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

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_sbct-01.php

SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

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Contributors are free to express their own views within the broad parameters of historic evangelicalism. The opinions of contributors may not be assumed to be those of Rutherford House or the Scottish Evangelical Theology Society.

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EDITORIAL

There are many joys in preaching to Christian undergraduates in St Andrews and near the top of the list is their concern to be readers of the whole Bible. For them intertextuality is cool.

One aspect of that is especially important. As soon as they are shown that Christ walks through the whole of his Word, lights go on in rooms that were previously viewed in some gloom. They can never read the Book in the same way again and they search its pages expecting Christ to show them how everything belongs to his story.

When you are given the key to any story you can never reread it except in the light of the disclosure. There is a 'Why didn't I see it that way before?' about subsequent encounters. This is a common enough experience in fiction and film.

Consider an analogy from fiction. The crime novel with the usual suspects, James, Rendell/Vine, Dexter, Rankin, McDermid and the rest, has been an interest of mine for many years (more recently supplemented by fascinating developments of the genre). The best of these books will have a varied cast of characters and an array of settings, with a complex plot of sub-stories and a set of puzzles to tease even the great investigator. But the narrative will move to a climax in which it is made clear that there has actually been one story unfolding all the way through, though it only becomes unmistakable late in the tale. That story is now very evidently what the whole thing has been about all along and a host of details make perfect sense when they are seen in its context. Contrary to myth these books are worth rereading, for the pleasure of seeing things one had missed or misunderstood click into place. Everything is now seen in the light of the *dénouement*.

Or to choose an analogy from film, take M. Night Shyamalan's ghostly drama *Sixth Sense*. Bruce Willis plays a child psychologist who is attacked by a disturbed ex-patient on the same night he receives a prestigious award. A little later he takes on the case of a young boy, the excellent Haley Joel Osment, who claims to see dead people 'all the time'. It's fun to watch it again, and especially with someone who hasn't seen it before, both for the pleasure of their reaction to the surprise and for the fresh perspective we now have on the unfolding details. What is not such fun is having mature Christians one remembers raving about this

'amazing' film, now insisting they saw through it within minutes on their first viewing. Above all others on earth, the graced should be willing to admit surprise. We for long failed to see the obvious.

But now we do see the obvious, as privileged readers of the last days, in the Christotelic narrative that makes sense of the whole Bible. In a favourite student word, Scripture is not 'random'. There is one Author and one Story and one Hero, and everything coheres around the Christ whose saving story is the narrative engine driving the plot. So this Book is worth daily reading and multiple rereadings for a lifetime, because new insights and interconnections are always waiting to be discovered in the infinite riches of Holy Scripture.

Those who teach Scripture to the people of God have a responsibility to help them read the Book effectively, providing tools for the task, so that all might be good readers of the whole Bible. Of course, spiritual interpretation depends on the ministry of the Holy Spirit, but he uses human agents to give readers and hearers helps for understanding. That has come home to me recently during a brief foray into the world of the threefold office of Christ, the Anointed, as prophet, priest and king.

The insights of Calvin's mature theology are familiar to all of us and we also know how they have been reworked in various ways through the riches of subsequent reflection. But to young Christians who had never heard it before, the model of the triple office was 'magic', 'brilliant' or 'awesome', depending on their provenance. Suddenly they had yet another way of reading the whole canon and soon nimble young Christian intellects began to see a thousand new connections. Let people explore the possibilities of Scripture and see texts travelling on surprising but biblical trajectories (as I have suggested to the students of St Andrews, they can learn to *Bend It Like Bauckham*).

Having ambled onto the theme of the threefold office, perhaps I can apply that in a general way to all our theology before I lay down my editorial responsibilities. Think with me of theology's humility, dignity and responsibility.

All true theology will be marked by humility, because it is done *for the Anointed*. The theologian can speak because the Prophet has spoken and it is his revelation that forms the subject-matter of theology. The theologian works under the grace of the Priest, focussed on his sacrifice and dependent on his intercession, so that all theology is eucharistic. And this theologising is under the King, Christ the Lord, who is King of kings and Theologian of theologians.

Theology will also affirm its own dignity, as done *by the anointed*. Every theologian is chrismed as prophet, priest and prince, and should

enjoy an anointed self-consciousness. In prophetic service you speak to church and to world. In priestly service you present your best in sacrifice and ask him to make that still imperfect offering acceptable before the throne. In royal service you claim intellectual territory for him, planting the flag of the kingdom. In this, men and women are equally anointed for Christian scholarship, so every Christian woman engaged in theology will be welcomed as a prophetess, a priestess and a princess.

And theology will remember its responsibility, as done *for the anointed*. At Pentecost the Church is baptised by the Baptised, given his Spirit to walk in his footsteps. If the people of God are prophetic, priestly and royal too, and will be so for ever, then theology should aim to help all the anointed exercise their vocations. Usually that will be done indirectly, as theologians feed those who then feed others in the churches. But sometimes they need to write directly for the people. I think here, for example, of Darrell Bock, Ben Witherington and others helping us respond to *The Da Vinci Code*, a real page-turning novel of cryptology and conspiracy, but one that turns the truth on its head, heresy masquerading as history.

Multitudes now believe the so-called Holy Grail to be the Holy Bloodline. The gaping lack of physical evidence is offered as triumphant proof that the Church suppressed the truth! Others still search for the Grail of legend, the cup or platter of the Last Supper or the cup in which Joseph of Arimathea caught the blood and water that flowed from Jesus' side at Golgotha. The students of St Andrews need the scholars' help here, as do the other readers of the novel and the viewers of the inevitable movie. Thus we ask theologians to be ready to help us refute popular error and defend basic truth, so that the Christ of biblical history might be the personal Jesus of faith, commended to the hearts and minds of our own day.

May the Grail quest recede into Arthurian and other mists and may the symbolism of the divine cup be seen in all its true horror and glory. The Saviour drank the cup of anguish and astonishment to its dregs so that we might drink the cup of salvation now and forever as beneficiaries of the glorious exchange. Of course, to understand cup language in that way simply reaffirms the basic point that to read Scripture intertextually and Christologically is to get the point.

And may *SBET* always point to him.

Alasdair I. Macleod

In this number

We have four articles to offer in this number.

First, we are delighted to publish the 2004 Finlayson Memorial Lecture, which was delivered by Professor David Bebbington of the University of Stirling at the Scottish Evangelical Theology Society Conference, Edinburgh, on 31 March 2004. Many readers will already be familiar with Professor Bebbington's work on the history of evangelicalism, and in this paper he discusses 'Evangelical Theology in the English-Speaking World during the Nineteenth Century' with typical clarity.

Our second article by Professor Christopher Seitz of the University of St Andrews is the published version of his Rutherford House 21st Anniversary Lecture, delivered in Edinburgh on 24 June 2004. As the introductory comments to the article make clear, this work on the canonical shaping of the 'Minor Prophets' or the 'Book of the Twelve' is part of a larger project and we are grateful to Professor Seitz for this opportunity to have our appetites whetted for his forthcoming book.

In the third article, Professor Donald Macleod of the Free Church College, Edinburgh continues vigorously to engage issues raised by various representatives of the so-called 'New Perspective on Paul', this time addressing the meaning of the term *dikaios*.

Finally, I offer an article from the perspective of a self-confessed music lover, which seeks to provide a starting point for reflection on song, not simply as an aspect of services of Christian worship but as a good gift from our Father. I trust that it will help readers to be both appreciative and critical of the songs we hear and sing.

I must also draw our readers' attention to a correction. Stephen Williams has kindly drawn my attention to the fact that, in his article in Volume 22, Number 1 (Spring 2004), line 9 of paragraph 3 on page 45 should read: 'But I certainly shall not drink cocoa at *t*.' Perhaps if the Editor had had another strong cup of coffee he might have noticed this slip!

Good reading!

Alistair I. Wilson

EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY IN THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING WORLD DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY (FINLAYSON MEMORIAL LECTURE, 2004)

DAVID BEBBINGTON, UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING

Evangelical theology was the prevailing mode of Christian thinking in the English-speaking world during the nineteenth century. It was the doctrinal system professed by the Evangelical Revival in Britain and the Great Awakening in America that in the previous century had given birth to Methodism, transformed the Congregationalists and Baptists into eagerly expanding bodies and begun to revitalise the Anglicans and Presbyterians. The revival was a pan-Protestant phenomenon and its adherents tended to sit loose to the detail of creeds inherited from the period of the Reformation. Evangelicalism was, as a disparaging Unitarian put it in 1847, 'the popular Theology'.¹ It was the burden of countless pulpits every Sunday in Britain, the United States, the British settler colonies and the territories throughout the world where Anglo-Saxon missionaries had carried the gospel. Its centrality to the church life of these lands during the nineteenth century has nevertheless been obscured in much of the secondary literature. The master-narrative of the history of theology in the United States, inaugurated by Frank H. Foster in 1907, sees the central theme as the decline of Calvinism.² The convictions brought over the Atlantic by the early settlers of New England, according to this account, gradually fell into decay over the centuries. This depiction, while far from entirely false, underplays the transformation of Calvinist thought into an Evangelical version and ignores the rise of a parallel doctrinal tradition created by Methodism. The modified version of Calvinism and the Arminian system of the Methodists steadily approximated to each other as the nineteenth century proceeded, forming the backbone of Evangelical theology.

¹ William Gaskell, *Some Evil Tendencies of the Popular Theology: A Sermon* (Wakefield, 1847), p. 3.

² Frank H. Foster, *A Genetic History of the New England Theology* (Chicago, 1907).

SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

Likewise the accustomed view of British religious thought in that century, as first outlined by Otto Pflleiderer in 1890 and expounded more recently by Sir Owen Chadwick and Bernard Reardon, treats its development as the rise first of the Oxford Movement and secondly of liberalism.³ Evangelical theology is pushed to the margins of the story or even beyond. For neither country, therefore, is the vigour of the tradition of thought deriving from the revival normally given its due. What is attempted here is a sketch of some of the main features of the body of theology that moulded the civilisation of the English-speaking world in the Victorian era.

EVANGELICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The characteristics of Evangelical theology that had arisen in the revival period were sustained into the nineteenth century. One of them was an attachment to the Bible. The traditional biblicism of Protestants was if anything taken to a fresh pitch. Evangelicals believed in searching the Scriptures for doctrine, for guidance and for spiritual nurture. Works of theology rarely strayed far from the biblical text, which was frequently quoted to give authority to any strand of teaching. There were guides to Bible reading such as the widely used *A Scripture Help* (1816) by Edward Bickersteth, one of the leading Evangelical Anglicans of his generation. The circulation of the Bible, as was undertaken by the British and Foreign Bible Society (1807), the American Bible Society (1816) and their many imitators, was conceived as a mode of propagating the gospel in its own right. The Bible was the vehicle of revelation. 'There is but one final standard of Christian living, or Christian doctrine', wrote an American Free Methodist in 1884. 'That standard is the word of God, revealed to man in the Holy Scriptures.'⁴ This comment was not designed to drive a wedge between the word of God and the text of the Bible, for Evangelicals would equally happily equate the Scriptures with God's word. Yet their attitude to the Bible cannot justly be identified, as it often has been, with Fundamentalism. There was normally no dogmatic insistence that the text of the Bible must necessarily be factually accurate on all topics. The work of scholarship that remained standard among Evangelicals for forty years, Thomas Hartwell Horne's *Introduction to the Critical Study and*

³ Otto Pflleiderer, *The Development of Theology in Germany since Kant and its Progress in Great Britain since 1825* (London, 1890). Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church* (2 vols, London, 1966-70). B. M. G. Reardon, *Religious Thought in the Victorian Age: A Survey from Coleridge to Gore* (London, 1980).

⁴ *Free Methodist*, 9 January 1884, p. 1.

Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures (1818), acknowledged that there are discrepancies in the biblical text. Similarly Charles Simeon, the mentor of generations of Evangelical Anglicans, held that it contains 'inexactnesses in reference to philosophical and scientific matters'.⁵ Inspiration was originally defined, following Philip Doddridge from the previous century, in a way that allowed for different levels of inspiration in various parts of the Bible, though with the publication of *Theopneustia* (1841) by Louis Gaussen, a Genevan professor of theology, a higher estimate of the matter came into vogue. Gaussen held that the very words had been breathed out by God and so that all the Scriptures were equally inspired, but even he did not accept the idea that the text was dictated to the authors of the biblical books. The Bible was loved and revered but theologians did not normally treat it uncritically.

The theological system extracted from the Bible, secondly, focused on the doctrine of the cross. Although Evangelicals shared the substance of Christian orthodoxy with High Churchmen and others, they put particular emphasis on the place of the atonement in the overall pattern of theology. Theirs was a soteriological scheme, for, as they sometimes remarked, their starting point was ruin, the first of the doctrinal three 'r's. Their conviction was that humanity was fallen, and so universally infected by the disease of sin that alienated it from the Almighty. There was therefore a need for redemption, the second of the 'r's, which had been achieved by Jesus on the cross. An editorial in the main American Methodist periodical, *The Christian Advocate and Journal*, for 1872 had as its title 'The Cleansing Blood'. 'As the sacrifice of Christ lies at the foundation of all Christian doctrine', it contended, 'so is its application essential to all Christian purity and life.'⁶ The received view was that the death of Jesus was both substitutionary and penal. Jesus, that is to say, took the place of human beings in order to receive the punishment for the sin that ruled their lives. Because he had suffered in their stead, they could be forgiven. The work of Christ was in some sense exemplary, since the submissive humility of the Son of God formed a model for Christian behaviour, but it was the power of the cross to turn aside the wrath of God that was dwelt upon. The Evangelical stress on the atonement contrasted with alternative interpretations of Christian theology that saw the incarnation as its kernel. Both Anglo-Catholics and Broad Churchmen in the Anglican communion, together with the many who were influenced by them in other

⁵ A. W. Brown, *Recollections of the Conversation Parties of the Rev. Charles Simeon* (London, 1863), p. 100.

⁶ *Christian Advocate and Journal* (New York), 3 October 1872, p. 316.

denominations, normally treated the taking of flesh by the Son of God as the greatest doctrine of the faith. But Evangelicals remained convinced that Christmas was important primarily as a prelude to Good Friday. Every minister, according to the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland in 1837, should 'keep the cross of Christ ever in view'.⁷ The atonement was the fulcrum of the Evangelical theological scheme.

The work of Christ was nevertheless ineffectual unless it was applied to the soul of the individual. The third 'r', following ruin and redemption, was regeneration. All human beings, it was believed, had to be born again if they were to have the prospect of going to heaven. There was no ultimate advantage in giving time, wealth or influence for the cause of Christ, declared the *British Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* for 1860, if there had been no personal submission to the Saviour. 'Christ has to do with *you*, to break *your* heart, to melt *your* soul, to bring *you* a happy captive to Himself.'⁸ The process was one of conversion, which was seen as the human side of regeneration. Whereas regeneration, according to the 'Theological Dictionary' issued by the English Baptist minister John Rippon in 1801, was 'the MOTION OF GOD in the heart of a sinner', conversion was 'the MOTION OF THE HEART of a sinner towards God'.⁹ The two were intimately related, and both, most Evangelicals believed, were in the last resort the effect of the Holy Spirit, whose work it was to bring people to Christ. Only those who had been converted were true Christians, for the experience was the essential gateway – the wicket gate of *Pilgrim's Progress* – to the life of discipleship. It was of no value to have been baptised as an infant if conversion did not follow in due course. Here Evangelicals differed from High Churchmen who maintained that the sacramental power of baptism was what turned people into Christians, and many of the fiercest English controversies of the early nineteenth century, culminating in the Gorham Judgement of the Privy Council in 1850, revolved round this contrast of opinion. Evangelicals nevertheless differed between themselves over the nature of conversion. Methodists, especially in the earlier nineteenth century, expected it to be instantaneous and conscious, whereas others were far more prepared to see it as a gradual and perhaps imperceptible development. The crucial point was to be aware of having passed from darkness to light. Reform, self-

⁷ *Account of the Twenty-Fifth Annual Session of the Baptist Union* (London, 1837), p. 30.

⁸ *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, February 1860, p. 118.

⁹ John Rippon, *The Baptist Annual Register for 1801 and 1802* (London, n.d.), p. 664.

improvement or good resolutions were not enough. Conversion was conceived to be essential as the entry on the Christian life.

Beyond conversion lay a life of diligent service for Christ. The activism that was a hallmark of Evangelicalism was the logical outcome of the experience of conversion. 'It is the duty of every one who knows *the good news* of salvation through Christ', announced *The Examiner and Chronicle*, the New York Baptist newspaper, in 1868, 'to *tell* the good news, as he has opportunity and ability, to his companion who does not know it, that he too may be saved.'¹⁰ Vigorous evangelistic activity was a central characteristic of the Evangelical movement. It drove adherents of the movement to launch missions to the non-Christians in far-flung parts of the globe as well as to the nominal Christians at home. The impulse to be up and doing, furthermore, meant hostility to the power from which conversion had rescued the soul. 'No one can doubt', wrote a contributor to the *Rocky Mountain Presbyterian* in 1872, 'that a profession of Christianity means *war against sin wherever it is found and war to the death*'.¹¹ Hence Evangelicalism was the seedbed for many a movement of reform during the nineteenth century – against slavery (despite its staunch Evangelical champions in the American South), against drunkenness (generating the enormously influential temperance movement) and against inhuman conditions in cities and factories (supremely in the work of Lord Shaftesbury). Philanthropic effort was as regular an outcome of Evangelical belief as evangelistic endeavour, for each was rooted in the teaching of the Bible. Care for the needy, so striking a feature of the multitude of voluntary societies generated by nineteenth-century Evangelicals, was an expression of their desire to obey the commands found in Scripture. Through good works believers bore witness to the reality of grace in their lives and made advances on the pathway of sanctification. Evangelicalism, though producing saints and scholars, put far less of a premium on meditation or learning than many other Christian traditions. Its grand imperative was ever to be active in fulfilling the obligations laid on the converted soul.

AN ENLIGHTENMENT SYNTHESIS

The theology of popular Evangelicalism in the earlier nineteenth century, though inheriting the main outlines of the Puritan dogmatic scheme, differed from its earlier equivalent because it had also been shaped by the

¹⁰ *Examiner and Chronicle*, 2 January 1868.

¹¹ *Rocky Mountain Presbyterian*, October 1872.

Enlightenment. If the emphases on Bible, cross and conversion echoed the earlier Protestant tradition, the activism constituted a novel feature of the Evangelical mindset. Missions to the heathen, for instance, were far more a feature of Catholic lands than of Protestant countries before the emergence of Evangelical zeal. The change was related to a significant shift in the doctrine of assurance that reflected Enlightenment priorities. Puritans had wrestled with doubt, regarding assurance of salvation as an ideal to be sought after rather than the normal possession of the Christian. Conscientious believers had been expected to engage in protracted self-examination to establish whether or not they were in the faith, an introspective preoccupation that inhibited bold evangelistic ventures. Although this style of spirituality survived into the nineteenth century among conservative Presbyterians, especially in the Highlands of Scotland, and among traditional Baptists in rural England and the American South, it was not to be found among mainstream Evangelicals. Following Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley, they standardly believed that it was possible to be sure of one's personal salvation. Evangelicals shared the Enlightenment's conviction in the power of reason, and extended its range to the spiritual realm. Knowledge of God could be as certain as the fruits of any other empirical investigation. With that confidence, they were eager to spread the truths they had attained. Their mission, furthermore, was undergirded by the typical high expectations of the future generated during the later eighteenth century. Evangelicals commonly held their own version of the idea of progress, the postmillennial belief that the gospel would spread throughout the whole globe before the return of Christ to the earth. They looked for what they called 'the latter-day glory of the church'. They did not have to wait for the Almighty to bring about the conversion of the world because they were authorised, they believed, to employ 'means', that is techniques offered by the modern world such as sailing ships and printing presses to disseminate the gospel. Missionary societies were modelled on joint stock companies. Here was a Christian pragmatism that saw the world as waiting to be conquered for Christ by the most efficient methods available. The Evangelical movement was bound up with the enterprise of modernity.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the integration of Evangelical thought with the legacy of the Enlightenment was the bond between theology and science. 'Nature and Revelation', wrote the English Congregational theologian John Pye Smith in 1839, 'are both beams of light from the same Sun of eternal truth; and there cannot be discordance

between them.¹² The unveiling of the natural world, it had been settled, could only prove effective through empirical investigation; and Evangelicals gladly avowed their adherence to the methods of the father of empiricism, Francis Bacon. They adopted and developed the natural theology that had been popularised by William Paley to show the way in which the created order vindicated belief in a Creator. Seeing evidences of design in the universe, they argued that the implication was that there must have been a Designer. An able Indian boy in a Wesleyan school in India put the essence of the case clearly when he was examined orally by a visiting examiner in 1850: 'When we behold a house, we conclude that there must have been a builder: so, when we examine the works of creation, we are convinced that they have proceeded from some cause.'¹³ The argument from design seemed irrefutable so long as there appeared to be incontrovertible indications of purpose in the universe – with plants so formed as to be nourished by moisture, for example, and animals so constituted as to feed on plants. David Hume had challenged this line of argument by questioning the notion of causation, but Evangelicals had generally espoused the rebuttal of Humean scepticism in the common sense school of Scottish philosophy. The notion of cause, they held, was a given of human experience, and so there had to be a connection between design and Designer. The resulting case for theism was articulated in its most persuasive form in the writings of the Scottish Presbyterian Thomas Chalmers. For more than half of the century, science seemed to have been successfully turned into the handmaid of theology.

THE CALVINIST TRADITION

Among Calvinists such as Chalmers in the earlier part of the century the dominant paradigm of theology was derived from Jonathan Edwards. Although the New England Congregational divine had died in 1758, his pattern of thinking was sustained by his disciples in America, and in particular by Joseph Bellamy and Samuel Hopkins, the leading advocates of the 'New Divinity'. The Edwardsean system bore the marks of accommodation to the rising temper of the Enlightenment both in its careful reasoning and in its insistence that the ways of God were consistent with public justice. Its central teaching, taken from Edwards's *Freedom of the Will* (1754), distinguished natural from moral ability. Human beings,

¹² John Pye Smith, *On the Relation between the Holy Scriptures and Some Parts of Geological Science* (London, 1839), p. 168.

¹³ *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, September 1850, p. 996.

the New Divinity men argued, possessed a natural ability to believe the gospel, even though their actions were part of a chain of causation. Their failure to respond to the gospel was an expression of moral inability, a wilful refusal that rendered them guilty of disobeying the commands of the Almighty. This analysis was an ingenious way of reconciling the principles of Calvinism with the demands of evangelism. On the one hand, its advocates could still legitimately claim to be loyal to the Reformed tradition in upholding predestination. God, they asserted, was the source of the causes that led to the acceptance or rejection of the gospel. They were soft philosophical determinists, believing that, although the actions of human beings were caused, their choices were nevertheless free. On the other hand, they were keen champions of spreading the gospel. Ministers who had pondered the implications of Calvinist belief had sometimes reached the conclusion that since God had preordained the elect for salvation, he would infallibly achieve that goal without human intervention. There was therefore no need to challenge sinners to repent and believe; indeed, to do so was an impious trespassing on the prerogatives of the Almighty. The Edwardseans, however, contended that because all had a duty to embrace the offer of salvation, ministers had a responsibility to exhort their hearers to accept the gospel. The implication was that efforts to spread the gospel should be maximised. This was the theology that, with minor variations, was expounded in America by the Congregationalists Nathaniel Emmons and Edwards A. Park, in England by the Congregationalist Edward Williams and the Baptist Andrew Fuller and in Scotland by the Presbyterians who followed Thomas Chalmers. It was the epitome of orthodoxy among most Evangelicals who stood in the Reformed tradition.

The more conservative Calvinist thinkers looked on these developments with suspicion. The new ways of setting out the way of salvation seemed to make too many concessions to the intellectual spirit of the age. Andrew Fuller, in particular, was attacked for teaching 'duty faith', the responsibility of sinners to believe the gospel. But how, asked the traditionalists, could the non-elect be supposed to have an obligation to believe what they could not believe? The revisionists must be abandoning the limitation of salvation to the elect and with it the idea of particular redemption that was at the heart of Reformed belief. The charge had a measure of validity: moderate Calvinists commonly did hold that the scope of the atonement was in some sense universal even though it was effectual only for those who accepted the gospel. The 'Old Calvinists' would have no truck with such a formula, implying, as it seemed to do, that the redemptive purpose of the Almighty could be frustrated. The underlying

issue was that, whereas the Edwardseans were determinists, the traditionalists were fatalists. They believed in irresistible grace, a divine power that extinguished any possibility of human freedom. These views were upheld by the strict Baptists on both sides of the Atlantic who sustained an older piety. In America they were often called 'Anti-Mission Baptists' because, with unassailable logic, they contended that missions were an unwarrantable attempt to supersede predestination. Those whom God had chosen he would call in his own way, not by human means. The traditional Calvinism was upheld with greater theological acuteness by a number of Presbyterian divines, chiefly in the United States, especially at Princeton Seminary. There Charles Hodge argued manfully for a confessional Calvinism that, he contended, Edwards himself would have endorsed even if his nineteenth-century successors did not. But Hodge, unlike Edwards, adopted the common sense philosophy and so, in a sense, made his peace with part of the legacy of the Enlightenment. Only those who, like the Primitive Baptists of the American South, put themselves outside the cultural mainstream could avoid its pervasive influence.

The Evangelicals in the Church of England normally, though not exclusively, took the Calvinist side in the controversies against the Arminianism of John Wesley during the eighteenth century. In the following century its ministry contained a number of stalwart Calvinists such as D. A. Doudney, the editor of *The Gospel Magazine* from 1840 to 1893. Most Anglican Evangelicals, however, were less committed to the Reformed heritage than their Dissenting counterparts in England. The man who shaped the thinking of Evangelical Anglicans for much of the century was Charles Simeon, Vicar of Holy Trinity, Cambridge, from 1783 to 1836. Simeon, who was essentially a preacher, believed in extracting his theology inductively from the Bible. He rejected, in a fashion typical of the Enlightenment, the whole enterprise of metaphysics. He claimed to be 'no friend to systematizers in Theology'.¹⁴ Before the end of his career he publicly repudiated Calvinism since it was associated in the public mind with the Puritans and revolution. His disciples, who included Bishops Charles McIlvaine in the United States and Charles Perry in Australia, carried his style of pragmatic, evangelistic theology throughout the worldwide Anglican communion.

¹⁴ Charles Simeon, *Horae Homileticae* (21 vols, London, 1832-33), 1, p. xxii.

ARMINIANISM, REVIVALISM AND MISSION

The alternative to Calvinism in the Evangelical world at the opening of the nineteenth century was Arminianism. This body of thought was professed by the small bodies of General or Freewill Baptists, but it was chiefly the possession of Methodism. John Wesley, its founder, had died in 1791, but he had established the theological parameters of his movement for virtually the whole of the succeeding century. Wesley had waged ceaseless war on Calvinism, supposing that predestination undermined the responsibility to observe the moral law. His teaching followed that of the early seventeenth-century Dutch theologian Jacobus Arminius in holding that Christ died not for a limited number of the elect but for all. John's brother Charles insisted in his hymnody that 'For all, for all, my Saviour died'. There was therefore no doubt that the gospel must be preached to any who would hear. But since Wesley rejected the Calvinist doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, he maintained that true converts could subsequently fall from grace. A person lapsing into a course of sin had ceased to be a Christian and was in need of a fresh conversion. The grand aim of the Christian life, however, was holiness. Wesley believed that it was possible to reach a state of entire sanctification, what he called 'perfect love', before the grave. All known sin was removed from the soul and the believer enjoyed uninterrupted communion with God. Again this state could be lost and won repeatedly. Wesley reached these conclusions partly by reading the Bible, but partly by observation of his followers. The experience of Methodists was formative of theology because he held that the discipline is as experimental as natural science, in which he took a deep interest. He was an empiricist in the manner of the Enlightenment. 'It is a fundamental principle with us', he wrote, 'that to renounce reason is to renounce religion, that religion and reason go hand in hand, and that all irrational religion is false religion.'¹⁵ There could hardly be a more explicit declaration of alignment with the age of reason.

The immense success of Methodism led to the growth of revivalism in theory as well as in practice. There was a long-standing tradition of revivals in the Presbyterian tradition. At the protracted communion seasons of Scotland and America anxiety for salvation could sweep over whole communities and last for several weeks. But with the advent of Methodism, intense revivals, often more noisy and emotional in manner, became regular features of the Evangelical scene. Evangelists of the other

¹⁵ John Wesley to Dr Thomas Rutherford, 28 March 1768, in John Telford (ed.), *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M.* (8 vols, London, 1931), 5, p. 364.

denominations started aiming to stir up revivals. Charles Finney, an American who worked with Presbyterians and Congregationalists, turned the technique into something like a science in his *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (1835). He advocated 'new measures' to facilitate conversions. Sinners troubled about the fate of their souls, for example, would be placed on an anxious seat at the front of a meeting in order to be objects of prayer for the whole congregation. Finney urged that, instead of taking time to work through their soul concerns, those seeking salvation should immediately surrender to Christ. The theologian who most clearly provided a rationale for Finney's procedures was Nathaniel W. Taylor of New Haven. Starting with the principle of duty faith – that a person has an obligation to believe the gospel – Taylor argued that there can be no 'ought' without 'can'. He inferred that all human beings must have a free capacity to believe. Conversion, as he put it, was 'within the sinner's will'. Finney echoed this view. 'Neither God', he wrote, 'nor any other being, can regenerate him, if he will not turn.'¹⁶ Swept along by currents of thought drawn from the Enlightenment, Finney adopted a high view of human ability. He subsequently went on to embrace a view of human perfectibility similar to that of Wesley. Under the influence of a desire to maximise conversions, the structure of traditional theology was being eroded.

The impulse to spread the gospel led to the creation of overseas missions, beginning in England with the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS, 1792) and in the United States with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM, 1810). The driving theology was outlined in the book *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (1792) by William Carey, the prime mover in the BMS. It was the doctrinal system of Carey's friend Andrew Fuller, the New Divinity deriving from Jonathan Edwards. The great example, cited in Carey's conclusion, was David Brainerd, Edwards's friend, who had gone as a missionary to the native Americans. The notions of duty, benevolence and postmillennial gospel triumph were to the fore. The inheritance of the Enlightenment was even more prominent in the version of missionary undertaking launched by Alexander Duff from Presbyterian Scotland in India (1830). Drawing on the thought of Chalmers, he devised a strategy in which education, the panacea of enlightened thinkers, should take priority over preaching. High-caste Hindus were trained in Western philosophy through the medium of English

¹⁶ Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Systematic Theology*, ed. George Radford (London, 1851), p. 413.

in the belief that they would be convinced by Christian apologetics and that their example would lead to the conversion of the lower castes. The most eloquent challenge to this approach came from Rufus Anderson, foreign secretary of the ABCFM from 1826 to 1866, who argued that to use English in education would alienate indigenous peoples from their own culture and so not reap a large harvest. Instead he advocated the training of indigenous ministry and the encouragement of local responsibility for church life. His views were substantially shared by Henry Venn, honorary secretary of the Church Missionary Society from 1841 to 1872. The other major figure influencing missions was the legendary Scot, David Livingstone, an agent of the London Missionary Society before resigning to become the most celebrated African explorer of the century. His *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (1857) contended that a combination of Christianity and commerce would transform the continent. The assumption of them all was that civilisation went hand in hand with the faith.

THE RISE OF ROMANTICISM

The synthesis of gospel and culture available for export, it must be concluded, had been profoundly affected by influences stemming from the Enlightenment. The central theme in the history of Evangelical theology from the 1820s onwards, however, is its attempts to come to terms with the impact of Romanticism, the cultural movement that steadily supplanted the Enlightenment. Perhaps the fresh style of thinking is best known in the English-speaking world through the Lake poets, especially William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The new mood, however, was not confined to that generation of literary figures but steadily spread through the various departments of intellectual life as the century advanced. Romanticism in this broad sense replaced the Enlightenment's stress on reason with an emphasis on will and emotion. Awe, mystery and the dramatic came into vogue, as in the paintings of J. M. W. Turner. Metaphysics returned to fashion as the philosophical works of the German schools of Kant and Hegel were read. The historicism of Germany also found a deep echo in English-speaking lands, where the writings of Sir Walter Scott nourished a regard for the ancient, the traditional and the customary. The distinctive German idea that values are not absolute but relative to particular cultural settings made gradual headway. Meanwhile the understanding of a static universe operating according to fixed laws gave way in many fields to a vision of a world of change, growth and development. The favourite metaphors for human beings were no longer

mechanistic but organic: they were seen less as cogs in a mighty wheel than as trees nurtured in their own soil. A love of nature in its untamed grandeur – an admiration for mountains, lakes and forests – was near the heart of the new sensibility. With such a profound mental revolution in progress, theology could not remain immune. How did Evangelicals respond?

In the first place they reacted against the most striking expression of the new way of thinking in the churches, the Oxford Movement. In the Church of England J. H. Newman, E. B. Pusey and their associates, inspired by a Romantic sense of history, set out to recover the Catholic inheritance of the early Christian centuries, so introducing much higher doctrines of the church, the ministry and the sacraments than had been customary. Newman's eventual secession to the Roman Catholic Church in 1845 merely confirmed what Evangelicals had already concluded, that the enterprise was a plot to repudiate Protestantism. Those swayed by the Oxford Movement who remained Anglicans began to turn to ritualism, the introduction of Catholic practices into worship in order to evoke a sense of the numinous. Evangelicals stridently denounced the new developments, but they also produced reasoned theological replies. William Goode, a London clergyman, argued in *The Divine Rule of Faith and Practice* (1842) for the uniqueness of Scripture, as against tradition, as a source of religious authority. The fathers of the early church, he contended, treated the Bible alone as the complete repository of truth. In 1871 Nathaniel Dimock, a clergyman in Kent, published a powerful Evangelical analysis of *The Doctrine of the Sacraments*. On points of detail, however, Dimock shows signs of a willingness to move towards the Anglo-Catholics. He was prepared by the end of the century, for instance, to accept the idea that the eucharist involves a representation (though not a re-presentation) of the death of Christ. His fellow Evangelical Anglicans increasingly adopted liturgical patterns initiated by ritualists. It is clear that later in the century some of them were drawn towards compromise with a tradition that was catering for the Romantic tastes of the times.

The most significant early adoption of an element of Romantic thinking by Evangelicals was in the area of eschatology. The brilliant but wayward Church of Scotland minister in London in the 1820s, Edward Irving, who spent time in conversation with Coleridge, adopted a histrionic style of declamation, embraced high doctrines of the church and sacraments even before the Oxford Movement, endorsed speaking in tongues within his congregation and eventually inspired a new denomination, the Catholic Apostolic Church. But probably his greatest significance lay in his teaching about the second advent. In 1827 he published a translation of a

strange work by a Chilean Jesuit entitled *The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty*, which predicted the imminent personal return of Christ, a belief then little known among Evangelicals. Abandoning the postmillennialism of his contemporaries, Irving urged that Christ himself would usher in the millennium, when he would reign on earth. This premillennial teaching, appealing to the new appreciation of the dramatic, gradually spread among Evangelicals of the Church of England as the century wore on. A version of it, dispensationalism, was zealously propagated by J. N. Darby, the leading personality in the early stages of the (so-called Plymouth) Brethren movement. World history, according to Darby, was divided into periods, or dispensations, in each of which the Almighty dealt in a distinct way with human beings. The church was an insertion into the divine scheme that would soon be caught up to meet its returning Lord in the air. By the end of the century dispensationalism had become popular in America, where it was to form the ideological glue of Fundamentalism. Its origins, however, must be seen as an irruption of Romantic sensibility into the Evangelical world.

Another symptom of Romantic influence is discernible in attitudes to holiness. The Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification was originally confined to Methodists, but, especially at meetings in the home of Walter and Phoebe Palmer in New York from the 1830s, began to attract attention from outsiders. From the 1860s a holiness movement developed beyond the bounds of Methodism. Phoebe Palmer taught that the experience of sanctification comes not after a long struggle, which was Wesley's view, but immediately in response to seeking faith. This was to break with the gradualism of the Enlightenment in favour of the crisis beloved of Romantics. This view became the teaching of the Keswick Convention, which from 1875 was the fulcrum of a non-denominational holiness impulse that spread round the world. Keswick held that holiness, like salvation, comes by faith. The state was achieved, according to Evan Hopkins, the Anglican clergyman who was its chief exponent, 'by a decisive act of will'.¹⁷ The resulting experience was one of peace, 'the rest of faith'. Although it made relatively little headway in the United States, the Keswick view became the prevailing attitude to the spiritual life among Evangelical Anglicans. The movement nurtured a love of poetry, its leaders often expressed an admiration for Wordsworth and its centre, Keswick itself, was in the heart of the district associated with the Lake poets. 'The lovely face of nature's panorama', an adherent wrote in 1895, 'must ever

¹⁷ E. H. Hopkins, *The Law of Liberty in the Spiritual Life* (London, 1884), p. 15.

have a chastening and purifying effect.¹⁸ The Keswick conception of holiness should be seen as another result of the fusion of Evangelical theology with Romantic feeling.

A further indication of the same process is evident in the theology of mission. The initiator was again Edward Irving, who in 1824 preached a sermon before the London Missionary Society in which, with characteristic extravagance, he denounced at length the methods of his host organisation. Irving argued that the structure of home committees, financial support and business techniques should be discarded in favour of simple reliance on God. The apostles sent out as missionaries by Jesus, he told his hearers, had to spread faith: 'therefore he made his missionaries men of Faith, that they might plant Faith, and Faith alone'.¹⁹ His vision of the missionary was of an individual depending on the Almighty for his daily needs. The vision was fulfilled in a different field by George Müller, a Brethren philanthropist in Bristol, who long ran an orphanage on faith principles, making no appeals for money but waiting for the Lord's provision. It was Müller's account of his experiences that induced James Hudson Taylor to launch his China Inland Mission (CIM, 1865). The mission pioneered the methods adopted by subsequent faith missions of having no subscribers but only prayer partners. The Romantic ethos of the CIM was evident, for example, in its magazine cover, which had elaborate floral decoration in the Pre-Raphaelite mode; its supporters had to give on divine impulse; and its exaltation of faith was clearly kin to Keswick teaching. Its replacement of prudent organisational techniques with heroic personal endeavour encapsulated the shift away from the rationality of the Enlightenment to something more in keeping with the spirit of the age.

LIBERAL TENDENCIES

The changes effected by Romanticism that have been reviewed so far tended to draw Evangelicals into conservative theological channels. The most important developments associated with the new impulse, however, pushed them in the opposite direction, towards theological liberalism. The prime mover in America was the Congregationalist Horace Bushnell who said that he owed more to Coleridge than to any other source except the Bible. Bushnell's 'Dissertation on Language' in his *God in Christ* (1849) contended that religious discourse should be understood not literally but

¹⁸ *Christian*, 25 July 1895, p. 14.

¹⁹ Edward Irving, *For Missionaries after the Apostolical School: A Series of Orations* ((London, 1825), p. 28.

poetically. Doctrine was therefore incapable of precise formulation. The main journal of the more traditional Methodists was to claim that his ideas were too vague and indefinite, mere 'images of fog'.²⁰ The central doctrinal shift was away from the conception of God as Governor, a view favoured by the New Divinity, to the idea of him as Father. Tender feelings encouraged by the temper of the times, especially in respectable families, made it easier to think of him as a kindly parent than as a stern judge. There was consequently an alteration in the way in which the atonement was stated. It became harder to think of the Almighty willingly inflicting suffering on his own Son, and so the substitutionary understanding of the cross came under attack. Bushnell contended for a moral influence theory in his book *The Vicarious Sacrifice* (1866). It was hoped, furthermore, that a lenient Father would not inflict eternal punishment on his wayward children, and so the traditional doctrine of hell became less widely believed. Some turned to universalism, the expectation that all will ultimately be saved; others rested content with conditional immortality, the opinion that only believers will receive a heavenly reward while unbelievers will simply die. These slackenings of received convictions, particularly notable among the Congregationalists in Britain as well as in America, represented the arrival of milder views under Romantic influence.

Attitudes to the Bible underwent a comparable modification, chiefly because of the reception of German theories based on historicist principles that once more reflected the assumptions of the Romantic era. It was growingly believed by German scholars that the Bible must be analysed critically so as to discern the historical evolution of its ideas. When these suppositions were first widely ventilated in the Church of England by the publication of *Essays and Reviews* (1860), the Evangelical world was almost solid in its horrified opposition. Advanced Broad Churchmen seemed to have gone over to the party of the scurrilous freethinkers who had been in the habit of pointing out the discrepancies in the Bible in order to discredit it. But gradually Evangelical scholars began to take up some of the suggestions of the higher critics of Germany. The greatest crisis came in the later 1870s when William Robertson Smith, a brilliant young professor in the Free Church of Scotland, upheld the view that the text of Deuteronomy was composed after the time of Moses. Following protracted discussion, his views were originally judged legitimate, though a further seemingly irresponsible article sealed his dismissal. By the end of the century, higher criticism was entrenched in most of the theological institutions of the English-speaking world.

²⁰ *Christian Advocate*, 1 August 1872, p. 244.

The notion that the idea of development was the key to understanding the world was growing in intellectual circles before Charles Darwin published *The Origin of Species* (1859), but his book gave a huge fillip to thinking in terms of growth. As the principle of the transformation of species became generally accepted, the arguments of natural theology no longer seemed tenable. If nature could adapt itself to its environment, there was no need for a Designer of the universe. Some Evangelicals were consequently troubled. The most vigorous repudiator of Darwin's theories in the Evangelical camp in England, T. R. Birks, Knightbridge Professor of Moral Philosophy at Cambridge, argued not that the biologist's theory contravened Scripture but that he was ignoring the proper methodological principles hammered out by thinkers whose debt was to the Enlightenment. Likewise a contributor to the premier American theological journal *Bibliotheca Sacra* in 1863 condemned Darwin for abandoning inductive method and so being 'notoriously imaginative as to his data, and hypothetical in his reasonings'.²¹ Thirty years later, however, a writer in the same journal was saying that the theory of evolution had been 'of essential service to theology' by giving larger views of the government of God based on the doctrine of immanence.²² Broader evangelicals took Darwin into their systems, allowing its themes to reconstruct their theology. The Scottish Free Churchman Henry Drummond went so far as to deploy evolution as a vehicle for evangelism in his *Natural Law in the Spiritual World* (1883). Growth towards maturity became a central motif of liberal Evangelical thought.

The other main broadening element in Evangelical thought at the end of the century, it must be admitted, owed little to the Romantic currents of opinion of the time. The social gospel was chiefly a response to the problems of the cities in an industrialising world. It was not solely an Evangelical movement, for some of its exponents on both sides of the Atlantic were from different ecclesiastical traditions. Nor was it intrinsically liberal in its theological affinities. The Salvation Army, for example, which remained impeccably fixed in its doctrinal anchorage, was prominent in the move towards trying to solve the difficulties of urban society. Yet among evangelicals the social gospel represented an addition if not an alteration to their theology. Preaching, according to Professor H. G. Mitchell of the Methodist Boston University in 1895, was only part of the mission of Jesus. 'He preached when he had opportunity; but he seems to have spent more time in healing the sick and otherwise supplying the

²¹ *Bibliotheca Sacra*, April 1863, p. 264 (J. M. Manning).

²² *Ibid.*, July 1893, pp. 413-14 (F. H. Foster).

physical needs of his countrymen than he did in talking to the multitudes that thronged him.²³ Accordingly the mission of the church needed to expand to take on board the priorities of its Master. In England John Clifford and Hugh Price Hughes, the two leading social gospellers, similarly put fresh tasks on the ecclesiastical agenda rather than subtracting old ones from it. Very few in the Evangelical world saw the new social message as a diversion from the true gospel until well into the twentieth century.

The modifications of the gospel based on Romantic premises, however, did create alarm. The most vigorous rebuttal of late Victorian trends came from the doughty Baptist minister in London, Charles Haddon Spurgeon. In the Down Grade controversy of 1887-88 he publicly withdrew from the Baptist Union because he could not continue to associate with deniers of fundamental truths. Although Spurgeon was a firm Calvinist, he was not protesting against the views of John Clifford, nor against the Arminian theology that Clifford shared with other General Baptists. Rather he was criticising those who, swayed by contemporary intellectual currents, were 'giving up the atoning sacrifice, denying the inspiration of Holy Scripture, and casting slurs upon justification by faith'.²⁴ He was voicing anxieties that were to surface in more widespread and more sustained forms after the First World War and were then to polarise Evangelicalism in America into Modernist and Fundamentalist factions. The liberal tendencies of the later nineteenth century pointed clearly to the one, just as Spurgeon's concerns anticipated the other. At the end of the Victorian era, however, the polarisation had not yet come to fruition. The American evangelist Dwight L. Moody, though himself adopting the premillennial teaching that was to be the rallying call of the Fundamentalists, nevertheless could use broader men such as Henry Drummond on his platform. Similarly the catechism of the Evangelical Free Churches, issued in London in 1899, still represented the common beliefs of all its constituent denominations, Methodist, Congregationalist, Baptist and Presbyterian. Evangelical Anglicans could have used it without demur. It spoke of God as Father, and yet adhered to a fairly traditional understanding of the atonement as propitiating the divine holiness. Liberal and conservative strands had not yet been sundered. The common Evangelical faith remained the popular theology of the English-speaking world.

²³ *Methodist Review*, March 1895, p. 269.

²⁴ *Sword and Trowel*, April 1887, p. 195.

ON LETTING A TEXT 'ACT LIKE A MAN' THE BOOK OF THE TWELVE: NEW HORIZONS FOR CANONICAL READING, WITH HERMENEUTICAL REFLECTIONS

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[*Editor's note:* An earlier version of this article was delivered as the Rutherford House 21st Anniversary Lecture in St Andrew's and St George's Church, Edinburgh, on Thursday 24th June 2004. This article is part of a larger project and will appear as a chapter in a forthcoming book entitled *Prophecy and Hermeneutics: The Twelve and Isaiah in Canonical Introduction*, in the new series, *Studies in Theological Interpretation*, edited by Craig Bartholomew, Joel Green, and Christopher R. Seitz and published by Baker Academic.]

The true use of interpretation is to get rid of interpretation, and leave us alone in the company of the author.¹

[I]f contemporary readers wish to understand the prophets, they must entirely forget that the writings were collected in a sacred book centuries after the prophets wrote. The contemporary reader must not read their words as portions of the Bible but must attempt to place them in the context of the life of the people of Israel in which they were first spoken.²

In these quotations we see a separation of text and author, and a valorizing of man over text. In this paper I want to reverse that trend, and so the strange title, 'On letting a text "act like a man"'.

¹ Benjamin Jowett, 'On the Interpretation of Scripture', *Essays and Reviews* (London, 1860), p. 384.

² H. Gunkel, *Prophecy in Israel: Search for Identity* (London, 1987), p. 24.

G. A. SMITH AND EXPERIENTIAL-EXPRESSIVE READING

Some years back, Klaus Baltzer, then Professor of Old Testament at the University of Munich, gave a public lecture at Yale on the Bible-Babel debate and its correlate, as he saw it, in the United States, in the famous Snopes Trial in Arkansas. The context was so familiar and so unique to us culturally as Americans, that it was difficult to think that a German professor from a different context might shed any light on things.

I want to begin my talk on the Minor Prophets with reference to George Adam Smith and do so with caution, for the same reasons Baltzer might well have paused as he looked in on an American culture not his own. For biblical students of a previous generation, I imagine Smith's name stirs up various kinds of memories, and evokes larger vistas than a simple citation from his work will convey. Yet in a way his work on the Minor Prophets, for all its cultural impact in this country, was also representative of a kind of reading of the Bible which held sway throughout the beginning and middle parts of the twentieth century.³ He put his own distinctive signature on this of course, and one can catch in the printed version what sitting in the classroom and listening to him must have been like.

For all that, I have my own version of this same kind of experience, and can recall it as though it were yesterday: lectures on Amos and Hosea and Micah and the prophets of Israel from my undergraduate days. I can see the lecturer mount the stage and begin an indictment of the nations, depicting at the same time the joy of the Israelites as their enemies were condemned, 'for three transgressions, yea for four'. And then the hammer came down, first on Judah and then, with real crescendo, on Israel.

Dr Bernhard Boyd, who gave those lectures, was also a sought-after preacher in the Presbyterian Church, and in fact, he died in the pulpit, in Charlotte, NC, having just completed a sermon worthy of Amos and of his university lectures on the prophets. (It is hard to match that for crescendo effect.)

The point is, this kind of approach to the prophets had a natural extension into the preaching life of the church that would be hard to fault. Listen to just a few lines from Smith, and you will sense that an alliance had been struck between rhetorical exposure of the force of the prophet's word and the deployment of a similar manner of speaking on behalf of the Christian gospel:

³ George Adam Smith, *The Book of the Twelve Prophets* (rev. ed.; New York and London, 1928).

Amos was not a citizen of the Northern Kingdom, to which he almost exclusively refers; but it was because he went up and down in it, using those eyes which the desert air had sharpened, that he so thoroughly learned the wickedness of the people, the corruption of Israel's life in every rank and class of society (p. 78).

OR

We read of no formal process of consecration for this first of the prophets. Through his clear desert air, the word of God breaks upon him without medium or sacrament (p. 79).

Two things stand out here. First is *the sense of discovering the very beginnings of a thing*: the taproot of the majestic tree of prophecy. For all the necessary preliminary attention to the 'pre-literary prophets', the power of Amos is the power of laying bare the ground floor of a phenomenon, that is, prophecy as it will unfold in the canonical presentation of the Three and the Twelve, the Major and Minor Prophets, the *Nebi'im*. Amos is signal: 'this first of the prophets' (p. 79).

And the second feature of Smith's treatment is his *simple capacity to identify with the world in which Amos lived*. This would in time prove a fragile thing. In Blenkinsopp's recent treatment,⁴ the rural shepherd and his clean desert air become something of the order of Ben Cartwright and agribusiness in the TV series 'Bonanza' (p. 79: 'an official of some kind in the kingdom of Samaria... which does not warrant the image of an uneducated rustic visionary'). This is what happens when the social world of the prophets is brought into ever greater – so it is hoped – precision. But we can set even this cavil to the side when we hear the rhetorical potential come rushing at us when one gets alongside the man Amos. For all the problems of historical-critical reading, it provided a fresh look at a corpus of minor prophets which, especially in the case of Amos, made them indeed major – especially the newly freed Amos, who had languished under characterisations like that of Jerome: *imperitus sermone* [*Editor's note*: see Vulgate translation of 'rude in speech' in 2 Cor. 11:6, AV].

'For the English-speaking world', writes Brevard Childs, 'G. A. Smith's eloquent Victorian commentary on Amos played no small role in the new assessment of the prophet's true significance.'⁵ Not third in a canonical series (thought somehow to be an important measure of things) but the first prophet: signal, rhetorically charged, his eyes sharpened, and

⁴ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (Louisville, 1996).

⁵ Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia, 1979), p. 397.

so too in some measure our own by looking in on such a portrayal, by the 'clear desert air'.

George Lindbeck has classified this kind of reading of Scripture 'experiential-expressive', as over against two other types, 'cognitive-propositional' and 'cultural-linguistic.'⁶ The theological lineage of such a stance can be traced to Schleiermacher and Herder and Bishop Lowth.⁷ It understands the Bible to be a deposit of religious feelings and dispositions, which its narrative line, properly reconfigured, will surrender up under the tools of historical retrieval. On such an account, doctrines are not cognitive statements, 'informative propositions or truth claims about objective realities', to paraphrase Lindbeck's language, but are 'noninformative and nondiscursive symbols of inner feelings, attitudes or existential orientations'.⁸

In the case of Smith, the discursive dimension has not gone away entirely: Smith works with the prophet's own words in a fairly direct way. It is just that these now exist within an existential framework which drives the selection of texts to be discussed, the order in which they are discussed, and the strong 'feelings, attitudes or existential orientations' Smith is able to focus on, which mark the treatment he gives.

This is not the place to give a full account of Lindbeck's theory (see a compact analysis in Childs' excursus, footnote 8). If we had time, it would be easy to show how Smith's assumptions contrast with cognitive and cultural-linguistic approaches. To a certain extent, the experiential-expressive approach, shorn of its scientific claims for accuracy and historical facts, and now attached to reader-response, is what one sees in the many works of Walter Brueggemann. So its legacy lives on.

⁶ George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia, 1984).

⁷ See the treatment of Hans Frei, 'Herder on the Bible,' in *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (New Haven, 1974). He helpfully distinguishes Herder's and Lowth's treatments. A single quote from Herder shows the lineage of Smith, 'Become with shepherds a shepherd, with a people of the sod a man of the land, with the ancients of the Orient an Easterner, if you wish to relish these writings in the atmosphere of their origin' – no wonder Amos, shepherd *and* man of the sod, got such special treatment (from Frei's translation of Herder's *Briefe, das Studium der Theologie betreffend*, in *Eclipse*, p. 185).

⁸ These paraphrases are supplied in a trenchant analysis by Brevard S. Childs, in *The New Testament as Canon* (Philadelphia, 1985), p. 542.

PROBLEMS

Those who adopted an experiential-expressive mode of reading did not all share the same historiographic confidence – or scepticism. But in some measure it is right to argue that they all share, as difficult as it may be for them to accept this, the same basic philosophical orientation.

I have indicated that this kind of approach had, in its day, considerable positive potential in connection with the life of the church and the preaching office, and that potential lives on and is a reality to be accepted and affirmed. But there was also a price to be paid.

First, such an approach ultimately had to face questions of authenticity. How much of the present book of Amos – its discursive reality – gave us access to the 'clear air of the desert' and the man Amos? It matters little that one can give minimal or maximal answers to this question, or that the kind of inquiry unleashed will have yet more dramatic effect in other parts of the canon, in Isaiah, for example. Smith had to wrestle with a text like Amos 9:8b – did it breathe the same desert air as 9:8a?⁹ This was not a technical question only, turning on consistent deployment of a critical method; one sees this more readily in Smith than in later treatments, which cover up the experiential dimension because it is now not so easy to come by as it was in Smith's mildly critical treatment. What was at stake was an accurate depiction, based upon an experiential account of the man Amos, of his views on Israel's restoration and the kind of theology – yes, doctrine – which must treat of the finality of God's sentences of judgement, both here and throughout the canon. A serious theological matter, and not just a literary-critical issue in the area of 'authenticity,' was at stake.

Second, it belongs to this kind of approach that the real Amos never stands still for long. Smith must make continuous revisions, up to his 1928 version.¹⁰ It belongs to the nature of the project that it be

⁹ In the section 'Voices of Another Dawn,' he asks, 'Can we believe the same prophet to have uttered at the same time these two statements? And is it possible to see in that prophet the hitherto unwavering, unqualifying Amos?' to which he replies, 'I confess I cannot so readily get over the rest of the book and its gloom; and I am the less inclined to be sure about these verses being Amos' own that it seems to have been not unusual for later generations, for whom the day-star was beginning to rise, to add their own inspired hopes to the unrelieved threats of their predecessors of the midnight' (pp. 201-2).

¹⁰ He writes, 'In the light of our clearer knowledge of Hebrew Metre I have thoroughly revised and recast my translations of the Prophets' own words and of the additions to them from later pious hands. I trust that such

speculative, because the final literary presentation cannot be judged final, but only an entry into a different and more decisive world of the man Amos. The inherent instability is a negative, seen from one side, but also a positive: it assures that 'scholars' will have something to do, permanently, be they strong positivists or sceptics who judge the Bible's capacity to render history virtually vacant – except for some very minimalist claim.

Third, such an approach severed the material witness, in its given form, from the subject matter, and made the canonical shape and order a land of potentiality only but not of final permanence.¹¹ And it did this not just in the case of individual prophetic books, but of the Bible as an entirety. I have a book on my shelf which I keep just within eye's view above my computer screen. *The Bible in Order* is its title.¹² It would be nice to be able to open that book and just have the Bible! But the title makes the point, and the point is not a local one only (in Amos). We will not all understand the same thing when we seek for and posit order, of course. But we will be saying that such an inquiry is important and valid.

That there is nothing simple about this kind of inquiry – a flight to premodern fundamentalism – needs to be underscored as well. The long history of interpretation is different from historical-criticism precisely because the larger question of order was taken seriously, and because *tota scriptura* meant that matters of interdependence and association were of necessity to be worked out. Steinmetz speaks of 'an endless deferral of

changes, bringing the results of Biblical Criticism down to this date, may continue the usefulness of a work, which during the last thirty-two years has maintained a wide circulation' (p. xv). Little could he have known about the inherent instability of the project upon which he had embarked.

¹¹ This point is made nicely in the quote at the heading of this essay: '[I]f contemporary readers wish to understand the prophets, they must entirely forget that the writings were collected in a sacred book centuries after the prophets wrote. The contemporary reader must not read their words as portions of the Bible but must attempt to place them in the context of the life of the people of Israel in which they were first spoken' (in H. Gunkel, *Prophecy in Israel: Search for Identity* [London, 1987], p. 24).

¹² Joseph Rhymer (ed.), *The Bible in Order* (Garden City, NY, 1975). The subtitle is especially instructive: 'All the writings which make up the Bible, arranged in their chronological order according to the dates at which they were written, or edited into the form in which we know them; seen against the history of the times, as the Bible provides it.' By 1975 this kind of project was admitting more complexity, as a distinction between the date of writing and editing was beginning to be registered as salient.

truth' which gets at the theological problematic,¹³ but there is a low-flying and messy historical correlate: the endless generation of separate prophets and truths and myths and authorial intentions and historical contexts and issues discretely handled without the need to bring them into a meaningful, inner-relationship.¹⁴

And lastly (one could go on at length) there is the price to be paid for attending to one basic level of intention: that said to attach itself to the prophet under scrutiny. This has sharp repercussions for our ability to treat an entire book – and not just parts of it – as an intentional speech-act. But it also means that one cannot adequately grasp how the Bible *relates to itself in its own system of cross-reference*. The technical language for this is intertextuality (or intratextuality) but the simple observation to be made is that, ultimately, it has to do with the way parts of the Bible and finally the Two Testaments themselves relate to one another. Failure to see this dimension at work within the Old Testament itself means that the way the New hears the Old and relates to it, cannot be properly assessed either – if one bothers at all in a treatment of Amos.

By focusing on historical retrieval of an author and his intentions,¹⁵ it is possible to lay bare a dimension of the Old Testament, which, in spite of its rhetorical potential, cannot be reattached to the way the New hears the Old.¹⁶ One will be forced to conclude that the New simply invents the stance it wants to take, given its theological concerns, over against the

¹³ David C. Steinmetz, 'The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis,' *Theology Today* 37 (1980), pp. 27-38.

¹⁴ Hans Frei, *Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (New Haven, 1974).

¹⁵ 'Scripture has one meaning – the meaning it had in the mind of the Prophet or Evangelist who first uttered or wrote, to the hearers or readers who first received it' – so Benjamin Jowett, 'On the Interpretation,' p. 378.

¹⁶ This was the modest point being made by Childs as far back as *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia, 1970). Whatever its limitations when extended to the level of Biblical Theology, it is a dimension that cannot be shut out – and most certainly not because historical-critical findings have obscured the intentionality heard by the New Testament. The fresh challenge raised in Childs' later works is, how does the Old Testament speak as Christian Scripture and as a vehicle of divine revelation? This cannot be exhausted by looking only at what the NT says about its plain sense, critical though this dimension is for theological reflection of its own kind. See now *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Minneapolis, 1993). I have also commented on this matter in 'Christological Interpretation of Texts and Trinitarian Claims to Truth: An Engagement with Francis Watson's *Text and Truth*' *SJT* 52 (1999), pp. 209-26.

Old; or one will tortuously seek to show that the Old is making its way to the New by means other than direct intertextual reference, say, by tradition-historical movement.¹⁷ The alternative, to say the New is reading the Old according to intentions exposed by historical-critical method, is simply too far to climb out on a limb already stressed and threatening to break from the sheer weight of historicism.¹⁸

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: THE NEAR EXAMPLE OF E. B. PUSEY

It is fascinating to look at Pusey's commentary on the Minor Prophets in the light of today's interpretative struggles. Pusey treats the Twelve in order.¹⁹ Where there is one prophet using language from another ('the LORD roars from Zion and utters his voice from Jerusalem' in Amos and Joel), he believes the earlier book must be in circulation and therefore available for reference. He defends the inspired character in these instances of dependence as well as in the case of individual books as such. The Twelve are in historical order. This is as true for undated books and books now treated as late (Joel, Obadiah, Jonah) as well as for books which are in (critically) undisputed chronological order, so Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. This also means that Amos has to surrender what would become his place of privilege and give way to Hosea and Joel. Amos is literally dependent upon Joel. Books that are undated should seek their proper historical location by reference to their neighbours, a principle Pusey derives from Jerome, and he calls upon him for support in a way which will soon become an embarrassment as the mechanisms of historical objectivity are released.

Pusey does not engage in the kind of lengthy historical defence of the Twelve individual prophets which marks, say, his treatment of Daniel. We get a realistic portrayal of the prophets, tuned to their assumed historical location. The matter of order is accepted for what it is, and assessed when there are difficulties, on the grounds that what we have before us is as it should be. There is no 'real Amos' other than the one brokered by the

¹⁷ C. Seitz, 'Two Testaments and the Failure of One Tradition-History,' *Figured Out* (Louisville, 2001), pp. 35-47, and *Word Without End* (Grand Rapids, 1998), pp. 28-40.

¹⁸ See the very illuminating exchange stimulated by John Sailhamer in 'Hosea 11:1 and Matthew 2:15' *WTJ* 63 (2001), pp. 87-96. The response by Enns and McCartney is: Dan McCartney and Peter Enns, 'Matthew and Hosea: A Response to John Sailhamer' *WTJ* 63 (2001), pp. 97-105.

¹⁹ E. B. Pusey, *The Minor Prophets with a Commentary* (Oxford, Cambridge, and London, 1860).

text's discursive unfolding. The matter of authorial intention does not raise its head, because Pusey does not focus on the 'real Amos' but on the intentionality he assumes the book itself executes as it unfolds in its literary givenness. Where his approach is different to what preceded in much of the history of exegesis, is in his need to relate the individual parts under discussion to the whole story of the Bible. But this observation risks being far too simple, given the diversity in the history of interpretation itself, and given the constraints and format of the commentary as he undertook it.

A FRESH LOOK AT THE MINOR PROPHETS

At this point the selection of my area of focus might be causing you to wonder, 'Why a talk on issues facing Old Testament study using the example of the Minor Prophets?' Four brief answers before we look at the Book of the Twelve as an example of recent trends in exegesis and hermeneutics. My hope in so doing is to show that the turn from man to text, from recovered individual personality to the collective witness of the final-form presentation of the Twelve as a whole, need not rob the exposition of its rhetorical power nor its existential engagement with new generations of readers.

1. I have learned in our post-modern context not to assume anything in the classroom. My new pedagogical insight is 'make your best case first and bring the students along'. The books of the minor prophets are small, and more easily treated. My new rule is: take the parts of the Bible which best illustrate the smallest number of problems and challenges, and build on that to more difficult cases. Try to get students to consider contexts other than historically reconstructed ones. Much of my own work has been in Isaiah, and it is too ambitious a book to begin with. The students are like Augustine who, having been given Isaiah, returned and asked Ambrose for something simpler.

2. The Twelve are getting a lot of attention today. Or, I should say, the Twelve *is* getting a good deal of attention. The comparison with Isaiah is helpful. That book was pulled apart and made into three or more separate collections. The sense that something was lost in reading the book as a whole in time returned and captured the attention of the field. Renewed interest in the larger book meant a spate of publications and fresh approaches.²⁰ The Twelve is now a similar case.²¹ Why does it circulate as

²⁰ Isaiah has been the focus of more monographs and new commentary treatments than any other book of the Old Testament. This has all had to do

one book? How does one honour individual prophetic books but also a given organisation and sequence? The rabbis counted the words of the whole collection, and the earliest reference in Sirach speaks of the Twelve as a whole, and not as isolated men in a more accurate chronological order. How should we assess this? Interest in Isaiah has shifted to the Twelve, and indeed to the relationship between these two books as books, and the way the final form editing of one matches kindred moves in the other.²²

3. To speak of honouring a given sequence and organisation is also to question standard ways of operating. I was asked to write a textbook on the prophets. If reconstructing the history of prophecy was riddled with problems, why perpetuate these in the name of putting my own theory forward? Could it not be possible to treat the Twelve in their given order, without losing the better aspects of historical-critical insight into their individuality and historical setting? It simply seemed inconceivable to me that a perpetuation of the 'Amos to Hosea to Micah to First Isaiah to authentic Jeremiah to Zephaniah and on through the Three and the Twelve model' was justified.

4. At a seminar in St Andrews we have been looking at the main principles and exegetical concerns which animate the work with Scripture in the Early Church and in the history of interpretation before the rise of historical-critical questions.²³ The way in which matters like sequence (*akolouthia*), larger organisational coherence (*skopos, hypothesis*), and governing theological significance and constraint (*dianoia, theoria, regula fidei*) function to order and guide exegesis remain as relevant today as ever. Once one frees the material from having to make sense only against a backdrop of historical reconstruction and contextualisation, new challenges

with the breakdown in an older 'Three Isaiahs' model of interpretation. See for example, my essays on Isaiah in *Word Without End*.

²¹ A very helpful sample of new work can be found in J. D. Nogalski and M. A. Sweeney (eds), *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve* (Atlanta, 2000). I have my own treatment in I. Fischer, K. Schmid, H. G. M. Williamson (eds), *Prophetie in Israel* (Munster, 2003) in an essay entitled 'Prophecy and Tradition-History: The Achievement of Gerhard von Rad and Beyond' (*Word Without End*, pp. 29-52). See also now P. L. Redditt and A. Scharf (eds), *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve* (BZAW 325; Berlin/New York, 2003).

²² O. H. Steck, *Der Abschluss der Prophetie im Alten Testament: Ein Versuch zur Frage der Vorgeschichte des Kanons* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1991).

²³ A provocative and engaging overview can be found in F. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge, 1997). I have a brief discussion of this in *Figured Out*.

emerge, having to do with what kind of associations are to be sought out, identified and theologically organised. The Twelve is a good place to test these particular issues, because its 'constituence', its being constituted as twelve separate sections, does not release one from the challenge of making sense of its present arrangement and its presentation as a theological statement of God's work in Israel and the nations.

EXAMPLES FROM THE MASORETIC TEXT OF HOSEA-NAHUM

Here I am only summarizing work that has gone on for a decade and more, so as to assess the hermeneutical significance in a movement from 'man' to 'text'. Much of what you read here may sound new, as the twelve Minor Prophets – or a selection from them – are allowed to provide literary and historical context, one for another. This is a departure from standard operating procedure. I will assume that the links I am pointing to have been argued for, relatively successfully, even though it may appear that I am the one proposing them. This makes my task a bit tricky. But to repeat: my interest is not in defending these linkages spotted by others, but in understanding what is at stake in taking an ancient witness and hearing it through the lens of a more recent witness, as in the case of Joel providing a concrete occasion for hearing the call to repentance at the end of Hosea. To ignore this kind of context in the name of historical context is wrongly to foreshorten what we mean by history and a properly historical approach. My more contentious point is that those who claim that their reading is more historically appropriate – a reading in which the individual prophets are isolated from one another, recast according to date, and placed in a reconstructed temporal context – are actually the ones who are not reading the prophets sufficiently historically. For final canonical form is also a piece of history, belonging to decisions made in the past about how an ancient prophetic witness is finally to be heard.²⁴

We begin at the beginning: *Hosea's signal position and larger implications*. That Hosea is the first prophet in the Twelve is not so hard to account for as the fact of a late book like Joel being second or Amos third and following it (a 'problem' the LXX order appears to have 'resolved'). Hosea is a near contemporary of Amos so who might come first is a close-run matter. The rabbis thought the reference to God

²⁴ See my discussion in C. Bartholomew, C. S. Evans, M. Healy, M. Rae (eds), *'Behind' the Text: History and Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, 2003) in the chapter entitled, 'What Lesson Will History Teach? The Book of the Twelve as History', pp. 443-69.

speaking at first to Hosea (1:2) could be translated into an answer to the question about his initial position in the Twelve. Formally more interesting is the matching of the superscription of Hosea to that of Isaiah, which could imply a desire to correlate the Twelve with Isaiah, as has been argued: both have a long history of composition and historical range.²⁵ I cannot go into that here.²⁶

If we leave Joel to the side for the moment, it is possible to account for the narrower question as to why the tradents of Israel's two early 'writing prophets' wanted Hosea to be the lens through which Amos was heard, as well as the lens through which the entire Twelve might be best seen. Jeremias has persuasively argued that the two books have been edited in such a way as to avoid any (1) historicizing of their message (the message is for someone in the past), (2) localizing of their indictments (the message is for the northern kingdom only), or (3) interest in keeping their messages specified and isolated one from the other. Here is a sample from his very illuminating essay:

I can understand these literary connections (between Hosea and Amos)... only if the pupils of Amos and the pupils of Hosea who handed down the message of the prophets wanted to teach their readers that they could not grasp the central ideas of these prophets by reading their books in complete isolation from one another. By contrast, the readers of the written words of the prophets were supposed to notice the similarity of Amos's and Hosea's message from God. The pupils were not interested in stressing the differences between the two prophets. The literary structure of both prophetic books – from the initial level shows that these books were meant as associated entities and should not be read as isolated pericopes. The literary connections between these books show that they should be read in relation to each other.... I want to show that these traditionists are on their way to discovering something like a common prophetic theology, not by denying that each prophet lived in singular historical circumstances, but by denying that this fact is decisive for their message.²⁷

²⁵ See Steck, *Der Abschluss der Prophetie*.

²⁶ Cf. J. Treballe-Barrera, 'Qumran Evidence for a Biblical Standard Text and for Non-Standard and Parabiblical Texts,' in T. H. Lim with L. Hurtado, A. G. Auld, A. Jack (eds), *The Dead Sea Scrolls in Their Historical Context* (Edinburgh, 2000), p. 95.

²⁷ J. Jeremias 'The Interrelationship Between Amos and Hosea,' in J. D. Watts and P. R. House (eds), *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays in Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D. W. Watts* (Sheffield, 1996), pp. 171-86.

But why Hosea first, even in an intentionally affiliated relationship such as Jeremias has argued for? The answer has several interrelated features. Hosea introduces the theme of YHWH's patience, and urges its centrality by clear intertextual links to the foundational account of Moses and God's forbearance at Sinai, following the golden calf incident (the names of Hosea's children, 'not my people' and 'no compassion' play on the dialogues between God and Moses in Exodus about *whose* people the murmuring Israelites are, and on the compassionate and merciful formula from Exodus 33-34).²⁸ This theme, God's patience, is crucial in assessing what follows in God's history with Israel and the nations in the Twelve's unfolding.²⁹ In addition, the formal links are much clearer in the Twelve than in the Pentateuch due to the repeated appearance of the formula, 'YHWH compassionate and merciful', at several key points (Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Mic. 7:18; Nah. 1:2).

Second, Hosea ends with an exhortation to the reader, and in this sense it is similar to other reader-directed shaping such as we find at another beginning: Psalm 1 of the Psalter Collection. Van Leeuwen, in a brilliant essay, has tracked the editorial function of this appeal to the wise reader, and especially the way in which it is reinforced in the sequential unfolding of the first six books – to my mind, a good indication of the sense of the Masoretic order, which is no longer sustained in the LXX.³⁰

Third, this bit of canonical shaping is preceded by a lengthy call to repentance (14:1-7) whose force does not take hold within the compass of

²⁸ See the interesting analysis of R. C. Van Leeuwen, 'Scribal Wisdom and Theodicy in the Book of the Twelve,' in L. G. Perdue, B. Scott, W. Wiseman (eds), *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie* (Louisville, 1993), pp. 31-49.

²⁹ 'The writing of Hosea was deliberately placed in the first position, although the historical prophet Amos probably delivered his oracles earlier than Hosea. The redactors wanted the reader to perceive the warning of Amos in the light of Hosea' (A. Scharf, 'Reconstructing the Redaction History of the Twelve Prophets: Problems and Methods' in *Reading and Hearing*, pp. 34-48). 'Why does Hosea precede Amos? Perhaps length and unwillingness to interrupt the clear connections of Joel, Amos, and Obadiah explain the priority of Hosea' (J. Crenshaw, *Joel*, [New York, 1995], p. 22). The categorical denunciation of Judah/Israel in Amos 1-2 is best heard against the Lord's roaring from Zion at the end of Joel, where he is a 'refuge for his people' (Joel 3:16; cf. Amos 1:2). See the discussion below.

³⁰ Van Leeuwen, 'Scribal Wisdom and Theodicy'. Van Leeuwen sheds particular light on the link from Hosea 14:9 to Micah 4:5.

Hosea as an individual book.³¹ It is a bit of final instruction from Hosea which sits now over the journey one is about to embark on in the unfolding of the Minor Prophets as a whole. That this is more than a piece of neutral observation is underscored by two further features. The book of Joel makes the call to repentance central to its presentation, where the theme of the compassionate YHWH is explicitly invoked (2:13; anticipating a latter scene of repentance and its aftermath, now not for Israel but for Nineveh, in Jonah; 'mourning beasts' is also a theme they share, see Joel 1:20 and Jonah 3:8).³² In other words, Joel provides an instance of quasi-liturgical enactment of the call for repentance (see 1:13ff), such as is initiated in Hosea (14:1-7), and demonstrates as well YHWH's willingness to respond and restore precisely those aspects of fertility and bounty withheld in Hosea's day (Joel 2:19).

More subtle is the present location of Amos, following Joel, in the light of the theme of repentance. The lapidary refrain, 'for three transgressions and for four I will not revoke', which is literally, 'will not cause it to *return*' is not lapidary when one reckons with Hosea's introduction of the theme ('return, O Israel'), and Joel's enactment of it. 'I will not cause it to return' means 'I will not be a welcome agent of repentance, *à la* Hosea 14:1-7.' Furthermore, when the crescendo indictment of first Judah, and then Israel, is made clear, this is an indictment to be heard within the context of YHWH's longstanding care and commitment to his people. The LORD does 'roar from Zion', as Joel states (EVL 3:16) and Amos immediately seconds (1:2), but primarily at the effrontery of the nations. The conclusion of Joel and the opening litany against the nations in Amos 1:3-2:3 makes this clear. Seen from this perspective, the indictment by YHWH of his own people occurs in the context provided by Joel and Hosea before him, where repentance is called for and enacted. As Joel puts it after his reference to YHWH's roaring from Zion (3:16): 'but the LORD is a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel'. It is precisely this horizon of great theological depth through which we can now see the mitigation of Amos 9:8b: not 'roses and lavender instead of blood and iron' (in the telling phrase of Wellhausen), but a judgement whose intent was always to cleanse and purify, not extinguish. In short, the final form of Amos, by the fact of its location and juxtaposition, takes its larger theological bearings from the witness of Hosea and Exodus, and Joel's position helps make those bearings even clearer – indeed unmistakable.

³¹ T. Collins, *The Mantle of Elijah* (Sheffield, 1993).

³² Collins, *Mantle*, p. 72.

There is not time to extend this reading of the Twelve beyond making a few further observations and discussing their hermeneutical significance for a fresh approach to the prophets. The fact that manifestly later books (Joel, but also Obadiah and Jonah) have found their place beside earlier and explicitly dated ones is not just a datum awaiting scholarly discovery and reassignment according to a theory of the history or development of Israelite prophecy. Joel's anthological character and indebtedness to earlier prophetic works has long been noted.³³ Obadiah's indictment of Edom would appear to best fit an historical period close to the fall of Jerusalem (though that is contested and is not required). Jonah contains several features which argue for a late date – some of them only noticed by an historical-critical mentality tuned to look for such things in the past 150 years. But it is one thing to make this diachronic observation and quite another to let the fact of the present location of these books stand and to inquire as to their significance. This too is a piece of serious historical inquiry.³⁴

When one adds to this observations about beginnings and endings of books; repeated themes, like the compassionate-formula, or drought and famine and their opposites; or reader-oriented appeals to learn from the past and re-orient oneself towards God's ways and self, it becomes clear that the placements of later books next to earlier ones is an intentional move, arising from the canonical process itself, and is not a reader-response imposition by readers tired of older approaches and looking for new ones.³⁵ Just as the LORD's roaring from Zion ends Joel and begins Amos, Amos ends with a promise of Edom's demise (9:12), and Obadiah unhesitatingly describes it. Jonah provides an occasion of, not Israelite but Ninevite, repentance, which makes the prophet sore but which reminds the reader that God is not above relenting over evil powers like Edom (whom he has punished in Obadiah already) or even the powerful nation of Assyria. He can treat them with the same patience and kindness he has lavished on his own people in, in different ways and dispensations, in Hosea, Joel, Amos, or in the context of Edom's destruction in Obadiah (17-21). Micah establishes the limits of God's patience, now toward the preserved remnant

³³ Joel is a particularly important book in the redaction of the Twelve. See among many other works, J. Nogalski, 'Joel as "Literary Anchor" for the Book of the Twelve,' in *Reading and Hearing*, pp. 91-109.

³⁴ This is the point of my essay, 'What Lesson Will History Teach?', cited above.

³⁵ E. Conrad sees the force of the issue in his new book, *Reading the Latter Prophets: Towards a New Canonical Criticism* (JSOTSS 376; London/New York, 2003).

of Judah, strikingly at the exact middle point of the twelve as a whole (3:12) – a prophecy which bore repeating in a later conflict over Jeremiah's similar preaching against the temple and king (see Jer. 26:18).

Joel helps us to hear the indictments of Amos in their proper long-range context. So also the uplifting oracle of Isaiah 2:1-4 (itself a response to judgement in Isaiah 1) finds another placement in Micah 4, now following the death sentence, not over the northern kingdom as previously in the Twelve, but over Zion. The refrain noted by Van Leeuwen at Micah 4:5, which differs from its Isaiah counterpart at 2:5, functions, in its difference, to orient the reader along the lines established at the close of Hosea ('each one walks in the name of his god, but we will walk...'), similar to Hosea 11:9, 'for the ways of the LORD are right and the upright walk in them'). The final lines of Micah underscore this link: 'who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression', now, 'over the remnant of your possession' – that is, those who have walked upright, in God's ways. The compassionate formula from Exodus is drawn upon to remind the reader of God's long-suffering and final heart to save. Sins are even cast into a sea as deep as Jonah's contrite praying! (Mic. 7:19). And from that depth comes hopefulness and new life on another shore.

This hope is established in part, as in Isaiah, by God's removal of Assyria as agent of his just judgement (Isa. 10:5ff). So in spite of his mercy toward Assyria in Jonah's day, Nahum reasserts the other dimension of his character, 'The LORD is slow to anger but great in power, and the LORD will by no means clear the guilty', for, in the case of Nineveh, 'who has ever escaped your endless cruelty?' (Nah. 3:19).

Thus far we are only demonstrating ways to read the Twelve as an integrated and intentional final composition, as has been argued recently by scholars. Nothing has been said which would diminish the need to honour the individuality of the witness, nor attention to a book's historical context. Far from it. Three spaces (though not the usual four) separate each of these prophetic works in manuscripts, and we have noted the strength of arguments which locate the undated books in a later period of composition.³⁶ But to say this is only to stand at the start of the interpretative task.

Alongside these editorial and compositional factors, moreover, are important hermeneutical signals which must be studied and assessed for their proper proportionality and significance. The juxtaposing of late and

³⁶ D. L. Peterson, 'A Book of the Twelve?' in *Reading and Preaching*, pp. 3-10.

early is not just a matter of the clever matching of kindred themes or catchwords, or the tidying up of historical gaps and inconsistencies after the fact. Here we approach the heart of canonical reading, that is, that aspect of God's word to Israel which continues to press for a hearing and addresses new generations with an old word, borne of a specific time and specific application, and without shedding that, moving forward through time to enclose new readers and new situations. Deuteronomy makes this point with urgency and passion in respect of the Decalogue: 'not with our ancestors did the LORD make this covenant today, but with us, all of us, here today' (5:3).

Of course the covenant was made with the old fathers, but the rhetorical point is what Deuteronomy is insisting on. Early and late may be particular indexes prized by readers seeking a handle on the interpretation of Israel's prophets, and sorting out the generations may help one gain a better sense of the precision and context of the prophet's word of address. But this should not hinder pressing ahead to ask the hermeneutical question posed by the juxtaposing of early and later witnesses – especially in a place like the Book of the Twelve where the evidence for this is supplied by virtue of the decision to retain clear boundaries for one prophet and his neighbours on either side.

And here we move at last to the place where I began, with Smith's provocative displaying of the world of Amos, such that, in his hands, past and present merged and we could almost smell the desert air of the rural shepherd. The problem with this approach is that it had to let fall to the side all that did not suit the reconstruction, and so the material form of the witness – first tentatively and then more aggressively – receded before the reconstruction said to be generating it. It was up to the interpreter to give us the precise profile of the man, so that we could get in his boots, and be 'left alone in the company of the author'. But were there no guidelines being set by the text itself which anticipated this hermeneutical ditch, separating our air from the air of the desert of Amos, and helping us take our proper place? Could not a text, to use a modern expression, 'act like a man'?

Smith was surely right to sense in the material before him some distinct urgency, a call for hearing, a pressure for reception if not imitation and obedience, some compelling ingredient which made Amos come alive, which tradition has strained to describe as 'the word of God, living and active'. But we were left, in his treatment and more so in those which followed his, at the mercy of the interpreter to know how to bridge the past and come alongside God's word, ever pressing for a hearing. Instead of leaving us alone in the company of the author, we pretty much found

ourselves in the company of an Amos that Smith had asked the text to give up, and not display on the terms of its own literary presentation. The author we were left alone with was George Adam Smith! In his case, that was not a bad place to be. But the clutch released on the mechanisms of experiential-expressive reading took us on a journey which, in the course of time, would lead to extremes of historicist minimalism or reader-response scepticism, a scepticism now supplying linkages in front of and not behind the material form of the witness.

CONCLUSIONS

Serious discussion about whether or not this or that text is 'authentic' does not play out against the backdrop of moral urgency it once did, in part because we have come to see the key role tradents and the community have in shaping the prophetic word.³⁷ The very notion of a canonical process assumes a doctrine of inspiration that spills out from the prophetic word once delivered, as God superintends that word toward his own accomplishing end. This being the case, 'authenticity' loses its power to persuade in the realm of 'copyright protection or infringement', as interpretation now assesses a wider range of what might count for inspired prophetic discourse. The community does not add its own corrections and supplements: that is too reductionistic a view of God's word spoken.³⁸ Rather, it sees the original word pressing forward towards a horizon God alone means to illumine, with recourse to that original word of his own, divulged by the work of the Holy Spirit in a new day.

This being so, decisions about secondary levels of textual history no longer come with automatic aspersions and a sense of some inferior species of inspiration and cogency being thrust at us, as we move from *man* to *text* in the crude manner of much nineteenth century reflection. What we have endeavoured to describe, as well, is the hermeneutical character of a

³⁷ Surely much of the credit for this goes to the canonical approach of B. S. Childs. For a discussion of this issue in a broader context, see now T. Ward, *Word and Supplement: Speech Acts, Biblical Texts, and the Sufficiency of Scripture* (Oxford, 2002).

³⁸ An early work which tried to deal with this issue sensitively – no small feat – was David Meade, *Pseudonymity and Canon* (Tübingen, 1986). It was not in my judgement an altogether successful effort, because it struggled to describe the pressure of previous inspired speech on secondary interpretation and elaboration. I believe one of the most intriguing exegetical efforts to work this out is Childs's treatment of Daniel in *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, pp. 608-23.

text's secondary transmission and reshaping. I will conclude with several final observations.

My final remarks all have to do with the subtle matter of how the reader is to identify with the prophetic witness. In some ways, experientialist reading (wittingly or unwittingly) sought to get us alongside the prophet, and may even have suggested thereby that we were to identify with the prophet as prophet, without a lot of reflection on just how or why this might be an appropriate point of standing for those of us manifestly outside the circle of 'prophets and apostles'. This is not an altogether tidy affair, I admit, and identification need not have meant, 'I too am an Amos in my day and this kind of reading is good at showing why that is so.'

Still, in what sense is the prophetic word a privileged word, delivered up by the power of the Holy Spirit to elected agents (for this is how both OT and NT understand the office), and therefore is a word addressing us, overtaking us, and in some sense directing us and asking of us obedience and deference – that is, not asking us to identify with the prophet except only as he too understands that same word given to him to deliver as a word of address and a word 'over his own head' as it were?

Attention to the canonical shaping helps us see that even the individual prophets belong to a larger history and sweep than they as individuals were able to recognize at the time (and this pains Habakkuk when he does recognize it, in the transition from one age of violence, the Assyrian, to the next, the Babylonian). And what is true of these prophets as men within Israel's history – and this is a history with Israel and the nations and the created order itself, and is no private affair: this is what attention to the Twelve as a whole shows us – will become a fact in respect of a history including Israel and the nations and creation in Jesus Christ. Israel's history as depicted in the Twelve is a type or figure of a larger history, and a story which takes two testaments to tell. Amos is a man among Twelve and the Twelve are men related to one Man: Jesus Christ.

We are trying to show that identification with the world of the prophet is available on terms other than the usual experiential access, in romantic 'behind the text' or post-modern 'in front of the text' modes. Joel brings the world of Hoses and Amos into the framework of his later context of exhortation, repentance, and restoration, at a time of severe natural disruption (the judgement of a locust plague as an example of Hosea's want of bounty and fertility); and at the same time, the audience of Joel, however we understand that, is transported back in time to re-live the testimony of two prophets of the eighth century, and to learn the lessons requisite of that period, now with the potential for change of heart and

mind. And with that unclear 'Joel audience' (precisely because so unclear) we modern men and women go too, in whatever way God means that to be a journey for us to take in our day, in his new deliverances of judgement and mercy.

The idea that a word from the past outlives original audiences and the one who delivered it both, is explicitly detailed at a pivotal moment of the Twelve's transition, at the beginning of Zechariah (1:1-6). The preface to the book tells us that former prophets spoke, and their words overtook the generations to whom they were proclaimed, and lived on, bringing about a confession, 'The LORD of hosts has dealt with us according to our ways and our deeds, just as he planned to do' (1:6). And with that confession and recognition registered, prophecy goes forth again, even in the strange and somewhat novel form – a form which 'seer' Amos might barely recognise – of visions, now visions of the night. New generations are addressed by a former word, and the former word gives rise to new prophetic discourse of a different but yet continuous character.

Still, within that past period of 'former prophets,' as we have seen in the case of Joel, the reader is not simply placed down to look around neutrally and conclude, 'how dreadful it all was, abandoned to false choices and the wages of disobedience'. There is a point of identification with the prophet that is neither inoculation nor a walk of innocence and later calm amidst past sin and sorrow. Recognition of the integrated – and carefully so – character of secondary levels of tradition opens up a fresh hermeneutical option not seen in the days of George Adam Smith, even though he might well have grasped at it with good intuition and godly exegetical instinct.

Both Jonah and Habakkuk contain a kind of speech-form unusual in the prophetic books and in the mouths of the prophets especially. This form is the psalm, and we know well that psalms resist historicization (the School of Antioch often came to grief on this issue). Both psalms tell of audacious hope in the midst of death, in the belly of a whale and in the belly of history's dark unfolding. Jonah's tribute to the Almighty is so unanticipated – prior to his disgorgement on safe shores – that the Gordian knot of interpretation is regularly cut and the psalm excised or moved to a 'better place' (how might we ever know what that is?). In its present place, however, it is both a powerful reminder that praise is a lesson best learned when all is dark, and praise even so hard-won can tragically be short-lived. Jonah goes from praise to obedience to success to sulk. But not to condemnation I think, for God remains solicitous to our struggling hero right to the end.

Habakkuk also suffers the indignity – though that is too weak a word – of being set before a divine revelation which seems interiorly unjust and

unpalatable: the odd divine justice that defeats injustice by using a violent judge (Hab. 1:13-14). The last word of this book is not a divine question, as in Jonah, but a remarkable psalm (3:1-17) in a similar place of great darkness, in the belly of God's strange superintendence of time, to extend the image from above. This psalm is not a secondary intrusion, even as it manifestly belongs to other contexts than Habakkuk, and we cannot judge ourselves shrewd historical-critics for seeing what is so obvious, and which must have been obvious to others before us and before the rise of the historical-critical method as a 'science'. Habakkuk the prophet does give us access to a world in which we are to make identification, and in this way, his final word is the best way to see a path not finally taken by Jonah, our pained antagonist wrestling with God's justice and forbearance. Jonah is not condemned, for the lesson he is meant to learn is not an easy one to learn, and we delude ourselves if we think it is and that Jonah is only held up for our condescending disapproval. To say that is not only wrongly to identify with a prophet as prophet, but to identify as if we actually knew better.

Habakkuk shows us a better way, and yet it is also a higher way, a way of identification that is proper for the reader. Habakkuk awaits a day of great darkness, as God goes about the business of judgement and cleansing. God is for our man Habakkuk unveiled in dark and powerful form, a form which brought deliverance in its day for Israel, but which is now unclashed to a different and far more difficult end. In spite of this, in the midst of this, Habakkuk is able, is made able, to give utterance to hope, when there is no earthly reason for it whatsoever. 'Though the fig tree does not blossom, and no fruit is on the vines' – though Hosea's and Amos's most dismal prophecies come to pass – 'yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will exalt in the God of my salvation. God, the LORD, is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, and makes me tread upon the heights' (3:17-19).

To conclude, then, this brief examination of hermeneutics and identification, a canonical reading of the Twelve, far from shutting off the experiential world of Amos and his colleagues, situates us properly, and him, and them, so that we might gaze on the history of God's word with Israel, and nations, and creation, and finally with his own Son. Such a reading teaches us where to stand and where to identify our proper place in that history, which providentially reaches out to enclose us even now in God's judgement and mercy. Smith could move from the world of the prophets to the pulpit, and bring alive the man Amos for his audience. A canonical reading of Amos among the Twelve gives us a world of reference and identification no less bold and no less enclosing of us and our world

than that; *and it does it on the terms of its own deliverance*. We are made to stand before the Twelve and see the word go forth, address generations, enclose the prophets in a history larger than themselves, and then reach out and locate us in its grand sweep – in judgement and in mercy – before that same holy God. He makes known those two great dispensations of his character – final judgement and final mercy – in his only Son, that we might at last by his grace identify even with him, and see through the judgements of our day into the eternity of his purposes. If then our confession becomes remotely like that which Habakkuk uttered in his day, we may count ourselves blessed beyond all measure.

So there is indeed a future for the powerful experiential readings of a G. A. Smith, but harnessed and tuned to the canonical shape of the texts before us. The existential dimension is not conjured up by the interpreter deploying historical tools, but makes its force felt through close reading and attention to the final-form presentation. Here we all need to go to school again. An earlier history of interpretation functioned with a view of intentionality which did not abstract the human author from the work said to be associated with him. Some stronger historicism is not being called on here to give us back the book of Amos as the authentic work of someone now to be called ‘the historical Amos’. That way has been tried and it failed because it did not deal carefully with the text as it lies before us.

Attention to the canonical form lets the text ‘act like a man’ by observing where and when and on what terms the prophetic figure is being given to us, as the messenger of God’s word, and also as a participant in a drama larger than himself. Such attention also gives us a place to stand within the drama, which we are privileged not only to observe but also be drawn into, by virtue of Christ’s inhabiting of Israel’s former story (the force of Luke 24:27). Christ it is who gives us a place to stand, while the text of the now ‘old’ Testament shows us where to stand. Experiential-expressive reading is not foreclosed by canonical reading. Rather, it is given proper focus and direction.

HOW RIGHT ARE THE JUSTIFIED? OR, WHAT IS A *DIKAIOS*?

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The classic Protestant doctrine of justification rests on a clear distinction between the forensic on the one hand and the ontological or transformational on the other. Not that the transformational is denied. On the contrary, it is asserted.¹ Every justified person is a transformed person and will continue being transformed till the day she is presented faultless in the presence of God's glory (Jude 24). This transformation begins in the new birth, proceeds through sanctification and reaches its climax (conformity to the image of Christ) in glorification.

But the hallmark of the Protestant doctrine is that the forensic (justification) does not rest on the ontological (sanctification). Expressed evangelically, that means that we do not have to be saints to be justified. Expressed lexically, it means that the Greek verb *dikaioo* signifies not to *make* righteous, but to *declare* righteous. It expresses the verdict of a judge, acquitting the person before him, pronouncing him, 'Not guilty!' and declaring him to be in the right.

Some scholars, including N. T. Wright, virtually take for granted the forensic, lawcourt understanding of justification.² This may be premature,

¹ See, for example, the words of Calvin: 'Therefore Christ justifies no one whom he does not at the same time sanctify. These benefits are joined together by an everlasting and indissoluble bond, so that those whom he illumines by his wisdom, he redeems; those whom he redeems, he justifies; those whom he justifies, he sanctifies.' (*Institutes*, III.XVI, 1). All quotations from the *Institutes* are from J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, edited by John T. McNeill, translated and indexed by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia, 1960).

² In his commentary on Romans 3:20, Wright simply asserts that, 'Justification, in this passage, is a lawcourt term ... The language most naturally belongs in the lawcourt.' Cf. the more extended treatment in Wright's Introduction to the commentary: "'Righteousness" was the status of the successful party when the case had been decided.... The word is not basically to do with morality or behaviour, but rather with status in the eyes of the court.' (*The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary and*

especially in view of the dogmatic position of the Roman Catholic Church as set forth in the *Decretum de iustificatione* of the Council of Trent.³ According to Chapter VII of the Decree, justification includes not only remission of sins, 'but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man, through the voluntary reception of the grace, and of the gifts, whereby man of unjust becomes just, and of an enemy a friend'. This clearly amounts to more than a *declaring* righteous: 'we are not only reputed, but are truly called, and are, just, receiving justice (righteousness) within us, each one according to his own measure ... and according to each one's proper disposition and cooperation.' In this Tridentine definition, justification becomes so comprehensive as to be virtually synonymous with salvation: 'a translation, from that state wherein man is born a child of the first Adam, to the state of grace' (Chapter IV).

All this may be a fair description of what the Bible means by the adjective *dikaios*: a righteous man. But when we turn to the corresponding verb, *dikaioo*, we find that it is not used to refer to the act of producing such a person, but to the act of declaring someone to be such a person. It is declarative: a statement about an accused person, not a transformation or infusion.⁴

Reflections [The New Interpreter's Bible, Vol. X; Nashville, 2002], p. 459, pp. 398-401). Henceforth cited as *Romans*.

³ See Schaff, *The Creeds of the Greek and Latin Churches* (London, 1877), pp. 89-100. Cf. H. Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, pp. 792-803.

⁴ This is conceded by some noted Roman Catholic scholars. See, for example, Hans Kung, *Justification: the Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic Reflection* (New York, 1964), p. 209: 'According to the original biblical usage of the term, "justification" must be defined as a *declaring just by court order*.' Cf. J. H. Newman, *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification* (6th edition, London, 1892), p. 65: 'in logical order, or exactness of idea, Almighty God justifies before He sanctifies; or, in rigid propriety of language, justification is *counting* righteous, not *making*'. (Newman's *Lectures* were first published in 1838, before his conversion to Catholicism. Notwithstanding this, Kung (*op. cit.*, p. 212) describes the volume as 'one of the best treatments of the Catholic theology of justification'. We should note, of course, that what these writers are conceding is not the Catholic doctrine of justification, but merely the meaning of the verb *dikaioo*. The *doctrine*, they would argue, is much wider than the *word*. On the other hand, such textbooks as Ott's *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (4th edition, Rockford, Illinois, 1960) adhere rigidly to the Tridentine position, even to the extent of treating justification under the heading, 'The Doctrine of God the Sanctifier'.

This appears in, for example, Exodus 23:6ff. The core statement is Yahweh's affirmation, 'I will not *acquit* (Hebrew, *atzdiq*) the wicked' (v. 7), but the whole context is juridical. Those charged with the administration of justice are being warned against corruption. They are not to pervert the justice due to the poor, they are not to slay the innocent and, above all, they are not to take bribes, 'for a bribe blinds the officials, and subverts the cause of those who are in the right'.

The same forensic setting is apparent in Deuteronomy 25:1ff., where to justify is clearly the opposite of to condemn: 'If there is a dispute between men, and they come into court, and the judges decide between them, justifying (Hebrew, *hitzdiq*) the innocent and condemning the guilty, then if the guilty man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall cause him to lie and be beaten in his presence.' In Isaiah 5:23 the force of the lawcourt imagery is enhanced by the picture of drunken judges: 'Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine, and valiant men in mixing strong drink, who acquit (justify) the guilty for a bribe, and deprive the innocent of his right!'

In the New Testament, the specific lawcourt imagery is much less prominent (the apostles were not, like Moses, laying down procedures for an earthly judicatory), but the basic meaning remains the same. Negatively, justification is the opposite of condemnation, as appears in Romans 8:33, 'Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies; who is to condemn?' Positively, justification means to declare someone (possibly oneself) to be in the right. The Pharisees, for example, justified themselves before men, but God passed a different verdict: He knew their hearts (Luke 16:15). Luke 7:29 is particularly illuminating, making crystal clear the gulf between the idea of justifying and the idea of making righteous. The context is Jesus' declaration of support for John the Baptist. The outcome is that the people 'justify God'. He was in the right in sending John.

But laborious analysis of biblical semantics is hardly necessary. Although the Christian Scriptures set forth a unique doctrine of justification, the concept of justification is not itself unique to Christians. It is common currency in all civilisations, and the fact that it basically means being declared or proved right can be demonstrated from the Oxford Dictionary as cogently (and as relevantly) as from a Hebrew or Greek lexicon. When human beings speak of justifying someone, they are referring to vindication, not to moral transformation. Indeed, we would do well to heed the words of Matthew Arnold, 'Terms like grace, new birth,

justification ... terms, in short, which with St Paul are literary terms, theologians have employed as if they were scientific terms.⁵

Take, for example, Robert Burns' use of the word 'justify' in the poem, 'To a Mouse':

I'm truly sorry man's dominion
Has broken nature's social union
An' justifies that ill opinion
Which makes thee startle
At me, thy poor, earth-born companion
An' fellow mortal!

Or take Milton's famous words in Book 1.26 of *Paradise Lost*, where he declares his intention to 'justify the ways of God to men'; or the words of Mark Pattison, 'We no longer have the difficult task of *justifying* science in the eyes of the nation';⁶ or the words of a young airman, Pilot Officer V. A. Rosewarne, in his last letter to his mother: 'The universe is so vast and so ageless that the life of one man can only be *justified* by the measure of his sacrifice.'⁷

In none of these instances would it make any sense whatever to understand 'justifying' as referring to inward renewal, infusion of righteousness or the repairing of a damaged soul. Even the proverbial, 'The end justifies the means' clearly bespeaks vindication, not transformation.

But what vital truth do we safeguard when we assert that justification is forensic, not ontological? The obvious point is that the judge's sentence has to do not with character, but with status. The verdict does not make the man in the dock a better person, or a worse. In the human court it merely indicates his relation to the law on a particular charge. In respect of the offence specified, he is innocent and free to go. The verdict itself is totally independent of character. The accused may have a string of convictions. He may even be an evil person. Yet in respect of the particular offence he is liable to no punishment and stigmatised by no guilt. He cannot even make his own evil character a reason for doubting his acquittal: 'I am a criminal,

⁵ Matthew Arnold, 'Literature and Dogma', 1.1. This essay can be found in John Drury (ed.), *Critics of the Bible 1724-1873* (Cambridge, 1989).

⁶ Cited by the *Oxford Dictionary* in support of its definition of 'justify' as, 'To show (a person or action) to be just or in the right; to prove or maintain the righteousness or innocence of; to vindicate (from a charge)'.

⁷ These words are inscribed on the portrait, 'The Young Airman', by Frank Salisbury, which hangs in the RAF Museum, Hendon. (*Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, p. 408).

a known criminal; therefore the judge must have found me guilty.' The verdict is not itself a moral renewal, and does not depend on moral renewal. It merely says, 'Not guilty!'

In all these respects the analogy from human justice holds good in relation to the divine act of justification. It is not a making righteous, but a declaring righteous. It does not make us God-like, but declares us to be right-with-God. We were held to be guilty sinners. Now we are affirmed as righteous.

FORGIVENESS

In one respect, however, the analogy with the human lawcourt is not complete. In the human court (at least under western judicial systems) the person appearing before the judge is innocent until proved guilty. The one who appears in the divine court, by contrast, is a sinner, and known to be such not only by the Judge but by himself. He knows that his life is indefensible and that if God marks his iniquity he will be swept away (Ps. 130:3). In such a case, the key element in justification is forgiveness; and such forgiveness must be an act of pure mercy.

The link between justification and forgiveness is plain in, for example, Romans 4:5ff., where Paul defines justification in terms of the non-imputation of sin and drives home the point with a citation from the Psalms of David: 'Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered' (Ps. 32:1). Similarly, in Romans 5:1 the result of justification is that there is peace between ourselves and God. Even more pertinent, perhaps, is the statement in Romans 8:1: 'there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus'. There was; but now there is none. The *none* is absolute. All danger of condemnation has been removed. Justified sinners 'lose all their guilty stains'. In the language of Ames, 'Not only are past sins of justified persons remitted, but also those to come ... justification makes the whole remission obtained for us in Christ actually ours.'⁸

⁸ William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology* (3rd edition, 1629. Translated from the Latin by J. D. Eusden and reprinted, Grand Rapids, 1997), p. 163. Cf. the words of John Owen (*Works*, Edinburgh, 1850-53), Vol. V, p. 146: 'in the first justification of believing sinners, all *future* sins are remitted as unto any *actual obligation* unto the curse of the law ... and although sin cannot be *actually pardoned* before it be *actually committed*, yet may the obligation unto the curse of the law be *virtually taken away* from such sins in *justified persons* as are consistent with a justified state' (italics his). See, too, the almost Protestant comment of Hans Kung, 'God treats us as though

It was in such terms that Jesus himself gave absolution. To the paralytic in Mark 2:5, for example, he says, 'My son, your sins are forgiven.' Similarly, of the woman who wiped his feet with her hair in the house of Simon the Pharisee he says, 'Her sins, which are many, are forgiven' (Luke 7:47). Paul states the point categorically in Colossians 2:13: 'you who were dead in trespasses, God made alive together with Christ, *having forgiven us all our trespasses*'. He cancelled the whole bond which stood against us.

The Old Testament proclaimed the same doctrine in some of its most memorable passages. David, for example, knows that if God forgives him he will be 'whiter than snow' (Ps. 51:7). Isaiah writes (1:18):

"Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD.
 "Though your sins are like scarlet,
 they shall be as white as snow;
 though they are red as crimson,
 they shall be like wool."

But we must also keep in view the point made by the prophet Micah: 'Thou wilt cast all our sins into the depths of the sea' (Mic. 7:19). One of the most specious platitudes of semi-erudite Protestantism is that, 'God forgives the sinner, but the sinner never forgives himself!' Such words have bred untold agonies of self-accusation and self-torture. We have to insist, instead, that God's forgiveness of our sins means that he forgets them. Such, indeed, are the very terms of the New Covenant: 'I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more' (Jer. 31:34). If he does not remember them, he cannot *remind* us of them. Who, then, does? What God has buried, let not our consciences raise. We have no right to go fishing in these waters. Instead, we have to believe in the forgiveness of sins. Such faith, as Barth points out, 'can never be lived except in a Notwithstanding: notwithstanding all that man finds himself and his fellow-men to be, notwithstanding all that he and his fellow-men may try to do'.⁹ Neither the guilt of past sins nor the shame of present failure should take that assurance from us.

we had not sinned. He hides his face from our sins and thus deletes them' (*Justification*, p. 212).

⁹ *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. IV.1 (Edinburgh, 1956), p. 634.

RECONCILIATION

The idea of forgiveness shades easily into that of reconciliation (a concept used by Paul alone among the writers of the New Testament). The link is made repeatedly by Calvin, who writes, for example, 'the righteousness of faith is reconciliation with God, which consists solely in the forgiveness of sins.'¹⁰ The identification is explicit in Paul himself: 'in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them' (2 Cor. 5:19). There is a similar ring to his language in Romans 5:9-11, where the statement, 'we are now justified by (*ev*) his blood' (verse 9) is clearly synonymous with the following declaration, 'we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son' (verse 10).¹¹

If forgiveness implies a state of guilt, reconciliation clearly implies a state of enmity: 'while we were *enemies* we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son' (Rom. 5:10). But on whose side was the enmity? Modern exegetes (going back at least as far as J. B. Lightfoot) have tended to limit it to our human hostility to God, as if there were no impediments to reconciliation on God's side.¹² There can certainly be no doubt about humanity's active enmity against God, or about the apostle Paul's clear perception of it. He has spelt it out plainly enough in Romans 1:18-32 (with regard to Gentiles) and in Romans 2:1-3:20 (with regard to Jews). Nor can we doubt that God took the initiative in reconciliation, his love anticipating and preceding not only our faith and repentance, but the very

¹⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.XI, 21. He writes to similar effect in the following paragraph, commenting on Paul's language in 2 Corinthians 5:19-21: 'Here he mentions righteousness and reconciliation indiscriminately, to have us understand that each one is reciprocally contained in the other... he reconciles us to himself by not counting our sins against us.' Earlier, in defining the benefits conferred by faith, he had declared that the first of these is that, 'being reconciled to God through Christ's blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a Judge a gracious Father' (*Institutes*, III.XI, 1).

¹¹ Cf. Dunn's comment: 'the close parallel between v. 9 and v. 10b shows that Paul regards the one as equivalent to the other' (*Romans 1-8* [Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas, 1988], p. 259). Hereafter cited as *Romans 1-8*.

¹² Noting that the 'universal language of the New Testament' is to speak of man as reconciled to God, not of God as reconciled to man, Lightfoot concludes that although the New Testament writers do use the expression, 'the wrath of God', 'when they speak at length upon the subject, the hostility is represented not as on the part of God, but of man'. (*Notes on the Epistles of St Paul* (London, 1895. Reprinted Winona Lake, Indiana, 1979), p. 288.

sacrifice of Christ itself. While we were hostile, evil, unrighteous, helpless, sinful and ungodly (Rom. 5:8), God demonstrated his love by not sparing his only Son, but giving him to die for us all (Rom. 8:32). This divine initiative is, if anything, emphasised even more clearly in 2 Corinthians 5:18-21, which insists that, 'All this is from God'. *He* reconciled us to himself through Christ. *He* was reconciling the world to himself. *He* made him who knew no sin to be sin for us. *He* refrained from imputing sin to us. *He* gave us the ministry of reconciliation. *He* appeals to us to be reconciled to God.

Yet, as both N. T. Wright and J. D. G. Dunn point out, it would be hazardous to adopt an either/or interpretation, as if the fact that there is enmity on our side against God were itself sufficient to prove that there is no enmity on his side against us.¹³ God is of purer eyes than to behold evil (Hab. 1:13). He may forgive sin, but he may not condone it. He condemns it. The final proof of that is his treatment of his own Son on the cross of Calvary. Because he was bearing the sin of the world, Christ was, in Paul's terms, 'cursed' (Gal. 3:13). In the immediate context of Romans 5:9-11, the clear impediment to reconciliation is 'the wrath': not our wrath, but an anger specifically emanating from God and directed against 'all ungodliness and wickedness of men' (Rom.1:18).

It is precisely because of the seriousness of this wrath and the gravity of the sin which evokes it, that, according to 2 Corinthians 5:18-21, God does not proceed directly and immediately from goodwill to reconciliation. In between, there lies the momentous *intermediate* step of the cross.

¹³ See Wright's *Commentary* on Romans 5:9-10. Wright acknowledges that Paul clearly sees all humans as being at enmity with God through sin: 'However, Paul has just mentioned the wrath, which (as in 1:18 and 2:5-11) clearly means God's wrath. This wrath stood over against us, and God's love has saved us from it. We should not, I think, cut the knot and suggest that the enmity was on one side only. God's settled and sorrowful opposition to all that is evil included enmity against sinners.' (*Romans*, p. 520). Dunn writes to similar effect, arguing that we should let the translation 'enemies' convey the implication of a mutual hostility (*Romans* 1-8, p. 258). Noting that wrath includes man's active and deliberate rebellion against God, Dunn adds, 'but it is also part of Paul's theology that "wrath" signifies an active hostility on God's part to that rebellion'. Cf. the earlier comment of James Denney, 'To St. Paul the estrangement which the Christian reconciliation has to overcome is indubitably two-sided; there is something in God as well as something in man which has to be dealt with before there can be peace.' (*The Expositor's Bible: The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* [London, 1894], p. 211).

First, there is the divine love, impelling towards reconciliation; then there is the sacrifice of Christ, in which God identifies his own Son with sin and treats *him* as sin deserves; then *we* become the righteousness of God in him; then and only then, there and only there, is the divine love reconciled to us.

That reconciliation denotes no moral transformation or spiritual change in us. It denotes specifically a change in God's attitude towards us: 'not counting their trespasses against them' (2 Cor. 5:19). This carries with it a revolution in our relationship with God. In this sense, reconciliation, like justification, is forensic. Like justification (Rom. 5:1), it brings peace: an objective cessation of hostilities. The divine condemnation is withdrawn, the threat of divine anger is averted, God no longer sees us as his enemies and no longer keeps us at a distance. Instead, we become God's intimates, members of his household and fully-fledged citizens of his kingdom (Eph. 2:11-22). To return to the language of Calvin, God, the stern, threatening Judge, has become our gracious Father.

VINDICATION

But justification is more than forgiveness and more even than reconciliation. It is a vindication: a divine acknowledgement that we are righteous. It is not a mere act of clemency, the exercise of the royal prerogative of mercy, repealing the sentence of eternal death while leaving the 'Guilty!' verdict unrevoked. The verdict itself is overturned. We are 'Not guilty!' We are righteous. The accused is vindicated and the slander of ungodliness removed.

But if justification means to declare someone righteous (*dikaïos*) we are still left with the question, 'What is a *dikaïos*?' Much of the recent discussion has focused on the alleged antithesis between the classical concept of righteousness (enshrined in the Greek word *dikaïos* and the Latin *iustus*) and the Hebraic (enshrined in the adjective *tsaddiq*). The classical notion, we are told, is legal, stressing conformity to a norm; the Hebraic is personal, stressing relationship rather than law.¹⁴ Alongside of

¹⁴ Dunn, for example, takes this distinction for granted: 'In the typical Greek world view, "righteousness" is an idea or ideal against which the individual and individual action can be measured ... In contrast, in Hebrew thought "righteousness" is a more relational concept – "righteousness" as the meeting of obligations laid upon the individual by the relationship of which he or she is part.' (*The Theology of Paul the Apostle* [Edinburgh, 1998], p. 341). Similarly, McGrath: '*dikaïosune* is a secular term incapable of assuming the soteriological overtones associated with the Hebrew term'.

this has developed the idea, central to the arguments of N. T. Wright, that the basic biblical understanding of righteousness, especially as applied to God, is faithfulness to the covenant.¹⁵

It is by no means clear that such linguistic contrasts deserve the respect commonly accorded them. The apostles chose to write and preach in Greek and they seem to have taken few pains to flag up the danger involved in using its vocabulary rather than the Hebrew. They certainly attached no health warning to their preaching, telling their audiences to take careful note that they were using the word 'righteous' in its Hebraic rather than its Greek sense. They knew that their Gentile audiences would bring their own conceptions to the word *dikaios*, as they would to the words *hilaskesthai*, *thusia* and *huiotesia*, and even to the words *kalos* and *agathos*. Yet they deliberately chose to communicate in such language, believing that it would enable them not only to say what they wanted to say, but to be heard as they wanted to be heard. The preacher in English runs exactly the same risk. The word 'righteous' cannot be theologically vacuum-packed. Like the incarnate Word, it dwells among us.

In any case, such antitheses between the legal and the personal are more apparent than real. The fundamental Ciceronian principle of justice is *suum*

(A. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* [2nd edition; Cambridge, 1998], p. 10). The scholar usually credited with changing the direction of thought on 'righteousness' is Hermann Cremer (*Die Paulinische Rechtfertigungslehre im Zusammenhange ihrer geschichtlichen Voraussetzungen*, Gütersloh, 1899). Cremer stressed in particular the link between righteousness and salvation, defining *tsedaqah* as *iustitia salutifera*. See further Mark Seifrid's survey, 'Righteousness Language in the Hebrew Scriptures and Early Judaism' in D. A. Carson, P. T. O'Brien and M. A. Seifrid (eds.), *Justification and Variegated Nomism* (Vol. 1; Grand Rapids, 2001), pp. 415-442.

¹⁵ This appears in, for example, his comment in 'Romans and the Theology of Paul' (in D. Hay and E. Johnson, eds, *Pauline Theology: Volume III, Romans* [Minneapolis, 1995]), p. 38: 'Alongside the fundamental covenantal meaning of the whole *dikaiosune theou* complex, there is, of course, the second-order lawcourt metaphor, derived not least from the Hebrew Scriptures' image of the righteous judge.' See also *Romans*, p. 471 (commenting on Romans 3:24) where he asserts that "'justification" carries both the lawcourt meaning that we would expect from the sustained metaphor of 3:9, 19-20, and the covenantal meaning that we would expect from 2:17-38 – these two being, as we have already explained, dovetailed in Paul'. Cf. *The Climax of the Covenant* (Edinburgh, 1991), p. 148: 'the *dikai-* language is best rendered in terms of "membership within the covenant"'.

cuique: giving to each his own. That is a perfectly sound norm for personal relationships, especially in the light of Paul's directive, 'Owe no one anything save to love one another' (Rom. 13:8). It is also perfectly possible to attach the biblical notion of covenant to the classical notion of *suum cuique*. A covenant (for example, a marriage 'contract') can define what we owe to each other and what we owe to God. Hence a *dikaïos* may well be understood as one who gives to God 'his own' as defined by the covenant.

Yet only occasionally does the Old Testament link the idea of righteousness to the concept of the covenant. Righteousness is a creational concept before it becomes a redemptive one: modified, indeed, by special revelation, but already clearly revealed in general revelation, and as such part of the religious and metaphysical inheritance of the whole human race. From this point of view, a survey of English usage would again be just as revealing as surveys of the Greek or Hebrew.

What is never far away is the concept of a norm. Righteousness is conformity to some standard, although that standard is seldom spelt out. The Greek word *dikaïosune* clearly bespeaks conduct that conforms to some norm or *dike*, whether personal or social, legal or theological. The same relation to a norm is apparent in the Hebrew *tsaddiq*, although, again, the actual norm is seldom spelt out.

The first biblical attribution of righteousness to God is in Genesis 18:25, where Abraham is pleading with God to spare the lives of any righteous people found in Sodom: 'Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?' However historic the moment may be semantically, the narrative does not specify either the norm by which men might be deemed righteous or the norm by which the judge of all the earth might be deemed to do right. It is assumed that in both instances the meaning will be self-evident, emerging not as a conclusion from some recondite lexical argument, but as a matter of natural law, or at the very least of social consensus.

Even in the historic moment when faith is credited to Abraham for righteousness (Gen. 15:6) there is no mention of the precise norm. We are simply told that Abraham believed God and that it was credited to him for righteousness. In the circumstances, faith was both appropriate and magnificent. God had made a mind-blowing promise: the still unborn descendants of the aged Abraham and the barren Sarah would be more numerous than the stars. However impossible (cf. Rom. 4:19), it was God who had said it; and because God had said it, you owed it to him to believe him, just as, if God made a threat, you owed it to him to fear him. At this point, there was as yet no covenant as such. That came later (Gen. 15:18).

Neither in God's case nor in Abraham's, then, could righteousness be defined at that point as faithfulness to the covenant.

Even more interesting is the case of Noah, the first figure in the Bible to be described as 'righteous'. Here, again, the criterion is left unexpressed. It was certainly not the covenant. The Noachic covenant was not instituted until after the Flood (Gen. 9:8-17). Noah's righteousness was a matter of the way in which he was perceived in the community: he was a righteous man, 'blameless in his generation' (Gen. 6:9). He was also a man who, like Enoch, walked with God (Gen. 6:9).

The justification of people like Noah and Abraham clearly occurred in a pre-covenant setting where judgements as to what constituted righteousness rested on conscience and on social consensus rather than on special revelation. This reinforces the claim that righteousness as such is a creational rather than a redemptive concept. Echoes of this can be heard even in the New Testament. Take, for example, the words of Paul in Romans 5:7: 'Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man – though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die.' It is interesting that N. T. Wright ventures little by way of elucidation of *dikaios* here, apart from dismissing the idea that it connotes 'the cold, legally correct person'.¹⁶ Dunn attempts to be more specific, looking for the source meaning in Maccabean martyrology before opting for an Aristotelian distinction: the *righteous* man is the man who is scrupulously just, the *good* man is the man who is prepared to make allowances.¹⁷ The very fact that the final appeal is to Aristotle, however, is significant. 'Righteous' and 'good' are not concepts unique to special revelation: nor, on this precise issue, is there any chasm between the perceptions of the 'natural man' and those of the 'spiritual man' (1 Cor. 2:14, 15). This is confirmed by the way that Paul in his Letter to the Philippians directs the Christians of this Roman colony to pursue a specific cluster of virtues, using for the purpose the characteristic terms of classical philosophy (Phil. 4:8). Among these are truth, purity and righteousness, as well as virtue (*arete*) itself. Clearly, righteousness did not mean one thing to Aristotle and another thing to Paul.¹⁸

¹⁶ Wright, *Romans*, p. 519.

¹⁷ Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 255.

¹⁸ Cf. Peter T. O'Brien: 'the apostle has taken over terms that were current coin in popular philosophy, especially in Stoicism. He wants his Philippian friends to develop those qualities which are good in themselves and beneficial to others, and so he has pressed those terms into service'. (*The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, [Grand Rapids, 1991], pp. 502ff.).

This is not to say that Paul or any other biblical writer is content with pagan ideals or prepared to endorse the presuppositions of classical philosophy. But it is to say that we should pause for serious reflection before adopting the assumption that there is a wide chasm between biblical and classical notions of righteousness. What the Torah did was not to replace the old norms, far less to contradict them, but to clarify them. It provided a clear standard, expressed summarily in the Decalogue and amplified in the Book of the Covenant (Exod. 20:1 – 23:33). This Torah, the Law, would henceforth serve as the benchmark for the righteous man. It would not, however, contradict the norms of the pre-covenant community, who recognised the righteousness of Noah. Nor would it contradict the instincts of the Gentiles, who 'do by nature what the law requires' (Rom. 2:14).

It was in relation to this Torah that David, for example, defined his own righteousness:

The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness;
 according to the cleanness of my hands he recompensed me.
 For I have kept the ways of the Lord,
 and have not wickedly departed from my God.
 For all his ordinances were before me,
 and from his statutes I did not turn aside.
 (2 Sam. 22:21-23)

Here the criterion by which David deems himself righteous is clearly the Torah. There is an implicit parallel to this in Psalm 1: implicit because the subject of the psalm is the blessed man rather than the righteous man. The two are brought together in the closing verse. Yahweh knows (approves) the way of the righteous, who, it is fair to assume, are also the blessed. If so, then the righteous man is the one who loves the Torah, meditates on it day and night, walks in its way and brings forth its fruit.

Yet (at the risk of repetition) the Torah does not bring in a new standard of righteousness. It merely clarifies the norms by which righteousness was defined before the giving of the Law. From this point of view the relation between the Torah and the patriarchal ethic is similar to that between the Torah and the Sermon on the Mount. The Torah no more came to abolish the pre-Sinai norms than Jesus came to destroy the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 5:17). Creation came before the Torah, and with creation came both human language and divine norms. This means, adopting the terminology of Wittgenstein, that the Torah does not use 'private language', as if it

were the first speaker on ethics or the founder of its own speech acts.¹⁹ The Torah neither invented a new language nor revealed new moral principles. The obligation to love God with their whole hearts and their neighbours as themselves lay as clearly upon Noah and Abraham as it did on Moses and David. It also lay, both before and after the giving of the Torah, on Gentiles, who had the works of the Law written on their hearts (Rom. 2:14).

This is the background to Paul's argument in Romans 5:12-14. Sin was in the world, and men suffered its doom even when, from Adam to Moses, there was no Law; and they suffered its doom because while there was no Law (Torah) there was 'law'. Otherwise, sin would not have been marked against them because 'sin is not counted where there is no law' (Rom. 5:13). Conversely, to justify a man would mean declaring him a keeper of the Law; a declaration which also implied that he was a keeper of 'law'.

There is no reason to assume that the giving of the Torah meant abandoning the idea of righteousness as a personal relationship. Even less did it mean dispensing with the notion of the covenant. The Decalogue was itself the covenant,²⁰ and the covenant defined not a merely legal

¹⁹ I owe the Wittgenstein link to an observation made by David Novak in the context of arguing that philosophy often forgets its theological origins and assumes it is speaking a 'private language'. Novak goes on to make a point similar to the point I have made above: 'Since creation precedes revelation, the method for understanding the Torah itself must come from the world itself. This is so, as Maimonides insisted, because the Torah, like the world, is a creation by God. The Torah itself, though, is not divine. Because the Torah is a more specific creation by God than is the world as a whole, *the methodology for understanding the more general created entity, the world, must be applied to understanding the more specific created entity, the Torah*' (italics mine). Novak also makes the associated point that 'the primary Jewish polity, the covenant,' is not something the Torah itself introduced into the world: 'It was already present in the world as a form of relationship between a sovereign and his subordinates.' See pp. 50, 54, 55 of Novak's essay, 'Theology and Philosophy: An Exchange with Robert Jenson' in C. E. Gunton (ed.), *Trinity, Time, and Church: A Response to the Theology of Robert W. Jenson* (Grand Rapids, 2000). All this accords perfectly well with the traditional Reformed insistence that without general revelation the scriptural ('special') revelation would be neither 'intelligible, credible or operative' (B. B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* [Philadelphia, 1948], p. 75).

²⁰ See, for example, Exodus 34:28, 'And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.'

relationship (whatever that means), but a personal one: 'I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people' (Lev. 26:12). Walking with God and being the friend of God therefore meant, simultaneously, keeping his Law, observing his covenant and having a personal relationship with him.²¹ These are the characteristics which defined the righteous man. He behaved in a way appropriate to humanity's relation to God, and under the Old Testament that meant keeping the covenant. For God to justify a man, therefore, meant declaring him a Covenant/Law-keeper.

PAUL

How does all this relate to the apostle Paul, the arch-exponent of the doctrine of justification? What is his conception of the righteous man?

N. T. Wright first faced this issue in an essay which appeared in a symposium entitled *The Great Acquittal*, published in 1980,²² and he has returned to it repeatedly in the course of a prolific publishing career. His most mature thought to date is set forth in 'New Perspectives on Paul', a paper (not yet published) presented to the Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference in August 2003.

According to Wright, justification is God's declaration that someone is in the covenant, but before looking at the details we should first note two remarkable features of the setting in which Wright operates.

First, there is its peculiar polemical edge. Already in *The Great Acquittal* (p. 14) Wright felt it necessary to write that justification 'is not how someone becomes a Christian, but simply the declaration that someone one *is* a Christian'. The precise target of the rebuttal becomes clear in 'New Perspectives on Paul'. There has been a general trend, Wright argues, to make 'conversion' and 'justification' more or less continuous (p. 10). This trend has been particularly marked since the 16th century and it has been 'sped on its way by the tendency to portray conversion as the establishment of "a personal relationship with God"' (p. 10). The result is that Christian dogmatics has come to use the word *justification* in a way

²¹ This should not be taken to mean that God and I are pals who might meet for coffee. But God and I have a relationship; and both God and I are both personal. Therefore, what we have is a personal or inter-personal relationship, analogous to that between the Father and the eternal Son.

²² G. Reid (ed.), *The Great Acquittal: Justification by Faith and Current Christian Thought* (London, 1980), pp. 13-37. Wright's essay is entitled, 'Justification: The Biblical Basis and its Relevance for Contemporary Evangelicalism'. Henceforth cited as *The Great Acquittal*.

that is totally at variance with the usage of the apostle Paul. The tradition has used 'justify' and its cognates to denote conversion, that initial movement of the Christian life whereby one becomes a Christian. By contrast, Paul's word for the initiatory moment of the Christian life is 'call' and he uses the word 'justify' to denote something that comes *after* the call (pp. 10, 11).

It is difficult to understand what provoked this particular critique. The word 'conversion' is nothing like as prevalent in Protestant dogmatics as it is in the discourse of evangelical religion.²³ The nearest biblical equivalent is 'repentance', especially that aspect of it captured by the Hebrew word *shubh* and the corresponding Greek noun *epistrophe*, both emphasising the idea of 'turn' or 'return'. Even in discussing repentance, however, the classical theologians portrayed it as but one half of conversion. W. G. T. Shedd (who does have a separate chapter on Conversion) put it succinctly: 'Conversion consist of two acts: 1. Faith; 2. Repentance.'²⁴ The evangelical preoccupation with conversion did not derive from Protestant dogmatics. Its probable source was the emphasis on testimony and conversion-narrative (particularly in connection with admission to church membership) which arose in the wake of the eighteenth-century Evangelical revival.

On the other hand, the concept of (effectual) calling, which Wright proposes as the proper alternative to justification/conversion, was extremely prominent in Protestant dogmatics, where it is invariably treated as prior to justification.²⁵ This emphasised the primacy and sovereignty of the divine initiative in applying redemption and brings out very fully the fact that calling comes before faith, which itself comes before justification. A glance at the *Shorter Catechism*, the most influential of all the documents of the Westminster Assembly, would have been sufficient to

²³ In Charles Hodge's *Systematic Theology*, for example, there are chapters on Vocation, Regeneration, Faith, Justification and Sanctification, but no separate chapter on Conversion (C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology* [London, 1873], Vol. 2, pp. 639-732; Vol. 3, pp. 3-258). This safeguards the very point Wright is concerned to make, namely, that justification is consequent upon a sovereign and efficacious divine call. Cf. Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids, 1978), where the Application of Redemption is covered by three chapters on Calling, Justification and Sanctification.

²⁴ W. G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* (Grand Rapids, n.d.), Vol. 2, p. 529.

²⁵ Besides Hodge and Heppe see, most recently, John Murray's *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids, 1955). Murray treats, successively, Effectual Calling, Regeneration, Faith and Repentance [one chapter] and Justification.

make this clear. There the decisive initiating step is taken by God, who in effectual calling 'persuades and enables' us to 'embrace Christ as he is freely offered to us in the gospel'. In this context, justification, far from being confused with calling, is a 'benefit' which 'flows from' calling. Even as such it does not stand alone. It is one of three 'benefits': justification, adoption and sanctification. One of these, sanctification, is ontological or transformational (at least in traditional Protestant dogmatics). The other two, justification and adoption, are forensic. But all three are benefits which flow organically, invariably and inevitably from that union with Christ brought about by the sovereign action of God in effectual calling. Whatever the confusions of which Protestant theology has been guilty, a confusion between justification and calling is not one of them.

The second curious factor in the setting of Wright's definition of justification is his assumption that Paul's is fundamentally a covenant theology.²⁶ This may be music to the ears of lovers of Federal Theology, but it is extremely doubtful whether Paul will fit comfortably into such a bed. Dr James Stewart was probably nearer the mark when he described union with Christ as the heart of Paul's theology.²⁷ But the safest view is that this theology, hammered out on the mission field and elaborated only in a series of occasional compositions, is not ruled by any single architectonic principle. The concept of the covenant certainly has little claim to being such a principle. The word scarcely occurs in the Pauline corpus. In the Epistle to the Romans, the most comprehensive statement of the apostle's thought, the word *diatheke* occurs only twice, and far from being pivotal to the development of the letter both references occur so late in the composition that it is hard to regard them as fundamental to Paul's

²⁶ See, for example, his criticism of Dunn in the Edinburgh paper, 'New Perspectives on Paul', p. 3: 'he never understands what I take to be Paul's fundamental covenant theology'.

²⁷ 'The conviction has grown steadily upon me that union with Christ, rather than justification or election or eschatology, or indeed any of the other great apostolic themes, is the real clue to an understanding of Paul's thought and experience.' (J. S. Stewart, *A Man in Christ* [London, 1935], p. vii). Something may be more fundamental, of course, without being more prominent. Cf. the remark of 'Rabbi' Duncan, 'There are fundamentals beneath justification. The person of Christ is fundamental ... justification by faith is the meeting-point of many doctrines, a rallying centre of theology; but it is not the foundation doctrine.' (J. Duncan, *Colloquia Peripatetica* [Edinburgh, 1871], pp. 58, 59). Duncan added, 'It is true that scarcely any of us in Scotland give due prominence to the Incarnation.'

plan (if he had a plan, which I doubt); and neither reference amounts, in any case, to much more than an allusion. In Romans 9:4, for example, possession of the covenant is one of the advantages enjoyed by the Jew: 'They are Israelites, and to them belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.' In the other reference, Romans 11:27, Paul is merely quoting from the prophet Isaiah (59:21; 27:9): 'and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.' The one reference to covenant in 1 Corinthians occurs in Paul's account of the institution of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:25) and simply repeats the words of Jesus himself, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood.'

In Galatians there are three references. Two of these (Gal. 3:15 and Gal. 3:17) occur in the same context and make the same point: the Sinaitic covenant cannot annul or replace the Abrahamic, because it was made over 400 years later (even a human covenant or testament cannot be simply set aside once it has been made). The remaining reference is in Galatians 4:24, where Paul allegorises the story of Hagar and Sarah, the former representing the Sinaitic covenant of bondage and the latter the Abrahamic covenant of grace. This clearly indicates that to Paul the covenant concept itself was neutral. It could be an instrument of grace or an instrument of law.

These Galatians references are of enormous theological significance when it comes to discussing two important issues: first, the relation between the Abrahamic, Mosaic and Christian dispensations; and, secondly, (along with Romans 11:17-19) the relation between the Old Testament church and the New Testament church. But the covenant was no more fundamental in Galatians than it was in Romans. When Paul pronounced a solemn anathema on those who preached another gospel (Gal. 1:8) what he had in his sights was not a group who denied the covenant, but a group who preached justification by works. The only way to elevate the covenant to the status of a controlling principle in Galatians would be to link it inextricably to the idea of righteousness. This, of course, is what Wright tries to do by defining righteousness as 'God's covenant faithfulness'. But Paul himself never links *dikaïosune* and *diatheke* in this way. To link them by bare assertion is to beg one of the key questions in the New Perspective debate. This is not to say that covenant is not important or even that interpreters of Paul cannot put it to good use (in explaining, for example, fundamental concepts such as promise and inheritance). But covenant itself is not a concept which figures prominently, far less controllingly, either in Paul's thought or in his vocabulary.

On the specific issue of the meaning of justification, Wright, as we have seen, firmly endorses the traditional Protestant view that it is a forensic act.²⁸ It is God's favourable verdict on the sinner: a declaring righteous, rather than a *making* righteous. Almost invariably, however, he subordinates the forensic nuances of justification to the covenantal, with the result that when he fleshes out this 'declaration' his language is far from traditional. Justification, he says, is, 'God's declaration that someone is a Christian' or that 'someone is a member of the covenant community' or that 'certain people are within the covenant'²⁹ or that they are 'God's true covenant people'³⁰ or 'members of his covenant family'³¹ or 'reckoned to be within the people of God'.³²

It is to Wright's credit that he has wrestled with the question of the meaning of 'righteous' in the context of justification. Theologians in general have devoted remarkably little attention to it, contenting themselves with repeating the statement that justification means 'to declare righteous', but apparently holding themselves under no obligation to define what 'righteous' means. Wright at least faces up to that obligation. It is difficult, however, to rest in his answer.

For one thing, it is hard to see how this definition accords with the fundamentally forensic nature of justification, particularly the insistence that justification is a vindication. Vindication implies a charge and the charge against human beings is not that they are not in covenant with God. For Paul's 'Gentiles' in particular that was not a crime: God had not offered them his covenant. The charge was that they are sinners. It can be no vindication, then, to declare them to be members of the covenant family. The only vindication would be a declaration that they are *not* sinners: that they are innocent.

Even more important, however, is the fact that a major Pauline concept (justification) is being defined in terms of another concept (covenant) which is virtually invisible in the apostle's writings. Even more invisible is the phrase 'in the covenant', which never appears at all in Paul.³³

²⁸ See, for example, the 'bare definition' offered in *The Great Acquittal*: 'justification is *the declaration that somebody is in the right*. It is a term borrowed from the lawcourt – that is what people mean when they say it is forensic' (*The Great Acquittal*, p. 14. The italics are Wright's).

²⁹ Wright, *The Great Acquittal*, pp. 14, 15.

³⁰ Wright, *Romans*, p. 471.

³¹ Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, p. 203.

³² Wright, 'Romans and the Theology of Paul', p. 38.

³³ Mark A. Seifrid observes that the phrase 'in the covenant' is rare even in the Old Testament and that when it does occur 'it signifies the entrance into

Paradoxically, it would have made much better sense if Wright had defined justification as 'God's declaration that one is a covenant-keeper'. This would have accorded well with his own starting-point,³⁴ since he consistently defines God's righteousness as his covenant faithfulness (or his loyalty to the covenant). By analogy, human righteousness must be *our* faithfulness to the covenant.

It would not be at all difficult to assimilate this latter definition into the orthodox Protestant doctrine of justification: when God justifies us he declares us to be, in Christ, covenant-keepers.³⁵ The problem is that, as we have seen, Paul makes such little use of the covenant concept. He does, however, repeatedly use the related term 'law' (*ho nomos*). In almost every instance the law, in Paul, means the Mosaic Law³⁶ and the Pentateuch associates this Law (the Torah) so closely with the covenant that it sometimes uses the terms interchangeably. This is especially true of the Decalogue. According to Exodus 34:27, for example, Moses 'wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.'

The reason for such metonymy is that the Torah is the *dike* or norm of the covenant. As such it is also the norm of righteousness and therefore of justification. The forensic and judicial *dike* by which God as judge pronounces people to be either in the right or in the wrong is the Law. When God justifies, he pronounces a man to be *dikaïos*, a righteous man; and that has to mean pronouncing him to be 'a keeper of the Law'. In Romans 5:19, for example, Paul describes the righteousness of Christ as 'obedience'. Our righteousness must be the same. And when, in Romans 8:1 he declares that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus he means that the Law does not condemn them. In Law they are innocent. The Law is satisfied. They have met its demands and it is, absolutely, on their side. The question how this can possibly be said of the

covenant responsibilities, not the enjoyment of saving benefits' (Carson, *et al.* [eds.], *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, p. 434).

³⁴ It would also accord with the definition of 'the righteous man' advocated by E. P. Sanders: 'the righteous man is one who has been *faithful* to the covenant' (*Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, [London, 1977], p. 205).

³⁵ It might, however, be difficult for Wright in view of his aversion to the idea of the imputation of Christ's righteousness.

³⁶ This is obviously a complex issue, but we can acquiesce provisionally in the conclusion of Cranfield: 'It is safe to assume that in Paul's epistles *nomos* refers to the OT law unless the context shows this to be impossible' (C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* [Vol. 1; Edinburgh, 1975], p. 154 fn.).

sinner and of the ungodly must wait for the moment. But there can be no doubt that this is what 'righteous' means.

Yet, although Wright's language will not serve as a definition of justification it does, nevertheless, set forth a truth: the truth covered by the Pauline word *huiothesia* (adoption). We have already noticed how closely Calvin links the idea of reconciliation to the idea of the divine fatherhood: 'being reconciled to God through Christ's blamelessness we have in heaven instead of a Judge, a gracious Father'.³⁷ Although Calvin did not use the word 'adoption' in this connection, there can be no doubt that justification and adoption are inseparably linked, although distinct. God both makes and declares the justified person a member of the covenant family. To return to the courtroom analogy: the judge acquits and vindicates the accused, but he does not then turn to him and say, merely, 'You are free to go!' Instead, he says, 'I want you to come home with me and to become a member of my family, with all that that means.'

Adoption is not, as such, an Old Testament concept, and even in the New Testament its use is limited to the apostle Paul (Rom. 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5). Paul does not relate the idea of adoption in any direct way to the idea of covenant, but he does link it very directly to the idea of inheritance: 'if children, then heirs: heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ' (Rom. 8:17). This provides an indirect link with covenant, since the word *diateke* can denote either 'covenant' or 'last will and testament' (a meaning it bears in, for example, Hebrews 9:16: 'For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established'). Taking the overall New Testament view, the believer, as an adopted child, enjoys many privileges (including access, provision, protection, security, indwelling by the Spirit, discipline and hope), but the primary thing is that every child of God enjoys the inheritance of his Father. Stated so baldly, it may not seem to amount to much, but we must always take it in the light of the accompanying phrase, 'joint-heirs with Christ'. The believer and Christ are co-heirs, enjoying one and the same inheritance. This means that all the promises made to Christ are, equally, promises made to his people. He is the heir of all things (Heb. 1:2) and in him all things are ours (1 Cor. 3:21ff.). We must be careful not to relegate or defer our enjoyment of this inheritance to the end-time. It is all too easy to forget that the death which makes a will effective is not the death of the beneficiary, but the death of the testator. We enter into the inheritance not when we die but when *he* dies. That means that we are already enjoying the benefits. God's promises are 'Yes!' and 'Amen!' in Christ (2 Cor. 1:20).

³⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.XI, 1.

Adoption, like justification, is entirely forensic. It is not a change in a child's nature or temperament or disposition. It does not make a bad child a good one or a good one a better. In itself, it leaves the child unchanged. What it changes is his or her status. It creates a whole new relationship: indeed, a set of relationships. In the religious use this forensic sense is plain. Adoption gives us a new spiritual status and brings us into a new relationship with God. We were enemies and aliens; now we are brought near, incorporated into God's family and fully entitled (indeed, as entitled as Jesus himself) to call God, 'Abba!'

One of the most remarkable features of the biblical presentation of this doctrine is the clear difference between Paul and John. John never uses the word adoption. He speaks, instead, of the new birth. Similarly, he does not refer to believers as 'sons' of God, but as 'children' (John 1:12; 1 John 3:1; 1 John 3:10). It would be hazardous to infer from this that while Paul's main interest is in the forensic, John's is in the transformational. John's language in John 1:12, for example, clearly has a forensic nuance: to those who received Christ God gave *authority* to *become* children of God. On the other hand, Paul can speak of Christian initiation as a vivification: God *made us alive* together with Christ (Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:13).

New birth and adoption are clearly two sides of the same reality. Being a child of God means both being adopted and being born again. This ensures that the forensic is inseparable from the ontological and transformational. In the case of the apostle Paul this becomes particularly clear in the connection between adoption and the gift of the Spirit: 'because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"' (Gal. 4:6). One result of this is boldness and assurance in our approach to God, but the Spirit also exercises a dynamic, transforming ministry in the heart of each believer, ensuring that we walk by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16), live by the Spirit (Gal. 5:25) and bear the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Under the Spirit's leadership, sin is mortified (Rom. 8:13) and 'the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit' (Rom. 8:4). The Spirit of Adoption is also the Spirit of Transformation.

In this respect, divine adoption differs radically from the human. The human adoptive parent cannot change the inherited nature of the child. God can. Not only is he able, like the human parent, to provide an entirely new environment for the child ('in Christ' or 'in the Spirit'). He is also able to change his child from within. He can give it a new heart. He can put his seed (*sperma*) in it (1 John 3:9). He can completely rewrite the software. This instantly precludes the possibility of our enjoying the privileges of

the Children of Light while living like the Children of Darkness. In the moment of adoption God provides for the eventual outcome: total moral and spiritual conformity to the image of his eternal Son. As we have born the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

But one thing must be made categorically clear. The forensic does not rest on the transformational. The change in nature does not earn or merit the change in relationship. We are not adopted because we are born again any more than we are justified because we are saints. If our peace rested on our transformation we would never have peace because we could never seem to ourselves transformed enough. Our faith has to lean on unconditional grace, not on personal moral and spiritual transformation.

Justification, then, is linked indissolubly to adoption ('membership of the covenant family'). But it is not the same. Adoption is a glorious plus, but without prior justification it would be inconceivable. God could not harbour the guilty, adopt the damned or damn the adopted. The marvel is that he does not stop at forgiveness, acquittal and vindication. He makes the criminal his child and his heir.

SING A NEW SONG: TOWARDS A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF SONG

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INTRODUCTION

Scotland is a land of song.¹ Whether we think of the traditional ‘mouth-music’ of the workplace in the Western Isles, or the Gaelic folk-rock of Runrig; the Jacobite songs of centuries ago, or the contemporary songs of Capercaillie; whether songs are sung with friends in the front room around the open fire, on the banks of Loch Lomond in the rain, or in a great amphitheatre or stadium, Scotland rings with strong melodies and haunting ballads.

However, the relationship between the Christian community and the lover of songs has often been a rather uncomfortable one. The church has always had a place (often a beloved place) for songs of praise in its worship.² The first phrase in the title of this paper is drawn from Psalm 149:1, and I doubt if anyone wishes to object to the singing of the Psalms! However, the church has often been hesitant of (if not simply antagonistic towards) any acceptance of the ‘secular’ music of the culture in which it finds itself. This may take the form of discouraging Christians from being actively involved in performing non-religious songs, or it may extend to a blanket condemnation of all songs that are not Christian in character.³

In some cases, it does not take in-depth research to discover good reason for such antipathy. The lyrics of some songs (ancient, as well as modern)

¹ In common, of course, with many other countries throughout the world. I trust that readers will contextualise my remarks as appropriate.

² See the helpful discussion of S. R. Guthrie, ‘Singing, in the Body and in the Spirit’ *JETS* 46/4 (2003), pp. 633-46, and the literature he cites.

³ One well-known critique of modern popular music is J. Blanchard, *Pop Goes the Gospel* (Darlington, 1983). Others from a similar theological perspective have, however, not been so negative in their judgement of modern popular music. See, for example, A. J. MacDonald, *Love Minus Zero* (Fearn, 1989), pp. 120-34. MacDonald makes frequent reference to another significant book which considers popular music from a Christian perspective: S. Turner, *Hungry for Heaven* (Eastbourne, 1988).

cannot be accepted by a Christian because of their profanity, or violence, or blasphemy, or crudity. Yet other factors often have an impact on the views of Christians also. The character of the singer may well be so godless that his or her songs are rejected. Or the venue in which the songs are sung may well cause concern.

However, valid as these latter concerns may be, they can lead to an attitude to song that is governed by association rather than by a biblical understanding of the place of song in God's world. For some people, this issue may seem of little significance. For others, music is like the air they breathe. I write this paper openly as one who loves songs, and who loves harmony and musical virtuosity and a driving rhythm. However, I too must submit my appreciation of music to the Word of God. The purpose of this paper is to survey some of the important biblical material relating to song, and to draw some conclusions about the validity or otherwise of this significant aspect of Scottish culture.

Before we turn to the primary texts, it is worth making a few foundational comments.

SONG IS NOT 'NECESSARY'

Song is not 'necessary' for true and full communication to take place. 'In the beginning', John tells us, 'was the *Word*' (John 1:1), not the song.⁴ Yet this 'Word' brings us a fully reliable exposition of God (John 1:18). In the beginning, according to Genesis 1:3, God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. There is not a hint of musical tone in the word that brought the first taste of order to the newly created cosmos.⁵ Yet these

⁴ Italics in all Scripture quotations are mine.

⁵ Having said this, both Genesis 1 and John 1 display such structure and such careful use of language as to be considered 'poetic' in a broad sense of that term. In this paper I do not intend to differentiate strongly between 'song' and 'poetry'. It seems to me that song is simply poetry set to appropriate music and since our access to both biblical songs (which perhaps were sung) and biblical poems (which perhaps were not) is through the written word, it seems unnecessarily pedantic to restrict consideration to texts which make explicit reference to musical accompaniment. For helpful introductions to the way in which Hebrew poetry functions, see P. D. Miller, *Interpreting the Psalms* (Philadelphia, 1986); C. H. Bullock, *Encountering the Book of Psalms* (Grand Rapids, 2001) and G. H. Wilson, *Psalms – Volume 1* (Grand Rapids, 2002). A classic study of the subtleties of biblical language is G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (London, 1980).

facts do not reduce the significance of our subject, but rather serve to highlight the vital importance of a proper understanding of song in the life of the Christian. For, though song was not essential to communication between God and human beings, between human beings and God, or between human beings and other human beings, yet the Father who gives good gifts gave human beings song. Thus, we might say that song is 'necessary' because God has given this gift to humans for the purpose of using and enjoying it.

A FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE

The words of James alluded to in the last paragraph should perhaps stand at the head of this paper as the fundamental principle in our discussion of the place of song in the life of the believer. James 1:17 reads as follows (in the NRSV):

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

The Greek text reinforces the strength of this statement by placing two phrases in parallel:

Pasa dosis agathe
kai
pan dorema teleion

Each word has a counterpart with substantially the same meaning, and mostly with similar sound. Thus this fundamental text is itself poetic in character.⁶ The repeated 'every' adds emphasis to the thesis that if a gift can be described as 'good' or 'perfect', then it has certainly come from the Father.

The source of these 'good gifts' is the 'Father of lights'. There is little doubt that this phrase, which is unique in the NT, relates to the creation account.⁷ In Genesis 1:14-18, God creates the sun and moon and stars as 'lights' (*phosteres*). The reference is perhaps intended to allude to the fact that God, who created all things, called his creation 'good' (Gen. 1:4, 10,

⁶ 'The words form an almost perfect hexameter' D. Moo, *James* (TNTC; Leicester, 1985), p. 75 n.1. See also P. Davids, *Commentary on James* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, 1982), p. 86.

⁷ See Ps. 136:7-9; Jer. 31:35.

12, 18, 21, 25) and 'very good' (Gen. 1:31).⁸ If God created 'good' things at that earliest point, will he not continue to provide what is good? The answer is 'yes', because he is not like the shifting shadows. We may, perhaps, develop James' statement to suggest that the very diversity of good gifts, which God gives reflects his character as creator. Song, with its endless potential for human creativity, reflects the very character of God, and perhaps may be understood as an aspect of the image of God in humanity.

Having made these initial comments, we now turn to consider biblical evidence from the OT relating to song and singing.

SONG IN THE PENTATEUCH

While no explicit song-vocabulary is found within the first three chapters of Genesis, Henri Blocher has hinted that Adam's exclamation at the sight of his newly created wife might best be described as a love song.⁹ Adam declares,

'This is now bone of my bones,
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man' (Gen. 2:23).

Gordon Wenham notes that this carefully crafted use of language is not an irrelevance, but rather a means of focussing attention on this most precious gift: 'the man's exclamation concentrates all eyes on this woman'.¹⁰ In fact, these are the very first recorded words from a human being, and they are poetic!

What is more, this is a 'secular' song! There is no reference to God and no exclamation of praise; Adam only has eyes for Eve! Yet I trust that the very act of describing Adam's 'song' as 'secular' raises grave reservations about that description, which I will return to later. How could we regard this song, sung within the very boundaries of Eden, as anything other than prompted by the Lord?

⁸ Although the Greek word used by the LXX for 'good' (*kalos*) in Genesis 1 is different from the term employed by James.

⁹ H. Blocher, *In the Beginning* (Leicester, 1984), p. 199. Blocher uses the language of poetry, but the distinction between poetry and song is so minor as to be of no consequence for this study.

¹⁰ G. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (WBC; Waco, 1987), p. 70.

The canonical location of this poetic outburst is also significant, in that it is pre-Fall. The expression of human delight through the medium of poetry cannot be relegated to the world of imperfection found in Genesis 3 and all that follows. Song may be included in all that was declared 'very good'. Blocher helpfully draws attention to the contrast between the sublime poetry of Genesis 2:23 and the vengeful song of Lamech in 4:23-24:

Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
 you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say:
 I have killed a man for wounding me,
 a young man for striking me.
 If Cain is avenged sevenfold,
 truly Lamech seventy-sevenfold.

Blocher comments that 'Lamech's poetry oozes hatred',¹¹ and so highlights for us the fact that, following the Fall, the devices of poetic language (parallelism, assonance, etc.) may be employed for both good and evil ends, for reflecting God's character and for denying it. Thus the moral character of poetry or song cannot be judged on the basis of its form, only of its content.

We have begun our survey by drawing implications from texts which are not explicit in their reference to song. Yet we do not lack explicit reference to song in the OT. Although it would be very exciting to be able to recreate these songs authentically, 'relatively little is known about the way ancient music sounded and was performed'¹² and so we must be content to access these songs through the written word.

One of the most famous songs in the early part of the OT, and, in the judgement of R. Patterson, 'one of the loveliest songs in the corpus of Israel's earliest poetry',¹³ is the 'Song of the Sea' found in Exodus 15. In fact, we find two songs in this chapter, or at least two groups of singers with a developing song. In 15:1, we are told,

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD: 'I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.'

¹¹ Blocher, *In the Beginning*, p. 199.

¹² G. H. Wilson, 'Song' in *ISBE* IV, pp. 581-84, here p. 584.

¹³ R. D. Patterson, 'The Song of Redemption', *WTJ* 57 (1995), p. 453-61, here p. 453. See Patterson's article for detailed analysis.

This song follows immediately after the mighty act of Yahweh's deliverance of his people from the hands of the Egyptians, and is an appropriate response to this act of redemption.¹⁴ It is frequently described as a 'victory song'.¹⁵ The words take the form of a confession of praise on the part of the singers, using, initially, the first person singular pronoun. The song does more than talk about God, however. It recounts the event that has just occurred (thus embedding the event firmly in the cultural heritage of the people of Israel), and also presents the interpretation of the event given by Moses. Thus, while a prosaic description of events might say 'an east wind separated the waters of the sea' (cf. 14:21), Moses is inspired to sing (15:8):

At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up,
the floods stood up in a heap;
the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea.

While the former description is entirely accurate, and indeed has its own effectiveness as narrative, there can be little doubt about the impact of the second version on the imagination of the hearer, as there can be little doubt who is responsible for what has happened. This creative interpretation of the act of God in history might be legitimately described as 'poetic theology' or 'theology in song'.

Later in the same chapter, in 15:20-21, we are introduced to the singing of Miriam, and are given a brief taste of her song:

Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand;
and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing.
And Miriam sang to them: 'Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed
gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.'

In this case, the song is couched in terms not of personal confession but of exhortation. Yet there is harmony between the two songs as seen in the carefully crafted refrain: 'Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea' (vv. 1, 21).

A different type of song is found in Numbers 21:16-18:

¹⁴ See B. Childs, *Exodus* (London, 1974), p. 248.

¹⁵ See Childs, *Exodus*; P. R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, 1998), p. 103.

From there they continued to Beer; that is the well of which the LORD said to Moses, 'Gather the people together, and I will give them water.' Then Israel sang this song:

'Spring up, O well! – Sing to it! –
the well that the leaders sank,
that the nobles of the people dug,
with the scepter, with the staff.'

This would appear to be a working song,¹⁶ perhaps with a rhythm to keep the pace of digging! R. B. Allen comments, 'It is possible that the song is the nearest we come in the Bible to "popular music".'¹⁷ By this reference to 'popular music' we should understand music that exists, not to communicate some great truth, but to be enjoyed for its own distinctive character. However, Allen recognises the pervasive theological perspective of the people of God when he continues, 'In this song there is a sense of joy of knowing God even though the name of God is not mentioned.' It is this consciousness of living life in the context of a vital relationship with God that will make all the difference to our ability to appreciate the gifts he has given in the world around us.

An interesting reference to a significant song is found towards the end of Deuteronomy in 31:19-30. Yahweh tells Moses in 31:14 that his time as leader of God's people is almost at an end, and that when he is gone the tendency of the people will be to turn away from God. So Yahweh instructs Moses to write down a song and to teach it to the people so that

when many terrible troubles come upon them, this song will confront them as a witness, because it will not be lost from the mouths of their descendants. For I know what they are inclined to do even now, before I have brought them into the land that I promised them on oath (31:21).

This song is therefore not a praise song (although the song does conclude with a call to praise in 32:43-47). It has more of the character of a testimony which will be passed on from generation to generation in order to stand against the generation that departs from the ways of Yahweh. Peter Craigie comments,

The song would serve a solemn function; as the people learned the song and took its words upon their own lips, they would be bearing witness against

¹⁶ So W. W. Klein, C. L. Blomberg and R. L. Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas, 1993), p. 272.

¹⁷ R. B. Allen, 'Numbers' (*EBC* Vol. 2; Grand Rapids, 1990), p. 881.

themselves, not only of their commitment to God, but also of their knowledge of the inevitable consequences of unfaithfulness.¹⁸

It would appear, then, that the regular act of taking the words of a song on their lips impressed the message on the people more forcefully and more permanently than prose. The song itself is written in Deuteronomy 32. Craigie points out that this song, unusually for Hebrew poetry, is 'spoken' (31:30) rather than sung.¹⁹ C. Wright offers a helpful insight into the powerful combination of themes in this song. He comments,

Verse 4, lustily sung as a chorus, affirms the character of God in repetitive, overlapping parallelism. As the Rock, God is utterly dependable, empty of any wrongdoing, the very foundation of all integrity and justice. Verse 5, not so often sung at all, affirms the lamentable opposite in Israel's case. These people are corrupt, slippery, unstable, warped and crooked.²⁰

The juxtaposition of these themes in a single creative composition designed to be repeated again and again by the people of God serves to bring before the people of Israel, again and again, from their own lips, the faithfulness of their God and the unfaithfulness of his people. If all of this sounds rather 'heavy' for a song, we should not allow ourselves to miss the impact of Moses' words in 32:46, 47:

Take to heart all the words that I am giving in witness against you today; give them as a command to your children, so that they may diligently observe all the words of this law. *This is no trifling matter for you, but rather your very life*; through it you may live long in the land that you are crossing over the Jordan to possess.

Songs, we must recognise, are not always a matter of light entertainment!

SONG IN THE PROPHETS

Judges chapter 5 contains a song which was sung by Deborah and Barak.²¹ David Gunn writes of this text that,

The song (chap. 5) that crowns the prose account of Jael's exploit (chap. 4...) brings the prose narrative of Sisera's death into focus by wordplay as

¹⁸ P. C. Craigie, *Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, 1976), p. 372.

¹⁹ Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, p. 373.

²⁰ C. Wright, *Deuteronomy* (Peabody, 1996), p. 298.

²¹ It is introduced with a similar formula to that employed in Exodus 15:1.

well as by precise repetition. 'He asked for water – milk she gave' (5:25) distills the irony of the more prosaic 4:19 ('and he said to her, "Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty"; and she opened the skin of milk and gave him some to drink').²²

The point of the song, then, is not to impart new information to the reader. For Deborah and Barak, the song immortalised a telling moment in the history of their people; for the modern reader, it brings the story to a fitting and memorable climax to the narrative of chapter 4. We should note, however, that the function of the song is not simply literary but it is theological, providing a theological context for this incident from the battlefield, particularly as it emphasises Yahweh's disposition towards his enemies and those who love him (5:31).²³

2 Samuel 1:18 makes reference to the 'Song of the Bow'. David, we are told, 'ordered that the Song of the Bow be taught to the people of Judah'. In fact, the Hebrew text makes no reference to a 'song'; it simply records that David said to teach the sons of Judah 'the bow'. However, it seems clear that 'the bow' is a title for the following lament. This view is reinforced when the reader is then informed where this song can be located ('It is written in the Book of Jashar').

The lament of David in the verses that follow is very significant indeed, although perhaps it causes preachers some uncertainty as to how to tackle it. It is a lament for David's dear friend Jonathan, and because of its significance I will reproduce it in full:

Your glory, O Israel, lies slain upon your high places!
How the mighty have fallen!

Tell it not in Gath,
proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon;
or the daughters of the Philistines will rejoice,
the daughters of the uncircumcised will exult.

You mountains of Gilboa,
let there be no dew or rain upon you,
nor bounteous fields!
For there the shield of the mighty was defiled,
the shield of Saul, anointed with oil no more.

²² R. Alter and F. Kermodé, *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (London, 1987), p. 106.

²³ For a recent discussion of this passage which is sensitive to its literary and theological contributions, see K. L. Younger, *Judges/Ruth* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids, 2002), pp. 132-66.

From the blood of the slain,
 from the fat of the mighty,
 the bow of Jonathan did not turn back,
 nor the sword of Saul return empty.

Saul and Jonathan,
 beloved and lovely!
 In life and in death they were not divided;
 they were swifter than eagles,
 they were stronger than lions.

O daughters of Israel,
 weep over Saul,
 who clothed you with crimson, in luxury,
 who put ornaments of gold on your apparel.

How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle!
 Jonathan lies slain upon your high places.
 I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan;
 greatly beloved were you to me;
 your love to me was wonderful,
 passing the love of women.

How the mighty have fallen,
 and the weapons of war perished!

Interestingly, as with Adam's song, there are no references to God or to his activities, there are no exclamations of praise, or petitions of prayer.²⁴ And yet only a very shallow reading of this text would allow the reader to come to the conclusion that God had nothing to do with this text. The text is evidence of a friendship lived in the light of God's covenant to his people, and the fact that there is no explicit reference to God does not lessen the fact that this song is indelibly marked with his character. What the reader finds here is a human heart exposed in grief. The depth of friendship is glimpsed. The loyalty of David to Saul, even in the face of persecution, touches the heart.

What is this song? In at least some respects, it is a love song: not in any sentimental way, and certainly not in any improper way as some

²⁴ See R. F. Youngblood, 'Judges' (*EBC* 3; Grand Rapids, 1992), p. 810: 'The poem is strikingly secular, never once mentioning God's name or elements of Israel's faith.' An example of a song of David extolling the character of Yahweh is found in 2 Samuel 22.

modern commentators,²⁵ with modern ethical perspectives, would like to suggest, but a love song, nonetheless.²⁶ David can say:

I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan;
greatly beloved were you to me;
your love to me was wonderful,
passing the love of women

and in doing so he demonstrates the power of a song to say what prosaic words never could. The impact of the song on the consciousness of the people of Israel may be seen in the fact that when the Jewish hero, Judas Maccabaeus died in about 160 BC, many centuries after David's time, it was David's dramatic refrain 'How the mighty are fallen!' (1:19, 27) that came to the lips of his family (1 Macc. 9:21).

Perhaps the prophetic books do not appear to be a rich quarry for song, but Isaiah may take us by surprise (as also his original hearers) when in 5:1 he beckons,

Let me sing for my beloved
my love-song concerning his vineyard:
'My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill.'²⁷

The lush imagery of this song whets the appetite for more rich metaphor, but it does not take more than a few lines before we discover that this is a love song with teeth! The vineyard produces nothing of value and so will be destroyed. Then verse 7 makes everything plain:

For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel,
and the people of Judah are his pleasant planting;
he expected justice, but saw bloodshed;
righteousness, but heard a cry!

Even in these words, the symmetry and parallelism maintains the poetic quality. This passage clearly indicates the power of song to be used as a medium of irony and rebuke.

²⁵ E.g. T. Horner, *Jonathan Loved David: Homosexuality in Biblical Times* (Philadelphia, 1978).

²⁶ See the helpful discussion of B. T. Arnold, *1 & 2 Samuel* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids, 2003), pp. 411-14.

²⁷ Klein, Blomberg and Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, p. 224, helpfully demonstrate the use of word repetition in this verse.

SONG IN THE WRITINGS

Standing as a majestic opening to the Hebrew 'Writings' there is no overlooking the substantial proportion of the OT that is devoted to the Psalms. These songs of praise to 'the God who rules'²⁸ have been treasured and used by the people of God through the years for several reasons. One important reason for this is that Jesus and the NT writers quote the Psalms frequently, drawing out the messianic implications of psalms such as 2 and 110.²⁹ However, further reasons will include the depth of human experience reflected in these songs, and the beauty of the poetry used by the authors as they were 'carried along by the Holy Spirit' (2 Pet. 1:21). Psalm 19 exemplifies the beauty of the language with its personification of creation and its rich metaphors, while, with respect to human emotion, few psalms can match Psalm 22 in depth of pathos and Psalm 23 is a masterful expression of peace and security.

Psalm 40:3 speaks of a 'new song'. Van Gemeren is surely right when he argues that this does not necessarily mean that a new composition has been written, but that the saving activity of God (40:1-2) has put every song into a new perspective.³⁰ The same phrase in Psalm 33:3 is combined with the exuberance of thankful praise, while it is used in Psalms 96:1 and 98:1 in the context of recounting the mighty acts of God.

Since the Psalms are so familiar and comparatively well-known, I will spend no further time discussing them. However, their significance for appreciating the great gift of song must not be underestimated, and can scarcely be overestimated.

One of the most important texts for the purposes of this paper, and one of the most intimidating portions of Scripture to Christian believer and professional interpreter alike, is the Song of Solomon, or the Song of Songs. Surprisingly, the term 'song' appears only once in this document, in the title (where the song is described as a *shir* or *asma*).³¹ However, this is not so surprising since what we find in this text is not an instruction manual on how to sing, or even as we find in other parts of Scripture, an injunction to sing; the whole of this work is an example of a song in action. It is a song that is sung.

²⁸ See the analysis of P. R. House, *Old Testament Theology*, 402-23.

²⁹ See S. Moyise and M. J. J. Menken (eds), *The Psalms in the New Testament* (London, 1994).

³⁰ W. A. Van Gemeren, 'Psalms' (*EBC* 5; Grand Rapids, 1991), p. 318.

³¹ A good discussion of this remarkable document can be found in I. Provan, *Ecclesiastes/Song of Songs* (Grand Rapids, 2001).

In fact, the phrase in the title is 'Song of Songs': this document is the most sublime of songs, the pinnacle of the craftsmanship of the songwriter. Yet the question remains: What kind of song is this?

There is a long tradition in Christian interpretation to treat this work as an allegory of the love of Christ for his people,³² and there is some biblical evidence to add support to this view in that the NT on several occasions likens Christ to a bridegroom coming for his bride.³³ However, in the case of the Song of Songs, this approach can only be worked out by a studious avoidance of certain portions of the song.

The most natural reading of the dramatic and sensual language is as a love song (or a collection of love songs) between two married³⁴ human beings who have been gripped by the reality of the words 'they shall become one flesh'.³⁵ It seems to me that the church's reluctance to accept that position stems, at least partly, from the conviction that a 'non-religious' song has no valid place in the canon of Scripture. Longman and Dillard write,

As can happen in any age, cultural presuppositions biased interpreters against the original meaning of the text and a spiritual, rather than a sexual, interpretation of the Song was the result.³⁶

In fact, an interpretation of this song as a love song between two humans has a hugely significant impact on our understanding of human relationships. In the garden, the disobedience of the first pair led to the devastation of the original wholeness between them. Nakedness without shame (Gen. 2:25) gave way to rather pathetic patchwork coverings (Gen. 3:7) indicating the great gulf that sin had brought between them. The Song of Songs points the way to a renewed wholeness in the relationship

³² See T. Longman, III, and R. B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Leicester, 1995), pp. 259-63.

³³ Cf. Ephesians 5 and Revelation 22.

³⁴ Longman and Dillard, *Introduction*, p. 261, write: 'Nowhere in the book are the lover or the beloved said to be married. Also, although there are wedding songs, no marriage ceremony is explicit in the book. However, the canonical context of the book makes it clear that this poem describing such intense lovemaking between the two requires that we presume they are married. In other words, the Song must be interpreted within the context of the law of God, which prohibits any kind of pre- or extramarital intercourse.'

³⁵ Longman and Dillard, *Introduction*, p. 259

³⁶ Longman and Dillard, *Introduction*, p. 261.

between a husband and wife, extending not only into their spiritual life but into their physical relationship also. Paul House points the way to a valid reading of this song when he writes,

Read in isolation, Song of Solomon is artistically and thematically lovely but not particularly theologically enriching. As part of a unified canon, however, as part of an ongoing interactive, authoritative whole, this book confirms earlier teachings about marriage while adding its own unique contribution about pre- and postmarital passions. As part of the canon Song of Solomon testifies to the one God who created men and women for loving, permanent relationships with one another.³⁷

The Song must be read in the light of the totality of Scripture to have its true impact, and, when read in that light, there is no need to provide the 'real meaning' in terms of spiritualising allegory. House points the way forward in appreciating the awe-inspiring beauty of this song, rather than mutilating it in the search for 'lessons'.

One further piece of literature to be mentioned is Lamentations. This largely unfamiliar document further illustrates the fact that song is not a medium reserved for the expression of joy. The document is carefully constructed according to the conventions of a 'dirge' or 'lament'. Among the characteristic features of the dirge, the contrast between past blessing and present disaster is particularly striking. Thus, Lamentations 1:1 reads,

How lonely sits the city
that once was full of people!
How like a widow she has become,
she that was great among the nations!
She that was a princess among the provinces
has become a vassal.

The expression of heart-rending emotion in Lamentations is quite overwhelming, yet, remarkably, Lamentations clearly demonstrates that it is not an unpremeditated wail but is a composition of astonishing creative artistry. Of the five chapters which compose Lamentations, four are acrostic poems, beginning each successive unit of the poem with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The fifth and final chapter is not an acrostic, but it resembles chapters one, two and four in that it too has twenty-two verses, corresponding to the twenty-two characters in the Hebrew alphabet. Chapter three forms the fulcrum of this delicately balanced composition by

³⁷ House, *Old Testament Theology*, p. 469.

modifying the acrostic structure so that instead of successive substantial verses beginning with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the author composes a group of three short verses, each beginning with the same character, followed by another group of three verses each beginning with the next character, and so on through the whole alphabet. Anyone who has attempted to write an acrostic poem will realise what mastery of language is required to move beyond banal verse. God chose to move his chosen author in such a way that he expresses a broken heart and also a living hope in the Covenant God, through delicate and intricate poetic structure. Interestingly, although modern Christians do not tend to empathise with the sombre tone of Lamentations, the familiar hymn 'Great is thy faithfulness' is based upon Lamentations 3:22-23, which is the point on which the whole dirge balances.

A CAUTIONARY NOTE

We have seen the pervasive presence of song in the OT. Yet there is not unqualified praise for those who sing. The southern prophet Amos, sent to proclaim God's judgement on the wayward northern kingdom of Israel, has typically biting words for certain music-lovers (6:4-7):

Alas for those who lie on beds of ivory, and lounge on their couches, and eat lambs from the flock, and calves from the stall; who *sing idle songs* to the sound of the harp, and like David improvise on instruments of music; who drink wine from bowls, and anoint themselves with the finest oils, but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph! Therefore they shall now be the first to go into exile, and the revelry of the loungers shall pass away.

The reference to David in the midst of this prophetic woe oracle suggests that it is not the activity of these people that is condemned, since David is extolled for his skill in music. It is the last phrase of verse 6 that provides the key to the problem – music was more important than the issues of God's people.

THE FUNCTION OF SONG IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

We have found songs in each of the major sections of the OT: the Law, the Prophets and the Writings. In drawing our survey of texts together, we can make some comments regarding the function of song in the OT.

- a. Song is a gift of creative and evocative communication that has been given to human beings by a gracious God whose creativity is reflected

- in the words of human songs. Thus song may be legitimately used as a form of expression where there is no explicit reference to faith in God.
- b. Songs are frequently used to express praise and thankfulness to God, yet they are often addressed to other human beings to share in the act of singing. They frequently recount (in vivid and memorable form) the saving acts of God among his people through the ages. They therefore act as a potent form of education, encouragement and exhortation within the community of believers. Songs may not always be 'enjoyable' but may be the bearers of words of rebuke.
 - c. Songs are neither inherently good nor inherently bad. They may be misused when the form of a song is filled with ungodly content, or when perfectly good songs are used in a way that is unacceptable to God.

SONG IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Discussions relating to song in the NT have often gravitated all too quickly to the several famous 'hymns' (particularly in Colossians 1 and Philippians 2) and to the (for some) contentious issue of the meaning of 'psalms, hymns and spiritual songs' (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19). In choosing to pass over discussion of these texts here, it is not my intention to devalue these passages of Scripture – these exegetical questions deserve careful discussion – but it is my intention to indicate that there are a number of texts in the NT that shed light on the value of song, and yet which are too often neglected.

Discussion could well focus on several references to song or singing in the NT documents. For example, Acts 16:25 tells of Paul and Silas singing praise at midnight in the prison in Philippi. Or, turning to Paul, tucked away in the lengthy passage on the proper outworking of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 14:15) are the words, 'I will sing praise with the spirit, but I will sing praise with the mind also' which beg for elucidation. James also has a commendation of song, once again in the context of worship, and yet not necessarily in the context of a 'formal' Christian gathering: 'Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise' (5:13).

However, I intend to limit my discussion in this paper to two NT documents where songs are not simply commended or described, but actually reproduced, and clearly identified in the body of the document within which they occur.³⁸

³⁸ Cf. R. E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (ABRL; New York, 1998), p. 489.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Luke's Gospel provides a rich vein of biblical material for exploring the theology of song. Luke, distinctively among the three Synoptic authors, records several 'songs' in some detail in the early chapters of his gospel. Though they are not described with the language of song or singing, it is clear from their structure that they are song-like in character, and it is worth our while taking a few moments to consider them.³⁹

The Magnificat (1:46-56)

The overwhelming news that comes by the angel to the young Middle-Eastern girl, Mary, does not result in hysterics or dramatics, but results in a song! The song stands in a worthy tradition of the songs of God's people through the ages, and the character of the song indicates that Mary was well established in the history of her people.⁴⁰ Indeed, the personal aspect of the song is very short-lived as the song becomes an expression of confidence in the God who cut a covenant with Abraham. And so the origins of God's people in an act of God's grace are identified, confessed and conveyed to those who will come afterwards, by means of one more song. Thus, Mary's song functions in a very similar way to the 'Song of the Sea' and other OT songs by providing theological reflection on God's mighty acts on behalf of his people. The song, including its poetic mode of expression, is not a quaint reflection on Mary's personal experience but it is a valid – indeed God-breathed – act of theological interpretation, setting God's remarkable act of incarnation in the wider context of his covenant commitment to his people through the ages.

The Benedictus (1:67-79)

Zechariah's song has added poignancy from the fact that it was the first expression that came from a tongue mute for nine months. It is clearly the Holy Spirit who so fills Zechariah in his moment of obedience that he 'prophesied' this poetic composition (v. 67),⁴¹ and so once again we are

³⁹ See in particular, S. Farris, *The Hymns of Luke's Infancy Narratives* (JSNTS; Sheffield, 1985).

⁴⁰ D. L. Bock, *Luke* (BECNT, Leicester, 1994), pp. 44-5. Mary's song shares some common themes with the 'Song of the Sea' and Deborah's song. Perhaps it recalls Hannah's prayer (1 Sam. 2) most closely; a fact which reinforces the need to be sensitive to form and content rather than explicit description in our present discussion.

⁴¹ J. B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 111, describes the prophecy as 'Zechariah's Song'.

confronted with the divine choice to communicate in poetic language. As with Mary, Zechariah recognises the part he and Elizabeth play in a much greater drama, tracing God's faithfulness back to his promise to Abraham, using concise and evocative expressions to highlight the significance of what is happening to him and his family.⁴² Thus, not only *has* God visited his people in the past (v. 68) but he *will visit* (v. 78) in the future act of grace to which Zechariah and Elizabeth's son will bear witness. Yet we should not so emphasise the theological function of the song that we neglect the context of the birth of the child, John, to astonished parents. This is surely a song that comes from Zechariah's heart and we can perhaps imagine him gazing lovingly at his son as he begins the second part of this balanced composition with the words of direct address, 'and you, my child' (v. 76) and then alludes in delightfully poetic terms to the new sunrise which John will usher in upon the people of God. The medium of song allows for the combination of rich theology and rich rejoicing in one remarkable exclamation.⁴³

The Nunc Dimittis (2:28-32)

The final 'hymn' of Luke's infancy narrative is much briefer than the previous two, and less wide-ranging. It is not so obviously song-like, yet it has a literary quality that justifies the description, and in the context of the previous songs is easily recognised as 'the finale in a narrative cycle leading from *promise* to *fulfilment* to *response* of praise'.⁴⁴ Simeon's words are, at the same time, a God-given interpretation of the little child whom he holds in his arms and a personal expression of gratitude for the realisation of his long-held hopes; both a declaration of theology and a personal exclamation of praise. In one of the most potent prophetic utterances of the NT, the medium that is chosen is song/poetry.

Leaving for the moment these masterful expressions of 'poetic theology', we find one other text in Luke's Gospel which might have a bearing on our subject. There is an interesting reference to 'cultural' music in Luke 15:25, where the Elder Brother in Jesus' masterful tale 'heard music and

⁴² I discuss Zechariah's prophecy against the background of the OT covenants and particularly the 'New Covenant' in my article 'Luke and the New Covenant: Zechariah's Prophecy as a Test Case' in the forthcoming volume, *The God of Covenant* (Leicester, 2005), edited by J. A. Grant and A. I. Wilson.

⁴³ J. B. Green provides a helpful discussion of the 'structure and role of Zechariah's Song' in *Gospel of Luke*, pp. 112-14.

⁴⁴ Green, *Gospel of Luke*, p. 143.

dancing'. This is clearly a description of a celebration, not of a worship event (though the Father would, no doubt, have been deeply thankful). While it is tempting to take this text and draw far-reaching conclusions from it, a safer course of biblical interpretation is to avoid placing emphasis on peripheral details in a parable of Jesus. Nothing is said by Jesus, in the text, either to commend or to condemn this manner of celebration – it is simply beside the point. However, it is to the point that there should be rejoicing when the lost are found, and the dead are raised, and the text hints at the place music and song might legitimately take in such celebration.

REVELATION

Turning to the final document of the NT canon, the Revelation to John resonates with the sound of song. Only an attentive reading of the text, taking care to note all relevant references, can truly indicate how much of this extraordinary work is couched in the form of song. We might identify the following passages, at least, as relevant: 4:8-11; 5:9-14; 7:9-12; 11:15-18; 14:3; 15:3, 4; 19:1-8. Though these passages are not lengthy, they punctuate the text in a significant manner. Each main vision section incorporates at least one song of praise, and the songs focus on the character of God so as to impress on the persecuted listeners the majesty of the Sovereign Lord. Thus, Wu and Pearson write,

In view of the readers' predicament under imperial persecution, the writer's inclusion of these praise hymns into his vision narratives serves not only to present an exalted view of God and Christ in Christian worship but more specifically to provide a coherent message of comfort to the readers. God, who is the Creator of the universe, is still in sovereign control despite the hardships they are experiencing.⁴⁵

Among the numerous references to song, there are two references to a 'new song' in Revelation – 5:9 and 14:3. Drawing particularly on Isaiah 42:10, 13 and Psalm 149:1, 6-9, Longman argues that the 'new song' in the OT is closely linked to the victory of the Divine Warrior.⁴⁶ Although it is not clear that all references to a 'new song' have this background, Longman's point is appropriate in the context of Revelation where the various songs extol the Lion-Lamb (5:5-6) who is victorious through his sacrificial

⁴⁵ J. L. Wu and S. C. Pearson, 'Hymns, Songs' in *DLNTD*, pp. 524-5.

⁴⁶ T. Longman III, 'The Divine Warrior: The New Testament Use of an Old Testament Motif' *WTJ* 44 (1982), pp. 290-307, here pp. 300-02.

death, and is declared to be Lord of all. Song is the appropriate means of expressing the hope of certain victory.

A particularly striking passage, in the light of our discussion so far, is found in 15:3, 4:

And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb: 'Great and amazing are your deeds, Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, King of the nations! Lord, who will not fear and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your judgments have been revealed.'

The reference to the 'song of Moses' appears to recall the events of Exodus 15. This is biblical theology at its best, as the Song of Moses becomes also the Song of the Lamb; as the great act of liberation through a parted sea in Exodus is interpreted by the great act of liberation accomplished through a broken body in Revelation. The song that became a reminder of the very origins of a people continues to be the song of a people created by grace. The foundation of the identity of God's people – the character of God himself – is once more declared in song.

This extends to the 'judgements' of God. As Moses' song told of the overthrow of horse and rider, so the song of Moses and the Lamb rejoices in the righteous character of God. Of the full impact of this song, Guthrie comments, 'It is intended to be reassuring, but the sense of awe and righteous wrath of God is unmistakable.'⁴⁷

The totality of Revelation presents the marvellous image of the singing saints. Those who have most awareness of the wonder of their Creator and Redeemer cannot keep themselves from song, and need not try, for songs will ring out forever.

THE FUNCTION OF SONG IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The character and function of the songs found in the NT are not nearly as diverse as in the OT. The songs which are reproduced in the NT are without exception 'religious' songs, in the sense that they are songs with God, his character and his activity as their theme. However, once again we must protest against this distinction between 'secular' and 'sacred' that comes all too easily to us.

⁴⁷ D. Guthrie, 'Worship in the Book of Revelation' in M. J. Wilkins and T. Paige (eds) *Worship Theology and Ministry in the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Ralph P. Martin* (Sheffield, 1992), p. 81.

A song with God as its theme is acceptable to the Lord if it brings honour and glory to 'the one seated on the throne, and to the Lamb' (cf. Rev. 5:13). Exactly the same is surely true of a song that has some other matter as its theme. Likewise, a song with God as its theme may be unacceptable to the Lord if it does not bring honour and glory to himself (cf. Amos 5:21-24).

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

If the contention of this paper is correct, and we have no biblical authority for distinguishing between 'Christian' and 'non-Christian' songs, or between 'sacred' and 'secular' songs, then we must rejoice in the songs that God has given to us by talented songwriters, and sing them for the glory of God, according to the principle laid down by Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:31: 'Whether, then, you eat or drink *or whatever you do*, do all to the glory of God.' Thus we should encourage those who have been gifted with singing talent to use that talent. Likewise, those who demonstrate facility with words and music should be encouraged to direct their talents towards the glory of God, even when – perhaps especially when – their creative productions make no mention of their Lord.

On the other hand, we must be careful not to allow culture to dominate our principles. Let me suggest a controversial area where Scottish Christians need to give some consideration to the implications of a biblical theology of song. Similar issues may arise for people of other nationalities also.

Sports enthusiasts may be aware that over a period of years, the famous and hugely popular Corries' song, 'Flower of Scotland' has replaced 'God Save the Queen' as the 'official'⁴⁸ national anthem to be played before a sporting event involving a Scottish national team. There is no denying its marvellous anthem-like qualities: a lilting melody that is simple enough to be carried by the largest crowd, and a simple march-like rhythm that gives the song a dynamism that is captivating. Most of all it has a distinctive Scottish character that takes it to the hearts of Scots as to no others. It is no surprise to me that it quickly overturned 'God Save the Queen' as Scotland's anthem.

However, on the basis of what we have said so far, I have a cautionary note to sound. You will expect, I trust, that it has nothing to do with the

⁴⁸ That is, the anthem that is played by a band as part of the opening ceremony. 'Flower of Scotland' was already an 'unofficial' anthem long before it was accepted by the organising authorities.

singing of the song, as such. The combination of melody and rhythm finds no challenge from Scripture, and indeed the strength of the song would be commendable as an expression of creativity at work. My concern has nothing to do with the idea of an anthem either. Indeed, we might describe some of the biblical songs as ‘anthems’ in that they are expressions of the nation’s identity. They declare what the nation is, and this is not condemned in any way.

However, I must voice concern at the sentiments of the song. Not the language – there is nothing obscene, blasphemous or otherwise offensive in the lyrics – but the sentiments. This concern does not relate primarily to the recounting of war, or to the actions of those ‘who fought and died for their wee bit hill and glen’; there may be true, selfless character demonstrated in such dreadful experiences. Particularly, my concern relates to the attitude of the lines that speak of those who

Stood against him
Proud Edward’s army
And sent him homeward
Tae think again.⁴⁹

It seems to me that this tends towards a rejoicing in nationalistic victory over another people, which is unacceptable for those who confess that Jesus Christ is ‘our peace’, that he has ‘made the two one’ and that he has ‘broken down the dividing wall of separation’ (Eph. 2). If my reading of the words of the song is in any way on target, and if Paul felt so strongly about the reconciling power of the cross of Christ, then perhaps the Scriptures must be allowed to challenge this song that has become a foundational element of Scottish culture.

CONCLUSION

There is no commandment in Scripture to delight in the blending of voices in harmony, or the intertwining of voice and instrument. For some, there will be no fire kindled by a love song or a poignant ballad. But equally, there is no commandment to abandon God’s good gifts, of which song is one. What is rejected in this world must be rejected because it stands against God and his design for humanity, not because some misuse it. William Booth’s question (echoed in song by Cliff Richard), ‘Why should the devil have all the good music?’ hit the nail on the head, except that it

⁴⁹ ‘Flower of Scotland’, written by Roy Williamson, one half of the duo ‘The Corries’ who made the song famous.

seems to suggest that he does, and that we should do something about it. He doesn't! The Lord God, who made all things well, has all the good music and all the good songs.

REVIEWS

Christology: A Global Introduction

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen

Baker Academic, 2003, 300 pp., £16.50; ISBN 0 8010 2621 0

Christology in Cultural Perspective: Marking out the Horizons

Colin Greene

Paternoster Press, 2003, xiv+434 pp., £19.50; ISBN 1 84227 015 X

A well-known evangelical speaker recently challenged a conference session to think of half a dozen books written about Jesus in the last decade. While older material on the person and work of Christ came readily to mind, it was difficult to meet the mental challenge. It is part of the irony of Christian dogmatics that, for all the centrality and importance of Jesus Christ to our faith and salvation, he has received scant attention in the theological literature.

New books on christology, therefore, are welcome, and these two volumes serve as useful introductions to the current status of christological reflection, as well as pointers to future discussion. Both also cover similar ground, and a short review of this kind cannot do justice to the wealth of material discussed in each work. Only Greene's book contains a (25-page) bibliography, but Kärkkäinen's work is no less erudite.

Kärkkäinen is professor of Systematic Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary, and his self-confessed purpose is to publish a textbook which will introduce students to christology in its contextualised forms. His approach is in four parts: to look at Christ in the Bible, Christ in history, Christ in the contemporary western christologies, and Christ in contemporary contextualised christologies.

The first two parts give a summary of biblical evidence, early christological disputes and the history of christology up to the liberal quest for the historical Jesus. While the New Testament material is thoroughly covered, the development of christology is sketchy in comparison. In particular, the dogmatics of the Reformation period

receive little attention – Calvin’s name, for example, is mentioned only once.

One gets the impression that Kärkkäinen is in a hurry to move to contemporary approaches to christology, and this is the strength of his work. The third part deals with the work of those who have shaped much modern thinking – chapters dealing with Barth’s dialectical christology, Tillich’s existentialist christology, Moltmann’s messianic christology, for example (there are studies of ten theologians, ranging from Barth to John Hick), give serious attention to the nuancing of christology in the writings of formative thinkers.

A further ten chapters in the concluding part of the book look at attempts to contextualise christology in areas such as process thought, feminist thought, postmodern thought, Latin American, African and Asian thought. Kärkkäinen’s conclusion is that future thinking will have to nuance further the relation between christology and other religions, and between christology and contextual theologies.

Kärkkäinen’s work is introductory, and will open up discussion on many areas of christological reflection for both experts and non-experts alike. As the sub-title indicates, it is ‘an ecumenical, international and contextual perspective’, showing where liberal, postmodern, political and other influences have taken christology. The book, however, begs one important question: in what sense is Christ the only way to the Father (John 14:6)? While the trajectories of current thought are well articulated in this book, they need to be subjected to the critique that their validity depends on whether or not they compromise the uniqueness of Christ.

In many ways, Greene’s book covers similar territory, although as Head of Theology and Public Policy for the British and Foreign Bible Society, his aim is not to produce an introductory textbook but to relate christology to developments in modern cultural theory. That involves him in starting where Kärkkäinen begins: with an overview of New Testament teaching on Jesus. However, unlike Kärkkäinen, Greene wants to view Jesus in relation to the culture of his day. His engagement with modern theologians is present from the beginning as he studies the implications for modern culture of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

This takes Greene into a discussion of Christ and modernity, and the four paradigms of religion in the modern world, progress in history, transcendentalism and liberation. The remaining chapters deal with the postmodern deconstruction of these paradigms, and the implications for culture of postmodernity’s ‘incredulity toward metanarratives and the end of history’ (p. 282).

Greene sees in the christologies of Barth and Moltmann, notwithstanding the weaknesses of their approaches, a recovery of the centrality of Christ to modern culture. Combining the best of Barth's Scripture-focussed christological metaphysic from above, and of Moltmann's cosmic soteriology grounded in a new christology from below, Greene moves towards a socio-political paradigm which has Christ at the centre as the real ground of human freedom. It is a long route to a simple conclusion: that genuine christology seeks to make the message of Christ relevant to a contemporary worldview.

Neither Greene nor Kärkkäinen offer an easy read. The aim of each is different: Kärkkäinen's to give a diachronic view of the development of christology, Greene's to view christology in the light of changing cultural paradigms. Together they remind us, however, of the centrality of the christological task, and the importance of its contextualisation. As a reader, I preferred Kärkkäinen; but I will leave the last word with Greene: 'Christianity stands or falls by the adequacy or otherwise of its Christology' (p. 96).

Iain D. Campbell, Free Church of Scotland, Back, Isle of Lewis

Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity

Larry W. Hurtado

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2003; 746pp., £39.95; ISBN 0 8028 6070 2

Professor Hurtado (New College, Edinburgh) has produced a major monograph that is to become a reference work of anyone working on the theme of how the early Christians worshipped Jesus. The title is telling: first, it shows that almost one hundred years after the then very influential book of Bousset, entitled *Kyrios Christos*, here is a fresh summary of what scholars hold about the views of the early Christians concerning Jesus' lordship and messiahship; second, devotion is discussed as an inclusive term, referring both to what Christians believed about Jesus and what grew out of their beliefs, i.e. their worshipping practices; third, the scope of the study is 'earliest' Christianity, implying already in the title one of the main theses of the book, that devotion to Jesus began in the first two decades after Jesus' death and resurrection (though the treatment of the subject covers the years ca. 30-170 C.E.).

The work is aimed at two types of readership: mainly to scholars, teachers and students of the NT, but also to an interested lay readership. For the sake of the latter, words of the biblical languages are

transliterated, and the details of the secondary literature are provided in footnotes (often taking up even one third of the page). The book is clearly structured, the main ideas are presented in a logical flow of the arguments (even numbered, when needed). The chapters end with helpful summaries.

The chapters provide a historical analysis of the evidence, with the aim of supporting Hurtado's main three theses: 1. 'Jesus was treated as a recipient of religious devotion' already between ca. 30-50 C.E. (p. 2), in other words, 'devotion to Jesus was not a late development'; 2. 'devotion to Jesus was exhibited in an unparalleled intensity and diversity of expression, for which we have no true analogy in the religious environment of the time' (p. 2); 3. 'Jewish monotheism had a powerful role in shaping Christ-devotion, particularly in the Christian groups that we know about in the New Testament' (p. 29). These theses are highly controversial in today's scholarship – we might say that they go against the main stream of critical ('liberal') scholarship and the author is to be praised for being courageous enough to offer his view on these themes that are so significant for Christians' self-understanding today. The author engages with critical scholars in a critical way, making use of the results of the history-of-religions school when he can agree with them, but also disagreeing with other critical scholars when he is not convinced by their arguments (e.g. by the work of Maurice Casey, entitled, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God*). Professor Hurtado works on an exegetical basis that has to be listened to by more critical scholars as well; for example, he advances his arguments on Paul by a primary reference to the 'seven undisputed Pauline epistles' (see e.g. p. 98). As regards the Gospels, he works with the Q hypothesis, but with his own thorough criticism and modification of it (pp. 218 ff.). However, he can show that even on grounds that are acceptable to more critical scholars, his theses can be argued and maintained exegetically. More traditional scholars will agree with most of his results, not being disturbed by the carefully formulated more 'critical' methods employed by the author.

To conclude, some of the titles and subtitles of the chapters should awaken the appetite of many future readers to learn from this scholarly book on Christian belief and worship of Jesus (following with the author the reconstructed historical sequence of the events and of the sources): 'Jewish Monotheism'; 'Christological Language and Themes in Paul'; 'Judean Jewish Christianity'; 'Q and the Early Devotion to Jesus'; 'The Synoptic Renditions of Jesus'; 'Crises and Christology in Johannine Christianity'; 'Other Early Jesus Books'; 'The Second Century'. The

book concludes with a bibliography (48 pp.) and detailed indexes of modern authors, of subjects, and of ancient sources (44 pp.).

Peter Balla, Károli Gáspár Reformed University, Budapest, Hungary

Israel's Messiah in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls

R. S. Hess and M. D. Carroll R. (eds)

Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003; 192 pp., £14.50; ISBN 0 8010 2611 3

This volume of essays arose out of a conference hosted by the Denver Institute for Contextualised Biblical Studies of Denver Seminary in 1991 and the papers at times retain some of the characteristics of oral communication.

There are four parts. Parts one to three address the Messiah in the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Dead Sea Scrolls respectively. More surprisingly, the fourth part is entitled 'The Messiah in Latin American Theology'.

Part one opens with a substantial essay by D. I. Block which argues that, although the concept of Messiah is associated to some extent with that of prophet and priest, the dominant messianic expectation is of a royal Davidic figure. There follow briefer responses from J. D. Hays and M. D. Carroll R, which are both critical and appreciative.

The lead article in part two is by C. A. Evans, who points out that messianism is a specific issue in only a small number of the scrolls from Qumran, but this forms part of a presupposed eschatology. Although he believes that the scrolls do testify to two messianic figures, one royal and one priestly, Evans does not consider the broad messianic expectation of the Qumran sectarians to have been particularly distinctive within Judaism. However, the awaited messiah was an important figure in all their eschatological hopes. R. S. Hess's response is not really a response to Evans' paper but rather a supplementary study dealing with some related issues.

The main paper on the NT is from C. L. Blomberg, who argues that a good case can be made that the Greek term *christos* ('Christ') should retain its Jewish significance ('Messiah') whenever it is used with reference to Jesus. In his response, Blomberg's colleague W. W. Klein disagrees with Blomberg's methodology, arguing that since later writings clearly (in his opinion) do use *christos* as a 'last name', Blomberg is obliged to show that this does not happen in the NT. Klein believes that he has not done so. Blomberg's views are probably not quite as novel as Klein suggests (similar views have been expressed with respect to Paul's

use of *christos* by N. T. Wright) but the paper does take the previous work somewhat further into discussion of the other NT literature.

In the final section, G. A. Alfaro Gonzalez engages with the writings of the Spanish theologian, Jon Sobrino, who has been based in Latin America for many years. Alfaro commends Sobrino's narrative approach to christology but also raises serious concerns about Sobrino's approach. K. Jobes' response largely confirms Alfaro's views, while also raising questions about the notion of the gospel directed to a specific socio-economic group.

Several papers are quite demanding and there is extensive documentation provided so it is not for the faint-hearted, although most of the essays would prove easier if the footnotes were skipped. Competent students and ministers may appreciate a recent survey of both issues and literature. All in all, this is a careful evangelical study of an important topic for the serious theology reader.

Alistair I. Wilson, Highland Theological College, Dingwall

Post-Modern Theologies. The Challenge of Religious Diversity

Terrence W. Tilley

Orbis Books, Maryknoll, 1995; 182pp., \$18.95; ISBN 1 57075 005 X

It would be interesting to know if there is any reader of *SBET* who cannot sympathise with this book's opening: 'Manifestos appear with disheartening regularity, announcing that our era is postmodern, postchristian, postreligious, postcolonial, post-industrial, postideological, postmoral, postanalytical, postliteral, postnarrative, postauthorial, postpersonal, poststructuralist, post-liberal, *etc.*... The signpost marking our age is the "post" sign. A paradox stamps each post-age... denying and affirming the past.' (The writer has evidently not yet heard of 'postevangelical'.)

In this way Terrence Tilley, Professor in the Department of Religious Studies, University of Dayton, begins an unusual book. Unusual because it is mainly a collection of co-authored essays reviewing the works of names both big and small, carrying, he believes, the postmodern sign outside their door. Tilley has written three of the ten papers and has inserted helpful prologues and epilogues in various places around the book. It is strongly North American in flavour. It could have been called a Primer in North American Postmodern Theology. It also strays into study of religion and critical studies. The names pursued include well-

known ones (e.g. Ray Griffin, T. J. J. Altizer, Mark C. Taylor, Edith Wyschogrod, Gustavo Gutiérrez), but also lesser-known ones, at least this side of the Atlantic. The method adopted is for Tilley to write three key chapters himself and to co-author and edit rigorously the others. There is a noticeably more mature content and attractively readable style to the three which are exclusively his (though he valorizes the word 'valorize').

Tilley identifies at least four broad types of postmodern theology ranging from the very radical (which is almost post-theology writing!) through process theology to the much more constructive and identifiably Christian 'Theology of Communal Praxis'. We get a measure of the range by noting that liberation theology is almost traditional by comparison with some of the others. A number of the writers analysed leave an impression of deep pessimism and aridness. It is noticeable that where Tilley is not the co-author, such writers get away with fewer rebukes. It is very fortunate that Tilley's work is present, for only when reading his essays does a sense of humanity and warmth come through strongly, along with a keen shrewdness in questioning otherwise unchallenged theories.

Perhaps more could be made of the fundamentally self-contradictory nature of some of the theologies examined. A good example is the paper on Sharon Welch, who repeatedly anathematizes theologies and undercurrents of power. For her, any claims even of moral purpose amount to an oppressive power. But later on we catch her, in a quotation, saying with approval that 'risks are taken... for *victory* later on' (italics mine). Even she cannot totally abandon the language of domination.

The book is an unusual type of survey, highly educative and serious. We just do not know yet whether evangelical Christian leaders should be reading it as a serious act of futurology or whether we are looking at idiosyncratic quirks. At any rate, it is worth reading for Tilley's own wise and very balanced summaries and critiques.

Roy Kearsley, South Wales Baptist College, Cardiff

This World Is Not My Home: The origins and development of dispensationalism

Michael Williams

Mentor, Fearn, 2003, 240pp., £10.99; ISBN 1 85792 874 1

In the 1940s, Lewis Sperry Chafer complained that, if only his critics would examine more carefully his so-called 'dispensationalist' positions,

they would find his conclusions not only biblically sound, but also representative of theological ideas shared by careful Bible expositors throughout history.¹ It turns out that Chafer's claim was a bluff, a bluff that is fully exposed and called by Michael Williams' astute book.

Part historical-sociological examination and part theological analysis, Williams' work evaluates significant tenets of two men whose influence may arguably account the most for the widespread popularity of early dispensationalism: C. I. Scofield and Lewis Sperry Chafer. Consistently, Williams presents their ideas fairly, and then insightfully refutes them, often warning the reader of dangerous potential implications. Williams is too polite and too professional to lambast classical dispensationalism as 'the fruit of baneful prejudice... pernicious heresy that entails the most serious doctrinal and practical consequences', the way Scottish Reformed theologian, John Murray, did in 1937.² Still, Williams' critique is no less withering.

If there is a flaw in Williams' analysis, it may be in that he takes dispensationalism too seriously as a 'theological system'. The subjects of his investigation may bear the larger part of responsibility for even this, however. As Williams' study suggests, dispensationalism started out as more of a piecemeal splicing of various populist strands within American and British evangelicalism. It appealed to, catered to, influenced and also simply reflected these populist impulses. The 'theology' of the Scofield Reference Bible was not the product of scholarly erudition; rather, it was a populist tool, intended for laypeople to provide them a quick, easy, readily understandable means of responding to biblical questions, critical problems and theological difficulties. Striving to make the Bible accessible for devotional edification and homiletical application, 'dispensationalist' thought often was reductionist, facile and idiosyncratic, as Williams points out. But it was not until 'dispensationalism' met with the disapproval of academicians that its adherents displayed such audacity as to describe their ideas as a 'system of theology' rivaling that of the Westminster Confession. Williams unmaskes such claims accurately as mere pretension. It is nevertheless questionable what effect

¹ Lewis Sperry Chafer, 'Dispensational Distinctions Challenged', *BibSac* 100 (1943), pp. 337-45; 'Review of Prophecy and the Church', *BibSac* 102 (1945), pp. 373-5. To be precise, it was actually his brother, Rollin Thomas Chafer, who originally staked out this claim; cf. Rollin Thomas Chafer, "'Modern' Dispensationalism', *BibSac* 93 (1936), pp. 129-30.

² "The 'Kingdom of Heaven' and the 'Kingdom of God'", *Presbyterian Guardian* 3 (9 January 1937), p. 141.

this unmasking will have on what remains to this day a largely populist movement, chastened and more self-critical, but still coveting the respect of the theological guild.

One should also take into account the fact that Williams' treatise is directed toward a target that has moved. In fact it has been moving steadily since the time period within the scope of his investigation. Several times Williams acknowledges that contemporary dispensationalists have already conceded and corrected flaws under critique in the ideology of Scofield and Chafer. While it would be a mistake to dismiss Williams' study as merely beating a dead horse, the question as to what is the specific bearing of Williams' findings is a legitimate one, never explicitly answered by the book.

Clearly, Williams' book will be helpful to those already convinced of dispensationalism's errors and curious about how it managed to become so popular. And it provides some solid material to such persons seeking ammo to fire against it. The book could also engage classical dispensationalists still convinced of the Scofield-Chafer ideology in serious dialogue, provided they are better up to the challenge than their forebears.

Of course, as Williams points out, traditional dispensationalists are Baconian in their hermeneutic, Common Sense Realist in their epistemology; but this means that they are likely today to feel no more beholden to Scofield's and Chafer's ideas (or threatened by critiques of them) than they would to the handling of a specific verse by their favorite Bible commentator. For this reason, the focus on Scofield and Chafer, while defensible, does limit the benefit of Williams' work. Nevertheless, where the insidious errors of Scofield-Chafer persist, which is surprisingly many places within contemporary evangelicalism, Williams' analysis provides a much-needed corrective.

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What Does It Mean to Be Saved? Broadening Evangelical Horizons of Salvation

John G. Stackhouse, Jr. (ed.)

Baker Academic Press, Grand Rapids, 2002; 203pp., £17.50; ISBN 0 8010 2353 X

Regent College, Vancouver, quite regularly hosts a Fall Conference, whose proceedings then find their way into print. This is not the first

such volume that John Stackhouse has edited, and he has again applied the helpful device of getting two respondents to comment on the collection. It is made up of three parts. Rick Watts, Bruce Hindmarsh and Henri Blocher contribute to biblical and historical perspectives on salvation and (Blocher) atonement. Then Vincent Bacote, Cherith Fee Nordling and Amy Sherman are given the task of 'Expanding Particular Zones' so that we understand the impact and dimensions of salvation on and for society, humanity and city. Loren Wilkinson contributes an essay to the same section, proposing a theological approach to modern paganism. In the final section, John Webster, now at Aberdeen University, and Jonathan Wilson of Westmont, California, offer their responses.

What does it mean to broaden horizons? It is to broaden them beyond the vision of the salvation of individual souls. In responding to John Webster's response, the editor assures us that it is not only in North America that the broader dimension needs to be spelled out. Webster's response is actually quite cool and, in part, characteristically Barthian (at risk of unhelpful labelling). But it also calls for a more explicit and developed trinitarianism than these essays provide, and here he is joined by his fellow-respondent, who provides a more substantial response than his own. Perhaps they are asking more of the volume than it was ever designed to provide. As conference organisers know, conference contributions, taken altogether, are often a blend of the ideal and the possible, but even ideally, it is not clear that trinitarianism must be focal in *exactly* the way that the respondents require.

That aside, the collection is a mixed bag. It is usually an invidious business to compare essayist with essayist in a multi-author collection, but in this case, I am bound to say that there is a difference in quality between the contributions of the three Regent Faculty members and Henri Blocher, on the one hand, and the less established scholars, on the other. This means that, on the whole, the first part is stronger than the second. On the other hand, with the colossal amount that is being written about everything these days, some of us get weary of words (our own as much as others') and welcome all evidence and reminders of action, with which we are provided in the second part. So we should not remain in a comparative spirit. If we take to heart what is written in this volume, or those things written in it with which we agree, we shall have plenty to get on with.

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Sufficient Saving Grace. John Wesley's Evangelical Arminianism

Herbert Boyd McGonigle

Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 2001; 350pp., £19.99; ISBN 1 84227 045 1

The author is Principal of the Nazarene College in Manchester and the book has its genesis in his doctoral research. The specialist will therefore rejoice in the thoroughness of treatment and the closely-reasoned argument, while the general reader (like the reviewer) may at times find the going rather heavy.

In the Introduction Dr McGonigle defines the theological terms which will occur frequently, distinguishing between the evangelical Arminianism of Wesley and the eighteenth-century Arminianism which was 'latitudinarian and often rationalistic'. There is a survey of earlier writing on Wesley's soteriology and a firm refutation of the idea that he was really a crypto-Calvinist.

McGonigle devotes two chapters to answering the question: 'What was this Arminianism that John Wesley espoused so fervently?' He surveys the political and religious situation in the Netherlands in the sixteenth century, with the 'theological innovations' of Jacobus Arminius, whose views are explained in considerable detail. After his death the Remonstrants set out their 'Five Points' in opposition to those of Calvinism. The development of Remonstrant theology in England is the subject of the next chapter, though Dr McGonigle sees English Arminianism as a home-grown product rather than a Dutch import. Here we meet Archbishop William Laud, the formidable representative of high Anglican Arminianism and the 'powerfully and influentially Calvinistic' John Owen, with Richard Baxter following his own *via media*. Towards the end of the seventeenth century 'the Church of England was steadily moving in an anti-Calvinist direction'. An important factor was the rise of the 'holy living' theologians, the best-known being Jeremy Taylor.

Enter John Wesley, June 1703. In the Epworth rectory Samuel and Susanna 'seldom agreed on anything' but theologically both were convinced anti-Calvinists. Samuel was no mean scholar and from him John inherited his love of the Early Church Fathers and the Anglican divines. Dr McGonigle gives a fascinating analysis of Wesley's reading between 1725 and 1735 (691 books!) and how it shaped his theological understanding. Jeremy Taylor and William Law had considerable impact, as did Thomas Bennet, who saw no disharmony between the teaching of Arminius and the Anglican Article XVII (Of Predestination and Election). By 1735, when he sailed for Georgia, 'John Wesley was theologically a

convinced Anglican, deeply committed to a pattern of personal devotion nourished by his Church's structured means of grace and already persuaded that the tenets of Calvinism were inimical to this scheme of salvation.'

After Georgia came Aldersgate Street and the strangely-warmed heart. At Whitefield's invitation, Bristol became the scene of Wesley's early open-air preaching, and the scene also of the famous 'Bristol Dispute' precipitated by the preaching and publication of his sermon on *Free Grace*. Dr McGonigle expertly analyses this sermon, with its 'stark portrayal' of reprobation, the 'Achilles heel' of Calvinism. John Wesley had emerged as 'dogmatically anti-Calvinist'. Whitefield entered the lists on the other side, provoking a riposte from the redoubtable Susanna herself. The pamphleteering continued with Wesley's *Dialogue between a Predestinarian and his Friend* (1741) and this period also saw the beginning of his teaching on 'Christian perfection'. His views on predestination and perfection he would have to 'define and defend' for the rest of his life. In some limited respects he felt that he had approached 'the very edge of Calvinism' but for the most part was engaged in a 'war of theological attrition'.

Dr McGonigle sees the war in three phases. Phase One was the Bristol Dispute, beginning in 1739. Phase Two took place in the 1750s while Phase Three, the 'Minutes Dispute', began in 1770. It is not possible in this review to follow all the arguments and counter-arguments, involving the questions of foreknowledge, perseverance, the extent of the atonement, the danger of antinomianism. McGonigle devotes a complete chapter to Wesley's teaching on holiness, a subject which had occupied him from the beginning of his ministry, though his 'definitive apologetic' came in 1766 with *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. Was the constant use of the term 'perfection' unfortunate? Was Wesley's definition of sin unsatisfactory? All these matters are handled with a sure touch, sympathetic but not uncritical.

The final major dispute stemmed from the *Minutes* of the 1770 Conference whose 'loosely-worded propositions' seemed to teach justification by works. Wesley's incautious statements arose from his conviction that Calvinism led to antinomianism. The subsequent battle involved Lady Huntington, John Fletcher, Augustus Toplady, Richard and Rowland Hill. (Has anyone ever considered a thesis on eighteenth-century theological vituperation?) In 1776 Wesley published a sermon on Romans 8:29, 30: *On Predestination*, setting forth his mature views on the *ordo salutis*, very much an Arminian understanding. Shortly afterwards he founded the *Arminian Magazine*. Volume I contained the

statement: 'The doctrine of predestination, as maintained by the rigid Calvinists, is very shocking, and ought utterly to be abhorred.'

McGonigle skilfully draws the threads together in his final chapter entitled 'Calvinism – the Antidote to Methodism'. He sees Wesley's objections as philosophical, theological, biblical and pastoral. 'His antagonism to Calvinism, far from abating, seemed rather to intensify in the latter years of his ministry.' It was his distinctive teaching on prevenient grace which enabled him to maintain his course between the extremes of high Calvinism and Pelagianism.

This book is erudite, the fruit of painstaking and detailed research. The reader who works hard will not only have a thorough grounding in the theology of John Wesley but a comprehensive introduction to men and movements in the eighteenth-century church. And the reader who is looking for a straightforward (and non-polemical) critique from the Calvinistic side could do worse than study the relevant chapters in Iain Murray's recent book on Wesley, published by Banner of Truth.

Robert Thompson, Belfast

The Gospel in the World. Vol. 1. Studies in Baptist History and Thought

David Bebbington (ed.)

Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 2002, xi+361pp., £24.99; ISBN 1 84227 118 0

The Gospel in the World is a diverse collection of conference papers from the first International Conference on Baptist studies, held at Regent's Park College, Oxford, in August 1997. Some of the leading Baptist historians from around the globe offer perspectives on four centuries of Baptist history and thought.

The major portions of the book focus upon historical developments in Britain and America. Topics examined here include religious tolerance, the communion controversy, the development of the international Baptist community, Baptists and early pentecostalism, Andrew Fuller's theology and the Gaelic hymn-writer Peter Grant.

John Coffey argues that there was considerable diversity in Baptist views towards religious toleration in England and America. He comments on the period 1612 to 1721 but his analysis encourages caution about specifying any definite consensus among Baptists on this issue. It was interesting to learn that the radical separationist view (church as a voluntary association of believers separate from the world and the state)

was the minority view. In contrast many Baptists were firm believers in God's intolerance towards sin creating communities of discipline and supporting a society which punished sin 'against nature.' It is illuminating to learn that a far greater proportion of Baptists have been firm upholders of the Christian nation position and we can see this in the United States in the views of Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell. This article informs us on the diversity of Baptist positions on an issue that refuses to go away, most recently in the recent discussions on the European Constitution.

Donald Meek provides a distinctive article in the collection which looks at how Christianity was contextualized in the culture of the Scottish Highlands through the hymn writing of Peter Grant (1783-1867). These hymns gave Christians familiar with the Psalter an opportunity to focus their sung worship directly upon Christ. Some hymns reject the ceilidh-house culture of the highlands because it represents the way of death, yet paradoxically the composer was deeply indebted to traditional metres and tunes. It seems that Grant was following the principle later espoused by William Booth: 'Why should the devil have all the best tunes?'

A significant proportion of the book covers the expansion of Baptist life in Italy, Germany, the Soviet Union, Australia and Papua New Guinea. The book moves beyond the development of the church in particular countries and seeks to record some lessons gained from missionary presence. The nonconformist conscience of the Baptist Missionary Society is illustrated in the account of the late nineteenth-century campaign against colonial authority in Jamaica after 439 were killed and 1000 homes destroyed. Further missionary focus is offered on Timothy Richard of China and T. R. Glover and his book *The Jesus of History*.

The book concludes with two important essays on the future of Baptist life that pay special attention to the United States. Bill Leonard argues that the Southern Baptist Convention is in the midst of 'significant transition, fragmentation, restructuring, redefinition and schism'. He challenges Baptists to identify the non-negotiables which define the nature of Baptist belief, practice and overall identity. In doing so he comments on the diversity of views among Baptists. 'Which Baptist identity – out of the multitudes – should be retained, renewed and passed on?... Baptists in the South and elsewhere might ask again: who is a Baptist and who is not and does anyone really care?' In contrast, Nancy Ammeram underlines those aspects of Baptist identity which provide

optimism for a cultural fit and flexible responses to the challenge of cultural change in the 21st century.

The breadth of subjects covered is so diverse that those who consult this book may do so selectively according to interest. As a collection it represents well a wide range of Baptist concerns but it is not obvious to the reader why he should want to invest time reading this particular collection as a whole. However, within one volume it pulls together an impressive snapshot of the international Baptist family, as well as in-depth articles on matters central to Baptist identity. The level is certainly academic but the introductions guide the non-specialist reader into most subjects without difficulty. The footnotes are comprehensive and accessible, and overall it would serve a pastor or academic well as a reference tool to increase general awareness or consult as specific questions arise.

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The Earthly Career of Jesus, the Christ: A Life in Chronological, Geographical and Social Context

Robert D. Culver

Mentor Books, 2002; 272pp., £ 9.85; ISBN 1 85792 798 2

In his quest to describe the earthly life of Jesus, the author divides the book into four main sections, based on four stages in Jesus' life as seen in John 16:28: (i) I came forth from the Father, (ii) I have come into the world, (iii) I am leaving the world, and (iv) I am going to the Father. Culver believes that this fourfold structure is the underlying thrust of all the four gospels.

His purpose is to so examine the evidence of the gospels so as to 'obtain a substantial, interpreted summary of our Lord's career, seen in chronological and geographical context'.

There are thirteen chapters in all, beginning with the Old Testament expectations for a Messiah and the actual birth of Christ. This makes up the first part (two chapters). A large chunk of the book (six chapters) lies in the second main part. It deals with Jesus' earthly activities – his ministry, his teachings and his miracles along with the training of the twelve disciples. The content of the third part (four chapters) is confined to the last week of Jesus' life on earth, ending with the crucifixion. The final part (one chapter) describes the resurrection manifestations and the ascension. While credit must be given to Culver for attempting to arrange gospel data into a chronologically continuous portrayal of Jesus' life,

there are perhaps more excursions than necessary (fourteen in all – sometimes as many as five occurring consecutively). These tend to break the continuous narrative approach that is just what in fact the book seeks to establish. One possible reason for the abundance of these distracting excursions may be the author's aim to include 'every incident, every parable (or group of parables), and every sermon and miracle...'

The scriptural references in the margins next to the events that are being described are helpful. This aids looking up the events in question. However, when the author quotes biblical verses, the Authorised Version is used which seems rather out of place in a book published in 2002.

Although the book does not deal with controversial scholarly issues that a discussion on the historical Jesus would surely unearth, Culver exhibits his awareness of current scholarship about which he appears a bit sceptical. Further, his criticism of doctrinal traditions associated with particular biblical texts is rather uncalled for and at times spoils the reverential atmosphere that he tries to create.

The entire book is written primarily from a devotional perspective and is hence helpful as an aid for reflection and devotion. At the same time Culver takes care constantly to provide the modern Arabic names for ancient biblical places. He also makes mention of the present-day churches, monasteries and chapels built on several sacred sites. This contemporary information coupled with detailed tables, maps and diagrams makes the book interesting to lay readers and students of the Bible alike.

Mark Jason, University of Aberdeen

Samuel Rutherford: A New Biography of the Man and His Ministry

Kingsley G. Rendell

Christian Focus Publications, Fearn, 2003; 192pp., £7.99; ISBN 1 85792 262 X

Kingsley Rendell's 'new biography' of Samuel Rutherford (1600-61) is a welcome addition to the corpus of literature that helps us better to understand this early-modern figure who described himself as a 'man of extremes'. The book is succinct and quite easy to read (though the use of footnotes rather than inimical endnotes would make it even more so!). Nevertheless, it gives a good introduction to Rutherford and his theology. Perhaps its greatest contribution, however, is its sketch of the historical context in which Rutherford lived and wrote. These aspects of the book –

its brevity and simplicity together with its emphasis on the historical context – make it a good starting point for those who are as yet unfamiliar with this towering Second-Reformation minister and theologian. For those who wish to wade more deeply into Rutherford's life and work, this book will probably only whet your appetite for what remains the definitive biography on Rutherford, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions: The Mind of Samuel Rutherford* (1997), written by John Coffey.

Rendell subdivides his biography into seven chapters. The first six each discuss a different aspect of Rutherford's life and work, while the seventh provides 'an estimate' of his 'life and character' as a whole (p. 129). The book begins with a survey of the historical context (or 'mêlée') into which Rutherford was born in 1600. Rendell reminds his readers that the Reformed Church of Scotland was established, not by an overnight work of Reformation, but as the result of a long and arduous struggle from 1560 to 1689. When seen in this context, the life and work of Rutherford form 'an indispensable link' (p. 9) between the first and final stages in the process of Reformation. Rendell's treatment of the scandal occurring in 1625, involving allegations of fornication, and triggering Rutherford's resignation from the 'Town College' in Edinburgh, is ultimately inconclusive, and, thus, rather unsatisfactory.

After this beginning, Rendell moves to a discussion of Rutherford's ministry in Anwoth and his exile in Aberdeen (1627-1638) in chapters two and three. Once again he is careful to set Rutherford's ministry in context. He then examines Rutherford as a preacher and pastor and gives several helpful and practical illustrations from which ministers today could benefit. For instance, he mentions Rutherford's tendency to use imagery and word-pictures in his preaching to help his parishioners understand and remember main ideas: 'Pride, lust, laziness and security are the meikle water... the saints are the short legged horse, and down they go' (p. 33). Rendell also helpfully emphasises Rutherford's Christ-centeredness in both his preaching and in his letters from Aberdeen: 'To preach Christ was in his [Rutherford's] own words "the apple of my delights"' (p. 34).

In chapters four and five, Rendell treats Rutherford 'The Reformer' and 'The Apologist'. Here he discusses the beginning of Rutherford's tenure as professor in St Andrews and his work at the Westminster Assembly, and surveys his theological, ecclesiological and epistolary writings. As is to be expected, almost half of his literary survey is devoted to Rutherford's two best-known works, *Lex Rex* (1644) and the *Letters*

(1664, 1891). And true to form, Rendell anchors all of this in an examination of the historical context.

Perhaps the historical highlight of the book, however, is Rendell's treatment of Rutherford 'The Protester' in chapter six. This chapter is a well-researched and contextualised look at the remaining years of Rutherford's life after the Assembly and his role in the Protester-Resolutioner controversy within the church. It portrays Rutherford as a coherent but narrow-minded man who was more concerned to be consistent theologically than he was about the unity of the body of Christ. In this, though, as Rendell demonstrates in chapter seven, Rutherford is a child of his times. We must be careful to understand him and judge him in the light of his own day, rather than by looking at him through twenty-first-century goggles. And Rendell's biography does a good job at just this point.

Guy Richard, New College, Edinburgh

Islam in Context: Past, Present, and Future

Peter G. Riddell & Peter Cotterell

Baker Academic, Grand Rapids MI, 2003, 231pp., £13.50; ISBN 0 8010 2627 X

Islam is seldom out of the news these days. It claims 1.2 billion adherents worldwide – about a fifth of the earth's population. It presents great challenges both to Western culture and society and to the church and its gospel. Some grasp of Islam is therefore essential for an understanding of the global context in which we live and work. This book aims to fulfil that need.

The authors are both senior staff from the Centre for Islamic Studies at London Bible College. In their introduction they state three aims of the book: first, to help readers understand Islam, second, to present an understanding of the ongoing interaction between the Islamic world with the rest of the world, and third, to identify a way forward in resolving current tensions and conflict. Their hope is that the book will attract a wide readership among Christians, Jews and Muslims and among people with both more and less commitment to their respective religion.

Much of the book follows a chronological ordering of the development of Islam from its beginnings in sixth and seventh century Arabia. This treatment is a reasonably in-depth overview but makes use of many original historical sources. There are also chapters on basic beliefs and practices and on the development of the Qur'an. It is well

written and would make a readable introduction to the subject for a minister or lay person. It will also benefit those already with some knowledge of Islam.

Included is a look at areas of conflict between the Qur'an and the Bible, such as the crucifixion of Christ which the Qur'an appears to deny, the Qur'anic denial of the Trinity, and assertion that Jesus foretold Muhammad's coming, and the Qur'an's claim that Jews and Christians have falsified their own Scriptures. On this latter point the question is raised as to whether this means that Jews and Christians have corrupted scriptural texts or simply misinterpreted the Scriptures. While this is left an open question in this section, somehow by the conclusion to the book on p. 213, without saying how, the Qur'an is said to accuse Jews and Christians of either allowing Scripture to become corrupt or of knowingly corrupting them in favour of their respective theologies. A fuller and better treatment of this question is found in Chawkat Moucarray, *Faith to Faith: Christianity and Islam in Dialogue* (Leicester, 2001), pp.

44-53, which is actually recommended by the authors and which, although inconclusive, veers in the direction of the Qur'an accusing Jews and Christians of misinterpreting rather than corrupting Scripture. This matter is of considerable importance in Christian dialogue with Muslims.

Part 3 of the book is entitled, 'Looking Around', and seeks to analyse the contemporary situation, in particular conflict between the Muslim world and the West. It examines the radical Islamist world-view, tracing its historical origins and background all the way back to parts of the Qur'an, which commend violence in the cause of establishing Islam. It then looks at the moderate Muslim world-view, which looks to more peaceful and tolerant parts of the Qur'an for its theological roots. In this section the authors quote from some rare voices of Muslim self-criticism. In between these two views are the traditionalist masses of the Muslim world, and the authors quote evidence that seems to indicate that these masses are moving in the direction of the Islamists. They also state that modern areas of conflict such as Iraq and Palestine are merely manifestations of the radical Islamists' antipathy towards the West rather than its causes. While this may be true, it should also be taken into account that, for example, failure to find a fair resolution for the Palestinian problem may create fertile environments for the recruitment of radicals.

The conclusion is that Islam is at a crossroads and needs to develop a new hermeneutic for dealing with Qur'anic passages that condone and commend violence, which makes a distinction between *meaning* for the

original hearers and *significance* for today, in order to allow the Islamic world to co-exist peacefully with the rest of the world.

Bearing in mind the above minor criticisms, I would recommend this book.

Duncan Peters, Asian Outreach, Govanhill Free Church, Glasgow

Covenant Theology. Contemporary Approaches

Mark J. Cartledge and David Mills (eds)

Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 2001; 128pp., £14.99; ISBN 1 84227 007 9

This book consists of four Chaplaincy Lectures delivered at the University of Liverpool between 1997 and 2000, together with four responses addressing each lecture and written for this publication. Both lecturers and respondents are well-known names in their respective fields. The lectures cover different aspects of Covenant Theology, beginning with the Old Testament, going on to the New Testament, then systematic theology and concluding with pastoral and ethical issues. One of the goals is to demonstrate the interconnected nature of theological study across these sub-disciplines.

The first lecture, 'The Covenant with All Living Creatures', is by Stephen R. L. Clark, Professor of Philosophy at Liverpool University. Drawing on a number of Old Testament texts, Clark seeks to apply covenantal thinking to the treatment of animals. Among other things, he argues that animals have value in themselves, as God's creation, not just on account of their usefulness to the human race. Although he makes a number of important points about the use and misuse of animals, Clark never really sets out a clearly argued interpretation of biblical covenant theology which justifies his position. In his response, John Goldingay rightly highlights the dangers, as well of the benefits, of reading the Old Testament in the light of a new question which the interpreter brings to the text. It is an exercise, he says, which creates both windows of new understanding and mirrors reflecting the interpreter's own outlook. He then considers number of OT passages which reflect a different attitude to animals from that espoused by Clark.

In the second lecture James D. G. Dunn of Durham University considers 'Judaism and Christianity: One Covenant or Two?' He begins by noting that how one answers this question has profound implications for how Christians are to view the Old Testament and also for one's attitude to Judaism. If a second (Christian) covenant *replaces* the first, are centuries of Jewish life and thought to be written off? Dunn then

traces the history of the biblical covenants from the covenant with Abraham through to the New Covenant, emphasising the elements of continuity between these covenants. His conclusion is that there is one covenant, with old and new being viewed as two interpretations of the first covenant, the promise to Abraham. 'The new covenant ... is not a rejection of the old so much as a more effective implementation of the old.' (p. 54). Mark Bonnington's response concentrates on covenantal material in Jeremiah and Paul and concludes that the answer to the question 'One covenant or two?' is 'Both'.

The third lecture, by Gary Badcock who teaches theology in London, Ontario, is entitled 'The God of the Covenant' and considers some of the ways in which the doctrine of God has been formulated in different strands of Covenant Theology within the Reformed tradition. In sketching the main elements of the seventeenth century 'Scholastic' theology of the covenant, Badcock seeks to demonstrate that these theologians' concept of covenant depends largely on their understanding of the nature of God, especially his immutability. He then argues, controversially, that a connection may be traced between this view and the 'existential' covenant theology of Karl Barth, in which the covenant depends entirely on the free decision of God. Among his conclusions Badcock pleads for theological modesty, a recognition of the limited character of speech and concepts in treatments of the doctrine of God. Trevor Hart's response marshalls various objections to covenant theology, some of them familiar from the writings of James Torrance, concentrating on contractual language and issues of grace and merit.

The final paper turns to the field of ethics, as Robin Gill of the University of Kent considers 'Health Care and Covenant: Withholding and Withdrawing Treatment'. Gill begins by examining the discussions of withdrawing nutrition and hydration from patients, which have been produced by the Lambeth Conference of Bishops and by the Medical Ethics Committee of the British Medical Association. This serves to highlight a number of the complex issues involved in withholding or withdrawing 'treatment' (not least how the latter is to be defined). Gill goes on to sketch out how a covenant understanding of the relationship between doctor and patient may help to resolve some of these problems. Drawing on the work of William May and Joseph Allen, among others, Gill draws a sharp distinction between contract and covenant, and argues that elements of both need to be present in medical relationships. His treatment of covenant theology is rather brief and serves to raise issues rather than resolve them definitively. The response by Margaret Whipp, theologian and physician, sees 'covenant' functioning mainly in terms of

the attitude of the doctor, particularly in a commitment to care, rather than as a source of specific guidance for decisions.

The papers in this collection are stimulating and thought-provoking, although some are more closely related to the theme of 'covenant' than others. For those who already have a general understanding of covenant theology they are worth reading critically.

David McKay, Reformed Theological College, Belfast

Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The 'Lutheran' Paul and His Critics

Stephen Westerholm

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2004; 488 pp., £24.99; ISBN 0 8028 4809 5

This substantial volume is a thoroughly reworked and significantly expanded version of the author's 1988 book, *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith*. Its primary purpose is to examine the various exegetical issues which lie at the heart of the debate concerning 'the New Perspective on Paul'. One of the most striking features of Westerholm's book is the delightfully light touch with which he discusses decidedly weighty issues. Wit and humour are evident throughout, yet these welcome characteristics do not lead to a frivolous book.

Westerholm divides his book into three parts. In part one, he considers the views of several key historical figures (Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Wesley) on a variety of relevant theological issues, such as the Fall, redemption, the Mosaic law, etc. This historical section is largely new and serves to locate the discussion of the rather complex modern debate in historical context. Given that Luther, in particular, is frequently cited in the modern debate, it is very useful to have a summary of his position which depends heavily on citations of his own words.

The second part of the book is a very useful survey of recent contributions to the modern debate. It is composed of nine chapters. Eight of them analyse the thought of significant authors, grouped according to broad similarity of perspective. The ninth chapter gathers together numerous quotations from authors who broadly stand against a 'Lutheran' reading of Paul, arranged under several headings, with the intention of allowing them to explain their positions in their own words. While it must be admitted that even direct quotations may sometimes misrepresent an author's views when taken out of context, and while the gathering of quotations might be taken to suggest more common agreement than some of the authors might wish, Westerholm's concern

that the scholars' own voices be heard is both commendable and beneficial to the reader.

The third and final part of the book is Westerholm's own contribution to the debate. Westerholm's conviction that terminology has been used with too little precision is reflected in the fact that he devotes three initial chapters (amounting to almost one hundred pages) to defining 'righteousness', 'law' and 'grace'. He then proceeds to trace Paul's thought concerning 'justification by faith' through Paul's letters (including the letters which modern scholarship frequently neglects as 'deutero-Pauline'). Finally, there is a chapter devoted to 'the law' in God's plan. As is fitting for a book which contains a reference to Luther in the title, Westerholm offers nine theses which, in essence, contend that although the law of Moses was a gift from God, it was unable to achieve life for those dead in sin – something only the death of Jesus the Messiah could achieve. Christians now fulfil the law as a grateful response and by the work of Holy Spirit. This is the most demanding section of the book. It is full of close textual analysis of Paul's letters and, although those without Greek should be able to follow a considerable amount of the discussion, the frequent citation of untranslated Greek will make for hard reading. Interaction with scholarship is also substantial and detailed. Westerholm concludes that, although 'New Perspective' scholarship has provided some important insights (particularly into Judaism), the 'Lutheran' position has a truer grasp of Paul's theology.

Although there have been several recent responses to the New Perspective, this is now the book I would recommend to serious readers who want a clear and well-rounded introduction written from a cautious, sane and helpfully critical perspective.

Alistair I. Wilson, Highland Theological College, Dingwall

The Making of the New Spirituality

James A. Herrick

IVP, Downers Grove, Illinois, 2003; 331pp., £15.99; ISBN 0 8308 2398 0

In this substantial volume, James Herrick, Professor of Communication at Hope College, Holland, Michigan, sets out to trace the influences which have led to what he calls the 'New Religious Synthesis', which is threatening to replace the 'Revealed Word' tradition of Christianity in the West. He begins by pointing out the growing influence of this 'new spirituality' through the mass media, literature, popular science and

religion. He then summarises the traditional Christian worldview and contrasts it with this new way of thinking which is not confined to those who are self-consciously New Age.

In the second chapter he traces some late medieval movements which he sees as contributing to the growth of this 'new spirituality' in the modern era. He briefly describes the origins and beliefs of neo-gnostic sects, such as the Free Spirits, Cathars, Bogomiles and Albigensians, the pantheistic and magical Hermeticists, the influence of Jewish kabbalah, the rise of neo-platonism and magical science, and European mysticism. The final strand which contributed to the rise of the 'new spirituality' in the modern period was, he says, the rise of medieval humanism and the (unintended) influence of the Reformation in encouraging private study and interpretation of Scripture. This led on to critical approaches to Scripture and the autonomy of the individual.

There follows a series of chapters tracing the development of each of these influences up to the twentieth century, when the New Religious Synthesis took shape. He begins with biblical criticism, tracing it from an almost forgotten but influential eighteenth-century English author, Thomas Woolston, who poured scorn on the Bible as history, to the more famous Reimarus, Lessing and Strauss and others in the nineteenth century. He then jumps to late twentieth-century figures such as Bishop John Spong and Michael Drosnin, author of *The Bible Code*. What is common to all these is the dismissal of the Bible as history, thus attacking the Christian revelation of a personal God who acts in history and opening the way for subjective readings of Scripture and a man-made theology.

A brief chapter traces the deification of human reason following Voltaire. Then the influence of those who see science as providing the answer to all human problems is traced, from Comte and Paine through Ingersoll to Carl Sagan, author of the extremely popular *Cosmos*. The development of evolutionary theory following Darwin is then studied to show how the Huxleys and others, such as Teilhard de Chardin, advocated a form of spiritual evolution guided by man. He seems to believe that such mystical scientists have had more influence on popular thinking than the materialist scientists who discount the spiritual realm altogether.

The rise of pantheism in the West, following Spinoza, is traced right up to its influence on some modern physicists. The rebirth of ancient Gnosticism is explored in some detail, including its influence on Joseph Smith, the nineteenth-century founder of the currently fast-growing Mormon sect, on Carl Jung, the extremely influential twentieth-century psychoanalyst, and on the latest popular science fiction. The importance

of modern shamanism is explored, mentioning the influence of Swedenborg and others and the current popularity of authors such as Gary Zukav, a frequent guest on the Oprah Winfrey Show.

In the penultimate chapter Herrick surveys some of the literature of mysticism to show its influence in the emergence of the prevailing pluralism, one aspect of which is that mystical spiritual experience is seen as the unifying factor in world religions. I believe he could have given more consideration to the influence of Eastern mysticism. Finally he summarises the weaknesses of the New Religious Synthesis and points the way to a return to the Revealed Word tradition of orthodox Christianity. This section is very brief and could have been expanded to give more practical guidance.

The writing is clear and the scholarship impressive. There are numerous endnotes and a full index. While the range of subjects covered is vast and often the connections between the various movements studied are not clearly delineated, I found his argument stimulating and enlightening. I recommend this book as a guide to understanding the development of the present view of spirituality in the West and as a stimulus to further thinking about communicating the gospel in this environment.

Donald M. MacDonald, Free Church College, Edinburgh

Engaging Augustine on Romans. Self, Context, and Theology in Interpretation

Daniel Patte and Eugene TeSelle (eds)

Trinity Press International, Harrisburg, 2002; xiii+290pp; £25; ISBN 1 56338 407 8

This important work is part of a projected multi-volume series, *Romans through History and Cultures* (eds Cristina Grenholm and Daniel Patte), which aims to explore 'the past and present impact of Romans upon theology, and upon cultural, political, social and ecclesial life, and gender relations'. The fruit of successful collaboration between a number of New Testament and patristic scholars, the collection of essays in this volume represents a major contribution to the study of Augustine's methods of biblical exegesis. Study of and comment on the Bible were central in Augustine's life and work. His understanding of Scripture, however, was never static and throughout his ministry he maintained a refreshing readiness (clearly reflected in these essays) to change interpretation of particular biblical texts, as his grasp of Scripture continued to deepen and

expand. As one contributor, Simon Gathercole, states, 'Many of us claim to be open to change our positions, but with the Bishop of Hippo we can actually see it in print.' Augustine's scholarly humility is calculated to 'inspire similar exegetical and theological repentance'.

The dedication of this work to Krister Stendahl, who provides an (unrepentant!) Last Word, reflects the importance of his contribution to studies on Paul and Augustine. In his influential *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*, Stendahl holds the Augustine of the *Confessions* responsible for initiating the whole history of the Western introspective conscience ('a Western development and a Western plague') to which Luther was to seek an answer. Paul was not concerned with issues of personal salvation but with the possibility of Gentile inclusion in the Messianic community. It was Augustine's misreading of Paul that set subsequent western interpretation of Paul on a wrong course. John Riches, in a very illuminating essay, argues for the recognition of much more common ground between Paul and Augustine than Stendahl and others would allow, and his case (which cannot be set out here) deserves careful reflection. Riches recognizes Lutheran interpretations of Paul (with their emphasis on forensic aspects of Paul's thought) as 'the most fruitful interpretations of Paul in the West'. Their very success, however, has militated against an appreciation of the inner dynamic of Paul's thought (the interplay of the forensic and the dualistic) by neglecting interpretations of other elements in Paul's texts, particularly liberation from bondage to the powers and participation in Christ. Riches calls for the developing of a new conversation between these two kinds of readings with a view to recapturing 'something of the inner dynamic of Paul's texts'.

Each of the other essays sheds important light on the particular topic under discussion. Eugene TeSelle provides an Introduction in which he surveys patristic interpretation of the Bible, with special reference to Augustine, and a later chapter exploring the Augustinian trajectory of interpretation of Romans 7 both in Augustine himself and through later ages. Thomas Martin establishes Augustine's interest in formal hermeneutical issues by calling attention both to his ground-breaking hermeneutical manual, the *De doctrina christiana*, and the 'hermeneutical asides' scattered through Augustine's works on John, the Psalms and Genesis. By examining Augustine's exegetical practice in some later works in which Romans occupies a prominent place, in light of these 'asides', Martin confirms the general consistency of Augustine's practice with his own hermeneutical principles. Paula Fredriksen explores Augustine's use of a literal interpretation of Scripture to establish his

distinctive teaching on the status of Israel, the Jews and Judaism within the context of his evolving theology of history. Simon Gathercole illuminates Augustine's capacity for interpretative change by examining his 'conversion' regarding the identity of the Gentiles who have the law written on their hearts in Romans 2:13-16. Peter Gorday considers the debate between Augustine and Jerome on the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in the first century church.

In a concluding essay, Daniel Patte presents Augustine as a model for the practice of 'scriptural criticism', an approach to biblical interpretation worked out by himself and Grenholm, and to which each of the authors in the volume makes a contribution. The term represents an 'integrated, tri-polar' approach to scriptural interpretation which recognizes that in any interpretation of a biblical passage, three things are being simultaneously interpreted: the biblical text, the readers' relational/contextual life and the readers' heteronomous/religious experience (hence the book's sub-title). It is an approach which enables readers to assess critically the different possible interpretative choices before them. In that connection, Patte commends Augustine as 'an excellent reading companion for all of us', not least because he is completely upfront about the hermeneutical and contextual frames of his interpretation. To enter into dialogue with such an exegete is not necessarily to adopt his particular interpretation, but it is to find ourselves in a much better position to assess the value of our own.

This scholarly work is an eminently worthy addition to the growing body of works in English on Augustinian hermeneutics. Fresh insights abound. Fine bibliographies at the end of each chapter and useful indices enhance its value. Pauline scholars and historians of biblical interpretation will gain most from these essays, but all with an interest in Romans and/or in Augustine's use of Scripture, cannot fail to benefit from its careful perusal. This reviewer's appetite has been whetted for further volumes in a most promising series.

Angus Morrison, St Columba's Old Parish Church, Stornoway

Mapping Postmodernism

Robert C. Greer

InterVarsity Press, Downer's Grove, Illinois, 2003; 286 pp., £12.99; ISBN 0 8308 2733 1

Robert Greer sets out in this book a basic introduction to the concept of postmodernism, and how he believes the church needs to respond to this

phenomenon. It is not a book designed for those already steeped in academic philosophy; nor, at the other end of the spectrum will it be of much help to those without at least a university education! As Greer himself says (p. 3), 'I was not asked to write a book for children or in uneducated language.' Just as well. The 'educated language' of philosophical debate threatens, in almost every chapter, to deaden the effect of Greer's work, but in fairness to the author he strives, successfully I think, to hack a way through the jungle of philosophy-speak and unpack for his readers both the essence of the subject-matter and his vision of where we go should from here.

The need for a book such as this is identified in the author's prologue where he claims to have found it remarkable how much sheer ignorance there is about the concepts of modernism and postmodernism in the church. (Guilty!) On p. 3 he writes, 'The confusion is compounded when this hybrid modernism is perceived as being synonymous with *liberalism* – another mistake.' (Guilty again!) 'Modernism' is identified as the culture of 'radical doubt' inspired by Descartes' maxim: *cogito ergo sum* – 'I think therefore I am' – and the post-Enlightenment obsession with scientifically proven objective truth. It is this maxim, more than anything else, which is the 'spine' from which all the other 'ribs' in the book take their identity as being more or less in agreement with it.

After introductory chapters on what Greer sees as 'the dark side of absolute truth' and an urgent 'ecumenical imperative', (in other words two reasons why postmodernism needs to be taken seriously) he goes on to introduce the reader to the four main groupings within postmodernism, namely: foundational realism, post-foundational realism, post-foundational antirealism and post-foundational middle-distance realism. A helpful appendix (which should be read before starting the book) defines some of these terms and an indispensable glossary covers everything else and more. Greer helpfully uses bold text each time an item from the glossary appears in the text of the book for the first time. This effectively means that it must be read with at least three bookmarks permanently in place: one for the text, one for the copious notes, and one for the glossary.

The book comes from an American rather than British perspective, and this is particularly apparent in Greer's characterisation of liberals and conservatives respectively. I found myself not really recognising most of his descriptions of what conservatives, for example, supposedly believe, but if I have one genuine criticism of the book it is that it has trouble finishing. After the four schools of postmodernism have been discussed Greer returns to his opening subject in a chapter entitled 'Absolute Truth

Re-visited', which has the 'feel' of a conclusion about it. But then two other chapters follow, before a somewhat unnecessary epilogue which adds nothing to the book but re-hashes questions Greer has already addressed in the main body of the work. That aside, this is a worthwhile introduction to a complex philosophical subject. In other words *Mapping Postmodernism* does exactly what it says on the tin.

Andrew W. F. Coghill, Lochs Crossbost Parish Church, Isle of Lewis

Alister E. McGrath & Evangelical Theology: A Dynamic Engagement

Sung Wook Chung (ed.)

Paternoster, Carlisle, 2003; 364pp., £14.99; ISBN 1 84227 202 0

This book, a collection of essays in honour of Alister McGrath's fiftieth birthday, is effectively a festschrift, although this is a somewhat unusual occurrence when the scholar in question is still at the height of his academic career. Presumably it must be seen as a celebration of what he has achieved to date, with the prospect of more to come. Professor McGrath has been Principal of Wycliffe Hall in Oxford, an Anglican College, for some years and has recently been appointed Director of the Oxford Centre for Evangelism and Apologetics.

After a foreword by J. I. Packer, the book is divided into two sections. Part one is entitled 'The Theology of Alister E. McGrath' and part two is entitled, 'Dynamics and Vitality of Evangelical Theology'. The essays in part one are concerned to summarise and engage directly with McGrath's own position, while the essays in part two are of a more general nature. The writers who have contributed represent a range of perspectives, ranging from Clark Pinnock to Gerald Bray. Nor have the authors been chosen because they are uncritical followers of McGrath's theological viewpoint. Indeed, there is some fairly serious criticism.

There are four essays in part one and the first is by Graham Tomlin on McGrath's understanding of the atonement. Tomlin, Vice-Principal at Wycliffe Hall, is very positive and respectful concerning the theological ability of his colleague (and former teacher) but he also points out McGrath's failure to choose between various theories of atonement and, in particular, regrets his refusal to make penal substitution the controlling motif for his understanding of atonement. In the next chapter, Gerald Bray revisits McGrath's *Iustitia Dei* and effectively asks for it to be rewritten! Others, of course, are much more complimentary. In the third chapter, on McGrath's work in the area of scientific theology, John

Roche says that McGrath has 'read everything of relevance in the history of science, in contemporary science, in the history of philosophy and in the history of the philosophy of science, in historical and in current theology, in the history of science and religion, and also in the current field' (p. 34). The fourth essay in part one is by Dennis Okholm, dealing with McGrath's views on postliberalism. He is pleased that in McGrath there is no outright rejection of postliberalism but rather a cautious raising of concerns. This, argues Okholm, makes McGrath a suitable dialogue partner alongside postliberals such as Lindbeck.

Part two of the book does not have the same coherence as part one and the essays are of mixed quality. These range from the rather pedestrian, such as the one contributed by the editor of the volume, Sung Wook Chung, on Karl Barth, to the quite challenging, such as the essay by William Abraham on 'Revelation and Natural Theology'. Others are quite controversial, for example, Clark Pinnock's argument that open theism is within the camp of evangelical theology. By far the most interesting and stimulating contribution, however, is by John Frame. In an essay entitled 'Machen's Warring Children' Frame outlines twenty-two separate controversies that have engulfed evangelicalism since the time of J. Gresham Machen. He also manages to take a position on most of these. Watch out for his comments on the justification controversy at Westminster Seminary! The volume is worth the purchase price for this essay alone.

There is not space in a short review to refer to all of the essays in this substantial volume but the book as a whole is certainly worth reading. The volume concludes with 'An Appreciation and Response' from McGrath himself.

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

Mission After Christendom

David Smith

Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 2003, 140pp, £12.95; ISBN 0 232 52483 1

David Smith is well known in Scotland, having been variously a Ph.D. student in Aberdeen, Principal of Northumbria Bible College, and now lecturer in Mission and World Christianity at the International Christian College in Glasgow. Along the way, he has served as a pastor in Cambridge, a missionary in West Africa, and co-director of the Whitefield Institute in Oxford.

Some years ago he wrote *Crying in the Wilderness*. It was an impassioned plea about the state of our western churches and our refusal to engage with the challenging realities. Above all, it was an appeal not to hanker after golden ages but to grasp present realities. I remember reviewing it, reflecting that it was moving and powerful – but a bit long on analysis, and relatively short on help with what to do next. I was eagerly awaiting the next book.

This is it. It does not disappoint. It is full of helpful pointers, though you have to face the hard facts first. In three major chapters, Smith surveys the challenges of secularisation, pluralisation and globalisation. As he does he introduces us both to periods of history and current world scenes which turn out to have encountered our kind of world before. It turns out we are not alone, nor indeed unique; and there are ways to move forward again. But we will not be able to move forward until we have fully faced the facts.

Some of Smith's most telling analysis of our situation comes from fifteenth and eighteenth century art. Learning to appreciate the likes of Hieronymus Bosch, Hans Holbein and William Blake is an art in itself, yet their critiques of their cultures prove compelling for ours. Smith sets them alongside Stanley Spencer and Georges Rouault to provide us with analytical tools and to point us to significant streams of hope.

These challenging chapters are interwoven with biblical models which show God and his people have been here before. We sit with Israel between the exile and return, not forgetting that the same land has recently been ravaged by war and riven by tension. We struggle alongside Peter in the house of Cornelius to make sense of our world. We join the earliest Christians in confessing Jesus as Lord in the cauldron of the Rome of Revelation. In order to engage in mission after Christendom we are invited to rejoin the churches that existed before Christendom. Here indeed is help. 'The Christians we encounter in this period have a deep awareness of the radical nature of conversion and the moral demands of Christian discipleship. In the second century, Justin Martyr speaks of a desperate struggle to get free from a world controlled by demons, a culture in which people are addicted to wealth and pleasure, and describes the new life in Christ in terms of a complete transformation' (p. 124).

In his concluding chapter, Smith says he has searched for 'the new frontiers of mission today and, in the light of the discovery of these, to consider the mental, structural and theological changes that will be needed if the church is to obey Christ in relevant and faithful witness in this new context' (p. 116). He presses us to distinguish now between mission, 'the abiding obligation and mark of the church of Christ at all times in

all places', and the specific institutions we call missions. Only then will we be free to explore contemporary and appropriate models of mission, just as the Chinese, South American and Pacific rim churches have done. Above all, Smith appeals to us to recover the priority of discipleship, 'to turn contemporary processes of thought and ways of living towards the Saviour' (p. 130). It is a timely and profound appeal in a world where the cross, the crescent and the golden arches vie for attention.

Mike Parker, General Secretary, Evangelical Alliance Scotland

The Doctrines of Grace: Rediscovering the Evangelical Gospel

James Montgomery Boice and Philip Graham Ryken

Crossway Books, Wheaton, Illinois, 2002; 240pp., £12.99; ISBN 1 58134 299 3

In the judgement of the writers of this volume, (both too well known to require introduction) contemporary Evangelicalism is in a parlous condition. 'We live in an age of weak theology and casual Christian conduct. Our knowledge is insufficient, our worship is irreverent, and our lives are immoral.'

The gravamen of their charge against contemporary Evangelicalism, however, is its worldliness, behind which 'there lurks a pervasive mindlessness, an unwillingness to think very seriously about anything, but especially Christian doctrine. Evangelicalism has become a religion of feeling rather than of thinking.' The remedy for this situation is, in their view, a recovery of the doctrines of grace.

In order to establish that claim (and there is a frank avowal in the preface that 'this is a polemical book [arguing] for a theological position – Calvinism as set over against Arminianism') there follows a 'historical, and practical presentation of the doctrines of grace'.

Chapter 1, 'Why Evangelicalism Needs Calvinism', is in part a résumé of a previous volume, *Whatever Happened to the Gospel of Grace?*, in order to contextualise the ensuing discussion.

Chapter 2, 'What Calvinism Does in History', looks at Calvinism in its most notable historical manifestations: Calvin in Geneva; the Puritans in Britain and America, and Kuyper in Holland.

The core of the book, chapters 3 to 7, is devoted to an exposition of the five points of Calvinism. This material is, no doubt, familiar to most readers of the Bulletin. Nevertheless, these chapters provide an excellent introduction for anyone starting to consider these issues seriously for the

first time. In this section the biblical basis of the doctrines is fully set out; some of the most eminent Reformed theologians are aptly cited, and most of the common misunderstandings and objections are convincingly answered.

Chapter 8, 'The True Calvinist', is, says Ryken in the preface, 'in some ways the most important chapter in the book'. This is so because the authors are only too alert to the fact that many of the 'Truly Reformed' have 'a bad reputation, and sadly, perhaps some of it deserved'. In this chapter, therefore, under the headings of, 'A God Centered Mind', 'A Penitent Spirit', 'A Grateful Heart', 'A Submissive Will', 'A Holy Life' and 'A Glorious Purpose', there is a description of the genuine Calvinistic lifestyle.

The final chapter deals with the outworking of the doctrines of grace in ministries of care, compassion and outreach, as well as their application to the wider world of politics, science and the arts. Under the title of 'Have Mercy', there is a description of some of the work done by Ryken's church, Tenth Presbyterian in Philadelphia, which is breathtaking in its scope!

The authors' thesis is encapsulated in their comments on Titus 2:11-12.

Back in chapter 1 we identified worldliness as a fundamental failing of the evangelical church. Here we discover that what teaches us to say "No" to worldliness is the doctrines of God's sovereign saving grace.... Hence the church's great need to recover the doctrines of grace, that not only preserve the grace of the gospel but also teach us the art of gracious living.

This is a book we have no hesitation in warmly commending.

John Scoales, Edinburgh

John Knox

Rosalind K. Marshall

Birlinn Limited, Edinburgh, 2000; 244 pp., £9.99; ISBN 1 84158 091 0

Rosalind K. Marshall ends her biography of John Knox by relating the tradition that Elizabeth Welsh, daughter of Knox and wife of the fiery preacher John Welsh, who was always ready to breathe out condemnations of James VI's ecclesiastical policies and consequently spent sixteen years in exile in France, once visited James to request permission for her husband to come home. When the king learned her

father's name, he is said to have replied, 'Knox and Welsh! The devil never made such a match as that!' She responded, 'It's right likely, Sire, for we never asked his advice.' Marshall points out that, authentic or not, the story indicates that the Reformer's daughter inherited his wit and courage, and then adds that 'the incident is a useful corrective for those who think of Knox only as a caricature of bigotry'.

The same could be said of Marshall's book. It effectively sets aside common caricatures of Knox not only as a bigot but also as harsh, unfeeling and violent. It provides ample evidence for Marshall's description of him as 'a strong and vibrant personality', 'straightforward in many ways, complex in others, ... tactless and ... churlish, yet ... an admired pastor, a patient counsellor and an affectionate husband, father and friend' who 'shrank from violence' though 'his moral courage never failed' (p. 215). One meets here a sensitive, self-doubting man who, driven by his unfailing conviction that the Bible as the Word of God spoke authoritatively to every man, high or low, could vehemently denounce, face to face, anyone – even a monarch – who (as he judged) transgressed its laws.

While Marshall makes good use of both secondary and published primary sources, one is surprised to find no references to archival sources, and she uses a modern severe abridgement of Thomas McCrie's *The Life of John Knox* rather than the heavily documented two-volume work (2nd ed., Edinburgh, 1813), which remains, though rare, the most thorough biography of Knox.

Nonetheless, Marshall uses sound historical discernment, developed through writing other biographies – of Mary, Queen of Scots, Elizabeth I, Henrietta Maria, Bonnie Prince Charlie, Mary of Guise, Anne, Duchess of Hamilton, Mary I, and Elizabeth of Bohemia. Her understanding of the roles and perceptions of women in historic Scotland – she wrote *Virgins and Viragos: A History of Women in Scotland from 1080 to 1980* – is particularly helpful to her analyses of Knox's stormy encounters with his queen. While it has been common to cite the confrontations, in which sometimes Mary burst into angry tears, as evidence of Knox's misogyny or insensitivity, Marshall, without being tendentious, demonstrates that Knox, though he developed a passionate hatred for Mary that precluded his giving her any benefit of the doubt, was simply fulfilling the biblical prophet's role. As he told Mary once, 'I am called, Madam, to a public function within the Kirk of God, and am appointed by God to rebuke the sins and vices of all' (p. 175) – without exceptions for rank or power.

The reader benefits from descriptions of Knox's most important writings ably set within their historical contexts. The evidence shows

that he was more than just the leading Reformer of a remote kingdom; he was, through his ministries in Frankfurt and Geneva, his friendships with leading continental Reformers including especially John Calvin, his chaplaincy for the Protestant boy King Edward VI, and his instrumentality in shaping early English Puritanism, a prominent international figure with whom even foreign monarchs had to reckon with care. He was also a tender, compassionate husband and father, patient and tireless through many years in his efforts to comfort and assure his fearful mother-in-law, Elisabeth Aske, of her forgiveness and Christ's unfailing love for her.

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Singing to the Lord

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Bryntirion Press, Bridgend, 2003; 92pp., £4.50; ISBN 1 85049 194 1

This volume is a collection of four previously unpublished sermons preached by Dr Lloyd-Jones on Ephesians 5:18-20. Those familiar with the Doctor's writings will immediately feel at home with the style and presentation of this volume. As one would expect in the light of the verses being considered there is a great deal of material here on the subject of worship and praise in the life of the Christian. However, especially in the last chapter, numerous other matters are considered, and the section on chastisement in the life of the believer is most helpful.

Dr Lloyd-Jones briefly considers the exclusive psalmody position and draws the following conclusion:

If it is wrong to sing an extra-biblical hymn or psalm composed in praise of God, then extempore prayer is wrong, and any praise and worship and adoration and thanksgiving that someone may give under the inspiration of the Spirit in prayer is wrong. But that is a monstrous suggestion. It cannot be wrong. It is inspired by the Spirit (p. 22).

Whilst fully appreciating the point which the author is making, one is left a little uncertain about what exactly is meant by 'inspiration'. Some clarification is given in the following statement:

Our hymns are not scripture, but that does not mean they are not inspired. Of course they can be! And so many of these hymns are obviously

gloriously inspired by the Spirit of God, whose concern is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ (p. 22).

The present reviewer, although sympathetic to the author's position, would have liked a clearer statement concerning the uniqueness of the inspiration of Scripture, and especially the Book of Psalms. The tone could be, I felt, somewhat uncharitable towards our brethren who hold to a 'Psalms only' position:

But if you think that this is an instruction to people to have a drab, solemn, dull service, where nothing is sung but psalms, then you have misunderstood the apostle's words (p. 21).

Strong statements are found in several places. Concerning the tune of the well-known chorus, 'God is still on the throne' Dr Lloyd-Jones states: 'I would not hesitate to assert that it is blasphemous!' (p. 3). On the subject of various instruments in the worship of God the following comment is most striking:

There are musical instruments that are sensuous, that belong to the world. Saxaphones and instruments of that type have no place in Christian worship; their sound is primitive, lacking the thoughtfulness and wisdom that characterize Christian music (p. 38).

The comments made on congregational praise and particularly on the importance of all the people of God entering unitedly into worship are excellent:

You must sing together, not to show off your voice, not to display yourself and thereby cause irritation to everybody else who is round and about you. If you have a great and powerful voice, then moderate it when you are with others, otherwise you will be disturbing the harmony. You are always to be guided by the Spirit (p. 40).

Equally helpful are the reflections on the relationship between the Word of God and the singing of hymns. These words of St Augustine are quoted approvingly:

When it happens to me to be more moved by the singing than what is sung, I confess myself to have sinned criminally, and then I would rather not have heard the singing (p 36).

This volume, as with all the writings of Dr Lloyd-Jones, is a worthwhile read. At certain points in this book your heart will be warmed and your soul refreshed. At other points you may well be a little agitated! The sermons were preached some years ago and there is therefore no interaction here with the current trends and developments in the whole area of worship.

Gareth Burke, Stranmillis Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Belfast

The Theology of Reconciliation

Colin E. Gunton (ed.)

T&T Clark, London, 2003; 177pp., £25; ISBN 0 5670 8889 8

This is a collection of nine essays on the theme of reconciliation, and is published as part of the Research Institute in Systematic Theology series. The starting-point of the collection is the observation that reconciliation is one of a few theological terms which are carried over into social and political life; apartheid in South Africa and unrest in Northern Ireland, for example, have both led to increasing use of the concept of reconciliation.

The various nuances and parameters of the concept of reconciliation were discussed at a conference in King's College London in 1999, and the papers have been gathered in this volume. The papers are of varying styles, quality and interest, but there is much here to stimulate. Professor Christoph Schwöbel locates the doctrine within a fourfold perspective of soteriology, christology, theology and pneumatology, and is particularly helpful in reminding us that reconciliation is a broader concept than justification, since it involves a complete lifestyle. Thus, while justification focuses on a change of status before God, reconciliation involves a change of relationship with him. No less important, in Schwöbel's view, is the non-mutuality of the doctrine: in the biblical presentation, God is the sole author of reconciliation. How ought this to impact on, for example, political realms which are at variance with one another? Does reconciliation not demand 'non-mutuality of the steps that can initiate reconciliation?' (p. 36).

Another thought-provoking study is on 'Reconciliation in Paul', by Douglas Campbell, in which he analyses Galatians 3:28. This he views as a summary of Paul's theology, and he analyses it in terms of its biblical and sociological context. Penetrating as many of its insights are, however, one must take issue with the translation of *pistis* as 'the faithful one' (i.e. Christ) on the grounds that the idea of 'faith' is 'essentially anthropocentric' (p. 46). In Paul's view, the faith by which

we lay hold on Christ is itself in the gift of grace (Eph. 2:8); the whole idea of believing, therefore, is essentially theocentric, and there are valid reasons for translating *pistis* as 'faith'. Similarly, Campbell's analysis hinges much on the translation of *baptizo* as 'immerse', a meaning which is difficult to justify. Nonetheless, Campbell's insistence on the eschatological dimension of reconciliation is to be welcomed.

So too is Douglas Farrow's treatment of 'Ascension and Atonement', in which Farrow explores the priestly and levitical roots of the concept of reconciliation. At one level Farrow is critiquing Barth for failing to do justice to the sacerdotal origins of reconciliation; at another he is demonstrating the indispensable and pivotal role of Jesus' ascension, which demonstrated that all necessary steps had been taken to secure peace for us with God. One of Farrow's concerns is to allow 'different authors to speak from a common set of assumptions' (p. 76), which is an important hermeneutical principle.

Murray Rae's paper on 'A Remnant People' raises important perspectives on the relation between reconciliation and the church. But it is haunted by the spectre of Barth's universalising tendencies, in which 'Jesus Christ becomes in the place of every man and woman their representative before God' (p. 94), and the church the remnant that bears witness to a reconciled humanity (p. 107). Despite the author's disclaimer ('I stop short of advocating universalism', p. 108), he still concedes too much to the Barthian view that all the trespasses of all men everywhere have been taken away. Perhaps there is a need to revisit the old doctrine of the extent of the atonement.

Robert Jenson's paper on 'Reconciliation in God' raises more questions than it answers, as it seeks to examine whether there are any mediating influences to be found within the ontological Trinity. Leaning far too heavily on speculation, Jenson speaks about the Spirit as the agent of reconciliation between Father and Son and the Father as reconciler of Son and Spirit. The paucity of biblical citation is perhaps one reason why Jenson takes us on such flights of fancy. The Bible's doctrine of reconciliation is grounded in the action of the Triune God vis-à-vis his relation to fallen humanity; there is no trace in Scripture of the Persons of the Godhead requiring to be reconciled to each other.

This is an eclectic collection of essays, containing useful and thought-provoking material. But those who would wish to ground their theology in the supreme authority of Scripture will probably have to look elsewhere for satisfactory material.

Iain D. Campbell, Back, Isle of Lewis

BOOK REVIEWS

VELI-MATTI KÄRKKÄINEN: <i>Christology: A Global Introduction</i> (Iain D. Campbell).....	219
COLIN GREENE: <i>Christology in Cultural Perspective: Marking out the Horizons</i> (Iain D. Campbell).....	219
LARRY W. HURTADO: <i>Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity</i> (Peter Balla).....	221
R. S. HESS AND M. D. CARROLL R. (eds): <i>Israel's Messiah in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls</i> (Alistair I. Wilson).....	223
TERRENCE W. TILLEY: <i>Post-Modern Theologies. The Challenge of Religious Diversity</i> (Roy Kearsley).....	224
MICHAEL WILLIAMS: <i>This World Is Not My Home: The origins and development of dispensationalism</i> (R. Todd Mangum).....	225
JOHN G. STACKHOUSE, JR. (ed.): <i>What Does It Mean to Be Saved? Broadening Evangelical Horizons of Salvation</i> (Stephen N. Williams).....	227
HERBERT BOYD MCGONIGLE: <i>Sufficient Saving Grace. John Wesley's Evangelical Arminianism</i> (Robert Thompson).....	229
DAVID BEBBINGTON (ed.): <i>The Gospel in the World. Vol. 1. Studies in Baptist History and Thought</i> (Alasdair Macleod).....	231
ROBERT D. CULVER: <i>The Earthly Career of Jesus, the Christ: A Life in Chronological, Geographical and Social Context</i> (Mark Jason).....	233
KINGSLEY G. RENDELL: <i>Samuel Rutherford: A New Biography of the Man and His Ministry</i> (Guy Richard).....	234
PETER G. RIDDELL & PETER COTTERELL: <i>Islam in Context: Past, Present, and Future</i> (Duncan Peters).....	236
MARK J. CARTLEDGE AND DAVID MILLS (eds): <i>Covenant Theology. Contemporary Approaches</i> (David McKay).....	238
STEPHEN WESTERHOLM: <i>Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The 'Lutheran' Paul and His Critics</i> (Alistair I. Wilson).....	240
JAMES A. HERRICK: <i>The Making of the New Spirituality</i> (Donald M. MacDonald).....	241
DANIEL PATTE AND EUGENE TESELLE (eds): <i>Engaging Augustine on Romans. Self, Context, and Theology in Interpretation</i> (Angus Morrison).....	243
ROBERT C. GREER: <i>Mapping Postmodernism</i> (Andrew W. F. Coghill).....	245
SUNG WOOK CHUNG (ed.): <i>Alister E. McGrath & Evangelical Theology: A Dynamic Engagement</i> (A. T. B. McGowan).....	247
DAVID SMITH: <i>Mission After Christendom</i> (Mike Parker).....	248
JAMES M. BOICE AND PHILIP G. RYKEN: <i>The Doctrines of Grace: Rediscovering the Evangelical Gospel</i> (John Scoales).....	250
ROSALIND K. MARSHALL: <i>John Knox</i> (E. Calvin Beisner).....	251
D. MARTYN LLOYD-JONES: <i>Singing to the Lord</i> (Gareth Burke).....	253
COLIN E. GUNTON (ed.): <i>The Theology of Reconciliation</i> (Iain D. Campbell).....	255