup> The appropriations therefore function to give the certainty of God's triunity ('*Dreieinigkeit*').<sup>26</sup> We assert the Trinity because the *opus indivisum trinitatis* is a three-fold work. This two-fold emphasis on God's unity and threefoldness is found in Luther's interpretation of the Apostles' Creed.

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<sup>20</sup> LW 15, 308.

<sup>21</sup> LW 1, 58; WA 42, 44 (Genesis).

<sup>22</sup> See 'The Apostles' Creed', in LW 24, 202ff. and 'The Creed' in 'The Small Catechism' and 'The Large Catechism', in *The Book of Concord*, pp. 344-5 & pp. 411-20 respectively.

<sup>23</sup> LW 15, 309.

<sup>24</sup> LW 1, 49-50, 60-61 (Genesis 1); LW 22, 19ff. (John 1).

<sup>25</sup> LW 1, 58.

<sup>26</sup> Though Luther did not coin the term '*Dreieinigkeit*', he facilitated its origin.

These are like different clothes, that one does not mix together among the Persons. For however creating and sustaining all things, atoning for sins, forgiving sins, awakening from death and giving the gift of eternal life are works that no one other than God can do, nevertheless there are special works here that are ascribed to each Person distinctly, so that Christians have one simple, certain understanding, that there is only one God, and nevertheless three Persons in the one indivisible Essence, just as the holy fathers read diligently in Moses, the Prophets, and the writings of the Apostles and have held intact against all heretics.<sup>27</sup>

In these remarks on the unity of the triune God Luther seemed, according to Bornkamm, to render the distinction of the Persons insignificant.<sup>28</sup> Yet, Luther justified the '*Ordnung der Personen*' theologically: 'For He [Father] is the fountainhead or wellspring (so to say) of the Godhead [Divinity] in the Son and the Holy Spirit, and when the Father is mentioned, the Son cannot be divorced from Him but must simultaneously be named and meant. Likewise the Holy Spirit is named and meant together with the Father and the Son, because none of the Persons can be a separate God apart from the others.'<sup>29</sup> While Luther emphasised the *homoousio*-unity in the Western tradition more than he emphasised the primacy of the Father in the Eastern tradition, he stopped short of the heresy of modalism: The Son is a Person distinct from the Father. Thus 'strictly speaking', in Lienhard's finding, 'there is a balance in Luther between the Western tradition with its own insistence on the *homoousios* [Augustine] and the Eastern tradition in its affirmation of the primacy of the Father [Basil].'<sup>30</sup> Where Athanasius stressed the unity of divine nature, the Cappadocians emphasised the threefoldness of the divine *hypostases*, giving primacy to the Father, 'the fountal principle in the consubstantial triad'. 'The Father is He out of whom and toward whom the Son and the Holy Spirit are reckoned, and by the communication of His nature He makes the unity of the Trinity.'<sup>31</sup>

In his excursus, *The Three Symbols*, Luther quoted favourably Athanasius, who distinguished the three Persons: 'The Father is of no

<sup>27</sup> See WA 41, 276, 39ff. as quoted in Jansen, *Studien zu Luthers Trinitätslehre*, p. 199. Translation is mine.

<sup>28</sup> Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther and the Old Testament*, trans. Eric W. & Ruth C. Gritsch (Philadelphia, 1969), pp. 114-20.

<sup>29</sup> LW 15, 316.

<sup>30</sup> Lienhard, *Witness to Jesus Christ*, p. 165.

<sup>31</sup> See Edmund J. Fortman, *The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Philadelphia, 1972), pp. 75-6.

one, neither born nor made nor created. The Son is of the Father, not made or created but born. The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son, not born or created, but proceeding.<sup>32</sup> For the eternal begetting of the Son by the Father, Luther turned to Psalm 27, 'The Lord said to me, "You are my son, today I have begotten or borne you."<sup>33</sup> While the theologians of the Eastern Church designate John 15:26 as the biblical ground for their rejection of the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, Luther tried to justify the '*filioque*' precisely from this biblical reference.<sup>34</sup> John 15:26 in Luther's translation read: 'When the Comforter comes, whom I shall send to you, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will testify of me.' Therefore the Holy Spirit 'proceeds' from the Father and is 'sent' by the Son. To be 'sent' and to 'proceed', for Luther, are basically nothing other than two different aspects of the same act so that we can assert at once: the Holy Spirit 'proceeds' from both the Father and the Son.<sup>35</sup> Luther continued his argument in the line of Augustine: 'Just as the Son is born of the Father and yet does not depart from the Godhead, but on the contrary remains in the same Godhead with the Father and is one God with Him so also the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and is sent by the Son, and does not depart from the Godhead either, but remains with the Father and the Son in the same Godhead, and is one God with both.'<sup>36</sup> For the Son, to be sent is to be referred to his 'origin' from the Father; likewise for the Holy Spirit to be sent is to be referred to his procession from the Father and the Son. In this discussion the relation between the immanent and the economic Trinity is brought into view. More precisely, the relation is brought into view when Luther related the eternal generation of the Son and the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit on the one hand to the temporal missions of the Son and the Spirit in the world on the other.<sup>37</sup>

The 'eternal immanent birth' of the Son and the 'eternal immanent proceeding' of the Spirit constitute Luther's view of the difference of the Persons in God.<sup>38</sup> How the connections of their immanent relationships exist in the Godhead cannot be grasped by reason, but can

<sup>32</sup> LW 34, 216ff.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. See also LW 12, 49 (Psalm, 1532).

<sup>34</sup> LW 34, 217.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> See Augustine's *de Trinitate*, IV. 20, 29, as cited in Bertrand Margerie, *The Christian Trinity in History*, trans. Edmund J. Fortman. Studies in Historical Theology, vol. 1 (Still River, Mass., 1982), p. 48.

<sup>38</sup> LW 34, 216-17.



only be believed. It is not even to be investigated by angels, who with joy nevertheless incessantly behold it. It is sufficient that we might grasp a certain distinction of the Persons in the Godhead. Thus Luther finally came to assert:

These, then, are the differences between the Persons as given to us in the gospel. Whoever wishes to do so can ponder on it further, but he will find nothing of certainty. Therefore we ought to stay with this in all simplicity and be satisfied with it, until we arrive in heaven, where we shall no longer have to hear it or believe it, but clearly see and apprehend it.<sup>39</sup>

Speaking about the immanent Trinity, Luther reasoned *a posteriori* from biblically-witnessed salvation history in the world back to God's eternal essence.<sup>40</sup> If Christ is born physically in our history, yet is the Son of God, he is born eternally in God. If God the Father is the Creator of the world, then God's origin must be in himself, from whom the Son and the Holy Spirit obtain their essence. God's historical revelation in three Persons mirrors God in his eternal essence. Statements on the immanent Trinity could therefore be derived through inferring the essence of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit from the way they are revealed to us. These statements maintain that God is 'beforehand in eternity', as the One that he reveals himself to be.<sup>41</sup> Torrance's words reflect Luther's: God 'has opened up himself to our knowledge in his own being as Father, Son and Holy Spirit for what he has revealed of himself to us through Christ and in the Spirit he is in himself.'<sup>42</sup> We know the Trinity only because we see God acting in Jesus and the Holy Spirit (economic Trinity). From this, the immanent Trinity could be deduced. Luther interpreted the economic Trinity as the self-manifestation of the immanent Trinity.<sup>43</sup> In other words, statements on the immanent Trinity

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<sup>39</sup> LW 34, 218.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> LW 34, 218. Cf. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and trans. T. E. Torrance (Edinburgh, 1962-1975), vol. 1.1, p. 383. Barth insisted that 'as Father, Son and Holy Spirit God is, so to speak, ours in advance', thereby bringing together the inner and outer being of God.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas E. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church* (Edinburgh, 1988), p. 67.

<sup>43</sup> Eilert Herms, *Luthers Auslegung des Dritten Artikels* (Tübingen, 1987), p. 118: 'Older: die ökonomische Trinität ist die Selbmanifestation der immanenten.'

are nothing other than the theological premises for the economic Trinity. In order to show the relation between the economic and immanent Trinity, Luther asserted emphatically that there is one Son and one Spirit, yet of two different 'births' or 'proceedings'. The Son, who is born in the world, and the Spirit who proceeds into the world are born and proceeded 'beforehand' in God's eternal essence. Luther wrote of such trinitarian apriorism:

Therefore it was indeed fitting that the middle Person was physically born and became a Son, the same who was born beforehand in eternity and is Son, and that it was not the Father or the Holy Spirit who was thus physically born and became a Son. ... The Holy Spirit proceeds physically, the same who proceeds in eternity and is neither born nor Son. And thus the Father remains of himself, so that all three Persons are in majesty, and yet in such a manner that the Son has his Godhead from the Father through his eternal immanent birth (and not the other way round), and that the Holy Spirit has his Godhead from the Father and the Son through his eternal immanent proceeding. The Son shows his eternal birth through his physical birth, and the Holy Spirit shows his eternal proceeding through his physical proceeding. Each of them has an external likeness or image of his internal essence.<sup>44</sup>

Luther interpreted John 15:26 both immanent-trinitarianly and economic-trinitarianly so that the knowledge of God the Father to which we can ascend through the Son and in the Spirit is a knowledge of God as he eternally is in himself as Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. This means that before God created, redeemed and poured forth his Spirit to sanctify, he already existed eternally as Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. The *opera trinitatis ad extra* and the *opera trinitatis ad intra* thus are distinguished, but not separated. God *in se* and God *pro nobis* cannot be separated. Though he distinguished with the tradition the immanent Trinity from the economic Trinity, he insisted on their unity by affirming that God is 'beforehand in eternity'. So what we encounter in revelation in the economic Trinity corresponds to what God is in eternity, the immanent Trinity.

Nevertheless the weight of Luther's theology concentrates on the discussion of the economic Trinity, from which the immanent Trinity can be deduced.<sup>45</sup> He conceived of God according to his work or God as

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<sup>44</sup> LW 34, 218. Cf. LW 24, 292-3.

<sup>45</sup> This interpretation has been offered by Jansen, *Studien zu Luthers Trinitätslehre*, pp. 204-5.

he wishes to be known in the Incarnate Son. His evangelical emphasis reinforces the way he must travel: to consider God primarily in terms of his saving work in his people or in terms of faith's experience of God's salvific activity. 'Or, to put it mediievally, God in his *operationes ad extra*, in his *potentia ordinata*.'<sup>46</sup> There appears in Luther a lively penetration of the article on the Trinity by his doctrine of justification by faith. While Luther on the one hand said that the article on the Trinity is 'the highest article in faith – the article on which all the others hang', on the other hand, he said of the 'main article [of the creeds], the one concerning Jesus Christ', that 'all the others attach themselves to it and firmly support it'.<sup>47</sup> From this we conclude, as Elert did, that Luther 'recognized more and more the Christological approach to the doctrine of the Trinity as the only one that was compatible with his theology'.<sup>48</sup> Christology and Trinity must not be neatly separated, for both are related to the Reformer's soteriology. This is evident in the exposition of the three articles in the Creed of his *Large Catechism* (1538) where Luther explained:

Here in the Creed you have the entire essence of God, his will and his work exquisitely depicted.... In these three articles God has revealed and opened to us the most profound depths of his fatherly heart, his sheer unutterable love. He created us for this purpose, to redeem and sanctify us. Moreover, having bestowed upon us everything in heaven and on earth, he has given us his Son and Holy Spirit, through whom he brings us to himself. ... We could never come to recognize the Father's Favor and grace were it not for the Lord Christ, who is a mirror of the Father's heart. Apart from him we see nothing but an angry and terrible judge. But neither could<sup>49</sup> we know anything of Christ, had it not been revealed by the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>46</sup> John Loesch, *The Divine Community. Trinity, Church and Ethics in Reformation Theologies* (Missouri, 1981), p. 18. Loesch accepts Regin Prenter's understanding of the Trinity in terms of the 'motion' analogy. Prenter develop, on the basis of Luther's Christmas sermon on Trinity of 1514, an image of the Trinity in terms of 'the moving, the moved and rest' (p. 20). See also Regin Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, trans. John M. Jensen (Philadelphia, 1953), pp. 173ff., where he discussed this topic.

<sup>47</sup> See WA 7, 214, 27ff.; WA 50, 266, 37.

<sup>48</sup> Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, vol. 1., trans. Walter A. Hansen (St Louis, 1962), p. 217.

<sup>49</sup> See The Creed in *The Large Catechism*, p. 419. See also The Creed in *The Small Catechism*, pp. 344-5. See also Friedrich Mildenerger, *Theology*

In the doctrine of the Trinity, we meet the same structure as in Christology: just as Luther developed his Christology in terms of justification, he developed his doctrine of the Trinity in terms of the work of the triune God in us. What is established here is that God alone is the one who acts, who is as Father, Son and Spirit the *justificans ac salvator hominis peccatoris*.<sup>50</sup> Hence in keeping with the dominant emphasis of soteriology, Luther not only stuck to his own rule – to view God primarily in terms of his saving activity towards us, but he also refrained from speculation about the characteristics of the immanent Trinity. God is in himself what he does in us, the former being the premise for the latter.<sup>51</sup>

#### THEOPASCHITISM VIS-À-VIS PATRIPASSIANISM:

The essential idea of the school of modalism was that there is one Godhead, designated as Father, Son and Spirit. These terms do not stand for real distinctions, but are successive revelations of the same Person. Father, Son and Spirit are identical. The modalistic solution to the mystery of threeness and oneness was, then, not three distinct Persons, but one Person with three different names or roles which are appropriate and applicable at different times.<sup>52</sup> Modalism safeguards the '*monarchia*'

*of the Lutheran Confessions*, trans. Edwin L. Lueker (Philadelphia, 1983), p. 147.

<sup>50</sup> See Lohse, *Martin Luther*, p. 167, who observes that Luther understood the dogma of the Trinity in light of the doctrine of salvation. 'To this extent, [Luther] was part of the line of theological development begun by Athanasius. Athanasius felt that the Arians' rejection of the doctrine that the Son was of one substance with the Father (*homoousios*) called the meaning of the redemption into question. Luther felt, however, that this connection between the dogma (i.e. the Trinity) and soteriology is even closer.'

<sup>51</sup> For further dialogue on the doctrine of the Trinity, see Robert W. Bertram, 'When is God triune?', *Dialog* 27 (1988): 133; Paul R. Hinlicky, 'Some Questions to Bertram on the Trinity', *Dialog* 18 (1989): 307-8; Ann Pederson, 'A Question to Bertram and Luther on the Trinity', *Dialog* 28 (1989): 308-9; Bertram, 'Again on the Trinity: Bertram Responds', *Dialog* 29 (1990): 60-61. For Bertram, Luther's theological thinking is strictly concrete: in Jesus Christ we know *Deus revelatus qua Trinitas*, revealed as Jesus Christ, his Father and their common Spirit. Outside of this particular context, we just do not know an immanent Trinity.

<sup>52</sup> *LW* 34, 208. Cf. John N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London, 1968), pp. 119-23.

(unicity) of God by teaching that God '*simpliciter*' (i.e., Father) was incarnated in the Son.<sup>53</sup> It follows from this that the Father suffered along with Christ, since he was present in and identical with the Son. This idea, labelled 'patripassianism', was condemned as a heresy. Praxeas' concession that the Father suffered only with the Son did not impress Tertullian:

[Our heretics] indeed, fearing to incur direct blasphemy against the Father, hope to diminish it by this expedient: they grant us so far that the Father and Son are two; adding that, since it is the Son who indeed suffered, the Father is only his fellow-sufferer. But how absurd are they even in this conceit! For what is the meaning of 'fellow-suffering,' but the endurance of suffering along with another? Now if the Father is incapable of suffering, he is incapable of suffering in company with another; otherwise, if He can suffer with another, He is of course capable of suffering.<sup>54</sup>

The main reason for the rejection of patripassianism was not so much its conflict with the hellenistic concept of divine impassibility as with the biblical revelation.<sup>55</sup> The distinguishing characteristic of patripassianism, Sarot notes correctly (i.e., in terms of the history of dogma), does not lie in its denial of divine impassibility but in its refusal to make a distinction between the Father and the Son.<sup>56</sup> Patripassianism erred in its failure to endorse the trinitarian distinctions between the Father and the Son. However the writings of the patripassianists must be understood for

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<sup>53</sup> See Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, pp. 83, 85, 100, 112, 119-23 as cited in Marcel Sarot, 'Patripassianism, Theopaschitism and the Suffering of God: Some Systematic and Historical Considerations', *Religious Studies* 16 (1990), p. 370. Tertullian means by '*Pater*' the first person of the Trinity, whereas the modalists use '*Pater*' in the more original sense as '*God simpliciter*'.

<sup>54</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean* 15. 402ff. Also cited in Colin Grant, 'Possibilities for Divine Passibility', *Toronto Journal of Theology* 4 (1988), p. 5.

<sup>55</sup> For a contrary view, see Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, 1984), who argues that the key reason for the repudiation of Patripassianism was its conflict with the hellenistic conception of divine impassibility. Cf. Sarot, 'Patripassianism, Theopaschitism, and the Suffering of God', p. 370.

<sup>56</sup> Sarot, 'Patripassianism, Theopaschitism and the Suffering of God', p. 370. See also John Mozley, *The Impassibility of God: A Survey of Christian Thought* (Cambridge, 1926), pp. 33ff.

the purpose of this study in the context of the question: how does one reconcile belief in the incarnation, which is integrally related to the nature of God, with belief in an impassable God? Because the axiom of divine impassibility was assumed by Tertullian, he rejected the idea that the Father 'fellow-suffered' on the cross. Hence the new term coined by Moltmann, 'patricompassianism', does not meet with Tertullian's objection, and cannot be used to distinguish itself from 'patripassianism'.<sup>57</sup> Strictly speaking, 'patricompassianism', for Tertullian, is identical to 'patripassianism', both of which fail to distinguish the trinitarian persons sufficiently.<sup>58</sup>

How did Luther avoid the heresy of 'patripassianism', a variation of modalism? First, he maintained a unity of the Godhead with 'distinctions', arguing against Sabellius who juggled the three Persons into one Person.<sup>59</sup> Luther, in speaking about the economy of salvation, refused to distinguish the Persons with respect to God's works *ad extra* so that what is done by one Person must be ascribed to all three 'without distinction'.<sup>60</sup> 'In relation to us, He is one God.' Nevertheless 'within

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<sup>57</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Future of Creation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Philadelphia, 1979), p. 73. Moltmann coins this new term 'patricompassianism' to indicate the theological position which advocates a trinitarian understanding of the suffering of God, according to which 'the Son suffers dying, the Father suffers the death of the Son'.

<sup>58</sup> Sarot, 'Patripassianism, Theopaschitism and the Suffering of God', p. 372. See Jung Young Lee, *God Suffers for Us: A Systematic Inquiry into a Concept of Divine Passibility* (The Hague, 1974), p. 74, where he, by rejecting patripassianism, rejected 'the unity of Godhead without distinction'. Kazoh Kitamori, in his *Theology of the Pain of God*, trans. Shinkyō Suppanska (Virginia, 1965), p. 15, also rejected patripassianism: 'My theology, however, cannot be identified with patripassianism unless the critics can prove that I made reference to God the Father as the One who suffered on the cross.' See Warren McWilliams, *The Passion of God: Divine Suffering in Contemporary Theology* (Atlanta, 1985), p. 21, where he labels many theologians as the 'new patripassianists', including Moltmann, James Cone, Geddes MacGregor, Kitamori, Daniel Day Williams, and Jung Young Lee. McWilliams calls them 'new' because they insist on stronger trinitarian distinctions than 'the old patripassianists'; Baron von Hügel, *Essays and Addresses on Philosophy of Religion*, series II (London, 1926), pp. 205 & 363. Hügel used *passio/compassio* distinction to support divine impassibility, while Tertullian rejected such a distinction in his attack on the patripassianists.

<sup>59</sup> LW 15, 303.

<sup>60</sup> LW 15, 311.

Himself,' said Luther, 'He is distinctive in three Persons.'<sup>61</sup> The unity of Godhead 'with distinction' is to be maintained as seriously as the unity of God's acts *ad extra* 'without distinction'. Second, we must ask how Luther understood the doctrine of Incarnation. Is the whole Trinity incarnate? To this Luther replied no. The divine nature, for him, designates one person of Trinity or the whole Trinity (*tota divinitas*). Thesis IV and X of his *Promotionstheses für George Major* read: '*Ut quaelibet person sit ipsa tota divinitas, ac nulla esset alia.*' '*Et tamen verum est, Nullam personam esse solam, quasi alia non sit, divinitatem.*'<sup>62</sup> It is inaccurate to say that the divine nature in itself becomes incarnate; rather we say it is the divine nature in the Person of the Son which becomes incarnate, that is, one Person alone. Likewise it is inaccurate to say that the divine nature suffers or dies. But we can say that the divine nature of the Son, one Person of the Trinity, *quando capitur pro persona* suffers or dies. Contrary to Nestorius's position, Luther provided his own reading of the Council at Ephesus in AD 431: 'We Christians must ascribe all the *idiomata* of the two natures of Christ... equally to him. Consequently Christ is God and man in one person because whatever is said of him must also be said of him as God, namely, Christ has died, and Christ is God; therefore God died – not the separated God, but God united with humanity.'<sup>63</sup> Luther explained this in his *Disputation On the Divinity and Humanity of Christ* (1540):

For we also say that God is one and not more; but that unity of substance and essence has three distinct persons, just as Christ's nature is united in one person. Therefore, when it is said: Divinity is dead, it then implies that even the Father and the Holy Spirit are dead. But this is not true since only one person of the divinity, the Son was born, died, and suffered, etc. Therefore, divine nature, when it is understood as the person, was born,

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> WA 39<sup>2</sup>, 287, 21-2. See also LW 11, 226; LW 15, 305-6; Liemhard, *Witness to Jesus Christ*, p. 322.

<sup>63</sup> LW 41, 103. For Luther, the Council at Ephesus 'condemned far too little of Nestorius, for it dealt with only one *idioma*, that God was born of Mary. Thus the histories relate that it was resolved in this Council, in opposition to Nestorius, that Mary should be called *Theotokos*, "bearer of God," even though Nestorius denied to God in Christ all *idiomata* of human nature such as dying, cross, suffering and everything that is compatible with the Godhead. This is why they should not have just resolved that Mary was *Theotokos*, but also Pilate and the Jews were crucifiers and murderers of God...' (p. 104).

suffered, died, etc.; it is true. Therefore a distinction must be made. If you understand divine nature as the whole Divinity or unity, then the argument is false; for Christ is not the whole Trinity, but only one person of the Trinity. Therefore, there is only one God. Let us proclaim here how it can be that those three persons are one God and one being. But we believe that these things are incomprehensible; if they could be understood, there would be no need to believe.<sup>64</sup>

Lienhard observes that Luther began with the divinity of Christ and then moved to the three Persons. Siggins explained:

Because the Son is one undivided essence with the Father and the Spirit, where we hear one person speak, we hear the entire Deity. So when we grasp the Son of God we grasp the Father too: the whole Trinity is known in the Person of Jesus Christ: 'Since Christ, who is one undivided Person, God and man, speaks to us, we are sure that God the Father and God the Spirit – that is the whole divine Majesty – is also present and speaking. So God is entirely comprehended in this one person and you need not nor dare search elsewhere.'<sup>65</sup>

When Luther said 'the whole Trinity is found in this Man', he did not intend modalism; rather all the divinity (*tota divinitas*) is present in the Son taken in isolation, but the Son alone is not the only Person, as if there were no other. The unity of the Trinity, for Luther, goes beyond what we meet at the level of the creatures or that of mathematics.<sup>66</sup> Here Luther employed a 'new' language to explain the mystery of the unity of the Trinity. This grammar assumes new utterances, since it wishes to speak about God. Numerical order ceases to be one, two, three: '*Cessat etiam numeri ordo: unus, dua, tres.*'<sup>67</sup> Within creation it is indeed valid; but here there is no order with respect to number, place, and time. Thus we must establish another form of speaking than that which has to do with creation. Words like 'coeternity', 'co-equality', 'image', 'nature', must thus be employed in a new way. Thesis VI of his

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<sup>64</sup> WA 39<sup>2</sup>, 110, 5-17. See Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (New York, 1981), p. 235, who claims that Luther used the name 'God' generically and promiscuously for the following: (i) the nature of God; (ii) the second Person of the Trinity; (iii) the Persons of the Father and the Spirit.

<sup>65</sup> Lienhard, *Witness to Jesus Christ*, pp. 163ff.

<sup>66</sup> WA 39<sup>2</sup>, 287, 24.

<sup>67</sup> WA 39<sup>2</sup>, 303, 24.



*Promotionsthesen für Georg Major* explains this: 'Ac hic aliquid diceretur improprie, tamen res ipsa defendenda est per scripturas contra Diabolum.'<sup>68</sup> In his disputation on *The Word was Made Flesh* (1539), Luther replied to argument 16 of Dr Jonas: 'There is a distinction of unity and trinity in theology. But such a distinction is in philosophy. Therefore there is, in theology, some necessary mathematical philosophy.'<sup>69</sup> After asserting, in reply, that 'the Trinity in theology is vastly different from the way it is accepted in mathematics', Luther then concluded: 'We say that mathematics should remain in its own sphere and domain. We are not concerned with disputing about trinity and unity, because mathematics cannot concede that trinity is unity. ... Even if it is not true in nature, it can very well be true in God, and it is.'<sup>70</sup> It is possible to say that which is trinitarian can be one thing; in God there is both unity and trinity.<sup>71</sup>

The unity of the divine nature means that each Person is in himself truly God: the Father is wholly God, the Son is wholly God, and the Spirit is wholly God. But there is only one God, yet three distinct Persons. Only God the Son, was born, suffered, and therefore he alone was on the cross. Because the Person of the Father is distinct from the Person of the Son, said Luther, 'we should not say that the Father suffered for us' on the cross.<sup>72</sup> To say that the Father suffers on the cross is, for Luther, to follow the rules of the *mathematica*; but our new language is effectively *contra Diabolum*. The Son is the being of God, going out of himself, becoming incarnate, assuming the servant form and becoming obedient unto death on the cross. In his sermon on John in 1537, Luther wrote: 'The two natures dwell in the Lord Christ, and yet He is but one Person. These two natures retain their properties, and each also communicates its properties to the other.'<sup>73</sup> Luther referred to the doctrine of *communicatio idiomatum*, according to which the properties of the two natures in Christ are communicated not only to the *concretum*

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<sup>68</sup> WA 39<sup>2</sup>, 287, 15-16.

<sup>69</sup> LW 38, 266; WA 39<sup>2</sup>, 21, 26-8. See Graham White, 'Luther's View on Language', *Literature and Theology* 3 (1989), p. 205 (Translation is White's).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. See also LW 38, 275; WA 39<sup>2</sup>, 22, 4-10 (Translation is White's).

<sup>71</sup> WA 39<sup>2</sup>, 303, 18ff.

<sup>72</sup> LW 24, 99-100; WA 45, 550-51 (John, 1538).

<sup>73</sup> LW 22, 491-2.

of his person, but also to each other.<sup>74</sup> On this delicate topic of God's suffering and dying, the authors of the *Formula of Concord* quoted Luther saying:

Unless God is in the balance and throws his weight as a counterbalance, we shall sink to the bottom of the scale. ... If it is not true that God died for us, but only a man died, we are lost. But if God's death and God dead lie in the opposite scale, then his side goes down and we go upward like a light or empty pan. Of course, he can also go up again or jump out of his pan. But he could not have sat in the pan unless he became a man like us, so that it could be said: God dead, God's passion, God's blood, God's death. According to his nature God cannot die, but since God and man are united in one person it is correct to talk about God's death when that man dies who is one thing or one person with God.<sup>75</sup>

Here Luther justified his remarks on the suffering and death of God in Christ on the soteriological ground. Already in his *Church Postil* in 1522, Luther said if it is true that only the human nature suffers and the divine nature has no part in it, then Christ is of no more use to us than any other saint because his death is merely that of a human being.<sup>76</sup> Christ's achievement would then become a pure model for the faithful, turning Christ into only an exemplar. In order to redeem human beings from the power of death, God has to co-suffer and co-die in Christ. God lets himself be overtaken by death in the suffering and dying of Christ, and yet he remains the victor over death. For Luther, it is a theological axiom that Christ be affected by suffering even according to his divine nature, otherwise salvation through Christ's suffering and death are inconceivable to him. With this it becomes clear how closely the two-nature Christology and soteriology are linked in Luther's thinking.

The content of God-language, for Luther, is Christologically based. In the disputation of 1540, Luther wrote against Nestorius: "But," you object, "God cannot be crucified or suffer." I reply, "I know – while He is

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<sup>74</sup> For an extensive study of Luther's usage of the doctrine of *communicatio idiomatum*, see chapter three of *The Suffering of God According to Martin Luther's 'Theologia Crucis'*.

<sup>75</sup> See WA 50, 590 (On Councils and the Church, 1539) as cited in *The Formula of Concord*, p. 599. Also cited in Ted Peters, *God – The World's Future* (Minneapolis, 1992), p. 198, where he argues, on the basis of his text, that 'for Luther the divine nature was present throughout the earthly life of Jesus, suffering the slings and arrows of human fortune'.

<sup>76</sup> See WA 10<sup>1</sup>, 11ff. as cited in Jansen, *Studien zu Luthers Trinitätslehre*, p. 115.

not yet man." From eternity He has not suffered, but since He became man, He is passable. From eternity He was not man, but now, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin, He became God and man, one person, and the same things are predicated of God and man.<sup>77</sup> The Ockhamists insisted on the principle *nulla proportio est finiti ad infinitum*, emphasising the infinite gulf between the infinite and the finite, and correspondingly were unwilling to predicate the same of God and man. Here Aristotle and Luther are comrades against the Ockhamists. Luther wrote:

It is not possible to predicate the same of God and man. *Ergo* etc. Response: This is a philosophical argument: There is no proportion of creature and Creator, of finite and infinite. However, we do not so much make here a proportion as a unity of finite and infinite. If Aristotle were to hear the above argument, it would never make him into a Christian because he does not himself concede the aforesaid proportion because it is the same proportion of finite and infinite.<sup>78</sup>

For Luther, the chasm between God and man, between Creator and creature, when one looks away from Christ, is even deeper than it is for philosophy.<sup>79</sup> This chasm between God and man is non-existent in Christ. Thesis 20 of the same disputation read: '*Certum est tamen, omnia vocabula in Christo novam significationem accipere in eadem re significata.*'<sup>80</sup> Nagel explains:

The traditional phrases 'according to his human nature' and 'according to his divine nature' Luther uses so that the distinction of the natures is not lost; but his usage of them has come free of the dualism which sees divine and human, heavenly and earthly, infinite and finite, impassable and passable, as opposites unreconcilable. They are if you look at God separately, and if you look at man separately, but in Christ this separation is gone. In Christ they have a new meaning; the old meaning applies only to them when separated. In speaking of him we may not speak of the divinity separated from the humanity, or of the humanity

<sup>77</sup> See WA 39<sup>2</sup>, 101, 24-8 as quoted in Siggins, *Martin Luther's Doctrine of Christ*, p. 236.

<sup>78</sup> See WA 39<sup>2</sup>, 112, 13-21 as cited in Norman Nagel, 'Martinus: Heresy, Doctor Luther, Heresy! The Person and Work of Christ', in *Seven-Headed Luther, Essays in Commemoration of a Quincentenary 1483-1983*, ed. Peter Newman Brooks (Oxford, 1983), pp. 44-5.

<sup>79</sup> WA 39<sup>2</sup>, 343.

<sup>80</sup> WA 39<sup>2</sup>, 94, 17-18.

separated from the divinity. By such separation our Saviour and salvation are done. *Extra Christum non est Deus alius.*<sup>81</sup>

'For this Person (Christ) is both true God and true man, one Divine Being with the Father, one God, and therefore one voice or one word or one work. Therefore we can and must say: "God was crucified and died for me."<sup>82</sup> The suffering of Christ as God's suffering lies in the concrete unity of his personal identity – the 'God-man' *in toto*. *In concreto*, the incarnate Son suffers in the act of his self-humiliation. Christ's humiliation is his own direct action as a whole person, an 'altogether pure and innocent person' who is constituted as 'God and man'. 'For in My own Person of humanity and divinity I am blessed, and I am in need of nothing whatever. But I shall empty Myself (Phil. 2:7); I shall assume your clothing and mask; and... suffer death, in order to set you free from death.'<sup>83</sup> This condescension is the condescension of the innocent Son of God and the innocent Son of Man, both becoming the Person of the sinful race, suffering and dying on the cross. The God who is known in Christ is the God who comes in lowliness or humility. The being of Jesus Christ in humility, suffering and dying on the cross is 'being' in self-humiliation, and the atonement effected by him is the 'act' of Christ's self-humiliation. By suffering, Luther means the kind of suffering which God does by assuming our sinnerhood in his incarnate Son. That is why Luther said the Father does not suffer in the sense of the firsthand cross-bearing of our sin and dying, only the Son does. As stated previously, 'not the separated God, but rather God united with humanity' dies. The 'separated God' is, for Luther, actually God who is the origin of the Incarnation – namely, the Person of the Father. The Father, in Luther's thinking, is the 'origin' of the Divinity, from whom

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<sup>81</sup> Nagel, 'Heresy, Doctor Luther, Heresy!', p. 47.

<sup>82</sup> See WA 45, 301, 21-5 as cited in Lienhard, *Witness to Jesus Christ*, p. 338.

<sup>83</sup> LW 26, 32; WA 40<sup>1</sup>, 448 (Galatians). Cf. Eberhard Jüngel, *The Doctrine of the Trinity. God's Being is in Becoming* (Grand Rapids, 1976), p. 87, where he quotes favourably Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, vol. IV.1, pp. 246-7: 'In his [Christ's] passion and death, he did not therefore somehow "waive his divinity (somewhat like the emperor of Japan in 1945)", but was rather "in such a humiliation supremely God, in this death supremely alive," so that "he has actually maintained and revealed his deity precisely in the passion of this man as his eternal Son.'" Moltmann, in his *The Crucified God*, pp. 214ff., says: 'the cross must be "evacuated" of deity, [if] by definition God cannot suffer and die...'

the Son and the Spirit derive their divinity. He is also, in that sense, the origin of the Incarnation. In his interpretation of the three names, where Luther spoke of the trinitarian Person of the Father he often said simply 'God'. In this sense the statement 'God in His nature cannot die' could be understood: as the Father, he cannot suffer dying, for as the Father he is the source of all life, that proves himself to be the victor over death.<sup>84</sup> The question of God's passibility therefore casts a new light on Luther's theology of the Trinity. While God as the Son is exposed to the suffering and dying of Jesus, still God as the Father remains the One from whom suffering and death can claim nothing. Luther conceived of the theology of the Trinity in such a way that it includes the Incarnation and passion of God in Christ, not as an addendum but as ontologically constitutive of God. With this the reformer distinguished himself clearly from modalism. Jansen writes of Luther:

For in his thinking, becoming human and Jesus Christ's suffering, death and resurrection are grounded in God's being itself. The theory of the Trinity as a differentiation in God's being makes it possible for the reformer to teach God's Incarnation and Passion of God in Jesus Christ. Precisely in this, Luther is far from metaphysical Monotheism, which teaches the intransitoriness, immutability, indivisibility, incapability of suffering and immortality of God.<sup>85</sup>

Luther, like the orthodox Christology, rejected patripassianists who extended the suffering of Jesus' death to the Father. He reacted to the modalistic theopaschitism by predicating the suffering of death only of the Son. Christ suffered in his person; and this person, God's Son, is of one being with the Father. If God is in Christ, then whatever God the Son suffers becomes the suffering of God by the union of the Persons of the Trinity. In this manner the Father, though he does not suffer dying as the Son does on the cross, suffers through divine unity with the Son. 'The Father and the Son are one' (cf. John 14). The concept of *perichoresis* was already assumed by Luther as he said in his sermon on John 14 (1538): 'Believe Me that I am in My Father and the Father is in Me.'<sup>86</sup> Since the Father and the Son mutually coinhere in one another, it is appropriate to talk also here about a marvellous exchange. For Luther it is important that whatever is said of the Son must also be said of the Father, since the two, as Scripture affirms, are one. The suffering of

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<sup>84</sup> Jansen, *Studien zu Luthers Trinitätslehre*, p. 119.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>86</sup> LW 24, 98; WA 45, 549.

Christ as the eternal Son is therefore also that of the Father because of their divine unity. In God's own life the Father and the Son are distinguished (the Son, not the Father, dies), but not separated (the Father wills the death of the Son and knows – suffers – the death of the Son). Modalistic forms of the theopaschite doctrines are rejected by Luther. But a qualified version of 'patripassianism' is attributable to Luther's theology, that is, by the principle of *perichoresis*: the Father suffers in and through the divine unity with the Son. This is in accordance with Luther's *theologia crucis* in which the triune God is one with the crucified Jesus. That God is identified with the crucified Jesus compels theology to speak of God in a trinitarian way, affirming not only the distinctions in God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit but also their unity.

#### DIVINE PASSIBILITY IN THE ECONOMIC TRINITY VIS-À-VIS THE IMMANENT TRINITY

The question as to whether the polarity between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity may be that of impassibility and passibility is the focus of concentration in this section. We know that, for Luther, only in Christ is God revealed as a suffering God who bears the judgement of sin *pro nobis*. In the cross the Father surrenders the Son in love; the Son surrenders himself as an act of his perfect obedience to the Father who sends. That God the Son became incarnate and suffered death and dereliction on the cross is an expression of God's self-giving love. The death of Jesus is, then, the definitive revelation of God, not only of the Father but also of the Son, which he is from eternity. If Jesus Christ is not eternally divine, as Arius claimed, there is no revelation of God. The death of Jesus is, for Luther, the definitive act of God going out of himself in self-giving love, going into the far country to perform the act of self-sacrifice on the cross. God is most himself precisely in the act of self-sacrificing death of his Son on the cross. In this act faith recognises God's divine being, which is found and recognised in Christ's humble obedience, which achieves for us salvation. The Holy Spirit leads us into the accomplished act of redemption, into the suffering love of the cross, that is, of the Son through whom we are restored to the Father. The work of the Holy Spirit thus is to communicate to us the gospel that, in Christ's cross and resurrection, the divine blessing has conquered the divine curse. 'The work (of redemption) is finished and completed, Christ has acquired and won the treasure for us by his sufferings, death, and resurrection, etc.'

But if the work remained hidden and no one knew of it, it would have been all in vain, lost. In order that this treasure might not be buried but put to use and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to be published and proclaimed, in which he has given the Holy Spirit to offer and apply to us this treasure of salvation. Therefore to sanctify is nothing else than to bring us to the Lord Christ to receive this blessing, which we could not obtain by ourselves.<sup>87</sup>

The love of God that suffers the sinful world and the divine wrath, and eventually conquers them is mirrored and revealed through the Spirit. All three persons work together as one God, the God of our salvation. It is God as Father, Son and the Holy Spirit who saves.

Luther's theology of the cross is primarily concerned with God as he wills to be found. God has designated a place and person, showing us where and how he can be found. Luther instructed us to listen to God's Word alone if we wish to learn who God is and what his will is towards us. Hence we are to follow the way of the baby in the cradle, at his mother's breasts, through the desert, and finally to his death on the cross. Luther's doctrines of the incarnation and of the economic Trinity provide the conceptual framework in which he conceived of God's suffering, that is, God's suffering in the concrete unity of Christ's personal identity. As has been stated, God's eternal impassibility is presupposed in Luther's thought. He, in his *Disputation on the Divinity and Humanity of Christ*, stated: 'From eternity, He has not suffered, but since He became man, he is passible.'<sup>88</sup> 'Inasmuch as he is God, he did not suffer, because God is incapable of suffering.'<sup>89</sup> The assertion of God's suffering, for Luther, can only be made *in concreto*, that is, in the person of Jesus, the God-man *in toto*. Though God *in abstracto*, that is, God 'by himself' does not suffer, God in his sovereign freedom determined himself in his Word, and hence became passible in Jesus Christ out of his unfathomable love toward the sinner. That is why Luther insisted that if we are to know God truly we 'look at no other God than this incarnate and human God', the righteous One who has acted and suffered in his self-humiliation

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<sup>87</sup> 'The Large Catechism', p. 415. Cf. 'Confession concerning Christ's Supper', in *LW* 37, 366: 'the Holy Spirit... teaches us to understand this deed of Christ which has been manifested to us, helps us to receive and preserve it, use it to our advantage and impart it to others, increase and extend it...'.

<sup>88</sup> See *WA* 39<sup>2</sup>, 101, 24 as cited in Siggins, *Martin Luther's Doctrine of Christ*, p. 236.

<sup>89</sup> *LW* 38, 254.

according to the *ratio vicaria* between the sinner and Christ. God as God does not suffer; but he suffers salvifically for us in the Son's concrete unity of the human and divine nature. Accordingly Luther's understanding of God is against that which tends to anchor God's suffering love in the pre-Incarnation Trinity, and finally in an extra-Incarnation Trinity, where suffering loses all its meaning. Once we retreat to this sort of divine aseity and sovereignty, we have little left for the Incarnation to do except to reveal a God who would have been what he is anyway, with or without the Incarnation. For Luther God as God, unlike human creatures, does not suffer because there is nothing in God's deity that gives rise to suffering. Divine suffering is affirmed when God constitutes humanity in himself, bearing our sin and mortality ontically. The greatest marvel occurs when God in Christ receives that which is alien to himself but proper to humanity – the suffering of the opposition or discontinuity between God and man. God in Christ suffers the opposition, and eventually suffers it into defeat, effecting for us reconciliation with God.

With respect to the issue of whether Christ's suffering is attributable to God in his immanent life, it is helpful to recall that for Luther, the incarnate One is taken into the immanent life. '[T]he humanity in which God's Son is distinctively revealed is complete, it is united with God in one Person, which will sit eternally at the right hand of God.'<sup>90</sup> God, who became incarnate, continues to be incarnately human. Christ's home-coming to the Father is his exaltation as the 'whole person' of the God-man. If God continues to be incarnately human, the question must then be, concerning God's passibility, whether the still incarnately human Son of God continues to bear our sin and mortality. Luther answered with a 'qualified' yes: yes, but the sin and death which the once humiliated Lord now carries are the sin and death as 'overcome' and 'vanquished' in the cross and resurrection. As Luther wrote in *A Sermon on Preparing to Die* (1519):

He [Christ] is the living and immortal image against death, which he suffered, yet by his resurrection from the death he vanquished death in his life. He is the image of the grace of God against sin, which he assumed, and yet overcame by his perfect obedience. He is the heavenly image, the one who was forsaken by God as damned, yet he conquered hell through

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<sup>90</sup> LW 15, 308; WA 54, 62-3.



his omnipotent love, thereby proving that he is the dearest Son, who gives this to us all if we but believe.<sup>91</sup>

Since the incarnate One is eternally exalted, the Son of God therefore continues to bear our sin and mortality, but in a new sense that springs from their having been defeated and overcome in the cross and Easter. The incarnately human Son's return to the Father is a return with our sin and mortality, which he has 'suffered', 'vanquished' and 'overcome'. In this way the cross as a crisis which the divine life wills to suffer in the humiliated Lord is eternally in God, but not as a crisis eternally; but as a crisis 'overcome' in his 'exaltation and glorification after the resurrection.'<sup>92</sup> Consequent upon Christ's victory, he, who 'is' Lord over creatures from eternity, was 'made' Lord in time and as such was and is therefore crowned with glory and honour.<sup>93</sup> God's eternal Son and the incarnate Son are one person, who continually bears our sin and mortality, although in the form of sin and mortality overcome. Suffering, an aspect of God's humble act in human history, is thus carried into the divine life of God. This means Christ's suffering has reached God's immanent life, and Luther has avoided driving a wedge between God *ad intra* and God *ad extra*. God's love must be conceived as 'suffering' love inasmuch as the cross of the eternal and incarnately human Son exists in the divine life of God.

The burning question of Luther is not whether there is an intra-trinitarian life in God's inner Being in the sense of how God might be in-and-for-himself, but rather what the gospel of Christ bestows upon us. Nevertheless, that there is an immanent Trinity as the God 'beforehand in eternity' is affirmed by Luther. Luther had no wish to occupy himself with speculation upon the immanent relations within the Godhead for that smacks too much of a *theologia gloriae*. Luther's emphasis is to know God in Jesus Christ, that is, in the triumphant act of loving and giving where he makes himself our righteousness and salvation. The reality of Christ as God-with-us and God-for-us is that which concerns Luther, not how God may be in-and-for-himself. Nevertheless Luther did affirm that God's essence is located in the incarnate Son, and since this is

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<sup>91</sup> LW 42, 107; WA 2, 691, 18-19. See also LW 51, 192; WA 10<sup>3</sup>, 49 (5th Sermon at Wittenberg, 1522), where Luther said Christ is 'the eternal satisfaction for our sin'.

<sup>92</sup> LW 42, 107; WA 2, 691, 18-19.

<sup>93</sup> See LW 12, 127, 131-2, where Luther distinguished between Christ's being Lord over creatures from eternity on the one hand and Christ's being made Lord in time.

what God really is in his revelation to man, Luther saw no need to inquire about some other essence, which by definition we cannot know. Luther saw no need to dwell on the *ad intra* life of God. Thus he did not develop a theology of relationships in which the suffering and dying person of the Son affect God the Father and God the Spirit in the inner divine life. However this does not mean that he said nothing of the immanent Trinity at all.

Although Luther refrained from speculating upon the relational dynamism in the immanent life, he did assert that 'the accomplishment of salvation, realized by the Father, the Son and the Spirit is determined in the very eternity of God.'<sup>94</sup> Any division between the economic Trinity and the immanent Trinity would not only lead to modalism, but also call salvation into question. In Lienhard's words:

If there were two 'Gods' – the God who saves and God in himself – the assurance of salvation would be put in question. Add to that, modalism ultimately leads, wherein the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are reduced to different modes by which the divinity is manifest in history. But in its essence it remains beyond revelation. A division arises between God as he is and God as he acts. That is why it is also necessary to speak of the 'immanent' Trinity, even if, faced with mystery it is only possible to speak with hesitation and inadequately. But it appears that the saving act of God in history only translates what God is from all eternity, that is, to say action between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.<sup>95</sup>

On this basis it is necessary to say with hesitation and inadequacy that the humiliation in history mirrors in God's inner life an eternal relation of obedience between the Father and the Son. Luther said in his sermon *Meditation on Christ's Passion*, 'Christ would not have shown this love for you if God in his eternal love had not wanted (willed) this, for Christ's love for you is due to his obedience to God.'<sup>96</sup> This text suggests that God has willed an eternal obedience of the Son to the Father who sends. There already exists in God's being a relationship of obedience between the Father and the Son, which, when the Son becomes incarnate, entails the Son's suffering. The obedience of the Son to the Father is an obedience rendered by God to himself. God the Son is one with the Father -- one of essence and will: 'I and the Father are one' (John 14). The obedience within the Godhead does not compromise the unity

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<sup>94</sup> Lienhard, *Witness to Jesus Christ*, p. 319.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *LW* 42, 13; *WA* 2, 140, 30.

and equality of divine being, thereby avoiding the heresy of subordinationism. Against modalism, the unity within the Godhead is not a simple and an undifferentiated unity. For Luther, as for Augustine before him, persons are differentiated within the divine life by relations. The distinctions within the Godhead ensure the particular characteristic of each person. A modalistic form of patripassianism, that the Father comes and suffers as man, is denied. Because the Son comes, suffers and dies, there must be in God's relationships, in his eternal being and life, the form of obedience, which makes incarnation and Calvary possible. For the reformer, there is an eternal relation of the Son's obedience to the Father who sends, which constitutes the basis for the suffering of the Son in human history. There is in God a sending and an obeying, a giving and a receiving, an active as well as a passive obedient aspect. The Father gives the Son to death, as is proper to a reflection of his eternal relationship to him, and the Son willingly accepts and carries out the eternal plan of salvation. This is evident in Luther's treatise on *The Last Words of David*:

This passage from Daniel (Chap. 7:13-14) also powerfully presents the doctrine of the Godhead in three Persons and of the humanity of the Son; for the Person who gives must be distinct from the Person who receives. Thus the Father bestows the eternal dominion on the Son, and the Son receives it from the Father, and this is from eternity; otherwise this could not be an eternal dominion. And the Holy Spirit is present, inasmuch as He speaks these words through Daniel. For such sublime and mysterious things no one could know if the Holy Spirit would not reveal them through the prophets. It has been stated often enough that Holy Scripture is given through the Holy Spirit. In addition, the Son is nevertheless also a Son of Man, that is, a true human being and David's Son, to whom such eternal dominion is given. Thus we note that the prophets did indeed respect and understand the word 'eternal' which God used when He addressed David through Nathan and said (I Chron. 17:14): 'I will install My Son and yours in My eternal kingdom.'<sup>97</sup>

The same idea emerges when Christ speaks about this in John 16:15: 'All that the Father has is Mine.' 'And of this "all" of the Father which belongs to the Son the Holy Spirit also partakes as Christ says in the same passage: "He will take what is Mine," which the Father has.'<sup>98</sup> That is patently saying that the Holy Spirit takes from both, from the

<sup>97</sup> LW 15, 291-291; WA 54, 48-9.

<sup>98</sup> LW 15, 193; WA 54, 49-50.

Father and the Son, the same single and complete Godhead from eternity. The relational dynamism in the immanent life of God consists of three poles: bestowing, receptivity and reciprocity. The pole of receptivity, which is the Son, is identified as passibility. Thus it is appropriate for God in the Son to be obedient unto death on the cross, to exhibit his deity in lowliness, for eternally there is a humility, a lowliness and receptivity in the triune nature of God. God's relation to what is *ad extra* reflects the relation which he has within himself from eternity. God's relation to man in the passion and death in his Son is, for Luther, a self-determined act of God. God says 'yes' to himself before he says 'yes' to suffering. Luther spoke of the foreordained will of God that the 'lamb' should be slain '*in promissio*' before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8).<sup>99</sup> The eternal will of God to suffer salvifically is seen in the Son's assuming the form of a servant, and becoming obedient unto death, even death on the cross. The Son willingly receives and carries out the role of an obedient servant to actualise reconciliation for humanity. The Son exhibits his 'inexpressible humility' of the cross (Matt. 11:29) until the Father 'exalts' him.<sup>100</sup> God has chosen to be found in the suffering and humiliation of the cross of Christ, in which God is most divine. 'God is to be found nowhere except in suffering and in the cross.'<sup>101</sup> This means the humiliation of Jesus, in Luther's view, must not be distinct from his divine nature. Jesus' suffering in his humiliation and weakness is actually God's suffering in his humiliation and weakness. On the cross it is actually God who is there, God who suffers, and God who dies. In the incarnate Son, the eternal God has entered the lowest of the low, thereby exhibiting himself as one who is not infinitely removed from suffering and death. That the only suffering was that of Jesus in his humanity is therefore, according to Luther, not a satisfactory answer since it was the one Lord Jesus in the totality of his being (God-man *in toto*) and work who suffered and died on the cross.

What about the pole of bestowing, that is, the Father? As noted earlier, the nature of God is inseparable from the act of Jesus Christ. The patristic idea of *perichoresis* accentuates Luther's view that God's essence and God's act are inseparably one. Here the trinitarian-theological

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<sup>99</sup> See LW 40, 215 (Against the Heavenly Prophets, 1525; cf. LW 34, 115; WA 39<sup>1</sup>, 49 (Thesis Concerning Faith and Law, 1535); LW 40, 214; WA 18, 203 (Licentiate Examination, 1545): 'Christ was not in reality slain from the foundation of the world, except in promise only.'

<sup>100</sup> LW 12, 55 (Ps. 2:8).

<sup>101</sup> WA 1, 362, 18-19.

axiom of *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* finds expression in the coinherence of the three persons in the one indivisible essence. Luther understood the act of Jesus Christ in his suffering as integral to the one essence of God. Because the Son is one undivided essence with the Father (and the Spirit), where we grasp the Son of God we grasp the Father too. The Trinity is known in the Son. The entire essence of God is found in the Person of Jesus Christ. 'For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily' (Col. 2:9). That the Father and the Son mutually coinhere in one another enables Luther to affirm a marvellous exchange between the Son's suffering and that of the Father. Since the Father and the Son are one in essence, as Scripture says, the eternal Son's suffering is therefore also predicated of the Father, except that the Father suffers through the compassion that he has for the Son who assumes the destiny of man into the inner life of God. 'The Father loves the Son,' declares John the Baptist (John 3:35).<sup>102</sup> Christ's humiliation shows the eternal love of the Father; both the Father's love and the Son's love are identical. It is here that God's trinitarian nature of love is demonstrated. From the perspective of the Father, he loves the only begotten Son, and therefore suffers the forsakenness of the Son, 'the heavenly image', in order to communicate his eternal essence of love to the world.<sup>103</sup> The Son's true image is demonstrated in his willingness to accept this God-forsakenness, thereby also communicating the essence of God's love. Both the Father and the Son are united in their self-giving love, that gives up the Son on the cross. A modalistic doctrine of God endangers the trinitarian distinction of persons; a perichoretic doctrine of God allows Luther to see the differentiated ways in which God suffers uniquely as Father and Son. Whereas it is the Son who suffers dying on the cross, the Father participates as the 'fellow-sufferer', indicating that the Father's heart is open to the suffering of his beloved Son. As Luther said, 'rise beyond Christ's heart to God's heart,' and 'you will find the divine and kind paternal heart, and, as Christ says, you will be drawn to the Father through him.'<sup>104</sup> For our Christ says, 'Whoever beholds the Father's love also beholds Mine; for Our love is identical. I love you with a love that redeems you from sin and death. And the Father's love, which gave His only Son, is just as miraculous.'<sup>105</sup> The Father of Jesus Christ suffers, not from any deficiency in being, but from the abundance of love. 'For

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<sup>102</sup> LW 22, 495.

<sup>103</sup> LW 42, 107; WA 2, 691 (Preparing to Die).

<sup>104</sup> LW 42, 13; WA 2, 140, 30.

<sup>105</sup> LW 22, 255.

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son' (John 3:16). This affirms that the God of Israel, the Father of Jesus Christ, was no apathetic being, whose essence is untouched by the pain and suffering of his beloved Son. Since the one undivided essence is located in the Son's act of self-humiliation, the redemptive act of Christ's suffering is integral to the one divine essence in the same Godhead.

Finally, what about the pole of reciprocity, that is, the Holy Spirit? Luther was wary of equating the Holy Spirit with passibility. Luther, in the third part of the *Confession*, designated the Person of the Holy Spirit as 'a living, eternal, divine gift and grace'.<sup>106</sup> With this he followed the old Western tradition which can be traced as far as Augustine, according to whom the Persons are distinguished from one another not in terms of substance, but in terms of unchangeable relations to one another in their *intra* life: paternity, filiation and gift.<sup>107</sup> In *De trinitate* XV. 19, Augustine provided an extensive account in which the Spirit is to be designated as *donum dei*. Thereby he sought to establish speculatively the *processus a patre filioque*, by understanding the Holy Spirit as the Father's and the Son's mutual love. The Spirit, the 'gift' of both the Father and the Son, is 'love', and thus, 'He reveals to us the common love by which the Father and the Son mutually love each other.'<sup>108</sup> Toward the end of the *De trinitate*, Augustine argued from the mutual-

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<sup>106</sup> LW 37, 366. See also LW 51, 46 (Sermon on the Raising of Lazarus, John 11: 1-45, 1518) where Luther ascribed 'goodness' (or love) to the person of the Holy Spirit: 'For to the Father is ascribed power, to the Son, wisdom, and to the Holy Spirit, goodness, which we can never attain and of which we must despair'. This pattern of ascription is recognised by Loeschen in his *The Divine Community*, pp. 24ff. Luther stood in the Augustinian-Western, as Jansen notes, when he designated the Holy Spirit as Person and Grace eternally. See his *Studien zu Luthers Trinitätslehre*, p. 123. Concerning Luther's doctrine of the Holy Spirit, see Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*; Herms, *Luthers Auslegung des Dritten Artikels*; Arnold E. Carlson, 'Luther and the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit', *Lutheran Quarterly* 11 (May, 1959), pp. 135-148; E. L. Towns, 'Martin Luther on Sanctification', *Bibliotheca Sacra* CXXVI (April-June, 1969), pp. 115-22; Philip Watson, 'Luther and Sanctification', *Concordia Theological Monthly* 30 (April, 1959), pp. 243-59; Lorenz Wunderlich, 'The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life', *Concordia Theological Monthly* 28 (Oct., 1956), pp. 753-64.

<sup>107</sup> See Fortman, *The Triune God*, pp. 143-6.

<sup>108</sup> See Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 15, 17, 27 as cited in David Coffey, 'The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son', *Theological Studies* 51 (1990), p. 122.

love to the 'communion' between the Father and the Son. This shows that the ideas of the mutual-love and communion become for him practically interchangeable.

And if the love by which the Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father ineffably demonstrates the communion of both, what is more suitable than that He should properly be called love who is Spirit common to both.<sup>109</sup>

Luther sought the scriptural foundation for Augustine's account of *filioque*. If, he concluded, the New Testament reveals to us that Jesus sends us as his own the Holy Spirit from the Father, as Augustine had said, then in the immanent Trinity the Holy Spirit must proceed from the Father and the Son as from a single principle.<sup>110</sup> Since the Holy Spirit proceeds as a *hypostasis* from the Father and the Son, he must be in his person the 'ontological communion' of love that exists between them.<sup>111</sup> Thus there already is a mutuality of self-giving love in the immanent Trinity, awaiting its actualisation in human history: in love the Father surrenders the Son and in love the Son surrenders himself, and the Spirit of love is between them. This is the conceptualisation of the event of the cross in trinitarian terms: the Son relates to the Father in obedient suffering and love, and the Father suffers the loss of the Son, with the Spirit binding them, even in the loss. Because it is the Father's love that gives up his beloved Son, Luther could speak of the Father's 'suffering' the Son's suffering on the cross. In this patripassianism is affirmed as seriously as the Son's suffering except that the Son suffers dying on the cross. Only one of the Trinity suffered and died on the cross. It must be remembered that by 'suffering' Luther meant in the first place the sort of suffering which God the Son undergoes by becoming a human sinner, and dying. The assertion that the Father suffers is made possible because Luther assumed Augustine's conception of the love of the Father for the Son, according to which the Father suffers in compassion with the Son

<sup>109</sup> See Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 15, 19, 37 as cited in Jansen, *Studien zu Luthers Trinitätslehre*, p. 122.

<sup>110</sup> LW 37, 366 (Confession on the Last Supper). Cf. LW 23, 273 (John, 1538): the Holy Spirit came forth not as one born but as one 'given' – that is, the Spirit is the bond of the Father and the Son, their common gift. Augustine's view of the Holy Spirit is also assumed by Luther in his exposition of John's Gospel (cf. John 7:37-39).

<sup>111</sup> Coffey, 'The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son', p. 199.

in the Spirit of love. The passion and death of Jesus Christ is thus the revelation of God, i.e., the revelation of the immanent Trinity. The perception of the Suffering Christ as the lowly servant is thus carried into the inner life of God, allowing a predication of Christ's suffering not only of the economic Trinity but also of the immanent Trinity, the former being the self-manifestation of the latter.

The aforementioned informs us that Luther developed the Augustinian-Western tradition in a way which led him to affirm that the Father suffers in love over the death of his Son. However he did not exploit in detail the implications of the Father's love for the Son in the unity of the Spirit. That is to say, he did not fully develop a theology of an immanent relationship in which the suffering of Jesus Christ affects the Father and the Spirit. In keeping with his main emphasis on soteriology, the reformer focused his attention on the economic Trinity. This is evident in his explanation of the third part of the *Confession*, where we witness how quickly he shifted from a discussion of the immanent Trinity to that of the economic Trinity: 'By this Holy Spirit, as a living, eternal, divine gift and grace, all believers are adorned with faith and other spiritual gifts. ... These are three Persons and one God, who has given himself to us all wholly and completely, with all that he is and has.'<sup>112</sup> Following the confession of the Father's, the Son's and the Holy Spirit's divinity is a summary of the one indivisible work of the Trinity, whereby God's unity is again emphasised. In revelation God communicates himself in the economy of salvation, in virtue of which 'the one God in three Persons' has 'given Himself' entirely to us. The Father gives himself to us with all creatures, so that we and they may serve him; the Son gives himself to us for reconciliation with the Father, for justification and for our knowledge of God; the Holy Spirit gives himself to us so that we may appropriate the charity of Christ. The work of the Son and the work of the Holy Spirit are referred to one another. Luther dealt with the doctrine of the Trinity, as he did with his Christology, by referring to justification. In declaring our justification, God announces himself three times, each one differently. The whole *Confession* is trinitarian, speaking not of three different gifts from God, but rather of God's three-fold giving of himself as one act in the economy of salvation. In Luther's own words in his *Confession*:

These are the three persons and one God, who has given himself to us all wholly and completely, with all that he is and has. The Father gives

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<sup>112</sup> LW 37, 366.



himself to us, with heaven and earth and all the creatures, in order that they may serve us and benefit us. But this gift has become obscured and useless through Adam's fall. Therefore the Son himself subsequently gave himself and bestowed all his works, sufferings, wisdom, and righteousness, and reconciled us to the Father, in order that restored to life and righteousness, we might also know and have the Father and his gifts.<sup>113</sup>

But because this grace would benefit no one if it remained so profoundly hidden and could not come to us, the Holy Spirit comes and gives himself also, wholly and completely. He teaches us to understand this deed of Christ which has been manifested to us, helps us receive and preserve it, use it to our advantage and impart it to others, increase and extend it. He does this both inwardly and outwardly – inwardly by means of faith and other spiritual gifts, outwardly through the gospel, baptism, and the sacrament of the altar, through which as though three means or methods he comes to us and inculcates the sufferings of Christ for the benefit of our salvation.

## CONCLUSION

The economic Trinity stands in the foreground, by which we are told who God is and what he does *pro nobis*. Luther explicitly asserted that God is passible after the incarnation of the Son. His use of the doctrine of *communicatio idiomatum* supports his understanding of God's passibility. He did not concede the suffering of God *in abstracto*, i.e., when the divinity is considered 'in itself'; he conceded no more than the suffering of God *in concreto*, i.e., when the divinity is bound to the humanity in Jesus Christ. The logic of his two-nature Christology enables him to free the concept of God from the categories of Greek philosophy. Because God's eternal Son and the incarnate Son are one and the same, the suffering of Christ in human history is attributable to the eternal Son of God. The redemptive 'act' of the Crucified Christ is integral to the one indivisible 'essence' of God. In addition, his assertion that the immanent Trinity corresponds to the economic Trinity allows this study to take Luther a step further, thereby affirming ontologically that Christ's suffering reaches beyond the temporal state of the incarnation into God's eternal being. Since the 'economic' God of the gospel corresponds to the 'immanent' God, Christ's suffering in human

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<sup>113</sup> Cf. *The Large Catechism*, p. 419, where Luther's interpretation of the Trinity in soteriological terms as revelatory of God's love is confessed.

history therefore belongs to the *intra* trinitarian life of God. Consequently God, for Luther, ceases to be God in a Platonic sense that denies suffering and death to God's heavenly divinity.

# A RE-EXAMINATION OF *DE SPIRITU SANCTO*: SAINT BASIL'S BOLD DEFENCE OF THE SPIRIT'S DEITY

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## INTRODUCTION: SAINT BASIL AND HIS PRESENTATION OF THE DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Saint Basil (330-379), the great fourth-century archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, has long been honoured as a defender of the doctrine of the Trinity. This respect and admiration has not been restricted to the churches of Eastern Orthodoxy. Basil was generally respected, for example, by the Protestant Reformers. David Wright states, 'Most Reformers accorded Basil due recognition for his vindication of the Nicene faith.'<sup>1</sup> It was Wolfgang Musculus, in particular, who praised Basil for defending the faith against heresy.<sup>2</sup>

Although Basil is remembered for many things, especially his monastic rules which are still used in Greek monasteries,<sup>3</sup> his endeavours in Trinitarian apologetics are still recognised. Johannes Quasten regards Basil as 'a second Athanasius in the defense of orthodoxy'.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, it was Basil's steadfast determination to be a defender of the apostolic faith. Writing about the intention of the Pneumatomachians in his *magnum opus De Spiritu Sancto*,<sup>5</sup> Basil says, 'The one aim of the whole band of these enemies of sound doctrine is to shake the faith of Christ down to its foundations, by utterly levelling apostolic tradition to the ground.... But

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<sup>1</sup> David F. Wright, 'Basil the Great in the Protestant Reformers', *Studia Patristica* 17, no. 3 (1982), p. 1151.

<sup>2</sup> Wright, 'Basil the Great in the Protestant Reformers', p. 1151.

<sup>3</sup> William C. Placher, *A History of Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Philadelphia, 1983), p. 76.

<sup>4</sup> Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 3, *The Golden Age of Greek Patristic Literature from the Council of Nicaea to the Council of Chalcedon* (Utrecht, Antwerp, and Westminster, MD, 1960), p. 204.

<sup>5</sup> Richard P. C. Hanson, 'The Divinity of the Holy Spirit', *The Church Quarterly* 1, no. 4 (1969), p. 300, regards Basil's treatise *De Spiritu Sancto* as his *magnum opus*.

we will never surrender the truth; *we will not betray the defense like cowards.*<sup>6</sup>

One of the outstanding features of Basil's work in apologetics is the manner in which he engages in the defence of the faith. Even as Basil defended the deity of the Holy Spirit in *De Spiritu Sancto*, he did so in dependence upon the Spirit himself. Basil began his classic treatise with this testimony: 'Wherefore now with the help, if I may say so, of the Spirit Himself, I will approach the exposition of the subject.'<sup>7</sup> Basil's apologetic style is also commendable in terms of his attitude toward the heretics against whom he marshalled his arguments. Although Basil attempted to destroy the theological positions of the Pneumatomachians, he did not desire the destruction of the heretics themselves, but rather their salvation. He expresses his prayer for them in *De Spiritu Sancto*:

As for our opponents, what will they have to say? What defense will they have for their blasphemy? They have neither shown reverence to the honor which the Lord paid to the Spirit, nor have they feared His threats. They are responsible for their own actions; they can change their minds if they wish. For my own part, I fervently pray that the good God will make His peace to reign in everyone's heart, so that these men who are swollen with pride and who bitterly rage against us may be calmed by the Spirit of gentleness and love.<sup>8</sup>

One of the principal apologetic concerns of Saint Basil relates to the issue of the identity and nature of the Holy Spirit. Anthony Meredith is even willing to say this: 'It is primarily as the theologian of the Holy Spirit that Basil deserves particular attention.'<sup>9</sup> As to his competence as a theologian in general, Richard Hanson provides this estimate: 'Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzen were outstandingly able theologians, among the most intellectual men of their time.'<sup>10</sup> But more particularly,

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<sup>6</sup> St Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Anderson (Crestwood, N.Y., 1980), 10.25 p. 46. Emphasis added. This modern translation of the Greek text will be hereafter cited as *On the Holy Spirit*.

<sup>7</sup> Saint Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, trans. Blomfield Jackson, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, vol. 8 (Edinburgh and Grand Rapids, 1989), 1.2 p. 3. This nineteenth-century translation will be hereafter cited as *De Spiritu Sancto*.

<sup>8</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 29.75, p. 113.

<sup>9</sup> Anthony Meredith, *The Cappadocians* (Crestwood, N.Y., 1995), p. 30.

<sup>10</sup> Hanson, 'The Divinity of the Holy Spirit', p. 304.

regarding his treatment of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the *De Spiritu Sancto*, Henry Swete gives this glowing commendation: 'Others may have carried the doctrine of the Holy Spirit somewhat further, but no ancient writer either in East or West shews more sympathy with his subject, or treats it more worthily.'<sup>11</sup>

### *The consubstantiality and deity of the Holy Spirit*

When it comes to Basil's treatment of the Spirit's deity in *De Spiritu Sancto*, there is a universal recognition that Basil does not speak about the consubstantiality of the Holy Spirit. Thomas Torrance, for example, asserts concerning Basil, 'While he was strangely hesitant in speaking of the Holy Spirit as *homoousios* with the Father and the Son, he held in accordance with the liturgy of the Church that the Spirit is glorified and adored equally with the Father and the Son in the indivisible oneness of the Holy Trinity.'<sup>12</sup> This approach, as Torrance points out, was different from that of Gregory of Nazianzus.<sup>13</sup> In Gregory's *Fifth Theological Oration*, he forthrightly declares, 'What, then? Is the Spirit God? Most certainly. Well, then, is he consubstantial? Yes, if he is God.'<sup>14</sup> Although Basil in referring to the Spirit did not explicitly use the word *homoousios* in *De Spiritu Sancto*, he nevertheless believed the doctrine. In at least one of his epistles (*Letter 8*), he speaks about the consubstantiality of the Holy Spirit: 'And if He is not a creature, He is consubstantial with God.'<sup>15</sup>

A second perspective on Basil's treatise on the Holy Spirit is the position that the great Cappadocian father asserts the deity of the Spirit,

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<sup>11</sup> Henry B. Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church* (London, 1912), p. 240.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh, 1996), p. 126. Cf., Quasten, *Patrology*, p. 232.

<sup>13</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 127.

<sup>14</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Fifth Theological Oration – On the Spirit*, in *Christology of the Later Fathers*, ed. Edward R. Handy, vol. 3 of *The Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia, 1954), 31.10 p.199. This will be hereafter cited as *On the Spirit*. It is rather remarkable in light of this statement by Gregory on the Spirit's consubstantiality that Rosemary Jermann, 'The Fourth-Century Cappadocian Witness,' in *Faith to Creed*, ed. S. Mark Heim (Grand Rapids, 1991), p. 93, states concerning the Cappadocians, 'Acknowledging limits in speaking of what God is, they did not try to apply *homoousios* to the Spirit.'

<sup>15</sup> Saint Basil, *Letter 8*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari, in *Saint Basil: The Letters* (Cambridge and London, 1950), vol. 1, p. 81.

but that he does so in a rather restrained and reserved manner. This approach is seen in Meredith who writes, 'Despite all this willingness on Basil's part to unite the Holy Spirit in common worship with the Father and the Son, he is curiously reticent about the actual assertion of deity and consubstantiality of all three persons, a diplomatic reticence which the Creed of Constantinople also shared.'<sup>16</sup> In a similar way, Justo González states, 'In the treatise *On the Holy Spirit* Basil affirms and attempts to prove the divinity of the Holy Spirit. But his affirmations and arguments are always restrained, as if he were afraid to scandalize those who... have not yet been convinced of the divinity of the Holy Spirit.'<sup>17</sup>

One of the problems with this view is that it does not take into account Basil's own statement that he, far from being reserved in his declarations, was attempting to set forth boldly the truth about the nature of the Holy Spirit. As he concludes his treatise, Basil affirms, 'Therefore the cloud of our enemies does not dismay us, but we place our trust in the Spirit's help, and *boldly proclaim* the truth.'<sup>18</sup> Basil had no notion at all that he was 'holding back' as it were from making a strong case for the Spirit's deity. Rather, as it will be demonstrated in this paper, Basil presents an overwhelming amount of evidence which convincingly maintains the deity of the Holy Spirit. In addition, it needs to be recognised right from the outset that Basil was not at all reticent in *De Spiritu Sancto* about the actual assertion of the Spirit's deity.<sup>19</sup> Speaking about the Spirit, he says,

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<sup>16</sup> Meredith, *The Cappadocians*, p. 33.

<sup>17</sup> Justo L. González, *A History of Christian Thought*, rev. ed. (Nashville, 1970), vol. 1, p. 309.

<sup>18</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 30.79, p. 118. Emphasis added.

<sup>19</sup> It is my own suspicion that this idea that Basil sets forth the Spirit's deity in *De Spiritu Sancto* in a restrained manner has its roots in a letter of Gregory Nazianzen which he wrote to Basil, *Letter 58*, trans. Charles G. Browne and James E. Swallow, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, vol. 7 (Edinburgh and Grand Rapids, 1989), p. 455. In this letter, Gregory relates to Basil what had recently happened at a party which he had attended. A certain monk spoke out questioning the orthodoxy of Basil. His proof was the hearing of one of Basil's sermons. According to his testimony, Basil spoke 'most beautifully and perfectly upon the Godhead of the Father and the Son, as hardly anyone could speak, but he slurred over the Spirit.' This monk, according to Gregory's letter, then compared the openness of Gregory's teaching on the Spirit's deity with the reticence of Basil to set forth

But what nature is it becoming to assign to Him who is omnipresent, and exists together with God?... Shall we not then highly exalt Him who is *in His nature divine*, in His greatness infinite, in His operations powerful, in the blessings He confers, good? Shall we not give Him glory?<sup>20</sup>

### *Identifying the Holy Spirit as God*

A third viewpoint with respect to *De Spiritu Sancto* is that Basil does not at any point explicitly identify the Spirit as being God. Writing about Gregory Nazianzen, Tom Noble affirms, 'Gregory stands out among the Cappadocian Fathers as the one most ready to declare the deity of the Spirit. Unlike the brothers, Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory was prepared to say openly and explicitly that the Holy Spirit is God.'<sup>21</sup> Alasdair Heron takes the same line when he says, 'Basil... drew back – at least in his official, public statements – from calling the Spirit "God" because such an explicit identification was not made in the Bible, and because it could cause offence.'<sup>22</sup> Quasten, directing attention specifically to Basil's *magnum opus*, says, 'Basil... never calls the Holy Spirit explicitly "God" in his treatise *De Spiritu Sancto*.'<sup>23</sup> Now it is true that one will not find in Basil's exposition on the Holy Spirit the kind of statement made by Gregory of Nazianzus in his oration *On the Spirit*: 'What, then? *Is the Spirit God? Most certainly.* Well, then, is he

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explicitly the same doctrine: "As for you my good sir," he said, looking at me, "you do now express yourself openly on the Godhead of the Spirit... but the other man hints obscurely, and as it were, merely suggests the doctrine, but does not openly speak out the truth." It may or may not be true that Basil was reticent to articulate clearly the Spirit's Deity at one period of time in his public preaching. But even if it is true that he had been somewhat reserved, it does not necessarily follow that a restrained style characterizes *De Spiritu Sancto*.

<sup>20</sup> *De Spiritu Sancto*, 23.54, p. 35. Emphasis added. The Greek text provided in Benoit Pruche, *Basile de Cesaree Sur le Saint-Esprit* (Paris, 1968), p. 444, reads *theion te phusei*. It should also be noted that Basil in 29.72 p. 45) also approvingly quotes from Irenaeus who referred to the Holy Spirit as 'the divine Spirit'. Pruche's text reads *theiou pneumatos* p. 506.

<sup>21</sup> Tom A. Noble, 'Gregory Nazianzen's Use of Scripture in Defence of the Deity of the Spirit', *Tyndale Bulletin* 39 (1988), p. 123. Frederick W. Norris, 'Gregory the Theologian', *Pro Ecclesia* 2, no. 4 (1993), p. 483, also appreciates Gregory's forthrightness: 'Gregory forcefully confessed that the Spirit is God.'

<sup>22</sup> Alasdair I. C. Heron, *The Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia, 1983), p. 81.

<sup>23</sup> Quasten, *Patrology*, p. 231.

consubstantial? Yes, if he is God.<sup>24</sup> But it is not adequate merely to say that Basil never explicitly called the Spirit 'God' without any kind of qualification. It must be recognised that Basil does cite the apostle Peter explicitly identifying the Holy Spirit as God in Acts 5:3-4. In the context, Basil challenges the Pneumatomachians:

Let our opponents determine what place they will give to the Holy Spirit. Will they rank Him with God, or will they push Him down to a creature's place? Peter said to Sapphira, 'How is it that you have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? You have not lied to men but to God,' and this shows that to sin against the Holy Spirit is to sin against God.<sup>25</sup>

Obviously enough, the very fact that Basil introduces this text into his discussion shows that he agrees with Peter's identification in Acts 5:3-4 – to lie to the Holy Spirit is to lie to God. Also, Basil does not merely cite the biblical text. He adds this comment in which he, like Peter, identifies the Holy Spirit as being God: 'This shows that to sin against the Holy Spirit is to sin against God.'<sup>26</sup> Later, in chapter XIX, Basil again draws an identification between the Spirit and God. Speaking about the leading of the Spirit, Basil writes,

Isaiah says, 'The Lord God and His Spirit have sent me,' and 'the Spirit came down from the Lord and led them.' Do not try to convince me that *this 'leading' by the Spirit* is some lowly service. Scripture testifies that *this is the work of God*: 'He led forth His people like sheep.'<sup>27</sup>

Finally, there is this passage in *De Spiritu Sancto* which helps to qualify the declaration that Basil never explicitly identifies the Spirit as being God. In chapter XXI, Basil directs these statements against the Pneumatomachians: 'Wherefore let them hear yet *another testimony which distinctly calls the Spirit Lord*. "The Lord," it is said, "is that Spirit:" and again, "even as from the Lord the Spirit".'<sup>28</sup> Basil's explicit identification of the Spirit and the Lord is later affirmed in the Constantinopolitan Creed: 'And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and life-giver, Who proceeds from the Father, Who is worshiped and glorified

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<sup>24</sup> *On the Spirit*, p. 199. Emphasis added.

<sup>25</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 16.37, p. 61.

<sup>26</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 16.37, p. 61.

<sup>27</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 19.49, p. 78.

<sup>28</sup> *De Spiritu Sancto*, 21.52, p. 33. Emphasis added.



together with the Father and Son, Who spoke through the prophets.<sup>29</sup> How shall we interpret this creedal declaration that the Holy Spirit is Lord (*kurios*)? It should be obvious that the intention of the Constantinopolitan statement is to affirm the Spirit's deity. Torrance rightly states that this statement 'had the effect of affirming full belief in the unqualified Deity of the Holy Spirit along with the Father and the Son.'<sup>30</sup> Surely, the same thing can be said about Basil's statement – it had the effect of affirming full belief in the unqualified deity of the Holy Spirit.

It can be seen then, in short order, that it is not legitimate (apart from qualification) to say that Basil 'drew back' in his public statements 'from calling the Spirit "God".'<sup>31</sup> But it still needs to be demonstrated more thoroughly that Basil was not reticent and reserved in *De Spiritu Sancto* in the way in which he sets forth the Spirit's Deity. After considering the historical setting of Basil's treatise, a reexamination of Basil's classic treatise will show that the thesis of Meredith and Gonzalez regarding Basil's so-called reticence and restraint does not fit the facts.

#### THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF BASIL'S TREATISE ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

In the year 375,<sup>32</sup> fifty years after the Council of Nicaea, Basil began his discourse *De Spiritu Sancto* with these words: 'Your desire for information, my right well-beloved and most deeply respected brother Amphilochius, I highly commend, and not less your industrious energy.'<sup>33</sup> Amphilochius (c.340-394), a disciple of Basil's,<sup>34</sup> was

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<sup>29</sup> John H. Leith, ed., *Creeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present*, 3d ed. (Louisville, 1982), p. 33. The Greek text of the Constantinopolitan Creed is provided in Charles J. Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church*, trans. Henry N. Oxenham (Edinburgh, 1896), vol. 2, pp. 349-50.

<sup>30</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 96. Writing about the Constantinopolitan Creed, Harold O.J. Brown, *Heresies: The Image of Christ in the Mirror of Heresy and Orthodoxy from the Apostles to the Present* (Garden City, N.Y., 1984), p. 142, affirms, 'The Spirit is called the Lord, a title the religious use of which is reserved in the biblical tradition for the Deity, i.e. for God himself.'

<sup>31</sup> This is the position of Heron, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 81.

<sup>32</sup> Quasten, *Patrology*, p. 210. Cf., Meredith, *The Cappadocians*, p. 31.

<sup>33</sup> *De Spiritu Sancto*, 1.1, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> John R. Willis, *A History of Christian Thought: From Apostolic Times to*

approximately ten years younger in age. He doubtless provided strong representation for Basil's pneumatology at the Council of Constantinople in 381.<sup>35</sup> Thus, he is a significant figure when it comes to the eventual triumph of orthodox doctrine on the Holy Spirit at the Second Ecumenical Council. *De Spiritu Sancto* provides not only Basil's commendation of his younger brother in the ministry, but it also gives the information that it was because of a request of Amphilochius for clear instruction on the Holy Spirit that Basil determined to write this treatise. At the conclusion of chapter I, Basil writes, 'You... have expressed the opinion that some clear instruction ought to be published.'<sup>36</sup>

### *The Pneumatomachian heresy*

Chapter I not only mentions Amphilochius, a solid Trinitarian bishop, but it also provides the immediate historical occasion which precipitated Basil's treatise on the Spirit. Basil writes,

Lately while I pray with the people, we sometimes finish the doxology to God the Father with the form 'Glory to the Father *with* the Son, *together with* the Holy Spirit,' and at other times we use 'Glory to the Father *through* the Son *in* the Holy Spirit.' Some of those present accused us of using strange and mutually contradictory terms.<sup>37</sup>

Basil's theological adversaries which are here introduced are later identified as the *Pneumatomachoi* (literally, 'the Spirit-fighters').<sup>38</sup> Several scholars identify Eustathius and his disciples as Basil's chief adversaries in *De Spiritu Sancto*. Hanson declares, 'C'était Eustathe évêque de Sébaste et ses disciples.'<sup>39</sup> Noble more cautiously states, 'Basil's arguments in this

*Saint Augustine* (Hicksville, N.Y., 1976), p. 275.

<sup>35</sup> A. G. Gibson, 'Amphilochius of Iconium', in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1967, asserts that Amphilochius did attend the Council of Constantinople. Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church*, p. 252, states, 'It was the role of Amphilochius... to defend and propagate the faith as it was taught by Basil.'

<sup>36</sup> *De Spiritu Sancto*, 1. 3, p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 1. 3, p. 17.

<sup>38</sup> Basil uses the Greek word *pneumatomachoi* twice in his treatise 11.27, 21.52.

<sup>39</sup> Richard P. C. Hanson, 'Basile et la doctrine de la Tradition en relation avec le Saint-Esprit', *Verbum Caro* 22, no. 88 (1968), p. 64. Meredith, *The Cappadocians*, p. 31, also regards Eustathius as Basil's principal adversary.

treatise... seem to have been directed specifically against Eustathius who now stood forward as a leading Pneumatomachian.<sup>40</sup>

Although there is no internal evidence in *De Spiritu Sancto* that Eustathius was Basil's principal target, Hanson's judgement is probably correct. In his letter 'To the Westerns' (*Letter 263*), Basil identifies Eustathius in these words: 'He... is the prime leader of the heresy of the pneumatomachi.'<sup>41</sup> Eustathius (c.300-c.377), the bishop of Sebaste, was significantly older than Basil, and at one time had been his theological mentor.<sup>42</sup> Hanson characterises him as 'that extraordinary and unpredictable character.'<sup>43</sup> His unpredictability is reflected upon by Basil in *Letter 263*. Sometimes his Christology was Nicene, at other times he embraced the *homoiousios* position. Still on other occasions, he joined with the Arians.<sup>44</sup> Besides being all over the theological map, he seems to have had a messiah complex. Socrates Scholasticus (c.380-450) provides this description of Eustathius: 'He himself wore the habit of a philosopher, and induced *his followers* to adopt a new and extraordinary garb, directing that the hair of women should be cropped.'<sup>45</sup>

Eustathius apparently embraced the Pneumatomachian doctrine of the Holy Spirit as he learned it from Macedonius who had been the bishop of Constantinople.<sup>46</sup> Both Socrates and Sozomen give a formative place to Macedonius in the thinking of Eustathius. Socrates affirms, 'When Macedonius began to deny the Divinity Of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity,

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<sup>40</sup> Noble, 'Gregory Nazianzen's Use of Scripture', p. 107.

<sup>41</sup> Saint Basil, *Letter 263*, trans. Blomfield Jackson, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, vol. 8 (Edinburgh and Grand Rapids, 1989), p. 302.

<sup>42</sup> V. C. De Clerco, 'Eustathius of Sebaste', in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1967. Michael A. G. Haykin, 'And Who Is the Spirit? Basil of Caesarea's Letters to the Church at Tarsus', *Vigiliae Christianae* 41 (1987), p. 377, adds, 'Eustathius had been instrumental in Basil's conversion.'

<sup>43</sup> Richard P. C. Hanson, 'The Doctrine of the Trinity Achieved in 381', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 36 (1983), p. 52.

<sup>44</sup> Saint Basil, *Letter 263*, 302. James O. Hannay, 'Eustathius', in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, 1960, states that Eustathius signed quite inconsistently the creeds of Ancyra (358), Seleucia (359), Constantinople (360), and Lampsacus (364).

<sup>45</sup> Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. A. C. Zenos, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, vol. 2 (Edinburgh and Grand Rapids, 1989), 2.43 p. 72. Emphasis added.

<sup>46</sup> W. H. C. Frend, *The Early Church* (Philadelphia, 1982), p. 171.

Eustathius said: "I can neither admit that the Holy Spirit is God, nor can I dare affirm him to be a creature."<sup>47</sup> Sozomen adds,

Macedonius.... began to teach that the Son is God, and that He is in all respects like unto the Father. But he affirmed that the Holy Ghost is not a participant of the same dignities, and designated Him a minister and a servant, and applied to Him whatever could, without error, be said of the holy angels. This doctrine was embraced by... Eustathius.<sup>48</sup>

When Basil composed his great refutation of the Pneumatomachian heresy in 375, he was addressing a movement which had been operative for approximately fifteen years. Sozomen states that 'after Macedonius had been deposed from the church of Constantinople', he began to teach this heresy.<sup>49</sup> It could be that Macedonius started to proclaim his Pneumatomachian views in 360, the very year of his deposition.<sup>50</sup> Already, by 362, this heresy had become a matter of significant concern. The synod of Alexandria (362) assembled with the Pneumatomachian heresy as part of its agenda. Summarising the work of this ecclesiastical assembly, Charles Hefele writes, 'Against this new heresy the Synod declared, that "the Holy Ghost was of the same substance and divinity with the Father and the Son, and that in the Trinity there was nothing of the nature of a creature".'<sup>51</sup> Although the Pneumatomachian heresy lasted for only twenty years (largely due to the work of the emperor Theodosius who demanded submission to the Trinitarian position of the Council of Constantinople<sup>52</sup>), it was nevertheless a significant movement. Hanson

<sup>47</sup> Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, 2.45, p. 74.

<sup>48</sup> Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Chester D. Hartranft, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, vol. 2 (Edinburgh and Grand Rapids, 1989), 4.27, p. 322. Everett Ferguson, *Church History, Early and Medieval* (Abilene, TX, 1966), p. 43, blunders when he states that 'the position of Macedonius... denied the personality of the Spirit'. Macedonius did not deny that the Spirit is a person, but that he is a *divine* Person.

<sup>49</sup> Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, 4.27, p. 322.

<sup>50</sup> Leon Cristiani, *Heresies and Heretics*, trans. Roderick Bright, vol. 136 of *Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism* (New York, 1959), p. 28.

<sup>51</sup> Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church*, vol. 2, p. 277.

<sup>52</sup> Theodosius began his reign as emperor by soon announcing his intention in 380 with regard to the Nicene faith and heretical deviations from it. N. Q. King, *The Emperor Theodosius and the Establishment of Christianity* (London, 1961), p. 28, affirms, "Theodosius opened his campaign against all the heresies with the magnificent trumpet blast of the edict *Cunctos*

describes it as 'a formidable movement'.<sup>53</sup> Adolph Harnack adds, 'The Macedonians in general made a deep impression on their contemporaries by their ascetic practices and by their determined struggle against the Homoeans. In the countries on the Hellespont they were the most important party.'<sup>54</sup> Sozomen likewise viewed the Pneumatomachian heresy as being a major problem:

A question was renewed at this juncture which had previously excited much inquiry and now more; namely, whether the Holy Ghost is or is not to be considered consubstantial with the Father and the Son. Many contentions and debates ensued on this subject, similar to those which had been held concerning the nature of God the Word.<sup>55</sup>

Saint Basil, who lived at the very time in which the heresy flourished, likened the situation to a 'naval battle, kindled by old quarrels, fought by men who love war, who cultivate hatred for one another, and have long experience in naval warfare.'<sup>56</sup> Basil goes on to say, 'Entire churches are

*populos.*' Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, 7.4, p. 378, summarises the content of this edict: 'Theodosius enacted a law at Thessalonika, which he caused to be published at Constantinople.... He made known by this law his intention of leading all his subjects to the reception of that faith... which was professed by Damasus, bishop of Rome, and by Peter, bishop of Alexandria. He enacted that the title of "Catholic Church" should be exclusively confined to those who rendered equal homage to the Three Persons of the Trinity, and that those individuals who entertained opposite opinions should be treated as heretics, regarded with contempt, and delivered over to punishment.' Frend, *The Early Church*, p. 175, writes about the actions of Theodosius four months before the Council of Constantinople assembled: 'On 10 January 381 he... proclaimed the orthodoxy of the Nicene Faith alone, and forbade heretics of any color to assemble.' After the Council of Constantinople set forth a clear Trinitarian position and explicitly anathematized the Pneumatomachian heresy in its first canon, Theodosius effectively displaced the Pneumatomachians from the church. King, *The Emperor Theodosius and the Establishment of Christianity*, p. 370, makes the point that those heretics who would not embrace the Constantinopolitan position on the Godhead were to be 'driven from the church.'

<sup>53</sup> Hanson, 'The Doctrine of the Trinity achieved in 381,' p. 52.

<sup>54</sup> Adolph Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. E. B. Speirs and James Millar (London, Edinburgh, and Oxford, 1898), vol. 4, p. 118.

<sup>55</sup> Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.22, p. 359.

<sup>56</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 30.76, pp.113-14.

dashed and shattered on the sunken reefs of a subtle heresy, while other enemies of the Spirit of salvation have seized the helm and made shipwreck of the faith.<sup>57</sup> Finally, the significance of the problem faced by the church is illustrated by the fact that two years after the death of Basil, thirty-six Macedonian bishops showed up for the convening of the Council at Constantinople in 381.<sup>58</sup>

### *The unpardonable sin*

At multiple points throughout *De Spiritu Sancto*, the doctrine espoused by the Pneumatomachians is summarised by Basil. The most obvious feature of this heresy concerns its subordination of the Spirit. Basil states, 'They further insist that the Spirit must not be ranked with the Father or the Son, but under the Father and the Son, not in the same order of things as they are, but beneath them, not numbered with them.'<sup>59</sup> The type of nature which the Eustathians ascribed to the Spirit is also reflected upon: 'The Holy Spirit is to be ranked with the Father. Our opponents do not agree; instead they divide and tear away the Spirit from the Father, *transforming His nature to that of a ministering spirit*.'<sup>60</sup> Later, Basil asks his theological opponents, 'Do you call the Spirit a servant?'<sup>61</sup> For Basil, this issue of the nature of the Holy Spirit was not merely a matter of intellectual speculation and debate. Basil regarded the position of the Pneumatomachians as nothing less than the unpardonable sin. Near the end of the treatise, Basil asks his adversaries, 'How fearful will be the account you will have to give for your words to God who cannot lie, who said that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will never be

<sup>57</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 30.77, p. 115.

<sup>58</sup> Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, 7.7, p. 380.

<sup>59</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 6.13, pp. 28-9. Basil makes a similar point in 10.24, p. 45: 'They say that it is not suitable to rank the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son, because He is different in nature and inferior in dignity from them.'

<sup>60</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 10.25, p. 46. Emphasis added.

<sup>61</sup> *De Spiritu Sancto*, 19.50, p. 32. It should also be noted that in Basil's judgement the Pneumatomachian movement also included a segment within it which affirmed the subordination of the Son. Basil writes (*On the Holy Spirit*, 6.13 p. 28), 'They say that the Son is not equal with the Father, but comes after the Father. Therefore it follows that glory should be ascribed to the Father *through* Him, but not *with* Him. *With* Him expresses equality but *through* Him indicates subordination.' Cf., 3.4-5, pp. 18-20; 4.6, pp. 21-2.

forgiven?'<sup>62</sup> To fail to place the Spirit within the Godhead had eternal consequences: 'Who is so contentious, who is so utterly without the heavenly gift, and unfed by God's good words, who is so devoid of part and lot in eternal hopes, so as to sever the Spirit from the Godhead and rank Him with the creature?'<sup>63</sup> It was with these perspectives on the Pneumatomachian movement that Basil rose to the defence of the deity of the Holy Spirit.

#### A RE-EXAMINATION OF DE SPIRITU SANCTO

Basil's treatise on the Holy Spirit was without doubt his greatest theological production. Hanson identifies it as such – 'son oeuvre principale, le *De Spiritu Sancto*'.<sup>64</sup> But it was not merely the greatest work produced by Basil. It was the most significant pneumatological treatise of the entire century. Hanson declares, 'The most important work on the theology of the Holy Spirit done in the fourth century came, of course, from the pen of Basil of Caesarea.'<sup>65</sup> *De Spiritu Sancto* is not only a theology of the Holy Spirit, but it is also a work of apologetics. As such, Basil had the two-fold intention of refuting heresy (the Pneumatomachian teaching) and defending apostolic truth (the deity of the Spirit, and more broadly the Trinitarian doctrine). As to the confutation of error, Basil said, 'But now we must attempt to refute our opponents' false ideas which have been directed against us.'<sup>66</sup> As to the defence of the Spirit's deity, Basil asserted, 'It would be utterly miserable that the Spirit is blasphemed and true religion is wrecked so easily by these men, while we, having such a mighty patron and protector, hesitate to defend a doctrine which has been maintained in unbroken sequence from the days of the fathers until now.'<sup>67</sup> In a broader sense, *De Spiritu Sancto* is also a defence of Trinitarianism. Henry Chadwick regards it as 'a decisive step forwards in the debate about the doctrine of the Trinity'.<sup>68</sup> Here is one passage, among many, which illustrates the Trinitarian emphasis of Basil's treatise:

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<sup>62</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 28.70, p. 106. Cf., 20.51, p. 79.

<sup>63</sup> *De Spiritu Sancto*, 24.56, p. 36.

<sup>64</sup> Hanson, 'Basile et la doctrine de la Tradition', p. 61.

<sup>65</sup> Hanson, 'The Divinity of the Holy Spirit', p. 300.

<sup>66</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 9.23, p. 44.

<sup>67</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 30.79, p. 118.

<sup>68</sup> Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church* (Grand Rapids, 1967), p. 149.

We worship God from God, confessing the uniqueness of the persons, while maintaining the unity of the Monarchy.... As unique Persons [i.e., the Father and the Son], they are one and one; as sharing a common nature, both are one.... The Holy Spirit... completes the all-praised and blessed Trinity.... He does not share created nature. He is united to the Father and the Son.<sup>69</sup>

The uniqueness of what Basil (along with the other Cappadocians) accomplished in terms of a complete integration of the Spirit into the Godhead must be appreciated. Hanson argues that the theologians of the first three centuries (writers such as Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Novation, Origen, and Athanasius) did not give to the Holy Spirit a necessary and absolutely indispensable place in their theological systems.<sup>70</sup> The Cappadocians, however, were different: 'The Cappadocian fathers were the first to find a way of fully integrating the Spirit within their theological thought.'<sup>71</sup> It is not difficult to find this emphasis in *De Spiritu Sancto*. Again and again, Basil makes statements in which he gives the Holy Spirit an absolutely indispensable place within the Godhead. He charges the Pneumatomachians with these words: 'I exhort them to keep the faith inviolate until the day of Christ's coming: they must not divide the Spirit from the Father and the Son.'<sup>72</sup> Later, he declares, 'In all things the Holy Spirit is inseparable and wholly incapable of being parted from the Father and the Son.'<sup>73</sup>

### *The structure and method*

Basil's exposition *On the Holy Spirit* consists of thirty chapters and seventy-nine sections. The basic order of its development is well summarised by Swete.<sup>74</sup> The treatise opens with reference being made to the attack made upon Basil by the Pneumatomachians relative to his doxology. The Pneumatomachians argued that a proper doxology should use the prepositions 'of the Father', 'through the Son', and 'in the Holy Spirit'. After Basil refutes this heretical argumentation, he expounds the deity of the Son in a lengthy section (from V.7 through VIII.21). As Jaroslav Pelikan observes, this material is 'about one-fifth' of the

<sup>69</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 18.45, pp. 72-3. The word *Trinity* is the Greek word *triada*, Pruche, *Basile de Césarée Sur le Saint-Esprit*, p. 408.

<sup>70</sup> Hanson, 'The Divinity of the Holy Spirit', p. 303.

<sup>71</sup> Hanson, 'The Divinity of the Holy Spirit', p. 304.

<sup>72</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 10.26, p. 47.

<sup>73</sup> *De Spiritu Sancto*, 16.37, p. 23.

<sup>74</sup> Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church*, pp. 231-8.



treatise.<sup>75</sup> Basil then sets forth the Biblical teaching on the deity of the Holy Spirit. Following this, he meets the objections of the Pneumatomachians, returns to the form of the doxology, and then concludes by listing theologians from the first three centuries who used the doxology which the Pneumatomachians opposed.

As we consider the proofs in *De Spiritu Sancto* for the Spirit's deity, it must be recognised that for Basil this was a doctrine which had to be believed for one's salvation. Basil affirmed, 'The Lord has delivered to us a necessary and saving dogma: the Holy Spirit is to be ranked with the Father.'<sup>76</sup> Basil gave this warning concerning the soteriological implications of denying either the Father, the Son, or the Spirit:

I testify to every man who is confessing Christ and denying God, that Christ will profit him nothing; to every man that calls upon God but rejects the Son, that his faith is vain; to every man that sets aside the Spirit, that his faith in the Father and the Son will be useless, for he cannot even hold it without the presence of the Spirit. For he who does not believe in the Spirit does not believe in the Son, and he who has not believed in the Son does not believe in the Father.<sup>77</sup>

In addition to Basil's explicit declaration that the Spirit 'is in His nature divine',<sup>78</sup> he presents a number of arguments in which he meticulously and thoroughly demonstrates the deity of the Holy Spirit. Some of these arguments, as Pelikan notes, were also used in his defence of the deity of the Son.<sup>79</sup> Basil himself explains the real thrust of his argumentation: 'It is... possible for us to arrive to a certain extent at intelligent apprehension of the sublimity of His nature and of His unapproachable power, by looking at the meaning of His title, and at the magnitude of His operations, and by His good gifts bestowed on us or rather on all creation.'<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, 'The "Spiritual Sense" of Scripture: The Exegetical Basis for St. Basil's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit', in *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic*, ed. Paul J. Fedwick (Toronto, 1981), vol. 1, pp. 340-41.

<sup>76</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 10.25, p. 46.

<sup>77</sup> *De Spiritu Sancto*, 11.27, pp. 17-18.

<sup>78</sup> *De Spiritu Sancto*, 23.54, p. 35.

<sup>79</sup> Pelikan, 'The "Spiritual Sense" of Scripture', pp. 340 and 343.

<sup>80</sup> *De Spiritu Sancto*, 19.48, p. 30.

*The Spirit's titles, operations, and gifts*

In his discussion of the Spirit's titles, Basil asks, 'First of all, who can listen to the Spirit's titles and not be lifted up in his soul? Whose thoughts would not be raised to contemplate the supreme nature?'<sup>81</sup> There are a number of specific titles which Basil brings to the attention of his readers. Early on, Basil writes, 'He is called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, the right Spirit, willing Spirit. His first and most proper title is Holy Spirit.'<sup>82</sup> Later in the treatise, he adds, 'He is called Paraclete, like the Only begotten.... He is called royal... and Spirit of wisdom.'<sup>83</sup> Again, in Basil's thinking, these titles reflect the supreme nature of the Person to whom they are attributed.

Basil strengthens his case for the deity of the Spirit in his treatment of the Spirit's works.<sup>84</sup> His fundamental recognition in this discussion is expressed by this question and answer: 'What does the Spirit do? His works are ineffable in majesty, and innumerable in quantity.'<sup>85</sup> This basic perspective, however, does not keep Basil from making an attempt at describing the major works of the Spirit. Basil highlights the work of the Spirit with respect to sanctification, revelation and illumination, and as the Source of grace. In each of these areas, he distinguishes between what the Spirit does for human beings and what he does for the angels.<sup>86</sup> As Basil reflects upon the works of the Spirit, he makes this comment, 'Understanding all this, how can we be afraid of giving the Spirit too much honor? We should instead fear that even though we ascribe to Him the highest titles we can devise or our tongues pronounce, our ideas about Him might still fall short.'<sup>87</sup>

Certainly there is an overlap between the Spirit's works and his good gifts, but Basil sees the Spirit's gifts bestowed on believers as a distinct argument for the Spirit's deity.<sup>88</sup> Without a doubt, the principal gratuity

<sup>81</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 9.22, p. 42.

<sup>82</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 9.22, p. 42.

<sup>83</sup> *De Spiritu Sancto*, 19.48, p. 30.

<sup>84</sup> Basil expounds upon the works of the Spirit in 9.22-23, 15.36, 16.38, and 19.49-50.

<sup>85</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 19.49, p. 76.

<sup>86</sup> The sanctification of the Spirit with respect to human beings is described in 9.22. His sanctifying work upon the holy angels is discussed in 16.38. The Spirit's illuminating and revelatory ministry for humans is seen in 9.22-23, for angels in 16.38. The Holy Spirit is both a fountain of grace for humans (9.22) and for the angels 16.38.

<sup>87</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 19.49, p. 78.

<sup>88</sup> *De Spiritu Sancto*, 19.48, p. 30.

of the Spirit is the gift of everlasting salvation. Basil writes that from the dwelling of the Spirit in our souls come numerous blessings, such as 'heavenly citizenship, a place in the choir of angels', and 'endless joy in the presence of God'.<sup>89</sup> Later, Basil adds this: 'Through the Holy Spirit comes our restoration to Paradise, our ascension to the Kingdom of heaven, our adoption as God's sons, our freedom to call God our Father, our becoming partakers of the grace of Christ, being called children of light, sharing in eternal glory, and in a word, our inheritance of the fullness of blessing, both in this world and the world to come.'<sup>90</sup>

### *Divine attributes and additional considerations*

A fourth argument which Basil uses in his patent setting forth of the Spirit's divinity relates to the fact that the Spirit possesses the attributes of deity. Although Basil does not expressly call attention to this issue of the Divine attributes, he recognises throughout the treatise that the Spirit has characteristics which God alone possesses. Basil acknowledges the incomprehensibility of the Holy Spirit: 'We can learn about the loftiness of the Spirit's nature not only because He shares the same titles and works as the Father and the Son, but also because He, like them, cannot be grasped by our thoughts.'<sup>91</sup> Although we cannot comprehend the Spirit's infinite nature, the omniscient Spirit fully understands the mind of God: 'The greatest proof that the Spirit is one with the Father and the Son is that He is said to have the same relationship to God as the spirit within us has to us: "For what person knows a man's thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God."<sup>92</sup> For Basil, the Spirit is eternal,<sup>93</sup> omnipresent,<sup>94</sup> immutable,<sup>95</sup> and omnipotent.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>89</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 9.23, p. 44.

<sup>90</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 15.36, p. 59.

<sup>91</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 22.53, pp. 83-4. Cornelius P. Venema, 'Gregory of Nyssa on the Trinity', *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 8, no. 1 (1992), pp.74-8, discusses the central place of God's incomprehensibility in the thought of Basil's brother Gregory of Nyssa. Tom A. Noble, 'Paradox in Gregory Nazianzen's Doctrine of the Trinity', *Studia Patristica* 27 (1993), p. 95, describes the Cappadocians as 'resting their essential theology on the divine infinity and incomprehensibility'.

<sup>92</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 16.40, p. 67.

<sup>93</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 19.49, p. 77.

<sup>94</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 9.22, p. 43. Basil expands upon omnipresence in 23.54, pp. 85-6.

<sup>95</sup> *De Spiritu Sancto*, 19.48, p. 30.

Another consideration which Basil sets forth in his thorough and comprehensive argumentation for the Spirit's deity relates to the Trinitarian baptismal formula of Matthew 28:19-20. This passage had great importance in the life and thinking of Basil himself.<sup>97</sup> Basil raises the question as to how he will defend himself on the great day of judgement: 'But before the great tribunal what have I prepared to say in my defence?'<sup>98</sup> He then answers his own question with these words: 'This; that I was in the first place led to the glory of the Spirit by the honour conferred by the Lord in associating Him with Himself and with His Father at baptism.'<sup>99</sup> As Pelikan observes, Matthew's Trinitarian baptismal formula is a theme which is repeated throughout Basil's treatise.<sup>100</sup> Basil first introduces this text in connection with his refutation of the subordinationism of the Pneumatomachians:

When the Lord established the baptism of salvation, did He not clearly command His disciples to baptize all nations 'in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit'? He did not disdain His fellowship with the Holy Spirit, but these men say that we should not rank Him with the Father and the Son. Are they not openly disregarding God's commandment? If they will not admit that this arrangement of Father, Son, and Spirit testifies to their union and fellowship, let them explain to us why we should agree with their opinion.<sup>101</sup>

Finally, there is one more argument which Basil used in his forthright declaration of the Spirit's deity. The Trinitarian baptismal passage of Matthew 28:19-20 was not the only text which figured large in the thinking of Basil. As Basil answers the question regarding his response on Judgement Day ('And what have we prepared for our defence on the great day of judgment?'<sup>102</sup>), he also affirms: 'Most of all, it was the threat of punishment which kept us away from unworthy definitions and demeaning opinions.'<sup>103</sup> Earlier in the treatise, Basil had referred to this

<sup>96</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 9.22, p. 43.

<sup>97</sup> Pelikan, 'The "Spiritual Sense" of Scripture', p. 346, states, 'This passage became the cornerstone of Basil's case.'

<sup>98</sup> *De Spiritu Sancto*, 29.75, p. 47.

<sup>99</sup> *De Spiritu Sancto*, 29.75, pp. 47-8.

<sup>100</sup> Pelikan, 'The "Spiritual Sense" of Scripture', p. 347. See 10.24, 17.43, 25.60, 27.66, and 29.75.

<sup>101</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 10.24, p. 45.

<sup>102</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 29.75, p. 112.

<sup>103</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 29.75, pp. 112-13.

threatened punishment (expressed in Matthew 12:31): ‘The Spirit is glorified by His communion with the Father and the Son, and by the testimony of the Only Begotten: “Every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men: but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.”’<sup>104</sup> Basil regarded Christ’s solemn warning regarding the unpardonable sin as a primary argument establishing the deity of the Holy Spirit. It should also be observed that Basil’s introduction of Matthew 12:31 into his discussion shows, contrary to what Gonzalez maintains, that fear of scandalising those who were not yet convinced of the Spirit’s deity was not even an issue for Basil.<sup>105</sup> Indeed, Basil was only concerned to proclaim boldly the truth. Basil openly declares that in his judgement the Pneumatomachians had committed the unpardonable sin: ‘As for our opponents, what will they have to say? What defence will they have for their blasphemy? They have neither shown reverence to the honor which the Lord paid to the Spirit, nor have they feared His threats.’<sup>106</sup>

#### CONCLUSION: BOLDLY PROCLAIMING THE TRUTH

Basil would doubtless be surprised that certain modern writers speak about his so-called reserve and reticence in setting forth the doctrine of the Spirit’s deity. As Basil himself asserted, his determination was to ‘boldly proclaim the truth’ regarding the Spirit’s deity.<sup>107</sup> Surely, ‘the theologian of the Holy Spirit’<sup>108</sup> cannot ask questions which are more forthright than these: ‘Shall we not then highly exalt Him who is in His nature divine, in His greatness infinite, in His operations powerful, in the blessings He confers, good? Shall we not give Him glory?’<sup>109</sup>

The significant impact of *De Spiritu Sancto* upon subsequent history underscores the fallacy of characterising Basil’s treatment as one of hesitation and fear that someone might be offended. It is abundantly clear that the Constantinopolitan statement – ‘And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and lifegiver, Who proceeds from the Father, Who is worshiped and glorified together with the Father and Son, Who spoke through the prophets’<sup>110</sup> – was impacted by Basil’s treatise. Chadwick affirms

<sup>104</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 18.46, p. 74.

<sup>105</sup> González, *A History of Christian Thought*, vol. 1, p. 309.

<sup>106</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 29.75, p. 113.

<sup>107</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, 30.79 p. 118.

<sup>108</sup> Meredith, *The Cappadocians*, p. 30.

<sup>109</sup> *De Spiritu Sancto*, 23.54, p. 35.

<sup>110</sup> Leith, *Creeds of the Churches*, p. 33.

concerning the Creed of Constantinople, 'The actual creed promulgated by the council... concerning the Holy Spirit... reflected the argument of Basil of Caesarea that in the liturgy the Holy Spirit is worshipped and glorified together with the Father and the Son.'<sup>111</sup> Basil's pneumatological doctrine influenced not only the East, but also the church in the West. The principal channel of this influence was Saint Ambrose. Quasten writes, 'The treatise... served St. Ambrose as a source for his *De Spiritu Sancto* six years later, so that many of St. Basil's ideas reached the West.'<sup>112</sup>

But the widespread impact of Basil's doctrine of the Holy Spirit was not restricted merely to geographical localities. Basil's pneumatology influenced the church's teaching for hundreds of years to come. Pelikan states, 'Basil's *De Spiritu Sancto* is one of a small group of treatises... that addressed the doctrine of the Holy Spirit directly, determining the form that it was to take in both East and West for a millennium or more.'<sup>113</sup> Surely, it is self-evident that only a bold proclamation of the Spirit's deity would have had such effects as these.

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<sup>111</sup> Chadwick, *The Early Church*, pp. 150-51. W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia, 1984), p. 632, also recognises that Basil's theology triumphed at Constantinople. Kei Yamamura, 'The Development of the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in Patristic Philosophy: St. Basil and St. Gregory of Nyssa', *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 18, no. 1 (1974), p. 4, takes the position that the third article of the Constantinopolitan Creed (on the Spirit's deity) was the work of Gregory of Nyssa, Basil's younger brother. This underscores the influence that Basil's Pneumatology had at Constantinople.

<sup>112</sup> Quasten, *Patrology*, p. 210. J. H. Srawley, 'Cappadocian Theology', in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 1958, takes the same position: 'Through Ambrose, who was a diligent student of Basil's writings, the theology of the Cappadocians was imported into the West, and influenced the later developments of Trinitarian doctrine found in Augustine.'

<sup>113</sup> Pelikan, 'The "Spiritual Sense" of Scripture', p. 337.

## REVIEWS

### **Evangelicalism Divided: A Record of Crucial Change in the Years 1950-2000<sup>1</sup>**

Iain H. Murray

Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 2000; 342pp., £13.50; ISBN 0 85151 783 8

This major, carefully documented work is concerned to trace the fundamental shift of doctrinal distinctiveness among evangelicals, primarily in the Church of England, and also churches in North America. Murray's hypothesis is that this shift has been largely caused by a threefold influence: liberal theology, ecumenism and the desire among evangelical scholars for intellectual respectability. Prior to the mid-1960s, those evangelicals, who are the subject of the book, courageously stood firm on biblical principles in the tradition of the Reformers. Thereafter they have begun to lose their way as they have succumbed to the subtle temptation of wanting to extend evangelical influence within mainline denominations and be accepted by non-evangelicals as voices to be heard. In this review, after a brief overview of the main arguments of the book, I shall venture to make some tentative comments on the author's hypothesis.

Five main themes are dealt with. First is growth of liberal theology due to Schleiermacher's writings and his separation of objective truth from Christian 'feelings'. His teaching on religious 'experience' opened the way to serious loss of fidelity to the Scriptures, his corrosive influence spreading to theologians on both sides of the Atlantic.

Second, two chapters are given to the development of Billy Graham's thinking which is followed through (in the opinion of this reviewer) with accuracy and compassion. Murray's case is that while the evangelist continued to preach a message which had the Cross of Christ at its heart, he also pursued a deliberate policy of ecumenism, insisting that churchmen of all theological persuasions be invited to take part in his crusades, which inevitably led to serious questions about both the

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<sup>1</sup> This review also appears as an article in the current issue of the *Rutherford Journal of Church and Ministry* 8.1.

effectiveness and rightness of his ministry. Graham's regrettable naivety over the support American Presidents offered him is given honest yet gracious treatment.

Third, Murray detects 'an unconscious shift in ecclesiology' which he believes evangelical Anglicans adopted as a consequence of their experience of the high-profile Graham Crusades of 1954-56. The sharp difference of opinion between John W. R. Stott and Martyn Lloyd-Jones at the Evangelical Alliance Conference of 1966 is seen as a decisive event in the change in theological stance of evangelicals within mainline denominations, evidenced in the outcome of the Keele (1967) and Nottingham (1977) Anglican Congresses. Stott and Packer are portrayed as opting to work for greater influence of evangelicals within the Anglican Communion and for pragmatic reasons allying with Anglo-Catholics in the attempt to resist liberal influences in the denomination.

Fourth, 'Intellectual Respectability and Scripture' is another theme. The author has an impressive grasp of the issues involved and demonstrates that many who seek to make evangelical theology intellectually respectable invariably compromise the reformed understanding of verbal inspiration. For interested readers who want to follow up Murray's arguments, he gives a wealth of footnote references to a wide range of literature, mostly written within the past two decades.

A fifth major theme is 'the growing warmth between evangelicals and Roman Catholics' (p. 220) which ultimately found expression in 1994 in the document *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium* (ECT). There are no prizes for guessing that in discussing the intense debate which followed ECT, Murray comes down firmly on the side of those who strenuously opposed this ecumenical rapprochement with Roman Catholics by leading American evangelicals. The reader is eloquently (again with impressive documentation) warned of the danger of tolerating error in the church for the sake of unity.

A sixth issue, which has not been far from the surface throughout the entire book, is the vexed question of ecclesiology and the 'one church' vision. While he maintains that his ecclesiology is that of the reformers, some readers will quickly realise his is in fact very much an 'exclusive' view of church membership, not the 'inclusive' view of the mainstream reformers.<sup>2</sup> Having already dealt with the importance of the question,

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<sup>2</sup> Murray, according to James Bannerman's understanding of church membership, would seem to have adopted an Independent's stance on membership of the church, rather than the reformed (mainline)



'What is a Christian?', he develops his view of the church visible and invisible and the implications for the preservation of a faithful church.

The final chapter gives a helpful summary under six headings of the main conclusions the author has reached.

By any standards, this is an extremely impressive work and reformed Christians will be deeply indebted to Iain Murray for his immense scholarship, inexorable logic and clear passion for the purity of the church and the glory of God. However, I would respectfully suggest there are several areas in which many reformed evangelicals will beg to differ with him.

First must be the interpretation he gives to the Martyn Lloyd-Jones address in 1966. Murray cites the reporting of only two Christian magazines, both of which were controlled by the Billy Graham organisation. He thus clearly implies that the Graham ecumenicity engaged in biased, unfair assessment of the Doctor, portraying him as saying something he never said. However, the careful reader who takes time to go back to the Doctor's original address, as well as to the Christian media's many other reports, will find it impossible to accept Iain Murray's interpretation of Lloyd-Jones' meaning. Such a basic apparent inaccuracy does raise serious questions about the objectivity of the author's judgements elsewhere in the book.

Those evangelicals who have served a lifetime in mainline denominations without let or hindrance by liberal colleagues will be disappointed that Murray seems unable to understand or empathise with their position. Some of the 'mainline' giants of the past held views which certainly would not be acceptable to the author. Within the limits of this review, I have space only to cite two. Samuel Rutherford held a highly pragmatic and, dare I say, unbiblical view that the divine Christ was the true King of all Scotland, whereas the Incarnate Christ was King of the Church. So Rutherford could refer to the entire population of Scotland as 'Christ's flock'.<sup>3</sup> I cite this to illustrate the realism necessarily employed by evangelicals in mainline denominations.

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Presbyterian stance. See James Bannerman, *Church of Christ* (1869, reprint Banner of Truth, Edinburgh, 1960) pp. 73ff.

<sup>3</sup> Readers interested to follow up this Christology which has been criticised as being Nestorian should read Gillespie's work, *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, 1644, and the critique by W. D. J. McKay, *An Ecclesiastical Republic: Church Government in the Writings of George Gillespie* (Rutherford House, Edinburgh, 1997), pp. 61ff.

In my long experience in a denomination with many 'liberal' ministers, I have to say that personally I have known few who would actually deny Paul's gospel; it is not just that they sincerely believe their own 'spin' on Paul, but also that they regard us evangelicals as putting our own 'spin' on him too. And it must be admitted that there are many 'orthodox' who seem as slow to reach out to the lost with Paul's gospel as those liberals.

The second example of a 'mainline' giant is that of J. C. Ryle who is alluded to and quoted with approval several times in the book. But what is not mentioned is the fact that, in the interests of fairness, Ryle followed the practice of appointing not only evangelical canons in his diocese but more than a balancing number of canons of very different theological views.<sup>4</sup> Murray unfortunately does not understand this kind of co-operation which freed Ryle to declare the truth faithfully and fearlessly, his integrity as a bishop widely respected within his denomination. In his day, no less than today, there were many clergy who hardly even paid lip service to their church's doctrinal standards. Not a few of Murray's statements in the book would come very near to condemning Ryle's position, despite the fact he is held up by him as a paradigm that modern Anglicans should emulate.

The book is implicitly critical of leading Anglican evangelicals who not only have never compromised the truth of God in their published works but indeed have stood firm as champions of sound biblical orthodoxy. One thinks, for example, of Stott's most excellent book, *The Cross of Christ*, perhaps the only orthodox work of note on the Atonement for at least a generation, yet the reader will search in vain for a word of appreciation of John Stott's outstanding contribution to the cause of the gospel, not least in his masterly strategy to support and develop theological education in Third World countries.

A further disappointment for some readers will be the astonishing selectivity the author chooses to exercise. The remarkable work of the Proclamation Trust over some twenty years, emanating from the ministry of Dick Lucas in St Helen's Bishopsgate, is surely a case in point. Apart from a note in the flyleaf, there is no mention of it in the book, and not a word about Dick Lucas, whose thirty-seven-year ministry in St Helen's has helped nurture hundreds of Anglican clergy who have not yielded one iota to the current ecumenical pressures and who continue to exercise faithful expository ministries building up the *ecclesiola in ecclesia*.

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<sup>4</sup> See Eric Russell, *That Man of Granite with the Heart of a Child* (Christian Focus Publications, Fearn, 2001), p. 145.

(Cf. also in the Anglican Church the movements, 'Reform' and 'Fellowship of Word and Spirit', which represent well over 1500 clergy committed to the reformed evangelical position; there is no mention of these.) Nor is there more than a passing reference to Scotland and to movements within a mainline denomination such as the Crieff Fellowship has fostered. In the period covered by the book, the number of reformed evangelical ministers within the Church of Scotland has risen from literally less than a handful to many hundreds who now bear witness to the evangel in virtually every part of the nation.

A final comment on the book must be the total absence in its pages of any mention of evangelism. We all know of churches and groups of churches which have been preoccupied with purity of doctrine and disciplinary procedures; this Iain Murray would applaud. But we have not noticed that they have been particularly concerned (far less fruitful) in searching out the lost and gathering in men and women to the fold of God. After forty years of ministry, I have observed that churches with an 'exclusive' view of membership can be almost entirely barren in evangelism. A far stronger biblical case can be made for an 'inclusive' view of church membership than Murray is prepared to allow, and it has been those holding this latter view who seem to me to have been singularly fruitful in reaching the unsaved for Christ.

Nevertheless, this important work carries solemn warnings for evangelical Christians at the start of a new century. May it revive our love for the church of Christ and lay a burden on all our hearts to take heed how and with what materials we build on the foundation and cornerstone, Christ Jesus, the King and Head of his church.

*David C. Searle, Rutherford House, Edinburgh*

### **Christ the Center**

George A. F. Knight

Hands Press, Edinburgh, and Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1999; 88pp., ISBN 1 871828 38 4 and ISBN 0 8028 4624 6

This short study of the 'Theology of the Incarnation', by the renowned scholar and teacher of Old Testament studies and Semitic languages, is intended to show that the meaning of the Incarnation is found in the Old Testament, rooted in a Hebraic world view. Modern theology, according to the author, has been shaped by Greek philosophy in a disproportionate manner, especially in the dualistic outlook. The ancient Hebrews, by contrast, never accepted a dualistic worldview and it is important, Knight says, to allow our understanding of the person of Jesus to be controlled

by Hebrew rather than Greek thinking. The argument is presented in a thorough, detailed manner, and will only readily be followed by those who are students in this area or those who are highly motivated to cope with the many examples of precise exegesis. The author sets down a number of marvellous insights in these seven short chapters but sometimes, in this reviewer's mind, the thread of reasoning appears disjointed. Consequently it is not easy reading at times.

The fourth chapter, 'The Incarnation of Christ', is clearly the central one. Thus before dealing directly with the meaning of Christ's coming, Knight unfolds something of the Hebrew mind and its relevance for our understanding of the being of God and the Trinity. The author uses, throughout the book, the metaphor of a coin, with its two sides, to indicate the way in which the human and divine relate in the unity of God's creative and redemptive purposes for the world. The Hebrew concept of unity is helpfully explained in the opening three chapters, with particularly useful information being given on the concepts, 'being' (*nephesh*) and 'word' (*dabar*).

The connection between the prologue of John's Gospel and the opening chapters in Genesis is underlined and a very strong case is made for showing that the Greek word 'logos' is inadequate in itself for understanding the statement, 'the word became flesh', and its reference to divine being. Knight suggests an interesting link between the titles Son of Man and Son of David to show the sufficiency of God's salvation in Christ for the worst of sins, that is 'sins with a high hand' (*Leviticus*).

The last two chapters, on the resurrection and the church, followed by a short epilogue, provide further material supporting this thesis that the divine and the human are bound forever in Jesus and his body on earth, the church.

The author makes use of his considerable Hebrew and Semitic scholarship throughout and those who persevere with the closely argued text, will reap expository rewards, in due season! Knight's use of and perhaps dependence on Barth may irritate some conservative readers, but the references are not excessive. The setting out of some consequences of the contemporary context of postmodernism in relation to belief in the Incarnation was helpful. Inspirational was Knight's closing paragraph and his reference to his wife's faith in the Incarnate and Risen Lord as she courageously coped with the onset of terminal cancer. This ultimately is 'the victory (and the theology) which overcomes the world'!

*Martin A. W. Allen, Chryston Parish Church*

## **The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology**

Gary Dorrien

Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 2000; 238pp.; ISBN 0 664 22151 3

This is an able, well-researched, scholarly, book. It is helpful both for the student approaching the subject for the first time and also for the scholar who is already familiar with the matters raised. It reads well.

Dorrien, as he himself tells us, is not a Barthian or an advocate of any existing form of neoorthodoxy. Yet he deals sympathetically, if critically, with Barth's theology. His aim is to show the relevance of Barth's theology for today.

Adopting an historical approach, Dorrien gives a clear account of the development of Barth's thought from his early days as a student, then parish minister, through to his years as a professor of theology in Göttingen, Bonn and Basel. Despite the liberal background of the period Barth become the foremost champion of the 'theology of the Word of God' and the pre-eminent theologian of his century.

Barth was the single figure that all other twentieth-century theologians had to deal with, if not define themselves against. The period through which he lived was theologically complex. Dorrien guides us through this 'tangled segment of twentieth century Protestantism', summarising briefly the theological position of Barth's contemporaries and showing us how each stood theologically in regard to Barth and he to them.

The book, in its critical appreciation of Barth, raises issues which are still vitally important today for biblical scholarship, and yet, I believe, are so little understood or acted upon. Contrary to Bultmann, and some of his contemporaries, Barth maintains that the Incarnation, Virgin Birth, Atoning Death and Resurrection of Christ are real historical events essential for faith. Yet they are not open to verification by secular historical methods. They may not be judged by criteria drawn from a non-Christian and pagan source. They are events which must be understood in their own light through the Holy Spirit. The Word of God is self-authenticating. That means, in Barth's view, that biblical scholarship must adapt itself to its subject matter and be true to the Word of God which it is studying.

On a more critical note, I personally do not like the terms orthodox and neoorthodox which are used so frequently in the book (any more than did Barth himself like the word 'Barthian'), no matter how useful these terms might be in a theological survey of the kind that is here conducted.

Every theologian is different and should be considered in his or her own light. Equally I would have preferred to see greater emphasis on the importance to Barth of the doctrine of Jesus Christ which for him is the starting point of any true biblical theology and likewise a greater emphasis on the doctrine of the Trinity. The book, however, is a valuable contribution to the study of Karl Barth and 'the influences and the controversies that constituted his life'. I recommend it.

*David W. Torrance, North Berwick*

### **Solid Ground: 25 Years of Evangelical Theology**

Carl R. Trueman, Tony J. Gray, Craig L. Blomberg (eds)

Apollos, Leicester, 2000; 319 pp., £14.99; ISBN 0 85111 465 2

The journal *Themelios* has proved to be of great value for evangelical students of theology and religious studies. It is now twenty-five years old, although this statement may be somewhat misleading as it had slimmer predecessors from the same publishing house and built on the foundation earlier laid by them. Of course, as most readers of this journal will know, 'foundation' is the meaning of the Greek word, *themelios*, itself.

This volume has been published to mark the journal's Silver Jubilee. It consists of sixteen essays, reprinted from the journal and selected from its whole history, plus 'two perspectives on the contemporary scene', one about Britain, by Carl Trueman, and the other about America, by Craig Blomberg. The essays are arranged under four headings: Biblical Studies, Hermeneutics, Systematic and Historical Theology, and Application.

They have been well selected, for although inevitably they bear the marks of the times in which and for which they were written, sometimes dealing critically with writers whose books have now disappeared from bibliographies issued to students, they are all still relevant. Any student reading the book would, however, be well advised to look at the original date of particular essays before reading them so as to set them in their historical context. Hermeneutics, for instance, is a fast-moving subject and the three essays under this general heading, published originally in 1975, 1989 and 1993, show how the main issues have altered over the years.

The essayists are almost entirely British, with Scots and others working largely in Scotland well represented by essays from Howard Marshall, Larry Hurtado, David Wright, John Drane and Carl Trueman. The two concluding essays, by Carl Trueman and Craig Blomberg show very clearly how different the British and American scenes are, for the former calls for a greater sense of accountability to the churches by

British evangelical scholars and expresses some concern about elements of theological slippage that he sees amongst conservative evangelicals, while the second is troubled at the way evangelical scholars can be shackled by the rigidity and extremism to be found in some church circles in America.

We can be thankful to God for the extent to which many evangelical scholars are now doing work of great value, and the fact that the value of that work is now much more widely recognised by others, but there can be no complacency, for what needs to be done still exceeds what has been done already.

If you know an evangelical student who is struggling with problems raised by some form of negative criticism or theological radicalism, why not give him or her a year's subscription to *Themelios*?

*Geoffrey W. Grogan, Glasgow*

### **Radical Orthodoxy**

Edited by John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock and Graham Ward

Routledge, London, 1999; pp.xii+285pp., £14.95; ISBN 0 415 19699

This book, by mostly High Church Anglican and Roman Catholic – and mostly young – theologians claims that Radical Orthodoxy counters the secularisation of modern culture, 'reclaiming... the world' by situating the concerns of secularisation within a Christian theological framework. 'It visits sites in which secularism has invested heavily – aesthetics, politics, sex, the body, personhood, visibility, space – and resituates them from a Christian standpoint; that is, in terms of the Trinity, Christology, the Church, the Eucharist' (p. 1). Its orthodoxy is thus pre-Reformation orthodoxy, and its radicalism lies in a return to the roots of Augustinian illumination and participation and by this 'systematically to criticise modern society, culture, politics, art, science and philosophy with unprecedented boldness'. (p. 2) It will attempt these feats by accepting the secular demise of truth, and so by reconfiguring theological truth (p. 1).

This much is clear, or fairly clear. An ambitious programme, in all conscience. But after these opening words the reader is confronted with closely printed pages containing many sentences such as the following, taken more or less at random.

It is this suspension of the created order between nothingness and the infinite which demands that its order be primarily a temporal and audible sequence, rather than a spatial and visible one. This might seem a paradox

in that it makes time, which does not stand still, closer to eternity than space, whose permanence might more easily seem to mimic it. However, the whole point is that such mimicry risks a demonic substitution for eternity, or forced 'spatialisation'. By contrast, the passage of time continuously acknowledges the nothingness of realised being, and can become the vehicle of a desire for a genuinely infinite 'permanence'. (Catherine Pickstock on Augustine on music, p. 248)

What does my faith make real? Faith in God, specifically in the God of Christianity, makes God real within the horizon of my 'I', which is to say faith in God makes me the horizon where God is made real and so expressed. (Laurence Paul Hemming on Nihilism, p. 92)

I wish to argue that, since none of us has access to bodies as such, only to bodies that are mediated through the giving and receiving of signs, the series of displacements or assumptions of Jesus's body continually refigures a masculine symbolics until the particularities of one sex give way to the particularities of bodies which are male and female. (Graham Ward on Bodies, p. 163)

Indeed it may be suggested that only when theology begins to think sexual difference starting from the homosexual couple as its paradigm of sexual difference will it be possible to think the difference not in crudely biologicistic terms, as in so much of Balthasar, but in more properly theological ones. This thinking of sexual difference is indeed already present in both Barth and Balthasar as the relationship of donation, reception and return; but it needs to be thought more radically, as that which establishes sexual difference, as that whether it plays between Father and Son, man and man, woman and woman, or woman and man, it remains, as Ward argues, always constitutive of (hetero)sexual difference. (Gerard Loughlin on Erotics: God's Sex, p. 158)

Part of the problem may be that the book amounts neither to scholarly analysis of the many historical sources and movements which are alluded to, nor to a tract for the times. Unprecedented boldness appears to require the authors to sweep along through the ideas of, it may be, Kant or Ockham or Scotus or Barth, making judgements which, to say the least, call for scholarly reflection. This breathless dogmatism is an important failure because the fulfilment of the project must lie in appealing to sources and to precedents the convincingness of which must supplant careful reasoning, since 'reason' is allegedly a secular product requiring the reconfiguring of theological truth, whatever that means.



The book is full of oracular assertions because the authors' bold prosecution of their radical orthodoxy does not allow them to be held up by historical, philosophical or theological reflections and analysis. Surely, one may think, unprecedented boldness requires unprecedented clarity and convincingness. But the density, opaqueness and downright incomprehensibility of much of the language prevent all but the already converted from being convinced. Such language bespeaks an introversion, a self-indulgence and a preciousness which is utterly at odds with boldness. The book may be radical; it may be orthodox. But intelligible it ain't!

*Paul Helm, Fifiield, Oxfordshire*

### **John Calvin – Student of the Church Fathers**

Anthony N. S. Lane

T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1999; 304pp., £16.99; ISBN 0 567 08694 1

Professor Anthony Lane is Director of Research at the London Bible College. *John Calvin – Student of the Church Fathers* is a book for researchers, or at least for those who are already reasonably well versed in the writings of John Calvin and interested in what other sources, besides the Bible, Calvin used in his works.

Lane himself having majored in patristics in his first degree and since then having become a leading Calvin authority in the English speaking world, has over many years pursued the use made by Calvin both of the early church fathers and of the later mediaeval theologians. Several of this book's chapters are based on articles, with some revision, already published elsewhere, but new material has been added and the whole moulded into a single work.

The most significant piece of additional material is the first chapter, *Calvin's Use of the Fathers; Eleven Theses*. Here Lane unfolds his methodology. At the heart of the theses lie the questions 'How did Calvin get his citations – directly from the authors, from anthologies or from secondary sources?' and 'How far was Calvin influenced by writers not frequently cited?' such as Bishop A. E. Steuchus, who, Lane maintains, was Calvin's chief source after Luther in the Genesis commentary. Lane also enters the debate as to whether Calvin was influenced by the Scottish theologian John Major and, if so, how far.

The eleven theses further maintain that citations are not footnotes, are not to be received uncritically, and are usually used to support Calvin's own position or else polemically in debate. They also indicate something of what Calvin was reading at any given time. Lane describes his own

approach as 'minimalism', adopting a 'hermeneutic of suspicion'. He carefully defines a citation as a 'quotation of, paraphrase of or clear reference to an author or (portion of) a work'. There must be explicit mention of the authors of the works or else some objective proof that Calvin had them in mind. (p xii).

The scope of the book covers the fathers, Latin and Greek, and the mediaeval theologians. Special consideration is given to Bernard of Clairvaux and the use of the fathers in the debate with Albert Pighius regarding the bondage and liberation of the will, and also to further examination of the sources of the Genesis commentary. There are tables of references to citations, and indexes of writers, ancient, mediaeval and early modern to 1700. There is also a bibliography of modern writers relevant to the subject. As Professor David Wright quite rightly appraises, 'This impressive volume reflects the closest reading of Calvin's works and tireless pursuit of his patristic sources.'

*Peter Cook, Alston, Cumbria*

### **A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs**

David W. Bercot (ed.)

Hendrickson, Peabody, Mass., 1998; xx+704pp., n.p.; ISBN 1 56563 357 1

By 'early Christian', David Bercot means specifically the pre-Nicene era of Church history. The reader will therefore search these pages in vain for many of the most famous and influential figures of the patristic age – Athanasius, the Cappadocians, Ambrose, Chrysostom, Jerome, Augustine, Cyril of Alexandria, Leo the Great (and yet, oddly, Arius himself gets an article – why?). I do not point to the omission of these later fathers as a criticism, merely to warn potential readers as to the scope of the work.

The *Dictionary* provides thumbnail sketches of the lives of the pre-Nicene fathers, followed by representative quotations from their works under thematic headings. Heretics like Marcion and Mani also appear, as do some emperors like Marcus Aurelius, although in the latter case I am not certain of the criterion of selection (Aurelius is here, but not Trajan). The rest of the *Dictionary* is devoted to theological and ethical themes treated by the pre-Nicene fathers, consisting of quotations illustrating the theme, with no accompanying comments by Bercot. The overwhelmingly topical nature of the work makes it more useful than Henry Bettenson's justly renowned *Early and Later Christian Fathers* if one wants to get a general overview of the spectrum of pre-Nicene belief or practice in

specific areas. Bettenson, however, remains superior for individual treatment of the fathers.

Some of the most interesting entries are on moral and cultural subjects: almsgiving, burial and funeral practices, celibacy, cosmetics (some fiercely puritanical statements on this), dancing, divorce, entertainment, grooming (how many of us know the patristic doctrine of wigs?), music and musical instruments, procreation, prosperity, usury, wine and women (these last two being separate entries, one hastens to add). Clearly many of the early Church fathers espoused an austere ethical counter-culture in which most modern Evangelicals would not feel at home. Whether we or the fathers are at fault is a moot point.

One caveat must be uttered, not against this useful *Dictionary*, but against the theological use that could be made of it. It would be all too easy to look up various doctrinal entries and assume that one had then discovered what 'the early Christians' believed on this or that topic. My caveat is that it is not as simple as that. The documentary residue of pre-Nicene Christianity is tiny. Even what exists does not present monolithic consistency. Protestants have usually insisted (against old-fashioned Tridentine Roman Catholicism) that the whole idea of the theological 'consensus of the fathers' is dubious at best, deceitful at worst. That healthy scepticism should, I think, be borne in mind when utilising the *Dictionary*. All it can really tell us is what those fathers believed whose writings have survived. We must not assume that this is equivalent to a seamless and unchanging garment of belief which neatly clothed the entire body of believers in the first three centuries. Just comparing Tertullian with Origen should suffice to tear that mythological garment to shreds.

This is a very helpful one-volume reference work, which no theological library should be without.

*Nick Needham, Highland Theological College, Dingwall*

## **Evangelicals & Truth. A Creative Proposal for a Postmodern Age**

Peter Hicks

Apollos, Leicester, 1998; 240pp., £12.99; ISBN 0 85111 457 1

Congratulations to Apollos for keeping quality, thoughtful up-to-date books like this one available when many 'evangelical' catalogues opt either for trading in tack or locking themselves in a time capsule. Peter Hicks has given us a timely, encouraging and robust evangelical response to today's crisis on the possibility of reaching truth. Any evangelical

presenting Christ in a hostile secular environment, or preparing Christians for witnessing today, should read this book. With a calmness rare among evangelicals, the author examines the track record of western thought in its struggle to find knowledge which is 'certain'. Two early chapters are devoted to the theme *Plato to postmodernism*. They lucidly summarise the story of certainty and the fatal role of 'rationalism' and 'empiricism' leading to exaggerated scepticism and relativism.

But what help could possibly come from evangelicalism? A bunch of anti-intellectualists aren't we? Yes, but only recently. Hicks is able to show that evangelical thinkers have frequently shown themselves well aware of the deep problems of epistemology and unafraid to plunge into the fray. He helps us to see the profound sharpness of such writers as John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards and B. B. Warfield. Some theologians find themselves (unexpectedly?) to be evangelicals here (P. T. Forsyth, H. Thielicke), and with some justification, for the arguments deployed are in the evangelical tradition. This review of evangelical contributions is fascinating and re-credits lost brownie points to such as Charles Hodge, an unlikely hero in this tussle. It is warm, easy reading and an education in itself. The inclusion of Forsyth and Thielicke, however, opens the author up to the complaint – and why not Karl Barth? His approach to revelation, for instance, has many points of contact with theirs. And Barth is now widely recognised as having anticipated some postmodern concerns. There seems a Barth-shaped hole in the history, though, admittedly, inclusion of Barth would have lengthened and slowed the account.

But to the book's main point. It is that evangelicalism deserves a hearing for its more creative approach to truth and knowledge. It challenges the polarisation between cold rationalism and chaotic relativism. Truth is not unassailable, cerebral, mathematical certainty. It involves the whole person and entails commitments, life-involvement, pragmatic discovery and religious exploration. The discussion has for too long been stunted by the rationalist exercise. And whilst postmodernism is unduly atomistic, yet it has opened the door for attention to the more rounded working knowledge supported by evangelical faith – a faith that unites heart and mind, a faith that has been around a long time. Ironically, Peter Hicks's approach outflanks postmodernism while playing it at its own game – demolition of narrow rationalist conceptions of knowledge. Not bad!

No brief review can do justice to the book. Read it. Enjoy it. Be encouraged in the hope that the whole idea of public truth is not dead yet.

*Roy Kearsley, South Wales Baptist College, Cardiff*

## **T. F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography**

Alister E. McGrath

T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1999; 300pp., £24.95; ISBN 0 567 08683 6

This biography of Very Rev Professor Thomas F. Torrance, former professor of Christian Dogmatics at Edinburgh University and New College, is an unusual and a challenging book!

It is unusual in that whereas many biographies focus on 'gossip' comments on the character, McGrath's comprehensive account of 'a career of unequalled distinction in academy and church' majors on Torrance as a 'man of ideas', one 'who has a passion for the life of the mind as it is encountered by the reality of God', and analyses his thinking, intending 'to demonstrate the coherence and significance of Torrance's conception of scientific theology'.

This easily read book, with its useful references of index and complete bibliography of Torrance's 633 published works, was written by the Professor of Historical Theology at Oxford, who concluded the introduction to one of his own books on apologetics with the words 'Let us begin by laying solid theological foundations upon which we can build...'. This biography traces the solid theological foundations Torrance has given to generations of students, e.g. dealing with the importance of the homoousion.

It provides not only a fascinating record for former students of Professor Torrance interested in the history of the theological scene in Scotland pre- and post- Barth, but is also a valuable source book for future students wishing to trace the development of the interface between science and the Christian faith. McGrath comments:

Perhaps one of Torrance's most signal achievements is to demonstrate that great-tradition Christianity continues to have the intellectual energy and vitality to engage the agenda developed and pursued by the natural sciences. His greatest bequest to the next century may well be a theological foundation, widely acceptable within orthodox Christianity, on which to build for the future.

But Torrance had a deep concern for people and for theological education to build up the church of God. It is hinted at in the example of Private Philips, but the stated aim of the book precludes an assessment of his pastoral evangelism. Yet his theology was not an ivory tower! It was lived out in the international scene, as the book appropriately begins and ends in a Chinese setting. And precisely because Trinitarian theology

links revelation and salvation it is gospel, a gospel shared in preaching and pastoral work in his parishes and amongst students.

In drawing our attention to the engagement of the Christian faith with the natural sciences and in the deep sense of call from God Torrance had to teach students, the book leaves one with a feeling of the exciting challenge to the church at the start of this new century to have a prayerful burden to produce similar pacesetters.

*Sandy Gunn, Aberfeldy Parish Church*

## **What Is Mission? Theological Explorations**

J. Andrew Kirk

Darton, Longman and Todd, London 1999; 320pp., £12.95; ISBN 0 232 52326 6

The author is Dean and Head of the School of Mission and World Christianity at Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham, and earlier in his life served in Latin America. He describes this work modestly as just an introduction, not a textbook, though it includes chapters on overcoming violence and on the environment which are seldom found in standard mission textbooks. In the first section, on 'Laying Foundations', he takes the theology of mission to be a disciplined study of the questions that arise when people of faith seek to understand and fulfil God's purposes in the world, as demonstrated in the ministry of Jesus Christ. He rejects the claims of postmodern culture, since these would make it impossible to critique particular theological stances, for example gnosticism, clericalism, or racism. Without 'settled views on central beliefs, the church's theology would be trivial and vacuous. Finally, there is no theology which is not missionary, whether it is about exposing idolatry or liberating the poor; and mission is not simply an activity of the church, it is the being of the church.

Dr Kirk explores with biblical balance the relationship between kingdom, church and world, giving a fair outline of views with which he disagrees. Following in the way of Jesus Christ is *the* test of faithfulness – and by that criterion those supporting an alliance of church and state today are as mistaken as the Spanish *conquistadores*. The first section ends with a superb restatement of the life of Jesus, which is thoroughly orthodox yet related to the theological concerns of today.

The main section of the book is about Contemporary Issues in Mission: evangelism as announcing good news, the gospel in the midst of cultures, justice for the poor, encounter with world religions, violence and peace, care of the environment, partnership. There is an ongoing,

fruitful but not uncritical dialogue with statements and practice of the World Council of Churches.

The final section is on Mission in Action, focused unashamedly on the church, with a postscript on the future, *Whither Mission?* There is a substantial bibliography and an index of scriptures and of topics.

An attractive feature of the book is the way the writer makes connections between the gospel and all kinds of practical issues, whether low-interest loans for small businesses, Star Wars, pesticides, animal rights, or house groups. The book certainly exhibits the conviction of the author that mission is the being of the church, not one activity among others, and it should be an inspiration to any follower of Jesus, not just the students for whom it is primarily aimed. And it is quietly gratifying that an evangelical theologian should be able so well to hold his own in the jungle of competing theologies today.

*Jock Stein, Boat of Garten*

### **Calvin's First Catechism: A Commentary. Columbia Series in Reformed Theology**

I. John Hesselink

Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1997; 244 pp.; ISBN O 664 22055 X

The book under review is actually in two parts. It begins with Ford Lewis Battles's translation of John Calvin's first Catechism, which was originally written in French in 1537 and then in Latin in 1538 (it is the latter version which is translated here); the bulk of this volume consists of I. John Hesselink's commentary on this early work of Calvin. If for no other reason, this study is to be commended for making available an English translation of this version of the catechism, which was composed between the first and second editions of the *Institutes* (1536 and 1539 respectively), and which preceded the better known 'Geneva Catechism' (French, 1541; Latin, 1545). As such, it is a valuable piece of evidence in plotting the development of Calvin's theological progress.

The aim of Hesselink's commentary, however, is less to provide an historical-theological examination of this catechism and more to treat it as a concise statement of the fundamentals of Calvin's theology. In so doing, he intends this book to offer an introduction to this broader subject that can be used as much by interested non-specialists in churches as by students in colleges and seminaries. He provides the reader with a discussion of what Calvin has written in this early work, drawing upon the *Institutes* and upon Calvin's commentaries for illustrative material to

flesh out the sparseness of the great Reformer's expression in the catechism, in order to show how the essence of his theology can be found in this short piece. Those looking for a synthetic statement of Calvin's theology will find this a helpful work; it is clearly written, with ample reference in the notes to the major secondary works on Calvin in addition to those of Calvin himself. On the other hand, those who hope to find an analysis of the catechism with respect to Calvin's theological development will be somewhat frustrated, for the discussion is a bit detached from the actual circumstances in which the piece was written, and the reader does not gain much of a sense of the place of this catechism in the movement from the 1536 *Institutes* to the later editions. But this would be to fault this book for something it did not intend to provide.

A few caveats are in order. On a number of occasions, Hesselink makes reference to the debatable distinction some have drawn between the theology of Calvin and that of the later Calvinists (for instance, on the question of Scripture, and that of total depravity – pp. 58 and 61 respectively). Granted, he makes only passing reference to this distinction, but it is so stated as if it were an uncontested point, which of course it is not. And with regard to the presentation of the sources, it is regrettable that the book is published with endnotes rather than footnotes, and further that there is no bibliography included.

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

## **Science and Homosexualities**

Edited by Vernon A. Rosario

Routledge, New York, 1997; 308 pp., n.p.; ISBN 0 415 91501 5

In April 1999, newspapers reported a Canadian study under headlines such as 'Scientists cast doubt on "gay gene" theory'. The two researchers' results challenged the claims of Dean Hamer, who in 1993 published his discovery of a genetic basis for homosexuality. Hamer's name, along with that of Simon LeVay, who in 1991 claimed to have identified a difference in the brain of gay men, appear often in this interesting collection of essays. The writers are concerned with the development since the mid-nineteenth century of attempts to study homosexuality scientifically, and with the relationship between such study and 'social and political agendas'. Although they generally display an attitude of acceptance towards same-sex eroticism, their task is historical and social analysis. They write in a non-campaigning mode, and in a manner accessible to readers with no specialist expertise in the relevant sciences.



They recognise that the American Psychiatric Association's decision in 1973 to remove homosexuality from its listing of pathological behaviours was taken 'largely in response to growing pressure from gay activists'. They evince no consensus that a genetic, or at least biological, explanation of homosexuality would necessarily lead to the growing acceptance of same-sex behaviour. 'In today's context, claiming that homosexuality is genetic places it in the company of unabashedly pathological behaviours.' But which other pathological behaviours? What the book as a whole lacks is a comparative dimension – with paedophilia, for example, or bestiality. One contributor acknowledges the difficulty of studying paedophilia when it is more or less identified with child sexual abuse. But in the absence of a recognition of the norm of heterosexuality, isolating the homosexual alternative in this way tends almost to make it the only other norm – which would be myopic. Substituting 'inter-generational sex' for paedophilia, the same American Psychiatric Association has even published an article arguing for its acceptability. Where a norm is abandoned, no privilege attaches to any one option. The quest for a biologically determined account of homosexuality may only too clearly reveal the socially or politically determined temper of the questing scientists.

*David F. Wright, New College, Edinburgh*

### **Facing Hell: The Story of a Nobody: An Autobiography 1913-1996**

John Wenham

Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 1998; 273 pp., £8.99; ISBN 0-85364-871-9

The name, 'John Wenham' will strike a chord in many memories but not always the same one.

For some, it will recall *The Elements of New Testament Greek*, which has been the textbook for most students of New Testament Greek during the past forty-five years or so. Although I learned Greek through its predecessor by H. P. V. Nunn, I used John Wenham's volume for many years in teaching and found it a model of clarity.

It will remind others of John Wenham as a doughty defender of a high doctrine of biblical inspiration, who wrote several valuable volumes on the Christian view of the Bible. His interests were particularly in the Pentateuch and the Gospels, the foundation documents of the two Testaments, but his work touched all parts of Scripture.

Yet others will know the work of two of his sons, Gordon and David, because of their expertise in Biblical Studies, one in Old Testament and

the other in New, and will realise that John and his wife had heeded the Deuteronomic injunction that the things of God were to form a major topic of conversation in the godly home.

Yet others will know that from his days as a student he held that the Bible teaches Conditional Immortality. This is the reason for the title of his autobiography.

Some will have known him personally and will know what a genuinely humble and unfailingly kindly man he was (but no 'nobody'!). Others who never knew him may have picked this up from some of the encouraging comments in the vocabularies of his Greek grammar, such as, 'at this point you have now learned one third of the words in the New Testament'!

All these features of his life and character come across in his autobiography, completed before his death but published a couple of years after it.

Several evangelical leaders have written autobiographies or surveys of evangelical history in the run-up to the new millennium. John Wenham's was clearly intended to focus on his Conditional Immortality views. He was first persuaded of this doctrine at Cambridge through Basil Atkinson, who also influenced others who were to become evangelical leaders. Some readers of the Bulletin will remember hearing John expounding the doctrine at a Rutherford House Dogmatics Conference in 1991. There is a chapter devoted to this conference. Towards the close of his book he deals briefly with arguments for and against this doctrine.

His deeply-felt views and well-argued case cannot be lightly dismissed by those of us who do not agree with him. Without doubt a good number of evangelicals have been re-thinking this issue, particularly since John Stott's views have become more widely known. The case for eternal punishment as traditionally conceived needs to be argued just as clearly and as courteously and with special attention to the main issues of biblical exegesis.

*Geoffrey W. Grogan, Glasgow*

## **The Burdensome Joy of Preaching**

James Earl Massey

Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1998; 102pp., n.p.; ISBN 0 687 05069 3

James Earl Massey is a black American theologian and preacher, who was a friend of Martin Luther King during the civil rights movement of the 1960s, and this book reflects 50 years of ministry in churches and theological colleges. The substance was originally presented as lectures,

and it retains the flavour of the lecture room, and includes a powerful sermon on 'The face of Jesus' from 2 Corinthians 4:6.

The title is one with which all preachers will identify, and Massey uses a mixture of personal observation and widespread reading to help his hearers stand back from their own involvement in preaching to look at the experiential aspects of their work. He begins with the inward aspects of the preacher's work, including a particularly helpful section on the call to preach. He then looks at the outward aspects, emphasising that preaching is not done in a vacuum, but among a people whose own 'part' in the sermon will only be enabled if the preacher's love for God and for them is transparent.

Next, he explores the role of preaching in achieving 'togetherness'. The preacher must be personal, and his life should be an instance of 'experienced grace', as through his life and words he seeks to draw people into community with God, with the preacher and with each other. Massey grew up in a country that treated 'African Americans' as outsiders simply because they were black, and one effect of this was the development of a strong community life in the black churches, and an evident interaction between the preacher and the congregation. He notes how Dietrich Bonhoeffer was deeply moved by this while he studied in New York in the 1930s, and his fieldwork at Abyssinian Baptist Church both affected his preaching style, and influenced his understanding of community.

Finally, he explores the need for preaching to be eventful. In our world preaching is increasingly disparaged and ignored in favour of more modern methods of communication. However, there are many similarities to the first-century world, and like the apostles we must be gripped by the message and preach its truth to our own specific situations. The preacher must do more than pass on information, but bring people into the presence of God and enable them to respond to the questions and challenges of their everyday lives.

Massey's book comes from a background very different from our own, but his conclusions would be widely accepted in our Scottish Reformed Tradition. Preaching has always seemed foolish in the face of worldly wisdom and technique, but when it comes through a man who is on fire, it has the power to bring us to God, and to unite us to one another in a unique and profound way. As Massey concludes: 'When our lives are stirred by love, flavored by prayer, and saturated with the informing and revealing Word, we can excite the concern of people when they gather to hear it.'

*Malcolm Duff, Glasgow*

## Fundamentalism and Evangelicals

Harriet A. Harris

Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1998; 384pp., £48; ISBN 0 19 8269609

The author aims to demonstrate the pervasiveness of a 'fundamentalist' mentality in contemporary English-speaking evangelical approaches to Scripture. She contends that fundamentalist apologetic for the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture is highly rationalistic, that its attempt to use an inductive 'evidence-based' approach sits uneasily with the a *priori* commitment to an error-free Bible, and that such rationalism does justice neither to the way in which Scripture functions in the believer's life as a *locus* for encounter with God, nor to belief in the Spirit as witnessing to Scripture as God's word (as enunciated by earlier thinkers and confessions). While suggesting a possible alternative in the approach of Abraham Kuyper, she rules out the likelihood that evangelical appropriation of the discipline of hermeneutics will lead them away from a fundamentalist approach.

Harris examines how the 'fundamentalist' mentality has been formulated, the major philosophical influences upon fundamentalism, and the alternative epistemologies adopted by followers of Kuyper and Dooyeweerd. The work is intended for academic readers, and the treatment is correspondingly dense. I found the introduction one of the most opaque sections of the book, and readers may prefer to begin with the conclusion, which provides the clearest outline of the argument.

Although Harris studied under James Barr, and devotes a chapter to an extended analysis of his critique of fundamentalism and evangelical responses, her approach comes across as less polemical and more cautious than his. She handles an astonishing variety of material – historical, theological and philosophical – in a scholarly and judicious manner. However, I noted some shortcomings in the historical material: discussion of controversy between moderate and radical evangelicals in the 1820s is over-simplified, the issues at stake in the Downgrade controversy are not explained, and the author omits the main cause of the disagreement between CICCUC and the SCM – the centrality of the atoning blood of Christ in the gospel – perhaps because of her focus on the doctrine of Scripture. Furthermore, those seventeenth-century thinkers who so stressed the Spirit's role in illuminating Scripture would have been committed to the kind of harmonistic hermeneutic which she deplors.

I would also have appreciated more thorough consideration of the sociological aspects of what it means to be a 'fundamentalist'

evangelical. The significance of particular institutions and journals for the maintenance or otherwise of a 'fundamentalist' mentality is not always given sufficient weight: London Bible College, Tyndale House and the Tyndale Fellowship receive just one mention apiece, *Themelios* and Rutherford House none.

In spite of these criticisms, I found the book worth reading, especially regarding the varying concepts of truth found among evangelicals. I was also challenged by her contrast between the way in which we formulate our doctrine of Scripture and the way in which Scripture functions in our lives. She has provided a stimulating (if not always convincing) analysis of the first half of this contrast; I hope that she will now conduct an extended examination of the second.

*Tim Grass, Horsham, West Sussex*

## **A Guide to the Puritans**

Robert P. Martin

Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1997; xiv+532pp., £12.95; ISBN 0851517137.

The subtitle of this work by Robert Martin is a good guide to its contents: A topical and textual index to writings of the Puritans and some of their successors recently in print. This gives an accurate picture of the scope and limitations of the volume. On the one hand, the use of the word 'Puritan' in the title is a little misleading: the writers listed in the work might more usefully have been described as Reformed or Reformed and Evangelical, as the collection covers a wide chronological variety of authors: from William Ames to B. B. Warfield, Paul Helm and beyond. Thus, the volume is of rather more relevance to more people than its immediate appearance might suggest. On the other hand, those looking for a relatively thorough catalogue of what different Puritans said on different themes may, like myself, be a little disappointed: the editor has confined himself to reprinted material and thus the scholarly usefulness of the volume is somewhat restricted.

That said, providing the reader is looking for a good handbook to help with devotional/church orientated work in Reformed theology, or is an outsider to the field wanting a general orientation course, this is certainly a mine of information. The book contains a series of topical indexes of Puritan and Reformed literature which is of real use to those preparing sermons or simply wanting to sample Reformed wisdom on particular issues. Thus, there is a topical index, running from 'abortion' to 'zeal', and covering most points in between. This takes up the lion's share of

the volume, but is followed by a Scripture index, lists of biographical sketches, various types of sermons, letters and a catch-all miscellany, before a complete list of all the books cited.

It is hard to review a book like this – like a concordance, it is most definitely a tool rather than a read in and of itself. Yet, as a handbook to reprinted Puritan literature and a good bibliographical and topical guide to the field, it is a bargain at the price. In days when we need once more to recapture some of the godliness and the gracious thunder of the Puritans, a book such as this, which maps a path through the maze that so often is Puritan literature, is to be welcomed.

*Carl R. Trueman, Aberdeen*

### **Biblical Interpretation – An Integrated Approach**

W. Randolph Tate

Hendrickson, Peabody, Mass., 1997; xxvi+276pp., £16.99; ISBN 1 56563 252 4

This volume is a revised edition of a book originally published in 1991 – It is intended to provide an introduction to the task of biblical interpretation, or hermeneutics. It therefore joins a rather large crowd of similar texts attempting to do much the same thing. So what distinguishes this text from the rest?

Tate seeks to present an ‘integrated’ approach, by which he means that he approaches the text from a number of perspectives, taking account of the significance of the author, the text, and the reader in the process of interpretation. Hence, the book is divided into three parts: The World Behind the Text, The World Within the Text, and The World In Front Of the Text.

The first part introduces the reader to background studies. Attention is given to both Old and New Testaments although the balance probably falls on the side of the New Testament.

The second part focuses on literary issues. There is a useful orientation chapter on literary genre, containing a helpful discussion of ‘sub-genres’ (such as ‘hyperbole’ and ‘irony’) which commonly appear in biblical literature. This is followed by the first of the two main chapters in this part, which looks at the literary character of the Hebrew Bible. A substantial section on Hebrew narrative is followed by brief sections on poetry and prophecy. A similar chapter looks at the New Testament, noting the way in which Hebraic literary forms are adopted and developed in the New Testament documents.

The third and final part examines the activity of reading. This is the most demanding section of the book, making frequent use of the terminology of modern linguistics. Yet Tate works hard to maintain comprehensible prose. Worthy of particular note in this section is a chapter which provides a worked example of 'integrated biblical interpretation' based on Mark's Gospel.

This book is clearly laid out, using sub-headings, bold print for important terms (which are also listed in a useful table at the end of each chapter), and summary paragraphs. There are also useful study questions for each chapter. These characteristics make this book well suited to the student.

The position Tate adopts might be described as 'studied neutrality'. His book provides an accurate account of various aspects of the task of interpreting the Bible, but I found little in these pages that gave me a reason to bother. It is useful, but not inspirational, and I would be inclined to look elsewhere (e.g. to Bray or Vanhoozer) for an approach to biblical interpretation that is more firmly rooted in the life of the church.

*Alistair I. Wilson, Highland Theological College, Dingwall*

## **What is the Gospel?**

P. G. Nelson

Whittles Publishing, Caithness, 1997; 17pp., £1; ISBN 1 870325 32 X

This very short pamphlet, written by an author who is described on the cover as 'a scientist and lay preacher', argues that evangelical Christians have, at significant points, misunderstood the gospel. This is his attempt to correct those errors.

It majors on the notion that to teach justification by faith was fine in the context of the culture which formed the background to the Reformation but that today our emphasis may have to be different. In particular it is argued that there should be an emphasis on the fact that 'for a person to be saved, he or she must stop doing wrong things, and do right ones'. It also stresses what the author regards as two other vital components of the gospel, namely, that a person should receive the gift of the Spirit and that he or she should be baptised.

This is too short a pamphlet to deal adequately with these major issues and at many points it raises more questions than it answers. My hesitant conclusion, because there is inadequate material on which to base a firm conclusion, would be that the author may have failed to understand two significant elements of Christian theology: First, the integral and unbreakable connection between justification and sanctification; and

second, the fact that the new birth and the baptism with the Spirit are two descriptions of the same event.

A. T. B. McGowan, *Highland Theological College, Dingwall*

## **Let's Study Philippians**

Sinclair B. Ferguson

Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1997; 136pp., £4.95; ISBN 0 85151 714 5

This is the first book in a projected series from Dr Ferguson which now includes *Let's Study Mark* and will include *Let's Study Hebrews* 'ere long. The aim of the series is to provide accessible study aids which combine explanation of the text with application to life. It lands somewhere around the level of IVP's *Bible Speaks Today* series, but is shorter and many might find it both cheaper and less intimidating. Detailed exegetical comments are absent; engagement with named scholars is avoided. The text is not broken up with constant parenthetical references and there are no footnotes. All the things that leave most ordinary Christians baffled or feeling stupid, and consequently discouraged in their desire to understand God's word, function in the background. Thus the reader is neither confused by scholarship nor patronised by a scholar. (See, for instance, pp. 52ff. for an excellent and concise unpacking of 2:13.)

To meet the aim of the book, the 27 short chapters begin with the NIV translation of the verses to be studied, then offer helpful comments with more or less detailed discussion. (The publishers might consider formatting this study series in a more user-friendly way, aiding navigation with such visual clues as are nowadays the stuff of typography and design.)

At the beginning of the book a brief and readable account of the Philippian Church is followed by an outline of the Epistle. Two very helpful sections at the end of the book provide a Group Study Guide, which gives useful comments on doing group study as well as 13 studies, and a short list for further reading.

The comments on the text are pitched perfectly. The blend of textual discussion and application overcomes the problems of trying to apply something that hasn't been understood, and leaving un-applied something that has been. Arguably, each without the other would be incomplete anyway. Experienced expositors and exegetes will be familiar with most of the points that are made; but they are made so helpfully, and with such an interesting mixture of allusions and references, that even those who



use the Greek New Testament for their Quiet Times will find the book a useful addition to their library.

Who else will benefit from this volume and from the rest of the series as it emerges? Certainly anyone who wants to study Philippians for their personal growth. It would enhance devotional Bible reading and give an excellent starter for a closer study of Philippians. Anyone about to start preaching from the Epistle would benefit from going through it with this book before launching into detailed textual study. Anyone called upon to give a Bible Study could 'borrow' from many worse sources and few better. Ministers could confidently recommend this or any of the other books in the series to their members, have it placed in their Church Library, buy multiple copies for a series of studies with congregational leaders or in other small groups (the Study Guide being especially useful), and use it in their own sermon preparation.

The book fills a significant gap, and provides a stepping stone to further study. The series is to be welcomed; it is only to be hoped that a volume on Revelation is not too far over the millennial horizon.

*Dominic Smart, Gilcomston South Church, Aberdeen*

## **Here Comes Your King – Christ, Church and Nation in Malawi**

Kenneth R. Ross

Christian Literature Association in Malawi (CLAIM), Blantyre, 1998; 188pp.; ISBN 99908 16 10 7.

Leap up my soul; leap up and sing;  
Take heart again, *here comes your King*.  
Redemption done by God's right hand  
Is breaking forth through all the land.

Using the vision of a Malawian hymn writer as its title, this fascinating book explores to what extent the King is influencing and has influenced the land of Malawi. It will appeal to readers with interests in African Christology or in recent and past Malawian history, as well as to others who have lingering concerns about the impact of missionaries and the gospel on Central Africa. Drawing on a wide range of interviews, surveys, personal contacts and other sources, Professor Ross' latest production gives deep insights into Malawian Christianity and its impact on society and politics. On the whole the book is easy to read and well presented. There is a good index and extensive bibliography.

The early chapters contain interesting studies of Malawian Christology and ecclesiology. These use contemporary surveys of Christians' beliefs and their understanding of their churches' roles. An underlying assumption of church unity is reinforced by a challenging statement from one Malawian that 'The church may be foreign but Jesus is not.' This underlines an important and reiterated point that Christianity is now indigenous: the church had such standing in 1991-92 that ordinary Malawians turned to it for guidance during the struggle for democracy.

Subsequent chapters describe the church's involvement in the enormous and mainly peaceful political upheaval that surrounded the remarkable change from dictatorship to democracy. The important question raised is whether there has been any change that affects the average Malawian.

The intertwining of the church and nation in past and present events shows how the political renewal of the state was set in motion by a church that has grown dramatically from tiny roots in only just over one hundred years. Its origins in the mission work of the church from Scotland through the later part of the nineteenth century explain its ongoing impact on politics. The early mission leaders made strenuous and often unpopular efforts to promote political freedom for Africans at a time when such moves were discouraged by the colonial government. What was once imported has now taken firm root and is indigenous. 'Jesus Christ [has become] a participant in the vernacular of an African community.' After exploring the role of the church in Malawi's nationhood, the book closes with a call to the nation to be changed for the benefit of its people 'to change the game, not just reshuffle the cards'.

This book is the product of careful research and much thought. It provides at least four challenges to its readers. Theologians are encouraged to look more carefully in African societies at the effects of Christian beliefs rather than the beliefs themselves. Secondly, there is a challenge to Christians everywhere to be part of a counter culture. In the Northern Hemisphere we tend to think of Christianity as the traditional culture with new ideas challenging it. In Malawi there is 'a sense of traditional culture being challenged by the life and values of the church [as it] pervades grassroots ecclesiology in Northern Malawi.' Here is great potential for Christian witness and lessons for those of us in other societies. The third challenge is to Malawian politicians to be part of a new transparent, incorruptible, vernacular democracy. Finally, for the church in Malawi, there is a call to continue to live out the gospel, using its heritage as

a church of the people so grounded in the life of the poor that it finds itself at odds with any structures that promote elitism, domination or oppression.... It is able to draw on the dangerous memory of Jesus Christ to determine where it should stand.

Such is surely a challenge to any church in any nation as it witnesses about its King.

*John Dorward, Eyemouth*

### **Doing Theology for the People of God. Studies in Honour of J. I. Packer**

Donald Lewis & Alister McGrath (eds)

Apollon, Leicester, 1996; 280pp., £9.99; ISBN 0 85111 450 4

Amongst evangelical scholars who could be more worthy than J. I. Packer of receiving, on his seventieth birthday, a collection of papers by such eminent writers? It is not meant to be just another *festchrift*. The writers were challenged to set out an agenda for evangelical theology over the next few decades. This was perhaps expecting a bit much since the world now changes so fast as to put futurists out of business. How did they fare with this task? The papers are mainly of a high standard, but, as in all such collections, some contributions stand out more than others as responding to the challenge issued by the editors.

David Wright (*Recovering Baptism for a New Age of Mission*) delivers an authoritative, brave and candid reconsideration of the practice of infant baptism, borne of prolonged reflection. The result is a generous and ground-breaking contribution to convergence of thought between pedobaptist and credobaptist approaches. It should stimulate much constructive discussion.

John Stott had the most spot-on title: *Theology: A Multidimensional Discipline*. We find him in form – clear, erudite and fruitful. Although not especially agenda-setting this time, he writes a beautifully balanced, and desperately needed, summary of the nature of spirituality. It is worth reading the whole book just to find the sentence: ‘Sunday worship services are valuable to God only if they are a distillation into an hour or two of the dedication of our whole life to him.’ I hear the sound of balloons bursting.

Roger Beckwith (*Toward a Theology of the Biblical Text*), provides much welcome light on biblical textual criticism and the so-called quest for the original form of the text. William Dumbrell gives a highly competent and illuminating account of the Johannine Prologue through

the key idea of revelation. Colin Brown (*Christology and the Quest of the Historical Jesus*) puts the quest for the historical Jesus into a wider framework with new and fruitful directions. Christology, he argues, has two poles: the quest and our ongoing human experience. He argues that we need to pay attention to both.

By selecting these tasters the review is not intended to disparage the other contributions.

There is a high standard, on the whole, throughout. With contributions from such as I. H. Marshall, Bruce Waltke, Kenneth Kanzer and Mark Noll, there is no danger that the reading of this book will be anything but time well spent.

Roy Kearsley, South Wales Baptist College, Cardiff

### Reminiscences of an Octogenarian

Bruce M. Metzger

Hendrickson, Peabody Mass., 1997; 242 pp., n.p; ISBN 1 56563 264 8

Bruce Metzger is a well-known American New Testament scholar, of Mennonite German extraction, belonging to a family which settled in America in the eighteenth century. He is ordained in the Presbyterian Church, and taught at Princeton Theological Seminary for 46 years. Now in his eighties, he has written this interesting account of his life – a life spent almost exclusively in academic pursuits.

Either he has an amazingly retentive memory, or he has kept very careful records over a great many years. He can tell you not only who taught him but what courses they taught him, not only what lectures he gave at conferences but what lectures he heard there, and everything has a date and is chronologically arranged.

Those who have met him know what a learned, gracious and orthodox scholar he is. Primarily a linguist and textual critic, he has a great deal of information on a great many other subjects, and all that he knows he is ready to communicate and to apply to the benefit of the church.

The same qualities appear in his writings, which are referred to at appropriate places in his narrative. Perhaps the most important of these are *The Text of the New Testament: its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration* (1964), *The Early Versions of the New Testament: their Origin, Transmission and Limitations* (1977) and *The Canon of the New Testament: its Origin, Development and Significance* (1987). The second of these includes signed Contributions by others, who are experts on particular ancient translations.

To describe these three as the most important of his writings is not to disparage his other writings, which have much to offer. And it takes no account of his leading role in various co-operative works of editing and translation, which bulk large in his narrative. The best known of these are the Revised Standard Version, the United Bible Societies' *Greek New Testament*, and the New Revised Standard Version, the first of which is probably the most successful venture of the three.

The RSV, though it indulges a little in conjectural emendation of the text, is in the historic tradition of English Bible translations, being a revision of the Revised Version (or strictly of its transatlantic counterpart, the American Standard Version) and not a new translation. The Revised Version was itself, of course, a revision of the Authorised (King James) Version, just as that was a revision of the Great Bible of Tyndale and Coverdale. The RSV retains much of the stylistic quality of its predecessors, and it continues their method of rendering the original as literally as possible, unlike most modern translations. It also has a uniquely wide ecumenical acceptance. As the *Common Bible*, it has been endorsed by the Roman Catholics and the Greek Orthodox, as well as by Protestant churches. The NRSV, with its 'inclusive language', is not so widely accepted, and the UBS *Greek New Testament* has attracted a lot of criticism recently by its curious method of assessing different readings.

One would not want to end on a critical note, so may I repeat that this is an excellent book by an excellent author?

*Roger T. Beckwith, Oxford*

## **Unemployment and the Future of Work: An Enquiry for the Churches**

CCBI

Delta Press, Hove, 1997; 298 pp., £8.50; ISBN 0 85169 238 9

This extended report brings together discussions by various English church bodies, focused by an enquiry begun in 1995 under the auspices of CCBI with Bishop David Sheppard as the prime mover. Lady Marion Fraser and Erik Cramb represented Scottish interests, and one of its five residential meetings was held in Scotland. Consultations were held with many organisations ranging from the CBI to EA.

Parts One and Two of the book analyse work and employment today, and Part Three examines what the Churches can do.

The book notes the radical changes in the nature of work which have taken place, but argues that paid work should remain an attainable goal for everyone. Unemployment is unjust. On the basis of the incarnation, a

Christian response must go further than simply stating principles, and leaving 'experts' to work out how they apply. So the book argues for a minimum wage as a 'sign of justice', and accepts that taxes may have to be raised. To achieve the latter would mean a change of heart among the electorate today towards a 'high doctrine' of taxation.

There is an annex by Peter Sedgwick on 'Christian Teaching on Work and the Economy', with a useful summary of Christian views held throughout the ages, but a rather deficient opening section on 'the Biblical Teaching'. This – strangely – understands 1 Cor. 7.20 as referring to work rather than slavery, and fails to recognise work as that which people do to sustain and enhance human life, so that (by implication) the unpaid work of women and men in a household is devalued. There is in fact one paragraph in the main report which understands unpaid work positively, but this is nowhere developed, as it might be for example in small Christian communities today. In general, the report is over-reliant on past models of work, and chooses to discount the radical vision of people like Charles Handy – not on biblical, but pragmatic grounds!

Overall, my feeling is that the book is excellent as a summary of policy and practice to date in the field of work and unemployment, but fails to recognise the realities of the postmodern world. Because of this, the remedies suffer from a failure of imagination. For Eric Cramb, it is the remembered social cohesion of the tenement staircase that 'still shines for [him] like a beacon'. The book is useful but not inspiring. Like the institutional church it represents, it is thoroughly 'modern' – neither radically biblical nor radically futuristic.

There is an excellent bibliography covering over three hundred titles, and a number of appendices on the theology of work, low pay, the work ethic, guaranteed wage, social security, the spirituality of work and theological method.

Malcolm Brown in the last mentioned discusses how the working basis of social theology has moved from the 'middle axiom' approach of John Baillie (credited to William Temple in this book) to either (a) postmodern pluralism where different presuppositions are acceptable provided they are spelt out, or (b) a confessional approach where the task of Christian theology is simply to apply the Christian meta-narrative to modern conditions. He has many helpful insights, e.g. 'all structural solutions tend towards their own distinctive sins'.

While the book includes several pages on the experience of the Republic of Ireland, it is strange to find no direct mention of the European Union and its influence on work and the economy. Even back

in 1995 the European dimension was important, and one wonders if this omission reflects the 'Englishness' of the debate – since the continental European attitude to work is actually closer to much of what this book is arguing for.

There are many good points made, not least that local churches should reflect work issues in their prayers.

*Jock Stein, Boat of Garten*

## **The Universal God: Justice Love and Peace in the Global Village**

James E. Will

Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1994; 280pp., \$26; ISBN 0 664 25560 4

The opening sentence of this book contains a clear indication of what is to follow: the author describes his central concern as 'God as our existential ultimate concern and the ontological and ultimate reality'. This statement makes clear that the following discussion is in the realm of philosophical theology and the language of the discourse is highly specialised, technical and difficult. Not only does James Will employ terminology which requires some knowledge of the Western tradition (the opening chapter is entitled, 'The Spatiotemporal Rationality of Creation') but he ranges far beyond this, engaging with the traditional thought of Africa, the categories of understanding within Asian religions, especially Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism, and with Islamic beliefs. It may fairly be said therefore, that this is a volume for specialists with a knowledge not only of Christian theology but also of Western philosophy, cultural studies and the modern study of religions.

Having sounded this warning note, the subject under discussion here is crucially important. Put simply: How can we speak of God and the human experience of the divine in a world of diverse cultures and radically contrasting approaches to the understanding of reality? The missiological implications of this question are obvious, and many Christians working cross-culturally, while unfamiliar with the language Will uses, are perfectly well aware of the problems and challenges discussed in this book. Needless to say, a discussion such as this enters controversial areas and challenges some fairly basic theological assumptions. In his introduction the author is explicit about his own faith commitment: 'I desire no other spiritual center than I have found in Jesus as the and my Christ, nor do I hope to become anything other than a better Trinitarian theologian.' Nothing in the text casts doubt on the sincerity of this

confession of faith but it must be said that the theology developed here takes a radically pluralist form which excludes absolute claims being made for Christ and removes the necessity of conversion to faith in him. Will agrees with John Hick that non-Christian religions are authentic responses to the one God from 'within different though related strands of the one human story' and he repudiates mission as evangelism because our 'complex, interreligious world has long had too much religious imperialism'.

Language of this kind confirms evangelical suspicions that this book advocates an unbiblical universalism. Nonetheless, there is much in this study that is challenging and informative. Who could fail to be moved, for example, by the discovery resulting from dialogue with a Japanese Buddhist that the West is perceived as 'a massive superstructure of brilliant, scientific achievement strung precariously over a chasm of meaninglessness...'. We may have well-founded doubts about the route this author takes toward what he describes as 'the ethos of a planetary culture for our emerging global village' but the reading of this book left the reviewer wondering how many evangelicals are capable of constructing a theology which, while faithful to the full biblical tradition, grapples with the real and urgent issues arising in a religiously plural world with the depth of knowledge and empathy shown here? Perhaps to ask this question is also to identify one of the great agenda issues for evangelical theology in the third millennium.

*David Smith, The Whitefield Institute, Oxford*

### **The Old Testament: Text and Context**

Victor H. Matthews & James C. Moyer

Hendrickson, Peabody, Mass., 1997; 308pp; ISBN 1 56563 168 4

In writing a book on the Old Testament 'for the beginning student', the authors have set out with a worthy objective. This book seeks to introduce 'the literature, history and social context of the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible and is designed not only to keep the student's interest, but to also say something about why studying this ancient material is relevant, and why it is essential that it be studied today.' The authors (and publisher) in trying to achieve those ends, have produced a book which is accessible and user-friendly. Indeed, they have included a section within the introduction on 'How To Use This Book' which describes the Insets, Maps, Glossary, Study Questions and Indexes that are helpfully included in the text, together with photographs. For this they are to be heartily commended.



However, when turning to the content of the book, the same cannot be said. The authors seem to have accepted the current liberal view of the composition of the Old Testament. For instance, they say that 'we have chosen to begin our survey... with Genesis, because we find students respond best to a linear approach based upon the Bible itself. Since Genesis *purports to describe* the beginning of the universe, it is a natural beginning for us as well.' (Italics mine) Already the alarm bells were ringing but worse was to come! Just a few lines later we read:

The material in the book of Genesis was not compiled or edited until the latter part of the monarchy or the early Persian period (ca. 550 BCE). Genesis describes the political and religious foundations of the nation of Israel, rather than offering a scientific picture of the origins of the earth and the human race.

At a stroke the authorship of Moses, the accuracy of the Bible's account of Creation are flatly contradicted. There is no discussion, no questioning the grounds for such statements; there are simply bald statements of 'fact'. The 'beginning student' may well feel confused, even bewildered or threatened, by such an introduction, but there is no respite. Throughout the book it is the historical and social context which governs the understanding of the text of Scripture: Comparative religion is king – almost to the extent that one might say that, for the authors, the controlling, authoritative 'scripture' is *Ancient & Near Eastern Texts!* The authority and trustworthiness of the Bible is called into question, if not undermined. As such I could not recommend this book, particularly to a 'beginning student'. And that is sad, because there is a real need for a contemporary introduction to the Old Testament, especially one which is equally accessible, readable and so well laid out, and which interacts with its historical and social context; but one which holds to the reliability of the biblical record.

*Alan Macgregor, Banff Parish Church*

### **Truth is stranger than it used to be. Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age**

J. Richard Middleton & Brian J. Walsh

SPCK, London, 1995; 250pp., £12.99; ISBN 0 28104938 6

Amongst the plethora of books on postmodernism this one has already become oft-quoted, and it is easy to see why. For one thing the joint authorship brings a breadth and inventiveness to the handling of a heavy

subject. In addition, the book connects with the New Testament work of N. T. Wright whose quote on the front cover tells us that 'all thinking Christians should read this book'. Furthermore, the approach is one of the early 'popular' advocates of so-called 'critical realism' which tries to steer a path between free-wheeling scepticism and over-exuberant confidence.

There are many fine sections. For example the opening chapter brings a devastating critique of the 'progress myth' of modernity in which the future is allowed to dominate the western imagination. That era, the authors judge, projected a world which was founded upon ourselves and our exaggerated autonomy – in other words on a fake idolatrous faith. The ensuing sociological analysis produces astute observations, for example, that non-commitment in relationships today springs in part from the multiple-self that modernity demands of us. The authors then produce a fascinating extended reading of the creation story through the eyes of exiled Israel in Babylon. It looks as though they accept the Babylonian provenance for the creation story but this is not essential to appreciating their insights.

The writing style fits the subject matter perfectly, with lots of images deployed to make the point: skyscrapers, El Conquistador, carnivals, circuses, shows, rafts at sea, dancing on a dragon's jaws, mirrors, prisms. It is all very stimulating and memorable. The book also offers the challenging image of the Bible as an unfinished plot and Christian living as an ongoing improvisation faithful to the known plot.

We have here an honest and creative attempt to contextualise Christian thinking and action in the postmodern world. Whilst some may think it too concessive to postmodernity, most of it is in the best tradition of Christian creativity as found in the early Fathers and ever since. All the same, perhaps it is not quite severe enough on the postmodern outlook. Take a parable. Ravers wake up one morning, each to the terrible discovery that an experimental drug has sent them blind. Separated well apart in rooms of a huge building surrounded by unfamiliar objects, they each think they are on their own as they struggle with perceptions of space and direction. Assuming that they are on their own and unable, therefore, to work together to find their way out for help they flail about individually, finally causing the destruction of their strange environment. The sole survivor eventually realises to his horror that, after all, they were all in the same building and merely needed to find each other and pool their insights to escape. But it is too late.

Can postmodernists guarantee that this parable does not predict the destiny of western humanity under postmodernity and the idolisation of

private opinion (apart from the handicap that postmodernity eschews all guarantees)? A sense of the full severity for corporate human life of postmodern thinking might, perhaps, have enhanced a very fine book even further.

*Roy Kearsley, South Wales Baptist College, Cardiff*

## **The Radical Evangelical: Seeking a Place to Stand**

Nigel Wright

SPCK, 1996; 144pp., £12.99; ISBN 0 281 04952 1

This is a lucid, accessible and intelligently written theological contribution from a Baptist pastor who previously lectured in Christian doctrine at Spurgeon's College.

Wright is motivated by a concern that some of the emphases in evangelical theology and popular attitudes are *excessively* negative. Examples include a pessimistic evaluation of human nature and the world, the view that only a minority will be redeemed, and that eternal destinies are determined this side of the grave. Although Wright does not wish to eliminate all negative elements of doctrine, he contends that they can only be weighed correctly within a reconstructed theology which he labels 'radical evangelicalism'.

For Wright, it is the doctrine of the Trinity, especially its emphasis on 'personhood achieved through relations' that constitutes the foundation of Christian faith. He therefore proceeds to develop a trinitarian theology of creation, redemption and consummation and to distil its doctrinal implications.

A central development is the notion of hopeful universalism. Although the salvation of all cannot be guaranteed due to free will, the theological possibility should not be excluded as Christ's work is for all humanity. Regarding those who have never heard, there is the larger hope of post-mortem evangelism, for Christ can give opportunities for faith after the point of human death.

With respect to Scripture, Wright rejects inerrancy as unhelpful. The primary function of the Bible is that of providing a reliable witness to God and his acts of creation and redemption and a divinely inspired interpretation of their meaning.

A penultimate chapter draws helpful distinctions between a conservative and a radical evangelical approach to the political sphere. The book is completed with a call to reject the self-righteous, oppressive and unlovely attitudes that can afflict evangelicals. Instead, firm convictions should be combined with a generous and compassionate spirit

that respects the dignity of others and sees the world hopefully and positively and engages with it effectively.

There is much here for many to disagree with. I shall contribute just two comments. First, despite the clarity of the exposition, this reviewer at least remains unsure how to define a radical evangelical. And second, the trinitarian model outlined in the early chapters is applied only infrequently thereafter, leaving unclear the fruitfulness of this theological framework.

*Ian Smith, St Andrews*

## **The Post-Evangelical**

Dave Tomlinson

Triangle, London, 1995; £5.99; ISBN 0 281 04814 2

This book explores the cultural roots of the disillusion and frustration that some evangelicals feel with their own tradition. Particular sources of irritation noted by Tomlinson include dogmatism in belief, theological censorship, narrow-mindedness in social attitudes and behavioural norms, and the tendency to confuse middle-class respectability and taboos with Christian holiness. For those who identify with postmodernity, the traditional evangelical sub-culture will naturally feel constricting. According to the book we have entered the postmodern age where truth is subjective and people construct their own set of beliefs and ethics, drawing on a wide range of different sources.

A Post-Evangelical is, therefore, a postmodern evangelical who wishes to explore new possibilities in her faith. In terms of spirituality, she is open to the symbolic and contemplative traditions of the Celts and Eastern Orthodoxy. Theologically, the post evangelical, recognising that truth is provisional, places much less emphasis on doctrinal correctness and more on sincere searching. Although, for example, she may follow Karl Barth in holding that the Bible is not in itself revelation, but rather testifies to the revelation of God in Christ, and although she may reject penal substitution in favour of an interpretation of the cross in terms of the loving example of Christ, the post-evangelical still values much in her evangelical heritage. The emphasis on the importance of salvation, the centrality of the gospel, mission and respect for the Scriptures remains. But it is augmented with a creative openness that engages positively with the world. An example is the rather unconventional form of church initiated by Tomlinson and his friends which meets weekly in the lounge bar of a London pub. People worship, study the Bible, drink beer and discuss their faith in the informal atmosphere typical of a public house.

Much of what Tomlinson writes is clearly a reaction to the perceived excesses of his own strict background in the Brethren and charismatic movement. He is particularly critical of those who are fixed in the immovable certainties of their theology and morality and who insist that others conform in even secondary matters of belief and practice. Such believers are identified as occupying the conformist stage of personal growth, characterised by behaviour that is compliant, immature, and uncritical. The evangelical environment readily accommodates people at that stage of spiritual development but is too constraining for those moving beyond to the next level of inquisitiveness, creativity and experimentation.

The book has attracted much critical debate. I will note two concerns. First, Tomlinson's starting point is dubious. It is unclear to what extent Western society is experiencing a shift from modernity to postmodernity as he asserts. It is true that rapid social change characterises the late twentieth century, but it is not obvious that this represents a fundamental shift in the cultural context. Tomlinson's repeated emphasis, for example, on the provisional nature of truth is actually a thoroughly modern notion rather than a postmodern innovation as he seems to suggest. The influential philosopher of science, Sir Karl Popper, stressed in the 1930s that scientific truths are actually properly described as our best guesses given the current state of knowledge.

Tomlinson defines postmodernity rather vaguely in terms of rejection of dogma, attention to emotions and symbols, and the tendency to mix and match in a pluralistic and relativistic age and so forth. It remains to be demonstrated, however, that any of this typifies the 1990s more than, say, the 1890s. Much better would be to focus on readily identifiable social changes such as the growth in married women's participation in the labour market and to discuss the significance of these observable factors for the church's mission and ministry.

Second, much of the dissatisfaction seems to apply to charismatic piety and taboos more than other sectors of evangelicalism. The inadequate attitudes and outlooks he describes cannot be applied in a blanket fashion to criticise a diverse movement across many denominations. The evangelical mainstream may be far less vulnerable to the weaknesses that he identifies. Even those supposed weaknesses should not be too easily dismissed. A range of churches with different emphases, practices, constituencies and appeal is desirable and healthy. Given the large variations in people's tastes and needs, variety in church styles (including the strict and the very strict) provides greater opportunity for people to find a suitable niche, even one for the post evangelical.

To sum up, while *The Post-Evangelical* is stimulating and worthy of serious reflection, it is based on the dubious premise of a postmodern age and applies criticisms of strict forms of evangelicalism too easily to the whole movement.

*Ian Smith, St Andrews*

## **The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology**

Richard Lints

Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 1993; 359pp., \$20.00; ISBN 0 8028 06740

Richard Lints teaches theology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Massachusetts. Lints' work is just what its title says, a *prolegomenon*. He is offering a word to Evangelicals, both a positive and a negative word as to how evangelical theology can move ahead in largely postmodern times. Lints claims that Evangelicals have too often ignored important methodological questions, and evangelical theology will be crippled until such questions are faced squarely. Lints argues that fundamental questions of theological method must be engaged: 'What is theology after all? What is a theological vision? How do theology and culture relate? How does the construction of dogma relate to the biblical text? Where does one's religious tradition fit in? What principles of organization (e.g. historical, philosophical, cultural) ought to be used in theology? How might one go about finding principles to determine which principles ought to be employed (the metamethodological question)?' (p. 8). Of these methodological questions, the central question for Lints concerns one's 'theological matrix' or 'theological framework'. By this he means something like one's 'conceptual framework', frame of reference, or one's 'way to think about the world'. Lints writes: 'My driving concern in this volume is to elucidate the process by which the theistic matrix is derived and to illuminate the significance of that matrix for the remaining matrices [vocational, leisure, etc.] of a person's noetic structure.... [I]t is to ask how one should construct a theological framework and how a theological vision ought to arise from that framework' (p. 19). Lints wishes to emphasise the overarching framework of the theological task. He laments that 'evangelical theology tends to deal with each component part individually, at best stitching things together after the fashion of a patchwork quilt'. Indeed, 'there is no pattern that holds the quilt together overall, other than its diversity. Evangelical theology tends to be as

haphazard in assembling individual doctrines as television is in assembling individual images: there is no encompassing framework or intrinsic consistency' (p. 261).

Lints affirms two principles, the 'realism principle' ('Individuals normally know the world pretty much as it really is') and the 'bias principle' ('Individuals never know the world apart from biases that influence their view of what really is the case'). Unless one recognises both of these principles one's theology will be skewed. It is necessary to affirm that one can know things (the realism principle), but that at the same time one's knowledge is influenced by one's background and culture (the bias principle). Lints is particularly concerned to relate these principles to the interaction of theology and culture. In short, Evangelicals must recognise that theology shapes culture and culture shapes theology. Each influences the other. If only the realism principle is recognised one will be blind to the harmful effects of one's own biases, and one's own biases may come to prevail as if they were 'the truth'. If only the bias principle is affirmed, all quickly becomes relative, and there is no ultimate truth accessible to human knowledge.

Lints' work is divided into three parts. Part 1, 'Theology: Texts and Contexts', contains: *prolegomena* (ch. 1); a brief survey of Evangelicalism (ch. 2); an introduction to Lints' own suggested theological matrix – the Bible presents the history of redemption, and this history of redemption should be the overarching framework for the theological task (ch. 3); an exposition discussing how Scripture – the divine witness to and interpretation of God's redemptive activity in history' – is appropriated by the believer through the three 'filters' of tradition, culture and reason (ch. 4).

Part 2, 'Theology: Past and Present', contains: a brief summary and recommendation of the theological 'frameworks' of the past – the Magisterial Reformation (Luther and Calvin), the Reformed scholastics, Jonathan Edwards, and Geerhardus Vos (ch. 5); an introduction to postmodern theology and the relation between evangelical theology and postmodern theology (ch. 6).

In Part 3, 'Theology: Frameworks and Visions', Lints offers some preliminary suggestions 'for constructing a theological framework and appropriating a theological vision'. This part contains: a detailed discussion of the theological nature of the Bible; it is the redemptive nature of the Bible, in the sense of both what the Bible *accomplishes* and what it *witnesses to* that is important (ch. 7); a discussion of how to move from the biblical text to a theological framework, a move that

focuses on three horizons – the textual horizon ('the immediate context of the book (or passage)'), the epochal horizon ('the context of the period of revelation in which the book (or passage) falls'), and the canonical horizon ('the context of the entirety of revelation') (ch. 8); a discussion of how a theological *framework* (which is constant) might be turned into a theological *vision* (which changes with the culture), a task that requires theology to enter into a rigorous discussion with the church, popular culture, and the academy (ch. 9).

Lints writes from within evangelical convictions and his book is good reading for several reasons. First, it is necessary for church leaders to think theologically and biblically, and this book walks through some of the first things in helping Christian leaders to do that. Lints calls for making both the *content* and the *form* of one's theology to be grounded in both the *content* and *form* of the Bible. Thus, it is no surprise that he continues to appeal to the Old Princetonian Geerhardus Vos as a helpful model in the ongoing task of theological work. (Indeed, Vos' *Biblical Theology* appears to be always close in the background of this volume.) Lints' own theological framework is largely modelled along Vosian lines: redemptive history, redemptive revelation, and redemptive theology are the keys to a sound evangelical theology.

Secondly, Lints is familiar with many contemporary trends in theology and philosophy, and can help introduce the busy Christian leader to such issues. Perhaps particularly helpful are the 60+ pages of chapter 6, where Lints deals with postmodern theology. He does an admirable job of both being fair to the postmoderns, but yet offering a strong warning that ultimately evangelical theology and the vast majority of postmodern theology are simply two different (and contradictory) projects.

Thirdly, and perhaps of particular interest to readers of this journal, Lints is articulating a theological vision which manages both to allow the Bible to be the determining force in the theological task, and to mine the riches of the best of Reformed and Lutheran theology as examples of theological movements which have engaged in the very project which Lints is recommending, and which can provide role models for contemporary Christians.

I know of at least one evangelical seminary professor who uses this volume as a text in his 'Introduction to Theology' class. As a graduate student, I found it to be a particularly helpful introduction to the often bewildering world of contemporary theology. It is refreshing to see Lints move from Scripture to Calvin and Luther, to Warfield and Vos, and then to contemporary theological issues. Lints' work is no light read,



and it is a dense work. But it deserves close attention, and a thorough read will be well worth the effort.

*Bradley Green, Jackson, Tennessee*

## **Booknotes**

### **The Meaning of the Millennium (Grove biblical series 5)**

Michael Gilbertson

Grove, Cambridge, 1997; 24pp., £2.50; ISBN 1 85174 354 5

The debate about the Millennium and Revelation 20 is dogged by extremism and controversy. This clearly written booklet aims to avoid both by stressing the Millennium's theological importance for today's world as expressed in such key scriptural themes as the triumph of God, the Lordship of Christ and God's commitment to transform the earth. A helpful stimulus for biblical reflection and relevant preaching on a timely subject.

*David J. B. Anderson, Glasgow*

### **New Heavens, New Earth: The Biblical Picture of Christian Hope (Grove biblical series 11)**

N. T. Wright

Grove, Cambridge, 1999; 24pp., £2.50; ISBN 1 85174 397 9

This booklet is a concise and stimulating statement of Christian Hope. A merely individualist, escapist notion of salvation is roundly rejected in favour of a broader biblical perspective. Authentic Christianity is shown to be both world affirming, offering a great incentive for radical Christian engagement, and cosmic in scope, involving ultimately the total integration of God's creation in a new heaven and a new earth. A timely booklet that will raise challenging questions for every thinking Christian.

*David J. B. Anderson, Glasgow*

### **Early Christianity and Hellenistic Judaism**

Peder Borgen

T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1996; xi+376pp; n.p.; ISBN 0 567 08501 5

This volume is a collection of twelve essays (most of which have been previously published) exploring the interrelationship of early Christianity and Judaism and the interaction between these and the wider Graeco-

Roman environment. The essays are grouped into four sections. In Section 1, Jews and Christians in the Graeco-Roman World, Borgen discusses the participation of Jews and Christians in pagan cults, Jewish methods of proselytism and Christian mission, and Judaism in Egypt. In Section II, The Gospel of John, he deals with the Sabbath controversy in John 5:1-18, the relationship of John to the Synoptics, the independence of John's Gospel, and tradition and interpretation in John 6. In Section III, Acts of the Apostles and Paul's Letters, Borgen discusses vice lists and the apostolic decree, and Christology and Spirit-reception as bases for a cross-national model of community. Finally, in Section IV, The Revelation of John, he treats anti-Jewish polemic in Revelation, and in two essays examines the ascent theme in Philo and Revelation. The volume is both scholarly and accessible. In the course of these twelve essays, Borgen sheds valuable light on assimilation, boundaries, mission and community self-understanding in emerging Christianity and late Second Temple Judaism.

*Edward Adams, King's College London*

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